

Environmental Art and Sustainability: Land, Climate, Memory, Activism, and Waste

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Abstract

Environmental art does more than depict nature or substitute recycled materials for conventional media. It creates ways of perceiving ecological systems, confronting environmental damage, and reconsidering human responsibility. This paper examines six artists—Robert Smithson, Andy Goldsworthy, Olafur Eliasson, Joseph Beuys, Tiffany Chung, and Bordalo II—whose practices represent distinct but overlapping approaches to art and sustainability. Smithson's earthworks reveal entropy, extraction, and the contradictions of transforming land in order to examine it. Goldsworthy's ephemeral arrangements treat weather, decay, and seasonal change as collaborators, proposing attentiveness and impermanence as alternatives to ownership and control. Eliasson converts climate processes into embodied public experiences, making atmosphere and glacial loss physically immediate. Beuys expands ecological art into social sculpture through collective tree planting and civic participation. Chung uses cartography, archives, and speculative models to connect climate vulnerability with displacement, planning, war, and political power. Bordalo II transforms discarded consumer materials into monumental animals, exposing the relationship between waste and habitat destruction. Together, these artists demonstrate that environmental art can function as witness, critique, experiment, memorial, and intervention. Although art cannot replace environmental policy or scientific action, it can make complex ecological relationships visible, felt, and ethically urgent, thereby contributing to the cultural changes required for more sustainable forms of life.

Introduction

The relationship between art and sustainability is not simply a matter of using “green” materials. In contemporary environmental art, sustainability becomes a way of thinking about land, time, waste, climate systems, memory, and public responsibility. Artists working with environmental themes do more than represent nature as beautiful scenery. They ask what happens when land is excavated, when weather becomes unstable, when ice disappears, when cities erase ecological histories, and when consumer waste enters animal habitats. In this sense, art can function as both witness and intervention. It can make environmental change visible, physically felt, and ethically difficult to ignore.

Environmental art is best understood as a broad field rather than a single movement. It includes Land Art, site-specific installation, ecological restoration, performance, participatory practice, climate art, and works made from discarded material. Thornes (2008) argues that the term is useful precisely because it can include both representational images of the environment and nonrepresentational, performative practices. Wildy (2011) similarly emphasizes that environmental art has developed from the earthworks of the late 1960s into approaches that may combine aesthetics with ecological repair, social reform, or environmental education. The field therefore contains a productive tension: some works alter landscapes, some cooperate with natural processes, some communicate scientific

evidence, and others intervene in political or social systems.

This paper argues that environmental art has developed through several distinct but overlapping approaches. Robert Smithson transformed actual sites to expose geology, entropy, and human intervention in the landscape. Andy Goldsworthy emphasized nature as process, showing that art can emerge through decay, weather, and temporary balance rather than permanent monumentality. Olafur Eliasson turned environmental systems into immersive experiences, bringing atmosphere, light, and melting ice into public encounter so that climate change could be sensed rather than merely described. Joseph Beuys expanded environmental art into social activism, treating ecological repair as part of a broader project of civic transformation. Tiffany Chung approached environmental crisis through mapping, memory, and research, revealing how ecological damage is tied to planning, displacement, and political power. Bordalo II used discarded consumer waste itself as artistic material, making pollution visible through large animal forms that embody both ecological vulnerability and human excess.

Taken together, these artists show that environmental art is not one style. It can involve moving earth, arranging leaves, planting trees, staging melting ice, remapping damaged territories, or assembling sculptures from trash. What unites them is a shared insistence that human relationships with nature are historical, material, and moral. Their work does not merely

celebrate the environment. It reveals the consequences of exploitation, the fragility of ecosystems, and the possibility that art can change how people perceive responsibility. At the same time, the works raise an important critical question: does environmental art merely symbolize concern, or can it contribute to real ecological and social change? The following case studies show that its strongest contribution is not a single solution but a capacity to reorganize attention—to make systems, consequences, and possible forms of collective action newly legible.

