NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

Faculty of Fine Art

Department of Painting

"Art engaged with current environmental issues and its relationship with Land Art of the past."

By

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INTRODUCTION

Art has always reflected the society that it was created in, and at present that society is one where a 'green' perspective on many issues has become commonplace. So naturally more artists are making work that deals either directly or indirectly with these concerns. Such artists usually work from or in the environment. While artists in the past have often taken the environment as referent, it has usually only been what is seen as the 'natural' environment, and they have often not addressed the fact that the land has not ceased to be continuously remodelled, and that the landscape is the product of patterns of ownership and use.

Our present society is beginning to question the traditional views of our environment by exploring our current spiritual frustration and asking are we truly on a road to ecological destruction and if so, how do we slow down? This is difficult as at present even industry is feeding off the fears of those concerned with the health of the planet.

It was once taken for granted that the planet was 'alive', but the view of nature as a mechanistic, lifeless storehouse of resources to be exploited for gain by humans has dominated for at least the last century; a century in which we have had the means to do to our environment whatever we liked. And

inevitably it has brought with it the unprecedented abuse of the Earth.

It has been realised within the past couple of decades that such an attitude can no longer be valid. A new understanding is coming about in which traditional wisdom, personal experience and scientific knowledge can combine to everyone´s benefit. There are many artists, such as Ashley Bickerton, who are presently drawing on this new understanding to produce work that deals with the many levels of our current ecological crisis. A crisis that is specific to our present society.

In this thesis I question the work of the 1970s Earth artists, who constantly tried to control nature, and I will look at how the beliefs of these artists arose. Other artists since then have submerged themselves totally, and given priority to, ´a world of nature´. I shall also question the actions and beliefs of these artists. I hope to prove that since the Earth artists art that takes the environment or environmental issues as it´s referent has developed along with an increasing ecological awareness. The problems such art faced and the motivations of the artists and their relationship to ecological thought all serve to help us analyse our current relationship with nature.

CHAPTER 1

On a Road to Destruction?

As recently as the mid 1950s, Eugene Odum argued that the components of the biosphere, the nitrogen cycle and the phosphorus cycle were essentially beyond the power of humans to affect;

> Fortunately, the more perfect cycles have so many compensating mechanisms that Man has not yet done too much to modify them. Disturbance or manipulation of a cycle involving a vital element however, could conceivably be much more dangerous than the disturbance of the less perfect cycles, because if such a cycle were disturbed beyond its compensatory powers, the whole thing might go completely to pieces. (Art Journal, '92, p.19.)

Only a few decades after Odum wrote this, we are all very familiar with the term 'hole in the ozone layer' and the possibility of a major ecological disaster is already upon us.

Our present society defines success as money and power, and modern Western civilisation is composed of ideas of domination; domination over nature, of masculine over feminine, of wealth over poverty and also of Western culture over other cultures.

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The present society defines success as money and power, and modern Western civilisation is composed of ideas of domination: domination over nature, of mankind over fellows, of wealth over poverty and also of Western culture over other cultures.

> We live in a culture that has little capacity or appreciation for meaningful ritual. Not only does the particular way of life for which we have been programmed lack any cosmic or transpersonal dimension, but its underlying principles of manic production and consumption, maximum energy flow, mindless waste and greed are now threatening the entire ecosystem in which we live. (Gablik, '91, p.2.)

We have all been made aware of all the more easily discernible environmental problems - waste management, pollution, and the damage of the ozone layer - by organisations such as Green Peace, and the Worldwatch Institute. These problems have brought about the realisation that things must change. There is now a need for action. There is also the belief that the existing mythologies of our present culture are leading us to destruction and these assumptions must also change.

A cry for a more harmonious relationship with nature and our environment has been heard for the last few decades, but only now is it heard with greater clarity and more receptive ears.

The different methods by which we estranged humans have sought to reconcile ourselves with nature and with ourselves is huge. There is vegetarianism, animal rights and naturism. In religion there has been a revival of paganism and a modified Christianity. There has been

As life in a culture that has risen only to superimposition for meaningless pleasure. Not to a more the particular way of life for which we have been programmed lack any cosmic or transcendental dimension, but its underlying principles of mass production and consumption, maximum energy-flow, mindless waste and are now threatening the entire ecosystem in which we live. (Gablik, op. cit., p.2.)

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the development of theosophy and of Rudolph Steiner's Anthroposophism and an increasing interest in alternative medical practises such as homeopathy and herbalism.

Although many would not agree, developments in the scientific field such as quantum physics are also helping to bring back features of nature denied in the mechanistic revolution, features such as "Indeterminism, spontaneity and creativity, leading us towards a 'post-mechanistic' world view." (Allison, '91, p. 75.)

Such views have prompted the artist Ashley Bickerton to move from producing commentaries on consumer culture in the early '80s to commentaries on Man's relationship with nature. Bickerton's work has a mechanistic feel to it, but he has also incorporated a natural element, both of these qualities combine together in an unsettling relationship that reflects a post-mechanistic view.

Bickerton: Man's Present Relationship with Nature

In Bickerton's exhibition at the Sonnebend Gallery in New York in 1990, he presented actual physical samples of coral, decomposed seaweed, agricultural raw materials and industrial waste. The sculptures are quite high-tech assemblages that encase his samples in anodised aluminium, black leather and glass. (Pls. 1, 2 & 3.) Some samples are spread out on layered sheets of canvas,

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Although many would not agree, developments in the scientific field such as quantum physics seem to bring back features of nature longed in the mechanistic revolution, features such as interdependence, spontaneity and creativity, leading us towards a 'post-mechanistic' world view. (Allison, op. cit. 76)

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In Richerson's exhibition at the Greenwood Gallery in New York in 1990, he presented natural specimen of varied, decomposed seaweed, agricultural raw materials and industrial waste. The sculptures are with high mechanistic assemblages that encase his samples in enameled aluminum, black leather and glass. (Fig. 1, 2 & 3) The samples are spread out on layered sheets of

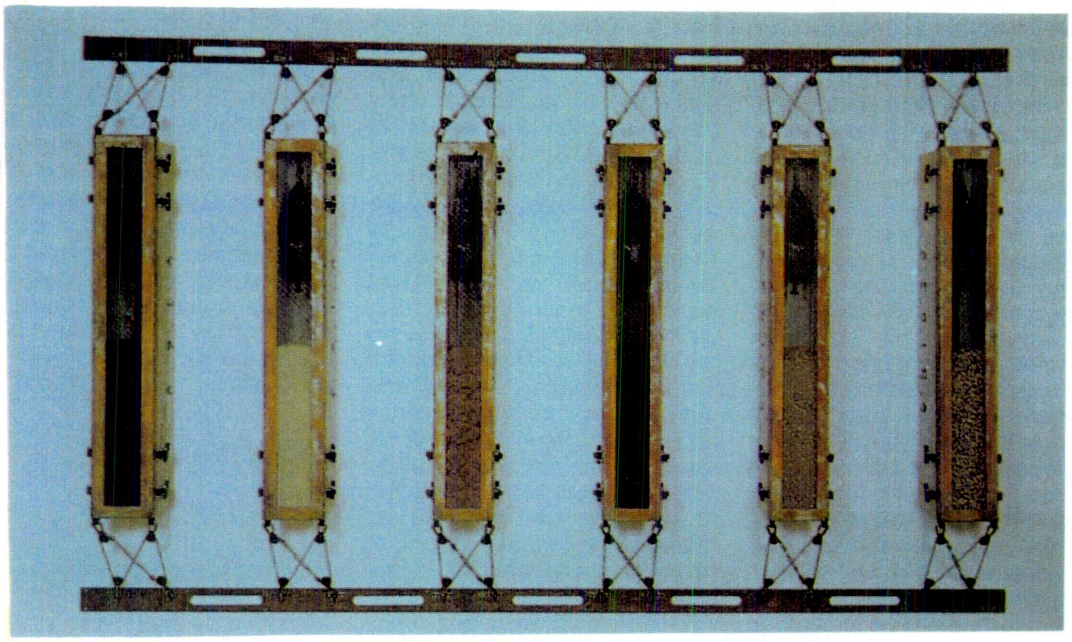

Plate 1. Ashley Bickerton, **Minimalism´s Evil Orthodoxy Monoculture´s Totalitarian Esthetic #1, 1989.** Steel, concrete, glass, rubber, plastic, soil, rice, coffee, peanuts, 96 x 156 x 12 1/2 inches. Sonnebend Gallery, New York.

