

The Anthropocene

In this exhibition I aim to explore the Anthropocene and the controversies surrounding it. The Anthropocene is a proposed geological epoch (a major interval in Earth's history) dating from the beginning of humankind's impact on the Earth's geology, ecosystems and climate, to the present day. The exact start date of the Anthropocene is still under discussion, in 2000 Crutzen and Stoermer linked the Anthropocene with carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel combustion and dated it to the start of the Industrial Revolution at the end of the 18th century (Ellis, 2018, pp. 2). However, some scientists and geologists argue the Anthropocene started before this point.

In curating my exhibition, my aim has been to select artworks that communicate the urgency of climate change and how the work of my chosen artists express this. Through a collection of photographs, paintings, sculpture and video I hope to bring awareness to the Anthropocene; I believe that the artists I have chosen are ideal for this, as each of them aims to create awareness by bringing a growing issue, such as climate change, to the forefront of people's minds. Their shared intention is for the viewers to gain a wider understanding of how serious climate change is becoming. T. J. Demos addressed that there is an increasing sense of urgency within multiple realms of visual culture, including art exhibitions (Demos, 2016, pp.7) to act against climate change. I believe it is important to discuss these current issues across a variety of audiences to reinforce the importance that we make a change before it's too late.

Artists and Artworks

I have selected the following artists for the diversity of their practices and how they impactfully capture the effects of climate change. David Buckland (1949), Edward Burtynsky (1955), Alexis Rockman (1962) Natalie Miebach (1972) and Richard Mosse (1980). The exhibition includes a combination of photography, video work, painting and sculpture. I think

it is important to display a range of mediums so viewers can experience different form of practice, while engaging with the media.

David Buckland



Figure 1: Burning Ice (Buckland, 2005-2009)

David Buckland is an artist, filmmaker, curator and writer. Since 2001, Buckland has created and directed the International Cape Farewell project which brings together artists, scientists and educators. The project aims to bring international awareness to climate disruption. The Cape Farewell Project [Cape Farewell], (2024), has been described as a catalyst, producing opportunities for artists, scientists and communities to work together, highlighting humanity's destructive impact on the earth and inspiring people to work towards a sustainable cultural shift. Buckland is an active member of the climate conservation movement and has been bringing light to the issues for the past 25 years, the inclusion of his work has weight in this exhibition.

His collection of work *Ice Texts* (2005-2009) contains a series of images showing angles of icebergs and glaciers with capitalised bold text as seen in Figure 1. The text presents controversial quotes directed towards humankind's impact on the Earth, particularly in places like the Arctic and Antarctica. Figure 1 is effective as it is simple and direct, Buckland makes his intentions clear through these images- the stark white lettering standing out against the calming deep blue hue of the glaciers.

The destruction that is shown through Buckland's work is successful and subtly digs at humankind, for burning fossil fuels and deforestation, both activities that emit greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and contribute to melting icecaps. The International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme discuss that greenhouse gas levels this high have not been seen for over one million years (IGBP, 2014, 1:35) the reason for these levels is because of burning fossil fuels. The issue is serious. The work is straight forward, Buckland is conveying a message that is direct and powerful in its simplicity. I have chosen *Burning Ice* out the *Ice Texts* because of its straightforward delivery of an important message.

Alexis Rockman



Figure 2: *Cascade* (Rockman, 2015)

Alexis Rockman is a contemporary artist and environmental activist. His paintings depict future landscapes as he imagines they will be shaped by climate change, and how evolution could be influenced by genetic engineering.

His collection *The Great Lakes Cycle* (2015-2019) includes the painting *Cascade* (2015). Figure 2 illustrates a chaotic scene; a burning horizon, oil, fire and debris, showing the environment, ecosystems, wildlife and their habitats. Through the hyper-realistic painting style, Rockman's intentions are clear, the details reflecting the devastating consequences of both deforestation and burning fossil fuels, which accelerate climate change. While the viewer will see the environmental damage caused by human actions, the painting also highlights the knock-on effect on ecosystems and wildlife. I think Rockman's painting is vital to include in this exhibition; he creates a holistic viewpoint addressing the environment, wildlife and the fear of urban spread.

