

**AH217 Nature on Display. From Landscape Representations
to Mold(er)ing Earth in Exhibition Spaces**

Seminar Leader: Friederike Schäfer

Course Time: Thursdays, 14:00 – 17:15

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Office Hours: By appointment

The course (re)considers the history of art from the twentieth century to now, from the perspective of what can be termed the “nature–culture divide” in Western art traditions. In order to diversify the canon, we will look into different conceptions of “nature” that artists have developed in and through art, and end with the discussion around the “Anthropocene” and alternative models regarding the changing relation between humans and “nature,” which emerged at the turn of the millennium in the larger art discourse.

Departing from landscape painting traditions that aimed for creating a compelling representation of an ideal image of nature, abstract painters took a more analytical approach to “the nature of nature.” The focus, however, is on the emergence of natural materials in the exhibition space. In the 1960s and 1970s, several art forms—from process art, and more specifically earth art and land art to performative practices—started to work directly with and in relation to nature. We will discuss this change from representational to material strategies, specifically considering ecofeminist/ecocritical approaches, and look into the development of artistic practices that can be subsumed under environmental art. In doing so, we will ask how (art) exhibitions deal with different conceptions of nature and analyze how “nature” is (re)presented in exhibition spaces, especially when taking into consideration non-Western concepts and epistemologies.

Schedule

Sept. 07, 2023

Week 1: Attention! This class will start in week 2, on Thursday, September 14 Please start preparing the assigned task for week 2!

Sept. 14, 2023

Week 2: Objects of Nature / “Nature” as Object in Western Art

Assignment: As this class will only start on September 14, prepare the following task and bring it to our first session: From an exhibition that you visit in person, choose an object that represents “nature” to you. 1. Draw the object (showing the drawing in class is optional). 2. Write a description of the object, and, following that, a short reflection why you chose this object. 3. Note down all information provided (such as creator, title, date, material, the place and time that you saw it, etc.). I recommend starting a field notebook for this class.

Reading:

Prepare the following text from the exhibition catalog of the ARoS Triennial titled *The Garden. End of Times, Beginning of Times* (curated by Erlend G. Hoyersten), which outlines one possible trajectory of Western perspectives on “Nature in and outside the Arts 1600–2017”:

Jacob Wamberg, “Between Paradise and the Anthropocene Garden. Views of Nature in and outside the Arts 1600–2017,” in *ARoS Triennial: The Garden. End of Times, Beginning of Times*, ed. by Erlend G. Høyersten, London: Koenig Books, 2017, 18–39.

Note down all questions and issues to discuss in class, and make sure to bring along your annotated copy of the text!

Sept. 21, 2023

Week 3: FIELD TRIP #1 “Nature” in Perspective: Exhibition Visit to the Alte Nationalgalerie

We will meet at 2 pm (14:00) inside the entrance hall of the Alte Nationalgalerie (Bodestraße 1-3, 10178 Berlin).

Preparation:

Linda Steer and Madeline Collins, “Unboxing the Canon,” Episode 12: *Where is the Land in Landscape?*, Podcast, Thursday Jan 27, 2022.

<https://unboxingthecanon.podbean.com/e/episode-12-where-is-the-land-in-landscape/>

Listen to the podcast, note and research all the terms and concepts that are new to you. Bring the notes to the museum.

Sept. 28, 2023

Week 4: Images of Nature as Landscape

Assignment: Prepare an input presentation (3 min.) on the assigned “landscape.”

Readings:

1. Excerpt from the first chapter of W.J.T. Mitchell’s book *Landscape and Power*, originally published in 1994: W.J.T. Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” in *The Cultural Geography Reader*, ed. by Timothy S. Oakes and Patricia L. Price, London: Routledge, 2008, 165–170.

2. W.J.T. Mitchell, “Preface to the Second Edition of *Landscape and Power: Space, Place, and Landscape*,” in *Landscape and Power*, ed. by W.J.T. Mitchell, 2nd ed. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002, vii–xii.

Additional Reading:

W.J.T. Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” 5–34. (complete chapter)

Oct. 05, 2023

Week 5: Changing Perspectives on Landscape I: Issues of Representation

Reading:

Kate Morris, *Shifting Grounds: Landscape in Contemporary Native American Art*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019.

1. “Introduction,” 1–6.

2. “Chapter One: The Lay of the Land,” 9–25.