Robert Smithson: Entropy, Extraction, and the Altered Landscape

Robert Smithson (1938–1973) was an American artist and writer whose work fundamentally expanded the definition of art and the spaces in which art could exist. Moving beyond traditional gallery-based practice, he became one of the central figures associated with Land Art. His interests in geology, cartography, ruins, prehistory, science fiction, and entropy shaped both his visual works and his critical writing (Holt/Smithson Foundation, n.d.; Marian Goodman Gallery, n.d.). Rather than presenting nature as pure or untouched, Smithson focused on landscapes already marked by extraction, industrial change, and temporal instability. His environmental importance lies in his treatment of land as both medium and evidence: the ground carries histories of formation, use, damage, and decay.

Spiral Jetty (1970)

Smithson's Spiral Jetty, constructed at Rozel Point on the northeastern shore of Utah's Great Salt Lake in 1970, is one of the most recognizable works of Land Art. The earthwork was built from more than six thousand tons of black basalt rock and earth and forms a counterclockwise coil approximately 1,500 feet long and 15 feet wide (Dia Art Foundation, n.d.a). The sculpture extends from the shoreline into the lake, where changing salinity, water levels, salt deposits, and weather continually modify its appearance. It is simultaneously a sculpture, a path, a geological marker, and a site of ongoing transformation.

The environmental significance of Spiral Jetty lies partly in its refusal to remain fixed. The Great Salt Lake appealed to Smithson because its fractured terrain and fluctuating conditions corresponded to his interest in entropy—the tendency of systems to move toward dispersal, disorder, and irreversible change. The work can be submerged, exposed, coated with salt, bleached by sunlight, or visually transformed by drought. It therefore does not represent environmental change from a safe distance; it undergoes change in public view. Dia's continuing aerial documentation further emphasizes that the artwork's identity is inseparable from the lake's changing condition (Dia Art Foundation, n.d.b).

Yet Spiral Jetty also produces an ethical contradiction. Smithson made viewers attentive to geological time and ecological instability by physically rearranging a vulnerable shoreline. The work brought unprecedented attention to landscape as an active material system, but it also

raises questions about whether an artist can intervene in land without reproducing the same habits of control that environmental critique seeks to challenge. This contradiction is central to the work rather than incidental. Spiral Jetty demonstrates that humans are not detached observers of nature: we shape environments materially and then encounter the long-term consequences of those actions.



Asphalt Rundown (1969)

If Spiral Jetty is Smithson's most famous earthwork, Asphalt Rundown is one of his clearest demonstrations that environmental art can foreground disturbance rather than stable form. Created in 1969 near Rome, the work involved pouring hot asphalt down the side of a quarry or embankment so that gravity, viscosity, heat, and slope determined the resulting shape. The dark material descended like an industrial landslide. Rather than presenting a completed object, the work emphasized an irreversible event in which material behavior exceeded precise artistic control.

The work stages a collision between a petroleum-based industrial substance and a geological

setting. Asphalt is associated with roads, construction, mobility, and the infrastructure of modern life. Released onto an excavated landscape, it collapses any simple division between the "natural" and the "artificial." Smithson's quarry is not wilderness but land already transformed by extraction. The asphalt intensifies that history and makes the site appear both constructed and wounded. Tate's account of Smithson's interest in entropy helps clarify why the downward flow, loss of boundaries, and resistance to restoration are central to the work (Tate, n.d.-a).

Although Asphalt Rundown predates widespread contemporary discussion of climate change, it speaks directly to the material logic of fossil-fuel modernity. It dramatizes spill, dispersal, and contamination without offering a comforting image of recovery. Unlike restorative environmental practices, Smithson's work does not heal the landscape or provide instructions for reform. Its value lies in forcing viewers to confront the violence concealed within ordinary industrial materials. Sustainability, in this context, begins with recognizing that the systems enabling modern convenience leave marks that may be neither clean nor easily reversible.

