

# GREENWASHING ENVIRONMENT: PERILS, PROMISES AND PERPLEXITIES

Jennifer Allora & Guillermo Calzadilla, Lara Almarcegui, Maria Thereza Alves, Ibon Aranberri, Amy Balkin, The Bruce High Quality Foundation, Chu Yun, A Constructed World, Minerva Cuevas, Ettore Favini, Cyprien Gaillard, Tue Greenfort, Norma Jeane, Cornelia Parker, Jorge Peris, Wilfredo Prieto, RAF / Reduce Art Flights, Tomás Saraceno, Santiago Sierra, Simon Starling, Fiona Tan, Nikola Uzunovski, Sergio Vega, Wang Jianwei, James Yamada



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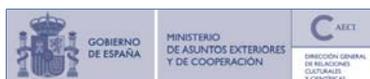


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# Preface

The *Greenwashing* exhibition is the final stage in a program dedicated to the environment, understood in the ecological sense as well as the physical space in which our daily lives are developed and transformed.

Every year, the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo chooses a theme around which to organize and develop exhibitions, reviews, meetings, and studies. Now more than ever, the environment is a real and urgent problem overwhelmingly capturing the attention of the media. Artists have always reflected on the critical state and prospects for our planet, tackling issues from many points of view. The idea of placing the environment centre stage emerged several years ago, anticipating what have now become burning questions.

In 2001, for example, the Fondazione supported the project by Maurizio Cattelan to build on the hill of Bellolampo, where the urban waste dump for the city of Palermo is located, a giant HOLLYWOOD sign, 170 metres long and 23 metres high, creating a short circuit between the glamorous world of stars and the grave problem of solid waste.

In 2007, we began the program tied to the environment with *Ambient Tour*, the exhibition that turned its gaze toward the emerging Italian artistic scene, bringing together projects by Flavio Favelli, Christian Frosi and Deborah Ligorio.

For *Greenwashing*, curators Ilaria Bonacossa and Latitudes (Max Andrews & Mariana Cánepa Luna) have invited 25 international artists to show their works. The title *Greenwashing* uses a neologism indicating the activities of companies, industries, political bodies or organizations aimed at creating a positive image in order to conceal or take attention away from their own responsibilities in terms of negative environmental impact.

Although the artists in this exhibition give no solutions, they raise many questions regarding environmental issues. They speak of fossil fuels, energy consumption, harmful emissions, and possible sources of renewable energy, fundamental for sustainable development. Using painting, sculpture, photography, video and installations, their works analyze our society's accumulation and waste – water, garbage, rubbish, petroleum, oil – in such a way as to make hidden mechanisms and processes evident, thus revealing the cycles of exchange and power not always visible to the greater public.

Their art never shows the 'right' ethical and environmental way, but helps to analyze and bring into discussion our actions and perceptions to allow us

to act with greater awareness. The Fondazione's attention to the environment is developed not only through exhibitions and events but also through long-term actions. Our headquarters are lit with clean energy produced from renewable sources, reducing carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere. In addition, we use ecological paper for our catalogues and invitations and recycled paper in all our offices. These changes to our daily management testify to our commitment to caring for the environment and an ecologically sustainable development to safeguard the planet.

Furthermore, carbon dioxide emissions (from transportation, heating, etc.) will be calculated and offset for the *Greenwashing* exhibition. The Fondazione also adheres to the RAF / Reduce Art Flights project that asks artists, assistants, gallery owners and whoever else must travel to make this exhibition possible, to use means of transport less polluting than airplanes, such as boats or trains. To tackle issues connected with sustainable development and safeguarding the planet, the exhibition will be accompanied by a cycle of conferences on the environment featuring scholars and journalists.

**Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo**

President

Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo



# A Convenient Lie

History repeats itself in a very sophisticated way. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, during the Crusades, the Catholic Church invented the sale of indulgences as a means to convince its Crusaders to go, fight and die for the Pope. Basically you could buy salvation in the afterlife by acquiring an indulgence. The more sins you had committed, the more indulgences you needed to buy. Apparently the rationale of the Church behind the sale of an indulgence was that it had accumulated a substantial amount of credit from Jesus through all of the good deeds performed over the course of centuries, enough that it was possible to re-sell some of these good credits to those who were in debt to the Saviour. In 1517, Martin Luther thought that this kind of market was preposterous and attacked the Church of Rome, stirring the Protestant Reform movement. Today the sale of indulgences has a different name: 'Emission Trading'. Simplifying the matter, the idea of Emission Trading is to allow those companies who are polluting too much to buy credit from other companies or countries that do not pollute as much. This idea, presented in the Kyoto Protocol, is meant to save the soul of our planet. From a profane point of view, this system to curb carbon dioxide emissions looks very much like the twelfth century Catholic gimmick to encourage a Crusader to participate in slaughter once he's secured his soul with a decent amount of 'indulgence trading'.

Catastrophism and disaster predictions are a very lucrative business. Foreseeing a gloomy future is definitely a more lucrative profession than working on immediate issues. Al Gore won the Peace Nobel Prize by embodying a twenty-first century Nostradamus; the reason why is still a mystery. It would be like awarding the Chemistry Nobel Prize to someone who was able to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I guess Al Gore with his documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, gave everyone concerned with the future of our environment quite a bit of peace of mind.

Did Al Gore ever measure the amount of energy wasted during the Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles? I feel that while it is an indisputably dramatic issue, the present frenzy about the unavoidable environmental doom is at the same time a very 'convenient lie' used to escape from the tragedies of everyday political crises, from Darfur, to Chad, to Kenya, to human rights that are violated all over the world, every day, every hour, every second. The logic appears to be: 'The environment belongs to us while human rights are theirs'. The environment is somehow abstract enough to allow us to deal with it in a correspondingly abstract way. Emission Trading is like putting your garbage bag next door when your own bin is full. Fear sells more than sorrow, and on this premise the entire ecological business has been built. I am not denying the importance of environmental awareness, we are on the edge of an abyss, yet on this edge there is a lot of speculation. Ecology, homeopathy and organic food, while byproducts of serious concerns and conditions, have morphed into a huge unregulated scam. The truth is that fear buys votes and voters buy goods. A society based on fear is a society that consumes more. Until a few years ago, the strategy was to create fear by introducing suspicion: warnings about the 'other' as a potential terrorist or a possible illegal immigrant. But to change the other is a much more difficult task than to change ourselves, or at least to try to change ourselves. That's why the business of psychoanalysis is suggesting that we are the problem, and not the 'other'. The 'fundamentalist environmentalist' figured out that fear of *ourselves* can change the world, or at least generate a movement that in an attempt to change the world will mobilize an enormous amount of money – from recycled denim to organic bananas. To save the Amazon forest is not only a humanitarian enterprise, but an economic one. Saving money and people, seeing the indulgences traded again, is good business. I am playing devil's advocate of course, but I believe that serious concerns for our society have often been transformed into tools of exploitation, or at least into consumerists' fever.

I wouldn't deny the possibility that much of the alarm about the environment will eventually cause more environmental problems. Societies can be transformed with minor but seminal changes as Muhammad Yunus, an economist from Bangladesh, is trying to prove in developing countries. One hundred dollar laptops and affordable cell phones in isolated areas can make the difference for hundreds of thousands of people. The environment can be saved by tools not by gadgets. In 1847, Dr. Ignaz Semmelweiss, a physician in a Vienna hospital, discovered that fatal infections were being spread among patients by doctors who failed to wash their hands between examinations. Semmelweiss immediately instituted a disinfecting procedure whereby physicians were required to wash in a lime chloride solution after autopsies and with soap and water between patient visits. Doctors also had to change into clean lab coats before examining patients. As a result, hospital mortality rates from infectious diseases declined. It's been many moons since the introduction of the practice of washing hands has turned into the marketing of antibacterial soap. From affordable health food to three star Slow Food restaurants, food has done a lot of mileage, and hundreds of SUVs have filled the parking lots of environmentally sound hotels and eateries. Al Gore is our contemporary Martin Luther, but to over-elevate human responsibility or focus excessively on macro issues could undermine attention to short-time responsibilities and deny the resolution of immediate damage. Both Pontius Pilate and Dr. Ignaz Semmelweiss believed that problems could be solved by washing your hands, but the outcome for human kind has been in each case been quite different.

**Francesco Bonami**

Artistic Director

Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo



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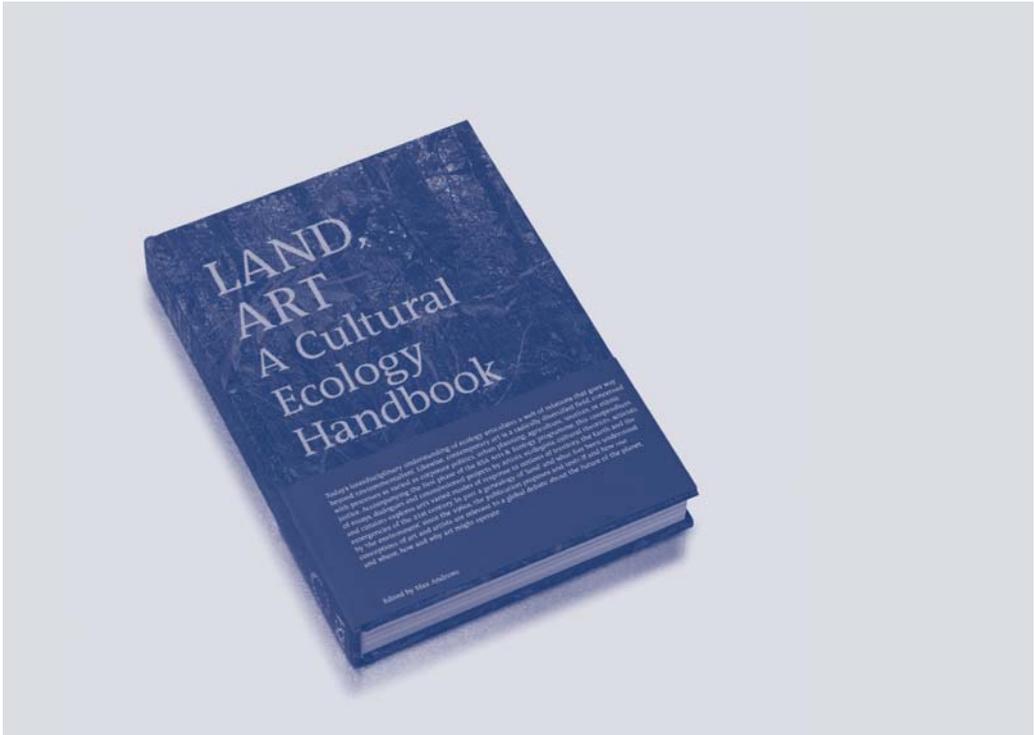
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# Shades of Green

## A conversation between the curators

**ILARIA BONACOSSA:** When we met up in London in 2006 at the conference *No Way Back?* organised by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA), I had just started to develop an exhibition of contemporary art that would present international artists whose work touched on environmental issues. I was pleasantly surprised that many of the artists I had been looking at for the show were already collaborating with Latitudes in one way or another. So after reading the book you edited – *Land, Art: A Cultural Ecology Handbook* (2006) – I decided that we should find a way of working together and exchanging our research. We discovered that we agreed on a core issue – that just presenting ‘green’ or ‘eco-conscious’ artists was not going to be particularly interesting for us. We wanted to show artists whose production was significant and relevant formally and aesthetically, but whose work also had the strength and clarity to interrogate and question the actual idea of ‘the environment’. Having discussed the multi-faceted implications of a show concerned with ecology, we decided that it should have a title, namely *Greenwashing* (a disparaging term for the dishonest representation of ecological merits) that was in some way indicative of a provocative and ironic approach.

**LATITUDES:** It is true that this exhibition has grown out of a consideration of artistic practice in relation to a ‘post-environmental’ sensibility. From the start, the fact that we wanted to question the very idea of what ‘an environmental issue’ could be, meant that we had to find a way of making a project that was nevertheless triggered by considering something (‘the environment’) that we regard as an inherently flawed concept. When we began collaborating, this was something that we had been operating around for a few years, often in association with the Arts & Ecology programme initiated by the RSA as you mentioned. We have been closely involved with their commissions programme, alongside which we produced a three-day symposium in the UAE for the 2007 Sharjah Biennial. Independently of this we also guest-edited the summer 2007 issue of the Turin-based art magazine *UOVO* which included interviews, artists’ projects, and texts around ‘Ecology, Luxury & Degradation’, so there were also some nascent Italian links when we started to work together with you.

Your invitation to us to co-curate the final exhibition in the recent series dedicated to the environment at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo was a way to reform many of the strands of conversation that have emerged throughout these existing projects in an exhibition format for the first time. Though what has resulted is not meant to be a consolidation or a thesis exhibition. We don’t regard ourselves as experts, and likewise we would hate to think that what we’ll still call for the time being ‘so-called environmental issues’ should be the preserve of specialists – it’s fair to say none of the artists would regard themselves as eco-artists, and we certainly don’t see ourselves as eco-curators.

**IB:** The work of the 25 international artists and artist groups that are included in this show likewise suggest that old-fashioned concepts of ‘nature’ cannot properly comprehend the complex ecological debate of the present. The evermore urgent ecological arena that is such a ‘hot topic’ today is haunted by the possibility of catastrophic ecosystemic collapse: yet cultural, political, social,

economic factors are all implicated. So much confusion has been generated by the swathe of relentless messages that try to induce ecological guilt and the business and political agendas that try to capitalise on this. The practices represented in the exhibition are diverse – they don't just passively mourn the destruction of the biosphere, and they don't really offer solutions either. What they do achieve is an active articulation of some of the contradictions and assumptions that we come across individually and as a society. The artists do not propose a 'correct' or 'green' way of living, but set up critical inflections that could be said to interrogate human behaviour. Could you expand on your understanding of the conceptual context of the show? And how much do you think the geographical context has influenced the exhibition?

**L:** The context of the city of Turin, being in the industrial north of Italy, has unavoidably informed the project – the historical background of *Arte Povera* and the industrial legacy of car manufacturing in the city in particular are things that we hope the exhibition can be infused by. Given the ecological grounding of the exhibition, we are almost bound to consider its formation as an organic process. But broadly speaking, three thematic concerns which have emerged and intertwined could be identified – they have been cultivated one might say – while many others, naturally, have taken root and multiplied. To force the analogies a little more, the nutrient-rich substrate of the exhibition-habitat as we see it derives from a suspicion of particular conception of nature as a metaphysical, supposedly romantic or harmonious category. Secondly, it is process itself, as you suggested, along with relation and exchange – of materials, of resources, of opinions, and so on – that seems to have thrived and taken precedence over stasis or fixed conclusions. This process-based thinking has clear affinities with the way energy circulates in living systems. Thirdly, the exhibition looks to host a broad bandwidth of responses and reactions to 'the green agenda' and ecological degradation – from personal, to corporate, to governmental – specifically and indirectly.



**IB:** It seems that the terminology and agency around ‘the environment’ and sustainability have become increasingly asymmetric and immaterial. Emissions’ offsetting, food miles, carbon debt, ecological footprints, and so on, are all recently coined terms. We can’t deny the anxious sense that the processes and practices of industrialisation and globalisation have induced unprecedented deprivations and abuses of the planet. That said, the familiar refrain to limit growth, particularly in the developing world, seems in some way unrealistic. One of the perplexities we wanted to pose was how we reconcile this with the observation that ecological concern is much greater in rich societies. How can we articulate the complex relation between emergency and complacency? And how can we more generally balance personal responsibility and collective consensus, local and global policies, or short-term fixes and long-term strategies? Do you feel that the show can deal with the changing definitions of what it means to be ‘green’ in this respect?

**L:** As Kermit the frog famously sang, ‘It’s Not Easy Bein’ Green’. What is at stake when an individual in Germany, for example, feels better about buying locally-grown strawberries which have in fact required considerably more artificial heating and light than those flown in from Spain? How can anyone make anything more than an emotional decision about the viability of various alternative energies without being an independent scientist? Such questions seem to be increasingly locating the individual at a nexus where fact, bluff and dissimulation have become difficult to tell apart.

The possibilities for action are becoming increasingly depoliticised under the guise of ‘ethical living’ and lifestyle trends, or made more-and-more abstracted through market-led practices such as carbon offsetting. Perhaps art that – like global warming – is intangible, global and future-oriented can have traction because of and not in spite of its ability to contest and be contested?

**IB:** I agree, we are not so naïve as to think that art alone can save or, shall we say, change the world, but I guess we can say that art has the power to create situations that rewire our normal understanding of reality. Art can oblige us to reconsider common assumptions about many issues that are constantly discussed in the public arena only in a superficial way. Even if the exhibition does not deny that we are living in a time of crisis, the title of the show, for instance, stands as a warning to the public that they actually might be being fed yet more environmental propaganda ...

**L:** The Brazilian art critic and radical politician Mario Pedrosa said that in times of crisis, we must stand by the side of the artist. [1] If the titles alone of the flood of best-selling books from the last several years are anything to go by – James Kunstler’s 2005 *The Long Emergency*, Jared Diamond’s 2005 *Collapse*, James Lovelock’s 2006 *The Revenge of Gaia*, and of course Al Gore’s 2006 *An Inconvenient Truth*, for example – these are times of crisis indeed. On the other hand there is Michael O’Leary, the boss of the Low Budget airline Ryanair, who has belittled climate change as a ‘middle-class mid-life crisis’. With the bewildering litany of bona fides that have inundated the media and our lives (recyclable, biodegradable, carbon neutral, locally sourced, compostable, free range, fair trade, certified organic, ethical, renewable, sustainable, dolphin friendly, etc.) ‘eco-fatigue’ is becoming a reality. The peril is that we either become utterly immune to hectoring or are actually petrified into inaction by apocalyptic proclamations. So this psychologically fraught territory and popular overabundance is another strata of the exhibition – the show is a symptom of its time.

In the same way, it could be interesting to consider two other recent ‘green’ exhibitions as genealogical-ecological predecessors to the present one – *The Greenhouse Effect* (curated by Ralph Rugoff and Lisa Corrin for The Serpentine Gallery and The Museum of Natural History, London, in 2000) and *Beyond Green: Toward a Sustainable Art* (curated by Stephanie Smith, originating at the Smart Museum of Art at The University of Chicago in 2005).



**IB:** During the past months I have been reading voraciously to try and learn about diverse ecological debates; but the more I have tried to take stock, the more complex the whole picture has become. Theories are in constant contradiction and there is never a single compelling answer to a question. Yet what *is* clear is that our understanding of what is at stake is very reductive. This uncertainty likewise suggested a way of processing an individual artwork's possible role in the show as a whole; together they are open to readings that encounter broad political and social issues, as well as 'classically' environmental ones.

**L:** One of the ironies of the concept and practice of environmentalism is not only that it has failed to include humans, but that for the majority of our species who live in the developing world, it simply does not exist as a perceivable category, still less a category that can be privileged above the meeting of basic and immediately pressing needs. 'Environmentalism' as such, as you hinted before, is the luxury of affluent societies.

The term ‘greenwashing’ is emblematic of a host of economic interests, competing ‘virtues’ and dubious practices that have accompanied climate change’s spread into the wider public consciousness. Importantly, the exhibition itself could not very well claim to be immune in any way from these very suspicions regarding the intentions and the manipulated perceptions of eco-credibility. The idea that the exhibition is ‘greening’ the Fondazione is, we would hope, already communicated with a certain self-reflexivity and wry humour in terms of the graphic design of this paper publication and the self-conscious use of stock with eager eco-credentials. As the ‘Perils, Promises and Perplexities’ of the subtitle similarly indicate, this is not an exhibition that could ever have had a unified or altogether benevolent goal – it is not a call to arms, a denouncement or a manifesto. The works have not been created from some kind of obligation to a particular lobby, they do not hold themselves up as paradigms of virtue, and they do not attempt to be commonsensical, or to merely use art to reach a wider audience. The one project that perhaps stands out in this respect to some degree, RAF / Reduce Art Flights, comes from and is addressed to the art world, though it is not a work of art – it is an ‘old-fashioned’ campaign which functions by its very refreshing and uncluttered honesty.

**IB:** As we have mentioned, the process-based and speculative approaches of some of the artists in the exhibition can articulate energy and its material transformation, which is a fundamental principal of ecology. Likewise, several works in the exhibition consider repositories of energy – whether rubbish, water, soil, petrol – in ways that reveal previously obscured patterns and give rise to disputed meanings. The workshop part of *The Cone of Silence* (2008) – the project developed for the exhibition by A Constructed World – is not an opportunity to generate new material per se, but a chance to transfer dialogue and make interactions that similarly work through circulation and modification of something that is already present.



**L:** Absolutely. Another artistic strategy that we have tried to reflect is that of antagonism – disruptive or seemingly counter-intuitive provocations. Santiago Sierra’s contribution (an action involving two cars inside the exhibition space with their engines on) for example, owes little to a ‘correct’ way of protesting about pollution. In fact, it ostensibly makes the situation empirically worse! The most superficially ecologically-friendly way of doing an exhibition would be to not invite any artists at all, not to transport anything, and just turn all the lights and heating off in the empty galleries. As a society we have become so used to equating ecological praxis with sacrifice and self-denial that such literal-minded suggestions actually might seem credible.

**IB:** Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger's theories about post-environmentalism presented first in their paper 'The Death of Environmentalism' and recently in the follow up book *The Break Through: From the Death of Environmentalism and the Politics of Possibility* have been a key reference for our dialogue in curating this show together. How does their vision of unleashing change proceed from their call for the abolition of a romantic representation of nature?

**L:** They show how the discourse of environmentalism is based on the understanding that humankind and culture are somehow seen as being separate from this thing 'out there' called the environment – the domain of national parks, forests, glaciers, and so on. In this sense, all human activity is tarred as a disruption and a transgression of a Nature that it is by implication not a part of – a construction which derives from the Biblical account of man's banishment from the Garden of Eden. Questions such as 'can art save the planet?' are similarly founded on a religiously tainted language which assumes that a sin has been inflicted on the planet in the first place, and that the sinners are somehow the external stewards of the Earth's fate.