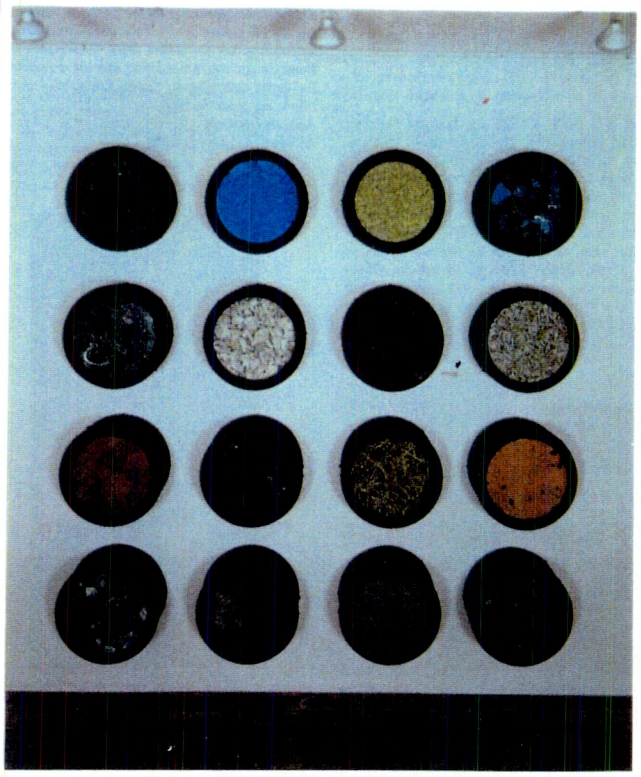

Plate 2. Ashley Bickerton, **Terra Firma Nineteen Hundred Eighty Nine #1, 1989.**
Anodised aluminum, glass, peppers, copper sulphate, pebbles, plastic refuse, metal shavings, coral, seaweed/skate eggs, cigarettes, raw pigment, broken glass, hay, bubble gum, vacuum cleaner refuse, human hair, sand lichen, 88 x 88 x 10 inches. Sonnebend Gallery, New York.

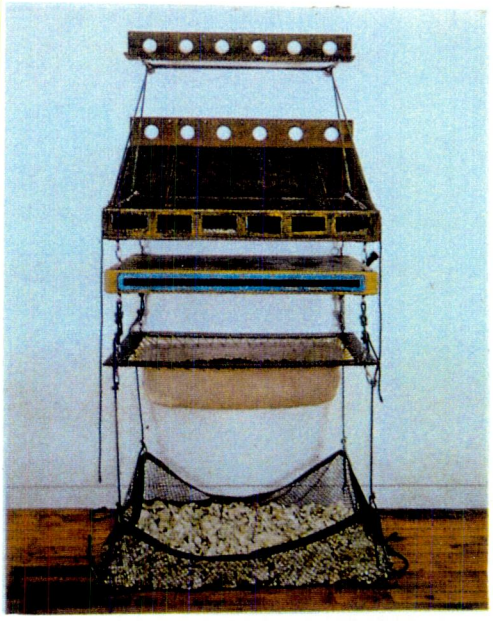

Plate 3. Ashley Bickerton, **Stratified Landscape #1, 1989.**
Wood, fibre glass, corroded steel, corroded copper, leather, rope, anodised aluminum, canvas, netting, beans, resin, decomposed seaweed, coral, 102 x 51 x 30 1/2 inches. Sonnebend Gallery, New York.

but all are neatly separated from each other.

Bickerton's concerns lie with environmental problems such as waste disposal, air pollution, and occupational poisoning and particularly with the destructiveness of agricultural practises such as monoculture - single crop farming which impoverishes the soil and confuses the ecosystems naturally varied vegetation.

His work raises questions about our complicity in the destructiveness of the environment and it is ecological in that it deals with natural systems. But that also includes the system of human culture, something that is often left out of the work of other artists dealing with environmental themes.

> In sculptures with titles like **Seascape; Transporter for the Waste of its Own Construction** and **Wild Gene Pool, Ark No. 1,** Bickerton articulates his elegant understanding of Man's uneasy relationship to nature and an artists responsibility to ecology. (Harrison, '90, p. 141.)

In **Wild Gene Pool** seeds of various vegetables such as corn and beans are sectioned off in containers with round windows or portholes, all contained in a huge structure made out of aluminium, rubber, leather and rope. It is clear that these seeds are small and

precious and they are being overwhelmed by their supporting structure.

Minimalism's Evil Orthodoxy Monoculture's Totalitarian Esthetic No. 1, (pl. 1) consists of six vertical concrete and glass containers filled with soil and rice from Asia, soil and coffee beans from South America and soil and peanuts from Africa. All of which are crops that provide their producers with a living and us with the food that we take for granted. The intensive farming used in the production of coffee, rice and peanuts is dangerous as are the chemicals and pesticides that are used in production. Richard Kalina suggest that Bickerton is also implying that "monoculture is also dangerous in art; aesthetic orthodoxy is not merely restricting, it actually damages the life of the culture." (Kalina, '90, p.166.)

These works have a great visual sense that results from the differences between the delicate natural specimens and the shiny metallic and leather of their cases. This metallic, high-tech quality throughout this work "implies man's impressive ability to overwhelm nature", and the care taken in the display of the samples reveals the "pathos of man's efforts to preserve the relics of that which he is busy destroying." (Nesbitt, 1990, p. 76.)

Some critics have praised his work for stating that everyone who lives in a modern technological society is implicated in ecological destruction. One

critic has said that this is merely exploiting "a generations collective guilty conscience". (Harrison, 1990, p. 141.) But the false belief that harm is done only by the obviously greedy and negligent exploiters of the environment absolves the rest of us of responsibility. The truth is that living well has its price.

Bickerton has combined the realities of our mechanistic society and our inability to manage that societies waste. This is the view that prompted Richard Kalina to comment that Bickerton's sculptures are "Smithson non-sites.....for the '90s." (Kalina, 1990, p. 166.)

> Landscape art is most interesting when it is a projection of culture onto nature. Bickerton has grasped the fundamentally ambiguous character of our societies relation to the environment. He leaves us seduced and discomfited. (Kalina, 1990, p. 166.)

Understanding how our present beliefs have arisen, and understanding how Bickerton's work came about, can be made more comprehensive if we realise that Man's relationship with nature is constantly changing.

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Many Revolutions In Thought

We have been through many revolutions in thought about our relationship to nature. The ancient relationship to nature was one where Man and nature were mutually dependent, as were mind and body. Berman writes that the Greek culture in particular was responsible for the development of a disenchantment of the world. (Berman, 1981, p. 70.)

In the 6th century B.C. science, philosophy and religion were not separated in Greek culture. All were connected in a search for the essential nature of things. Greek scientific thought was initially based in natural correspondences, and such correspondences between Man and environment were seen as common sense. Practical observation, intuition and imagination allowed the ancient civilisations insight into the nature of Man and the universe.

The first revolution in thought may be attributed to Pythagoras, who held the view that the cosmos was a manifestation of geometric and numeric values. For Pythagoras reason and mystical experience complemented each other. He thought that each number had a mystical life of it's own and that all numbers were divine and symmetry inherent in nature, manifesting itself through ratio and proportion.

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Many Levels of Thought

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The learning process had been a cognitive experience, according, by urging the individual to "know

thyself", (Berman, 1981, p. 72.) turned it into a nonsensual type of knowing. Socrates was aghast to learn that the artisans of the time learnt and pursued their craft by sheer instinct and personal intuition. Friedrich Nietzsche wrote that the creative person works by instinct and checks himself by reason, Socrates did just the reverse. (Berman, 1981, p. 71.)

Aristotle placed mind above body, believing that our mind should control and be the ruler as it possesses reason.

Plato believed in the existence of absolute knowledge. He believed that we should try to define what we are and we must solve our existence by knowing the truth and the truth would fix reality.

After Plato, the Greek began to see himself as an "autonomous personality apart from his acts". (Berman, 1981, p. 72.) Berman believes that at some stage between the lives of Homer and Plato there began the gradual disappearance of animism (Berman, 1981, p. 71.) - the belief that everything, including what is now regarded as inert material objects, is alive and possesses an indwelling spirit. Such beliefs have greatly influenced us throughout the centuries. 'Western Man' now only looks for a sense of beauty that is defined by logic and analysis.

The second revolution was brought about around the 13th century when the Christians attributed good to God and evil to the Devil. The mind's power over

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The second revolution was brought about around the 16th century when the Christians attributed good to God and evil to the Devil. The mind is powerful

body was equated with God's power over the Devil. The Devil was seen as being savage nature, and God was pure ideas. The belief was that God made the world with a purpose in which Man was most important. The Earth was seen as totally Man's domain. This derives from the Old Testament where God gives Man dominion over the beasts, the sea, and the land.

With such ideas in mind Man believed that the Earth was his personal property, to be ordered, tamed or consumed as he wished. The Earth was seen as dead matter, there to be purely exploited.

The struggles with untamed nature can be seen in the landscape art of the 18th and 19th centuries where they tried to attain the beautiful in nature, which was seen as a tranquil nature that was well removed form the complexities of life. The overwhelming forces of nature were also depicted - thunderstorms, floods. Up to the mid 19th century the landscape was associated with spiritual qualities. A beautiful nature in art was seen as a sensitivity towards the work of God. Albert Bierstadt's paintings almost illustrate the Christian Mission to subdue the wilderness.(pl. 4.) The paintings show no threat that civilisation posed to nature.

At the beginning of the 19th century Sheldrake says that,

> The new taste for wild nature was a sophisticated response, inspired to a large

Man was created with God's power over the beasts. The Devil was seen as being savage nature, and God was with Adam. The belief was that God made the world with a purpose in which Man was most important. The Earth was seen as rightly Man's domain. This derives from the Judeo-Christian idea that gives Man dominion over the animals, the sea, and the land.

