Land Art : True Capitalist Art

Annie Gustafsson
Sotheby's Institute of Art

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ABSTRACT

Artworks belonging to the Land art movement are known to exist in remote locations, are immense in scale, site specific and incredibly costly to create. All of these traits make Land art inherently resistant to conservation and the secondary market.

If these works do not present an obvious investment opportunity, how then can a movement like Land art even exist? What is its role in a capitalist driven society, if it cannot perform as a financial asset? Where then does the value in Land art lie?

This paper will attempt to explore the cultural effects on the movement, the subsequent methodologies developed by a handful of artists, and the pursuit of financing which does not conflict with their artistic intentions.
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INTRODUCTION

In today’s art market and art world, fine art is viewed as a financial asset. Having earned the reputation of being "recession proof" after the 2008 market crash, when art not only held its value but the auctions immediately following showed works at breaking record prices, fine art is considered by many to serve as an investment as well as a tool in portfolio diversification. Brook Hazelton, a managing director of Phillips de Pury & Co New York auction house has stated, “There is a fundamental change in the way people approach art. People are viewing art more as an asset category.”

How then can an art movement like Land art exist? These works tend to be ephemeral, are immense in scale, exist in remote locations, and are site specific. What is its role in a capitalist driven society, if it is inherently resistant to conservation and the secondary market?

Wall Street reporter Earl C. Gottschalk wrote in 1976:

“I'm here thirty miles downwind from the U.S. atomic testing site in a godforsaken, barren desert to view, of all things, an exhibit of modern art... The artwork I'm looking at cost $100,000 to make and is highly praised by New York art critics, but isn't for sale. It can't be moved. It weighs 500 tons, and only a handful of people have ever seen it. It's called Complex One, and it's an earthwork.”

Complex One (a quarter mile wide, one and a quarter miles long) is part of a larger project known as The City (1972), a complex still in construction today and totaling now


2 Michael Lailach, Land Art, (Taschen, 2007), 16
over 47 years in the making. It has accepted millions of dollars from collectors and institutions throughout its making.\(^3\)

However, if society protects what it values, and our dominant form of valuation is to assign a price with respective currency, seeing as land art exists it cannot be immune to or survive outside of this societal structure... There must be a relationship between Land art and the art market for it to survive.

I will open with the history of the movement to give context and understanding. The difference between the Land art of Britain and that of the United States, these two countries being the source of the majority of works, will also be considered in terms of core concepts and stylistic traits. The above mentioned term "Earthworks" is associated with the Land art of the United States, which will be explored and built upon shortly, as it is an important distinction moving forward in this paper.

The methodologies of each are reflected in their manifestation and in turn the paths they navigate financially. Although Land Art outside of the US is in no way lesser, to facilitate the exploration of Land Art’s relationship with finance and the market it will help to keep the conversation focused on the capitalistic structures and societal values of the United States.

Granted, body artworks by artists such as Ana Mendieta, Dennis Oppenheim, and Richard Long have had significant and important influence on the Land art movement, they could be more likened to performance art. This is in contrast to the more permanent pieces which this paper will focus on, and therefore will not be explored in depth as well.

Also, although in a technical sense, 'American' Land art includes that of South and Central Americas, moving forward in this document 'America' will signify specifically the United States. Not that Land artworks of the remaining Americas do not hold merit, but as mentioned prior the societal and economic structure of the United States will set the groundwork for this discussion.

Although the movement is ongoing, a core group of pioneering leaders will serve as our primary case studies, being that this is a relatively young discipline and several of these founding artists are still alive today. We can benefit directly from witnessing their transitions and adaptations as the markets have shifted, being that they have literally forged the way in which Land art is executed and valued culturally and monetarily.

Just as there is no one way to build a garden, there is no one type of Land art or set of rules to abide by. As artists ethos tend to differ, this effects how the works are realized. These intentions, visions, aesthetics and forms of execution ultimately impact the way they interact with the art market and art world as well. Although no route is superior to another, they can differ drastically and we will explore a variety of them as well as their respective connotations. As each artist has a different relationship with different sectors, we will have the opportunity to see the nuances of not just how land art interacts with the art market, but the vocabulary and character of the art market itself.

As this paper moves forward the definition of Land art must evolve, however, we will begin with this: Land art is intimately related to landscape, nature and the environment - those relationships being primarily physical and nonrepresentational. Being that it is closely related to minimalistic and conceptual art, examples such as national monuments do not qualify. To distinguish the difference between landscape and Land art
may also be helpful, as we can view the term “scape” as one denoting distance. This highlights the fact that in Land art the environment is an active component rather than merely a setting, as is the viewer’s participation and engagement over the course of time that empower the works.

So, considering that the current state of the art market has become openly and aggressively financially based, it seems ironic that an inherently difficult to valuate discipline has emerged at all. Given that there is no intrinsic value to the pieces aside from that of the land and materials, what is the motive to create them at all? If Land artworks do not present an obvious investment opportunity, where does the value in Land art lie?

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HISTORY

It is recognized that art is seen as a reflection of society. By taking a closer look at the socio-political ongoings occurring in unison with the development of land art, we can better see what inspired its conception and by consequence the steps it has taken throughout its evolution. The late 1960s and early 1970s are recognized as the start of the movement. The United States post WWII had established itself as a military superpower, and emerging leader of the art world. Thus, the history given will be US-centric. There are four developments in particular which contribute to the beginning of Land art as a recognized movement.

Firstly, under the Kennedy administration, the political climate of the cold war era was thawing into a more positive and fruitful national attitude. He planted the seeds for a stronger economy and reinvigorated the Manifest Destiny, re-opening the American Frontier, as well as submitting the United States as a contender in the ‘Race for Space.’ As one can see, the country was growing dramatically in more ways than one - outwardly, inwardly, and all degrees in between.

Another notable development of the time is that of the Baby Boomer generation coming into young adulthood. This new dominance of youth now made up more than half of the US population. This new majority, combined with buying power resulting from a strengthening economy and a fresh outlook, would be significant as catalyst for change.

Alongside ongoing conflict (both the domestic color war and the Vietnam war abroad) was the introduction of Eastern philosophies to Western culture, inviting a more wholistic view of the world. Returning troops were not only exposed to the atrocities of war but to

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5 Ben Tuffnell, Land Art, (Tate Publishing 2006), 30
such Eastern philosophies in real time. Racial issues were being challenged, economic impact scrutinized and then-current divides were being critically reevaluated.

The fourth exceptional happening of the time is the newfound attention of mankind’s effect on the environment. Ecological issues such as those discussed in Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* published in 1962 were gaining attention. This in hand with the looming threat of nuclear warfare resulted in a newfound awareness of man’s effect on the health of the planet, arguably reflected in the creation of Earth Day, (April 22 1970).6

Our worldview had drastically shifted in every way. When once nature and man were identified as separate entities, it was now recognized that we were not only uniquely intertwined, but in fact inseparable.

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This series of simultaneous and monuments events set the stage for the birth of Land art, known to be predominantly American and British. Subsequently, the approaches to land art run parallel to their respective cultures. The degree to which the artists choose to display man’s hand in their work is the main divide, and from these opposite courses of action we see the result of most Land art being American.

