

# TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE ATTITUDE

## Aesthetics, the Arts, and the Environment

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE | Venice >> October 6-8, 2022**  
Ca' Foscari University of Venice >> Aula Magna Ca' Dolfin and Aula Baratto Ca' Foscari



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**Mediating  
the Ecological  
Imperative**

SNSF Sinergia 2021 – 2024

# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

*Toward a Sustainable Attitude: Aesthetics, the Arts, and the Environment*

Venice, October 6-8, 2022

Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Aula Magna Ca' Dolfin and Aula Baratto Ca' Foscari

## Conference Partners:

Ca' Foscari University of Venice (IT)

New York University Tandon (USA)

University of Bern (CH)

## Scientific Committee:

Roberta Dreon, Ca' Foscari University of Venice (IT)

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Diego Mantoan, University of Palermo (IT)

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Jonathan Soffer, NYU Tandon (USA)

The conference is organised and funded by various institutes and research centres of Ca' Foscari University of Venice: the Venice Centre for Digital and Public Humanities at the Department of Humanities, Sustainable Ca' Foscari and the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage.

The concept of the conference is based on the fieldwork done in art and sustainability at Ca' Foscari University of Venice over a period of eight years, especially by means of the Sustainable Art Prize founded by Sustainable Ca' Foscari at the art fair of ArtVerona and the subsequent public art projects developed in Venice. Conference partners

[ve]dph

Venice Centre for  
Digital and Public  
Humanities



Ca' Foscari  
University  
of Venice  
Department  
of Humanities



Università  
Ca' Foscari  
Venezia  
Dipartimento  
di Filosofia  
e Beni Culturali



### **A new conceptual framework for sustainability.**

The conference is set to investigate sustainability challenges confronting the world from a philosophical and artistic perspective to overcome the indeterminateness of the term sustainability and its multi-faceted nature, which unfortunately falls prey to contrasting world views. So far, the crisis has been addressed primarily with solutions based on technological innovation, rather than those that require significant changes in attitude and conceptual frameworks. The failure of inspiring behavioural change through rigorous scientific communication increasingly fostered interest in the relationship between aesthetics, art, and sustainability, which offers new forms of knowledge production and human action that complement necessary legislative developments and shared international policies. The background of the conference lies in the problematic of concepts such as 'world' and 'environment', as well as in the opposition between 'natural' and 'cultural'. Considering how human transformations of the Earth system and the climate crisis definitively question the culture/nature and natural sciences/humanities dichotomies, as well as their underlying epistemological paradigms, the conference will explore the theoretical and procedural implications of connecting aesthetics and art to sustainability. Two aspects shall be explored particularly, the first one related to the way sustainability is sensed and understood in different cultural and social contexts, the other one to the way artists may contribute to the debate on sustainability at an experiential and conceptual level. Hence, the conference wants to become a privileged occasion to reflect on the philosophical and artistic contribution to the discourse and practices of sustainability, such as to emerge as favourable drivers of behavioural change.

### **Four research strains between philosophy and art.**

After an extensive call for papers and direct invitations, the conference collected the participation of scholars from the entire spectrum of the humanities, ranging from philosophy to art history, from public to environmental humanities. Conceived as a multi-disciplinary conference, the framework is grounded on four principal research strains:

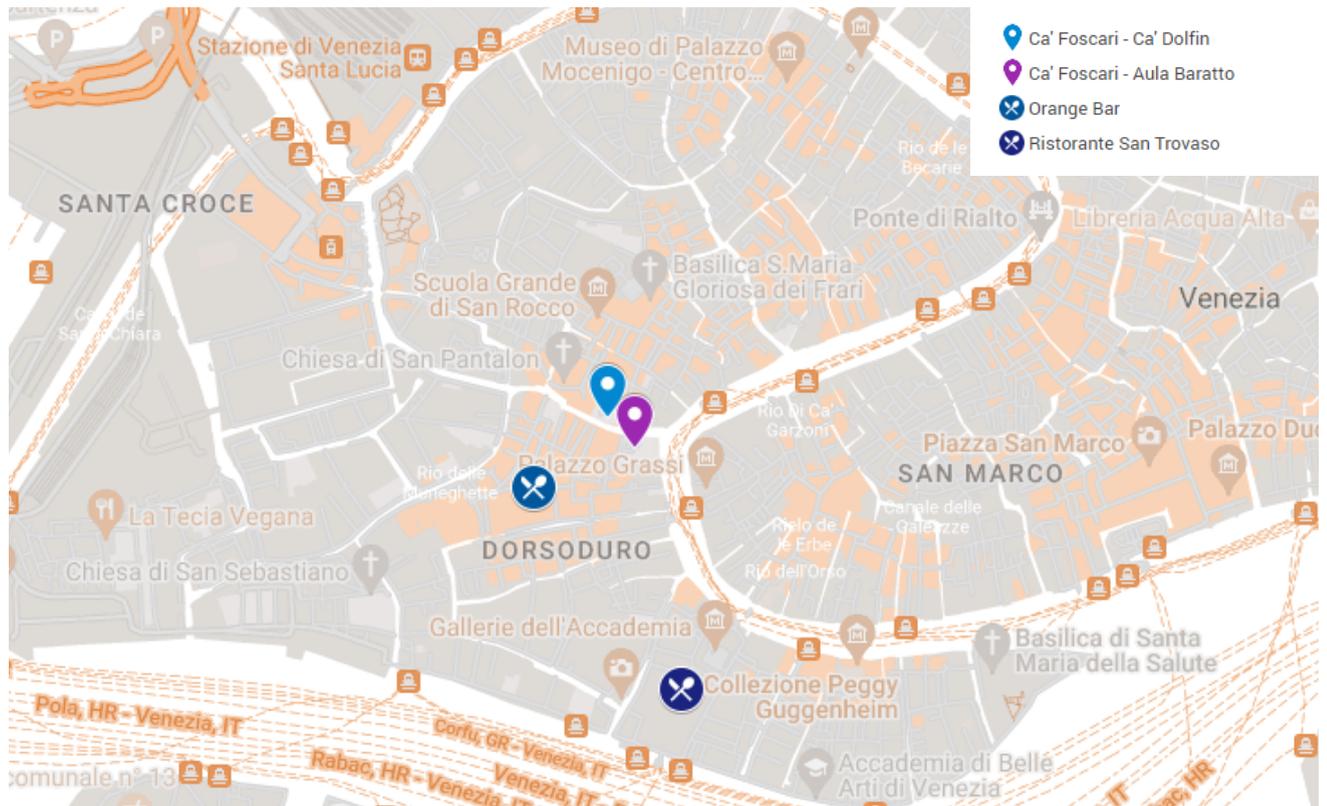
**PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY** >> inquiries into the concepts of the environment, both natural and built; a new contextualisation of animality envisaging a conceptual framework for sustainability that avoids the widespread anthropocentric character; a reflection on the Anthropocene that may help rethinking both the geological and historical time in a non-dualistic way, urging for a consideration of the environmental dimension at a global level of human action, science, and technology.

**SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES** >> mapping of sustainable practices in the political, artistic, societal, and humanistic field, as well as their effects on the concept of the environment, both natural and built; encouraging forms of sustainable awareness, criticism and activism, that contribute to the definition of an "eco-aesthetics" opposed to environmental exploitation.

**ETHICS AND AESTHETICS** >> reprising environmental ethics and aesthetics to rethink pragmatically about transactions between humans and environment; shaping a new perspective of the environment beyond contemplation and anchored in a post-subjective and pragmatically steered concept of the interactions between humans, animals, and nature.

**ARTISTIC CONTRIBUTIONS** >> analysing the role of the artist and public engagement in influencing the behaviour of individuals and communities, particularly by shifting from representational forms of art to a participatory and processual paradigm; inquiries into the mode that artistic practice influences human behaviour and affects widespread feelings in sight of an "eco-aesthetics" that counters extractivism.

