University of North Carolina Asheville
Journal of Undergraduate Research
Asheville, North Carolina
Decenter 2018

Art From Waste: Effects on Material and Place in the Environmental Artworks of Nils-Udo and Chris Jordan

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Abstract

Environmental art is a wide-ranging term encompassing sub-categories like land art, earth art, earthworks, ephemeral art, bio-art, earth art, walking works, eco art, and many more. For the purposes of this paper the term 'environmental art' will be used to describe works intended to become part of the natural world and works meant to incite discussion concerning environmental issues. The environmental art movement began concurrently with the environmentalist movement of the late 1960s and early 70s and also coincides with other revolutionary political and social movements such as counterculture, anti-Vietnam War, civil rights, women's rights, and gay rights movements. This experimental, politically charged period inspired art that reflected on society's' relationship with nature and visual art in the public sphere. The environmental art genre is not the first category that comes to mind or serves as a popular discussion point in the comprehensive canon of art history. However, artworks under this wide-ranging term profoundly and directly reflect the beauty, horror, and reality of our current world. This paper will critically examine how contemporary artists Nils-Udo and Chris Jordan address the increasing threats to the environment today, such as the effects of climate change, and will compare and contrast the artists' respective individual approaches, styles, and mediums. The examination will also consider how the urgency of these environmental changes has significantly influenced material, place, and technique in environmental artworks and will explore how both Udo and Jordan's works differs from the works of eco artists of the past.

1. Introduction

Environmental art is a wide-ranging term encompassing sub-categories like land art, earth art, earthworks, ephemeral art, bio-art, walking works, eco-art, and many more. For the purposes of this paper the term 'environmental art' will be used to describe works intended to become an integral, ephemeral part of the natural world and are meant to incite discussions about environmental issues. The genre of environmental art is not often the first category that may come to mind or serves as a popular discussion point in the comprehensive canon of art history, however artworks under this wide-ranging term profoundly and directly reflect the sublime beauty, horror, and reality of our current world. This paper will critically address how the effects of climate change and environmental destruction have influenced material, place, and technique in the contemporary works of artists Nils-Udo and Chris Jordan and will explore how their work differs from other contemporary environmental artists (of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries).

2. Environmentalism of the 1960s and 70s

In order to understand the themes of contemporary environmental works one must understand the roots of the movement as well as the history of environmentalism. The late 1960s became the years of the counterculture movement in the United States—a cultural revolution of a community that embraced anti-conformity, new spiritual

ideologies and theologies, the use of psychedelic drugs, limitless expression, and the sexual revolution following the availability of birth control pills.[i] This movement was antithetical to the traditional Eurocentric definition of a 'culture' that represented the expansion of technology, industry, and the increase of affluence. The Environmental Art movement was born out of the Post-Modern, Post-Minimalist, Conceptual, and Arte Povera movements of the 1960s.[ii] Poignantly set against the background of the political and social upheaval of the late 60s and early 70s, this movement also coincided with the environmentalist movement, student protests, anti-war and anti-nuclear movements, and the civil, women's, Native American, and gay-rights movements. This revolutionary period served as a hotbed for new ideas, where all traditional institutions, establishments, and ideologies were questioned and adamantly challenged in virtually all fields of study.

The environmental movement rose in popularity in the United States after conservationist and biologist Rachel Carson published her groundbreaking book *Silent Spring* in 1962.[iii] In this text, Carson explained the disastrous effects insecticides had on other animal species and human health as they were sprayed in mass aerially over crops throughout the country. Carson's research encouraged a surge in other publications that also discussed similar ecological problems caused by industry and human behavior. Dramatic events like the 1969 oil spill off of the California coast were televised and brought awareness to the dire need for environmental intervention and governmental reform. During 1970, millions of Americans protested the negative impacts of irresponsible industry in the first Earth Day on April 22nd. These growing concerns led President Nixon and the U.S. Congress to pass legislation like the *National Environmental Act*, the *Clean Air Act*, the *Clean Water Act*, and the *Endangered Species Act*, while political engagement also led to the founding of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Environmental protest and reform were of course not exclusive to the United States during this period. In 1970 Great Britain formed the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution and the Department of Environment. A year later France elected Europe's first environmental minister and West Germany developed the *Umweltprogramm der Bundesregierung* (Environmental Program of the Federal Government). In 1972 the publication of the book *The Limits to Growth*[iv] commissioned by The Club of Rome[v] organization became an international best seller. In the same year the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (also known as the Stockholm Conference) took place in Sweden, where representatives from over one hundred countries gathered for eleven days to discuss challenges facing the environment; serving as a pivotal moment in the progress of international environmental politics.

2.1. Land and Earthworks

During this revolutionary period Land Art, the pioneering movement of the environmental art genre (also known as the Earth Art movement) began to develop. Land Art emerged in the United States as a movement whose purpose was to rebel against the increased commodification of works sold in the art market as well as the traditional establishments of museum and gallery spaces meant to house, protect, and display these works to the public. The concept of a work of art being exposed and affected by the unpredictable elements and cycles of nature challenged traditional museum practices of the protection and the *preciousness* of art objects.

Land Art refers to site-specific often large-scale works created outdoors in nature that encompass natural materials found in that particular location. Works like artist Walter de Maria's *The Lightning Field*, Agnes Denes' *Wheatfield*, and Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Running Fence* serve as some well-known examples of works within the genre. Artists of the Land art movement posed significant, often philosophical questions like: *Should works be bought and sold for financial gain? How should art be viewed (if at all)?*, and *How important is the context (the environment surrounding) the work to the viewer's understanding of its content and message?* Land art requires "mapping the land"—meaning the artist and/or viewer must walk through it, experiencing it with their senses and physical body—forcing them to *go over* a space rather than just looking *at* or *on* with a bird's-eye perspective.[vi]

Earthworks (a term coined by one of the leading figures in the environmental art genre, artist Robert Smithson) differ slightly from Land Art in that works under this category require earth-*moving*—where the artist creates structures like manmade ravines, sculptures, mounds, and mountains out of the earth itself. The popularity of these works also emerged in the late 60s after Smithson's revolutionary exhibition *Earthworks*, debuted at the Dwan Gallery in New York City funded by patron and gallerist Virginia Dwan in 1968. *Earthworks* set the precedent for other emerging environmental works to be displayed within a museum context and rebelled against the prevalence of technology in the New York art scene in what Smithson deemed "the urban desert."[vii]

Smithson was the first artist who articulated and separated his works into the two categories: "Sites" and "Nonsites." "Sites" referred to works created outside in the natural world, free from the confines of museum and gallery walls, while "Nonsites" (also referred to as "indoor earthworks") defined works where natural materials gathered from a site were presented and framed within a museum or gallery space. Both "Sites" and "Nonsites" explored the viewer's

personal and psychological relationship with nature and challenged societies' often-anthropocentric [viii] views. Smithson's 1970 *Spiral Jetty* (Figure. 1) is the artist's most well known "Sites" and arguably one of the most recognizable earthworks in the genre.

Figure. 1: Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1970, mud, precipitated salt crystals, rocks, water coil, 1,500 ft. x 15 ft. https://www.parkcitymag.com/articles/2017/12/15/you-need-to-visit-these-incredible-land-art-pieces-in-utah.

