

# **LAND, ART: A Cultural Ecology Handbook**

**To accompany the first phase of the Arts & Ecology programme a publication investigating aspects of ecology from different perspectives and highlighting the creative work being done in this area has been edited by Max Andrews and was launched on 12 December 2006, to coincide with the A&E conference 'No Way Back? '.**

*Land, Art: a Cultural Ecology Handbook* presents a compendium of texts, dialogues and collaborations by and among ecologists, economists, cultural theorists, activists and art writers that extend from the notions of land, cultural production and the emergencies of 21st century. Reproductions of existing artworks by and original contributions from international practitioners – as well as artists on-the-page 'studio visits', for example – will explore art's varied modes of response – from detached crisis commentaries to engaged activist solutions.

The book has been produced within the **Arts & Ecology** programme—an initiative launched by RSA and Arts Council England in 2005 examining and addressing environmental concerns through the engagement of artists.

Today's understanding of ecology articulates a web of relations that goes way beyond 'environmentalism' and the notion of '*green*'. Likewise, contemporary art is a radically diversified field that explores subjects as varied as corporate politics, urban planning, agriculture, tourism or ethnic justice. In part a genealogy of '*land*' and what has been understood by '*the environment*' since the 1960s—with the activities of '*Land artists*' and the emergence of a popular '*eco*'-consciousness—**LAND, ART...** proposes and tests if and how our conceptions of art and artists are relevant to a global debate about the future of the planet, and where, how and why art might operate—at the grass roots, at a tangent, as propaganda, as activism or as resistance, for example.

*Contributions by* Lara Almarcegui, Amy Balkin, James Boyle, Fernando Bryce, Susan Canney, Chu Yun, Jimmie Durham & Maria Thereza Alves, Feng Yuan, Futurefarmers & Free Soil, Tue Greenfort, Thomas Hirschhorn, Katie Holten, Jiang Jun, Jeffrey Kastner, Winona LaDuke, Learning Group, Lucy R. Lippard, Wangari Maathai, Jonathan Meuser, Jason Middlebrook, Nils Norman, David Naguib Pellow & Lisa Sun-Hee Park, PLATFORM, Natascha Sadr Haghigian, Paul Schmelzer, Peter Schmelzer, Michael Shellenberger & Ted Nordhaus, Cameron Sinclair, Stephanie Smith, Bruce Sterling, Kirstine Roepstorff, Rirkrit Tiravanija, David Toop, Vitamin Creative Space, Insa Winkler, the Worldwatch Institute and Zheng Guogu.

*Artists' 'plates' section:* Claire Bishop on Francis Alÿs, Gemma Lloyd on Donna Conlon, Max Andrews on Henrik Håkansson and Insa Winkler, Diana Baldon on Marine Hugonnier, Mariana Cánepa Luna on Alfredo Jaar, Zoë Gray on Brian Jungen, Lars Bang Larsen on Aleksandra Mir, Richard Flood on Richard Prince, Alejandra Aguado on Tomás Saraceno, Francesco Manacorda on Simon Starling.

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The publication exists within the time frame of a fragmentary genealogy of 'land' (and what has been understood by 'the environment') since the 1960s, when the term was evoked in culture through the activities of so-called 'Land Artists' and those working in novel ways within natural contexts. At this time too a new, popular environmental consciousness began to emerge (an axis marked by the publication of Rachel Carson's incendiary *Silent Spring* (1962), through the first photograph of Earth from space (1968) to the first Earth Day in 1970).

### **Silent Spring**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silent\\_Spring](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silent_Spring)

### **Earth Day**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth\\_Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_Day)

Today's interdisciplinary understandings of ecology, however comprehend a complex set of relations that go way beyond environmentalism and, for instance, its historical fixation with wilderness conservation. Likewise, art has radically diversified and globalised from an inherited notion of landscape, becoming concerned with, for example, areas as varied as corporate capital, politics, technology, utopian communities, industrial agriculture, tourism, ethnic and social justice in the process.

**LAND, ART** ... proposes to test if and how our current conception of art and artists is relevant to the urgent territory of accountability and sustainability, and where, how and why art might operate – at the '*grass roots*', at a tangent, as propaganda, as resistance, etc.

The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce—commonly known as the RSA and founded in 1754—is a not-for-profit, independent, non-aligned, multi-disciplinary charity, supported by 25,000 Fellows. It encourages sustainable economic development and the release of human potential through a programme of projects and a national lecture programme, that continue to place it at the forefront of social, economic, political and artistic thought and action.

The Society stands as an influential and highly respected organisation, focusing on five strategic areas to deliver its mission. RSA manifesto challenges are:

1. To encourage enterprise.
2. To move toward a zero waste society.
3. To develop a capable population.
4. To foster resilient communities.
5. To advance global citizenship.

## **RSA ARTS & ECOLOGY**

Examining and addressing the environmental emergencies of the 21st Century through the engagement of artists

The Arts & Ecology programme was launched by Michaela Crimmin, Head of Arts at the RSA, in partnership with Arts Council England in April 2005 to support the work of the arts in examining and addressing environmental concerns in an international arena. The entire programme—envisaged under the RSA's manifesto challenge 'moving towards a zero-waste society'—is informed by the notion of ecology as the study of relationships between an individual and their cultural, social, economic and natural environments, and by the belief that the arts can play a central role in providing creative—and sometimes radical—insights to the challenges facing contemporary society.

How the environment relates to poverty and party politics, conflict, global trade, desertification, waste and land use, among other topics, are pressing matters for a growing number of artists. RSA Arts & Ecology, in partnership with Arts Council England, has been exploring the various ways in which visual artists, writers and film-makers are currently addressing this field through a series of initiatives including conferences, workshops, research trips, education pilots, artists' projects and commissions, a website and the publication

***LAND, ART: A Cultural Ecology Handbook.*** Each of these is produced by the RSA in collaboration with varied institutions and individuals that provide their own expertise and resources, and developed through a dialogue established with scientists, ecologists, writers, philosophers, other theoreticians, industrialists and the government.

***RSA Arts & Ecology*** was initially established in partnership with Arts Council England. This has been extended to include the London School of Economics and Political Science, Creative Partnerships, the Royal College of Art, the Greater London Assembly, the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, inIVA and Situations, among others. Work is very generously supported by a number of organisations including Arts Council England, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Danish Arts Council and the Pontin Charitable Trust.

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*Bibliography / further reading/ links*

**<http://www.rsa.org.uk/arts/resources/bibliography.asp>**