## MAPS AND CONFERENCE LOCATIONS



### Conference Locations

Ca' Dolfin > [Aula Magna](#) > Ground floor  
Dorsoduro 3825/e - 30123 (VE)

Ca' Foscari > [Aula Baratto](#) > Second floor  
Dorsoduro 3246 - 30123 (VE)

### Conference Dinner

[Ristorante San Trovaso](#)  
Dorsoduro 967 - 30123 (VE)

### Venetian Aperitivo

[Orange Bar](#)  
Campo Santa Margherita - Dorsoduro 3054a - 30123 (VE)



# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## THURSDAY AFTERNOON

October 6, 2022

Aula Magna, Ca' Dolfin

### 14:00 GREETINGS

**Maria Del Valle Ojeda Calvo** (Vice Rector for Research, Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

**Luigi Perissinotto** (Member of the Board of Governors, Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

**Franz Fischer** (Venice Centre for Digital and Public Humanities, Department of Humanities, Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

### 14:30 PANEL 1 – Chair: Roberta Dreon (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

14:30 [Emily Brady](#) (Texas A&M University), *Aesthetics, Ecology, and Community*

15:00 [Paolo D'Angelo](#) (Roma Tre University), *Sustainability and Environmental Art*

15:30 DISCUSSION

### 16:00 COFFEE BREAK

### 16:30 PANEL 2 – Chair: Diego Mantoan (University of Palermo)

16:30 [Laia Anguix](#) (Trnavská univerzita v Trnave), *The dirty patrons: environmental sustainability and museum sponsorship*

17:00 [Vanessa Badagliacca](#) (Universidade Nova de Lisboa), *An aesthetics of Minimal Resources. Colombia and Environmental issues in Alicia Barney's Work (1975-1981)*

17:30 DISCUSSION

### 18:15 SUSTAINABLE ART CONVERSATION 1: Protagonism and Antagonism

[Markus Reymann](#) (Ocean Space)

[Paolo Cirio](#) (independent artist)

discuss with

[Carolina Fernandez Castrillo](#) (Universidad Carlos III Madrid)

### 19:00 OPENING OF SOLAR PROTOCOL

Sustainable art installation by Tega Brain, Alex Nathanson and Benedetta Piantella, New York University Tandon – curated by Diego Mantoan and produced by VeDPH with Sustainable Ca' Foscari

### 19:30 END OF DAY 1

### 20:00 SPEAKERS' DINNER

## FRIDAY MORNING

October 7, 2022

Aula Magna, Ca' Dolfin

9:00 **PANEL 3** – Chair: Elisa Caldarola (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

9:00 [Heather Diack](#) (University of Miami), *Dolphins in Venice: Climate Crisis, Credibility, and the Life of Images*

9:30 [Madalina Diaconu](#) (Universität Wien), *Leave No Traces – A paradigm change in the Anthropocene?*

10:00 [Nicole Annette Hall](#) (Texas A&M University), *Virtue Appreciation & Sustainability*

10:30 DISCUSSION

### 11:15 COFFEE BREAK

11:45 **PANEL 4** – Chair: Elisabetta Di Stefano (University of Palermo)

11:45 [Alberto Siani](#) (University of Pisa), *Re-centering Aesthetics: Toward a Pragmatist Paradigm for Landscape Character*

12:15 [Michaela Schäuble](#) (Universität Bern), *Of spiders, dead olive trees and industrial contamination: an artistic-ethnographic site visit in Puglia*

12:45 DISCUSSION

+13:15 END OF MORNING, DAY 2

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## FRIDAY AFTERNOON

October 7, 2022

Aula Magna, Ca' Dolfin

14:30 **PANEL 5** – Chair: Alberto Siani (University of Pisa)

14:30 [Piergiorgio Donatelli](#) (Sapienza University of Rome), *Perfectionism and the value of nature*

15:00 [Olga Smith](#) (Universität Wien), *Strategies of Resistance as Ecocritical Aesthetics*

15:30 [Elisa Caldarola](#) (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), *Natural objects: independent, situated, and situational*

16:00 DISCUSSION

### 16:30 COFFEE BREAK

17:00 **PANEL 6** – Chair: Alberto Pirni (Sant'Anna Pisa)

17:00 [Elisabetta Di Stefano](#) (University of Palermo), *Frugality. An aesthetic category for a sustainable art of living*

17:30 [Elena Romagnoli](#) (Freie Universität Berlin), *Sustainability through situatedness. A hermeneutical approach*

18:00 DISCUSSION

**18:45 SUSTAINABLE ART CONVERSATION 2: Norms and Forms**

[Jonathan Soffer](#) (NYU Tandon)

[Peter J. Schneemann](#) (Universität Bern)

[Benedetta Piantella](#) (NYU Tandon)

[Anna Mazzon](#) (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

discuss with

[Diego Mantoan](#) (University of Palermo)

**19:30 – END OF DAY 2**

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**SATURDAY MORNING**

**October 8, 2022**

**Aula Baratto, Ca' Foscari**

**9:30 PANEL 7 – Chair: Gioia Laura Iannilli (University of Bologna)**

9:30 [Alberto Pirni](#) (Sant'Anna Pisa), *Motivational Models for Climate Change-Sensitive Agents*

10:00 [Kira Meyer](#) (Universität Kiel), *Cultural services as a reason for strong sustainability*

10:30 [Paolo Furia](#) (University of Turin), *The Great Green Wall Initiative. From “acting upon” to “acting with” landscape*

11:00 [Roberta Dreon](#) (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), *Sensibility and Interest: Toward a Sustainable Attitude*

11:30 DISCUSSION

**12:00 VENETIAN APERITIVO**

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# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

**Laia Anguix**

**Title**

The dirty patrons: environmental sustainability and museum sponsorship

**Abstract**

The controversial connections between the fossil fuel industry and present-day museums have been in the spotlight for well over a decade. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the combined efforts of artists and climate change activists have led to the creation of action groups denouncing Shell's patronage of the Science Museum, as well as BP's sponsorship of institutions such as the Royal Opera House, the Tate Galleries, the British Museum and the National Portrait Gallery. Their creative performances, with examples such as infiltrating a gigantic Trojan horse into the British Museum, or releasing dead fish attached to black balloons into the Tate's main turbine hall, have made headlines and achieved significant goals: in February 2022, the National Portrait Gallery put an end to its BP's 30-year sponsorship, following the lead of the Tate Gallery, the Edinburgh Fringe and the National Theatre.

With public scrutiny growing stronger, and with the International Council of Museums (ICOM) featuring environmental sustainability centrally in its agenda, it is tempting to believe that the days in which the fuel industry could 'greenwash' its activities by funding art museums will soon be over. However, it has been only three years since the Louvre renewed its sponsorship agreement with 'supermajor' oil company Total, whilst the museum's partnership with its (notoriously oil-funded) Abu Dhabi branch is scheduled to last at least until 2037. The opposition that the creation of Louvre Abu Dhabi has arisen in France, with a petition signed by 4,650 curators and art historians, has not detracted the Guggenheim Foundation from signing a similar deal for its new Emirates branch museum, set to open in 2025. What is motivating world-leading museums to keep building links with those Earth-unfriendly patrons? Financial survival does not seem to be the main answer: as the Art Not Oil activist group reported in 2016, BP's funding of the British Museum is equivalent to less than 1% of the annual income of this institution.

Details such as the above open up, thus, a challenging set of questions: how reliable are the 'green goals' that museums worldwide are currently incorporating into their mission statements? To what extent are they offering a role model to their visitors and communities in terms of environmental responsibility? How transparent is the funding of major museums, and how unbiased and independent are their curatorial decisions? Should the change in museum sponsorship be led by museums themselves, or by their critics? By analysing the complex relationship between museums and their fossil fuel sponsors, this paper aims to go beyond the strictly environmental dimension of the problem, opening up a debate that will involve issues of social activism, politics, finance, ethics, and the accountability of publicly funded institutions.

**Biographical note**

Dr Laia Anguix is an art historian specialising in museum history and theory. Her doctoral research, funded by a Northumbria University scholarship, focused on the history of British regional art galleries. She is particularly interested in curatorial practices, as well as in issues of equity within the museum field. Some of her most recent publications include an analysis of the impact of design exhibitions in post-war Newcastle (*Journal of Design History*, 2020) and a study of gender policies at the Prado Museum in Madrid (*Novecento Transnazionale*, 2021). In the past few months, she has also published a chapter on the training of women artists for the exhibition catalogue of 'Uncommon Power': Lucy and Catherine Madox Brown (Watts Art Gallery, 2021). Upcoming publications include a Paul Mellon- funded project on the rediscovery of the Romantic British artist John Martin during the post-war years, as well as a co-edited journal issue on British curatorial practices for the *Museum History Journal*. She currently holds a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Trnava University (Slovakia), where she lectures on museum studies and curatorship, whilst researching the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in museums of Central Europe.

## **Vanessa Badagliacca**

### **Title**

An aesthetics of Minimal Resources. Colombia and Environmental issues in Alicia Barney's Work (1975-1981)

### **Abstract**

Alicia Barney's work is an invitation to think about what a sustainable attitude can be. Focusing on the first years of her artistic production (1975-1981) the present intervention addresses some pieces which identify her as a pioneer of environmental art in Colombia. Looking at pieces such as Puente Sobre Tierra (1975), Diario Objeto (1978-1979), Yumbo (1980-2008), El Ecológico (1980-1981), Estratificaciones de un Basurero Utopico (1981) becomes then an opportunity to encounter an ecofeminist aesthetics that attempts to be sustainable conceptually and by the materiality of its means, demonstrating their nonseparable unity. Moreover, these works – released with minimum resources and of low or almost absent impact in the environment where they take place – reveal all the complexity of a truly sustainable attitude, an intersectional perspective that claims environmental and social justice as unquestionably undivided.

### **Biographical note**

Vanessa Badagliacca is a researcher at the Institute of Art History at the NOVA University in Lisbon. Her academic research – interacting with her curatorial practice – explores the entanglements between plant life, environmental issues and artistic practices, with an approach informed by the sciences, ecocriticism and new materialism, focusing mainly on the Iberian Peninsula and Latin America in a transnational perspective.

