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# WAYS OF SAYING

## Rhetorical Strategies of Environmentalist Imaging

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If one is alive to the world at a time of crisis, one wants to be “woke,” and to awaken others. That motivation, to manifest persuasive agency toward increasing awareness of climate change, is fundamental to environmentalist art. Thus, akin to environmentalism itself, in advocating attention to ecological losses, ameliorative measures, and proactive policy change, environmentalist art’s relation to the viewer is—tacitly or explicitly—polemical. That intention influences both the practice of artmaking and the ways it is received and discussed. Most often, emphases on knowledge of the crises’ dimensions and on finding fixes have led to enlarging subject matter but slighting the persuasive powers of artistic form itself.

It is understandable that the environmental and social disequilibria stimulating artists’ environmentalism are so urgent that attention to topical crises and potential cures dominate. Yet if we consider environmentalist art as intended to be public address, a kind of speech, is emphasis on information, or demonstrations of artists’ engagement with solutions, enough to alter viewers’ subjectivities? Rather, a potentially more socially effective approach of creating affective resonance is demonstrated by artists who in their artmaking both draw from, and speak to, pre-cognitive, sensory, and corporeal experience.

In a 2009 jeremiad, whose fervency and topical neologism, “Ecoaesthetics: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century,” garnered influential attention, artist, writer, and curator Rasheed Araeen anachronistically denounced “the extreme self-entered individualism of art today.” As did the Dadaists and other radicals across the twentieth century, Araeen urged artists to “abandon their studios and stop making objects.”<sup>1</sup> Essentially, Araeen reiterated calls for artists to focus on altruistic subjects and acts. Eco-art had originated forty years earlier, and while socially engaged art was central to the feminist art movement from the 1970s, it had gained traction in the mainstream already sixteen years before in the controversially political work prevalent in the 1993 Biennial of the Whitney Museum of American Art. That prominent exhibition stimulated—gave high-level professional permission to—artists far and wide to take up social injustices (and propelled one of its curators, Thelma Golden, to the directorship of the Harlem Museum). Even more so today, the predominant genre of current art calls out abuses in relation to social identities (gender, race, ethnicity, and, recently, immigration). The artists admirably aim to heighten awareness of social injustices and the need for reform.

But their—and environmentalist art’s—emphasis on subject matter also participates in a preceding trajectory of art history. Categorically, that purposefulness differentiates it from





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nonpartisan, “disinterested” art taken to be the expression of personal vision, or, at the other end of the intentional spectrum, from a collective criticality regarding styles of form, material, space, mode of expression, historicism, etc. as in Modernism’s sequential “-isms.” In its decadent late form specified by Clement Greenberg in the 1940s–60s,

“Art for art’s sake” and “pure poetry” appear, and subject matter or content becomes something to be avoided like the plague [...]. In turning his [sic] attention away from subject matter of common experience, the poet or artist turns it in upon the medium of his own craft.<sup>2</sup>

The quest for purity of medium reduced painting, for example, to mere opticality, sculpture to form and spatiality.

Subsequently, and especially since the 1990s, this Greenbergian equation has been inverted: a concurrent plurality of styles and media both within and between bodies of artistic work is commonplace and subject matter is absolutely “interested,” that is, it serves—in degrees of directness—as advocacy. But in doing so, artists and their works’ analysts and presenters frequently slight the complementary attention to the manner of visual presentation, the specifics of sensory and material elements and the affects they engender. Of course, it is more difficult to either make or discern art in which its visual and material facture is productively ambiguous—that is, not elusive but provocatively allusive—than to rally around subject matter. But the scarcity of attention to traditional nonverbal aspects of visual art across the cosmopolitan contemporary art world is evinced by a German professor of art and philosophy’s observation that

In late modern and postmodern times, art has been redefined as a primarily “managerial” phenomenon, in other words, reduced to its position and use in the art world—something whose meaning is in effect little more than the intersection of those critical, historical, curatorial and administrative interests that are parasitic upon art practice... There is no meaning to the work over and above this nexus of managerial concerns, [ignoring] a dimension of aesthetic visual meaning.<sup>3</sup>

As the psychoanalyst and philosopher Félix Guattari remarked in his *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, when art has an

existential function—namely, rupture with signification and denotation—ordinary aesthetic categorizations lose a large part of their relevance. Reference to “free figuration,” “abstraction,” or “conceptualism” hardly matters! What is important to know is if a work leads effectively to a mutant production of enunciation.<sup>4</sup>

Guattari’s “mutant production” doesn’t sound reductive, but a simplistic emphasis on ethical subject matter can reduce the art to mere real life speech.