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Plate 4. Albert Bierstad.
Cho-Looke, The Yosemite Fall, 1864.
Oil on canvas, 34 1/2 x 27 1/8 in.
Tinken Art Gallery, San Diego.

> extent by literacy and artistic models. Indeed scenes were called landscapes because they were reminiscent of painted landscapes. (Sheldrake, 1988, p. 48.)

> With the 18th century there ends in Western civilisation an epoch in the history of Man's relationship to nature. What follows is of an entirely different order, influenced by the theory of evolution, specialisation in the attainment of knowledge, acceleration in the transformation of nature. (C. Glacken cited in Bramwell, 1989, p.22)

What followed was the development of capitalism and the embracing of technology. The ultimate aim of 'Western Man' since the turn of the century has been to own land. And as a prelude to that fact, during the 19th century nature was perceived as wild and destined to be controlled by Man, and since then the landscape has undergone relentless destruction, due to the fact that it was seen as inexhaustible.

The Surrealist movement seems to have realised the shortcomings of the mechanistic age. Salvador Dali's **The Persistence of Memory** has a dreamlike quality in which linear mechanical time has started to wilt and run down in the arid desert of the twentieth

action in literary and artistic modes. Landscapes were called landscapes because they were instruments of painted landscapes. (Schlosser, 1958, p. 34)

With the 16th century there arose in Western civilization an epoch in the history of Man's relationship to nature. What follows is an entirely different order, influences by the theory of evolution, specialization in the attainment of knowledge, acceleration in the transformation of nature. (G. Giacomo cited in Fromwell, 1974, p.32)

What followed was the development of capitalism and the embracing of technology. The ultimate aim of Western Man since the dawn of the century has been to own the Land as a product to that last. During the 16th century nature was perceived as wild and destined to be controlled by Man, and since then the landscape has emerged relentless development, due to the idea that it was an inexhaustible.

The Surrealist movement seems to have realised the shortcomings of the mechanistic age. Salvador Dalí's The Persistence of Memory has a dreamlike quality in which linear mechanical time has ceased to exist and run flow in the arid desert of the twentieth

century. Sheldrake links Surrealist art, dreams and alchemy saying that the messages they give are intuitive rather than rational.

> All three use allegory and the incongruous juxtaposition of objects, and all three violate the principles of scientific causality and noncontradiction. (Sheldrake, 1990, p. 96.)

While nature was once seen as being wild and majestic, something that was beyond our grasp, out of control, but a great challenge to try and master, we then realised that we were actually strangling nature. It was realised that a more reverent approach to nature would be more beneficial to us, and this was another revolution in thought about our relationship to nature. These are the beliefs that the Land Art of the '70s grew out of.

Indeed, like supernatural art, dreams are alchemy seeking out the messages they give are imaginative rather than rational.

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While nature was once seen as being wild and mysterious, something that was beyond our grasp, out of control, not a direct challenge to try and master, we then realised that we were actually abusing nature. It was realised that a more reverend approach to nature would be more beneficial to us, and this was another revolution in thought about our relationship to nature. There also believes that the Land Art of the '70s grew out of.

CHAPTER 2

The Earthworks of the 1970s

The Land Artists of the ´70s regained a mystical fascination for nature. They entered into it in an attempt to understand what it was about. It was an effort to help us link again with nature. Artists like Michael Heizer were entering into nature. But really all they were doing was physically ´entering into nature´; bringing peoples attention back to nature. But the work often struggled with nature trying to hold back earth, put it into a desired shape, battling against weather and vast distances while trying to move huge amounts of materials.

Michael Heizer, the son of an archaeologist, left New York in the late 1960s for the deserts of the American West, where he began making monumental constructions. Heizer´s interest in the land seems to have been primarily in the scale that was available, this scale gave his every action the monumentality he seemed to crave.

Some of Heizer´s early work consisted of gouging into cliffsides and carving large trenches in mountains. This type of work involved thousands of tons of earth being moved, by cranes, heavy machinery and explosives, and caused the extensive altering of the landscape. Heizer actually bought vast areas of the American desert and a lot of the work could only be seen from a helicopter. The public were, however, able to view

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Michael Heizer, the son of an archaeologist, left New York in the late 1970s for the deserts of the American West, where he began making sculpture. Heizer's interest in the land seems to have been partially in the scale that was available. The scale gave him a canvas on which the monumentality he sought could be achieved.

Some of Heizer's early work consisted of large earthworks, excavations and carving large trenches in mountains. This type of work involves thousands of cubic metres of earth being moved, by cranes, heavy machinery and explosives, and caused the extensive altering of the landscape. Heizer actually bought vast areas in the Nevada desert and a lot of the work could only be seen from a helicopter. The public were, however, able to see

the work in a gallery in the form of slides and photographs, many of the man himself supervising the various digging operations. One sharp critic wrote;

> The city dwellers no doubt catch their breaths to see the natural vastness sullied by one puny man. It would be better to be the man of course...in fact you could be the man if you had the money, since the mountain was bought by the acre..... (Ashton cited in Sonfist, 1983, p. 28.)

One piece Heizer did in 1968 was **Dissipate**(pl. 5), a series of five rectangular trenches dug in random order into the soil of the Black Rock desert in Nevada. The sides of the trenches were lined with steel. The work was intended to be permanent and leave a lasting reminder of Heizer's presence there. His presence over nature. An attempt to control nature by trying to match its scale.

During the early seventies Heizer spent four years working on the permanent piece **Complex One/City**,(pl. 6) a huge earth, concrete and steel structure, which was an optical illusion in the desert - an optical game that I'm quite sure few people have had the chance to play. From the front and at a distance it appears to be a solid rectangle of concrete bordered by steel bands. From the side they are seen to be segmented and placed yards apart.

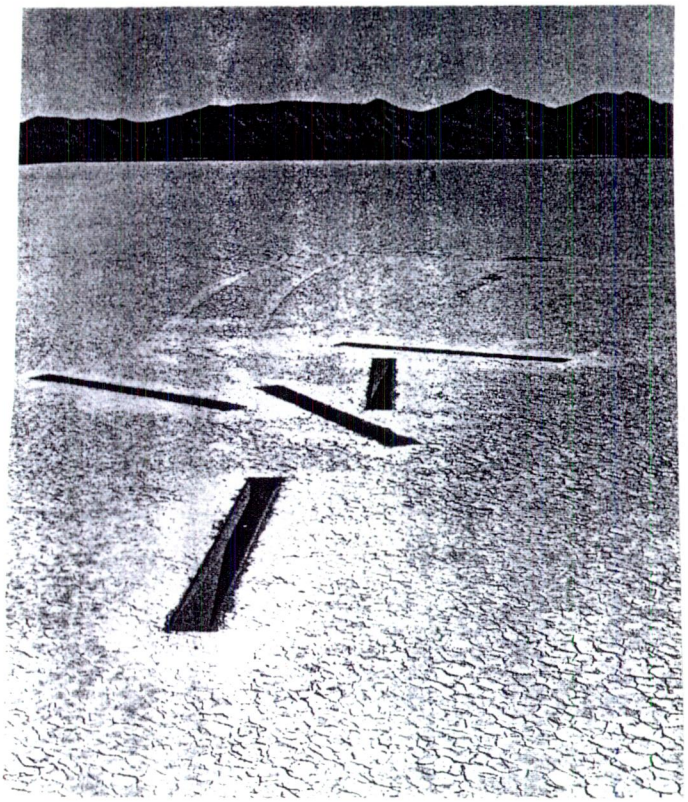

Plate 5. Michael Heizer, **Dissipate**, 1968. Wood and steel, 40 x 50 foot, each trench 12 x 1 x 1 foot. Black Rock Desert, Nevada. (Collection of Robert Scull)

Plate 6. Michael Heizer, **Complex One/City**, 1972-76. Concrete, granite, steel, and earth, 110 x 140 x 23 1/2 ft. (Collection of Virginia Dwan and the artist)

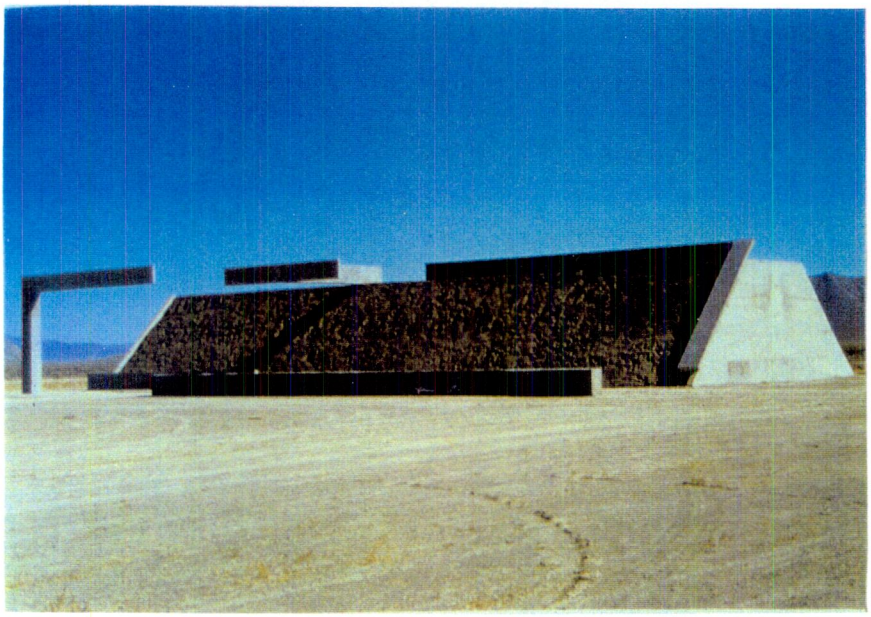

Plate 7. Robert Smithson, **Spiral Jetty**, Rozel Point, Great Salt Lake, Utah, April 1970.
Mud, precipitated salt crystals, rocks, water.
Coil 1500 ft. long and 15 ft. wide.

