Nature as violent and violated

Five essays on the visual culture of the Anthropocene

Synnøve Marie Vik

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)
University of Bergen, Norway
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Scientific environment

This Ph.D. was undertaken at the University of Bergen, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Information Science and Media Studies, where I was part of the Nomadikon project and research group. As a Ph.D. candidate I participated in the Text, Image, Sound, Space school of research.

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to explore the configuration of the relationship between nature and technology in a selection of significant works from contemporary visual culture, that have not previously been subject to a similar ecocritical analysis. I engage with central concepts to the field of visual culture, focusing primarily on the Anthropocene, violence, technology, and visuality. Through deploying and developing this theoretical framework on a heterogenous image material from 1959 to 2015, I find that nature is depicted as violent and violated, a paradoxical condition which also presents itself in the depiction of humanity and its extensions. The dissertation demonstrates the relevance of visual culture analyses to the critical study of the Anthropocene and the academic field of environmental humanities.

I approach the main research question through five independent articles. Inspired by Jacques Rancière's concept of mediality, the first article asks how a media ecological analysis may contribute to a discussion on media's material, physical consequences on the environment today, in a study of the auto-destructive and auto-creative art of Gustav Metzger. The second article describes how Olafur Eliasson's art installations and photography engage with nature and technology, demonstrating how his projects both epitomize and challenge Jussi Parikka's notion of a topological media ecology. Exploring the visual construction of authority over the Arctic, the third article explores PR photography accompanying resource extraction by way of tar sand and shale gas installations, carried out by the oil company Statoil (now Equinor). Further exploring the perspectives of visuality and media ecology, the fourth article examines an art installation by Toril Johannessen that researches objects used to uncover the laws of light and vision, displaying the geological foundation of modernity. Finally, in an analysis of the TV series *Treme* (2010) and the motion picture *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012), I identify the visuality of "Mold in the Machine". This visuality highlights nature's violent and violated characteristics and their entanglement with technology's role in the slow violence endured by local communities, demanding that we recognize the material consequences of progressive modernity.

List of Publications

All five articles that constitute part II of this dissertation are single-authored by Synnøve Marie Vik. Four articles are peer-reviewed and have been published, and the fifth is peer-reviewed and forthcoming in Fall 2020. Except for some basic format changes and corrections, the articles are not revised for the purpose of inclusion in this dissertation.

Vik, Synnøve Marie. "Damaged Nature: The Media Ecology of Auto-Destructive Art." In *Media and the Ecological Crisis*, edited by Richard Maxwell, Jon Raundalen, and Nina Lager Vestberg, 40–52. New York/London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2015.

———. "Nature as Image in Olafur Eliasson's Art: A Media Ecological Perspective." In *Seeing Whole: Toward an Ethics and Ecology of Sight*, edited by Mark Ledbetter and Asbjørn Grønstad, 101–17. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016.

———. "Petro-Images of the Arctic and Statoil's Visual Imaginary." In *Arctic Environmental Modernities: From the Age of Polar Exploration to the Era of the Anthropocene*, edited by Lill-Ann Körber, Scott MacKenzie, and Anna Westerståhl Stenport, 43–58. London and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017.

———. "Toril Johannessen's *In Search of Iceland Spar*: Truth and Illusion in the Anthropocene." In *Artistic Visions of the Anthropocene North, Climate Change and Nature in Art*, edited by Gry Hedin and Ann-Sofie Nielsen Gremaud, 110–27. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.

———. "Mold in the Machine: Nature and Technology in *Treme* (2010) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012)." In *The Aesthetics of Violence*, edited by Hans Jacob Ohldieck and Gisle Selnes. Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, forthcoming.

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Part I: Extended introduction

1. Introduction

1.1 Dissertation outline

This article-based dissertation consists of two main parts. Part I contains the extended introduction with an introduction to the findings in the five articles included in this dissertation, as well as methodological, historical, and theoretical contextualizations of the articles and dissertation. Part II contains the articles in full text.

Part I consists of three chapters. This introductory chapter outlines the general scope of the dissertation, presents the research questions, and introduces the five articles and their findings. The chapter further includes a methodological contextualization that outlines the overall approach and the selection of empirical material in each article as well as in the dissertation. It discusses the approach employed in the articles concerning the academic field of visual culture. The second chapter, *Historical perspectives*, offers a historical and theoretical contextualization of the articles through an overview of the history of ecocriticism and environmental art from the 1960s until today. The third chapter, *Theoretical perspectives*, discusses four key concepts central to the analyses in all five articles: the Anthropocene, violence, technology, and visuality.

Part II contains five articles. The first discusses the auto-destructive work of the German-British artist Gustav Metzger (1926-2017).[1] The second explores installations and photography by the Icelandic-Danish artist Olafur Eliasson.[2] The third considers the installation "In Search of Iceland Spar" by the Norwegian artist Toril Johannessen.[3] The fourth article deliberates a selection of PR photography by the Norwegian oil company Statoil.[4] Finally, the fifth article examines the American

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[1] Synnøve Marie Vik, "Damaged Nature: The Media Ecology of Auto-Destructive Art," in *Media and the Ecological Crisis*, ed. Richard Maxwell, Jon Raundalen, and Nina Lager Vestberg (New York/London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 40–52.

[2] Synnøve Marie Vik, "Nature as Image in Olafur Eliasson's Art: A Media Ecological Perspective," in *Seeing Whole: Toward an Ethics and Ecology of Sight*, ed. Mark Ledbetter and Asbjørn Grønstad (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 101–17.

[3] Synnøve Marie Vik, "Toril Johannessen's In Search of Iceland Spar: Truth and Illusion in the Anthropocene," in *Artistic Visions of the Anthropocene North, Climate Change and Nature in Art*, ed. Gry Hedin and Ann-Sofie Nielsen Gremaud (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 110–27.

[4] Synnøve Marie Vik, "Petro-Images of the Arctic and Statoil's Visual Imaginary," in *Arctic Environmental Modernities: From the Age of Polar Exploration to the Era of the Anthropocene*, ed. Lill-Ann Körber, Scott MacKenzie, and Anna

TV series *Treme* and motion picture *Beasts of the Southern Wild*.[5] After the articles, I briefly summarize the discussions of the previous chapters, the main findings and conclusions of the five individual articles, and their contribution to the overarching research question of the dissertation, in the separate and last section, "Final conclusions." Finally, the dissertation includes an appendix with two curatorial essays.

1.2 Research focus

The most recent report by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that the tipping point for climate collapse on a global scale is 2 degrees warming. The commitments made in the Paris accords, which are far from being upheld, are steering towards 3,2 degrees warming, and by 2100 towards 4,5 degrees warming.[6] This trajectory will, by 2050, have led to the Arctic ice sheets melting, flooding a hundred cities around the world, as well as catastrophic changes in weather conditions, such as stronger hurricanes, heavier rainfalls, and more severe and long-lasting drought. This climate emergency, which the U.N projects will lead to 200 climate refugees and one billion vulnerable people by 2050[7] and up to 1 billion migrants by 2100[8], is the backdrop for this dissertation's discussions of the relationship between nature and technology in contemporary visual culture.

The climate crisis is a technology crisis. However, while technology has contributed to climate change, as in the extraction of fossil fuels and the release of emission gases, at the same time, it is commonly argued that the future depends on technological progress.[9] Technology would be crucial in moderating the worst consequences of global warming by developing tools for reducing emissions, climate

Westerståhl Stenport (London and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 43–58; The company changed it's name to Equinor in 2018, reflecting a shift in strategy towards being a more diversified energy company". Equinor, "Statoil to Change Name to Equinor," accessed August 26, 2020, https://www.equinor.com/en/news/15mar2018-statoil.html.
[5] Synnøve Marie Vik, "Mold in the Machine: Nature and Technology in Treme (2010) and Beasts of the Southern Wild (2012)," in *The Aesthetics of Violence*, ed. Hans Jacob Ohldieck and Gisle Selnes (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, n.d.).
[6] Change The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate, "Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report," n.d., 11, www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/AR5_SYR_FINAL_SPM.pdf.
[7] World Bank, "Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration" (Washington D.C, 2018), https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29461.
[8] United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, "Sustainability. Stability. Security," n.d.
[9] David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2019).

mitigation, capturing carbon, geoengineering, and creating green energy, but also to enable a Western living standard for people in third-world countries.[10]

Image technologies, from analog to digital and virtual, are among the leading technologies that enable us to see and understand ourselves and our actions. Our conceptions of nature, and in turn of global warming, are social constructs, and visual culture is essential for these conceptualizations. Within the reality of a worldwide climate emergency, the visual narratives of natural disasters, exploitation of natural resources, and other changes to landscapes and nature influence how we as viewers experience and intellectualize both ongoing and similar future events. Film scholar Jennifer Fay has forcefully argued how "cinema helps us to see and experience the Anthropocene as an aesthetic practice,"[11] an argument that is readily expanded to include all forms of visual culture. These images then may have a more significant impact beyond the individual significance to the specific location where they unfold. The articles included in this dissertation demonstrate the potential of visual culture approaches to a critical study of the Anthropocene, and the environmental humanities, through discussions of the materiality and processes of images.

The aims of this dissertation can be roughly described as twofold: to contribute with analyses of a body of images that have not hitherto been subject to similar studies and within a similar context, and theoretically to contribute with novel applications of – and perspectives on – some key terms within the academic field of visual culture.

1.2.1 Case, scope and context

In an attempt to narrow down these general research interests, both in terms of scope and case studies, the dissertation consists of five independent articles, all discussing images of nature and technology. This dissertation as a whole relies on W.J.T. Mitchell's double definition of the image as both referencing something through resemblance, as "a sign or symbol of something by virtue of its sensuous resemblance

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[10] For a thorough discussion of ecomodernism's optimist view of technological progress see Jonathan Symons, *Ecomodernism: Technology, Politics and The Climate Crisis* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2019) Still an environmentalist group, ecomoderists reject the Green movement's exalted view of nature in favour of a more anthropocentric world view.
[11] Jennifer Fay, *Inhospitable World: Cinema in the Time of the Anthropocene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 4.

to what it represents"[12] and as the content or form of a medium, "the thing that makes its appearance in a medium while making the medium itself appear as medium"[13] For the most part, the images in this dissertation represent what we traditionally conceive of as nature in its most straightforward form, exemplified by landscapes, waterfalls, and rivers, weather phenomena such as hurricanes, natural resources such as minerals or living organisms such as mold.

Four key theoretical concepts have proved particularly relevant to the analyzes in the articles; The Anthropocene, violence, technology, and visuality, and will be discussed in detail in chapter 3. The Anthropocene is the proposed name for the geological period of the earth, where human activity has permanently changed the world in which we live. Initially proposed in 1981 by the Nobel prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and the biologist Eugene Stoermer, the term was popularized in 2000 and further disseminated in various academic disciplines in the following years.[14] While the Anthropocene initially was solely a part of the academic discourse on geology and stratigraphy, over the last twenty years, the term disseminated into the academic discourses of the humanities and social sciences as well as into popular culture. Within this context, technology refers to extensions of human faculties ranging from cities and large-scale infrastructure to cars and photographic apparatuses. Technologies are fundamental to the destruction and creation process in Gustav Metzger's work and essential to the operations of recreating natural phenomena in Olafur Eliasson's installations. Technology's destructive potential is sought to be disguised by PR photography from an oil company with production facilities located across the globe. At the same time, its role in propelling science forward is highlighted in Toril Johannessen's installation. Finally, the devastating effects following in the wake of technological progress, both on the Louisiana bay area landscape and the climate, are accentuated in *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*. The use of the term visuality is in concordance with

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[12] W.J.T. Mitchell, "Image," in *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, ed. W.J.T Mitchell, Hansen (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 38.
[13] Mitchell, 40.
[14] Paul J Crutzen, "Geology of Mankind," *Nature* 415 (January 3, 2002): 23, http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/415023a; Working Group on the 'Anthropocene,' "Results of Binding Vote by AWG," Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy, 2019, http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/working-groups/anthropocene/ Chapter three will give a more thorough introduction to the term.

Nicholas Mirzoeff's notion, where visuality consists of specific visual configurations that legitimize institutions of power and naturalize their authority.[15] Visuality, in this sense, is often developed in alliance with damaging, authoritarian, exploitative, and suppressive practices, and thus contingent on violence. Violence is present in the configuring of the relationships between nature and technology in all five articles: in the violence of nature and natural forces, as well as in the violence brought onto landscapes and its peoples by technological progress and exploitation of natural resources.

The cases in this dissertation are a selection of notable works of visual culture from the 1960s to the 2000s, spanning geographically from Norway, England, the Arctic, Iceland, and the USA. The material as a whole consists of artistic interventions, art installations and art photography, PR photography, a TV series, and one motion picture. This variation allows for both an explorative and synthetizing methodology. It is explorative in that it includes analyses of an eclectic image material and employs a theoretical framework that has previously not been used to shed light on the relationship between nature and technology, or this specific image material. Thus, the five articles contribute with novel research on each case. The dissertation is synthetizing in that it contributes to our knowledge of the visual culture of nature and technology within the Anthropocene. The dissertation is situated within the discipline of visual studies or visual culture. It is interdisciplinary in that it draws upon both research and theories from art history, visual studies, and media studies. The dissertation responds to the research fields of art and ecology, material media ecology, and visual studies. It aims to present new perspectives on specific image materials and relevant theory, perspectives that are significant to the overall scope of the dissertation. It is not committed to offering any sort of full overview of the artistic practices or academic fields discussed. It is not the intention of the project to produce generalizable findings. However, the dissertation aims to vitalize discussions about the relevance of images to how we see nature today, stimulate critical thinking about

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[15] Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Duke University Press Books, 2011) The term is further discussed in chapter 3.4.

the ecologies of images of nature within the Anthropocene, as well as contribute to informing our overall understanding of life in the Anthropocene.

1.2.2 Research questions

The five articles included in the dissertation each discusses individual research questions, which are as follows:

Article one: "Damaged Nature: The Media Ecology of Auto-destructive Art": In what ways do Jacques Rancière's notion of mediality and Gustav Metzger's artistic practice of auto-destructive art contribute to the discussion on media ecology's current material, physical consequences for the environment?

Article two: "Nature as Image in Olafur Eliasson's Art: A Media Ecological Perspective": In what ways do Olafur Eliasson's art projects both epitomize and challenge Jussi Parikka's concept of a topological media ecology?

Article three: "Petro-images of the Arctic and Statoil's Visual Imaginary": In what ways do images of Statoil's operations fuel dominant petro-narratives and constitute a visuality which confronts and influences the way we perceive the Arctic in terms of landscape, its aesthetic, and its environmental challenges?

Article four: "Toril Johannessen's "In Search of Iceland Spar": Truth and Illusion in the Anthropocene": In what ways may a media-ecological analysis of Toril Johannessen's "In Search of Iceland Spar" advance our understanding of the constructions of truth and illusion in the Arctic and within the Anthropocene?

Article five:" Mold in the machine: Nature and technology in *Treme* (2010) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012)": How is the visuality of "Mold in the machine" portrayed in the TV-series *Treme* and the motion picture *Beasts of the Southern Wild*?

Although all five articles explore a wide range of visual material spanning from the 1960s to 2015, they consistently engage with central theoretical concepts within the fields of art and ecology, and visual culture. All articles respond to the overarching research question: How is the relationship between nature and technology configured in a range of significant works of contemporary visual culture?

1.2.3 Visual Studies

In recent years, as the current ecological emergency has become a priority on many levels of society, we have seen a range of new aesthetic strategies unfolding in artistic and creative practices and visual culture at large. These strategies are generally included in the fairly new academic discipline of environmental humanities, a field spanning interdisciplinary studies of nature and the ecological and climate crisis.[16] Environmental humanities analyze ecological topics through the lens of philosophy, environmental ethics, -history and -anthropology, visual culture and the arts, literature, and media studies. The field is multifaceted and concerned with several trajectories, such as the role of literature, art, and visual culture in modeling our perceptions of the climate crisis, including ecocritical perspectives on visual representations of the environment, and how they are informed by culture.[17]

While my background is in art history, rather than focusing on art alone in attempting to answer my research question on the relationships between nature and technology within the Anthropocene, the scope of the dissertation needed to be broader. The methodological approach employed in the articles adheres to common practice within visual studies, as in the study of visual culture, while also being related to the traditional disciplines of art history and aesthetics. This dissertation sometimes pays little attention to the rules and limitations of these disciplines and borrows what it needs to develop each article on its own terms. I agree with Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey's summary of the limitations of these disciplines.[18] As they write, while art history is committed to studying art through the lens of its historical circumstance, it is, at the same time, clearly constraining not to consider its philosophical and ideological foundation also.[19] This constraint is particularly evident with regards to Gustav Metzger's artistic practice but may be of equal importance for

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[16] See for instance: Arne Næss, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 1983); Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature : Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007); and P Warde, R Libby, and S Sörlin, *The Environment: A History of the Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018) Chapter 3 will provide a an overview of the history of art and environmentalism.

[17] Chapter 2 offers an introduction to ecocritical art history.

[18] Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey, "Introduction," in *Art History Aesthetics Visual Studies*, ed. Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey (New Haven and London: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, distributed by Yale University Press, 2002), xvi.

[19] This is in line with John Berger's influential book Ways of Seeing from 1972, where he rationalizes how looking is a political act and a historically constructed prosess. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Penguin Books Ltd, 2008).

the PR photography of the oil company Statoil. Similarly, while aesthetics can accommodate interesting analyses of human responses to art, as Holly and Moxey put it, I too find it impossible to disregard "the historical and cultural circumstances in which those responses took place," as becomes clear in my readings of Olafur Eliasson's and Toril Johannessen's work. Furthermore, I agree with them that if visual studies may embrace "all forms of visual production" in its analytic scope, it is necessary with a structuring frame for its evaluations to have credibility.[20] This demand for structure applies to my selection criteria for the image material in all five articles, which have in common that they all demonstrate configurations of nature and technology in visual culture.

As W.J.T. Mitchell writes, visual culture can be seen as a supplement to art history and aesthetics in that it probes the experience of seeing, asking the question: 'What do pictures want?'.[21] I agree with Mitchell's notion that visual culture does not mean "(a)n end to the distinction between artistic and non-artistic images, a dissolving of the history of art into a history of images."[22] The image material in this dissertation contributes to the discussion on the relationships between nature and technology, some through the institutions, genres, and modes of communication of art, others through mainstream media. I follow Mitchell's view of visual studies as "not merely an 'indiscipline' or dangerous supplement to the traditional vision-oriented discipline, but an "interdiscipline" that draws on their resources and those of other disciplines to construct a new and distinctive object of research."[23]

This dissertation further leans on Jacques Rancière's notion of the police order, which Nicholas Mirzoeff uses to develop his concept of visuality in visual culture. Mirzoeff sees visual culture as a space to ask questions on visibility and power. My analyses have been directed towards understanding the mechanisms behind what is visible at any given moment in society. As Mirzoeff puts it, for visuality, "[i] t's object of study is precisely the entities that come into being at points of intersection

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[20] Holly and Moxey, "Introduction," xvi.
[21] W.J.T. Mitchell, "Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture," in *Art History Aesthetics Visual Studies*, ed. Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey (New Haven and London: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, distributed by Yale University Press, 2002); The article was later included in W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* (University of Chicago Press, 2005) where the perspective was further established.
[22] Mitchell, "Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture," 238.
[23] Mitchell, 248.

of visibility and social power."[24] This line of thinking is closely related to Jacques Rancière's notion of the police order and its ruptures, where we should separate between the system we live under in the everyday, with its distribution of power and positions, and politics, which points to events that break with this order of the everyday.[25]

Mieke Bal has suggested four tools for research in the visual arts, which have been constructive in developing a methodology for this dissertation. The first is analogy, as that between recognition and discovery. The second is motivation, which is individual. The third is serendipity, which supports a research not driven by intentionalism, but preferably one that is relevance-driven, and often short-term. The fourth is secrecy, meaning the importance of modesty or discretion in information sharing. Also, she suggests the need for close looking.[26] Looking and looking again at the images in question, be they in an art gallery, a book, or online, have been invaluable in the process of understanding how to write about them. While this has been a constant throughout working with all five articles, the importance of analogy, motivation, serendipity, and secrecy has changed from one article to the next. Making analogies, especially between the images and various theoretical perspectives, has been indispensable in propelling the analyses forward. My motivation for writing this dissertation is grounded in a wish to sort out the potential of visual culture in a time of climate emergency. Still, on a smaller level, motivation to develop the analyses has also been fueled by the inclusion of the initial papers in specific conferences and by the context and scope of the anthologies in which the articles have been included. Serendipity has occurred several times throughout this process, as artworks or theoretical perspectives spurred the analyses in new directions and ended up being key fragments where they initially were thought to be less significant. Secrecy has been part of the selection criteria of the empirical material, in that I have searched for material where the connections to the climate emergency have not necessarily been

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[24] Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Ghostwriting: Working Out Visual Culture," in *Art History Aesthetics Visual Studies*, ed. Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey (Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, distributed by Yale University Press, 2002), 189–90.

[25] Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2010), 30–31.

[26] Mieke Bal, "Research Practice: New Words on Cold Cases," in *What Is Research in the Visual Arts? Obsession, Archive, Encounter*, ed. Michael Ann Holly and Marquard Smith (Haven and London: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, distributed by Yale University Press, 2008), 205–2010.

evident at first sight. Ultimately, the articles ended up being, in no small degree, driven by the writing process itself, including the rewriting and re-looking, and not by endless hours researching archives or reading earlier research – although that was indeed a significant and time-consuming part of the early stages of the dissertation process. As a case-based dissertation, the guiding principle behind the selection of cases has been to find revealing examples of relationships between nature and technology that may also propose different perspectives onto the main research question.[27]

The material's relation to visuality is a question of its ecologies, including the technologies and the media systems in which it is embedded. Media technologies and other technologies affect not only the outreach and the broader consequences of the image material but also the flows and streams within each ecology. Through analyses of these ecologies, visualities surface. The discussions of the image material describe the relations between nature and technology that are depicted, constructed, and played out in each artwork or image. True to the interdisciplinary field of visual culture, my perspectives borrow from art history, aesthetics, media studies, the social sciences, and philosophy. My approach, however, is that of any humanist: I study images and texts looking for how and in what way they might shape our culture and our understanding of reality. I have analyzed the image material using an aesthetic framework in qualitative analyses based on close reading, describing aesthetic patterns and visualities. My intention has never been to pinpoint the rhetorical function or rhetorical quality of the images. My perspective thus diverges from that of visual rhetoric, with its emphasis on the affective reception of the images. At the same time, my understanding of *the aesthetic* is strictly tied to the social conditions under which it appears. Any analysis of the images without their context would lose out on the historical and societal dimensions so crucial to any research within visual culture.

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[27] The scope of the image material that is analyzed in the articles has to a large degree remained as planned in my initial project proposal for a Ph.D.

1.2.4 Curatorial reflections

As part of making sense of the field in which I have been writing, I had the opportunity to develop my thoughts on the matter of nature and technology in art through curating four exhibitions. All four exhibitions specifically related to the overall topic of the dissertation, and two exhibitions included artworks that are part of the dissertation's empirical material. These exhibitions, independent work as they were, are not part of the dissertation other than as processual methodological inquiries into theoretical and art historical perspectives on nature and landscape, and which facilitated close studies of specific artworks. Together with the education- and mediation work that ensued from the exhibitions, the curatorial processes became part of the processes of writing the academic articles. The curatorial work offered the opportunity to test theories on various empirical materials, to research material in-depth and to assemble the works of art in new constellations or new surroundings, and to display them to new audiences.

Holocene was a museum exhibition held in 2011, which centered mainly around landscape paintings from the collection of Lillehammer Art Museum. The selection of artworks, ranging from national romantic paintings to contemporary photography, was made based on how they expressed or reflected different times and spaces in and with landscapes in various ways, variations that have consequences for the images' relation to the time they contain and of which they are a part. Christian Skredsvig's (1854–1924) painting "Ballade" (1884) is a concrete example of a landscape displaying time, with a (to Skredsvig) contemporary battle set in an 800-year-old castle, in a newly cultivated but ancient landscape belonging to the Holocene geological period.[28] The curatorial concept was developed and mediated in an essay published in the accompanying exhibition catalog. In the essay (see Appendix 1), I especially engaged with Michel Foucault's concept of 'heterochrony' by way of Jacques Rancière's use of the term, to oppose a hierarchical understanding of time, and describe the specific relationship between time and space within landscape

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[28] The exhibition and curatorial concept were developed before the term Anthropocene entered the mainstream discussion of landscape today.

images.[29] The exhibition borrowed its title from the geologic period, the Holocene epoch, beginning 11,500 years ago at the end of the last ice age. The period is characterized by a relatively warm and stable climate, population growth, and technological advancement, in short – landscape and life as we know it, and as art history demonstrates. Today, the Holocene is, by many, considered to be a bygone era, more known through its proposed following period: The Anthropocene. However, as the exhibition was developed through 2010 and 2011, the Anthropocene had not yet wholly entered the academic discourse within the environmental humanities (chapters 2 and 3 will discuss this development and the concept further). Working with art history through a geological lens contributed to my interest in seeing the Anthropocene as a framework for the dissertation's analyses.

Both the production- and exhibition period of *Holocene* coincided with another landscape exhibition, *Rules of Action*. It was held at Lillehammer Museum Maihaugen, both indoors and in their large outdoor area, a brief walk from the art museum. *Rules of Action* included new works of art by eight artists.[30] The exhibition was inspired by W.J.T Mitchell's ten theses on landscape,[31] as well as the so-called rule of action, referring to the Norwegian State Pension Fund, the former Oil Fund. This rule is an attempt to distribute the financial surplus of the oil age to future generations, an oil age highly marked by economic prosperity formerly not seen in Norway, and a radically changing landscape to follow. The exhibition was an attempt to actualize the relevance of the landscape term by examining landscape as a process where social and individual identities are formed, and where economically and politically motivated actions affect our environments both today and in the future. Our impressions and ideas concerning landscapes are constituting fundamental rules of possibility for our actions, and a variety of these impressions and ideas were examined and elaborated upon within the exhibited artworks.

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[29] Synnøve Marie Vik, "Holocen - Landskap Fra Lillehammer Kunstmuseums Samling," in *Lillehammer Kunstmuseums Landskaper*, ed. Janneke Meyer Utne (Lillehammer: Lillehammer kunstmuseum, 2011).
[30] Patrick Huse, Anna Widén, Jannecke Lønne Christiansen, Marit Arnekleiv, Toril Johannessen, Jørgen Larsson, Anngjerd Rustand and Lars Korff Lofthus.
[31] W.J.T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell, Second edi (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 5.

An essay published in the accompanying catalog expands on these ideas, drawing on Nicolas Bourriaud's notion of 'the radicant' to describe how we navigate and negotiate our worlds (see Appendix 2).[32] The exhibiting artists demonstrated how landscape is constructed through our actions and while simultaneously being constitutive of our actions. Toril Johannessen's work "Upward, yet not northward!", for example, was an electromagnet buried in the Maihaugen park. The work plays with the possibility of a fourth dimension and points to how we navigate a world where our physical space is made up of two- and three-dimensional surroundings, unable to comprehend solutions outside of our perceptual reach.

Having worked with Toril Johannessen for *Rules of Action*, I later invited her to exhibit at Kunsthuset Kabuso, for what became the exhibition *Unlearning Optical Illusions* in 2016.[33] The exhibition presented the project by the same name, which considers two different visual cultures and their background in Western psychological research on geometrical, optical illusions, as well as in global textile history. The installation, made up of colorful fabrics printed in geometric patterns and stretched from the ceilings, invites us to dwell on and question how we perceive our surroundings and the events leading to their construction. Johannessen's summoning of the socio-cultural origin of the pattern style expresses how aesthetics are interwoven with political and economic narratives. The article "Toril Johannessen's In Search of Iceland Spar: Truth and Illusion in the Anthropocene" was developed in correlation with the exhibition process. The close study facilitated by the exhibition process revealed the relevance of "Unlearning Optical Illusions" for my analysis of the materiality of image technologies as a specific instance of the relationship between nature and technology and subsequently led to its inclusion in the article.

Gustav Metzger – The Table Series, at Kunsthuset Kabuso in 2017,[34] was the first presentation of the entirety of "The Table Series," the last paintings Metzger

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[32] Synnøve Marie Vik, "Rules of Action – Landscape in Contemporary Norwegian Art," in *Handlingsregler - Landskap i Norsk Samtidskunst*, ed. Synnøve Marie Vik (Lillehammer: Kunstnersenteret i Oppland, 2011), 9–23. The exhibition catalogue for Holocene was submitted as part of the phd research dissemination requirement.

[33] The exhibition held October 8th – December 11th, 2016 showed a new installation of the series «Unlearning optical illusions», which had been presented in its entirety for the first time at Trondheim Art Museum in the summer of 2016.

[34] The exhibition held May 27nd – September 3rd, 2017, was cocurated with Metzger's assistant Leanne Dmyterko, and was planned for two years. Sadly, Metzger passed away in March that same year, and the Kabuso exhibition was the first exhibition of his work post-mortem.

made in the 1950s before taking on a more radical approach to art with his auto-destructive work. In these paintings, an everyday object – a table – is transformed by the strokes of the paintbrush into the iconic mushroom cloud stemming from the atomic bomb, expressing the concerns of a young artist with a powerful sense of personal responsibility. The exhibition further included new and site-specific productions of his audience-engaging installation "Mass Media: Today and Yesterday," made with stacks of local newspapers, and "Mirror Trees," an installation of locally sourced trees turned upside down, with their branches put in concrete and their roots flailing in the air. These are artworks from three very different bodies of work, but that represent equally essential aspects of his practice, and which were presented to a local community in the Hardanger region with a strong history of environmental activism.[35] The exhibition demonstrated the fundamental movement within Metzger's oeuvre, from pictorial representation to a process-based practice.[36]

1.3 Introduction to the articles

The dissertation consists of five independent but interrelated studies published as separate articles, respectively addressing the relationships between nature and technology in contemporary visual culture. In the following, I will present a summary of each article:

Article 1: Damaged Nature: The Media Ecology of Auto-destructive Art

Throughout his artistic career, spanning seven decades, the German-British artist Gustav Metzger (1926-2017) explored the intricate relationship between art, technology, and nature. In his auto-destructive and auto-creative works, he studied and tested the destructive nature of technology, science, and media and its equally creative potential. This practice, most famously including acid paintings, were mainly developed throughout the 1960s, at the time of the very earliest beginning of the

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[35] The Hardanger landscape is iconic in Norwegian art history, playing an important role in the construction of a Norwegian visual identity during the period of national romanticism. This heritage has been an active ingredient in local activist's struggles against large infrastructural installations in the landscape.

[36] A selection of images from the exhibitions and the curatorial essays are included as an appendix to the dissertation.

environmental movement, and decades before the climate emergency emerged.[37] The article "Damaged Nature: The Media Ecology of Auto-destructive Art"[38] asks how these art projects may contribute to a discussion on media's material, physical consequences on the environment today. The article relies on the premise that media ecology could, to a more considerable degree, incorporate and acknowledge media's adverse effects on our surroundings. On this premise, the article tries to expand the applicability of media ecology within media studies and visual culture by learning from an artistic practice that centered around the medium's materiality, and consequently, its ecological effects.

The article commences with a presentation of the essay *What Medium Can Mean* (2011), where Jacques Rancière expands the notion of a medium's means to include the configuration of a specific sensory milieu. While Rancière confines his argument to the photographic apparatus, I discuss the idea of a sensory milieu in relation to Metzger's artistic practice, which incorporates performative actions and installations.[39] Discussing Rancière's thesis of mediality and sensory milieu in conjunction with Metzger's auto-destructive art, we see how Metzger's work embodies a media ecological practice that accentuates its material, technological, ethical, and political dimensions. Metzger's work is developed as extensions of his ethical and environmental concerns. This commitment manages to expand Rancière's concepts to the extent that the ecological impact of any technical apparatus must be considered if we are to grasp the mediality of which it is a part entirely. This realization is not clear in Rancière's account, referring exclusively to the photographic apparatus.

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[37] Metzger was in a sense an institution in his own right, an important yet solitary figure within eco-critical art throughout these years. His achievements were not fully recognized in the larger art community until the 1990s and 2000s, when he exhibited in prestigious venues, such as the New Museum (New York, 2011), the Serpentine Gallery (London 2009), dOKUMENTA (13) (Kassel, 2013), the Sao Paolo-biennial (2010), and the Gwangju-biennial (2010) to name a few of the more recent. See also chapter 2 for a context through a discussion on the development of environmental art throughout the last six decades.

[38] Vik, "Damaged Nature: The Media Ecology of Auto-Destructive Art" The article was published in Media and the ecological crisis, edited by Richard Maxwell, Jon Raundalen and Nina Lager Vestberg. The anthology discussed the material impacts of digital media, and was set within the theoretical framework of media studies.

[39] An early version of the analysis was first presented as the paper "The mediality of destruction" at the conference media acts – The 10th international conference of the Nordic Society for Intermedial Studies (NorSIS) at the Department of Art and Media Studies at NTNU – the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim on October 26th – 28th 2011, in session 2D, Media acts and Rancière. Jacques Rancière was a keynote at the conference, and work with his perspectives on media was a factor in the development of the theoretical perspective in the paper and subsequent article.

Auto-destructive art demonstrates the destructive and creative transformative practices of technological materiality, showing a belief in the creative possibilities brought about by technical advances while demonstrating its harmful effects. Auto-destructive art also formulates an ethics of technology, concerned with technology's impact on the physical environment. It thus further develops the notion of sensory milieus to consider an environmental dimension of media ecology. Seen through the lens of Rancière's concept of mediality, Metzger formulates a genuinely ecologically oriented approach to media and their technologies.