Andy Goldsworthy: Ephemerality and Ecological Attention

Andy Goldsworthy is a British artist known for ephemeral works made directly from materials such as leaves, ice, stone, mud, branches, snow, and rain. The Andy Goldsworthy Digital

Catalogue records his early practice across numerous sites and seasons and demonstrates how closely his work depends on specific conditions of place and time (University of Glasgow, n.d.-a). Unlike artists who impose permanent structures upon land, Goldsworthy often makes delicate arrangements that shift, decay, collapse, or disappear. Weather, gravity, moisture, sunlight, and time are not obstacles to the work; they are active collaborators.

Goldsworthy's practice challenges the conventional expectation that art should become a durable possession. His works are usually known through photographs, but the physical arrangements themselves remain temporary and materially embedded in their sites. In relation to sustainability, this impermanence models an ethic of attentiveness rather than domination. The artist borrows local material, works within seasonal limits, and allows the work to return to ecological processes. The result is not environmental activism in an explicit political sense, but a disciplined practice of noticing.

Rowan Leaves and Hole (1987)

Rowan Leaves and Hole is among Goldsworthy's most elegant meditations on color, absence, and seasonal change. Bright leaves are arranged around a dark opening in the ground, producing a vivid contrast between luminous organic matter and an apparently depthless void. The leaves create order, but their beauty is inseparable from vulnerability: they are already detached, drying, and moving toward decomposition.



The environmental meaning of the work emerges from the tension between careful human arrangement and inevitable natural change. Goldsworthy's catalogue records numerous leaf works whose forms depended upon searching, timing, weather, and the physical condition of the material (University of Glasgow, n.d.-a). Rowan Leaves and Hole do not portray nature as stable scenery. Instead, it isolates a brief moment in an ongoing cycle of growth, fall, decay, and renewal. The dark center can be read as absence or mortality, while the leaves register the intensity of life precisely because their color will not last.

This temporariness offers an alternative to extractive consumer culture, which often measures value through accumulation and permanence. Goldsworthy creates meaning through material that remains local and eventually returns to the site. The work's small footprint is important, but its perceptual effect is more important: it trains the viewer to notice relationships among color, soil, season, fragility, and disappearance. Such attention is ethically

relevant because environmental exploitation often begins when land is perceived as inert resource rather than a network of living processes.

Rain Shadow Series (1984 onward)

Goldsworthy's Rain Shadow works make environmental process even more immediate by using the artist's body as a temporary index of weather. In examples made at St. Abbs, Scotland, and Haarlemmerhout in the Netherlands in 1984, Goldsworthy lay on the ground during rainfall and left a dry, body-shaped silhouette against the wet surface (University of Glasgow, n.d.-b, n.d.-c). The image is produced by a brief act of resistance: the body interrupts rain, then departs.

Rather than creating an image of weather, Goldsworthy lets weather create the image. Rain becomes medium, collaborator, and timer. Evaporation, further rainfall, changing light, or foot traffic quickly erase the trace. The human figure appears not as a dominating presence but as a temporary absence. This inversion makes the body's dependence on atmosphere visible. People do not stand outside climate; they are surrounded, marked, and sustained by it.

The Rain Shadow series differs from Smithson's monumental earthworks in scale, duration, and environmental impact. It leaves almost no material trace and makes no explicit policy argument. Yet its intimacy is politically suggestive. By showing that weather is a point of contact between body and world, the work counters the abstraction through which climate is often

discussed. A sustainable relationship with nature begins here as recognition: human life is brief, embodied, and inseparable from larger cycles of moisture, temperature, and time.

