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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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Virtual Menagerie Fit for a Ruler Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen's Handbooks as a Part of Dutch Colonial Propaganda

Proposed paper analyses the *Libri Principis* or the *Handbooks* of Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen. Two albums of watercolour and gouache depictions of animals and plants were a souvenir of his term as governor-general of Dutch Brazil (1637-1644). He employed for his Brazilian retinue physicians, naturalists, and artists to describe and depict local flora and fauna. Preserved visual documentation includes four albums of preparatory studies (*Theatrum Rerum Naturalium Brasiliae*, mainly by Albert Eckhout), scientists' private sketchbooks (a.o. Georg Marcgraf's), and loose zoological drawings (mostly by Frans Post). These became the source material for European depictions of Brazilian landscapes, inhabitants, animals, and plants. Hand-painted illustrations, woodcuts, oil paintings, tapestries, and frescoes were components of the propaganda action promoting Dutch attempts to conquer South America.

The *Handbooks*, attributed to Georg Marcgraf, were probably made in governor's menagerie in Vrijburg. They were a souvenir for the prince who would study the images and add his comments. Yet, he promptly passed them on. In 1652 he gave both the *Handbooks* and albums of Eckhout's drawings to the Elector Frederic Wilhelm of Brandenburg. They were among the most valuable manuscripts in the Royal Library in Berlin. This collection disappeared shortly after the end of World War 2 and resurfaced in the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow in 1977.

The *Handbooks* never received the same level of attention as other volumes of *Libri Picturati*. Usually, they are only mentioned or shortly described. This presentation would be the first in-depth description and analysis of the albums' contents. I suggest that, although *Handbooks* were designed as a personal virtual menagerie to study and comment, they were even more valuable for Dutch colonial propaganda. Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen used them to present himself as a considerate coloniser, who not only exploited new lands but also supported scientific research. Albums faithfully documented animals living in captivity at his Brazilian court. Therefore, they helped him to create a self-portrait of a capable governor but also of a patron of sciences. I intend to prove that, while *Handbooks'* scientific value is undebatable, in the 17th century it was their secondary purpose. I believe it is evident that Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen treated them primarily as proof of his accomplishments as an effective governor who took care of his land's environment. Therefore, the *Handbooks* were part of a grand propaganda action that included scientific research as an essential part of the American colonisation.

Kathrin Borgers

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Nature as Representation of Life and Death

The depiction of botanical motifs has had a long tradition in art. The motifs have been marginally used in many ways in paintings to enliven the depicted environment and to explain natural philosophical phenomena, medical findings, but also artistic and creative principles and processes. In short, they form a component with the help of which the interrelationships of people's natural living environment can be explained. This is often done through their artistic representations.

In my contribution, I look specifically into the depictions of death and life and their visualization through plants. In particular, pictorial themes such as ideas of the afterlife, visions and depictions of death will be in the focus of my interest. Through their everyday use in medicine, plants provide an insight into the workings of nature and life and are thus highlighted as symbolic elements. Within the thematic spectrum between life and death, representations of plants can be found, among others, in the paintings of Dirk Bouts, Hans Memling and Matthias Grünewald. I would like to point out that plants, within these paintings being a microcosm, often represent the macrocosm of the life cycle, which unites life and death. The natural philosophical implications associated with this are often taken up in order to set them apart for the understanding of life in general.

In addition, the genesis of the painting and its basic composition from materials of nature can also be considered in this context, since many colors derive from vegetative or mineral materials. Colour in itself was understood as a living material, usually derived from an organic source and can thus be understood as a carrier of material memories, levels of meaning and properties in the picture. Both the rarity of their origin and their material value often determine the use of pigments for the choice of motif in the painting. In addition to that, however, healing or toxic properties of pigments can also be considered in the context of alchemical processes. These considerations ultimately go back to an idea in which artistic process and materials used are understood as creative act.

The two approaches outlined here are intended to demonstrate that the depiction of plants in the 15th and early 16th centuries offered a way of conveying natural philosophical concepts about life and death in pictures.

Silvia Papini

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Breeding and Depicting Chameleons between the Court of Louis XIV and the Port of Livorno: Art, Science and Maritime Connections

During the second part of the 17th-century scientists tried to better understand the nature of chameleons, with the aim to refute ancient tales that described the animal as fed only by air and capable of blending into the environment. Two attempts in breeding and studying chameleons are noteworthy. The first was made at the court of Louis XIV by Claude Perrault (1613-1688), the other, which is the topic of this contribution, was led in the Tuscan port of Livorno by the naturalist Diacinto Cestoni (1627-1718). Having worked for some time in Marseille, Cestoni was familiar with the French research on chameleons published in the *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire naturelle des animaux* (1671), a richly decorated folio volume printed by the French Royal Printing Office in order to promote the King's scientific patronage. Cestoni's studies on chameleons, published in 1715, were a direct response to the earlier French publication. He tried to differentiate his work by highlighting the care for the animals and the constant search for good and precise illustrations, both lacking in the *Histoire des Animaux*. While the relation between text and images in the French volume has been extensively studied, Cestoni's research has never been assessed from an art historical perspective. This contribution will investigate what Cestoni intended for "good" illustrations and why the French did not meet with approval. Cestoni relied on draughtsmen, whom he named Antonio Vallisneri in his correspondence. However, only one was a professional artist specialized in still-life painting, while the other two – both belonging to the Jewish community in Livorno – were respectively a goldsmith and a naval insurer.

