

Analyse the impact of the environment and sustainability on art practice by describing how artists have responded to these issues in their work.

In this essay I will be discussing how various artists include the environment in their work and raising awareness for the danger it imposes to animals and the future world. The natural environment that surrounds us every day is all naturally made by nature itself and consists of all living organisms such as animals, plants, and anything that has the ability to grow and adapt. Across from living organisms there are non-living components in the natural environment such as, water, mountains, air, and sunlight. These non-living components are just as important as the living, as they determine the conditions we live in.

The constructed environment is a human-made building or area that is designed for a purpose. Most of these buildings are equipped for housing or employment, mainly to accompany human needs and desires, this is only one of few positives in the constructed environment as it has and continues to destroy the natural world. Since human existence took over the planet there has been many world disasters that have affected the

world in catastrophic ways. Global warming is the biggest concern as it is a threat to the human existence and the present lives of animals and their homes.

You can send a message through art about global warming as it can create a picture that is hard to see with the naked eye, making the viewer think differently about their actions. Art can be understood by anyone from around the world as it has no language barriers making it accessible to all. There are a lot of artists who use man-made materials in their practice such as paint and paper, however there are ways to make these supplies sustainable and eco-friendly. Natural materials can also be found in the environment such as clay, leaves with a range of colours, along with sticks and stones to create art that doesn't harm the environment.

Alexis Rockman is a painter who addresses the concern of global warming and the danger that is imposing on the environment through his art. By creating catastrophic world ending events through his paintings, he catches the public eye and challenges them to think about global warming rather than ignoring it. He predicts the future as saturated dystopia, where

creatures struggle to survive, these scenarios he creates are real life problems that need to be addressed to save the future of the world.



Alexis Rockman (Manifesting destiny, 2004)

In this piece Alexis Rockman has created a realistic death-defying future of Brooklyn, as sea levels rise there is a cause for concern to act and notice the global warming issues that have been around for a long period of time. Due to the melting of glaciers in the arctic, climatologist estimate in 80 years significant proportions of Brooklyn will be underwater, this imposes high danger to human existence and thousands of animal species, as buildings will be destroyed forcing most coastal communities to relocate. There will be a mass loss of habitats either being destroyed or animals that are unable to adapt to their new environment, increasing risks of extinction.

When there is rising sea levels it can impose health risks as it can impact fresh water supplies as the salted water can become contaminated with the fresh water making it unsafe to drink leading to illnesses and deaths. In this piece Alexis Rockman had consultations with NASA climatologists to create the most realistic events of the future of Brooklyn if no action is taken. He also worked with Diane Lewis who created pieces of the architectural Brooklyn landscape, which he then submerged them underwater in his piece. Manifesting destiny describes an apocalyptic future version of Brooklyn where only the animals who can fend for themselves appear, there is no human in sight implying that it is unhabitual to humans, therefore abandoning the city and leaving toxic waste. On the left side of the painting is the Brooklyn bridge that has been swallowed underwater by the east river on the right, along with buildings and abandoned ships. The colours in this provides a clear view of the ecological disaster as the red defines the rust on metal that has been left to rot, as the brown and green shows the Algy implying the city has been abandoned for a long period of time.



Alexis Rockman (The Lifeboat of the HMS Erebus)

Another piece created by Alexis Rockman is dedicated to the sinking of the HMS Erebus along with the HMS Terror. In 1926 the HMS Erebus was built in Pembroke dockyard located in Wales and was used for war. When its career as a bomb vessel came to an end it was used as an exploration ship due to its large capacity. In 1836 HMS Terror ventured off into the north arctic where it suffered severe ice damage. Modern day ships are built for every weather condition, unlike old war ships that couldn't break through the ice resulting in damage to the ship such as, cracks, dents, and internal industrial damage. Later HMS Erebus joined Terror and sailed for three consecutive years 1841, 1842, and 1843. During this trip they again suffered significant damage as they collided into an iceberg getting stuck in

the arctic. Eventually they released and made their return. In 1845 the ships then set sail once again under command of Sir John Franklin to find the northwest passage, never to be seen again. Aboard those ships were three animals, a monkey for amusement, a dog as a companion, along with a cat to catch the rats. The HMS Erebus and Terror both became trapped in arctic ice killing all 129 crew members. Due to the limited food supply their animal instinct kicked in and there were reports of cannibalism. When the ships were later found there was reports of limbs in cooking pots and crew members being skinned for food, it is believed that many of crew members were killed by lead poisoning or polar bear attacks.

The impact on the environment the HMS Erebus had a significant impact on the environment as they were disturbing and destroying homes for thousands of animals. They were polluting the land and sea with poisoned lead food cans. Even though animals have a strong immune system lead poisoning can cause a number of problems such as blindness, seizures, paralysis, and sudden death. The HMS Erebus was powered by steam that produces air pollution disturbing the terrestrial ecosystem and destroying habitats.

