

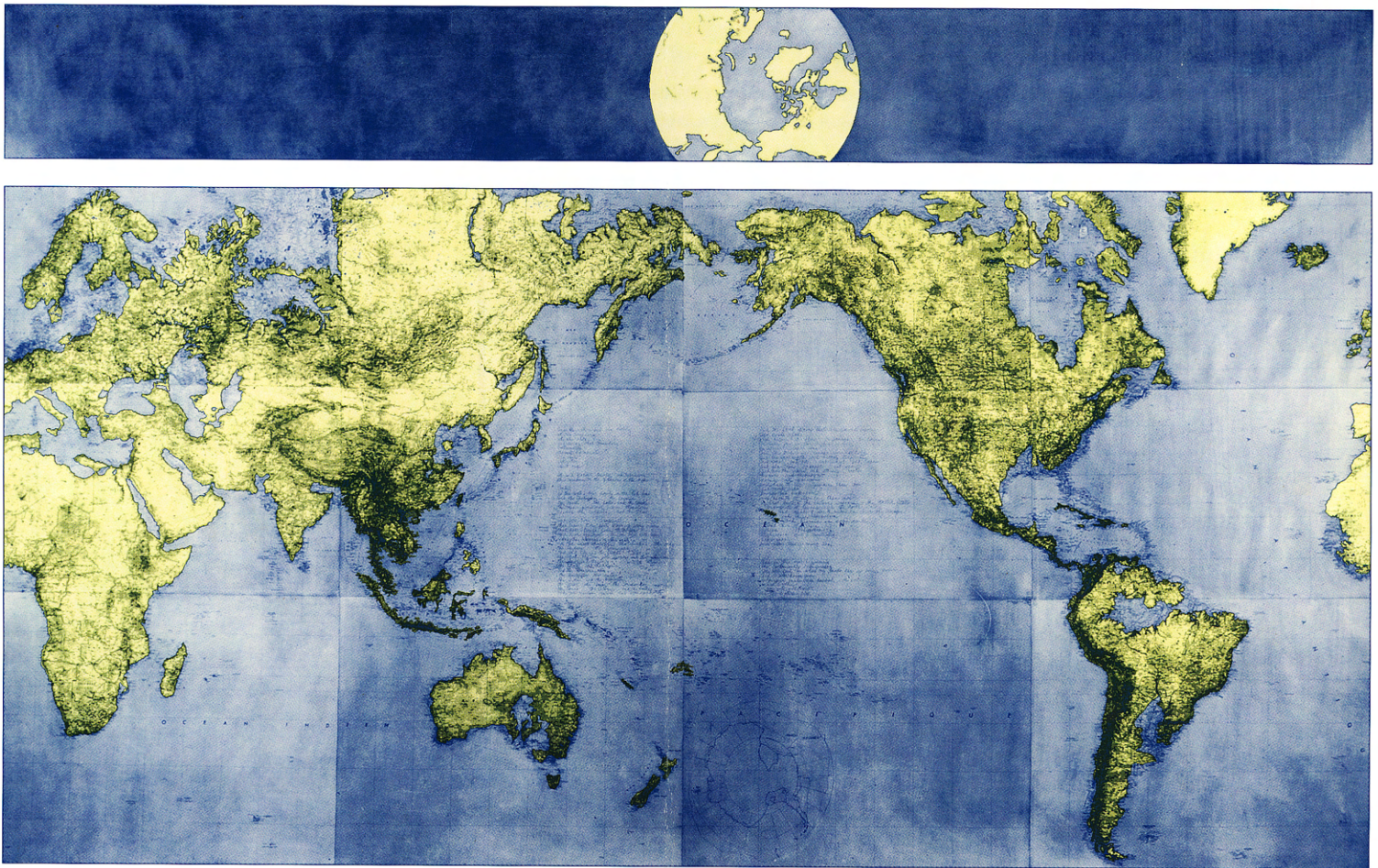
LEONARDO

Volume 26 Number 5 1993

Journal of the International Society for the Arts, Sciences and Technology

Special Issue

ART AND SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS



Guest Editor: Sheila Pinkel

ABOUT THE FRONT COVER

Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison, *The Seventh Lagoon*, of *The Lagoon Cycle*, Panel No. 6, installation, 8 x 13 ft, 1979. This work is part of the artists' 12-year work, *The Lagoon Cycle* (1974–1984), encompassing text, drawings, maps, site-specific environmental artworks and performance. *The Lagoon Cycle* includes a 350-ft-long narrative in the form of a discourse between two characters. The work is named for the estuarial lagoons that are endangered everywhere, with the lagoon as a metaphor for life itself. The following is part of the text accompanying *The Seventh Lagoon*.