This contribution aims to cast further light on the collaboration between scientists and draughtsmen at the end of the 17th century focusing on the underestimated importance of Livorno in the exchange of ideas on flora and fauna across Europe.

Luís Ferro

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Sacred Places: The *cubas* from Southern Portugal

This paper presents the study of more than two hundred *cubas* – small constructions with squared plans topped by hemispherical whitewashed domes – located in strategic points where nature is “sublime or cheerful” (Espírito Santo, 1990): near rocks, woods, paths, mountain tops, and bodies of water, establishing a strong connection with the landscape.

These structures are the focus of the lasting polemic debate: are they an original typology from Northern Africa, built on the Iberian Peninsula during Islamic rule (Correia de Campos, 1970) or the expression of a type of funerary architecture typical of the Iberian Peninsula and later transferred to *Maghreb* (Pires Gonçalves, 1964). Could they be Mozarabic temples from the time of *al-Andalus*, were they a part of military line of defence along the administrative borders (Torres Balbás, 1948) or shelters/mausoleums for Sufi saints (Fierro, 2004)?

The field research (geo-historical and metric-constructive surveys) enabled to identify four features: (1) the *cubas* are multifunctional constructive modules that are always located in the area of influence of urban settlements, inhabiting the borders between the urban and the rural space, witnessing the evolution and transformations of the urban centres (transition of two different spatialities); (2) the majority of these buildings are visually connected, creating a complex system that aims to the defence of the frontier's and urban settlements; (3) some *cubas* are erected over or near megalithic buildings and archaeological sites dated to the Roman and Islamic periods, entailing that these constructions are linked to an ancient network of pre-existent sacred formations, whose significance was renewed (cultural resilience); (4) nowadays, the majority of these landmarks have been integrated in new urban peripheries (industrial, sport and commercial areas) and in larger architectural arrangements (hermitages, churches, and agriculture structures) that have adapted the religious space according to new ways of worship (Ferro, 2004), maintaining the collective memory that connects Men to Nature and Earth to the Sacred.

The main purpose of this paper is to discuss the role (religious/funerary and/or military/territorial) and the construction period of the *cubas* from southern Portugal, focusing on the study of the relationship between these buildings and the landscape they were/are located in.

Irene Gilodi

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Birds, Flowers and Crocodiles: Nilotic Scenes on Mosaic Pavements in Late Antique Palestine

In remarkable persistence of the popular artistic practices in Roman imperial times, the plentiful Nilotic landscape, with its wildlife of aquatic birds, fishes and other animals, continued to adorn walls and floors of churches and private houses in the Byzantine provinces of Palestine and Arabia. How can we account for this continuity? Despite the condemnation by some early Christian authors of what they viewed as an idolatrous worship of the generosity of the Nile river, the customary devotion to the Nile, with its original metaphorical associations with fruitfulness and abundance, continued in Christian times, as attested by the presence of a Christian hymn celebrating it. In accordance with the sentiment of the hymn and in addition to their apotropaic function, Nilotic images would have enveloped the viewer in a lively depiction of the 'divine nature' created by God. While walking on a Nilotic image on a floor in particular - an act that implies a direct physical contact between beholder and artistic object -, the viewer would have 'entered the image-space' and, as this paper aims to show, he could have thus metaphorically stood on the plenty of the land of Egypt, while also meditating on the act of Creation. Indeed, topographical representations of Egypt were on occasion explicitly remarked upon in mosaic floors with the use of inscriptions accompanying city portraits (as in the Haditha chapel mosaic), but it was the representation of the natural landscape of the Delta that characterized such depictions. In describing the walls of the Church of St. Stephen in Gaza, Choricus (6th century) specifically remarks that the river itself is not portrayed in its personification, but rather he is "suggested" by the representation of its meadow and the "various kinds of birds that often wash in that river's streams" (C. Mango 1986, 72). Images such as these offered the possibility to glimpse at the workings of that 'Divine Nature', that according to the Catechetical Lectures of Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem was "impossible to see with eyes of flesh" (K. C. Britt 2019, 288).