## Emily Brady

### Title

Aesthetics, Ecology, and Community

### Abstract

In this lecture, I develop a postcapitalist theory of environmental aesthetics which is informed by ecological thought and ideas of community and 'commoning'. The postcapitalist perspective adopts a critical approach to understanding the particular meanings, qualities, and experiences of the land, and how they figure in artistic practices. As a critique of the historical category of the pastoral, the theory contests romantic characterizations of rurality, recognizes the complexities of socionatures within rural settings, and is cognizant of social and economic inequalities. My approach emphasizes features of aesthetic experience which are multisensory, immersive, affective, imaginative, relational, participatory, and place-based. Postcapitalist environmental aesthetics is situated within a broader framework of (critical) aesthetic pluralism in which ecological processes and diverse cultural resources shape aesthetic engagement. The theory interprets relationality through an ecological lens and places value externally or within the value-space of interdependent, meaningful relations (Holland 2012). In so far as commoning is understood as a practice or performance (Nightingale 2019), I argue that postcapitalist aesthetics creates a space for collective relations with more-than-humans in both daily encounters and extraordinary moments. This space is active and receptive, involving both doing and undergoing in terms of how aesthetic experience unfolds (Dewey, 1934). Postcapitalist aesthetics articulates values through temporal and particular lived relations and, in this way, aligns with narrative-based and pragmatic approaches to environmental ethics.

After developing a postcapitalist aesthetic theory in the first part of the lecture, the second part explores how the theory is expressed in artistic practices. More specifically, I ask: What kinds of socionatures emerge through artistic practices, and how can a postcapitalist aesthetic foster flourishing relationships? What role is played by the arts in co-creating solidarity and community-based actions with the land? How do creative interventions which engage with biodiversity loss, climate change, and ecological injustice generate positive postcapitalist transitions and imagine collective futures? To address these questions, I consider a range of practices including: ecological and land arts; socially-engaged and participatory arts; and more-than-human participatory approaches.

### Biographical note

Emily Brady, PhD, is Professor of Philosophy at Texas A&M University. As the Director of the Glasscock Center for Humanities Research, she held the Susanne M. and Melbern G. Glasscock Director's Chair (2018-2022). Before these appointments, she was Professor of Environment and Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. Professor Brady's research and teaching interests span environmental and everyday aesthetics, environmental ethics, eighteenth-century philosophy, and animal studies. She has authored or co-edited several books, including, *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment* (2003), *Human-Environment Relations: Transformative Values in Theory and Practice* (co-edited with Pauline Phemister, 2012), *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature* (2013), and *Between Nature and Culture: The Aesthetics of Modified Environments* (with Isis Brook and Jonathan Prior, 2018). Her current project, *Aesthetics in Planetary Perspective*:

Environmental Aesthetics for the Future, develops a new research agenda for philosophical aesthetics in response to urgent environmental problems such as climate change and biodiversity loss, supported through the conceptual frames of 'future aesthetics', 'intergenerational aesthetics', 'aesthetic humility', imagination, wonder, and the sublime.

**Elisa Caldarola**

**Title**

Natural objects: independent, situated, and situational

**Abstract**

The aesthetic experience of nature, on the one hand, and of art, on the other hand, are often discussed as separate issues by philosophers. Artistic categories that are key to structuring the aesthetic experience of art (e.g., painting, sculpture, comical, and tragic) do not apply to nature and the notion of the picturesque, which models nature appreciation on the appreciation of landscape paintings, has been starkly criticized. In this talk, I explore a different direction of research, arguing that both natural objects and artworks are such that, when aesthetically experienced, any of them is regarded as belonging to one (or more) of the following categories: (a) independent object, (b) object situated in a specific physical space, (c) complex situation encompassing multiple objects, including ourselves. I claim that our aesthetic experience of both natural objects and artworks varies significantly depending on which of those categories they are regarded as belonging to. In the first part of the talk, I distinguish between independent, situated, and situational artworks. Situated artworks, as opposed to independent ones, are such that, to appreciate them, we need to focus, among other things, on their relationship with a portion of the physical space around them. Situational artworks consist of situations encompassing the public and requiring the public to perform certain actions to instantiate them fully. In the second part of the talk, I explore two hypotheses. (1) All natural objects, when aesthetically experienced as such, are regarded as either independent from other objects or situated within a certain environment. The aesthetic appreciation of, say, a tree qua tree, can either be an experience where we focus only on the tree, or be an experience where we focus on the tree and its relationship with, say, the natural environment where it grows. (2) Sometimes, when experiencing them aesthetically, we regard certain natural objects as situational, by focusing on the fact that they allow for us to be immersed within them and to interact with them. This is the case, e.g., when we go for a walk in a forest, and focus not only on appreciating the various components of a natural landscape and how they relate to each other as well as to us, but also on how it feels, for us, to be inside the forest and to be making an impact on it, at some level, because of our presence in there. To conclude, I argue that, although those three ways of regarding natural objects are structurally similar to the three basic categories for the aesthetic appreciation of art that I have identified, my view on the similarity between the aesthetic experience of art and that of nature is a genuine account of the aesthetic experience of nature as such, and not a view holding that, to experience nature aesthetically, we ought to apply art categories to it: my claims are based on the understanding of the basic ways in which we can focus our attention on perceptual objects, and not on the application of artistic categories to nature.

**Biographical note**

Elisa Caldarola is Junior Faculty at the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage of Ca' Foscari University, Venice. She works mainly in analytic aesthetics and philosophy of art, focusing on contemporary art forms (abstract painting, conceptual, site-specific, and installation art) and, more recently, on environmental aesthetics. Some of her papers have appeared on *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *Ergo*, and *Open Philosophy*. She is the former recipient of a Fulbright research scholarship and has been a visiting researcher at the Universities of Oxford and of Santiago de Compostela.

**Paolo Cirio**

**Sustainable Art Conversation 1**

Protagonism and Antagonism

**Biographical note**

Paolo Cirio engages with social, economic, and cultural issues of contemporary society. He shows his research and intervention-based works through installations, artifacts, photography, videos, and public art both offline and online.

Cirio has exhibited in international museums and has won prestigious art awards. His artworks have been covered by hundreds of media outlets worldwide and he regularly gives public lectures and workshops at leading universities.

**Paolo D'Angelo**

**Title**

Sustainability and Environmental Art

**Abstract**

It appears that the issue of sustainability can be examined with regard to environmental art in at least three ways:

In first place can be asked how sustainable can be an environmental artwork from the point of view of the choice of the used materials, of the involved location, of the impact on surrounding flora and fauna, etc.

Secondly, we can discuss the influence of environmental art on behavioural changes in those who come in contact with it (increasing ecological consciousness etc.)

Thirdly, we can consider the problems raised by what needs to be done to become familiar with environmental artworks: travelling, tourism, human presence in relative wild places, pollution etc.

Each one of these topics will be discussed in my paper, through reference to concrete examples of environmental artworks, park-museums of environmental art, gardens designed by artists, etc.

**Biographical note**

Paolo D'Angelo is professor of Aesthetics at the University of Roma Tre since September 2000. A graduate of the University of Roma Uno, "La Sapienza", he received his PhD (Dottorato) from the University of Bologna. He formerly taught at Messina University (1992-2000). Since September 2004 full Professor of Aesthetics at Roma Tre. Head of the Department of Philosophy, Communication, Media and Performing Arts of Roma Tre University from January, 1 st, 2013 to December, 2018. He gave lectures at the Universities of Paris I – La Sorbonne, Mainz in Germany (Studium Generale), Universidad de Merida (Venezuela), Universidad de Rio de Janeiro, Alexander von Humboldt Universität (Berlin). He took part in international conferences at Fiecht (Austria) Ljubljana (Slovenia), Merida (Venezuela), Berlin (Humboldt Universitaet, (2003), Malaga, Spain, (2009), Prague (2013). He is editorial consultant of "Rivista di Filosofia" "Cultura Tedesca", "Studi di Estetica", "Estetica", "Paradigmi", "Intersezioni". He has been vice-president of the Società Italiana di Estetica (SIE), 2001-2014. Chief areas of interest: Aesthetics of the visual arts; environmental Aesthetics; analytic Aesthetics; History of Aesthetics; german philosophy; contemporary italian philosophy.

## **Elisabetta Di Stefano**

### **Title**

Frugality. An aesthetic category for a sustainable art of living

### **Abstract**

Climate change prompts us to find new interpretive models and new aesthetic categories to investigate our relationship with the environment in which we live, a relationship characterized by instability, uncertainty, and anxiety. The relationship with the environment can no longer be set on a contemplative model or even on the notion of the sublime, according to the Kantian paradigm.