The analysis in this article sheds light on the environmental impact of the materiality of media and waste while recognizing the need for media ecology to integrate media's adverse effects on the environment. The article's inclusion in an anthology concerning the environmental impact of digital media and electronic waste highlights the relevance of Metzger's work in a contemporary context, also outside of the art sphere. As contemporary works of art intended to shift public perceptions of technological progress in the 1950s,1960s, and 1970s, Metzger's auto-destructive and auto-creative works failed. However, their aesthetic rupturing of the governing visuality lays bare the obvious relationship between violence and technology, a foundational aspect of the Anthropocene.

Article 2: Nature as Image in Olafur Eliasson's Art: A Media Ecological Perspective

The extension of media ecology to the connection between art, nature, and technology continues in "Nature as Image in Olafur Eliasson's Art: A Media Ecological Perspective."[40] The analysis is motivated by what Jussi Parikka terms a 'topological media ecology'[41] which, with its strong emphasis on perception, space, and time, offers constructive analytical tools for identifying the complexity of the art of Icelandic-Danish Olafur Eliasson.

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[40] Vik, "Nature as Image in Olafur Eliasson's Art: A Media Ecological Perspective" An early version of this article was presented as the paper "Watching Destruction: Ecologies of Sight in Contemporary Art", at the conference The 6th Nomadikon Meeting: Ecologies of Seeing, at St. Rose College, Albany, New York, 27th – 29th of September 2012. The paper also included a presentation of selected works by Gustav Metzger.
[41] Jussi Parikka, "Media Ecologies and Imaginary Media: Transversal Expansions, Contractions, and Foldings," *The Fibreculture Journal*, no. 17 (2011), http://seventeen.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-116-media-ecologies-and-imaginary-media-transversal-expansions-contractions-and-foldings/.

A prominent feature of Eliasson's installations is the visible presentation of how technology, often by straightforward means, facilitates and mediates the appearance of nature, while simultaneously managing to charm the viewer into having a sensuous aesthetic experience. Eliasson's attention-grabbing and highly appealing exhibitions and public art projects have turned him into one of the most popular and influential artists of our time, often entering into partnerships with large corporations and other institutions politically invested in the current social order. This prominence makes his work a relevant and challenging case for a media ecological analysis, also considering how they differ from Metzger's often equally bold but less alluring projects.

Several art projects are analyzed in the article. In the public art project *New York City Waterfalls* (2008), four artificial waterfalls were installed at four different points along the East River between Manhattan and Brooklyn. They ranged in height from 90 ft to 120 ft, each pumping up to 132 500 liters of water a minute up and cascading over their giant frames. The photography project "Bílar í ám/Cars in rivers" (2009) features 35 crowdsourced photographs of cars of various kinds, stranded in flooded rivers in the Icelandic countryside. The exhibition *Volcanoes and Shelters* (2012) included several series of photos taken in, or otherwise inspired by, the particular natural formations of the Icelandic landscape, such as volcanos and hot springs, as well as an installation of black, obsidian lava rocks and three installations which consisted of cascading water fountains placed under strobe lights in pitch-dark rooms. [42]

The article asks in what ways Eliasson's art projects both epitomize and challenge Parikka's notion of a topological media ecology. Parikka's analysis proves applicable to Eliasson's specific engagement with nature and technology, where he recreates natural phenomena and displays their relationship to and reliance on technology. Parikka's theoretical and analytical structure, where the flows and processes of natural phenomena are understood as media, offers insight into

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[42] *Volcanoes and Shelters* became a natural focal point around which the analysis developed as it coincided with the effects of Hurricane Sandy in New York in 2012, adding a new attentiveness to the eco-critical dimension of Eliasson's artistic practice. As part of the research into Eliasson's work and seen through the lens of Parikka's topological media ecology, I included *New York City Waterfalls* and *Bílar í ám/Cars in rivers,* of which I have relied on images and online videos of *New York City Waterfalls*, and the art book of *Bílar í ám/Cars in rivers*.

Eliasson's production. The artworks are participating in a "topological cross talk," which extends our range of perception of nature. This cross-talk is both founded upon and exposing the very material core of the installations/media while demonstrating the artworks' ongoing deliberation of the ways nature itself is already mediating itself and how in fact, our mediation is a part of nature.

In many ways, Eliasson is the ideal artist of our time, practicing the Anthropocene as an aesthetic practice and letting us take part in the experience, to paraphrase Jennifer Fay. There is even something genuinely cinematic about his installations, in their mimicking of scenography and film sets, while inviting the audience backstage to enjoy the technical mastery demonstrated by scaffolding, pumps, strobe lights, and more. Eliasson's art does not present a countervisuality to the dominant forms of visual representations of nature per se; instead, he points out the dominant visuality's inherent countering strands by lingering on its technological and mediated nature. This centering on the mediality of nature does not leave much room, however, for the consequences of the violent forces at play in nature's relationship to technology.[43]

Article 3: Petro-images of the Arctic and Statoil's Visual Imaginary

Continuing the discussion of the mediation of nature and landscapes, the article "Petro-images of the Arctic and Statoil's Visual Imaginary"[44] explores examples of image material accompanying resource extraction in the Arctic. The article asks in what ways images of the Norwegian oil company Statoil's fracking operations create dominant petro-narratives.[45] The analysis argues that the images constitute a visuality that confronts and influences the way we perceive the Arctic in terms of landscape, its aesthetic, and its environmental challenges.

The material is drawn from the image database for PR purposes offered by Statoil. Through analyses of a selection of photographs of fracking and shale gas

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[43] In an instance of dramatic irony, the first time New York City experienced waterfalls after Eliasson's installations, was when hurricane Sandy struck, and water gushed into the Subway in lower Manhattan and Brooklyn.

[44] Vik, "Petro-Images of the Arctic and Statoil's Visual Imaginary" An early version of this article was presented as a paper titled "Statoil's oil images: Arctic Oil Sands and the Bacgrounding of Nature" at the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study Annual Meeting in 2013, held at the Scandinavian Department at the University of California, Berkeley, San Francisco, California 2-4th May, in the session Arctic Studies – Arctic Sites.

[45] Statoil changed its name to Equinor in 2018, reflecting a shift in the company from fossil based energy production towards reneable energy.

operations, the article foregrounds the corporation's persuasive visual rhetoric in terms of their portrayal of the production sites. The PR photography analyzed here holds a specific position between straightforward advertising photography and art photography, embodying a hidden rhetoric, with an agenda of exemplifying the company's activities. The images are widely distributed globally and dominate the visual presentation of the company. This presumably neutral agenda demonstrates how the images create a visuality that trivializes the brutal impact of the sites, where the production facilities alter its landscapes and its representations and leave both short-term and long-lasting environmental consequences. This brutality is not exclusive to this relatively recent phase of Arctic modernization and industrialization but leans into a tradition of Western capitalist imaginations of conquest and mastery of the Arctic nature.

The analysis relies heavily on Nicholas Mirzoeff's notion of countervisuality[46], enabling us to determine the potential political implications of the aesthetic of the images presented by power. While Mirzoeff draws on the writings of Jacques Rancière and his notion of the police order and its ruptures, Mirzoeff presents his theory of a counterhistory of visuality specifically engaging with colonial history, arguing how power creates a standard operating procedure: an aesthetic of normalcy and regularity, encouraging our eyes to look past, where we should stop and look again. Depicting oil extraction on behalf of the oil extractors might just be the epitome of the visuality of the Anthropocene. A central feature in this visuality is its attempt to present the technological infrastructure of the production sites in a contained and skillfully handled way, to strengthen the company's apparent authority over the landscape. Drawing on Mirzoeff's analysis of Haitian slave-based sugar plantations, the article shows how the visuality of Statoil's production sites functions similarly, suppressing the violent consequences of the extraction, signaling control to its stakeholders.

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[46] *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality.*

Article 4: Toril Johannessen's In Search of Iceland Spar: Truth and Illusion in the Anthropocene

Both exploitation of natural resources as a motif and media ecology as an analytical tool is central in the fourth article, "Toril Johannessen's *In Search of Iceland Spar*: Truth and Illusion in the Anthropocene."[47] This article asks in what ways a media-ecological analysis of the Norwegian artist Toril Johannessen's art installation *In Search of Iceland Spar* (2008) may contribute to our understanding of the constructions of truth and illusion in the Arctic and within the Anthropocene.[48]

Toril Johannessen is trained as a photographer, but with a practice that spans a broad range of media. She navigates the worlds of nature and science through art, mixing science and scientific results with artistic research, in works that often examine the margins of scientific truth and our individual, subjective perception of the world. The article demonstrates how *In Search of Iceland Spar* researches how a set of truths about the laws of light and vision are grounded in a very material history, involving not only of scientist's interaction with the elements, but also excavation and distribution of raw materials throughout history. *In Search of Iceland Spar* illustrates the interconnectedness of geology and vision, while unfolding the power inherent in the collecting and organizing of all forms of information.

The installation *In Search of Iceland Spar* did not include an actual piece of the mineral spar but encompassed a media ecological archive of a small part of the Arctic. The installation consisting of three distinct parts.[49] One hundred eighty-one black and white fiber prints of digitally received images of calcite, framed and hung in a cluster on the wall, were images that were sent to Johannessen in response to her e-mail request sent to people working in archives, museums, universities, and other research facilities across Europe and North America. The installation also included a light grey painted area on the wall, indicating the amount of calcite that was exported

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[47] Vik, "Toril Johannessen's In Search of Iceland Spar: Truth and Illusion in the Anthropocene" I was invited to develop an article for what became the anthology Artistic Visions of the Anthropocene North: Climate Change and Nature in Art, by the editors Gry Hedin and Ann-Sofie N. Gremaud. The anthology taking on an Arctic perspective, Johannessen stood out with a relevant artistic practice from both a processual and material perspective.

[48] The analysis centers around *In Search of Iceland Spar* while also discussing several later works by Johannessen.

[49] Toril Johannessen *In Search of Iceland Spar* 2008 is owned by the Norwegian National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design. *In Search of Iceland Spar* was most recently installed in fall 2016 at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Oslo / The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, as part of the exhibition Norsk Natur / Norwegian Nature, but was first installed at Bergen kunsthall in 2008.

from the Helgustadir quarry, as well as a printout of the complete e-mail correspondence from the project, compiled in eleven plain, white books and neatly placed in a stack on the floor.

The article continues the argument of the creation of certain visualities and countervisualities borrowed from Mirzoeff and Rancière, while also relying on Jussi Parikka's argument that to understand media and media history fully, we must examine the innermost materiality of media, all the way to earth's geology and minerals.[50] The analysis shows how "In Search of Iceland Spar" traces the history of one of the fundamental building blocks of the scientific development of image technologies, thus performing a countervisuality by highlighting the uniqueness of each piece of calcite. The analysis further develops this discussion of materiality within the Anthropocene by displaying the geological foundation of modernity. Johannessen's representation of the finite nature of our geological world invites us to see the inherent violence in all forms of resource extraction.

Article 5: Mold in the Machine: Nature and Technology in Treme (2010) and Beasts of the Southern Wild (2012)

The connection between the exploitation of resources and environmental consequences is examined in the article "Mold in the Machine: Nature and Technology in *Treme* (2010) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012)", but with strengthened attention to violence.[51] The article presents an overview of the relationship between nature and technology as it is portrayed in the TV-series *Treme* season 1[52] and the motion picture *Beasts of the Southern Wild*.[53] *Treme*, following a set of individuals, is centered around the attempts at assuming everyday life a few months after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in August 2005, while *Beasts of the Southern Wild* follows the girl Hushpuppy as she tries to establish a way of life after a tropical storm hit her native Louisiana community, the Bathtub.

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[50] Jussi Parikka, *A Geology of Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).
[51] Vik, "Mold in the Machine: Nature and Technology in Treme (2010) and Beasts of the Southern Wild (2012)" The article was included in the anthology after a call for papers.
[52] David Simon and Eric Overmyer, *Treme Season 1 Won't Bow Don't Know How* (HBO Entertainment, 2010) The article analyzes Treme's season 1 exclusively, where the effects of nature on infrastructure have a more prominent place than the following seasons. After season 1, the narrative is set later in time, and is to a larger degree focused on rebuilding lives, infrastructure and society. The mold that is so visible in season 1, is later removed along with the remnants of its host buildings.
[53] Benh Zeitlin, *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (United States: Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2012).

This article analyzes the specific visual imprint and effects that water has on infrastructure and society in the movie and series. These imprints and effects are traced through images of the immediate damage brought on by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and a tropical storm in the Bathtub, via the secondary flooding caused by infrastructural failure or deliberate action, and finally to the slower event of mold damage in *Treme* and the underlying exploitation of the Louisiana Bay area in *Beasts of the Southern Wild*.[54] The article seeks to understand how scenes depicting infrastructural damage after extreme weather events present the duality of nature as both violent and violated. This duality is a central argument in the development of the article's analysis of in what ways moving images lend themselves to the portrayal of the specific forms of violence of the Anthropocene, and more specifically, how the visuality of "Mold in the machine" is portrayed in *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*.

The background for the events dramatized in the series and motion picture is severe. Years of exploitation of the landscape, as well as disinvestment in city infrastructure along the Louisiana coastline, has made life in the area precarious. Rob Nixon's notion of "slow violence" is valuable to the analysis in that it describes an environmental violence that is low in drama but high in long-term catastrophic effects. Nixon underlines how those who suffer the most from this violence is often the poor, highlighting how the effects of the Anthropocene will be experienced differently depending on class, race, nationality, and other power structures.

The article argues, by way of Stephanie LeMenager's analysis of the BP blowout, that the exclusion of the Louisiana area from the logic of modernity is what facilitates the slow violence exerted by society at large towards its vulnerable communities such as the Bathtub. The analysis identifies a specific visuality to describe the dual relationship between nature and technology. Building on Leo Marx's trope of "The Machine in the Garden," which described the nature-technology relationship in late 19th and early 20th century American literature, the visuality of *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* is identified as "Mold in the Machine." This

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[54] It was evident that the environmental situation in Louisiana provided ample material for this discussion. The juxtaposition of *Treme* with *Beasts of the Southern Wild* made possible an in-depth analysis of the long-term, devastating impact made by technological progress onto the Louisiana landscape.

visuality highlights technology's role in the critical living conditions local communities are enduring and demands that we recognize both the materiality of progressive modernity and its concrete material consequences.

1.4 The contribution of the articles as a whole

While being independent studies, the articles have been developed as part of the dissertation and in response to the overall research question: How is the relationship between nature and technology configured in a range of significant works of contemporary visual culture? All five articles touch upon the Anthropocene, technology, violence, and visuality, to some degree with similar approaches, but between them, they also deviate in their advances to these very same concepts.

The Anthropocene is the fundamental basis, the ground from which the discussions grow, for all five articles. As a whole, the articles approach the Anthropocene as both an inescapable framework for discussions of nature in contemporary visual culture and as a useful analytical tool in itself. The term represents both a highly material, geological period, and an abstract categorical concept, a coupling of matter and idea that is active in all five articles. All the same, the Anthropocene holds different values for the separate analyses. Gustav Metzger's practice critically observes and explores the relationship between nature and technology as a fundamental aspect of the Anthropocene, decades before the term's content had gained any widespread traction. Olafur Eliasson performs the Anthropocene as an aesthetic practice in which we all engage. Toril Johannessen's *In Search of Iceland Spar* deals directly with the Anthropocene by revealing the geological foundations of modernity's technological progress and its history of geological exploitation. Obviously, the images of oil extraction distributed by Statoil are representations of the type of practices that have led to the climate crisis. However, to read them as representations of controlled violence requires a preconception of the Anthropocene. This is also the case for *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, which evoke the Anthropocene through the destructive effects of

global warming in the most direct way, conveying how these effects are both social and material.

Confronting us with direct representation of violence, *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* demonstrate the forms of slow violence exerted by society at large towards its vulnerable communities. This is a violence of neglect asserted by class and government, that visualizes as mold or as floodwater. These destructive forces remind us of Metzger's auto-destructive works, which demonstrate with all possible transparency the violent destruction brought on by technology onto nature and the environment. At the same time, he leaves room for the creative potential in all forms of destruction. Eliasson's installations and photography seemingly linger on the creative potential in nature's relationship to technology but escapes the consequences of the violent forces at play, focusing instead on its aesthetic potential. In a similar manner, but for entirely different reasons, the images of Statoil's industrial sites completely suppress the violent consequences of fracking, both on a local and global level. Johannessen's representation of the finite nature of our geological world takes the analysis one step further and can be seen as an invitation to look closer and see the inherent violence in all forms of resource extraction.

All five articles problematize technology as creative and destructive tools for life in the Anthropocene. As seen through these examples, technology is present in a wide range of visual presentations of nature and involved in the transformational processes of landscapes and the climate. The analyses also link the media ecologies in which the images take part to technology's materiality and nature's mediality. In his auto-destructive work, Metzger formulated an ethics of technology, demonstrating technology's materiality through processual performances of destruction. Concerned with technology's impact on the physical environment, his ecologically oriented approach to media and their technologies is unlike Eliasson's recreation of natural phenomena, although they both rely on technology as central to the creative process. The controlled way Eliasson's installations display technology – in his case to disclose the facilitation of the creation of natural phenomena – may, on the other hand, be recognized in Statoil's presentations of the technological infrastructure of the production sites for fossil fuel energy, even if Statoil's installations are presented

as to overlook them. Statoil's form of 'standard operating procedure' displays technical installations in the middle of vast, untouched landscapes. Johannessen, on the other hand, examines the scientific development of (image) technologies on a much smaller, even microscopic level. The analysis demonstrates how *In Search of Iceland Spar* investigates the historical materiality of science and technology's struggle for knowledge, understanding, and control over natural forces and resources. This struggle for control functions as an aesthetic guiding principle for Statoil's images, giving them a sense of order, which contrasts significantly with the realities playing out in *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*. The devastating effect of the natural forces is tightly bound to the materiality and technology of the city, as years of exploitation of the landscape and disinvestment in city infrastructure is what led to the catastrophic effects of the storms in New Orleans and the Bathtub. The social distribution and use of technology, as infrastructure, has violent consequences.

Identifying visualities and exploring the possibilities for countervisualities have been paramount to the analyses and in attempting to answer both the individual and overall research questions. All five articles have engaged directly with questions of visuality and prove the value of this term for informing the configurations of the relationship between nature and technology in visual culture. Metzger's work demonstrates how the aesthetic rupturing of the governing visuality lays bare the relationship between technology and its creative and destructive properties. Eliasson's work points out the contradictory aspects of the dominant visuality by lingering on nature's technological and mediated features. The images of Statoil's extraction is the epitome of the visuality of the Anthropocene, in which a central feature is its attempt to present the technological infrastructure of the production sites as homogenous, contained, and expertly handled, to strengthen the company's authority over the landscape. Johannessen takes the opposite approach. Performing a countervisuality by highlighting the uniqueness of each piece of calcite, *In Search of Iceland Spar* disrupts the visuality of the history of natural sciences and technological progress. The visuality of *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild,* identified as "Mold in the Machine," is a visuality that highlights technology's role in the critical living conditions local communities are increasingly enduring. These visualities and

countervisualities are central to the configuring of the relationship between nature and technology in visual culture while offering ways to recognize both the materiality of progressive modernity and its material consequences.

2.   Historical perspectives

This chapter, an overview of the field of art and ecology from the 1960s to today, presents a historical frame of reference for the contribution of the dissertation. Following a short survey of the field of ecocriticism in art history, the chapter presents a selection of works of art and exhibitions – predominantly within a North American and European context – as well as some of their critical and theoretical circumstances and responses, pointing to the interplay between art, its historical conditions, and its theorization. Due to the great variety of genres and media of contemporary art, not all the works mentioned are immediately recognizable as images. However, as artistic expressions, they are essential parts of the landscape that has shaped the visual culture of the Anthropocene.

Narrating a tendency rather than representing a comprehensive overview of the field during these vastly productive years in art history and visual culture, the chapter outlines a history of art and visual culture that is preoccupied with process over objects. This history is exemplified with artists and artwork embodying an interest in nature that is both persistent in its focus and shifting in its approaches, while also pointing at relevant practices where the relation to the environmental agenda is present but less apparent. This approach will lead to the inclusion not only of practices that fall within 'ecological art' as conceived of in the 1990s based on practices emerging from the 60s and onwards, and whose prominent characteristics have been described by Sacha Kagan[55] but also works that simply indicate growing awareness and sensitivity to environmental issues. Naturally, a brief overview of such a rich historical material – both theory and artistic practices – will not give justice to the field of eco-art and its critical responses from the 1960s to today. Taking a birds-eye view means sacrificing depth for breadth, surveying rather than thoroughly analyzing the specific events. On the other hand, this approach has the advantage of directing our attention to the long process of visualizing our relationship to the environment during these fundamental years of the Anthropocene, while establishing

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[55] Sacha Kagan, "The Practice of Ecological Art," *[Plastik]* 4, no. february (2014).

a broader context for the specific analyses of visual representations of nature and technology.

The period coincides, on the one hand, with the most extraordinary material prosperity humankind has ever known, while we at the same time have produced more massive environmental emissions and impacts than anyone before us. The history of art and visual culture that I am telling follows in the path of the history of environmentalism as a movement and global warming as a problem in society at large. This connection to environmentalism will illuminate central positions and perspectives on the discussions of ecology, the environment, and climate change relevant to the artworks.

2.1 Ecocriticism in art and visual culture

This dissertation adds to a growing literature on art and ecology within the environmental humanities labeled ecocriticism, which over the last twenty years, has fast become an important and quickly advancing area of research and teaching in cultural studies at large. In their essence, ecocritical surveys of art and visual culture present new perspectives on a historical material, assessing the way the environment is represented visually and how culture shapes these representations. As art historian Alan C. Braddock has written:

> Briefly defined, ecocriticism emphasizes ecological interconnectedness, sustainability, and environmental justice in cultural interpretation. It asserts the imbrication of all beings, artifacts and matter – including humans and their creative works – within a dynamic mesh of relations, agents and historical forces.[56]

Developed initially within literary studies, and specifically within the context of the study of nature writing and wilderness romanticism under the Western Literature Association of America, it has since – and especially since the publication of the seminal *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* by pioneer eco-critic Lawrence Buell in 2005 – extended considerably.[57]

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[56] Alan C. Braddock, "From Nature to Ecology : The Emergence of Ecocritical Art History," in *A Companion to American Art*, ed. John Davis, Jennifer A. Greenhill, and Jason D. LaFountain (Hoboken: Wiley, 2015), 1168, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118542644.ch26.
[57] For an overview of the development of ecocriticism within literary studies in the years following Buells book, see for instance Lawrence Buell, Ursula K. Heise, and Karen Thornber, "Literature and Environment," *Annual Review of*

Apart from its firm hold within literary studies, ecocriticism today includes studies within art history and media studies as well as interdisciplinary studies within the broader environmental humanities, and is an institutionalized academic field in its own right. [58] However, not until the 2000s do we find serious attempts at an ecocritical reception within art history and visual culture, attempts that still fall short in comparison to the scope in ecocritical writing within literary studies, such as demonstrated in the substantial contribution to the history of ecocriticism presented in Greg Garrard's *Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*.[59]

Philosophical writing connecting nature and aesthetics have a centuries-long history in the Western tradition, from Immanuel Kant to Theodor Adorno,[60] and art history provides ample examples of artists deeply involved with examining aspects of nature and landscapes. Malcolm Andrews surveys this tradition splendidly in *Landscape and Western Art*,[61] and landscape is further examined as a powerful cultural force in W. J. T. Mitchell's *Landscape and Power. Space, Place and Landscape*.[62] Recent contributions such as *Ecocriticism and the Anthropocene in Nineteenth-Century Art and Visual Culture*, edited by Maura Coughlin and Emily Gephart,[63] provide valuable ecocritical responses to nineteenth-century practices. As these surveys show, the idea of nature has changed substantially since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, although the period's view of nature as "the other," both a distant, highly praised aesthetic object while at the same time readily available for exploitation, has remained dominant well into our time.

Since the 1960s, however, this idea of nature has been challenged within art by a concern for the environment, connecting art to an idea of our natural environments

Environment and Resources 36 (2011) It should be noted that Buell, one of the leading scholars on the topic, favors the term "environmental criticism" over ecocriticism. ; Rob Nixon connected literary environmentalism and social sciences in his Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor, his perspective on slow violence being important to the development of the discussion in my article "Mold in the Machine". Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011).

[58] For an introduction to the dominant conceptualizations of ecocriticism , see the Hubert Zapf's introduction to Hubert Zapf, "An Introduction to Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology," in *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, ed. Hubert Zapf (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 5–8.

[59] Greg Garrard, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[60] See for example Steven Vogel, *Against Nature : The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996) for a critical examination of the concept of "nature" in Critical Theory.

[61] Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art Oxford History of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[62] W.J.T. Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power. Space, Place and Landscape*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[63] Maura Coughlin and Emily Gephart, eds., *Ecocriticism and the Anthropocene in Nineteenth-Century Art and Visual Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

and the concept of ecology in a consistent manner. This increasing environmental concern does not entail, however, that art preoccupied with the environment or ecological thinking has been consistently accepted or appreciated as environmental art over the last 60 years. In 2005 Andrea Gaynor and Ian McLean addressed the fact that ecology was missing from Edward Lucie-Smith's seminal *Movements in Art Since 1945* from 2001. They argued that ecology has had a low profile in the art world mainly due to the division between the humanities and the sciences in the twentieth century, and that art history, therefore, needs 'an ecological art history' for landscape art, a task that relies on an alliance with environmental and ecological historians.[64] One of the earliest and most well-received contributions to an ecocritical art history, and one that notably called upon the urgency of climate change, came with the 2009 publication of *A keener perception : ecocritical studies in American art history*, edited by Alan Braddock and Christoph Irmscher. The anthology provided valuable assessments on environmental practices within American art history and visual studies at the time, demonstrating how materiality, technique, and style were equally important to an ecological aesthetic as subject matter.[65] However, as Yates McKee two years later pointed at in his review of the book, it neglects postwar neo-avant-garde art and thus misses out on the opportunity to write a history of ecology's status within neo-avantgarde and postmodernist art, particularly Land art and its most prominent exponent Robert Smithson.[66] This opportunity was taken in part by McKee himself, with the article "Land Art in Parallax: Media, Violence, Political Ecology," an essay on the land art movement, primitivism, and new media technologies.[67]

As a movement and genre, environmental art since the 1960s had indeed received limited, serious critical attention at the time and did not join feminism,

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[64] Andrea Gaynor and Ian McLean, "The Limits of Art History: Towards an Ecological History of Landscape Art," *Landscape Review* 11, no. 1 (2005) A task, one might add, perhaps especially worth undertaking facing exhibitions and projects where artists engage in extensive collaborations with scientists, such as the exhibition Weather Report: Art and Climate Change, curated by US art critic and curator Lucy Lippard in 2007, where 60 artists partnered with an environmental scientific community to create "a visual dialogue" on climate change. See; Lucy Lippard, Stephanie Smith, and Andrew Revkin, *Weather Report: Art and Climate Change* (Boulder: Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007).
[65] Alan C. Braddock and Christoph. Irmscher, eds., *A Keener Perception : Ecocritical Studies in American Art History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009).
[66] Yates McKee, "Art History, Ecocriticism, and the Ends of Man," *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 1 (2011), https://academic.oup.com/oaj/article-abstract/34/1/123/1578429?redirectedFrom=fulltext.
[67] Yates McKee, "Land Art in Parallax: Media, Violence, and Political Ecology," in *Nobody's Property: Art, Land, Space, 2000-2010*, ed. Kelly Baum (Yale University Press, 2010) The essay was published in the exhibition catalogue of the Princeton University Art Museum exhibition Nobody's Property: Art, Land, Space, 2000-2010.

sexuality, identity, race, globalization, and media on the list of main issues for artists and critics within postmodernist art history. This lack of attention is evident also when looking to scholarly work within visual culture, such as Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright's introduction *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*[68] or anthologies such as *The Visual Culture Reader* edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff,[69] where the sole exception is Mirzoeff's own discussion of biopower and visuality in representations of the sea.[70]

In the ten following years, the situation has improved substantially. An early contribution was an essay initially published for the exhibition catalog for *Radical Nature: Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet, 1969–2009,* at the Barbican Art Center in London. In "The Politics of Sustainability: Art and Ecology," art historian T.J. Demos traced the development of art and ecology through an examination of how sustainability has been understood in a selection of exhibitions and artistic practices from the 1960s to today, a development which he identified in terms of 'Fragile Ecologies,' via 'Systems Ecology' to 'Political Ecology,' categories which allow us to see a development in the relationship between nature and culture in the arts[71]. According to Demos, the artists grouped under the first heading may be found to uphold the nature-culture dichotomy by highlighting an ideal notion of nature at the expense of the complexity of environmentalism.[72] The artists of Systems Ecology, on the other hand, incorporated social and technological systems into their understanding of ecology, and consequently, their art, while keeping their distance from environmental activism.[73] The art of Political Ecology attempts to overcome this dialectic, and Demos formulates a broad set of interrelated ecological problems that starts by recognizing the complicated situation of ecological art itself: "[H]ow can

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[68] Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Second (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[69] Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed., *The Visual Culture Reader*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[70] In which he includes the documentaries When The Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts by Spike Lee, (2006) and Carl Dean and Tia Lessin's Trouble the Water (2008) Nicholas Mirzoeff, "The Sea and the Land: Biopower and Visuality from Slavery to Katrina," in *The Visual Culture Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[71] T.J Demos, "The Politics of Sustainability : Art and Ecology," in *Radical Nature: Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet, 1969–2009, Exhibition Catalogue*, ed. Francesco Manacorda and Ariella Yedgar (London: Barbican Art Gallery and Koenig, 2009) A shorter version of the essay was also included in the exhibition catalogue for Rethink : Contemporary Art and Climate Change; Anne Sophie Witzke and Sune Hede, eds., *Rethink : Contemporary Art & Climate Change* (Århus: Alexandra Instituttet A/S, 2009).

[72] Demos, "The Politics of Sustainability : Art and Ecology," 19–21.

[73] Demos, 21–24.

artistic practices, operating at the juncture of art institutions, activism and non-governmental politics, challenge the emergence of neo-liberal eco-governmentality?"[74] This discussion on Political Ecology is carried further in *Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology*, a special issue of *Third text* (2013), edited by Demos. Expanding the scope of what a political ecology of art could entail considerably, the issue includes discussions on art criticism, environmental activism, and postcolonial globalism.[75]

By the mid-2010s, writings on art and ecology had begun to proliferate. *Eco-Aesthetics: Art, Literature and Architecture in a Period of Climate Change* (2014) by Malcolm Miles contributes to the discussion of the interconnectedness of eco-art, eco-aesthetics and contemporary aesthetic theories from an interdisciplinary perspective. Framing his analyses within a pragmatic anti-capitalist perspective, Miles takes on the problems of political ecology as formulated by Demos, exploring, in Miles' words, "ideas and attitudes which might contribute to an ecologically aware relation between human observers and the worlds which they observe."[76] This same affiliation is described by Suzaan Boettger, who elegantly sums up the most important contributions to what she describes as an environmentalist criticism of art, mentioning Demos as a defining contributor, in "Within and Beyond the Art World: Environmentalist Criticism of Visual Art" (2016). Boettger underlines how "the categorical imperatives – between agency and materiality, actant and environment, art and politics – have dissolved" in current ecocritical thinking, opening a new potential between politics and aesthetics in images, enabling them to overcome the paradox of political art.[77]

Some of the first serious attempts at situating the Anthropocene at the center of discussions of visual culture and contemporary art are found in Nicholas Mirzoeff's

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[74] Demos, 24.

[75] T.J Demos, "Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology : An Introduction," *Third Text : Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture* 23, no. 1 (2013).

[76] Malcolm Miles, *Eco-Aesthetics : Art, Literature and Architecture in a Period of Climate CHange* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 4.

[77] Suzaan Boettger, "Within and Beyond the Art World: Environmentalist Criticism of Visual Art," in *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, ed. Hubert Zapf (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 678.

Visualizing The Anthropocene[78] and the anthology *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies* from 2015,[79] edited by Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin. In *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (2016), T. J. Demos introduced the term post-anthropocentric political ecology to artistic practices aesthetically and politically engaged in climate change and environmental concerns. In *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today* (2017), he makes a strong argument for the need to expand the discussion on the Anthropocene in visual culture to power structures suppressing races and gender on behalf of capitalist society.[80] Recent, crucial contributions to the field have been made in the 2018 publications *Landscape into Eco Art: Articulations of nature since the 60s*, where Mark A. Cheetham goes a long way to fill the gap in ecocritical art history by creating a dialogue between contemporary eco-art, the land art of the 1960s and 1970s and the historical genre of landscape painting,[81] while *The ecological eye: Assembling an ecocritical art history (Rethinking Art's Histories)* by Andrew Patrizio challenges the task of assembling an ecocritical art history, and does so from an interdisciplinary and non-hierarchical perspective, incorporating art history, aesthetics, political economy, and environmental studies.[82] Finally, the seven essays included in the Spring 2019 issue of *Panorama*, *Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art*, "Ecocriticism," edited by Karl Kusserow, present brief but pertinent analyses of art and ecology today, encouraging the reader to think through the ethics of what it means to be writing on such matters currently.

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[78] Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Visualizing the Anthropocene," *Public Culture* 2 (73), no. 26 (2014) Mirzoeff also wrote on the topic in; Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Countervisuality and the Common: The Global Social Movements, Imagination and Climate Change," *Third Text Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture*, no. 120: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology, Online supplement (2013), http://thirdtext.org/countervisuality-and-the-common-arc.
[79] Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, eds., *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environmentas and Epistemologies* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015).
[80] T.J Demos, *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today* (Berlin New York: Sternberg Press, 2017).
[81] Mark Cheetham, *Landscape into Eco Art Articulations of Nature Since the '60s* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2018).
[82] Andrew Patrizio, *The Ecological Eye: Assembling an Ecocritical Art History (Rethinking Art's Histories)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).