Although Nordhaus and Shellenberger write very thoughtfully about the legacy and mythology of the environmental movement from the perspective of political strategy, their approach really seems to resonate with research-based and interdisciplinary artistic practice as well. Their insistence that the concept of the environment needs to be laid to rest really comes into its own when, for example, they ask why air pollution is widely understood as an environmental issue when tobacco smoking is not, or they demonstrate how a certain Edenic fantasy prevails in relation to Amazon deforestation which denies the agency of Brazil's crippling debt. Their argument is that the politics and mindset of restrictions, fears, limits and prevention should be deposed by a new vision of innovation and growth where, for instance, climate change is not seen as the consequence of too much development, but not enough of the right kind of development.

**IB:** These are the kind of issues around which Sergio Vega has developed his recent work. In his video *Paradise on Fire* (2007), included in the show, he documents the southern limit of the Amazonian forest, which has been burnt to grow soy, sugar cane and to ranch cattle. The impulse to conserve and protect the forest and a concern for the social conditions of its inhabitants are seen to be intricately related.

**L:** Nordhaus and Shellenberger clearly articulate that biodiversity cannot be separated from economics, or pollution from unemployment, and so on. This assertion conspicuously echoes the ‘ecosophical’ writings of Félix Guattari – the psychoanalyst better known as Gilles Deleuze’s partner-in-philosophy. Guattari’s short book *The Three Ecologies* was originally published in French in post-Chernobyl 1989 – the year of the well-publicised Exxon Valdez oil spill, and a time when environmental issues consisted of acid rain, CFCs, ozone layer depletion, and so on – yet it was only translated into English in 2000. Guattari’s prescient account has been an important reference point for many artists whose work draws on ecological processes yet who are not necessarily interested in what has been termed ‘eco-art’. He warns about the dangers of restrictive definitions of naturalistic ecology, and instead proposes thinking and acting across a triple-layered field that interconnects the biosphere with human subjectivity and social relations. ‘Environmental ecology, as it exists today, has barely begun to prefigure the generalised ecology that I advocate here’, Guattari writes. ‘Ecology must stop being associated with the image of a small nature-loving minority or with qualified specialists’, he continues. [2]

In the context of a medium-term art-historical perspective, these words comprise a definite break with the legacy of Joseph Beuys, an artist whose charismatic preacher persona positioned itself as a shamanic negotiator between the human and the non-human world, culture and nature. In contrast, Guattari describes a field of action that continues to be charted by the artists of today, one in which practitioners can no longer claim to occupy a position of mystical expertise. One of the most striking passages of *The Three Ecologies* is worth quoting at length.

Now more than ever, nature cannot be separated from culture; in order to comprehend the interactions between ecosystems, the mechanosphere and the social and individual Universes of reference, we must learn to think 'transversally'. Just as monstrous and mutant algae invade the lagoon of Venice, so our television screens are populated, saturated, by 'degenerate' images and statements. In the field of social ecology, men like Donald Trump are permitted to proliferate freely, like another species of algae, taking over entire districts of New York and Atlantic City; he 'redevelops' by raising rents, thereby driving out tens of thousands of poor families, most of whom are condemned to homelessness, becoming the equivalent of the dead fish of environmental ecology. [3]

**IB:** Guattari offers a theoretical framework that has doubtless been important for the development of many contemporary artists – Tue Greenfort or Tomás Saraceno, for example, who in different ways critically explore and represent human behaviours in the social sphere. It has certainly been a key orientation for us in deciding how to frame this show. While we are quoting philosophers, let me throw in a passage from Slavoj Žižek which might bring us towards some kind of end.

So, back to the prospect of ecological catastrophe, why do we not act? It is too short to attribute our disbelief in the catastrophe to the impregnation of our mind by scientific ideology, which leads us to dismiss the sane concerns of our common reason, i.e., the gut sense that tells us that something is fundamentally wrong with the scientific-technological attitude. The problem is much deeper, it resides in the unreliability of our common sense itself which, habituated as it is to our ordinary life-world, finds it difficult really to accept that the flow of everyday reality can be perturbed. Our attitude here is that of the fetishist split: 'I know very well (that the global warming is a threat to the entire humanity), but nonetheless ... (I cannot really believe it). It is enough to look at my environs to which my mind is wired: the green grass and trees, the whistle of the wind, the rising of the sun ... can one really imagine that all this will be disturbed? You talk about the ozone hole – but no matter how much I look into the sky, I don't see it – all I see is the same sky, blue or grey!' [4]

I am convinced that a growing awareness of the urgency of change, together with necessary political long term planning and law-making (the British parliament is in the process of approving, with the support of all parties, a series of laws that will fix the minimum levels of reduction of CO2 emissions until 2020) will continue to transform our way of life. I think and hope that the interventions of artists can and will be relevant in this moment of transformation. Hopefully generations to come will be able to look back at our present as an absurdity. Our relationship to resources and energy will inevitably change, and art will change too.

**L:** For our final own proclamation allow us to recycle – like all good citizens with their tin cans – an observation by Shellenberger and Nordhaus. Two of the greatest achievement of mankind – landing on the moon and the invention of the internet – were only possible through an unprecedentedly massive and sustained investment from governments (the latter was developed as a military tool). No matter how great the will of individuals, these vast infrastructural revolutions could never have been achieved through voluntary cuts or goodwill gestures alone. The best thing that could happen in the coming years would be for governments to pump a vast amount of money and hard technological know-how into an arms race for the rapid development of clean affordable energy.

[1] Cited by Paulo Herkenhoff during the discussion 'A Cultural Cartography – Does Art Travel?', Frieze Talks, 14 October 2007.

[2] Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, The Athlone Press, 2000, p.52

[3] Guattari, op. cit. p.43

[4] Slavoj Žižek, *Censorship Today: Violence, or Ecology as a new opium for the masses*, part 2. [www.lacan.com/zizecology2.htm](http://www.lacan.com/zizecology2.htm)



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## Printed on **Shiro Alga Carta** 120 Gr.

'Each summer algae blooms in the Venice lagoon. And each summer we harvest the algae to combine with recycled mill paper and FSC fibre to create an extraordinary ecological paper called Alga Carta. This unique paper offers an innovative solution for protecting our fragile ecosystem. Its colours are inspired by the delicate tones of the Adriatic, and the presence of algae makes this the only paper to lighten and whiten with age! Be unique. Use Alga Carta.'

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*Land Mark (Footprints)*, 2001–2005,  
digital c-prints, 50,8 x 61 cm each.  
Courtesy the artists and Galerie  
Chantal Crousel, Paris

# JENNIFER ALLORA & GUILLERMO CALZADILLA

Allora born 1974, Philadelphia, US;  
Calzadilla born 1971, Havana, Cuba;  
live in San Juan, Puerto Rico

**Jennifer Allora** and **Guillermo Calzadilla**'s collaborative installations, photographs, sculptures, videos and public projects contest the seemingly incontestable power of official norms and values. Their work puts forth an understanding of protest in a broader context of what artist Krzysztof Wodiczko has termed 'proactive testing'. They have articulated that, 'for us the political dimension in a work of art lies in its endless propulsion of given norms and terminologies into a space of crisis. This happens through a state of permanent questioning.' [1]



Several of their recent works developed alongside the popular resistance movement on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques. In 1941, the US Navy took over about 70% of the territory on this tiny island and for sixty years, until 2003, conducted war games and bomb testing that resulted in toxic pollution and ecological damage. As documented in the photographs of *Land Mark (Footprints)* (2001–2005), Allora and Calzadilla worked in collaboration with various individuals and activist groups to make customized shoe soles etched with personalized images and messages. The shoes were worn by the participants as they walked in the off-limits militarized zone as an act of civil disobedience, leaving impressions in the sand.



*Under Discussion*, 2004–2005, video projection, 6'03". Courtesy the artists and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

Yet the photographs also serve to document the competing interests and motivations of the diverse group of individuals who came together for the common goal of stopping the bombing on the island. The images depict 'a composite of individual traces', each one effacing the next in the collective aim to mark their presence in this contested territory, which, though still contaminated and still debated, has since become a wildlife refuge under the protection of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The video *Under Discussion* (2005) shows a Viequense activist in an makeshift motor boat – made from an upturned conference table – touring the waters of this reclassified restricted area.

Allora and Calzadilla's Vieques artworks witness the 'death of environmentalism' while acting politically, breaking with the iconic standardisation of the earth as a realm of natural laws and organic harmony, in order to foreground antagonism. As Yates McKee has described, 'while purporting to restore the site's natural balance and protect it for future generations, the Department of the Interior makes a very special form of destruction and obliteration. In designating the site as exclusively "natural", it wipes out the memory of those who lived and worked there ... the issue is now how to engage in combat with a new regime of "environmentality"'. [2]

MA

[1] Wodiczko and Allora & Calzadilla cited in *Whitney Biennial 2006: Day For Night*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 2006, p.166. Artist text by Max Andrews.

[2] Translation from Yates McKee, 'L'art et les fins de l'écologie', *Vacarme*, no 34, winter 2006. [www.vacarme.eu.org/article547.html](http://www.vacarme.eu.org/article547.html)

## MATERIALI DI COSTRUZIONE DELL'EDIFICIO FONDAZIONE SANDRETTO RE REBAUDENGO

Calcestruzzo	8 663,42	tonnellate
Ghiaia	4 610,00	tonnellate
Cartongesso	448,81	tonnellate
Acciaio	305,46	tonnellate
Pietra di Lecce	280,04	tonnellate
Malta	104,60	tonnellate
Legno	41,45	tonnellate
Intonaco	39,72	tonnellate
Alluminio	22,60	tonnellate
Pittura	19,08	tonnellate
Vetro	17,67	tonnellate
Catrame	16,66	tonnellate
Plastica	16,29	tonnellate
Ceramica	8,75	tonnellate
Zinco	6,58	tonnellate
<b>Totale</b>	<b>14 601,13</b>	<b>tonnellate</b>

# LARA ALMARCEGUI

Born 1972, Zaragoza, Spain;  
lives in Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Lara Almarcegui's art is concerned with unplanned uses and material constituents of the urban fabric. Working with the persistence and meticulousness of an anthropologist of the present, or an archaeologist of our very recent past, she has – quite literally – weighed the evidence of the built environment and excavated its embedded layers. Almarcegui's works can be separated into four strands, each closely linked to the other: 'demolitions', 'removals', 'construction materials' and 'wastelands'.

An integral part of her practice is the production of guidebooks. Through the means of photographs, texts and maps, she has documented abandoned sites and neglected areas in Amsterdam (1999), São Paulo (2006), the Al Khan area of Sharjah (2007), and has recently completed the long-term project *Ruined Buildings in The Netherlands in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (2008). These publications comprise a historical, social and geographical record of forgotten structures and overlooked zones; they cherish sites which have defied consumption by development and design, yet remain vulnerable to wholesale transformation in the near future.







*A Wasteland, 2003–2007, (Rotterdam Harbour, 2003–2018; Genk, 2004–2014; Arganzuela Public Slaughterhouse, Madrid, 2005–2006; Peterson Paper Factory, Moss, 2006–2007), slides, slide projector and postcards. Courtesy the artist and Galería Pepe Cobo, Madrid*

The first of the artist's contributions to *Greenwashing* is a slide show with accompanying postcards that document four urban 'wastelands' (*A Wasteland, 2003-2007: Rotterdam Harbour, 2003-2018; Genk, 2004-2014; Arganzuela Public Slaughterhouse, Madrid, 2005-2006; Peterson Paper Factory, Moss, 2006-2007*). Each site has been, or continues to be, preserved in its unplanned state. Set up through often protracted periods of negotiation with councils and owners, these are designated interstitial, entropic sites where a very lack of planning is the only thing that has been planned and where unregulated change is encouraged. Seen within a discourse of environmentalist conservation, their commemoration problematise a privileged concept of nature as 'that which has not been sullied by humankind' and seems to ask us why some landscapes are deemed more remarkable than others.

Almarcegui's 'construction materials' works have included the placing of stacks of the constituent materials of a gallery within the same space (*Construction Materials of the Exhibition Room FRAC Bourgogne, 2003*), as well as the seemingly impossible task of working out the weight of all of the concrete, steel and glass that make up the megacity of São Paulo (*Construction Materials of São Paulo, 2006*). *Construction Materials of the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo (2008)* concludes the artist's precise calculations and measurements of the 'ingredients' that comprise the entire building which hosts *Greenwashing* in the form of an imposing wall-text list, as if an industrial recipe. Powerful in its simplicity, the work allows us to imagine the venue in geological time exactly as the sum of its parts, no more and no less than a temporary conglomeration of substance and energy.

MCL

## Il Sole

O sole di Viganella

Sole, sole, sole, sole ...

The Sun is life. We hope for the sun. We hope.

Sun, sun come to me the shepherd.

When there is no sun, there is no life. The sun gives life, with the spirals of the sun, with the rays of the sun. Our mayor is clever because he amplified the spiral of the sun that we did not have.

The sun what is it for us? It is a fountain of health, of happiness, of joy.

To me the sun is hope. We hope that they will realize this project.

The possibility of bringing the sun to Viganella even during the winter months is a project we have begun.

In the village of Viganella, in the Italian Alps, there is not one ray of sun which falls during the three months of winter.

There on the side of the mountain we want to put a mirror. It will reflect the sun onto the *piazza* of Viganella.

I am old. I am 88 years old. But before I die ... I do not want to die before I see the sun arrive here on the *piazza* of the sun.



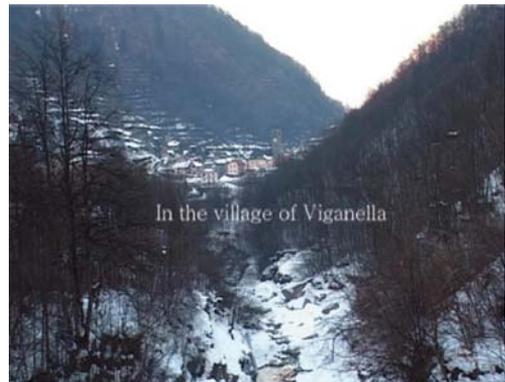
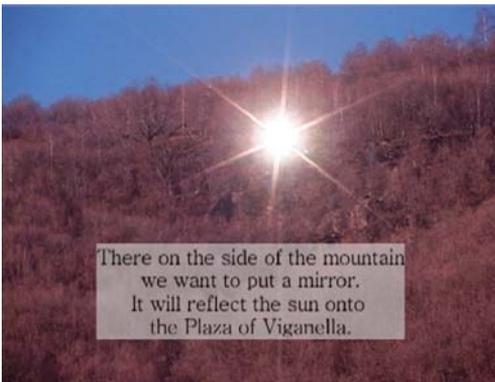
# MARIA THEREZA ALVES

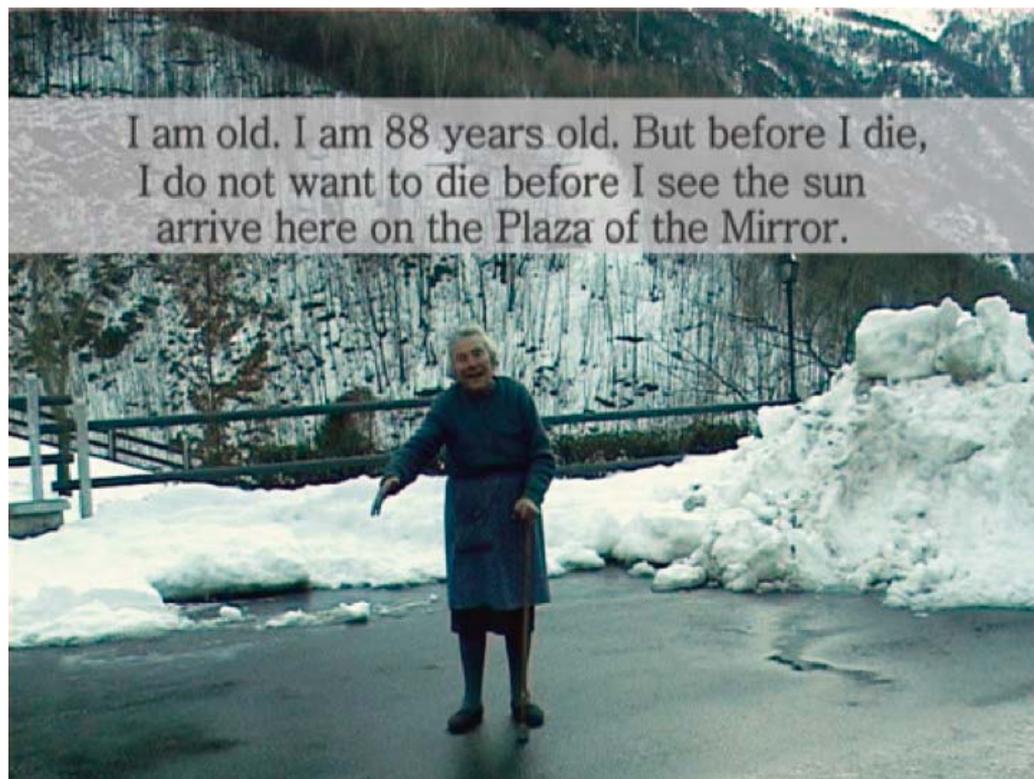
Born 1961, São Paulo, Brazil;  
lives in Rome, Italy

In recent years **Maria Thereza Alves**'s practice has focused on the phenomenon of ballast flora. In colonial times, earth and sand were put in the hulls of ships to keep the vessels upright during journeys when they were not carrying enough cargo. At the destination port the ballast material was often discarded on mudflats or used for paving roads. Foreign plants which have grown from seeds contained in such ballast dumps are often still apparent in English port cities such as Bristol and Liverpool – a floral record of the locations with which they traded. For her *Seeds of Change: Bristol* (2007) project, **Alves** studied the array of plants that germinated from dormant seeds at known ballast sites and was able to trace the routes of ships in relation to the history of slavery, migration and the merchant economy.



Her film *Il Sole* (2006) is also rooted in a consideration of the macro narratives embedded in micro locations and bringing to life that which was previously inhibited. It narrates the fable-like story of an initiative undertaken by the two hundred residents of Viganella, a village in the Piedmont region in the Italian Alps. The settlement lies in a steep valley and does not receive any direct sunlight between mid November and early February, when the people of Viganella finally celebrate the arrival of the sun with a festival. During the dark winter some of the residents were suffering from a medical condition known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) whereby the lack of sunshine reduces the production of the natural hormone melatonin and can produce symptoms of depression. The young population were leaving for brighter and more promising horizons, steel and manufacturing plants in the surrounding valleys were being forced to close and the community of Viganella was threatened with disappearance.





The film portrays the startling proposal by the former railwayman spearhead of the project, Mayor Pierfranco Midali, to artificially bring sunlight to the village by means of a giant mirror which would constantly follow the sun's path and reflect it onto the village square: *la piazza del sole*.

After years of deliberation and plight, press attention and protracted fundraising efforts, the project came to fruition in November 2006 thanks to the support of the province, the town hall and a private bank. [1] The computer-controlled mirror is 8 x 5 metres in size and is placed at a strategic angle on the south-facing slope on the mountainside above. [2] The project has made Viganella a unique place where technology has changed the climate for the benefit of its inhabitants.

**MCL**

[1] Since its conception the project has attracted press from Argentina to Japan and journalists have come from the BBC, French TV, Spanish radio, etc. As quoted in *La Repubblica*, Italy, 9 November 2006. [www.repubblica.it](http://www.repubblica.it)

[2] Further technicalities and documentation are detailed in the town's website: [www.comune.viganella.vb.it/ProgettoSpecchio](http://www.comune.viganella.vb.it/ProgettoSpecchio)



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*Light over Lemóniz (without shockwave)*,  
2000–2004, slide detail. Courtesy the artist  
and Isabella Bortolozzi Galerie, Berlin.  
Following page: *Light over Lemóniz*  
(*without shockwave*), 2000–2004,  
installation Kunsthalle Basel, 2007.  
Courtesy the artist and Isabella Bortolozzi  
Galerie, Berlin. Photo: Stefan Meier

# IBON ARANBERRI

Born 1969, Itziar, Spain;  
lives in Itziar, Spain



**Ibon Aranberri's** practice dissects the ideologies of landscape and its representations. Caves, mountains and forests – as well as urban public spaces and monuments – are questioned and confronted in his art, as the meanings and contradictions that have been projected onto them are researched, scrutinised and documented. His works are 'prospective archives as opposed to retrospective' ones: they gather the past in order to look into the future. [1]

Works such as *Dam-Dreams* (2004) – a group of traffic signs retrieved from land now flooded by a reservoir – and *Hydraulic Politics* (2005–ongoing) focus on the numerous large-scale water-engineering developments that characterised the public works programme carried out in Spain during the dictatorship of General Franco (1939–1975).

In 1972, with the central Franco government on its last legs, the construction of a nuclear power plant began at Lemóniz on the picturesque Basque coastline. Soon after, the plan encountered severe opposition with protests from ecologists, neighbouring residents and the artistic community – the late Basque sculptor Eduardo Chillida designed the logo for the protest movement. The building of the reactor was finally abandoned in 1984 following a convulsive series of terrorists attacks and kidnappings by the separatist group ETA in 1981, and today the site is a strictly-guarded atrocity of concrete – a contemporary ruin of atomic history.



Light over Lemóniz (without shockwave), 2000–2004, slides. Courtesy the artist and Isabella Bortolozzi Galerie, Berlin.

In 2000 **Aranberri** proposed a 20-minute firework display to take place nearby the station complex. A site of great significance as industrial heritage, and also important in its role in both political and collective memory, Lemóniz seemed to be a perfect counterpart to the cultural and economic boom triggered by another kind of Basque power station – the nearby Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, which was inaugurated with a huge pyrotechnic show in 1997. The millennium was ‘the year of commemorations and celebrations, of new beginnings’, **Aranberri** has written; ‘fireworks erase traces, unravel signs and cover repercussions. They reinforce the ephemeral and make it spectacular’. [2] After much deliberation, his proposal, like Lemóniz itself, was aborted. Iberdrola, the Spanish energy company that owns the site, refused to collaborate with **Aranberri** and **consonni**, the artistic production team.