To consider a statement made by the British Land Artist, Richard Long:

In the sixties there was a feeling that art need not be a production line of more objects to fill the world. My interest was in a more thoughtful view of art and nature, making both visible and invisible, using ideas, walking, stones, tracks, water, time, etc, in a flexible way… It was the antithesis of so-called American ‘Land Art’, where an artist needed money to be an artist, to buy real estate to claim possession of land, and to wield machinery. True capitalist art.  

This seems to be a contradiction in every way to our initial understanding of Land Art. However, upon closer inspection we begin to gain some clarity.

Artists of the UK prefer for the most part to be minimally invasive, which is reflected in their consciously gentle approach of shaping and molding of the earth into their desired forms. Richard Long’s A Line Made by Walking England (1967) exemplifies this, carving a path into the earth with only his footsteps. Whereas Andy Goldsworthy limits his tools to natural materials such as stone, leaves, branches, snow, ice, water, and on occasion saliva to attach icicles or his hand to mold mud in a stream.

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This is in stark contradiction to American Land art, typically characterized by the overt evidence of man’s hand, size, ownership of land, and costliness. Artists of the US, such as Robert Smithson and Michael Heizer, do not seek to hide or remove signs of his influence in the landscape. In fact, they are particularly enchanted with sites that have been essentially scarred by men, such as quarries and mined landscapes.

The size of many works is also typically American, echoing the American cliché of ‘bigger is better.’ With the line between nature and man being erased, artists take their work out into nature, outside of the confines of the studio, gallery and museum walls. Suddenly there is no constraint on size and the option to create sculpture of monumental scale is suddenly available.

The costliness of building and purchasing land is where Richard Long was critical of American Land art as it quickly becomes prohibitive. This can be a contributing factor to the remoteness of Land art, especially the popularity of the deserts of the American West, if not purely as a financial practicality. Conversely, it can also serve as a conscious and intentional stylistic choice, as Michael Heizer has proposed, “What is more American than the west?”

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ROBERT SMITHSON

Robert Smithson is known to be a pioneer of Land Art, and his 1972 *Spiral Jetty* is perhaps the most emblematic work of the movement. It satisfies all of the major staples of American Land Art…

It is grand in scale and remote. *Spiral Jetty* is the result of 6,650 tons of earth sourced on-site from the beach, molded by two dump trucks, a tractor and a front loader into the shape of a coil reaching out 1,500 feet in length and 15 ft wide into the Great Salt Lake of Utah.9 Protruding from Rozel Point on the northeastern shore of the lake, it is ephemeral, comprised of basalt rock, mud and algae, and is subject to the elements. Entropy being a primary and consistent concept in Smithson’s methodology, its subsequent degradation is visceral to the work.

Furthermore, *Spiral Jetty* is an excellent example of the difference between Land art and site-specific sculpture, in that Smithson chose this location specifically for the red hue of the water colored by the micro-bacteria in the lake.10 As Smithson has explained when recounting the process and execution of *Spiral Jetty*, “because of the remoteness of Bolivia, and because Mono Lake lacked a reddish color, I decided to investigate the Great Salt Lake in Utah.”11

Originally having planned to create an island reclamation, he learned of the area’s history of having had oiling in the area which he incorporated into his approach, it’s

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10 Ben Tuffnell, *Land Art* (Tate Publishing 2006), 41
influence inspiring the spiral shape. As explained in the text *Land and Environmental Art* by Jeffrey Kastner:

“The form of the work was influenced by the site, which had once been used to mine oil; the spiral shape of the Jetty was derived from the local topography as well as relating to a mythic whirlpool at the center of the lake. The spiral also reflects the circular formation of the salt crystals that coat the rocks...”\(^{12}\)

The site is more than a platform - the site IS the work.

Finally, environmental concerns are highlighted by the work’s resurrection due to drought. Created in 1970, the jetty was subsequently submerged within no less than two years of completion due to natural causes. However, 30 years later (2002) an unforeseen drought would reveal the sculpture yet again, and it has remained visible until this day. \(^{13}\) This of course leads to *Spiral Jetty*’s notoriety, but is also considered a beacon of global warming.

The question stands, how does a work like *Spiral Jetty* exist? Entropy being inherent to the work, it therefore is resistant conservation. If it were to be purchased it could not truly be owned, and no profits are made via visitation.

However, if we view these monumental works as archetypal forms, the articles, essays and films discussing these works can be viewed as supplementary and supportive. Smithson’s materials give both additional context for the conceptual aspects of the work, as well as exposure.

\(^{12}\) Kastner, *Land and Environmental Art*, 58

\(^{13}\) “Robert Smithson, Spiral Jetty”, Dia Art Foundation, October 13, 2019  [https://www.diaart.org/visit/visit/robert-smithson-spiral-jetty](https://www.diaart.org/visit/visit/robert-smithson-spiral-jetty)
Here is where our definition of Land art established prior evolves, and our understanding expands... Through his writings, we see the thought process explaining, supporting and justifying his Site and Non-site works.

Although *A Non-Site (indoor earthwork)*, 1968 precedes Site-works such as *Spiral Jetty*, the strength is in the concept rather than the physical manifestation of the work, emphasizing the Conceptualist tendencies of the Land art movement. The work features blue-painted, three-dimensional aluminum trapezoids which are arranged into a larger hexagonal shape. These trapezoids contain sand which each correlate to a position on the map that hangs beside the sculpture identifying where the samples of earth were collected from. The viewer experiences displacement, being physically indoors yet mentally taken off-site.

We can trace the influence of theorist Anton Ehrenzweig’s discussion of boundaries, and the self vs non-self. Smithson adapts this to his artistic agenda, explaining in an interview with Anthony Robbin, “I’m not all that interested in the problems of form and anti-form, but in limits and how these limits destroy themselves and disappear… There are strict limits, but they never stop until you do.” 14

Following this vein, we can then see within the creation of his site and non-site works, which would, “…display physical disintegration within exact limits, fractured material within an artificial topographic structure.” 15 emphasizing a lack of connection to a greater world. In other words, the non-site as an indoor-earthwork.

14 Smithson and Flam, *Robert Smithson, Collected Writings*, 191
Suddenly land art is transportable and scalable with the potential to be placed indoors, thereby prolonging its life expectancy as it now being protected from the elements. The idea of the non-site earthwork opens doors for the ways land art can be displayed, viewed and physically move through the market. Potentially most importantly, now these works can be bought, sold, and truly owned.

Giving land art a presence in the gallery introduces the art to viewers who would not otherwise have been exposed to it, nor would they have made the pilgrimages required to visit the seminal work in person. Furthermore, these indoor earthworks and supporting materials, (including writings, films, sketches, etc.) all steer the conversation to the archetypal artwork, even emphasizing the concepts of displacement and entropy. In this way the artist may stay true to their artistic intention, yet have a scaleable and salable work which may serve as a bridge between the gallery and the seminal work.

