

PRAXIS
ACTING AS IF EVERYTHING MATTERS

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## Some Helpful Definitions of Terms

- Bioremedial – works that restore or recover lands, waters and habitats.
- Earthwork – a type of contemporary art that uses the landscape, or environment, as its medium.
- Eco-art – a broad field of interdisciplinary arts practice, distinguished from Land Art and Environmental Art by its specific focus on ‘earth-sensitive’ ideologies and methodologies, and often by a political, activist environmentalism.
- Environmental Art – a general term referring to art in and/or about the environment. Not necessarily earth-sensitive or remedial practice.
- Ecovention – a term brought into use through the 2003 exhibition and book of the same name. ‘Ecovention’ is a short form of ‘ecological intervention’ as artwork.
- Intervention – as an art term it denotes works that function as a kind of artistic ‘direct action’. Interventions can be confrontational and are intended to be subversive.
- Land Art – similar to Earthwork, an art category denoting works on, or utilising, the land.
- Reclamation Art – similar to bioremedial art, these works reclaim or recover large areas of damaged and post-industrial habitat.
- Resourcism – a term from Neil Evernden’s book *The Natural Alien* denoting an ideology and set of cultural practices that consider and treat the non-human and the world as resource.
- Sci-Art – art/science collaborative works and practices.
- Site-specific – a work designed for, and/or responsive to, a particular site.

Environmentalism must find other ways to articulate its ethics because the established forms of ethics, insofar as they are representations and embodiments of modernity, will inevitably distort or exclude the values of critics who live or envisage a different form of life, an alternative ethos.

Mick Smith, *An Ethics of Place*<sup>1</sup>

Poiesis is about acting upon, doing to: it is about working with objects. *Praxis*, however, is creative: it is other-seeking and dialogic ...for Aristotle, *praxis* is guided by a moral disposition to act truly and rightly.

Mark Smith, *Infed Encyclopaedia* online<sup>2</sup>

## **Abstract**

It's no secret that we, our environing world and all species who share it with us are living in what artist and critic Suzi Gablik back in 1991 called a time of global eco-crisis.<sup>3</sup> In response to this crisis, we see a varied and ever-expanding body of ecologically engaged artworks and art practices. But do these help? Do they make a difference to how we make choices and act in the world? Can artworks and art practices engage us in such a way as to transform the human/world relationship for the better, and if so, how might they do this?

Any significant changes for the better must be tied to an ethics that informs individual and cultural actions in the human/world relationship. Drawing from a constellation of influences in philosophy, anthropology and the arts, this paper examines some contemporary Eco-art works and practices as models of ethical engagement with our environing world. Eco-art is a complex, emergent genre notable for collaborating with disciplines and sectors outside the arts in an active engagement with environmental concerns. Eco-artists often set out to engage the public in environmentally sensitive behaviours through a kind of artistic 'direct action' and via innovative pedagogic methodologies. These works and projects are complex, engaging people in several ways. Some of these ways are direct and overt, others subtle. Important as many of the overt methodologies of engagement

are, it is the more subtle ways that these works engage people that are of particular interest here. Through connecting people with the greater ecological community of their environing world, and by revealing, or foregrounding these ecological relationships in ways that are emotional, embodied and non-cognitive, they aim to encourage a more caring and responsible role for people within that community.

This paper investigates what makes a practice or work an Eco-art work, and takes a close look at three examples of Eco-art projects, tracking and untangling ways that they engage with people and communities, looking at how they engage with environmental ethics and considering their efficacy in healing or bettering human/world relations. I conclude that such works do have a vital role to play in ethical human/world relations, and while their obvious activist, didactic or science-based aspects may, because of their perceived pragmatism and utility, initially appear to be the most effective elements of these works, it is the more subtle and often backgrounded aspects that most effectively promote more ecologically sensitive behaviours by engaging the whole bodied beings that we are, i.e. our senses and hearts as well as our minds, in an ethical, emotional conversation that foregrounds the world as a relational matrix within which we dwell.

## **Introduction**

Persons who grow up in any society are culturally ‘hypnotized’ to perceive reality the way the culture experiences it. Acculturation, according to social scientist Willis Harman in his book *Global Mind Change*, works exactly like hypnosis. The trance of consensus programs much of our behaviour. The challenge of the next few decades will be to awaken from this hypnosis; as Harman states, the real action today is *changing fundamental assumptions*, so that we can learn to transcend our culture.

Suzi Gablik, *The Re-enchantment of Art*

"Alice laughed. 'There's no use trying,' she said; 'one can't believe impossible things.'"

"'I daresay you haven't had much practice,' said the Queen. 'When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.'"

Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

The clocks, both industrial and biological, are ticking. The story of humans on the planet might truly be “nasty, brutish and short”,<sup>4</sup> although for different reasons than Thomas Hobbes once argued, and on a scale that he could hardly have imagined. In the story of the earth, humans haven't been around long and may not have much longer to go, having removed enough of the other species in the world community to clear the exit. But, surely there is something we can still do about this; some way we can check, or alter the full-steam-ahead-and-don't-spare-the-world course we have set.

If we listen to what science tells us, especially as regards global warming, it may be too late to alter this course – impossible, in fact. At the same time, the fact that scientists regularly repeat pleas for us to smarten up and change our ways can be heartening; it holds the premise that there are things we can still do, things that may be important and that will in fact make a difference to how things go. In practice, however, we carry on pretty much as usual. Not many in the western industrialised world are in a rush to give up their Porsche, air conditioning, or even strawberries in winter. In response to such cultural behaviours and the state of the world, Bill McKibbin, author of *The Death of Nature*, declared in a recent article in *Grist Magazine*: “What the warming world needs now is art, sweet art”.<sup>5</sup> Can art save the world? It's doubtful, but maybe what art can do is open our perceptions and help change our beliefs, and in this way transform how we think and act in the world.

The quotes at the beginning of this introduction speak to the proposition that what is needed to change our ways is a change in beliefs and cultural assumptions – a

wider vision, or a differently shaped view. It is artists who deal in visions, as Jeanette Winterson reminds us in *Art Objects*, her book of criticism.<sup>6</sup> But are visions helpful? Dr. Freda Pagani, Director of Sustainability at the University of British Columbia, tells us that what we need, before beginning any practical plan of action, is a vision of where it is we want to go.<sup>7</sup> Suzannah Biernoff, in *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* reminds us that in the European Middle Ages, vision “exceeded both viewing subjects and visible objects, as well as determining their modes of interaction”.<sup>8</sup> Visions, in the Western medieval world, and in other cultures, are often messages from something or someone outside the human. Since it is the larger than human environing world with which these artists and works engage in their processes, the works can readily be seen as carrying messages and knowledge beyond that intended by the artists. They also, not unlike more familiar sorts of visions, hold within them moral lessons, offering an alternative view of human interaction and dwelling within a shared environing world.

Before beginning the project of discussing Eco-art practice and environmental ethics, I think it useful to clarify the term ‘ethics’. The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘ethics’ as follows: “The science of morals; the department of study concerned with the principles of human duty.” ‘Moral’ is defined as “of or relating to the distinction between right and wrong, or good and evil, in relation to the actions, desires, or character of responsible human beings”.<sup>9</sup> Ethics is about right action, but is right action only duty, and for that matter, what is “duty”? Duty is commonly equated with obligation, something we don’t necessarily want to do, but that we are compelled to do – in other words, something not necessarily pleasant, to which we have may have some resistance. Again, according to the OED online, ‘duty’ means to ‘reverence’, to show “due respect”; it is an “expression of submission, deference”. Putting this all together, one might get a picture of ethics that includes the possibility of moral duty – and even desire – as reverence and respect. One could also say that ethics might involve a willing, or desired, submission to natural, as well as social and self imposed limits. Ethics has to do with how one acts in relation to others and to the world. Eco-art praxis, as a

kind of realised ethical vision and collaboration, embodies and reveals alternative ways of acting within human/world relations.

This paper begins with a discussion of what Eco-art praxis is, taking a critical look at its roots in the art practices and radical ideas of North American counter-culture of the 1960s and 1970s. I then engage in an exploration of contemporary Eco-art through looking closely at three examples of the genre. In each case I consider the artist's intentions for the work and then go on to discuss the ethical engagement or awareness embodied in, and/or revealed by each of these works, considering how this ethical engagement opens a space for a recognition and reinterpretation of human/world relations. I suggest that these works, and our interactions with them, can be both revelatory and transformational of dualistic enframings of human/world relations in such a way as to convert our Cartesian disengagement with the environing world and non-human others to responsible and joyful engagement within a community of beings in the world.

### *The Agency of the Other-Than-Human*

Eco-art works, like all artworks, are collaborative, since in the act of "making" the artist interacts with the world outside herself, and is informed by this outside in the visioning of the work. In the case of these particular works, I argue that because of this process of interaction, the works hold within themselves, in addition to the subjective goals of the artist, the voices and presences of places and non-human agencies. When I say these eco-artists, in creating their work, engage in a collaboration with places and nonhuman agencies, I mean it quite literally. We dwell intertwined within an ecology; and, when artists work as embodied beings with and in places, there is agency on both sides. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in his essay *Eye and Mind*, writes (in this case about the painter Cézanne) that "[i]t is the mountain itself which from out there makes itself seen...it is the mountain that he interrogates with his gaze".<sup>10</sup> To continue with the mountain, because the mountain has been an active participant in the becoming of the work, the work carries the "voice" of the mountain within itself. The presence, or voice, of the other-than-human within the work becomes central to how an

Eco-art work engages us with the presence of the non-human as an agency. In other words, the work brings us into contact with, and foregrounds the voice of, the other-than-human in such a way as to open a conversational space where human and world can be experienced as intertwined. To return to Merleau-Ponty: “It is the work itself that has opened the field from which it appears in another light. It changes *itself* and *becomes* what follows (original emphasis)”<sup>11</sup> Although he is speaking of more traditional forms of art, his comments can be applied very well to a kind of agency within Eco-art works.

