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**Outside the Gallery space, how have artists developed art practice utilising space or place?**

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The first forms of galleries were cabinets of curiosities belonging to wealthy people or families. During the Italian Renaissance aristocracy would keep rare objects and artefacts that they found when travelling in small, compact places such as chests of drawers or sometimes even whole rooms. These items would keep guests entertained during parties by being a way for the host to tell stories about each object and it was additionally meant to show their intelligence, education, wealth and good taste (University of California, 2014).

Public museums were created around the 18<sup>th</sup> century all around the world to keep artworks safe from vandals (term invented in France during the Revolution of 1789) and also in order to preserve them for historical purposes to archive art for future generations and to keep art pieces as witnesses of the past. For instance the British Museum was founded in 1753 and the Louvre in Paris in 1793 (Britannica). Walls of museums used to be filled from the ceiling to the floor with paintings from all over the world. Further on when museums started developing curators began to organise their layout in a better way, giving more space in between artworks for them stand out thus having less pictures on the walls of a room. Museums were also a way to make art accessible to the public and to present artworks from private collections that probably would not have been seen except by their owners.

Whether it's in sculpting, painting, drawing, performance, installation or photography artists who have developed their practice outside the gallery space made their work even more accessible to anyone than if it was stuck in a building. An example of art present outside the exhibition space is the Land Art movement. This essay will focus on three very different artists and specifically three of their artwork that have a common relationship to earth and the sky. It will also show how artists have pushed the boundaries of art by adopting the outdoors as a way to create and present their work.

Land Art also known as earth art or ecological art appeared during the 1960s-1970s, first in the United States and Great Britain then made its way to other parts of the world (Tate). During that time ecological and environmental questions around preservation started to emerge. It was also an era of women gaining more freedom and liberating for the bounds men power and an important time of political activism. Artists placed art outside the confines and restraints of the gallery space by using natural materials and creating ephemeral, outdoors artworks. They also believed that art shouldn't be commercialised and conceived works that couldn't be bought. Land Art can be closely linked to many other movement such as Ecological Art, Conceptual Art or Site Specific Art: Ecological Art with their use of material, Conceptual Art as the idea of the work could be reproduced infinitely but if the artwork was reproduced it would never exact the original and finally, Site Specific art because some of the work was made especially in reaction to and for the place it was located in. Like all new introduction of an artistic movement it received a lot of critique: it was considered as harming nature's aesthetic and as using it without justification of any sort.



Figure 1



Figure 2

The work of Robert Smithson and in particular his piece *Spiral Jetty* are key references of the Land Art group. Situated in the Great Salt in Utah, United States *Spiral Jetty* is a 1 500 feet long and fifteen feet wide path twisted anticlockwise. It begins from the shore and goes out into the lake. It is formed of six thousands tons of black basalt rocks created from hardened liquid lava and earth collected from around the site. The rocks were collected from the area's extinct volcanos and are considered one of the densest stones in the world. Called a terminal lake the

water composing it is collected from streams and rivers making it rich in minerals and salt. The water evaporates after some time changing the water levels.

At the time of the construction in 1970 the low water levels facilitated an easy development of the work.

Although the spiral was submerged a few times, since 2002 draughts have kept the artwork visible in such way to permit visitors to see and walk on it. Having a strong interest in entropy Smithson chose the lake for its violet, pinky red colour due specifically to a type of algae and microbes, and for its salinity that produces beautiful salt crystals. Entropy is by definition a lack of order or predictability ; gradual decline into disorder. This concept constitutes a major link to the way the work progressively has been deteriorating because of its environment. Robert Smithson wanted to create a sculpture that would constantly be surrounded by change and would transform in reaction to its changing environment. The *Spiral Jetty* resembles from an aerial perspective the Nasca Lines in Peru. According to the National Geographic these extensive line drawings were made about 2000 years ago by the Nasca people and were well conserved as a result of the dry weather. They essentially represent animals or geometric figures ; sometimes triangles, straight lines, rectangles or swirls. Measuring from 50 to 1 200 feet long the drawings are called geoglyphs and are made by removing rocks and earth. To this day there has been many theories proving different ideas about this community and their intention but archeologists and scientists are still studying the site trying to find their real meaning.