Oct. 12, 2023

Week 6: Changing Perspectives on Landscape II: Ecocritical and Ecofeminist

Art History

Exhibitions on “American Landscape,” two case studies:

Group I *Nature’s Nation. American Art and Environment*

Princeton University Art Museum, NJ, October 13, 2018–January 6, 2019, Peabody Essex Museum, MA, February 2–May 5, 2019, and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, AR, May 25–September 9, 2019.

Group II Women Reframe American Landscape: Susie Barstow & Her Circle / Contemporary Practices

Thomas Cole National Historic Site in Catskill, New York, May 6-October 29, 2023, and New Britain Museum of American Art in New Britain, Connecticut, November 16, 2023-March 31, 2024.

1. Assignment: Prepare a group presentation on the assigned exhibition (10 min.).

2. Reading:

“Introduction” from Karl Kusserow and Alan C. Braddock to *Nature’s Nation: American Art and Environment*, edited by Karl Kusserow, Alan C. Braddock, Miranda Belarde-Lewis, Art Museum Peabody Essex Museum and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Art Museum, 2018, 12–39.

WEEK 6 or 7: Schedule a meeting with a Writing Tutor!

Oct. 19, 2023

Week 7: FIELD TRIP #2 IMAGE ECOLOGIES: Photography as a Medium of Representation and

Reflection

Exhibition visit of *IMAGE ECOLOGIES* at C/O Berlin (Hardenbergstraße 22-24, 10623 Berlin). We will meet in the entrance hall at 2 pm (14:00), schedule enough time to travel to the Zoologischer Garten station!

Reading: Robin Kelsey, “Photography and the Ecological Imagination,” in *Nature’s Nation*, 394–405.

Oct. 26, 2023 FALL BREAK/No Class Oct. 29, 2023 Deadline mid-term essay (midnight) Nov. 02, 2023

Week 8: Mold(er)ing Earth in the Exhibition Space: From Representations of “Nature” to Natural Materials

Assignment: Prepare a 3 min. input presentation on the assigned “earth art” artwork.

Reading/Online Lecture:

Shannon Jackson, “Ecological Time in Time-Based Media Art,” *The Environment Forum*, February 17, 2022, Harvard University:

<https://mahindrahumanities.fas.harvard.edu/event/shannon-jackson-ecological-time-timebased-media-art>.

Nov. 09, 2023

Week 9: Acts of Displacement: Earth Art, Land Art, Environmental Art

Readings:

1. Miwon Kwon and Philipp Kaiser, “Ends of the Earth and Back,” in *Ends of the Earth. Land Art to 1974*, ed. by Miwon Kwon and Philipp Kaiser, München: Prestel, 2012, 17–31.

2. Kelly C. Baum, “Earthkeeping, Earthshaking,” in *Critical Landscapes: Art Space Politics*, ed. by Emily Scott and Kirsten Swenson, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2015, 110–121.

Additional reading:

“Earthkeeping, Earthshaking: Feminism & Ecology,” *Heresies 13*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1981.

<http://heresiesfilmproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/heresies13.pdf>.

Nov. 16, 2023

Week 10: From Earth to Waste. Art and Maintenance

Readings:

1. Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *MANIFESTO FOR MAINTENANCE ART 1969!* Proposal for an Exhibition “Care,” 1969. Four typed pages.

2. Excerpts from Bettina Knaup, *Performing (as) Waste. Sticky Care in Feminist Materialist performance and Curation*, doctoral thesis, University of Roehampton, 2021.

Additional Reading:

Françoise Vergès, "On the Politics of Extraction, Exhaustion and Suffocation," *L'Internationale Online* (November 8, 2021).
https://www.internationaleonline.org/research/politics_of_life_and_death/195_on_the_politics_of_extraction_exhaustion_and_suffocation/.

Nov. 18, 2023

Saturday, 1.15–3 pm (13:15–15:00) FIELD

TRIP #3 Exhibition Visit, tbd Details will be announced in class.

Nov. 23, 2023

Week 11: Art and Ecology Readings:

1. T. J. Demos, "The Politics of Sustainability: Contemporary Art and Ecology," in *Radical Nature: Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet 1969–2009*, ed. by Francesco Manacorda, London: Barbican Art Gallery, 2009, 16–30. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, shown at the Barbican Art Gallery, London, 2009. 2. María Puig de la Bellacasa, "Soil Times: The Pace of Ecological Care," *Solitude Journal 1 Collective Care & Response-ability*, Stuttgart: Akademie Schloss Solitude, Sept. 2020, 98–106.

https://www.akademie-solitude.de/wp-content/uploads/solitude-journal-1_collectivecare-response-ability_complete.pdf.