After all the ocean whispered
I am the beneficiary of your garbage can
as you are the beneficiary of my abundance
and everybody knows that ice into water
and water to ice are changes of state

Upon hearing this
we took a present world map
and drew a probable world

It is said that if all the ice melted
the oceans would rise about 300 feet
So we drew a line as best we could at the 300-foot level
and thought about how the land would shrink
as the oceans grew

And the waters will rise slowly
at the boundary
at the edge
redrawing that boundary
continually
moment by moment
all over
altogether
all at once

It is a graceful drawing and redrawing
this response to the millennia of the making of fire

As the waters rise slowly in the Red Sea
and the Dead Sea the Caspian
the North the Baltic and the Black
the ocean gyres will redraw themselves
as will the currents and the tides

And over time gracefully
this rising tide will flow up every river
that once flowed down to the sea
and each freshwater tongue will withdraw
before the advance of the salt
Up the Saint Lawrence the Columbia the Amazon
the Hudson the Mississippi
the White Nile and the Blue
the Volga the Don the Danube and the Thames
the Seine and the Loire
the Rhone and the Rhine
and the Garonne
the Ganges the Congo
the Tigris and the Euphrates
the Yellow the Amur the Irrawaddy
the Lena the Potomac and the Snake
and all rivers named and unnamed

And the flood plains that are farmed upon
and lived upon
will become marches or swamps or bogs
or beds for swollen rivers
or shallow inland seas
and the tropics will become uninhabitable
and the far north will become temperate
and corn and rice and wheat and beans
and plantain manioc and yams
and all the grains and starchy roots
known and unknown
named and unnamed
will have to grow elsewhere than now
and most life
known and unknown
will have to go elsewhere than now
as vast parts of the eastern seaboard of the United States
and parts of Europe near the North Sea
and much of South America near the Amazon
and China somewhere
and Russian in some parts India
and other bits of Asia
Africa Polynesia
Melanesia Australia
and Japan
will join the growing sea

And in this new beginning
this continuously rebeginning
you will feed me when my lands can no longer produce
and I will house you
when your lands are covered with water
and together
we will withdraw
as the waters rise

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LEONARDO

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JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE ARTS, SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

Shifting Positions Toward the Earth: Art and Environmental Awareness

Helen Mayer Harrison and
Newton Harrison

Our work begins when we perceive an anomaly in the environment that is the result of opposing beliefs or contradictory metaphors. Moments when reality no longer appears seamless and the cost of belief has become outrageous offer the opportunity to create new spaces—first in the mind and thereafter in everyday life.

We understand the universe as a giant conversation taking place simultaneously in trillions of voices and billions of languages, most of which we could not conceive even if we knew that they existed. Of those voices whose existence has impinged upon our own to the degree that we can become aware of them, we realize that our awareness is imperfect at best. Therefore, it seems to us that the casual and wanton destruction and disruption of living systems of whose relationships we know so little requires extraordinary hubris.

For us, everything started with a decision made in the late 1960s to deal exclusively with issues of survival as best we could perceive them. Each body of work sought a larger or more comprehensive framing or understanding of what such a notion might mean and how we, as artists, might express it. For example, in *The Seventh Lagoon* of *The Lagoon Cycle*, we came up with the statement, "But that would require re-orienting consciousness around a different data base."

We are now working on exploring what such a statement might mean—unpacking our intuitive ideas. Our most recent work opens up the idea of setting up an eco-security system, a safety net for the ecology not unlike a social-security system. However, there are issues such as the population explosion that need a separate and comprehensive address, for just as prairie grass would displace everything that is not itself, so would any expanding population. The notion that ingenious technology will resolve population pressures on the one hand and generate infinitely expanding markets on the other is simply an illusion. It is too easy to forget that every entrepreneurial act, even recycling, is itself a tax on the ecosystem.

The works that we describe and present here are excerpts from narratives that have engendered projects, or stories that may engender projects in the future. *The Lagoon Cycle* is its own story, presenting a series of our adventures and thereby telling of expanding ecological awareness. *Breathing Space for the Sava River* was on its way to happening when the war in the former Yugoslavia began. *Tibet Is the High Ground* is a project we are working to make happen (Fig. 1). *The Sacramento Meditations*, originally exhibited in 1977, is still only in its beginnings. The latter three projects required, or would require, the cooperation of many others in our dialogues: ecologists, landscape architects, engineers and politicians.

THE LAGOON CYCLE

This work is, in part, a mural 360 ft long, averaging 8 ft tall, in 60 parts (Color Plate C No. 2 and Fig. 2). It was completed over the period 1973–1985. It is portable, done on photomural paper mounted on heavy cotton duck. The materials are photography, oil, graphite, crayon and ink. It was first exhibited in complete form at the Johnson Gallery at Cornell University 1985, then later at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art [1].

The Lagoon Cycle can be read as a story in seven parts; each part, as in a picaresque novel, is its own story. It can be read as an array of storyboards for a very unusual movie. As artists, we see it as an environmental narrative, one of whose properties is to envelop the viewer with its form and subject matter. For us, this work relates to other twentieth-century environmental works as well as to the myriad mural programs of the past.

The Lagoon Cycle unfolds as a discourse between two characters who discuss the ways in which the metaphors we live by affect what we do to each other and to the environment. It casts light on how we create our world view and are in turn created by it. *The Lagoon Cycle* is named for the estuarial lagoons that are endangered everywhere; the lagoons are used as a metaphor for culture, and even for life itself.

