

Spring 2022

Art and Environmental Activism in the Age of Climate Change

Devon Donahue

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2022



Part of the Arts and Humanities Commons



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Art and Environmental Activism in the Age of Climate Change

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Environmental and Urban Studies
of Bard College

by
Devon Donahue

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
May 2022

Dedication

I dedicate my research project to my parents, who helped keep me on track with their immeasurable love and support during a difficult four years of my life. I would also like to dedicate my work to the incredible friendships I have made at Bard College, I would not be standing here without them.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my dedicated and wonderful advisor Olga Touloumi. She kept me strong and determined throughout my final year at Bard College. I would also like to acknowledge Ellen Dirscoll, who introduced me to environmental art at the beginning of the pandemic. She pushed me to stay creative and engaged during a difficult time. Last but definitely not least I would like to acknowledge Krista Caballero and Eli Dueker for their help during my research and writing process and for being wonderful and supportive teachers.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	8
Chapter 1.....	20
Chapter 2.....	34
Chapter 3.....	45
Conclusion.....	58
Bibliography.....	60

Introduction

Environmental activism is often left on the shoulders of scientists and public figures. However artists also engage in environmental activism, protesting climate change through their artwork. In urban spaces, such as New York City, artists have created public art projects that advocate for a solution to climate change. Artists also use their work to tell a story about climate change. Art can engage with unique ways of thinking about and interacting with nature. It can also impel us to take action by instilling a sense of urgency and fear. Land art was a radical shift within the boundaries that the art world takes on. As the urgency to fix our planet rose up, the format of land art became more action based and politically motivated. It became less about the artist's motive, and more about the needs of our environment. The power that art holds has been used as a form of protest to the ongoing destruction of our planet.¹ It can address issues from overconsumption and overproduction, to air pollution and water pollution so horrific that in some places women can't get pregnant. Art has the ability to be shared universally and promote information and awareness, while hoping to emotionally attach the audience to the issue in question.

This research project tackles the question of how art is able to engage with environmental concerns. It discusses early forms of environmental art that is known as "land art" and how the beginning stages were focused on a more conceptual form of art. Land art was a radical change of direction in the art world because the installations were often made incapable of being in a gallery space. The pioneers of this movement did not conform to minimalist ideals, focusing on making monumentally large art. Artists were engaging with their environment by using it as their canvas and as their materials, but this was only the beginning. Environmental art progressed to

¹ Scott, Emily Eliza, and Kirsten Swenson. "INTRODUCTION: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Land Use."

be more politically motivated throughout the last 50 years. This part of my research aims to answer the question of how activism transformed environmental art. The project dives into answering questions about how the world came to accept art as a form of activism. The project also inquires about what kind of impact art has made on the individual, on society and on the planet. I will provide examples of how art can engage with its audience at a level that is a useful and unique part of environmental activism.

When environmental art first began in the 60s, it was determined to bridge the gap between nature and art. During the 1960s, land art showed up in isolated areas in mostly the Southwest. It can be seen as a radical movement within the field of the visual arts because it dealt with geographical elements, as well as natural spaces of all dimensions and materials, containing earthworks, landscapes, or biodegradable sculptures. The first part of the movement established a deeper connection between art and nature through the use of natural materials.² The next phase developed richer ideas of how to use nature as a medium to tell a story or communicate a message. The shift that happened in postwar American art began with the exhibition *Earthworks* in 1968. This art exhibition demonstrated one of the first attempts of land art to use only natural materials, “rejecting traditional sculptural forms”.³

Earthworks inaugurated an art movement that considered questions of how art is able to have a close connection and tell a story of nature. The exhibition took place at the Virginia Dwan Gallery in New York City. At the time, land art was not popularized enough to have a proper definition. The exhibition brought together artists who have been using land as their medium. Robert Smithson, Walter de Maria and Micheal Heizer all showed their work in *Earthworks*. In fact, Robert Smithson’s most well known piece is the *Spiral Jetty*, which he created in 1970, was

² Darabas, Susanne. “A Short History of Environmental Art.”

³ Micucci, Dana. “Land Art: Earthworks That Defined Postwar American Art”

displayed in the show. This was one of the first well known pieces of land art. This piece of work was built in the Great Salt Lake in Utah and was a 1,500 foot long spiral made of rocks, mud and salt crystals. The jetty is often submerged under water due to climate change. He also made the sculpture into a 32 minute film, so it could be shown at the exhibition. “These and other seminal works of land art are associated with that meteoric moment in time, when revolution was transforming American society on all levels and a group of pioneering artists risked a radical new path.”⁴



Spiral Jetty, 1970

In a *New York Times* article, Robert Smithson notes that, “In a sense, a park is already a work of art. It’s a circumscribed area of land that already has a kind of cultivation involved in it.”

⁵ Smithson’s idea about land art is vague, because he was never that politically motivated. Highly

⁴ Micucci, Dana. “Land Art: Earthworks That Defined Postwar American Art”

⁵ Phyllis Tuchman, “How Do You Sell a Work of Art Built Into the Earth?”

curated parks that land in the middle of cities count as land art to Smithson because of the performative element they carry. Parks are performative because they unnaturally present nature, usually the most beautiful parts of nature, to man made industrial space. The contrast of bringing together the natural and the artificial will ingrain some sort of response or thought to its audience. It's easy to forget the importance and vulnerability of nature when you live in a city, but parks have the ability to bring attention to the vast need to have kindness and respect towards our environment.

The documentary called *Troublemakers: A Story of Land Art*, made in 2015, discusses land as a subject and as a material. It coincided with more minimal and conceptual art. The most widely known and written about artists that were considered the pioneers of this radical movement are white males named Robert Smithson, Walter de Maria and Michael Heizer. They worked to defy any orthodox parameters of art on a monumental scale. They created their work in the American southwest, but brought it to New York City by filming and photographing their projects. Smithson, Maria, and Heizer worked through the questions of how an individual can come into exchange with nature. They collaborated their ideas of nature and of sculpture into a field of work they defined as “Land Art,” or also known as “Earthworks”. Their work conveyed the feelings of aloneness and unsafety within society. For example, Michael Heizer’s *Double Negative* gives the viewer a feeling that they are looking at something that should be hidden. Heizer stated, “Double negative is really a scar of a king, an intrusion of nature, an assault of some sort. It’s as though a surgeon took an exploratory cut of a mesa to show its innards.”⁶ The instability and fragile state our planet was and is in was somewhat shown through the first few works of land art.

⁶ Summitridge Pictures *Troublemakers: The Story of Land Art Online*



Double Negative, 1969

The unsettling feeling that art is capable of filling someone with shows the power it holds. The environmental crisis can use the power art holds to make politically motivated art as a form of activism and protest. Harald Szeemann, a Swiss curator, artist and art historian, took interest in the *Earthworks* exhibition. He said: “The exhibition was scandalous because everything was getting very simple. All you had to do was believe in that guy who was digging the hole for whatever reason, he lives for what he wants. If he wants to dig holes, he should dig holes, and I think this engagement and this aspect, I think, was not associated with art. It was really the process of work, the motion, the attitude, it wasn’t about the form, it was about the content.”⁷ He took a closer look at the artwork and the artists’ process. He notes that during the beginning stage of environmental art, the work itself was not that motivational but the process of

⁷ Summitridge Pictures *Troublemakers: The Story of Land Art Online*

the artwork and the meaning behind it was very telling. The process told a story through the use of nature because it showed the value nature has, the deeper meaning that can be expressed by using it in a different way, and the enormous power it has within human existence.

Land art transformed over time, “becoming and unbecoming”⁸. It was not until it was more properly defined that it became an accepted genre of art. Land art was also expensive to make, especially when heavy machineering is required. Foundations like DIA have funded projects like the *Lightning Field* and the *Spiral Jetty*. Philippe Vergne, the president of DIA said: “The best-known earth works express a feeling of liberation and freedom and inspire new generations of artists to think about art in a different way.” The way land art works is that it's less for pleasurable viewing, but rather more about giving awareness of the environment around us. Its intention is to shift our blinded perceptions of nature. Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* was part of the foundation of the movement of humans reconnecting with nature during a time of urgency.⁹ In *Silent Spring*, Carson talks about the human power to alternate nature. She points out the irreversible pollution to our water and air and how humans can’t even see how large their impact is. She says, “in the modern world there is no time”. Carlson’s book became widely popular for its detailed account of how each person needs to take responsibility for saving the planet. This gave every field of work, including the art world, a voice to speak on the call for action to help prevent more irreversible destruction.

Robert Smithson’s wife, Nancy Holt, was also involved in environmental art crafts. Holt created the *Sun Tunnels* sculpture in 1976, located in the Great Basin Desert in Utah. The sculpture is made up of four, eighteen feet tall concrete cylinders. They are placed so that they frame the sun on the horizon during solstices.¹⁰ Holt created Sun Tunnels after she visited remote

⁸ Micucci, Dana. “Land Art: Earthworks That Defined Postwar American Art”

⁹ Darabas, Susanne. “A Short History of Environmental Art.”

¹⁰ DIA, “Nancy Holt, Sun Tunnels”

locations across the U.S. She studied the history and geology of the Southwest and created Sun Tunnels from the concerns that arose from her research and exploration.¹¹ Her work was created thoughtfully, and it gives the viewer a feeling of calmness and relaxation. This emotion resonates with its audience as a way to reconnect with their surroundings in a peaceful way, while also understanding the urgency of the climate crisis as the foreground of the artist's purpose.