*Light over Lemóniz* (2000–2004) emerged as the result of this process. It consists of a selection of eighty images presented as a slide projection: pictures from this story of political and ecological upheaval, maps, engineering plans, and graphics, as well as images of the terrain surrounding the power plant and the Guggenheim museum. **Aranberri** exposes the complex narratives activated by Lemóniz’s past, and the no-less conflicted future of nuclear’s claims to carbon-free energy despite the ‘not in my backyard’ responses that it invariably provokes.

**MCL**

[1] Miren Jaio: ‘Utopía, Entropía y después’ in *Ibon Aranberri. Wiro/Containment*, Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, June 2006, p.18

[2] Ibid. Quote from the artist. Email conversation with Peio Aguirre. ‘Driving a car is not the same as looking at the landscape’

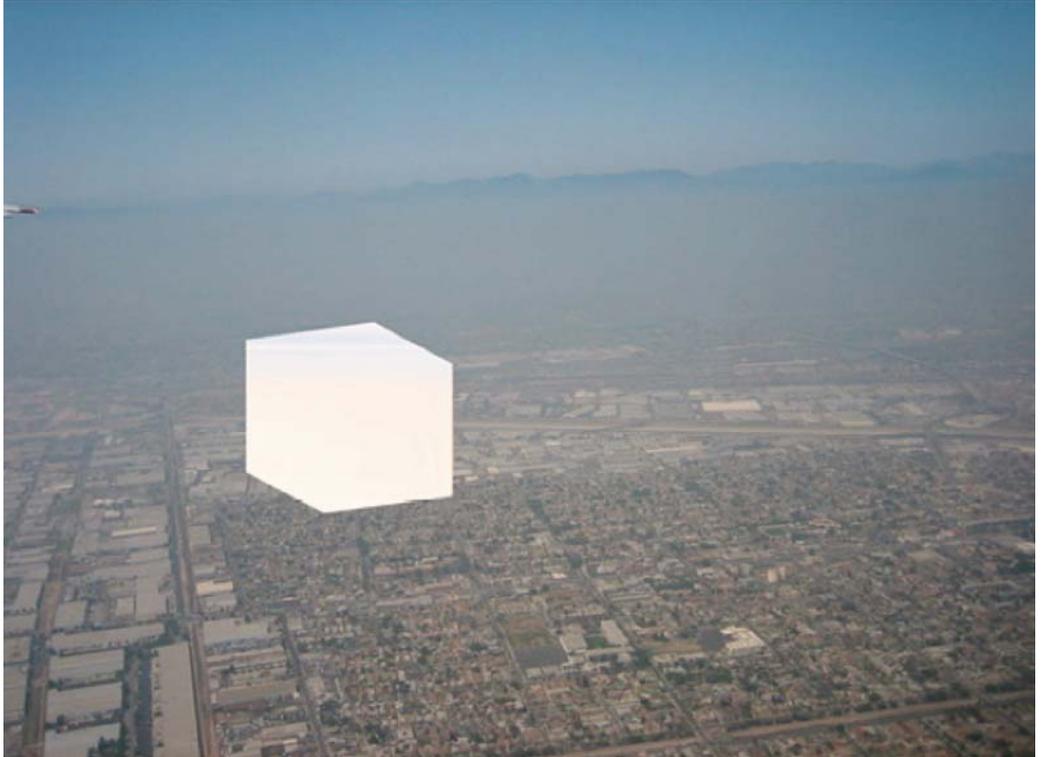


*Public Smog*, 2004–ongoing, project documentation, looping Flash animation, 22'. Courtesy the artist. Cloud images courtesy of NASA/GSFC/ LaRC/JPL, MISR Team ([www.visibleearth.nasa.gov](http://www.visibleearth.nasa.gov))

Public Smog has been made possible through the input and contributions of Dr. Alexandra Thompson, David Oppenheimer, Mark Van Soestbergen, Dr. David Pepper and Dr. Thomas Cahill (CO<sub>2</sub> Metrics), Josh On, and Kate Rich. Additional thanks to all who helped answer questions about the World Heritage List process, and to friendly and unfriendly emissions trading brokers, agencies, and administrative representatives involved with, or consulted during the research and trading process. Special thanks to Public Co. Trading partner Fiona Parry, the anonymous trader who helped purchase NO<sub>x</sub> in 2004, to the New York-based trader who attempted to assist with a trade in 2006 but was unable due to regulatory issues, and to the traders in Hungary who donated their time and waived their brokerage fees to execute EUA trades in 2006. An additional thank you to Rob Halperin, Ben Furstenberg, Fabienne Delpy-Adler, unnamed khat traders and chewers from Stepney Green, and the students on the MA Curating Contemporary Art course at the Royal College of Art, London (class of 2007). **Amy Balkin**

# AMY BALKIN

Born 1967, Baltimore, US;  
lives in San Francisco, US



**Amy Balkin's** practice examines how humans interact with their social and physical environment, often focussing on issues of speculation and public access to common resources. Her work has embraced audio tours, slide shows, lectures, installations, websites and research, and has involved collaborations with academics, community groups and activists. Started in 2001, *This is the Public Domain* follows her purchase of a small and unremarkable portion of land near Tehachapi, California, US, and her attempt to transfer it through legal process into an international commons which can be freely used by anybody. Effectively enacting a reversal of the Homestead Act (which encouraged expansion of the American frontier by selling off public land), *This is the Public Domain* questions proprietary definitions of territory and instead attempts to broaden the frontier for global public space in the light of the open source principles fostered by the internet.



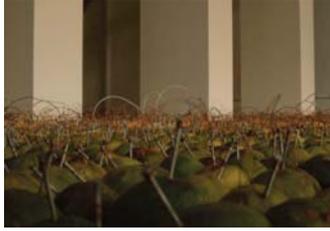
**Public Smog** (2004–ongoing) is a project that infiltrates the conflicted and intangible intersection of climate change, politics and economics. By purchasing carbon emissions credits that are available to polluting industries on the open market and putting them out of use, the artist created two clean air parks in the atmosphere. Fluctuating in precise location and scale, and remaining open as long as the offsets remained valid, one park existed over the coast of California through the state’s own greenhouse gas trading system. Another is currently open above the European Union until the end of 2008 thanks to Kyoto-protocol-standard carbon purchased through a broker in Hungary. ‘Public Smog makes you feel better’, ‘Public Smog will save the earth’, dryly states the digital slideshow that documents the project and promotes the use of the parks for events including ‘breathing or other self-directed activities’.



**Balkin's** ironic conceptual construction disputes the role of emissions' trading as a golden-bullet solution to the climate crisis, and is concerned with the monetizing and expropriation of the very air we breathe. 'As the politics of the atmosphere and the atmospherics of politics are currently so intertwined', she has written, 'it's important to consider the air as a political construct, legally and financially manipulated by polluting entities and nation-states, who continue to sabotage attempts to ameliorate climate change.' [1] Integral to the project is the artist's application to have the entire atmosphere declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In subverting the abstract mechanisms of turbo-capitalist transactions *pro bono publico*, the *Public Smog* enterprise proposes an atmospheric sublime where revolution is in the air: 'Whose sky? Our sky!' [2]

**MA**

[1] See [greenmuseum.org/c/aer/projects/public\\_smog/index.htm](http://greenmuseum.org/c/aer/projects/public_smog/index.htm) [2] Ibid.



*Beyond Pastoral*, 2007, installation at Exit Art, New York and video documentation. Following pages: *Beyond Pastoral (Shroud of Turin)*, 2008, photos, 51 x 92 cm each. Courtesy the artists



# THE BRUCE HIGH QUALITY FOUNDATION

Founded in 2004, based in New York, US

Recalling J. R. 'Bob' Dobbs and The SubGenius Foundation in its aphoristic mission statements, or the 1990s artist group Art Club 2000 in its critiques of cultural commodity, **The Bruce High Quality Foundation** is an art collective which aspires 'to invest the experience of public space with wonder, [and] to resurrect art history from the bowels of despair'. [1] 'The official arbiter of the estate of the late Bruce High Quality', the **BHQF** is dedicated to what it describes as the 'contemporary possibilities of social sculpture'. [2] Touching on themes such as gentrification and public space, satire and self-promotion, its activities have included reality TV, films, tableaux vivants, photography, protests, installations, merchandising and a production based on the musical *Cats*.







The **BHQF** has often ridiculed what it sees as hypocrisy. In 2000, British Petroleum changed its name to BP (Beyond Petroleum). [3] Recently named one of the 'ten worst' companies based on its human rights and environmental record, BP sported a new corporate identity formed around a yellow and green sunflower-like logo. The **BHQF's** installation for *Greenwashing*, titled *Beyond Pastoral (Shroud of Turin)* (2008) grows out of a project it initiated for an exhibition in New York in 2007. It consisted of a 1/5 scale model of the BP petrol station located opposite the gallery, underneath which thousands of lemons and limes were arranged on the floor in the form of the BP logo. Each fruit was wired with electrodes and together they generated enough electrical current to illuminate the model. [4]

What appeared at first to be an earnest demonstration of a viable and alternative energy source was soon undermined as the citruses inevitably rotted, posing a health hazard. It also became apparent that transporting the fruit had used hundreds of litres of fuel. Seemingly embroiling itself with a message that was as falsely virtuous as the clumsy eco-marketing which it ostensibly critiqued, the project now necessitated its own form of re-branding. The video element of the new installation shows the original context of the petrol station sculpture, its passage into decay and the removal of the noxious fruit, while two photographs depict before-and-after details of the lemons and limes. The **BHQF** exploits the power of faith, images and advertising in the new found religion of 'green' to further test the sustainability, credibility and authenticity of both corporate critique and supposedly miraculous technological promises. It seems to ask: how can both art and business go beyond the facile or false communication of green credentials? In the words of Bruce High Quality, 'These are good and tasteless times. Good and tasteless times call for provocative reflections and murderous predictions.' [5]

MA

[1] [www.thebrucehighqualityfoundation.com](http://www.thebrucehighqualityfoundation.com)

[2] Ibid.

[3] See [www.multinationalmonitor.org/mm2006/112006/mokhiber.html](http://www.multinationalmonitor.org/mm2006/112006/mokhiber.html)

[4] Organic power was a subject explored by Joseph Beuys in his multiple *Capri Battery*, 1985 – a lemon is the energy source for an attached yellow light bulb. The instructions with *Capri Battery* read 'Change battery every thousand hours'

[5] [www.thebrucehighqualityfoundation.com](http://www.thebrucehighqualityfoundation.com)



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*Green Water*, 2007, glass container  
and green liquid, 160 x 100 x 90 cm.  
Courtesy of the artist and Vitamin  
Creative Space, Guangzhou

# CHU YUN

Born 1977, Jiangxi, China;  
lives in Shenzhen, China

‘Art still inhabits the problems of globalisation’, **Chu Yun** has stated, ‘the image plays the same role in the domain of art as capital does in the economic and political domain.’ [1] Likewise, his works often pursue a counter investment in ‘invisible’ things – everyday, unremarkable objects and relations – and frequently operate within an emotive, incremental and personalised realm that is deliberately withdrawn from easy consumption. On the occasion of a commission for an automotive electronics facility in Huizhou, China, for example, the artist conceived the ‘parasitic’ installation *Love* (2005–2006). Trees were planted in pairs across the grounds of the factory complex, which were designed to impact the experience of the site and the people who worked there in an intentionally inconspicuous way. *Green Water* (2006) – a monumental human-sized glass tank of virescent liquid – meanwhile seems to demand an explanation of the presence of what looks like alarmingly polluted water, yet no such justification is forthcoming.



*Constellation* (2006) is an installation that also functions through the apparent effects of redundancy and obliqueness. A darkened room is filled with a host of electrical appliances and domestic devices whose operation is suspended or defective – the blinking green, red, yellow and orange lights which form a cluster of twinkling ‘stars’ signal their unheeded messages. The objects that make up this display are also fast approaching the status of technological relics. All of the devices – which include a mobile phone, fax, fan, washing machine, mp3 player, cassette recorder, VCR player, USB hub, computer and monitor – were purchased by the artist from a second-hand market, having outlived their primary usefulness. *Constellation* is a testament to the sheer pace and inbuilt obsolescence of the consumer goods market – where products are inherently uneconomic to repair, and new purchases are constantly stimulated. Somewhat ironically, it transforms the ubiquitous ‘Made in China’ product repertoire into an evocation of a timeless, celestial vista.



**Chu Yun's** work also inevitably brings to mind factors which are currently the subject of much debate regarding 'What can I do?' responses to climate change. The practice of leaving appliances, particularly televisions, on standby or 'sleep' mode is often attacked as an unnecessarily wasteful practice. In the UK alone it has been estimated that it accounts for two power stations' worth of electricity per year and results in the emission of almost a million tonnes of carbon dioxide. [2] Meanwhile, the assessment that China is currently constructing the equivalent of two power stations every week – another much cited statistic of our carbon-footprint-conscious times – is frequently indicted as a consequence of the West's exploitation of the country as a cheap manufacturing base for these very products. [3]

**MA**

[1] Chu Yun quoted in 'Cultural Evolution: Chinese Perspectives on Land, Art and Ecology. Parasitically Green: Vitamin Creative Space interviews Chu Yun' in Max Andrews (ed.), *Land, Art: A Cultural Ecology Handbook*, Royal Society of Arts / Arts Council England, 2006, p.177

[2] 'Stand by for an end to "sleep" buttons', Energy Saving Trust, Daily News, January 24, 2006, [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)

[3] See, for example, [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6769743.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6769743.stm)



# A CONSTRUCTED WORLD

Founded in 1993, based in Paris,  
France and Melbourne, Australia



**A Constructed World** is an Australian art collective consisting of **Jacqueline Riva** and **Geoff Lowe** that has been working internationally since the early 1990s. **ACW** devises projects and actions that are capable of dismantling and bringing to life contemporary artistic discourse, actively involving viewers who would normally remain mere spectators. **Riva** and **Lowe** start out from the premise that we all have the ability to interpret works of art without recourse to art critics, and we all have the right to ordain a work of art's success or failure. **ACW** thus formulates its work by constantly inventing new ways of involving people in discussions, performances and collaborations. These events lead to the creation of objects whose nature, as a result of their 'open' formulation, cannot be known beforehand even by the artists. This accordingly encourages the public to reconsider supposedly entrenched rules and to interact more freely in an art space than is usually possible in contemporary life.

For the *Greenwashing* exhibition, ACW is presenting a work that is composed of several parts – a new sculptural installation, *The Cone of Silence* (2008) that hosts workshops and publications for the public to consult; two paintings, a sculpture and a small burnt plastic globe; as well as four videos that take an ironic view of various issues concerning our environment. This is how Riva and Lowe have commented on the project: ‘We all know our habitat is under threat, the Club of Rome first published numerous articles on the subject, which left no room for doubt, way back in 1968. Pretending that something is uncertain when it isn’t has led to the difficult situation in which we find ourselves today. It’s as though ‘The Cone of Silence’ – a device used in an American television show in the 1960s – were being used by lobbyists and commentators to deliberately conceal what is known to be true about the state of the environment. Because of the echo it produces, people under the cone cannot hear each other clearly, while those who are outside can hear everything and have to tell those on the inside so they can communicate properly’. *The Cone of Silence’s* workshop consists of two sessions developed during the weekend prior to the opening of the exhibition, in order to create a debate about what people think, know – and what they are prepared to say – about ‘the environment’. The workshops are not an opportunity to find new information, but to provide moments of dialogue, interaction and discussion about complex and urgent issues.



*Explaining contemporary art to live eels*, 2004, video, 6'40"

Following page: *World Fire*, 2004, video, 1'35"

Courtesy of the artists



Underneath *The Cone of Silence* there is a table at which visitors are able to sit down and read publications which have been changed and reformulated in a critical and ironic manner. Working with a number of people, ACW transformed the 2007 'green issue' of *Vanity Fair* and a 2007 issue of *Time* on global warming, for example, into two unique editions that, with the addition of photos, collage and commentary, bring a critical edge to the pages. The public will also be offered other sources of information, including special essays written and collected by ACW, but also recommended by acquaintances and assistants. The artists want to show how, even though we are all more-or-less informed of the facts, and have precise and well-defined opinions about many environmental issues, we live as though we are a community surviving in a shared space of ignorance.

IB



*Egalité*, 2004, installation view at Le Grand Café, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Saint-Nazaire. Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City  
 Following pages: *Serie hidrocarburos*, 2007, detail of the installation: research documentation (book covered in chapopote, 14 photographs, magazine and newspaper clippings), magnifying glasses, 4 asphalt fragments, 2 chapopote fragments with sea incrustations, 1 fragment of concrete, objects covered in chapopote (8 model figures, diving helmet, mobile telephone, hemp reel, wooden stick, two plastic figures, stone, ceramic figure, pump), 7 pieces of solid chapopote, solidified dripping of chapopote. Table: 82 x 200 x 200 cm. Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City  
 Photo: Michel Zabé and Enrique Macias.

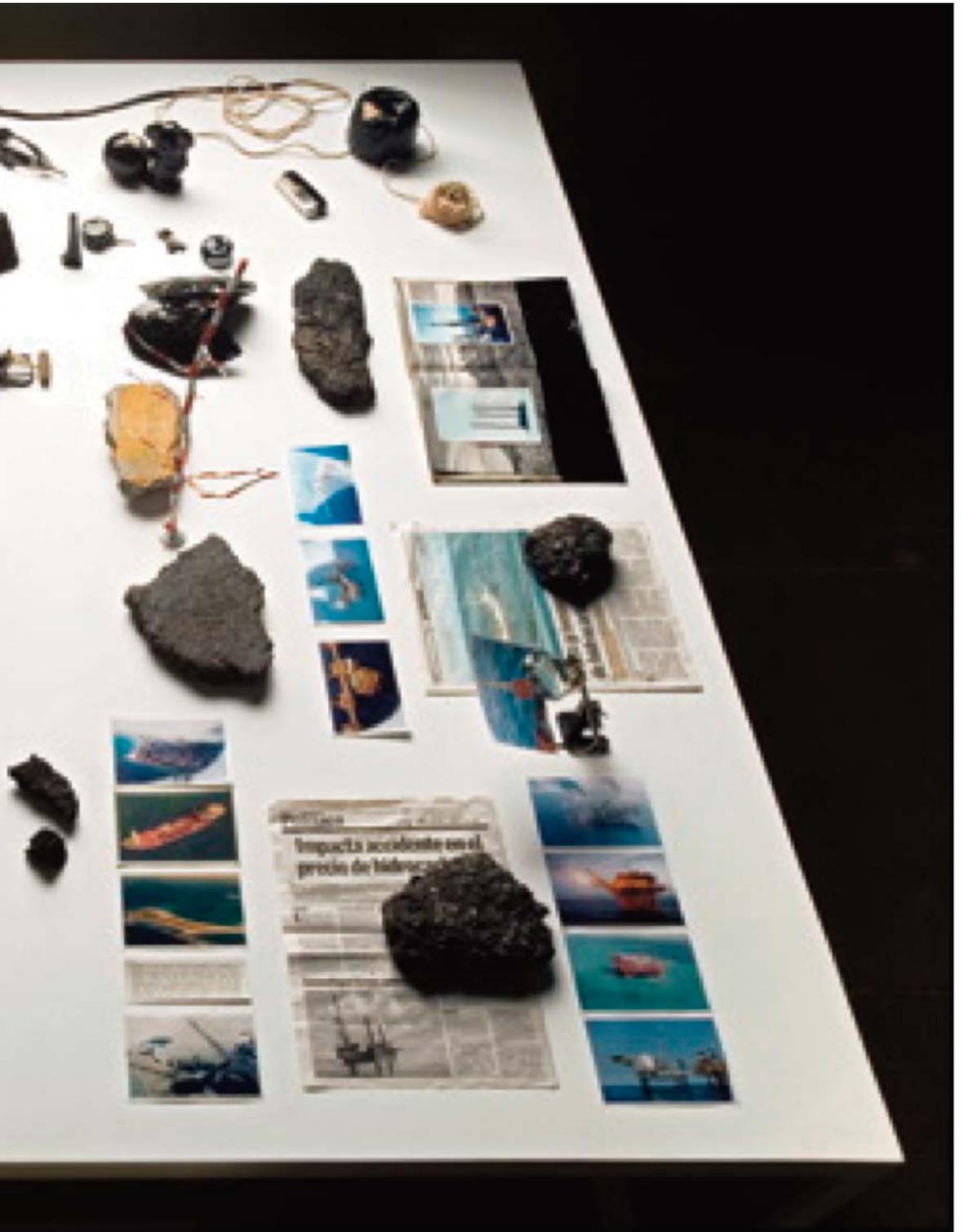
# MINERVA CUEVAS

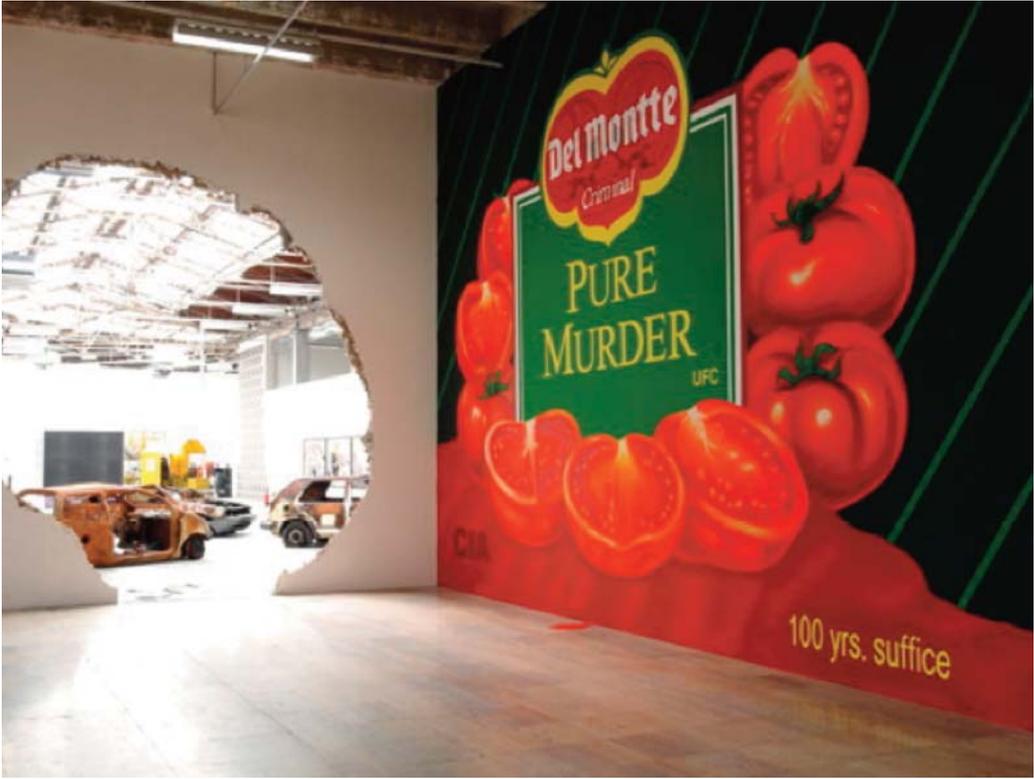
Born 1975 Mexico City, Mexico;  
lives in Mexico City, Mexico



The art of **Minerva Cuevas** has its roots in social activism that seeks to defend the public domain from exploitation and to empower individuals and communities. Consisting of actions, photographs, murals, sculptures, internet projects and videos, the artist's work has engaged themes including governance, piracy, colonialism, evolution, democracy, archeology and corporate strategy. The latter strand has interrogated the practices of multinational companies such as Nestlé, McDonalds, Shell and BASF. Her recent *Hydrocarbon Series* (2007) is a collection of artefacts and images that conceive oil and related substances across time through both natural and cultural manifestations. Plastic figures daubed in *chapopote*, a volcanic tar found in Mexico, for example, are arranged alongside mineral samples and articles about accidents on oil rigs.







