

Timothy Morton's *All Art is Ecological* (2018) consists of two essays, 'And You May Find Yourself Living in an Age of Mass Extinction', and 'Tuning'.

The first explores the strangeness of living right now, inside a mass extinction event, when most people are just living the status quo. Morton denies any separation between the self and the environment; we are connected to the fossil fuels that contact our food through the plastic containers it's stored in, and when we throw things away, there is no 'away', because their parts still exist on this planet.

The second explains an earlier concept, stating that ecology is dark because of the sad truth of existing alongside and harming other beings.

Morton argues that rather than data/policies, the real basis for engaging ecologically must involve experience and emotions (the weirdly intimate, 'beauty/ugly soup'). Real ecological awareness must come from tuning into this darkness. The sustainable, shiny future narrative feels impossible.

Morton writes well. Everything *is* ecological and connected. This description of how art can practice coexisting interdependence, where non-human beings are acknowledged without being reduced, is convincing. Art tunes us into the '*truthfeel*' of this mad journey we're on instead of spouting facts. Not being omniscient, our art deals with Morton's wonderfully termed object-oriented ontology: the entanglement of existence and the unknowable essence of objects made of infinite parts.

This book is a starting point for the rest of my research, as my question has changed, challenging all of my ecological perspectives formed to date, the way I create, the materials I use and the theory behind it.

T. J. Demos' *Decolonizing Nature* (2016) addresses contemporary art, political ecology, and environmental activism. More artists are producing work that reflects these disasters, but art history has given it limited attention. Demos believes that art and activism are spaces where new political possibilities can be worked out in radical ways. Chapters are based on specific sites and artists, displacement, the "post-natural condition", and what "art after nature" might mean.

Demos mainly argues that mainstream responses to these crises are colonial, using the same logic that forces economics, technology and most of the sustainability consensus onto us. He highlights the importance of nature as more than a resource and of indigenous knowledge as vital. He calls for a post-anthropocentric political ecology, legally enforceable rights for ecosystems, and art that investigates issues instead of merely representing them.

This is a powerful, deliberate, and materialist book compared to Morton's phenomenological, ontological perspective. He challenges who owns this discourse, whose lives it destroys and how its politics form relational, artistic responses - utterly appropriate for my practice, giving strong examples of artworks and artists who use relational aesthetics/activism to enfranchise nature.

Claire Bishop's *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012) looks at the history of participation within art, from Dada, through the political Situationist International (Guy Debord's Society of the Spectacle), up until the 1990s social turning point, when collaboration within workshops/communities became dominant in the art world.

Bishop writes against the theories that only participation can cure the alienation and passivity caused by spectatorship, that we are colonised by images, insisting that film theory proves active interpretation through spectating. She argues that spectatorship isn't a sickness to be cured, and disinterested watching can itself be an active, critical mode.

She adds a refreshing truth to how the art style is critiqued. I have enjoyed making uncomfortable, disruptive work. When participatory art was judged by social policy instead of as art, and funding depended on inclusivity box-ticking, it got silly. It was still about art, not community welfare.

I am interested in how antagonistic, relational, participatory artworks can mingle with the subject of the Anthropocene, particularly as other resources lean heavily on ecological engagement through experience and emotion.

Arts of Living On A Damaged Planet (2017) by **Anna Tsing** et al. is split into two parts, ghosts and monsters, a collection of essays that provide lenses for the Anthropocene.

It rejects the main story that frames humanity as causing this planetary crisis, saying instead that specific industrial/colonial arrangements did, above the fossil-fueled plantation/extraction.

It supports previous writers who argue that living well amid this ruin isn't just a human project. It's shared with all other organisms.

Ghosts explain the hauntings of the landscape (nuclear environments, extinctions, past industries, wiped-out civilisations) that still affect present life, even when they seem invisible. Ghosts are melancholy, demanding inheritance and a reckoning, since the past is not past.

Monsters are new additions caused by a damaged world, such as antibiotic-resistant bacteria, animals escaping captivity, zoonoses (like COVID), and invasive species. They are the descendants of opportunistic human design.

They write about multispecies thinking and collaboration, and how time and space must be attended to by bringing together all kinds of people, much like the book does.

How can this epoch be perceived, using art for living, persisting, when the untouched natural world is simply a fantasy?

How do modern visual art practices help society address climate abuse, and how does this process lead to societal change through non-literal forms of artistic expression?

This book feels like an important addition to my research so far, picking up where the rest have left off.

140 Artists' Ideas for Planet Earth (2021), edited by **Hans Ulrich Obrist** and **Kostas Stasinopoulos**, was created by asking artists around the world for one idea, drawing, instruction or recipe that might help the planet before printing 140 of their answers. It came from his own ecology work done at London's Serpentine Galleries, like his DIY prompt books, or Yoko Ono's instruction pieces.

It varies in form, with some pages showing works of art disguised as instructions, poetic fragments or governmental policy, from a wide range of people across demographics. Extraction in the Global South is mentioned.

The book has a few main threads: ironic or optimistic tension between individual action and systemic change, ecological repair is cultural and indigenous (spiritual knowledge is important, perhaps even more so than engineered responses), and there is no single solution detailed here: the book supports all other resources mentioned above, as it gives a practical input to balance out a lot of theory.