Sun Tunnels, 1976

Environmental historian William Cronon wrote in 1994 in an essay called “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature”, that “the time has come to rethink wilderness”. In his essay he points out that many environmentalists have conflicting views. He says that environmentalists will often argue that having wilderness outside of manmade spaces is one of the best ways to connect yourself to nature. He talks about how it is common for people to feel like they need to be more connected to nature by going to the wilderness. However, he argues that this does not entail one to become more environmentally conscious because the more important step to take is to take care of the environment around you. He believes that

¹¹ Donnelly, Micky, and Nancy Holt. “Nancy Holt Interviewed by Micky Donnelly.”

environmentalists have the tendency to ignore the important ways we can connect to nature in our daily lives.¹²

There has been a surge in environmentalism in the mainstream media. Pretty much everywhere we look now, something or someone has “gone environmentally friendly”, to the point where it's been criticized and questioned by environmentalists of what “environmentally friendly” actually entails. There's a huge amount of genuine interest in being eco-friendly, however “all this attention seems encouragingly to be more everyday-centered and not terribly suspicious- perhaps even more suspicious enough- of the places we live. And it offers an enormous opportunity to articulate a set of reformulated environmentalist ideals.”¹³ This has created a path for environmental artists to become more political and also collaborate with scientists to offer more information within their work.

Environmental art has become more politically motivated over the years. An example of political environmental art is One Planet One Future, a growing project to raise awareness about climate change.¹⁴ The project is funded by the Time Shrine Foundation, which was jump started by the urgency to fight our environmental crisis through collaborative action. The foundation was created in 2016 and gets donations from individuals, corporations, sold artwork and public charity. Environmental art is more understood to be a part of social activism through projects like One Planet One Future. Their website calls attention to how art can document “what we have, what we are losing, and what we have already lost”. Anne de Carbuccia is the artist for the project. She is a French American environmental artist and filmmaker who has traveled around the world observing and documenting endangered environments, species and cultures. In 2013 she began photographing installations that she calls “time shrines”. Her work is mostly

¹² “Cronon, William. “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature”

¹³ Price, Jenny. “Remaking American Environmentalism: On the Banks of the L.A. River.”

¹⁴ De Carbuccia, Anne. “One Planet One Future”

sculptural pieces that are placed in spaces of decaying nature. She takes beautiful photographs of the pieces, often also capturing wild animals. At the end of the documentary on her work, she says “art, in all its forms, right now has a civic duty to remind us of who we are.” Her solution to climate adaptation is to visually show her audience how the planet is changing. Viewing her work often leads to a conversation about learning to control our overproduction and be ethical with how we interact with our planet. Lots of the people she met in travel were in the process of adapting to a new world, a scary world, where land is under the ocean and plants can no longer survive.

Art allows for a different outlook on the impacts of climate change. Maya Lin’s Ghost Forest offers an example. This piece of public art was created this year and presented from May-November in Madison Square Park in New York City. Maya Lin has earned her masters in architecture, she has the National Medal of Arts and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. She began focusing her work on nature based solutions to climate change in the late 90s.¹⁵ The Ghost Forest was made of 49 Atlantic White Cedar Trees from dying forests in New Jersey. When viewing the space, there is a stark and meditative feeling one gets. The forest is evidence of dead wood that is vulnerable from climate change and human interference. It was successful because it was able to tell a story through observation. It’s a very simple way for people to digest the universal crisis we are faced with. The contrast of the city space and the starkness of the trees provide a very simple way to expose the damage that overproduction and human interference has caused. After the project was taken down, the nonprofit organization Rocking the Boat used the trees to build boats.¹⁶ This is a good solution for what can be done once an installation project can no longer exist.

¹⁵ Madison Square Park Conservancy, “Maya Lin: Ghost Forest”

¹⁶ Zachary Small, “Maya Lin’s Dismantled ‘Ghost Forest’ to Be Reborn as Boats”



Ghost Forest, 2021

The Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art had an exhibition called “Weather Report” that was curated by Lucy Lippard.¹⁷ There were a number of driving questions during the process of constructing the exhibition. Some of the questions were: what can artists contribute to the understanding of climate change? How can art compel us to do something about it? What is the museum's responsibility to act as an agent of change? Marda Kirn is the director of EcoArts, a Boulder Colorado environmental arts collaborative that works to achieve activism through art forms. Basia Irland, an example of an artist who successfully told a story about climate change, made a project called Ice Books for the exhibition.¹⁸ Her work is mostly sculptures that highlight an issue of water scarcity and waterborne diseases locally and internationally. Her most well

¹⁷ Jacobs, “Weather Report at the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art”

¹⁸ Hoffman, Fishman Susan, “When Water Speaks for Itself”

known work are ice sculptures that float and melt in a body of water as part of the installation. The art pieces are beautiful to look at, but not in a problematic way because the beauty is destroyed shortly after it's put into a body of water. The rapid destruction of the art once it goes into the water will show whoever is observing it, that water scarcity is a vastly important issue. She mostly used seeds from tapering trees to put in the ice books. There was a huge amount of attention and time spent in the environments she worked in. She also implemented a collaborative feature within her art project. She had her audience put the books into the river by themselves. There is a huge emphasis on collaboration within Eco-art. Irland was very detached from the idea of art as a commodity. She felt strongly that her form of art had the sole purpose of raising awareness.¹⁹

The progression of media and technology has undoubtedly helped society spread awareness about climate change. Within the influx of rapidly spreading information, there is room for skepticism. Skepticism of what is the truth, what we can actually do individually, and what has been done already. Different types of art forms are capable of portraying the human experiences to elicit an emotional response. An emotional response can help the viewer feel the importance of hope in conversation with the mass destruction to our planet.²⁰ Feeling fearful and like you need to make a sacrifice can turn into feeling hopeful of a future because feeling something negative is more powerful than feeling nothing at all. As I research these questions to come to a conclusion of what the role of art is within environmental activism, I will discuss the works of Agnes Denes, who was a prominent environmental artist who is most well known for her *Wheatfield* installation piece that was made in NYC in 1982. I will then discuss the work of indigenous artists, namely Cecilia Vicuña, a Chilean poet and visual artist. My last focus will be

¹⁹ Irland, Basia. "Eco-Art."

²⁰ Dunaway, Finis. "Seeing Global Warming: Contemporary Art and the Fate of the Planet."

on more contemporary works of art that deal with issues surrounding water pollution and the impact of carbon emissions from plastics.

Every field of work seems to have found a way to connect to our decaying environment, and the art field has taken a huge step to be a part of this movement. I will begin by discussing the pioneers of the environmental art movement in the 60s and 70s, then move to a discussion of how the movement was criticized to how and why it evolved, and from that I will segway to discuss the more current work from the 21st century. Current environmental artwork is highly politically motivated because of the recent dire need to rethink how to protest and educate the public about climate change. I will discuss the outside opinions of this type of art from the perspective of both environmental historians and art historians. I've separated the discussion into 3 parts to include a critical outlook on the motives of land art, the reason there was a shift towards action based and politically motivated art, and finally what influence media and culture has had on this art movement. I am arguing that the call for action in regards to the planet has led to a larger acceptance of environmental art within the art world and to environmentalists. I believe art as a visual representation of climate change is an engaging and impactful way to spread awareness.

Chapter 1

Agnes Denes: Art as an Investigation

“We are surrounded with things which we have not made and which have a life and structure different from our own: trees, flowers, grasses, rivers, hills, clouds [emphasis added]”

-Kenneth Clark ²¹

Agnes Denes was a pioneer of the environmental art movement that took place in the 1960s. In 1969, Denes wrote a manifesto that defined the intentions of her artwork, published in 1970 in her book *Absolutes and Intermediates*. The manifesto makes claims of how and why environmental art can be successful. She argues that art is “communicating the incommunicable,” that art lets us see things through a creative lens. It understands the societal limitations we face, it can turn something scary into something beautiful (which can be problematic). Denes declares that art is “desiring to know the importance or insignificance of existence”. This provides insight into an artist's mindset. It also tells us Denes’ objective when creating her work. She was combating complex questions about what existence entails that drove her to her artistic work. The environment is full of both life and full of death and decay. Denes works to give life and meaning to the land we all live on. Her work also proves what an individual can do in the time of an emergency climate crisis. News outlets and politicians feed us undoubtedly important information related to climate change, but they don't have a deeper purpose to question our position as individuals in the world.

²¹ Platt, Susan Noyes. *Art and Politics Now: Cultural Activism in a Time of Crisis*.

Denes was born in Budapest, Hungary in 1931, but was raised in Sweden. She studied painting at the New School and Columbia University in New York City. She also holds honorary doctorates from many different institutions, including Ripon College, Wisconsin and Bucknell University. She won accomplished fellowships at Carnegie Mellon's Studio for Create Inquiry and at M.I.T.'s Center for Advanced Visual Studies. She began her exhibition career in the early 1960s and had pieces of work all over the country and the most famous museums. She has spent her later years lecturing at schools across the country and also been involved in global conferences. She is the author of six books including: *The Human Argument*, *Book of Dust*, *Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Intermediates*, and *Isometric Systems in Isotropic Space: Map projections from the Study of Distortions Series*.

In her artwork, Denes deals with examining and interrogating our human and societal values. Since the beginning of her exhibition career, she chose to dive into the environmental art field, as she realized the importance and urgency of her time and also learned through her studies the power art holds. Some of her environmental work is large in scale, so it was dependent on commissions, technology and machinery. This meant that some of her installations took years to complete, so in that time she also did a lot of writing. Through the process of her work, she engages with ethnographic methods. Through her investigations, she spoke directly to communities and did a whole bunch of reading that made her career all that more successful. This thoughtful base of her work allows her art to be a message of solution to ecological, cultural and social issues on a large scale.

Denes not only made her own forms of environmental art, but she also understands her art as a form of protest. "In a time when meaningful global communication, intelligent restructuring of our environment, and priorities are imperative, art can assume an important role

by affecting intelligent collaboration, integrating disciplines, and offering skillful and benign problem-solving,” she argues. She proves this in her collaborative art pieces that involve community engagement to create that actual art piece. It can offer “benign problem-solving” because it's not an attack on a person's guilt, it just paves a way for a new future and initiates an emotional connection and/or response. This was her approach to achieving a form of environmental activism.