His "Nonsites," for example, *A Nonsite, Pine Barrens, New Jersey* (Figure. 2) (debuted in the *Earthworks* exhibition) made the often unnoticeable mundane elements of nature the focus- simply by framing the materials in manmade geometric containers and placing them in an indoor space. Thus, "Nonsites" made the unnoticeable noticeable by creating a dialogue between the outdoor and the indoor space.

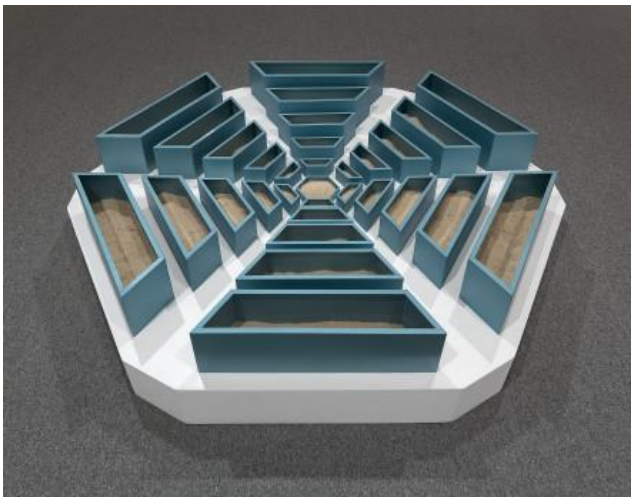

Figure. 2: Robert Smithson, *A Nonsite, Pine Barrens, New Jersey*, 1967, 30.48x 166.37x 166.37 cm https://www.artslant.com/ny/works/show/783467?tab=ARTWORK.

Both, the Land Art and Earthwork movements emphasized the importance of site-specificity, often located in vast open rural spaces that most viewers could not access except through photographs that would ironically be displayed in museums. Only being able to observe but not experience the scale or intimacy of the work, the viewer would acquire knowledge about a site through its represented materials but could never buy or own the work itself due to the object's marriage to the site.

Similarly to Smithson's "Sites," the environmental works of Nils-Udo consist of staged organic (sometimes incorporated with inorganic) materials captured in natural environments like forests, rivers, lakes, and fields. His work brings what can be seen as a striking, transcendent, spiritual experience out of the museum and gallery space back into

the wilderness (and arguably back to the human condition and consciousness)—where the environment itself through natural materials and space becomes its own storyteller. In contrast to this contemporary artist Chris Jordan's series *Message from the Gyre* can serve as an example of how conceptual—and often aesthetically pleasing environmental art has become more documentary in nature as a direct reflection of the artist's increasing environmental concerns. Udo's work creates a serene, reflective space for the viewer to meditate on nature itself, while Jordan's work takes a more literal approach in visually confronting the viewer with the natural consequences of environmental destruction.

The transition from large-scale and tranquil works exemplifying pure aesthetic beauty in nature to documentary works that visually create a more palpable sense of urgency can largely be interpreted as a direct response to the rapidly growing destructive impact human behaviors have on the environment and artists' motivation to use their work as a catalyst to promote a change to those destructive patterns of thinking. Like the land and earth artists of the 60's and 70s, contemporary environmental artists have successfully stepped away and distanced themselves from traditional ideas of how art should be produced (the materials chosen), viewed (in sterile museum and gallery spaces), advertised and consumed (in the art market and through replication) in order to reconnect audiences to the earth they are rapidly and often unconsciously destroying.

In her article, *The Ecological Imperative: Elements of Nature in Late Twentieth-Century Art*, art historian Aleksandra Mańczak explains the impact of environmental destruction in a contemporary art context, saying:

> …our very culture-making human civilizations have become capable of putting an end to the existence of all Earth's living creatures. It was not long ago that the maximum 'Ars longa vita brevis' ('Art is long, life is short') rang true. Now it seems we must alter it to 'Ars brevis vita in periculo' ('Short-lived art, life in danger').[ix]

Mańczak argues that the information confirming the calamities caused by human behavior addressed by the science community can then be reinterpreted as artworks that make that information more visual, relatable, and accessible to the public. She explains that historically artists have reacted to the observed devastation of nature by gravitating towards organic materials found in nature in what she calls "quotations." This conscious shift in materials is intended to appoint nature as the co-creator of its own narrative, ultimately de-emphasizing the importance of the autonomy of the artist and their manual virtuosity.[x] This process and line of thinking is harmonious with contemporary environmental artist Nils-Udo's environmental philosophy.

3. Nils-Udo

Contemporary artist Nils-Udo was born in 1937 and raised in the German state of Bavaria but moved to Paris in the late 1960s where he began painting mostly natural subjects like trees, flowers, rivers, and landscapes. The style of his paintings ranges from realistic portrayals of natural environments to more vibrant, colorful abstractions of natural elements and scenery including leaves, trees, rivers, and tropical landscapes as his main subjects. His painting, *1131 Forrest* (Figure. 3) exemplifies the beginning stages of this shift from nature as muse and inspiration to nature as the artist's physical material.

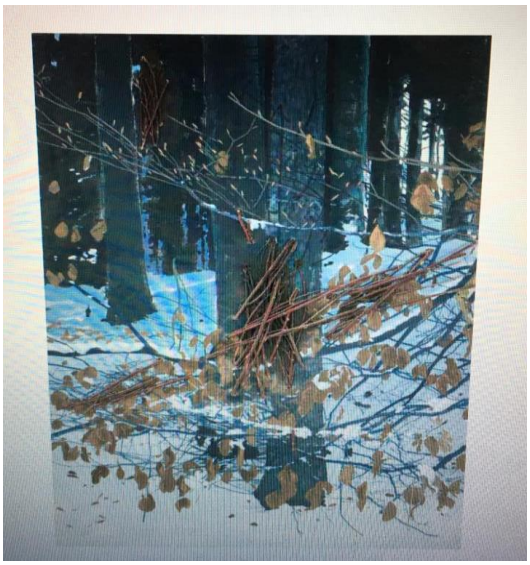

Figure 3. Nils-Udo, *1131 Forest*, 1970, oil and twigs on canvas 114 x 75 cm. Photo of work taken by author. http://www.nils-udo.com/painting/?lang=en.

This oil painting depicts a winter forest scene complete with a ground blanketed in snow. Branches bearing dead, brown leaves seem to sweep across the foreground where an assemblage of real found branches has been attached to the center of the canvas. This marriage of materials serves as a metaphor for the physical natural world and the imagined natural world of the artist. Many of Udo's realistic oil paintings created in the 1970s and 80s play with juxtapositions of color, the reflective quality of water, the variations of light experienced through dense vegetation, and the interplay between overlapping shadows.