In this intervention, frugality is proposed as a new aesthetic category useful to constitute a paradigm for a sustainable art of living. Contemporary capitalist societies are characterized by consumerism, by luxury, by excess. On the contrary, by reconciling ethical and aesthetic values, frugality can lead us toward a lifestyle capable of enjoying simple and healthy things, genuine products according to the perspective of Everyday Aesthetics.

### **Biographical note**

Graduate cum laude both in Classical Literature and in Philosophy, took a Ph.D. in Aesthetics and Art Theories (17.2.2000, dissertation: Leon Battista Alberti and the art theory in the Fifteenth-Century). In 2004, together with Prof. Anthony Colantuono (University of Maryland), she organized the international seminar *The Muse in the Marble - Plastic Arts and Aesthetic Theories in the Seventeenth Century* (18 February 2004 - American Academy in Rome). Actually she is researcher at The University of Palermo (FIERI Department) and she lectures at the Faculty of Architecture (Aesthetics) and at the Faculty of Literature (Aesthetics of the New Media) at the University of Palermo; his main interests are in theory of arts, design and new media aesthetics. She is a member of the International Centre for the Study of Aesthetics and the Italian Society of Aesthetics (SIE).

## **Heather Diack**

### **Title**

Dolphins in Venice: Climate Crisis, Credibility, and the Life of Images

### **Abstract**

The climate crisis has an image problem: If I can't believe what I see in pictures, how can I be moved to action? Early in the pandemic, many phony stories of wild animals flourishing in quarantined cities achieved viral fame across the internet, each supported by falsified images. Perhaps the most sensational among these were reports of dolphins swimming in Venetian waterways. While this story was eventually debunked, by a strange twist of fate one year later, in the spring of 2021, two striped dolphins were actually spotted and rescued from the Giudecca Canal. This bizarre mingling of fact and fiction, and the images which document each iteration, form the basis of Anastasia Samoylova's intricate photo montage *Dolphins in Venice* (2021) from the artist's ongoing "Landscape Sublime" series. Other works in the series focus on coral reefs, glaciers, and old growth forests, among other poignant scenes. Each work of art in the series wrestles with the credibility of images and the ways they connect to larger hopes and fears regarding climate crisis. My paper presentation will use Samoylova's creative investigation of the picture-based environment of the internet and particularly social media as a starting point to analyze the ways images and their respective aesthetics can both mobilize and inure people to the imminent crisis that is global warming and sea level rise. This paper will discuss the liabilities of beauty in representations of crisis alongside the affective possibilities aesthetics can bring into being, ultimately showing how the climate crisis is indeed also a crisis of images.

### **Biographical note**

Heather Diack is Associate Professor of Contemporary Art and the History of Photography at the University of Miami. She holds a PhD from the University of Toronto, and is an alumna of McGill University, Montréal and the Whitney Independent Study Program, Whitney Museum of American Art. She is the author of *Documents of Doubt: The Photographic Conditions of Conceptual Art* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020) which was awarded a Photography Network Book Prize (2021) and a Wyeth Foundation for American art /College Art Association publication grant (2018), co-author with Erina Duganne and Terri Weissman of *Global Photography: A Critical History* (London: Routledge, 2020), and co-editor of *photographies* (Fall 2017 no. 10.3) *Not Just Pictures: Reassessing Critical Models for 1980s Photography*. Her writing has appeared in numerous journals including, *Visual Studies*, *History of Photography*, *Public*, and *RACAR*, as well as in several edited volumes, such as *Photography Performing Humor* (Leuven University Press, 2019), *L'art de Douglas Huebler* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018), *Photography and Doubt* (Routledge, 2017), and *The Public Life of Photographs* (MIT Press and Ryerson Image Center, 2016). Diack writes criticism for *Artforum.com* and *caa.reviews*, among other publications, and was the Terra Foundation for American Art Visiting Professor at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at the Freie Universität in Berlin in 2016.

**Madalina Diaconu**

**Title**

Leave No Traces – A paradigm change in the Anthropocene?

**Abstract**

From Aristotle's complaint about the corruptibility in the sublunar world to Proust's fight against oblivion, the Western culture has constantly condemned transitoriness and praised persistence, opposing a meta-physical eternity to ephemerality. Without being able to escape their mortal condition, humans attempted to overcome it by leaving traces through descendants or memorable deeds and works. Culture itself was conveyed meaning and value insofar as it promised to survive the passing of time. The aesthetics of monuments, the exclusion from art of all phenomena that disappear through consumption (Hegel), even the hierarchy of arts and building materials had extra-aesthetic reasons and reflected the value of continuity and durability, regarded as closely connected to identity. The cultural dimension of this view becomes evident if we compare it to the appreciation of fleetingness in the traditional Japanese culture. The environmental crisis in the late modernity contributed to a change of perspective. The long-lasting damage of anthropogenic trace substances, the imperative of reducing waste and the dilemma of depositing noxious waste let emerge a new ideal: to leave no traces, including through their reintegration into natural circuits. Concepts like carbon footprint and ecological footprint epitomize this paradigm change in the Anthropocene. The new context requires a rereading of philosophical interpretations of trace (e.g. by Ricoeur) from the perspective of the environmental ethics. Moreover, traces have acquired novel features that fall out of the spatiotemporal frame of human perception. The (anthropic) waste can have an invisible materiality (remnants of human practices surpass the mesoscale of catastrophic landscapes and can be microscopical or colonize the atmosphere that surrounds the Earth), be dispersed (nonlocality), and appear as ineffaceable, regarded at the human timescale (radioactive particles remain dangerous for several thousands of years). These aspects elude the subject's experience in situ and challenge not only the phenomenological first-person perspective, but the redefinition of aesthetics as aesthetics (theory of perception) as well. How does contemporary art adapt itself to the present situation and how can it reconcile its message addressed to posterity with avoiding the production of enduring traces? Some artists rehabilitate the ephemeral (performances, "counter-monuments"), others erase the anthropic traces in natural environments and practice an aesthetics of care, restoring landscapes. Further strategies visualize the invisible (the data art about climate change) or create visions of "zero landscapes" (Morton) and post-apocalyptic environments without humans.

**Biographical note**

Mădălina Diaconu is Dozentin for philosophy at the University of Vienna. She is member of the editorial boards of Contemporary Aesthetics, Studia Phaenomenologica and polylog. Zeitschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren. She authored ten books and (co)edited twelve collective volumes on Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, the phenomenology of senses, the aesthetics of touch, smell and taste, urban sensescapes, and environmental philosophy. Her latest publication is: Liber amicorum for Arnold Berleant (co-edited with Max Ryyänen, Popular Inquiry, vol. 10, 1/2022).

## **Piergiorgio Donatelli**

### **Title**

Perfectionism and the value of nature

### **Abstract**

Working within the canon of moral perfectionism elaborated by Stanley Cavell comprising, among many others, romantics such as Emerson, Thoreau and J.S. Mill, I will argue about the importance of the environments for the transformation and perfecting of the self. This requires though an appreciation of the value nature in its autonomy from us.

### **Biographical note**

Piergiorgio Donatelli is Full Professor of Moral Philosophy at Sapienza University of Rome. He is chair of the Department of Philosophy . He directed the Ph.D. program in Philosophy from 2012 to 2018 and the Master program in Practical ethics and bioethics from 2011 to 2015. He studied in Rome, Sapienza, where he received his laurea degree and the Ph.D. and at the University of Pittsburgh as visiting scholar. He taught at the Faculty of Political Sciences at LUISS University, Rome, and was Visiting Professor at the Department of philosophy of the University of Chicago and at the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. He was invited to deliver lectures and talks in various universities in Italy, in Europe and in the US. He is a member (among others) of the editorial advisory board of «Bioetica. Rivista interdisciplinare», «Philosophy and Public Issues / Filosofia e questioni pubbliche», «Etica & Politica / Ethics & Politics», «Janus», «Notizie di Politeia. Rivista di etica e scelte pubbliche». He is the author of several books: *Etica analitica. Analisi, teorie, applicazioni* (with E. Lecaldano, LED, 1996); *Wittgenstein e l'etica* (Laterza, 1998); *La filosofia morale* (Laterza, 2001, 2nd ed. 2012); *Introduzione a Mill* (Laterza, 2007), *La vita umana in prima persona* (Laterza, 2012), *Manieres d'être humain. Une autre philosophie morale* (Vrin, 2015); *Etica. I classici, le teorie e le linee evolutive* (Einaudi, 2015); *Il lato ordinario della vita. Filosofia ed esperienza comune* (il Mulino, 2018); *La filosofia e la vita etica* (Einaudi, 2020). He edited (among others): *Cora Diamond's L'immaginazione e la vita morale* (Carocci, 2006), *Eugenio Lecaldano's Dizionario di bioetica* (Laterza, 2nd ed. 2007), *Il senso della virtù* (co-ed. with E. Spinelli, Carocci, 2009); *James Conant and Cora Diamond's Rileggere Wittgenstein* (Carocci, 2010); *Eugenio Lecaldano. L'etica, la storia della filosofia e l'impegno civile* (co-ed. with M. Mori, Le Lettere, 2010); *Manuale di etica ambientale* (Le Lettere, 2012); *Etica, fenomenologia e psicoanalisi. Omaggio a Francesco Saverio Trincia* (co-ed. with F. Lijoi, Morcelliana, 2018). He is the editor of the journal «Iride. Filosofia e discussione pubblica / Philosophy and Public Discussion» (Il Mulino).