She says that art can be of help when there is “ignorance in the midst of information overload”, that can occur from the onload of information from the media. Denes also says that there is a “lack of self-evaluation” and no signs of self reflection of one's part within society. This is why art has the potential to be a part of the protest. Art can command one to reflect. Her installation pieces allude to human destruction of the environment and also demand the audience to question their values. It's often when you are being thoughtless that you will get led to have “misguided priorities” or “jaded values”.²² How are communities able to unite their values to create a path in the right direction for us all to follow? For one, sacrifices are necessary. The sacrifice you might need to take could be portrayed in an art piece that convinces you to take a deeper look into your morals and actions.

Denes writes that a change in our surrounding environment demands a shift in the way we make art. “I wanted to cleanse art from its elitist self-involvement to achieve greater universal validity”. Art that begs for questions or answers is powerful. Denes' art questioned human existence. She gives life to decaying soil by creating art out of plants and trees that she grew. She wants her art to be “egoless” and focus solely on nature and how we can work to preserve what we have left.

²² Denes, Agnes, and Klaus Ottmann. *The Human Argument : The Writings of Agnes Denes*

Her first environmental project was in 1968 and was a haiku poetry burial about rice planting and tree chaining. She began this project in Sullivan County, New York during a symbolic ritual. It was her announcement of her commitment to use her artistic talents to protest environmental concerns. The piece was called *Rice/Tree/Burial*, the three parts to this art piece was the first example of the triangulation theme her work took on. Denes planted rice to represent life and growth, she chained trees to show human interference with the environment, and then at the end she buried her Haiku poem. She did not save a copy of her poem as a symbol of “giving up to the soil”²³ She said it was “an act that also symbolized the self-denial and discipline required by this new analytical art form”²⁴. Her realization of the need for self-discipline and ego-less and mindless thinking towards any engagement with nature was an important part of her successful activism. She said she gave up poetry shortly after, when she discovered her means of visual expression. She thought that art was a more advanced means of environmental activism because it speaks on an audience on a different level than anything else.

25

In her environmental work she strives to present a solution for environmental destruction stemming from human existence. She says: “dust is the beginning and the end: the essence of existence”. Her map project piece, called *Syzygy- The Moment Of*, began with a concept that you can hold the center of the universe in the palm of your hands. Denes is very in touch with the idea that an individual has the power and capability to create change. At one point in her career she remade the dictionary, editing out every word for “strength”. The more honesty that presents itself in a work of art, the more beautiful and complex it will be. Her artwork is complex enough to signify a solution to the ongoing climate issues. This is exponentially more important as time

²³ Denes, Agnes. *Agnes Denes Studio*

²⁴ Denes, Agnes. *Agnes Denes Studio*

²⁵ Denes, Agnes, and Klaus Ottmann. *The Human Argument: The Writings of Agnes Denes*

goes on. Denes “...anticipated that at a moment when no one was paying attention.” She saw the need and studied the problem. She believes that an epiphany is less important than the research, reading, writing, and thinking process is. She is a huge enthusiast of the process that goes into a piece of work, because she proves how a deeper process will accompany the art in having a more complex message.

Denes is most well known for her *Wheatfield* installation piece that was made in NYC in 1982. *Wheatfield-A Confrontation* was a huge, nearly impossible project that stood for four months and was commissioned by the Public Art Fund. The piece was meant to be a statement against “misplaced priorities and deteriorating human values”.²⁶ It was an example of her work that represented her curiosity about paradoxes. She toyed with the contrast between the bustle and congestion of the city with the calmness and slowness of harvesting wheat. Her installation technically wasted two acres of real estate. The absurd contrast of a wheatfield being in the middle of Battery Park City led to a deeper analysis of the factors that contribute to the success of a city. The conversation that followed her installation enabled this public art piece to stand as both a paradox and a protest.

On the first of May in 1982, Denes dug 285 furrows by hand. She had to clear off pounds of garbage and sentiment that had been dumped on the landfill site. She had tractors come in to flatten the area and to spread topsoil. She said that planting seeds in each furrow took two to three hours. Denes and her team of two assignments and a few volunteers set up an irrigation system and cleared off wheat smut, which was a disease that had affected wheatfields across the country for that entire year. She fertilized the field and protected it against mildew fungus by spending hours a day spraying down the field. The field was finally harvested on August 15th on

²⁶ Denes, Agnes. *Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Intermediates*

one humid summer morning. The field ended up being a success, with more than 1000 pounds of healthy, maintained wheat plants.



Wheatfield, 1982

The field exhibition was promised to make people rethink their priorities while living in a city. Especially Manhattan, as it is one of the wealthiest and most overcrowded cities in the world. Denes says that the paradox of her work was so urgently important because if our values were not reassessed soon, the quality of our life is in dangerous territory. The field was placed right in front of the World Trade Center, it faced the Statue of Liberty, and was a few blocks from Wall Street. The piece was symbolic; she says it was meant to represent “mismanagement, waste, world hunger, and ecological concerns”.²⁷ The symbol of all of those things is further proved through the contrast of that and the wealth and economical ideals of the neighborhood the

²⁷ Denes, Agnes. *Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Intermediates*

installation stood in. She says it stood at an “intrusion into the Citadel, a confrontation of High Civilization”.²⁸

The installation was intrusive, but also compared to Shangri-La because it was a peaceful break from the city that could ignite forgotten values and connect city folk to the calmness of nature and the beauty of ecological growth. The wheatfield was grown on a contaminated landfill, making it nearly impossible to build and to sustain. Denes says, “the absurdity of it all, the risks we took and the hardships we endured were all part of the basic concept. Digging deep is what art is all about.”²⁹ Even though the piece only stood for four months, it gained a lot of attention and inspired people living in Manhattan to rethink how they are living within the environmental restrictions of a city. After it was taken down, it did make room for a billion-dollar luxury complex, which was inevitable.

Once the field was put to rest, the grains were harvested to travel across the country in an exhibition called *The International Art Show for the End of World Hunger* that took place for 3 years following Denes’ installation. The rest of the crop was given to Manhattan’s police horses. Denes didn’t want her paradoxical message to end there. She wrote to the governments of Moscow, Beijing and Washington D.C. to propose that they commission for wheatfields to be harvested within the city. Russia was of a higher interest because President Jimmy Carter put in place a wheat embargo against Russia in January 1980. Denes said that it would be powerful for different countries to acknowledge the notion that you can harvest crops on any type of land. She also proposed that cities make harvest festivals to celebrate and contribute to the incredible powers of our ecosystem³⁰.

²⁸ Denes, Agnes. *Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Intermediates*

²⁹ Denes, Agnes. *Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Intermediates*

³⁰ Denes, Agnes. *Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Intermediates*

In January 2018, in New York City, Hans Ulrich Obrist recorded a conversational interview with Denes at her studio. Obrist thinks of Denes as an artist “holding the universe” in her hands. Obrist’s opinion on the topic of art in relation to the environment, is that “inspiration can come from life, and from nature”.³¹ Denes would agree with this statement but also brings up the topic of analyzing work, saying that it is useless to convert your ideas into painting just to have them translated back into words. She aims for her work to communicate more directly and lead to a larger reevaluation of human knowledge. Her opinion on this matter began to form back in the late 50s and early 60s. She says that when analyzing art, “a process of comprehension is initiated- an understanding that wouldn’t have happened otherwise”. This process only happens when the piece of art has become beautiful through time and research. Denes says, “I like to create something, then dissect it and show you the result. Often a beautiful process emerges and becomes visual- it wouldn't have been exposed without that process”. This statement shows how there is such a vital research and thought process that goes hand in hand with her final art piece.

Denes views her artwork as an argument for a reason to change our close minded perspectives on nature. She says that there are three parts to her thought process that turns into artwork. These three parts are a thesis, an antithesis and a synthesis. Denes defines making an argument step by step. She says first one must form a thesis, then find its opposite: the antithesis, and then seek a synthesis. Once you do this, she says to repeat the steps and you are now building an argument. This can also be represented in a triangular form, for example: a pyramid. She uses the significance of a triangulation in her work. Denes closely studied math, architecture, and urbanism. At the end of her manifesto she speaks on the importance of “being creatively obsessive...questioning, reasoning, analyzing, dissecting, and re-examining...understanding that

³¹ Denes, Agnes. *Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Intermediates*

everything has further meaning”.³² Struggling to find the meaning of so many different things is what led her to communicate her research through art. She saw the importance of doing the most one can as an individual in a moment of crisis. She says in her manifesto: “Living for a fraction of a second and penetrating light years”. As her manifesto also says, there’s not enough time on this planet to accept the “limitations society has accepted”. She pushed past the boundaries of the art world, and of societal limitations to protest for our planet.

Denes says that the two most important aspects of her work are that it contains an argument and it is bringing beauty out of whatever material she is working with. She says, “you have to look through my work to see how the argument changes in each instance and how it takes in unfolding fields and concepts like evolution, religion, or the basic interaction of things”. Obrist believes she has some renaissance ideas that are similar to Leonardo da Vinci, as he worked on scientific projects. Denes believes renaissance ideals connect with futuristic ideals, and that is why her work is so complex. “The strength of a work of art is the push and pull of the paradox. If it doesn’t have the strength of a paradox, it doesn't exist”. She says that it's important for an artist to let go of their ego in order for others to benefit from their work. This is a paradox in itself, and she writes about more paradoxes throughout her years of study.

Paradoxes are a common motif in Denes’ work. Her manifesto says, “working with a paradox, defining the elusive, visualizing the invisible”. Her work captures the known and unknown. For example, she proves in her *Wheatfield* installation that we can grow crops in the middle of a city. She crosses boundaries to prove to her audience that there is so much more to learn about nature. Once we educate ourselves more, maybe we will have a greater emotional connection that will result in more mindful and sustainable behavior. *Wheatfield* was also about the stark contrast of nature and city life. It was a paradox that was also described as limitless.