Udo eventually moved back to his home state of Bavaria in 1972, where he was inspired by the surrounding rural untouched landscape to create artworks within the natural environment itself and would document his finished creations by photographing them. (Though he would later return to painting in conjunction with his environmental works—often replicating them on canvas). He explains this creative shift stating:

> The works I created in Paris in the 1960s using living plants and natural materials marked my first step towards moving away from panel painting and studio work. Moving from Paris to rural Bavaria, perceiving the endangerment of nature, (and) its growing destruction, I lived through a profound change of awareness. By elevating the natural space to a work of art, I had opened myself to reality, to the liveliness of nature- I had overcome the gap between art and life. The roundabout way of two-dimensional abstraction in painting had been overcome. Henceforth my pictures were no longer painted, but planted, watered, mowed, or fenced. Through my plantations, I associated my existence with cycles of nature, with the circulation of life. Henceforth my life and work proceed under the guidance and in keeping with the rhythms of nature.[xi]

Udo's early environmental works primarily took place in the wild foothills of the Alps in Chiemgau, Bavaria where most of his subject matter was centered on the phenomenon of phenology.[xii] However, eventually he created works in rural areas of many other countries including England, Italy, France, Yugoslavia, Holland, Namibia, Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

All of the materials Udo utilizes for his outdoor works are typically found at the site of the creation. His choice to have nature serve as both subject and material can be interpreted as a humble, simplistic, and unassuming gesture as well as a sentimental nod of respect to the landscape as he incorporates the organic materials produced within it. He addresses environmental causes not by radical protest but instead through ecological artistic interference and interaction. One method he applies in a number of his works is the process of planting trees and flowers. His plantings in the early 1970s were a major development in the field of contemporary art because not only was he orchestrating various plants as aesthetic objects in an outdoor space; he was also changing the ecology of the space through the vessels themselves. For example, his works conducted in the Chiemgau region of Bavaria: *Birch Tree Planting (1975)*, and *Spruce Tree Planting (1976)* both utilize native trees in order to change the ecology of the forest, whereas plantings

like *To Gustav Mahler (1973)* and *The Blue Flower*: Landscape for Heinrich von Ofterdingen (1993-96) serve as visual, poetic homages to historical figures.

Other contemporary artists have implemented Udo's planting concept into their own environmental works. Artists like Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado and his wife Lélia Salgado founded the *Instituto Terra* (Earth Institute)[xiii] after planting more than four million native tree seedlings on Salgado's former childhood farm located in Minas Gerais, in efforts to heal the ecological damage caused by deforestation, industrial exploitation, land erosion and drought.The stages of the growing seedlings were then photographed by the artist as documentary proof of the newly restored ecology of the subtropical rainforest (Figure. 4).

Figure. 4: Sebastião Salgado, before (2000) and after (2013) photographs of the Rio Doce River Valley, Brazil. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/sebastiao-salgado-forest-trees-180956620/.

Similarly, conceptual artist Mel Chin also incorporated plantings in his *Revival Field* (Figure. 5).

Figure. 5: Mel Chin, *Revival Field*, Pig's Eye Landfill, St. Paul, Minnesota 1991-Present. https://art21.org/read/mel-chin-revival-field/.

Working closely with USDA senior research scientist Dr. Rufus Chaney and volunteers, Chin orchestrated the plantings of hyperaccumulator plants that were arranged in a geometric design located on Pig's Eye Landfill, deemed a Superfund[xiv] site in St. Paul, Minnesota. These hyperaccumulators are able to thrive while selectively absorbing and housing large quantities of toxic metals. The plants after a certain period of time are manually harvested and incinerated in a process that extracts the metals that are then sold for profit—leaving the soil cleansed and rejuvenated.[xv] Chin returned to the site on the ten-year anniversary of the project in 2001 planting "super" hyperaccumulators (plants that could contain an even higher concentration of metals) in collaboration with agricultural

scientist Dr. Volker Römheld. Projects like these as well as works like Udo's plantings have been considered *ecoventions* (ecology and invention)—a term coined in 1999 describing a project that employs an artist-led strategy to physically transform a local ecology.[xvi]

With the exception of young children (like those portrayed in both his Waternest photographs in 1995 and 2001), people are never present or photographed as a part of Udo's official work. By excluding people from his plantings and outdoor installations, Udo creates a more serene, reflective space free of distraction from other humans while simultaneously unifying elements of culture with nature by integrating the site's natural history and (in some works) by hinting at trace remnants of human interference and both ancient and modern civilization. Aesthetics through the implementation of gardening and permaculture play a central role to Udo's work creating visual interest and balance by exercising artistic factors like placement, symmetry, intersecting lines, created frames, and sculpted geometric forms create structure and order out of the natural world.

Many of Udo's artworks employ natural elements within nature as an international and universally understood language with which to communicate human kind's connection with and understanding of their natural environment. Much like a smile can be instantly understood by all nationalities, serving as a physical, positive reflection of internal happiness—Udo's planted trees, flowers, and carefully manipulated orchestrated works seem to communicate immediate-connections through the audience's instant, familiar recognition of the environment and their place within it. Because nature is typically an approachable, comforting, inclusionary space—it is inherently infinitely more relatable than an intimidating, stark, controlled museum or sterile gallery setting.

Like artist Robert Smithson's "Sites" and "Nonsites," Udo separates his art into two categories: works, "…created in and with nature, using exclusively natural materials, and (the) projects meant for urban spaces."[xvii] His philosophy aligns with the belief that art should always deal with (not necessarily directly reflect) reality and the state of the world, and explains that, "Despite clear-sighted pessimism—we must hope in order to live—what counts for me is that my actions, utopia-like, fuse life and art into each other."[xviii] Subsequently he refers to many of his works as "potential utopias" that serve as hopeful, idealistic windows into what our prospective future mutual relationship with the environment could be if we choose to respect it.

Udo's conflicting reflections on his personal romantic view of nature and how it is defined and interpreted by space is reflected in works like his permanent installation, *Romantic Landscape* (Figure. 6).

Figure. 6: Nils-Udo, *Romantic Landscape*, Germany 1992.
https://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag99/sept99/nils/nils.shtml.

This work was created specifically for the Ludwig Forum for International Art museum's sculpture garden located in Aachen, Germany. The installation is an entirely constructed manmade landscape supported by an elaborate wooden platform underneath where visitors can see all the way through thanks to the widely spaced supportive beams. A staircase climbs up through the center of the massive platform where children are encouraged to climb up and play on the imaginary landscape complete with vibrantly green grass, varying species of trees and vegetation and natural rocks.

Udo's picturesque landscape purposefully looks a little too perfect—much like a manicured suburban lawn or an upscale golf course. Every tree, rock, and organic element has been selected and placed in this seemingly odd curation. Upon further reflection, the idyllic imaginary 'natural' playground for visitor's children seems more and more bleak

when the viewer realizes the consequences of separating what the purpose of nature is in their everyday experience. The irony that this installation is placed directly adjacent to a prestigious modern art museum further pushes Udo's quest to explore how the placement of works can inform the reception of their message.

4. Waternest

One of Udo's primary metaphors throughout his body of work is the imagery of the nest. The nest serves as a symbol of comfort, safety, hominess, and connectivity with the self and with nature. Arguably one of Udo's most humbling and personal environmental works using this metaphor is *Waternest* (Figure. 7) created in England in 1995.

Figure. 7: Nils-Udo, *Waternest*, England 1995, Pigment Print 124 x 124 cm.
http://www.nils-udo.com/art-in-nature/?lang=en.

This photograph depicts a young, naked, sleeping boy curled up in the fetal position, arms tucked under his head in a vast spiraling nest floating in a still body of water. The outline of the child's body is visually brought forward by the slight contrast between the small circular patch of pale yellow hay laid against the extending light brown reeds set against the serene background of turquoise and green. The spiraling sun-like nest seems to serve as a womb-like depiction of mother earth's cradle. While the soft center of the nest serves as a resting place for the child, the spikey reeds that make up the outside spiral represent defense and protection of the innocent boy. Udo seems to be highlighting the fact that nature while often fragile and vulnerable like the child can also be protective and hostile to threatening forces. Through this photograph Udo draws a parallel between humanity and nature—that we are all born into and therefore are an integral and inextricable part of the natural world. He metaphorically links the innocent, vulnerable associations the audience might have with childhood to the vulnerability and (what he calls) "the virginity of nature."[xix] Similar themes are explored in Udo's photograph of the same name created six years later.