*Del Monte*, 2003, acrylic paint on wall and diagram on paper, 500 x 600 cm. Courtesy the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City

**Del Montte** (2003) conflates references to the brutal regime of the former Guatemalan dictator Efraín Ríos Montt with the American fruit brand Del Monte. Comprising of a large wall painting that subverts the graphics of a Del Monte tomato paste label so that it reads 'Pure Murder', and a corresponding diagram that explains the background of each modified element, the work details the bloody history of economic colonization and land expropriation in Central America – fresh and wholesome food branding becomes mired in corruption and criminality.

**Égalité** (2003) also involves the sabotaging of a corporate graphic identity. Owned by the Danone group, Evian is probably the world's best-known 'luxury' bottled water. Considering that the global market for bottled water multiplied more than 1000 times in the last decade – its average price is more than that of petrol – Cuevas has modified the familiar blue and pink mountains design of the Evian label. [1] The brand's red lettering is replaced by 'Égalité' (equality), a word that is part of France's official motto, 'Liberté, égalité, fraternité' (Liberty, equality, fraternity) and is employed in a wall painting and on the labels of a palette of bottles. As if hacking into the software of a marketing message that is based on glacial purity, **Égalité** disrupts the conception of water as a high-end hydration and health commodity. The artist labels it instead as a common resource that should be available to all, simultaneously asking why affluent society demands to pay for something that comes almost freely from a tap.

**MA**

[1] See, for example, Johnny Davis, 'Would madam care to taste the cloud juice?', *The Observer*, 2 December 2007, [lifeandhealth.guardian.co.uk/food/story/0,,2219258,00.html](http://lifeandhealth.guardian.co.uk/food/story/0,,2219258,00.html); Lucy Siegle, 'It's just water, right? Wrong. Bottled water is set to be the latest battleground in the eco war', *The Observer*, 10 February 2008, [www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/feb/10/water.foodanddrink](http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/feb/10/water.foodanddrink)



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# ETTORE FAVINI

Born 1974, Cremona, Italy;  
lives in Cremona, Italy



The work of **Ettore Favini** often deals with issues concerning the habitat in which we live – a context that is constantly changing. The works he has made in recent years concentrate on topographic research that is designed to reclaim places in an attempt to reveal some of their preindustrial and premodern characteristics. In a recent public sculpture project (*Verdecuratoda*, 2006) for the Falchera housing estate in the suburbs of Turin – an area that was historically agricultural – **Favini** not only studied the territorial context but he also related it to the resident population, their everyday lives and aspirations. He attempted to provide a historical reinterpretation of the area by focusing on the links that exist with the past, its present life and its possible future. In the final work, he transformed a communal garden into a public orchard with fruit trees that are native to the region (pear, apple and damson trees) which can live ‘wild’ without the need for care or watering.

With his recent *Private View* (2007) installation in New York, Favini intervened in the temporary gardens found in the city's Lower East Side, which are threatened by real-estate development. The artist's aim was to represent, as he has described, 'a personal look at a fleeting image' in order to show how our surroundings are constantly in flux as a result of the fragility and instability of the present. The artist placed benches or chairs in the gardens in which he worked and the visitor could move these items of furniture around to create their own 'private view' and record 'a pleasurable memory of a green space that might not exist tomorrow', as the artist has put it. Through minimal intervention, Favini gave anyone the possibility to experience green space from a personal vantage point.



*The Revolution is Not Changing the World*,  
2008, engraving on glass, photograph,  
30 x 21 cm. Courtesy the artist and  
Galleria Alessandro de March, Milan

Over the past year Favini has been collecting the 'green' messages that are often used by international companies in ecological marketing campaigns, as well as activist slogans. These often include examples of 'greenwashing' and a scarcely ethical approach in which businesses and political bodies hide behind a seemingly positive image to distract attention from their dubious environmental responsibility. At the Fondazione, Favini is exhibiting a work on canvas (*Green is the Color of Money*, 2007), that illustrates a one-dollar bill with the slogan of the title written in block capitals. The artist also uses a symbol of contemporary capitalism (the American Express credit card logo) to focus attention on the strategic power that environmental issues have amassed in the globalised economic market today. The green background of the dollar note has been created by combining 'green' advertising texts – taken from newspapers, posters, invitations, banners, and so on. Placed together, out of context, like a series of pixels, the texts are even more ambiguous.

For the exhibition, the artist has also created T-shirts with 'green' and subverted slogans printed on them (*La vera rivoluzione è non cambiare il mondo* ['The real revolution is not changing the world'] and *We also harness Greenwash*), which will be worn by the gallery assistants for the duration of the exhibition. They thus becoming unwitting ambassadors for the conflicted messages of environmentalism. The fact that the words are read completely out of context makes them even more absurd and highlights the ineffectiveness and inaccuracy of much of today's environmental marketing.

IB



*Real Remnants of Fictive Wars I*, 2003, 35 mm film transferred to DVD, 19'20". Courtesy the artist and Cosmic Galerie, Paris. Following page: *Real Remnants of Fictive Wars IV*, 2004, 35 mm film transferred to DVD, 4'15". Courtesy the artist and Cosmic Galerie, Paris

# CYPRIEN GAILLARD

Born 1980, Paris, France;  
lives in Paris, France



**Cyprien Gaillard's** practice disputes the romantic understanding of 'nature' as something essentially harmonious, with which humans should be in balance. The very creation of our planet, for instance, was hardly an idyllic affair. Similarly, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, extinctions and destructive fires imply that 'nature' has always embraced violence, chaos, entropy and disharmony, even before human history. Likewise mankind has long engaged in practices – war, agriculture, hunting, and so on – that have disrupted the Earth's supposedly calm and 'natural' state.

The film *Desniansky Raion* (2007) is a dystopian portrait of urban gang clashes and equally brutal modern architecture. What seem like a 21st century Stonehenge are the 'megalithic' tower blocks of the suburbs of Paris, St Petersburg, Belgrade and Kiev, which for Gaillard echo 'the Medieval Age, its threatening and enclosing castles, its blind belief in the Church, its endless wars'. [1] The artist's sensitivity for ruins reactivates the artist Robert Smithson's consideration of entropy, the irreversible condition of a system's tendency toward deterioration and breakdown. Gaillard's work seems to actively cultivate entropic states, and he has 'accelerate[d] it if necessary (with fire extinguishers, cutting-down trees, etc.)', as he looks to 'achieve a renewed harmony by going to chaos'. [2]



*The New Picturesque (Bambiderstroff)*, 2007, acrylic and acrylic paint on canvas, 50 x 60 cm. Courtesy the artist and Cosmic Galerie, Paris. Following page: *Real Remnants of Fictive Wars IV*, 2004, 35 mm film transferred to DVD, 4'15". Courtesy the artist and Cosmic Galerie, Paris



In 2003 he began the series *Real Remnants of Fictive Wars*, which to date consists of six 35mm films varying in length from twenty to just a few minutes long. Seemingly tranquil landscapes in rural and urban environments (Paris suburbs, a railway tunnel of the Parisian *Petite Ceinture*, a forest in Auvergne, a lush jungle in Vietnam, the grounds of the 18th Century Château de Millemont) are suddenly bathed in white vaporous clouds expelled from industrial fire extinguishers. The most recent film, *Real Remnants of Fictive Wars VI* (2008), premiered in *Greenwashing*, 'erases' the iconic Land Art work *Spiral Jetty*, made by Smithson in 1970 at the edge of the Great Salt Lake, Utah, US. A similar gesture is manifested in the canvases of *The New Picturesque* (2007), a series of bucolic *vedute* analogous to paintings by masters such as Courbet, Poussin or Lorrain, which have been 'vandalised' with white paint. Beyond the do-good rules of environmental or artistic conservation, Gaillard's graffiti-like 'en plein air' pollution clouds 'redraw [the landscape] ... as if the cloud which had at one point annihilated it, brought it back to life, and gave it a deeper dimension.' [3]

MCL

[1] Interview between the artist and Edoardo Bonaspetti, *Mousse* no.9, Summer 2007, pp.27-31

[2] Op. cit.; and 'Nothing is really real', interview with the artist by Lillian Davies, *UOVO/13*, April-June 2007, p.248

[3] Op. cit. p.243



Production photo: *Untitled*, 2008, modified Eurobins (wheeled plastic waste / recycling containers) and Plexiglas. Courtesy the artist, Johann König, Berlin and Zero..., Milan. In collaboration with the Arts & Ecology programme, The Royal Society of Arts, London  
Following pages: *Diffuse entries*, 2007, liquid manure spreader, iron (III) chloride solution. Courtesy the artist and Johann König, Berlin. Photo: Roman Mensing / artdoc.de

# TUE GREENFORT

Born 1973, Holbæk, Denmark;  
lives in Berlin, Germany

**Tue Greenfort's** works develop in a non-linear manner, yet each new project seems to spring spontaneously from the previous one. His projects tackle issues that are urgent in our globalized society – agriculture, waste, industry, diversity, and so on. Over the last few years, his artistic reflections have focussed especially on pollution, recycling methods, and 'green' policy, frequently consisting of minimal interventions into already-existing processes. During the Sharjah Biennial he exhibited *Exceeding 2 Degrees* (2007), for which he obtained permission to raise the temperature by two degrees centigrade in one of the venues by turning down the air conditioning and consequently reducing the building's energy consumption. The artist deliberately referenced the so-called 'Stern Review' and the research that predicts that restricting the average global temperatures to just two degrees centigrade over the next fifty years is necessary to avert the worst effects of climate change. [1] **Greenfort** has said that 'nature is not something outside us, something that's beyond the city or beyond human activity. We are embedded in nature because we are living organisms as well, and each of our actions has an impact on, and is part of, so-called nature.' [2] His projects are accordingly marked by an interdisciplinary quality and an approach developed through careful, detailed research.







**Diffuse Entries**, presented at the Sculpture Projects Münster in 2007, was a one-of-a-kind fountain – a truck used for spreading liquid manure that continuously sprayed water from the artificially-created Lake Aasee back into the lake itself. The Aasee is subject to constant blooms of algae due to the phosphates from fertilizers and liquid manure which leach in from the surrounding farmland and its intensive livestock production (some 15,000 cows and 85,000 pigs in the region). Mimicking a practice already carried out by the local government in the Münster region, the artist mixed the water with a chemical solution that makes sediment sink, yet which makes the water only appear to be cleaner. For the artist, this work makes evident the numerous costly political attempts aimed at combating the results of pollution without ever attempting to intervene at source or deal with causes.

For **Greenwashing**, the artist again works within public space. Having modified three 1100 litre 'Eurobins' (wheeled street refuse containers) supplied by AMIAT, the municipal waste collection agency in the city of Turin, he located them at designated sites for bins in the streets around the Fondazione. The artist cut away and replaced the sides with sheets of transparent polycarbonate, thus making visible to everyone what the residents of the district are actually putting into the bins and perhaps revealing how regulations are ignored. In this way, citizens become actors in a reflection on waste, and the feasibility of recycling in large cities. **Greenfort's** project sparks a discussion on the power of art to change the world. The artist works in the belief that art has the ability to consider and pose delicate questions without having to be labeled politically.

**IB**

[1] *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change*, Nicholas Stern, October 2006. This was the first detailed report financed by a government, in this case the British parliament, written by an economist on the financial consequences of global warming. [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk)

[2] Tue Greenfort, interview with Francesca Pagliuca, *UOVO/14*, July-September 2007



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*Potlatch 6.1/The Happy Surrender,*  
2001–2004, cheese made of mother's  
milk, fridge, gauze. Courtesy the artist.

# NORMA JEANE

Born 1962, Los Angeles, US

**Norma Jeane** is a pseudonym whose significance indicates something of the poetics of the present artist. Taken from the real name of Marilyn Monroe, who died in Los Angeles on the same day that the artist was born, this borrowing immediately complicates the matter of authorship. **Norma Jeane's** works deal with contrasting situations – natural conditions, emotional reactions – and propose unstable experiences that are at the limits of paradox. The artist creates installations, events, and actions that produce, disperse and transform energy through experiments and situations that manipulate and force situations beyond human control.

The artist chooses to deal with the sense of loss and confusion in contemporary society, recovering materials and languages that have mutated during the process of technological evolution. According to **Norma Jeane**, modernity has taken us away from an original state and has caused a process of alienation between humans and their own bodies, between which there is now only minimal communication. Paradoxically, the artist chooses to represent this feeling of dispersion and anxiety precisely with means and languages borrowed from science and advanced technology.





Central to this artist's work is the role man has developed within his environment. Yet rather than being limited to representing natural phenomena, **Norma Jeane** is more interested in representing them artificially so as to create short circuits that transform their interpretation. In the work *Potlach 6.1 – The Happy Surrender* (2001–2004), the artist created a small cheese using only human breast milk: an attempt to point out the often absurd differentiation between man and other animal species, and the dictatorship of humans through biotechnologies, from artificial insemination to cloning. The work creates a disjuncture between the worlds of humans and animals. It seems to ask: if we can raise, eat, and clone animals, then why not produce human cheese?



*Potlach 11.1 / The Dead End Strategy*, 2007, seeds, plants, mud from Turin drainage system and river beds, artificial lights, irrigation system. Installation view 2007 Lyon Biennale. In collaboration with the microbiologist Dr Giusto Giovanetti (CCS Aosta) and SMAT, Turin. Courtesy the artist

For the *Greenwashing* exhibition, Norma Jeane is showing the installation *Potlach 11.2 / The Bonfire of Vanities* (2008), which consists of a bed of plants installed in industrial pallets in the garden surrounding the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, an extension of a project originally created for the 2007 Lyon Biennale. The wild growth – representing the ‘vitalistic plethora of nature’ as the artist has put it – parallels the desire of humans to constantly expand and survive at any cost. In Lyon, the installation (*Potlach 11.1 / The Dead End Strategy*, 2007) was sited indoors, supported by artificially supplied water and light, and was therefore destined to die. In Turin, however, the work is transplanted outside into a more ‘natural’ context, exposed to inclement weather, contamination, and so on. The plant bed was created in collaboration with the microbiologist Giusto Giovanetti using the same soil as in Lyon, produced by the company SMAT from mud from the Turin’s water purification system, microbiologically treated to make it less toxic. The vastest possible selection of ‘tame’ plants have been chosen and are continually nurtured to keep the bed alive and in a constant state of blooming transformation. Metaphorically, the image could be considered of a fireplace constantly fed with wood. The title, *The Bonfire of Vanities*, refers to the 1987 Tom Wolfe novel that was in turn inspired by the public burning of sinful objects that was staged in Florence in 1497 by the Dominican monk Girolamo Savonarola. Both references attempt to call attention to the energy dispersed in the collision between hedonism (or human ambition) and the reality of natural needs.

FC



*Chomskian Abstract*, 2007, video projection, 41'48". Courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London

# CORNELIA PARKER

Born 1965, Cheshire, UK;  
lives in London, UK

**Cornelia Parker's** work centres on the hidden life of materials, the invisible dimension of the physical world, and the unconsciousness of objects. Her projects have been both minimal and grand; they can be restricted to appropriated objects already dense with references, or they can be expansive and spectacular installations. Parker's abundant works are the result of processes that are frequently destructive – some involuntary, some triggered by the artist – that shed light on the complex relationship between nature and culture, between physical laws and human intervention.

*Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View* (1991) is a three-dimensional reconstruction of a garden shed that the artist arranged to have blown apart with explosives by the British army. The fragments of the blast are suspended from the ceiling and illuminated to dramatic effect. A sense of fear, bomb threats, and the urgency of globalized conflict – which the artist identifies as a typical condition of modernity – are here evoked as well as surpassed through the creation of a new form emerging from the explosive detritus. The notion of destruction returns in *Heart of Darkness* (2004), an installation created with charred wood from a forest fire in Florida, US. Started by the national park service as a routine forestry management practice, the fire burned out of control in this case and annihilated thousands of acres of woodland.

Recently **Parker** has turned her attention to what she defines as a 'quieter apocalypse': the phenomenon of global warming and the threat that by the end of this century the planet might no longer be able to sustain human life. *Chomskian Abstract* is a video interview conducted by **Parker** with Noam Chomsky, the eminent professor of linguistics who is a key figure in political life in the US. Although an important member of the academic establishment, Chomsky could be defined as an activist who is particularly critical of the US's international policies. On invitation from the artist, Chomsky analyses the failures of governments, corporations, institutions and the media to confront the risks of imminent environmental collapse. The need for greater responsibility, for a change in our lifestyles and national socio-economic policies appears, for Chomsky, the only way to avert disaster. The artist has edited her questions out of the video, leaving empty moments in their place. During these silences, in which Chomsky is paused in freeze frame, his expression is motionless and disturbed, reinforcing the unease created by his words. A sense of expectation is at the centre of *Killing Time* (2007), another work by **Parker** with an ecological theme. Four synchronized videos show images of tourists armed with cameras and video recorders, ready to record an unseen event. The videos were made on four consecutive days in Yellowstone National Park during which people wait for the appearance of the famous geyser Old Faithful. This information is excluded from the narration, however, and the result is an anxiety-inducing work related to an unidentified and impending event.

IC

**Professor Noam Chomsky responding to questions asked by Cornelia Parker at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, March 9th 2007. (Edited transcript)**

**Cornelia Parker:**

**Noam Chomsky:** Not just so much of the developed world but the American population, which has also been clamoring for action. In fact, support for, say, the Kyoto protocol, is so overwhelming that a majority of Bush voters thought that he supported it, because it's such an obvious thing to support. But there's a huge gap in the United States between public policy and public opinion ... and not just on this issue – on a huge range of issues – so public opinion is pretty much excluded from influence on policy. As a result, even the very strong support for the public does not enter into policy choices, on this or other issues.

As far as the Bush Administration is concerned, their position is the familiar one of corporate executives – which is the sector of the population that they represent, in effect. If you're a CEO of a corporation you don't pay much attention to what's going to happen five years from now. You pay attention to the bottom line in the next quarter ... that's going to determine your salary, your prestige, the power of your corporation, and so on. If it turns out that the world is going to collapse five years from now, that's somebody else's business.

Governments reflect the interests of their populations, to some extent at least ... And people, of course, would like a world for their grandchildren to live in – so therefore they have different points of view. But the very same individual as a State manager and as a human being may make very different choices. You can see this when people drop out of office and they come at the world from a different point of view.

There are many such conflicts. I mean, even though the Government is extremely closely linked to major corporations, in particular energy corporations (so the Bush Administration practically comes out of the energy sector) – even though there's a very tight linkage, there are conflicts – striking conflicts – when the same individual, say Dick Cheney, is representing corporate interests or State interests – and sometimes it's almost comical. Just to give a minor example ... or, pick a major example, which illustrates it ... take an impending war with Iran. Corporations aren't in favor of it; the population's overwhelmingly opposed; the energy corporations would be pleased to enter into Iran and exploit its oil resources – but the US Government won't allow them because it has a State interest. The State interest goes back to a standard Mafia-style of international affairs ... the Godfather does not accept disobedience; it has to be punished.

And, in 1979, Iran was disobedient. They overthrew a US-imposed tyrant, who was a centerpiece of US power in the region and, what's more, they even put some American hostages diplomats in prison ... so then all of US-Iranian history, which was horrible, is eliminated – and we've got to punish the Iranians for that. The US immediately started supporting Saddam Hussein's war against Iran, went on with harsh sanctions ... and the energy corporations can't break through that, even though the Administration comes straight from that sector. In fact, there are even more dramatic cases ... take, say, Cuba. The US has been punishing Cuba (or Cubans, not Cuba – the people of Cuba) for 45 years because of what internal documents call 'successful defiance' – their successful defiance of US policies going back to the Monroe Doctrine, the Godfather does not accept that. Successful defiance is intolerable. People have to be

punished to ensure that they overthrow the Government that is defying the master. The population of the United States – large majorities – want to establish diplomatic relations with Cuba ... end the embargo, end the terror, and so on and so forth – it's been true for decades.