Olafur Eliasson: Embodied Climate and Public Perception

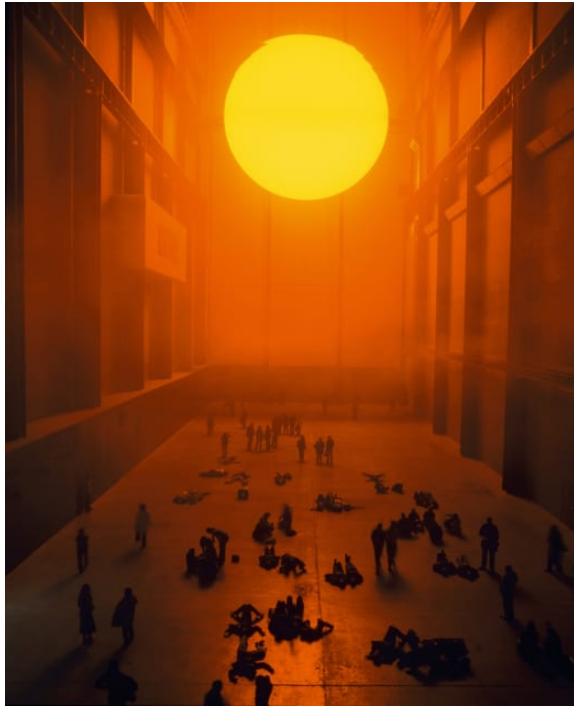
Olafur Eliasson, born in 1967 and raised in Iceland and Denmark, is an Icelandic-Danish artist whose practice explores light, atmosphere, water, perception, architecture, and public space. Since establishing his Berlin studio in 1995, Eliasson has created large-scale installations that draw from art, science, engineering, and environmental thought (Studio Olafur Eliasson, n.d.). His environmental importance lies in his ability to make systems that are normally invisible or geographically distant become physically perceptible.

Eliasson does not generally restore ecosystems directly. Instead, he creates encounters in which viewers experience fog, reflection, heat, light, or melting ice through their own bodies. His work assumes that environmental understanding is sensory and social as well as intellectual. Scientific data may describe climate change accurately, but art can alter how that information is felt, remembered, and discussed in public.

The Weather Project (2003)

Installed in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall in 2003, The weather project used a semicircular screen, hundreds of lamps, mirror foil, and artificial mist to create the illusion of a giant glowing sun. The mirrored ceiling doubled the semicircle into a full

disk and reflected the visitors below, many of whom lay on the floor or formed shapes with their bodies (Studio Olafur Eliasson, 2003; Tate, 2003). The museum became an artificial climate zone in which atmosphere organized collective behavior.



The work's environmental power lies in the fact that its "nature" is visibly mediated. The sun is technological, the haze is manufactured, and the sky is an architectural mirror. Rather than attempting to deceive viewers completely, the installation invites awareness of how perception is constructed. This matters because modern environmental experience is also mediated by buildings, energy systems, satellite images, forecasts, news reports, and political institutions. The weather is shared, but access to safety, comfort, and representation is uneven.

Unlike a landscape painting, The weather project

does not position nature at a distance. It surrounds the viewer and includes the audience within the image. Individual silhouettes become part of a temporary public. The work therefore reframes weather as a collective condition rather than private background. Its contribution to sustainability is perceptual: it helps audiences imagine atmosphere as a common medium that links bodies, institutions, technologies, and environments.

Ice Watch (2014–2018)

Developed by Eliasson and geologist Minik Rosing, Ice Watch brought large blocks of free-floating glacial ice from a fjord outside Nuuk, Greenland, to public spaces in Copenhagen, Paris, and London. The blocks were arranged so that passersby could touch, smell, listen to, and watch the ice melt (Studio Olafur Eliasson, 2014; Tate, 2018). In some versions, the circular placement resembled a clock, linking the physical process of melting with the urgency of time.

Ice Watch transforms climate evidence into direct encounter. Arctic warming is often communicated through graphs or images of remote regions. Eliasson instead places ancient ice within urban daily life. The ice does not merely symbolize disappearance; it disappears in front of the audience. Cracks sound, surfaces become wet, edges soften, and the mass gradually becomes water. Through touch and proximity, climate change becomes embodied.

The work is not free from contradiction. Transporting ice for an artwork requires energy,

and the project's spectacle may risk simplifying a complex planetary system into a dramatic object. Yet Eliasson and Rosing foregrounded these questions and presented the ice as material evidence rather than decorative resource. The project's strength lies in collapsing geographic and emotional distance. It turns a remote process into civic witness and asks viewers to recognize that environmental time is already unfolding within human time.