To think of the non-human as having agency, as in the case of the mountain, or in the case of the artwork when it expresses the voice of the mountain, is to bring in the idea of an animate world, which I intend primarily in that term’s most basic sense of meaning living or alive, but also, as noted above, as having agency. I am taking some time with this explanation, since to bring forward both non-human agency and the idea of an animate world is likely to raise some eyebrows. But because in this paper I propose that it is this voice and presence of the non-human in these works that engage people, and that it is in part through this engagement with the non-human as being in the artwork that relationships with the non-human are foregrounded and taken up by people – with the end result of more caring and sensitive behaviours – it then becomes necessary to anticipate questions that are likely to arise about non-human agency and a kind of animism.

It seems to me that objections to an animate world are based in the usual Western dualisms, which I am convinced are wrong-headed.<sup>12</sup> Alternatively, a worldview that the entire world is animate takes into consideration the multiplicity of lifeforms as a web of relations (or an ecology, if you will) – a belief that has recently been described by Graham Harvey as a “new animism”<sup>13</sup>. A belief (rather importantly differing from an objective view) that we are part of an animate world of interconnected relations must direct us toward ethical behaviour, in the sense that it is generally accepted that right action, or choices in keeping with one’s responsibilities, or duties, as a member of a relationship, or community, are required. In *Perception of the Environment*, Tim Ingold tells us that the animist

worldviews of several human cultures “see no essential difference between the ways one relates to humans and to non-human constituents of the environment”.<sup>14</sup>

He goes on to critique rather savagely Western formulaic thinking that dismisses out of hand the validity of animist worldviews declaring that we are

profoundly arrogant...to accord priority to the Western metaphysics of alienation of humanity from nature, and to use *our* disengagement as the standard against which to measure *their* engagement. Faced with an ecological crisis whose roots lie in this disengagement, in the separation of human agency and social responsibility from the sphere of our direct involvement with the non-human environment, it surely behoves us to reverse this order of priority...<sup>15</sup>

I do not intend to take this particular argument further in this paper, but wish to point out that such a reversal of the order of priorities, and the corresponding ethical imperative, is central to this discussion – being precisely what the arts can, and in the cases I put forward *do*, actively promote, or embody. These ideas are implicit in much of the following discussion.

### *Ethics and Praxis*

On beginning this essay on Eco-art and environmental ethics, my first thought was to attempt to locate and perhaps define the kind of environmental ethics that this artistic genre is informed by. It soon became clear, however, that the project of thinking about how this variety of diverse works might be framed by a specific environmental ethics – such as ecofeminism, deep ecology, etc – is correspondingly difficult to that of defining it as an existent formal, or disciplinary arts practice. Wallace Heim, in the context of describing Social Practice Art (to which fluid genre many Eco-art works conform) makes the following helpful observation. “Because these works are resolutely *between* conventional forms, criticism from disciplinary perspectives can find the works lacking.”<sup>16</sup> Essentially, while these works are informed by various strands of art practice and environmental ethics, it is not my intention to attempt to frame Eco-art as a whole, or these projects specifically, according to any single framework, but instead to focus on the practical and ethical implications of the work. In short, while this

paper will involve some discussion of how the work might be situated as art, and discussions of how environmental ethics *inform* the work, my intent is not to reduce the works to this sort of framing, but instead to focus on the *consequences* of the work in terms of its ability to alter attitudes, and re-form ethical frameworks in a more ecologically sensitive and responsible manner.

Eco-art works are, as already discussed, specific to particular places. Partway through my discussion of Eco-art and ethical engagement by way of focusing on individual projects as examples, I realised I had fallen into doing what Mick Smith, in *An Ethics of Place*<sup>17</sup>, and philosophers from non-Western cultural traditions often remind us that Western philosophy does; namely, to assume that it is the only philosophy. In other words, I had initially configured my enquiry as if the Western philosophical tradition, and the Western worldview were the only traditions and worldviews to be considered. In doing this I was myself embodying a practice of which I am critical. In almost every case, critical writing on or about Eco-art is part of and informed by a Western perspective and as such asserts that the central project in which Eco-art is engaged has to do with changing and transcending existing cultural assumptions – assumptions about human-world relations based on specific Greek, Christian and Cartesian dualisms of mind/body, emotion/reason, objectivity/subjectivity and culture/nature that support a binary opposition between humans and non-humans and serve to separate us from any reciprocal relationship with our enviroing world. But what about Eco-art, or ecologically informed art that emerges in, or is produced in cultures that do not share such assumptions? Remaining sensitive to the cultural contexts in which Eco-art arises is a crucial part of determining its ethical consequences; and so, while I devote a good deal of attention to the ways in which Eco-art challenges and subverts dualisms inherent in Western contexts, I also leave room for a consideration of how ecological art in other cultures might function differently, serve other goals and be received in alternate ways.

As already mentioned, the Eco-art projects that have arisen over the last four decades have had some practical use, or function. While the notion of utility in art

might seem to raise the spectre of the longstanding debate between art as didacticism and art for art's sake, the focus of my argument is, rather, on the ethical effects of art works that are both functional *and* aesthetic, with the understanding that 'aesthetic' does not mean 'removed' from the world, as is often thought to be the case based on the Kantian idea that "disinterested attention" is required for aesthetic experience. Rather, I draw on the etymology of "aesthetic", meaning that we are engaged by and in the work by way of our *senses* – by way of our embodied being in the world.

From time to time in this discussion, I refer to the following definition of "reformist" and "radical" environmentalisms as a helpful way of considering a work or an ethical stance:

Environmentalism may be reformist or more radical. The former is anthropocentric and aims to ameliorate the environment primarily for the benefit of "anthropos" ("man"). To this end, 'reform environmentalists' employ such measures as 'resource management' (including 'resource conservation') or technological innovations, but see no need for a fundamental change in perspective or values. A more radical environmentalism is ecocentric and seeks to improve the life of planet Earth as a whole. Its adherents believe that 'nature' is sentient and intrinsically valuable".<sup>18</sup>

### **Eco-art and Ethical Engagement**

If you are going to challenge the old Cartesian dualisms – like the one that separates art from life – with more participatory and engaged forms of consciousness, then you will also need a whole new language; one that expresses interdependence and reciprocity, so that the creative imagination can meet its new task. Changing paradigms is more than just a conceptual challenge...

Suzi Gablik, in *ecovention*<sup>19</sup>

We can be ethical in relation only with that which we can see, feel,  
understand, love, or otherwise have faith in.

Aldo Leopold, *The Land Ethic*

In the words of Chris Cuomo, “[t]he term “eco-art” is used to describe art that expresses an environmentalist spirit ... Artists motivated by ecological values create works that challenge assumptions ... and enact new forms of being, engagement and restoration”.<sup>20</sup> In other words, Eco-art is *essentially* concerned with ethical engagement with the enviroing world. It springs from a profound concern about unethical and uncaring human cultural interactions with the world and seeks to not only comment on, but to change these. Artists who become Eco-art practitioners are collectively distressed at the loss of habitat and species, devastated by the destruction of the biosphere and the bioregions they call home and appalled at what all this proposes for future generations of humans. Conversely, they are moved in a positive sense by a love for their home places and of the world as a diverse interaction of interrelated lifeforms. Many artists, so motivated, act by bringing their creative engagement with the world into forms that directly address and seek solutions to the ongoing devastation of beings, lands, waters and the very air. Eco-art practice emerges as direct action environmentalism and activism through acts of intervention. And yet, even works that do not seem explicitly activist or interventionist might be considered as interventions in terms of how they act to influence the ways we think about, perceive and move through the world.

Some Eco-art works for instance may not engage us in overtly cognitive ways, but engage us emotionally, perceptually, sensuously. Alan Sonfist’s *Time Landscape* contributes (even if in a small way) to the general air quality of New York as it contributes to our lived experience of the world. Situated on a busy corner in Greenwich Village, *Time Landscape* consists of a small woodland planted with native plant species that were present before colonisation of the area. Created in 1978, the work resonates back into the pre-colonial past while in its growth it

stretches into the future. It is a rustling, green, twittering space surrounded by concrete, brick and traffic. Our bodies are aware of its presence; the work interacts with our sensuous, embodied, perceiving, animal selves.<sup>21</sup>

Less well known than both Sonfist and his work, artist Carmen Rosen in Vancouver Canada worked with local community development director Paula Carr to recover the habitat of one of the only remaining urban creek remnants above ground in the city – the Still Creek habitat in Renfrew Ravine. The project includes a number of artworks created for the site by local school children working in collaboration with the artist. The ravine, which had become a dumping ground for such urban detritus as old car tires and mattresses, with the creek water dangerously polluted, is now a small green forested place in the busy eastside of Vancouver, where the sounds of traffic are muted and one hears instead birdsong and the gurgling of the creek, to which complex lifeforms are slowly returning.<sup>22</sup>

Eco-art works are in our spaces, if not our faces. These works can subtly intervene in the business as usual of moving through a cityscape, such as when walking along False Creek in downtown Vancouver we come across a human-size “nest” created by Claire Bédard, that recalls the presence of songbirds in the city community and links us with them through a work that resonates across species.<sup>23</sup>

We might also think of the ways that such works engage with ethics as both reformist and radical, anthropocentric and ecocentric in the ways that characterise the different strands of environmentalism. In most cases they seem to embody both to some degree, with definite leftist, or radical, leanings. Most of these artists see industrial and technological development inexorably rolling on as it has unchanged at least since the industrial revolution. They seek to intervene in and mitigate this unchecked development. Solution focused, they do not seek cultural change by confronting us with guilt, or with our wrongs, but by engaging people in, or reminding them of, our relationship with our enviroing world, and of the responsibilities inherent in being in relationship. These include loving, cherishing, negotiating and, above all, respecting our partners in relationship as subjects in

their own right. Eco-artists see the industrial/technological world growing without regard for the responsibilities of relationship and continuing to abuse the non-human world as resource to sustain this growth without concern for the wellbeing of natural systems that support us. Works such as Aviva Rahmani's recovery of a salt marsh from a dumpsite in coastal Maine seek to heal this dysfunctional and abusive relationship by recovering small pockets of habitat one at a time. The name under which she does this work is Ghost Nets, which "takes its name from the discovery that invisible, indestructible nets, lost by fishermen, float indefinitely in the sea, 'trapping fish indiscriminately and strip-mining the sea'. Thus, Ghost Nets offers a metaphor for the way destructive patterns trap and kill us all".<sup>24</sup>

Contemporary Eco-art practices, in contradistinction to 'environmental' or 'land art', exemplify a striving for balance in human/world relations and are often remedial in nature - what Canadian writer and art critic John Grande calls 'earth sensitive'.<sup>25</sup> Under this umbrella falls a variety of ever evolving forms and hybrid practices. Examples of these are Arts -Based Community Development projects such as those developed in the SongBird project in Vancouver Canada and large bioremedial works such as Keepers of the Waters' *Living Water Garden* in Chengdu, China and the performative interventions of the UK group Platform. But rather than attempting to define Eco-art by its many forms, the genre might best be described through a shared agenda; as the bringing into form of, in Gablik's words, "an aesthetics of interconnectedness, social responsibility and ecological attunement"<sup>26</sup>.