A lot of the business world wants to do the same thing – they see market opportunities – and, particularly interesting, is the oil companies ... Texas oil companies, (George Bush's background) want to exploit offshore Cuban oil. US Government, which comes right out of that sector, won't allow them to do it. Sometimes it reaches comic proportions. About a year ago, there was a meeting in Mexico between Cuban energy officials and Texas oil company executives (including some of the bigger ones, like Exxon Mobil). Washington discovered that it was being held in a Sheraton Hotel, which is owned in the United States, and they ordered the hotel to throw them out. Now, here you have George Bush and his friends coming out of the Texas oil industry, you have their friends – the Texas oil industry – trying to reduce US dependency on foreign oil by exploiting closer oil ... but, in his capacity (whoever makes the decisions) ... in their capacity as State Executives, the US is perfectly willing to shoot themselves in the foot to prevent use of oil nearby, to harm their constituency, in order to ensure that successful defiance will not be tolerated. Now, any Mafia Don will understand this. And those kinds of conflicts exist.

In the case of the global warming, for the real constituency of the Bush Administration, the energy corporations, multi-nationals and so on ... they don't care that much what happens. In their capacity in those institutions it doesn't matter if their grandchildren don't have a world to live in. Of course, when they go home, it does matter. But people act differently in institutional frameworks.

**CP:**

**NC:** Yes, he's correct – but it's far more general. Take, say, lead ... it was known that lead was poisonous by the early 1920s. It took 50 years in the United States before you could get some legislation to protect children from dying from lead poisoning. It was done ... but the facts were known ... companies were keeping a lot of it secret, but most of it was known. 50 years. Take tobacco it has never been technically criminalized. But there are now measures, which make it difficult for children to smoke. It's been known for decades that tobacco is far more lethal than hard drugs – incomparably more lethal – but the major corporations and the media, which go along with them, have held it back. Now take, say, Europe – I read recently, in an article, a book by Hugh O'Shaughnessy a British journalist, that the European Union subsidy for tobacco industries is greater than the amount of money that the European Union provides for alternative crops for people growing coca. That's supposed to be one of the ways to stop drug production – provide them with alternative crops. They get less money for that than the British tobacco companies, and the others, get for poisoning people at a level far beyond that of hard drugs. Well, you know, those are the short-term calculations of people whose institutional role is to maximize profit, market share and power ... whatever they may think – you know, move outside, they may be the nicest people in the world ...

I remember once, when the Butcher of Lyon was captured – Klaus Barbie – finally captured ... He had worked for the Nazis and then the Americans picked him up. He was doing exactly the same work for the Americans and they finally spirited him off to Latin America – he was becoming embarrassing ... but he was finally picked up and he was

taken to France – he was going to be tried. I happened to be listening to the, I think it was probably the National public radio. They had an interview with his daughter. She said she didn't believe any of the charges against him because he was the nicest father in the world and he was very loving, took care of everybody ... a sweet guy, and so on ... which I think is probably perfectly true. You can be one thing at home and you can be something else in an institutional role. You can be destroying the world in your institutional role – consciously – and loving your children at home.

Case after case of poison and destruction and so on has this property. The same is true of what you began with – Apocalypse Soon – which was not my phrase; it was Robert McNamara's ... so when a sober or serious analyst warns of apocalypse soon, it is correct. Unlike climate change ... we may be past the point when we can solve it ... maybe mitigate it, but something bad's going to happen ... In the case of nuclear war, which is far more dangerous – I mean, that terminates the species – we know what to do, how to solve it ... I mean, it's not a mystery, the solution is understood but it's just not interesting, so we'll take the chance, the serious chance, of apocalypse soon or 'Armageddon of our own making' as Senator Sam Nunn put it, because it's more important to be able to shake our fist at people.

**CP:**

**NC:** If you take an Economics course, they teach you that a market, a consumer market, is based on informed consumers making rational choices. Right? Then you have rational choice theory and you go on from there. Well, have you ever turned on a television set? Yes, I suppose so. You've seen an advertisement ... let's say, for an automobile or a lifestyle drug or toothpaste. I mean, is the advertisement

giving you information about the product? No. I mean, if they were giving information about the ... if they're trying to have informed consumers they'd say here's specification for model so-and-so next year. Instead, it's doing exactly what Adam Smith said is the job of business: to delude and oppress the public. He was correct. The goal of business is to delude and oppress the public. And they delude the public by not telling you what this automobile is but having a beautiful actress, say, sitting on top of it ... or climbing up some impossible mountain, or something like that. Business is spending hundreds of millions of dollars a year to undermine the threat of markets with informed consumers making rational choices. They want uninformed consumers to make irrational choices. And, on top of that, they want to fabricate consumers – create 'wants' – as the business literature points out.

So, at either end, we don't really have market systems – and it goes on ... I mean, take what's called 'trade'. It's largely an economist's myth. I mean, in the old Soviet Union, if something was produced – if parts were produced – in Leningrad then send to Bulgaria for assembly and then the automobile was sold in Poland, it crossed borders but we didn't call it trade – it was all within a command economy. Well, when General Motors produces parts in Indiana, sends them to Mexico for assembly and sells them in California, we call it trade in both directions – but it's internal to a command economy. It's not trade in any meaningful sense – and it's certainly not free trade. In fact, free trade is the last thing that States want. If you take a phrase like North American Free Trade Agreement, the only accurate words in it are 'North American'. It wasn't an agreement either, if people count as part of their countries, because most people were against it. You just have to decode an awful lot of mythology before you can even talk about these questions.

**CP:**

**NC:** Oh, I think so. In fact, it's ... the fact that consumption is sort of the goal of life was manufactured – consciously. If you go back to the business literature in the 1920s, and ever since in an increasing scale, it was recognized that we must turn (I'm almost quoting) focus people on the superficial things of life – like fashionable consumption. If we don't do that, they're going to get involved in the political system ... and we don't want that. What was happening in, roughly, the 1920's, is that, in the most free countries of the world – Britain and the United States – enough freedom had been won so that it was becoming impossible for the State to control people by force, in the old way. You were getting parliamentary Labor parties, women were getting the right to vote, and the vulgar masses were getting involved in running their own affairs – which cannot be tolerated. You couldn't control them by force. That's when conceptions like manufacturing consent, or fabricating consumers, and engineering of consent, were developed. That's when the public relations industry developed ... in the freest countries – in the United States and Britain. And its main goal was to create consumerism, first of all, because it's profitable, but also, because it's anti-democratic. Invariably the main goal of business, and other elites, is to undermine democracy – which is regarded as very threatening.

Actually, I should say that elections in the United States are now run the same way that commodities are sold – and by the same institutions, so it's not accidental. So you undermine markets by creating uninformed consumers making irrational choices – and the same public relations institutions, when they run elections (look at the ads), try to do the same thing: keep away from issues; present imagery, delusion; and so on.

You don't want people to pay attention to issues because, on issues, the public disagrees enormously with the two factions of the business party. So keep issues out of it. People don't know the stands of the candidate on issues. You focus on whether he's a nice guy, you'd like to meet him at a bar, does Hillary Clinton have too much of a sex problem or ... I don't know, whatever it may be – but those are the things you focus on, just take a look at the newspapers or television ... and it's very much like undermining markets. But this came in the free societies as a result of the victory of struggles to attain democracy, which is frightening, it has to be beaten back. Consumerism is, to a large extent, created by conscious effort ... but that means it's fragile – and it is. And, there are large sectors of society that just don't want it. They want to live a decent lifestyle, not have every imaginable gadget you can have in your home.

Can that develop? Yep, sure – these are cultural changes that can certainly develop. It's never easy to do these things ... but, of course, there are no major institutions backing it. It has to be done through popular action. And, at a higher level, at a State level, it has to be done by co-operation with the oil producers and the oil consumers. Actually, I'm sure you know, when Hugo Chávez appeared at the United Nations there was tremendous ridicule of his outrageous speech. He actually gave a very sensible speech at the Security Council, at the General Assembly I guess, which I don't think was ever reported. His speech started by saying exactly this point ... he said we are facing an environmental crisis – the oil producers, like my country, and the oil consumers, like many of the others gathered here, have to co-operate to deal with this crisis which will require carrying out significant socio-economic changes ... changing the nature of the world order – the way we live and so on –

so that we can reduce and maybe end the use of petroleum for production of energy, and use it for more healthy things ... and find other ways to live. And he went on with a number of constructive suggestions. Well that, as far as I can recall, didn't even get reported. It's much more interesting to report him calling Bush a devil ...

**CP:**

**NC:** Nobody can predict the future of technology, so it makes good sense to explore technological solutions to things like environmental problems but, of course, you can't have faith in them. And you can be pretty confident that any technological solution that comes along will have negative side effects as well, which will have to be balanced. Nothing comes free. If history's any guide – history of science, too – there is not going to be a magic solution.

It was thought at one point that nuclear power would be a magic solution. It was quickly discovered that there are very harmful negative effects. And it's very likely that that'll be true of any kind of technology that's developed. The cosmos is a complex system, any way you manipulate it, something else is going to happen that you hadn't thought about. So, yes, every such effort should be pursued, if they make any sense, but with recognition that, at the core of the problem is serious socio-economic and cultural changes. We just have to live in other ways, not like the ones that we have been driven to live in. There's nothing natural, nothing in human nature, that forces people to work 20 hours a day to accumulate as many commodities as they can stuff into their house. I mean, that's an imposed lifestyle – which has some attraction otherwise people wouldn't accept it ... but it certainly doesn't have to be the one that's followed. I mean, I can give you personal stories about things like this, but ... It requires a change.

And these changes can take place. The result of the 1960s – the activism of the 60s – did have a big effect on this, and it did make the societies much more civilized. That's one of the reasons that it's called 'the time of troubles'. It was making the countries too civilized. It's dangerous – and too democratic. But one of the effects was simply on lifestyle. So, during the late 1970s and the 1980s, you know, this was sort of reaching, becoming ingrained in large parts of the public. There was a very ... and, you know, I don't know the figures for Europe, but in the United States there was a steady decline among younger people in use of tobacco, red meat, coffee, marijuana (which is less dangerous), but things that really are dangerous, just declined sharply. There was no legislation that said to not smoke tobacco, 'don't eat red meat' – it was just a change in lifestyle; people wanted to be more healthy, more activity: go to the gym, jog, whatever it may be. Well, you know, these are changes in culture and lifestyle which, to some extent, separate people from the / their culture of consumption and distraction ... By no means are they all like this. At the same time in the United States general health was declining. So, actually, height – which is a fairly good measure of health – is declining in the United States. The genes are pretty much all the same. But the tallest people are the Dutch or the Germans and not the Americans, they're shorter – you notice it when you go to the airport in Frankfurt and there are these six-foot tall women. It's just reflections of changes in lifestyle ... probably even in hours of work. Hours of work have declined in Europe, gone up in the United States – and that has health effects. The things that they measure, say, GDP per capita, is going up less in Europe I suppose, because people are choosing a different lifestyle. They're choosing to have a couple of weeks off instead of copying a Japanese salary man who has to be taught what leisure is.

**CP:**

**NC:** There is a cultural fear that goes way back in American history, right from the beginning. You see it in popular literature and, in more recent times, in movies and television. It's been well studied. A kind of a constant theme in the popular culture has been that we're on the verge of destruction – somebody is about to destroy us – and, at the last minute, a super-hero comes, or great technologists invent a super-weapon, and it saves us. That's a theme that's run through for centuries.

A sub-theme is that the enemy that's going to destroy us is someone we're destroying. So, it's the native population that is going to come up wipe us out. Or it's the black slaves ... they're just waiting for a chance to come and murder all the whites and rape the white women and so on. Or, later, it's the Chinese – you think they're here to run laundries but it's really those millions of Chinese that are coming in here and infiltrating, and they're going to take us over and destroy us. I mean, progressive writers like Jack London, a century ago, were writing that we have to destroy everyone in China by bacteriological warfare to prevent their insidious aim of doing this to us. Later ... the Second World War – it was quite striking – it was the Huns, of course, and the Japs ... But the Huns were treated (who were much more ... as criminals, they were by degrees of magnitude, much worse) they were treated pretty calmly – this much I can remember – I mean, after all, they're blond and blue-eyed and white-skinned, they can't be that bad ... The Japanese, on the other hand, were just vermin – they had to be crushed and wiped out and ... You can read the public literature – 'we have to wipe

out their ant heaps' and they're 'scurrying around like vermin' and so on and so forth. But they're going to destroy us unless we destroy them first, so we've got to destroy them. And then, through the Cold War, you pick up one enemy after another: the Red Chinese, the Vietnamese, the Hispanic narco traffickers, whatever they may be ... Iran, today, is going to come and destroy us. How? Well, nobody's very clear – but somehow Iran will destroy us. Or maybe Cuba will destroy us. It can be the most minimal enemy. I mean, Ronald Reagan – who must be the most cowardly thug in history, now venerated after a huge PR campaign ... In 1985, he declared a national emergency in the United States because of the threat to the security of the United States posed by the Government of Nicaragua, which had troops only two days away from Harlingen, Texas. So, you know, Nicaragua's going to come any minute now and just overwhelm us. If you look at it from the outside, you don't know whether to laugh or cry. But this is a constant theme and it usually ... it's sort of a steady sort of current – you know, which can always be stimulated when needed by cynical leaders with usual public relations techniques. When they decided they wanted to attack Iraq, they have Condoleezza Rice talking about the next time we hear from Saddam Hussein it'll be a mushroom cloud in New York – and everybody's terrified, and so on. And it can be whipped up into fear and paranoia, and it's very real.

It's an unfortunate feature of the culture – a strange culture in many ways – and part of it may be related to the fact that it's an extremely Fundamentalist society, and it's always been by far the most Fundamentalist country

among the industrialized societies, maybe in the world. Two centuries ago, in the early days of the republic, there was a huge wave of Fundamentalist fanaticism about how we've got to quickly convert the whole world to speak English and save their souls ... and the Second Coming, and so on. And it goes on and on like that. There's another one in the 1950s. There are several in the 19th – 20th Century. Right now, about a third of the population, probably, believes it doesn't matter what we do about global warming, say, because Jesus is coming – pretty soon, you know – and so if there's global warming, what's the difference? It's because God wants it – and He's coming soon, anyway, and those of us who are saved will rise to heaven and everyone else will be massacred – and it'll be wonderful.

In fact, when you look at even narrower positions like the incredible support for Israel, no matter what it does ... and part of that is based on the fact that about a same third of the population, roughly, thinks we must support anything Israel does because that – in fact, even if it leads to, say, nuclear war – it's great, because that's how we read the book of Revelations, Armageddon, and so on and so forth, and then the Second Coming takes care of it all. There's a deep element of anti-Semitism in this because the Jews are all going to get massacred unless they convert. But the Jewish community and the State of Israel supports – in fact, even have ... missions to it because they like what they're getting in the short term, even if they all get wiped out after Armageddon. These are strong elements in the society.

They're there in Europe, to a lesser extent – and there are other ones, that are worse, in Europe. But the propaganda – the State propaganda, the business propaganda – does play on these fears. I mean – take, say, Germany. Look, Germany in the 1920s / early 30s was the peak of Western civilization – the absolute peak – in the sciences, in the arts, literature ... American political scientists regarded it as a model for democracy, and, within about three years, it was turned into a country of savage barbarians who'd carry out the worst crimes in history. And we're always right at the edge.

In fact, we're doing it right now and we don't notice it. Let's stick to the invasion of Iraq – and one of the first things that Rumsfeld, Cheney and Wolfowitz did was wipe out the origins of Western civilization: such as the Sumerian sites, the majority of them destroyed; The Military base in Babylon; The National Museum, looted. You know – these are the riches of the origins of Western civilization. That's why the Iraqis regarded it just like the Mongol invasion. But it gets much worse. Yesterday, in the papers, you read that there was a suicide bomb in Mutanabi Street, which is important in Middle East culture. That was the centre of bookstores, literary cafés, and lively discussion in Iraq – which was in some respects the most advanced country in the Arab world. It survived right through the Saddam period ... with debates, discussions – kind of like the Left Bank, you know, probably more advanced – but that's Mutanabi Street. Well, it was practically destroyed last year – but the final blow was the suicide bombing a couple of days' ago. Well, one of the newspapers quoted

somebody there who, they say, in reverential tones repeated a well-known Arab proverb: Cairo writes, Beirut publishes, Iraq reads. OK – Iraq's not reading – we took care of that, from the Sumerians up to the present. But Cairo's still writing – so, if we can get out of our cocoons and become civilized, we can read with the writing in Cairo ... which is, for example, that, during the US-Israeli bombing of Lebanon (which is US-Israeli – I say it because that's what it was), they specifically targeted the cultural areas in Beirut. They wiped out centers of publishing; they wiped out some of the places where the bookstores are – because you must destroy the culture. We really are barbarians. We must destroy the cultures of the countries we are attacking. So now Cairo can still write but Beirut can't publish as much and Iraq can't read – and, just to make sure, we went all the way back to the Sumerians. Yes, it's a barbaric, savage culture that we live in.

This doesn't mean anything in the West. OK, so we wipe out the history of Western civilization – modern culture, who cares? But it does mean something in other parts of the world, and we can't comprehend it ... and then you ask, 'Well, why do they hate us?' These are factors that have to be taken into account. We have to learn enough to understand what things mean to people in the world. Maybe we're too uncivilized to see them. It doesn't mean they don't.



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*Marte in Gaia e Cosimo, 2007,*  
installation: compressors, sandblasting  
guns, peeling plaster, electronic system,  
timer, sensors, stands. Courtesy Galleria  
Zero..., Milan. Photo: Agostino Osio  
Following pages: *Cristal, 2005, installation:*  
fertilizers, hydraulic system, bread,  
wood, Plexiglas, water. Courtesy the  
artist and Galleria Zero..., Milan

# JORGE PERIS

Born 1969, Alzira, Spain;  
lives in Madrid, Spain



Following in the footsteps of artists such as Gordon Matta-Clark and Robert Smithson, **Jorge Peris** creates often violent and unpredictable site-specific works which focus on spatial transformation. His practice often takes the form of actions that trigger physical and chemical reactions which escape the artist's control. The instability of his installations establishes a confounding experiential and emotional relationship with the space they inhabit – the artist seems to use chaos in order to reconcile natural and artificial realms.

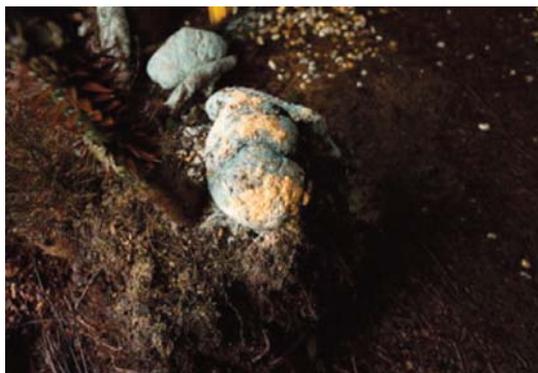






Peris does not attempt to control and direct matter. On the contrary, he is fascinated by metamorphoses and, through his works, he endeavours to bring out the beauty, power and energy of such processes. Jets of water, particles of dust blown at great speed, and walls covered in mould are the expressive means that the artist uses to transform, erode and destroy, thereby creating the most alluring installations.

The installation *Allegra sin gravedad en el Atlántico (Euriloco y Foucault en análisis)* (2007) was a particularly significant work for the artist. Peris created an elision of life and death which referred to Homer's *Odyssey* (specifically when Eurylochus finds Ulysses sowing corn in salt water, pretending to be mad in order to escape the war) and Michel Foucault's concept of the panopticon (the museum for which the installation was created was originally a prison). Peris salvaged a large number of plants that were clinically 'terminal' and installed them in conditions of absolute control. He created an infernal greenhouse in which the plants were constantly sprayed with scalding seawater heated up in a Jacuzzi whirlpool. The plants, which were already dead or dying, became momentarily resuscitated in the extreme conditions due to the nutritious organic elements in the water, yet the salt gradually solidified them into saline sculptures. Through its 'pointless' waste of energy, the work suggested the frustrations of man in his attempt to transform the biological destiny of the planet.