³² Denes, Agnes, and Klaus Ottmann. *The Human Argument: The Writings of Agnes Denes*

Susan Sollins, a former executive producer of Art21, commented on Denes' work. She says “for Agnes Denes, art is a system for exploring the universe; it lies somewhere between science and myth but uses elements of both”.³³ Her work takes on many different elements that are about intrusion into urban spaces, and about forcing her audience to question how they think about their climate.

Her work is very focused on the future, which is correlated with it being about the climate because she shows us what can still be fixed and achieved. Denes speaks on her theories about time, saying, “we live in a constant time flux with our consciousness sharp in the present but beginning to blur backwards or forward in time”. Her work combined the past history of environmental disasters with future solutions. She creates artwork about “a future yet to be realized’. The future is very fragile because we are at a point where it can lean either way. She lived by and through the ideas of how we can communicate with the future and change people's ideals in new generations.

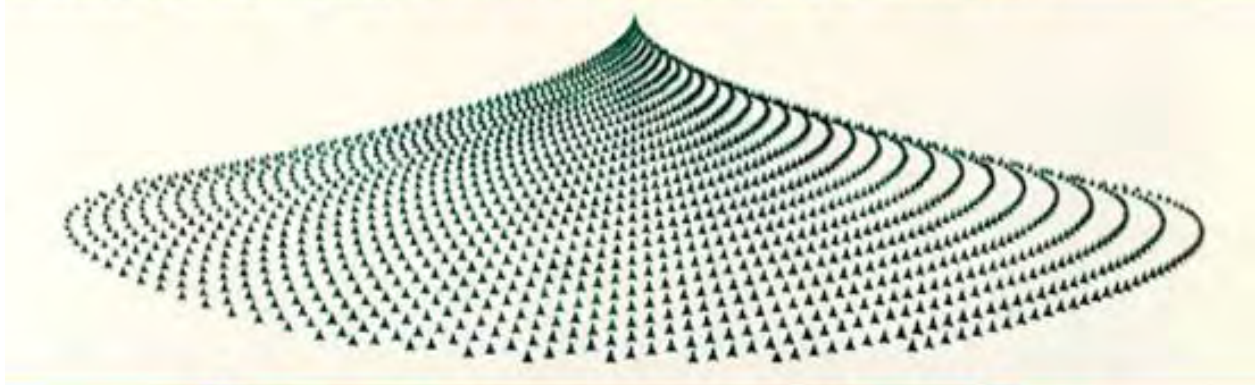
Communications are important for Denes. She claims that the most important powers are, “the power of knowledge, linguistics, and communication”.³⁴ Her public projects are there to serve humanity. Her work creates communication between humans and nature by communicating ideas about solutions to cultural and environmental issues. Her work sparks questions for the audience and visually displays the different paradoxes she engages with. Her work is thought-provoking, by demanding her viewers to question their relationship with their environment.

The Samek Art Gallery held Agnes Denes’ first exhibition solely focused on her environmental work. The show was called “Agnes Denes: Projects for Public Spaces”. Her art

³³ Denes, Agnes, et al. *Agnes Denes: Projects for Public Spaces: A Retrospective*

³⁴ Denes, Agnes, et al. *Agnes Denes: Projects for Public Spaces: A Retrospective*

piece, called *Tree Mountain- A Living Time Capsule*, was the most community involved piece of work. It was a collaborative project that engaged thousands of people to plant trees for others around the world. It consisted of drawings, models, and documents about an abstract world that were represented in *Pascal's Pyramid* print project. The project extended from 1992-1996 and is located north of Helsinki, Finland. She subtitled it: 11,000 trees-11,000 people-400 years. The trees are in an elliptical shape on an artificial mound that is on top of an old gravel pit. Her work is a prelude to future human knowledge. She challenges us, and the future generation by creating time capsule artwork.



Tree Mountain- A Living Time Capsule-11,000 trees, 11,000 people, 400 year.

Conceived in 1982, realized from 1992-96

Time capsule artwork was a form of art that Denes really delved into. Using trees in this piece makes her art “become an instrument that measures the evolution of art”.³⁵ *Tree Mountain* will develop and change forms over many years. It will last longer than those who contributed to its creation. Denes says there is a “strange paradox in this”.³⁶ The paradox lies on how even though the trees will last longer than the creators, the message will carry on that there can be no ownership over this art piece. *Tree Mountain* began as a curiosity project, but will remain in the world as a shrine that speaks volumes to the importance and magic of our ecosystems. She says that once again, it's not built for the human ego, but to benefit future generations.

She continues to use her work as a protest to climate change, writing a book called *The Human Argument* that was published in 2008. She makes the claim that a “well-conceived” work of art can ignite and unify people towards a collective movement to take care of our planet.³⁷ Her goals and motives have not shifted. You can see the same message and purpose carried out in her very first environmental piece: *Rice/Tree/Burial*. Denes is a highly accomplished pioneer of the environment art world and has been analyzed by many famous art critics.

Art critic, Eleanor Hearney, comments on Denes’ life and work, saying that her work responds to environmental disasters and the impact overpopulation has had on our planet. She describes the issues our world faces and how environmental art plays a role in the solution. Hearney says that Denes’ past work, *Tree Mountain*, *Forest for Australia*, *Poetry Walk*, and *Hypersphere* are all very admirable because it was a form of protest on climate change.³⁸ Art critic, Lucy Lippard, says that complexity is the most commonly used description of Denes’ work.³⁹ She says that art critics don't do her justice, and this is partly because it was such male

³⁵ Denes, Agnes. *Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Intermediates*

³⁶ Denes, Agnes. *Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Intermediates*

³⁷ Denes, Agnes, and Klaus Ottmann. *The Human Argument : The Writings of Agnes Denes*

³⁸ Denes, Agnes, et al. *Agnes Denes: Projects for Public Spaces: A Retrospective*

³⁹ Denes, Agnes. *Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Intermediates*

dominated world. Lippard says, “underlying everything Denes creates and writes is a passionate desire for humanity to succeed, despite its constant failures”.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Denes, Agnes. *Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Intermediates*

Chapter 2:

The Spirit Within Nature: Always Give Back

“We forget and we consider ourselves superior, but we are after all a more part of creation...And we stand somewhere between the mountain and the ant. Somewhere and only there as part and parcel of creation.” - Faithkeeper Oren Lyons, Onondaga Six Nations⁴¹

“When history awakes, the image becomes an act.”⁴² Octavio Paz wrote in 1950

Native American Art Historian, Susan Noyes Platt, speaks on the exclusion of Native American art in most exhibitions and conversations revolving around the environment. She says she isn't surprised because “they are not speaking the same language”.⁴³ Throughout history, environmental disasters have taken a detrimental toll on Native American land. It's been the dumping site for many landfills and been a site for coal mining that destroys the land. Platt says, “Indigenous people are trying to survive. Indigenous artists are making visible those struggles as well as the threat to their beliefs”.⁴⁴ The ancestral history of Native Americans has created a strong quality of resistance that often plays a large role in their artwork.

For Indigenous people, everything has a spirit and entity. Native American author, Leslie Marmon Silko, wrote, “Corn cobs and husk, the rinds and stalks and animal bones were not regarded by the ancient people as filth or garbage.” The spiritual aspect of Native American culture is pretty different from the European standard way of thinking about nature. The launch

⁴¹ Platt, Susan Noyes. *Art and Politics Now: Cultural Activism in a Time of Crisis*

⁴² Vicuña, Cecilia, et al. *Cecilia Vicuña: Seeing the Enlightened Failure*

⁴³ Platt, Susan Noyes. *Art and Politics Now: Cultural Activism in a Time of Crisis*

⁴⁴ Platt, Susan Noyes. *Art and Politics Now: Cultural Activism in a Time of Crisis*

of “Land Art” can be easily critiqued. Silko says that the term “landscape” comes from self-righteous European language, and can be deceptive. The word landscape takes away from any living soul of the clouds, plants, hills, etc. Environmental art has a lot to do with the urgency of global warming, but it is pretty immersed in European ideals.

Native American poet, Paula Gunn Allen, also speaks on the connection humans have to nature through spirituality. She compares Native American ideals to Christian ideals, saying that the Native Americans world is centered around “dynamic self-esteem”, whereas a Christian is taught to focus more on separation and loss. She points out that “the ability of all creatures to share in the process of ongoing creation makes all things sacred”. This is why Native American environmental art is more valuable than past European land art because many indigenious people are taught different ideals on how we interact with nature. There was no sense of superiority within indegenious land art world, but rather gave land the meaning and recognition it deserves. Native Americans often have a more developed sense of unity with their environment.

An important concept to look at when thinking about Indigenous artwork is the place-thought idea. Place-thought is not a certain, defined space but rather the ambiguous space between place and thought. Place and thought are often not separated but place-thought is about the idea that land has its own thoughts and both humans and non-human life “derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts.”⁴⁵ This cosmology differs from the traditional European way of thinking about our natural environment. The idea that non-human life is evaluated in terms of society is an important way of evaluating land.

The difference between indigenous cosmologies and euro-western cosmologies can be further described. The place-thought belief says that it will “determine agency within creation”, then society and our societal system will become extensions, which requires communication with

⁴⁵ Watts, Vanessa. Indigenous Place-thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-humans

our environment and that will give more land and non-human life a spirit. ⁴⁶ The epistemology-ontology divide “separates constituents of the world from how the world is understood” and that will limit agency to humans which creates a greater distance between humans and their environment. ⁴⁷

Land carries so much value in Indigenous cultures. “If we do not care for the land we run the risk of losing who we are as Indigenous people,” says Vanessa Watts. If people have more agency than land, then relationships are compromised. Not shifting the epistemological-ontological hierarchy can be disastrous. However, it's not easy to change this thinking because it's so long standing. “Societies were built upon domination over nature because of a perception that human arrangements with the animal world were unnecessary, if not dangerous.” ⁴⁸ Indigenous thinking says that we are an extension of soil, and if this is universally believed then it will shift and guide our principles of governance to reflect what is best for our ecosystems.