Jakov Đorđević

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Taming the (Super)Natural: Negotiating and Appropriating the Powers of Heaven and Hades in Late Medieval Eastern Christian Monasticism

In his recent book *Byzantine ecocriticism*, Adam Goldwyn has observed: “we can no longer see the starry night, literally or as depicted in pre-modern literature, as previous generations of scholars did, much less as the original authors and audiences of pre-modern texts did”. The implied ever wider distancing is not the product of the passage of time but of the human impact on the natural world - in the case of the starry night, the diminishing experience is the result of light pollution. However, this does not mean that one should romanticize the relationship between humanity and nature in the past. Harmonious coexistence was hardly ever the case. It can be said that one of the main characteristics of this relationship was tension. For humans in the Middle Ages, there was often a clear distinction between society and nature. Moreover, nature was perceived as a powerful subject instead of passive scenery. It is this notion of nature’s agency and separation that gave rise to tension, which in turn filled human imagination with fears and desires – fears of nature’s threatening powers and the desires to control them and put them to use.

The aim of this paper is to retrieve part of the late medieval ‘environmental imagination’ cultivated in Eastern Christian monasticism - more precisely, the one relating to paradise and Hades. Monastic thought was often turned toward fashioning those landscapes of the afterlife in this world. Almost as a rule, a monastery with its ‘tamed’ surroundings was conceived as a heavenly abode, while a secluded ascetic cell set in a gloomy cave was recognized as a property of Hades. However, this conceptualization was not based on pure symbolism. The intent of the present paper is to show not only how these identities were visualized but also how they were ritually performed in relation to the taming of the natural world and appropriation of its innate powers.

Dr Chiara Ballestrazzi

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The Art of Nature in Classical Antiquity: Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*

My paper focuses on the ambiguous relationship between human and natural artistry in classical antiquity according to the most extraordinary work devoted to the natural world: Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* (1st century AD). The *fil rouge* running across the encyclopaedia is the ambiguous interaction between humans and Nature in their reciprocal roles of *artifices* ("artists"). This relationship should be respectful and creative as the "competition between art and Nature" fought by the Greek painter Pausias and his beloved Glycera, a garland maker who personifies the artistry of Nature (*NH* 21,4; 35,125). It is not only the human artists who imitate nature in their works, but it is also Nature who imitates human artistry, e.g. with an extraordinary bush generating pearl-like seeds alternated to green leaves as if it were "realized by the artistry of a jeweller" (*NH* 27,98-99). However, driven by greed, artists sometimes maliciously disguise the *feri* ("to make") of human artistry and appropriate the *nasci* ("to be born") of natural artistry, to the point of adulterating raw materials forcing them "to be born" as they desire: marbles artificially veined, living sheep tinged in purple. The climax of the *Natural History* is not, as frequently stated, human art, namely painting and sculpture (*NH* 34-36), but instead the art of Nature, which finds its higher expression in gemstones. According to Pliny, because of their colours, materials, and beauty, it is in gemstones that the majesty of nature is more perceivable for the human beings, to the point that it is considered an impiety to engrave intaglios on them (*NH* 37,1). Pliny even describes an agate with the effigy of Apollo and the Muses "due not to any artistic intention but to nature unaided", a chance image that, through Pliny's discussion, influenced the sensibility towards natural artistry until the 18th century.

I conclude my paper with a neglected passage from Book 37 about variegated gemstones that, although invasively processed by human artists, have their current name changed into that of Nature herself, *physis*, "in order to sell with them the admiration of Nature". To my opinion these fake versions of the agate with Apollo and the Muses are cameos, whose ancient name is unknown to us. *Physis*-cameos are not only the peak of the ambiguous relationship between *nasci* and *feri* in the *Natural History*, but were probably appreciated, by ancient connoisseurs, as special crossroads of natural and human art.

Sterre Barentsen

PhD student at the Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany

Does the Elbe Flow Underneath the Wall?

At the centre of my research is a belief that using ecology as a framework allows us to discuss both international and local aspects of art in the German Democratic Republic. Many artists and activists in East Germany saw the overwhelming pollution and the rapid forest dying as *visible* signs of failure and incompetence. The state's reliance on open pit mining and outdated chemical factories created so much environmental damage, that by November 1982 there was a ban on the publication and distribution of information about the condition of the natural environment in the GDR. In this paper I will present a section of my PhD which deals with instances of international collaboration initiated by East German artists. The 1970s saw the rise of a global environmental movement, which resulted in German-German collaborations in activism and art. An example of ecology as a means of borderless exchange is the collaboration between Joseph Beuys and Erhard Monden and the art critic Eugen Blume in the *Parallel Performance*. Monden attached chalkboards with red string to three trees in Dresden that acted as 'antennas', which would radiate his message over the wall to Joseph Beuys in West Germany. They purposefully used Joseph Beuys' motif of the Oak Tree to create a German-German art which resisted the wall that stood between them. However, when the action was followed by an exhibition of the documented material, Beuys was barred from entering into the East Germany. The artist Joseph Huber looked further beyond the Germanys and visualized the idea that environmental protection must transcend borders and nations, in his mail art project, entitled *Nature is life, Save it*. Huber sent postcards to fellow mail artists, often attaching a packet of sunflower seeds, and asked his correspondents to send him back postcards to this theme. Huber was able to collect 339 entries from artists from nineteen countries. The entries stemmed from all over the world and while various themes are explored, an interest in nature conservation on both local and global levels was shared. I aim to show how artists in the GDR used environmental themes to connect themselves to a global art world they yearned to belong to, whilst still responding to and engaging with local problems, often in the process provoking the cultural politics of the GDR.