This piece was specially designed to "deflect enormous heat and enormous shock", in the event of "that final blast". "Its very much about the atomic age." (Gruen, 1977,p.99.)

Complex One is only one element of a project called **City** which is to be "a group of geometric abstract sculptures the size of huge buildings, arranged in a twenty-eight acre, rectangular complex" in the Nevada desert; "elements of the work are reminiscent of such modern structures as billboards, skyscrapers, highways and airport runways" (Mc Gill, 1990, p.20.). Completing the **City** may take his lifetime.

Early settlers in North America had no sense of the imminent conquest of the wilderness by Man, neither it seems did Heizer in 1970. Sheldrake says of the attitude of these settlers, "there were limitless lands to develop - and no sense that nature was sacred or of any value in its wild state." (Sheldrake, 1990, p. 50.)

One critic said of this type of gargantuan work, that Heizer was entering "the primeval wilderness to leave monuments of his manhood there." (Ashton cited in Sonfist, 1983, p. 28.) This comment points out the prevailing male thinking behind the production of such site specific works at that time. The thinking that gives traditional male values the dominating role. "Many Earth works attempt to challenge and even to obliterate an individuals sense of self." (Mc Gill, 1990, p. 20.) Robert Smithson, another artist who was also creating

Earth art in the ´70s, has said in his writings that the "disruption of the earth´s crust", was "compelling". Undoubtedly, Smithson, like Heizer, was interested in the vast scale that was available to him and which enphasised his every mark. His famous piece, **Spiral Jetty**(pl. 7) involved huge amounts of black asphalt, limestone rocks and earth that had been scraped from the surrounding shoreline and then deposited in a spiral form in the Great Salt Lake. **Spiral Jetty** is clearly an addition, a human gesture made to the site. By this gesture he is perhaps maintaining his own self-importance in the ultimate studio situation. Other works by Smithson involved pouring asphalt down hills and also plans for dropping broken glass onto an island. Smithson admitted that he was "confused" by "a lot of ecological language used in the furore" that preceded the broken glass piece. (Leider, 1970, p. 48.)

Smithson said of the difficulty in finding suitable sites for working. "Every time you thought you found your place in a site the site kicked you out of it. Makes you feel like a fool." (Leider, 1970, p. 49.)

Many artists of the time were interested in highlighting Man´s ability to control the land. Dennis Oppenheim´s pieces **Branded Mountain** and **Branded Hillside** involved branding the 35-foot-diameter sites by pouring hot tar on them in the shape of a circle with an X in the centre of it. He intended to draw attention to the similarities between branding cattle and branding the land

they grazed. But such actions draw more attention to the artists ability to mark the land. This ability was something that Oppenheim seemed to relish in. His relationship to the land was like that between artist and canvas, and he was prepared to make any mark he desired. In **Directed Seeding - Cancelled Crop**, done in Holland in 1970, an X with 825-foot-long arms was plowed into a 422 by 709 foot grainfield. Oppenheim said of the project: "Planting and cultivating my own material is like mining one's own pigment....I can direct the latter stages of the development at will." (Burnham cited in Sonfist, 1983, p. 46)

Clearly, leaving his mark was important to Oppenheim. He went one stage further with his piece **Identity Stretch**(pl. 8). It consisted of taking two thumbprints, Oppenheim's and his son's, on elastic material, which he then stretched to the maximum, photographed and reproduced over an area 300-foot by 1,000-foot by spraying hot tar to make the image. Jonathan Crary says that Oppenheim's practises assume that "all systems and materials whether global or microscopic, institutional or anatomic, are subject to his intervention and modification." (Cited in Sonfist, 1983, p. 48.)

The creation of Earthworks on such large scales can be related to a shift in the economic basis of work dealing with the environment. It parallels the evolution of the small business into the large corporation. A nineteenth century artist could relate to

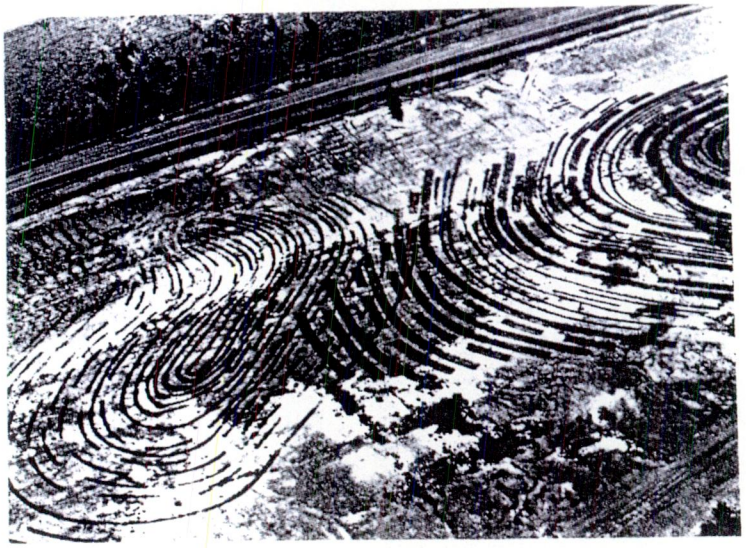

Plate 8. Denis Oppenheim, **Identity Stretch**, 1970-1975. Hot sprayed tar, 300 x 1,000 ft. Artpark, Lewiston, New York.

Plate 9. Michael Heizer, **Effigy Tumuli - Water Strider**, 1983-1988, 685 x 80 x 14 ft., Buffalo Rock State Park, Illinois.

nature with paint and canvas, but when Heizer and Smithson began relating to their environment, which was far more multifaceted and complex, the traditional economics of art production seemed inadequate as a means of art expression, The Earth Artists, therefore, felt impelled to make work which related to the immense bureaucracies and multinational corporations and which did not pale when compared to them. A piece of art on a more human scale did not seem appropriate to them. One senses in Michael Heizer's work a competition with the scale of modern industry. Heizer said that, "We live in an age of the 747 aircraft, the moon rocket....so you must make a certain type of art." (Gruen, 1977, p. 98.)

Towards the end of the Earthwork age, some of the involved artists turned their efforts to land reclamation. Propositions were put forward to recycle land which had been used for industrial purposes and hence had left its scar on the land. Towards the end of his career Robert Smithson visited several strip-mined sites, proposing that the mining companies allow him to use such land for large-scale earthworks. One such proposal was **Project for Tailings**. Tailings are the solid waste that remains after ore is chemically extracted from rock. Such work appears to show more concern about the ecological implications of working on such a grand scale, but Smithson was merely hiring himself out to decorate an area of landscape the mining company had exploited.

Michael Heizer also turned to recycling

land. In 1983 he was commissioned to help reclaim 150 acres of strip-mined land on the Illinois River. The resulting project was **Effigy Tumuli**. It consists of five earth sculptures, each as large as 1,000 feet long and 25 feet high, in the shapes of animals indigenous to the region(pl. 9). Due to the destructive mining techniques in the 1930s the area was covered with highly acidic materials and the entire landscape was poisoned, all the plant and animal life killed, and black acidic water spilled into the river with every rain fall. Heizer recycled the land and bulldozed it into geometric shapes resembling a cat-fish, a water strider, a frog, a turtle and a snake. The project was made possible by the state reclamation agency and Edmund Thornton, an Illinois mining executive. Heizer says that he did not undertake the Effigy Tumuli project for ecological reasons but purely for the possibilities it offered him as a work of art. (Mc Gill, 1990, p. 35.) The artist Robert Morris said of such land reclamation,

> The most significant implication of art as land reclamation is that art can and should be used to wipe away technological guilt. Will it be a little easier in the future to rip up the landscape for one last shovelful of a nonrenewable energy source if an artist can be found - cheap, mind you - to transform the devastation into an inspiring and modern work of

art? (Cited in Dunham, 1979, p. 1.)

