

Annotated Bibliography

The Impact of Irresponsibility

Summary of Resources

Artists have been creating art in response to social, political and environmental issues for hundreds of years. Artists take a varied approach to creating art based on environmental issues. Whether it's creating an artwork made out of trash found while cleaning up, known as "Upcycling", or it's creating an artwork to comment on the impact of pollution and waste, artists are using their work to raise awareness for the need to reduce consumption and protect the world we live in. For the purposes of this annotated bibliography I will separate my listing of artists into two categories: Upcycling Eco-Artists and commentary/activism artists. The artists referenced in this bibliography are John Dahlsen, Ramiro Davaro-Comas, Alke Schmidt, Carrie MacKinnin, and Ha Schu. Further, non-artists related annotations address the contamination and destruction of the Amazon Rain Forests, one environmental issue that is impacting the world.

Upcycling Eco-Artists

Dahlsen, J. (2009). *John Dahlsen: Environmental artists and contemporary painter*.

Retrieved from http://www.johndahlsen.com/enviro_art.html

John Dahlsen is a contemporary Australian environmental artist who walks the beaches collecting the trash that has been left behind or washed up from other places. His art making media is what he finds discarded on the shores and lands of Australia. These materials consist mainly of plastic bags, bottles, bottle caps, broken toys, flip flops, buoys, guardrails, and varieties of other discarded materials. From this trash he creates abstract mixed media paintings, totems, and public sculptures. He has had over 150 exhibitions of his environmental artworks across the globe. Dahlsen states on his website that his art is about spreading the message of the need for more conservation and care of our environment to a wider audience.

I see that by making this art, it is a way of sharing my messages for the need to care for our environment with a broad audience. I feel that even if just a fraction of the viewing audience were to experience a shift in their awareness and consciousness about the environment and art, through being exposed to this artwork then it would be worth it. This stems from the fact that I believe presently humanity is at a critical point in time, with our planet currently existing in a fragile ecological state, with global warming hastening unheard of changes, all amplifying the fact that we need all the help we can get. (Dahlsen, 2009, para 5)

In 2005-06 Dahlsen's artworks transformed from assemblages of found post-consumer waste to drawings and paintings of plastic fabricator machine end waste. The plastic "purges" are what is left over from the fabrication of anything plastic. "They represent everything and nothing. The plastic in its petroleum state has undergone millions of years

of evolution to get to this stage. And then, it is discarded as a by-product of societal needs” (Dahlsen, 2009, para 19).

Environmental Activism / Commentary

Art not oil galleries. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.artnotoil.org.uk/gallery>

Art Not Oil is a website dedicated to advancing global resistance to big oil companies, their environmentally destructive behaviors and their corporate sponsorship of the arts. Multiple galleries exhibit contemporary commentary/activist artworks, and documentary photographs of demonstrations and activist protests. One artist featured on this site is Ramiro Davaro-Comas. One of his mixed media paintings, *American Oil* (2011), focuses on America’s increased consumption oil and the implications of the 2010 Gulf oil spill. Also focusing on the Gulf oil spill is the painting *Nothing I see could bring me joy* by Carrie MacKinnin. This painting is displaying death, destruction, and the gulf water pollution crisis in a triptych format and has a visually expressionistic style.

Schmidt, A. (2012). *Alke schmidt*. Retrieved from <http://www.alkeschmidt.com/index.html>

Alke Schmidt is a London based mixed media artist whose work focuses on environmental, social, and political issues. Her work can be found on many gallery and artist networking Internet sites and she has been exhibiting her work throughout London, England for the last six years.

Schmidt creates her art in multiple series formats. Each series focuses on a different contemporary issue that she feels needs more attention for changing. Deeply critical and depressingly engaging works on topics like the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina and the lack of timely aide and the Gulf oil spill and its lack of sufficient clean up are contrasted by her brightly colored assemblages of post consumer waste. Critical of the prevalence of obesity, instant gratification, fast food consumption and its waste products, Schmidt created a series of works between 1999-2007 entitled *Waste Scapes*. Here she uses the post-consumer byproducts like those that are found left over after a night of partying or multiple fast food drive through trips. That series morphed into a more severe commentary of what society holds as important and sacred. Utilizing the form of a three paneled altarpiece, *Shrine of the Times* (2007) compares the sacred notion of an altarpiece for communicating symbols of religious divinity to what contemporary society holds as sacred: Fast Food. This three paneled hinged altarpiece is created out of convenience food & drinks packaging waste, plastic bags, polyester resin, acrylic, beads, glitter, confetti, wood, and fluorescent lights and is 128 x 100 cm in size. Arch inset spaces within each of the three panels hold a relic of the fast food empire. Bottle caps become outlines, and cups and food containers become the landscape. From social issues of racial and ethnic discrimination to the plight of the Palestine, Schmidt’s art places a critical eye on global issues.

The decline. (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.trucostudios.com/the-decline.html>

Artist Ramiro Davaro-Comas is a contemporary social commentary artist whose work ranges from shedding light on man-made environmental disasters to political destructiveness. A painter and illustrator, Ramiro’s choice in media range from acrylic

and spray paint to collage and ink. On this page Ben Sullivan describes Ramiro's work as "symbolic image (s) of how today's youth is confronted with constant global crisis." ("The decline," 2012, para 2). *Eat, Pray, Love* (2009) is a satirical look at our love of McDonalds. A skewed rendition of Ronald McDonald sadly looking at the viewer from the center of rhythmic slew of golden arches and the repeated commercial mantra of "I'm loving it." "Eat, Pray, Love" is written in bold Black and White letters across the bottom of the painting.