Hauke Ohls

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Capitalocene: Artistic Reflections on Corporate Responsibility for Climate Change

It's widely considered nowadays that we are living in a new era called "Anthropocene", in which mankind is a climatic force. But this general notion of mankind is too general for some cultural theorists like T. J. Demos or Jason W. Moore. They both describe in their books that not the whole or an abstract 'mankind' is responsible for the climatic changes in the first place, but the "military-state-corporate apparatus", as Demos puts it. Therefore, the name "Capitalocene" is more accurate, since the aspect of responsibility is taken into account.

Artists respond to this imbalance of responsibility in various ways as they try to make the processes behind the global-acting structures of multinational corporations visible or by joining and supporting protest movements. Even more, they are able to team up with marginalized people and challenge corporate power-structures. In this perspective, nature is not an immobile background anymore or only a resource of exploitation, separated from the human being. Nature and humans exist in close interaction and shape each other reciprocally.

Two artistic approaches will be discussed in this paper. One is *Oil and Gas Pollution in Vaca Muerta* by the British collective Forensic Architecture. Their work is a research video from 2019 which deals with the deposit of shale oil in a region in Argentina where the indigenous Mapuche people used to settle. The other is an artwork by *Territorial Agency*, an independent organization which created a video installation in 2015 called *Museum of Oil*.

Both works address a structure that T. J. Demos calls "Petrocapitalism" - a distinct and perverted form of the "Capitalocene". The effects that every person has on climate change are not denied in this account, but additionally the corporate responsibility gets fully visible. Our understanding of the term 'nature' is challenged in various ways by these two artworks, and it becomes clear that in the "Capitalocene" nature is a resource of wealth for some groups and at the same time a necessity for mankind.

Julia Modes

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Toxic Beauty: New Aesthetics of Industrial Disaster

In 2017, the Brazilian artist Silvia Noronha looked 100,000 years into the future with her work *Future Stones*. The work uses material from an industrial disaster on November 5, 2015, in Brazil, where the dam of a retention basin broke, sending a wave of toxic mine waste slurry flooding over villages downstream. Noronha collected contaminated soil samples from the site and, in collaboration with the Institute for Applied Geoscience and the Geochemical Laboratory of the Technical University of Berlin, produced *Future Stones* by applying high pressure and temperatures to the material she had gathered. On its black surface, blue and green bits sparkle with poetic beauty, elevating the soil's human-caused contamination to an aesthetic sensory experience. Regarding stones, as mediums which preserve information about our time, Noronha's experimental work creates a pseudo-alchemical, speculative prognosis of a post-human geology. In doing so, she addresses the increasingly precarious interaction between natural ecology and human influence and points to the development of a human-generated next nature: the Anthropocene.

In 2019, I curated the exhibition *unnatural*, where Noronha's stones were exhibited alongside works by Saskia Krafft, Niccolò Krättli and Jonathan Banz, Mark Dion, Nina Schuicki, Duy Hoàng, Markus Wirthmann and Robert Smithson. Based on Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection, the exhibit raised the question of whether the conscious selective actions of humans should be conceived of as a natural or an unnatural process. Bringing the dichotomy of humanity and nature into focus, the nine artists addressed the human fascination for, and influence on, natural cycles.

In my presentation for the conference *Art and Nature* I will put forward the artistic positions that emerged in the exhibition *unnatural*. These artists, and the ongoing development of their works, demonstrate that art is not only a sphere in which to reflect nature's beauty or to make political statements on its devastation, but as in Noronha's *Future Stones*, to transmute moments of destruction into aesthetically beauty artefacts that call into question the dichotomy of natural and unnatural.

Anna-Rosja Haveman

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Co-created by the Tide: Were Han Jansen's Tidal Paintings Raising Awareness for Nature or Polluting a Nature Reserve?