The story concerns two characters who begin a search for a "hardy creature who can live under museum conditions" and who are transformed by this search. The characters define themselves in *The First Lagoon* by the differences in their values and perceptions, with one naming himself Lagoon Maker and the other naming herself Witness. Both proceed to live up to their names, although they finally surrender them as circumstances push the two characters into constructing ever-larger frames for their discourse.

ABSTRACT

The authors present their philosophy of a holistic and interdependent universe, and situate the origins of their work in their concern with the issue of survival. Following a model of nature as a conversation, their work is composed of visual and textual narratives presenting arguments for ecological preservation and a rethinking of current uses of technology. An emphasis on the potential of any work to affect this posited universal whole is related to their projects as proposals for change.

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Fig. 1. *Tibet Is the High Ground*, installation of maps, text and drawing, markers, paper, crayon, gold, graphite and ink, 1991. (Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York)

The Sixth Lagoon: On Metaphor and Discourse

The Fifth Lagoon deals with the Salton Sea, which was formed by flood flow released by human error from the canals along the Colorado River. *The Sixth Lagoon* treats the entire Colorado River basin. Lagoon Maker and Witness reflect on the insights they have gained through observing aquatic systems. They expand the scale of their thinking from the Salton Sea to the Colorado River watershed, which has been changed by lifestyles that demand vast amounts of electricity and irrigation. The exploding megatechnology of the twentieth century has shocked the environment and does not have time to “niche itself in.” Witness sees all nature as a discourse between the elements, and both characters urge, “Pay attention to the discourse between belief systems and environmental systems” [2].

Pay attention to the flow of waters
 Pay attention to the integrity of the waters
 flowing
 Pay attention to where the waters are flowing
 Pay attention to where the waters desire
 to flow
 Pay attention to where the waters are
 willed to flow
 Pay attention to the flow of waters and
 the mixing of salts
 Pay attention to the flow of waters and
 the mixing with earth
 Attend to the integrity of the discourse
 between earth and water the watershed
 is an outcome

Pay attention to the discourse between
 earth water and men interruption
 is an outcome

Pay attention to the meaning of the nature
 of such discourse and the nature of the
 meaning of interruption After all
 a discourse is a fragile transitory form
 an improvisation of sorts

And anyone may divert a discourse of any
 kind into another direction if they do not
 value its present state

Pay attention to changes of state

For instance

If
 the flow of the waters of the Colorado River system
 has been interrupted by dam after dam which demand of
 the river that it generate electricity and serve as a source
 of potable water for cities outside the watershed while
 requiring the river to act as a sewer for agricultural wastes
 then
 the state of the river has been changed and that change
 must reverberate back through the system

If
 the flow of waters has been made to behave like rain to
 irrigate millions of acres of arid land
 then
 the state of the land has been changed to give advantage
 to that which would not naturally grow and
 disadvantage to that which did

If
 the state of the water has been changed to disadvantage that
 which evolved in the flowing waters and give advantage
 to recent forms such as urbanization and industrialized
 agriculture
 then
 since a steady output of industrialized energy must be spent
 for the maintenance of the system
 and the energy is electrical and of high voltage
 and the energy is hydraulic and of high cost
 concomitant beliefs have evolved that these
 recent forms are valuable and self-justifying
 and necessary
 for the maintenance of life and well-being

Pay attention to the cost of belief

For instance

If
 for millennia the fresh waters of the Colorado
 and the salt waters of the gulf
 have been improvising the form
 and disputing the southern boundary
 of the delta the silt-laden Colorado
 dropping its load and extending the delta
 the gulf with its thirty- to fifty-foot tidal bores
 washing the delta away
 but slowly retreating before the massive silt load
 and if this dialogue has been interrupted
 to divert the waters of the Colorado elsewhere
 then
 advantage has been given to the tides of the gulf
 which will once more slowly seep up the delta
 to again reclaim
 the Colorado-irrigated farmlands
 of Mexico
 and the Imperial and Coachella valleys
 and
 disadvantage has been given
 to that vegetation which had adapted
 to the inconstant flow of waters
 and to all parts of the life web
 dependent upon those parts

already disadvantaged
 and advantage has been given to Phoenix
 Arizona the Denver plains
 the Platte River the cities of Los Angeles
 Long Beach San Diego
 and the counties of Riverside Imperial
 Orange Los Angeles and San Diego
 and all of their populations and industries

Pay attention to the cost of the giving
 of advantage and disadvantage

For instance

If the flow of waters within the Sri Lanka tank system
 has been operating for more than 2,500 years
 utilizing depressions in the ground for off-stream storage
 and gently sloping canals to bring water to smaller tanks
 and smaller tanks again
 through the villages to the paddies

And if
 the water in the canals serves for daily bathing
 and washing
 and as potable water
 and as a sanctuary for fish and animals
 and bird and plant life