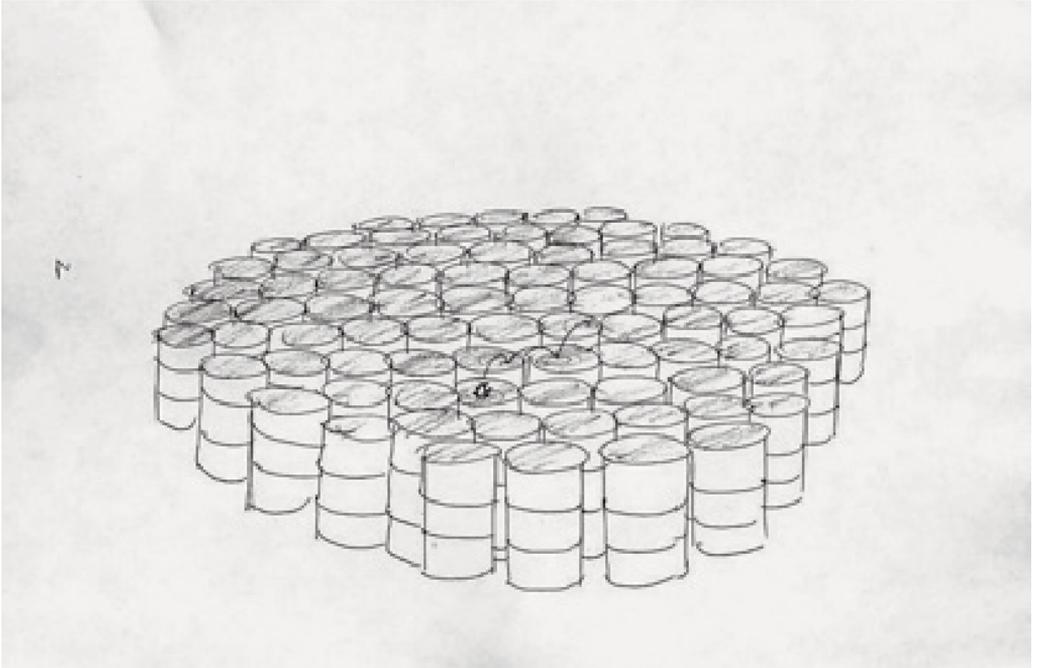
For *Greenwashing*, Peris is creating a new on-site installation at the Fondazione entitled *Fairy* (2008). Taking over an entire room, the artist's work completely covers the walls and ceiling with slabs of grey clay, which are used as a sculptural material. Peris thus transforms the rigid architectural confines of the museum into a natural, almost organic form that seems to have a life of its own. To prevent the clay from drying out and cracking, the artist keeps the room constantly humidified with a series of industrial vaporisers. The sculpting and casting process is conceived in reverse as modelling by the artist creates a mould of the space that contains it. The room becomes no longer simply a container of art, but rather a work of living art itself. The minimalist architecture of the Fondazione is turned into something more like a humid cave in which time and atmospheric conditions are allowed to gain the upper hand, and human control is defied. When one enters the space, it seems as if some apocalyptic event has consumed the museum – it is like discovering a town covered in mud after a hurricane, perhaps. We feel like archaeologists of the future looking at the traces of a submerged world.

IB



# WILFREDO PRIETO

Born 1978, Sancti-Spiritus, Cuba;  
lives in Havana, Cuba and  
Barcelona, Spain



**Wilfredo Prieto's** practice fuses critique and serious intent with a calculatedly exaggerated sense of the absurd. His works have frequently been composed of situations in which circuitous and laughably overblown mechanisms are employed to achieve comparatively straightforward actions. In 2003, for example, he employed a tanker truck and a mobile electrical generator parked on the street outside a gallery in order to give light and water to a small potted plant inside (*Mucho Ruido y Pocas Nueces*). His exploration of a 'purposeless' art which can be rapidly visually absorbed, yet whose possible value can take time to be realised, has also long been concerned with organic objects. He has established and tended to a plot of banana trees in the name of sculpture (*Untitled (200 Banana Trees)*, 1998–2002), 'ripened' mangoes by painting fruit on a tree (*Optical Art*, 1999) and taken a house plant for a ride in a wheelbarrow around the island of Curaçao (*Paseo*, 2000).

The artist's most visible contribution to *Greenwashing* is *Estanque* (2007), a new sculpture in which a congregation of crude oil barrels have seemingly been transformed into an idyllic, 'eco-friendly' lily pond habitat with the addition of water puddles and a live frog. Though the oil barrel is not commonly part of our everyday surroundings as a physical object, it has a familiar significance as the standard unit of volume for the production and consumption of petroleum, and as such, it is often cast as a symbol of all of the ills of fossil-fuel dependency. Furthermore, the price of a barrel is a global index of macroeconomic conditions, geopolitical stability, and the fundamentals of energy supply-and-demand. [1]



*Paseo*, 2000, ornamental plant, earth and wheelbarrow. Courtesy the artist and NoguerasBlanchard, Barcelona

The environment that **Prieto** has created by converting the petroleum containers is no more 'natural' than the oil itself – which is, after all, an organic substance. Yet the sculpture inevitably suggests the prospect of eco-advertising, as if its graphic visual summary of apparent amphibian-petroleum harmony could perfectly lend itself to an audacious company marketing department in a bid to demonstrate their 'green' industrial principles. [2]

As with many of his works, *Estanque* – and a companion piece which visitors might encounter unannounced – can be read against the context of **Prieto's** native Cuba. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, the US tightened its trade embargo and oil imports into Cuba virtually dried up overnight. This compelled Cubans to return to agricultural and transportation technologies that would have been used by their grandparents: horses, oxen and bicycles, for example. Though the effects of the post-Soviet 'Special Period' were harsh (the country lost 80 percent of its export market, there were frequent power blackouts and the average calorie intake of citizens dropped by a third), there have been considerable long-term ecological benefits as energy-saving transit systems, community gardening and renewable energy projects have flourished in recent years. [3]

MA

[1] According to the 2007 CIA World Factbook, in Italy the equivalent of 32.1 barrels of oil are used each day for every 1000 people – or 11.7 barrels per person per year. The figure for the US is roughly double this estimate, and for Cuba, roughly half.

[2] The connection to a recent Ford Motor Company campaign is irresistible: the well-known character Kermit the Frog appears pedalling on a bicycle singing his 1970 song 'Bein' Green', before he spots a Ford Escape Hybrid in a verdant wood, 'I guess it is easy being green', Kermit declares. See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKotANcNVyo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKotANcNVyo)

[3] See, for example, Megan Quinn, 'The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil', February 25, 2006, [globalpublicmedia.com/articles/657](http://globalpublicmedia.com/articles/657).



# RAF / REDUCE ART FLIGHTS

Initiated 2007

**RAF** is a campaign which upholds that the art world – artists, curators, critics, gallerists, collectors, museum directors, etc. – could or should diminish its use of aeroplanes. It was initiated by the artist Gustav Metzger (born 1926, Nuremberg, Germany; lives in London, UK). [1] The **RAF** acronym deliberately echoes the Royal Air Force – the aerial warfare branch of the British military – as well as the militant left-wing group known as the Red Army Faction. The campaign had been mooted by Metzger for a year or so, before being realized as a mass-produced leaflet on the occasion of the artist's participation in Sculpture Projects Münster in 2007. This leaflet was based on a 1942 Royal Air Force poster that detailed the aerial bombardment of Germany during the Second World War. The project conjoins the historical memory of airborne destruction (Münster was among several cities devastated by air-raids), with Metzger's 'ongoing and endless opposition to capitalism' and his 'objection to the massive commercial growth of the art industry' exemplified by the unprecedented art tourism of the 2007 'Grand Tour' (the coincidence of the 52nd Venice Biennial; the five-yearly Documenta 12, Kassel; and the once-a-decade Sculpture Projects Münster itself). [2]

**R**EDUCE  
**A**RT  
**F**LIGHTS

**TORINO**

**28.02.2008**

**WWW.REDUCEARTFLIGHTS.COM**

The **RAF** initiative is neither a work of art, nor an idea over which Metzger claims ownership or leadership. The curators of **Greenwashing** were however guided by the artist's advice concerning how the campaign could be extended on the occasion of the exhibition. 'RAF Torino' consists of the printing of a new version of the leaflet, made available in the galleries and inserted into international mailings in connection with the exhibition, and the distribution and attempted implementation of its inherent request to 'consider forms of travel and transportation other than flying' in the process of **Greenwashing's** organisation. [3] A website ([www.reduceartflights.com](http://www.reduceartflights.com)) has also been established.

Leafleting is one of the most elementary forms of campaigning and propaganda. Somewhat ironically in this context, among its most effective applications in the last century has been through the deployment of aeroplanes to drop leaflets as a form of psychological warfare. The plea to 'Reduce Art Flights' – however viable or compelling it may be – does not attempt to address practical means to alleviate art world aviation itself. Instead, Metzger suggests the 'reduce, reuse, recycle' mantra of environmentalism be transformed and integrated into a more radical spectrum of consideration of humanity's destructive potential. With full cognisance that it is 'a drop in the ocean', the **RAF** 'manifesto' nevertheless invites voluntary abandonment – a fundamental, personal, bodily rejection of technological instrumentalisation and a vehement refusal to participate in the mobility increasingly endemic to the globalised art system. [4]

**MA**

[1] 'At last year's Art Basel I felt that something should or could be done in relation to the flights, both of artists and gallery people, and the transportation of works of art.' Gustav Metzger quoted in Mark Godfrey, 'Protest and Survive', *Frieze*, Issue 108, Jun-Aug 2007

[3] Gustav Metzger, telephone conversation with Max Andrews, 1 November, 2007.

[4] Gustav Metzger quoted in Mark Godfrey, op. cit.

[2] Ibid.



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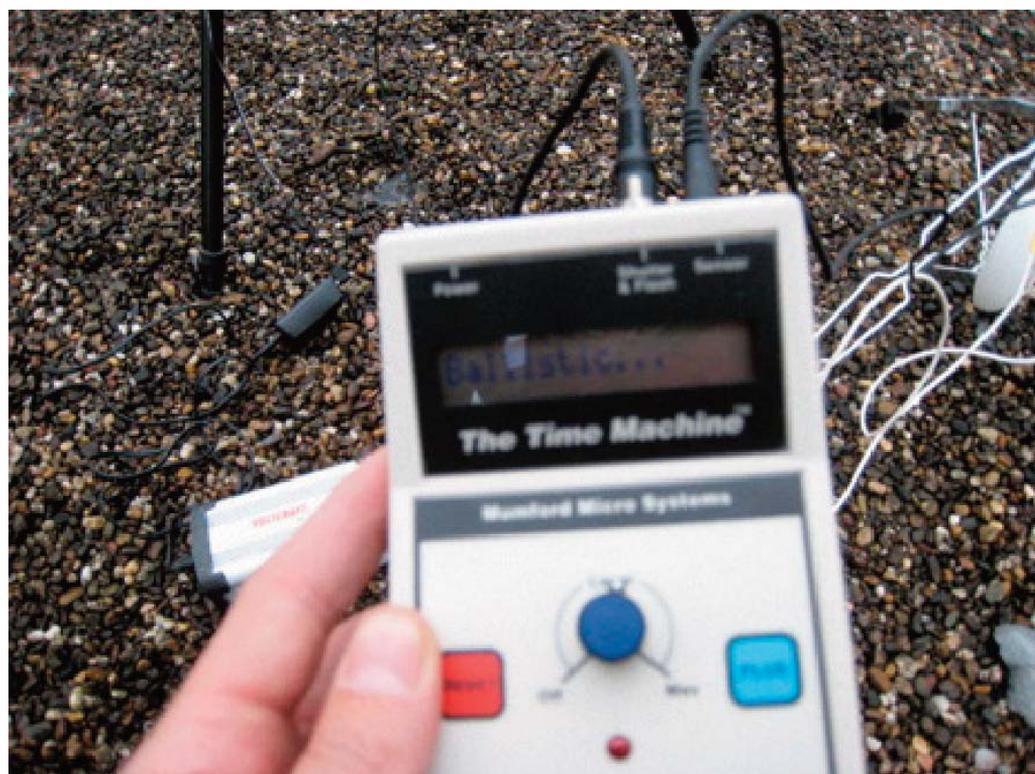




# TOMÁS SARACENO

Born 1973, San Miguel de Tucumán, Argentina; lives in Frankfurt, Germany

The works of **Tomás Saraceno** give life to spatial poetics, social dynamics and a revolutionary system of thought. His visionary videos and installations anticipate a new form of natural and socio-cultural development inspired by the 'ecosophy' of Félix Guattari (a fusion of three ecological registers: environmental, mental and social). **Saraceno** works like a 21st century Leonardo da Vinci, searching for innovative materials and self-sufficient systems that could be models for life in the future. His works present a reality in which the individual citizen has the opportunity to choose an alternative to absurd, egotistical global policies.









At the centre of his research is the air – a free, extra-national space that, for the artist, should be accessible to all human beings. For **Saraceno**, the sky is a real and inhabitable space and is the preferred site for future flying cities that migrate like accumulations of clouds in constant flux above continents and seas. Born out of his passionate political vision and supported by cutting-edge scientific research, the artist has been working on his expansive ***Air-Port-City*** project since 2006 by producing designs, sculptural prototypes and experiments. This work is based on the premise of enabling a migration to these flying cities – places that would not be governed by national legislation but, like airports, would be covered by international law.

Aimed at avoiding environmental catastrophe, ***Air-Port-City*** seeks a feasible future through an innovative housing proposal. These zero impact city-airports would exist on inflatable airborne structures that float around with the wind and would be powered by the sun. The ***Air-Port-City*** project is not a utopian one but a kinetic reality that is capable of bringing about a revolution in the concept of nationality and the exchange of information – a new form of freedom for the individual as a world citizen.



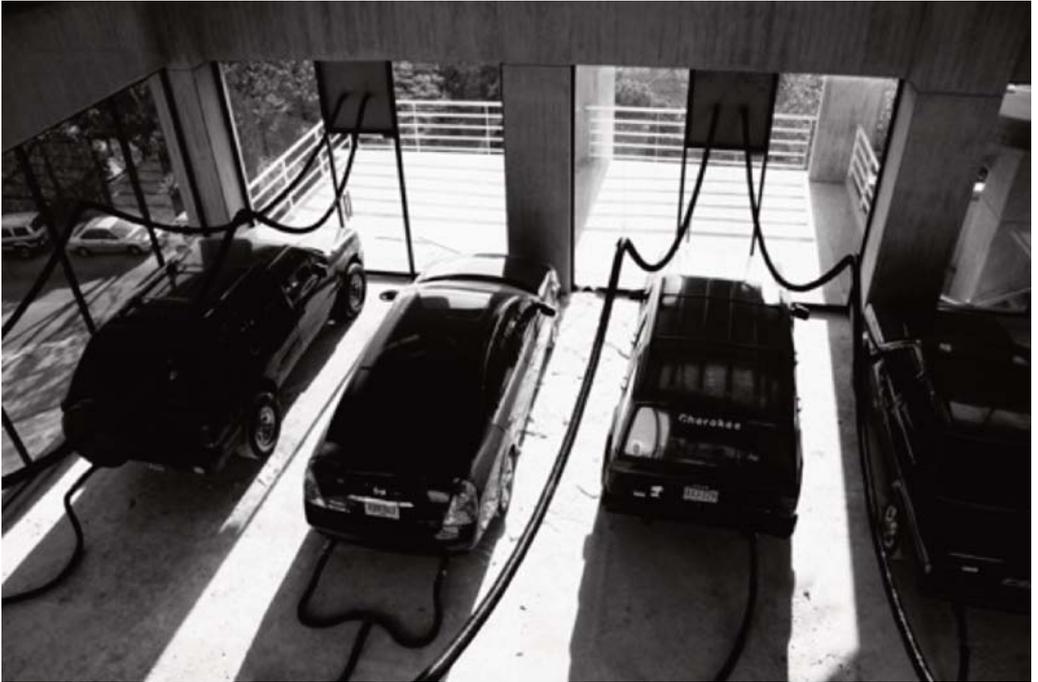
For the exhibition, Saraceno presents a new work, *Immagine-movimento* (2008), a photographic series-cum-film that captures the movement of clouds against a backdrop of snow-covered mountains. The artist designed a wind-powered camera: a sensor activated by a propeller indicated the speed of the wind, variations of which automatically took a number of shots based on the speed of the movement of the air. Through the propeller the wind also supplied enough energy to power the camera. If there was no wind, only single photographs were taken. When the wind blew, a sequence of images was captured as if the device was a video camera, creating the effect of spatial-temporal acceleration. Because the wind on the ground was different from that blowing three-to-six miles above the earth – where clouds are typically found – the number of frames taken did not necessarily reflect the speed of movement. In order to operate, the wind camera needed a set condition to last over time: if the wind failed to blow at a set speed for a long enough period, it could not record movement. The camera's exposure meter also determined the speed of the shot: even in situations with constant wind, if the light was low, the image sequence was slowed down. On entering the space where the video is presented, we are immersed in a panorama of clouds and lose our terrestrial spatial coordinates – floating and suspended above the world we become hypothetical citizens of one Saraceno's airborne cities.

IB

Opposite and following pages:  
***FOUR BLACK VEHICLES WITH THE ENGINE  
RUNNING INSIDE AN ART GALLERY,  
Sala Mendoza, Caracas, Venezuela.  
February, 2007. Courtesy the artist  
and Lisson Gallery, London***

# SANTIAGO SIERRA

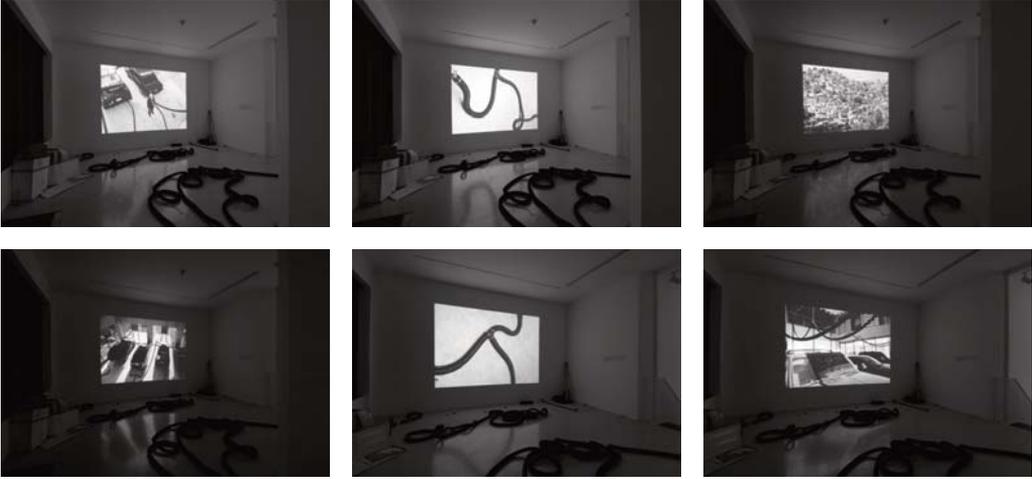
Born 1966, Madrid, Spain;  
lives Mexico City, Mexico



**Santiago Sierra's** oeuvre consists of a wealth of critical operations that are uncompromising, incisive and are undertaken with no 'anaesthetics'. Borrowing from the aesthetics of Performance, Conceptual and Minimal art, **Sierra** has often directed controversial situations, as evidenced by titles including *250 CM LINE TATTOOED ON SIX PAID PEOPLE* (1999); *3 PEOPLE PAID TO LAY STILL INSIDE 3 BOXES DURING A PARTY* (2000) or the recent *21 ANTHROPOMETRIC MODULES MADE FROM HUMAN FAECES BY PEOPLE OF SULABH INTERNATIONAL* (2005–2007). Such descriptive titles often reduce to a bare minimum the complex set of social and ethical problems that confront the viewers of **Sierra's** works.







*FOUR BLACK VEHICLES WITH THE ENGINE RUNNING INSIDE AN ART GALLERY, Sala Mendoza, Caracas, Venezuela. February 2007, installation view 'Santiago Sierra – New Works', Lisson Gallery, London, 2007–2008. Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery, London. Photos: Ken Adlard*

A number of 'difficult' themes run throughout his practice: exploitation, poverty, guilt, gender difference, domination, violence, torture, pollution and economics, to mention only a few. His work can be uncomfortable to behold and at times it can seem pointless or cruel, absurd or monotonous – both to the viewer and to those who participate in it. But so, one could argue, are the conditions to which the artist refers.

In 2006, Sierra produced *245 m3*, in which an art centre and former synagogue in Pulheim, Germany, was filled with car exhaust fumes. Visitors entered the venue wearing gas masks; the press soon caricatured the work as a tasteless reference to Holocaust gas chambers and the exhibition was shut down. The artist wanted to instigate a discussion around pollution, poisoning and carbon emissions – divisive headline-grabbing subjects in themselves. As with Gustav Metzger's recently realised *Stockholm, June (Phase 1) (1972–2007)* – in which 120 cars had their exhaust pipes connected to a central transparent cube – Sierra makes pollution visible in order to provoke a discussion about contamination and our petrol-dependant economy.

**TWO BLACK VEHICLES WITH THE ENGINE RUNNING INSIDE AN ART GALLERY** was originally staged in Caracas, Venezuela, in 2007 with four cars. For *Greenwashing*, two black 'bureaucratic-looking' Alfa Romeos (Alfa is a Turin-based car manufacturer) run continuously in the galleries during the first three days of the exhibition. The smoke from their engines is diverted through pipes to the exterior of the venue. The emissions here are not contained or easily discernable, but are instead dispersed into the environment of an industrial city famous for its automobile heritage. Metzger has pinpointed possible responses to **TWO BLACK VEHICLES...** in a proposal for one of his own works: 'We must face a contradiction. Wherever the work is to be placed ... it will lead to a considerable increase in pollution ... we can expect reactions to the "waste" involved, the cars merely standing there, the amount of fuel used up. Again we can respond by questioning the value of the "normal" use of the car.' [1]

**MCL**

[1] Gustav Metzger, 'Earth minus Environment', 1992, reprinted in *Gustav Metzger and Sabine Breitwieser, Gustav Metzger History History*, Hatje Cantz, 2005, p.272.



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# SIMON STARLING

Born 1967, Epsom, UK;  
lives in Copenhagen, Denmark

Process and exchange, balance and circularity are at the core of **Simon Starling's** often-convoluted installations, objects and photographs. His practice implicates a network of interconnections and transformations that have mapped ecological and economic systems, historical and scientific legacies, as well as references to modernist design and the Arts & Crafts movement.

*C.A.M. Crassulacean Acid Metabolism* (2005) consists of four functioning cast iron radiators, made in the shape of cacti, which are connected to a boiler with copper piping. It takes its title from a biochemical pathway that is a complex variation of photosynthesis, whereby some plants – typically inhabitants of the driest arid regions – acquire carbon dioxide during the hours of darkness. Cacti and other succulent plants can thus minimize eco-physiological stress and water loss from their leaves by avoiding gas exchange during the hot part of the day. The highly energy efficient cactus has long fascinated **Starling** – desert species were integral to his *Kakteenhaus* (2002) and *Tabernas Desert Run* (2004), for example. The latter involved a hydrogen fuel cell powered bicycle which the artist used to cross a desert in Andalusia, Spain. The only emission from the vehicle was the pure water that **Starling** then used to make a painting of an *Opuntia* cactus. *C.A.M.*, however, acknowledges the prudence of the succulent plants' 'design' through their literal re-casting as contrastingly inefficient manmade devices: the absurd radiators that expel heat into the exhibition space.