Joseph Beuys: Social Sculpture and Ecological Citizenship

Joseph Beuys (1921–1986) was a German artist whose work joined sculpture, performance, education, and political activism. He developed the idea of “social sculpture,” the belief that society itself could be shaped creatively through collective thought and action. This concept explains why his environmental practice often moved beyond objects and exhibitions into public campaigns, organizations, discussions, and long-term planting projects. For Beuys, ecological crisis could not be separated from failures of democracy, education, economics, and social imagination.

Beuys's approach expands the meaning of sustainability. Rather than focusing only on conserving material resources, he treated ecological repair as a civic and cultural process. Environmental damage reflects systems of value: what societies consider disposable, profitable, public, or worthy of care. His work therefore asks whether artistic creativity can be redirected from

producing objects toward transforming shared life.

7000 Oaks (1982–1987)

Beuys initiated 7000 Oaks at Documenta 7 in Kassel, Germany, in 1982. The project called for the planting of seven thousand trees throughout the city; each paired with a vertical basalt stone. It took five years to complete, and the final tree was planted in 1987 after Beuys's death. Supported by Dia Art Foundation and carried out with residents, organizations, and the Free International University, the work was conceived as the beginning of a wider global program of environmental and social change (Dia Art Foundation, n.d.-c).

The pairing of living tree and basalt marker brings together different temporal scales. The stone appears stable but slowly weathers; the tree begins small but grows, changes, and eventually exceeds the stone. Each pairing is both sculpture and ecological infrastructure. Trees provide shade, habitat, carbon storage, and visual change, while their distribution across the city alters streets and neighborhoods. The project's aesthetic form therefore cannot be separated from its environmental function.

Equally important is the project's participatory structure. 7000 Oaks could not be completed by the artist alone. It required fundraising, permissions, local proposals, maintenance, and cooperation across years. The artwork exists in the social relationships that enabled the plantings as much as in the physical tree-and-stone units. This

is social sculpture in practice: the city becomes a medium shaped through collective responsibility.

Compared with Smithson's earthworks, 7000 Oaks is explicitly regenerative. It does not reveal entropy by accelerating disturbance; it introduces living systems into urban space and asks communities to care for them. Yet Beuys avoids presenting ecological repair as purely technical. Planting trees becomes a democratic gesture and a symbolic challenge to short-term thinking. Sustainability requires not only trees but institutions and citizens willing to protect them after the initiating artistic event has ended.

Tiffany Chung: Mapping Climate, Displacement, and Power

Tiffany Chung, born in Da Nang, Vietnam, in 1969, is a Vietnamese American artist whose multimedia practice investigates migration, conflict, urbanization, environmental change, and shifting geographies. She is best known for intricate maps developed through archival research, fieldwork, demographic data, historical documents, and projected scenarios. Her work treats cartography not as neutral description but as a political technology that can reveal or conceal relationships among land, government, infrastructure, memory, and human movement (Smithsonian American Art Museum, n.d.; Tiffany Chung Studio, n.d.).

Chung's importance to environmental art lies in the way she links ecological crisis with social history. Flooding, sea-level rise, redevelopment, war, and forced migration are not separate

categories in her maps. They overlap across time. A landscape may simultaneously contain ecological processes, colonial borders, military operations, speculative development, erased communities, and future climate risk. Her maps make these layers visible and challenge the authority of official planning documents that often present transformation as orderly or inevitable.

One Giant Great Flood 2050 (2012)

Chung's one giant great flood 2050 is a meticulously drawn map that visualizes a projected environmental future. The work, held by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, uses ink and oil on paper to transform climate projection into a dense visual field (SFMOMA, n.d.). Rather than presenting a conventional scientific map with a purely technical appearance, Chung combines the authority of cartographic information with the delicacy and ambiguity of drawing.

The work demonstrates that mapping is never only about location. A flood projection implies decisions about whose homes, infrastructure, histories, and livelihoods are considered vulnerable or expendable. The year 2050 places the image in a near future that is both speculative and politically actionable. It invites viewers to consider not only what water may cover, but how present planning decisions shape future exposure.

