



Center for Creative Ecologies <tdemos@ucsc.edu>

Newsletter Fall 2016

1 message

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the center for creative ecologies

Welcome to our Fall 2016 Newsletter!

For the upcoming year the **Center for Creative Ecologies** is delighted to announce an exciting new program, advancing its research into the ecologies of cultural practice, particularly those artistic and activist engagements with environmental transformation, modes of extractivism, and creative forms of resistance.



We're excited to embark on ***Extraction: Mining Values / Fueling Transformation***, a half-year arts-led research project (January-June 2017) that will investigate

extraction as an industrial calculus of wealth accumulation, including energy, natural resources, food and labor exploitation, which, as a dominant logic of the Capitalocene—the geological age of capital—privileges short-term profits over long-term ecological wellbeing. How have artists, activists, media practitioners, architects, and filmmakers critically documented and creatively intervened in this condition? **What options exist at present for living non-extractively?**

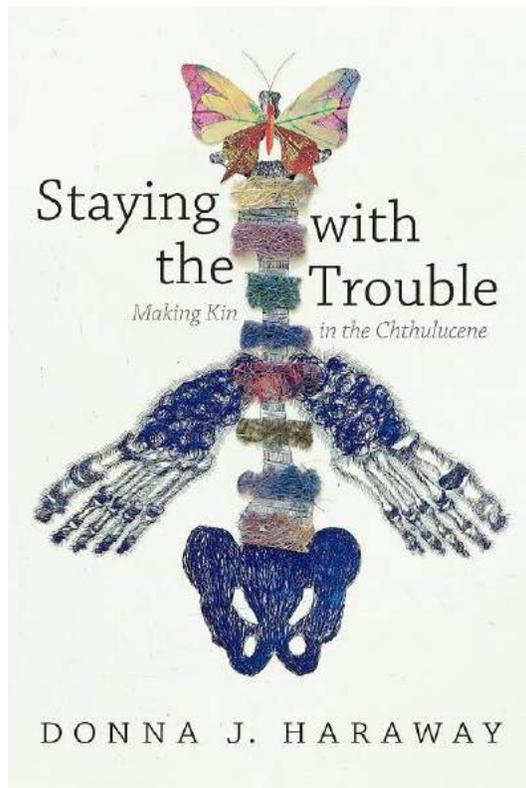
(Image: Center for Land Use Interpretation, still from *Houston Petrochemical Corridor Landscan*, 2008)

In collaboration with UCSC-based artist **Laurie Palmer** and the CCE's **Tj Demos**, and with support from UCSC's Institute of the Arts and Sciences, the project couldn't be more timely. Ours is a radically transforming era marked by record-scorching temperatures (August 2016 marks 15 consecutive months of record heat for the globe) and ongoing extreme weather events (including raging forest fires in California, fracking-induced earthquake activity in Oklahoma, a super-typhoon hitting China and Taiwan, and climate-change-magnified flooding in Louisiana at a cost of \$15 billion). Meanwhile, we're witnessing pitched battles over land use and fossil fuel infrastructure development, as the Dakota Sioux-led Indigenous resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline currently rages on, which, like the Unist'ot'en Camp in northern British Columbia, pits neocolonial petrocapiatist interests against Indigenous sovereignty, vital drinking water sources, and popular democratic will.

Addressing these urgent conflicts, **ExtrACTION** calls for intensified action from the cultural sector at this time of climate emergency—an outcome of a hundred and fifty years of fossil-fuel capitalism, building on centuries



of colonial plunder and waves of economic globalization. We seek to break open artistic practice as a site of creative ecologies—drawing together interdisciplinary and cross-cultural alliances, multi-species assemblages, and heterogenous practices—where alternative worlds of transformative justice and environmental wellbeing can be invented. (Image: activists perform *Ende Gelände* (Here and no Further), a 2015 civil disobedience action and radical performance shutting down lignite coal opencast mining pit in German Lusatia: climate justice in action!)



Upcoming Events:

- In October, the CCE will host a special by-invite-only event (owing to limited space): **“On the Power of the Humusities for a Habitable Multispecies Muddle”: A Salon Evening With Donna Haraway.** The discussion with UCSC Distinguished Professor Emerita Donna Haraway celebrates the publication of her new book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016). In its pages, Haraway writes of the sustained imperative of our new geological epoch: “we must cultivate “response-ability; that is also collective knowing and doing, an ecology of practices.” In that spirit, the Center for Creative Ecologies—dedicated to exploring



Resources:

- A review of the 32nd São Paulo Biennial, “Incerteza Viva” (Live Uncertainty), by CCE member and UCSC grad student **Tatiane Schilaro**, [“A São Paulo Biennial in Praise of Uncertainties,”](#) *Artnews*, 09/13/16. In it she critically examines the exhibition’s address of Brazil’s current political instability following the anti-democratic ouster of Dilma Rousseff, the country’s politico-ecological and postcolonial Indigenous conflicts. Among the works discussed is Maria Thereza Alves’ *A Possible Reversal of Missed Opportunities* (2016), in which Alves attempts to “decolonize Brazil,” in part through a politically-directed practice of fiction. For Schilaro, the show offers “a solid and timely platform against a worldwide wave of conservatism, capturing a moment in which some artists are asking, with concern but not despair, ‘How can we, humans and nonhumans, postpone the end of the world through imagination?’.”
- New CCE journal article: **T.J. Demos**, [“Animal Cosmopolitics: The Art of Terike Haapoja”](#): Finnish artist Terike Haapoja’s work to date

precisely creative practices of response-ability and promoting ecologies of interdisciplinary connection—invites comrades to consider the significance of the terminological proposals for our time, such as Anthropocene, Capitalocene, and Chthulucene. The latter is Haraway's own conceptualization for describing and cultivating a post-anthropocentric era of multi-species mutualities, sympoiesis, and creative kin-ful co-becomings. For these may be our best chance of fending off the incursions of the regressive individualism and human exceptionalism of Anthropocenic hegemony and equally the petrocapialist exterminism of the Capitalocene's financialization and colonization of all remaining natures. We look forward to what will be a fascinating discussions in the humusities—akin to a muddy exchange of organisms, a composting of ideas in the pluriversity of humus—of how we might make life habitable amidst this multispecies muddle.

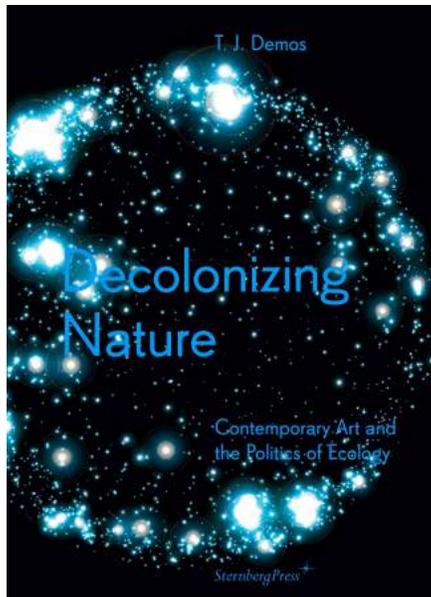
includes a range of mixed-media projects dedicated to the non-represented, and to inventing new ways to counter their exclusion. These include pieces such as *Party of Others* (2011) and *History of Others* (2013-ongoing, in collaboration with the writer Laura Gustafsson), the latter unfolding to a series of related projects such as *The Museum of the History of Cattle* (2013) and *The Trial*. In addition to future pieces planned for 2016 like *Museum of Nonhumanity*, all contribute to a rebellious attempt to found a new “ethico-aesthetic paradigm” that is psychic and social as much as institutional and environmental, which moves beyond the grips of anthropocentrism.

Building An Environmental Arts Curriculum

Here is a selection of recent publications of interest (keywords: Activist / Arts / Culture / Radical / Political / Ecological / Environmental Racism / Speculative / Emancipatory):

• **The Movement for Black Lives, [A Vision for Black Lives: Policy Demands for Black Power, Freedom & Justice \(2016\)](#)**

“Black humanity and dignity requires black political will and power. In response to the sustained and increasingly visible violence against Black communities in the U.S. and



• Also in October, we are happy to announce a book talk with T.J. Demos, author of ***Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology*** (Sternberg Press, 2016), UCSC, 5:30pm, Wednesday September 28 (Humanities 1, Room 210). For the UC Santa Cruz launch of his new book *Decolonizing Nature, Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology*, Demos will read from his book and discuss his research into creative proposals of artists and activists for ways of life that bring together ecological sustainability, climate justice and radical democracy. While ecology has received little systematic attention within art history, its visibility and significance has grown in relation to the threats of climate change and environmental destruction. By engaging artists' widespread aesthetic and political engagement

globally, a collective of more than 50 organizations representing thousands of Black people from across the country have come together with renewed energy and purpose to articulate a common vision and agenda. We are a collective that centers and is rooted in Black communities, but we recognize we have a shared struggle with all oppressed people; collective liberation will be a product of all of our work...While this platform is focused on domestic policies, we know that patriarchy, exploitative capitalism, militarism, and white supremacy know no borders. We stand in solidarity with our international family against the ravages of global capitalism and anti-Black racism, human-made climate change, war, and exploitation.”