2.2 Art and environmentalism

Art and ecology coevolved with the emergence of the 1960s-environmental movement, where environment and ecology as concepts were disseminated in the culture at large. Famously coined as 'Oecologia' by the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel in his 1866 book "General Morphology of Organisms" when biology was a very different field than it is today, the original definition of ecology (oikos: house) was the study of the relationship of living organisms with the external world – their environment.[83] As environmental and ecological issues are deeply connected, there is no distinction made between ecological concerns and broader environmental ones within the following overview. By environmental or ecological concerns, a concern for the processes and relations of nature within their immediate surroundings is understood, but also the broader environmental concerns, including Anthropogenic climate change. Ecology as a science today has a wide span and is generally understood as the study of living systems, be they biological systems or energy flows, and the networks in which they occur. Relational at its core, ecology as a discipline is also in close affinity to economics, sociology, and art. This affinity has spurred the development of more specific philosophies of ecology, some of which have informed artists and the reception of art.

Environmentalism covers a general concern for and interest in conserving or protecting the environment. While the early Conservation movement in the late 19th Century was mainly preoccupied with wildlife management, water conservation, and preservation of habitats, the modern environmental movement developed around the 1960s in response to increased knowledge of pollution and its consequences for the environment and human health. The ecological awareness at the core of the movement popularized with the success of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* in 1962, which opened the eyes of a generation to the harmful effects of industrial and agricultural chemicals on local societies and food safety.[84] The photographs of Earth taken on NASA's Apollo Space missions in the years following the 1968 moon

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[83] Environment & Society Portal, "Ernst Haeckel Coins the Term 'Oecologia,' or Ecology," the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, 2020, http://www.environmentandsociety.org/tools/keywords/ernst-haeckel-coins-term-oecologia-or-ecology.
[84] Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002).

landing, contributed to a new understanding of the global.[85] Images of visible pollution at the time further fueled the perspective of the fragile planet, and while this was not the first time images of industrial pollution were heavily disseminated to the general public, the changing social values and a general increase in prosperity of the American and European Post-war era facilitated a widespread acknowledgment of the underlying value of environmentalism – ecological concern. Organizations such as World Wildlife Fund and Green Peace, and a substantial number of smaller NGOs, have been and still are central representatives of the environmental movement, and throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the movement gained power through the implementation of important laws and regulation in both the US and throughout Europe. The first Earth Day was held in 1970, an organization eventually turning into the most extensive environmental movement in history, with a yearly event that came to symbolize the growing environmental awareness with its individualized form of responsibility, while at the same time aiming for a global impact.[86] The sum of these events, be they ideological, political, local, or global, point to a growing environmental awareness on all levels of society. James Lovelock's Gaia theory, developed in 1974 and popularized in *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (1979), where he argues for a holistic understanding of Earth where every part, including humanity, is dependent on the other, may be seen as a pinnacle of this movement – and even foreshadowing many of the theoretical positions defended in this dissertation. However, the theory was either "embraced with too much enthusiasm or rejected with too much skepticism," as described by anthropologist and sociologist Bruno Latour and climate scientist Timothy M. Lenton, hindering the development of the theory's promise.[87]

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[85] Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright trace the history of the publication of the first images of earth from space in culture, describing how the image became a an icon of 1960s and 70s counterculture, in Sturken and Cartwright, *Practices of Looking An Introduction to Visual Culture*, 391–92.

[86] For an insightful account of the beginnings of the movement, see Gaylord Nelson, Susan Campbell, and Paul A. Wozniak, *Beyond Earth Day: Fulfilling the Promise* (Wisconsin: Univ of Wisconsin Press, 2002) Gaylord Nelson (1916–2005) initiated the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970.

[87] Bruno Latour and Timothy M. Lenton, "Extending the Domain of Freedom, or Why Gaia Is So Hard to Understand," *Critical Inquiry* 45, no. 3 (2019): 660, https://doi.org/10.1086/702611.

2.2.1 The 1960s – 70s

The concern for nature and its ecologies coincided with a moment in art history where artistic practices progressed in new and unexpected directions, and where artistic processes – their position within a social, political, material, and time-based reality – gained more interest than objects themselves. As the environmental movement grew during the 1960s and -70s, art became a much-used tool for illustrating concerns about the environment and conveying critical thinking on ecological issues. Robert Smithson, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Joseph Beuys, Agnes Denes, and Hans Haacke are but a few of the artists of the period whose practices were engaged in ideas of nature, landscape, and the environment. Their work, and many others, took off in multiple directions and evolved into the heterogeneous field of environmental art, now commonly called eco-art. These otherwise diverse projects often formulated a connection between ecological and political questions while seeing landscape as part of a larger picture affected by social, economic, and technological factors.

Part of the evolution of this field was a transition from a focus on the art object to the concept, famously synthesized and formulated by the US art critic and curator Lucy Lippard in her seminal book *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966-1972*, from 1973. Exemplifying with interviews with and projects and statements made by a range of significant artists at the time, Lippard forcefully declared the years from 1966 to 1972 to have been first and foremost characterized by the dematerialization of the art object, in favor of conceptual art.[88] As art historians and curators Catherine Morris and Vincent Bonin write 40 years later, the rise of conceptualism and environmentalism coincided, as did other "era-defining movements" such as feminism, civil rights, antiwar protest, student activism, and gay rights, indicating a connection between the intense political awareness of the Post-War generation and the challenge posed by conceptualism towards the reigning traditional formalist aesthetics at the time.[89]

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[88] Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966-1972* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1997) Lippard also uses the terms information art and idea art, and includes subdivisions such as eart art, process art, minimal art, and more.
[89] Catherine Morris and Vincent Bonin, "An Introduction to Six Years," in *Materializing Six Years Lucy R. Lippard and the Emergence of Conceptual Art* (New York: MIT Press and the Brooklyn Museum, 2012), xvi.

While Lippard, as well as Morris and Bonin, wrote in response to an American art scene, Gustav Metzger's activist art practice was, in the beginning, most heavily invested in the British nuclear disarmament movement in the 1960s, where he was involved in demonstrations against nuclear power plants and co-organizing the Committee of 100,[90] an organization that on several occasions in 1961 demonstrated against the use of the nuclear bomb and governments' nuclear stockpile at the risk of mass annihilation. Metzger's practice embodied the main concerns at the time, connecting environmentalism with anti-war activism and critiques of patriarchy, as well as skepticism towards uncritical technological progress and unlimited industrial expansion. As part of the transition from object-oriented to conceptual art, and from gallery to open-air performances, Metzger, like many artists of his time, focused on processes. To him, this predominantly meant the destructive and creative potential within the artistic process. Together with John Sharkey, Metzger initiated and organized the *Destruction in Art Symposium* in 1966, an event on destruction in art and its relation to society, with participants ranging from Yoko Ono, Otto Mühl, Peter Weibel, John Latham to Günther Brus, and having a significant impact on the development of the Happening and Fluxus movements.[91] Other artists at the time were also exploring the creative potential of destruction: The biodegradable artworks made by Dieter Roth in the 1960s, a Swiss artist who was a prominent part of the Fluxus movement, can readily be seen as holding auto-destructive qualities, as they go through a series of transformations from mold to bacterial decay and damage made by insects before the non-biodegradable remnants were all that was left. Similarly, art historian Jasia Reichhardt traces fire as an auto-destructive medium in contemporary practices, such as fire paintings by Yves Klein and Werner Schreib and John Latham's book burnings, seeing these artistic approaches as attempts to convey the threat of human extinction.[92]

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[90] The Committee of 100 was an organization of artists, authors and other public figures, including Bertrand Russell, with whom Metzger was arrested. Metzger was also involved in the Direct-Action Committee against Nuclear War.

[91] Adrian Glew, "Happening and Fluxus Artist Lost and Found," in *Gustav Metzger : Retrospectives*, ed. Ian Cole (Oxford: Oxford Museum of Modern Art, 1999).

[92] Jasia Reichardt, "The Fire Next Time," in *Gustav Metzger : Retrospectives*, ed. Ian Cole (Oxford: Oxford Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 69.

The dematerialization process at the expense of the formal conception of art objects was just as prevalent in the Land Art movement, whose earthworks and site-specific installations were created directly onto and in the landscape and with natural materials. Practitioners of Land Art such as American artists Robert Smithson, Nancy Holt, and James Turrell and British artist Richard Long, actively took a stance against the tradition of landscape representation in favor of working in situ, transforming or restoring land and landscapes. As Malcolm Andrews has described, Land Art cannot easily be identified as an object but may instead be seen as the very relationship between nature and the artist's action, a portrait of the dialectic between nature and art.[93]

Pioneering Land artist Robert Smithson (1938-1973) set this dialectic in motion both within and outside of the art institutions. For his "Sites/Nonsites" series in the 1960s, he transported dirt, sand, rocks, or coal from distant venues to the gallery space, and through the act of removing materials, he altered the original landscapes while creating new material relationships within the gallery. His subsequent earthworks, "Spiral Jetty" (1970) in Salt Lake being the most prominent, involved a direct configuration of the land, where the work's response to the specific site and its vicinity was vital.[94] While Smithson and other Land artists have generally been regarded as more interested in the material, historical, and perceptual conditions of landscapes than their ecological conditions, art historian Yates McKee has pointed to Smithson's own writing – which was substantial – as in fact conveying a radical ecological thinking, critical of those who would simply celebrate nature, ignoring the relations in which nature was entangled. McKee quotes Smithson: "Dialectics of this type are a way of seeing things in their manifold relations, not as isolated objects. Nature is indifferent to any formal ideal […] but this does not mean one is helpless before nature, but rather that nature's conditions are unexpected."[95] Furthermore, McKee points out that nature's "non-separability from humanity" was one of these conditions. This view of nature is congruent with Metzger's interest in nature's

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[93] Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art Oxford History of Art*, 204.
[94] The works mentioned may be seen here: The Holt Smithson Foundation, "The Holt Smithson Foundation," The Holt Smithson Foundation, accessed August 31, 2020, https://holtsmithsonfoundation.org/.
[95] McKee, "Art History, Ecocriticism, and the Ends of Man," 3.

uncontrollable destructive and creative potential, and both may be put in relation to the idea of depersonalization in art that developed throughout the twentieth century. Smithson was, however, less prone to protest than Metzger. In 1971 he wrote

> The world needs coal and highways, but we do not need the results of strip-mining or highway trusts. Economics, when abstracted from the world, is blind to natural resources. Art can become a resource, that mediates between the ecologist and the industrialist. … Art can help provide the needed dialectic between them.[96]

While Metzger would undoubtedly have supported the idea of art functioning as a mediator between different fields of human experience, combining the diverse elements of the industrial society, his practice leaves little room for the industrialists to engage in this exchange.

Smithson serves as an example of what American art historian and art critic Rosalind Krauss framed as working within "the expanded field of art" that was so central to critical postmodernity.[97] From the time of its introduction in 1979, the term became an essential theoretical framework for these kinds of artistic practices within critical postmodernism. Krauss conceptualized the practice of earthworks and other Land art as not-architecture, not-landscape. Highlighting Smithson's work as one of the key artists in this regard, she did, however, not conceive of him as an environmental artist. Instead, she conceptualized his practice, together with land artist Richard Long, and the British 'walking' artist Hamish Fulton and others, to be exponents of an art that should no longer be considered as a distinctive and confined practice, but rather be seen as a range of practices that often cannot be separated from cultural discourse or even political critique.[98] Artworks took on informational and documentary forms, applied a range of new materials, and were often exposed or performed outside of the traditional art venues. Naturally, such a definition includes Metzger's auto-destructive demonstration on the South Bank in 1961, the first art event in public space in the United Kingdom.[99]

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[96] Quoted in Braddock, "From Nature to Ecology : The Emergence of Ecocritical Art History," 1171–72.
[97] Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October*, 1979.
[98] Jacques Rancière has traced the logic of this breakdown of artistic barriers to what he calls "the aesthetic regime" for the identification of art which – roughly speaking – has its origins in the modern breakthrough. This doesn't mean that Krauss is wrong in her description, but rather that postmodernism was not as radical as first thought. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), 22–23.
[99] The following year, he stated: "We take art out of art galleries and museums." Justin Hoffmann, "The Idea of the Art Strike and Its Astonishing Effects," in *Gustav Metzger:Retrospectives. Museum of Modern Art Papers Volume Three*, ed. Ian Cole (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art Oxford Publications, 1999), 26.

Both Lippard and Krauss' ideas are relevant to a range of significant, environmentally oriented artworks in the following decades. The work of American artists Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison exemplify an art that examines complex environmental challenges on a global scale while often proposing local solutions. The Harrisons were deeply committed to creating art involving ecosystems and environmental awareness, Newton Harrison declaring in 1971 that: "My art…has moved into survival because of my obsession with the study of planetary eco-systems. As we all know, they're showing signs of breakdown. I want to know how I will survive – how we'll all survive."[100] Working together from the 1970s until Helen Mayer Harrison died in 2018, the Harrisons introduced global warming as an artistic topic as early as 1973. Their projects investigate a vast range of environmental topics, from agriculture and aquaculture and their its ecosystems in their "Survival Pieces" series such as "Hog Pasture" (1971) and "Shrimp Farm" (1971) to consequences of global warming on the shores of Great Britain, in the more recent work "Greenhouse Britain" (2006-2009), complete with proposals for water barriers and environmentally friendly housing for displaced shore dwellers.[101]

Going even deeper into the ecologies involved in various ecosystems, the German artist Hans Haacke's work is a crucial example of the systems ecology emerging in the mid-1970s as a response to new knowledge on cybernetics, and where social and technological systems took part in an expanding notion of ecology.[102] This expanding ecology is evident in works such as *Rhinewater Purification Plant* (1972) and *Kreefeld Sewage Triptych* (1972), where Haacke effectively demonstrated how interference in technological systems might trigger social feedback that could potentially have environmental consequences. Several scholars, notably T.J. Demos and Sven Lüttiken, have pointed to the legacy of Gregory Bateson's 1972 highly influential book *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* in

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[100] M. Tuchman and J. Livingston, *Eleven Los Angeles Artists. Exhibition Catalogue, 30 September – 7 November 1971.* (London: Hayward Gallery, 1971).
[101] The works mentioned may be seen here: The Harrison Studio, "The Harrison Studio," The Harrison Studio, accessed August 31, 2020, http://theharrisonstudio.net/.
[102] For an introduction to the systems aesthetics as developed by Jack Burnham, see Luke Skrebovski, "All Systems Go: Recovering Jack Burnham's 'Systems Aesthetics,'" *Tate Papers* 5, no. Spring 2006 (2006).

Haacke's work, in which Bateson introduced the idea of 'ecological imbalance,' seeing ecology as natural, social and technological.[103]

While these practices continued to hold a prominent position through the 1980s, object-oriented art reclaimed a strong position within the art field, and much of the more process-oriented art lost some of its radicality in the course of being accepted – and turned a profit on – by the market. In an act that can be seen as the peak of the tendency towards a dematerialization of art, Metzger proposed the "Art Strike 1977-80," encouraging artists to join him in a three-year strike against what he saw as destructive, capitalistic forces in the art world. As Anna-Verena Nosthoff writes on Metzger's work as a response to Adorno's claim of the barbarism of writing poetry after Auschwitz:

> The art strike can be seen as a radical interpretation of Adorno's call for art that articulates itself within an absolute negation. Metzger's silence in this case, however, is not silence in itself; instead, it is an articulated negation of speaking that results in non-speaking, which is articulated as absolute nothingness. It is more of an active affirmation of the negation that then follows and is intended to openly question, specifically, the barbaric impulse underpinning the privatization of the art market as well as art and art criticism's complicity with political ideology.[104]

While Metzger's position on this matter was more committed than most, the basic sentiment was shared with several of his contemporaries. Metzger's 'art-strike manifesto' was published in the catalog of the influential 1974 exhibition *Art into Society: Society into Art – Seven German Artists* the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London,[105] where the artists were specifically engaged in communal discussions and decisions in order to reformulate what an exhibition could encompass and imply. The art strike was, however, an act that consequently led to Metzger being almost forgotten by the broader art world well into the 90s.[106]

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[103] Demos, "The Politics of Sustainability : Art and Ecology," 21 and ; Sven Lüttiken, "Mutations and Misunderstandings: Notes Towards a History of Bio-Aesthetic Practice," *Third Text Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture*, no. 120: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology, Online supplement (2013), http://thirdtext.org/mutations_and_misunderstandings_arc. Lüttiken's argument is connected to an analysis of the work in light of Guattari's transversal connections.

[104] A-V. Nosthoff, "Art after Auschwitz –Responding to an Infinite Demand. Gustav Metzger's Works as Responses to Theodor W. Adorno's 'New Categorical Imperative,'" *Cultural Politics* 10, no. 3 (2014), https://philarchive.org/archive/NOSAAAv1.

[105] On display from 29 October – 24 November 1974 and organized by ICA Curator Sir Norman Rosenthal and writer and curator Christos M. Joachimides, *the exhibition* included artists Albrecht D., Joseph Beuys, KP Brehmer, Hans Haacke, Dieter Hacker, Gustav Metzger, Klaus Staeck and photographer Michael Ruetz. An archival display of documents of the original exhibition was on display at ICA from 19 Jan 2016 – 13 Mar 2016.

[106] While no one followed him, Metzger pursued his project. Refusing to produce more art and thus be a part of the commercial gallery world, he started a silent withdrawal from the art scene paralleling with the surge of market-driven art in the 1980s. Hoffmann, "The Idea of the Art Strike and Its Astonishing Effects," 27.

Challenging the same capitalist, patriarchal power mechanisms as Metzger did, but from a different perspective, the ecofeminist movement shared with the environmental movement a concern for the impact of human activities on our surroundings, while working from the foundational analysis that we live in a gendered world, where women are oppressed and exploited.[107] Ecofeminism evolved as part of the feminist movement in the mid-1970s, along with the environmental movement. Forcefully articulated in Carolyn Merchant's 1980 book *The Death of Nature*, Merchant argues that any critical examination of nature needs to consider the essentialist assumptions of nature's bond to the physical body, seeing how nature had generally been seen as both disordered and feminine, in need of mastery. [108] During the fast-paced industrial development and mass production, leading to a high level of exploitation of natural resources with little concern for its ecological consequences, both women and nature were 'backgrounded,' as environmental philosopher Val Plumwood argues.[109] Connecting this backgrounding to the denial of dependency of nature, which lies at the core of modern capitalism, Plumwood demonstrates how our current climate crisis is ultimately also a feminist question, explaining that by rejecting the assumption that women are linked to nature, we reject to take a stance on the assumption of nature's inferiority to Man. This rejection disengages women from the sphere of nature, without questioning whether nature is inferior or the dichotomy between nature and culture.[110]

Although this dichotomy was somewhat problematic,[111] it served as an inspiration to artists such as Americans Agnes Denes (1931–) and Mierle Laderman Ukeles (1939–), and Cuban-American Ana Mendieta (1948–1985). Agnes Denes' 1968 work *Rice/Tree/Burial* in Sullivan County, New York, where she planted rice, chained trees, and buried a haiku, is generally considered to be one of the earliest

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[107] *Feminism & Ecology* by Mary Mellor, New York Univerity Press, 1997, p.1.
[108] Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature : Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989).
[109] Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (New York/London: Routledge, 1993), 21.
[110] Plumwood, 34.
[111] Ecofeminism may readily be criticized for advocating an essentialist view of women, where there supposedly exist certain gender specific characteristics or properties. If we conceive of nature as something that needs to be cared for, and not a critical agent; it leads to a perception of both nature and women as passive agents. As philosopher and historian of science Carolyn Merchant writes in The Death of Nature, "Such actions seem to cement existing forms of oppression against women and nature, rather than liberating either". Merchant, *The Death of Nature : Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, 16.

large-scale site-specific artworks demonstrating an explicit ecological concern. As a woman pioneering the Land art movement, Denes has been continuously working with planting and restoring ecosystems.[112] For her most well-known work, "Wheatfield—A Confrontation" (1982), over the course of four months, she planted, maintained and harvested two acres of wheat on a landfill near the Battery Park in Manhattan, in a work that comments the twisted modern ecosystem, where food waste and world hunger, commerce, and unsustainable land use walk hand in hand. In her later, monumental earthwork and land reclamation project "Tree Mountain — A Living Time Capsule" (1992–96), 1,000 volunteers planted 11,000 trees on a hill in Finland, in what became the first human-made virgin forest, legally protected for the next four hundred years, acting as a restoration of past and current human-made environmental damage that will outlive generations. In his walkthrough of art and ecology T.J. Demos points out how Denes and similar practices have been understood as ecological by a definition of ecology as "the science of planetary housekeeping," drawn from curator Barbara Matilsky. However, this runs the risk of defusing the political potential of ecology, instead reproducing "the very objectification of nature that has got us into trouble in the first place."

Reminiscent of Land Art but taking an approach more oriented towards systems aesthetics – to borrow the perspective of Demos – Mierle Laderman Ukeles treated a landfill as a human-made sculpture, exploring it as a deposit of what the city had thrown away. Laderman Ukeles' collaborative project with The City of New York Sanitation Department, and around the Fresh Kills Landfill on Staten Island, has been ongoing since the mid-1970s. In her widely recognized *Touch Sanitation* project (1978-80), she personally greeted each of the city's 8500 sanitation workers with a handshake and saluted their work for the sustenance of the local environment by saying: "Thank you for keeping New York alive."[113] While this work is regarded as one of the essential environmental artworks of the 1970s, highlighting the complex relationship between cultural, human society, and its material and natural debris, the

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[112] Agnes Denes Studio, "Agnes Denes," Agnes Denes Studio, accessed August 31, 2020, http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/.
[113] Feldman Gallery, "Touch Sanitation – Mierle Laderman Ukeles," Feldman Gallery, accessed August 31, 2020, https://feldmangallery.com/exhibition/096-touch-sanitation-ukeles-9-9-10-5-1984.

engagement with sanitation – the most industrial form of care – also lets us see the work's feminist underpinnings.

Ana Mendieta produced several earthworks, such as "Silueta Works in Mexico" (1973), where she used her own body to make impressions in sand, the imprint then sprinkled and lined with pigment resembling blood. The final work resulted in a photograph which she further treated by hand[114]. In their introduction to *Practices of Looking,* Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright dwell on Mendieta's use of her own body, while leaving out the ecological connotations of the work. They write: "Mendieta's image is an imprint, an outline that reminds the looker of the historical absence of the hand of the woman artist. She refuses the spectator's gaze on her body by erasing her literal form while leaving its trace."[115] This absence is particularly powerful considering the masculine dominion of Land- and earth art at the time, a connection that is emotionally heightened by Mendieta's coloring of the ground.[116] This coloring describes the relationship between the human body and the land as violent, and one might be tempted to call this a simplistic perspective. However, the disappearance of the imprinting object – the body in this case – can also be read as a media ecological comment, a reminder not only of the material foundations of any piece of photography but also of any piece of art, even the most immaterial cases.

Art historian Eleanor Heartney shows the legacy of the 70s ecofeminist movement in today's environmental art, pointing to Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Agnes Denes, Helen and Newton Harrison, and Aviva Rahmani (*Blue Trees Symphony* (2015-)), Betsy Damon (such as her non-profit organization *Keepers of the Waters* (1991-), Bonnie Ora Sherk (*The Farm* (1974-1980)) and *The Living Library* (1981-)) and Mel Chin (*Revival Field* (1991-)). Arguing for the relevance of ecofeminist art practices today, she draws attention to the fact that these kinds of practices often fail

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[114] The Guggenheim Museum, "Ana Mendieta," The Guggenheim Museum, accessed August 31, 2020, https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/ana-mendieta.

[115] Sturken and Cartwright, *Practices of Looking An Introduction to Visual Culture*, 129 The environmental perspective is, in fact, not mentioned in the book at all.

[116] Surveying interactions between women artists and the environment from the 1960s to today, Jade Wildy provides an insightful assessment of the movement and its development, emphasizing the many women artists working within the field. Jade Catherine Wildy, "The Artistic Progressions of Ecofeminism: The Changing Focus of Women in Environmental Art," *International Journal of the Arts in Society* 6, no. 1 (2011).

"to register in the mainstream art world." [117] This is an important observation that points to the implication of ecofeminist ideas for this dissertation project, where (the critique of) backgrounding of nature is intrinsic in all of the processes of visuality.

2.2.2 The 1980s – 90s

When Joseph Beuys (1921-1986), the prominent German Fluxus, happening and performance artist, presented *7000 Eichen. Stadtvervaldung statt Stadtverwaltung*, in which he planted slow-growing oaks coupled with columns of basalt that lay strewn in front of the Friedericianum, as part of the Dokumenta 7 in Kassel, Germany in 1982, society had already turned its interest away from environmental art. Nevertheless, the project demonstrated the power of his social sculptures or 'gesamtkunstwerk' by extending traditional understandings of the time and space of a sculpture: Time as the life-span of an oak tree could long exceed that of most art objects, and space in that residents of Kassel, demonstrating civil disobedience in the name of art and the name of Beuys, planted their own oak trees in a park-turned-parking lot.[118] The project stood out in an exhibition that was otherwise demonstrating a much more conservative view on art. Dokumenta 7, under the artistic directorship of Rudi Fuchs, was curated with the "aesthetic autonomy of art" in mind, predominantly giving space for paintings and sculpture, in contrast to the socially and politically oriented art that had dominated the 1970s' editions of the exhibition.[119] This development was entirely in line with the current politics at the time, and given Documenta's importance in the international art field, may be seen as demonstrating the turning point from the socially oriented and politicized art field of the 1970s towards a more object-oriented art more suited for museums and a fast-growing international art market.

　　The art field's inwards turn happened on its own but was matched by the anthropocentrism in politics and society in general. Under the UN-led World Commission on Environment and Development, The Brundtland Report of 1987 –

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[117] Eleanor Heartney, "How the Ecological Art Practices of Today Were Born in 1970s Feminism," Art in America, 2020, https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/ecofeminism-women-in-environmental-art-1202688298/.

[118] The work is maintained and continued by "Stiftung 7000 Eichen," Stiftung 7000 Eichen, accessed August 31, 2020, https://www.7000eichen.de/index.php?id=2.

[119] "Dokumenta 7," Dokumenta, accessed August 31, 2020, https://www.documenta.de/en/retrospective/documenta_7#.

Our Common Future – in which the Commission aimed at uniting the world in pursuing a sustainable future – introduced the term "Sustainable Development."[120] In his critique of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Sam Edelman traces the history of sustainable development and its inherent anthropocentrism in international environmental and climate law, arguing against the central argument of the SDGs – the possibility of endless economic growth while also protecting the environment.[121] While neoliberalism arguably was terrible news for the environmental movement, perhaps even for the general interest in environmental art in the 1980s and 1990s, the environmental movement reached important milestones and political recognition on a global level, such as the ratification of the 1987 international treaty phasing out chlorofluorocarbons only two years after they had been proven to destroy the ozone layer. During these years and coinciding with the increased warming of the cold war, two catastrophic events gained massive global media coverage and widespread attention in society at large: The Chernobyl nuclear disaster of April 1986 and the Exxon Valdez oil spill in March 1989. Together with increased knowledge of ozone layer depletion, acid rain, and deforestation, these human-made emergencies further lifted the discussion of environmentalism from a local level and into a global conversation that perhaps did not proliferate in the art field.

Even as Metzger was predominantly missing from the public domain of the 1980s and 90s art scene, many of his radical ideas trickled down to a new generation, but often without their ecological edge. In 1990, British artist Stuart Home declared a new art strike lasting for three years, creating an international movement around it with a highly successful propaganda campaign. The interest in the strike demonstrates that the radical stance towards art production and its inclusion in the capitalist art market resonated in a generation of artists opposing a decade of neoliberalism.[122]

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[120] The World Commission on Environment and Development, "Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future," 1987, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf.

[121] Sam Adelman, "The Sustainable Development Goals, Anthropocentrism and Neoliberalism," in *Sustainable Development Goals : Law, Theory and Implementation*, ed. Duncan French and Louis Kotzé (Cheltenham, Glos ; Northampton, Massachusetts: Edward Elgar, 2018), 15–40.

[122] Home organized British, American, German and Irish art strike committees and edited publications such as The Art Strike Handbook and Art Strike Papers. The notion of the art strike was again awakened in 1996 as an Art Strike stand in the Art is not enough exhibition at the Stendhalle in Zurich Hoffmann, "The Idea of the Art Strike and Its Astonishing Effects," 26–28.

Meanwhile, British artist Cornelia Parker took another approach to avoiding the object. She has expressed Metzger's influence on her "Avoided Objects" series, where she sees forces of destruction as a way to 'avoid' the object, often by way of shooting, burning, or exploding the objects.[123] The same influence may just as readily be found in her pivotal work "Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View" (1991), where she had a garden shed blown up by the British Army, and the remaining fragments hung from the ceiling, exposing and suspending the explosion process in time and space.

Another reaction against the commodifiable art object can be found in the relational art of the 1990s. This art form often demonstrated a return to the belief in the social and political potential in art, reminiscent of the 1970s, while putting significant weight on the processual development of the artwork as a relation to and with the individual audience-participator. In the late 1990s, Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija, who was central in the development of relational art, founded *The Land Foundation*,[124] where he built a community on a plot near Chiang Mai in Thailand as a place for discussions and experimentation on sustainable ways of life, environmental recovery, renewable energy, and local food production. The term 'Relational aesthetics' was coined by the French curator Nicholas Bourriaud in his influential book *Relational Aesthetics* where he identified a generation of artists who included the audience as participants in a social environment. Artists such as Tiravanija and the French artists Philippe Parreno, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, and Pierre Huyghe all frequently transformed the museum and gallery environments through site-specific installations, while often questioning the status quo in politics of representation.[125] While Bourriaud's notion of seeing art as producing a 'model of sociability' comprised of human relations and their social context is reminiscent of Joseph Beuys's social sculptures, Bourriaud leaned heavily on the fluid notion of

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[123] See her essay in Cornelia Parker, "Avoid the Object," in *Gustav Metzger:Retrospectives. Museum of Modern Art Papers Volume Three*, ed. Ian Cole (Oxford: Oxford Museum of Modern Art, 1999).

[124] "The Land Foundation," The Land Foundation, accessed August 31, 2020, https://www.thelandfoundation.org/.

[125] Nicholas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Les Presse Du Reel, 2002) First published in French in 1998, the book was published in English in 2002. The term has been heavily critiziced, among others by; Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October*, no. 110 (2004): 51–80 For a nuanced discussion of the relevance of the term, see; Anthony Downey, "Towards a Politics of (Relational) Aesthetics," *Third Text : Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture* 21, no. 3 (2007).

art's possibilities developed by psychoanalyst and philosopher Félix Guattari in his 'ecosophy', put forward in *The Three Ecologies* (1989). Guattari describes different registers of ecological thought and action, such as the 'environmental', 'social', 'mental', 'cultural' or 'political', pointing out the artist as embodying a powerful ability for dynamism and 'transversality' between these registers.[126] These ideas would prove vital to the art that engaged with environmental perspectives in the following years. At the same time, these perspectives had significantly developed during the 1990s.

When the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), consisting of leading climate scientists, was initiated by the UN in 1989, their assessment reports on climate and climate change became the primary, reliable source of climate science. The first UN's Earth Summit for politically led climate negotiations on a global level was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Three years after, in 1995, the Second Assessment Report by the IPCC concluded that human influence on the Earth's climate was "discernible", a statement which marks the first official announcement of human-led climate change.[127] As subsequent political negotiations leading to the Kyoto-agreement gained massive media attention, the term climate change disseminated into society at large. While the causes fought for by the environmental movement had often been highly visible and largely localized to communities, and people's everyday lives, the long-term and often remote consequences of climate change, such as sea-level rise, ocean acidification, frequent heat waves, and intensified storms are harder to comprehend. When topics related to climate change started to circulate in mass media in the mid-1990s, the traditional environmental movement had lost some of its social momentum, and it took some time before the concerns of global warming were articulated in artistic practices.

2.2.3 The 2000s

Demonstrating with force the relational and transversal potential of art, Olafur Eliasson's majestic, artificial sun and inclusive atmosphere in *The Weather Project*

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[126] Felix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2008).
[127] The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "IPCC Second Assessment Climate Change 1995 : A Report on the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change," 1995, 22, https://archive.ipcc.ch/pdf/climate-changes-1995/ipcc-2nd-assessment/2nd-assessment-en.pdf.

(2003) drew two million visitors to the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, where they lounged and picnicked beneath the artificial sun. Less spectacular but equally invested in creating dialogue was the part where Eliasson surveyed people's interest in and thoughts on the weather through questionnaires in London cabs and among the museum staff, encouraging a broader conversation on climate change and its local manifestations.[128] Three years later, when Al Gore's documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*[129] (2006) was first released, the public conversation on global warming intensified.[130] The art field grew increasingly interested in questions of how art could contribute to the discussion on climate change, as seen when – coinciding with the COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009 – there was a wave of large-scale exhibitions giving attention to both the historical dimension of environmental art as well as trying to unpack art and ecology within a contemporary climate reality. *Radical Nature, Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet* at the Barbican Art Centre in London, included major works of Land Art, environmental activism, experimental architecture and design.[131] *Life Forms* at the Bonniers Konsthall in Stockholm, an exhibition set out to reveal how the relationship between nature and culture, human and landscape was depicted in contemporary art,[132] *Rethink Contemporary Art & Climate Change*, the Nordic exhibition in 2009-2010 at several major Copenhagen art institutions, exploring the role of contemporary art within the climate change discussions and how art might contribute to a wider public commitment to the climate issue.[133] *Nature Strikes Back, Man and Nature in Western Art*, also in Copenhagen, "addressing humanity's relationship with nature from the Renaissance up until the present day," were equally important exhibitions in a Nordic context.[134] Exhibitions such as these,

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[128] The project and the survey is presented in Susan May, ed., *Olafur Eliasson : The Weather Project* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003).