As a sort of shaman, Han Jansen brought a group of spectators onto the mud flats of the Wadden Sea, where he threw pigments into the gullies, which created coloured water streams. These tidal paintings were captured through photography and film by the onlookers, or we could call them archivists. Whereas the artist made the project because he thought people ought to care more for nature, the work brought a controversy about. Environmental activists filed a lawsuit against the artist's action of discarding pigments into the water, which they saw as an act of pollution.

In this paper I reflect on the art project from three different perspectives: art historical, philosophical and environmental. First, I sketch an outline of the artistic development in the oeuvre of Han Jansen that follows broader art historical tendencies of the time. He went from painting semi-abstract paintings of cows (painting *after* nature), to creating abstract paintings by using gravity (painting *with* nature) to creating ephemeral tidal paintings in the Wadden Sea (painting *in* nature). Second, the tide as co-creator in art is taken as incentive to question and re-evaluate the nature-culture dichotomy, as the discussed artworks are inherently hybrid and diffuse binary thinking. I draw on the concept of affordances, as put forward by James Gibson, to describe how the artist use the aspects that the environment offers to him, and to describe what the artwork offers to the viewer. Third, this paper embeds the work of Han Jansen in a broader societal context of the simultaneously emerging environmental movement in the Netherlands. For instance, Jansen was a close friend of Jan Abrahamse, who was one of the founders of the Waddenvereniging, and organization defending the interests of the natural values of the area. By considering questions regarding the visibility of pollution in art and the paradoxical position of the artist, this paper addresses questions that are still relevant for all artist who create art in nature today: to what extent does a minor polluting act in art out way the benefits of raising awareness?

Dr Friederike Vosskamp

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The Eternal Cycle of Nature? The Four Seasons, Times of Day and Ages of Man by Caspar David Friedrich between Traditional Allegory and New Aesthetic Concept of Modernity

Natural cycles such as the four seasons or the four times of day have always been part of human experience and currently have become once again prominent in the wake of a global climate change. As natural phenomena and structuring models, they reflect an ideal image of nature and man's place in it. Due to their special significance for human life, the four seasons and times of day were taken up early on as a motif in visual arts and became especially popular in Baroque imagery as allegorical figures or landscapes. In the 18th and early 19th centuries, however, new discoveries in science and philosophy challenged the perfect image of nature that was envisioned in art. These processes of questioning both natural and iconographic ideas are particularly exemplified in the depictions by the German Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich. In his oeuvre, he repeatedly deals with the course of nature and time. In particular, his lesser-known sepia landscape series, created in 1803 and 1826, which combine the allegorical themes of the seasons, times of day and ages of man, allude to traditional *topoi* of representing nature, but at the same time depart from the classical iconography by considering landscape both as a means of aesthetic expression and as a projection surface for human emotions. The paper proposes to discuss the questioning of classical iconographic concepts of the representation of natural cycles. It uses Friedrich's sepia series as a particular case study to examine how the notion of nature develops and is called into question in view of changed social conditions at the beginning of the 19th century. How does Friedrich deal with the iconographic tradition and transform the allegorical concept of nature? What role does the relationship between man and nature play in this context? In focusing on these questions, the paper explores Friedrich's depictions of natural cycles as new versions of allegorical landscape, which point far into modernity as a space for reflection on human feelings and an aesthetic field of experimentation.

Jadranka Ryle

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Blue Ether: Nature, Fluidity and Gender in Hilma af Klint's Watercolours

This paper explores the gender politics of fluidity in the abstract watercolour paintings of Swedish modernist Hilma af Klint. It develops the term 'feminine abstraction' to account for the interrelation of her explorations of nature, fluid abstract aesthetics, esoteric revelation and gender politics in this work. For the last two decades of her life, af Klint painted exclusively in watercolour. Despite the ever-increasing number of publications recognizing af Klint's contributions to abstract painting's formative years, this culmination of her work has not yet received sustained attention. Yet, as this paper shows, these paintings contribute deeply to our understanding of af Klint, in particular the way she ties her understanding of gender to the natural world through her vision of the fluid and invisible.

Filled with intuitive sensory and botanical impressions, af Klint's final work marks a significant change from her previously analytical and diagrammatic paintings. My paper focuses on the relation of af Klint's techniques and motifs of fluidity alongside a consideration of the historical situation of women and modernism. Particularly in her writing, af Klint was concerned with the relation of nature, aesthetics and spiritualism.