• **Ashley Dawson, *Extinction: A Radical History* (OR Books, 2016)**

From the publisher: “Researchers generally agree that the current extinction rate is nothing short of catastrophic. Currently the earth is losing about a hundred species every day. This relentless extinction, Ashley Dawson contends in a primer that combines vast scope with elegant precision, is the product of a global attack on the commons, the great trove of air, water, plants and creatures, as well as collectively created cultural forms such as language, that have been regarded

with environmental conditions and processes around the globe—and looking at cutting-edge theoretical, political, and cultural developments in the Global South and North—*Decolonizing Nature* offers a pathbreaking contribution to the intersecting fields of art history, ecology, visual culture, geography, and environmental politics. Demos, author of *Return to the Postcolony: Specters of Colonialism in Contemporary Art* (2013), considers the creative proposals of artists and activists for ways of life that bring together ecological sustainability, climate justice, and radical democracy, at a time when such creative proposals are urgently needed. The event is organized by the Center for Emerging Worlds and the Center for Cultural Studies, with additional support from the Institute of the Arts and Sciences and the CCE. (Book introduction available [here](#))

- Our research project into ***The Cultural Politics of Sustainability at UCSC and Beyond*** continues, with the launch of a new [webpage](#). Funded by the UCSC Sustainability Office, this two-quarter-long project comprises a series of UCSC interdisciplinary symposia and workshops dedicated to the topic of sustainability. The series of workshops, talks, and guest lectures, intends to bring to campus speakers representing expertise in diverse areas of sustainability

traditionally as the inheritance of humanity as a whole. This attack has its genesis in the need for capital to expand relentlessly into all spheres of life. Extinction, Dawson argues, cannot be understood in isolation from a critique of our economic system. To achieve this we need to transgress the boundaries between science, environmentalism and radical politics. *Extinction: A Radical History* performs this task with both brio and brilliance.”

- **James Brady, ed., *Elemental: An Arts and Ecology Reader* (Gaia Project, 2016)**

From the publisher: “*Elemental* is an ‘introductory reader’, comprising a unique collection of essays by some of the world’s leading artists, activists, curators and writers currently working in the expansive, interdisciplinary field of arts and ecology. The book presents critical reflections, and philosophies on a variety of eco-art practices and methodologies. Subjects areas include: New Materialism, socially-engaged ecosystem restoration, the legal ‘Rights of Nature’, and ecology in theatre and performance art. The symbiotic environmental, social and economic crises of our era (Climate Change being one significant symptom) have now emerged as a poignant and critically relevant presence throughout culture globally. It is therefore timely and

studies, and with them organize discussions with interdisciplinary members of UC faculty and graduate and undergraduate students on the history, meaning, and conflictual elements of sustainability.



The **Center for Creative Ecologies** supports the struggle at [La Zad](#) in Central France. For over 50 years, farmers and locals have resisted the building of a new airport for the French city of Nantes (which already has one airport). Now in these rich fields, forests and wetlands, which multinational Vinci want to cover in concrete, an experiment in reinventing everyday life in struggle is blossoming. Radicals from around the world, local farmers and villagers, citizen groups, trade unionists and naturalists, refugees and runaways, squatters and climate justice activists and many others, are organising to protect the 4000 acres of land against the airport and its world. Government officials have coined this place “a territory lost to the republic”. Its occupants have named it: la Zad (zone a défendre) zone to defend: "Against the airport and its world."

vital that these essays of vision, hope and solidarity are being published.”

• **Yates McKee, *Strike Art: Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition* (Verso, 2016)**

From the publisher: “Tracking the work of groups including MTL, Not an Alternative, the Illuminator, the Rolling Jubilee, and G.U.L.F, *Strike Art* shows how Occupy ushered in a new era of artistically-oriented direct action that continues to ramify far beyond the initial act of occupation itself into ongoing struggles surrounding labor, debt, and climate justice, concluding with a consideration of the overlaps between such work and the aesthetic practices of the Black Lives Matter movement. Art after Occupy, McKee suggests, contains great potentials of imagination and action for a renewed left project that are still only beginning to ripen, at once shaking up and taking flight from the art system as we know it.”

• **L'Internationale Online with Sarah Werkmeister, eds., [Ecologising Museums](#) (2016)**

“The implications around climate change have far-reaching consequences but they can also have far-reaching benefits. The e-publication *Ecologising Museums* explores how museums and cultural

institutions can face the issue not only head-on, but from all angles. To what degree are the core activities of collecting, preserving and presenting in fact attitudes that embody an unsustainable view of the world and the relationship between man and nature?"

* Please send publication references for future Center for Creative Ecologies newsletter listings to: creativeecologies@ucsc.edu

The Center for Creative Ecologies also stands in solidarity with the Indigenous and Environmentalist-allied Defenders and Protectors struggling against the Dakota Access Pipe Line (#NoDAPL). The proposed \$3.8 billion oil pipeline, intended to transport 500,000 barrels of Bakken oil from North Dakota to Illinois, has faced massive resistance from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and other tribal nations at the [Sacred Stone Spirit Camp](#), refusing to put oil infrastructure and corporate profits over clean water, ecological wellbeing, and native rights. (Image: Dylan Miner)



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