Edward Burtnysky



Figure 3: Clearcut #2, Palm Oil Plantation, Borneo, Malaysia (Burtynsky, 2016)

Edward Burtynsky is a Canadian photographer who captures industrial landscapes. He records locations around the world, showing the development of industrialisation, and its impacts on wildlife the environment, and population.

His portfolio spans a global scale, giving the audience a view of issues surrounding industrialisation. Industrial areas are growing rapidly to keep up with urban spread and the popularity of capitalism and consumerism. Burtynsky's work covers issues surrounding the Anthropocene (deforestation, ice caps melting and concerns over the lack of drinkable water as the population grows) as well as lesser-known effects such as plant diseases, negatively affecting wine producers in the US and South America.

Burtynsky has created work around oil, exploring the destruction caused by palm oil production. I think that Figure 3 is a shocking photo; you can see the vast scale at which palm oil production is happening on, as well as the landscape which stretches behind, untouched for now. I think there is significance with the line along the boundary which separates destruction and the surviving forest. Figure 3 is an important photograph for this exhibition, even though only capturing a fraction of the deforestation creating the plantation in Borneo, Malaysia. The vastness is shocking and shows the global scale of destructive processes that are driven by humanities demand for resources. Burtynsky's work is vital for this exhibition to create a wider view for the audience and demonstrating the magnitude of climate change.