Smithson created *Spiral Jetty* knowing that it would be relating to the natural elements its surroundings: the sky, the water, the earth and the wind. The matter of it being a jetty is also inevitably connected to water. Besides, its shape conducts the idea of time passing and concepts such as the circle of life, going from a beginning to an end. Or even a watch as a rounded object again, showing time. The ephemeral aspect of the work is in itself also reflected with time fleeting. The spiral can be considered as a Site Specific artwork as it is constantly subject to the laws of nature and as it was specifically created in relation to its location.



Figure 3

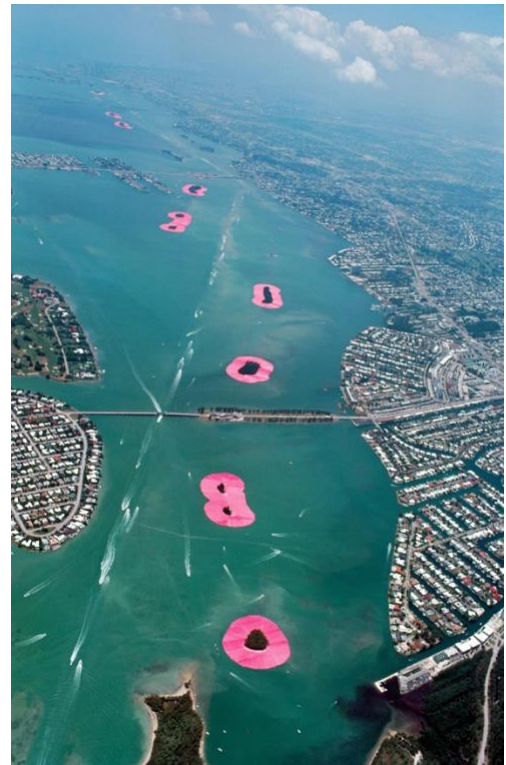


Figure 4

Artist duo and couple Christo and Jeanne-Claude have pushed the limits of Land Art by creating large scales artworks in restricted locations all over the world. They met in 1958 when Christo was commissioned to do portraits of her family and have been inseparable ever since (Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation). Well known for their controversial wrapped monuments and landscapes such as the Valley Curtain project in Colorado and their other large-scale work, they have an unusual way of using materials. Depending on the artworks and where it would be placed they always took care in choosing the appropriate material based on its colour, its reaction to light, its texture and its weight. They were extremely committed to their artworks and would spent great amounts of money from their own savings in order to finance their them. They would not accept financial aids of any sort so they would fund their work by selling the groundworks of their research for each designs. Most of their artwork had to be granted by permits obtained from committees and organisations that the couple would sometimes spent years arguing for but eventually acquired. In between many successes, Christo and Jeanne-

Claude sometimes had unachieved projects because of the missing authorisation necessary. Before she died, Jeanne Claude made Christo promise that he would continue their legacy and complete their unfinished or unachieved projects. He therefore continued them for eleven years, starting with their *Over the River* project in 2011 that never saw the light of day in reason of lawsuits, until he passed away in 2020. They had such an impact on society and in the art world that in October 2021, the French government finalised the couple's plan to wrapped the Arc de Triomphe in Paris in order to pay tribute and celebrate the couple, and because it was Christo's last planned project. The way Christo and Jeanne Claude prepared their projects was by drawing many detailed sketches of how they envisioned the work to look like and choosing every detail from the location, the material, the size etc. In a documentary video for an exhibition at the Pérez Art Museum Miami in 2018 Christo talked about what he calls the « software period » which is when the project exists only with the drawings, sketches and plans and when the artists try to get permits to construct it ; and the « hardware period » when the project is being constructed and goes from abstract ideas to concrete object (Art Basel, 2019).