Having given a description of what Eco-art is, and, speaking in broad terms, how it engages with environmental ethics, I think it helpful to also provide a brief lineage for the emergence in North America of this genre from its beginnings in the cultural revolution of the 1960s North America, through the emergence of early forms of Earth and Land Art, and via developments in ecofeminist thought. In doing so I am not making a claim that contemporary Eco-art is Land Art, or that it is specifically ecofeminist; rather I am tracking its genesis.<sup>27</sup>

### **Radical Roots and Topography of Eco-art – a critical view**

In his introduction to the fourth edition of *Environmental Philosophy*, Michael Zimmerman reminds us that Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was a primary generator of both the environmental movement in North America and of environmental philosophy.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, and as part of this emerging environmental consciousness, a new form of art came into being, which came to be known as Earth and/or Land Art. Artists such as Helen Mayer-Harrison and Newton Harrison (known collectively as "Harrison Studio" and simply 'the Harrisons'), Alan Sonfist, Joseph Bueys and others still practicing today, began turning their attentions to the relationship between people and the land, in the form of an environmental art practice that set down roots and began to emerge from a crack in the roots of Modernist Western ideology.

In contradistinction to such early forms of Land and Environmental Art such as Christo's Running Fence, a nylon fence 39 kilometres long, and Ant Farm's Cadillac Ranch, where a row of ten Cadillacs were halfway buried fins-up in a Texas wheatfield,<sup>29</sup> the term Eco-art is intended, in part, to differentiate a more "earth-friendly", or in Grande's phrase, a more "earth-sensitive", way of working with the environment. Much Environmental and/or Land Art of the 1960s and 1970s involved tremendous imposition on the land and eco-systems, such as Robert Smithson's famous *Spiral Jetty*, or Michael Heizer's *Double Negative*, where 244,800 tonnes of earth was moved to form the land itself into a sculpture. Allen Carlson casts a critical eye on these practices in his essay "Is Environmental Art an Aesthetic Affront to Nature?" where he cites these examples as well as that of the artist Christo's surrounding of eleven islands in 5.5 million square feet of pink plastic as questionable in both environmental and aesthetic terms.<sup>30</sup> Emily Brady and Stephanie Ross in related but separate commentaries each refer to these as imposing "masculine gestures" in nature.<sup>31</sup> Similarly sceptical, Canadian art critic and writer John Grande refers to monumental works of this order as 'ego-centric' rather than 'eco-centric'.<sup>32</sup> Such practices certainly seem unlikely

candidates for ethical engagement with the other-than-human, yet many artists, like Smithson and Heizer, saw themselves as engaging the land in intimate ways, and in Smithson's case, specifically critiquing industrial practices. Critic and curator Brian Wallace thinks that important aspects of these massive works have tended to be overlooked; "...aesthetic descriptions [of monumental earthworks] failed to acknowledge the complex relationships between the earthworks and the social and biological context of the desert".<sup>33</sup> He goes on to say that one could get a sense of this relationship only by visiting the works in situ.<sup>34</sup> Wallace's comments, in other words, explicitly assert that these works call for and require an embodied experience, and that, through such embodied experience, one comes, by way of the art, to gain a renewed experience of the place. This is the kind of engagement that Emily Brady in her paper "Rooted Art?"<sup>35</sup> also advocates for these works, but she goes on to note that the remote locations of these early and massive earthworks make such connections difficult.<sup>36</sup>

Wallace's sympathies for these works notwithstanding, from our view some thirty plus years on, many do seem insensitive and uncaring with respect to the way they interact with the environment. That they now seem so could perhaps be interpreted as a hopeful sign of a contemporary move toward a greater caring about environment, or sensitivity to, the other-than-human in Western culture, and of a general trend of calling into question industrialised culture's dogma of what Canadian ecologist Neil Evernden termed *resourcism*<sup>37</sup>. These artists, for all their stated intentions of pulling away from a Modernist framework, remained products of mid to late twentieth century Western culture, and while the works might represent the beginnings of a move away from these cultural norms, even if one assesses them charitably, they remain problematic in their treating the environment as mere material, or medium for an art purpose.

In addition to the above considerations of the roots of Eco-art in Land and Environmental Art, and of the ethical debates this work, it is appropriate to note the ways in which this genre has also been greatly influenced by the ethical dimensions of feminist thought, its perception of the oppressions of women,

nature, and “colonised others” as interconnected, and its critique of the ideologies and systems of power that enforce these oppressions. Therefore it is important to include in any review of the roots of Eco-art a mention of early ecofeminist land art. Gloria Feman Orenstein, in her 1987 essay *The Greening of Gaia*, provided a summary of this work, distinguishing it from other art forms with respect to its particular integration of ecology and liberationist politics.

In the creation of new cultures that neither pit humans against nature nor set them above it, but rather situate humans within the cycles of the cosmos and celebrate the interconnectedness of all things, the arts have begun to play a major transformational part. This, in itself, makes ecofeminism a different kind of political movement, for instead of viewing the arts as adjuncts to political activity, or as distractions from political activism, ecofeminism considers the arts to be essential catalysts of change.<sup>38</sup>

What Orenstein is referring to here is a particular movement in feminist art practice during the 1970s and especially the 1980s that saw a proliferation of earth/body art, works in which many women artists explored relationships among body, land and culture. These artists saw both the female body and the body of the earth (or nature) as colonized sites, fodder for an exploitive patriarchal culture. The work was personal and political. It explored human relationships with the land, while at the same time critiquing dominant cultural beliefs and behaviours. Examples of this way of working are found in the performative/sculptural/place-dialogic works of Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta, who in the 1970s created transient embodiments of her own form in mud, in soft limestone, on leaves, and with gunpowder. These works are statements about the fecundity of land and woman, and of the violence done to both by a dominant patriarchal culture. However, many of these early works by women artists came to be considered ‘essentialist’ – problematic in their linking woman with earth – and such practices and ideas continue to be viewed with suspicion in much contemporary feminist thought.

Drawing nourishment from the burgeoning environmental movement of the 70s, from Early forms of Land and Earth Art, from the critical writings and artistic practices of an increasingly sophisticated ecofeminism – as well as from significant international sources – such as UK organisations Common Ground, Platform and others – a tradition of Eco-art continues to grow and evolve in North America. It is adaptive, hybrid and flexible, informed by fields of knowledge as diverse as the natural sciences, landscape architecture, North American First Nations cultures, and brought into focus by local understandings of and a reawakened appreciation for the agency and ecological significance of such non-human elements as bird populations, salmon migrations, forests and watersheds, to name only a few.

Before turning to a more detailed examination of some specific examples of Eco-art, I would first like to examine three aspects of engagement common to the diversity of works that comprise the genre of Eco-art as a whole, aspects that will provide additional context for the project descriptions and analyses that follow.

### **Three Things (Modes of Engagement)**

In addition to the shared ethical beliefs and commitments described earlier, Eco-art projects and works share three important modes of engagement that serve to connect people both to a fundamental relationship with the other-than-human physical world. In nearly all Eco-art projects, these three modes of connection and engagement are education, conversation and community.

#### *Education*

Ubiquitous in contemporary Eco-art practices is a focus on learning; learning about habitats, eco-systems, how to tread with sensitivity in the world – in short, how to act in the world as if everything matters – which, in a world of interdependent relationships, must be a primary ethical assumption. Eco-art then, as a form of environmental education, reveals interrelationships among beings and things and foregrounds ethical choices in the context of this understanding. Eco-

art practitioner and educator Ann Rosenthal tells us that “[b]y its very nature, Eco-art is multidisciplinary and pedagogical.”<sup>39</sup> These works aim to educate in the broadest possible sense. They do so in numerous ways, some overt and some subtle, and what this education comprises, in addition to the obvious aspects of gathering and passing along specific information, or data, about, for example, how plants remove heavy metals from the earth, is ethical engagement.

Many bioremedial projects, for instance, are too small in size to make the massive physical changes required to restore large areas of habitats damaged by industrial practices and modern urbanisation, so they function as experiential learning spaces. Learning is within the transparency of natural process designed into many bioremedial works, so that in seeing how water is cleaned by plants, for example, people experience and come to understand how natural systems<sup>40</sup> work. Such bioremedial projects also function as exemplary models, providing people with an understanding that interactions with our world can be different from the business-as-usual of corporate industrialisation. Learning in some of these projects also results from having communities of people working together in cleaning up a river or restoring a wetland and sharing their stories – and, even more importantly, learning results from the work itself, from the embodied engagement in a praxis that reveals and foregrounds relationships in the world that extend well beyond the human.

### *Conversation*

Linked to learning and education is another mode of engagement – at the centre of Eco-art practices is conversation. These conversations take place inside the work, in the collaborative making of the work, they take place with the work, as when we engage in an exchange with songbirds, and they take place within community. Conversations build community, confirming, and nurturing relationships and intimacies. They are revelatory – in conversation we learn about and come to know others. And what many of these Eco-art works do in particular is to introduce humans to other-than-human elements, and open up a space where the voice of others in the ecological community may be heard and responded to.