Nathalie Miebach

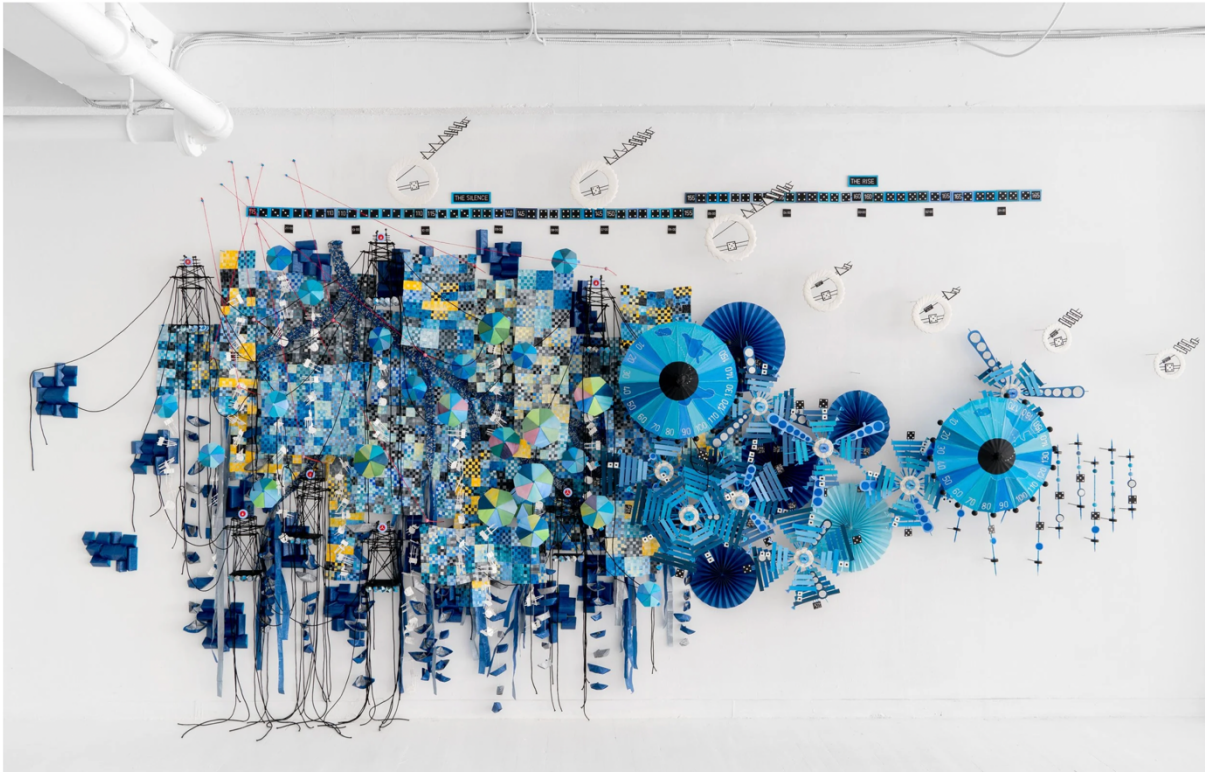


Figure 4: The Burden of Every Drop (Miebach, 2018)

Nathalie Miebach is an artist who explores the overlap of art and science by translating scientific data collected from meteorological events, ecology and oceanography into sculptures, musical scores and performances about the disruptions to human and ecological systems. Water availability is fundamental to the global population. Jumana Emil Abboud is a Palestinian artist who created work in the 2025 Artes Mundi 11 exhibition, where she expanded on her practice in Water Divining Workshops. Abboud discusses the impact of water on communities in an episode of *Empire Lies*, saying local stories speak of place and survive changes in land use, occupation and dispossession often through water sources (Sofronijevic, 2026, 1:22). This is reflected in Miebach's work which shows how communities all over the world experience and respond to destructive water events.

Miebach's collection *The Floods* (2018-2019) documents extreme weather events, including a sculpture called *The Burden of Every Drop* (2018). This is shown in Figure 4 the work focusing on extreme weather events and floods, caused by precipitation and sea level rise.

The complexity of the sculpture encourages the audience to look closely at its details. Figure 4 measures at 17'x10'x1m. It is a large sculpture only showing data from one extreme weather event. This reflects that weather events are occurring globally, prompting the audience to recognise that climate change will inevitably impact us all.

Made from wood, paper, rope and using data from Hurricane Maria, the sculpture includes blue, woven, paper quilt, forming a map of Puerto Rico. With translated data from the hurricane layered on top, it is visually busy yet interesting. The data represents the chaos that Hurricane Maria inflicted, along with the immense amounts of damage and destruction the population, environment and wildlife suffered. Miebach's work is vital for the exhibition because it introduces a different creative practice while demonstrating a visually challenging way of approaching the overlap of art and science in a multimedia sculpture.

Richard Mosse



Figure 5: Broken Spectre (Mosse, 2022)

Richard Mosse is an Irish artist working with photography and video art, documenting significant humanitarian crises of our time. *Broken Spectre* (2018-2022) is bringing awareness towards deforestation and destruction in the Amazon Rainforest, Brazil, which in turn impacts the planet.

Broken Spectre includes multiple forms of work for this I have chosen the 74-minute film. Firstly, I think that the film (Figure 5) will hold an important place in the exhibition. The film provides an important contrast in media which is important for audience interest. Secondly, the film offers a new perspective from Indigenous groups and cattle farmers experiencing the damage alongside the environment and ecological impact. Shot in analogue, infra-red, black and white, the film shows clips of the experiences Indigenous groups and cattle farmers in the Amazon Rainforest are suffering through, caused by the loss and damage of their land and resources. Mosse captures anger and violence brought about by deforestation and criticises the impacts of capitalism and consumerism, in a similar way to Rockman and Burtynsky. It is important to have Mosse's work in this exhibition as it pushes the issue of climate change to the forefront of the audience's mind, hoping for them to be more aware of the complex issues.

Conclusion

Through this exhibition I hope the audience will be moved to explore the challenges around climate change. All the artists included are actively aiming to bring attention to the Anthropocene, and at the same time shock and challenge the audience. They achieve this through their chosen practices, demonstrating a strong collective statement that raises awareness of climate change. The exhibition I have curated offers viewers the opportunity to explore challenging issues around the Anthropocene and experience a range of media and styles. The work of the five artists I have chosen to bring these shocking issues to light will hopefully encourage deeper reflections and encourage viewers to make a change.

Gallery Layout



Word Count: 1647

AI Acknowledgement

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work.

I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

List of References

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