An experienced botanical and zoological illustrator, she was well aware of popular publications on nature and art and her library was filled with books on plants and nature along with spiritualist literature. Of particular importance is Charles Darwin's scientific discovery of evolution which fascinated artists and intellectuals from the beginning of the century. Evolution, as a process of progression whose development is imperceptible, served as inspiration for many esoteric teachings of the day. For spiritualists, the theory of evolution offered an insight into dynamic forces of the universe, and our bodies, as processes which take place beyond our perception. Immensely popular at the turn of the century, this parallel notion of evolution, as exemplified in the esoteric writings of Helena Blavatsky and Rudolf Steiner, served af Klint as a starting point in her own aesthetic innovations. Channelling the scientific overturning of the conventionally visible, esoteric ideas challenged establishment values, and theorised utopian political arrangements of social life. These movements served af Klint as a model both for her own gender politics, and her fluid gendered aesthetics. Her watercolours challenged patriarchal structures embedded in the geometric motifs of early abstraction, the Romantic representation of nature, and scientific botanical illustrations. Innovating a feminine abstraction, af Klint's fluid depictions of nature sought to envision new feminine futures.

Dr Hee Sook Lee-Niinioja

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Landscapes in Shaping Nordic National Identity through Ephemeral-Perpetual Green Midsummer and White Winter in Romantic Art

The Romantic view posits the object-subject theory of creation that form needs discovering the inner insight of the personal ability and motivation to articulate-cultivate individual internal property. For the Nordic artist, the winter landscape inherited from mythic nature became the means of "spiritual, existential or emotional notions". Nordic landscape art welcomed long snowy winter with sparkling light of shifting colours and emotions. The ephemeral-yet-perpetual light was salvage in white-dark nights where all types of feelings are intermingled.

In the early 19th century, Nordic landscape painting transcended the landscape's notions, alluring the art viewers. It was the time for shaping national identity, calling back their artists to return home. Norway's national poet Bjornson was enchanted by his native county's spectacular winter in a ridge of white, formulating the critical geographical circumstance as the country's character: "Its location far to the north near the realms of eternal snow". In that epoch, the winter season in Norway was a characteristic feature, which Romantic painters revealed a national awareness through their art. However, their paintings recollected Impressionism or Romanticism in contemporary Europe.

Midsummer is a spirit-night feast for the Nordic when native spirits, happiness-mischief, and the uncovering future on this enchanting night. Nordic artists borrowed the celebration to find their identity as a communicator of National Romanticism. Amid the conceptual-stylistic framework of Realism around the 1880s, they were encouraged to depict local circumstances and landscape in their homelands. Urban internationalism and Realism led to a focus on the characteristic qualities of the Nordic, enforcing its nationalism in progress. The fishing village of Skagen, Denmark, turned to a haven due to isolated folk fishing life, giving new attention to indigenous traditions after homecoming as a characteristic of this epoch's art.

The landscape full of phenomena is ephemeral-perpetual, depending on tradition, culture, and emotions. Nordic landscape art evoked the blue forest mood and nocturnal water, introducing these places to testify its history. The midsummer's overtone symbolism invited the white winter to connect human's inner psychology by the landscape, fusing to shift ideas of the self and nation towards Nordic art's complexity.

This paper discusses Nordic art's hidden notions and its contribution to shaping the national identity and collective memories, exemplifying artistic works. Semiotic interpretations of this immaterial cultural heritage are critical: the researcher's subjective closeness yet objective distance from Nordic societies as an insider-outsider is observed. Regardless, nature is a Nordic heritage transmitted to the present.

Vanda Dillmann

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'The Hidden Face of Nature' Connection Between Art and Nature in Ernő Kállai's Bioromanticism-Theory

Ernő Kállai (1890-1954) was one of the most important Hungarian art theorists and art critics of the 20th century. While living and working in Germany between 1925 and 1940, he became a recognized theorist of modern art. Later on, after returning to Budapest he quickly immersed in the art scene of his home country as art writer and exhibition organizer. After the World War II, he became one of the founders of the progressive artistic group named "European School" and the leading figure of the "Abstract Artists' Group" that emerged from it. These groups marked a short (1946-1948) but productive and forward-looking period in Hungarian art.

The theory of Bioromanticism, which had preoccupied Kállai since the early 1930s, is explained in details in his booklet *The Hidden Face of Nature (A természet rejtett arca)*, published in 1947. It outlines a special link between arts and nature, on the principle that modern art's new sense of reality is not based on the external appearance of objects but on their internal structure, on the "forces and functions that create, sustain and consume the material world". The main idea, reflecting the modern scientific achievements of Kállai's time, is that if we look beneath the surface, we always find a much more complex and mysterious system behind all phenomena. Translated into the language of fine arts, these profound meanings cannot be represented in concrete terms - rather, they can be suggested by the simplest shapes, such as geometric or organic forms.

In February 1947, parallel to his illustrated booklet, Kállai organized the famous group exhibition *New World Image (Új Világkép)* presenting unique artworks and reproductions together with a wide range of scientific photographs depicting various phenomena such as X-rays or images of microscopic cells or even galaxies. The formal similarities of the artworks and the micro and macro photographs made clear the connection between the inner structures of nature's and artist's creations.

