Art and political ecology (II)

Our second issue in this short series continues exploring the field of art and political ecology, focusing particularly on our journal's central question of art and its meaningfulness/ agency as a local phenomenon. The paths from Latour that proposed to investigate the perceptual paradigm of modernity and its consequences in Seismopolite 14, are further developed and contextualized in this issue, most evidently perhaps in two interviews: Hans Ulrich Obrist, who tells us about the origins of his collaborations with Latour and the idea of the *gedankenausstellung,* among other things, and Yuko Hasegawa, who shares some of her critical thoughts about the exhibition model and not least some of the ideas behind her exhibition, *New Sensorium – Exiting from the Failures of Modernization* that ran parallel to Latour's *Reset Modernity* at the ZKM in Karlsruhe this autumn.

Also relating himself directly to Latour, Giacomo Bazzani discusses how one may use economic theory as one of the actors that can allow a specific form of society in the present, rather than merely as a pair of glasses through which to place a diagnosis. From this performative perspective on social reality and economic theory, Bazzani interestingly proposes how artistic and activist practices, rather than trying to influence the ecological culture of the next generations of humans, may try to

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reprogram new forms of collective economic action – in the very present.

For his part, Joseph Beuys' contextual analysis of his present concluded with the necessity of a "third way," one by which society would be organized by the individual through his own creative initiative, a "social sculpture." Through his own social sculpture projects as well as his involvement with the green movement and *7000 Oaks,* as Cara Jordan explains, Beuys hoped to create a model for artists to enact widespread social and political transformation and to develop a "real alternative to the existing systems in the West and in the East."

In a different take on the need for a perceptual "reset" of the here-and-now, Louise Malcom uses the examples of Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla – who notably bring in prehistoric artefacts in their exhibitions and "reactivate" them through the touch of breath and sound – to show how artistic approaches may bring abstract concepts such as ecology, climate change or nature closer to human experience. "Allora and Calzadilla do not interpret prehistoric artefacts but rather facilitate an encounter with them via a phenomenological strategy of letting 'things themselves' guide our understanding", she writes. According to Malcolm, these artworks reignite our connection with the Earth and in doing so make ecology palpable.

Through his performances and audio-visual installations, Allard van Hoorn reworks some of the same problematic within the contemporary urban context, taking an aboriginal

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conception of sound and environment as his basic
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inspiration:

[…] a method of mapping, spiritually embodying and managing the land of the Aboriginal Australians by ways of singing the shape of their natural environment. The cities we live in have become our habitat and the streets are collective, public property; squares and bridges are as much ours as is the mountain ridge to the aboriginal. So how to restore the ties with our urban spaces in which we spend such abundance of time and so much of our lives happen? How to restore some of that connection we might have had once to our land?

Perceptual connections with the world were just as brutally as they were silently corrupted through the use of Kepone in the island of Guadeloupe, that continued until 1993. Kepone is a pesticide and endocrine disruptor, that affects the reproductive organs, potentially causing cancer, and that may take many hundreds of years to eradicate from the ground – having been transported by water and spread from banana plantations to adjacent areas. In her article that addresses this « patent neo-colonialism » performed by the colonialist ruling class of the island despite all possible evidence of the toxicity of the pesticide (of which a US ban started as early as 1979), social researcher and performance artist Melyon-Reinette also presents and describes the ideas and process behind her public art performance, « Kepone experiment. A triptych against food poisoning. », that was realized as part of her article for this issue.

Albeit a differently located investigation, site- and

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eco-specific art projects and their very aptitude as *models* aasd of site-specificity – affected as they are by the dynamics of ecology, location and society – is the theme of Sozita Goudouna's article "Eco-Specificity: Performing the Heterogeneous Centre of The Ecological Imperative". The example discussed in her article is the "eco-critical" and site-specific project "Eleventh Plateau" by the non-profit company 'Out of the box Intermedia' that took place in 2011 at eleven sites in the islands of Hydra at the uninhabited island of Dokos. Through art, ecological issues were here reconstituted so as to reveal and emphasize "a logic of interdependency and transformation between object, environment and organism."

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