Another *Waternest* (Figure. 8) was created in 2001 on a lake in rural Germany.

Figure. 8: Nils-Udo, *Waternest*, Germany 2001, Pigment Print 124 x 124 cm.
https://nilsudo.wordpress.com/2012/12/21/water-nest/.

Similar to Udo's *Waternest* created in 1995, this photograph also captures a small, young child curled up resting in the fetal position, placed in the center of a large nest also crafted out of reeds creating a spiral shape. Like his previous photograph, this nest serenely floats on the still body of water. The child is also naked and also lies on a small patch of pale yellow hay. This later photograph differs from the previous in that although the sex is not certain (the child's genitalia are not visible) the child is assumed female due to the presence of her long hair.

Instead of choosing to photograph the subject at close range (with the child at the center of the nest serving as the focal point) this image is shot at a comparably longer distance. This longer distance allows more elements of the natural environment to enter the scene through the reflection on the water's surface. The reflection of the light-blue sky and white clouds are-incorporated in perfect harmony with the dark reflections of the forest of trees lying on the perimeter of the lake. Instead of a uniform blue body of water, this photograph incorporates both dark reflections of the landscape (creating depth and a murky feel to the water surrounding the nest) with the open lightness and hopefulness of the sky reflected above the resting child. The maroon color of the reeds used to create this nest seems more striking than the light brown reeds used to construct the first. The later photograph also differs in that the nest is not floating independent from the shore.

The curling reeds and brush that come into contact with the bottom half of the nest almost seem to be a personification of the land disappearing out of frame. The land looks like it is reaching out, grabbing onto the resting child and entangling itself into the reeds of the nest.-Perhaps Udo is visually reiterating the point that the land needs us and we need the land. Although both visually captivating and dialogue provoking, Udo seems to prioritize aesthetic appeal over the mere documentation of nature in both *Waternest* photographs.

5. Chris Jordan

Another contemporary environmental artist exploring the fragility of nature is Chris Jordan. Since 2003, the Seattle-based artist has been creating work directly reflecting consumer waste beginning with his series of photographs, *Intolerable Beauty: Portraits of American Mass Consumption*. In this series Jordan captures seemingly endless piles of consumer waste products found in different shipping ports and industrial yards located in Atlanta, New Orleans, Orlando, Tacoma, and his hometown of Seattle. Some of these objects include: cellphones, cellphone chargers, circuit boards, electronic waste, bullet casings, cigarette butts, diodes (semiconductor devices), glass shards/bottles, and crushed cars. Some of the objects in the photographs are slightly manipulated manually to form an intentional uniform pattern, element of design, or a sense of flowing movement, while others are simply captured documentary-style in their found positions in the junkyard. Jordan also uses multiple colors found on certain objects such as stacked wood pallets, large wooden spools, train boxcars, metal barrels, and gas tanks to his advantage: "painting" an orchestrated, aesthetically pleasing, intriguing image by manipulating the object's orientation and relationship with the objects around it. He has explained that he manipulates some of the waste objects as if he were assembling an art installation

with the intention of drawing the viewer in towards the beauty of the photograph (enticed by the design, scale, and color) as they observe from a considerable distance.[xx]

As the viewer moves closer to his work they slowly realize the enormous image is crafted from thousands of objects of waste. According to Jordan, this reaction and strange combination of beauty and horror serves as a potent metaphor for consumerism.[xxi] All of a sudden the viewer is repulsed by the destruction caused by their mindlessly discarded products that were once so desired. For Jordan this purposeful juxtaposition of beauty and horror goes beyond issues of environmental ethics—stating:

> The strange combination of beauty and horror for me also serves as a potent metaphor for our consumerism. When you stand at a distance, consumerism can look pretty attractive — all the nice shiny cars and houses and clothes and plasma TVs and so on. But when you get up close and look at our overworked dysfunctional families, the waste streams of our products, the wars our greed is fostering, worldwide environmental degradation, toxic metals in the breast milk of Eskimo women, birth defects in the children of the mothers who assemble our electronics in China, then you start to see that our consumer lifestyle is not so pretty. I try to create this effect in my photos, where it looks like one thing from a distance and then up close you realize it is something else.[xxii]

Jordan continues the theme of beauty and horror in both of his photograph series *Running the Numbers*, which include replicas of famous paintings like Seurat's *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (two different replications: one composed of bottle caps and the other aluminum cans), Van Gogh's *Skull of a Skeleton with Burning Cigarette* (composed of cigarette packs) as well as *The Starry Night* (Figure. 9) (made from cigarette lighters), Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (Figure. 10) (plastic bags), and Hokusai's *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (Figure.11) (shards of-plastic).

Figure. 9: Chris Jordan, *Gyre II*, 2011.
http://chrisjordan.com/gallery/rtn2/#gyre2.

Figure. 10: Chris Jordan, *Venus*, 2011.
http://chrisjordan.com/gallery/rtn2/#venus.

Figure. 11: Chris Jordan, *Gyre*, 2009.
http://chrisjordan.com/gallery/rtn2/#gyre.

These replications serve as a deeper metaphor meant to reflect the level of comfort and familiarity Americans have in our relationship with the single-use (mostly plastic) products we consume and discard by the millions every day. These famous works become so iconic and familiar to us because they have been replicated and printed on paper countless times throughout history and have been replicated on consumer products like clothing, coffee mugs, tote bags, home décor, jewelry, and furniture sold in institutions like art museums and gallery gift shops. In both *Running the Numbers* series Jordan seems to be exploring the relationship between art and consumerism, the viewer and consumerism, and the potential for art to change those patterns of unconscious behavior.

There are multiple famous paintings replicated throughout both Jordan's series, *Running the Numbers: An American Self-Portrait* (2006) and *Running the Numbers II: Portraits of Global Mass Culture* (2009). Throughout both series he visually represents statistics pertaining to America's culture of consumerism through waste objects like cigarette butts, car keys, credit cards, mail order catalogs, light bulbs, different manifestations of plastic, packing peanuts, and toothpicks. Jordan is not the first artist[xxiii] to create artistic images out of garbage, however he has cleverly added a thoughtful and arguably philosophical representational element that others have not included in their work. The thousands of photographs of waste products directly correlate to specific statistics linked to consumerism and are arranged digitally to create a composed, aesthetically capturing familiar image.

One example, his piece *Three Second Meditation* (Figure.12), is a Tibetan Buddhist Mandala composed of 9,960 mail order catalogs, representing the average number of junk mail that is printed, delivered, and quickly discarded in the U.S. every three seconds.

Figure. 12: Chris Jordan, *Three Second Meditation*, 2011.
http://chrisjordan.com/gallery/rtn/#meditation.

Quite a few of Jordan's works are evocative of mandalas and other circular, meditative geometric designs. Another example of this is *Oil Barrels* (Figure. 13)— a digitally altered image of an upturned, rusted metal blue barrel (seemingly representing the earth)— encompassed 28,000 black barrels arranged in multiple overlapping patterns representing America's oil consumption every two minutes.