*Surrounded Islands* was a project realised in Biscayne Bay in Miami, Florida in 1983. When invited by a friend to visit Miami, Christo and Jeanne-Claude noticed the flat landscape and stretches of water where these forest-like small islands stood and thought that it was missing something. They then started to think of the project and ended up creating this beautiful cultural history for the city. During the time the project was build Miami was a place of drug dealing and crime. By bringing this project to the city Christo and Jeanne-Claude showed people that there was potential and that it could become a better place. The couple extended 603, 870 square meters of floating bright pink polypropylene fabric which is a light weight plastic woven material on the water around eleven islands of the bay. They attached octagonal boom to the fabric to enable it to float and so that debris from the sea would not go onto the fabric. Boom is a barrier used in large water surfaces to contain things like oil spillage or debris. The pink fabric was placed so that it would move with the tide (Art Basel, 2019). From April 1981, Christo and Jeanne Claude worked in collaboration with marine biologists and engineers, ornithologists, contractors and engineers to prepare the island for the project and to make sure they wouldn't disturb the fauna and flora. The work actually helped get rid of forty tons of detritus surrounding and on the islands. They of

course had to obtain permits for the construction which they got from about eight government organisations (Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation). The work resembles galaxies with their circular shape and bright pink colour. The fabric also looks like a means to restrict access to the islands. It must have been impressive going around the installation by boat and even seeing it from afar. Just like Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* this artwork could be seen from the land or the water but to see it from a better angle was from the sky to see all of the islands and their pink halos.



Figure 5

James Turrell is an American artist who explores the relationship between light and space. Ever since he was little he had a fascination for light and the cosmos. He is a key figure of the Light and Space movement that took place in California during the mid 60s and has invented signature forms that intensify the experience and changes the perception of light in a space. His installations sometimes create a sense of disorientation by using strategically placed lights to create a colourful, surreal space that is completely immersive. Situated in the Painted Desert in Arizona James Turrell's greatest space is placed in an extinct volcano that he spent forty-five years building and has for the past few years focused on finishing the detailed blueprints for in case someone had to take over to finish the construction. This project uses natural light coming from outside to manipulate how we view and experience it, and to make us more aware of the different light changes throughout the day. He described his vision as being:

« [...] enfolded in nature in such a way that light from the sun, moon and stars empowered the spaces...I wanted an area where you had a sense of standing on the planet.» (Pace Gallery, 2020)



Figure 6



Figure 7

The artist bought the *Roden Crater* in 1977 and finished the first major construction in the early 2000s. He has received many donations throughout the years from many establishments, public and private, to finance his project (ArchDaily, 2019). The installation is constructed of tunnels connecting each of the twenty-one planned spaces from which only six are currently completed: the Crater's Eye, the Crater Bowl, the East Portal, the Alpha (East) Tunnel, the Sun and Moon Chamber and the Fumarole Spaces. These rooms are all connected and dependent on one-another in order to be a naked eye observatory. The Sun/Moon Chamber works as a giant pinhole camera, the Alpha Tunnel as a huge telescope and each of the other spaces have different large-scale light effects. In the evening the Crater allows to see the stars, the moon and the planets and during the day to feel the shifts of lighting and the different atmospheres it brings. The light coming into the it changes depending on the weather and the time of day. It engages with these celestial elements by amplifying what can be seen from the bare eye. Roden Crater is a major scientific and artistic construction that will most definitely bring people from all over the world to watch these empyrean events. It is currently closed to visitors, but the artist intend to open it to the public by 2024.

This piece is connected to the other artworks mentioned as it is linked directly to space (as in the cosmos) and time with the dates the different celestial events observed from it. It is also similar with the circular shape of the crater and each of its rounded rooms.

Unlike classical painters such as Cézanne, Picasso or Rembrandt, land-artists chose to work with natural elements and materials as a way to redefine the boundaries of art and free themselves from the constrictions and norms of galleries. They have rejected all standards and have created a new revolutionary form of art practice. The artworks mentioned in this writing all have as common object time, space, the four natural elements and have a connection to the sky and the celestial. Earth was part the location chosen for each piece, water was surrounding *Spiral Jetty* and *Surrounded Islands*, fire can be linked to the sun and more so for *Roden Crater* being an observatory, and finally air because all of them are located outside and are subject to it. When placed and kept in a specific location we can wonder if the organisation who's artwork belongs to or has been donated to is looking after it and trying to preserve it or is letting the work fulfil its original purpose. For example, *Spiral Jetty* has for aim to be changing with its environment and it still exists and is a place that people can still explore. This question of conservation is in complete contradiction with museums' objective to protect and keep paintings but therefore is entirely in phase with the Land Art movement of them being outside the norms of galleries.

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