The concept of the site and non-site work negates the common misconception that all Land art is anarchistic by design, that it sought to separate itself from the art world and confines of the white cube. Yes, artists sought to push and explore the boundaries of the gallery walls, and were in want of form without limit, but just because these monumental works did not fit within the gallery does not leave the gallery without purpose or role in Land art.
"Land art also plays an extremely important role in the undoing or opening up of the relationship between the artist and the gallery and by the implication the economic structure of the gallery and museum system. By working outside the gallery, in the landscape, by making works that could not (in theory) be sold, or in some cases, even exhibited, and by thus initiating a critique of the role of the gallery or museum institution, artists such as Smithson are said to have forged a new model for the artist, and in expanding the means and areas in which the artist might operate…. Considerable finance is required to build a major earthwork, and the artist is forced to negotiate." 16

Robert Smithson’s Non-site sculptures debuted at the “Earthworks” show, (organized via the combined efforts of both Smithson and gallerist Virginia Dwan) opened October 5, 1968 at the Dwan Gallery in New York City. Through discourse in relation to the show, Smithson famously coined the term ‘Earthwork’ which is now often used as a synonym for Land art of the United States. Through the generous support of Virginia Dwan, in both her friendship and patronage, several of the most significant Land artworks to date were realized.

The show initially began as scouting for sites which the 10 included artists showcased could build land sculptures upon. Although no location was selected, the hunt was not in vain as this is the time when Smithson began to create both the concept of and physical first Non-site sculpture which would debut at the “Earth Work” exhibition as mentioned above.

As Virginia Dwan recalled the planning of the “Earth Works” show:

16 Tuffnell, Land Art, 17
"We decided that there was so much energy behind the whole concept - there
was so much of a need to get this, to move this out into the world, that we
wanted to find some vehicle, and the only thing that seemed available was the
gallery space, which was definitely our last choice. That was not the original drive
at all. Nevertheless we decided while waiting to find some earth, to find some
proper land to build things on, we would go ahead and do sort of an anthology
show of what we were aware of as current earthworks at that point, or of projects
which were intended to be earthworks projects."  

As stated, their search for land was not entirely fruitless, as Smithson used the trips as
opportunities develop his Non-site sculptures, to collect supplies and map out the
works. Perhaps Non-sites were born out of necessity, in the spirit of adaptability, but are
no less innovative and impactful to how Land art has evolved and is understood.

Two years later, Dwan would also support Smithson in the form of an advance on the
funds for the construction of Spiral Jetty, for which he would repay her in Non-site/indoor
sculptures. Also supplying financial aid would be Douglas Christmas of Ace Gallery,
B.C., contributing $25,000 to construction and the 35-minute film made which
documented and contextualized the project.

Spiral Jetty would remain in the hands of the Holt-Smithson Foundation until being gifted
to the Dia Art Foundation, New York in 1999. As stewards, they have absorbed the lease
of the land, as well as documenting the jetty with photographs taken aerially to track the
effect of the change in water levels - biannually every year as of 2007. Dia does not
represent Land art exclusively, but also Minimalist and Conceptual Art of the 1960s and

17 Boettger, Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties, 130
search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=12721551&site=ehost-live, 59
19 Tuffnell, Land Art, 41
20 Dia Art Foundation, “Robert Smithson, Spiral Jetty.”
1970s. This combined with hosting lectures provides museum-goers additional exposure to such works.
PATRONAGE: DIA

Dia Art Foundation is also a patron themselves, funding the construction of Walter De Maria’s *Lightning Field* (1977) when Virginia Dwan who had supported the smaller scale, prototype of the the work in 1974 had declined to participate the larger version of the work.

While the *Lightning Field* is concerned with interaction between the work with natural forces, to fully experience of the work is not reliant upon the event of a lightning storm, revealing the work’s ties to conceptualism. Sunrise and sunset are deemed to be the times of day which the poles are most visible, and to be immersed in the work serving as a sense of scale, to experience the site and be an active participant, is the artists intention and is a shared feature throughout Land art movement.

To facilitate this, Dia offers an experience which differentiates this work from other Earthworks which are similar in remoteness and scale. Other famous Earthworks of this size and scale do not charge admission, and are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year with perhaps helpful warnings from the stewarding institutions to visit during the day as to not get lost on roads which become difficult to navigate in the darkness of night.

*Lightning Field*, however, is a much more controlled environment. Dia offers an overnight experience for those who wish to visit, bookings available during lightning season which ranges from May to October. Rates run from $150-250 depending on the date, the middle of the season being the more expensive, and enrolled students enjoy a discounted rate of $100. The on-site cabin accommodates 6 people, who are picked up from a meeting point off-site, the exact location of the *Lightning Field* undisclosed. The protection of the site also allows for another unique character of the work, in that
photography by visitors is prohibited in efforts to respect the wishes of the artist, thereby making it exclusive by comparison.  

Dia Art Foundation has also backed other notable works by De Maria and continues to care for them today. *The Broken Kilometer* and *The Earth Room* (1979 and 1977 respectively) both in New York City, and *The Vertical Earth Kilometer* in Kassel, Germany. These works are more accessible to the masses, and allow a larger audience of viewers to experience the impact of his work. Furthermore, this masterwork receives additional support in both literature dispersed by the foundation and via lectures which Dia both hosts and partciples in, as do his other works mentioned.

Although figures may be difficult to compare to other institutions of New York, styles, missions and figures vary with the following data being one working methodology of such an institution. Referencing charts reflecting data sourced from Dia Art Foundation’s IRS 990 Forms dating June 2018, “Contributions, Gifts and Grants” collectively make up 87.9% of their total contributions and “Fundraising Events” 11.6%. While exact numbers vary, this relatively similar to other major institutions in New York City. However, a notable difference is the significantly smaller percentage of “Government Grants” - 0.5% versus other comparable institutions which range 1.7% to 4.3%. Also worth mentioning is the absence of "Membership dues" on Dia Art Foundation’s chart, indicating that it’s impact insignificant enough to warrant its absence. The smaller scale and figures of Land art’s leading institution is reflective of Land art's prominence in the art world. Albeit atypical to a standard institution's business model, it demonstrates one fashion that such efforts can in fact be monetized.


The first large-scale earthwork Virginia Dwan sponsored was *Double Negative*, by Michael Heizer who was another close friend amongst their group. It was the first sculpture made of negative space, and at the time of its creation was the largest sculpture in the world.

Blasted out 270,000 tons of rock and carved by bulldozers, we see two ramps (750 and 330 feet respectively, both 30 feet wide and 50 feet deep. It would appear to form one continuous line if not for the canyon in-between, emphasizing the negative space. It resides approximately 80 miles outside of Las Vegas in the American west, (which as previously stated Heizer views as the epitome of Americana) he has likened the work to the 1,475 foot tall Empire State Building.  

"Dwan paid for the purchase of the square mile land within which the mesa is located. and funded the works enlargement to its final size. For her part in bringing this work to fruition, Dwan received co-ownership of both *Double Negative* and the land. In 1985 Dwan would become sole owner of *Double Negative*, and in turn donate it to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles making MOCA LA the first steward of an earthwork."  

Although *Double Negative* cannot be incorporated into the Museums collection in the traditional sense, it will never be taken off display or closed to the public. Similar to Dia’s role as steward to *Spiral Jetty*, conservation and maintenance are not part of the

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23 Lailach, *Land Art*, 54

institution’s duties, as Heizer planned no conservation intending the erosion and eventual collapse to contribute to the life of the work.

Although Virginia Dwan continues to be an active participant in the art world to this day, it was the end of an era when she closed her gallery in 1971. Private patronage had served as the primary source of financing of Earthworks, but otherwise corporate patronage is considered to be the leading financier of cultural projects in the United States.