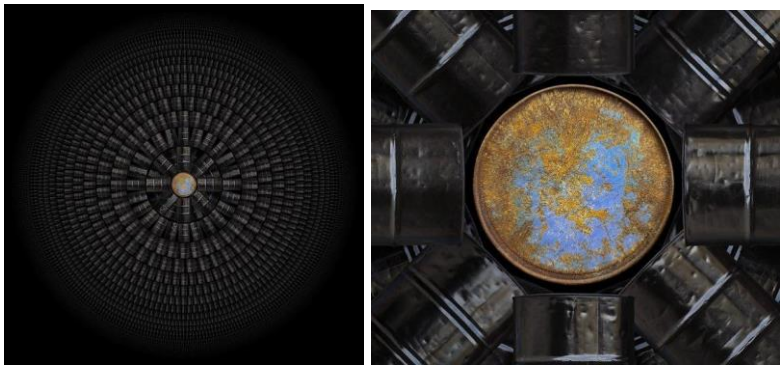

Figure. 13: Chris Jordan, *Oil Barrels*, 2008.
http://chrisjordan.com/gallery/rtn/#oil-barrels.

This piece as well as works like *Roundup*, *Stone of the Sun*, *Over the Moon*, and *Light Bulb* creates a sense of visual calm, order, control, symmetry, and purposefulness that directly contradicts the chaos, destruction, and confusion caused by excessive consumption. *Over the Moon* and *Light Bulb* conjure up images of outer space and the universe as an infinite entity. Like Udo's contemplative plantings and outdoor works, Jordan's imagery seems to encourage the viewer to pause, reflect, and meditate on the state of the world and on their personal relationship and individual contribution to it.

Similar to his work referencing famous works and movements of the past (such as Pointillism, Renaissance, and Impressionism), some of the pieces in Jordan's 2006 *Running the Numbers* series seem derived from the minimalism movement and arguably even the Pop Art movement. The consumer waste products in works like *Office Paper*, *Paper Cups* (Figure. 14), and *Valve Caps* appear from a distance to be ominous blends of the same neutral colors.

Figure. 14: Chris Jordan, *Paper Cups*, 2008.
http://www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/rtn/#paper-cups.

The objects depicted are stacked by the millions in a symmetrical, orderly and compact manner. Similar to Jordan's mandala-like amalgamations, these minimalistic squares, rectangles, and neat stacks of objects give the viewer a sense of calm, order, and even banality as they trace the lines and form of the arranged image. Once the viewer reads the statistics associated with the piece and "run the numbers" in their minds, they are again encouraged to reflect on the deeper implications of those seemingly endlessly repeating consumer waste products.

Artworks like these also reference famous images like Andy Warhol's repeating *Campbell's Soup Cans*, where a consumer product is repeated so many times it becomes like wallpaper in the background of our subconscious. Jordan seems to take this concept and flip it on its head, bringing the background noise into the foreground/ conscious mind as the viewer steps closer to the work. This also seems to be the case in his works, *Cell Phones*, *Plastic Bags*, *Handguns*, and *Shipping Containers* because all four works strongly resemble static on a television—again emphasizing how the American consumer way of life has become white noise to the masses.

Like *Intolerable Beauty* and *Running the Numbers I* and *II*, Jordan's 2005 series, *In Katrina's Wake: Portraits of Loss from an Unnatural Disaster* (Figure. 15), links consumerism with tragedy and evokes reactions of disappointment and even horror.

Figure. 15: Chris Jordan, *In Katrina's Wake: Portraits of Loss from an Unnatural Disaster*, 2005. http://www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/katrina/#remainsofhome.

His photographs of destroyed homes, businesses, schools, and churches reduced to piles of rubble strongly resemble his previous series of photographs of expansive piles of trash. The photographs of Katrina's devastation are large, imposing, and shot at close range and ground level in order to make the viewer feel as if they were personally witnessing the devastation of the storm that some scientists have argued was largely the result of global climate change.

When asked about the reaction to his work in an interview with contemporary photography writer Jörg Colberg, Jordan stated, "Talking to Americans about consumerism is like talking to someone with an alcohol problem. Our culture is in deep denial about what we are doing to our planet, to the people of other nations, and the people of the future…When I exhibit my work and talk about our rampant consumerism, no one ever seems to think I am talking about them."[xxiv]

Aside from *In Katrina's Wake*, Jordan's most recent series of photographs are arguably the most shocking and heartbreaking. *Midway: Message from the Gyre* is a series of photographs taken on the chain of islands known as the Midway Atoll—one of the most remote locations on the planet. In this series Jordan photographs carcasses of dead baby albatrosses with the insides of their stomachs exposed and filled to the brim with bits of plastic. The albatross mothers circle what is known as the *Great Pacific Garbage Patch*, a collection of two pools of waste debris (known as the Western and Eastern Garbage Patch) swirling around the North Pacific Ocean, as they are searching for food. The mothers gather plastic from these whirling patches, assuming that the bright-colored plastic is food, (fish) and bring the debris back to feed their chicks who then die a slow and painful death due to malnutrition and stomach punctures.

6. Midway: Message From the Gyre

The first untitled photograph in artist Chris Jordan's series, *Midway: Message from the Gyre* (Figure. 16) is truly horrifying.

Figure. 16: Chris Jordan, *Midway: Message from the Gyre*, Midway Island, 2009-Present. http://www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/midway/#CF000313%2018x24.

Like any photograph documenting a tragic event the viewer is simultaneously repulsed and intrigued—unable to look away. This zoomed-in photograph documents one of the many deceased baby albatrosses located on Midway Island whose deaths are directly caused by the devastating effects of the large amount of plastic swirling in the ocean, known as *The Great Pacific Garbage Patch*. The baby bird in this particular photo is laid sideways in full profile on the ground, sprawled out facing the viewer's left. The baby's stomach has been cut open and exposed by Jordan for the purpose of fully displaying the miscellaneous bits of surprisingly large plastic objects crammed throughout the infant animal's insides. Although this act served as the only alteration performed on the subject matter (Jordan did not add any plastic to the insides) there are many formal elements of the photograph Jordan has captured that encourage the viewer to look closer.

The lighter outline of the flattened, decaying bird's body is covered in both patches of bright white and deep, dark brown (almost black) feathers. The distinction between the two colors and the visual textures of the bright/dark, airy feathers in contrast with the light grey, gravel-like texture of the ground brings the silhouette of the bird into the foreground—visually making a two-dimensional photograph appear more realistic and three-dimensional. Although the stomach is the only part of the bird that has been manipulated by the artist, the body seems like it has been manually positioned with its wings high above its body, its webbed feet angled out to the side of the bottom of the frame and its head cast down towards its chest. This position makes the bird seem like it is standing up—almost teetering on an invisible high wire when in reality the flattened body is pressed into the surface of the ground as it continues to decay.

The open incision exposing the insides of the bird serves as a visual frame. This frame serves as a visual marker, (as if the viewer is looking through a keyhole), separating the outside world from an entirely different inner universe. The bright colors of the tiny shards of plastic grab the focus of the viewer immediately towards the stomach. The deep, vibrant red, pastel greens, and dark blue plastic shards create a contrast with the neutral cream and beige-colored plastics—creating an even deeper sense of space. Even the vertebra of the bird appears false—like just another neutral-colored plastic accessory added to the chaotic, jumbled pile. The different shapes of the plastic objects also create visual interest as the viewer moves in closer, trying to work out what particular consumer product each piece may have been in its former life. While some of the objects like the cigarette lighter and the bottle caps are immediately recognizable, others present more of a challenge.