Opening the conversation to the voice of a river, or to birdsong, for example, becomes important, as does engaging with the artwork itself that has its own story to share. A particular strength of almost all Eco-art works is the foregrounding via the practice of the relationship between human and other-than-human voices through the opening of this conversational space.

### *Community*

Communities are groups of similarly minded people; communities grow spontaneously from shared interests and experiences. Communities are also groups of people and other beings who live and interact together. An ecologist is interested in biotic community, defined as “[a]n aggregation of different species of organisms living and interacting within the same habitat”<sup>41</sup>. Anthropologist Tim Ingold tells us that “relations among humans, which we are accustomed to calling ‘social’, are but a sub-set of ecological relations.”<sup>42</sup>

In the case of Eco-art, communities are formed in the process of being engaged, in various ways, with a work or project. Sharing the experience of a massive long-term reclamation project such as *Nine Mile Run*<sup>43</sup> builds community as does sharing the experience of getting up very early in the morning to listen to birdsong – one of the components of the SongBird project. Most, if not all, Eco-art works and projects are consciously committed to community in important ways. Some work with the natural tendency for communities to grow and are designed to encourage this. Others work with existent communities of humans and non-humans. “Community collaborative” designates a work where local people have an equal part in the creating and sustaining of the project. In all these various ways Eco-art projects build webs of relationships and interactions. Since ecology, according to one definition, is the “relations of animals and plants to one another and to the outer world”,<sup>44</sup> and since humans are clearly one species of animal, ecology is, itself, inherently about relationship and community.

Education, conversation and community – nearly all Eco-art projects in various ways and to various degrees bring together these three modes of engagement. In

the analysis of the three examples that follow, I intend to show how these three modes inform and interact with one another to characterise both the works themselves and the ways in which they function as catalysts in improving human-world relations through the alteration of ethical attitudes and perceptual frameworks.

### **Contemporary Eco-art Practice – 3 examples**

...no one else creates the questions and invents the different perspectives that artists of all disciplines engage with in their practice. To ignore art and artists is to see, hear, and feel only part of the diverse richness of life and the issues we face.

David Haley, Eco-Artist and Academic, *Manchester Metropolitan University*<sup>45</sup>

As I mentioned earlier, one of the best ways to understand, or ‘get inside’ contemporary Eco-art practices without actually being there, as it were, to gain a sense of how they engage with ethics, world and people, and how they might actually better human/world relations, is to pay close attention to some specific examples of the practice. To that end, I have chosen to foreground the work of Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison (known as ‘The Harrison Studio’ or just ‘the Harrisons’), Betsy Damon and her organisation Keepers of the Waters – I focus specifically on their project the *Living Water Garden* in Chengdu, China – and the initiatives of the SongBird project in Vancouver, Canada. These three are far from an exhaustive representation of the diversity of works that exist within Eco-art, but I believe they represent aspects central to the genre and to this discussion. While all three examples represent the works of North American artists and Eco-arts organisations, they vary in the form and location of the works and in the kinds of collaborations in which they engage. The Harrisons’ *Future Garden Part 1* is in Bonn, Germany, *The Living Water Garden* is in China, while the SongBird project is in Western Canada. True to the genre of Eco-art, all

collaborate with local places and communities, and connect with the worldviews, philosophies and ethics of those cultures.

- *The Harrison Studio*

Work often begins when we perceive an anomaly in the environment that is the result of opposing beliefs or contradictory metaphors. These moments, in which reality no longer appears seamless and the cost of belief has become outrageous, offer the opportunity to create new spaces, first in the mind and thereafter in everyday life.

Helen Mayer-Harrison and Newton Harrison, *Harrison Studio Statement*

I begin – at the beginning as it were – with the Harrison Studio, the works of Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison (also commonly known as “the Harrisons”), because their practice spans the distance from the beginnings of Eco-art to the present. Their works, both early and more recent, also explicate and illustrate some of the things I have been asserting about Eco-art in general. The Harrisons have a foot in each world of past and present practice, as well as in both the official ‘art world’, where their works are recognised, and in the more marginalised spaces of Eco-art. The fact they and their work are so well known is due not only to the longevity of their practice, but to the remarkable originality and efficacy of their works, which are both like, and very unlike, those of others who have also been working in this genre since the early days of Earth Art.

The couple has been working creatively with land and ecological issues since they were first influenced by Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* in 1962. Their projects are frequently international, always monumental and often bioremedial. Examples of their projects include their *Lagoon Cycle*, which took place over 10 years from 1972-1982, and which involved researching and documenting the role of water and wetlands in different cultures. This piece politically and critically reflects on the effects of industrialization on human communities and ecosystems alike. The

7th section of the *Lagoon Cycle*, titled *Buffalo Wallow*, addresses the replacement of the water buffalo in Sri Lanka by tractors. “The water buffalo were an indigenous part of the ecosystem, replaced themselves for free, did not pollute the environment and provided both milk and meat... When the water buffalo disappeared, the rate of malaria increased.”<sup>46</sup> In 1988-90, the Harrisons proposed *Breathing Space for the Sava River* – to construct a series of wetlands designed to filter chemical effluent from the river before it reached a nature reserve in ex-Yugoslavia. The project was never realized, however, as war broke out in the Balkans. In 1995, their *Vision For the Green Heart of Holland*, proposed “ a Ring of Biodiversity, 140 km long and 1-2 km wide, which would act as an interface between rural and urban environments.”<sup>47</sup> Like all the Harrisons’ projects, it was a product of long and careful research and planning.

Due to the scope of the proposed projects, many are not implemented as such, but instead exist as large maps, diagrams, poems and texts exhibited as gallery installations. The Harrisons’ current role as consultants, researchers, designers and, primarily, as initiators of conversations, means that if these massive works are to be implemented, they must be taken on by others, such as government bodies. Mostly concerned with “the insertion of their ideas into larger political and social debates”,<sup>48</sup> they refer to their practice as an ongoing “conversational drift”, a process of cultural change brought about over time, as stories and ideas move around. Due to the desired goal of having their ideas infiltrate larger social and political systems, they do not attempt to retain ownership of them, but hope to have them adopted by those who have the resources to implement them.

Artist and writer Arlene Raven says that the Harrisons “work from their aesthetics, from which originates the impulse to restore the relationship between the physical ground and the physical humans inhabiting that ground.”<sup>49</sup> She tells us that the Harrisons “want to create actions that not only stand beside, but work to undo the domination and manipulation of nature in the service of man-made hierarchical systems”.<sup>50</sup> As do most practitioners in the genre of Eco-art, they

believe quite firmly that a problematic mechanistic human worldview *can* be changed, as can the environing world, for the better.

A fairly recent example of the Harrison's works is *Future Garden Part 1: The Endangered Meadows of Europe*<sup>51</sup>. For this work, a 400-year old meadow, slated for destruction, was moved to the roof of a museum in Bonn, Germany. The seeds of this meadow were later harvested and planted at a site across the river from its original location, effectively salvaging the meadow and providing an opportunity for education and public engagement that would not occurred had they simply moved the meadow to another site. Several questions immediately arise, the most prominent of which may be whether this is really saving the meadow ecosystem. Why not just plant a meadow with indigenous seeds? Or, if one wished to save the meadow, why not protest and work to save this very meadow, in situ, which, it could be argued, is *the* actual meadow, rather than either the meadow as moved to the museum roof, or the one later planted? In the following, the Harrisons tell us that their work is an both actual and symbolic meadow:

One meadow

Which is every meadow

Becomes storyteller

Teacher and model<sup>52</sup>

*Future Garden* is obviously more a didactic artwork than an actual case of habitat recovery. Its veracity as ecosystem conservation is conceptual and long-term. The irony – that hallmark of postmodernism – of the work is also apparent. The piece begs the question that if the only way to save, or “recover” an endangered ecosystem is to install it on the roof of a museum and call it art, what have we come to as a culture and a civilisation? Can we save eco-systems only by declaring them to be art? The placement of this meadow eco-system on a museum adds another layer of resonance as well. Museums are for collections of things that are no longer alive and functioning in present day life. What does this say about our relationship with the environing and “natural” world – in this case, meadows? These are, of course, precisely the sort of questions one is meant to

ask. The placement of the meadow on the museum roof is deeply disturbing. It feels wrong, even as the meadow itself feels good to be in – and yes, we should be disturbed. If we do not care for and value these meadows, then we will lose them from our lives, as will all beings that depend upon them for their livelihood.

Can this meadow on a museum, with its admonitions of a possible future, be effective in promoting change? The answer is, possibly, yes. The work received a great deal of attention and had many visitors from the public. As a work of art it opens a conversation about the need to save other ecosystems *in situ*. It is also a living lesson in the experience of the meadow that leads to a desire to keep meadows around. The meadow itself speaks through its being, its presence. It entices and whispers to our sensuous, bodied selves. The meadow feels good to be with, even as it remains disturbing, beautiful and disruptive in its dislocation. This is the kind of powerful experience that Rebecca Solnit mentions in her book *As Eve Said to the Serpent*, where she discusses the disruptive and challenging abilities of beauty, and its potential for opening us up, so we are no longer limited, even if only briefly, by our usual ways of framing the world.<sup>53</sup> In such experiences we are confronted ethically, in visceral and emotional ways, in addition to the more obvious, cognitive ones. How do we respond? This is a question the work asks. It does not provide answers, but encourages them.