In Europe, nobility and the church were the primary patrons of the arts. The United States, having no aristocracy and a separation of church and state, business has filled these shoes. Befitting to America’s high regard of capitalism, corporate commissions have been the primary form of patronage. Corporations, just as sovereigns and religious officials, have many incentives to invest in culture. Ranging from shaping taste and education of their respective demographics, to beautify their palaces/office buildings, recruit new worshippers/clientele, and to give back to the community in the spirit of philanthropy. Overall, consumption in a variety of forms is increased.

Michael Heizer, as a pioneer of Land art and still living today, serves* as a valuable case study for how an artist may transition from the private patronage of Virginia Dwan to the art world of today.

In 1983, Michael Heizer was commissioned to create Effigy Tumuli in Ottawa, Illinois by Thornton. “Thornton would make a deal with the state agency. The Ottowa Silica Company would donate the land to Illinois and take a tax deduction for the gift. In return,

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that state would pay for all subsequent reclamation costs. It would receive the gift, also, only on the condition that it promised to restore the site according to some creative plan that would benefit the public - that would contain art.” 26 Initially a plan not warmly received by all of his board, approval was eventually granted thanks to the enticement of a tax break.

Heizer is consistent in pulling inspiration from Meso-American culture, specifically from religious architecture and ruins. The five mounds, grand in scale created for Effigy Tumuli, take the shapes of different creatures native to the area: a water spider, frog, catfish, snake and turtle.

What we can learn from this commission it that an Earthwork artist can create work which does not stray from or conflict with the integrity of his artistic methodologies even in partnership with a business organization. Heizer had already established his attraction to reclamation projects, and his preference of Meso-American religious and ritual influences - ancient mounds harkening back to 2000 BC. We also observe that the motives to beautify the land with art and financial incentives are not mutually exclusive.

Michael Heizer has stated,

“I guess I’d like to see art become more of a religion.” 27

Beyond the connotation of piousness, it must be noted that the most impactful religious institutions have strong funding. If Heizer was envisioning the Vatican when sharing this thought, his choice of Gagosian Gallery for representation seems appropriate.

26 Michael Heizer and Douglas MacGill, Effigy Tumuli: the Reemergence of Ancient Mound Building (Abrams 1990), 16

27 Lailach, Land Art, 54
Gagosian is one of the largest and most influential galleries in the world, who has a penchant for working with critically acclaimed Blue Chip artists. Originally a stock market term denoting important and established companies, the work of these blue chip artists maintain high and consistent value, reflected in auction sales.28

It is only fitting that his first exhibition at Gagosian in 2015 be titled “Altars.” Many rare and never-before-seen Minimalist works from the 1960s and new works from the 2015 *Altar* series served as bookends for the absent monumental outdoor works which he is famous for. The exhibition article on Gagosian’s website opens with a quote by Heizer, “Size is real. Scale is imagined size,” consistent with the logic behind Non-site works.29

Heizer’s corporate commissions and union with Gagosian Gallery, corporate influence and the commoditization of art does not necessarily need to be seen as a conflict of interest to Earthwork art. Just as nature and man were once viewed as separate entities, money and art are also uniquely coupled. As such, if we take the approach that this is simply the relationship between people, money and art of today and the integrity of the pieces are not being compromised, there is no reason to deny or attempt to hide such funding sources. The artist embracing this norm is in line with the American Land Artists’ embracing evidence of man’s hand in the land and artwork and is thereby suitable for him to embrace Art’s relationship with money.

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His consent to these projects, relationships and transactions demonstrate that, just as business' may have genuine motives to support art, artists can in good conscience leverage funding, thus providing a mutually beneficial arrangement. The size of a corporate funding source may also provide unique outlets for the artist as well as reach new demographics for the sponsor, where the exchange is basically that of cash for the cultural validity the artist can provide. Though traditionally viewed as “selling out,” the costliness inherent in creating earthworks demands negotiations such as these to bring these projects into fruition.
SELF FINANCING

Christo Javacheff and his late partner in both life and art Jeanne-Claude are known for their monumental installations, (primarily using wrapped, hanging, or floating fabric) each lasting for two weeks and costing millions of dollars. Priding themselves on being self-reliant, they have always been adamant not to accept outside money thus declining commissions and patronage, be it private or corporate. They make no exceptions, believing any amount of outside monetary influence threatens the integrity and execution of the artist’s vision.

“We fund each of our projects with our own money. We do not want to cede control of one bit of it, and when you accept outside money, someone wants to tell you what to do. So we finance our projects through the sales of Christo’s predatory drawings, collages, and early works from the 1950s and ’60s. But we never know if they will sell fast enough to meet expenses. Money is always a big headache for us.”

The process IS the art. Categorizing their projects as “realized” or “unrealized,” although ideally installed, both are considered completed works of art regardless of whether they were physically enacted. Imitating the language of site and non-site, it is the concept that is important. The manifestation is the goal, but not the deciding factor.

Their algorithm is consistent and each step is both functional and necessary in terms of practicality, but more importantly they collectively are the work of art. Each project begins with the idea, as it moves through the checklist (software illustrations and preparatory drawings, technical development and testing, legal planning and permission, public approval, construction, then standing for two weeks, then before removal and

materials being recycled as much as feasibly possible which are then incorporated into
collage-type works to sell) ultimately a cyclic endeavor.

The cost of lawyers, public administrators, labor and industry typically fronted by patrons
is now their own responsibility. Over the course of these projects, realized or not, bills
need to be paid. What is unique in Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s process is that the
business and legal aspects are embraced in the works rather than treated as obstacles,
as are meeting their financial obligations.

Subsequently, the pair has developed an elegant entrepreneurial solution which has
been fine tuned and perfected over the years. They are incorporated as a for-profit
organization, for liability purposes, and during the course of their planning will approach
banks for a financial line of credit presenting their project as an asset-supported
business proposition. Paradoxically, in their adamant distancing from outside funding
has resulted in perhaps the most intimate relationship between money and artist.

*The Gates*, erected in New York City’s Central Park in 2005 were wildly popular and well
received publicly. The journey for financing the project began in 2003. At that time banks
were reacting to the onset of several lending deterrents including, (but not limited to) an
expanding art bubble, rising valuations of art and therefore increasing the difficulty to
obtain a line of credit for what was already viewed as highly illiquid and temperamental
in terms of sale-ability. Many banks were no longer lending in this area and they were
subsequently declined by 23 banks in just a 4 month span. Whereas many would be off
put by such a series of refusals, again, this collective merely considers such a series of
events simply a part of the process.
Ultimately, Bank Leu of Switzerland who at the time was known to be conservative and would be celebrating its 250th birthday that same year, (2005), was approached and educated by the artists and their administrative team on the benefits of such types of art lending. Once having presented the *The Gates* in a more business-framed vocabulary, the bank was swayed and saw the unique opportunity to stand out in a changing market. Such a celebratory gesture not only in its 250th year, but also viewed as directly investing in the public goodwill helped paint the institution in a more culturally inclined light (unlike most of their competitors) in the eyes of the people. As such, it could also simultaneously be viewed as an investment in public perception as well as still funding the project. As echoed in Anthony Cagiati’s shared thoughts, "It was a business transaction, not a sponsorship," and, "[it] was never our goal to make money on this in the short term; however, we were not going to lose any either. We clearly saw the long-term benefits."\(^{31}\)