[129] Davis Guggenheim, *An Inconvenient Truth* (USA: Paramount, 2006). The film documents a lecture on the climate crisis given by former presidential candidate Al Gore, as part of an effort to communicate the climate crisis in which he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007.

[130] See for example John Cook, "Ten Years on: How Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth Made Its Mark," The Conversation, accessed August 30, 2020, https://theconversation.com/ten-years-on-how-al-gores-an-inconvenient-truth-made-its-mark-59387 in which Cook refers to several studies discussing its impact on public opinion.

[131] the Barbican Art Center, "Radical Nature : Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet," accessed August 5, 2020, https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2009/event/radical-nature-art-and-architecture-for-a-changing-planet.

[132] Sara Arrhenius and Magnus Bergh, eds., *Life Forms* (WS Bookwell, Finland: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 2009).

[133] Witzke and Hede, *Rethink : Contemporary Art & Climate Change*.

[134] Hanne Kolind Paulsen and Henrik Holm, eds., *Nature Strikes Back : Man and Nature in Western Art* (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 2009).

as well as transdisciplinary research programs, [135] contributed to lifting the value and relevance of eco-art at the time and in the following years.

The threat of climate emergency has been picked up in different manners. A subset of the eco-art of the 2000s offered solutions or hopeful responses to environmental problems and climate change. Examples include Natalie Jeremijenko and Tomas Saraceno, who offer alternatives to the traditional critical environmental art, and their work may be seen as demonstrating the artistic and ecological potential in technological progress. Natalie Jeremijenko's work blends art, experimental design, engineering, environmentalism, biochemistry, and social engagement, exploring the opportunities for social and environmental change that lies within new technologies. In her *xDesign Environmental Health Clinic* at New York University, people can get 'prescriptions' on how to act to resolve environmental issues.[136] A similarly hopeful approach to environmental issues can be found in Saraceno's techno-optimistic work, albeit of a very different format and aesthetics. *Biospheres*, a series of sculptures and installations heavily influenced by ideas of networking and ecology, are frequently included in exhibitions on climate change and nature in the 2000s. The interconnected spheres take up the shape of bubbles, are often filled with water and plants, and suspended in air akin to spider webs. People are sometimes allowed to enter the spheres, partaking in the ecology of the biosphere, a gesture highlighting the viewer's role as an active participant in the real, global environment.[137]

Where Saraceno's propositions for living with global warming are idealistic, artistic renditions of future life, Tue Greenfort, with whom he has exhibited several times, addresses climate change in more pragmatic ways. Greenfort provides sensible solutions while acknowledging the harsh realities of real-world politics. In the 2016

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[135] Such as the Arts & Ecology programme developed by The RSA and Arts Council England, which ran from 2005 - 2010 and resulted in the anthology Max Andrews, ed., *Land Art : A Cultural Ecology Handbook* (London: The RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) in partnership with Arts Council England, 2006); Emily Eliza Scott describes a selection of artist-generated research platforms. Emily Eliza Scott, "Artist's Platforms for New Ecologies," *Third Text Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture*, no. 120: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology, Online supplement (2013).

[136] See for instance Amanda Schaffer, "Prescriptions for Health, the Environmental Kind," *The New York Times*, 2008, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/12/health/12clin.html.

[137] Saraceno's projects and exhibitions are listed on his website, "Studio Tomás Saraceno," accessed August 30, 2020, https://studiotomassaraceno.org/.

duo exhibition with Toril Johannessen, *NORSK NATUR* (Norwegian Nature) at the Norwegian National Museum for arts,[138] Greenfort expressed this analytical methodology in works such as *Exceeding 2 degrees*, conceived initially for the 2007 Sharjah Biennial, which displayed an air-conditioner set for 2 degrees higher than normal for the museum venue, mirroring the UN and IPCC prognosis of global warming. The installation calculated the saved cost of electricity, and an equal amount was then used to buy – and save – part of an Amazonian rainforest.[139] Greenfort and Johannessen extended their discussions on deep ecology to the exhibition, where the artworks were to be considered as organisms within an ecosystem, each room closed off from the next by a site-specific intervention.[140]

Johannessen, however, offers no solutions, remaining in an inquiring mode, as in the project *Liquid Properties* (2018). Together with Dutch artist Marjolijn Dijkman Johannesen researched the normally invisible ecosystem of microorganisms, algae, and microplastics below water on the Oslo waterfront, exhibiting their result as an installation and outdoor projection of the video *Reclaiming Vision*.[141] This penchant for a scientific approach can be found among a significant number of younger artists. One example being *States of Inflammation* (2019), the contribution of Norwegian artist Ane Graff to the *Weather Report: Forecasting Future* group exhibition in the Nordic Pavilion at the 2019 Venice Biennial. The work consisted of three glass cabinets containing ecosystems made through microbiological experiments with

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[138] "NORSK NATUR. Toril Johannessen Og Tue Greenfort," The Norwegian National Museum, accessed August 30, 2020, https://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/utstillinger-og-arrangementer/museet-for-samtidskunst/utstillinger/2016/norsk-natur.-toril-johannessen-og-tue-greenfort/.

[139] Luke Skrebowski has noted how this work, as installed at the Sharjah Biennial, in its ecologically oriented institutional critique reminds us of Hans Haacke's Recording of Climate in Art Exhibition (1969–1970). See Luke Skrebowski, "After Hans Haacke: Tue Greenfort and the Problem of an Eco-Institutional Critique," *Third Text : Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Art and Culture* 27, no. 1 (2013): 115–30.

[140] In addition to several other works, the exhibition included Johannessen's In Search of Iceland Spar and her series Words and Years (2010-2016), where she displays the statistical results of her search for words in science journals within a given time period, such as Wilderness in Nature and Revolutions in Time, pointing to a possible correlation between changes in the political climate and the relevance of said terms. The exhibition was inspired by Johannessen and Greenfort's trip to filosopher Arne Næss' cabin in Norway where they discussed deep ecology. Næss' holistically oriented eco-centric philosophy argues on the grounds of ethics that all species and living organisms have equal status, and that biodiversity should be at the basis of all international policy. Arne Næss, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy.* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989) Næss' ecosophy opposes the more anthropocentric social ecology advocated by Murray Bookchin, where humans and social development are set at center stage, and where environmental problems are seen as consequences of social issues. Bookchin view of nature entails that nature need not be preserved for its own sake, unless it challenges production or human survival not to intervene, and sees nature predominantly as a resource readily available for human gain. .

[141] The Munch Museum, "Toril Johannessen Og Marjolijn Dijkman 'Liquid Properties,'" 2018, https://www.munchmuseet.no/utstillinger/arkiv/2018/marjolijn-dijkman-og-toril-johannessen---liquid-properties/.

bacteria, industrial waste, trans fats, phthalates, and silica. Highlighting our interconnectedness with our surroundings and the increasingly unnatural state of our bodies, where pollutants and bacteria may affect our behavior as well as our genes, the work was exhibited along with an installation of seaweed in *A Great Seaweed Day* by Swedish artist Ingela Ihrman and the sculptures *Compost* and *Dead Hedge* made by organic material found in the Giardini area, by Finnish artist duo Janne Nabb and Maria Teeri.[142]

Similarly concerned with what we discard and how it affects human lives, Vik Muniz's project and video *Waste Land* (2010), directed by Lucy Walker, documents the creation of large self-portraits of garbage, produced by individuals making a living off of collecting recyclable materials in toxic waste dumps in Rio de Janeiro.[143] In *Crystal of Resistance*, Thomas Hirschhorn's installation for the Swiss Pavilion at the 2012 Venice Biennial, Hirschhorn transformed the pavilion into a cave filled with e-waste, discarded media technologies that are typically transported to countries south of Sahara for 'recycling' of valuable minerals.[144] While Amanda Boetzkes, in her book *Plastic Capitalism: Contemporary Art and the Drive to Waste* has conceptualized Hirschhorn and other, similar practices within visual culture as constitutive of the ecological consciousness in today's neoliberalist society,[145] compelling analyses from a media studies perspective are Sophia Kaitatzi-Whitlock's "E-waste, Human-waste, Infoflation,"[146] highlighting both the growing e-waste production and its accompanying 'infoflation' of wasted communication, and Jon Raundalen's "Tech Support: How Technological Utopianism in the Media is Driving Consumption,"[147] where he unveils the lack of environmental press ethics in the media coverage on new media technologies.

[142] Office for Contemporary Art Norway, "Venice Biennale 2019," 2019, https://www.oca.no/venice-biennale/venice-biennale-2019-20190511-0915/.

[143] Lucy Walker, *Waste Land* (Arthouse Films (US), 2010).

[144] "Crystal of Resistance," Thomas Hirschhorn, accessed August 30, 2020, http://www.thomashirschhorn.com/crystal-of-resistance/.

[145] Amanda Boetzkes, *Plastic Capitalism Contemporary Art and the Drive to Waste* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2019).

[146] Sophia Kaitatzi-Whitlock, "E-Waste, Human-Waste, Infoflation," in *Media and the Ecological Crisis*, ed. Richard Maxwell, Jon Raundalen, and Nina Lager Vestberg (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2015).

[147] Jon Raundalen, "Tech Support: How Technological Utopianism in the Media Is Driving Consumption," in *Media and the Ecological Crisis*, ed. Richard Maxwell, Jon Raundalen, and Nina Lager Vestberg (New York: Routledge, 2015), 99–120.

The question of resource management, which lies at the root of our approach to waste, has been central to several key Sami works from the 2000s, and Sami art has experienced international attention in recent years, with a prominent attendance at Dokumenta 14 in 2017.[148] While serious attempts of a decolonizing of the Nordic art field has been the main reason for the attention given to Sami art since 2015,[149] the increased awareness of the backgrounding of indigenous art in the art field at large may also be connected to the increased interest in environmental art. Britta Marakatt-Labba's monumental embroidered tapestry *Historja* (2003-2007), depicting the ecology of Sami life in Sápmi, the Fennoscandian region, was nominated as one of the ten most significant works on display.[150] Máret Anne Sara's *Pile o' Sápmi Supreme* (2017) developed for Dokumenta 14, shows 400 reindeer skulls installed as a hanging tapestry, as a protest against Norwegian resource management politics forcing Sami reindeer owners to reduce their livestock, an act that would reduce their chance of upholding a livelihood.[151]

The subjects raised by Sami artists relate to the subjects raised by artists invested in questions of postcolonial globalization, in situations where technology has transformed natural environments. The Swiss artist, curator, and researcher Ursula Biemann has presented valuable perspectives on the relationship between rights of nature on local levels and climate change on a global level. In *Black Sea Files* (2005), she researched the Caspian oil geography and the pipeline pumping crude oil through the Caucasus, and in *Egyptian Chemistry* (2012), she portrayed the River Nile and its hydroengineering. Biemann's *Forest Law* (2014), made in collaboration with the architect Paulo Tavares, is a video essay and accompanying book based on research carried out in the Ecuadorian Amazon, mapping the historical, political, and ecological dimensions of trials on the right to nature, between indigenous nations in

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[148] "Sámi Artist Group (Keviselie/Hans Ragnar Mathisen, Britta Marakatt-Labba, Synnøve Persen)," Dokumenta 14, accessed August 30, 2020, https://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/13551/sami-artist-group-keviselie-hans-ragnar-mathisen-britta-marakatt-labba-synnove-persen-.

[149] Office for Contemporary Art Norway, OCA, has worked extencively for the visibility of Sami art in recent years.

[150] Nikita Mathias, "The Beauty of Things Going Wrong," *Kunstkritikk Nordic Art Journal* (Oslo, 2017), https://kunstkritikk.com/the-beauty-of-things-going-wrong/; The work may be seen here: KORO, "Historja – Britta Marakatt-Labba," KORO, accessed August 31, 2020, https://koro.no/kunstverk/historja/.

[151] Maret Anne Sara, "Pile o'Sápmi," Pile o'Sápmi, accessed August 31, 2020, http://www.pileosapmi.com/.

the Amazon and companies invested in extraction of oil, gas, and minerals.[152] Similarly, the Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky's *Oil* project,[153] which traces the petroleum industry from extraction to its destination in car culture. As Catherine Zuromskis has argued, his work, such as diptych *Oil fields #19* of an oil field in Belridge, California, depicts the shift in portrayals of the wilderness landscape to a petromodernity where the infrastructural installations appear "inseparable from the geography they inhabit."[154]

Zooming in, Palestinian artist Jumana Manna's video *Wild Relatives* (2018) shows the labor demanded by local and global survival, in a work portraying the effort of an agricultural research center in Aleppo to preserve and plant their back-up of the world seed bank – the Svalbard Global Seed Vault – while relocating to Lebanon due to the Syrian Revolution turning into war in 2012.[155] The American-Cuban artist duo Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadillas' work is similarly historically and critically oriented, subtly revealing power structures and the violence being exerted upon the landscape of Vieques, Puerto Rico, by the American military and their nuclear bomb testing, such as in *Land Mark (Foot Prints)* (2001-2002), *Returning a Sound* (2004) and *Under Discussion* (2005). While *A Man Screaming Is Not a Dancing Bear* (2008), a video integrating film footage shot in a New Orleans house and the Mississippi delta with the rhythmic drumming sound of window blinds problematized effectively the damage brought on by nature together with structural, societal, and political failure in the New Orleans area post-Katrina.[156]

While these and countless more artistic practices have continued to pose the question 'what must be done?', the increasingly alarming reports by the IPCC made the grim realities of global warming clear both on a political and societal level during

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[152] The works may be seen here: Ursula Biemann, "Art and Videos," Geobodies, accessed August 31, 2020, https://www.geobodies.org/art-and-videos.

[153] "Oil," Edward Burtynsky, accessed August 31, 2020, https://www.edwardburtynsky.com/projects/photographs/oil.

[154] Catherine Zuromskis, "Petroaesthetics and Landscape Photography: 'New Topographics,' Edward Burtynsky, and the Culture of Peak Oil," in *Oil Culture*, ed. Ross Barrett and Daniel Worden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 291.

[155] Jumana Manna, "Jumana Manna," accessed August 31, 2020, https://www.jumanamanna.com/.

[156] I base my knowledge of the works on this exhibition: "Allora & Calzadilla," Nasjonalmuseet for kunst, arkitektur og design, accessed August 31, 2020, https://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/utstillinger-og-arrangementer/museet-for-samtidskunst/utstillinger/2009/allora--calzadilla/; which I reviewed here: Synnøve Marie Vik, "Rapporter Fra Frontlinjen," *Billedkunst* (Oslo, 2010); Images of their works can be seen here: "Allora & Calzadilla," Lisson Gallery, accessed August 31, 2020, https://www.lissongallery.com/artists/allora-and-calzadilla.

these years.[157] Still, the period coincided with an unprecedented increase in the production of oil and gas globally.[158] The fossil fuel industry claimed new frontiers. One followed the breakthrough in the development of extraction processes of shale gas and tar sand fracking, enabling the US to step up as a major producer, to the significant disadvantage to local communities around the fracking sites and pipelines, who suffer from polluted groundwater and land expropriation. Another frontier was the prospect of opening up the fragile Arctic region for extraction. The powerful interests both from private and public sectors made international climate negotiations increasingly difficult. Despite victories such as the Paris agreement in 2015, where all nations agreed to carry out ambitious efforts to combat climate change,[159] practical results are slow to manifest.

2.2.4 Remember Nature

In these somber circumstances, Hans Ulrich Obrist, artistic director of the internationally renowned Serpentine Galleries in London[160] and one of the most influential people in the art world,[161] in January 2020 announced that the Serpentine would "go green" to mark their 50th anniversary. "Ecology will be at the heart of everything we do," he stated.[162] A range of past events and exhibitions show that a focus on ecology was already a central part of the Serpentines' curatorial practice.[163] And even if the last year has shown several exhibitions on art and ecology in Tate,

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[157] The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), "IPCC Reports," United Nations, accessed August 5, 2020, https://www.ipcc.ch/reports/.

[158] See International Energy Agency, "Oil Information: Overview," accessed August 5, 2020, https://www.iea.org/reports/oil-information-overview and; International Energy Agency, "Natural Gas Production in the OECD, 1960-2019," accessed August 5, 2020, https://www.iea.org/data-and-statistics/charts/natural-gas-production-in-the-oecd-1960-2019.

[159] United Nations, "The Paris Agreement," n.d., https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement.

[160] The Serpentine Gallery was established in 1970, with an extension opening in 2013, creating two venues for contemporary art in Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park, London. Since 2000 they have also commisioned a yearly, temporary summer pavilion in the garden by a leading architect or artist. See https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/

[161] Hannah Ellis-Petersen, "Hans-Ulrich Obrist Tops List of Art World's Most Powerful," The Guardian, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/oct/20/hans-ulrich-obrist-tops-list-art-worlds-most-powerful-artreview-power-100.

[162] The institution also appointed a curator dedicated to ecology, as the first contemporary art institution to do so. Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Hans Ulrich Obrist: 'Ecology Will Be at the Heart of Everything We Do,'" *The Art Newspaper*, February 20, 2020, https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/archive-leaders-hans-ulrich-obrist-look-to-artists-to-shape-the-future; Garreth Harris, "How London's Serpentine Galleries Is Going Green for Its 50th Birthday," The Art Newspaper, 2020, https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/50th-anniversary-serpentine-galleries.

[163] Their long-term research project General Ecology examines environmental issues and climate change through artistic projects, and Back to Earth in 2020 invited artists, thinkers, designers and architects to create works that respond to the climate emergency The Serpentine, "General Ecology," The Serpentine Galleries, n.d., https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/general-ecology/.

Victoria & Albert, and Royal Academy of Art in the UK, to name but a few, for an institution of the Serpentine's standard and ability to announce that ecology will be such an integral part of their identity, entails a shift in gravity when it comes to the field of art and ecology. In many respects, the galleries are demonstrating an ecocritical assessment of their own productions and activities, and the symbolic effect of their gesture should not be underestimated.

Obrist attributed the shift in focus to the legacy of Gustav Metzger. Metzger had developed a strong connection to the Serpentine Galleries, holding a major retrospective exhibition there in 2009 – *Gustav Metzger: Decades 1959 – 2009*,[164] and developing his practice in a social and dialogue-based direction, with the 2014 *Mass Media: todayandyesterday.co.uk* event, the corresponding Serpentine's *Extinction Marathon: Visions of the Future*, a conference co-curated by Metzger, [165] and *Remember Nature*, a nationwide day of action on November 4th, 2015, initiated by Metzger.[166] These events can be said to draw inspiration from the article "nature demised resurrects as environment" (1996) in which Metzger reflects critically on how, during his lifetime, "[t]he term Nature is dropped, and replaced by Environment."[167] He sees environment as that which is created by humanity as we make our way in nature, the only thing left at this point. The article attacks the environmental consensus around sustainability, and which Metzger thought was not only unclear, but damaging, since it did not challenge either authoritarian corporate rule, or the military-industrial complex, or any of the other institutions that support the destruction of nature as well as our environment. Written at the height of the

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[164] "Gustav Metzger : Decades 1959-2009," The Serpentine Galleries, accessed August 5, 2020, https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/gustav-metzger-decades-1959-2009/ While it was his first retrospective at Oxford Museum of Modern Art in 1998 that had revived his practice, the Serpentine exhibition showed the relevance of his work to a wide audience and brought him back into the international art scene, perhaps at what couldn't have been a more timely time for his environmentally dedicated practice to reach a new audience.

[165] The Serpentine Galleries, "Extinct.Ly," 2014, http://extinct.ly/ Mass Media: todayandyesterday.co.uk was Metzger's first digital work, where art students spent two days collectively searching for and cutting out newspaper articles on 'extinction', creating a collage, while the event was broadcast online. The event coincided with the Extinction Marathon: Visions of the Future, where artists, writers, scientists, film-makers, theorists and musicians and more were invited to present on the topic of Extinction, which was documented and expanded online.

[166] "Remember Nature," 2015, https://remembernaturegustavmetzger.wordpress.com/ The event was attended by art schools across Britain and was produced by Andrea Gregson (UCA Farnham), Jo Joelson and Bruce Gilchrist (London Fieldworks), Hans Ulrich Obrist (Serpentine), Alex Schady (Central St Martins, UAL), Alex Thorp (Serpentine Gallery) and more, in partnership with Serpentine Gallery, Central St. Martins University of the Arts, London and University for the Creative Arts, Farnham. .

[167] Gustav Metzger, *Damaged Nature, Auto-Destructive Art* (Nottingham: Coracle@workfortheeyetodo / Russell Press, 1996), 8.

liberal wave of the 1990s, Metzger sees barely any difference between the environmental destruction of the Communist bloc and the capitalist West, the only difference being that capitalism had been willing to "incorporate the clean-up process as part of the long-term strategy."[168] The strategy did not account for the global warming following the greenhouse effect, however, and Metzger points out that sustainability understood in these terms is a cynical stance, weighing the destruction of our life-world – causing tremendous loss – against the needs of financial actors.

Read today, Metzgers furious, radical sadness seems both foreign and extremely recognizable. The relevance of his critique of both the term "the environment" and of sustainability can be illustrated by looking to how the debate over the term ecomodernism has played out. In 2007, former environmental activists and communication professionals Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger proposed "the death of environmentalism," formulating a now well-known critique of environmentalism for harboring a view of nature as separate from humanity, a view that, within the dominant right-wing political climate and the climate emergency unraveling, they found to be unhelpful at best and harmful at worst.[169] "An ecomodernist manifesto" from 2015 encapsulates the culmination of these ideas, where nuclear power, urbanization, intensified agriculture, aquaculture and industrialization are seen as having "potential to reduce human demands on the environment".[170] Political ecologists Giorgos Kallis and Sam Bliss trace the development of this movement, originating in the perceived failure of US environmentalism, attempting to fix this failure with a contradictory mix of liberal economics and political ecology.[171] Kallis and Bliss show how Nordhaus and Shellenberger try to push through a radical environmental agenda by conforming their rhetoric to the neoliberal state of politics and end up supporting the technical, environmental solutions that conservatives and corporations had supported all along.

[168] Metzger, 20.
[169] Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, *Break Through: From the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility,* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007).
[170] "An Ecomodernist Manifesto," 2015, http://www.ecomodernism.org/manifesto-english.
[171] Kallis Giorgos and Sam Bliss, "Post-Environmentalism: Origins and Evolution of a Strange Idea," *Journal of Political Ecology* 16, no. 1 (2019), https://journals.uair.arizona.edu/index.php/JPE/article/view/23238.

In one sense, Metzger's view of nature as something radically nonhuman belongs to a bygone era. Nature proper cannot exist other than as an ideological construct if we are to follow the lead of Bruno Latour. In an extraordinarily influential discussion on the relationship between the sciences and politics, he suggests instead that we see nature and society as specific forms of public organization that are ever more entangled, rather than different domains of reality.[172] In another sense, however, Metzger's view of our current situation in the Anthropocene – a term he would not have been familiar with in 1996 – is all too apt: it is no longer possible to see nature.[173] Indeed, the realization that we had moved into a new geological era forced Latour to think through the cornerstones of his project:

> While the older problem of science studies was to understand the active role of scientists in the construction of facts, a new problem arises: How to understand the active role of human agency not only in the construction of facts, but also in the very existence of the phenomena those facts are trying to document?[174]

The Anthropocene poses a series of problems for any science dealing with human activity. As Metzger puts it: "It is not just that Nature is wiped out: it is our memory that is overturned."[175]

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[172] Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004), 9–52.
[173] Metzger, *Damaged Nature, Auto-Destructive Art*, 10.
[174] Bruno Latour, "Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene," *New Literary History* 45 (2014): 2.
[175] Metzger, *Damaged Nature, Auto-Destructive Art*, 23.

3.   Theoretical perspectives

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the dissertation through an examination of four theoretical concepts central to the five articles, namely the Anthropocene, violence, technology, and visuality. I do not aim to present a full account of these terms and all the theories that are attached to them; instead, I will limit the examination to how the concepts are deployed in my analyses in the five articles. Thus, this chapter will forgo surveying the scope of these concepts for an exploration of a carefully chosen selection of theoretical impulses. The framework has been guided by the research questions, the dissertation's empirical material as well as driven by an interest in assessing the relevance of the concepts to the diverse image material. The individual articles engage with these terms and concepts in different ways, in part because the analyses were developed over several years. Nevertheless, my dependence on the Anthropocene, violence, technology, and visuality as concepts have been strengthened as the dissertation project progressed, resulting in a – relatively speaking – consistent and defined theoretical framework. However, as the extended introduction offers an opportunity to explore the articles seen as a whole, I will, on occasion, widen the scope of theoretical perspectives to include scholarly ideas and arguments that have not been mentioned in the individual articles.

3.1 The Anthropocene

The entirety of the visual material I deal with in this dissertation is produced within the Anthropocene period. This fact makes it evident how the Anthropocene is both a material context for the images and my writing, as well as an analytic tool in my analyses. Nevertheless, the application of the term varies: In the first three articles, the Anthropocene is only invoked in the form of its manifestations as global warming and the ecological crisis, which I explicitly lay down as a vital foundational setting for the analyses, as well as in the contextual framework of the anthologies in which the articles were included: "Damaged Nature: The Media Ecology of Auto-Destructive Art" was included in an anthology on the ecological crisis from a media

perspective, and "Petro-images of the Arctic and Statoil's Visual Imaginary" was included in an Anthropocene-oriented anthology on the Arctic. In "Toril Johannessen's *In Search of Iceland Spar*: Truth and illusion in the Anthropocene," which was included in an anthology on artistic representations of the Anthropocene North, conceptualizations of the Anthropocene forms integral parts of the analyses. Similarly, conceptualizations of the Anthropocene are also part of the analysis in "Mold in the Machine: Nature and technology in *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*" as their narratives display the social and material realities of the period.

Origins

Anthropocene, the name originating from the Ancient Greek word 'anthropos,' meaning "human being" and "kainos" or "cene," meaning "recent, new" is the proposed term for the unique time in history where human activity has permanently changed the earth to the degree that we now speak of a new geological period. The highest level of Greenhouse gas in the atmosphere in one million years, a hole in the ozone layer, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, the sixth mass extinction, our waste forming new sediments of earth, our massive shifting of land masses surpassing that of all natural processes of erosion and rivers – all these human-made changes to the environment and earth contribute to the shift from the Holocene to the Anthropocene period.

The starting point and scope of the Anthropocene has, however, been under debate ever since the proposal of a new period was put forth in 2000 by the originators of the term, atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and biologist Eugene Stoermer. Crutzen and Stoermer dated it to the beginning of the Industrial Age at the start of modernity and a fast-paced industrial and agricultural development that changed the earth and the environment at a higher speed than ever before.[176] While the Anthropocene Working Group, under the International Union of Geological Sciences, the professional organization in charge of defining earth's time scale, published a formal vote on May 21st, 2019 that the Anthropocene should be treated as a formal chrono-stratigraphic unit, with the primary guide for its base being

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[176] Crutzen, "Geology of Mankind."

stratigraphic signals from the mid-twentieth century, where plutonium isotopes from nuclear testing appear in the earth's crust, meaning this would mark the beginning of the Anthropocene.[177] Despite, or perhaps partially because of, this uncertainty, a range of scholars have deliberated the scope and potential implications of the term to a great extent and within many academic disciplines, including within the environmental humanities and in relation to visual culture.

Narratives

The uncertain delineation of the Anthropocene is consequential, as it provides the users of the term ample opportunity to place it within their own analysis of how this situation came to be. As mentioned, the starting point for the Anthropocene is now officially considered to be marked by the droppings of the nuclear bomb. This dating adds a new perspective to Gustav Metzger's practice. His turn towards auto-destructive art coincided with his involvement with the nuclear disarmament movement and his ethical injunction to see and protest human damage to nature though his art was born from his humanist ideals and having outlived the Holocaust. From the onset of his artistic practice in the 1950s, Metzger can be found to critically observe and explore the relationship between nature and technology as a fundamental aspect of the Anthropocene, decades before the term was proposed. My analysis of Toril Johannessen's *In Search of Iceland Spar,* on the other hand, was written when Crutzen's hypothesis of the Enlightenment period as the starting point for the Anthropocene was still dominant. As the work deals directly with the Anthropocene by revealing the geological foundations of modernity's technological progress and the history of geological exploitation that facilitated this progress, this was a fitting historical and conceptual framework.

In "The Geological Turn. Narratives of the Anthropocene," the French historian of science Christophe Bonneuil outlines four different narratives of the Anthropocene that stretch into both the past and the future: The "naturalist" narrative is the traditional narrative that presumably leads to the Anthropocene condition: it

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[177] Working Group on the 'Anthropocene,' "Results of Binding Vote by AWG" The proposal from the Anthropocene Working Group has not yet been ratified by its parent bodies, the Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy and the International Commission on Stratigraphy. .

"tends to reproduce the grand narrative of modernity, that of Man moving from environmental obliviousness to environmental consciousness, of Man equaling Nature's power, of Man repairing Nature."[178] The "post-nature" narrative "heralds the Anthropocene as the Ends of nature," where nature does not exist except as a cultural and technological construction, and where Man has taken control. This is the narrative argued for by eco-modernists such as Latour, Shellenberger, and Nordhaus.[179] The "eco-catastrophist" narrative believes that the modernist project of infinite growth has led us to the limit while refusing the post-nature belief in finding our savior of green technology. Instead, it puts its faith in low-tech and community-led environmental solutions.[180] And finally, the "eco-Marxist" narrative, sometimes called the "Capitalocene" as it began with European capitalist expansion in the sixteenth century, is based on the unsustainable 'world-system' of capitalism, "its inability to maintain nature" and where technical, economic and social development is always understood as entangled in systems of exploitation.[181]

Bonneuil's list of narratives serves as a helpful overview of different conceptualizations of the relationship between human society and its natural foundations today. Just as importantly, however, Bonneuil underlines how whichever narrative one sees fitting for one's purpose, the narrative is performative and powerful. It will contribute to shaping "the kind of geohistorical future we will inhabit."[182] This reminder is timely both for my understanding of the term and how it is applied in the analyses, whom all tend to move in the direction of an "eco-catastrophist" narrative. This narrative is, naturally, not always supported by the image material itself. The most significant discrepancy can be found between my analysis and Statoil's PR photography, as they are perfect emblems of limitless growth, at worst clueless to the ongoing climate emergency, at best believing other parts of the modernist project to be able to create "the good Anthropocene." However, one might also point to how Olafur Eliasson's work can be read as quite

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[178] Christophe Bonneuil, "The Geological Turn. Narratives of the Anthropocene," in *The Anthropocene and the Global Environmental Crisis: Rethinking Modernity in a New Epoch*, ed. C Hamilton, F. Gemenne, and C Bonneuil (London: Routledge, 2015), 23.
[179] Bonneuil, 24.
[180] Bonneuil, 26–27.
[181] Bonneuil, 29.
[182] Bonneuil, "The Geological Turn. Narratives of the Anthropocene."

literal illustrations of "the post-nature narrative," as presented by Bonneuil. The works demonstrate how it is entirely possible to artificially construct an immediate or phenomenological experience of nature and natural phenomena, as a means of acknowledging our interconnectedness with our surroundings.

One can also find an affinity between "the eco-Marxist narrative" and the article "Mold in the Machine" much due to historical themes of exploitation, suppression, and neglect found in the analyzed material. Art historian T. J. Demos has expanded the scope of the Anthropocene and given the term a broader significance while criticizing its anthropocentric and Western-oriented worldview. In his book *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and the Environment Today* (2017), Demos reasons that we need to see the climate emergency that manifests the Anthropocene as part of a much more comprehensive discussion on violence and power, incorporating the suppression of races and gender by capitalist society beginning as early as the colonization of America.[183] Setting aside the problematic aspects of such an expansion – such as its inherent Americentrism and weakening of the concept's geological specificity – it is fitting to highlight that the long history of suppression of the people of the Louisiana Gulf Coast is closely tied to the violation of landscapes. While my analyses where I identify nature as violent and violated were developed in parallel to Demos' argument, the history is the underlying premise for the disasters at play in *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* – subsidence and land loss – underscoring the point that any ecocritical discussion of the visual representation of the Louisiana Gulf coast will need to account for the colonial history embedded in the landscape.

While Demos' approach to the Anthropocene is decidedly historical, and therefore necessarily humanist to a degree, philosopher and literary scholar Timothy Morton deals with the climate crisis in a way that foregrounds our fetishization of the present, by way of a geological – and thus nonhuman – understanding of time. Morton develops his notion of an "ecology without nature" as a response to what he considered to be an unfruitful legacy of romanticism within mainstream ecological

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[183] Demos, *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today*.

thinking: the divide between humans and 'nature' as 'other.'[184] Morton furthers this project of overruling environmentalism's notion of nature by introducing the concept of the hyperobject. As much as a hyperobject is an abstract concept is also decidedly "real," "objects in their own right."[185] And, in line with Morton's overall philosophical framework of object-oriented ontology, "things that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans"[186] and "genuine nonhuman entities that are not simply products of a human gaze."[187] Examples are ecosystems, black holes, and, notably, climate change. Urging us to move past environmentalism's focus on the present – its phenomenological approach to our surroundings and nature – Morton argues instead for aligning our sense of time with that of geological time.[188] This alignment can be achieved by engaging with the hyperobject as a concept for thinking "ecology without matter" and "ecology without the present,"[189] as the hyperobject prevents us from being stuck in the present, enabling us instead to encounter the Anthropocene through its local manifestations – drought, or floods, storms, and mold, as is the case in *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*.