Born in 1948 in Chile, Cecilia Vicuna is a visual and performance artist, and a poet. She was raised in the Maipo valley, south of the capitol, by a family of artists and writers. In 1964 her father had built her an art studio where she first began painting. In 1966, she attended architecture school at the University of Chile but left to go to the Fine Arts School. In 1967, she published her first poems in Mexico City and she also created a group that was made up of performance, action based art and poetry within Santiago. In 1971 she had her first solo exhibition called “Otoño” that was held in the National Museum of Fine Arts in Santiago. In 1972 she moved to London to attend the Slade School of Fine Arts with a British Council Scholarship. She held a solo exhibition in London called “Pain Things and Explanations.” She

⁴⁶ Watts, Vanessa. Indigenous Place-thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-humans

⁴⁷ Watts, Vanessa. Indigenous Place-thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-humans

⁴⁸ Watts, Vanessa. Indigenous Place-thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-humans

then moved to Colombia and held exhibitions in Bogotá. She started a teaching workshop at the Guambiano Indigenous community of Cauca, Colombia. She then began creating films and was a part of a MoMA exhibition called “Latin American Video”. She had many more solo shows take place in New York, which spread a greater awareness about Latin American artists within the United States.⁴⁹ Cecilia Vicuña made works of art that take her audience “to a place that is conceptually rich and clean, where there is no waste and where all is rejected”.⁵⁰

Vicuña left her home of Chile in the early 1980s to escape Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship. Her goal was to reclaim her ancestral traditions. She proved to be an activist through her art forms when she should have led with the message of resistance against anyone trying to destroy cultures. She used raw wool in her pieces, to make a Quipu, an ancient Andean way of recording stories. Quipu is used as a counting system using knots at certain lengths to signify a unit. The color and structure of the strands contain information about population/community and can also act as a calendar.⁵¹ Vicuña uses the threads of wool to symbolize the precariousness of our world, both socially and ecologically. “She also explores the power of intuition and activism in the face of oppression, patriarchy, white supremacy, totalitarian rule and ecological devastation.”⁵²

Vicuña’s *paideia* was “to always give back”⁵³ and this message illuminates through her work. This message came from her heritage. “Her ancestral rubbish is her own Parthenon”⁵⁴, and this proved to be a function of her art. Her work deals with communicating ecological disaster from an indigenous perspective. Her Andean ethos were a part of her process. The Andean

⁴⁹ Vicuña Cecilia. “Timeline.”

⁵⁰ Vicuña Cecilia, et al. *Cloud-Net*

⁵¹ Quintanilla, Edgar. “Inca Quipus.”

⁵² Carrigan, “Cecilia Vicuña on Female Power and Climate Change.”

⁵³ Vicuña Cecilia, et al. *Read Thread: The Story of the Red Thread*

⁵⁴ Vicuña Cecilia, et al. *Read Thread: The Story of the Red Thread*

ideology consists of “coexisting and subsisting” within one's environment.⁵⁵ Her work also incorporates itself within the more modern postcolonial state of Chile. She uses a “translinguistic rendition of ancient poetics in a sophisticated hybrid art form that challenges most international avant-garde trends.”⁵⁶ She uses “semiotic signs, traces, marks, and textualizations that attest to her ethnolinguistic journeys and direct interactions with Andean peoples.”⁵⁷

The poiesis to her work has poetic, double meaning often. The use of the color red takes a few functions. Red functions as both a signifier and a signified. Red operates as a colloidal color and as a symbol of the precariousness of her work. “What is precarious and what endures are tightened by a curve of obsolescence that always places us before the possibility that every piece of rubble may transform into art when it becomes a ruin.”⁵⁸ She speaks a lot of precariousness and that being inherent to human and nonhuman life. The red thread piece also carries tension. “It's not the blood that clots like a war wound, but that ignored blood of domestic peace, as she herself tells us: the *ignored*.”⁵⁹

“Cloud-net” by Vicuña was a sculptural piece she created in 1999. It was abstract and created a closeness between human life and non human life. The cloud sculpture was made out of thick unspun wool. The piece was touchable, which created room for a closer attachment to our environment. Cloud-Net was about climate change, but Vicuña says that “no one that wrote about it addressed the issue of global warming”. Vicuña believes this is because of the universal denial to accept that “everything is dying” and “we’re killing our own means of survival”.⁶⁰ She says that another reason she doesn’t get the recognition she deserves and why there isn’t more conversation surrounding her work, is because there is very little acknowledgement for ingenious

⁵⁵ Vicuña Cecilia, et al. *Cloud-Net*.

⁵⁶ Vicuña Cecilia, et al. *Cloud-Net*

⁵⁷ Vicuña Cecilia, et al. *Cloud-Ne*

⁵⁸ Vicuña Cecilia, et al. *Read Thread: The Story of the Red Thread*

⁵⁹ Vicuña Cecilia, et al. *Read Thread: The Story of the Red Thread*

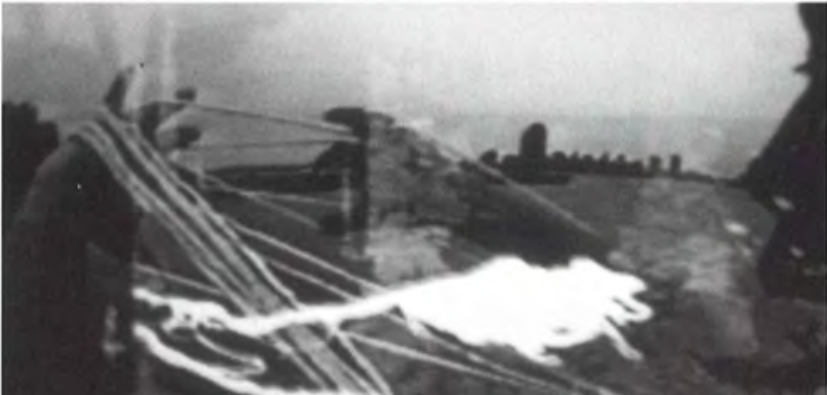
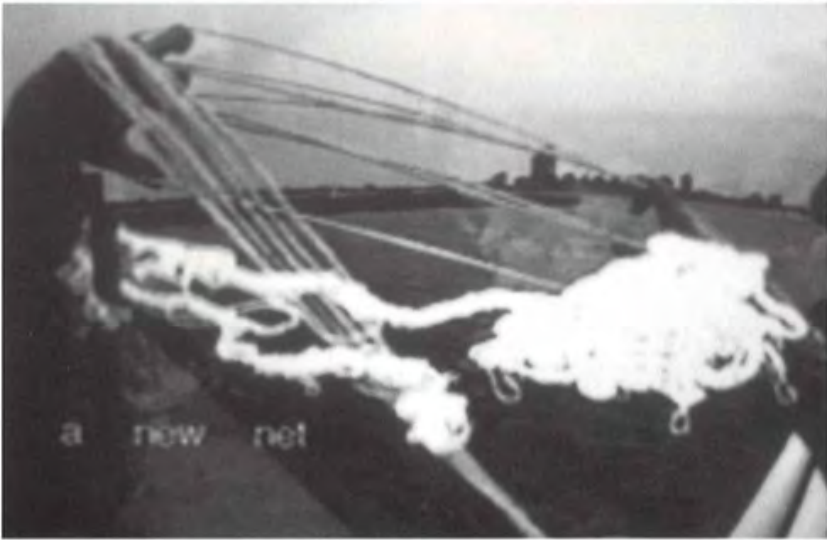
⁶⁰ Carrigan, “Cecilia Vicuña on Female Power and Climate Change.”

people in the US. Vicuña says that Lucy Lippard was the only art historian to ever notice that she was working on environmental work way before the Land Art movement began. Vicuña says that being overlooked actually benefited her work, as she was able to be more free and experimental. She says this is very common for female artists. It's a “profound and brutal reality”.⁶¹



Art in General, NYC, 1999

⁶¹ Carrigan, “Cecilia Vicuña on Female Power and Climate Change.”





Stills from Cinematography by Francesco Cincotta, *Cloud-Net*, 1998. New York

Vicuña says, “My art began on a given day in the year 1966, in January, when I felt that the ocean was alive and had so much awareness as I do now.”⁶² In an interview with Julia Bryan-Wilson, titled “Awareness of Awareness”, Vicuña speaks on her work. She speaks on the important elements to her work: land, site and the ocean. The ocean played a significant role in her childhood. She spent a lot of time in Con Cón beach in Chile, from the time she was born. She said that her visual work began when she had a realization and a strong feeling towards the ocean being alive and more awareness than any human could have. She had a “visceral

⁶² Wilson, “Cecilia Vicuña: About to Happen”

relationship”⁶³ with the ocean. She wanted to communicate with the ocean to pay her respect and give it the admiration it deserves. The first action she took was using debris from the ocean. She picked up a stick and held it vertically to the ocean; she found this to be a remarkable symbol for humanity having a place within nature. She felt that the stick was a middle point between human life and ecological life. She took more sticks from the beach and created a spiral design. At this time she had just finished high school and her life dream was to become an architect and she intended to head to school for it. She created a futuristic imaginary city from beach debris and thought that her artistic journey might head in a different direction. However, she says that “architecture was a total art where I could do poetry in the city, where the city itself would become an art form”⁶⁴

Vicuña says that her desire for environmental work was also ignited by seeing the oil residue on her feet after leaving the beach. Her feet would be black when she surfaced. Twelve years before her work began an oil refinery was put in the area of the Aconcagua River. The refinery was built on top of the cemetery of ancient inhabitants of Chile that was 6000 years old. She started doing more research about our climate crisis after first hand experiencing the effects. She quickly realized the urgency of the issue after she read in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* that we didn't have many years left with the state of ecological destruction we are in. There was also a deeper significance of oil contamination being the cause of erased cultural memory of the land.⁶⁵