In Mark Rosenthal´s essay, ´Some Attitudes of Earth Art: From Competition to Adoration´, he quotes Pablo Picasso; "Nature exists to be raped", and says that the actions of Heizer, Smithson and others such as Walter de Maria and Dennis Oppenheim, retain in their actions "some of the impetus suggested by Picasso´s metaphor of the rape". Rosenthal also quotes Smithson in the same paragraph; "...there´s no need to refer to nature anymore. I´m totally concerned with making art." (Sonfist, 1983, p. 64.)

Rudolph Bahro defines the "patriarchal" character as "expansive, progressive", etc., moving "forward" and "upward", "away from the earth", while "feminine spirituality" is directed downwards, into the earth. (Cited in Bramwell, 1989, p. 28.) This definition of patriarchy seems to apply well to the work that I have just discussed. Bahro also argues that the salvation is that men should give more priority to the feminine part of their being.

CHAPTER 3

The Priority is Given to Nature

As opposed to these Earth works, other artists were beginning to produce work that banished the artists heroic actions and gave absolute priority to nature. Richard Long worked in a more unobtrusive manner, creating patterns from stones or branches. He viewed his work as a ritualistic response to whatever environment he was working in.

Alan Sonfists project, **Time Landscape**(pl. 10) consisted of a 9,000 square foot site that was reconstructed as a pre-Colonial forest in New York in 1978. The forest is set with natural species of trees and plants that existed on the site before New York city was formed. Sonfist, in his work, wanted to form new relationships between the society of the twentieth century and nature. He concerns himself with the Earth and the role society plays in connection with nature. **Time Landscape** exists alongside everyday situations and so brings Man and nature together with equal status. Sonfist said of his work, "I am trying to bring forth meaningful metaphors that show that we are only one of many internal structures that exist in nature." (Sonfist, 1983, p. 103.)

Robert Smithson disapproved of artists such as Alan Sonfist saying that he was seeking a Garden of Eden and naively trying to return to such a place from

which humanity has not yet fallen. (Rosenthal, 1983, p. 7.)

Other artists who worked in or from the landscape in a very unobtrusive manner such as Richard Long or Hamish Fulton have also been criticised for presenting purely picturesque, passive and unprovocative views of the environment and have been ridiculed for trying to regain a lost paradise. Andy Goldsworthy might also fall into this category. He is an artist who has submerged himself totally in a natural world.

Goldsworthy

Andy Goldsworthy has been practising his art since the mid-seventies. He is generally categorised as a wanderer or rambler who "creates his subtle and mysterious works as he goes." He takes everyday natural materials that he finds in forests, fields etc. and manipulates them to give a beautiful visual effect. He weaves sticks, arranges different colour leaves, uses feathers and stones and even the most delicate materials such as petals to create work that makes you look at the most familiar natural objects with fresh eyes(pls. 11 & 12). His work, however, does not seem to question or illustrate Man´s effect on such natural objects or their habitat.

He is at present living near and working on a three acre tract of wood and stream in Scotland which he

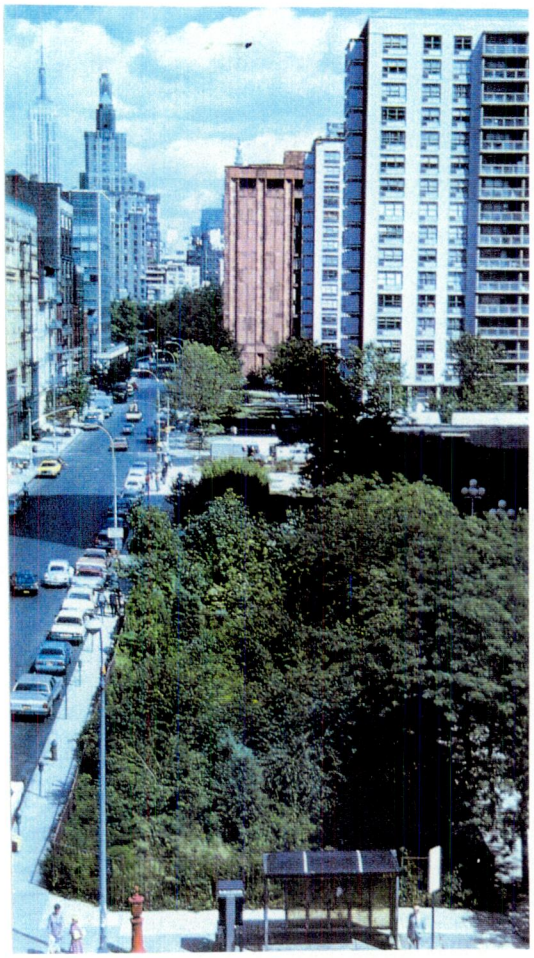

Plate 10. Alan Sonfit, **Time Landscape**, 1965-present, trees, 45 x 200 ft. Corner LaGuardia & West Houston, New York City.

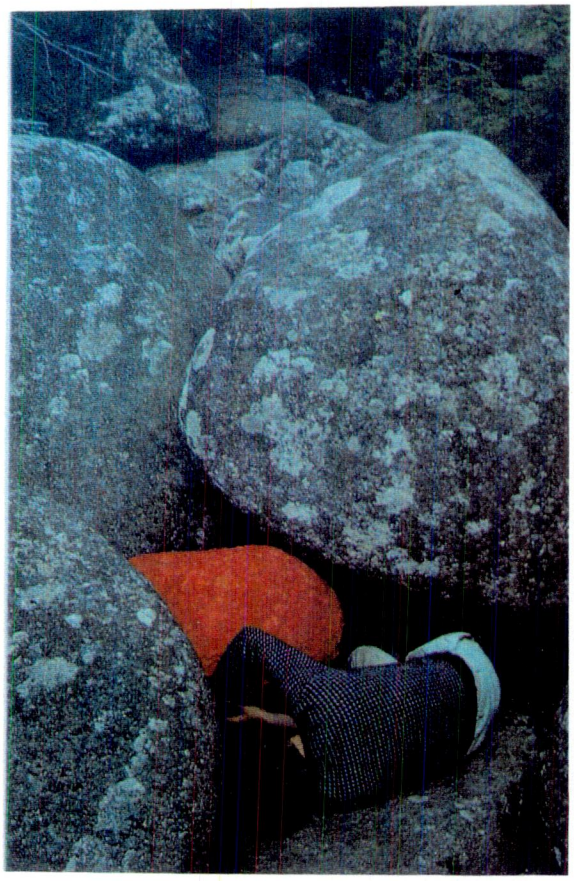

Plate 11. Andy Goldsworthy, wrapping poppy petals around a granite boulder. Sidobre, France, 6 June 1989.

Plate 12. Andy Goldsworthy. Green sticks partly scraped and rubbed. Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 10 February 1987.

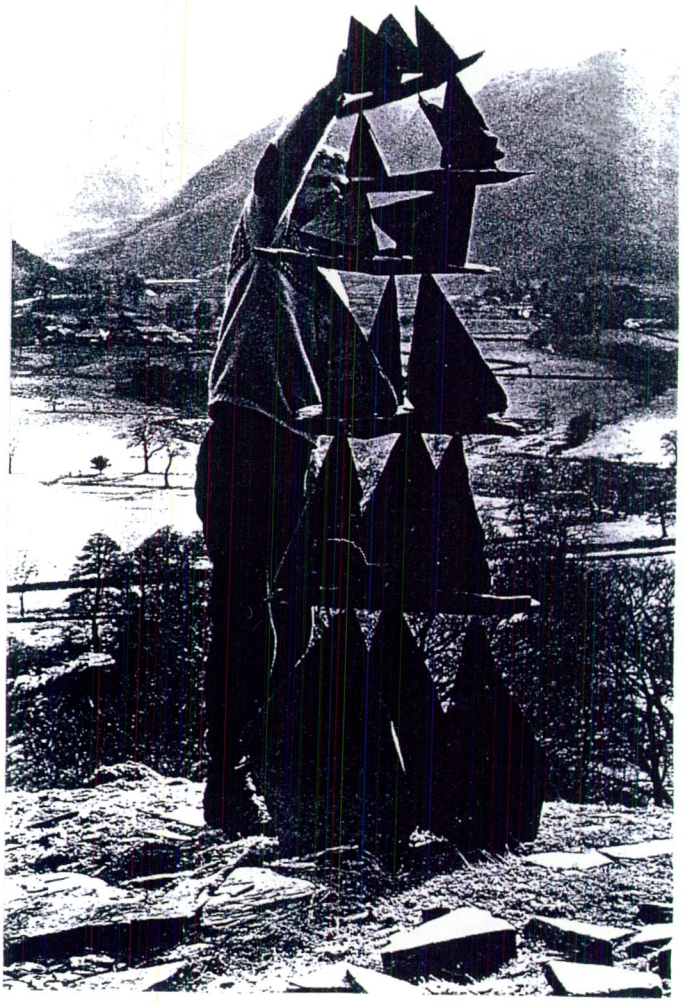

Plate 13. Above, Andy Goldsworthy on the beach. Morcame Bay, Lancashire, Oct. 1976.