Morton further develops his understanding of nature in *Dark Ecology*, arguing that with the event of the Anthropocene, we now understand that we never were apart from nature and that we neither were in control of nature.[190] Hyperobjects make us realize that climate change is, at the same time, a direct consequence of our actions, but nevertheless out of our control. We suddenly learn how everything we do – all mundane activities of everyday life, be they driving, throwing away garbage, or flushing water – affect nature. This realization of the entanglement of our lives with all other beings, Morton argues, is forcing a revolution in human thought, manifesting as a dark ecology, where we need to learn that we can only live with it since science can offer no easy solution.

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[184] Morton, *Ecology without Nature : Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* Morton further develops this concept in; Timothy. Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010) and; Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects. Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
[185] Morton, *Hyperobjects. Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, 2.
[186] Morton, 1.
[187] Morton, 199.
[188] Morton, 92.
[189] Morton, 92.
[190] Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology. For a Logic of Future Excistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016) Although not referenced in the articles, the argument is relevant to the analysis in the context of the dissertation.

Morton may be considered one of the most widely read philosophers writing on nature and the Anthropocene within the art field in recent years, and his conceptualizations of an "ecology without nature," "hyperobjects," and "dark ecology" have become influential within the environmental humanities as well as shaped the current, mainstream views on nature and global warming within the art field. [191] While Morton's conceptualization of the hyperobject is problematic in several ways, first and foremost as Morton repeatedly contradicts himself when characterizing hyperobjects, as Ursula Heise has pointed at in a review,[192] I consider his philosophical probings to be relevant to the theoretical context of this dissertation, as they offer a convenient set of tools for thinking about the larger picture of the representation of nature in the articles. How to conceptualize nature within the Anthropocene, and how to comprehend the Anthropocene through its equally difficult-to-grasp manifestations: global warming and the impending climate emergency.

Aesthetic practice

In the article "Mold in the Machine," I argue that *Beasts of the Southern Wild* enlists the tools of cinema to express "the Anthropocene as an aesthetic practice," an expression formulated by film scholar Jennifer Fay in her book *Inhospitable World: Cinema in the Time of the Anthropocene* (2018). Fay argues that cinema enables us to "glimpse anthropogenic environments as both an accidental effect of human activity and a matter of design."[193] She reminds us how cinema has always been about creating artificial worlds, simulating our own, including weather conditions. Fay urges us to consider the aesthetic practices with which we have met the climate crisis and the aesthetic effects it has produced, to gain a full understanding of our current situation. I take her argument as a motivation for the kind of analyzes made in this dissertation, where explorations into representations of nature in art and visual culture may inform our understanding of the Anthropocene.

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[191] Morton has been applauded by Hans Ulrich Obrist, repeatedly invited to lecture at exhibition openings for Olafur Eliasson and others and contributed to Björk's retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2015.
[192] Ursula K. Heise, "Ursula K. Heise Reviews Timothy Morton's Hyperobjects," *Critical Inquiry*, 2014, https://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/ursula_k._heise_reviews_timothy_morton.
[193] Fay, *Inhospitable World: Cinema in the Time of the Anthropocene*, 4.

While Fay writes specifically about cinema – and as such, *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* are easily read into her narrative – we might consider exploring her framework in relation to the other parts of this dissertation's material, images produced for and in other media and genres. For instance, Fay formulated "the Anthropocene as an aesthetic practice" years after the publication of the article on Olafur Eliasson. Still, we may easily see how Eliasson's installations are perfect examples of an artistic practice employing scenographic tools similar to cinema, to enable the audience's perceptual engagement with the Anthropocene. The "uncanny aesthetic effects" of cinema may be an equally apt description of Eliasson's artificially constructed, immersive installations, where the technological set-up and material preconditions are contributing to the effect. Similarly, the beautiful colors and formations of the ever-transforming liquid crystals in Gustav Metzger's auto-creative works, or the brush strokes of the acid paintings in his auto-destructive performances, may leave us – quite literally – with the feeling of "dread that emerges from a brush with (and even self-canceling preference for) the mechanical or the mystical."[194] Cinematic world making is not the same as the world making of art, but the defamiliarizing process set in motion by cinema is not inherently exclusive to that genre.[195]

3.2 Violence

Violence is an important concept with a rich history within visual studies.[196] My specific application of the term 'violence' in this dissertation refers to the duality of nature as violent and violated, a dichotomy that in this context is closely tied to the

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[194] Fay, 3.

[195] Fay employs the term "strangeness", perhaps due to her opening reference to Bertolt Brecht. Fay, 3.

[196] More or less recent explorations in visual studies include W. J. T. Mitchell's analysis of the multitude of "wars of images", including the violent role played by images in the war on terror. W.J.T. Mitchell, *Cloning Terror* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); The contributions made in the anthology Ethics and Images of Pain probes what we can learn from exploring the hurtful and haunting potential of images of pain. Asbjørn Grønstad and Henrik Gustafsson, eds., *Ethics and Images of Pain* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2012); Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites discuss photography's role in the public memory of trauma. Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Ariella Azoulay's discussion on the civil contract of photography explores the violence rendered unto those who are invisible in a society and what kind of connection there exists between this violence and photography. Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone Books, 2008); Henrik Gustafsson reflects on the depiction of landscapes in the wake of violent encounters. Henrik Gustafsson, *Crime Scenery in Postwar Film and Photography* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019).

destructive forces of technology and technological progress. The outset for my thinking on violence can be found in the destructive forces of Gustav Metzger's auto-destructive art, which problematizes the violent destruction brought by technology onto nature and the environment while demonstrating the creative potential of destructive acts and other forms of destruction. In other parts of the dissertation, the approach to violence is more oblique, as when dealing with Olafur Eliasson's installations and photography where the aesthetic potential in the violent forces of nature – volcanoes, waterfalls, rivers – lead to a discussion on the creative potential in nature's relationship to technology. Similarly, I argue that Toril Johannessen's investigation into the limited nature of our geological world through her digital search for calcite may be understood as an invitation to look for the inherent violence in all forms of resource extraction, a central aspect of the grand narrative of the Anthropocene. This connection between extraction and violence takes on a more prominent role in my discussion on Statoil's photography, where the violence is present – but notably not visible. The local consequences of fracking, the threat of future extraction in the fragile Arctic ecosystem, and the global implications of the climate crisis are all kept out of sight by the proclaimed authority of their visuality. Violence is most explicitly analyzed in the fifth article. Offering a direct representation of violence, *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* forcefully display the violent forces of nature, but also nature as violated. The analyses of the series and film engage in a discussion demonstrating the slow violence exerted by society at large towards its vulnerable communities. This is a violence of neglect asserted by class and government onto the landscape and those living there, that is made visible through manifestations of mold or the damage brought on by floodwater.

Slow Violence

Literary Scholar Rob Nixon's conceptualization of *slow violence*, developed in relation to the environmentalism of the poor, offers a valuable theoretical perspective to the discussions on the relationship between nature and technology. Writing from the perspective of postcolonial literary studies and environmental humanities, Nixon theorizes slow violence by connecting a range of literary and political forms of resistance with environmental catastrophes. Slow violence, Nixon argues, is a

specific form of violence that accompanies a warming planet, but that is easily

overlooked, as it does not make a grand entrance through spectacle or speed. Instead,

it "occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is

dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as

violence at all."[197] As the emergence of slow violence is always facilitated by

discrimination, Nixon sees the act of identifying forms of slow violence as an ethical

and political responsibility, an especially crucial task at a time of the Anthropocene's

climate emergency. As Nixon writes:

> Discrimination predates disaster: in failures to maintain protective infrastructures,
> failures at pre-emergency hazard mitigation, failures to maintain infrastructure,
> failures to organize evacuation plans for those who lack private transport, all of
> which make the poor and racial minorities disproportionately vulnerable to
> catastrophe.[198]

The connection he is making between discrimination of poor and racial minorities

and material and infrastructural consequences is highly relevant to the analysis of the

events unfolding in *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*. Slow violence is easily

located in the impersonal violence experienced by the protagonists of both *Treme* and

Beasts of the Southern Wild, in lack of maintenance of the levees, in the failure to

evacuate the people of New Orleans both before and after the storm, in the absence of

immediate and long-term aid in the aftermath of the storms, in the unwillingness to

help the Bathtubbians continue their lives in the Bathtub, and importantly, in the

landscape, in the form of the long-term violence of neglect produced by the unseen

power of society: As demonstrated in my analyses, the slow violence in *Treme* and

Beasts of the Southern Wild is tied to a centuries-long politics of identity and race,

with its inherent and often violent power structures discriminating the (traditionally

Black and indigenous) people of the Louisiana coastline, through land subsidence.

My analysis leans on Stephanie LeMenager's argument concerning the BP blowout,

where she points to the uncanny fact that despite a massive distribution of its brute

realities through media, US politics has not made subsidence a matter of national

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[197] Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, 2.
[198] Nixon, 59.

concern, which raises "the question of when the Gulf Coast fell out of the US territorial imaginary."[199]

Although not part of the analytical framework for the first four articles, slow violence may be found throughout the image material in this dissertation. Slow violence is embedded in the landscapes subjected to the extraction of fossil fuels, as depicted by Statoil. Slow violence may even be found in Olafur Eliasson's images of people in cars and the overflowing rivers they try to cross, given the increase in precipitation due to global warming. It is an integral part of the history of technological progress that Toril Johannessen researches, and in the broader reference to the waste produced by the very same progress, articulated both in Johannessen and Metzger's work. One might argue, however, that Metzger's most overtly environmentally oriented projects such as *Mobbile* and *Project Stockholm*, where he visualized the consequences of exhaust fumes from car engines – an unevenly distributed social problem in all the world's great cities – illustrate slow violence to the greatest effect.

Violent and violated matter

Violence as a slow event is equally present in the mold that followed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Developing as an ominous threat, visible in the water-damaged homes, while at times only making its appearance as smell, in the analysis of *Treme,* I propose to see it as an agent in its own right. This analysis is enabled by Jacques Rancière's philosophical divide of all things into things and beings through a partition of our sensible world,[200] and which political theorist Jane Bennett has further developed (or collapsed) into her theory of "vibrant matter." By coining this term, Bennett makes an argument for seeing things, or what she calls matter, as vibrant, embodying a vitality, not unlike Bruno Latour's understanding of "actants," as that which has the ability to produce effects.[201] As Bennett writes: "By "vitality" I mean the capacity of things – edibles, commodities, storms, metals – not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with

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[199] Stephanie LeMenager, "Petro-Melancholia: The BP Blowout and the Arts of Grief," in *Energy Humanities An Anthology*, ed. Imre Szeman and Dominic Boyer (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 476.
[200] Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*.
[201] Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, 75, 237.

trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own."[202] This approach to matter challenges the mechanistic, anthropocentric worldview reigning since René Descartes (1596-1650), which laid the foundation for the exploitation of nature that resulted in the Anthropocene. Bennett's extension of vitality to both dead and living entities allows us to think of the storm and the mold in *Treme* as vibrant matter, whereas in *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, all aspects of Hushpuppy's relationship to her surroundings articulate Bennett's understanding of the vitality of all things. Seeing mold and storms as vibrant matter also enables us to see them as a *violent matter*. This sense of materiality as vibrant and vital is not at odds with Toril Johannessen's incorporation of calcite as an agent in the history of science. While not applied in the first three articles, the technologies involved in Metzger's auto-destructive art may just as easily be understood by these terms. His use of the expression "damaged nature" instead of "nature" or "the environment" also entails thinking of nature as a whole as vibrant and vital, violent, and violated.[203] Similarly, the notion of vibrant matter is in line with the understanding of the rivers and streams engaging in a topological cross-talk in Eliasson's installations. In contrast, Statoil's visuality aims to present the landscape as entirely subjected to their technological mastery, erasing, or at least controlling any trace of vitality or vibrancy.

Bennett's position has been criticized by media theorist Joanna Zylinska in her book *Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene* from 2014.[204] Zylinska's project[205] is, to a large extent, congruent to that of Bennett. However, in her discussion on the politics of the Anthropocene, Zylinska posits that "Bennett's politics is not political enough"[206]: There are several reasons for this, but most relevant to this context is that Zylinska points out that Bennett's widening of democracy to include nonhuman materialities in political ecology, does not account for what Chantal Mouffe has

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[202] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter, a Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 8.

[203] Metzger, *Damaged Nature, Auto-Destructive Art*, 8.

[204] Zylinska describes her ethics as "minimal in the sense that it is non-systemic (i.e., it does not remain rooted in any large conceptual system) and non-normative (which is to say, it does not rest on any fixed prior values, nor does it postulate any firm values in the process)." Joanna Zylinska, "Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene," Open Humanities Press, 2014, 21, http://openhumanitiespress.org/books/download/Zylinska_2014_Minimal-Ethics-for-the-Anthropocene.pdf.

[205] Zylinska aims to develop an understanding of the Anthropocene "as a designation of the human obligation towards the geo- and biosphere, but also towards thinking about the geo- and biosphere as concepts". This entails a post-Anthropocentric thinking, which does not operate with definitions of the environment or nature as separate entities, rather from an interest in the "dynamic relations between entities across scales". Zylinska, 19, 20.

[206] Zylinska, "Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene."

called the "democratic paradox," that sees liberal democracy as built upon a tension between different ideas and principles "that can never be overcome but only negotiated away."[207] Zylinska finds that Bennett does not adequately account for the philosophers' role in speaking "*about* and *for* other actors."[208]

Zylinska's criticism may well be levied against my project. I would, however, first say that my engagement with nonhuman entities here has been mediated through images and that my discussions are more directed towards how matter is understood and conceptualized in these images, rather than with matter itself. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, by focusing on the dichotomy between violent and violated matter, I try to highlight this "democratic paradox" as both nature and humanity – with its technological extensions – may be characterized by these terms. The violence exerted by technology creates violent natural reactions, threatening the social and material infrastructures built to feed and support us while protecting us from the natural forces. This catch-22 shows us that the compartmentalization of modernity does not scale up to a planetary level, overruling the nature-culture dichotomy.[209]

3.3 Technology

As a keyword used in the research questions of this dissertation, technology naturally plays a crucial role in all the articles. Technology and its creative and destructive abilities are central motifs in Statoil's PR photography. Technology functions as a facilitator for the representation of nature, as in Eliasson's photography and installations. Further, technology is integral to transformational processes of landscapes and environments –in *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, as well as in Metzger's and Johannessen's artworks. Importantly, I argue that that the images,

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[207] Zylinska, 133.
[208] Zylinska, 133.
[209] As journalist and professed city-dweller David Wallace-Wells notes: "The force of retribution will cascade down to us through nature, but the cost to nature is only one part of the story; we will all be hurting. I may be in the minority in the feeling that the world could lose much of what we think of as "nature," as far as I cared, so long as we could go on living as we have in the world left behind. The problem is, we can't." Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*, 36.

through their depiction and application of technologies, engage the media ecologies of which they are part.

Extensions of man

The examination of technology in these articles take their starting point in Marshall McLuhan's famous and sweeping 1964 definition from *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, of technology as "extensions of humanity."[210] As McLuhan develops his thinking throughout the book, it becomes clear that he divides his definition into "*extensions of the body*" and "*extensions of cognitive functions*" such as senses, as understood by P. Brey, who sees McLuhan connecting technology to "an amplification or acceleration of existing human faculties or behaviors."[211] However, Steffen Steinert has made clear how that while this definition may be valid, and perhaps even the best definition within extension theory, it entails "a characterization of every external means to realize our intention."[212] This unspecificity about what differentiates technology from other forms of extensions puts it at risk of being "philosophically uninteresting."[213] Nevertheless, my primary concern for a functional definition of technology is not to explicate the nature of technology but to find a serviceable concept that sits well with the wide-ranging image material I am analyzing. For instance, this expansive definition sits well with Gustav Metzger's work. As stated in one of his manifestos, "auto-destruction art is the transformation of technology into public art," he continues by listing up what such technologies might be:

> Materials and techniques used in creating auto-destructive art include: Acid, Adhesives, Ballistics, Canvas, Clay, Combustion, Compression, Concrete, Corrosion, Cybernetics, Drop, Elasticity, Electricity, Electrolysis, Electronics, Explosives, Feedback, Glass, Heat, Human Energy, Ice, Jet, Light, Load, Mass-production, Metal, Motion Picture, Natural forces, Nuclear energy, Paint, Paper, Photography, Plaster, Plastics, Pressure, Radiation, Sand, Solar energy, Sound, Steam, Stress, Terra-cotta, Vibration, Water, Welding, Wire, Wood.[214]

The list includes natural elements in the form of water and sand, as well as forces such as energy, pressure, and stress, which points to Metzger's comprehensive

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[210] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 7–21.
[211] P Brey, "Technology as Extension of Human Faculties," *Metaphysics, Epistemology, and Technology. Research in Philosophy and Technology* 19 (2000): 2.
[212] Steffen Steinert, "Taking Stock of Extension Theory of Technology," *Philosophy & Technology*, 2015, 72.
[213] Steinert, 71.
[214] Metzger, *Damaged Nature, Auto-Destructive Art*, 59.

understanding of technology, which comes close to McLuhan's definition. Broad as it may be, the definition proves useful for the diverse image material analyzed in this dissertation, offering a possibility to see technology as ranging from cars and photographic apparatuses to cities and large-scale infrastructure, as well as taking part as technologies in specific media ecologies. Additionally, it opens up new avenues for our understanding of technology, as we consider the position of humans in the present and future Anthropocene.

      There are other approaches to technology that would seem equally relevant, and perhaps more revealing than McLuhan's wide-reaching definition, the most obvious one being Martin Heidegger's conceptualizing of the term.[215] His examination leads to the definition of 'enframing' – meaning both man's challenge to "reveal the real […] as standing-reserve" and creation in the sense of *poiesis* – as modern technology's essence.[216] Many elements in Heidegger's theorizing suggest his relevance for my project, especially his position that modern technology challenges man to reveal "nature […] as the chief storehouse of the standing energy reserve,"[217] and that we may find technology's "saving power" in the arts.[218] When I choose not to let Heidegger's perspective guide my approach, I do so mainly because he is looking for something which I am not: Heidegger's objective is to reach an understanding of technology's essence, which he states unequivocally is not to be found in the technological itself, seeking instead the hidden principle that lies beyond the two descriptive definitions that he finds are operative around him: "One says: Technology is a means to an end. The other says: Technology is a human activity."[219] These two definitions, the instrumental and the Anthropological, amount approximately to McLuhan's definition.[220] My project does not lead me to investigate the essence of technology. Rather I am specifically interested in the concrete instances of technology in my analysis of the image material. I am not certain that a

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[215] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays.* (New York/London: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), 3–35.
[216] Heidegger, 20–21.
[217] Heidegger, 21.
[218] Heidegger, 34–35.
[219] Heidegger, 4.
[220] This is not to say that Heidegger's and McLuhan's perspectives on technology cannot be combined, as they are for instance both proponents of a sort of soft technological determinsm. See Michael Heim, "The Computer as Component: Heidegger and McLuhan," *Philosophy and Literature* 16, no. 2 (1992): 304–19, https://doi.org/10.1353/phl.1992.0016.

heideggerian perspective could not have been incorporated into the project. However, the trajectory of Heidegger's analysis seems to suggest some points of divergence, as when writing:

> Yet an airliner that stands on the runway is surely an object. Certainly. We can represent the machine so. But then it conceals itself as to what and how it is. Revealed, it stands on the taxi strip only as standing-reserve, inasmuch as it is ordered to ensure the possibility of transportation.[221]

I am as interested, if not more, in the airliner as a piece of material technology than in revealing its essence.

The understanding of technology as extensions of human faculties includes examples such as the extraction technologies controlled by Statoil, and more unorthodox technological iterations such as the technical apparatuses set up in Eliasson's installations, or Metzger's list of advantageous technologies for art for industrial societies. Although both Metzger and Eliasson rely on technology in the creative process, Metzger leads our attention to the uncontrollable aspects of technology, while the analysis of Eliasson's work demonstrates his technical precision and control. At the same time, Eliasson's use of natural elements such as water and lava stones might be seen as "natural technologies," similar to Metzger's extended definition of technology.

The definition also includes technology as infrastructure, ranging from buildings to cities, levees, and means of transportation, in which we find technology to be both violent and violated. This duality and its manifestations in technology is related to the development of, and proposed end to modernity. The Anthropocene and its major consequence, global warming, confronts us with the failings of modernity, which facilitates the slow violence affecting local communities. The social distribution of technology has violent consequences, especially for communities located at the borders of areas where technological progress has changed the landscape the most. This violence is strikingly palpable in the face of the collapsing levee system in *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, and in the weak societal response in the aftermath of the storms. Against the storms and floods, infrastructure, both working and malfunctioning, become tools of violence.

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[221] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 18.

Finally, seeing technology as an extension of human faculties allows for the inclusion of technologies of visualization, such as the photographic apparatus and other camera technologies needed to photograph the Icelandic landscape formations in Eliasson's photographic work, or Statoil's fracking sites at sunset, where the technology of photography is instrumental in creating the visuality that Statoil aspires to, in that it allows for the sites to be photographed from the specific angles, height, and distances, and repeatedly so with several similar sites, creating a pattern of repetition. Toril Johannessen's printed e-mail correspondence and photography is in itself an inquiry into the geological foundations of our technologies of visualization, presenting us with the looping interconnectedness of technologies. Additionally, this project is a study of the relationship between nature and technology through images, which means that the content is, by necessity, technologically mediated. Mediation makes the questions of media ecology, its materialities, and social ramifications relevant at all times, regardless of what the images depict.

Material characteristics and consequences

All these forms of technologies point us in the direction of their materiality, but none more so than Gustav Metzger's practice. His auto-destructive art, where the destructive process of the materials is both provoked and displayed, is a pertinent reminder to look for the materiality and material consequences of any technology. The analysis in "Damaged Nature" sees auto-destructive art as relevant to our current media technological reality, where technological progress and a profit-driven market has resulted in increasingly fast-paced disposal of technological devices. This material reality is found in the often-dangerous mining for minerals needed for these devices, as well as in the massive material waste resulting from the disposal of old devices, both of which are normally hidden to us, predominantly in underdeveloped countries. Both his auto-destructive and auto-creative works demonstrated technology's materiality through destructive and creative processes. His concern with technology's material consequences for the physical environment was the underlying ethical injunction in his practice. Through these artistic processes, Metzger communicated an ethics of technology, offering an ecologically oriented approach to

media and media technologies, where no new materials or objects were created and added to the world, except for the possible remains of the destructive process.

These material consequences of media technologies and the need for an ecocritical awareness of both media practices and their scholarly contexts have been articulated by media studies scholars such as Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller in *Greening the Media*, and in *Media and the Ecological Crisis*, edited by Maxwell, Jon Raundalen and Nina Lager Vestberg.[222] Several of the artistic practices mentioned in this dissertation aspire to the same awareness, much as Maxwell and Miller see the potential of humanistic approaches to have if we emphasize its ecological context. As they write:

> [Humanistic approaches'] focus on the symbolic environment would be enhanced by articulating links between the environmental impact of media technology and, say, media representations of the environment, from Romantic ideas of machines in the pastoral idyll to depictions of technological remedies for natural disasters in popular film, fiction, and TV. Such as transformation could link the synthetic chemical ecology that people have introduced to the Earth as they have developed the media.[223]

In parallel with these efforts, Jussi Parikka has contributed to the discussion of the problematic aspects of technological waste, showing how we are quickly creating new geological sedimentations out of technological, human-made waste. In *The Anthrobscene,* Parikka proposes the notion of *deep time* to describe how media live on in the toxic waste that makes up a new geological layer of earth,[224] an idea which is expanded in *A Geology of Media*.[225] Seeing these direct connections between geology and media is an uncanny reminder that the materiality of our technological devices will long outlive the content we store and stream on them. This point has also been made by Sean Cubitt, in *Finite Media: Environmental Implications of Digital Technologies*, in which he specifically ties digital media to environmental degradation.[226] Cubitt formulates an eco-political media aesthetics that rethinks the

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[222] Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller, *Greening the Media* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Richard Maxwell, Jon Raundalen, and Nina Lager Vestberg, eds., *Media and the Ecological Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 2015).
[223] Maxwell and Miller, *Greening the Media*, 11.
[224] Jussi Parikka, *The Anthrobscene* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
[225] Parikka, *A Geology of Media*.
[226] Sean Cubitt, *Finite Media: Environmental Implications of Digital Technologies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017).

way we communicate and cohabitate with each other, while also seeking to overcome the nature-human distinction through acknowledging our interlinked ecology.

Toril Johannessen's archival study of calcite is such an articulation of the connection between media technologies and their material consequences, perhaps made all the more striking because she is dealing with a technology that is far from new, but through digital media technology. The analysis of *In Search of Iceland Spar,* on the other hand, demonstrates and reflects upon the geological foundations of the history of science and technology. The resulting display includes images of microscopes and calcite, pointing to the scientific development of technology as a social practice, and the materiality of science. Technology is, in this sense, a representation of humanity's ability and wish to know and control nature.

Metzger's work highlights the ecological context of all technologies as he reveals the uncontrollable aspects of any act involving technology. What Metzger demonstrates in his manifestos and performances alike is that all we may know for certain is the preconditions for the technological process. Once the performance has started, we hand our control over to the apparatus and the process. We may, in this regard, see auto-destructive art as an invitation to think about the act of dematerializing as an act of loss. Dealing with loss and things disappearing today have become increasingly alien to us. This estrangement is relevant from a contemporary, technological perspective because, having grown accustomed to the possibility of taking and saving endless numbers of photographs in digital clouds, we nurture the idea of them being eternally preserved, the past readily accessible to us. The availability of everything is, of course, a faulty conclusion, unhelpful at best, and dangerous at worst: Not only is cloud storage, as shown by Cubitt, quickly developing to become a major source of CO_2-emissions, but the memory practice of cloud storage also keeps us from realizing the material consequences of the Anthropocene. Loss is highly present in the Anthropocene, as biodiversity and species loss, as well as irrevocable changes to earth systems, entails that the past is lost to us, never to be reaccessed. We are presented with a paradoxical relationship between how the media affects our material and intellectual environments.

Media ecologies

In line with the thinking of technology as extensions of human faculties and capabilities, several of the analyses of technology included in this dissertation examines the image material through the conceptual lens of media ecologies. Further developing Marshall McLuhan's analysis of media environments, media theorist Neil Postman introduced the term in 1968, as a study of "the ways in which the interaction between media and human beings give a culture its character and, one might say, help a culture to maintain symbolic balance,"[227] or simpler, as "the study of media as environments."[228] It is important to note that Postman and his collaborators chose the term to underscore

> the fact that human beings live in two different kinds of environments. One is the natural environment and consists of things like air, trees, rivers, and caterpillars. The other is the media environment, which consists of language, numbers, images, holograms, and all of the other symbols, techniques, and machinery that make us what we are.[229]

This separation between natural and media environments has been tremendously important but is, of course, also deeply problematic. Media ecology's history of reception is much too long to even broach in this format. However, a vital development to our understanding of the term was brought about by Matthew Fuller's materialist media ecology, as explained in his *Media Ecologies: Materialist Energies in Art and Technoculture*, in which Fuller makes an early argument for considering the interactions between media systems and networks while acknowledging their material basis. [230]

The analysis of Metzger's work in "Damaged Nature: The Media Ecology of Auto-destructive Art" relies on Jacques Rancière's essay *What Medium Can Mean*[231], in which he, true to traditional media ecological thinking, expands the notion of a medium's means to include the configuration of a specific sensory milieu.[232] Writing

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[227] Neil Postman, "The Humanism of Media Ecology," *Proceedings of the Media Ecology Association* 1 (2000): 11.
[228] Neil Postman, "What Is Media Ecology?," Media Ecology Association, accessed August 17, 2020, https://media-ecology.wildapricot.org/What-Is-Media-Ecology.
[229] Postman, "The Humanism of Media Ecology," 11.
[230] Matthew Fuller, *Media Ecologies: Materialist Energies in Art and Technoculture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005).
[231] Jacques Rancière, "What Medium Can Mean," *Parrhesia Journal*, no. 11 (2011), http://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia11/parrhesia11_ranciere.pdf.
[232] One might ask whether there is any great distinction between the French 'milieu' and the English 'environment'. While the term in French has a wide range of meanings, in English its meaning is much more limited, and mainly a synonym to 'environment'. The choice of using 'milieu' also in the English translation of Rancière may contribute to occlude the similarities between Rancière's thesis and the standard media ecological thinking.

specifically about photography, Rancière's understanding of the sensory milieu importantly includes both the milieu where artistic performances are *inscribed,* but also includes the milieu that the artistic performances contribute to *configure,* the socio-technological world of our society.[233] Rancière applies the term mediality to pinpoint the interrelation between a technological apparatus (the medium), our idea of art, and the sensible milieu.[234] Rancière's thesis advocates a technological turn of aesthetics, where the multitude of useful technologies suggested by Metzger seems appropriate. Rancière's technological turn implies an expansion of the possible technologies that can work as human extensions, neutralizing the distinction between means and ends, and materials, technologies, and sensory milieus. Gustav Metzger's auto-destructive and auto-creative art could very well be understood in terms of Rancière's notion of mediality. However, Metzger's ethical and environmental commitment, as exemplified by his emphasis on the material foundations and consequences of all technologies, demands that a media ecological discussion needs to account for the ecological impact of all technological apparatuses and their media environments. This need is made explicit as the sensory milieu Metzger's work participates in both was and is the Anthropocene.[235]

A central theoretical framework used as an analytical tool in "Nature as Image" is Jussi Parikka's text *Media Ecologies and Imaginary Media*, in which he reframes nature as media within a topological media ecology.[236] Parikka writes about an art project where several subtle natural processes are reconceptualized as mediating events.[237] By topological media ecology, he means an ecology where the nature of the medium might change, but with a set of unaltered relational properties. He sees the processes of nature and media to be connected by the expansion,

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[233] Rancière, "What Medium Can Mean," 35–36.

[234] Rancière, 37.

[235] It is interesting to note how Metzger formulates a media critique not dissimilar to that of Neil Postman. Metzger ties his media criticism to his greater ecological critique of capitalism. Metzger, *Damaged Nature, Auto-Destructive Art*, 13–15; Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death : Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (London and New York: Penguin Books Ltd, 1985).

[236] Parikka, "Media Ecologies and Imaginary Media: Transversal Expansions, Contractions, and Foldings."

[237] An integral component in Parikka's understanding of a medium is Claude Shannons concept of "empty" information. CE Shannon, "A Mathematical Theory of Communication," *The Bell System Technical Journal* XXVII, no. 3 (1948): 379–423, http://www3.alcatel-lucent.com/bstj/vol27-1948/articles/bstj27-3-379.pdf.

contraction, and folding of time and space,[238] including forms of nature and animal perception in his definition of media:

> Media ecology involves an expansion of media to include a number of processes, objects and modes of perception, motility and relationality that are not usually seen as media in its modern, cultural sense; in this expanded mode, media becomes an ethological relationality rather than merely a technological object. Hence, media ecologies can take its cue as much from flows and streams of nature or the modes of perception of animals as from conventional media technologies.[239]

Thus, this view of media ecology is a radical widening of the view inherited from McLuhan of media as extensions of man. In this, Parikka's expansion of media is not unlike Jane Bennett's effort to include matter itself into democratic and ecologic thinking.

By opening up for a variety of media, Parikka argues that media ecologies may engage in "transversal communication" or "cross talk" between such media of nature and media culture.[240] Cross talk functions as a "topological method in art"[241] that extends to nature and entails looking for "[…] what *could* act as a medium; what flows, what carries, what bends time and space".[242] Parikka's analyses of eco-art projects show how imaginary media – where imagination should be understood as realizing the potentiality that lies within any form of media – functions as a creative practice where time must be understood as a "rewiring of potentialities" and "a continuous shifting of emphases." He specifically connects this with our perception of the "stillness of nature," which is brimming with possibilities, including as sites of capitalist exploitation.[243] These theoretical concepts are applied in the analysis of the cars, rivers, and waterfalls in Eliasson's installations and photography, which may be seen as involved in such a topological cross talk, resting upon and revealing the material basis of the works. Although not applied in any of the other analyses, the notion of topological cross talk could very well provide an alternative approach to the extensions to nature made by and in the rest of the analyzed image material, as in the connection between the fracking installations, the landscape and the oil in Statoil's PR images.

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[238] Parikka, "Media Ecologies and Imaginary Media: Transversal Expansions, Contractions, and Foldings," 36.
[239] Parikka, 46.
[240] Parikka, 46.
[241] Parikka, 38.
[242] Parikka, 45–46.
[243] Parikka, 46.

While these media ecological analyses provide rich perspectives on the relationship between nature and technology in Metzger and Eliasson's artistic practices, also the analysis of Toril Johannessen's *In Search of Iceland Spar* engages with a media ecological perspective. Her research, the geological object, its geographical locations, and their global connections, its scientific and human implications, and its aesthetics may be seen as engaging with a material media ecology. However, my analysis of Johannessen's work moves on from the focus on materiality and into an exploration of how media ecologies, following Neil Postman, structure "(…) what we can see and say, and therefore, do."[244] I find that these mechanisms are best described through the concept of 'visuality.'