Going one step further, a unique opportunity was presented to existing clients. In the event the Christo and Jeanne-Claude would default, the $60 million worth of work held as collateral (abiding by the standard 6:1 ratio for a bank’s coverage in art) investors would either be repaid for the loan in addition to an enhanced return for the time of guarantee, or partake in an offer to purchase from the works held as collateral at one-third, (33%) of the insured value. Furthermore, offering a 30% discount on the price from an antiquated valuation, (2 years prior) rewarding existing clients for their loyalty as the works should have inherently increased in value within those two years. Ultimately, the artists only utilized seven of the ten million they were loaned, coming in approximately three-million dollars under budget. This degree of business savvy clearly indicates the thorough and expert planning by both themselves and their team. Lastly, this investment

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\(^{31}\) Hardymon, Lerner, and Leamon, “Christo and Jeanne-Claude: The Art of the Entrepreneur,” 8-11
model also mitigated all risk to the lenders, effectively creating a zero-risk investment for them and guaranteed recovery of the dispatched funds.

Bank Leu gained valuable cultural currency, investors lent funds with zero risk and the project was realized for the artists. In a financial climate when art was being avoided, this type of thinking within the marriage of Art and business allowed all parties to move forward achieving exactly what each respectively sought. Finally, client, institution and the public all benefitted from the business dealings and the PR would gain attention from potential new clients on an international stage.

Aside from external funding, a consistent revenue stream comes from producing works in their studio comprised of preparatory sketches and collages utilizing recycled materials from successfully erected installations of realized works. To this day Christo sells the majority of works from his studio, fondly dubbed “the factory” by Jeanne-Claude. This could be seen as the equivalent of Smithson’s Non-site works in terms of supporting the artists and installations financially, serving as a scalable, saleable branch of their work without deviating from their core artistic ethos. By selling his own works from "the factory", the couple has bygone the gallery and the typical 30-50% commission attached as well as remonetizing materials.

Jeanne-Claude has explained:

“An artist doesn’t create a masterpiece every day. So if you want something of lesser quality, you buy at auction. If you want better work, you buy directly from us. We keep the best for ourselves.” 32

This presents the question of how and why their works can still be present in a gallery setting. With collage-style works and even large scale models currently available for sale

32 Hardymon, Lerner, and Leamon, Christo and Jeanne-Claude: The Art of the Entrepreneur, 6
at galleries such as the Swiss Galerie Gmurzynska’s as well as The Bonnier Gallery of Miami, Florida. While it would be possible for buyers and collectors to sell through the gallery, it appears that Christo does in fact work with a small network of dealers. The differentiating factor here is that there are no expectations of level of production on the artist’s end and more control in the finances and selling of works.

Organizing events and lectures, the Gmurzynska website boasts articles in relation to events, lectures and overall press. Having access to the associated gallery spaces in Zurich and New York gives additional exposure, and an additional platform upon which to raise awareness of upcoming projects or hold retrospectives, which helps in their overall fundraising.

“For collectors it’s about becoming part of the project and like buying a memento of a performance,” explains Gmurzynska CEO and co-founder Mathias Rastorfer. “Christo’s drawings offer something permanent while supporting future projects.”

One would think it may be unsettling for consumers to see works by the artists in a gallery setting consumers, given that they claim to "keep the best for themselves" in their studio. However, this is likely more targeted toward the auction houses which they have reluctantly sold works drastically below market value in years past. Being self funded, they are more susceptible to money stresses, to make pay-roll and ends meet for these projects that -again- require millions of dollars, whether realized or not.

Ultimately, these installations depend on public approval. *Surrounded Islands*, recognized in 1983, a project which had an incredibly beneficial impact on the Greater

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Miami area, was at first met with great resistance. At a time in history when the city was primarily known for drugs and crime, (thanks in part to feature films such as Scarface, etc.) one would expect an invitation to be center stage of the international art world to be a welcome and exciting opportunity. However, it was difficult for the public to digest the idea that so much money would be spent on a work of modern art that would only last two weeks. Many in the community were adamant that the money would be better spent in some other public initiative, not fully understanding that Christo and Jeanne-Claude would be financing *Surrounded Islands* entirely on their own through methods of self-funding.

*Surrounded Islands* was not only self-financed (having received a line of credit through Citibank), but uniquely 400 volunteers were actually paid and workers in warehouses in Hialeah were employed for the cutting and sewing of the 6.5 million square feet of fluorescent pink polypropylene and manufacture the associated anchors.34

Then-chairman of the Biscayne Bay Management Committee Harvey Ruvin, current Clerk of Courts for Miami Dade County (1992- today) was originally the leading force against *Surrounded Islands* claiming to be advocating environmental concerns. The artists were denied the Class 1 Permit in the County Commission Meeting, however immediately after were able to encourage Ruvin to reconsider. He had asked them to explain how the work constituted art, and (in his own words) he recounted, “It was art, because anything that teaches you something or moves you can be classified as art, and this taught the world about Biscayne Bay.”35

34 Jonathan David Kane and Lisa Leone “Remembering Surrounded Islands.” Jan 29, 2019, documentary,13:54-14:00 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4s_d14haHU&feature=youtu.be

35 Kand and Leone, “Remembering Surrounded Islands,” 11:43-11:51
The motion was reversed and reopened with the proposal that a thousand images of the project after completion would be created, numbered and signed. Sold for $150 each, and resulted in a $150,000 contribution to the Biscayne Bay trust fund.36

Not only are the artists entrepreneurs with a strong track record, but have a reputation for leaving a site completely in tact, if not in better condition than when they found it. In fact, the islands were cleaned of 40 tons of accumulated trash in preparation for the installation.37 A very strict list of protocols was also implemented by Miami-Dade County, which Christo aggressively asserted to volunteers and workers that if a single bullet point were overlooked he would consider the entire project a failure. One such stipulation was the requirement of a boat per island being present to circle each island 24 hours a day throughout the two weeks they stood to ensure no birds, manatees or any other forms of marine life would become trapped in the floating tarp.38

Nearly 40 years later in late 2018, the Perez Art Museum held an exhibition “Christo and Jeanne-Claude: Surrounded Islands, Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida, 1980–83 | A Documentary Exhibition.” The commemorating exhibition displayed an impressive and cohesive collection of illustrations, collages, large-scale models as well as a documentary. The film was made for the exhibition and consisted of interviews and footage focused on the public’s response, eventual construction and deconstruction of the project. While other institutions discussed previously in this paper were already established at the time of their involvement with Land art, the PAMM having opening in 2013 is relatively young. We can perhaps consider the institution as being the primary

36 Kand and Leone, “Remembering Surrounded Islands,” 12:19-12:32
38 Kand and Leone, “Remembering Surrounded Islands,” 20:10-20:40
benefactor in hosting the show as it creates a tie with a work of art which had a powerfully beneficial impact on both Miami’s economy and community.