That is exemplified in a highly cited work of art from the 2019 Venice Biennale that consisted of a rectangular message in four rows of capitalized text in white neon against orange edged in yellow: “ARTISTS NEED TO CREATE ON THE SAME SCALE THAT SOCIETY HAS THE CAPACITY TO DESTROY.” Made by Lauren Bon of The Metabolic Studio, Los Angeles, 2006, this earnest declaration could be historically validated as playing off of Bruce Nauman’s 1967 statement in cursive within a spiral, *The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing*



*Mystic Truths*, also in neon. But whereas Nauman's then-inventive use of electric commercial signage satirizes Abstract Expressionism's metaphysical aspirations, the bluntness of Bon's battle cry (in what we now recognize as a resource-consuming medium) entices no more thought than would a neon Budweiser logo in a dive bar. Its "production of enunciation" doesn't encompass either the mutancy or the mix of life and art.<sup>5</sup>

In his "Ecoaesthetics," Araeen specifically called for "the establishment of desalination plants around the world... as an artistic idea."<sup>6</sup> Artists as scientists? As administrators? Ask artists to instrumentally carry a flag and it becomes just that: flattened into a sign of affiliation and squeezing out art's polysemous potential. Nevertheless, as if taking up Araeen's mandate, a large and widely shown exhibition concurrent with this book's production exemplifies curatorial and critical grappling with climate change by emphasizing environmentalist works' social utility. "Eco-Visionaries: Art, Architecture, and the New Media after the Anthropocene" was presented at six European museums of art, art and science, technology, as well as architecture.<sup>7</sup> Its exhibits on material manifestations and responses to climate change were grouped in sections designated "disaster," "confluence," "extinction," and "adaption," driving viewers' and catalogue readers' to attend to these subjects.

The rhetorical strategy of these "visionaries" is by and large that of the "mad" (affectively and creatively) scientist who cleverly applies information and technology to design works that are pseudo- or proto-pragmatic. So we see Malka Architecture's *A Green Machine* (2014), an image illustrating an expanse of desiccated cracked earth above which a group of elevated buildings are supported by huge latticed wood mobile pylons that seem to be producing the furrowed crops below it; SKREI's large ovoid metal tank within a support structure and with various metal appendages as a domestic *Biogas Power Plant* (2017); and Gilberto Esparza's tabletop creature, *BioSoNot 2.0* (2017), with two arms, three legs, and domed head above a body of circuitry and throngs of cables, speaks in sound levels generated from the metabolism of microorganisms in its torso's contaminated water, serving as a pollution alert.

The procedures of these designers, artists, and many others in such surveys parallel those of the original eco-artists of the 1970s such as Newton and Helen Mayer Harrison, Hans Haacke, Patricia Johanson, and Mel Chin, all of whom often collaborated with scientists in direct terrestrial remediations, modelling responses to environmental debilitations with some corollary public exposure to the conditions. In the fifty years since the onset of "eco-art" – now about so much more than the then-fashionable emphasis on "eco"-logical networks—the degradations of climate change are obvious to anyone alive to the world: displayed in journalistic reports of both disasters and corporate and governmental malfeasance; in novels, film, and video games; and through personal privations from volatile weather, flooding and wildfires. Scientists and technologists increasingly take up climate change and its sequelae. As Guattari recognized as early as 1992, articulating art's progressive potential, "It's not a matter of transmitting messages, investing images as aids to identification, patterns of behavior as props for modeling procedures, but of catalyzing existential operators capable of acquiring consistence and persistence."<sup>8</sup>