In my lecture, in addition to giving an insight into Kállai's inspiring theory by presenting the previously mentioned theoretical writings, thematising the link between nature, science and arts, I would also like to outline its scientific and artistic context. Moreover, I would like to examine the impact that Bioromanticism had on the post-war Hungarian abstract surrealist art for which it provided an intellectual background.

Dr Carla Herman

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Johann Moritz Rugendas' Brazil and American Landscapes and Humboldt's Idea of Nature

An important part of Brazilian landscape art history was made under the gaze of foreign painters that visited the country after Britain forced the opening of the Portugal colony to the world in the first decades of the 19th century. Much of their perception was influenced by the readings of the German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt. Humboldt believed that the painting of landscape was essential for scientific research as well as an educational tool. Considering nature and landscape as an entity, his writings encouraged the activity of traveling abroad to see and understand Nature. Mediated through the aesthetics, landscape was seemed like a living unity, and its empirical observation and contemplation should convert the aesthetical spectacle into scientific knowledge. Influenced by Kant's ideas in *Critique of Judgment* and also by the writings of Goethe and Schelling, Humboldt devised a new interpretation and representation of nature on Earth's surface, wherein the concept of space is essential to explaining natural phenomena.

Johann Moritz Rugendas was one of the artists strongly under Humboldt's influence. Rugendas first travelled to Brazil in the years 1821-1825, in the occasion of an invitation to take part of the Langsdorff Expedition, an official party that happened with the acceptance of Brazil's young Emperor Dom Pedro I. This group searched the interior of the state of Minas Gerais in the first part of the expedition, in 1824-1825. However, after disagreements with Langsdorff, the artist decided to leave the expedition and travelled back to Europe. After meeting Humboldt in Paris, with his drawings in hands, the naturalist convinced Rugendas to publish a travel book, helping him to sign with the important Engelmann Publishing House. Between the years 1831 and 1837 Rugendas travelled for the second time to America, and the works that he produced in these trips are somehow different from the ones originated during his first journey. These drawings and writings Engelmann published in Paris in 1835 under the title *Malerisch Reise in Bresilien*, both in German and in French.

In this paper I propose to compare the two, different examples of Rugendas' American representations: the ones from the *Malerisch Reise in Bresilien* and the series of oil paintings of America's landscapes he produced in the 1830's, in reference to Humboldt's texts and his influence over Rugendas, to better understand the heritage of German Romanticism on Brazilian and American landscape.

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Life, Light and Wires. The Electrified 'Gesamtkunstwerk' around 1900

In the Fin de Siècle, electricity was not initially understood as an artificial man-made resource, but as a vital and driving force found in nature and drawn from it. The laws of thermodynamics and the related mutual convertibility of all forces and energies into one another seemed to confirm such biological understanding. As I'd like to demonstrate in my paper, the artisans around Émile Gallé and the École de Nancy integrated the technological components of the ultra-modern light bulbs into the visual program of their lamp designs, bringing the connotation of electric light with the invigorating forces of nature to the fore by almost naturalistic, sculptural means. In contrast to the products of sculpture, the functional properties of the electric lamp also allowed the vital force of electricity, which was assumed to be present in nature, to actually act within these objects. Due to their electrification, the artistically designed plants appear to have literally grown from the ornately carved Art Nouveau tables.

For the entire 19th century, yet especially for Art Nouveau and Jugendstil, the recreation of nature in private interiors was an essential paradigm. Guyau attested that both naturalist and symbolist art movements were concerned with the re-contextualization of nature and "renouveler la nature, de la créer une seconde fois". Yet, this original nature was identified above all with the flowing movement of living organisms. So how could this artificial second nature be made visible more properly than in the shape of the electric force of nature, which can be sensually experienced as light and heat? Vases, services, cane handles and *fauteuils* picked up a distinct moment from nature's repertoire that was as close to life as possible, captured it and made it tangible. In the lamps, however, the galvanic *élan vital* actually ran. Thus, an almost energetic causal relationship can be ascertained between the lamps and the nature-shaped interior. Only through the living lamps does the total work of art come alive. Particularly from the evening hours onwards, their luminous properties breathed life into the surrounding biomorphic objects, which would otherwise have disappeared for hours in the dark.

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“Sacra Natura”: The Representation of Mediterranean Nature in Italian Contemporary Sacred Art through the Sculpture of Pericle Fazzini (1913-1987)

The sculpture of Pericle Fazzini offers an exceptional repertoire of images inspired by nature. These creations are profoundly connected to the context of the 20th-century sacred art in Italy, characterized by an oscillation between religious and profane forms. This aesthetic and moral dynamic in art might represent a reaction to a seemingly irreparable fracture between Church and contemporary artists, following the historical perspectives opened by the Lateran Treaty and the rise of the avant-garde movements on the Italian artistic scene.