Chung's use of beauty is significant. The map's intricate lines and colors attract sustained attention, even as its subject is catastrophe. This

tension prevents the work from functioning as a simple warning poster. It asks viewers to examine how visual systems can make disaster appear manageable, distant, or aesthetically ordered. By slowing down the act of reading, Chung restores uncertainty, memory, and human consequence to the abstract language of risk.

Stored in a Jar: Monsoon, Drowning Fish, Color of Water, and the Floating World (2010–2011)

In *stored in a jar: monsoon, drowning fish, color of water, and the floating world*, Chung created a large-scale model of a floating settlement in response to extreme flood projections, sea-level rise, and climate variability. The work draws from research into houseboat and floating-village communities across Asia and combines vernacular forms with speculative adaptation (Weisman Art Museum, 2026; Kiang Malingue, 2024). Suspended structures appear fragile, improvised, and interconnected.

Unlike representations that frame flooded communities only as victims, the installation foregrounds knowledge developed through generations of living with water. It proposes adaptation not as a purely futuristic technological solution but as a practice already embedded in vulnerable communities. At the same time, the work does not romanticize resilience. The title evokes drowning, containment, unstable weather, and a world whose boundaries have become fluid.

Chung's environmental art therefore differs from Eliasson's immersive climate spectacle. Rather than bringing a distant material into a public

square, she uses research and model-making to reveal how environmental crisis is distributed through geography and political power. Her work asks who is expected to move, who receives protection, whose knowledge is recognized, and whose histories disappear when landscapes are redesigned.

Bordalo II: Waste, Consumption, and Animal Vulnerability

Artur Bordalo, known as Bordalo II, is a Portuguese artist who creates large sculptures and reliefs from discarded materials such as plastic, vehicle parts, construction debris, household objects, and industrial waste. Many of the works depict animals, especially species whose habitats are threatened by pollution and excessive consumption. The artist describes his practice as a response to the continuous production of garbage and the environmental destruction associated with mass consumption (Bordalo II, n.d.-a).

Bordalo II's material choice is central to the work's meaning. Trash is not disguised as a refined sculptural medium; fragments remain recognizable as bumpers, bins, tubing, tires, or broken containers. From a distance, these fragments cohere into vivid animals. Up close, the illusion breaks apart and the viewer confronts the material residue of consumer life. The work thus produces a double image: an animal is represented through substances that contribute to the destruction of animal environments.

Big Trash Animals and Half Rabbit (2017)

The Big Trash Animals series includes monumental foxes, birds, fish, bears, rabbits, and other creatures installed on buildings and in public spaces. The scale allows the animals to compete visually with urban advertising and architecture. Rather than placing ecological imagery inside a museum, Bordalo II inserts threatened or overlooked life into the spaces where consumption and waste are produced.

Half Rabbit, created in Vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal, in 2017, is especially effective because it divides the animal into two contrasting halves. One side is painted with a relatively naturalistic surface, while the other exposes the assemblage of discarded plastic and metal. The artist's own description of the "Half-Half" works emphasizes this conflict between the living animal and the waste materials that contribute to habitat destruction (Bordalo II, n.d.-b). The sculpture makes the causal relationship visually immediate.

The work's accessibility is both a strength and a potential limitation. Its message can be understood quickly: human trash harms nonhuman life. This clarity helps the work reach a broad public, but it can also allow viewers to treat recycling as the complete answer to a systemic problem. The sculptures do reuse waste, yet their deeper critique concerns the economic culture that continually produces disposable goods. Sustainability cannot be achieved merely by transforming a small portion of trash into art; it requires reducing the conditions that generate waste in the first place.

Bordalo II differs from Goldsworthy, who uses biodegradable local materials, and from Chung, who works through data and archival research. His environmental argument is materially direct and urban. The viewer sees consumption's leftovers reorganized into the bodies of vulnerable creatures. In this way, waste becomes both medium and accusation.