Having considered some of the Harrisons' works with respect to their ethical environmentalism, additional questions nonetheless arise. One such question might be how this work substantially differs from that of early "Earth artists", such as Robert Smithson, whose primary interest was in working with large "disturbed" post-industrial sites? Moving a meadow is not so large a project as moving the tailings required to build Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, but it is a substantial action on the earth that could be construed, in Grande's terms, as "ego-centric" as opposed to "eco-centric". In the Harrisons' defence, I would argue that their work, in contradistinction to Smithson's expresses a sensitivity of process and underlying intention to heal abused natural systems. By collaborating with natural systems and not just with people, their work portrays the human as embedded

within natural systems. In contrast, Smithson's works do not display such sensitivity to natural systems, nor express this embeddedness. They seem rather to *foreground* industrial damage, adding disruption onto disruption, asserting another layer of imposition onto what in ecofeminist terms is the colonised other, or body, of the land and its natural systems.<sup>54</sup> The land, to Smithson, seems to be material, or medium, for his art practice, and to express a kind of thinking not substantially different from that which caused the initial disruption, or damage. Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* may have directed us beyond the gallery and reawakened our appreciation for the materiality of the world, but it remains an "objet d'art" in the Modernist sense, and stands as an autonomous creation. The Harrisons' *Future Garden I* on the other hand, is didactic and pedagogic, engaging us in an ethical conversation and enlarging our sense of community. As such it represents a clear shift from "ego-centric" to "eco-centric" concerns, and, by virtue of its ethical import, serves as a clear illustration of a distinct new genre of Eco-art.

- *The Living Water Garden*

This planet is our home. If we are going to protect it, we really have no choice but to become involved in the design of an environmental language that expresses symbolically and practically our mutual interdependence with the living systems of this planet.

Betsy Damon, quoted in *Living Water*<sup>55</sup>

On the Keepers of the Waters website, the *Living Water Garden* is described as "... a fully functioning water treatment plant, a giant sculpture in the shape of a fish (symbol of regeneration in Chinese culture), a living environmental education center, a refuge for wildlife and plants, and a wonderful place for people."<sup>56</sup>

Designed to clean polluted water from the Fu-Nan river system in the heart of the city of Chegdu, the *Living Water Garden* engages the public directly through education and conversation. People are engaged at first because they can actually

see polluted water pass through the park and emerge clean. Posted signs along the pathways explain how this happens, combining with the sensory experience of the work to educate the public through revealing the process of how water is cleaned by plants and revitalised by air and movement.

We are both aesthetically and biologically drawn to water, as demonstrated by how we love to live by it. And in *Living Water Garden* the lived experience of walking the path of the river water as it is cleaned and re-enlivened by wetlands, pools, and flowforms is a process of following and tracing with one's body the path of the water, sharing its journey each step of the way. This embodied relationship is always present amidst the more obvious cultural ideas and thinking in which we're engaged, but projects such as this recall us to our own corporeality and our interconnected relationship with the physical world. Through sharing the river's process and the project's foregrounding of the relationship with the river, people come to care about the river for itself, and in terms of its place in the ecological community.

These kinds of embodied engagement and ways of knowing via relationship are typical of Damon's works. According to Ruth Wallen,

Damon often cites as the pivotal point in her development of her work, her 1985 piece, *A Memory of Clean Water*, where she cast a 200-foot section of a dry riverbed in hand-made paper. The strategy of embodiment is ... central to this piece – through closeness, through touching and replicating the watercourse, empathy is established with the particular. ... this work evokes relationship rather than identification.<sup>57</sup>

In the *Living Water Garden*, Damon has opened the opportunity for this pivotal experience of “relationship rather than identification” to everyone who spends time in the park, sharing the water's journey.

Recent and rapid industrialisation and its accompanying urbanisation are placing incredible strains on natural systems in China. So rapid has the change been to rivers, for example, that older people easily remember swimming and fishing in

waters that are now polluted beyond recognition. Unlike in many cases of reclamation, or bioremedial Eco-art works, it was not the artist (Betsy Damon) that initiated the clean-up of the Fu-Nan rivers, but a group of local schoolchildren, and their Natural Sciences teacher, Da Pengfu, who recalled swimming in the river as student. He said he "...felt that if the children had a deep understanding of the river that it would nurture a feeling of respect."<sup>58</sup> The *Living Water Garden* reflects this feeling on the part of Da Pengfu and nurtures this deep understanding.

Damon, then, got involved after a revitalisation plan for the river was already underway. She proposed a natural water recovery system that would also be a park and include an environmental education centre – an interface foregrounding the overlap and interdependencies between naturally existing systems and human culture. In making an argument to persuade the local officials to undertake the *Living Water Garden* as part of the overall river recovery, a performance was organised in which women wearing red gloves washed lengths of white silk in the river. The longer they washed, the dirtier the silk became. The performance referred directly to a legend which spoke of the Fu-Nan River being so pure that silk washed in it would become more bright and lustrous.<sup>59</sup> The performance had a profound impact on the media, who broadcast the images of the event over and over. It also had a significant impact on Zhang Jihai, director of the Fu-Nan Rivers Bureau. In Damon's words:

The cloth turned brown and gray, giving wordless testimony to the great loss that has occurred. Upon seeing this, the agency head told me that he was deeply touched and reminded anew why he does his job. He said that water forms the spiritual basis of life, and that care for the environment and economic development cannot be separated.<sup>60</sup>

This response on the part of a government official, followed by action, is connected to what Damon cites as a reason for her being able to realise this work in China when it would have proved difficult in the U.S. She tells us, as reflected in her recollection of Zhang Jihai's words, that there is in China a deeply held

cultural belief that the wellbeing of people and environment are linked, and that the environment must be cared for.<sup>61</sup> This belief does not mean that the land and waters are not there to be used by people. Rather, people are seen as a part of natural systems, or a natural order, within which one's acts should be in harmony.<sup>62</sup> Philosopher Tu Wei-Ming explains that for the Chinese, there is no "Nature" constructed as Western culture has made it. Nature is not specifically to be preserved as a thing "out there", but is to be cared for as that of which the people are also a part. People are fed and their wellbeing depends on using the world and the other beings we share it with. In China, there is still an awareness of a "natural order" that Tu Wei-Ming also says lies very deep in the Chinese identity.<sup>63</sup> One thinks also of Lao Tzu, who encouraged the people to notice the natural order of things and work within it.<sup>64</sup>

In seeming contradistinction to the traditional Chinese human/nature relationship, many ecosystems in China, already heavily mediated by centuries of human use, are being negatively affected by China's rapid industrial growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as are the traces of older ways of interacting with the environment, which may have been more "balanced", or "earth-friendly". In such a climate, as the schoolteacher Da Pengfu recognised, reminders of the human/world connection become critical.

Damon points out that in cleaning 250 cubic metres of water daily the park cannot possibly clean the entire river.<sup>65</sup> It can however, provide an exemplary model and an inspiration. If there were, for example, such parks along all the rivers, the condition of the rivers would change dramatically for the better. If all wastewater was treated by wetlands and natural systems – as she claims this project demonstrates can be done – then entire habitat systems could be recovered throughout the region.<sup>66</sup> Damon hopes the knowledge and influence of the project will spread to other centres in China and it seems that to some extent she will see this hope realised. The *Living Water Garden* has, in fact, been so successful in convincing the Chinese government about natural systems of water purification that Damon has been asked back to China to work on similar projects in other

cities.<sup>67</sup> In addition, another, much larger, project is being installed elsewhere in the city of Chengdu, by designer Huang Shida, who collaborated with Damon on the first *Living Water Garden*.<sup>68</sup> “We as a developing country need to develop our economy, but we absolutely at the same time must do this environmentally,” says Secretary General Zhang. “I think that polluting first and then cleaning-up is an extremely uneconomic and irresponsible way of doing things”.<sup>69</sup>

The third project I consider is one that was in part created to respond to a nexus of complicated cultural differences resulting from, on the one hand, rapid immigration, and on the other, colonial practices that fairly recently sought to overlay Western ideology onto a pre-existing First Nations worldview. This project – the SongBird project – is one on which I worked for six years from initial research stage in 1996/97 until completion in 2002. I have selected it as an example of long-term collaboration among diverse groups and disciplines as well as for its creative diversity in adaptive forms of engagement. In particular, I include it here because its creators specifically chose to foreground the voices of non-human members of the community, taking what, for want of a better word, I will call an animist position in encouraging people to consider community as a collaborative relationship among human and non-human kinds of being.

### **- SongBird**

The world is full of persons, only some of whom are human.

Graham Harvey, *Animism: Respecting the Living World*<sup>70</sup>

Initiated in Vancouver Canada by writer and theatre director Nelson Gray and myself, and collaboratively developed in partnership with the Institute for Urban Ecology at Douglas College, the SongBird project was comprised of a number of events and initiatives designed to engage urban communities in understanding themselves to be part of a greater, non-human community and enviroing world. While in this way the project bore similarities to the two previous works I have looked at, SongBird also differed from these in important ways. First, it was

neither a bioremedial project nor was it a conceptual visual art or museum work. In fact, it was often not recognised as being “art” at all. In terms of both form and content it came closest to what Wallace Heim calls “social practice art”.<sup>71</sup> SongBird was very much about building collaborations and opening up subjective experiences of place through the arts.