Embracing the legal procedures and exercising respect for the leaders involved created a joyful and rewarding experience with authority. Additionally, the city benefitted from lasting, long term effects. Being presented in a positive light on an international stage would boost sales in real-estate, including the reawakening of the Art Deco district and by extension a newfound appreciation of the things that were unique to Miami. Furthermore, doors were opened for future growth in culture and the arts exemplified by the introduction of the Art Basel Fair, which has grown into Art Miami Week empowered by several satellite shows emphasizing the cultural potential. The economy and arts scene of Miami was completely transformed.

This distinctly highlights the landscape’s impacting role in a Land art work, reverberated by the PAMM’s commemorating exhibition as the museum sits on the Biscayne Bay itself where the work was executed. Surrounded Islands could be seen as giving support to a new institution, perhaps even its credibility, as Miami continues to grow and gain traction in the fine arts community to this day.
PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY

In stark contrast to Christo and Jeanne-Claude who have actively avoided any outside funding in forms of commissions and patronage, taking an entrepreneurial approach in their efforts to remain independent throughout the entirety of their careers, Agnes Denes’s alternatively has been receptive to several types of outside funding. These sources include being awarded government grants, as well as public and private commissions from around the world, these serving as the main sources for financing of her artwork. Denes’s art focuses on environmental issues and is overtly political, thus in her perspective such partnerships elevate her platform and serve to promote her message rather than cause any conflict (similar to Heizer’s compatibility with corporate patronage and representation by a blue chip gallery) and are not seen to detract from her intended vision.

Agnes Denes identifies as an Ecological artist. Ecological and Environmental art are branches of Land art, however tend to focus more on activism. Alternatively, Land art utilizes more natural materials and is more invasive with physical land, while remaining more rooted in conceptual art and thinking. Her approach to art is one of duty, and encouragement for the betterment of her fellow man. As she has stated, “a well-conceived work of art can motivate people, unite communities, and affect the future.”

Nonetheless, Denes’s most famous work Wheatfield, A Confrontation has been deemed “perpetually astonishing . . . one of Land art’s great transgressive masterpieces” by scholar and curator Jeffrey Weiss. An iconic work of the movement which challenged

39 Agnes Denes and Klauss Ottmann, The Human Argument: The Writings of Agnes Denes (Spring Publications, 2008), xv
40 Agnes Denes, artist’s website homepage. Accessed June 8, 2019 http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com
viewers to reassess their priorities in regard to the treatment and mismanagement of earth’s resources, food, energy and humanitarian efforts.

*Wheatfield, A Confrontation* spanned the two full seasons of Spring and Summer in 1982. Beginning by flattening the existing landfill which it was installed upon, and subsequently laying the minimum 10 inches of topsoil before planting seeds by hand. Ultimately, the crop grown was harvested yielding 1,000 pounds of grain. The two acre plot sat where the World Trade Center, Statue of Library and Wall Street all converge - now part of Battery Park- at the southern-most tip of Manhattan, NY.

The Public Art Fund served as patron, both commissioning the work and acquiring the use of the land on the artists’ behalf. Although the accessibility of an Earthwork of this scale is uncommon, it was not detrimental to the work as the location actually amplified the intended message to an astronomical degree. Although *Surrounded Islands* proximity to the masses is comparable, proportionally, the population of New York City is staggeringly higher and therefore exposed a uniquely large public to not only an outdoor sculpture but a Land artwork. This is reiterated and exemplified by The Public Art Fund’s mission statement explains their goal to “[bring] dynamic contemporary art to a broad audience in New York City and beyond by mounting ambitious free exhibitions of international scope and impact that offer the public powerful experiences with art and the urban environment.”

In juxtaposition to a work such as *Spiral Jetty*, which was not only remarkably inaccessible but also seemingly lost to natural causes for nearly 30 years, *Wheatfield, A Confrontation* had the potential to impact millions of people per day. Steps away from Wall Street, commonly heralded as the financial center of the world, beyond being

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situated in one of the most visited cities on the planet it is unthinkable that any other location could have attracted more eyes and attention.

*Wheatfield, A Confrontation* shook New Yorker’s perspective of the utilization of land, as Manhattan in particular had not been leveraged for farming since the Dutch West India Company had settled and occupied the area in the 1600s. Now the island is home to some of the most desirable and expensive real estate in the world, such a project understandably drew immense attention. At the time of the project, the two acres of land which was used was valued at $4.5 billion dollars to produce a crop worth disproportionately less. When *Wheatfield, A Confrontation* was finally harvested, the 1,000 pounds of wheat went on tour to 28 cities around the world as part of an exhibition called the *International Art Show for the end of World Hunger*, organized by the Minnesota Museum of Modern Art, (1987-1990). The seeds were carried away by people who planted them around the globe.42

Conceived the same year as *Wheatfield, A Confrontation*, an equally powerful and famed work by Denes is *Tree Mountain - A Living Time Capsule - 11,000 Trees, 11,000 People, 400 Years* was sponsored by the United Nations Environmental Program, and commissioned by the Finnish Ministry of Environment in 1992 and completed in 1996.43 Intended as a reclamation project, *Tree Mountain* aimed at restoring land which had been scarred when used as a source for gravel in Ylojarvi, Finland. The sculpture is 100,000 square meters, making it the largest national monument and the world’s first virgin forest. Also notable is the artist’s choice of Silver Firs, which are struggling and dwindling in numbers, adding another layer to the theme of preservation in the work.

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42 Agnes Denes, artist’s website homepage.

43 Tufnell, *Land Art*, 103-104
Tree Mountain is a “living time capsule,” each individual tree was planted in accordance with a mathematical grid designed by Denes, which would protect the foundation from erosion as the trees grew. Each of the 11,000 trees was planted by a different person, who was in turn provided with a contract which grants them authority to pass their tree down up to four generations - owners may even choose to be buried beneath their tree. However, trees may not be removed or sold, so those who planted a tree and their “heirs” may be regarded more as caretakers than owners in a traditional sense.

A reclamation project such as this is reminiscent of works by Smithson and Heizer, however their Earthworks embrace entropy and erosion, whereas Denes is planning for growth towards and into a distant future. Tree Mountain will essentially be complete when it reaches its predetermined point of maturity, 400 years from its creation. The work will have become fully realized when they will have reached their peak in benefitting the planet in terms of their capacity to clean the air, all the while providing wildlife a home to return to by replacing the foliage lost prior sourcing in simply being a gravel pit. While we watch Spiral Jetty erode, Tree Mountain will outlive all of those who partook in its construction and birth exhibiting this artists forethought into a distant future significantly beyond her own lifespan whereas most only think within or close to their own mortal timeline.

The Finnish government created a unique opportunity to educate and shape the taste of its citizens in raising awareness for ecological care and welfare. In return, Denes was provided with yet another platform to promote her ecological agenda, a true symbiotic relationship. Furthermore, through this project a new relationship with art is presented. Rather than ownership of a commodity, those involved experienced the honor and pleasure to serve as an active hand and then custodian of the work. Thus asserting a strong connection to and concern for the national forests, rather than simply replanting
trees that had been removed, again exhibiting unique foresight and concern for the future. This encourages virtuous behavior from the community as a whole, benefitting the masses, wildlife and the environment.