Then
 over time
 the tank and the canal system has niched itself into the
 ecology
 and the state of the land has been minimally changed
 giving advantage to such historic forms as villages and
 farms
 while not disadvantaging the rivers and riverine life
 Thus

although a steady output of manual energy must be spent
 in order to sustain the system
 the energy spent is collaborative and of low force
 the energy is harmonic and of low cost
 Therefore
 concomitant beliefs have not evolved
 that high-force high-energy systems
 are valuable and useful
 and necessary
 for the maintenance of life and well-being

Pay attention to the cost of belief

Pay attention to the state of belief

Pay attention to the belief stated

Pay attention to the flow of belief and the willing of desire

Pay attention to the flow of belief
 and the enacting of desire

Pay attention to the system upon which desire is enacted
 and the system that generates desire

Attend to the discourse between belief systems and
 environmental systems

Pay attention to the meaning of the nature

of such discourse and the nature of

the meaning of redirection After all

a discourse is a fragile transitory form an improvisation
 of sorts

and anyone may divert a discourse of any kind into
 another probable direction

if they do not value its present direction

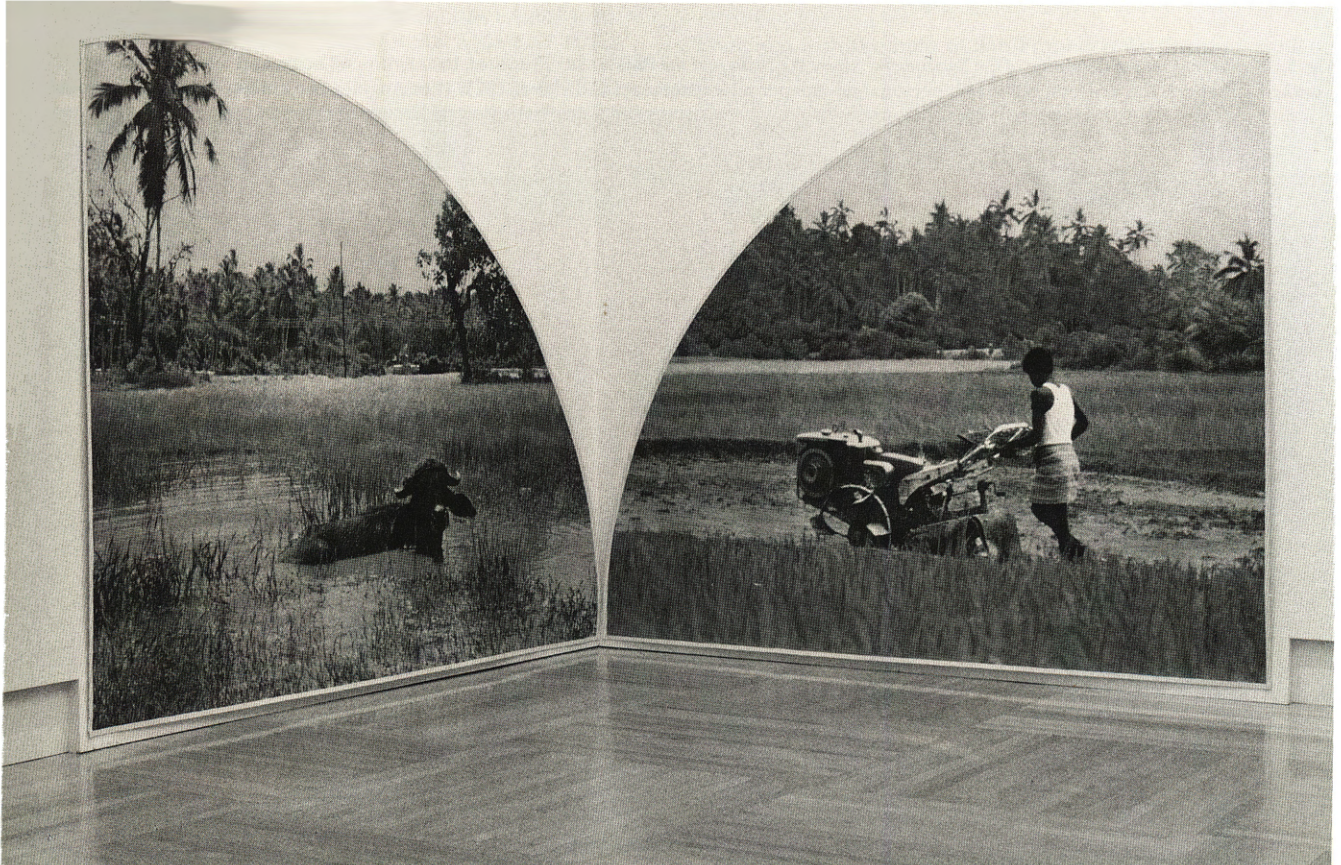
Pay attention to the choosing of probable

directions and the authorship of

changes of state

Pay attention to changes of state

Fig. 2. *The Seventh Lagoon*, of *The Lagoon Cycle*, installation, Panels Nos 3 and 4, 8 × 9-½ ft each, 1988. Part of the artists' 12-year work including text, photos, drawings, maps, site-specific artworks and performance. (Courtesy of Los Angeles County Museum of Art. All Rights Reserved. Photo: Barbara Lyter and Steve Oliver.)