**Roberta Dreon**

**Title**

Sensibility and Interest: Toward a Sustainable Attitude

**Abstract**

Can aesthetic disinterest represent an adequate strategy for developing a sustainable attitude? While aesthetic disinterest played a basic role in the Kantian foundation of aesthetics, (dis)interestedness has been a puzzling topic of discussion in the debate on environmental aesthetics and is becoming an increasingly pressing one, given the current worsening of the climate crisis.

In my talk, I will at first explore the different meanings of the term within the debate on environmental aesthetics (Berleant, Carlson, Brady), as well as the arguments adduced by different scholars in support of or against the adoption of a disinterested attitude towards the environment - from preserving nature's otherness and avoiding hedonism, as well as the instrumental exploitation of the environment, to taking into account living beings' structural embeddedness and situatedness in their environment. I will suggest drawing a distinction between an ontological meaning of aesthetic interest/involvement and the idea of engagement as fully embodied and embedded perception, which is to say between a strong and a weak conception of aesthetic engagement within the debate.

Against this background, I will defend two claims: firstly, interest has many meanings, not only negative ones - primarily, self-interest and instrumentalism - but even positive ones - being involved and engaged in something, taking care and feeling responsible for something. Hence, we should distinguish between different interests at stake, instead of assuming a (quasi)transcendental point of view, conceived of as allegedly immune to any interest. Secondly, we should develop an anthropological theory of interest, by connecting it to a conception of sensibility as the constitutive exposition to an environment characterizing organic beings, and by taking into account the feedback actions on human interests elicited by the specific linguistic-cultural structure of the human niche.

**Biographical note**

Roberta Dreon is Associate Professor of Aesthetics at the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage of Venice University, Ca' Foscari. She is a member of the International Ph.D. board of Philosophy and Pedagogy at Ca' Foscari University, Venice, as well as of the Teachers' Assembly of the National Ph.D. Programme in Sustainability and Climate Change. Since October 2020, she has been appointed the Delegate for the Research in the Humanities by the Dean of Ca' Foscari.

She is a member of the editorial and scientific boards of "Mind, Language and the Arts", "Ermeneutica letteraria", and she is co-editor in chief of the "European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy" since June 2019. Since 2007 she is a member of the Società Italiana di Estetica and of "Pragma" association.

Her main research areas are classical pragmatism, particularly the philosophy of John Dewey - but she has also written on James, Mead, as well as on contemporary pragmatists, particularly Joseph Margolis' philosophy -, the contemporary debate in philosophical aesthetics (pragmatist aesthetics, evolutionary aesthetics, environmental aesthetics), some conceptual categories of classical aesthetics (the notions of autonomy/heteronomy of art, the concepts of genius, aesthetic experience, aesthetic disinterest), and a philosophical anthropology grounded on the Pragmatists' legacy. On this topic, she recently published a

book, *Human Landscapes. Contributions to a Pragmatist Anthropology* (Suny Press 2022), focusing on sensibility, habits, and the idea of 'enlanguaged experience'. She has published articles on the conception of sensibility, viewed both from a perceptual and an affective angle, on the theory of emotions, on theories of habits and the concept of affective habits, on the intertwining of language and sensibility in the human environment, and on the relations between experience and cognition. She has developed pragmatist arguments on these subjects, often in dialogue with the current debate on embodied and enacted theories of the mind. In the past, she worked on phenomenology and hermeneutics, with a book on the concepts of time and experience in early Heidegger's philosophy (Franco Angeli 2003). She later investigated the relationship between sensibility and language, in a volume published by Mimesis in 2007. Later, she published a monograph on Dewey's aesthetics (Marietti 2012) translated into French at Questions Theoriques in 2017.

## **Carolina Fernandez Castrillo**

### **Sustainable Art Conversation 1**

Protagonism and Antagonism

#### **Biographical note**

Carolina Fernández-Castrillo (accredited as Full Professor, ANECA 2016) is Professor of Cyberculture and Transmediality at the Department of Communication and Media Studies (Carlos III University of Madrid) and researcher in the group TECMERIN (Television-cinema: memory, representation and industry) as the driving expert in the area of Media Archaeology. She is also Research Fellow at the Venice Centre for Digital and Public Humanities, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia as Principal Investigator of the project "Digital Media Culture: Intercreativity and Public Engagement" on Digital Innovation and Activism in connective environments. Currently, she is also professor and coordinator of the following Academic Programs in Digital Communication and Innovation: Master in Transmedia Documentary and Reportage (UC3M/RTVE) – Mobile and Interactive Storytelling, Master in Advertising Communication (UC3M) – Cultural Creativity, Master in Visual and Digital Media (Business School, IE) – Digital Media Culture.

She also teaches Communication and Participation of Civil Society in the Internet in the Dual Bachelor in Journalism and Film, Television and Media Studies (UC3M), a pioneer subject on the Information Society from Civic Engagement and Cyberactivism.

**Paolo Furia**

**Title**

The Great Green Wall Initiative. From “acting upon” to “acting with” landscape

**Abstract**

This paper aims to discuss the aesthetic, environmental, and political implications of the Great Green Wall initiative, which has been labeled as “the world most ambitious reforestation project”. Officially launched by the African Union in 2007, it aims to restore by 2030 about 100 million hectares of degraded lands in central Africa by creating an 8.000 km strip of vegetation snaking from Senegal to Ethiopia. The institutional communication ([www.greatgreenwall.org](http://www.greatgreenwall.org), <https://www.unccd.int/actions/great-green-wall-initiative>) emphasizes the environmental and social benefits of the project, but does not ignore its aesthetic significance. Indeed, The Great Green Wall has been referred to as a new world wonder and, at the same time, a global symbol of hope and rebirth. Because of its monumentality, the Great Green Wall project has something in common with the great experiences of land art of the past century (Walter De Maria, *The Lightning Field* 1977; James Turrell, *Roden Crater*, from 1977 on). At the same time, shortcomings in both the conception and the implementation of the project have slowed down its realization. Barely 4% of the Green Wall’s goals for 2030 have been achieved, with only 4 million hectares restored out of an objective of 100 million. The monumental dimension of the initiative gives way now to the promotion of a mosaic of sustainable “landscaping” practices (Lorimer 2005), entailing the recognition of the local specificities (both natural and socio-cultural) and the proactive participation of the local communities. Interestingly, the transformation of the monumental project into a patchwork of multiple site-specific interventions is paralleled by a progressive shift from the monumental approach of 1960s and 1970s land art to less intrusive and context-dependent artistic practices of “ecoart”.

My paper will be divided in three parts. In the first part, I will present both the strengths and the weaknesses of the original Great Green Wall initiative, by drawing on both institutional statements and academic literature. In the second part, I will draw on the distinction made by the geographer Jean-Marc Besse (2020) between two attitudes towards landscape planning, namely “acting upon” and “acting with”. The distinction is aesthetically relevant since the first attitude implies the adoption of a non-relational ideal of beauty to be implemented regardless of the idiographic features of landscape, whereas the second is site-specific and adopts a context-dependent ideal of beauty. In the third part, I will show how the Great Green Wall initiative is progressively switching from the “acting upon” perspective of the first mammoth project to the “acting with” attitude of the actual implementation. I will also draw a parallel between the evolution of the Great Green Wall project and the transition from monumental land art to eco-aesthetic practices, by emphasizing both similarities and differences between them.

**Biographical note**

Paolo Furia is currently a research fellow at the Department of Philosophy and Education at the University of Turin. His research, between aesthetics and social sciences, focuses above all on the concepts of space, place and landscape. He is a member of the CIM - Interuniversity Center of Morphology - and of the Alumni du Fonds Ricoeur association.

## **Nicole Annette Hall**

### **Title**

Virtue Appreciation & Sustainability

### **Abstract**

What can we learn from Olafur Eliasson's 'Ice Watch' regarding the development of a sustainable attitude towards the environment? How and what might we learn from it to consider and rethink the relationship between aesthetic value, ethical value, and the concept of sustainability?

'Ice Watch' was a series of installations that took place in Copenhagen (2014), Paris (2015), and at Tate Modern in London (2018). Against an urban backdrop, each installation was of twelve massive, bluishly transparent iceberg chunks from Greenland, filled with bubbles of trapped air from millennia ago, and of which the public could have situated, multi-sensorial experiences, and eventually see it melting, disappearing, over time.

This paper is a case study of Eliasson's Paris installation in particular, which coincided with the Climate Change COP-21 conference at the United Nations in 2015, and whose message was poignantly felt as a reminder of global warming, the melting polar regions, and the current environmental crisis.