Like most other Eco-art works, the initiatives of the SongBird project were about encouraging learning through both direct, cognitive means, and via indirect, embodied and emotional processes. SongBird focussed on the local, in the sense of the intimate day-to-day lived relationships that people develop and maintain with a place. Anthropologist Tim Ingold discusses such lived relationships in his book *Perception of the Environment*, where he speaks about place and being as continuous. “[T]hrough living in it”, he writes, “the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it.”<sup>72</sup>

Given Ingold’s observations it is important, before taking a detailed look at the SongBird project, to take some time to consider its context – its “place”. What I mean by “place” in this instance is the ecology of beings, land, waters and cultures of a specific geographic location. In this case the place is the west coast of British Columbia, Canada, bounded by still-wild spaces of mountains and old growth forest, where the Fraser River meets the sea in some of the last intact river estuary habitat in North America. It is now called the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). Ecologically, socially, it is complex. First, politically speaking, it is colonised territory, and remains as such. To date, with only a handful of treaties signed, almost the entire province of British Columbia, including the GRVRD, remains First Nations land<sup>73</sup>. Accordingly, the names and intentions of Western colonial powers lie uneasily here over ancient ecologies of land and culture. Here, the Western malady of separation of human from nature can be said to arise from the usual source of dualistic and mechanistic thinking, but this is then compounded by an unease, or dis-ease of not-belonging. It is difficult to put down deep roots in a place where as one does so, one disturbs and must contend with the ghosts of ancient cultures along with the ghosts of the relatively recent

acts of one's own colonial past. In thinking about the Canadian coloniser culture's uneasy relationship with the land, Northrop Frye quotes philosopher George Grant:

That conquering relation to place has left its mark within us. When we go in to the Rockies we may have the sense that gods are there. But if so, they cannot manifest themselves to us as ours. They are the gods of another race, and we cannot know them because of what we are, and what we did. There can be nothing immemorial for us except the environment as object.<sup>74</sup>

And in a remarkable passage, Frye goes on to elaborate on Grant's observations. "There are gods here," he writes, "and we have offended them. They are not ghosts: we are the ghosts, Cartesian ghosts caught in the machine that we have assumed nature to be."<sup>75</sup>

Added to a sense of a coloniser culture both being and not being at home in this place, is the rapid growth of the region. Vancouver is currently considered the "most liveable city in the world" and from 1991 to 1996, when development of the SongBird project began, it was the fastest growing metropolitan area in Canada, with growth at 14.3 percent.<sup>76</sup> This kind of human population growth means that few of the people who live in the GVRD, except the very young, were born there, or have indeed spent much of their lives there. It means also that great pressure is placed on the lands, waters, air, forests, farmlands and resident non-human animals of the region. Moreover, according to the official *Newcomer's Guide to Vancouver*, over seventy languages are now spoken in the city,<sup>77</sup> and this kind of diversity means that it is very difficult to achieve continuity in terms of belief, worldview, and a standard of ethical behaviour regarding the lands, waters, forests and other non-human members of the community. So the question then becomes not only how do the children of colonisers come to know, or recognise their dwelling with/in this place, but also how do the many recent arrivals *come to dwell* in this place? It is helpful here to cite Ingold's definition of what he calls "the *dwelling perspective*", which is

...a perspective that treats the immersion of the organism-person in an environment or lifeworld as an inescapable condition of existence... the world continually comes into being around the inhabitant, and its manifold constituents take on significance through their incorporation into a regular pattern of life activity.<sup>78</sup>

Exploring the question of why people from different cultural backgrounds perceive the world differently, Ingold concludes that it is because “organism-persons” develop along with and within an ecology, an environing world, and do so continuously through their dwelling as part of this world.<sup>79</sup> It follows then, that cultures also do this, in that (and here I repeat Ingold’s observation quoted in my introduction) “relationships among humans, which we are accustomed to call ‘social’, are but a subset of ecological relations”.<sup>80</sup> In the context of places like Vancouver, such ideas give one pause. Ingold, of course, must be thinking of those cultures that are relatively stable over time in and with a place. But this prompts me to ask how this might work in cases where the human population is fairly transient, or where, as is the case in the GVRD, it is a *mélange* of peoples recently come from many other places-cultures? How also, as I mentioned above, does one think about place and ecological dwelling in the case of a dominant coloniser culture whose social and ecological histories of dwelling are also imported from elsewhere along with their ideas about human-world relations – in this case Western, dualistic and mechanistic – and which clings onto these histories and world views, ignoring ancient stories of dwelling and cultural/social worldviews already existing within the place? While these two questions might seem to be addressing different situations, they are in fact related, in that in each case these members of the community must develop and/or recognise their dwelling relationship within the greater community of ecological relations.

These are some of the questions and dilemmas that presented themselves to Nelson Gray and myself, both born and raised in the region and both children of children of colonisers. Our response was to develop the SongBird project as a series of events, activities and performances that were designed to foreground

what we thought of as a backgrounded and largely unacknowledged lived relationship of dwelling (within the experience of the children of colonisers), and also to bring, guide, or introduce newcomers into a newly informed dwelling relationship with/in this place. We believed that by foregrounding and affirming this relationship through embodied practices, a love of place and the non-human community would grow, one that would consequently manifest as ecologically sensitive, and ethically sound, behaviours.

We chose songbirds to represent the project for a number of reasons. People love them in a way that transcends cultural differences; there are stories about birds in many cultures and bird watching was and is the fastest growing pastime in North America. In short, birds have significance to people both as metaphors and symbols and as living members of the ecosystem community. For many of us, they have come to represent freedom, mysterious in their knowing patterns of air and wind and how to navigate the planet, which they do, linking cultures and places across vast distances. As indicator species for habitat health, they are also literally canaries in the coalmine. Environment Canada indicated to me that we really know very little, in scientific terms, about songbirds, but we do know they are disappearing rapidly.<sup>81</sup>

The SongBird project was comprised of four main initiatives, events and performances over five years, with several smaller, satellite initiatives.

1. The annual *Babylon Gardens Habitat Challenge* encouraged people to plant well-designed bird and insect friendly gardens on urban rooftops and balconies to support migratory pollinator species. Through learning about and ‘doing’ gardening one learns the weather and patterns of seasons in a place. One becomes acquainted with the plants that grow in a place, and interacts physically with the non-human community. The beauty and captivating scents of these gardens served to draw one into relationship. All this becomes patterned into one’s own being with/in a place. Through nurturing, we care and belong to the greater social ecology of a place.

The *Babylon Gardens* program also offered workshops on garden design for small spaces, native plants and the habitat needs of indigenous, migratory and pollinator species.

2. The *Living City Forum* (1998 and 1999) brought together artists, scientists, architects, landscape designers, environmentalists, community groups, businesses and the general public to discuss local habitat, interspecies relations, the farms and the wild spaces bordering the city, and how to better support their flourishing. The discussions were rooted in the premise that humans are part of local ecosystems, and, this being the case, that it helped to know one's neighbours, including the wild ones, and discover how to behave as responsible members of the community. In the summer of 1998 more than 500 black bear were killed in the GVRD because rapid urban growth was constructing new boundaries between humans and the wild – imaginary boundaries that the bear regularly cross in going about their business in the community. Each year several million songbirds are killed by colliding with windows that are not marked, so the birds cannot see them. The *Living City Forum* was a place to bring forward these and other community concerns and collectively discover solutions.
3. The *Dawn Chorus Celebration* was an annual event, modelled on the International Dawn Chorus, which originated in the UK and which was held on the first weekend of May each year. Intended to encourage awareness among the people of the GVRD of birds and of their habitat needs, the *Dawn Chorus* was configured as a series of official “listening sites” in neighbourhoods throughout the area. Each was “staffed” with a volunteer birder from the local natural history society. The event was a “meet and greet” the avian members of the community; it was an opportunity to visit them in their places, to listen to them, come to understand some of their needs, and to see where and how they lived. By taking an unofficial “bird count” of species and numbers, people became

more connected to the presence of birds in the community, and more desirous of supporting their wellbeing. This “listening to the other” was also an important part of the development of the *SongBird Oratorio*.

4. The seed for the *SongBird Oratorio* was planted at the very beginning of the project, when we heard a robin’s evening song flying high and clear through the din of a light industrial area in Vancouver’s east side. Four years in development, the primary focus of the performance “was the relationship between humans and songbirds”.<sup>82</sup> Linked to the *Dawn Chorus*, the *SongBird Oratorio* was comprised of five songs, or arias, composed by five composers of different cultural origins and based on indigenous birdsong. There were also seven monologues written by Gray, who recently published a paper that includes some reflections on the *SongBird Oratorio*, in which he explains how the *Dawn Chorus* and the *SongBird Oratorio* performances were linked.

On the morning of the *Dawn Chorus*, people gathered after the experience of the listening sites for a breakfast celebration, and reported the bird sightings (or, more accurately, soundings) of the morning. As Gray recounts it,

It was only after the compilation of this list, and after naturalists on hand had given renditions of birdcalls, that the *SongBird* composers and performers presented their songs from the *Oratorio*. Producing the songs in this way...provided the audience with a first hand experience of the creatures that had inspired the vocal compositions, and allowed them to perceive, in their own way, the connections and distinctions between these two kinds of “song”.<sup>83</sup>

As the *Oratorio* was hatched from the song of a robin, so in the final performance of the work, at twilight in a garden, a robin arrived and burst into an evening song, performing a duet (intended or not) with the human singers.

In a similar collaborative spirit, French artist and landscape architect Claire Bédât studied animal architecture and constructed a large, human-size nest for the SongBird project based on a wren's design. The nest remained in situ in a small park in the heart of downtown Vancouver for almost a year. Children and animals loved it and by the time it was taken down, someone was sleeping in it regularly. People said they liked best the way it smelled and the way it enfolded their body, that it was comforting to them. After finishing the nest Bédât offered the following comments: "Growth is often assimilated to change - I changed during the making of this project and feel emotionally empowered and bounded to a greater cause: preserving biodiversity on Earth..."<sup>84</sup>

Although it is difficult to gauge the effectiveness of the SongBird project in terms of change in behaviours, feedback from the culturally diverse human participants in the project over five years was overwhelmingly positive. The most common response was wonder, while many reported a greater sense of connection to and knowledge about the local ecosystem, along with a feeling of being empowered to act on behalf of the wellbeing of the greater ecological community. Environmental issues no longer seemed so big and daunting, neither did they seem to be something happening "out there". They had come to be understood as issues or problems arising within community relations, something people could engage with.<sup>85</sup>

In thinking again of the questions that led to SongBird's becoming, one could say in hindsight that the project did not do enough specifically to attempt to reconcile coloniser/settler and First Nations cultural views, and these different understandings of the local place-world. Yet I believe it is correct to say that the children of the children of colonisers are becoming subtly hybridised, so that home is not elsewhere anymore, and the environment is no longer an object to the same extent that it was to original colonisers. At the same time, coloniser culture is so solidly supported by entrenched power structures whose representations are persistently foregrounded, that the only way that this infiltration of hybridity could happen is subtly, by knowledge seeping in through the crack under the

closed door of ideologies like a good west coast sea fog, like a secret lover through the back door, like Raven, that trickster and shapechanger,<sup>86</sup> thumbing his nose at who we think we are, and laughing, because we are no longer that, and don't yet recognise it.