3.4 Visuality

In his form of "critical visuality studies," Nicholas Mirzoeff formulates visuality in a quite particular sense, turning away from the social practice of vision – as proposed by W.J.T. Mitchell[245] – while developing our understanding of the power structures of visuality further, as a means to actively oppose visuality. Mirzoeff reminds us that visuality was a tactic of war formulated by historian Thomas Carlyle concerning eighteenth-century military operations. As Carlyle demonstrated in his 1840 lectures *On Heroes*, it was the general's – the Great Man's – responsibility to visualize the complex battlefield, with the aid of all forms of information, knowledge, and experience available.[246] As Mirzoeff writes: "Visualizing was and is a hierarchical, indeed autocratic, means of imagining the social as permanent conflict (…). Its goal is to maintain the authority of the visualizer, above and beyond the visualizer's material power."[247] After the military visuality, according to this line of thinking, modernity produced the visuality of "the Empire," "the West of the Cold War, "the Market," and now finally, the visuality of the Anthropocene.[248] Accordingly, Mirzoeff sees visuality as a "specific technique of colonial and imperial practice,

[244] Postman, "What Is Media Ecology?"
[245] Mitchell, "Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture," 248.
[246] Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*, 3.
[247] Mirzoeff, "Visualizing the Anthropocene," 216.
[248] Mirzoeff, 216.

operating both at "home" and "abroad," by which power visualizes History to itself. In so doing, it claims authority, above and beyond its ability to impose its will."[249] The other side of this coin is the impulse among the dominated to break free from visuality's authority, claiming a "right to look" to establish autonomy.[250] Mirzoeff names this claiming "countervisuality."

Mirzoeff developed the notion of visuality and countervisuality as contesting powers of authority within modernity in *The Right to Look*: *A Counterhistory of Visuality*. Here, visuality is formulated as "that authority to tell us to move on, that exclusive claim to be able to look."[251] What Mirzoeff does is essentially to articulate a discursive toolbox specifically developed for visual culture. He reveals how strategies for visual domination can be identified by describing three "complexes of visuality," which includes their countervisualities, namely plantation slavery as seen in seventeenth-century Haitian sugar plantations, imperialism, and the contemporary military-industrial complex. Mirzoeff cleverly demonstrates how each of these applies techniques of classification, separation, and aestheticization, enabling those in power to demonstrate authority through creating a "standard operating procedure."

Sugar plantations, for example, were traditionally controlled from Europe through a precise mapping and standardization of each plantation and its surrounding landscape, which erased individual traits of the landscape and plantation. In this way, the visual world is named, categorized, and defined; the world and its inhabitants are separated and segregated into groups, and the regularity and neatness of this standard operating procedure appear as aesthetically appealing to us. It is an aesthetics that seems right, and thus encourages us to "move on" since "there is nothing to see here." Importantly, through specific historical events, Mirzoeff shows how suppressed groups were asserting their right to look and thereby conceptualizing a countervisuality. This dismantling of the authoritarian aesthetics of power may enable us to see the political implications of their aesthetics.[252] In this regard, Mirzoeff appropriates the fundamental meaning of the distribution of the sensible from Jacques

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[249] Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Introduction: For Critical Visuality Studies," in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff, Third (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), xxx.
[250] Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*, 4.
[251] Mirzoeff, 2.
[252] Mirzoeff, 1–34.

Rancière, where Rancière distinguishes between the order of the police, with its distribution of power and positions – what Mirzoeff calls visuality – and politics, which points to ruptures in the police order – what Mirzoeff calls countervisuality.[253] Rancière lets authority usher the crowd away, "Move along! There's nothing to see here!" Mirzoeff adopts this command in his argument, stressing the authoritarian directive of non-engagement, as opposed to Louis Althusser's famous concept of "interpellation," in which authority inversely addresses the subject "Hey, you there!".[254]

The visuality of the Anthropocene

In "Visualizing the Anthropocene," Mirzoeff describes a specific visuality of the Anthropocene: "Anthropocene visuality keeps us believing that somehow the war against nature that Western society has been waging for centuries is not only right; it is beautiful, and it can be won."[255] Not only does this visuality rest upon two centuries of mental backgrounding of nature, as described earlier, Mirzoeff argues that this idea of the conquest of nature builds on the colonial heritage of the West and that it has been embedded in our Anthropocene aesthetics. This embedding has influenced art history, leading to a paradox: "the conquest of nature, having been aestheticized, leads to a loss of perception (aesthesis), which is to say, it becomes an anaesthetics."[256] The beautification of the Anthropocene has, through this effect, made us less aware of the consequences of industrial progress.

> There is no modern Western painting more widely reproduced and taught than Claude Monet's 1873 *Impression: Sun Rising*. In supplementary addition to the standard appreciation of Monet's handling of color and light, I want to stress here that this is a painting that at once reveals and aestheticizes anthropogenic environmental destruction.[257]

This act of forgetting is in Mirzoeff's account, countered by a countervisuality that manifests itself in a "renewed equality," a participatory democracy including all humans and "all nonhuman actors."[258] Mirzoeff does not describe clearly the grounds

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[253] Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, 30–31.
[254] Rancière, 37 Rancière, famously, was Althusser's student, and their differing accounts of the functioning of authority was one of the main reasons for the break between them after 1968.
[255] Mirzoeff, "Visualizing the Anthropocene," 217.
[256] Mirzoeff, 220.
[257] Mirzoeff, 221. Writing in 2014, Mirzoeff operates with a starting point of the Anthropocene at approximately the start of the industrial revolution.
[258] Mirzoeff, 226.

for the establishment of such a countervisuality, which he considers to be concerned with creating a "mental space for action that can link the visible and the sayable."[259] One step towards creating such a mental space may be taken by engaging with Ursula Heise's seminal book *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (2008), where she develops the concept of *eco-cosmopolitanism* through analyses of a varied image and literary material. Demonstrating the interconnectedness between our "sense of place" and our "sense of planet," eco-cosmopolitanism articulates "forms of awareness and habitation on the basis of shared risk," an analysis which may lead (though not necessarily) to the sense of equality that Mirzoeff calls for.[260]

Identifying visualities and probing their consequences has been a vital part of the analyses and in answering both the individual and overall research questions. As the analyses show, the visualities generally rest upon technologies and are often contingent on violence. As demonstrated in my analysis of Statoil's production sites, the PR photographs expose how Statoil displays an imaginary of power through constructing a specific visuality. The images of their production facilities are the epitome of the visuality of the Anthropocene. A central feature in this visuality, and throughout the image material in the articles, is its presentation of the technological infrastructure of the production sites as homogenous, contained, and expertly handled, and where nature is "backgrounded," borrowing the term from ecofeminist theory.[261] The study predominantly relies on Mirzoeff's analysis of sugar plantations. Similarly, to the plantation owners' mapping of sites in order to have oversight, so too does Statoil's operations adhere to a 'standard operating procedure' which strengthens the company's authority over the landscape through their PR photography. The power of the existing visuality extends to the company's planned endeavors in the Arctic.

Olafur Eliasson's art engages with the hegemonic visuality by insisting on nature's beauty– creating scenic vistas and glimpses of the sublime – thus flirting

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[259] Mirzoeff, 226.
[260] Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 121.
[261] Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, 21.

with and playing to what Mirzoeff calls the "anaesthetic" visuality of the Anthropocene. At the same time, Eliasson's elaborate and deliberate use and display of technology are unsettling to the very same visuality, by undercutting the well-established delineation between the natural and the cultural. Taking Eliasson's engagement with technology seriously can lead us to an understanding of his representations of nature as reflections on the mediating processes of natural phenomena, that is, an effort to imagine a visuality of nature.

Given Gustav Metzger's critical approach to any establishment, it is hardly surprising to find countervisualities in his practice. Many of the performances and installations mentioned here rupture the visuality of late industrial England, refusing to aestheticize the anthropogenic environmental destruction, choosing rather to lay all his weight on the revelatory act. This rupturing unveils the destructive and creative capacities of the technologies involved, which in turn points to the destructive potential in all technologies. The countervisual demand for "the right to existence"[262] is a recurring theme in all of Metzger's oeuvre. Visuality is not present as a term in either of the articles dealing with Metzger or Eliasson, as they were written before I developed an interest in the term. I do, however, see a strong explanatory potential in the term's application to the two analyzes.

My analysis of Toril Johannessen's *In Search of Iceland Spar* demonstrates Johannessen's contrasting approach to visuality, as she emphasizes the uniqueness of each piece of calcite that she is able to trace. The history and appearance of each mineral are documented and put on display, shedding light on parts of the material history of science that have been slowly sliding into the shadows. The ideology of cumulative progress that underpins scientific practice is shown to leave remnants and voids in its wake. In this sense, Johannessen may be said to perform a countervisuality, where her installation disrupts the visuality of the history of natural sciences and technological progress.

The visuality of *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* is identified as "Mold in the Machine." In this article, I opt for a less historically involved definition of visuality, where visuality simply means "a set of scenes or individual images that are

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[262] Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*, 4.

tied to each other by specific motifs." This purely aesthetic definition is less concerned with authority; instead, it highlights the visuality of mold and the slow violence that permeates the scenes unfolding before our eyes. Mold in the Machine highlights both nature and technology's role in the critical living conditions local communities are increasingly enduring within the Anthropocene. In this sense, visuality is understood as a discursive practice, and as such, in line with Mirzoeff's definition. If we were to put Mold in the Machine within Mirzoeff's framework, it would be best described as a countervisuality to the dominant visuality of the Anthropocene. This visuality has been made untenable, however, due to the material effects of the climate crisis. Through the identification of the visuality Mold in the Machine in *Beasts of the Southern Wild,* we become aware of the duality of nature as violent and violated, where Hushpuppy and Wink are always both masters of – and at the mercy of – nature. Mold in the Machine is a reversed paraphrase of Leo Marx's metaphor "Machine in the Garden," originally used to express a specific connection between nature and technology where pastoral idyll and serene landscapes gave way to the fast-paced industrialization and signs of human progress of the nineteenth and twentieth-century America. A central part of the visuality of Mold in the Machine, which is reminiscent of Leo Marx' postulation of the modern melancholia for the lost pastoral idyll that characterizes the Machine in the Garden, is the grief of modernity formulated by Stephanie LeMenager[263], as humanity's life conditions become ever more precarious as the Anthropocene proceeds.

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[263] LeMenager, "Petro-Melancholia: The BP Blowout and the Arts of Grief," 472.

Part II: The articles

- Damaged Nature: The Media Ecology of Auto-destructive Art
- Nature as Image in Olafur Eliasson's Art: A Media Ecological Perspective
- A Countervisuality to Statoil's Petro-Narrative
- Toril Johannessen's *In Search of Iceland Spar:* Truth and Illusion in the Anthropocene
- Mold in the Machine: Nature and technology in *Treme* (2010) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012)

4. Damaged Nature : The Media Ecology of Auto-destructive Art

Published in *Media and the ecological crisis*, edited by Richard Maxwell, Jon Raundalen and Nina Lager Vestberg. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group 2015

5.   Nature as Image in Olafur Eliasson's Art: A Media Ecological Perspective

Published in *Seeing Whole: Toward an Ethics and Ecology of Sight*, edited by Mark Ledbetter and Asbjørn Grønstad. Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2016

6. Petro-images of the Arctic and Statoil's Visual Imaginary

7.   Toril Johannessen's "In Search of Iceland Spar": Truth and illusion in the Anthropocene.

8. Mold in the Machine: Nature and technology in *Treme* (2010) and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012)

9. Final conclusions

This dissertation aims to explore the configuration of the relationship between nature and technology in visual culture. The main research question, "How is the relationship between nature and technology configured in a range of significant works of contemporary visual culture?" has led the analysis to the conclusion that nature is depicted as violent and violated, a paradoxical condition which also presents itself in the depiction of humanity and its extensions. This seemingly double paradox is, in fact, the logical conclusion of a view on nature that includes humanity – and technology – which has become inevitable as we have entered the Anthropocene, the geological era defined by human activity. The configuration naturally takes different forms in the wide-ranging image material, some of which actively seek to suppress the inherent crisis of the Anthropocene. By studying the visuality of the Anthropocene, we become aware of the structures involved in creating the visual authority needed to support a *status quo*.

The research question is answered through analyses of a heterogenous image material spanning from art installations to PR photography and cinema, from 1959 to 2015, in five individual articles. While the inquiries carried out in the articles all focus on the relationship between nature and technology, they highlight the specificity of each body of images. The study of the auto-destructive and auto-creative art of Gustav Metzger deploys Jacques Rancière's concept of mediality in a media ecological analysis of Metzger's engagement with nature and technology. The media ecological approach, this time from a topological and material perspective, is furthered in the analysis of Olafur Eliasson's technologically constructed and mediated natural phenomena as art. Moving from a media ecological perspective to a discussion on visuality and the visual construction of authority, the third article explores Statoil's PR photography accompanying resource extraction. Both visuality and media ecology is engaged in the fourth article, examining how an art installation by Toril Johannessen displays the geological foundation of modernity. Finally, the analysis of *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild* focuses on how their visuality highlights nature's violent and violated characteristics within the Anthropocene.

The analyses are performed within a theoretical structure consisting of four concepts: The Anthropocene, violence, technology, and visuality. The scope and content of these concepts are formed in my engagement with the images, resulting in an eclectic theoretical approach that only receives a final form with the expanded discussion of "Theoretical perspectives" in chapter 3. The summary of and reflection on the concepts as they are deployed in each article demonstrate the relevance of the concepts to the broader analysis and the interrelation between the different image materials. The introduction of the analytical lens of visualities and countervisualities on the earlier articles reveals, for instance, how Gustav Metzger's artistic practice in the early 1960s attempted to rupture the visuality of late industrial England.

The discussions carried out in the articles are placed within a historical framework in chapter 2, in which I give an overview of central contributions to ecocriticism within art history and visual culture, as well as reviewing the field of art and ecology from the 1960s to today. The overview traces the development of crucial artistic practices as parallel to the development of the environmental movement and global environmental politics. These historical events point to the changing conceptions of nature, both in society and the arts. A dominant conception of nature as "other," ready for exploitation, was challenged by notions of an ecology without nature, where nature is understood as an ideological construct, interlinked with humanity.

The dissertation demonstrates that our understanding of the Anthropocene within visual culture today has historical precedents and that the history of visual culture is a rich resource for any scholar wishing to examine the relationship between nature and technology. As the image material in this dissertation has not previously been subject to a similar ecocritical analysis, the analyses further contribute to the scholarly work on Gustav Metzger's, Olafur Eliasson's, and Toril Johannessen's artistic practices, *Treme* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, as well as the dominant petrovisuality. In addition to offering individual analyses of a selection of significant works of contemporary art and visual culture and developing an understanding of the interrelationship of the Anthropocene, violence, technology, and visuality as relevant and consistent conceptual and analytical tools for this body of images, the dissertation

may hopefully serve a broader purpose: to stimulate critical thinking about nature's role as both violent and violated.

This study is limited to a small number of artistic projects and images and can surely be expanded. Similarly, the theoretical framework can be further developed to create an even more comprehensive analysis of nature as violent and violated within the Anthropocene. Nevertheless, the discussions prove the value of identifying visualities and countervisualities for informing our understanding of the configurations of the relationship between nature and technology in visual culture. This identification is pertinent with regard to our attempts to recognize both the materiality of progressive modernity and its material consequences. By reflecting on the visualities of the Anthropocene, the dissertation confirms the importance of images to how we conceptualize nature today, demonstrating the relevance of visual culture analyses to the critical study of the Anthropocene and the academic field of environmental humanities.

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Appendix

1
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Holocen – Landskap fra Lillehammer Kunstmuseums samling
Synnøve Vik

Holocen

Holocen er betegnelsen på vår geologiske tidsepoke, som startet for ca. 11500 år siden, etter vår nordlige halvkules siste istid, og fortsetter i dag. Det er våre fysiske omgivelser, vårt norske og europeiske landskap slik vi kjenner det i dag, og betegnelsen på varmeepoken etter siste istid, som karakteriseres av jevne og milde temperaturer. Et relativt stabilt klima og vegetasjon la sammen med økt befolkningsvekst grunnlaget for en unik periode i menneskehetens historie. Holocen rommer dermed også vår moderne sivilisasjon, med alt den innebærer av jordbruksrevolusjon, fremvekst av bygder, byer og stater, skriftspråk, malerkunst og alle andre moderne uttrykk. Holocen er vårt faktiske landskap, våre ytre omgivelser som kunstneren og betrakteren lever i og ser, derfor har det også gitt navn til denne utstillingen der landskap er det gjennomgående motivet. Holocen er steile fjell, dype fjorder og viltre elver som i *Romsdalshorn* (1865) av J.F.Eckersberg (1822–1870), langstrakte Jær-landskap som i *Laksefiskere*, (1889) av Eilif Peterssen (1852–1928), og glattslipte svaberg som i *Kålstangen* (1992) av Jim Bengston (f.1942). Men holocen er også sporene av mennesker, i form av gamle hus og kultiverte jorder, som Halvdan Holbøs (1907–1995) *Snerle i Vågå* (1937), og byens lyktestolper, gateløp og handelshus, som i Edvard Munchs (1863-1944) *Fra Saksegårdsgaten* (1885). Dermed rommer holocen-begrepet et annet viktig poeng for utstillingens tilnærming til landskapet: det rommer et stort tidsrom, et tidsrom som innbefatter en rekke ulike perioder og tideverv, med utviklingslinjer som både kan gå sammen og virke motstridende.

Talende bilder

Denne utstillingen er en form for introduksjon til en visuell kultur, til hvordan vi ser én type bilder, nærmere bestemt landskapsbilder. Der den tradisjonelle kunsthistorien har vært mer opptatt av å plassere et bilde historisk, kronologisk og ut i fra stilmessige kjennetegn, forsøker visuell kultur som disiplin å beskrive bildenes funksjon og i hvilke samspill de inngår, i dag; hvordan bilder og tilskuere påvirkes av estetiske, sosiale, kulturelle og politiske kontekster. Fra å se landskap som motiver som refererer til bestemte stiler og sjangre som utviklingstrinn i en kunsthistorie, blir bildene vist frem som måter å se verden på, måter vi fortsatt tar i bruk, lar oss påvirke og forme av. Lillehammer Kunstmuseums samling inneholder flere hundre landskapsbilder, som vanligvis vises gjennom utstillinger der bildene

henger kronologisk og kategorisert etter motiv, stil og sjanger, i tråd med en kunsthistorie som publikum, kuratorer og historikere enes om. Utvalget i utstillingen *Holocen* er derimot gjort med tanke på hvilke bilder som i særlig grad kan sies å fremvise *rom* og *sted* i landskap på ulike måter, forskjeller som får følger for bildenes relasjon til tiden de rommer og går inn i. Rom og sted viser her til to ulike forståelser av våre omgivelser, der rom kan forstås som det åpne, abstrakte rommet, definert av himmelen eller de blånende åsene i landskapet, mens sted refererer til et konkret sted. Med disse utvalgskriteriene til grunn forsøker utstillingen å vise et noenlunde representativt utvalg fra samlingens ulike tidsepoker. Utstillingen vektlegger altså ikke først og fremst hvordan landskap ser ut eller blir brukt, noe som tradisjonelt vektlegges i landskapsutstillinger. Det er imidlertid viktig å understreke at kategoriene landskapsbildene plasseres i her ikke er absolutte størrelser, men tilnærmingsmåter som aktualiserer bildene for oss.

En kan trekke en løs linje fra ideen til utstillingen *Holocen* til den tyske kunsthistorikeren Aby Warburgs (1866–1929) berømte kunsthistoriske billedatlas *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1924–29). Atlaset, som riktignok aldri ble ferdig, skulle romme rundt 60–70 billedtavler med collager av klassiske motiver fra renessansen til hans tid. I en tid da kunsthistorien helst beskjeftiget seg med lineære og stilhistoriske fremstillinger av kunstens utvikling, gikk Warburg i retning av å skissere en forståelse av en ny, romlig kunsthistorie. Der Warburg var opptatt av assosiative metoder, følelser og intuisjon, er det for denne utstillingens del mer interessant hvordan han så på gjentagende motiver i så vidt forskjellige uttrykk som primitive kulturers visuelle uttrykk og renessansens billedskjønne formspråk, så vel som i reklameplakater fra sin egen samtid. I utstillingen *Holocen* er det landskapsmotiver som er tema, presentert gjennom et vidt spekter av kunsthistoriske epoker og metoder. Hvilket landskapsbegrep er utstillingen så plassert innenfor, med en så uensartet kunstsamling som utgangspunkt?

Hva er et landskap?

Landskap er et av kunsthistoriens mest flyktige tema i dag, fordi vi har sett for mye av det allerede slik at det har blitt en klisjé, eller fordi landskap er våre fysiske omgivelser og vårt livsgrunnlag – vårt holocen. Vi er *i* landskap, våre liv *er* landskap. Dette gjør det vanskelig å se noe som *ikke* landskap, siden vi ikke klarer å rette blikket utenfor de kulturelt konstruerte brillene og rammene som gjør det vi ser på til det vi tror vi skal få se. Vårt blikk formes av våre omgivelser, og preger deretter hvordan vi ser et landskap. Vi har alle våre forestillinger av landskap, noe som ikke sjelden gjør oss skuffet når vi opplever et landskap vi har sett et bilde av, hørt beskrevet eller forestilt oss på forhånd. Spektakulære Niagara Falls maktet ikke å leve opp til de skyhøye forventningene forfatteren Nathaniel Hawthorne kom med i 1835,

og han trengte flere dager på å kvitte seg med sine egne forestillinger for å kunne se landskapet med friske øyne. «Oh that I had never heard of Niagara till I beheld it!». Så hva er det vi leter etter, hva er et landskap?

Landskapet som omgir oss, er altså våre fysiske omgivelser. Men landskapet blir også til i tilskuerens blikk. En måte å se forholdet mellom landskap og tilskuer på er ved å dele landskapsbilder i to kategorier: som en måte *å se* og *å skape*. Det *å se* innebærer en frakoblet tilnærming hos tilskueren. Det omhandler landskap som representant for en måte å se på, et blikk. Den andre kategorien, *å skape*, knytter seg til en involvert tilnærming, som representerer utfoldelsen av konstruksjonen og handlingen det er å skape landskap, gjennom å utforme, fortelle om og forestille seg dem. Fra Düsseldorf-maleren Lars Hertervigs (1830–1902) *Fra Skånevik* (1855), til Kristen Holbøs (1869–1953) *Kveld ved Assisi* (1923), til Patrick Huses (f. 1948) *Dritvik* (1998)*,* og Hanne Borchgrevincks (f. 1951) *Hus i nord II* (2000), går en gradvis linje fra en frakoblet til en involvert tilnærming, hvor landskapet henholdsvis er uttrykk for et blikk på verden, og noe som skapes gjennom kunstverkets utforming og formelle trekk. I Hertervig og Holbøs malerier er det en representasjon av et landskap slik kunstneren har betraktet det og opplevd det. I Huses *Dritvik* (1998) finner vi en vekselvirkning i og med at det har de formale trekkene til et landskap, men er konstruert og fiktivt, og i Borchgrevincks husklynge har konstruksjonen kommet så langt at landskapet har blitt en integrert del av husformasjonene.

I Thorvald Erichsens (1868–1939) *Aftenstemning. Vestre Gausdal* (1908) overlater kunstneren til betrakteren å skape landskapet, i et motiv som er løselig stedsspesifikt – et vinterlandskap fra Vestre Gausdal. Erichsen er her impresjonistisk i stilen, og henholdsvis løser opp og samler former ved hjelp av farge, slik at de minner om landskapsformer, men uten å være for uttalte. En inviterende, snøkledd forgrunn dominerer, et skogsbelte trekker blikket inn i bildet, som så dras videre mot en snøkledd bakketopp under himmelen, alt holdt i vinterblått. Bildet formidler en stor stillhet, men først og fremst er dette et bilde av et skapende blikk, fokus rettes mot betrakteren, individet, som opplever landskapet. Det er et stemningsbilde som lar betrakteren *være* i landskapet.

Rom / sted

Vanligvis blir landskap definert som enten et konkret landskap, det vil si en region, en del av et land, eller så er landskapet et bilde, en representasjon av et rom med ulike objekter i, det være seg mennesker, dyr, hus, og så videre. Dette må ikke forstås som at den første definisjonen betegner landskap som et gitt sted, mens den andre kun er en *representasjon* av et sted. De er begge bilder, men i landskap forstått som rom er ikke det som representeres først og fremst stedet, men rommets kvaliteter, og bildets bestanddeler

underordnes dette. Om en kunstner er mer interessert i å male rom enn objektene i rommet, så er det fordi den romlige dimensjonen, som et aspekt ved virkeligheten, er en viktig del av den kunstneriske representasjonen. Når så objektene i et maleri blir identifisert med et sted, et konkret landskap, er det lett å overse rommet til fordel for realistiske kjennetegn ved det spesifikke stedet. Referansen til en virkelighet utenfor bildet blir tydeligere enn rommets utforming og kvaliteter. Dette ser vi i Einar Sandbergs (1876-1947) *Olstad i Kvikne* (1911). Kunstneren har malt gården Søre Olstad ovenfra, men det er ikke gården som er i fokus. Det første man legger merke til er det veldige, grønne fjellet på motsatt side av dalen som går nedenfor gården. Sandberg har vært opptatt av det koloristiske og det romlige ved landskapet. Først etter å ha betraktet landskapet flytter blikket vårt seg til gården, og da knyttes det romlige ved landskapet til et konkret sted og en tidsspesifikk virkelighet, som vi ikke så lett klarer å løsrive oss fra.

Det politiske landskapet

Den franske filosofen Jacques Rancière (f. 1940) skriver i boken *The Politics of Aesthetics* (2006) om et begrep som er interessant for vår forståelse av landskapsmalerier i dag, «fordelingen av det sansbare», en ordning og strukturering av det som til enhver tid er tilgjengelig for våre sanser i tid og rom. Det interessante i denne sammenheng er ikke fordelingen av det sansbare i seg selv, men hvordan fordelingen av det sansbare innebærer en ordning av samfunnet, og at denne ordningen alltid innebærer at noe utestenges. Rancière hevder at det er i denne forbindelse det spesifikt politiske oppstår, når det som er stengt ute trenger inn i det ordnede, når de uten stemme tar ordet. I vårt tilfelle kan vi utvikle denne tanken videre og for eksempel hevde at naturen, på grunn av økt fokusering på klimaendringer – eller på grunn av selve klimaendringene? – trenger seg inn i vår erfaringsverden og slik, ved denne inntrengingen, blir deltager i politikken. Hva gjør det med vår opplevelse av landskapsbildene i Lillehammer Kunstmuseums samling? Gjennom historien endres forutsetningene for vår forståelse av forholdet mellom rom, sted og objekter. Hvordan endrer denne bevegelsen *i tid* forståelsen av forholdet mellom rom, sted og objekter i maleriene? Er det i det hele tatt mulig å navigere etter *ett* landskapsbegrep, når betingelsene for å se og tenke på landskap stadig endrer seg, og i tilfelle – hvilket? Joachim Frichs (1810–1858) nasjonalromantiske *Skogtjern* (1856) blir «politisk» i dag gjennom at naturen i det aktualiseres av vårt moderne blikk. Bildet av det stille skogstjernet med urskog og visne trær er preget av dramatiske lys- og skyggevirkninger, nesten på grensen til det teatrale, men like fullt troverdig. Likevel er det påfallende hvordan bildet representerer et landskap som er truet av stadig større menneskelige avtrykk i naturen, og som de fleste av oss ikke lenger er bevisst som annet enn en drøm. Samtidig forteller bildet

en annen historie som handler om nasjonalromantikkens tilstedeværelse i det norske samfunnet. To rødluede mennesker i en liten båt på tjernet trekker motivet enda lenger i den retning. Slik blir verket dobbelt politisk, men på to vidt forskjellige måter. Forholdet mellom bildets bestanddeler og de overordnede kategoriene forandrer seg over tid. Nasjonalromantikk er fortsatt nasjonalromantikk, men den betød forskjellige ting i 1814, 1945 eller 1972, 1994 og i dag. Og naturens betydning har også hele tiden vært i flukt. Det eksemplifiseres i Frichs bilde.

Se på utsikten!

Det kan være vanskelig å bedømme hva det betyr å betrakte et landskap. Begreper som rom og sted er like viktige for å belyse dette forholdet, som landskapsbegrepet. Ser en på stedet, eller det overordnede landskapet, rommet? En vanlig kommentar er: Se på utsikten! Dette impliserer at man ikke ser på noe spesifikt, men på en helhet, et rom. Kunsthistoriker W.J.T. Mitchell (f.1942) beskriver invitasjonen til å betrakte en utsikt som en invitasjon til å betrakte ingenting, eller til å betrakte det å *se* i seg selv, til å hengi seg til en bevisst erfaring eller opplevelse av rom.

      Utstillingen *Holocens* utgangspunkt i en frakoblet og en involvert tilnærming til landskap har flere implikasjoner: inndelinger i faktiske landskap versus forestilte landskap, samt de uspesifisert stedsspesifikke − de vi i dag vet er virkelige steder, men som ikke er angitt av kunstneren − og inndeling i rom versus sted. Dette grepet har også politiske implikasjoner. Kunst som involverer betrakteren, gjerne da i form av å referere til et sted som er involvert i en eller annen konflikt, blir ofte ansett for å være «mer» politisk enn bilder med andre motiver. Men Jacques Rancière beskriver en i denne sammenheng svært aktuell episode i teksten *Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community*, en artikkel som tar for seg kunstens evne til å skape menneskelige fellesskap og dermed være politisk relevant. En arbeider legger fra seg sitt arbeid og ser ut gjennom vinduet på et landskap «som om det var et maleri»:

> Believing himself at home, he loves the arrangement of a room, so long as he has not finished laying the floor. If the window opens out onto a garden or commands a view of picturesque horizon, he stops his arms and glides in imagination toward the spacious view to enjoy it better than the possessors of the neighbouring residences.

Den lille teksten er angivelig skrevet av arbeideren selv, som refererer til seg selv i tredje person, og publisert som et dagboknotat i den revolusjonære franske arbeideravisen *Le*

Tocsin des travailleurs (Arbeidernes stormklokke) i 1848. Dette er et eksempel på en frakoblet tilnærming til et landskap, der en nettopp ser det åpne rommet heller enn stedet og dets krav om mer arbeid. Og i arbeiderens estetiske oppdagelse ligger det et politisk aspekt. Arbeideren omformet sine omgivelser til et rom for et fritt blikk. Dette kan være mye mer virkningsfullt enn det vi i tradisjonell forstand anser som «politisk kunst», hvor det er en mer eller mindre rett linje fra den estetiske erfaringen til den politiske erfaringen, eller kunstens intensjon. Den estetiske erfaringen arbeideren opplever foran vinduet, er politisk i kraft av å være uten en uttalt politisk intensjon. Det er først og fremst en frigjørende og åpen erfaring, hvor arbeideren for et øyeblikk trer ut av sin definerte plass i samfunnet. Den estetiske effekten er en effekt av arbeiderens des-identifikasjon, og det estetiske samfunnet er et samfunn bestående av des-identifiserte personer. Den er politisk fordi den politiske subjektiveringen går gjennom denne des-identifikasjonsprosessen. En enklere måte å si det på er at en frigjort arbeider er en arbeider som ikke lenger identifiserer seg med jobben. Fritz Thaulows (1802–1942) *Den gamle fabrikk, Akerselva* (1901), er en kontemplasjon over naturen og det estetiske også i en gammel fabrikk, i et miljø som kan være sammenlignbart med utsikten til franske arbeidere. I et intervju i Verdens gang (8.1.1901) sa han sittende foran sitt staffeli ved Akerselven:

> – Er her ikke henrivende? Udbrød han og pegte fremover. Jeg trængte mig forbi ham og Skilderhuset, men veg sky tilbage, da jeg mærkede, hvad slags Hus, det var. – Aa, bryd Dem ikke om det, sagde han. Næsten overalt i Verden er jeg kommet til at male ved Siden av saadanne Huse. Mine beste Malerier skriver sig fra slike Standpladse. Men se dog! Se disse gamle røde Bygninger mod den hvide Sne og det sorte Vand. Ingenting er saa herligt som rødt og hvidt og sort. Om Sommeren vil det røde være mat, og Elven ingen Farve have. Det er den hvide Sneen, som giver det høie Valeur. – Sneen er noksaa skidden, sagde jeg for at sige noget. – Det er netop det fine ved Tingen. Jeg liker skidden Sne. Den maa ikke være altfor ren, - og det er der jo ikke Fare for her i Byen. Sort maa der til. Sort er en henrivende Farve. Se engang den svarte Elven, - svart som Blæk, De! Kan de tenke Dem noget saa vakkert? Ja, Bentse Brug er en Guldgrube for Malere – langt mer end for Ejerne, lagde han til med et Smil. Her er mange slige Guldgruber for Malerne opover Elven her. Jeg har allerede fundet tre fire, som jeg skal faa noget ordentlig ud af, - bare Sneen bliver liggende.

I dag er kanskje ikke behovet for en estetisk og politisk «frigjøring» like stort som i Frankrike i 1848, det er i alle fall annerledes, men vi kan likevel ta med nyttig lærdom fra Rancières måte å tilegne landskapet en vekkelsesfunksjon på. For landskapsbilder er ikke kun en representasjon av et sted, den er et rom for tanken, og for minner.

Landskap og hukommelse

I romanen *Austerlitz* (2001) av den britiske forfatteren W.G. Sebald (1944–2001) forsøker hovedpersonen å nøste opp sin egen fortid, som barn av jødiske foreldre under andre verdenskrig. Austerlitz er kunsthistoriker, og i en scene i boken beskriver han hvordan hendelser kan vekke minner. Han står og ser utover et landskap, nærmere bestemt vannet Schelde ved Antwerpen, og begynner å fortelle sin venn hvordan dette landskapet refererer til et bilde malt av den flamske maleren Lucas van Valkenborch (1533–1612), som viser Schelde under den «lille» istiden på slutten av 1500-tallet. Glade mennesker går på skøyter på isen:

> I forgrunnen, mot den høyre billedkanten, har en dame gått over ende. Hun er kledd i en kanarigul kjole; kavaleren, som bøyer seg bekymret over henne, i en rød bukse som er svært påfallende i det bleke lyset. Når jeg ser dit ut nå og tenker på dette maleriet og de bitte små figurene på det, så står det for meg som om det øyeblikket Lucas van Valkenborch har skildret aldri har tatt slutt, som om den kanarigule damen er falt eller besvimt nettopp nå, som om den lille ulykken som de fleste betraktere ganske visst overser, hele tiden skjer på nytt, som om den aldri mer vil opphøre, og som ingen eller ingenting kan gjøre den godt igjen.