*C.A.M. Crassulacean Acid Metabolism*, 2005, installation with 4 cast iron cactus radiators, copper piping, boiler, video, monitor, DVD in loop. Installation view VOID Gallery, Derry, 2005. Courtesy the artist and The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow



*Tabernas Desert Run*, 2004, fuel cell powered bicycle, vitrine, watercolour on paper, 170 x 224 x 62 cm. Installation view, The Modern Institute, Glasgow, 2004. Courtesy the artist and The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd. Glasgow City Council, permanent collection, Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow

**Starling** relates the biological **C.A.M.** process to ingenuity and profit in a more visible nocturnal energy 'loophole' concerning hydroelectric power. Cheaper night-rate electricity is purchased by Switzerland from neighbouring countries in order to pump water into reservoirs; in the daytime, when the energy demand is higher, the stored water is used to generate electricity that can be sold back at peak-rate prices. [1] **C.A.M.** could also be linked with the 'grey' market for ferrous scrap, in which looted cables are melted down in order to be smuggled, and, less specifically, with the general practice of recasting and reusing metals. Such processes have been exploited since pre-industrial times, and the value of scrap metal is today regarded as a telling economic index. Whether connecting to the carbon that is fixed by cacti, the use of reservoirs as 'batteries', or to plundered metal, **C.A.M.**'s materials and energies can thus be understood as part of a cyclical biological-technical nutrient system from which they generate meaning. [2]

**MA**

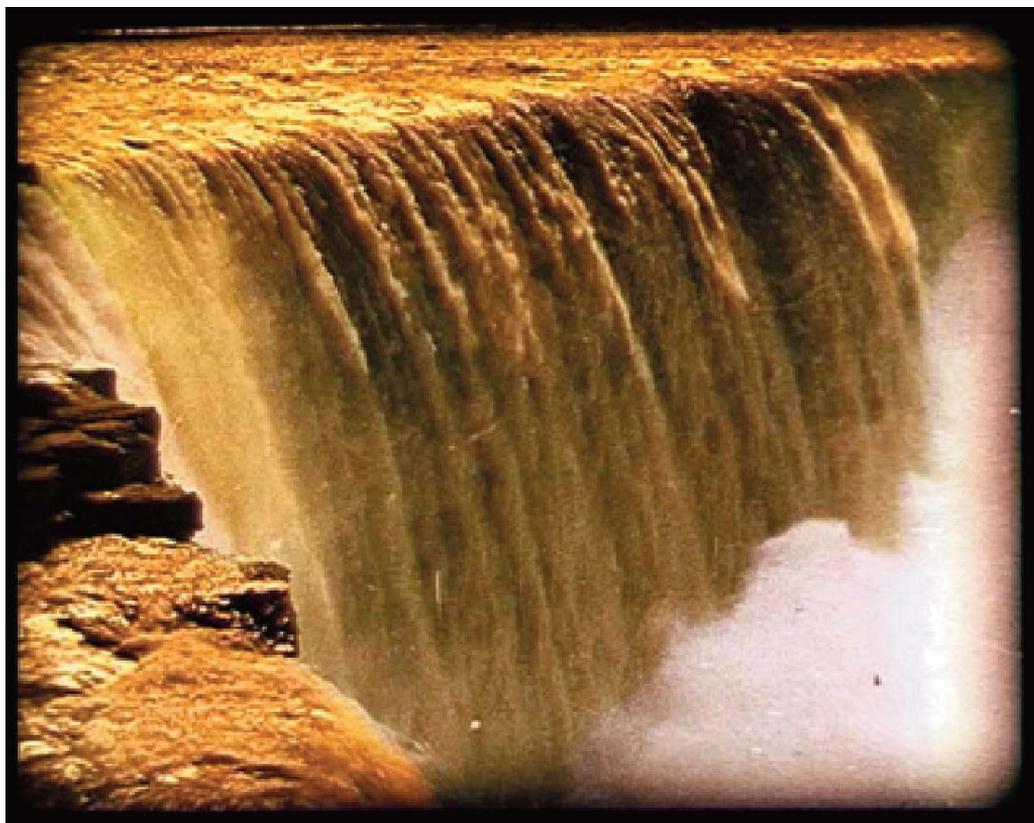
[1] Or, as described by the title of the 2005 photographic series by Starling which was inspired by this discovery, *By night the Swiss buy cheap-rate electricity from their neighbours which they use to pump water into holding reservoirs. By day they use the stored water to generate hydroelectric power which they then sell back to their neighbours at peak-rate prices.* (After Christopher Williams / After Jean-Luc Godard).

[2] For William McDonough and Michael Braungart's compelling account of 'biological and technical nutrients' see their *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*, North Point Press, 2002



# FIONA TAN

Nata nel 1966, Pekan Baru, Indonesia;  
vive ad Amsterdam, Olanda



The possibility of giving order to the world, of classifying reality according to objective criteria, is one of man's innate aspirations, and one destined to irreparably fail. **Fiona Tan** has made this irrational desire for order the centerpiece of her research – something she herself cannot escape. Through photos and video installations composed of appropriated or specially created materials, **Tan** analyses the multiple meanings born from the montage of images and their role in defining concepts of collective and individual identity. Ethnography is a frequent refrain in her work, and the cataloging of the human community into stereotypes is perhaps the most ambitious and problematic expression of this tendency. In the project *Countenance* (2002), created during a year's residence in Berlin and presented during Documenta 11, the artist documented the population of the city through portraits filmed in 16mm.



Above and previous page: *News From The Near Future*, 2003, video projection, 9'20". Courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London

The spectator experienced the four-screen video installation that resulted as an immense contemporary archive of faces, looks and gestures. The work was inspired by the photographer August Sander's project *Citizens of the 20th Century*, a sort of physiognomic catalogue of German society started in 1910. The status of the portrait, in Tan's project as in that of Sander, comprises a classic issue regarding the fields of art and anthropology and the relationship between observer and observed that is the politics of the gaze. In the series *Vox populi* (2004–2007) – realized in Norway, Australia and Japan – the artist collected private photographs. She organised and exhibited these images as historical documents that were capable of not only evoking individual memories but also of becoming a popular form of ethnography and a self-representation of a community.

*News from the Near Future* (2003) is a montage of old newsreels that show scenes and events connected to water, selected by the artist from the archives of the Amsterdam Filmmuseum. The heterogeneity of the visual repertory of the original source is reflected in the divergent representations of seas, waves, floods, and so on, that Tan has composed into a narrative crescendo that runs from calm to stormy, from a panorama to devastation. When the destructive power of nature is finally appeased, it leaves a desolate landscape of flooded cities. The ruin of the constructed world tragically recalls the present – or the near future – by evoking the threat of sea level rise due to global warming and the mismanagement of water resources. The soundtrack is made up of a montage of nautical reports and the sounds of the sea, which heightens the sense of imminent danger. Tan reflects on the ways that the mass media has constructed our awareness of reality and has contributed to the creation a collective memory and imagination. Through the evident contradiction between the obsolete quality of the images and the film's setting in a hypothetical tomorrow as evoked by the title, the artist reflects on the ambiguous state of the image with respect to history and its continuous flow through time.

IC

Opposite: *A Change in The Air Changes Everything*, 2004, movement of the air in the exhibition space, paper, polycarbonate. Collection Sciarretta, Rome. Photo: Francesco Cartocci

# NIKOLA UZUNOVSKI

Born 1979, Belgrade, Serbia;  
lives in Venice, Italy and Helsinki, Finland

## **Nikola Uzunovski**

*A Change in The Air Changes Everything*, 2004

Movimento in aria, carta, policarbonato / Movement in air,  
paper, Polycarbonate

Dimensione variabile / Variable dimensions

Courtesy Collezione Sciarretta, Roma

At first glance, **Nikola Uzunovski's** works show clear conceptual origins in both their extreme reduction of expressive methods and the central role that language plays. Nevertheless, he is not dealing with the classic reflection of art on itself – **Uzunovski** concentrates more on the surrounding environment, the world of natural and psychological phenomena, as he invites the spectator to attune their perceptions and gain a greater awareness of reality. The essential quality of his works' visual components is a metaphor for the wealth of sensations nature offers yet that frequently remain imperceptible. The perfection of snowflakes, for example, is aesthetically seductive, infinitely variable and geometrically beautiful yet is not easily observed. *Snow* (2004–2006) is a photographic series created in various European countries; overexposed and printed on white photographic paper, its individual photos seem completely identical – absolutely white – and can only be told apart by captions that indicate the place and date of the shot. These brief notations are a trigger, a stimulus for the spectator's imagination. Although the images are ostensibly empty, they remain completely open to a whole series of reflections concerning aesthetics and ecological sensitivity.



Although seemingly limited to just a caption, *A Change in the Air Changes Everything* (2004) lists the air in the exhibition space as the material constituents – Uzunovski designates the air which visitors are breathing as an integral part of his artwork. The work recalls the theory of the so-called ‘butterfly effect’ that suggests that even the smallest change in one part of the globe can upset the balance in another faraway place, or even across the entire planet. Every action produces an effect in nature as well as daily life, it seems to suggest, since everything is connected to something, and every person is part of a network of relationships and interdependences. Uzunovski limits himself to ‘pointing a finger’ at phenomena, thus bringing them into our consciousness. Yet when considered seriously his minimal work might trigger profound changes in society through individual behaviour.

A more concrete and utopian transformation is at the centre of Uzunovski’s recent work *My Sunshine* (2007–2008), a project which straddles the border between art and science with the purpose of increasing the hours of sunlight during the long winter in Lapland. The work was clearly inspired by the installation *The Weather Project* (2003) created by Olafur Eliasson for the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern, London, in which an artificial sun was created that emotionally warmed the grey English winter. The physical and psychological effects caused by the absence of natural light was the starting point for Uzunovski’s extensive research project that has involved astrophysicists, engineers, architects, environmentalists and social analysts, who have been invited by the artist to collaborate and work towards a ‘copy’ of the sun itself. A research laboratory – built for a recent solo exhibition in Trieste – is the first stage in a process that, according to Uzunovski, will effect not only the local arctic population but will also offer future applications in various fields such as air transport, sustainable architecture and alternative energy.

IC



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Above and following pages: *Paradise on Fire*, 2007, series of inkjet prints, 106 x 134 cm each. Courtesy the artist and Umberto di Marino Arte Contemporanea, Naples

# SERGIO VEGA

Born 1959, Buenos Aires, Argentina;  
lives in Gainesville, US



**Sergio Vega** is engaged in interdisciplinary research around the notion and location of paradise. Following the writings of 16th and 17th-century historian explorers such as Antonio de León Pinelo, the artist has traced how their words fed the imaginary life and iconography of Judeo-Christian religions. The locus of this ultimately pleasurable yet lost paradise was traditionally located in the so-called New World, more or less at the centre of the South American continent, in the vast region today known as Mato Grosso, Brazil.

Over the last decade, **Vega** has presented immersive installations that have incorporated photographs, wallpaper, videos, texts, sculptural objects, dioramas, architecture models, bean bag chairs, plants, hammocks and music. These elements are complemented by a travel diary ([www.sergiovega-art.net](http://www.sergiovega-art.net)) that documents and contests the evergreen mythology of Eden with critical analysis of the stereotypes of colonialist representations.







The video *Paradise on Fire* (2007) was shot in the Chiquitano dry forests, the biologically rich eco-region which straddles the Brazil-Bolivia border at the southern limit of the Amazonian system. It documents the potential social and ecological effects of habitat degradation in this unique area, which is the largest healthy dry forest ecosystem on the planet. Swathes of virgin forest have been burnt in nearby areas such as the Serrado in the north of Mato Grosso to grow soy, sugar cane, cotton and to ranch cattle. Gas pipeline corridors built by multinational energy companies, such as Enron and Shell, have cut through the ancestral lands of indigenous family farming communities. [1] The 'garden of Eden' is today an increasingly industrialised landscape wrecked by power and material demand, and, in the bitterest of ironies, driven by the growing 'green energy' biofuel market.

The companion photographs were taken in Novo Mundo ('New World'), near the city of Alta Floresta, also in Mato Grosso, and record the distressingly beautiful visual side-effects of this unrestricted destruction. In words of the artist, 'the images propose a rather perverse aesthetic pleasure (versus the romantic and sublime appreciation of nature). Here we see clouds of smoke against the light and the silhouette of trees and plants appearing and disappearing ambiguously, as if it were the morning mist in the creation of Eden. The only difference is that this time, the mist has blue and red tones, if you look carefully you will see branches and trunks smouldering. What appears to be dirt attached to the negative is in fact burning leaves that blew with the smoke and turned into cinders. The photos show a landscape where the vegetation acquires the phantom and metaphorical presence of its own disappearance.' [2]

MCL

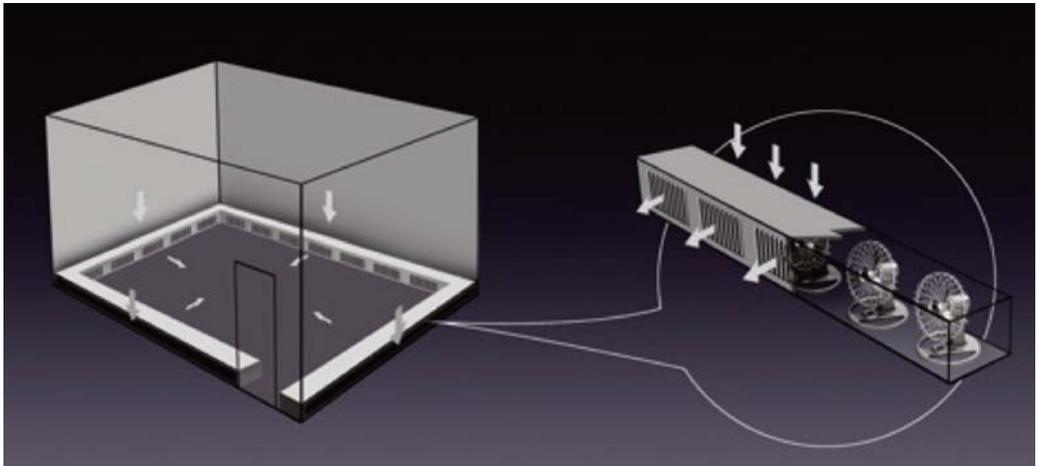
[1] See [www.amazonwatch.org](http://www.amazonwatch.org)

[2] Email correspondence with the artist, 23 November, 2007



# WANG JIANWEI

Born 1958, Suining, China;  
lives in Beijing, China



**Wang Jianwei's** artistic practice focuses on the problems posed by the public realm in contemporary China. By adopting a multidisciplinary approach in the form of video installations and theatrical events, the artist examines notions of publicness, society, knowledge and perception in China, a country whose economic and social transformation appears to be as violent as it is indecipherable. Derived from more than 60 hours of filming, the video *Living Elsewhere* (1999–2000) documents the lives of a group of peasants who are forced to move from the country to a semi-urban area in the province of Sichuan. Attracted by job prospects that prove to be illusory, they find refuge in a complex of villas whose construction started during a boom period, but have since remained unfinished.



*Spectacle*, 2005, installation: benches, plastic bags and electric fans. Courtesy dell'artista e Chambers Fine Art, Beijing



These luxurious shells with no electricity or gas are the surreal setting in which the peasants try to recreate their previous life, going hunting for semi-urban game and working the fields. They create a dystopian space at the centre of all the changes going on around them. The title of the video comes from the philosopher Gilles Deleuze's metaphor of modernity as a building site and the sense of contemporary living as a dislocation of space and time. In his *Cycle-Growing* project (1993–1994), the artist gained first-hand knowledge of this condition. After renting a plot of land in a village in the province of Sichuan, he worked entirely alone on cultivating a new variety of wheat. This experience, later represented in photographs and documents of various types, resulted in a conceptual work from the hinterland between artistic and non-artistic identities. These are key themes in **Wang Jianwei's** art, as his production is always at the forefront of sociological research and epistemological reflections.

*Spectacle* (2005) is an immersive installation in which hundreds of white plastic bags whirl around the space, blown by an artificial wind created by a series of fans concealed underneath benches which line the edges of the exhibition room. The poetic vision that is created – with the constant movement of this ethereal, transparent material – is in stark contrast to the work's reference to unbridled consumerism and to the pollution it has led to. Plastic bags are used throughout China and the carelessness with which they are abandoned in urban areas has led the authorities to consider banning their use by shopkeepers, especially in the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The work also references the classical utopia of a 'triumph' of man over nature, and the quintessentially human desire to have the artificial take the place of what is natural – an ambition, the artists observe, that is so dominant today in China. *Spectacle* is a fictitious and synthetic landscape, where the wind imitated by fans is a symbol of the 'present universal existence of instrumental determinism'. The artist does not take a clear-cut position, but leaves the public in a state of emotional suspense – however polluting it may be, the blizzard-like whirl of bags has a hypnotic and evocative presence.

IC



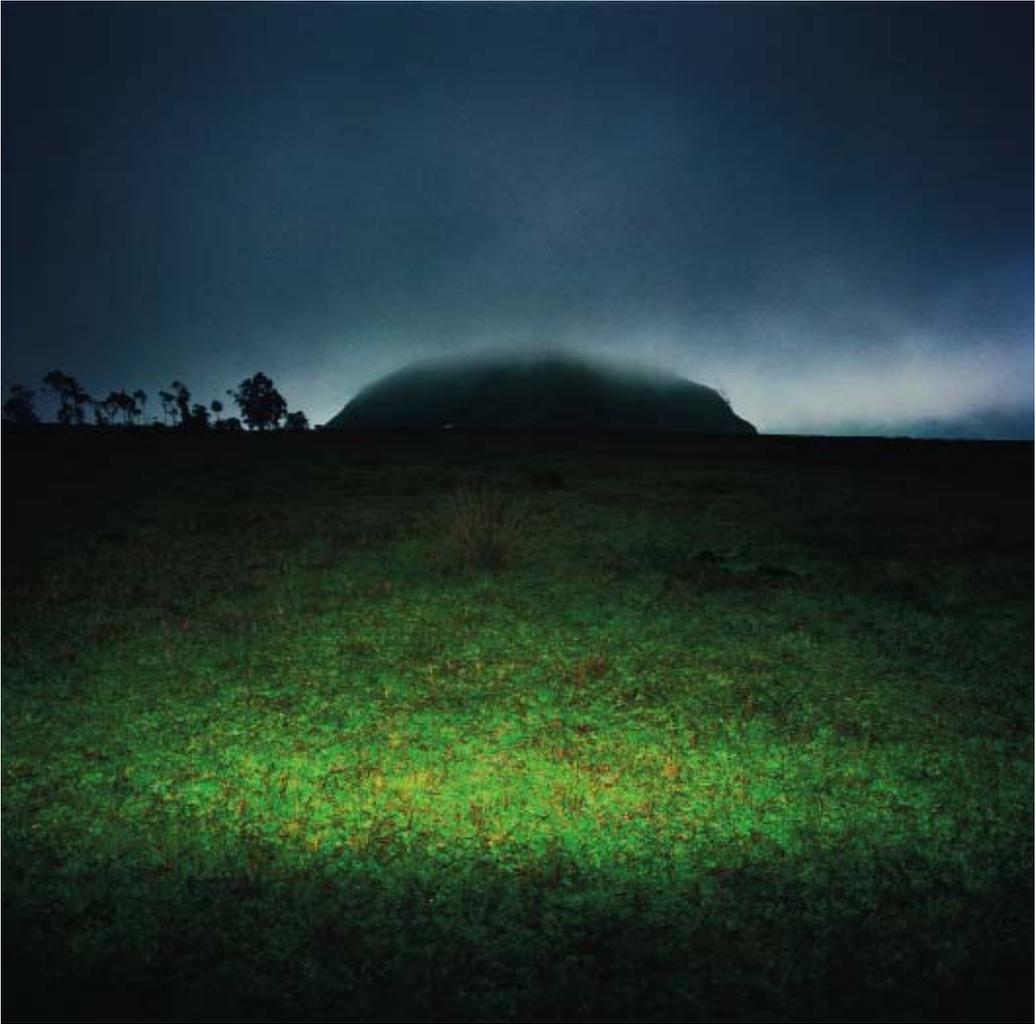
*Birth of the Cool*, 2008, digital rendering. Courtesy the artist and Raucci / Santamaria, Naples

# JAMES YAMADA

Nato nel 1967, North Carolina, USA;  
vive a New York, USA



**James Yamada** investigates the contrast between 'natural' landscapes and 'digital' landscapes typical of post-industrial society. The artist proceeds like a scientist-archeologist, analyzing the different strata of the reality in which we live. He consequently creates installations, sculptures, paintings, videos and photographs that stimulate the spectator to reconsider the limits of perception. The artist's works are systems that are in constant evolution and interaction with each other and with the public through electronic, mechanical or digital mechanisms that often simulate atmospheric transformations or natural phenomena.



*Ufo*, 2007, c-print, 104 x 104 cm.  
Courtesy Raucci / Santamaria, Naples

**Yamada's** practice has analysed the influence that technology has on our environment and on us as individuals. Perhaps paradoxically, the artist has adopted this very technology and the internet to indicate these relationships and his sense of anxiety with our investment in digital reality and the consequent disappearance of 'natural' landscapes. The fragmentary aspect of his work derives from his belief that it is only through eclecticism that art can reach a form of coherence necessary to survive in the globalised world.