The paper is divided into three parts. The first provides a description of Eliasson's work, its intellectual and urban context, and (at least some of) the reasons for its existence.

The second argues that Eliasson's work requires perceptual-intellectual double awareness. That awareness involves virtuous appreciation that is both externally directed and internally motivated. It is argued that virtuous appreciation, judgment, and evaluation emerge if engaged for the right kinds of aesthetic, ethical, and epistemic reasons. Here, the interplay between aesthetic and ethical value are centrally important, in addition to seeking to understand and being scientifically informed.

Part three presents objections, according to which some epistemic reasons, such as artistic instrumentalism and lack of focus on the effects of climate change on indigenous populations, threaten to thwart the aesthetic and ethical aims of Eliasson's installation. Having responded to these objections, 'Ice Watch' is vindicated by combining perceptual, multi-sensual experience, and beauty with tragedy, grief, and guilt. These emotions are derived from intellectual, contextual, and epistemic concerns, as well as ethical worries.

I conclude the paper by answering the question, set out in the introduction, what and how can we learn from Eliasson's 'Ice Watch' to consider and rethink the relationship between aesthetic value, ethical value, and the concept of sustainability? I conclude that qualitative, aesthetic experience provides access to understanding nature's fragility, and our own fragility, when accompanied by the right kinds of internally motivated reasons.

This guides us to consider our everyday engagement with both natural and urban environments, the repercussions of our actions, and the wider importance of cultural, artistic, and narrative-based approaches (in addition to the rigors of science) to sustainability and living a good life.

### **Biographical note**

I am a postdoctoral researcher working with Emily Brady, Susanne M. and Merlbern G. Glasscock Director and Chair, and Professor of Philosophy, Texas A&M University. We are collaborating on a project, "Aesthetics, Environmental Justice, and Ecological Justice", which

examines key questions and issues at the intersection of aesthetics and philosophies of justice as they relate to environmental issues and the more-than-human world.

## **Diego Mantoan**

### **Sustainable Art Conversation 2**

#### Norms and Forms

#### **Biographical note**

Diego Mantoan is Faculty in Modern and Contemporary Art History at University of Palermo. Previously he was Assistant Professor at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, specialising in Digital and Public Art History. He obtained a PhD magna cum laude at the Freie Universität in Berlin. He is a founding member of the Venice Centre for Digital and Public Humanities. His research interests touch upon digital art history, contemporary art market, aesthetics and art theory, art and sustainability. He was among speakers for international conferences at relevant institutions, such as University of Bern, Bibliotheca Hertziana Rom, University College London, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, Sotheby's Institute of Art London, New York University, Galerie Belvedere Vienna, Universidade NOVA Lisboa, Universidad Carlos III Madrid, Université Grenoble Alpes. He was a Visiting Fellow at NYU Tandon for the Department of Technology, Culture and Society. He is Advisory Editor of Vernon Press Academic (USA) and member of the editorial board of the Yearbook of Moving Image Studies (Germany). Among his several books, *The Road To Parnassus* (Vernon Press 2015) was long-listed for the Berger Prize 2016 by *The British Art Journal*. He co-authored the volume *Paolozzi & Wittgenstein: The Artist and the Philosopher* (Palgrave MacMillan 2019) and further participated in the Palgrave *Handbook for Digital and Public Humanities* (2022).

In the past he was Assistant Director and subsequently Jury Secretary at the Venice Biennale. He curated the archive of artist Douglas Gordon (Berlin), developed the digital archive of Sigmar Polke Estate (Cologne) and is responsible for the archival development for the Julia Stoschek Collection (Düsseldorf and Berlin). He was a co-founder of the Sustainable Art Prize organised by Sustainable Ca' Foscari at ArtVerona art fair. He has also collaborated with the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, with ArtVerona, the Fondazione Teatro La Fenice and is author of the encyclopaedic programme Wikiradio on Rai Radio3.

**Anna Mazzon**

**Sustainable Art Conversation 2**

Norms and Forms

**Biographical note**

Anna Mazzon holds a BA in Visual Arts and Theatre at IUAV University and a MA in Arts Management at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Her interests revolve around the connection between sustainability and contemporary cultural processes. With a multidisciplinary background, Anna has worked both for renowned institutions, such as La Biennale di Venezia, and for art-sustainability related projects within the nonprofit sector. In particular, in 2021 she collaborated with UNLESS in the promotion and fundraising of the Antarctic Resolution research project. She currently works as a curator for KoozArch, a research online platform founded to foster an inclusive and diverse discourse on the potential of our un-built environment.

**Kira Meyer**

**Title**

Cultural services as a reason for strong sustainability

**Abstract**

The ecosystem services approach, which stems from the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment Report (2005), lays down the several ways in which nature contributes to the welfare of human beings. One important category of this approach are the cultural services which nature offers: They include aesthetic values, the symbolic meaning of nature, sense of home, leisure and recreation, spirituality and transformation (Ott, 2020). These cultural values conform to the eudaimonic values from environmental ethics. The cultural services of nature are one important reason in favor of choosing a conception of strong sustainability (Döring and Ott, 2004) and thus build an integral part toward a sustainable attitude. We wish to develop this argument in three steps.

First, we will present the category of cultural services more in detail and show their connection to aesthetics and art. Aesthetic values form themselves one dimension of cultural values and refer to meaningful experiences with beautiful or sublime nature, which is being experienced bodily-sensually (Böhme, 1989). If one understands aesthetics in a broad way, nature as home as well as the non-metaphysical sacred can be seen as being parts of aesthetics (Krebs et al.,2021). From the experiences which can be made due to the cultural services of nature, like transaesthetic experiences that link beauty and spirituality (Ott, 2013), art can emerge. Second, we will flesh out the conception of strong sustainability and show that it avoids the widespread anthropocentric character of sustainability. The conception of strong sustainability argues that natural capital cannot be substituted by man-made capital, therefore natural capital must be constant over time and investments in it must be made. Strong sustainability includes several platforms, one of them being the ethical premises regarding justice and the values of nature. Regarding the values of nature, the conception assigns inherent moral value not only to human beings but also to sentient animals and eudaimonic value to those natural entities which are an integral part of the good life of human beings. Insofar, strong sustainability is deep anthropocentric (Ott, 2016): It goes beyond the purely instrumental value of nature and gradually overcomes such a shallow anthropocentrism. Thus, cultural services are one important step towards a conceptual framework for sustainability that avoids the purely instrumental anthropocentric character. Third, we will point out that cultural values lead to environmental virtue ethics which highlights that they are a fruitful concept for the required significant changes in our attitude towards nature. Especially transformative values (Norton, 1987), that is experiences in and with nature which transform our current value system, which are being included in the cultural services approach, can contribute to an attitude change.

**Biographical note**

Kira Meyer is a doctoral candidate in the field of environmental ethics at Kiel University. In her dissertation project she investigates the connection between corporeality and a relational understanding of freedom and argues on this basis for the compatibility of (strong) sustainability and freedom. Her research areas include philosophy of nature, sustainability, and (New) Phenomenology. She was a research assistant at the Philosophical Department of Kiel University and of the University of Hamburg.

## **Benedetta Pientella**

### **Sustainable Art Conversation 2**

#### Norms and Forms

#### **Biographical note**

Benedetta Piantella is an artist and designer turned humanitarian technologist, after she helped organize emergency response efforts during the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004 in Sri Lanka. She has taught Lego robotics and worked for Arduino in Milan and, after receiving a Master's from the Interactive Telecommunications Program at NYU in 2008, she worked at Smart Design in NYC producing interactive prototypes for high-end clients. She co-founded GROUND Lab® and more recently T4D Lab®, engineering R&D companies focused on producing sustainable solutions to humanitarian, social, environmental challenges worldwide. She has built partnerships with organizations such as the UN, UNICEF and Universities such as NYU, Columbia and Princeton and have designed, prototyped and deployed projects in countries such as Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. She is a frequent lecturer, an Open Source advocate and she currently teaches at NYU Tandon School of Engineering in the Technology, Culture and Society Department.

**Alberto Pirni**

**Title**

Motivational Models for Climate Change-Sensitive Agents

**Abstract**

The paper aims at framing the issue of motivation, with specific reference to patterns of action that are oriented at promoting climate change-sensitive behaviours. In doing that, the paper outlines first a preliminary dichotomy between insensitiveness and sensitivity vis à vis climate change provisions and evidence. By limiting the validity of the normative proposal to the Western context, the paper will thus propose a taxonomy of possible motivations that can trigger or limit climate-change sensitive behaviours in accordance with two of the most common normative approaches: the deontological and the consequentialistic one. The main aim is to propose a multiple model for overcoming the motivational gap that limits (up to reducing or blocking) the adoption of climate change sensitive behaviours in both individual and collective agency.

**Biographical note**

Alberto Pirni (PhD) is Associate Professor in Moral Philosophy at the Institute of Law, Politics and Development by the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies (Pisa), where he coordinates the Research Area in "Public Ethics".