***The Seventh Lagoon: The Ring of Fire;
The Ring of Water***

Lagoon Maker and Witness deal with enlarged perceptions of time and space, and shape and size. For example, they envision the Pacific Ocean as an estuarial lagoon with "rivers feeding it like tiny streams" (see Fig. 2) and perceive that "the business of the universe" is conducted in an odd kind of dialogue, but that the business of technology is conducted as a monologue that has become more seductive and "does not like that which is not itself." Lagoon Maker and Witness begin a search for new guiding metaphors to replace those of force and fire, as they perceive the accelerating greenhouse effect as nature's response to the millennia of force and fire (see Color Plate C No. 2). Finally, they muse, the oceans will rise gracefully, but will people withdraw with equal grace?

Now I see the Ring of Fire as
the wave front of an ocean of fire
beneath an ocean of water
mostly separated by rock

Of course a more literal mind
could see the mountains as froth
on top of a wave of fire
moving at the speed of
one to ten centimeters a year

And in less than a second
I can visualize any section of the Ring of Fire
the Kuril Trench for instance
with the Pacific plate subducting
uplifting the Kuril Islands thereby

And in less than a second I can shrink the Pacific
by orders of magnitude and make its size
no more than that of an estuarial lagoon

And in less than a second I can imagine

a corresponding simplification
of biocultural complexities

*That would require reorienting consciousness
around a different data base
Sometimes I dream of the water buffalo
in its wallow in Sri Lanka
the one that ran afoul of the gasoline engine
and is being replaced by the tractor
Now that tractor does not replicate itself freely
nor provide milk nor utilize weeds as fuel
nor produce fertilizer and fuel with its dung*

Yet the tractor maker would say that
the tractor is a bold invention
an improvisation that will change the state of farming
It is more efficient
it can cover more ground in a day
It is modern and cheap
and helps bring people into the technological domain

*Yes
yet in some places the buffalo and its wallow still continue
their several-thousand-year-old discourse
their collaboration
and one of the consequences of redirecting their discourse
into the technological monologue will be a peculiar
subtraction of possibilities for gone will be the fish
that eats the larvae of the malaria mosquito
while itself serving as a source of protein
and gone will be the vermin-eating snake
that breeds in the wallow's surrounds*

while fertilizers will be added
and insecticides and herbicides

*And the refugia disappears
though the tractor is not graceful on the land
and the buffalo will yield to that tractor
although the buffalo
finally*

Fig. 3. *Meditations on the Condition of the Sacramento River, the Delta and the Bays at San Francisco, installation of maps and text, with site-specific works of street graffiti, posters, billboard, personal newspaper advertisements and video, 1977. (Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art)*



is more efficient
and its dialogue with the land
more lucid

Clearly there is something about
technology that does not like that
which is not itself

Yet this is not
a necessary condition
this unfriendliness
to the land

SACRAMENTO MEDITATIONS

"VISIONARY" PLANNERS INGENUOUSLY USING MODERN TECHNOLOGIES TO SECURE THE INHABITANTS OF CALIFORNIA FROM FLOOD AND DRAUGHT HAVE CONTROLLED THE FLOW OF WATER IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE INTERCONNECTED ARRAY OF RESERVOIRS DAMS POWER STATIONS PUMPING STATIONS DITCHES AND CANALS TO IRRIGATE THE CENTRAL VALLEY AND TO SEND WATER OVER THE TEHACHAPPI MOUNTAINS TO THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT IN THE SOUTH CREATING THE LARGEST IRRIGATION SYSTEM IN HISTORY GENERATING AN EIGHT BILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRY THAT SUPPLIES FOOD AND FIBER TO THE STATE THE NATION AND THE WORLD

AN IMPROBABLE PROFITABLE EXPANDABLE SYSTEM

"TECHNOCRATIC" PLANNERS SUBSIDIZED BY THE TAXPAYERS OF THE NATION AND IN HIDDEN INTEREST GIFTS BY THE STATE AT THE EXPENSE OF NON-IRRIGATED FARMING ELSEWHERE PRIMARILY FOR THE PROFIT OF A FEW LARGE LANDHOLDERS AND AGRIBUSINESS HAVE TURNED THE ENTIRE WATERSHED OF THE CENTRAL VALLEY INTO ONE LARGE IRRIGATION SYSTEM SERVING OVER SIX AND ONE HALF MILLION ACRES COMPOSED OF DAMS THAT BECOME USELESS THROUGH SILTING A PUMPING SYSTEM THAT WILL USE MORE ENERGY THAN IT CREATES AND A DYKING SYSTEM THAT REQUIRES ONGOING REPAIR THAT IN CONCERT REDUCE THE QUALITY AND LONG TERM PRODUCTIVITY OF BOTH THE LAND AND THE WATER THROUGH PROGRESSIVE SALINIZATION