Comparative Discussion: What Environmental Art Can Do

The six artists examined here reveal a historical shift from landscape as artistic site toward ecology as a network of material, social, and political relationships. Smithson's work begins from altered ground, geological time, and entropy. Goldsworthy replaces monumentality with temporary collaboration. Eliasson translates atmospheric and glacial systems into bodily public experience. Beuys makes ecological repair inseparable from collective civic action. Chung exposes the maps, archives, and planning systems through which environmental risk is distributed. Bordalo II turns the remains of consumption into images of the life endangered by it.

These approaches can be organized around several recurring questions. The first concerns material responsibility. Smithson's asphalt and basalt, Goldsworthy's leaves and rain, Eliasson's ice and artificial mist, Beuys's trees and stone, Chung's paper and models, and Bordalo II's discarded plastic all carry environmental histories. Materials are not neutral. They connect artworks to extraction, transport, decay,

infrastructure, labor, and waste.

The second question concerns time. Smithson invokes geological duration and entropy; Goldsworthy emphasizes the brief life of an arrangement; Eliasson makes melting visible minute by minute; Beuys constructs a work that grows across decades; Chung overlays past violence with future risk; and Bordalo II exposes the long afterlife of disposable objects. Sustainability requires precisely this ability to think across different timescales. Immediate convenience must be weighed against slow ecological consequences.

The third question concerns the viewer's role. Some works ask for contemplation, others for physical encounter, and others for participation. Goldsworthy trains attention; Eliasson creates embodied experience; Beuys depends on civic involvement; Chung asks viewers to read evidence critically; Bordalo II uses public visibility and recognition. These different positions matter because environmental responsibility is not produced by information alone. People must perceive themselves as participants in systems rather than spectators outside them.

Nevertheless, environmental art has limits. Ellison and Borden (2019) caution that prescriptive ecological art does not automatically produce meaningful action and may narrow rather than expand public imagination. Artworks can also consume energy, rely on institutional sponsorship, become tourist destinations, or aestheticize suffering. A melting block of ice may

inspire grief without changing behavior; a sculpture made from trash may be photographed and shared while patterns of consumption continue.

These limitations do not make environmental art ineffective. They clarify its role. Art is not a substitute for regulation, conservation, climate science, infrastructure, or political organization. Its strongest contribution is cultural and perceptual. It can expose contradictions that policy language hides, connect abstract data to bodily experience, preserve erased histories, create symbols for collective action, and help publics imagine relationships that are not organized solely around extraction and ownership. Environmental change is also a crisis of perception and value, and art operates directly within that domain.

Conclusion

Environmental art demonstrates that sustainability is not simply a technical problem or a decorative theme. It is a question of how humans perceive land, value materials, understand time, remember damage, and organize collective responsibility. Robert Smithson reveals that landscapes are already entangled with extraction and entropy. Andy Goldsworthy shows that attention to fragility and impermanence can challenge the desire for possession and control. Olafur Eliasson makes climate systems physically and socially present. Joseph Beuys transforms ecological care into a participatory civic project. Tiffany Chung maps the unequal political geographies of flooding,

displacement, and redevelopment. Bordalo II turns the waste of consumer culture into the bodies of animals threatened by that culture.

No single one of these practices defines environmental art, and none offers a complete solution to ecological crisis. Their differences are precisely what make the field valuable. Environmental problems operate across scales, from the movement of a leaf to the transformation of a city, from the lifespan of plastic to the melting of Arctic ice. They also operate across disciplines, joining science, history, economics, politics, ethics, and daily behavior. Environmental art can move among these scales and translate them into forms that audiences can see, touch, remember, and debate.

The most sustainable artwork is therefore not necessarily the one that uses the least material or delivers the clearest slogan. It may be the work that changes the terms through which people understand their relationship to the world. Art can reveal that nature is not a distant scene, that waste does not disappear, that maps are political, that climate is shared, and that repair requires long-term participation. Its contribution is not to replace environmental action but to deepen the perception, imagination, and ethical commitment on which meaningful action depends.

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