Plate 14. Left, Andy Goldsworthy, **Balanced Slates.** The moment of collapse. Barrowdale Cumbria, 1988.

has on long lease from the local landowner. He has the image of a Robinson Crusoe type figure who struggles yet again with the forces of nature such as bitter cold and the dampness. Goldsworthy gave up attending life classes in college because his hands, being used to the cold, hurt in the warmth of the studio, (Goldsworthy, 1990, p.13.) and one writer (Miranda Strickland-Constable) imagines herself to be among the trees where Goldsworthy works "miles away from anywhere" (Goldsworthy, 1990, p. 11.) All this helps conjure up an heroic image. Yet we know there is bound to be houses nearby, roads, square fields and telegraph poles that we all know from walks in the countryside are now part of the landscape. A landscape that has been altered radically by economics and politics.

> I take the opportunities each day offers...if it is snowing I work with snow, at leaf-fall it will be with leaves, a blown over tree becomes a source of twigs and branches. (Goldsworthy, 1990, p. 10.)

It is hard to believe that he has never stumbled over a fence, a man-made field or even a pathway through a forest, all examples of Man's imposition on nature, that are also part of our environment. Surely an artist who deals with nature so directly has not only to deal with the complex modules of nature but also with the economic factors which surround each work, such as the leasing of

For a long time the Inuit language. He has an image of a Eskimo Canoe type figure who struggles with the forces of nature such as bitter cold or the dangerous. Goldsworthy gave up attending life classes in college because his hands, being used to the cold, hurt in the warmth of the studio. (Goldsworthy, 199- p.1.) and two writers (Miranda Stirling and Charlie) imagines herself to be among the trees where Goldsworthy works "miles away from anywhere" (Goldsworthy, 1990, p. 11.) All this helps to picture up an heroic image. Let us know there is times to be bosses nearby, roads, moving fields and telegraph poles that we all know from walks in the countryside are now part of the landscape. A landscape that has been altered radically by economics and politics.

> I take the opportunities each day there ... If it is snowing I work with snow, at least half it will be with leaves, a blown over tree becomes a cone of twigs and branches. (Goldsworthy, 199-, p.1.)

It is hard to believe that he has never stumbled over a fence, a man-made field or even a pathway through a forest, all examples of Man's imposition on nature. He also part of our environment. Surely an artist who deals with nature so directly has not only to deal with the complex modules of nature but also with the schemes of nature which surround each work, such as the freezing or

land, financing (as in means of self support), and photography. Such factors of the society we live in today are not present in Goldsworthy's work. Perhaps Goldsworthy is still searching for the Garden of Eden. If so, he is denying that at present we have destroyed much of our natural environment, with drastic results, and are capable of more damage.

Dr. Terry Friedman, in the book about Goldsworthy, "Hand to Earth" describes the idyllic life and settings where Goldsworthy and his wife, son and daughter walk and talk and Friedman recollects his "personal journey to understanding and friendship." (Goldsworthy, 1990, p. 3.) Susi Gablik has argued that as we begin to move towards a new ecology of consciousness, and the world becomes understood as a place of interaction and interconnection, the challenge will be to break through the illusions that have generated the impression of separation and detachment. (Gablik, 1991, p. 60.) It seems that Andy Goldsworthy has detached and separated himself from the outside world, and this, according to Gablik is not the way forward.

Goldsworthy saw that the forcing of geometric shapes on to nature was an imposition. He realised this while looking through the window of a train at formal rows of trees along the edge of some fields. Yet, he admires the work of Richard Long, whose work has often placed or forced a straight line down the middle of large sections of land. Artists such as Goldsworthy and

Richard Long, who began working in the early '70s, did work in a more unobtrusive manner to earth artists such as Michael Heizer and a clear division here is evident, but the emphasis was still on using the land to make the artists mark stand out. Goldsworthy considered his pieces to be "a trail of work that marks my progress through life." (Goldsworthy, 1990, p.60.) Even though the marks may not be permanent, the importance is placed on the ingenuity and skill of the artist in his ability to improve on nature, rather than on nature itself. And his abilities are usually immortalised by photography.

Goldsworthy is putting every effort into trying to gain an understanding of "not a single isolated object but nature as a whole." (Goldsworthy, 1990, p. 1.) "The creative act of touching rather than of encroaching on the land" (Goldsworthy, 1990, p. 6.) is evident in his work. But the most important aspect for him, more than the photographs of his work, is the "experience of making". (Goldsworthy, 1990, p. 6.)

> Each work grows, stays, decays - integral parts of a cycle which the photograph shows at its height, marking the moment when the work is most alive...(the photographs) are not the purpose but the result of my art. (Goldsworthy, 1990, p. 9.)

The "transience" which is the most important aspect to him

is not conveyed to the viewer. The viewer merely sees a series of photographs. The transience is something this artist alone can truly revel in (pl. 14).

When Goldsworthy began making work in the mid-seventies the meaning of being closer to nature was perhaps different to what it means today. "When I began working outside...I splashed in water, covered myself in mud, went barefoot and woke with the dawn." (Goldsworthy, 1990, p. 12.) (pl. 13). Nowadays being closer to nature does not mean frolicking through the wilderness, it means obtaining a better understanding of how the processes of nature are being interrupted by us.

Goldsworthy is an heroic figure in a different sense from Michael Heizer. Heizer was confronting the primeval nature with his tools and explosives and trying to order it. Goldsworthy is seen as heroic for submerging himself totally in a world of nature and closing himself off from the plundered outside world. While Andy Goldsworthy is interacting and connecting with nature it seems that this is purely for his own benefit, he is separated quite literally from the average goings on of daily life.

Goldsworthy is known for entering into an enchanted relationship with the earth, and reintroducing the childhood wonder and amazement into such things as snow and sand. Lincoln Allison in his book, Ecology and Utility, says that people have a habit of bringing their children up in a realm of Tolkien fairy stories.

> Certainly it is good to stretch childrens imagination and they need a world of fantasy. But it is not good to encourage the view that the real life of the higher self is lived among deserts and forests and mountains and not down here among the motorways and supermarkets. (Allison, 1991, p. 62.)

When asked in an interview by Terry Friedman, whether ecology was an important aspect of his thinking, he replied;

> ...I have a very personal approach; it is not in a political sense. For me ecological issues are very creative ones. I have found this a very exciting time to live, in a way, because we are reassessing our relationship to the land. For me it is not just doom and gloom; it is also a sort of celebration. It is a time when we can find a very personal relationship with the land. (Goldsworthy, 1990, p. 60.)

Establishing a rustic settlement where the individual can detach his or herself from the outside world and 'find' his or herself is not the concern of a progressive ecological thought. It is not engrossed with the concerns of the individual alone but is more concerned with mutual aggression and with Man's uncontrollable effect on the

Instead, it is a call to attend creatively and action and they need a world of language, but it is not good to encourage the view that the real life of the human self is lived among objects and forces, and manipulative and not down into among the subjects and experiences.
(Allison, 1981, p. 80)

When asked in an interview by Terry Fitzhamen, whether ecology was an important aspect of his thinking, he replied:

"I have a very personal approach. It is not in a political sense. For me ecological issues are very [illegible]-one. I have found this a very exciting time to live, in a way, because we are reassessing our relationship to the world. For me it is a [illegible] down and gloom. It is also a sort of [illegible]. It is a time when we can find a very personal relationship with the land (Goldsworthy, 1985, p. 30)

Establishing a more wholesome where the individual can detach his or herself from the outside world and [illegible] or herself in the context of a progressive satisfying [illegible]. It is not concerned with the [illegible] of the individual alone but is more concerned with [illegible] and with their mutual [illegible] effects on the

environment around him, through such things as the growth in population and in resource consumption.

CHAPTER 4

A "Grey" or "Green" Nature?

During the 1980s the idea of a 'green' perspective on politics became commonplace. However the impression was given that a lot of people voted 'green' on the grounds that it would mend the ozone layer or keep the countryside intact.

The broadest definition of 'green' thought, at this time, is that human beings have ceased to have harmonious relations with nature - out of this comes possible ecological catastrophe and the start of a sense of spiritual frustration. An examination of deeper ecological views reveals an opposition to humanism and a tendency towards "survivalism, anti-rationalism, authoritarianism and even racism." (O' Brien, 1992, p. 19.)

There is dissatisfaction with modern life in certain countries more than others. It lacks the tranquillity of previous societies and is highly destructive. Ambition and incentive have been organised around material life and in the countries where there is a sceptism about the benefits of economic growth, there has been a surge towards 'green' thoughts. Those countries are mainly, Britain, Germany and North America.

In Lincoln Allison's book 'Ecology and Utility' he says that there are two traditions of planetary management, the utilitarian and the ecological,

the "grey" and the "green". (Allison, 1991, p. 1.) The utilitarian bases of practical philosophy says we should use the planet and subject our own activities only to the criteria of efficient use. The ecologist says that we revere the planet or at least treat it as if it had rights of its own. The central theme of Allison's book is that each of these ways of thinking has much to learn from the other and discusses them both, but from a "grey" viewpoint. He puts great importance on these views by saying that the ecology/utilitarian debate has been confused and overlaid by two other historical struggles between ideas, "between scientific rationality and orthodox religion and between left and right" and he believes that the importance of the ecology/utilitarian debate will soon become more apparent;

> I think it is possible to argue from either a utilitarian or an ecological stance that these distinctions in themselves are likely to diminish in importance compared with the debates between ecology and economics, between utility and nature. (Allison, 1991, p. 3.)