In the "Eco-Visionaries" catalogue, one of its curators, architect Mariana Pestana, asks the rhetorical question, "If [the Enlightenment's] ideas of reason and science that stimulate technological progress can be directly linked to environmental destruction... what are the alternative orienting principles of reason, objectivity and rationality?" The ongoing environmental catastrophes around us demonstrate that like the presentation of data, urgent logic hasn't been very persuasive. Every conception of art implies a construction of the viewer. Modes that are primarily scientifically demonstrative or rhetorically polemical speak to viewers' powers of deductive analysis or potential outrage. It's time to change art professionals' perception of audience—to promote works of art addressing other than rational communicative modes, not to "rescue a



Figure 23.1 John Gerrard, *Western Flag (Spindletop, Texas)*, 2017

sense of hope in the future”—nothing merits that except the will to be hopeful—but to affect individuals who may then press for governmental policies.<sup>9</sup>

One of the most affecting works among the “Visionaries” group, Irish artist John Gerrard’s *Western Flag (Spindletop, Texas)* (2017) exceptionally has no utilitarian aims (Figure 23.1).

A continuous moving picture made by animated computer graphics, the work depicts a high pole planted at the present-day rural spot of the “Lucas Gusher,” the world’s first major discovery of oil, in Texas, 1901. The virtual reality simulates the site’s actual diurnal and annual cycles of light, as if slowly encircling the pole and transmitting a live image feed from Texas. At the pole’s top, dense black smoke continuously streams from seven regularly spaced vertical spouts as if billowing a flag’s horizontal stripes, ragged. The continuous emission of black murk portends death by asphyxiation, and the barren environment, a post-apocalyptic future. The single pole, Texan location, and allusion to the United States flag—the seven spouts echoing its seven red stripes—call up the US’s current stance of belligerent exceptionalism and refusal to sign international climate accords.<sup>10</sup> Its allusions are timely, but also timeless. The centered pole in *Western Flag*’s symmetrical composition evokes an omphalos, the world navel or still point symbolizing both the importance and the centrality of the consumption of petroleum around which every element of urban life continually turns.

When *Western Flag* was first publicly shown in April 2017, it was on a huge free-standing LED screen (10.1m × 8.2m) in the courtyard of Somerset House in London. The size simultaneously monumentalized the territorial indomitability associated with a national flag and memorialized the loss of industrial optimism. But the piece’s politically environmentalist impact also derived from its phenomenological relation to viewers: large-scale in comparison to human height, allowing peripheral sight, absorption into the pictured landscape, and an overall perceptual and corporeal envelopment.<sup>11</sup>

In speaking to several realms of the art/life mix, *Western Flag* has generated an enormous following. Gerrard's video's widely-posted illustration on the internet, viewing numbers on YouTube, and repeated inclusion in exhibitions (e.g., concurrent with "Eco-Visionaries," a version of it was projected at the Desert X exhibition in Coachella Valley, California), suggests the extent to which audiences groove with it. Likely, this derives from the artist's synthesis of the topical, the technical, and imaginative visual sensitivity. Garrard's subtle fusion of subject matter and visual form speaks to psychic levels deeper than awareness of oil = death or awe for simulation wizardry.

Questioning Araeen's exhortation, art historian Alan Braddock has cautioned, "Under such conditions, hasn't the role of the artist simply collapsed into ecological activism as such? Or is there yet something distinctive about the work an artist does?"<sup>12</sup> Likewise, in his comprehensive history, *Landscape Into Eco-Art*, Mark Cheetham advocates attention to aesthetics, asking "Is some degree of separation warranted [here, between art, science, and engineering], perhaps even to uphold art's ability to make a difference precisely through its difference?"<sup>13</sup> Art historian Claire Bishop focused on these concerns in her substantial analysis of the evaluative criteria of performance art, another genre with a strong identification with social issues and remarkably pertinent to environmentalist art. These art historians all share what Bishop succinctly identifies as "the ongoing struggle to find artistic equivalents for political positions."<sup>14</sup> Her assessment of performance art sounds like the inventive structures predominant among the "Eco-Visionaries": "Through this language of the ideal system, the model apparatus and the 'tool,' art enters a realm of useful, ameliorative and ultimately modest gestures." Viewed as social speech, and in the case of environmentalism, sometimes direct ameliorative utility, the artwork expands its polemical aim toward life but is trivialized as a creatively mediated presence itself. Bishop's analysis centers around a critical splitting that is also applicable to environmentalist art. Preliminarily acknowledging the insufficiency of formal analysis toward understanding art, she notes, "Participatory art demands that we find new ways of analyzing art that are no longer linked solely to visuality." She is then free to declare the necessity of attending to that very essential component: "even though form remains a crucial vessel for communicating meaning."