AN ENERGYEXPENSIVE SELF-CANCELING SYSTEM

—Text II of *Sacramento Meditations (Meditations on the Condition of the Sacramento River, the Delta and the Bays at San Francisco)*

The nine texts of the *Sacramento Meditations* comprise the revised version of the work that was commissioned by the Floating Museum, San Francisco (director, Lynn Hershman), in 1976 and was hung in the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1977. The text and slides were slightly revised for an exhibition at the Ronald Feldman Fine Arts gallery in New York that then travelled to the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art (1980). The nine mappings of the state of California are a drawing, a satellite photo, a political boundary map, and maps of state and federal water projects, irrigable and potentially irrigable land and topology in duplicate (Figs 3 and 4).

The poster sketch contains 11 posters, each beginning with "For instance . . . if" and ending with "What if all that irrigated farming wasn't necessary?" While *Sacramento Meditations* was hanging in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1977, we put these posters up on street corners throughout San



Fig. 4. *Meditations on the Condition of the Sacramento River, the Delta and the Bays at San Francisco* (detail), installation of maps and text, with site-specific works of street graffiti, posters, billboard, personal newspaper advertisements and video, 1977. (Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art)

Francisco with the help of San Francisco Art Institute students and others; we also erected two huge brown and blue billboards that said, "Water" (Fig. 5). We wrote street graffiti on sidewalks in chalk, such as, "Somebody's crazy, they're draining the swamps and growing rice on the desert" (Fig. 6) and "Let every community empty its wastes upstream from where it takes its drinking water." Performances at the Art Institute and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art included the simultaneous but slightly offbeat reading of a four-page water resources bibliography as a work scored for two voices. We showed a videotape of a Bakersfield (California) Water Board meeting on local TV, obtained several spots on local radio, performed readings of the work in situ and published a series of bits of "advice" to important water personnel in the personal columns of a local paper. Each bit of "advice" was derived from Buddha's eight-fold path and applied to water. For instance, "Dear Ron Robie: Right water thought," "Dear Jerry Brown: Right water action."

The work owed its existence to 6 months of research at the Berkeley (California) water resources library, which displayed a set of the original posters for several years. All the information it presents that was not public knowledge when the work was first done has since become readily available. However, although 650,000 of the 6,500,000 acres under irrigation became too salty to farm long ago, the wetlands at the end of the reversed flow of the San Joaquin River have become deadly and several severe draughts in California have made people begin to question water priorities, subsidized intensive irrigated farming continues as usual through good times and bad.

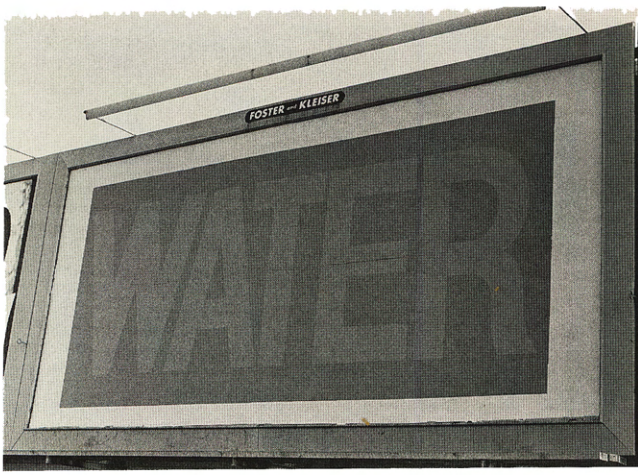


Fig. 5. *Meditations on the Condition of the Sacramento River*, billboard at the corner of Geary Blvd. and 7th Ave., San Francisco, CA, 1977. Commissioned by the Floating Museum, Lynn Hershman, director. Part of a larger work including installation of maps and text, and site-specific works of street graffiti, posters, billboard, personal newspaper advertisements and video. (Photo: Lynn Learned)

THE SAVA RIVER PROJECT (ATEM Pause FÜR DEN SAVE FLUSS)

In 1988, while on a Deutsche Akademische Austausch Dienst (DAAD) fellowship in Berlin, we were introduced to Yugoslavia by Hartmut Ern of the Berlin Botanical Gardens. He asked if we could not help with the formation of a nature reserve in the area that had once been a no-man's-land situated at the border between the former Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. After spending time in Yugoslavia and viewing the site, we felt that the idea of a nature reserve, although important, could not succeed in the long run, as a reserve would suffer from all the problems of an island ecology and its uniqueness would be under attack from the surrounding industrial farming. Therefore, we proposed a nature corridor that would run the length of the Sava River from its twin beginnings above Ljubljana to its ending in Beograd where it joins the Danube River and supplies the lower Danube with one-third of its water.

Our work took the form of an exhibition—*Atempause für den Save-Fluss: Die Summe Sener Geschichte, Beginn Einer Neuen Geschichte*—funded by the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, in cooperation with the Berliner Künstlerprogram das DAAD and the Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana. But the Sava project was more than an exhibition, it was a proposal for change.