The plastic inside the baby birds in the first portion of the series of photographs is not manipulated (Jordan has not added any plastic to the bird's stomach). The sprawled-out decaying birds are shot at close range, and simply documented for exactly what they are: a direct confrontation of the effects of consumerism on the natural world. Although the visual components of this photograph (whether intentionally chosen by Jordan among the hundreds of dead birds or not) play an important role in creating visual complexity for the viewer, the significance of the image lies in Jordan's somber and shocking subject matter. Upon first glance, the viewer can immediately understand why the bird is no longer alive, and thus make the connection between societal consumer waste and the devastation this waste means for the albatrosses.

With further reflection, the viewer may eventually shift their thinking from the greater culture to themselves—making the deeply personal connection between their own choices as a consumer, and the effects those personal choices have on the natural world. Examining the composition of the photograph further, the baby albatross in the photograph has his or her head cast down in what could be read as despair with its little beak sealed shut. All of the albatrosses' eyes in Jordan's series of photographs have decayed, leaving only empty holes. Throughout history,

through stories and mythology, this species of bird has symbolized hope, grace, and loyalty (this species mates for life). Jordan's choice to photograph these particular animals serves as a deeper commentary on how dire issues affecting the natural world due to human behavior have become. Similar to how Udo equates the innocence and vulnerability of a child with the fragility of nature—Jordan uses the cute sympathetic baby albatross to highlight the innocence of the environment.

6.1. Albatross Mandala

Albatross Mandala (Figure. 17) is a simultaneously shocking and touching photograph also included in Jordan's series *Midway: Message from the Gyre*.

Figure. 17: Chris Jordan, *Albatross Mandala*, Midway Island, 2010, Print 69.85 x 76.2 cm. https://paddle8.com/work/chris-jordan/35593-albatross-mandala-midway-island-2010.

Albatross Mandala is similar in subject matter to the other photographs in the series but remains unique aesthetically due to the artist's hand. Instead of simply slicing the bird's stomach open to showcase the plastic objects inside, Jordan instead surrounds the bird with plastic found in and around the animal at the time of its death—creating a brightly colored mandala. Similar to the other photographs in the series, the lifeless body of the baby albatross is the focal point and is shot at close range. Instead of facing sideways this albatross is facing stomach up towards the sky with its wings spread apart seemingly surrendering to its fate, in an almost Christ-like manner. The bright rings of plastic evoke images of stained-glass windows in a church with the baby bird serving as an innocent saintly martyr figure. Like many birds in the series, the bird's head is also cast down and its eyes have rotted away into the ground.

The mandala resembles a rainbow radiating out from within and around the bird. The inner circles closest to the bird consist of the cooler/pastel colors of violet, blue, turquoise, and green—bleeding out into the warmer colors of hot pink, red, orange, and yellow. The outer rim of the mandala is comprised of neutral colored plastic pieces that blend into the light grey color of concrete background that serves as the solid backdrop to many of the other photographs in the series. Jordan's purposeful inclusion of the word *mandala* in the title encourages the viewer to stop, reflect, and meditate on the suffering of the baby albatross and the sacrifice it was forced to make for our American way of life.

7. Vik Muniz

Like Chris Jordan, Brazilian artist Vik Muniz is a contemporary photographer who uses consumer waste as an expressive, deeply metaphoric medium. Muniz was born in São Paulo, Brazil in 1961 and later moved to New York City in 1983. He was initially trained as a sculptor, but later became more interested in drawing and photography. He established his signature style and process by photographing his works (starting with drawings) and would only keep the photos as singular artworks themselves.[xxv] Arguably Muniz is most known for his series of photographs produced in 2008: *Pictures of Garbage*—a series of portraits created from trash taken and produced by waste-pickers (known as catadores) working in the Jardim Gramacho—the world's largest landfill located on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, depicted in the 2010 academy award-winning documentary *Wasteland*. Muniz and his team collaborated with the catadores, taking photographs of them often in posed positions. The photographs would then be drastically enlarged

and projected onto the ground, where the same group of workers would fill in the outlines and figures of the portraits with garbage collected from the landfill that Muniz would then photograph from above.

Pictures of Garbage consisted of seven works depicting workers in various poses that all seem to weave a metaphorical and historical narrative through their subject matter and title that is always followed by the name of the individual portrayed. Works like, *Atlas (Carlão)* evokes *Mother and Children (Suellen)*, and *Marat (Sebastião)* draw visual parallels to both mythological and art historical imagery of Atlas bearing the world on his shoulders, the Madonna and Child, and the recreation of artist Jacques-Louis David's famous painting *The Death of Marat*. Like Jacques-Louis David did with the religious iconography of Christ to create the scene of the murdered Jean-Paul Marat, Muniz substitutes the iconography of this famous work to expose the contemporary societal issues facing catadores.

Just two years prior, Muniz created a stylistically similar series of photographs entitled, *Pictures of Junk* where he collaborated with art students living in a favela (low-income area) outside of Rio. Instead of using projected photographs as guides, students created trash works based off of Muniz's own renderings of famous artworks that would be photographed by the artist before eventually being dismantled. This series of twenty-one photos depicts interpretations derived from famous works like *Atalanta and Hippomenes* by Guido Reni, *Saturn Devouring One of His Sons* by Francisco Goya, *Amore And Psyche* by François Lemonyne, *Narcissus* by Caravaggio, *Leda and the Swan* by Leonardo Da Vinci, and (a precursor to *Atlas (Carlão)*) *Atlas* by Giovanni Francesco Barbieri. In this series of trash reproductions of globally renowned works, Muniz makes a profound statement on artist's constant quests throughout history to reach perfection or ideal aesthetic beauty when portraying historical figures in an idealized narrative. The over-simplification of complex issues, events, and people depicted throughout art history in paint conveys an entirely different tone when recreated by Muniz's the choice of material.

8. The Birth of Venus

Arguably the most recognizable artwork in the *Pictures of Junk* series (as well as one of the world's most famous artworks of all time) is Muniz's *The Birth of Venus, after Botticelli* (Figure.18).

Figure. 18: Vik Muniz, *The Birth of Venus, After Botticelli*, 2006, Digital C-print, 593.6 x 341.9cm. http://vikmuniz.net/gallery/junk.

The original *Birth of Venus* was painted in the 15th century by Italian renaissance artist Sandro Botticelli for the Medici family. The painting illustrates the story of the birth of Venus, the ancient Roman goddess of love, sex, fertility, and beauty (a comparable figure to the Greek goddess Aphrodite) after she is formed out of the foam of the sea, and soon after rides into the shores of Cyprus on a seashell. She is greeted by Pomona the goddess of spring who swiftly approaches to cover her nakedness with a floral cloak, as Zephyr (the god of wind) blows Venus to shore while carrying Chloris the Nymph.[xxvi] This painting is unusual for the renaissance period because a woman (who is not Eve) is completely naked and not a figure depicted in a Christian narrative. Although she partially covers her private areas with her hands and long hair, the sensual body of the goddess of love is on full display in an impossible pose. All four figures in the painting appear to float above the water and ground, defying naturalistic traditions of painting for the period. Through witnessing the physical and surreal beauty displayed in the painting, it was hoped that viewers would also experience divine transcendent beauty.

