

CLIMATE CHANGE EXHIBITION - A SURVEY AND FUTURE TRUTH

Ref. COP26/UK December 2020

David Buckland 2019

PREAMBLE

'There is a consensus that the science on climate change is accepted as true, but this does not translate into a belief in the consequences of dangerous climate change.'

Jonathan Safran Foer

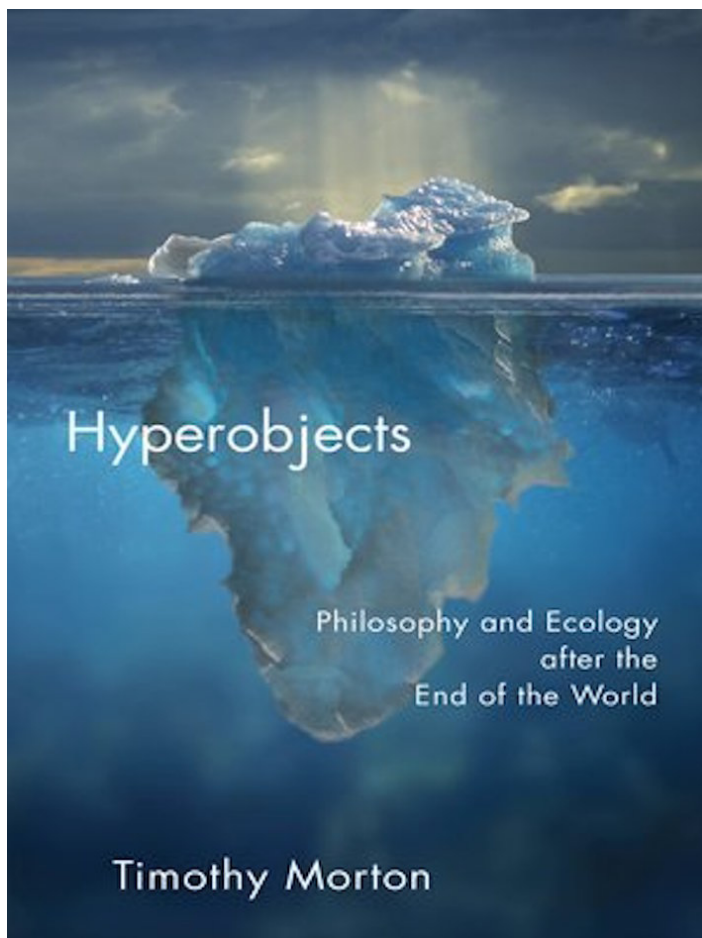
In 2007 Cape Farewell in partnership with the South Bank staged a climate festival 'SHIFT'.

The base thinking for this festival was that climate scientist have clearly laid out the facts and that if humanity continues on its present trajectory then we, and our habitat, are heading for a climate and ecological catastrophe. What has become clear is that although scientists have outlined the challenge, the solution lays elsewhere and nothing short of a cultural SHIFT will deliver the sustainable habitat we all desperately require.



Cape Farewell at SHIFT

Cultural SHIFTS do happen and within very short time frames: the digital revolution/the Internet; the 'sixties' popular music and cultural global re-alignment; the nightmare scenario of the Third Reich which very nearly succeeded (Ref. Reich 'the mass psychology of fascism').....



Front cover of 'Hyperobjects' by Timothy Morton

2020

We are at the cusp of change, the demands of a complete cultural renewal that embraces ecological derogation and the climate change challenge is largely being thwarted by the forces of 'invested interests' in our carbon based economy, wealth and culture. Many have described this as humanities greatest challenge, a titanic struggle to implement change. Viewed from a distance these are truly fascinating times, viewed from within then there is a cultural desperation, frustration and impotency.

Our present malaise is narrated as a 'hyperobject' – too big to countenance within our knowing and psychological make-up. The ambition of the Survey Cape Farewell exhibition is to remove the unthinkable scale of societies ecological threat and construct the building blocks of re-newel. Artists and the creative estate work from the bases of human scale; this is my witness, my storytelling, my vision – stories that are made/created, which an audience can approach or be immersed in. Is it possible to break down the 'hyperobject' of climate change into manageable chunks of 'knowing' and thereby replace impotency with actions for change?