Prof. Pirni is the Coordinator of the Curriculum 4. "Theories, Institutions and Cultures of Ecological Transition" belonging to the National PhD School in "Sustainable Development and Climate Change" and has been Vice-President of the Joint Ethical Committee between SSSA and Scuola Normale Superiore (2018-2021). He is also member of the Scientific Board of the PhD programmes in "Human Rights and Global Politics", and in "Health Science, Technology and Management".

Finally, he is Responsible Director of the International Journal "Lexicon of Public Ethics". He spent research periods at the Universities of Tübingen and of Freiburg i.Br. He was also visiting professor by several universities in Germany, Spain, Russian Federation, Brazil, Argentine, Chile.

He is the author of 5 monographs, 4 co-authored volumes, and over 180 essays in volumes and refereed national and international journals (in 6 languages). He is also the editor and co-editor of more than 25 volumes and monographic issues of journals.

His main research fields involve German Classical Philosophy, public ethics, ethics of technology, ethics and institutions, theories of (climate, energy and intergenerational) justice.

## **Markus Reymann**

### **Sustainable Art Conversation 1**

Protagonism and Antagonism

#### **Biographical note**

Markus Reymann is Director of TBA21–Academy, a non-profit cultural organization he co-founded in 2011 that fosters interdisciplinary dialogue and exchange surrounding the most urgent ecological, social, and economic issues facing our oceans today. Reymann leads the Academy’s engagement with artists, activists, scientists, and policy-makers worldwide, resulting in the creation of new commissions, new bodies of knowledge, and new policies advancing the conservation and protection of the oceans. In March 2019, TBA21–Academy launched Ocean Space, a new global port for ocean literacy, research, and advocacy. Located in the restored Church of San Lorenzo in Venice, Italy, Ocean Space is activated by the itinerant Academy and its network of partners, including universities, NGOs, museums, government agencies, and research institutes from around the world. Reymann also serves as Chair of Alligator Head Foundation, the scientific partner of TBA21–Academy. Alligator Head Foundation established and maintains the East Portland Fish Sanctuary, and oversees a marine wet laboratory in Jamaica.

**Elena Romagnoli**

**Title**

Sustainability through situatedness. A hermeneutical-pragmatist approach

**Abstract**

In this paper I claim that the hermeneutical notion of situatedness might possibly shed light on a philosophical understanding of sustainability. The latter is an intrinsically relational concept concerning the interaction between human beings and their environment. It follows therefore that the philosophical conceivability of the sustainability concept is predicated through our understanding of that interaction. This in turn requires us to overcome the dichotomy between subject and object. I argue that the notion of situatedness is able to do precisely that, thus producing a holistic vision in which humans are necessarily located within a web of relations pre dating them, which forms their theory and praxis. In this sense, sustainability ceases to be an abstract goal of certain specific practices and becomes the actual overarching structure of the way in which we interact with the world.

I will elucidate this point by focusing on the domain of landscape, following a line of inquiry recently developed by Berleant (1997), Brady (2003), D'Angelo (2004), Siani (2020). This shows how landscape is particularly apt for explaining how to overcome subject-object dualism. The notion of sustainability can be applied to the landscape by indicating how we can practice a sustainable attitude towards landscapes. A concrete example of this can be found in mass tourism and attempts at making it sustainable, e.g., the case of "the pink beach" in the Maddalena Archipelago in Sardinia which was at risk of disappearing because tourists kept on removing sand (appropriative behaviour) and now only accessible for contemplation from a boat (contemplative behaviour). In this case, both models, the unsustainable and the – apparently – more sustainable, are consequences of the same dualistic conception of the landscape. The main goal here is to conceive an alternative model focusing on the situatedness of humans in the world.

The concept of situatedness can be better elucidated by recalling some elements of Hans-Georg Gadamer's thought. Although Gadamer never discussed landscape, it is possible to apply certain conceptions of his thinking to this topic. Hermeneutics constitutes a holistic rather than a dualistic approach - an element it has in common with pragmatism. We cannot conceive of the human as an abstract subject separated from a context: every human experience is situated inside a web of relations. This is particularly true of landscape which as such would not exist without its interaction with humans giving sense to it. Landscape is not an object or a "neutral" element, rather it derives from the "fusion" within the "viewer's" background. Moreover, the notion of situatedness helps us overcome the separation between subject and object as every landscape experience is possible only from the specific spatial-temporal condition in which we are situated. By focusing on this perspective, we can analyse the sense in which a landscape could be sustainable, namely accessible to future human life with their specific backgrounds.

**Biographical note**

Dr. Elena Romagnoli is currently Fritz Thyssen Foundation Post-Doc Fellow at Freie Universität of Berlin. She obtained her PhD in philosophy at Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa in 2020. She also obtained a Post-doc DAAD scholarship at University of Freiburg in 2021. Her research focused on the aesthetics of German idealism as well as on philosophical Hermeneutics and American Pragmatism. To these topics she wrote several

articles and, she has recently authored a monograph on the comparison between Gadamer and Derrida titled *Ermeneutica e Decostruzione. Il dialogo ininterrotto tra Gadamer e Derrida*, published by ETS. She also edited (together with Prof. Stefano Marino) the Italian translation of a collection of Gadamerian Essays on aesthetics, *Scritti di Estetica, Aesthetica edizioni*, 2021. She is Member of the Italian Society of Aesthetics (SIE) and of the Pragma Society. Her current research concerns the relation between Gadamer's hermeneutics and American pragmatism (in particular Dewey's aesthetics).

**Peter J. Schneemann**

**Sustainable Art Conversation 2**

Norms and Forms

**Biographical note**

Peter J. Schneemann is full professor at the Institute of Art History at the University of Bern and director of the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art History. He was a co-proposer of the SNF Sinergia project "The Interior. Art, Space, and Performance (Early Modern to Postmodern)" (2012-2016) and director of the sub-project "Anagrammatic Spaces: Interiors in Contemporary Art". He is an elected member of the Academia Scientiarum et Artium Europaea Salzburg and the Academia Europaea London. Since 2016 he has been co-director of the SNSF Sinergia project "Swiss Graphic Design and Typography Revisited". Since his fellowship at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz one of his areas of research concerns "Mediating the Ecological Imperative: Formats and Modes of Engagement". As coordinator of the SNSF Sinergia 2021 – 2024 "Mediating the Ecological Imperative" he leads one of Europe's principal research clusters on sustainable art. He is also the author of leading papers on art and sustainability with renowned publishers, such as *Exhibiting Nature?* with DeGruyter (2019), and organizer of international conferences on the topic, like *The Ecological Imperative* (2020). His research interests further include: American art history, discourse analysis, paradigms of art observation, ecology, art education, archive processes, display, and museology. One of his latest publications is: *Localizing the Contemporary. The Kunsthalle Bern as a Model*, 2018.

## **Michaela Schäuble**

### **Title**

Of spiders, dead olive trees and industrial contamination: an artistic-ethnographic site visit in Puglia

### **Abstract**

“Yes, we can say that the tarantism of today can be compared to environmental pollution. If we look at the situation we experience in Puglia, especially in contexts such as Cerano or Taranto, we realise that we are experiencing a disaster. So, let’s say that tarantism manifests itself in this way today. The poison that was once the spider’s has been replaced by the one created by the factories that pollute the environment and ruin people’s health. So the poison is still there, it just mutated, it took a different form: ignorance, the lack of respect and care for the territory and the environment ... their exploitation”, says 24-year old environmental activist and dancer Irene Scarlino. I met Irene in the context of my research on artistic appropriations of Apulian tarantism, an affliction supposedly caused by the (symbolic) bite of the tarantula spider, which used to be cured through music and exorcist trance-dancing during the feast of Saints Peter and Paul. The cult that has been endemic to Southern Italy for at least five hundred years was actively practiced until well into the 1980ies and recently experienced an unprecedented revival and growth in popularity. In this context, Irene had been commissioned to reenact a historic possession/exorcism by the CLUB UNESCO Galatina, a local association that works towards inscribing Apulian tarantism onto the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage and also organises annual reenactments in commemoration of the actual disease. I had attended the rehearsals and performances at historic sites of “tarantismo” to study embodied practices and the revival of mediatised images of the ancient cult. When interviewed by a local TV station, Irene made this connection between Apulian tarantism and environmental issues quoted above. With this comment she joins a long line of readings that relate the spider possession cult to environmental toxins, caused mainly by the ILVA steel plant in Taranto and/or the ENEL power plant in Cerano, Brindisi and, more recently, is also seen to being responsible for the massive death of olive trees in Salento.

In my presentation, I propose to closely examine this connection based on almost ten years of intermittent multimodal ethnographic research on the Salentine peninsula. On a more abstract, theoretical level I scrutinise whether spiders are good to think with. At the latest since the dissemination of Donna Haraway’s concept of “tentacular thinking” (Haraway 2016) and the publication of *Feral Atlas* (Tsing et. al. 2020) it has become apparent that human exceptionalism and the mono-perspectivism that often accompanies it, have become inadequate knowledge practices. The tentacular are nets and networks and tentacularity is about entanglements and layerings. As “chthonic figures” (Haraway 2016), spiders ARE good to think with when it comes to generating other forms of knowledge and/or connecting seemingly unrelated phenomena that challenge culture/nature dichotomies.