Bishop critiques a shared pattern in the reception of performance and environmentalist art:

[...] an ethically charged climate in which participatory and socially engaged art has become largely exempt from art criticism: emphasis is continually shifted away from the disruptive specificity of a given practice and onto a generalized set of ethical precepts... And so, we slide into sociological discourse—what happened to aesthetics?... It is also crucial to discuss, analyze, and compare this work critically as art, since this is the institutional field in which it is endorsed and disseminated, even while the category of art remains a persistent exclusion in debates about such projects.<sup>15</sup>

With this critique, Bishop applies to the visual art realm abstract formulations by Guattari and Jacques Rancière, who posits that

the ideal effect is always the object of a negotiation between opposites, between the readability of the message that threatens to destroy the sensible form of art and the radical uncanniness that threatens to destroy all political meaning—in other words, between the message and the customarily more multivalent, ambiguous visual form.<sup>16</sup>

Likewise, Guattari describes an unstable balance within which art needs to maintain its independence:



Figure 23.2 Edward Burtynsky, *Oxford Tire Pile #8*, Westley, California, USA, 1999

Each work produced possesses a double finality: to insert itself into a social network which will either appropriate or reject it, and to celebrate, once again, the Universe of art as such, precisely because it is always in danger of collapsing.<sup>17</sup>

Photography is a popular medium among environmentalist artists for the camera's documentary potential regarding scenes of devastation, but in an artist's hands—and eyes—adeptness at handling the formal elements of composition, scale, light, and texture take it beyond witnessing. In Edward Burtynsky's 1999 image of millions of damaged vehicle tires in a southern California valley, *Oxford Tire Pile #8*, the mountains of black rubber rings are awesome in themselves, evidence of population growth, energy consumption, and a hoarder's (and would-be recycler's) obsession (Figure 23.2).

But Burtynsky's viewpoint on those massive jumbles, from above the narrow path that they constrict, extending to a small triangle of green grass, intensifies the image's desolation. Beyond the sheer mass of tires, the distant countryside conjures a verdant paradise lost; the image is affecting for its use of color, scale, perspective, space, and cultural associations of nature as primal fertility.<sup>18</sup>

There is a reason that powerful art is called "moving." Its engine is affect, stimulating emotions. Art reconstitutes information that speaks in complex ways that other means do not, and through its engendering of affects, offers access to aspects of the self, and the self in the world, that non-art forms cannot reach. Affects are popularly considered synonymous with emotions, and that is accurate in the sense that a thing's affect is its emotional tenor, as, for instance, a disadvantage of terse email is the absence of a voice's inflection of affect, which helps to disambiguate a speaker's intention. But more precisely and biologically, affects register physiologically, prior



to feelings and cognition, as corporeal responses along a spectrum of attraction–repulsion to things sensed or experienced. When the right match for a sensation producing an affect is found in words, it is identified as a feeling and emotions are associated with it.

Affects are transmitted at subliminal physiological levels among and between people as pheromones; as visual or auditory vibrations; bodily movements and gestures; and imitations of rhythms effected by sight, touch and hearing. Psychologist Teresa Brennan notes,

Visual images, like auditory traces, also have a direct physical impact; their reception involves the activation of neurological networks, stimulated by spectrum vibrations at various frequencies. These also constitute transmissions breaching the bounds between individual and environment.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, affects are inherently *environmental*. They are the biological level of the now widely accepted understanding that identity is not just a product of individual acts, experience, and genetics, but is also strongly affected by shared cultural conventions regarding gender, race and ethnicity.