'Discounting the Future' Ice Text, David Buckland

ART AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Central to the survey is to witness the endeavour of our artists and creative estate over the past twenty years who have created works alienated to the 'now' of climate change. Artists who are not environmentalists per se but have 'lent' their creative skills and vision to de-code the climate science, to witness the ecological deprivation and create their story. Artists tend to drift towards the dominant issues of our times and globally many have approached the climate challenge within their work. The works produced have the capability to de-code the hyperobject, to break it down into manageable stories and at times vision a way out, a way through.

Attached is a power-point of some of these artworks – what is clear is that already significant iconic works have been created. These works have been created under the Cape Farewell umbrella but globally so much more has been produced and celebrated. The curatorial challenge is to create an exhibition that states the present, showcases how artists can and have risen to the challenge and curate an exhibition of celebration. The eARTh RA exhibition in 2009/10 is also a point of reference as was the global ArtCOP21 festival of creative cultural engagement. The current Istanbul Biennial assembles a 'squadron of eco-artists' (FT) although critically it was not perceived as a success. The Venice Biennial's of 2017 and 2019 have a strong eco focus, the ROM Carbon 14 exhibition 2017 and much more besides. The Survey would be a landmark exhibition that would be a curatorial challenge to get right and make the overall vision powerful and an instrument of change. The works should challenge us in the now, containing all the current climate/ecological thinking and angst.

Included in this initial survey of Iconic works are Hartley's 'No Where Island'; Ackroyd and Harvey's 'Stranded' & 'Polar Diamond'; Lemn Sissey's 'What If', Gilligan's 'Deep Time'; Buckland's 'Ice Texts' & 'Internal Combustion'; Mel Chin's 'The Potential Project'; HeHe's 'Cloud'; Pinsky's 'Pollution Pods' and Drury and Syad's 'Exchange' each giving witness to how complex and multilayered the climate challenge is. And the power of art to engage.



Performance Work Vanessa Reid

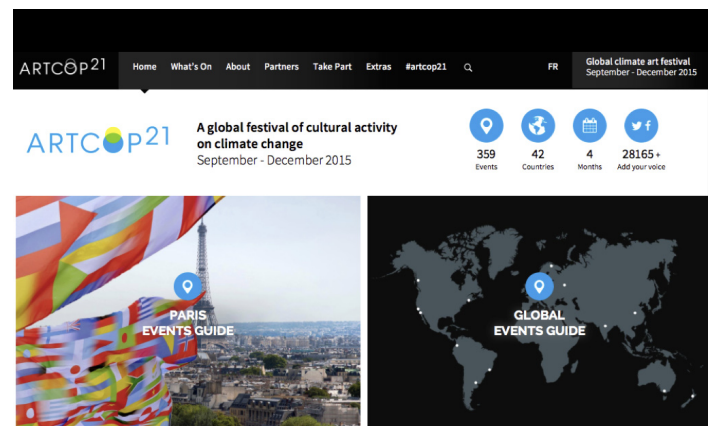
NEW COMMISSIONS

The last year has witnessed a new wave of climate engagement. The Extinction Rebellion, the presence of Greta Thunberg leading a youth movement, the United Nations (UN) Climate Action Summit, all frustrated by a political impotency. Personal choices of the food we eat, vegetarian and vegan diet, and how we produce food, how we travel. Air pollution and how health has become centre stage in the climate debate, water supply, floods and destabilised and more violent weather systems. There is much for artists to interrogate and having these new and future concerns represented within the survey is both essential and exciting. In scope these could be new individual commissions, they could be group interventions, there should be protest represented and given voice. They can be temporal daylong actions or works that evolve over time during the exhibition.

CLIMATE SCIENTISTS AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Climate science is the bases of why we realise the climate challenge, without it we only have a chaotic witness of derogation. Placing the art and creative endeavour with a science context enables the chaos of observation to have a placement within an intellectual framework of clarity. Within the layers of this partnership lays the marriage of emotion knowledge and reason that underpins human endeavour.