The green movement have had a lot of influence on political policies but mainly through environmentalism. Environmentalism seems to be almost the middle man between ecology and utility. Environmentalism is generally the view "that certain goods inherent in our

surroundings are undervalued by public decision-making compared to material goods." (Allison, 1991, p. 7.)

If heads of state were to put environmentalism into practise it would mean an assumption of greater powers over economic and social activity. Examples Allison gives of this are that the state would

> penalise certain kinds of activity (as with hydrocarbon taxes) or takes as regulatory powers what were once the rights of private ownership...or directly manages sectors of the economy for long-term public benefit rather than according to commercial criteria. (Allison, 1991, p. 3.)

This type of environmentalism is far from radical unlike a lot of 'green' views on such issues, Environmentalism does not demand changes in public philosophy, it usually consists of a lean towards conservation or preservation. True ecological philosophy rejects much of the way we now think and demands entirely different ways of living.

The different views may be illustrated as follows: it is better to have a road running around a forest (the environmentalists view), rather that through it (the utilitarian view), but it might be quite impossible not to build the road at all (the ecologist view). The utilitarian attitude seems to be the one that

Michael Heizer might assume; it clearly poses problems. The artist holding the ecological view also poses problems. Jan Avgikos sees this problem as being one of content. He says that even when there is strong content in the work it is still hard to negotiate or deal with because by putting really "hard" information in a gallery it may go "soft". (Avgikos, 1991, p. 109.) Artists such as Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison may be in danger of falling into this category. They present quite hard information within the gallery system. Their work seems to have arisen partly from their disapproval of the Earth artists such as Heizer, and while many believe Heizer's actions were drastic the same has been said of the Harrisons.

The Harrisons

In Craig Adcocks recent interview with Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison, he begins by talking about the early '70s as the time the Harrisons began working as a collaborative team and a time when "ecology was just becoming a fashionable term". (Adcock, 1991, p. 35.) This typifies the attitude towards ecology at this time, a "fashion". Because of the realisation that the natural environment was beneficial to us, being "at one with nature" was then the current tendency or trend. This rush to enter into nature was spearheaded by people

such as Heizer and Smithson whose ideas of entering into nature were often to bulldoze into it. Newton Harrison's view of such artists was as follows:

> Think of the vast energy put into big cuts and shapes in the desert that are inherently gestural, simply primary structures in another context. They are transactional with museum space, not with the earth. They are involved primarily with forms. (Sonfist, 1983, p. 182.)

Helen and Newton Harrison have been working together since 1971 producing art that engages in real world ecological situations. Their work poses questions such as: How devastating is an oil spill? What effects will deforestation have upon tropical ecosystems? How does continuing development interrupt the natural cycles of the environment? And they have focussed on matters such as the relationship between commercial fishing and seabed resources, and the problem of sulphuric acid rain because of increased air pollution. They create installations consisting of plans, maps, diagrams, drawings, photographs and verbal descriptions(pls. 15 & 16), all of which take on an environmental problem and propose a solution. They are mounted and hung in gallery spaces and sometimes in places like Town Halls.

When the Harrisons began working they were interested in the strength in ecosystems(pl. 17) and were

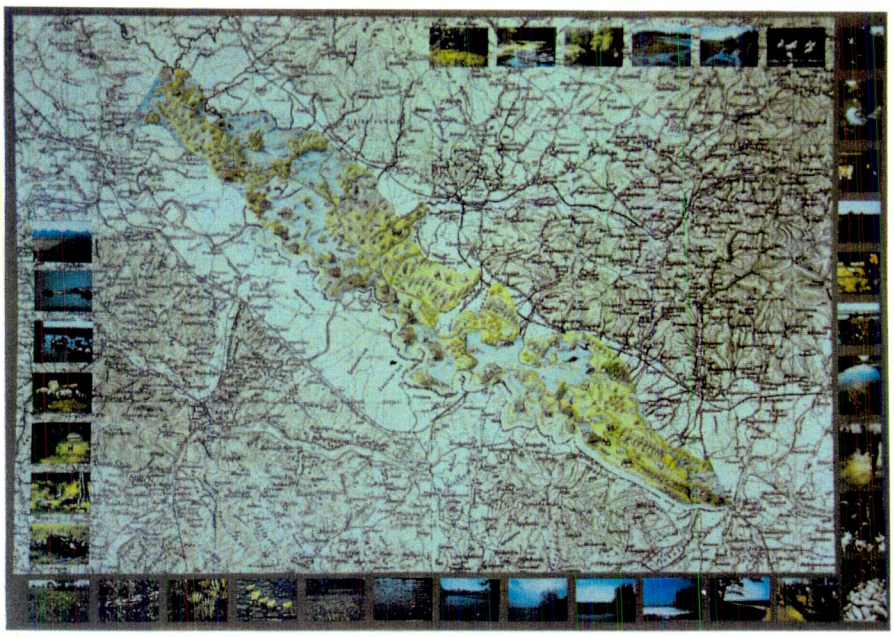

Plate 15 & 16. Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison, **Sava River Project, Yugoslavia**, 1988-91, two of twelve photo collages with texts, maps and mixed media. Moderna Galleria Ljubliana.

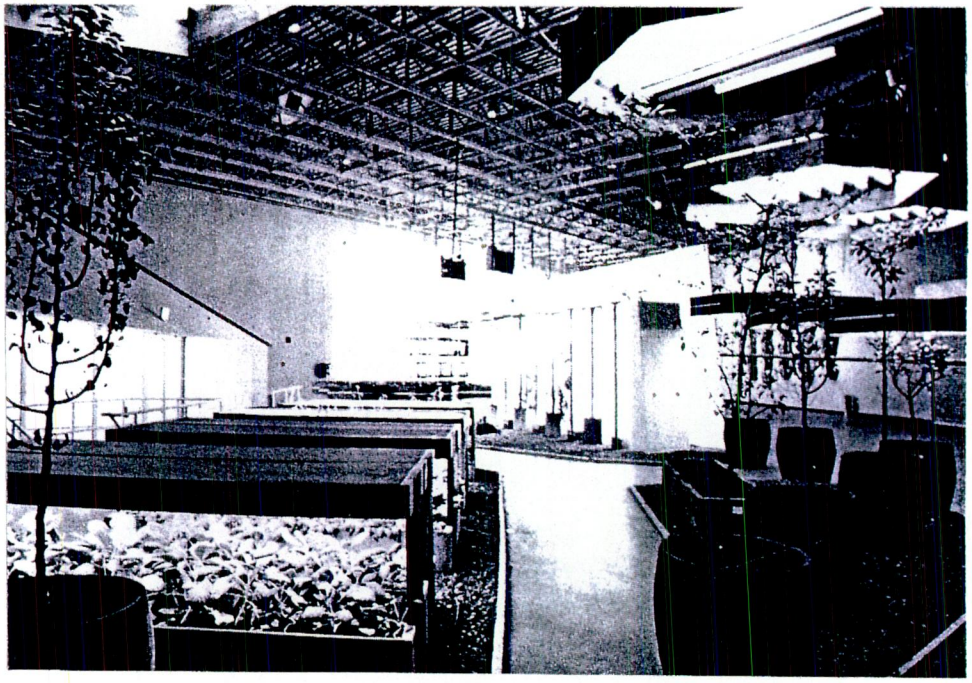

Plate 17. Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison, **Portable Fish Farm: Survival Piece No.6,** 1972. Plants and trees exhibited in containers to suggest future sources of food. Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston.

"dealing with the miracle of it all". (Adcock, 1992 p. 36.) They did however make the distinction between growth material and ecology, and according to the Harrisons other artists only used growth material because it was fashionable. (Adcock, 1992, p. 35.) Since the '70s they have gradually come to certain understandings about the interdependencies and basic patterns of nature. Newton Harrison believes that,

> Those kinds of understandings can cause a revolution in values. Your values can change in the face of that information. One of the problems that we all confront today, in terms of our education, is that our values are not changing fast enough in the face of new information. (Adcock, 1992, p. 36.)

One of their earliest projects was **The Lagoon Cycle**. This was a massive research project in which they observed the Scylla Serrata lagoon crabs, natives of Sri Lanka. Their experimentation succeeded in getting the crabs to mate in a laboratory with the help of a man-made monsoon, something that had not been achieved before. Their discovery earned them a $20,000 grant from scientists at a nearby Institute, to support further study.

> We found that no researchers before had

Dealing with the miracle of life gives, however, rise to self. They did however make the distinction between material and society, and according to the Hare-Krishna movement only used growth material because it was indispensable. (Adcock, 1982, p. 38.) Since the 70s we have gradually come to certain unprecedentedness about the interdependencies and basic patterns of nature. More is learned as we leave that.

These kinds of understandings can cause a revolution in values. Your values can change in the face of that information. One of the assumptions that we all constant today, in terms of our education is that our values are not changing fast enough in the face of new information. (Adcock, 1982, p. 38.)