Early in this century, critical theorist Brian Massumi observed, “There seems to be a growing feeling within media, literary and art theory that affect is central to an understanding of our information–and image–based late capitalist culture, in which so–called master narratives are perceived to have foundered.”<sup>20</sup> A basis for understanding how culture and society changes, argues Brennan, is to reconceptualize the self. Just as politicians and environmentalists urge recognition that we are communities of shared interests, Brennan argues that the propensity toward considering the thus socialized individual as cognitively and biologically self–contained has prevented recognition of the importance of the interpersonal and socially contagious transmission of affects. Whereas, regarding their transmission among individuals, “Affects have an energetic dimension... they can energize or deplete.”<sup>21</sup>

The same, commonplace lack of recognition of the affective aspects of social interactions corresponds to inattention to the communicative power of affects in art. Both indicate a privileging of the cognitive over the sensory. This potent source of art’s communicative power, and, not incidentally, experiential pleasure, has been insufficiently attended to in terms of rhetorical strategies. Integration of affects in analyses of art requires scrutiny of their carriers, that which evokes affect, which as much as subject matter are the formal elements through which they are conveyed. Art historian Emily Eliza Smith emphasized this when she recognized the video of artists Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla, *Raptor’s Rapture* (2012), as “trading a topical approach for one that operates in the realm of affect.”<sup>22</sup> Scott’s tracing of the phenomenological and suggestive aspects of this artwork offers a rare example of addressing the evocations latent in color, light, shape, texture, sound, and all the sensory and material elements brought to life by a beholder’s sensitive articulations.

One of the most poignant essays on climate change as a problem of public persuasion was written by the novelist Zadie Smith. Beginning with “what is happening to the weather,” her reflection on rationales for insufficient responses includes surmising her explanation to future grandchildren. “Apocalyptic scenarios did not help—we had a profound historical attraction to apocalypse. In the end, the only thing that could create the necessary traction in our minds”—to generate what she had described as the absence of “a global movement of the people that forced [climate change] onto the political agenda, no matter the cost”—“was the intimate loss of the things we loved.” That statement’s most potent word is not “loved” or “loss,” but “intimate.” It is that ability to make the unfathomable amorphousness of climate change feel personal and emotionally affecting that allowed Smith to conclude, after recounting her experience of a





desiccated countryside, “I found my mind finally beginning to turn from the elegiac *what have we done*, to the practical *what can we do?*”<sup>23</sup> Her mourning was not immobilizing but galvanizing.

Awareness of the power of affects to create sensations of direct experience—of intimacy with the subject—opens up new syntheses of environmentally topical subject matter and its imaginative materialization. Exemplifying this, Brandon Ballengée’s body of work creates a sense of intimacy with the species whose loss, resulting from climate change, he honors. An artist and zoologist who studies reptiles and amphibians, Ballengée is an expat Brooklynier based in rural Louisiana, which, due to its lack of commercial development, is a hotspot of amphibious diversity, facilitating biological research.<sup>24</sup> As a multimedia artist-activist, in conjunction with art exhibitions—many more in European institutions than elsewhere—Ballengée conducts field research workshops as biology instruction for children. With his partner Aurore Ballengée, he is developing on his property an *Atelier de la Nature* (the title a bow to the Louisiana French Creole spoken locally and Aurore’s native French), that will restore land for agriculture and animal habitats and teach conservation in public events. Although his research, teaching, activism, and art share the subject of species loss and other consequences of climate change, these practices’ rhetorical strategies differ: the science experimentation is published in journals and the art in striking visual formats that merge science’s objectivity and art’s potential to evoke and provoke.

Targeting the crucial issue of species loss through science and art, Ballengée’s *Frameworks of Absence* series (from 2014), for example, takes authentic historical prints of naturalistic renderings of wildlife, such as Audubon’s birds in lush foliage, and excises those species which as of the prints’ creation had become extinct (Figure 23.3).

Displayed in ornate frames in styles contemporaneous with the prints’ period of origin, yet small in scale in relation to the viewer, the intimate presentations conjure devotional images of beings both sacred and vulnerable. Ballengée’s desecration of the work of a revered illustrator, doubled by the gaping and shadowed holes where delicate species had been and intensified by the contrasting hue (in gallery/museum installations, blood red) of the then-exposed rear wall, both evoke and enact loss. The painful image cuts to the heart of the matter, and that of the viewer. The discarded paper is burned, and the ashes contained in a small black vessel labeled with the corresponding name of the extinct species, and displayed as a group in rows of shelves as *Frameworks of Absence Funerary Urns*.