This is a work that wanted to happen. Support immediately appeared from many sources. All agreed that we should begin an address to this marvelous but obscure place—really a 340-sq-km place, an island of bio-physical providence and diversity, an exquisite cameo of cultural and ecological history existing within a 7,000-sq-km factory farm.

It was obvious to us, as it is to all who pay attention to such things, that this island was under assault from petro-chemical invasion and factory farm wastes, that even the Sava River that flowed through it was under assault, and that the assault was and is both overt and covert. The defenders were few and mainly passive, and it seemed to us that the strategy of its defense was a guarantee of defeat. It had all the limitations of the Maginot Line. Therefore we began to invent a work building support for the allocation of territory as a nature reserve but recontextualizing its strategy, generating a new set of tac-

tics for the nature corridor. The manifestation of the story of this place was larger than the nature reserve itself [2].

Since we first made the Sava proposal, the aftermath of Chernobyl led the Slovenian and Serbian peoples to consider shutting down a relatively safe American-made nuclear energy plant and trying to construct a series of 10 to 15 dams on the Sava, to replace nuclear power with hydro-electric power. This would turn the Sava into a series of lakes and effectively kill the river. Our work served as a rallying point and a counter-proposal for the opponents of this idea.

This work was supported by the Croatian Water Department and the Department of Nature Protection. The Nature Reserve was declared and the corridor was being considered. Until the tragic invasion of Croatia, the even more tragic ethnic cleansing attack on Bosnia-Herzegovina and the ensuing ongoing disaster, the World Bank was going to support the clean-up of the Sava River. Since then we have heard that the invasion has severely damaged, if not destroyed, the nature reserve, and Yugoslavia has remained a series of separate warring states [3].

TIBET

For two decades, we have pursued the art of conversation. Over the years we have created photographs, maps, drawings, poems and performance scores that document a diverse array of conversations, most of which take up the issue of global survival. The specific subject matter ranges across a wide spectrum of eco-political issues, often generating new metaphors that in turn are the basis for proposals and projects.

What follows is a proposal (see Fig. 1) for the early stages of a conversation about one million square miles of emerging man-made desert in what used to be the rainforests of Tibet. We are exploring the potential of pulling together a team of experts to create an "analog" forest—a proposal that seems to run parallel to the Dalai Lama's vision of a "world peace park." As envisioned, the analog forest would be only 20% as complex as the ecosystem it replaces, but would behave in much the same way. Its future survival would be aided by the presence of species most useful to man if harvested selectively.

TIBET IS THE HIGH GROUND

FOR THIS PROJECT, WE INTEND

To create a very large scale model of Asia, where Tibet as the High Ground is manifest and the Seven Principal Rivers of Southeast Asia—the Indus, Yellow, Yangtze, Salween, Mekong, Brahma Putra and Ganges rivers—are clearly stated. This model would make obvious the implications of the deforestation of Tibet for the many nations of the continent of Asia.

To come to a clarified statement of the research on the outcome to the rivers, riverine life and riverine surrounds, including the dams and other river projects, in other countries as well as Tibet, of the deforestation of Tibet.

To develop a conceptual design for the regeneration of Tibetan forest, farm and meadowland. We would hold that a conceptual design for this kind of transformation carries a moral force in advance of criticism of any kind.

To develop a conceptual model that envisions a probable life web for the deforested area of Tibet. This ecological model, working with the idea of an analog forest, or a simplified woodland-rainforest ecosystem, would also have yields of recognizable value to those who inhabit the surrounds. The process would suggest an analog for the forest that once existed, less complex than the original, but nonetheless with overstory,

