



The Art & Ecology research group hosts a broad cluster of artistic research at the intersection of ecology, art and activism. This highly interdisciplinary field, which is attracting increasing interest, offers a multitude of perspectives, including social and political engagement, (eco)feminism, scientific perspectives and artistic activism. Insights from Posthumanism and New Materialism play an important reference point here. From a commitment to art and ecology, the research group wishes to play a meaningful role in the recognition of contemporary art as a vital, connecting, investigative and regenerative force within society and within local natural and (cultural) historical givens. With exemplary policies, it aims to help foster action and commitment to pressing local and global issues and the development of equitable and sustainable alternatives for a positive future.

Ecology (literally, from the Greek: "the study of the home") examines the relationships and vital interrelationships between living organisms - including humans - and their physical environment. The term was coined by German zoologist and illustrator Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919). In the second half of the twentieth century, the term "ecology" also became widespread beyond the scientific field of biology. At the beginning of the 21st century, it was enriched by insights from Posthumanism and discourses about the Anthropocene. These movements, criticizing forms of anthropocentrism and universalism, questioned the central and superior place of humans within creation. Also making an appearance was New Materialism, which has far-reaching implications for our perception of matter, creation and embodiment.

Ecological art

Ecological art constitutes a highly pluralistic artistic discipline that has been around for decades, but for a long time remained relatively invisible and on the margins of more dominant art movements. In the historiography of ecological art, it is often regarded as a branch of American Land Art with pioneers since the late 1960s. At the beginning of the new millennium, the movement seems to have rapidly gained renewed momentum, visibility and a (young) following.

Among the numerous topics addressed within eco-art are the representation of "nature," sustainability, the Anthropocene, climate change, species extinction, the finite nature of fossil fuels, colonialism, waste, species contact, taxonomy and classification, food, indicator species, ecological alternatives to contemporary intensive farming methods (including permaculture), water management, genetic engineering, land reclamation and ecosystem restoration. Many ecological artists share a holistic worldview that focuses on ecological interconnections rather than humans; an interdisciplinary, inquisitive attitude; critical, socially and politically activist engagement; a tendency toward participation and inclusion; and an interest in dynamic processes rather than immutable objects.

History

The Art & Ecology research group stems from Body and Material Reinvented, which was founded in 2015 as a cluster of individual projects around questions of body, material, technique and craft. This thematically highly diverse research group was characterized by a strong social, sometimes also socio-political anchoring. Partly because of stormy debates and pioneering research in the field of

body and matter, and from the need to give ecology a permanent place within the Royal Academy, in recent years the group has felt the need to define its field of research more specifically. Body and matter also continue to play a prominent role in the research group-new-style, but within a theoretical framework in which Posthumanism and New Materialism are important references.

Spearheads

Unlike in the United States, academies in Europe have few, if any, Art & Ecology programs. Initially, therefore, the Art & Ecology research group at KAA sets itself two goals. On the one hand, it wants to support pioneering research within the group's domain. On the other hand, it hopes to develop a substantive program of teaching, lectures and publications around art and ecology to showcase the great multiplicity and thematic variety of eco-art, canonize relatively unknown artists, and help to write the history of an artistic discipline that has hitherto barely been charted. With these spearheads, the group wishes to position itself as a laboratory for critical, interdisciplinary research into sustainable alternatives for the future, merging artistic and scientific modes of knowledge production with other areas of research.