If, as Ingold maintains in *Perception of the Environment*, those who dwell in a place *are* that place, or that one becomes place and place becomes oneself through the act of dwelling (although we don't really know how long this might take), then the separation we feel must be illusion, and any discomfort of placelessness we experience can be attributed to a stubborn belief in this illusion. There can be no hard boundaries in a world of becoming. The SongBird project and others like it foreground this relational being in the world, and as we see it, we recognise it as something we know, even if we can't tell how we arrived at the knowing. It seems to follow, then, that revelatory experience can create some internal shifts and disruption that could lead to transformation and changed ways of being in the world. Even in the face of ideologies that tell us otherwise, the conviction of personal, emotional, lived experience carries a great deal of value. "The reality of our situation is being envired, being engaged in an embrace, not as an optional extra – a lifestyle choice – but just how it is."<sup>87</sup>

To say there are no hard boundaries does not mean to say that everything is one thing, but rather that we are always in relationship, in a web of becoming that is interwoven, complex and at the same time expressing itself as a diversity of beings. This might be something like Merleau-Ponty's "flesh of the world" as Isis Brook thinks of it. She tells us this notion of flesh seems "to be pointing to a relationship of some sort, a sharing that breaks down a solitary self enclosedness, both between me and other humans and between me and non-humans, and even between me and the inanimate."<sup>88</sup> Compartmentalising on the one hand, into discrete and solid differences is a kind of simplification that is dangerous because it can lead us to believe we can freeze the fluidity of this constant becoming into forms we think are finite and permanent. This would also deny or limit the possibilities of transformation and change. On the other hand, collapsing

difference into a kind of primeval sameness is to deny the very real complexity of the world, and so a collapsing of difference is dangerous as well. To conclude this consideration of the interconnectedness of being and becoming, let me pass on this offering from artist Ada Medina as she quotes the Buddhist teachings of Nagarjuna: “all arises in a matrix of interrelated contingencies”.<sup>89</sup>

### **About Being Nature...**

Before presenting my conclusions of this examination of art practice and ethical engagement with the world, I wish to visit a question that remains unresolved.

Throughout this paper, I have been making an argument for humans as a part of an envioning and more-than-human world, as participants in an ecology of dwelling. Whenever there is an assertion that humans are embedded within, a part of, and collaborating within, natural systems, it seems that the question arises of whether everything that humans do is therefore ethically sound, or even above questioning. In other words, if humans are conflated with nature, as a part of nature, and nature is configured as innately good, one hundred percent good, then how can what humans do be bad? And, as the matrix of all life, even if nature may not be all good, surely nature is above being questioned about ethics and goodness – nature just “is”. In that case, is the genetic manipulation of non-human animals morally neutral, or even good? What about dropping a nuclear bomb, or how about restoring a salmon stream – is everything then morally neutral, or good? I’d like to respond by turning to the human-world relationship *as* a relationship.

Imagine that we are all in a relationship called, for the sake of this argument, “nature”, which is a really big family, with pretty much everything in the world in it. Lots of things happen in this relationship. There is beauty, joy, birth, sustenance, and there is also pain, illness, ugliness, death, and issues that need to be resolved. In thinking about relationships, we might consider how healthy they are. Of course, not all relationships are healthy, and what determines the health and wellbeing of a relationship is how those in it treat one another through all of the things that happen and the resolution of difficult issues.

Now, if one person in an *inter-human* relationship seeks to control the other, to exercise power over them – if they injure or oppress their partner, or manipulate them to their exclusive benefit, we call such relationships dysfunctional and even abusive. Healthy relationships are characterised in part by respect, love, care, responsibility and clear communication. There is shared power, a “power-with”, reciprocity, or balance. We could say that such relationships are ethically sound.

If we now turn back to the nature relationship and apply the same kind of criteria, we can see that we humans have dysfunctional and even dangerously abusive relationships within nature. Of course this isn't a perfect analogy, since in nature, for example, we all eat one another as part of a healthy ecosystem relationship, and humans usually don't do this with one another. Nonetheless, I think it is a useful analogy. If we follow the argument to its conclusion, what I am saying is that being a part of nature, rather than meaning that we can get away with whatever controlling, wilful, or self-serving behaviours we want, means that we have responsibility, a duty to participate and contribute to the wellbeing of the relationship from our place within what in Ingold's terms, we might call an ecology of dwelling.

## Conclusions

Now I'll give you something to believe.  
Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*<sup>90</sup>

I titled this paper “praxis” after the quote from Mark Smith which I cite at the beginning. He combines in his idea of praxis the dialogic, the active seeking out of the other, creativity, and right action, or ethics. This seemed to me to be the perfect description of what Eco-art practice embodies. The question I was seeking to answer in the essay was, given that we are living in a time of eco-crisis, whether these Eco-art practices could help transform the human-world relationship for the better by contributing to more ecologically sensitive attitudes and behaviours.

I have shown that these works and practices do in fact bring about transformation in both worldviews and behaviours through reengaging people in ecological relationships that are embodied and emotional. They do this through education, which presents as opportunities for learning in many forms; through conversation, which is also collaboration, an opportunity for learning, as well as for revelation; through community, both by acknowledging and foregrounding the ecological community of a region, to which human and non-human alike belong, and by engaging with local communities in the making and presenting of the works.

In order to transform the human-world relationship for the better, there must first be a recognition and acknowledgement that one is in a relationship. It seemed to me that overcoming the dualist based separation that plagues Western culture must be at the heart of any solution to an eco-crisis. Eco-art practices, as I have shown, are rooted in an awareness of embodied ecological relationship. The practitioners, or artists, and the works themselves express this in each case and actively seek to engage others in this awareness.

While relationship is central to ethical engagement, engagement is essential to relationship. The requirements for healthy relationships cited in the above section resonate with the clarifications of the term “ethics” that I gave in the introduction to this paper. A quick look at this reminds us that ethics involves duty, moral behaviour, a “distinction between right and wrong, or good and evil, in relation to the actions, desires, or character of responsible human beings”. Duty means to “reverence” and “show respect”. I suggested that ethics could be configured as including “the possibility of moral duty – and even desire – as reverence and respect.”

By embodying within themselves the presence and voice of the other-than-human, of places and beings, these works open a conversational space for humans and world. People who spent time with birds in the SongBird project, or with the river at Chengdu came to an awareness of the responsibilities of relationship as respect for the other and as a desire to act in caring ways. Through these works people

learn that relationship is supported and nurtured by small things as well as big ones. Relationship is something lived and living, it is a path one walks every day.

I've been focusing on relationship here, since I think it is central to bringing about change. But these Eco-art works also give us lots to think about in terms of regular information about what we can do in hands-on ways to clean waterways by working within natural systems, or how we can buy food from local farmers, thereby reducing the need to truck food from elsewhere – about taking “right action”. The Harrisons's works are high-profile and so when they get taken up by others, as their *Vision for the Green Heart of Holland* was taken up as a proposal in its entirety by the Dutch Ministry of the Environment,<sup>91</sup> there is a real possibility of massive change in terms of habitat restoration and preservation.

In concluding this conclusion, if you will, I wish to return briefly to the ideas of an animate world full of agencies which I brought forward in the introduction and which were interlaced throughout the paper. Thinking about an animate world, a world full of, as Graham Harvey says “persons not all of whom are human”<sup>92</sup> brings me back to thinking of the Haida and Coast Salish peoples of British Columbia. When considering questions of how to behave well within dwelling relationships in such a world, or as a “part of nature” as discussed just previously, it might be helpful to look at cultures that have no need to return to such a relationship, since they never left it. I have heard Coast Salish people speak about the Salmon People and the Cedar People. When it comes to ethical relations within the world, they have a “protocol”, which is a path of balance that also consists of a code of proper conduct in relations with others, whether human or not. It is, for example, wrong to take anything without giving something back.<sup>93</sup> Art, in these cultures, represents this way of being in the world and negotiates these relationships. Recently, I visited *Raven Travelling*, an exhibition of 200 years of Haida art at the Vancouver Art Gallery. On leaving the exhibition, there was a statement on the wall. I quote it here in its entirety.

Everything is connected to everything else. These lands and waters have made us who we are, we are deeply interconnected. With the great privilege of this land comes great responsibility. If we fail to care for it, we will lose all that has been born of it.

The art represents this sacred relationship and the centuries of history embedded within it. If the land and the water go uncared for, this art is rendered meaningless to future generations and we will all have suffered an unimaginable loss.

*From Raven Travelling: Two Centuries of Haida Art*

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Smith (2001) p. 25

<sup>2</sup> Infed online Encyclopaedia: <http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-praxis.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Gablik, Suzi (1991) *The Re-enchantment of Art*. London: Thames and Hudson

<sup>4</sup> Hobbes, Thomas (1660) *Leviathan*, now in the Public Domain. Hobbes famously declared that life in “a state of nature” (prior to the formation of a civil society and overseeing state) was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short”.

<sup>5</sup> McKibbin, Bill (2005) “Imagine That: what the warming world needs is art, sweet art.” in *Grist Magazine*, April 21<sup>st</sup> 2005 issue. online at:

<http://www.grist.org/comments/soapbox/2005/04/21/mckibbin-imagine/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> Winterson, Jeanette (1995)

<sup>7</sup> Source: Videotape documentation of Dr. Pagani’s talk at the *SongBird 1998 Living City Forum* in Vancouver, Canada

<sup>8</sup> Biernoff (2002) p. 3

<sup>9</sup> Oxford English Dictionary Online

<sup>10</sup> Merleau-Ponty (1968) p. 166

<sup>11</sup> Merleau-Ponty (1968) p. 179

<sup>12</sup> Rather than taking up a thorough critique of dualism here, I refer the reader to the wealth of existing scholarship on this topic.