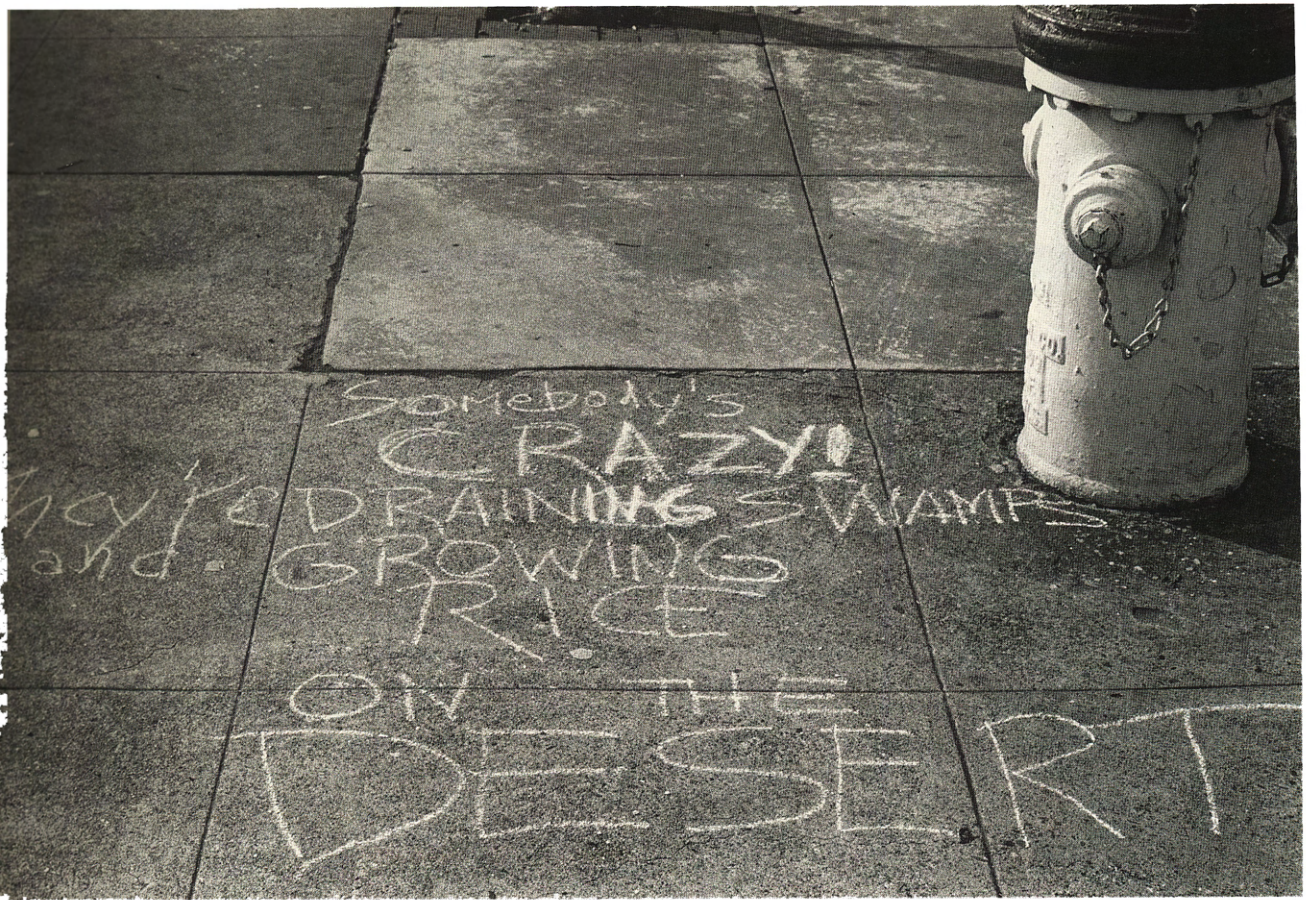


Fig. 6. *Meditations on the Condition of the Sacramento River*, graffiti on the street, San Francisco, CA, 1977. Commissioned by the Floating Museum, Lynn Hershman, director. Part of a larger work including installation of maps and text, and site-specific works of street graffiti, posters, billboard, personal newspaper advertisements and video. (Photo: Lynn Learned)

understory, canopy and appropriate niches. This forest would also serve to conserve existing or replaced topsoil and protect riverine and wetland ecologies—first in Tibet proper, and then in the countries below.

More is at stake here than the simple regeneration of a new kind of forest. The forest knits Tibet, China, Nepal, Kashmir, Bhutan and all the bordering countries together from an ecological point of view. The rivers which spring from Tibet are also waters that bind these countries. We would hold that a conceptual design expressing these understandings can be the basis for generating conversation based on common interest as opposed to conflicting interest.

We hold that putting in place a working model of this kind is a necessary addition to the present discourse on saving the Tibetan culture, peoples and children, and is necessary to preserve the terrain from emerging abuses such as atomic waste dumping.

As we stated earlier, we believe that the Universe is a giant conversation, and that any introduction of new ideas, new metaphors or new possibilities changes that conversation. Although we have built works, we think that changes in the

conversation that lead to attitudinal and behavioral changes are as significant as any “built” work.

References and Notes

1. This work was commissioned by the Metromedia Company and is presently in their collection.
2. A catalog of this work with full-color illustrations exists in German, English and Slovene, with translations into Serbo-Croatian, French and Japanese. The text, with several accompanying black-and-white images, has been reprinted in the *Journal of International Synergy*. The work has been exhibited in Berlin at the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, in Zagreb (Croatia) as well as in Ljubljana (Slovenia), at the Centre International d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, the Palmer Museum at Penn State University, at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts in New York, at Washington University in Saint Louis (Missouri) and at the Nagoya Biennale in Japan in 1991, where it won second prize. The work is currently part of a traveling exhibition entitled *Fragile Ecologies*, which will tour the United States for 3 years, beginning at the Queens Museum in New York.
3. We wish to offer our thanks to Hartmut Ern and Martin Schneider-Jacoby of the Stiftung Europäische Naturerbe (European Natural Heritage Fund) for their generous ongoing assistance in the *Sava River Project*. In addition, our work has only been possible by the support of the Water Department of Croatia, the Nature Protection Agency of Croatia, the Croatian Zoological Society, the Natural History Museum of Zagreb and various other official and semi-official organizations.