Ballengée’s even earlier group of works called *Malamp* (begun in the 1990s), an acronym for “malformed amphibian project,” is informative, but the source of its affective power is less in the damaged anatomies of individual specimens depicted than in Ballengée’s choices of light, lighting, and symbolism when presenting them. Frogs’ predators, nourished by climate change’s enhancement of their wetlands habitat’s bounty, eat their legs, which grow back as just too many limbs or not entirely or enough. Collecting these terminally deformed amphibians after death, or euthanizing them, Ballengée gives them new life as aestheticized evidence. Flaying their bodies, he stains bones, tendons, and cartilage contrasting saturated hues, predominantly turquoise, red, and yellow. Photographed, scanned, enlarged, these become luminous beauties dramatically seen individually and centered against a black field spotted with glistening bubbles, as if figures floating among stars or martyrs spiritually risen. Printed on 46- × 34-inch watercolor paper, the large-scale forces viewers to examine frog anatomy disabled by climate change and challenges the historical anthropomorphic preeminence of human beings. He considers the *Malamp* pictures to be portraits and, out of respect for each subject, makes only a single print of each. Yet he also draws upon spatial encouragements of relationship. Scaling up the once tiny beings to the size of a human toddler arouses endearing appeal, but as they are posed supine with arms perpendicular to the body, he slices in allusions to a fallen corpse or skeletal crucifixion. Mortality







Figure 23.3 Brandon Ballengée, *RIP Louisiana Parakeet: After John James Audubon*, 2008/14

is accentuated by his designation of his *Malamp* images as reliquaries. Again, as with his excised avians, contrasts or alignment of scale in relation to the size of the human body, and here, anatomical parallels, promote affinities across species toward an empathetic resonance.

Similarly, one of the newest mediums being utilized for art, virtual reality, engenders affiliation with nature and its multiple spheres of actants by engaging the body, but literally so in the movements, sensations, and visual perceptions called up by immersive environments. *We Live in an Ocean of Air* is another assertive claim, but this work's implication of cosmic oneness situates viewers to discover it experientially, thus more memorably, through corporeal interactions. The latest project of the London VR team Marshmallow Laser Feast, *We Live in an Ocean of Air* debuted at The Saatchi Gallery, London, in December 2018 and, due to public demand, had an extended run through spring 2019 (Figure 23.4).

Projections on walls of the modest-size black box room open them to a coastal California forest scene, featuring one of the oldest living things on earth, a giant sequoia. In fifteen-minute sessions, just a half-dozen or so participants at a time don the cumbersome computerized sensors in a HP backpack, on wrists, in a helmet and goggles—something like suiting up for a moon-walk—that monitor a person's biorhythms, and through which one sees physiology not visible to the naked eye.



Figure 23.4 Marshmallow Laser Feast, *Live in an Ocean of Air*, 2018

It's worth it, and the sense of heaviness soon falls away as the apparatuses make the tree appear three-dimensional and branches extend and weave into the middle of the space, or we can explore inside its bark. We hear sounds local to the forest and abstract music, arboreal scent is dispersed, and wind is felt on the skin. The VR headset reveals the bones of one's hands; pulsing along the fingers toward the tips are molecules of red oxygenated blood. Urged by the staff monitoring each of us to inhale deeply, the complementary exhalation is startlingly vivid, surging before us in flumes of neon-hued particles that float off to mix with others' exhalations. Breath made visible merges before our eyes with the forest's simulated release of carbon dioxide, energy, and water into the atmosphere. We're undergoing what psychologists call a social "contagion," an affective resonance of experiencing the same affect in response to viewing a display of that affect by another person. Akin to the thrill of a dense group "rave" at a dance club or the communality at a church service, the effect—and affect—is euphoric. The installation appears as high-tech play, but in engendering wonderment, incites affects that give energy. Technology's immersive simulation of atmospheric mutuality profoundly persuades a biophilic engagement in earth care, in turn stimulating cognitive environmentalism.

The ongoing challenge of environmentalist art is devising forms effective in altering public consciousness—and conscience—about climate change. The inventive works of art analyzed in this essay, among others, exemplify sensitivity to the ways that visual and material qualities engender affects and create intimacy with urgent subject matter. Powerful as both advocacy and art, they offer compelling models of persuasion.