In December 2020, COP26 will take place in Glasgow. This COP is widely seen as having the ambition to place into law the successes of the COP21 accord in Paris. The most up to date science will be available and laid before the politicians and the United Nations to implement the laws and changes we must have if global societies are serious in addressing the climate crisis. I see a visualisation and social media engagement of COP26 as being part of the survey; it will give a central intellectual core to the exhibition and enable educational access and context to the ambition of the exhibition. To work with climate scientists and political entities with the aim to produce a synthesis of the COP26 summit in visuals and text as part of the exhibition. This would enable the most up to date data and political will – as yet we do not know whether the COP26 will be a success but therein lays a marking of our time. COP26 would mirror the ArtCOP21 global festival where over 600 cultural climate events were staged in 50+ countries. www.artcop21.com



ARTCOP21

EDUCATION POSSIBILITIES

Cape Farewell has always delivered the cultural work in partnership with its educational programme – those that will inherit the legacy of our excesses are the next generation. They already are rising to the reality and are angry at current ineptitude – their knowledge is based on the education that is thankfully present in our schools, building on that education through the lens of creative output available from the exhibition will extend their scope of engagement and open up the world of emotional intelligence. The education should come under the banner of lifelong learning and be targeted at all ages. Schools, Universities and the wider public. London is the epicentre of climate science, political ambition and NGO's. of psychosocial enquiry (CPA), of technical invention. Running daytime educational programmes and a lecture/talks series would enrich the central core of the exhibitions and music/poetry/activism.



'Pollution Pods' Education, Manchester Clean Air Festival 2019

MARSHALL ISLANDS AUGUST 2020 CAPE FAREWELL EXPEDITION – WA KUK WA JIMOR

Climate Change is a global phenomenon. Unfortunately those most suffering are largely those who had no hand in creating the climate problem. This should underscore our moral framework to the core – we have and continue to export our cultural consumption off shore compromising the lives and culture of millions of people who live in countries now dangerously threatened by the consequences of climate change. The Pacific Islands are unique in that they are a water focused culture, a heritage of thousands of years who's cultural base was formed on living in partnership with the seas and not dependent on cultivation of land for human survival. To say there are enduring culturally and climatic challenges is a fulsome understatement. The Marshall Islands average height above sea level is 2m. Extreme weather events that used to happen every 100 years now due to climate change, occur every 2 or 3 years. In August 2020 Cape Farewell in partnership with a USA foundation and a Marshallese Poet Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner is staging an expedition to four atolls within the RMI. An onboard crew of Oceanic creatives are tasked with visioning their cultural strength, their plight and their challenge to create narratives that entice and inform us in the developed western economies. The Marshalls span a space half the size of the USA, there latitude and longitude lines curve over oceans describing their geographical position. Their ancient cultural navigation waylines enabled them to voyage for enormous Pacific distances to other islands, the knowledge of these navigations were generations apart. We have much to learn and comprehend from their cultures that now face possible extinction due to our excesses. Their voice has to be heard and showcasing the outcomes of the 2020 expedition within the survey will be enlightening and important. I believe also the plight of the island nations and the work the artists produce will capture a public imagination and dialogue.



Low Lying Marshall Islands

FUNDING

Cape Farewell is in discussion with the UN and WHO with the focus on forming a partnership to deliver a new cultural communication vs. climate change. The survey 2020 exhibition could be part of that endeavour, giving a potential UN branding. This and the reputation of Somerset House should enable a strong approach to many city/international companies who have a climate mandate in their social responsibility policy and therefore would be interested in partner funding. Given that the Cape Farewell has an ambition to tour the exhibition internationally it should be possible to approach the big ecological foundations, PEW, Bloomberg, Oceans Five etc. Cape Farewell would also be approaching the Arts Council for a touring grant.



'Pollution Pods' + Projected text of Greta Thunberg at UN Climate Action Summit September 2019
Photo Credit: Buckland