Vicuña says her work functions as a form of communication, communication to women, to indignant people, and to anyone else who cares about the environment. “There is an

⁶³ Vicuña, Cecilia, et al. *About to Happen Cecilia Vicuña*

⁶⁴ Vicuña Cecilia, et al. *About to Happen Cecilia Vicuña*

⁶⁵ Vicuña Cecilia, et al. *About to Happen Cecilia Vicuña*

awakening going on right now that has become very powerful”.⁶⁶ She says that through art it's possible to communicate abuse with another. Whether that be abuse to women, or abuse to our environment. Vicuña strongly believes that art has the capacity to change our perspective. She says that the biggest factor of change is awareness. She considers awareness to be the “main art of human beings”. What she means by this is further explained here: “Awareness is what we share even with subatomic particles. So awareness– consciousness– is the art.” She says that the physical form of art is only a small part of its power. Its greater function comes from the awareness it brings and the intent of the piece. Her work has a mission and it comes from the foundation of having a concentrated intention. There are a few layers to this fundamental intention, firstly it must be well represented in the work of art and it must also examine the intention of how it communicates with its audience. There must be a mutual awareness between maker and viewer, which makes the work dependent on its audience. In one of her poems, she says: “consciousness is the art...awareness...aware of itself”.⁶⁷

Vicuña says that art’s “most precious gift” is the way it can stick in a person's head.⁶⁸ She says that on a political level, an audience could be “more inclined to be creative and fight for a world in which their brothers and sisters are able to enjoy themselves as they do”.⁶⁹ The significance of her work is carried by her connection and selfish attitude towards nature. She works towards eliminating human domination of nature. Her work an “ecology of connections that helps to foment other forms of life in opposition to destruction and loss”⁷⁰

Vicuña had a deep understanding of the elements of the environment and how they are meant to function. Her work calls for a reexamination of our connection to nature, one that

⁶⁶ Carrigan, “Cecilia Vicuña on Female Power and Climate Change.”

⁶⁷ Vicuña, Cecilia, et al. *About to Happen Cecilia Vicuña*

⁶⁸ Vicuña, Cecilia, et al. *Cecilia Vicuña: Seehearing the Enlightened Failure*

⁶⁹ Vicuña, Cecilia, et al. *Cecilia Vicuña: Seehearing the Enlightened Failure*

⁷⁰ Vicuña, Cecilia, et al. *Cecilia Vicuña: Seehearing the Enlightened Failure*

“anticipates, resembles, or resonates in reflections about forms of memory, perception, and thinking that are not dependent on a brain or on human function”.⁷¹ Vicuña has made some art pieces with *basuritas*, or trash. She comments on why this is powerful, saying that it is a way to empower something and unearth a deeper meaning to something that is defined as useless.⁷² “Every gesture that we now try to convert into art functions in our memory as testimony of that which is not there.”⁷³

When looking at Chile’s current climate, there are lots of environmental issues still happening. There is a huge mining crisis currently taking place. There's a high demand for Chile’s abundance of lithium and copper that has occurred because of the lack of sustainable fossil fuels. Chile’s constitutional court brought these issues to the Ecuadorian government in order to revoke mining permits. They brought to light the harm it was causing to the amazon rainforest. It “violated the rights of nature”.⁷⁴ Mineral mining has huge risk factors for our ecosystems, the extinction of species or even could permanently alter our natural eco cycles. Mining not only harms nature, but also the people who live near mining locations.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and The International Labour Organization’s 1989 convention on Indigenous and tribal peoples have helped Chilean people gain more rights. “Currently, the country’s laws only require mining companies to engage in ‘good faith’ consultation with Indigenous peoples in some circumstances, and even then they are not required to reach an agreement.”⁷⁵ The systems that were put into place in Chile promote inequality and are detrimental to indigenous people. There needs to be a constitutional change, but that's vulnerable.

⁷¹ Vicuña, Cecilia, et al. *Cecilia Vicuña: Seehearing the Enlightened Failure*

⁷² Vicuña, Cecilia, et al. *Cecilia Vicuña: Seehearing the Enlightened Failure*

⁷³ Vicuña, Cecilia, et al. *Read Thread: The Story of the Red Thread*

⁷⁴ Winters, Joseph. “Chile Is in for a Mining Boom. Could a New Constitution Prevent Environmental Catastrophe?”

⁷⁵ Winters, Joseph. “Chile Is in for a Mining Boom. Could a New Constitution Prevent Environmental Catastrophe?”

Chapter 3:

Current Time: Multimedia Art in Protest to Climate Change

“Often, in the hour of greatest need, when the system fails, it is neighbors coming together to support one another, building networks of cooperation through mutual aid.”—Shanna Merola⁷⁶

Water Pollution in New York:

Addressing current, local environmental issues to show the direct role art has played as form of protest, activism and community engagement

In 1837, New York City built the 400-acre Croton Reservoir in Westchester County, and a 41 mile aqueduct that channeled water down to Manhattan. Exponential population growth led the city to need more water, and smaller reservoirs were added to the Croton water system. However, towards the start of the 20th century, New York City’s water system was deemed inadequate. The city had depleted most of its water source and the original solution was to start importing water. However, that was not a permanent solution, and city officials began building the new water system. The watershed would end up in the Catskill Mountains, especially in Bishop Falls on Esopus Creek in Ulster County. The area performed as a natural drainage point. In 1905, engineers sent by the Water Supply Board of New York City went to investigate the Catskill watershed and agreed that Bishop Falls was an ideal location. The dam site for the reservoir would end up being 8,300 acres long.⁷⁷ The city took over the Ashokan valley and displaced a lot of people in order to continue with the construction. There were also ongoing

⁷⁶ Harris, Gregory. “Shanna Merola.”

⁷⁷ Sante, Lucy. “An Enduring Source of Drinking Water.”

issues of unfair workers' pay throughout the process. From the beginning of time, there has been a negative impact from trying to get the city clean, safe drinking water.⁷⁸

An example of water pollution in NYC is the Gowanus Canal, located in Brooklyn, New York. It has been determined to be a superfund site since 2010. It is so grossly contaminated that the EPA announced a \$500 million clean up plan in 2012. In 2014 I helped clean it up and saw how polluted it really was. The river contains a bacteria called desulfococcus, which is a sulfate reducing bacteria that decomposes carbon based materials. In 2019, city officials put green dye in the river to detect what toxins it carried. They found coal tar in the canal, which is referred to as “black mayo ” because of its repugnant texture and appearance. The toxins in the canal have killed off any and all marine life. It also has created high levels of air pollution for the neighborhood. There has been lots of community engagement from the city in the Gowanus.

Charles Fishman’s book, *The Big Thirst*, discusses important issues surrounding our drinking water around the world. He talks about managing and using water in different places around the world. Water is extremely important in so many aspects of our lives and for the earth around us. It's a never ending struggle for some people to even get as little as a glass of water every day. For those who have the freedom of clean drinking water at their disposal, they are wasting gallons of that water daily. Fishman outlines the many different layers to our global water issues and gives us details of his research and his personal experiences. He highlights how certain places around the world have huge water resource problems that are being ignored and left unsolved.

Water that comes out of our tap has a large history behind it. It has gone through a long process to get to our faucets. “Unlike the time we spend at the gas pump—where we can see the gallons as they are pumped, and the instant impact on our credit card bill—the way we handle

⁷⁸ Sante, Lucy. “An Enduring Source of Drinking Water.”

water use insulates us not just from the wonders of water, but from any sense of how much water daily life requires, or the work and expense required to deliver that water”.⁷⁹ Often, people don’t spend the time to think where their resources are coming from and how vulnerable they are to abuse. How can society spread more awareness on issues related to the distribution of water, water scarcity issues, and water pollution issues?

Shanna Merola is an contemporary artist who specializes in mixed media pieces about climate related issues.⁸⁰ She was born in 1980 in Bridgeport, Connecticut and gained her BFA from the Virginia Commonwealth University. She later went to the Cranbrook Academy of Art for her MFA. She currently lives in HAMtramck, Michigan. She has spent her life being a visual artist, a photojournalist, and a legal worker. One of her series is about Love Canal, which was an area in Upstate New York that was filled with toxic chemicals. This environmental crisis was an important starting point for the environmental justice movement because it was the first undeniable correlation between environmental hazards and human health. The people that lived in Love Canal were terribly affected by the toxic chemicals, to the point where 45% of pregnancies were miscarriages.⁸¹ Her *Love Canal* project consists of collages made from photographs. Her photographs are of the people impacted from the environmental disaster that go along with photos of water, plants, and industrial materials. It’s a very moving project, and it really gets the story across.

Merola traveled to this EPA identified Superfund site in Niagara Falls, New York to record “the slow violence of deregulation”.⁸² Her pieces are multi-media art projects that show the horror that took place in upstate New York. She used her own photographs and photographs

⁷⁹ Fishman, Charles. *The Big Thirst: The Secret Life and Turbulent Future of Water*

⁸⁰ Merola, Shana, “Love Canal”

⁸¹ Gensburg, Lenore J., Cristian Pantea, Edward Fitzgerald, Alice Stark, Syni-An Hwang, and Nancy Kim. “Mortality among Former Love Canal Residents.”

⁸² *Strange Fire*, “Four Degrees: Eco-Anxiety and Climate Change.”

from the internet. Merola described her work as an intertwining of “activism and conceptual art” and stated that it “lies at the intersection of photography, grassroots organizing and the legal system.”⁸³ Many of the pieces showed women's body parts, woven together with different parts of the river. The different dimensions of the collages tell a story that may take time to process for the audience. The pieces are very politically motivated and carry messages about toxic waste and human health.