For *Greenwashing*, Yamada presents a new production: a black steel sculpture that takes the form of extruded letters that spell out the phrase of its title, *Birth of the Cool* (2008). This apparently cold and minimalist sculpture is actually a structure for transforming organic matter – it hosts thousands of worms inside. These worms digest organic waste from the Fondazione's catering facilities and turn it into compost – soil that is rich and fertile – thus creating a self-sustaining ecosystem capable of processing 20kg of organic waste each week. The public cannot detect the presence of the worms contained within this sculpture as they produce no sound or odor, though the rich compost they generate during the months of the exhibition will gradually be deposited on the floor underneath the sculpture as it falls from a series of holes in the base of the container. The title, *Birth of the Cool*, is taken from one of the most famous recordings by the jazz master Miles Davis, from 1957, which adopted the 'cool' term from its origin in African-American culture following the Second World War. Yamada chose this phrase to evoke what is happening inside the structure – the birth of new earth and new 'cool' worms. Above all it is a metaphor for the mechanisms of society and its ongoing, 'silent' production of contrastingly useless waste.

**IB**



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# The Dark Side of the Green Planet

by Riccardo Boero

Can a good, progressive idea ever be transformed into counterproductive trend or an irrational form of fundamentalism? Of course, not only can this happen, it is inevitable. From the moment it exists, every innovation, whether an idea, a practice or an object, can be subject to abuse, excess, and distortion – which is not always negative. The development of what we now call an ‘environmental sensibility’, something born of the 1960s, has thrown up numerous excesses and deviations that have made history. But my interest here will focus on the contemporary errors (and horrors) of our time. Every planet has two sides, one dark and the other

illuminated by the stars – the dark side is more intriguing and ultimately more cathartic. So what are the dark sides of a green planet? Two aspects are currently on the increase which seem unsettling, and these are obviously the ones I will discuss. The first concerns the transformation of personal opinions on environmental issues into a veritable form of ideology. The second problematic aspect involves proposals developed to reduce pollution on our planet. More than one hundred years ago the Turinese Vilfredo Pareto (one of the founders of sociology and an illustrious economist) theorized that ideology and science were inevitably opposed. According to him, ideology is based on emotion

and faith, while science deals in observation and reasoning. The main purpose of an ideology is persuasion for the purpose of directing and guiding action. In Pareto’s terms, then, does an Environmental ideology exist? Probably, yes – and most of the recent attitudes toward our environment can be traced back to an ideological ‘Environmentalism’. Apart from its desire to change the world through enacting transformations, Environmentalism also trades on faith and emotion. Today the clearest example of Environmentalism is provided by one person, Al Gore, who in 2007 won the Nobel Peace Prize for his contribution to ‘for their efforts to build up and

disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change'. In 2006, Gore starred in the documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth*, which was awarded two Oscars and has been screened at the best film festivals around the world. So can the 'inconvenient truths' of the film be discussed as the bible of Environmentalism? Let's start with the role faith plays in the film. It may seem self-evident but science has a scientific position on global warming: a heterogeneous position made up of hypotheses, models and conflicting data. In other words, theories are a mature form of relativism. Science has long ago abandoned the absolutism of the Enlightenment and of Newtonian physics (not to mention even earlier religious thinking) through centuries of progress and exceptional discoveries. To put it another way, scientists are not only never ashamed, but also are actually proud of having doubts and uncertainties, even more so now than in the past. It is not only about continuing respect for the Socratic method (knowing

that you don't know) but also developing its practice through the constant awareness of relativism. Truth (inconvenient or not) does not belong to science, but to faith. The lexical analysis of what I have called 'the bible of Environmentalism' is not limited to its title. The documentary presents evidence as being overwhelming and undeniable, terms which are foreign to scientific practice. When discussing such a controversial issue, we should attempt dialogue and debate very carefully. Instead, the documentary seems to express dogmas and presents controversial data as unquestionable, neglecting to reference hypotheses that contradict his supported thesis. A scientific method would require another process in order to demonstrate a thesis – the discussion of the different hypotheses and the refutation of contrary data. The conflict between science and ideology as expressed by Pareto had another central point. Ideology aims at persuasion, no matter whether it has a basis or not. The message transmitted by ideology must be simple (you cannot believe in something complicated and

described in a complex way). It must be communicated with authority (it is not pleasant to find yourself agreeing with someone who doesn't believe in themselves). So Environmentalism supports ideas outside the realm of science yet mimics scientific practice to gain credibility. Therefore, it is not surprising that Environmentalism gives complete credibility to researchers like those from the IPCC (the Intergovernmental Committee on Climate Change), that could be subject to political control, yet for example, would dismiss those who have worked for private entity. Environmentalists deride those scientists who have received financing from private enterprises but celebrate scientists financially linked to political will, and they present this as something rational. Disdain for other opinions is perhaps one of the most annoying aspects for those with a scientific mindset. This is the crux of the 'authoritative' approach regarding of Environmentalism in general and Gore's documentary in particular. For a scientist the film is propaganda that unsettlingly lacks a

methodical basis, though for the greater public the effect is totally different. Environmentalists too, might find it hard to recognize Gore's authority. He does nothing but pollute throughout the film, they might say – he even flies over national parks and the Antarctic! (they might ask why no one gave him a bicycle.) In any case, Gore has won the Nobel Prize and the Oscars and so someone must think he has some authority. Besides faith, Environmental ideology's basis in emotion does well because contemporary society is clearly sick with fear. *An Inconvenient Truth* targets the spectator's feelings in two ways. The first refers to the private and family realm. We must believe in Environmentalism for the sake of our children – the poor kids! The second operates through the presentation of images of natural catastrophes. It deliberately ignores how the disastrous consequences of such phenomena (hurricane Katrina or the floods in Piemonte, for example) may be due to local policies and human errors that have little to do with global warming.

The Environmentalist might start to tremble because, without some kind of miraculous redemption, the future will be condemned to an endless series of catastrophes and unspeakable suffering. The concluding part of Gore's documentary takes us to another aspect of the dark side of the green planet. Finally, after one hundred minutes of terror and horror, proposals arrive to save the Earth and us as the credits roll: 'use low energy light bulbs ... photography by so-and-so ... if you can, use your bicycle to go to work ...' If we were not in the sphere of an ideology, the fact the documentary presents practically no solutions to the problem we face might seem strange. This is because emotion and fear reinforce belief, as if we were to find a remedy for fear, the churches of faith would collapse. A similar argument could be applied to the proposals, in fashion in Europe, which are centred on concepts of reduction and restriction. Here one can find a complete manifestation of Western guilt that not only pollutes but becomes rich in doing so. Its 'solution' is not the invention of an economy

that pollutes less and is more democratic (guaranteeing equal global opportunities), but a punitive one, seemingly living on bread and water, that renounces progress and calls for a return to the 'golden age' of barter. The result of applying this formula might sound tragicomic, but then at least this make us think of a global warming world where governance is patently absurd and difficult. We could begin to talk about real problems and their solutions that we hope can be found soon on the brighter side of the green planet.

**RICCARDO BOERO** (1974) studied in Italy and in the UK and has developed his research throughout Europe and the United States. He holds a PhD in Political Economy and in Sociology. He teaches Macroeconomics at the Università di Torino and his current research touches on areas from methodological issues to cooperation and local development. Politically conscious to environmental issues, Boero travels mainly by bicycle.



# Greenwashing or Greenwishing?

by Marco Benatti

Advertising often expresses the degree of sensitivity which companies show in understanding their audience. The aim is to be accepted and chosen by showing the audience the best possible image of itself. When advertising was only analogical and 'one size fits all' – the consumer being a

generic 'Mrs. Smith' – companies communicated with their consumers by treating them as an undifferentiated mass, visualizing them only in terms of statistics. To tell the whole truth, for years consumers clearly let themselves be guided and deeply influenced by the so-called 'hidden persuaders'. If a product

promised to wash whiter, make you happier, or help keep the family united, there were myriads of people who uncritically believed it; the hyperbolic promises of advertising became mental states in the shape of achievable dreams. Very often advertising anticipated and steered the public's taste.



In the last decade or so, the spread of digital technology and the values brought to society by so-called Web 1.0 – i.e. globalization, speed, flexibility, transparency and interdependence – have helped the public evolve and taught it to see every situation from multiple points of view. Attitudes have become more critical, more aware, and a new social conscience has emerged, concerned with the individual's ability to go beyond standard

commercial messages and to understand the real substance of what companies pledge.

'Mrs. Smiths' and housewives are getting fewer and fewer, and the trend that sees consumers as individuals – different, dynamic and unfaithful – seems unstoppable. Years ago, Italian consumer associations were nothing but labels invented by idealists, or hideouts for rejected politicians, but now they have started to acquire weight and

authority – although they cannot yet compare to their Anglo-Saxon counterparts – and even the political world has acknowledged their existence by proposing drafts (however rudimentary) for class actions.

In fact, for several years, the more farsighted companies have dealt structurally with the issues of corporate social responsibility by investing in it, although they were fully aware that they



could not expect any return in the short term. They have invested in people, training, transparency and respect, both for the sake of their own shareholders, and for the natural and social environment in which they find themselves.

The public has only recently started to show signs of acknowledging the actions of these companies, and word of mouth among new consumers is becoming a measurable phenomenon.

Appreciation of, and agreement with, such responsible values can be inferred from a renewed faith in the products of these companies. However, as is typical of a trend that promises to be successful, those who slipstream do not always join in because they really subscribe to the guiding principles. Sometimes participation is by chance or even for reasons of opportunism. The result is behaviour that is not inspired by the culture of transparency, but by the

old presumption and arrogance of 'analogical' advertising.

There are those companies that hide themselves behind images of uncontaminated landscapes but actually pollute the environment, those who show clean skies but actually contaminate the air, those who show happy workers but in reality exploit child labour (especially in the developing world), and those who show lively elderly people but are



actually denying them help. These companies try to put a fig leaf over their private parts, yet the warning that the emperor has no clothes comes almost immediately thanks to the viral force of Web 2.0, and those 'responsible' are instantly pilloried. These 'greenwashing' attempts are short lived, subject to a boomerang effect which relentlessly labels them as 'greenwashing'.

In such a context, the role of the consumer is undergoing a deep change.

Users become increasingly active, collaborative and involved – they are no longer cold receivers of the message which is addressed to them. Thanks to the Web, user comments, suggestions, recommendations, approvals and disapprovals, all gather information which can be analyzed, criticized, praised, communicated and ultimately judged.

Looking beyond national borders, we can consider the example of EnviroMedia Social

Marketing, a leading American company in the development of ethical and sustainable projects. In partnership with the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication, they have set up a directory website [greenwashingindex.com](http://greenwashingindex.com), where users themselves can evaluate the claims and campaigns of corporations. What is greenwashing? 'When a company or organization spends more time and money claiming to be "green" through



advertising and marketing than actually implementing business practices that minimize environmental impact. It's whitewashing, but with a green brush', the website states.

Greewashingindex.com has provided simple, rigid criteria regarding the transparency and truthfulness of advertising messages – both in the essential claim and the graphic elements. These are the tools which help determine whether corporations

that take pride in their environmental engagement are genuinely committed or whether they are simply 'greenwashing'. Is it a case of sheer appearance or authentic Corporate Social Responsibility?

As Oscar Wilde put it, 'life imitates art far more than art imitates life'. Such an axiom contains plenty of hope – the hope that art can continue to forward ideas, suggestions and reflections that can

uplift the human mind and soul so that we may constantly feel encouraged to follow its initiative. Not just for individual people, but also for companies and those who manage them.

After a degree in architecture at the Università di Venezia, **MARCO BENATTI** (1953), has worked as an entrepreneur in various areas of communication. A pioneer of media centres in Italy in the 1980s – and in the 1990s with Medianetwork – he was the founder of Matrix, an enterprise that developed the internet portal Virgilio. He is currently the President of Fullsix Spa a European leader in multichannel and integrated communication that is listed on the Milan stock exchange.



# Checklist

## JENNIFER ALLORA & GUILLERMO CALZADILLA

*Land Mark (Footprints)*, 2001–2005  
Digital photos in colour (performance documentation)  
Series of 12 photographs;  
50,8 x 61 cm each  
Courtesy the artists and  
Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

## LARA ALMARCEGUI

*A Wasteland*, 2003–2007  
(*Rotterdam Harbour*, 2003–2018;  
*Genk*, 2004–2014; *Arganzuela Public Slaughterhouse*, Madrid, 2005–2006; *Peterson Paper Factory*, Moss, 2006–2007)  
Slides, slide projector and postcards  
Courtesy the artist and Galería Pepe Cobo, Madrid

*Construction Materials of the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo*, 2008  
Vinyl text  
Courtesy the artist and  
Galería Pepe Cobo, Madrid

## MARIA THEREZA ALVES

*The Sun*, 2006  
Video projection, 5'03"  
Courtesy the artist

## IBON ARANBERRI

*Light over Lemoniz (without shockwave)*, 2000–2004  
Slideshow and screen projection  
Courtesy the artist and Isabella Bortolozzi Galerie, Berlin

## AMY BALKIN

*Public Smog*, 2004–ongoing  
Project documentation,  
looping Flash animation, 22'  
Courtesy the artist

## THE BRUCE HIGH QUALITY FOUNDATION

*Beyond Pastoral (Shroud of Turin)*, 2008  
2 photos (51 x 92 cm each),  
video on plasma screen, latex,  
cheesecloth and fruit impression  
Courtesy the artists

## CHU YUN

*Constellation*, 2006  
Installation, mixed media  
Courtesy the artist and Uli Sigg  
Collection, Mauensee, Switzerland

## A CONSTRUCTED WORLD

Special thanks to Olivia Barrett,  
Per Hüttner, Pascal Bircher, Ruby Lowe

*The Cone of Silence*, 2008  
Mixed media installation  
Courtesy the artists

*Il mondo*, 2004  
Plastic sculpture  
Collection Tullio Leggeri, Bergamo

*Explaining contemporary art to live eels (Milan)*, 2004  
DVD loop, 6'40"  
Courtesy Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

*Explaining contemporary art to live eels (Philadelphia)*, 2005  
DVD loop, 2'5"  
Courtesy Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

*Schiavo*, 2003  
DVD loop, 1'18"  
Courtesy Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

*Whirling Hole*, 2007  
DVD loop  
Courtesy Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

*Study for Human all too human*, 2008  
Watercolour, ink jet print  
and biro on paper, 160 x 160 cm  
Courtesy the artists

*Towerhill with Ozone Holes*, 1991  
Synthetic polymer paint on linen  
30,5 x 3,04 cm  
Courtesy the artists  
Photo credit: Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery,  
Sydney

*Writing on Vanity Fair*, 2008  
Paper, adhesive tape,  
adhesive paper, marker pen  
27,5 x 20,5 cm  
Courtesy the artists

*Writing on Time magazine*, 2008  
Paper, adhesive tape,  
adhesive paper, marker pen  
27,5 x 20,5 cm  
Courtesy the artists

## MINERVA CUEVAS

*Egalité*, 2004  
Acrylic paint on wall and a stock  
of water bottles with altered labels  
Dimensions variable  
Produced by Le Grand Café,  
Centre d'Art Contemporain,  
Saint-Nazaire  
Courtesy the artist and  
kurimanzutto, Mexico City

## ETTORE FAVINI

*Green is the Color of Money*, 2007  
Digital print on canvas, 370 x 165 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Galleria  
Alessandro de March, Milan

## CYPRIEN GAILLARD

*Real Remnants of Fictive Wars I*, 2003  
35 mm film transferred  
to DVD, 19'20"  
Courtesy the artist and  
Cosmic Galerie, Paris

*Real Remnants of Fictive Wars II*, 2004  
35 mm film transferred  
to DVD, 7'14"  
Courtesy the artist and  
Cosmic Galerie, Paris

*Real Remnants of Fictive Wars III*, 2004  
35 mm film transferred  
to DVD, 11'30"  
Courtesy the artist and  
Cosmic Galerie, Paris

*Real Remnants of Fictive Wars IV*, 2004  
35 mm film transferred  
to DVD, 4'15"  
Courtesy the artist and  
Cosmic Galerie, Paris

*Real Remnants of Fictive Wars V*, 2004  
35 mm film transferred  
to DVD, 7'20"  
Courtesy the artist and  
Cosmic Galerie, Paris

*Real Remnants of Fictive Wars VI*, 2008  
35 mm film transferred  
to DVD, 1'40"  
Courtesy the artist and  
Cosmic Galerie, Paris

*The New Picturesque (Bambesch)*, 2007  
Acrylic and acrylic paint  
on canvas, 50 x 60 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Cosmic Galerie, Paris

*The New Picturesque (Bambiderstroff)*, 2007  
Acrylic and acrylic paint  
on canvas, 50 x 60 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Cosmic Galerie, Paris

*The New Picturesque (Koenigsbourg)*, 2007  
Acrylic and acrylic paint  
on canvas, 80 x 60 cm  
Courtesy the artist and  
Cosmic Galerie, Paris

**TUE GREENFORT**

*Untitled*, 2008  
Modified Eurobins, (wheeled plastic waste/recycling containers) and Plexiglas  
Courtesy the artist; Johann König, Berlin and Galleria Zero..., Milan  
In collaboration with Arts & Ecology programme, The Royal Society of Arts, London  
Thanks to AMIAT Turin

**NORMA JEANE**

*Potlatch 11.2 / The Bonfire of Vanities*, 2007-2008  
Installation in Fergat garden  
Plants, seeds, mud from Turin drainage system and river beds, 4,80 x 4,80 m  
Collaboration with Dr Giusto Giovanetti, CCS Aosta and Studio Dendroservice, Chieri.  
Special thanks to Michele Piovano; Floricoltura, Cambiano; Le Serre, Chieri and SMAT, Torino  
Courtesy the artist

**CORNELIA PARKER**

*Chomskian Abstract*, 2007  
Video installation, 41'48"  
Courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London

**JORGE PERIS**

*Fairy*, 2008  
Site-specific installation: plaster, clay, water vapour  
Courtesy the artist and Galleria Zero, Milan

**WILFREDO PRIETO**

*Hoyo negro*, 2008  
Steel and oil  
Courtesy the artist and NoguerasBlanchard, Barcelona

*Estanque*, 2008  
Barrels of oil, water and frog  
Courtesy the artist and NoguerasBlanchard, Barcelona

**RAF/REDUCE ART FLIGHTS**

Leaflets

**TOMÁS SARACENO**

*Imagine-movimento*, 2008  
Projection, wind power, wind turbine, battery, optical sensor, timer, photo camera  
Courtesy the artist and Galleria Pinksummer, Genoa

**SANTIAGO SIERRA**

*TWO BLACK VEHICLES WITH THE ENGINE RUNNING INSIDE AN ART GALLERY*, 2008  
Remake of a work original realised in the Sala Mendoza, Caracas, Venezuela, February, 2007  
Courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery, London

**SIMON STARLING**

*C.A.M. Crassulacean Acid Metabolism*, 2005  
Installation with 4 cast iron cactus radiators, copper piping, boiler  
Courtesy the artist; The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd., Glasgow and Galleria Franco Noero, Turin

**FIONA TAN**

*News From The Near Future*, 2003  
Video projection, 9'20"  
Courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London

**NIKOLA UZUNOVSKI**

*A Change in the Air Changes Everything*, 2004  
Movement of the air in the exhibition space, paper, polycarbonate  
Collection Sciarretta, Rome

**SERGIO VEGA**

*Paradise on fire*, 2007  
Video on plasma screen, 29'  
Courtesy the artist and Umberto di Marino Arte Contemporanea, Naples

*Paradise on fire*, 2007  
Series of five archival inkjet prints, 106 x 134 cm each  
Courtesy the artist and Umberto di Marino Arte Contemporanea, Naples

**WANG JIANWEI**

*Spectacle*, 2005  
Installation: plastic bags, benches and electric fans  
Courtesy the artist and Chambers Fine Art, Beijing

**JAMES YAMADA**

*Birth of the Cool*, 2008  
Steel, iron, compost, worms, c. 4 metres long  
Courtesy the artist and Galleria Raucii / Santamaria, Naples



[WWW.GREENWASHING.LTTDS.ORG](http://WWW.GREENWASHING.LTTDS.ORG)  
Digital supplement including artists' biographies,  
interviews and slideshows.



What is at stake in today's constant **bombardment of ecological guilt**, corporate agendas and political point-scoring with respect to so-called 'environmental issues'? The 25 artists presented in the exhibition *Greenwashing. Environment: Perils, Promises and Perplexities* do not just passively lament the degradation of our planet, or provide pragmatic solutions. Instead they actively **articulate the contradictions and responsibilities** that we are encountering personally and as a society. The works in *Greenwashing* – a term used to describe misleading ecological practices – do not necessarily proclaim a **'correct' ethical or 'green' agenda**. They allow the possibility for broadening and analysing our perceptions and actions, setting a **critical attitude** into motion that intervenes and infiltrates, re-interprets and decodes humans' relation to the planet and its non-human inhabitants, together with our daily social and interpersonal behaviour.

**ILARIA BONACOSSA** (1973) is Curator at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin. She curated *D-Segni* (2004–2005), a series of five monographic exhibitions by emerging international artists, and *Subcontinent, The Indian Subcontinent in Contemporary Art* (2006) together with Francesco Manacorda. She was a Golden Lion jury member at the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007) and is a member of the Technical Committee for Acquisitions of Frac Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Marseille. Bonacossa is the Italian Correspondent for *Contemporary*, London, has published numerous catalogue texts, recently editing the publication *Marlene Dumas* for the series *Supercontemporanea* (Electa Mondadori, 2006).

**LATITUDES** ([www.lttlds.org](http://www.lttlds.org)) is an independent curatorial office based in Barcelona, Spain. It was founded in 2005 and is directed by **Max Andrews** (1975) and **Mariana Cánepa Luna** (1977). Latitudes collaborates with artists and institutions to produce exhibitions, commissions, publications and research initiatives. They edited the publication *Land, Art: A Cultural Ecology Handbook* (2006) and in 2007 curated the exhibition *Extraordinary Rendition* (NoguerasBlanchard, Barcelona), guest edited *UOVO/14 'Ecology, Luxury and Degradation'*, and organised a 3-day symposium in partnership with the Royal Society of Arts for the 8th Sharjah Biennial, UAE. They are part of the editorial board of *The Bookmakers Ed.*

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