To reiterate in Agnes Denes's own words:

“In our world, a lack of intelligent self-evaluation and failure to understand one’s contribution to society has led to jaded values and misguided priorities. The individual needs to regain respect and integrity that stems from self-esteem based on an understanding of his value to become more altruistic and less greedy, therefore more willing to make sacrifices for the whole… humans need to appreciate, understand, and take pride in their role in society, which creates a healthy feeling of self-worth - a love of self and of mankind. We have a choice.”

*Tree Mountain - A Living Time Capsule* was designed to be adaptable and scaleable, which we can see exercised in one of several commissions by The Shed in Hudson Yards, New York City. The Shed opened its doors April 2019, with a mission statement to “[commission] original works of art, across all disciplines, for all audiences.”

“*Agnes Denes: Absolutes and Intermediates*” is the artist's first retrospective in the city of New York, commemorating her 50 year career. Several works were commissioned by The Shed, but the star is perhaps *Model for Probability Pyramid - Study for Crystal Pyramid*. Stemming from her “*Pyramid Series*” ongoing since 1970 which consists of incredibly accurate, hand drawn pyramidal forms, these structures vary drastically as they communicate complex humanitarian and environmental issues pertaining to their time of creation.

A subcategory within the “*Pyramid Series*” are her “*Future City Drawings*.” These drawings are of designs for structures for both space and self-contained ecosystems

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44 Agnes Denes, *The Human Argument*, xv
here on Earth. They are in anticipation of the future ecological stresses which are inevitable, given the overwhelming burden we continue to impose on the planet. These drawings and models are a sublime example of the simultaneous doom and optimism for the future which makes use of the wealth of information and science collected by civilization, beyond what any individual could achieve or acquire in his or her own lifetime. Although these two visions seem to contradict one another, without this proactively ominous attitude, she is all the while hopeful for a future to plan for.

While Agnes Dene’s Pyramidal illustrations and models step away from true Land art, and invasive and immersive work utilizing natural materials, it illustrates the wide breadth an artist may have without conflict to her core ethos and methodologies. Her message is consistent, and she can reach a wider audience, appealing to those who are more geometrically and architecturally inclined. It is also an example that, precisely as for Christo, unrealized works are recognized as artworks in their own right, the concept IS the work.

All of her drawings are an attempt to make complex ideas and philosophies palpable. She explores the world around her through a lens of mathematics including forms of probability theory, to convey them via visual form to a public typically averse to these complicated and at times morbid topics. By solidifying the audience’s attention in the visuals of the philosophy she is then able to convey the desired message where the viewer can ideally realize the true gravity of the piece. One is reminded of the impact that the threat of nuclear war and global annihilation had on the conception of the Land art movement as a whole.
“Making art today is synonymous with assuming responsibility for our fellow human beings.” - Agnes Denes.\textsuperscript{45} We as a species are so advanced, pushing the environment harder and faster than evolution would naturally allow, and our use of valuable resources needs to be re-evaluated if we desire to preserve life as we know it - if not life absolutely.

\textsuperscript{45} J. T. Mitchell, \textit{Art and the Public Sphere} (University of Chicago Press 1992), 177
SPIRITUALITY AND METAPHYSICS

The inherent spiritual value of art cannot go unmentioned. Reflecting again on the influence of Eastern philosophy on Western culture in the conception of Land art, we consider the inherent sanctity of Art.

At a time in history where men were first contemplating and eventually attempting travel to the moon, concepts such as the cosmos, time and space were still abstract. As advances were made on these fronts they became less abstract and more concrete but many times lead to more questions. These artists who focus on the spiritual and metaphysical aspects of art may be viewed essentially as shamans and teachers of philosophy.

As stated in *Land Art* by Ben Tufnell:

“At its most effective, such work also offers a means of ordering human experience and addressing seemingly incomprehensible concepts: the vastness of space, cosmological time, the cyclical movements of the stars in relation to our planet, and thus the insignificance of human life.\(^{46}\)

Parallel to the way Agnes Denes’s drawings are a form of visual philosophy, James Turrell utilizes light as his primary medium, and invites his viewer to experience, perceive and define light and space. Subsequently, he creates seemingly tangible light - a transcendental encounter which could only be shown rather than explained.

Turrell has participated in exhibitions in some of the most prestigious institutions, as well as and having works placed in collections around the world. His most famous work, however, may reside in the *Live Oak Friends Meeting House*, a functioning venue

\(^{46}\) Tufnell, *Land Art*, 109
utilized for Quaker worship in Houston, Texas. The work once known as Meeting House 2000, and later re-named, One Accord, was originally the concept of Hiram Butler, a gallerist in Houston, and created in collaboration with Houston architect Leslie K. Elkins. Known as one of his “Skyspace” works, it features a convertible roof which opens depending on forecast around the hours of dawn and dusk. The resulting display is a dialogue between natural and artificial light, ultimately a surreal experience.

Omnipotent beings have long been associated with forms of light. This in hand with the meditative approach Quakers take to commune with “the light” (synonymous with “god”) makes Turrell’s skylight work ideal for connection, and in a sense, prayer. Light is a strong and visceral theme throughout these Meetings.

James Turrell was raised as a Quaker and enjoyed creating the space for the community, and in an interview with Art 21 reflected on the planning and construction of the project, “[it] was kind of the meetinghouse I always wanted to see. I guess I like the literal quality or feeling or sensation, in that I want to feel light physically. We drink it as vitamin D; it’s actually a food. We are heliotropic. And it has a big effect on the skin; it produces vitamin D. We also have a big psychological relation to light. All or most spiritual experiences, near-death experiences, are described with a vocabulary of light. So, for me, this quality to feel light exists, almost like we see it in a dream. And in having this associated with the Meeting . . . First of all, it’s something that generally wouldn’t necessarily be opened with the Meeting, but it’s something that can give that quality, say in a midweek Meeting, or in the evening when you change from day to night. So, it was something I was very happy to do. It just took a lot to plan it.”


The public is welcome to visit every Friday night and first Sunday of the month 30 minutes before sunset, free but accepting donations. Additionally, the organization rents out the space for weddings and events “keeping with Quaker values.” According to the Live Oak Friends Meeting’s rental agreement contract on their website, current wedding fee is $1,200, which will accommodate up to 120 people for 4 hours. There is a minimum fee of $900, and there is also a refundable security deposit of $250. This strong and consistent source of revenue facilitates the upkeep, maintenance, and repairs which are adopted by the religious society.

Turrell’s most ambitious, and perhaps the most costly thus far, Roden Crater ongoing since its conception in 1972. According to Suzanne Boettger, Roden Crater is a “cash cow… [Having] received funding from the NEA, every major foundation, [and] many private collectors such as Count Panza.” A more recent addition to this list is Kanye West, who reportedly donated $10 million in December of 2018.  

Residing in an extinct volcano, construction involves manipulating the tunnels, chambers and crater bowls. Over 438,000 cubic yards of earth have been excavated and repositioned, illustrating the sense of scale involved in this monolithic sized work. In his efforts to create a variety of experiences which will respond to and make tangible light, “Turrell plans a highly subtle and spiritual performance of the stars, which is intended to lead the viewer to the boundary of what is barely visible.”