<sup>13</sup> Harvey (2006)

<sup>14</sup> Ingold (2000) p. 75

<sup>15</sup> Ibid p. 76

<sup>16</sup> Heim (2003) in Szerszynski, Heim and Waterton (2003) p. 186

<sup>17</sup> Smith (2001)

<sup>18</sup> Langer (2003) in Brown and Toadvine, p. 103

<sup>19</sup> Gablik (2002) in *ecovention* p. 150

<sup>20</sup> Cuomo (2003) Guest Editor’s Note in *Ethics and the Environment*, 8(1) 2003 p.1

<sup>21</sup> Information on Alan Sonfist and his works, including Time Landscape can be found on the Green Museum website: [www.greenmuseum.org](http://www.greenmuseum.org). A direct link to Sonfist on this site: [http://greenmuseum.org/content/artist\\_index/artist\\_id-129.html](http://greenmuseum.org/content/artist_index/artist_id-129.html)

<sup>22</sup> Carruthers (2006) *Art in Ecology* p.10

More on this project can be found here:

<http://www.creativecommunities.ca/project/project.php?ProjectID=15>

<sup>23</sup> See the Nest page on the SongBird project website:

<http://songbirdproject.ca/nest.html>

<sup>24</sup> Spaid (2002) p. 115, 116

<sup>25</sup> Grande (2000)

<sup>26</sup> Gablik (1991) p. 22

<sup>27</sup> In focusing on North America I do not mean to ignore the lineage of Eco-art elsewhere, especially in the UK, which has a significant history of its own as demonstrated in the works of Common Ground, Platform, Welfare State International and others. My delimiting is rather for the sake of length and focus.

<sup>28</sup> Zimmerman, Michael (2005) “General Introduction to the Fourth Edition”, *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*. p. 1

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- <sup>29</sup> See Kastner and Wallace (1998)
- <sup>30</sup> Carlson (2000)
- <sup>31</sup> Brady (1998) and Ross (1998) in IO Internet Magazine
- <sup>32</sup> Grande (1994)
- <sup>33</sup> Kastner and Wallace (1998) p. 28
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid p. 29
- <sup>35</sup> Brady (1998)
- <sup>36</sup> Ibids
- <sup>37</sup> Resourcism is a term borrowed from Neil Evernden (1985) *The Natural Alien*
- <sup>38</sup> Feman Orenstein, Gloria (2003) in *Ethics and the Environment*, 8(1) 2003 p. 102
- <sup>39</sup> Rosenthal (2003), "Teaching Systems Thinking" in *Ethics and the Environment*, 8(1) 2003 p. 154
- <sup>40</sup> My use of the term "natural systems" is not meant to convey that humans are not natural, or indeed not a part of natural systems. The language embodies dualisms and so terminology becomes challenging. I use the term to denote systems that occur without overt human design.
- <sup>41</sup> Definition text sourced at Biology Online: [http://www.biology-online.org/dictionary/Biotic\\_community](http://www.biology-online.org/dictionary/Biotic_community)
- <sup>42</sup> Ingold (2000) p. 5
- <sup>43</sup> See the Nine Mile Run project website at: <http://slaggarden.cfa.cmu.edu/>
- <sup>44</sup> Source: Oxford English Dictionary Online
- <sup>45</sup> Haley, David (2006) as quoted in Carruthers, Beth (2006) *Mapping the Terrain of Contemporary Eco-art Practice and Collaboration: A research report* commissioned by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2006  
<http://www.culturalcurrency.ca/ArtInEcology.pdf>
- <sup>46</sup> Kastner and Wallace (1998) p. 145
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid p. 147
- <sup>48</sup> Heartney, Eleanor (2003) "Mapping a Better World" in *Art in America*, July 2003. Accessed online at:  
[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1248/is\\_10\\_91/ai\\_109667935](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1248/is_10_91/ai_109667935)
- <sup>49</sup> Raven (1998) in *The Citizen Artist: 20 Years of Art in the Public Arena* p. 69
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid
- <sup>51</sup> Website for Future Garden Part 1: The Endangered Meadows of Europe:  
<http://www2.kah-bonn.de/1/3/0e.htm>
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid, "Future Garden. Eine Wiese auf dem Dach" a film by Bernhard Pflöschinger
- <sup>53</sup> Solnit, Rebecca (2003) p. 81-86
- <sup>54</sup> See Plumwood, Val (1993) *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* for an excellent analysis of narratives of colonisation and mastery
- <sup>55</sup> Author not listed (2000) "Living Water: Combining Art & Science to Rejuvenate Communities and Restore Waterways" in *Bush Fellows News Autumn 2000*. Accessed online at:  
[http://www.bushfoundation.org/Publications/fellows\\_news\\_pdf/bushnewsautumn2000.pdf#search=%22Betsy%20Damon%22](http://www.bushfoundation.org/Publications/fellows_news_pdf/bushnewsautumn2000.pdf#search=%22Betsy%20Damon%22) September 4<sup>th</sup> 2006
- <sup>56</sup> Source: Keepers of the Waters website: <http://keepersofthewaters.org/lwg.cfm>

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<sup>57</sup> Wallen, Ruth (2001) “The Legacy of 1970s Feminist Artistic Practices on Contemporary Activist Art” in *N.Paradoxa*, Issue 14, February 2001 Accessed online at: <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/n.paradoxa/2001panel3.htm> September 4th 2006

<sup>58</sup> Da Pengfu, Quoted in “The Long March” on *LifeOnLine*, a multimedia initiative about the impact of globalization

<http://www.tve.org/lifeonline/index.cfm?aid=1037> Accessed September 3rd 2006

<sup>59</sup> Source: “The Long March” on *LifeOnLine*, a multimedia initiative about the impact of globalization, <http://www.tve.org/lifeonline/index.cfm?aid=1037> Accessed September 3rd 2006

<sup>60</sup> Author not listed (2000) “Living Water: Combining Art & Science to Rejuvenate Communities and Restore Waterways” in Bush Fellows News Autumn 2000. Accessed online at:

[http://www.bushfoundation.org/Publications/fellows\\_news\\_pdf/bushnewsautumn2000.pdf#search=%22Betsy%20Damon%22](http://www.bushfoundation.org/Publications/fellows_news_pdf/bushnewsautumn2000.pdf#search=%22Betsy%20Damon%22) September 4<sup>th</sup> 2006

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> Tu Wei-Ming (1989) in Callicott and Ames (1989)

<sup>63</sup> Tu Wei-Ming (1989) in Callicott and Ames (1989)

<sup>64</sup> Feng, Gia-Fu and English, Jane, Translators (1972) Lao Tsu, *Tao Te Ching*

<sup>65</sup> Source: Keepers of the Waters website: [www.keepersofthewaters.org](http://www.keepersofthewaters.org) Accessed September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2006

<sup>66</sup> Damon, Betsy (date unknown) accessed online August 29<sup>th</sup> 2006 at:

<http://www.wellnessgoods.com/garden.asp>

<sup>67</sup> More information can be found on the Keepers of the waters website at [www.keepersofthewaters.org](http://www.keepersofthewaters.org)

<sup>68</sup> Source: The Long March on *LifeOnLine*, a multimedia initiative about the impact of globalization. Accessed online at:

<http://www.tve.org/lifeonline/index.cfm?aid=1037> on September 4<sup>th</sup> 2006

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

<sup>70</sup> Harvey (2006)

<sup>71</sup> Heim (2003) p.185

<sup>72</sup> Ingold (2000) P. 191

<sup>73</sup> Title to almost the entire land-base of what we now know as British Columbia, the adjacent waters and islands, prior to the 2000 Nisga’a treaty, was never ceded to any colonial peoples or powers. “The most important decision on Aboriginal title is the 1997 *Delgamuukw* decision from the Supreme Court of Canada. In that case, the Court said that:

- Aboriginal title is a communal right;
- Aboriginal title, like other types of Aboriginal rights, is protected under *s.35 of the Constitution Act, 1982*;
- Aboriginal title lands can only be surrendered to the federal Crown;
- Aboriginal title lands must not be put to a use which is irreconcilable with the nature of the group's attachment to the land; and,

In order for the Crown to justify an infringement of Aboriginal title, it must demonstrate a compelling and substantive legislative objective, it must have consulted with the Aboriginal group prior to acting and, in some cases,

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compensation may be required.” Source: Dept. of Indian and Northern Affairs, Canada. Webpage: [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/info/abr\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/info/abr_e.html)

<sup>74</sup> Frye, Northrop (1977) p. 28

<sup>75</sup> Ibid

<sup>76</sup> Source: [www.gvrd.bc.ca/growth/pdfs/Census1996-Growth.pdf](http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/growth/pdfs/Census1996-Growth.pdf)

<sup>77</sup> Source: *A Newcomers Guide to Vancouver*:

<http://www.vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/newtovancouver/pdf/fullbook.pdf#search=%22population%20and%20culture%20info%20on%20Vancouver%2070%20languages%2C%20UBC%22>

<sup>78</sup> Ibid p. 153

<sup>79</sup> Ingold (2000)

<sup>80</sup> Ibid p. 5

<sup>81</sup> Source: private conversation

<sup>82</sup> Gray (2006) p. 189

<sup>83</sup> Ibid p. 192

<sup>84</sup> Source: SongBird project website: <http://songbirdproject.ca/nest.html>

<sup>85</sup> Personal conversations/project feedback from my role as SongBird co-director

<sup>86</sup> See Bringhurst (1999) *A Story as Sharp as a Knife* for translations from the Haida of some of the many transformations of Raven. I bring Raven into this because he belongs here, on the west coast. To the Haida, he is trickster, shapechanger, and a troublemaker.

<sup>87</sup> Brook (2005) in *Environmental Values* 14 (2005) p. 361

<sup>88</sup> Brook (2005) in *Environmental Values* 14 (2005) p. 361

<sup>89</sup> Medina (2003) in *Ethics and the Environment* Volume 8, number 1, Spring, 2003 p. 5

<sup>90</sup> *Complete Works of Lewis Carroll* (1936) p. 200

<sup>91</sup> Source: Heartney, Eleanor (2003) *Mapping a better world: more than 30 years ago, Helen and Newton Harrison decided to devote themselves to environmentally beneficial art. Their latest project, "Peninsula Europe," envisions nothing less than the greening of most of an entire continent* - Critical Essay

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<sup>92</sup> Harvey, Graham (2006)

<sup>93</sup> Source: private conversations with telàsemkin/siyam (Squamish Nation Hereditary Chief Bill Williams)

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