The work of the sculptor Pericle Fazzini is an example of artistic and spiritual interrogations arising from this fracture: the artist seeks to reconcile art and sacred models through the celebration of nature. Besides his numerous works directly referencing religious themes, Fazzini honors the Mediterranean fauna and flora in all its forms, conceiving Nature as the place of God. Although Roman by adoption, the artist also never ceases in his career to pay homage to his native land, the Marches, through subjects that become archetypes of an ideal rural and maritime civilization suspended in time: peasant women, fishermen, fauns and Mediterranean idols. In the field of animal sculpture, Fazzini, in accordance with his Franciscan sensibility, elevates the animal to the rank of the privileged vehicle of the divine.

The particularly relevant aspect of Fazzini's production corresponds to an aesthetic fluctuation - between figuration and abstraction - that incarnates the moral, artistic and spiritual imperatives of a century that is on the way to secularisation, and attempts through the naturalistic theme to reconnect images with the sacred.

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Roger Raveel: Providing a New Vision on the Complex Rural Landscape

Roger Raveel is considered one of Belgium's major artists after the World War II. Mainly studied as the founder of *de Nieuwe Visie* (the New Vision), adjacent to pop art and nouveau realism, or as the artist who was only interested in depicting his birthplace (the rural Machelen), Raveel's environmentalist aspects, however, are still not recognized in contemporary art studies.

I argue that Raveel's practices lean towards what contemporary scholars define as 'sustainable art'. I focus here on the interpretation of art that contributes to experiencing the intertwined, transdisciplinary networks that create our environment. Without falling into the trap of closed cybernetics, aesthetics of sustainability is an antidote to reductionists and Fordist lifestyles. They promote a reconsideration of human's hierarchical position in the complex networks that perpetually create our environment together with nonhuman actors.

Using bright colours, incorporating mirrors and organic materials and honing a painting style switching from hyperrealist to abstract to cartoonish all in one work, Raveel infused the everyday rural village into his art and highlighted its infinite aesthetic pleasures and environmental complexities. Without glorifying the rural life, he protested against his urban peers who saw it as redundant, dull and behindhand.

It is crucial not to separate Raveel's works from a time period in which Belgium was falling victim to chaotic urbanizations of the landscape. Inspired by the slow modernization of his Heimat, Raveel was not someone who perceived the rural lifestyle as the antipode of modern urban living. He pictured modernizing changes with great interest but detested the unthoughtful and consumerist driven speed of these changes, which resulted in environmental disruptions and the reduction of rural complexity to a monoculture.

After analysing the sustainable aesthetics in Raveel's oeuvre, this paper focusses on two environmental works created in the seventies: *De Zwanen van Raveel* (*Raveel's Swans*) and the happening *Raveel op de Leie* (*Raveel on the Leie*). Although the first work, an installation piece on the waters of Bruges, was not conceived as environmental art, the work caused people to re-appreciate their surroundings, noticing in turn the pollution of it and inciting a bottom-up initiative for environmental restoration. The second work was Raveel's contribution to a group protest to save the biodiversity of a meander that was to become urbanized. The happening emphasized different uses of the meander (artistic, recreational, ecological) that were threatened to be erased in favour of a modern monoculture.

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The Material and Symbolic Potential of Nature in Britain since the 1960s

This paper proposes to study the specificities of environmental artistic experiences in the British territory since the 1960s. In Great Britain, the relationship to nature is manifested in the work of artists, sculptors and photographers who survey the wildest and least urbanized parts of the island. They do not appropriate the representations of the landscape by the classic topography, they do not modify the ground by the same processes as the American Land Art, but we will see how they experiment the insular natural space following a *genius loci*. Since the 1960s, we have seen the development of artistic practices linked to nature. Ian Hamilton Finlay develops his Little Sparta garden near Edinburgh, Richard Long surveys the paths of southwest England, David Nash rarely leaves Blaenau Ffestiniog, in North Wales, Chris Drury works close to home in Sussex and Andy Goldsworthy nurtures his work in Penpont, in the south of Scotland. The exhibition spaces are questioned since these artists choose to intervene directly in nature. It becomes at the same time an everyday environment, a physical space, a site, and a tool. From the end of the 1970s, the English natural space is invested, as the forest of Grizedale (1977), the Yorkshire Sculpture Park (1977), the Forest of Dean (1986) and King's Wood (1993). However, the artists do not refuse to transport their experiences and also invest in galleries and museums that allow them to extend their visibility. We will see how their works oscillates between the respect of the English tradition for landscape and the development of conceptual practices. While 18th century Britain saw the birth of landscape painting beyond its decorative function, we note that these artists subverted the tradition of English garden and British landscape art to invent new means of expression linked to the practice of sculpture.