Professor i kunsthistorie Siri Meyer (f.1952) trekker frem hvordan Austerlitz fornemmer dette øyeblikket som «øyeblikk som aldri tar slutt, som om fallet på isen har skjedd akkurat nå og aldri vil opphøre; det dukker opp igjen for hver ny betrakter. Maleren beskriver ikke et langt hendelsesforløp, men trekker et øyeblikk ut av tidens strøm og holder det fast». Ifølge Meyer gjelder dette for alle malerier. Med henvisning til den tyske forfatteren og filosofen G. E. Lessing (1729–81) karakteriserer Meyer forskjellen mellom maleriet og diktning som at maleriet viser ett øyeblikk, mens litteraturen viser et forløp av hendelser i tid. Der den kanarigule damen kun tilhører én scene i Austerlitzs fortelling, og vi vet hva som skjer før og kommer til å få vite hva som skjer siden, er maleriet stumt, og knyttet til øyeblikket der damen faller. Men kan maleriet likevel være tidens medium? Det er landskapet, med Schelde og Antwerpen som minner Austerlitz om maleriet. Landskapet slik han ser det 400 år etter at det ble malt av van Valkenborch. En kan kanskje si at landskapet *er* i tiden, og *inneholder* ulike tider. Maleriet viser både et landskap fra slutten av 1500-tallet, og et landskap som er gjenkjennelig på slutten av 1900-tallet, etter flere generasjoners liv og død, etter den industrielle revolusjon og gjennom et menneskes hukommelse.

Christian Skredsvigs (1854–1924) *Ballade* (1884), er et konkret eksempel på at landskapet er i tiden, og inneholder ulike tider. Skredsvig malte bildet basert på en dansk legende hvor en flokk rytterløse hester vendte hjem fra et blodig slag i 1208. Skredsvig

valgte å legge scenen til sin samtid, slik han ofte gjorde på 1880-tallet, nærmere bestemt til en spesifikk borg i Normandie. Borgen var 800 år gammel, men tilhørte både Skredsvigs samtid *og* legendens faktiske nåtid, Skredsvigs fortid. Landskapet er derimot hentet fra Meudon, og var samtidig eldgammelt, og nykultivert. *Ballade* er dermed både romantisk i sitt tema og realistisk i sitt motiv, og rommer flere ulike tider.

I Gerhard Munthes (1849–1929) *Aften i Eggedal* (1889) er disse forskjellige tider også til stede, men en tidløshet presser seg frem i bildets vektlegging av rommet, landskapet og utsikten. Det er et storslått landskap, der blikket dras mot de blånende fjell i bakgrunnen, de røde stabbur står mot de mørke skogene og de lysende grønne jordene i forgrunnen. En måne lyser på den blå himmelen og ned på en elv som går gjennom dalen. Selv om stedet er angitt og stabburene fester motivet i en periode, er det rommet som trer frem, et rom som ikke refererer til eller tilhører noe spesifikt tidspunkt, og som dermed etterlater oss med et inntrykk av tidløshet. Interessant nok er motivet og landskapet konstruert, slik Skredsvigs landskap i *Ballade* er. De røde stabburene er fra gården Jellum i Eggedal, men selve motivet og landskapet er inspirert av et tidligere motiv av Skredsvig, også fra Eggedal, men altså ikke det samme landskapet som rommet gårdshusene på Jellum. Det fiktive ved landskapet rykker det ut av en steds- og tidsspesifikk kontekst, og det blir en tidløs representasjon av et norsk dallandskap.

Arkivet og dets ulike tider

Den franske filosofen Michel Foucault (1926–1984) har beskrevet 1800-tallet som *historiens* århundre, med sin rivende samfunnsutvikling og påfølgende kriser, imperier og glorifisering av døde menn og store dåder. 1900-tallet, derimot, anså han for å være *rommets* århundre. Århundret for samtidighet og motsetninger mellom fjern og nær, side om side, der noe hele tiden er utenfor eller «mellom rommene». For å beskrive denne modernitetens marginale rom lanserte han begrepet *heterotopi*. Heterotopi, forstått som ulike steder (*hetero*: ulik, *topos*: sted), kan beskrives som steder som inneholder flere meningslag eller relasjoner, men som eksisterer utenfor et gitt fysisk eller mentalt sted, litt som et utopisk ideal. Likevel skiller det seg fra utopien, («ingen sted»), i dennes betydning av å være uoppnåelig eller utenfor denne verden. Heterotopier finnes derimot i den virkelige verden, som en form for mot-steder, effektivt utførte utopier som speiler virkelige steder, objekter og hendelser i verden. Foucault trekker frem nettopp et speil som et eksempel. Speilet er et reelt objekt som påvirker ens eget bilde av en selv. Den fremste heterotopi er derimot arkivet, som er samlet sammen og bevart for ettertiden som en refleksjon, noe som sier oss noe om hvem vi er eller hva vi gjør, eksempelvis et bibliotek. Moderne museer og deres samlinger fungerer på samme måte. Slike arkiver akkumulerer rom, og har blitt heterotopier hvor rom stadig bygges

opp og lagres, i motsetning til tidligere tiders museer, hvor en samling var et uttrykk for én samlers individuelle valg. Dagens museer vil gjerne omfatte det meste, konstituere et sted utenfor verden som representerer en gitt del av verden, men – får man føye til – selvsagt innenfor sine estetiske rammer.

Foucault hevder videre at heterotopier som oftest er knyttet til *heterokronier* (*Hetero*: ulik, *kronos*: tid). Heterokronier er sammensetninger av tider som i utgangspunktet ikke går sammen. Både landskapet i seg selv, så vel som arkivet over landskap som denne utstillingen viser et utdrag av, kan forstås ut i fra en heterokron tidsforståelse. Landskapsbilder representerer ulike tider, som et konkret landskap og som kronologisk tid innenfor den geologiske perioden «holocen», og med betrakterens blikk følger også betrakterens samtid.

I et foredrag under Venezia-biennalen 2011, som en del av det offisielle programmet til Norges bidrag gjennom Office for Contemporary Art, snakket Jacques Rancière nettopp om heterokronier. Han beskrev heterokroni som en mulighet for å beskrive kunst og tid – et alternativ til andre tidsperspektiv som innebærer en hierarkisk tidsforståelse. I utstillingssammenheng vil det si en kronologisk plassering av bildene som forankrer dem i en kunsthistorisk tidsepoke. Rancière snakket, med referanse til Foucault, om de mekanismene og kunnskapsstrukturene som forsterker og opprettholder samfunnets maktbalanse. Vår tids dominerende tenkning tar for gitt en «state of things», mente han, hvor det finner sted en utvikling vi aldri kan slippe unna. Og disse mekanismene og kunnskapsstrukturene forsøker alltid å begrense vår forståelse av verden til kun å romme ett tidsbegrep, en måte å tenke tidens utvikling på. Dermed motarbeider de alle forsøk på å sette sammen forskjellige tidsforståelser som kan la oss se andre muligheter til å se og tenke samtiden og dens utvikling. Kunsten kan være et sted hvor disse mekanismene og strukturene kan utfordres.

Landskapets heterokroni

Heterokroni er et interessant begrep for utstillingen *Holocen*. Landskapet er Nå, men er samtidig gammelt. Landskapet består av flere tider, flere hendelser som kommer sammen, spor av naturkrefter og av levde liv. Denne beskrivelsen av landskapet som satt sammen av flere tider kan uttrykkes om vi ser på forholdet mellom to bilder malt med nesten to hundre års mellomrom, J.C.Dahls (1788–1857) *Landskap med foss* (1835) og Astrid Nondals (f.1958) *Blindsone* (2006). I Dahls suggererende bilde av et fossefall er betrakterens synspunkt så pass høyt at blikket kan streife innover i bildet, mot tømmerfløting og videre mot en slette. En bjørk står og vipper på kanten av elvebredden, truer med å falle i den buldrende fossen, trekker oss inn i bildet og i øyeblikket. To hus står ved elvebredden, mennesker og hester glir naturlig inn i landskapet. I en helt annen tid, vår egen tid, maler

Nondal *Blindsone*. Nondal går tydelig i dialog med kunsthistorien, og motivet har likhetstrekk med Dahls *Landskap med foss*. Hos Nondal er fossen erstattet med mørk skog, tømmerhusene med en høyspentmast. Der Dahl lar en bjørk stå ustøtt langs elvekanten, lar Nondal en ung kvinne miste fotfestet på toppen av en stein ved kanten av skogen. Mennesket passer ikke inn i landskapet, slik det gjør hos Dahl. Begge landskapene er romlige mer enn stedlige. Men der Dahls landskap er festet i en scene som synes mer tidløs og varig, som om den ikke er hentet fra et spesifikt øyeblikk, men fortsetter, er Nondals landskap nesten som et stillbilde fra en film, hvor den unge kvinnen sitter fast i øyeblikket, slik den kanarigule damen beskrevet av Austerlitz er det. Kvinnen er så liten i landskapet at hun nesten slukes, likevel trekkes blikket mot bevegelsen hennes. Landskapets drømmeaktige uttrykk forsterker opplevelsen av flere tider som et både reelt øyeblikk og et kunstig. Jenny Rydhagens (f.1965) fotografi *Parallel Universe # 5* (2006) spiller som Nondal på klassiske landskapsmaleri i komposisjon, med lys forgrunn og blå himmel, dybde og trær som skaper diagonaler. En rød bil kommer ut av en velfrisert hekk, på en og samme tid malplassert med sin samtidsreferanse og likevel som en naturlig forlengelse av landskapet og landskapets historie.

I Frederick Colletts (1839–1914) *En lun krok* (1893) er ikke tidsaspektet umiddelbart til stede. Det er ingen mennesker i bildet, ingen hus som kan angi tid. *En lun krok* er ved første blikk kun rom og landskap. Tittelen røper ikke at dette er et spesifikt sted, men motivet forteller oss at det er Colletts yndlingsmotiv, elven Mesna i Lillehammer. Collett malte det samme motivet fra det eksakt samme stedet gjentatte ganger over en periode på flere år. De ytre omstendighetene var alltid de samme. Snøen ligger tung over trær og bakke, slik Collett var blitt en mester i å male den. En liten fugl i vannkanten er eneste tegn til liv, og er en gjenganger i Mesna-bildene. Vissheten om dette lader bildet med tid, vi vet at landskapet ikke kun er et nå, men rommer flere tider, flere vinterdager ved elvebredden. Til sammenligning kan vi nevne Einar Sigstads (f.1950) *Ark* fra 1988 blottet for både steds- og tidsreferanser, og hvor huskonstruksjonen befinner seg som i en egen boble, utenfor tid og sted.

Erik Werenskiolds (1855–1938) *Minner* (1891), er ved første blikk et portrett av to kvinner hensunket i egne tanker, sittende ved et vindu. Det er tidlig kveld, og de to kvinnene sitter omsluttet av et begynnende mørke. Den ene kvinnen ser lett ned, den andre ut vinduet, en melankolsk stemning preger dem. Blikket dras snart mot vinduet, hvorfra vi ser et kultivert sommerlandskap med blånende åser i aftenstemning. Der tiden står stille i rommet, er det landskapet som forrykker balansen, drar minnene med seg videre mot en fremtid som ufravikelig er på vei, men som likevel må skapes. I selve det blikket på landskapet maleriet byr oss, ligger det et krav om handling. Den passive stemningen inne i stuen brytes opp.

Bildets indre rom defineres mot landskapet utenfor. Blikket på landskapet er med på å skape et annet bilde av det private rommet.

Landskapet er tidens medium

De foregående eksemplene viser hvordan landskapsmotivene i *Holocen* representerer ulike tider, samtidig kan også den samlingen utstillingen representerer ses som heterokron. Samlingen er ikke bare en heterotopi, hvor flere steder møtes, men også en heterokroni, et sted hvor flere tider eksisterer samtidig. Et heterokront syn på landskap innebærer at vi drar linjer fra flere tider. Det vil også si at vi kan navigere mellom ulike landskapsbegrep, som hvert er forankret i sin egen tid. Museet i seg selv, og Lillehammer Kunstmuseums samling av landskapsmalerier særskilt, kan dermed ses som heterokrone.

Utstillingen *Holocen* viser hvordan det alltid finnes ulike tider representert samtidig både i en museumssamling, og i de enkelte bildene. Rom er aldri fritt for tid. Stedet er alltid tidfestet, og stedsbundne motiver viser tidens innflytelse også i de bildene hvor blikket festes til det abstrakte rommet. De romlige motivene viser ved sin avvisning av én bestemt tid frem at landskapet helt konkret er fortid og nåtid på en gang. Det er ikke mulig å navigere etter ett landskapsbegrep i møte med bildene i denne utstillingen, fordi betingelsene for hvordan vi ser bildene endrer seg gjennom historien. Begrepene rom, sted og landskap må sidestilles, for en fullverdig forståelse av hvordan vi ser på landskapskunst, det være seg gjennom nasjonalromantiske malerier, eller abstrakte fotografier.

Denne utstillingen er en del av Lillehammer Kunstmuseums Blikkfang-utstilling (2011-12), hvor Museet ser på sin samling, sin bygning og sin egen institusjon. Rammen rundt utstillingen *Holocen* er derfor i særlig grad refleksiv. Utstillingsarkitekturen og monteringen er på mange måter museets landskap. Utstillingen er et forsøk på å vise vårt eget blikk på landskap og landskapskunsten. Ved å ta utgangspunkt i «arkivet» over landskapskunst i Lillehammer Kunstmuseums samling kan en konfrontere sitt eget blikk på landskapene rundt oss. *Holocen* konstituerer et arkiv over museets landskapskunst – selv om den kun viser et utvalg av flere mulige utvalg – og den blir sammen med de parallelle utstillingene et arkiv over Lillehammer Kunstmuseums fortid og nåtid. Dette arkivet vil vokse og endre seg i takt med nye innkjøp og nye utstillinger. Arkivet er i bevegelse, men heller ikke landskapsbegrepet er stabilt. Det bevegelige ved kunsten og ved en billedsamling er nettopp det som er kunstens styrke, og som skiller det fra andre arkiver. Og slik landskapet er *i* tiden og rommer flere tider er også bildene av landskap i bevegelse. Landskapet er både rommets og tidens medium.

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HANDLINGSREGLER

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LANDSKAP I NORSK SAMTIDSKUNST
OPPLANDSUTSTILLINGEN 2011

AV SYNNØVE VIK

TESER OM LANDSKAP

❶ — Landskap er ikke en kunstsjanger, men et medium.

❷ — Landskap er et utvekslingsmedium mellom det menneskelige og det naturlige, selvet og de andre. I den forstand likner det på penger; tilsynelatende poengløse, men likevel med potensial for en ubegrenset verdi.

❸ — I likhet med pengene er landskapet en sosial hieroglyf som skjuler det virkelige verdigrunnlaget. Dette skjer ved å gjøre dets konvensjoner naturlige og dets natur konvensjonell.

❹ — Landskap er en naturlig scene som kulturen har omskapt. Det er et rom som på en gang er presentert og representert. Landskapets rom er både betydningsbærende og betydningsfullt, både en ramme og rammens innhold, både et virkelig sted og dette stedets simulakrum, både en pakke og innholdet i pakken.

❺ — Landskap er et medium som finnes i alle kulturer.

❻   Landskap er en spesiell historisk formasjon forbundet med den europeiske imperialismen.

❼ — Tese 5 og 6 motsier ikke hverandre.

❽ — Landskap er et uttømt medium, ikke lenger mulig å bruke som kunstnerisk uttrykk. I likhet med livet er landskapet kjedelig; men vi må ikke si det.

❾ — Landskap som det blir henvist til i tese 8 er det samme som i tese 6.

W.J.T. MITCHELL:
LANDSCAPE AND POWER, 2002

HANDLINGSREGLER

«These kind of scenes are better in pictures than reality, and faith I own I was heartily sick of them.» Ordene tilhører den britiske kunstneren Francis Danby (1793–1861), som i 1825 reiste rundt i Norge og malte landskapet han så. Det norske landskapet forfulgte ham i årevis, og påvirket et stort antall av hans senere verk. Ordene gir resonans også i dag, da landskapet til tross for å være et velkjent og ofte stigmatisert tema innen kunsten, like fullt stadig inspirerer og fascinerer kunstnere.

Utstillingstittelen, *Handlingsregler*, refererer til regelen for bruk av avkastningen fra Statens Pensjonsfond utland, tidligere kalt Oljefondet. Regelen er et forsøk på å fordele overskuddet av oljealderen til de kommende generasjoner, en oljealder som preges av tidligere uant økonomisk vekst og et landskap i radikal endring. Utstillingen *Handlingsregler* er ikke en illustrasjon av verken den norske gullalderens medalje eller dens bakside. *Handlingsregler* er derimot et forsøk på å aktualisere landskapsbegrepets relevans, ved å undersøke landskap som en prosess hvor sosiale og individuelle identiteter blir formet, og hvor økonomisk- og politisk motiverte handlinger påvirker våre omgivelser både i dag og i fremtiden. Våre inntrykk av og idéer om landskapet konstituerer grunnleggende regler – mulighetsbetingelser – for våre handlinger. I dagens politiske situasjon er verken den eksisterende realitet eller de foreliggende løsningsforslag noe vi kan slå oss til ro med. Det samme kan sies om våre utopiske og dystopiske forestillinger om landskapet. I hvilken grad er

RULES OF ACTION

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LANDSCAPE IN CONTEMPORARY NORWEGIAN ART
THE OPPLAND EXHIBITION 2011

BY SYNNØVE VIK

THESES ON LANDSCAPE

❶ — Landscape is not a genre of art but a medium.

❷ — Landscape is a medium of exchange between the human and the natural, the self and the other. As such, it is like money: good for nothing in itself, but expressive of a potential limitless reserve of value.

❸ — Like money, landscape is a social hieroglyph that conceals the actual basis of its value. It does so by naturalizing its conventions and conventionalizing its nature.

❹ — Landscape is a natural scene mediated by culture. It is both a represented and presented space, both a signifier and a signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package.

❺ — Landscape is a medium found in all cultures.

❻ — Landscape is a particular historical formation associated with European imperialism.

❼ — Theses 5 and 6 do not contradict one another.

❽ — Landscape is an exhausted medium, no longer viable as a mode of artistic expression. Like life, landscape is boring; but we must not say so.

❾ — The landscape referred to in Thesis 8 is the same as that of Thesis 6.

W.J.T. MITCHELL:
LANDSCAPE AND POWER, 2002

RULES OF ACTION

«These kinds of scenes are better in pictures than reality, and faith I own I was heartily sick of them.» These are the words of the British artist Francis Danby (1793–1861), who travelled throughout Norway in 1825 painting the landscapes he saw. The Norwegian landscape would pursue him for years and influence a great number of his later works. The words ring true even today, when landscape, despite being a commonplace and often-stigmatised theme in art, continues to inspire and fascinate artists.

The exhibition title, *Rules of Action* refers to the rules regulating the administering of returns from The Government Pension Fund - Global, formerly known as the Petroleum Fund. The rules are meant as guidelines for managing the surplus revenues from the Oil Age for the benefit of future generations, and oil age that is marked by previously undreamed of economic growth and a landscape in radical transition. The exhibition *Rules of Action* is not an illustration either of the front or reverse side of the coin with regard to the Norwegian Golden Age in oil. *Rules of Action* is rather an attempt at shedding light on the relevance of the concept of landscape, through examining landscape as a process in which social and individual identities are formed, and where economically and politically motivated actions influence our surroundings – today as well as in the future. Our impressions of, and ideas about, landscape constitute the fundamental rules – the conceivable conditions – for our actions. In today's political situation, neither the existing reality nor the

vårt blikk på landskap politisk, sosialt og kulturelt betinget, og bestemt av fordommer, klisjeer, og forestillinger? Hvordan former landskapets fremtreden vårt verdenssyn? Hvordan definerer samtidskunsten landskap, og hvilke landskap snakker vi om?

LANDSKAP ER IKKE EN SJANGER, MEN ET MEDIUM

Den amerikanske kunsthistorikeren W.J.T Mitchell har sagt at landskap ikke er en sjanger innenfor kunsten, men et medium. Hans tese kan forstås som et uttrykk for hvordan mennesket bruker landskap av alle sorter, det være seg naturlige, billedlige, symbolske, mytiske, imaginære, konstruerte, og så videre, som veier til å nå kunstneriske, sosiale, økonomiske og politiske mål. I tillegg kan det forstås som måten alle mulige former for landskap handler, agerer, og skaper *oss*, som om landskapet har sin egen agenda. Med dette som bakteppe er det vanskelig å overvurdere betydningen av *hva* og *hvordan* landskap *er* og *gjør*, hvordan den fungerer som en kulturell praksis, mener Mitchell. Særlig siden vår erfaring og oppfatning av landskap har direkte betydning for opprettholdelsen og bærekraftigheten i det landskapet vi lever i og er en del av - også fremtidige sosiale, økonomiske og politiske geografier, som territorier, grenser, og forflytning over grenser.

Naturbegrepet er nært knyttet til landskapsbegrepet. Landskap er et produkt av naturkreftene. Vi er en del av naturen. Naturens skjønnhet og mirakel har inspirert mennesket i århundrer, derfor har den også vært dyrket og idealisert i billedkunsten, som i det klassiske landskapsmaleriet. Dette var en natur som mennesket ideelt behersket; den kunne formgis og tuktes, som vi kan se i de franske klassiske hagene. Landskap kan sees som en spirituell og estetisk respons til naturen, særlig fra den senere romantikken og videre. Romantikken forfektet et syn på landskapet og landskapskunsten som en dialog mellom kunst, natur og subjektivitet, noe som markerte starten på en periode med kreative undersøkelser av personlig opplevelse. Naturen dyrkes i dag som en nesten-religiøs størrelse, samtidig som den i stadig større grad oppleves som traumatisk og traumatisert. I

dette knyttes landskap og natur sammen i form av ideologi: Naturen er landskapets materialitet. Kunst som problematiserer landskap, landskapets handlingsrom og våre handlingsrom i landskap har dermed stor relevans, særlig i lys av klimaendringer og naturkatastrofers inngrep i millioner av menneskers liv. En utstilling som tematiserer landskap i samtidskunsten er både eksplisitt og implisitt politisk. Naturen er en synlig deltager i våre omgivelser, en aktør vi må ta stilling til, og som politiserer kunsten selv uten at kunsten er politisk i tradisjonell forstand. Ideen om den sublime erfaring, som en opphøyd erfaring av noe overskridende i rom og tid eller av makt, kan gi interessante perspektiver i denne konteksten, i møtet med det storslåtte og det vakre på den ene siden, og vold og ødeleggelse på den andre. Det sublimes stadige relevans skriver seg fra tidligere århundrers landskapsforståelse, men aktualiseres og appliseres i dag på en rekke kunstneriske praksiser som tematiserer frykten for det ukjente, og trusler mot vår eksistens. Også forholdet mellom representasjon, presentasjon og virkelighet i landskapskunsten, og betrakterens rolle i erfaringen av den, er et bakteppe for utstillingen.

Som et rammeverk for visuell og sosial erfaring kan kunst være et verktøy for å synliggjøre våre relasjoner til landskapet. Kunstnere som tematiserer landskap gjør bruk av ulike visuelle strategier, og disse diskuteres så av kunstnere, kuratorer, kunstkritikere og publikum og får slik større handlekraft. Den tradisjonelle fremstillingsmåten har vært å lage bilder *av* landskap. Dette forutsetter at «landskap» er et avgrenset og forståelig fenomen, som lar seg gripe og ramme inn av et bilde. Dagens kunstnere arbeider derimot gjerne med andre visuelle virkemidler. De lager ikke bilder av landskap, men aktualiserer gjennom representasjon, skaper situasjoner, installasjoner osv. som vekker bestemte forestillinger og tankefigurer hos betrakteren. Samtidskunsten utgjør et radikalt mangfoldig felt knyttet til landskapsbegrepet, og innebærer retninger som «klimakunst» og land art, men også former hvor landskapet utforskes som en del av kunstneriske undersøkelser av så ulike tema som kroppslig erfaring, identitet, tradisjon, religion og politikk.

available proposals for a solution are such that we can rest at ease with them. The same can be said of our utopian and dystopian concepts of landscape. To what degree is our image of landscape politically, socially and culturally conditioned, and determined by prejudices, clichés and conceptions? How does the appearance of the landscape form our worldview? How does contemporary art define landscape and which landscapes are we talking about?

LANDSCAPE IS NOT A GENRE, BUT A MEDIUM

The American art historian W.J.T. Mitchell has stated that landscape is not a genre within the field of art, but a medium. His thesis can be understood as an expression of how human beings make use of all types of landscapes, whether they are natural, scenic, symbolic, mystical, imaginary, construed, and so on, as a means of achieving artistic, social, economic and political aims. In addition, it can be seen as the way all possible forms of landscapes act, react and create us, as though landscape has its own agenda. With this as the underlying idea, it is difficult to overestimate the significance of what landscape is, what it does and how it functions as a cultural practice, according to Mitchell. In particular because our experience and conception of landscape has direct relevance for the maintenance and sustainability of the landscape we live in, and are a part of; also future social and economic geographic issues such as territories, borders and the movement across borders.

The concept of nature is closely tied to the concept of landscape. Landscape is a product of the forces of nature. We are a part of that nature. The miracle and beauty of nature has inspired human beings for centuries, and has therefore also been cultivated and idealised in visual art, such as in classical landscape painting, for example. This was a type of nature that humans ideally could control; it could be shaped and disciplined, as we can see in classical French gardens. Landscape can be seen as a spiritual and aesthetic response to nature, in particular since the period of late Romanticism and later. Romanticism advocated a view of landscape and landscape art as a dialogue between art,

nature and subjectivity, which marked the beginning of a period of creative investigations of personal experience. Today nature is cultivated as a near-religious entity, at the same time that it is increasingly experienced as traumatic and traumatising. In this context landscape and nature are linked together in a form of ideology: nature is the material make up of the landscape. Art that problematizes landscape, landscape's range of activity, and our range of activity in the landscape, thus has great relevance, particularly in light of climate changes and the intrusion in the lives of millions of humans caused by natural disasters. An exhibition that has landscape in contemporary art as its theme is both explicitly and implicitly political. Nature is a visible participant in our environment, a player we must take into account, that politicises art even though this art is not political in a traditional sense. The idea of the sublime experience as an exalted experience of something that transcends space and time, or as an experience of power, can produce interesting perspectives in this context; in an encounter with magnificence and beauty on the one hand, and violence and destruction on the other. The continuing relevance of the sublime derives from the understanding of the landscape of bygone centuries, yet is actualised and applied today in numerous artistic practices that examine fear of the unknown and threats against our existence. The relationship between representation, presentation and reality in landscape art, and the viewer's role in the experiencing of it, also form part of the backdrop for the exhibition.

As a framework for visual and social experience, art can be a tool for illustrating our relationships to landscape. Artists who treat landscape in their work make use of different visual strategies, and these are then discussed by other artists, curators, art critics and the public, and thus gain increased vitality. The traditional form of presentation has been to create an image of landscapes. This implies that 'landscape' is a limited and comprehensible phenomenon, which can be grasped and framed by a picture. Today's artists, on the other hand, often work with other visual means. They do not create pictures of landscapes, but rather actualise via representation, or create situations, installations, etc. that awaken specific ideas or mental images

RADIKANT, IKKE RADIKALT

Den franske kuratoren og teoretikeren Nicholas Bourriaud beskriver i sin seneste bok «The Radicant» (2009) et begrep som kan overføres til utstillingen *Handlingsregler*. Han bruker eføy som et eksempel fra plantefamilien radikanter. Radikanter utvikler sine røtter ettersom de vokser, til forskjell fra radikale, som er avhengig av å være festet i et spesifikt jordsmonn for å utvikle seg. Røttene på radikante planter vokser langs deres første røtter, og i overensstemmelse med jorden. Den tilpasser seg jordsmonnets formasjon, endringer og bevegelser. Der Bourriaud bruker begrepet for å forstå samtidsmennesket og samtidskunstens posisjon mellom deres omgivelser og fremmedgjorthet, mellom globalisering og singularitet, identitet og åpenhet mot andre, kan vi overføre det til hvordan kunstnerne i *Handlingsregler*, og hvordan vi alle, navigerer i ulike landskap, med ulike landskapsbegrep, i en verden som er regulert av handlingsregler. Bourriaud skriver at radikantbegrepet definerer subjektet som et resultat av forhandlinger. I *Handlingsregler* får betrakteren anledning til å reflektere over sine egne forhandlinger, og handlinger. Utstillingen er et resultatet av at åtte kunstnere har *skapt* landskap heller enn å betrakte dem. Landskap er i denne sammenheng noe vi *gjør*. Utstillingen fungerer som et laboratorium for handlinger og nyorienteringer i landskap. Bourriaud beskriver denne måten å agere som kunstner på godt når han skriver at kunstnere i dag ikke uttrykker den tradisjonen de kommer fra, men veien mellom den tradisjonen og de ulike kontekstene de krysser. Og dette gjør de ved å utføre *oversettende* handlinger. Handlinger, kunstverk, som formidler og oversetter en bevegelse i tradisjon, i kontekst og i begreper.

NYE HANDLINGSROM

Alle kunstnerne bidrar med nyproduksjoner. Utstillingen inkluderer flere kunstneriske sjangere: installasjon, fotografi og fotogravyr, maleri, lydkunst og video. Kunstnerne er valgt ut på bakgrunn av at de tidligere har jobbet med tematikker som rom, sted og landskap i utvidet forstand, gjennom alt fra landskapsmaleri til lydlandskap, med en tilnærming som gjør det interessant å se deres produksjon i sammenheng med hverandre. Anna Widén, Jannecke Lønne Christiansen, Marit Arnekleiv og Patrick Huse er alle sentrale aktører på Opplands kunstscene. I tillegg presenteres arbeidene til fire norske kunstnere som jobber med tematikken på en måte som kan bidra til en utfordrende og dynamisk utstilling, Toril Johannessen, Lars Korff Lofthus, Anngjerd Rustand og Jørgen Larsson. Det oppstår en interessant konstellasjon ved å hente inn fire kunstnere som ikke tilhører kunstmiljøet i Oppland, sammensetningen av kunstnere, lokale og ikke-lokale, kan sees i sammenheng med menneskets inngripen i landskapet, hvordan det skaper nye handlingsrom, nye handlingsregler. Man får også en dynamikk mellom det lokale og det nasjonale/globale, gjennom kunstnernes arbeidsprosesser og de ulike verkene. Slik skapes flere nye landskap, mellom kunstnerne, i tillegg til selve utstillingslandskapet. Kunstverkene presenteres innendørs i Lillehammer Museum – Maihaugens største utstillingssal, og utendørs i deres parkanlegg.

MARIT ARNEKLEIV

Marit Arnekleivs verk *Kvile* består av en serie fotografier som dokumenterer lastebiler parkert i «gruva» på Tretten, tatt over et lengre tidsrom. Lastebiler med langtransport parkeres

in the viewer. Contemporary art is comprised of an extremely diversified field linked to the concept of landscape, and includes art movements such as 'climate art' and land art, but also art forms in which the landscape is explored as part of an artistic investigation of such different themes as physical experience, identity, tradition, religion and politics.

RADICANT, NOT RADICAL

In his latest book The Radicant (2009), the French curator and theoretician Nicholas Bourriaud describes a concept that can be applied to the exhibition *Rules of Action*. He uses ivy as an example of the radicant plant family. Radicants develop their roots from the stem as they grow, as opposed to radical plants, which are dependent on having a foothold in a specific type of soil in order to develop. The roots of radicant plants grow along their first roots and in acquiescence with the earth. It adapts to the soil's formations, transitions and shifting movements. When Bourriaud uses the term to understand contemporary man's and contemporary art's position between familiar surroundings and alienation, between globalisation and singularity, identity and openness towards others; we can apply it to how the artists in *Rules of Action*, and all of us for that matter, navigate in various landscapes, and with different concepts of landscape, in a world that is regulated by rules of action. Bourriaud writes that the term radicant defines the subject as a result of mediations. In *Rules of Action* the viewer has the opportunity to reflect over his or her own mediations, and actions. The exhibition is a consequence of the fact that eight artists have created landscapes rather than observed them. In this context landscape is something that we do. The exhibition functions as a laboratory for practices and new orientations in landscapes. Bourriaud describes this form of practice as an artist accurately, when he writes that artists today do not express the tradition they emanate from, but rather the path between that tradition and the various contexts that they come across along the way. And they achieve this by performing translative practices. Practices, or artworks, that convey and interpret a shift in tradition, in context and in concepts.