In this piece there are three polar bears, two of them are trying to climb aboard the lifeboat for survival as there is no icebergs for them to depend on as the HMS Erebus and Terror broke through large lands of ice dividing them into smaller pieces unable to hold a polar bear and other large animals. In an interview with Alexis Rockman, he stated that he creates these pieces to grab the attention of the public and force them to see what is happening in the world around them, stating *"I can't sit aside and just watch the world go up in flames or get flooded, so to speak, without trying to do something about it."*

Andy Goldsworthy

Andy Goldsworthy is an environmental artist who only uses natural materials from nature to create his work. By using sticks, leaves, stone and sunlight to create an eco-friendly body of art. Once finished his sculptures he lets the natural course of nature such as rain or gust of wind take over and reverts the objects back to their natural form.

This can also be known as natural phenomena, which has not been man-made but is the biological process of nature and all its weather and seasons. Land art first emerged in 1960-1970, as the natural phenomena process happens artists were relying on photograph evidence to get their work on show as many people could not get to see live artwork as it could vanish at any moment.

Andy Goldsworthy also uses photographic evidence to capture his work. In his book (Ephemeral Works: 2004 and 2014) all his natural sculptures from the past ten years are displayed in this lasting record book. In this book themes of decay, temporality of the natural elements are exhibited in this book.



**Andy Goldsworthy (Stones sinking in sand, Morecambe Bay,
Lancashire, 1976)**

Morecombe bay in the northwest coast of England became a popular location in Andy Wordsworth's art. Morecombe Bay was where Andy Goldsworthy created his first land piece, by using wet and dry stones along with found objects along the bay, created a long line down to the shore. With tides moving in and out he stated that it wasn't even a full day of work. He revisited it several times watching people walk over it and horses jumping over it. Eventually it faded and got swallowed by the sand. Andy Goldsworthy said, *"I often think it is still being there, although I know it isn't intact"*.

By creating land art there are so many positive effects on the human body and mind along with helping the environment, as it draws you away from the natural gallery space allowing the artist and the viewers to connect with nature on a deeper level, helping reduce stress and anxiety when creating art in the outdoors. By using found materials artists are able to help with the sustainability of the planet, along with using these materials to get the public's attention about the danger global warming is imposing.



Benjamin Von Wong (The Thinker's Burden)

Benjamin Wong is a climate activist artist who uses recycled plastic waste materials to create sculptures bringing awareness and change for the environment. Benjamin Von Wong's art does not appear in galleries but where it will be seen from a political view grabbing the attention of the public.

This piece created by Benjamin Von Wong and a team of people who helped created this piece was displayed outside of the United Nations office of Geneva Switzerland. Over past years Benjamin Von Wong has been creating plastic pollution art and how it effects the environment and

the lives of animals, however this piece was targeted towards human health. Plastic is a huge threat to the human race as it gives off chemicals into the environment while also absorbing them. These issues have never been seriously addressed as the micro nano plastics are invisible to the human eye but still impose a huge threat as there are over 16,000 chemicals in plastic. There have been recent recordings of microplastics in human blood cells that can be linked to heart attack, stroke and early death.

This piece stands at 6 meters tall and is an environmentally friendly piece as the sculpture is made from recycled paper mache, wood and metal, while being covered in living vines, it depicts the thinker statue created by (Auguste Rodin) cradling a child on his forearm while resting on mother nature wrapped around in giant strand of DNA. The thinker statue has globally sparked controversy for hundreds of years as a question of human existence as it captures a moment of introspection. In one of the thinkers' statues arms there is a baby and in the other is a crushed plastic bottle implying that the diseases plastic contains can spread across DNA. Said by Benjamin Von Wong, "*We want a healthy, clean environment and healthy, clean bodies, not just for ourselves, but for future generations*". Each day

Benjamin Von Wong added recycled plastic trails surrounding and climbing over the sculpture sending a message to the plastic industry for the future generations.



Cai Guo Qiang (inopportune stage two ,2004)

In 2004 artist Cai Guo Qiang's artwork (inopportune two) was held in an installation in Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. In this installation there are nine tigers all pierced with dozens of arrows. This piece strikes a powerful message and demonstrates the cruelty of how humans treat animals. Wildlife experts estimate tigers will be extinct by 2030 due to the brutal act of humans hunting tigers for centuries. Tigers get killed for fur, meat, or sport. In the past 100 years there has been a 96 percent drop in the number of tigers alive today leaving only 4,000 tigers left in the entire world.

By examining this artwork, the viewer gets a clear picture of what is happening to tigers everywhere around the world when they are just trying

to survive. This cruel act sparks emotion by the viewer as they can connect and feel the pain they are going through.

Conclusion

In summary these artists have achieved the goal of spreading a powerful message about the danger global warming imposes on the environment and the future world. From creating art into the future puts the viewer in shock as they can see an envisioned world of future reality that looks apocalyptic. Art that is created in the past and present tense has a beneficial factor that can inspire people to change their actions, spark conversation, and spread awareness before any more damage is done. Environmental art that is exhibited in public spaces is more beneficial to making a change as it reaches a broader audience as there is no traditional gallery space and allowing viewers to personally interact and connect with the pieces.

All of these artworks have targeted different environmental problems such as rising sea levels, animal endangerment, and plastic pollution all resulting in disaster and showing the aftermath of the world if they continue to increase, causing deconstruction, world chaos and habitat loss. There needs to be more environmental art activists who can take inspiration from these artists whose passion is to make a change for the greater good.

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