Love Canal was stated to be an “opening event in an upsurge of activism to protect people from toxic wastes.”⁸⁴ It was the jumping off point for the Superfund program to begin cleaning up. It also led to a change in federal policy. There was a huge community response to the scientific health results that put “citizen protest front and center”.⁸⁵ The suspicions started when there was a noticeable trend of children getting sick. “Love Canal was an example of the power of old-fashioned grassroots democracy, wherein people used street-level community organizing to change public policy from the group up”.⁸⁶ It became a feminist activism moment, but it was very sexistly defined as “housewife data” in some reports.⁸⁷

In an article for *Interview Magazine*, Merola speaks on the greatest hurdles our society must overcome. She says that unless there is a “radical shift in the way we think about the distribution of public resources, the next world wars will be fought over water”.⁸⁸ She goes on to speak on the water pollution issues in Detroit that occurred in 1967. She says that the city didn't implement any official plans of action to help drop the rising cost of water. Instead, water supplies were shut off, stripping people of a basic human right. In fact, it wasn't until September

⁸³ Zeitlin, Noah. “Artist Shana Merola Combines Political Activism and Photography in Artist Talk.”

⁸⁴ Brown, Phil, and Richard Clapp. “Looking Back on Love Canal.”

⁸⁵ Newman, Rich. “Making Environmental Politics: Women and Love Canal Activism.”

⁸⁶ Newman, Rich. “Making Environmental Politics: Women and Love Canal Activism.”

⁸⁷ Newman, Rich. “Making Environmental Politics: Women and Love Canal Activism.”

⁸⁸ Harris, Gregory. “Shanna Merola.”

28th, 2011, that the UN declared water to be a human right.⁸⁹ Merola was a legal worker for years, and also worked as an organizer for grassroots media. She spent her later years dedicating her life to be an artist/environmental activist for waterborne diseases in the U.S.



Love Canal Project, 2021

⁸⁹United Nations General Assembly, “The right to water. UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Right”



Love Canal Project, 2021

Merola is very optimistic about community engagement as a solution to environmental issues. She says that when the city was shutting off people's water in Detroit, community members used abandoned buildings as a post for free water and emergency hotlines. This sort of bottom up aid is the best solution for the city, as city officials would not budge on water shut offs. Merola also uses an example of community protest in Flint, Michigan. Flint had an outbreak of lead toxins in their water supply that led to mass disease. The city's people took matters into their own hands and helped their neighbors by bringing them clean water. Plumbers traveled from around the world to try to fix the problem, they put in way more work than any city official

did. Merola says that, “these kinds of newsworthy stories are far too common and often under-represented by mainstream media”.⁹⁰

Basia Irland, an example of an artist who successfully told a story about climate change, made a project called Ice Books for the exhibition.⁹¹ Her work is mostly sculptures that highlight an issue of water scarcity and waterborne diseases locally and internationally. Her most well known work are ice sculptures that float and melt in a body of water as part of the installation. The art pieces are beautiful to look at, but not in a problematic way because the beauty is destroyed shortly after it's put into a body of water. The rapid destruction of the art once it goes into the water will show whoever is observing it, that water scarcity is a vastly important issue. She mostly used seeds from tapering trees to put in the ice books. There was a huge amount of attention and time spent in the environments she worked in. She also implemented a collaborative feature within her art project. She had her audience put the books into the river by themselves. There is a huge emphasis on collaboration within Eco-art. Irland was very detached from the idea of art as a commodity. She felt strongly that her form of art had the sole purpose of raising awareness.⁹² “Irland's purpose...to physically bring people in touch with the river, and to think about the water, to observe their relationship to it”.⁹³

Irland was born in 1946 in Fort Smith, Arkansas. She attended school at the University of Illinois and earned her MFA from the University of Massachusetts. She went on to join the faculty and initiate an Art and Ecology program at the University of Mexico.⁹⁴ Irland later went to work in Colorado on her water art pieces. She worked closely with the neighborhoods in Colorado to explore a deeper, more imaginative way to expand our understanding of the power

⁹⁰ Harris, Gregory. “Shanna Merola.”

⁹¹ Hoffman, Fishman Susan, “When Water Speaks for Itself,” Artists & Climate Change

⁹² Irland, Basia. “Eco-Art.”

⁹³ Platt, Susan Noyes. *Art and Politics Now: Cultural Activism in a Time of Crisis.*

⁹⁴ Howe, Kathleen. “Basia Irland Biography”

and strength water has in our lives.⁹⁵ “Irland does not control her projects, but rather embraces accidental connections and serendipity”.⁹⁶ Basia Irland and other participants and volunteers gathered water from Boulder Creek and put it in a canteen after decanting it. Each person to fill the canteen passed it onto the next person, making it a collaborative project that was meant to symbolize that “we all live downstream”.⁹⁷ The creek water was then frozen and Irland carved it into a 250-pound open book shape. Laying within the book are lines made of plants and seeds. This is meant to be observed as an “ecological language”, as Irland refers to it. As the book is released into the creek, the seeds will settle at the edges of the bank and grow new life. It was a metaphor of nature and a way for the viewer to re-experienced what is natural. The regeneration the open book project created and the dialogue, care and respect it inspired made it a prominent piece within the Weather Report catalog that Lucy Lippard wrote and curated. The open book project very meaningfully encouraged more long term thinking in terms of the environment.⁹⁸



Ice Book, 2007

⁹⁵ Platt, Susan Noyes. *Art and Politics Now: Cultural Activism in a Time of Crisis*

⁹⁶ Platt, Susan Noyes. *Art and Politics Now: Cultural Activism in a Time of Crisis*

⁹⁷ Lippard, Lucy R., et al. *Weather Report: Art and Climate Change*

⁹⁸ Platt, Susan Noyes. *Art and Politics Now: Cultural Activism in a Time of Crisis*.

Art historian, Dr. Kathleen Stewart Hower, called Irland an “archivist of water”.⁹⁹ She was well accomplished at using her own experiences, along with knowledge she gained from diving deep into the functionality of water in specific communities. She has a lot of poetic statements about water. She once said, “water is simple and complex, serene and devastating, always changing, and important simply because we cannot survive without it”.¹⁰⁰ She took her thoughts and experiences and brought them to life through her ice books. She added collaborative elements to engage the community and she made sure to get feedback from her audience.

Her work came with a logbook for people to record their observations and reflections. “The artist’s purpose with the Gathering projects is to build connections between people and place, and to create awareness of our actions, our environment and of the importance of water”.¹⁰¹ The story of the water book is about the use and abuse of water. Irland tells us that, “water carries our cultures and languages, as well as our garbage”. The books help us “locate ourselves in the cosmos”. The books show the “direct consequences of neglect, damage, and forgetting”. They show this through the performance part of the piece, when they are drifting and melting away in the water. It shows us the power of water and it has its own spirit. We are not more powerful nor are we superior to water.

Similarly to Shana Merola, Basia Irland’s work reflects a combination of conceptual artwork and political activism. “Irland is an artist working at the intersection of environmental issues, governmental policy, human rights, and natural science, always informed by an awareness of the spiritual dimensions of water.”¹⁰² Both artists have a profound connection with water that

⁹⁹ Irland, Basia, et al. *Water Library Basia Irland*.

¹⁰⁰ Irland, Basia, et al. *Water Library Basia Irland*

¹⁰¹ Platt, Susan Noyes. *Art and Politics Now: Cultural Activism in a Time of Crisis*.

¹⁰² Irland, Basia, et al. *Water Library Basia Irland*

has been translated into their artwork. They also both take on a political tone because of their background being highly focused in researching personal stories of those impacted by climate change. They both hope their work inspires people to take action, or to at least educate themselves more.

Plastic products are really only designed to be used one and then thrown away. The arrow symbol, known as the “chasing arrows” logo, is not portraying accurate information. The plastic industry is allowed to put it onto any product they manufacture. The meaning of the arrow symbol has gotten distorted. Its actual purpose is to identify the type of plastic. Last year, California banned the “chasing arrows” logo to be put onto things that aren’t actually recyclable due to the mass misinformation it was spreading. Recycled plastic is based on a coded system that most Americans aren’t aware of. Plastics numbered either 1 or 2 are recyclable, but only 30% of those produced that are placed in a recycling bin are actually being recycled, according to the EPA. The rest of the numbered plastic products are not recyclable, with an exception for plastic 5 that is slowly being infiltrated into certain recycling centers. Plastics with numbers 3 and higher are often the most used products, they are the soft plastics that include shopping bags, and resealable bags. Another major obstacle of recycling is the strict rule that it will need to be in a transparent trash bag. The United Nations Environment Program says that only 9% of all plastics products have been recycled. The rest is dumped in landfills, burned and releasing toxic emissions that are a major contributor to global warming.¹⁰³

Of course, there are solutions based on policy changes. There is talk of laws being passed that would charge the producers a fee to pay for recycling programs. The fees would be based on the weight of the plastic, its ability to be recycled, and if it contains toxins such as PFAS. This can pose an incentive for companies. There are also states that have banned certain plastics from

¹⁰³ Tabuchi, Hiroko, and Winston Choi-schagrin. “Trash or Recycling? Why Plastic Keeps Us Guessing.”

being sold. The other part of the solution lies in the hands of community engagement and the dissemination of smaller scale solutions. Dr. Ana Baptista, an environmental policy professor of the Tishman Environment and Design Center at the New School states that, “they are small things, but they start to introduce some pushback against a system that is dumping cheap plastic into our society.”¹⁰⁴ A method to educate the public on the crisis of plastic pollution can be through performance and visual art projects.

Ellen Driscoll of the Bard College Studio Arts program has created art projects in protest to climate change and more especially focuses her work on plastic pollution. She uses plastic that she collects herself to turn into art, and once the piece is ready to put to rest, she reuses the plastic again and makes it last for up to eight years. She puts use to plastic that would otherwise be a contributor to air, land and water pollution. She has taken a lot of her plastic from trash around NYC marathons. She collects the disposed water bottles and snacks around the city and uses them for her projects. Driscoll tackles important environmental issues. She embraces the allegory of her work through deep integration of the oil economy and the impacts it has had on our water sources.