50 Howard, Collecting Land Art: How Earthworks Challenge Patronage.
51 Lailach, Land Art, 94
Turrell's medium is pure light. He says, "My work has no object, no image and no focus. With no object, no image and no focus, what are you looking at? You are looking at you looking. What is important to me is to create an experience of wordless thought."52

Without this guidance, it is all too common for the masses to focus on local problems and forget the larger impacts of their actions. Creating works that provoke thought and remind the general public that we are all a single culture living on a fragile planet could almost be considered the job of an artist in and of itself. Questions that appear to have no answers are still worth asking, seeing as the technology may develop to explore such concepts. The value is in act of holding a mirror to society and provoking introspection and philosophical debate, that we as a species may be humbled.

CONCLUSION

Land art is the consequence of the dissolution of boundaries, evident and rippling through all facets of the movement from conception, through manifestation and into its reception. No longer are man and nature recognized as separate entities, nor do the gallery walls limit art physically in form or scale. Even the separation between viewer and artwork is dissolved, as both the viewer’s physical and cognitive participation are essential to the realization of the work.

Fritjof Capra, scientist and environmental activist, has expressed:

“Deep ecological awareness recognizes the fundamental interdependence of all phenomena and the fact that, as individuals and societies, we are all imbedded in (and ultimately dependent on) the cyclical process of Nature.”

Most of the above mentioned barriers were not recognized to begin with. It is the role of unconventional art to serve as a catalyst in the growth and evolution of these relationships. As societal structures shift, Art adjusts accordingly (as does the market) responding to changes in values.

Land art presents an invaluable opportunity as an exercise to evaluate the true characteristics of various sectors in the market and society as a whole, as they are forced to encounter these works which cannot truly bought, owned, and sold. Land art can perhaps be viewed as an equal and opposite reaction to the aggressive financialization of the art market.

However, although resistant to commodification, it is interesting to see that money and financing are still present yet are not manipulative forces on these works, and that it is in

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fact possible to fund Land artworks without conflicting with the artist's intention or ethos. In many circumstances, the role of financing is embraced as part of the work, and may even elevate the artwork.

In the context of capitalism, as we cast our vote for the world we want to live in with our respective currency, thus we can trace our behavior patterns, seeing where our concerns lie. Recognizing the inseparable bond between money, art and society, it can also be perceived that this misuse of resources and misplaced priorities are in unison with the current art world trends, financial market, and the current environmental crisis.

The zeitgeist of the modern era has followed the trajectory of environmental awareness initiated by the same ecological concerns which sparked the Land art movement. Increasingly over time, dialogue has shifted to action as evidenced by the today's pursuit of healthy practices in all pursuits of humanity, from diet and health, to business and consumption.

Collectively our concept of value is expanding, encompassing ethics, goodness and knowledge. This, paired with a wanting and willingness to learn about ourselves and our place in the universe indicates that perhaps the immediate return of monetary investments made by patrons is of less concern, or least not serving as the primary goal.

The normative definition of fine art established by Immanuel Kant in the *Critique of Judgment* (1790) reads as that “which is not produced for the market and is non-utilitarian.”[^54] Land art's simultaneous resistance to commodification whilst engaging in the art market epitomizes Kant's definition of fine art, if we choose to uphold it.

[^54]: Taylor, “Financialization of Art,” 16
Land art and Earthwork may not dominate the art market as the leading trend, but the fact that it has been able to set roots and grow is exemplary of the capacity for virtue in, not just finance, but the spirit of our times. If humanity continues on this path of self awareness and self betterment, we may be on the cusp of a spiritual renaissance, in hand with a rebirth and reconstruction of the finance and art world as we know it.
ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig 1. Michael Heizer, *Complex One, The City*, 1972,
Concrete, steel, compacted earth, 700 x 3300 x 400 cm.
Nevada USA. © Michael Heizer

photograph of path marked by trodden grass,
approximately 20 miles Southeast from London Waterloo Station, England.
© Richard Long
Fig 3. Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1972, rocks, earth, salt crystals, water, 6,783 tonnes 1,450 m 450 cm. Great Salt Lake, Utah USA. © Holt/Smithson Foundation and Dia Art Foundation/Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Photo: George Steinmetz.

Fig 4. Robert Smithson, (a) *A Non-Site (indoor earthwork)*, 1968, blue painted aluminum with sand. (b) *For a Non-Site below*, 1968, Aerial photograph/map. © Holt/Smithson Foundation and Dia Art Foundation/Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS)
Fig 5. Walter De Maria, *The Lightning Field*, 1977.
400 polished stainless steel poles installed in a grid array measuring one mile by one kilometer. The poles -- two inches in diameter and averaging 20 feet and 7½ inches in height -- are spaced 220 feet apart and have solid pointed tips that define a horizontal plane. Quemado, New Mexico.
© Estate of Walter De Maria. Photo: John Cliett

Fig 6. Walter De Maria, *The New York Earth Room*, 1977,
3,600 square feet of floor space and consists of 250 cubic yards of earth, measuring 22 inches deep. New York City, USA
© Estate of Walter De Maria. Photo: John Cliett
500 highly polished solid brass rods placed in 5 parallel rows of one hundred rods each. If laid end to end would measure 1,000 meters.
New York City, USA
© Estate of Walter De Maria. Photo: Jon Abbott

Fig 8. Walter De Maria, *The Vertical Earth Kilometer*, 1977,
solid-brass rod, 5 centimeters in diameter and 1 kilometer long.
Kassel, Germany.
© Estate of Walter De Maria. Photo: Nic Tenwiggenhorn
Fig 9. Michael Heizer, *Double Negative*, 1969,  
2 removals of 240,00 total tons of earth, rhyolite and sandstone  
45,000 x 900 x 1,500 cm; 45,000 x 900 x 1,500 cm  
Mormon Mesa, Overton, Nevada USA  
© Michael Heizer/ Triple Aught Foundation

Fig 10. Michael Heizer, *Effigy Tumuli* (a) detail of water strider and frog / (b) detail of catfish and turtle), 1983-1985  
5 mounds totaling 255,000 tons of compacted earth  
catfish: 23,100 x 8,400 x 5500 cm; turtle: 19,500 x 10,500 x 300 cm;  
waterstrider: 20,550 x 240 x 400 cm; frog: 10,200 x 11,100 x 500 cm;  
snake: 62,100 x 2600 x 300 cm.  
Buffalo Rock State Park, Ottawa, Illinois USA. © Michael Heizer
7,500 vinyl gates, with free-flowing nylon fabric panels, anchored to 15,000 steel bases on 37 kilometers (23 miles) of walkways. Duration of 16 days. Central Park, New York City USA.
Photo: Wolfgang Volz © 2005 Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Pink woven polypropylene fabric floating around eleven islands: 6.5 million square feet. Duration of 14 days.
Biscayne Bay, Greater Miami, Florida USA. © 1983 Christo
Growing wheat (duration May 1- August 16), 2 acres, resulting in 1,000 pounds of grain.
Battery Park Landfill, Downtown Manhattan
© Agens Denes

Fig 14. Agnes Denes, *Tree mountain - A Living Time Capsule - 11,000 Trees, 11,000 People, 400 Years*, (1992-1996),
420 meters long, 270 meters wide, 28 meters high. Elliptical in shape. (will grow)
Ylojarvi, Finland. © Agnes Denes

Fig 17. James Turrell, *Roden Crater*, 1972 - ongoing
Series of sensory experiences within an extinct volcano comprised of a manipulation of natural and manmade light.
© James Turrell