Both Vik Muniz and Chris Jordan's choice of this particular painting to reinterpret and reproduce with garbage is both deliberate and poignant. In both works Venus, the divine iconic symbol and personification of unearthly and unattainable perfection and beauty, is rising up out of a sea of garbage—representing both the power of the ocean and the harm caused by human interference. Both works explore the same theme and concerns regarding human environmental destruction through using consumer waste as the only medium in their compositions. And each of the works also metaphorically parallel both the beauty of Botticelli's original and the horror of their chosen materials.

Jordan's *Venus* differs slightly in material from Muniz's because he only uses plastic bags to visualize a specific statistic (the number of estimated plastic bags consumed around the world every ten seconds), while Muniz uses an array of waste ranging from electronic, rubber, hard plastic, and metal. Furthermore, Muniz draws, photographs, and projects his image of Venus onto the floor of his studio in order to place trash over the image, whereas Jordan takes photos of a few hundred plastic bags and digitally copies them over and over to attain the precise number of 240,000 and digitally arranges the bags on a computer to then replicate the famous painting. In the making of *The Birth of Venus, after Botticelli,* Muniz collaborated with many individuals (which he commonly does, and in this instance they were Brazilian art students) to create his large-scale works, while in Jordan's *Venus* (like all of his works in both Running the Numbers series), he works alone; tediously creating pieces that help visualize overwhelming numerical data.

9. El Anatsui

Like Jordan and Muniz, contemporary environmental artist, El Anatsui also works with recycled waste materials, including wood, ceramics metal, and bottle caps.[xxvii] Anatsui was born in Anyanko, Ghana in 1944, and currently lives and works in Nsukka, Nigeria. He is a sculptor known for his large captivating installations composed of an array of recycled materials. Some of his works solely consist of liquor bottle caps obtained from local alcohol recycling centers. Like Muniz, Anatsui works with others to help construct and assemble his pieces—working with a group of young men in the college town of Nsukka. The liquor bottle caps themselves symbolize colonial and postcolonial relations between Africa and the West—referencing when Europeans first came to the continent bringing bottles full of liquor to trade for slaves that would be consequently brought to America to grow crops like sugarcane and cotton. According to Anatsui, these serene bottle cap installations are "objects of contemplation"[xxviii] that have a textile quality, and have often been compared to curtains, tapestries, and even Kente cloth—a traditional Ghanaian sacred, woven cloth meant exclusively for royalty. He plays with vibrant color schemes inspired by the bottle caps themselves and often uses flattened gold caps in many of his works that also reference wealth, royalty and power. These malleable large-scale abstract forms are not fixed and are usually held together by connecting copper wires that are easily manipulated into various positions each time they are displayed at the gallery or museum curator's discretion. The tapestry-like objects create a sense of energy and movement and like Jordan's *Running the Number*s series are beautiful compositions that the viewer discovers are entirely created from waste the closer they approach them.

One striking example of Anatsui's environmental works is his *Ozone Layer and Yam Mounds* (Figure.19) that was displayed outside the entrance of the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin in 2010.

Figure. 19: El Anatsui, *Ozone Layer and Yam Mounds*, 2010 Berlin mixed media
https://universes.art/specials/2010/who-knows-tomorrow/artists/el-anatsui/03/.
https://www.wescover.com/p/sculptures-by-el-anatsui-at-alte-nationalgalerie-berlin--PB15G7gpF0Z.

This site-specific installation was a part of the institution's *Who Knows Tomorrow* exhibition exploring and reflecting Europe's (particularly Germany's) colonial history with Africa. The massive tapestry-like installation composed of aluminum bottle cap strips, metal graters, milk cans and offset printing plates cascaded down almost completely obscuring the front of the building except for the museum's plaque with the engraving, *Der Deutschen Kunst MDCCLXXI* (To the German Art 1871).[xxix] This monumental work ties the colonial (and art historical) past and present together while incorporating Anatsui's own environmental concerns (suggested by not only material but the inclusion of *Ozone Layer* in the title). He also incorporated sculptures created from recycled aluminum representing yam mounds—Nigeria's largest agricultural export.

10. Fereshteh Alamshah

In a similar way to how some artists (like Jordan) have turned to documentary-style photography in order to expose the harsh realities of environmental destruction, other artists are turning towards video art and performance. Like previous artists discussed, contemporary environmental artist Fereshteh Alamshah also uses plastic as a metaphoric medium in her works and incorporates photography, film, and performance artworks in site-specific locations. These performances serve as visual protests against the exploitation of that particular environment and the citizens who live there. Alamshah is an Iranian artist who lives and works in the city of Isfahan. Similarly to fellow artists Udo, Muniz, and Anatsui, Alamshah began her career drawing and painting. Many of her paintings incorporated overlapping, colorful, collage-inspired shapes decorated with natural motifs, the architecture of mosques that were covered in Persian script. She would later continue to incorporate script in a series of photographs *Write Art* where she would write her own reflections on and conversations with nature onto natural objects/elements like shells, dirt, sand, leaves, tree trunks, and animal bones.

Over the years, as environmental concerns in Iran increased, Alamshah's work became more collaborative and performance-based incorporating thin plastic as the primary material and fish as a reoccurring allegorical subject. Her film, *Jonah's Fish* (Figure.20) created in 2009, is a performance of 21 citizens of Varzaneh, Iran and takes place on the Gavkhouni Wetland.

Figure. 20: Fereshteh Alamshah, video still from *Jonah's Fish*, 2009 Iran.
http://www.natureartbiennale.org/en/bbs/board.php?bo_table=exhibition&wr_id=980.

This wetland is one of the most popular ecotourist sites in the country. Located east of Isfahan, this salt marsh serves as the interior drainage basin for the Zayandeh River (the largest river in Iran) as water travels down from the Zagros Mountains. The Gavkhouni Wetland is heavily polluted by neighboring cities and is consistently drained for industrial, agricultural, and drinking water due to lack of precipitation in urban areas. This extraction of water leaves the land dry—endangering native species of snakes, birds and fish.

Alamshah's five-minute-thirty-second video begins with a shot of one man standing on the now desert-like wetland staring off into the distance. The man begins to put on a surgical mask covered in Persian script and is shortly joined by a stream of other men and women who file in one by one, also placing masks over their faces. The 21 citizens all stand and face the same direction with their eyes closed after they have donned on their masks. Frightening string music plays and the screen flashes in and out of black and white sepia, as all of the participants reach down to the ground and slip on plastic in the shape of a fish (complete with tailfins)— completely covering their bodies and faces.

Then all members together lay down in death on their backs, heads all facing the same direction creating the image of an even larger fish whose image is projected over their bodies concluding the film.

In this black-and-white film, Alamshah demonstrates how silent protest can be performative. The act of volunteers literally putting themselves in the positions of the endangered fish that often die from the polluted dry wetland puts a human face to a largely human-caused problem. The plastic fish bags look alarmingly like body bags that create immobile macabre anthropomorphic creatures, while the encrypted masks indicate the silent rebellion of the Varzaneh people who are also experiencing their own kind of entrapment. When describing her choice of materials Alamshah explains, "People who surround themselves with plastic are symbols of humans who not only devastate and destroy nature and earth, by their hands but also, damage their life and their children's lives within the nature cycle. Plastic, for me, is a symbol of pollutants."[xxx]

Like Udo, Alamshah also incorporates children into her work to highlight the innocence and vulnerability of nature. Her 2010 video performance, *Tree Spirit* (Figure.21) depicts a sleeping, standing woman dressed in all white (symbolizing purity) wrapped in plastic covering her entire body—attaching her to a tree.