### Notes

- 1 Rasheed Araeen, "Ecoaesthetics: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century," *Third Text* October 2009, [www.tandfonline.com/loi/tte20](http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tte20)
- 2 Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture, Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 5–6. This quote is from "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," which was first published in *Partisan Review* in 1939.
- 3 Paul Crowther, "Artistic Creativity: Illusions, Realities, Futures," in Francis Halsall, Julia Jansen, and Tony O'Connor, *Rediscovering Aesthetics, Transdisciplinary Voices from Art History, Philosophy, and Art Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 133, 135.



- 4 Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 131.
- 5 That absence, and the subject-dominated discussion of environmentalist art in an art periodical, is exemplified in an article that illustrates Bon's sign. Hettie Judah, "There's a Flood of Climate Change-Related Art at the Venice Biennale. Can It Make a Difference – Or Is It Adding to the Problem?" *Artnet*, May 6, 2019, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/climate-change-venice-biennale-1532290>
- 6 Araeen, as above.
- 7 The exhibition was initiated by and exhibited from spring 2018 to winter 2020 at Fundação EDP/MAAT (Lisbon, Portugal), Bildmuseet (Umeå, Sweden), HeK (Basel, Switzerland) and LABoral (Gijón, Spain), in collaboration with the Royal Academy of Arts (London, UK) and Matadero Madrid (Madrid, Spain). The curators were Pedro Gadanho, Sabine Himmelsbach, Sofia Johansson, Karin Ohlenschläger, Mariana Pestana and Yvonne Volkart.
- 8 Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 19.
- 9 Mariana Pestana, "Eco-Visionaries: Art and Architecture After the Anthropocene," *Eco-Visionaries: Art and Architecture After the Anthropocene*, ed. Pedro Gadanho (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2018), 75.
- 10 Alternately or additionally, historian Lisa FitzGerald has suggested that the seven plumes may refer to the "Seven Sisters, the common moniker for the seven oil companies that control global oil production and distribution." Lisa FitzGerald. "Black Gold: Digitally-Simulated Environments and the Material Aesthetics of Oil." *Transformations* 32 (2018), 97. [www.transformationsjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Trans32\\_6\\_fitgerald.pdf](http://www.transformationsjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Trans32_6_fitgerald.pdf)
- 11 The work was commissioned by the British television Station 4 to be screened intermittently – interrupting programs – throughout Earth Day 2017. That did not offer the absorptive experience and neither did its presentation at the "Eco-Visionaries" venues, an indoor LED wall approximately 2m x 3m.
- 12 Alan C. Braddock. "Ecological Art after Humanism," responding to Mark Cheetham, "Ecological Art: What Do We Do Now?," in *Nonsite.Org*. March 2013 issue. <http://nonsite.org/feature/ecological-art-what-do-we-do-now>
- 13 Mark A. Cheetham, *Landscape into Eco Art, Articulations of Nature Since the '60s* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018), 11.
- 14 Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and New York: Verso, 2012), 7.
- 15 Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 23, 7, 22, 17, 12.
- 16 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London, NY: Continuum, 2004), 63.
- 17 Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 130.
- 18 For an image of this work and more on Burtynsky, see Suzaan Boettger, "The Mirror of our Nature: Edward Burtynsky's Images of the Anthropocene," in Edward Burtynsky, *Anthropocene* (Germany: Steidl Verlag, 2018), 9–16.
- 19 Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 10.
- 20 Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual, Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Raleigh: Duke University Press, 2002), 27.
- 21 Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, 6. This is distinct from the brain's mirror neurons, which more directly promote a person's mimicking of another's sensations—to personally varying extents of affiliation.
- 22 Emily Eliza Scott, "Feeling in the Art: Ecology at the Edges of History," *American Art* 28, no. 3 (2014): 15.
- 23 All quotations are from Zadie Smith, "Elegy for a Country's Seasons," *New York Review of Books* 61, no. 6 (April 3, 2014), 6.
- 24 This discussion draws from my more comprehensive essay, Suzaan Boettger, "Brandon Ballengée: Amphibious," in University of Wyoming Art Museum, *WASTE LAND: A Survey of Works by Brandon Ballengée, 1996–2016* (Laramie: University of Wyoming Press, 2017), 11–17.