NEW RANGE OF ACTIVITY

All of the artists have contributed new works to the exhibition. It includes several artistic genres: installation, photography and photogravure, painting, sound art and video. The artists have been chosen on the basis of their having previously worked with themes such as space, site and landscape in a broad sense of the term, through everything from landscape painting to soundscape, with an approach that makes it interesting to see their work in connection with each other. Anna Widén, Jannecke Lønne Christiansen, Marit Arnekleiv and Patrick Huse are all major players on the art scene in Oppland County. Four additional Norwegian artists who treat the subject in a way that contribute to creating a provoking and dynamic exhibition are also presented: Toril Johannessen, Lars Korff Lofthus, Anngjerd Rustand and Jørgen Larsson. By bringing in four artists that do not belong to the art circles in Oppland, an interesting constellation arises; the combination of artists, local and non-local, can be seen in connection with human intervention in the landscape, where a new range of activity and new rules of action are created. One also achieves a dynamic interaction between the local and the national/global, through the artists' working methods and their various works. New landscapes are thereby created, between the artists as well as within the exhibition landscape itself. The works of art are presented indoors in the Lillehammer Museum – Maihaugen's largest exhibition hall – and outdoors in the park grounds.

MARIT ARNEKLEIV

Marit Arnekleivs work *Repose* consists of a series of photographs that document the presence of trucks in the "mine" in Tretten taken over a period of time. Trucks with semi-trailers are parked in this little village on weekends while the drivers are at home. The tractor-trailers are witnesses of a global landscape. They are what connect our commercial society. The series of photographs reveal the otherwise invisible in-between spaces, the rest areas we do not see, as static sequences in a globalised, speeding landscape. The photographs reveal a continuously
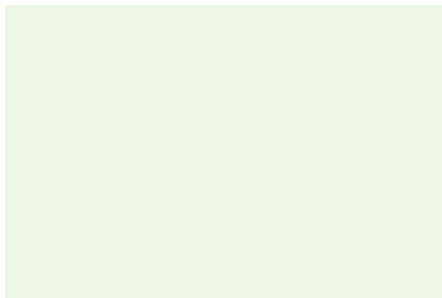
på dette lille tettstedet i helgene når sjåførene er hjemme. Lastebilene er vitner fra et globalt landskap. De binder vårt handelssamfunn sammen. De serielle fotografiene viser de ellers usynlige mellomrommene, hvilestedene vi ikke ser, som stillestående sekvenser i det globaliserte, hurtiggående landskapet.

Fotografiene viser en stadig gjentatt situasjon, vegetasjonen rundt endrer seg, og bilenes frontruter speiler sine omgivelser. Den stedsspesifikke situasjonen i serien *Kvile* refererer til noe som kommer utenfra, men også tilhører stedet. Men fotografienes lastebiler trer frem som en selvmotsigelse – det er kun sporene av is eller skitt i karosseriets overflate som kan fortelle om at de har vært i bevegelse. Slik adresserer situasjonen begreper som stillstand og bevegelighet, isolasjon og tilgjengelighet.

I *Posing in green* er miljøet en grønn løvskog høyt til fjells. Tre personer poserer henholdsvis sittende, stående og liggende i dette tette skoglandskapet. I *White Act* vises en snøkledd fjellbjørkeskog omkranset av tre gipsobjekter: en stol, en kjegle og en seng. På disse sitter, står og løper hvite, støpte, beverlignende skikkelser. Både *White Act* og *Posing in green* uttrykker en ambivalens mellom bevegelighet og stillstand. I *White Act* er det frosne uttrykket mer relatert til landskapet gipsobjektene er plassert i, enn til selve de støpte objektene. Landskapet framstår tømt for liv til fordel for gipsobjektenes framstilling av bevegelse. Beveren hører til i naturen, men her er den tatt ut og plassert tilbake igjen, en handling som framhever menneskets blikk på naturen. I *Posing in green* fanger kameraet bildet av «menneske i natur» og får tilbake et blikk fra tre ulike posisjoner. Her ligger det fastfryste uttrykket i et fravær av bevegelse og handling hos personene som er avbildet.

Begge verkene reiser spørsmål om premisser for tilstedeværelse, tilknytning og betraktning.

Blikket på natur og bildet av natur påvirker menneskets besittelse av landskap og gir videre forutsetninger for menneskenes handling i og i forhold til natur.

PATRICK HUSE

Patrick Huses arbeider i *Handlingsregler* tar opp problemstillinger knyttet til forholdet natur/kultur, landskapsstrukturer og identitetsspørsmål. Alle arbeidene har klare referanser til konkrete landskap eller forståelser og erfaringer av landskap, det være seg kulturelle, økonomiske, religiøse, eller sosiale landskap. *Perspective Displacement X* er på én og samme tid en dokumentasjon og en fornemmelse av et landskap. De to delene er utsnitt av samme landskap: Haughton Crater, et nedslagskrater etter en meteor i kanadisk Arktis. Der den gule delen er en beskrivelse av overflaten, en opplevelse av et landskap hvor kunstneren har gjengitt en fornemmelse av hvordan solen skinner i krateret, er delen i sorthvitt et dokumentarisk fotografi. Sammenstillingen viser til de to ulike perspektivene og perseptuelle erfaringene. *Altered Landscape* er et fotografisk og dokumentarisk verk av 225 landskapsfotografier overført til fotogravyr, en trykketeknikk hvor fotografiet trykkes som et originalt, grafisk dyptrykk. Verket er en nøyaktig, realistisk beskrivelse av en fjellvegg. Tverrsnittet er en linje fra fjellveggen, hvor kameraet for hvert fotografi er flyttet 50 cm til høyre, totalt 27 serielle bilder på hver linje. *Forestial Park* viser et annet landskap, det industrielle, og utgjør en landskapsoppfatning hvor landskapets industrielle, fysiske utforming får en estetisk verdi. Gjennom denne tilførte verdien stiller kunstneren spørsmål ved hvilke verdisett industrien vanligvis inngår i. Tittelen peker på et industrielt landskap hvor det teknologiske er i et motsetningsforhold til naturlandskapet. Huse bidrar også med *Perspective Displacement XI*, en kollasj av fotografier av
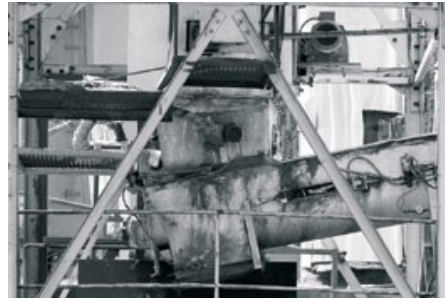
PATRICK HUSE

recurring situation, the vegetation around the area is transformed and the windshields of the vehicles reflect their surroundings. The site-specific situation in the photographic series *Repose* points to something that comes from the world without, but also belongs to the place. And yet the trucks in the photographs appear as a self-contradiction – it is only the traces of ice or grime on the chasses that reveal to us that they have been in motion. In this way the situation addresses the concepts of immobility and motion, isolation and accessibility.

In *Posing in Green* the environment is a green deciduous forest high in the mountains. Three persons pose, sitting, standing and reclining, in the dense forest landscape. In *White Act* a snowy mountain birch wood is depicted encircled by three plaster objects: a chair, a cone and a bed. On these objects white beaver figures appear to be running, standing or sitting. Both *White Act* and *Posing in Green* express an ambivalent relationship between mobility and immobility. In *White Act*, the frozen appearance is related more to the landscape that the plaster objects are arranged in, than to the cast objects themselves. The landscape seems devoid of life as opposed to the representation of movement by the plaster objects. The beaver belongs in nature, but here it's been removed and reintroduced again, an act that underlines the human view of nature. In Posing in green the camera captures the image of "Man in nature", and get's a look in return from three different positions. Here, the frozen expression is embedded in the absence of movement and action in the persons depicted. Both works pose questions on the premises of presence, attachment and viewing. The gaze on nature and the image of nature is influenced by our possession of landscape, and further precondition our actions in, and in relation to, nature.

Patrick Huse's works in *Rules of Action* take up problems tied to the relationship between nature and culture, landscape structures and questions of identity. All of the works have clear references to specific landscapes or ideas and impressions of landscape, whether they are cultural, economic, religious or social landscapes. *Perspective Displacement X* is simultaneously a documentation of and an impression of a landscape. The two sections are details of the same landscape, the Haughton Crater, formed by the impact of a meteor in the Canadian Arctic. Whereas the yellow section is a description of the surface of the crater – an impression of the landscape whereby the artist has reproduced a sense of how the sun is reflected in the crater, the section in black and white is a photographic documentary. The juxtaposition of these approaches reveals two different perspectives and perceptual impressions. Altered Landscape is a photographic documentary work composed of 225 landscape photogravures, an intaglio printmaking technique where a photograph is transferred to a copper plate that is chemically etched and then printed as an original graphic work. The work is an exact, realistic depiction of a cliff. The cross section is a section of the cliff, where the camera has been moved 50 cm for each photograph, with a total of 27 series of pictures for each section. *Forestial Park* depicts a different landscape, an industrial one, and entails a landscape concept where the landscape's physical industrial appearance gains an aesthetic quality. Via this added quality, the artist questions the set of values industry is normally incorporated into. The title points to an industrial landscape where the technological is juxtaposed with the natural landscape. Huse has contributed another work, *Perspective Displacement XI*, a collage of photographs of a church from Iceland and stones from Gudbrandsdalen, which examines two ways of viewing religious
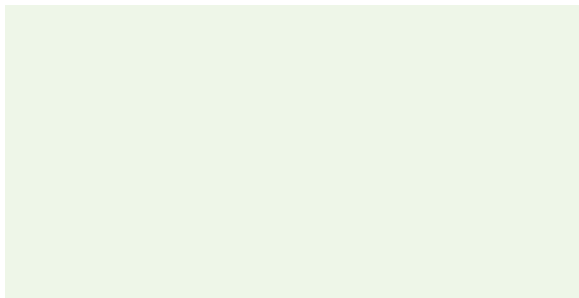
en kirke fra Island og stein fra Gudbrandsdalen, som tematiserer to måter å tilnærme seg et trosforhold på. Der den gamle naturreligionen har en sirkulær naturoppfatning har den vestlige verden en lineær oppfatning. Bildene er tilført en estetikk inspirert av pop art, som en kommentar til hvor lett alvorlige spørsmål blir behandlet i dag. I tillegg stilles Huses seneste bokprosjekt ut som en del av utstillingen. *Realms of Belonging* omhandler ulike tilnærminger til identitet, og åtte skribenter er invitert til å bidra med tekster som følges av Huses bilder. I *Handlingsregler* vises i alt 148 boksider, montert som ett verk. I sammenheng med dette verket vises videoarbeidet *Per Gynt, men ikke av Henrik Ibsen.* Verket synliggjør hvordan vi skaper og tar i bruk andres identiteter for å oppnå fordeler.

TORIL JOHANNESSEN

Toril Johannessens installasjon *Upward, Yet Not Northward!*, består av en elektromagnet gravd ned et sted i parkanlegget til Maihaugen. Publikum vil ikke få vite hvor det er plassert. De må derimot navigere seg frem til magneten ved hjelp av kart og kompass. Elektromagneten i hullet plasseres slik at nord blir sør og sør blir nord. Hvis man holder et kompass over vil man se at kompassnålen endrer posisjon 180 grader. Tittelen er en henvisning til boken «Flatland: A Romance in Many Dimensions», en 1800-talls samfunnssatire og science fiction-roman av Edwin A. Abbott, som undersøker persepsjonen av verden slik den ville fremstått i ulike romlige dimensjoner. I boken går setningen Upward, yet not northward! ofte igjen når en som lever i fjerde dimensjon skal forklare den tredje dimensjon - dybde – til et vesen som lever i andre dimensjon og kun forholder seg til flate. Verket tar opp vårt fysiske handlingsrom som definert av dimensjonene, og hvordan vi navigerer i en verden der vi ikke alltid kan forestille oss løsningene, siden de ligger utenfor vår perseptuelle fatteevne.

Johannessens andre verk på utstillingen er det digitale trykket «Comparative Map», som kan sees i forhold til verdenshistoriens geografiske, økonomiske og politiske handlingsrom. Bildet er basert på et tysk kart fra 1800-tallet som sammenligner høyden på fjellene på verdens kontinenter. Det ble laget en rekke slike komparative kart på 1800-tallet, der høyden på fjell og lengden på elver ble sammenlignet. Bildet er en sammenstilling av to ellers ulike felt, geografi og økonomi, og peker mot en tenkt, sammenheng mellom topografi og økonomisk utvikling. Over kartet har Johannessen tegnet et linjediagram, men uten å angi hva aksene i diagrammet indikerer. De kan eksempelvis forstås som to tidsakser, der den vertikale er geologiske strata og den horisontale er en lineær historisk tidslinje. Til høyre for kartet vises en statistikk basert på tall fra det internasjonale pengefondet om den prosentvise økningen i bruttonasjonalprodukt på verdens kontinenter. Vanligvis presenteres slike tall for økonomiske soner som Vest-Europa, USA, Midt-Østen, men her er de organisert ut fra de geografiske kontinentene slik de er inndelt på kart: Europa, Asia, Oceania, Afrika og Amerika.

LARS KORFF LOFTHUS

Lars Korff Lofthus viser en video som tar utgangspunkt i reality-TV. Arbeidet viser én scene som går i loop, og denne låner estetikk og form fra en typisk utvelgelsesseremoni. Her er det nettop *fraværet* av handling som er sentralt. De gamle husene i bakgrunnen har en unik historie, men på TV blir denne redusert til scenografi og kulisser. Scenariet er en tribune med «deltagere». På gresset foran tribunen står to personer vendt mot de andre deltagerne. Like ved de to stående personene står et bord med forskjellige rekvisita. Vi får verken presentert en konkret handling, en fortelling eller replikker. Selve situasjonen er det sentrale, og potensialet

belief. While primitive religions have a cyclical conception of nature, the western world has a linear concept of religion. The pictures are imbued with an aesthetic inspired by Pop Art, as a commentary on how superficially serious issues are treated today. In addition, Huse's latest book project is presented as part of the exhibition. *Realms of Belonging* treats various approaches to identity, and eight writers have been invited to contribute texts, which are accompanied by Huse's pictures. In *Rules of Action* a total of 148 pages of the book are exhibited, arranged as one artwork. In connection to this work is the video *Per Gynt, but not by Henrik Ibsen*. The work shows how we create and make use of other peoples identities in order to gain advantages.

TORIL JOHANNESSEN

Toril Johannessen's installation *Upward, Yet Not Northward* consists of an electromagnet buried in the ground at an undisclosed spot in the park at Maihaugen. The public is not informed where it is located. They will have to navigate with the help of a map and a compass in order to find the magnet. The electromagnet is placed in the hole so that north becomes south, and south becomes north. If one holds a compass over it, one will discover that the needle of the compass changes position by 180 degrees. The title is a reference to the book Flatland: A Romance in Many Dimensions, a 19th century social satire and science fiction novel by Edwin A. Abbott that investigates a perception of the world as it would have appeared in various spatial dimensions. In the book, the sentence Upward, yet not northward! appears repeatedly when one who lives in the fourth dimension has to explain the third dimension – depth – to a creature who lives in the second dimension and relates only to flat surfaces. The work examines our physical range of activity as defined by the dimensions, and how we navigate in a world where we cannot always imagine the solutions since they exist outside of our perceptual comprehension.

Johannessen's other work in the exhibition is the digital graphic print Comparative Map, which can be seen in relation to the geographic, economic and political range of activity in the history of the world. The picture is based on a German map from the 19th century, which compares the height of mountains on the seven continents. A number of such comparative maps were made during the 19th century, on which the height of mountains and the length of rivers were compared. The picture is a juxta-position of the otherwise two different fields of geography and economics, and point towards a conceived connection between topography and economic development. Johannessen has drawn a line diagram, but without disclosing what the axes in the diagram stand for. They could for example be seen as two axes indicating time, where the vertical represents geological strata, and the horizontal a linear historic timeline. To the right of the map, statistics are shown based on numbers from the International Monetary Fund regarding the percentile increase in gross national products across the world. Ordinarily such figures are presented according to economic zones such as Western Europe, USA, the Middle East, etc., but here they are organised according to the continents as they are located on the map: Europe, Asia, Oceania, Africa and America, etc.

LARS KORFF LOFTHUS

Lars Korff Lofthus presents a video that has its point of departure in reality TV. The work shows one scene that continues in a loop, and it borrows its aesthetic and form from a typical selection by elimination ceremony. Here it is precisely the *absence* of action that is central.
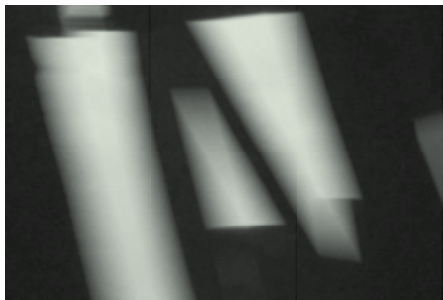
for konflikt og drama ligger i selve settingen. Gjennom nærbilder av ansikt, spenningsskapende lydbilde og øyekontakt mellom deltakerne fungerer filmen som en vedvarende uløst situasjon. Verket kommenterer det moderne menneskets forhold til naturen og til historien som omgir oss. Korff Lofthus undersøker den medierte fremstillingen av gårdsarbeid i en tid der de fleste av oss er fremmedgjort overfor maten vi kjøper i butikken. Samtidig kan utvelgelseskonseptet i reality-TV fungere som en metafor for mellommenneskelige relasjoner i et bredere landskap; - i kunstlivet, i arbeidslivet og på andre arenaer. Deltagerne må samarbeide og spille på lag samtidig som de er konkurrenter i et landskap, der spillereglene ikke diskuteres.

JØRGEN LARSSON

I et eget spesialbygd rom vises Jørgen Larssons video- og lydinstallasjon *Whiteness.* Filmen er et opptak fra vinduet mot syd på togturen fra Finse til Myrdal på Bergensbanen en solskinnsdag om våren. Alle snø-overbyggingene lager naturlige «glitcher» i landskapet, mellom svart tunnel og hvit snø. Glitch er et begrep hentet fra musikkfeltet, nærmere bestemt elektronikasjangeren. Begrepet er karakterisert av en bevisst bruk av lyder som vanligvis blir ansett som uønskede forstyrrelser og som dermed reduserer den helhetlige lydkvaliteten, og bør unngås. I *Whiteness* forekommer derimot slike glitcher som plutselige hvite felt i form av blendende hvite snølandskap hvor der ikke finnes referansepunkter, noe som etterlater betrakteren desorientert, og svarte felt som gir den samme desorienterende effekten, her i form av tunnel-

er. Filmen har ingen tog-referanser, kun gjennom bevegelsen langs det vakre snølandskapet som hakkes opp og glimter, overstrømmer, fyller skjermen og rommet med et øyeblikk av hvitt, før det igjen blir svart. Når landskapet tidvis åpenbarer seg i all sin hvite skjønnhet, er det akkompagnert av et overdøvende kor av skrik. *Whiteness* viser vår bevegelse i landskap. Kunsten får her en funksjon som fremmedgjørende kraft. Gjennom en insistering på landskapets materialitet, det sorte, hvite og skriket, fremtrer landskapet for oss på nytt.

JANNECKE LØNNE CHRISTIANSEN

Jannecke Lønne Christiansens *Evigheten Nå* består av et videoarbeid og en billedserie av arkivmateriale og fotografier tatt i sammenheng med videoinnspillingen. Prosjektet tar utgangspunkt i menneskets personlige erfaring av landskap. Landskapet vises i en nasjonalromantisk maleritradisjon, med storslått vakker natur hvor mennesket er lite i bildet. Arbeidet fremviser måter mennesker ser på og avbilder landskapet, i kontrast til det fysisk opplevde landskap. Verket kan sees som en kommentar til menneskets relasjon til naturkreftene og naturens sårbarhet. *Evigheten Nå* har to hovedelementer: Gamle svart-hvitt fotografier av mennesker i landskap, delvis dobbelteksponerte, med lysinnslag, oppripede og med fingermerker. Motivene er til dels ugjenkjennelige, det er som om vær og vind overtar motivet. I sitt utrykk har de noe nostalgisk og drømmende over seg samtidig som de er i ferd med å forsvinne, forvitre og bli ødelagte. Den andre delen er et videoopptak av

The old houses in the background have a unique history, yet on TV this is reduced to theatrical scenery and stage sets. The scenario is a raised platform with 'participants'. On the grass in front of the stage stand two persons who are facing the other participants. Next to the two standing persons is a table holding various props. We are not presented with any concrete plot, narrative or dialogue. The situation itself is what is important, and the potential for conflict and drama lies in the setting itself. Via close-ups of faces, a tension-creating soundtrack and eye contact between the participants, the film functions as an endlessly unresolved situation. The work is a commentary on the modern human relationship to nature and to the history that surrounds us. Korff Lofthus examines the media-based presentation of agriculture in a time where most of us are estranged from the food we buy in the supermarket. At the same time the selection by elimination concept from reality TV functions as a metaphor for interpersonal relations in a broader understanding of landscape – in the art world, in the workplace and other arenas. The participants must work together and as a team, at the same time that they are competitors in a landscape, where the rules of the game are not discussed.

JØRGEN LARSSON

Jørgen Larsson presents the video and sound installation *Whiteness*. The film is a shoot from a window facing south on a sunny spring day en route by train from Finse to Myrdal, on the Bergen Line. All of the covered stretches of tracks, constructed to guard against the snow, create natural 'glitches' in the landscape, in between black tunnels and white snow. A glitch is a term used in music, more specifically from electronica. The term is characterised by a conscious use of sounds that are normally viewed as unpleasant disturbances and that therefore

reduce the overall quality of the sound, and are normally to be avoided. In *Whiteness*, however, glitches appear in the form of sudden white intervals in the form of blindingly white snowy landscapes, where there are no reference points, something that leaves the viewer disoriented, and black areas that cause the same disorienting effect, now in the form of tunnels. The film has no references to trains, beyond the perception of movement along the beautiful snow-clad landscape, which is chopped up with flashes of flooding light and fills the screen and the room with seconds of whiteness, before becoming dark again. When the landscape periodically reveals itself like this in all its beautiful whiteness, a deafening chorus of screams accompanies it. Whiteness depicts our movement in the landscape. Art gains a function here as an alienating force. By insisting on the materiality of the landscape – the black, white and the scream – the landscape reveals itself to us in a new way.

JANNECKE LØNNE CHRISTIANSEN

Jannecke Lønne Christiansen is represented with the work *Eternity Now*, a video and a series based on archival material and photographs from the production of the video. The project is based on the human experience of landscape. The landscape is presented in a National Romantic painting tradition, where the human being is small in comparison. The work reveals the way humans look at and portray the landscape, in contrast to a physically experienced landscape. The work can be seen as a commentary on the human relationship to the forces of nature and nature's vulnerability. *Eternity Now* has two major elements: old black and white photographs of figures in a landscape, at times doubly exposed, and with elements of light, tears and fingerprints. The motifs are only partially recognisable; it's as though the wind
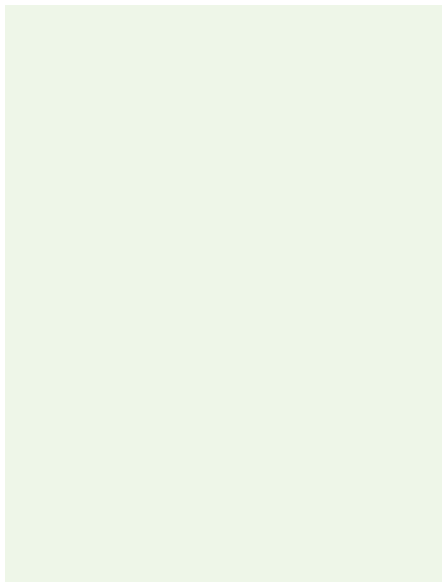
panoramalandskap med mennesker i det store landskapet. Opptakene er gjort i tre forskjellige områder, ved et hogstfelt, ved et tjern og et fjellparti. Naturelementer som vind, vann, sol, opplevelsen av høyde og redsel for mørket vises gjennom nærbilder av menneskets bevegelser i landskapet. Videoens utrykk veksler mellom det kontemplative, gjennom bruk av store panoramalandskap, og raske montasjer med nærbilder. Videoen har ikke en klart narrativ oppbygging, men oppleves som sirkulær - som en vandring i indre og ytre landskap. De tre landskapene, hogstfelt, tjern og fjellparti går også igjen i billedmaterialet og arkivmaterialet. Landskapets tette bånd til minner og hukommelse problematiseres, der mennesket står med naturen som scene, mens fotografiene er så slitte at de gir inntrykk av at elementene og naturen har tatt overhånd.

ANNGJERD RUSTAND

Anngjerd Rustand viser *Det handler ikke om flukt*, en kollasj av 128 tegneseriesider. *Det handler ikke om flukt* tar utgangspunkt i Tintinskaperen Hergés tegneserie «Månen tur-retur» I og II («Objectif Lune» og «On a marché sur la Lune») fra 1950–53. Rustand har benyttet brukte tegneserier fra 1980-tallet, da hun selv var barn. Alle tegneseriefigurer, bygninger og romskip i tegneseriene er malt over, tilbake står øde landskaper og landskapsfragmenter sett fra jorden, fra rommet og fra månen. Rekke-

følgen på sidene følger den opprinnelige fortellingen, men når narrativet er forsvunnet utgjør bildene heller ett landskap eller landskapsbilde, hvor bilder av og fra jorden og månen omslutter hverandre. Et av utgangspunktene for verket var en interesse for konspirasjonsteoriene rundt månelandingene. Rustand fant at disse konspirasjonsteoriene skiller seg fra de fleste andre i og med at alle «bevisene» for at vi har landet på månen består av billedmateriale som ser kunstig ut, hovedsakelig på grunn av optiske effekter som måten månen reflekterer lys på overflaten, og at månen ikke har en atmosfære som slører horisonten. Selv om også politiske årsaker spilte inn i folks overbevisning eller avvisning av månelandingen mener Rustand en åpenbar forklaring er at vi kun har våre egne omgivelser til å måle dette «andre» opp mot. Slik problematiserer hun hvordan våre forståelser av nye landskap alltid konstitueres i forhold til det eksisterende. Hergés tegneserie ble skapt sytten år før månelandingen, og forespeilte et utopisk eller dystopisk landskap. I Rustands verk blir den fragmenterte kollasjen en utdypning av fantasien som tilholdssted. Apollo-bildene var ikke lenger like til stede i nyhetsbildet på 1980-tallet som de var et tiår tidligere. Rustand spør om hennes generasjon vokste opp i et vakuum, før alt billedmaterialet ble tilgjengelig på internett. Måneferdene var fjerne og tilhørte historien. «Månen tur-retur» ble en langt mer tilgjengelig fortelling. Hennes egen forestilling om månen stemmer i stor grad fortsatt med disse bildene. Ved å fjerne

and weather have taken over the motif. In their style they have something nostalgic and dreamy about them, while simultaneously seeming to be on the verge of disappearing, disintegrating, or being destroyed. The second element is a video sequence of a panoramic landscape with human figures included in the vast landscape. The video clips were made in three different venues, at a logging site, near a pond and by a mountain. Natural phenomena such as wind, water, sunshine, the experience of height and the fear of darkness are shown via close-ups of humans moving in the landscape. The idiom of the video alternates between a contemplative mood, via the use of broad panoramic landscapes, and rapid composites of close-ups. The video does not have a clear narrative structure, but is experienced as cyclical. The three landscapes, the logging site, the pond and the mountain scene are reproduced in the photographic material and the archival material. The landscape's close bond to reminiscences and memory is examined, where the human being exists in the setting of nature, while the photographs are so worn that they give the impression of being overrun by the elements of nature.

ANNGJERD RUSTAND

The work Anngjerd Rustand presents, *It is Not About Escape*, is a collage consisting of 128 comic strip pages. *It is Not About Escape* is based on the comic strip albums "Destination Moon" and "Explorers on the Moon" ("Objectif Lune" og "On a marché sur la Lune") from 1950–52 by the creator of Tintin, Hergé. For her piece Rustand has employed the Norwegian Tintin albums from the 1980s, when she herself was a child. All of the figures, buildings and spaceships in the comic strips are painted over, and what remains are deserted landscapes and landscape fragments seen from the earth, from space and from the moon. The sequence of the pages follows the original story, but once the narrative element has been removed, the pictures make up a landscape or image, in which the pictures of, or from, the earth and the moon envelop one another. One of the points of departure for the albums was an interest in the conspiracy theories related a moon landing. Rustand realised that these conspiracy theories differenti-

ate themselves from most other conspiracies in that all of the "evidence" of the moon landing consists of images that appear artificial, mainly because of optical effects such as the way the moon reflects light on its surface, and that the moon does not have an atmosphere that blurs the horizon. Although political considerations also played a role in whether people were convinced or sceptical about the veracity of a moon landing, Rustand believes that an obvious explanation for this is that our own environment is the only thing we have to measure against this "otherness". In this way she examines how our conceptions of new landscapes are always constructed in relationship to existing ones. Hergé's comic strip was created seventeen years before the actual landing on the moon, and reflected utopian and dystopian landscapes. In Rustand's work, the fragmented collage becomes an exploration of fantasy as a form of environment. The Apollo photographs were no longer present in the news during the 1980s as they had been a decade earlier. Rustand questions whether her generation grew up in a vacuum, before all of the photographic material once again became available on the Internet. The missions to the moon were distant events and belonged to history. Hergé's "Destination Moon" and "Explorers on the Moon" were far more accessible stories. Her own conception of the moon corresponds with these pictures even today. By removing the characters and events of the comic strip, she recaptures some of the gravity with which she read the comics the first time.

ANNA WIDÉN

Anna Widén's installation, *Evolution*, consists of one hundred skulls cast in concrete and placed on a shallow, rounded heap of coarse salt on the floor of the exhibition hall. In this work Widèn refers to the human ecological footprint. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has determined that today we have exceeded the earth's biological capacity, which includes all available natural resources, by twenty per cent. *Evolution* emphasises that our behaviour leaves traces that have dramatic consequences, and can be seen as a commentary on how humans leave irreversible footprints on the earth.

de karikerte figurene og hendelsene gjenfinner hun noe av det samme alvoret som hun leste «Månen tur-retur» med første gang.

ANNA WIDÉN

Anna Widéns installasjon *Evolution* består av hundre hodeskaller støpt i betong og plassert i en lav, avrundet haug av grovkornet salt på gulvet i utstillingssalen. I verket refererer Widén til menneskets økologiske fotavtrykk.

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) har slått fast at vi i dag har overskredet jordens biokapasitet, som er alle tilgjengelige naturressurser, med tjue prosent. *Evolution* aksentuerer at våre handlinger setter spor med dramatiske konsekvenser og kan sees som en kommentar til hvordan menneskene legger igjen irreversible fotavtrykk på jorden.

Hodeskallene i installasjonen vil forvitre svært langsomt; betong kan holde seg intakt i flere hundre år før det sakte brytes ned. Elementet forsterkes av at hodeskallene er plassert i salt, som har blitt brukt til konservering gjennom historien. Salt er også et livsnødvendig mineral - men i for store mengder utarmer det jorden og legger den øde.

LANDSKAPETS MAKT

De åtte kunstnerne som deltar på *Opplandsutstillingen 2011 – Handlingsregler,* argumenterer for og konstituerer ulike handlingsregler, mulighetsbetingelser for våre handlinger i et landskap, gjennom sine blikk på, og handlinger i, landskap. Deres utopiske, dystopiske, historiserende, dokumentariske, dramatiske og romantiske forestillinger om landskapet er alle like aktuelle, like sanne. Mulighetsbetingelsene for handling konstrueres som en forhandling med et landskap i endring. Så er heller ikke disse åtte kunstnernes beskrivelser av realitetsbundne, erfaringsbaserte eller mulige forslag til handlinger tilstrekkelig for å forstå *hva* og *hvordan* landskap *er* og *gjør*, om vi skal følge kunsthistoriker Mitchells oppfordring. Kunstverk som oversetter en bevegelse i tradisjon, i kontekst og i begreper er et resultat av forhandlinger i et landskap, og det er disse forhandlingene som konstituerer subjektet. Refleksjon over våre egne handlinger blir dermed en uunngåelig del av vår egen samfunnsdeltagelse. Det gjør det nødvendig å gå i dialog med kunsten, for å forstå hva verkene på denne utstillingen er og gjør, og hvordan de sammen skaper et landskap av handlingsregler. Samtidig som vi må spørre oss selv hvilke mulighetsbetingelser som bestemmer våre handlinger som individ, venner, familiemedlemmer, kolleger, nordmenn, verdensborgere? Hvilke landskap handler vi i? Hvilken makt ligger i landskap, og hvilken makt ligger i våre handlinger?

The skulls in the installation will disintegrate very slowly; concrete can remain intact for several centuries before decomposing. The effect is strengthened by placing the skulls in salt, which has been used as a means of conservation throughout history. Salt is also an essential life-supporting mineral – yet in excessive quantities it can deplete the earth and lay it to waste.

THE POWER OF THE LANDSCAPE

The eight participating artists in the Oppland Exhibition 2011 – Rules of Action make an argument for and represent different rules of action, conceivable conditions for our activity in a landscape, via their view of and actions in landscapes. Their utopian, dystopian, historical, documentary, dramatic and romantic presentations of landscape are all equally relevant, equally true. The conceivable conditions for action are constructed as mediations with a landscape in transition. On the other hand, the descriptions of reality-bound, experience-based or possible suggestions for action presented by these eight artists are not sufficient to understand what landscape is and what is does, if we wish to comply with art historian Mitchel's appeal. Artworks that interpret a shift in tradition, in context and in concepts are a result of mediations in a landscape, and it is these mediations that constitute the subject. To reflect over our own actions is thus an unavoidable aspect of our own participation in society. This makes is necessary to enter into a dialogue with art, in order to understand what the works in this exhibition are and what they do, and how they collectively create a landscape based on rules of action. At the same time we must ask ourselves: what range of conditions determine our actions as individuals, friends, family members, colleagues, Norwegians, or citizens of the world? Which landscapes do we act in? What power lies in a landscape, what power lies in our actions?

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