Figure. 21: Fereshteh Alamshah video still from *Tree Spirit*, 2010 Iran.
https://artmap.com/konsthallmalmo/exhibition/nietzsche-was-a-man-2014.

The tree is also wrapped in plastic and little hive-like cocoons are suspended from each branch encasing sleeping infant children (mannequins). Through this work, Alamshah seems to be making reciprocal maternal connections between human beings and the earth—the notion that mother earth takes care of us and we must also take care of her. However, the woman is completely suffocated by plastic as her swaddled children hang asleep above her.

11. Conclusion: The Future of Environmental Art

As the global sea level rises and the climate becomes warmer due to greenhouse gases, as increasing numbers of species are added to the endangered list, and biodiverse forests become more at risk, as air and water pollutants plague urban and rural developments, and toxic landfills double in size due to increased greed and consumption, contemporary environmental artists have reacted in various ways. Artists like Udo create contemplative serene photographed outdoor plantings and installations that cause the viewer to pause, reflect, and reconnect with nature. Instead of directly reflecting the horror of reality, Udo instead creates romantic and idealistic utopias: glimpses into what the future could look like if we choose to change our destructive behaviors and respect the natural world. Other artists have taken a more literal approach by creating ecological change through large-scale plantings and ecoventions like Lélia and Sebastiao Salgado's *Instituto* Terra and Mel Chin's *Revival Field*.

Other artists like Jordan and Muniz choose trash as their primary material to create captivating large-scale works evocative of famous works and movements throughout art history that create an automatic familiarity. At first glance, their reinterpreted works are meant to capture the viewer's attention with their immediate striking beauty and then encourage them to walk towards the piece and look closer in order to recognize the alarming message behind the waste material. Artists like Anatsui also use waste material to create works that tell a story as well as the history of a country and its cultural and environmental concerns. His works, though not recreations of famous works, are reminiscent of the Modernist movement and also use the beauty of glimmering light and color to lure viewers closer in order to tell a story through the bottle caps.

Although individual artists will always have their own personal preferences when it comes to materials, techniques, and locations for their works, it appears that many environmental artists have transitioned more towards documentary photography (or photography with little manipulation and artist interference), film, and performance art as a response

to increasing environmental concerns. Artists like Alamshah utilize film to empower citizens affected by environmental destruction, while Jordan's photographs from the series *Midway: Message from the Gyre* illustrate that too often aesthetic beauty in art is not powerful enough to ignite a sense of urgency, action, or promote change in a consumer-driven culture. Sometimes, these artists seem to say, we must see the horror that is revealed through a real captured image in order to starkly witness the result of our decisions, raise our consciousness, and ultimately change our ways.

12. Endnotes

1. Linda Weintraub, *To Life! Eco Art In Pursuit of a Sustainable Planet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 3
2. Arte Povera (translates to "poor art" in Italian) was an avant-garde movement that spread throughout Europe in the 1960s that served as a rebellion against the popularity of modernist abstract painting and technology in the 50s. Artists under this movement chose pre-industrial inexpensive (often deemed mundane unsophisticated, "un-artistic") materials like rocks, sticks, clothing, rope, and textiles to incorporate into their work.
3. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).
4. *The Limits to Growth* was written by MIT scientists Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and William W. Behrens III. This book was a report on results of a computer generated mathematical model of global economy and the ramifications of continued worldwide population increase, agricultural production, non-renewable resource depletion, industrial output and pollution generation.
5. *The Club of Rome* is an organization of members in the science community, business world, high level civil servants and former heads of state from all over the globe, whose mission is to solve global challenges through scientific research and advocacy.
6. Edward S. Casey, *Earth-Mapping: Artists Reshaping Landscape* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xvi.
7. Ibid, 5.
8. Anthropocentrism is the belief that human beings are above and of more importance than any other living being on earth or the universe. Anthropocentrism is the opposite of ecocentrism, which is the belief that humans are not superior to other living things but are equally significant and interconnected. 9.Aleksandra Mańczak, "The Ecological Imperative: Elements of Nature in Late Twentieth-Century Art," *Leonardo* 35, no. 2 (2002): 131.
10. Ibid, 132.
11. John K. Grande and Nils-Udo, "Nils-Udo: Nature Vision," http://www.ecologicalart.org/nilsduo.html.
12. Phenology is the study of cyclic and seasonal natural phenomena in relation to climate and plant and animal life—the timing of biological events like flowering, migration, and hibernation.
13. Founded in 1998, The *Instituto Terra* is a non-profit, "…environmental organization committed to the sustainable development of the Valley of the River Doce."
14. A Superfund site is any land in the United States that has been contaminated by hazardous waste and identified by the EPA as a candidate for cleanup because it poses a risk to human health and/or the environment. These sites are placed on the National Priorities List. (https://toxmap.nlm.nih.gov/toxmap/faq/2009/08/what-are-the-superfund-site-npl-statuses.html)
15. Sue Spaid, *Ecovention: Current Art to Transform Ecologies* (Cincinnati: The Contemporary Arts Center, 2002), 6.
16. Ibid.
17. John K. Grande, *Art Nature Dialogues: Interview with Environmental Artists*, Ithaca: State University of New York Press, 2004. ProQuest Ebook Central. 97.
18. Ibid, 101.
19. Ibid.
20. Jörg Colberg and Chris Jordan, "Intolerable Beauty," Orion Magazine. https://orionmagazine.org/article/intolerable-beauty/.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. London-based artists Tim Noble and Sue Webster are a couple known for their shadow self-portraits created by piles of arranged trash lit from behind. Exposed silhouettes, like their sculpture *Dirty White Trash (With Gulls)* showing a seated portrait of the couple consisting of six months worth of their combined trash.

24. Jörg Colberg and Chris Jordan, “Intolerable Beauty,” Orion Magazine. https://orionmagazine.org/article/intolerable-beauty/.
25. “Artist Mik Muniz,” International Center of Photography, accessed November 25, 2018, https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/constituents/vik-muniz?all/all/all/all/0.
26. “Botticelli’s Birth of Venus,” Analysis of the Art of Renaissance Italy, accessed November 27, 2018, http://www.italianrenaissance.org/botticelli-birth-of-venus/.
27. “El Anatsui in “Change,””Art in the Twenty-First Century Season 6, last modified April 14, 2012, https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s6/el-anatsui-in-change-segment/.
28. Ibid.
29. “El Anatsui,”Who Knows Tomorrow, accessed November 27, 2018, https://universes.art/en/specials/2010/who-knows-tomorrow/artists/el-anatsui/.
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13. Resources

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5. Casey, Edward S. *Earth-Mapping: Artists Reshaping Landscape*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
6. *Chris Jordan: Photographic Arts*. “Midway: Message from the Gyre.” http://www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/midway/#CF000313%2018x24 (accessed February 7, 2018).
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8. Grande, John K. “Art Nature Dialogues: Interviews with Environmental Artists.” Ithaca: State University of New York Press, 2004. ProQuest Ebook Central.
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10. International Center of Photography.“Artist Mik Muniz.” Accessed November 25, 2018. https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/constituents/vik-muniz?all/all/all/all/0.
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