Inspired minds. (2003). Retrieved from <http://inspiredminds.de/detail.php?id=28&tt=2>

This website is the product of a collaboration between Deutsche Welle Online and Deutsche Welle Radio and was initiated by Breandain O'Shea. On this site are the background materials that complement the radio show. One article here features a short biography and discussion on sculptural work of Ha Schult, a German artist creating trash art to reinforce the idea that we are trash and we live in trash. He says about his work "We are living in the time of garbage. We produce garbage and we will be garbage. I created a thousand sculptures of garbage. They are a mirror of ourselves." ("Inspired minds," 2003)

Ha Schult was born in 1939 in Germany and grew up amidst the destruction and recovery from World War II. This lived experience of growing up in a place filled with the remnants of war, surrounded by the fallen, broken and thrown away, had to have had some impact on his art. Schult's *Trash People* is comprised of 1,000 separate life size sculptures of figures made out of the trash people leave behind. This installation work was first exhibited in 1996 in the Amphitheater of Xanten, but then its rising popularity resulted in an exhibition world tour.

Environmental Contamination Sources

Amazon watch: A global treasure. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://amazonwatch.org/news>

Amazon Watch is a non-profit organization founded in 1996 to protect the indigenous people of the Amazon basin and the land and waters, which sustain them. This site features numerous articles pertaining to deforestation and land contamination, and humanitarian and environmental programs to help sustain the Amazon and advance the cultures of the indigenous people.

Amazon Watch. (2012, February 8). *The True Story of Chevron's Ecuador Disaster*. [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://vimeo.com/36423706>

This video, produced by Amazon Watch, shows the devastating effects on the land of the Amazon basin, and its indigenous people caused by 30 years of irresponsible drilling of oil and disposal of toxic waste from Chevron/Texaco. Also in this video are illustrations showing the correct methods for ensuring safe environmental drilling practices and how Chevron/Texaco deliberately did not follow environmental safety guidelines.

Butler, R. (2009). *Mangabay.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.mongabay.com/about.html>

This website is dedicated to environmental science and conservation and whose mission is to distribute news and information about tropical rainforests, conservation and wildlife. Established in 1999 by Rhett A. Butler as the primary author, it is now also the

publisher of *Tropical Conservation Science*, a peer reviewed, open access journal to provide opportunities for scientists in developing countries to publish their research. This site features numerous articles about issues and research pertaining to ecological and environmental awareness, conservation, rainforest deterioration and destruction, indigenous people and cultures and serves as a springboard for further action.

Chevrontoxico: The campaign for justice in Ecuador. (2000). Retrieved from <http://chevrontoxico.com/>

This webpage is dedicated to chronicling the environmental and humanitarian impact of the devastation caused by the 30 years of drilling for oil by Texaco, now owned by Chevron. Numerous research articles and videos pertaining to the environmental, ecological and human health devastations can be found here along with court documents, trial briefs and interview transcripts.

Doucette, K. (2011, July 25). The plastic bag wars. *Rolling Stone*, Retrieved from <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-plastic-bag-wars-20110725>

This Rolling Stone article from August 4th 2011 addresses the global impact of one-time use plastic bags. Plastic bags made their first appearance in grocery stores in 1976 and are made from a byproduct of oil and natural gas called high-density polyethylene. The result of rising international bans of plastic bag production and consumption has resulted in a 25% drop in usage throughout the world.

Galasyn, J. (2010, July 21). [Web log message]. Retrieved from <http://www.desdemonadespair.net/2010/07/amazon-watch-campaigners-report-from.html>

As a part of the Amazon Watch's Ecuador campaign team, Jim Galasyn's field report highlights their discoveries in the former Chevron oil well sites, the abandoned toxic waste pits, and through interviews with local community members living with the effects of this environmental pollution in the Oriente.

Hance, J. (2011, February 14). Chevron found guilty, ordered to pay \$8.2 billion in epic oil contamination fight. *Mongabay.com*. Retrieved from http://news.mongabay.com/2011/0214-hance_chevron.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%5C%3A+mongabay%5C%2F%5C%28Mongabay.com+news%5C%29&utm_content=Netvibes

In an Ecuadorian court Chevron was found guilty of environmental harm due to their dumping of billions of gallons of toxic waste into the Amazon rainforest and water supply creating lethal consequences for the indigenous people and their environment. While this is the first time ever Indigenous people have won a court case over an international company, Chevron contends that the ruling is illegitimate and vow not to pay their penalty.

Handler, M. (n.d.). The new amazon: In the face of petroleros, bribery, and soldiers, Ecuador's Serayacu defend a world and way of life. *Orion Magazine*, Retrieved from <http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/10/>

This article chronicles the Ecuadorian indigenous people of Serayacu's fight against the push from oil companies and their own government to destroy more of their native lands in the search of oil. The mission of the magazine *Orion*, where this article originated, is to inspire and engage individuals to take action in becoming emissaries for cultural and environmental improvements.