### **Biographical note**

Michaela Schäuble is an Associate Professor of Social Anthropology with a focus on Media Anthropology at the University of Bern (Switzerland) and co-founder of EMB – Ethnographic Mediaspace Bern (<https://www.ethnographicmedia.space/>). From 2018-2021 she headed "Sinta - Studies in the Arts", a graduate programme in practice-based artistic research. She

herself uses audio-visual media to conduct ethnographic research on trance, performance and re-enactments.

She is author of *Narrating Victimhood: Gender, Religion, and the Making of Place in Post-War Croatia* (Berghahn Books, 2014/2017), and co-editor of *Rethinking the Mediterranean: Extending the Anthropological Laboratory across Nested Mediterranean Zones* (*Zeitschrift für Ethnologie/Journal of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 2021).

Michaela is one of the PIs the SNSF Sinergia “Mediating the Ecological Imperative” at the University of Bern, where she is heading the subproject “Indigenous Futurisms: Counter-publics in the Slipstream”.

In addition, Michaela has the lead of two more projects, one on Big Data / Tech Imaginaries and Human Transformation and another one on the role of rituals in religious conflicts.

She is currently in post-production with a feature-length essayistic documentary entitled *Tarantism Revisited* (with Anja Dreschke).

**Alberto Siani**

**Title**

Re-centering Aesthetics: Toward a Pragmatist Paradigm for Landscape Character

**Abstract**

While natural beauty, as opposed to artistic beauty, is a traditional topic of philosophical aesthetics, this is less the case for landscapes, which have traditionally been neglected by it. Conversely, aesthetics plays a rather marginal role in contemporary landscape studies. The persisting uncertainty on the meaning and determinability of the aesthetic value of landscapes raises urgent practical matters, e.g. when conflicting with other, more tangible or quantifiable values dictating the final use of a specific landscape (agriculture, industry, tourism, energy production and so on). In the last thirty years, such uncertainty has led to the emergence of the notion of “Landscape Character” (LC) as well as to the development of “Landscape Character Assessment” (LCA) practices, informing legal, political and economic decisions. LC and LCA aim at taking the criteria of landscape values and management away from the arbitrary, taste-related, elitist control of a few privileged individuals as it was the case in the modernist aestheticist paradigm. Control should instead be transparent, based on objective, accessible criteria, and democratic. Besides, LC is an egalitarian and pluralistic notion, aimed not at hierarchically ordering landscapes as better or worse, but at highlighting their differences. The LC notion has been widely and diversely discussed in the literature, and the related assessment practices have been employed, and in many respects successfully, to engage practical issues. However, both the current standard notion of LC and its practical applications (LCA) are meeting growing dissatisfaction among scholars and practitioners.

This paper provides, in the first part, a critical examination of the concept and practice of “landscape character” (LC) and, in the second part, some philosophical suggestions for its improvement. After an historical overview of the emergence of the LC notion, partly in response to the modernist-aestheticist view of landscape (1.1), I will discuss some of the main problems underlying the currently dominant LC paradigm and its application, as shown in the current literature (1.2). I will then show that such problems, both conceptual and practical, have a common root, namely a narrow and unexamined view of experience and the aesthetic dimension (1.3). In the constructive part, I will propose a reframing of LC from a pragmatist-aesthetic angle (2.1), by drawing on Simmel’s notion of landscape “mood” (2.2), and I will eventually outline an alternative LC paradigm and highlight its advantages over both the dominant paradigm and the modernist-aestheticist one (2.3).

**Biographical note**

Alberto L. Siani is an Associate Professor of Aesthetics at the Department of Civilizations and Forms of Knowledge of the University of Pisa. He received his PhD through a joint program of the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa and the FernUniversität Hagen, with a dissertation on art and politics in Hegel (2010). After two years as an Alexander von Humboldt Post-Doc Fellow and temporary Lecturer at the Universität Münster, he has been an Associate Professor at the Department of Philosophy of Yeditepe University, Istanbul. He has done research mostly on the aesthetics of Hegel and German Idealism, with a special focus on the “end of art” thesis and its relevance for the definition of the European idea of modernity. He has research interests on contemporary political philosophy and

pragmatism. Currently, he is working on a project on landscape and aesthetics: on this topic he has published the article “Unifying Art and Nature: Brady and Eco on Interpretation” (in: *Aesthetica Preprint*, 2020) and has a forthcoming entry on “Landscape Aesthetics” in the *International Lexicon of Aesthetics* (2022).

Among his other publications: the book *Morte dell’arte, libertà del soggetto. Attualità di Hegel* (Pisa: ETS, 2017), the edited volume *Women Philosophers on Autonomy. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (with S. Bergès, New York: Routledge, 2018), and the article “Antisubjectivism and the End of Art: Heidegger on Hegel” (in: *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 2020).

## **Olga Smith**

### **Title**

Strategies of Resistance as Ecocritical Aesthetics

### **Abstract**

This presentation takes as its starting point of discussion an artwork by French artist Jean-Luc Moulène (born in 1955), entitled *La Vigie*. The work consists of 299 photographs of different states of a Princess tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*). The tree, known for its adaptability and resilience, sprouts from a crack in the pavement in the proximity to the French Ministry for the Economy, Industry, and Employment in Paris. Moulène photographed the tree in the course of six years, between November 2004 and December 2010, noting, through these photographic documents, a correlation between plant's evolution and different levels of the French security alert system. When the alert level rises, the police barriers are erected around the Ministry thus unwittingly giving the plant protection. With alert level drops down to 'normal', the barriers are removed thus placing the plant at the mercy of municipal services that repeatedly try to eradicate it. Growth cycles of a plant, seasonal changes, and climatic conditions overlap with patterns related to human vulnerability, national security and politics, and link directly to Moulène's longstanding interest in strategies of resistance, explored through a multidisciplinary practice that embraces artistic, political, sociological and public activities. In this, I argue, *La Vigie* can be productively considered with reference to Jacques Rancière's thesis of "the sharing of the sensible" that describes forms of participation within a given community. Crucially, it also explains the logic that distinguishes between those who are visible in the field of political representation, and those who are invisible, inaudible, excluded—those "without a part" in the sensible. (Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, 2004).

In selecting, as my case study, an artwork without an obvious 'ecological' meaning, my aim is not only to oppose the leading tendency in contemporary art history to focus on dramatic images of climate change, often offered as a means of 'raising awareness' and political mobilization. Rather, I want to argue for a greater attention being paid to aesthetic strategies, beyond the subject matter. Timothy Morton has warned that "if we restrict our examination of the citation of ecological "content"" we risk handing over "aesthetic form, the aesthetic dimension and even theory itself to the reactionary wing of ecological criticism." (Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature*, 2007). I propose that Rancière's faith in the transformative potential of aesthetics has much to offer to the ongoing negotiations of the entanglements of human and more-than-human in an ecocritical perspective of sustainability.

### **Biographical note**

Dr Olga Smith is an art historian, specialising in contemporary art. Her research interests include photography and new imaging technologies, interchanges between art and intellectual ideas, cultural memory and, most recently, 'landscape' as a form of picturing nature. This current research, undertaken at the University of Vienna with the support of a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship, regards environmental concerns as posing a challenge to the humanistic basis of art history as a discipline. Olga is affiliated with the Vienna Anthropocene Network, where is working on a project 'Towards Ecocritical Art History: Methods and Practices', comprising of a workshop series and a forthcoming publication.

A graduate of the University of Cambridge, Olga Smith has been a recipient of postdoctoral fellowships at the Humboldt University of Berlin and the University of Warwick, where she cofounded Environmental Humanities Network. Her publications appeared in *Art History*, *Fotogeschichte*, and *Photographies*, among other journals, and she is the editor of *Photography and Landscape* (2019), among other publications. Full list is available here: <https://www.univie.ac.at/germanistik/olga-smith/>

**Jonathan Soffer**

**Sustainable Art Conversation 2**

Norms and Forms

**Biographical note**

Jonathan Soffer is Full Professor of Urban History at New York University Tandon School of Engineering and Associated Faculty in NYU's Department of History. He was Chair of the Department of Technology Culture and Society, as well as among the founders of the unique US-wide course in Sustainable Urban Environments. He is the author of ground-breaking monographs with Columbia University Press on urban progress and sustainability through public activism such as *Ed Koch and the Rebuilding of New York* (2010) and *The Swing to Suffrage* (2012). He is a Fellow of prestigious American societies, like New York Academy and Gilder Lehrman Foundation, and recipient of Columbia's Schoff Fund. As the Chair of the Department of Technology, Culture and Society he directed many innovative projects with NY authorities, such as the activation of the Future Labs and Brooklyn Navy Yard. He mentored over 20 PhDs on urban development and policies.