Additional date: Nov. 27, 2023, between 4–9 pm (16:00–21:00)

Optional! FIELD TRIP #4 Visit to the Museum of Natural History Berlin

Event presentation "Netzwerk Naturwissen" (Network of Nature Knowledge). Details will follow.

Nov. 30, 2023

Week 12: Exhibiting the "Anthropocene"

In-class debate: Anthropocene vs. Capitalocene, Chthulucene, Plantationocene, or Holocene?

Reading:

Donna Haraway, "Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene," *e-flux Journal* #75 (September 2016), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/75/67125/tentacularthinking-anthropocene-capitalocene-chthulucene/>.

This text is an edited extract from chapter 2, "Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene," in Donna J. Haraway, Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene, Duke University Press, 2016.

Preparation:

"Visit" the online exhibition *Welcome to the Anthropocene: The Earth in Our Hands* of the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society:

doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6354. Nina Möllers, "Welcome to the Anthropocene: The Earth in Our Hands." *Environment & Society Portal, Virtual Exhibitions* 2014, no. 2.

Dec. 07, 2023

Week 13: New Perspectives

Reading:

Please propose a text during the course of the seminar on a topic that you would like to discuss more in-depth. Based on this selection, we will decide together what reading to prepare for this session.

Dec. 14, 2023

Week 14: Final Session: On the Function of the Exhibition & Deep Futures

Readings:

1. Marv Recinto., "Eco Exhibitions Won't Save Us" (Opinion), *ArtReview* (18 July 2023), <https://artreview.com/ecocritical-art-hayward-dear-earth-climate-crisis-exhibition/>
2. Choose one review from the series "Ecological turns" of the online platform *e-flux Criticism*, in which writers consider how the ecological discourse is shaping the production, exhibition, and reception of contemporary art: <https://www.e-flux.com/criticism/444883/ecologicalturns>.

Additional reading:

Jennifer Newell, Libby Robin, and Kristen Wehner, eds., *Curating the Future: Museums, Communities, and Climate Change*, New York: Routledge, 2017.

Dec. 21, 2023

Completion Week/No class: Deadline final paper (midnight)

Requirements

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, one absence from a once-per-week course will not affect the participation grade or require documentation. Any additional absence needs prior approval by the instructor or a doctor's certificate; unexcused absences will affect the participation grade. Students may not attend class when they test positive for COVID-19.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Exhibition Visits

Three of our scheduled classes will be exhibition visits. As the seminar starts in the second week, one of the visits has been scheduled to take place on a Saturday. When coming to the exhibition, schedule enough time for travelling and for storing your bags. We will meet in the lobby at 2 pm and then start at 2.15 pm. Bring a notebook/notepad and pencil.

Assessment

Assessment is based on in-class contributions (participation in discussions, assigned presentations, preparation of required readings, general communication) and the two written assignments.

Come to class prepared! This includes:

1. having completed the assigned reading/task/presentation, listed for each session
2. bringing to class an annotated copy of the reading (NOT on a smartphone)
3. being able to actively contribute to the discussion

Assignments

All assignments need to include footnotes/references, a bibliography and a list of illustrations. All assignments for in-class presentations are listed in the syllabus, incl. scope and date of presentation.

There will be two written assignments over the course of the term: a mid-term essay (ca. 2000 words, due on Oct. 29, midnight), and a final paper (ca. 3000 words, due on Dec. 21, midnight). (The first text can be an essay; the second text should follow a basic thesis structure.) In addition, at least one meeting with a writing tutor is mandatory. All readings marked as “additional” are voluntary.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Students need to get in touch with the instructor at least 24 hours before, if they are not able to meet the deadline, in order to reschedule an individual submission date. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

Seminar preparation and participation:

30% for the semester (15% for weeks 1-7 and 15% for weeks 8-14)

Presentations: 20%

Mid-term essay: 20%

Final paper: 30%

Library and Book Purchase Policies

There will be a course reader available for this class, as well as some digitized texts. Students are not required to purchase any books. The exhibition catalogs will be held in the library reserve collection, so that all students can access the books during the semester.