¹⁰⁴ Tabuchi, Hiroko, and Winston Choi-schagrín. “Trash or Recycling? Why Plastic Keeps Us Guessing”





Distant Mirrors, 2011¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Driscoll, Ellen. ellendriscoll.net

Conclusion

“[Artists] can deconstruct the ways we are manipulated by the powers that be and help open our eyes to what we must do to resist and survive.” -Lucy Lippard, *Weather Report*.¹⁰⁶

We are far from innocent to the level of carbon emissions that is destroying our planet. It can be hard to feel hopeful, as writer Jenny Offill says, we are in a state that is beyond dread. I believe that is a lot to learn from Indigenous artists and contemporary artists that use collaborative methods and performance pieces that have a direct impact on the emotional state of the audience. Of course, it's important to have some hope but there's no use in sugar coating climate change. Lucy Lippard's purpose while curating the *Weather Report* exhibition was to entangle a connection between artists and scientists. She says that environmental art has “a subtext about corporate attempts to “own” existing life forms”.¹⁰⁷ Artist Chrissie Orr, who has made lyrical visual art to protest global warming says: “Being in the community, not in a studio, is activism in and of itself”.¹⁰⁸ Artist Aviva Rahmani says that her art is meant to “clarify the complex relationships between natural resources and built infrastructures”.¹⁰⁹ Lippard concludes her statement about *Weather Report* by saying “As global warnings proliferate, we are seeing only the tips of the melting icebergs. But at least we are finally seeing them, and it is the artist's job to teach us how to see”.¹¹⁰

Author of *Art and Politics Now*, Susan Noyes Platt, states that, “We [artists] are not just informed, we are outraged by the state of the world, by the actions of the U.S. government, by the devastation of war, by the oppression of the poor, and we have chosen to dedicate our

¹⁰⁶ Lippard, Lucy R., et al. *Weather Report: Art and Climate Change*

¹⁰⁷ Lippard, Lucy R., et al. *Weather Report: Art and Climate Change*

¹⁰⁸ Lippard, Lucy R., et al. *Weather Report: Art and Climate Change*

¹⁰⁹ Lippard, Lucy R., et al. *Weather Report: Art and Climate Change*

¹¹⁰ Lippard, Lucy R., et al. *Weather Report: Art and Climate Change*

creative energies to contributing to an awareness of those crimes. We inform ourselves in order to act, to express, to respond.”¹¹¹ Platt provides the critiques of political environmental art, but focus is on “ artists who have something to say, and have taken the time to say it effectively, based on commitment, research, consciousness, and engagement.”¹¹²As I have argued throughout this research paper, artists as “radical new thinkers”¹¹³ can provide us with a form of knowledge that is beneficial to societal growth. The most thoughtful format of this is through the place-thought indigenous cosmology. This belief gives all living things a spirit that “means that non-human beings choose how they reside, interact and develop relationships with other non-humans.”¹¹⁴ If all living things possess agency then humans are no longer superior. This is why this indigenous way of thinking is a more sustainable way of viewing our ecosystems. Our environment should be what directs society, not the other way around.

¹¹¹ Platt, Susan Noyes. *Art and Politics Now: Cultural Activism in a Time of Crisis*

¹¹² Platt, Susan Noyes. *Art and Politics Now: Cultural Activism in a Time of Crisis*

¹¹³ Platt, Susan Noyes. *Art and Politics Now: Cultural Activism in a Time of Crisis*

¹¹⁴ Watts, Vanessa. *Indigenous Place-thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-humans*

Bibliography

Brown, Phil, and Richard Clapp. "Looking Back on Love Canal." 2002

Carrigan, "Cecilia Vicuña on Female Power and Climate Change." July 13, 2018

Darabas, Susanne. "A Short History of Environmental Art." Green Art Collection, 2014. Environment & Society Portal (Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society) <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6806>

De Carbuccia, Anne. "One Planet One Future", 2021. <https://oneplanetonefuture.org/it/films/>.

Denes, Agnes. *Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Intermediates*. The Shed, 2019.

Denes, Agnes. *Agnes Denes*, <http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/>.

Denes, Agnes, et al. *Agnes Denes: Projects for Public Spaces: A Retrospective*. Samek Art Gallery, Bucknell University, 2003.

Denes, Agnes, and Klaus Ottmann. *The Human Argument : The Writings of Agnes Denes*. 1st ed. Putnam, Conn.: Spring Publications, 2008.

DIA, "Nancy Holt, Sun Tunnels | Visit Our Locations & Sites | Visit | Dia," 2018 <https://www.diaart.org/visit/visit-our-locations-sites/nancy-holt-sun-tunnels>.

Donnelly, Micky, and Nancy Holt. "Nancy Holt Interviewed by Micky Donnelly." *Circa*, no. 11 (1983): 4–10. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25556789>.

Driscoll, Ellen. Ellendriscoll.net

Dunaway, Finis. "Seeing Global Warming: Contemporary Art and the Fate of the Planet." *Environmental History* 14, no. 1 (2009): 9–31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25473326>.

Cronon, William. "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," 1995. https://www.williamcronon.net/writing/Trouble_with_Wilderness_Main.html.

Fishman, Charles. *The Big Thirst: The Secret Life and Turbulent Future of Water*. Free Press, 2011.

Gensburg, Lenore J., Cristian Pantea, Edward Fitzgerald, Alice Stark, Syni-An Hwang, and Nancy Kim. "Mortality among Former Love Canal Residents." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 117, no. 2 (2009): 209–16

Harris, Gregory. "Shanna Merola." *Interview Magazine*, 29 Mar. 2016

Hoffman, Fishman Susan, "When Water Speaks for Itself," *Artists & Climate Change*, January 27, 2020, <https://artistsandclimatechange.com/2020/01/27/when-water-speaks-for-itself/>.

Howe, Kathleen. *Basia Irland Biography*

Irland, Basia, et al. *Water Library Basia Irland*. University of New Mexico Press, 2007.

Irland, Basia. "Eco-Art." In *Keywords for Environmental Studies*, edited by Joni Adamson, William A. Gleason, and David N. Pellow, 60–61. NYU Press, 2016.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt15zc5kw.23>.

Jacobs, "Weather Report at the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art" *The Museum Journal* - Wiley Online Library," 2008.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.2151-6952.2008.tb00315.x>.

Lippard, Lucy R., et al. *Weather Report: Art and Climate Change*. Boulder Museum of Contemporary Arts, 2007.

Madison Square Park Conservancy, "Maya Lin: Ghost Forest". May 10, 2021.
<https://madisonsquarepark.org/art/exhibitions/maya-lin-ghost-forest/>.

Merola, Shana, "Love Canal," 2021. <https://www.shannamerola.com/love-canal>

Micucci, Dana. "Land Art: Earthworks That Defined Postwar American Art," *Art & Antiques Magazine* (blog), April 4, 2012,
<https://www.artandantiquesmag.com/land-art-earthworks-postwar-american-art/>.

Newman, Rich. "Making Environmental Politics: Women and Love Canal Activism."

Phyllis Tuchman, "How Do You Sell a Work of Art Built Into the Earth?," *The New York Times*, January 27, 2017, sec. Arts,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/27/arts/design/robert-smithson-earthwork-art.html>.1

Platt, Susan Noyes. *Art and Politics Now: Cultural Activism in a Time of Crisis*. Midmarch Arts Press, 2011.

Price, Jenny. "Remaking American Environmentalism: On the Banks of the L.A. River." *Environmental History* 13, no. 3 (2008): 536–55. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25473266>.

Quintanilla, Edgar. "Inca Quipus." *Museo Larco*.

Sante, Lucy. "An Enduring Source of Drinking Water." *Places Journal*, 1 Nov. 2020.

Scott, Emily Eliza, and Kirsten Swenson. "INTRODUCTION: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Land Use." In *Critical Landscapes: Art, Space, Politics*, edited by Emily Eliza Scott and Kirsten Swenson, 1st ed., 1–16. University of California Press, 2015.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv1xxxgv.4>.

Strange Fire Collective, and Humble Arts Foundation. "Four Degrees: Eco-Anxiety and Climate Change."

Summitridge Pictures *Troublemakers: The Story of Land Art Online*, 2020, <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/landartfilm>.

Tabuchi, Hiroko, and Winston Choi-schagrin. Trash or Recycling? Why Plastic Keeps Us Guessing. *The New York Times*, The New York Times

United Nations General Assembly, July 2010. General Comment No. 15. The right to water. UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, November 2002

Vicuña Cecilia, et al. *About to Happen Cecilia Vicuña*. Siglio, 2019.

Vicuña, Cecilia, et al. *Cecilia Vicuña: Seehearing the Enlightened Failure*. Witte De With Center for Contemporary Art, 2019.

Vicuña Cecilia, et al. *Cloud-Net*. Art in General, 1999.

Vicuña Cecilia, et al. *Read Thread: The Story of the Red Thread*. Sternberg Press, 2017.

Vicuña Cecilia. "Timeline." *Cecilia Vicuña*

Watts, Vanessa. Indigenous Place-thought & Agency Amongst Humans and Non-humans. 2013

Wilson, "Cecilia Vicuña: About to Happen" BOMB, 2017

Winters, Joseph. "Chile Is in for a Mining Boom. Could a New Constitution Prevent Environmental Catastrophe?" *Grist*, 7 Feb. 2022

Zachary Small, “Maya Lin’s Dismantled ‘Ghost Forest’ to Be Reborn as Boats,” *The New York Times*, November 24, 2021, sec. Arts,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/24/arts/design/maya-lin-rocking-the-boat.html>.

Zeitlin, Noah. BRIDGING ARTS TO ACTIVISM: Contemporary artist Shanna Merola uses photography to explore grassroots activism and the legal system, et al. “Artist Shanna Merola Combines Political Activism and Photography in Artist Talk.” *The Justice*