One of their earliest projects was The Lagoon Cycle. This was a massive research project in which they observed the Devils Paradise lagoon study, located in Sri Lanka. Their experimentation successes in getting the tribe to work in a laboratory with the lagoon a measure measure, something that had not been done before. Their discovery earned them a $10,000 grant from Scientists as a nearby institute, to support further study.

We found that no relationship before had

> succeeded in getting Scylla to mate in the laboratory - when we repeated the monsoon we found out how to duplicate the conditions necessary for mating to occur. (Sonfist, 1983, p. 25.)

The crab project began as a piece about survival and life cycles and became a ten year project that also questioned the nature and uses of technology. In 1980 they brought The Lagoon Cycle into a gallery space. The crabs were displayed inside a tank where they demonstrated their life cycle to the public.

The Harrisons have made extensive studies on other projects such as plans for extensive control systems for the Los Angeles basin which are designed to collect the floodwaters coming down from the San Gabriel mountains every year. A more recent project which was on show in Berlin in 1990 was a study on the Save region in Yugoslavia, one of the last large floodplains offering habitat to the black stork and the sea-eagle(pls. 15 & 16).

While the Harrisons were already doing work about such issues as global warming in the mid 1970s, and were fully aware of the effects all their actions had on the environment, they seem to be the exception rather than the rule. Earth artists like Michael Heizer had an extremely aggressive approach towards nature. The bulldozers and explosives he used emphasise this. The

strength of the Harrisons work lies in the fact that all the work they have done together since the '70s is still valid today, unlike monumental Earth works which in my opinion are not. They have also, unlike Heizer, interacted with nature in a totally unaggressive way, but the fact that they present such hard information in the gallery makes it difficult to negotiate. We might ask where is the art?. Perhaps it is hard to deal with because the art that we are usually presented with serves no other purpose other than that of being a work of art. There are plenty of artists who make work that has no practical purpose out of what many might consider to be 'rubbish', and much of this work is considered art because it has been stripped of any practical purpose. Since Duchamp we have been prepared to treat any such object as a work of art. But the question still remains as whether the information the Harrisons present to the public is taken as seriously as intended. The dilemma for the viewer must be whether to feel shocked and gratefully informed or whether to look for the artistic qualities that might also be intended. Either way, the viewer will decide.

CHAPTER 5

Towards a ´Post-Mechanistic´ World View.

As previously mentioned, the developments in the scientific field are bringing aspects of nature such as indeterminism back into the fields of physics, mechanics and also medicine.

In 1969 Buckminster Fuller wrote that a Utopia could be attained and ecological disaster forestalled, by imaginative and fearless use of our most modern technical discoveries. He glorified technology and expected it to save the day. While his opinion has some truth in it - our discoveries may help way-lay disaster - it is only one aspect that will help in the future, and it is not something to totally depend on. Comprehension of the ancient values, but at a higher level is also important. Raymond Dasimann said that "the future belongs to those who can regain, at a higher level, the old sense of balance and belonging between man and nature." (Berman, 1981, p. 292.) Morris Berman also states that "a reenchantment does not involve a return to archaic modes of thought, rather an insight into them must become a major part of our view of reality". (Berman, 1981, p. 195.)

A New Revolution in Thought

All these ideas have created a new revolution in thought about our relationship to nature, we now know that we are dependent on the health of the planet, and we have realised that we are also in charge. We have control, if we don't take certain actions and avert others, the results may be disastrous. This realisation obviously creates reactions and responses from concerned artists of our present day. These artists usually try to put across to us the notion of "a fragile environment at the mercy of human needs and systems". (Avgikos, 1991, p.106.) Ashley Bickerton would fall into this category as would David Nyzio.

In Nyzio's first solo show "Form", he created "eight sculptures that allude to biology, technology, beauty and a bit of sadism". (Cottingham, 1990, p. 156.) In this show Nyzio approached nature as something that could be constructed and reformed. Not constructed, as in the way Heizer might construct but in a scientifically investigative way. Two freestanding sculptures described as "treetrunk-like" consisted of magnets covered with iron pieces that change shape when moved, resembling a fungus growth pattern and suggesting "technologies potential to overpower nature". (Cottingham, 1990, p. 156.) Nyzio's work, like Bickerton's, suggests just how responsible for the planet we are and how much control we have.

Jan Avgikos in his article 'Green Piece' points out the problems of art that has many built-in green beliefs. He also says that,

> The stampede to board the green bus threatens to crush into conformity all work that takes nature as its referent....to hustle it into one hunky paradigm of just causes and didacticisms. (Avgikos, 1991, p. 105.)

The problems he sees in the art that he considers green, is that even when there is strong content in the work it is still hard to negotiate or deal with because by putting really hard information in a gallery, it may go "soft". The Harrisons may be in danger of falling into this category.

Avgikos gives Peter Fend as an example of an artist, who, like the Harrisons, gives hard information. He proposes political and ecological manifestos for a new world order, clean water and air and plans for a new paradise. He uses maps, models, satellite images and supporting documentation in the gallery. Avgikos calls them "geo-politico-bio-eco-logistic compatibility studies." (Avgikos, 1991, p. 107.)

Avgikos states that the possibility of "paradise regained" was an option for the 19th century Romantics but that option does not exist today. He believes that artists such as Meg Webster and Michael

Paha, who often use the metaphor for nature of the ´garden´ in indoor gardens or ´ecosystems´ in the gallery, are aspiring

> to reconcile the arcadian dream of the garden with the materialism of natural history.....it manages a liaison between corporate atrium greenhouses and museological displays of natural habitats. (Avgikos, 1991, p. 110.)

He describes Meg Websters **Lifted Wetlands**, which consisted of rocks, earth and flora on a structure in a gallery fed with a circulating water system, as "phantasmagoric" rather than ecological, and says that such work "reveals our reconciliation with the natural world as a pathetic illusion". (Avgikos, 1991, p. 107.)

Avgikos also says that the more techno-sublime of ´green´ artists, such as Vincent Shine, provide a bleak and barren view of a science-fiction future with no way out. When the struggles of nature are

> staged against the backdrop of sci-fi futurism.....the terrifying and sinister come into play. We know that we humans, too, belong to the ´old´ natural order, and like those little seedlings, may be subject to chemical modifications. (Avgikos, 1991, p. 108.)

The various words of caution Avgikos gives us on the obligatory moral content of "green art" today are all very valid, but I do not believe that art is in danger of being turned into a series of "just causes". He assumes that all such artists only purpose is to "pave the way for the mutual salvation of humankind and the planet". (Avgikos, 1991, p. 110.) As he says himself art cannot be expected to neutralise contradictions, when, if anything, art hyperealizes them.

CONCLUSION

We have experienced much cultural despair, since the peak of mass production. The early ´50s was a time of urban sprawl. It was a time of cheap motor cars and a multitude of cheap plastic products, Hollywood films and canned food. This despair has gradually built up and many people now search desperately for love and authenticity, but are searching in a world that has taught us to fear these very things. The results, say Morris Berman are "mass neurosis and substitute gratification". (Berman, 1981, p. 16.) Berman sites the Beatles Sgt. Pepper album released in 1967, as an example of the mass neurosis that was felt at that time. The album is mainly about human dissociation. The substitute gratification takes the form of the world of drugs tranquilizers and television. Yet television is looked on as a form of entertainment, but now however, we are aware of the possibility of "amusing ourselves to death". In this present age, we have realised that depression has become a norm, and that something must be done about it.

Bramwell states that the ecologist is defined by many writers in terms of his opposite, the enemy of nature, "when the enemy is clearly portrayed, then the naturist emerges as his victim." (Bramwell, 1989, p. 23.) The enemy was certainly there in the ´70s but perhaps it wasn´t portrayed clearly enough for the Earth artists of

the time. The earthworks were not very ecological, not that such work has to be dealing with ecological issues to be valid, but very ironically they were pertaining to a sacred nature that they did not show much respect for.

> The impulse to make earthworks was not itself specifically ecological but was imbued with a transcendent intention to reconcile humankind....with the natural environment and its implicitly sacrosanct character. (Avgikos, 1991, p. 105.)

Much of the land is not a natural category at all, yet some artists have attempted to hide that fact. At the end of the Earthwork age some artists, like Goldsworthy, hung on to the idea of finding a path back to a 'golden garden' where we would find our salvation. But it is only by becoming aware of the control we have over the environment that we can attempt to stop its destruction. Other artists have harnessed this control and used Man's abilities to shape the environment for their own purpose alone. By using these abilities more wisely together with an appreciation of the natural systems, we can understand how to view our environment and how we can respond effectively.

The last few years have produced artists who now realise that we "no longer engage in a dialogue of how nature constructs us but rather how we construct nature".

(Avgikos, 1991, p. 106.) Avgikos believes that "green" art often assumes a "missionary position", but perhaps the good outweighs the pitfalls more now than it has in the past. The art produced is more interesting as it is a projection of culture onto nature, it is reflecting society, a society that is very slowly coming around to the idea of a ´post-mechanistic´ age.

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