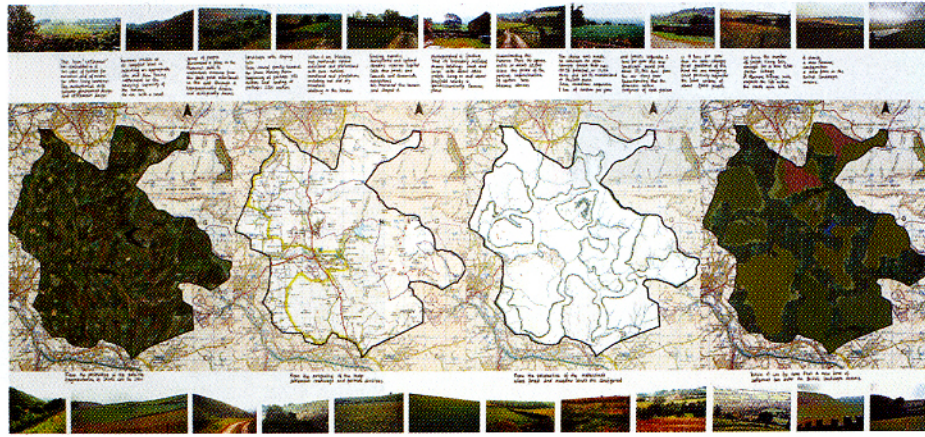


Newton Harrison and Helen Mayer Harrison: *Greenhouse Britain: Pennine Variation II*, 2008, ink, oil and colored pencil on vinyl, 36½ by 78½ inches; at Ronald Feldman.



NEWTON HARRISON AND HELEN MAYER HARRISON

RONALD FELDMAN

Ahead of the curve, Newton and Helen Mayer Harrison started addressing global warming in 1974. Over the years, working with scientists, architects, artists and city planners, among others, they have completed scores of collaborative designs that offer possible geopolitical solutions to ecological problems. Taking on a river system or an entire continent, their practice entails intense research into the specific circumstances of a place. As stated on their website (theharrisonstudio.net), their work begins when they "perceive an anomaly in the environment that is the result of opposing beliefs or contradictory metaphors." For exhibitions, the visual display consists largely of maps, audiovisual illustrations and written statements. The Harrisons' bold plans—the execution of which largely depends on regional governing bodies (for example, watershed and zoning authorities)—have led in some instances to practical implementation and legislative policy change.

A recent show at Ronald Feldman presented the five exhibits constituting

"Greenhouse Britain" (2006-09). At the invitation of environmental artist and activist David Haley (senior research fellow at Manchester Metropolitan University), the Harrisons studied the effects of rising sea levels on Britain and explored the feasibility of moving populations to higher ground in determined, sustainable ways. Funding for the project came from local governmental and private sources and totaled approximately \$380,000. A 13½-foot-long white platform in the shape of the title island was illuminated by ceiling projectors that beam down landmasses in green and water bodies in blue. Over several minutes, the waters surge and the coastline is greatly reduced. An audiotrack describes the causes and results of the predicted phenomenon. The second component, *On the Upward Movement of People: A New Pennine Village*, elaborates a plan through photos and text for a 9,000-person, 42-square-mile village located on Britain's Pennine Mountain range. Different types of maps (aerial, road, watershed) indicate the irregular borders of the proposed village; the Harrisons arrived at the area and shape by calculating the amount of forest and meadow necessary to neutralize the carbon output of the inhabitants.

In a 3-minute video animation, the city of Bristol is saved from forecasted flooding instigated by increased ocean levels. The duo proposes the construction of a dam along the Avon River, which would both keep Bristol dry and allow the excess water from storms to be stored

for efficient usage. Turning their attention to London in *The Lea Valley: On the Upward Movement of Planning*, the Harrisons use maps and texts to analyze the current built environment within this watershed and suggest high-rise living spaces for one million, to be outfitted with solar power and hanging gardens. A 7½-foot-high architectural model created by ATOPIA architects expands the Harrisons' vision of vertical habitation, articulating the details of an open-air multipurpose structure and how people could move through it comfortably.

Seven other works were shown in the back gallery. The earliest was *From the 7th Lagoon, The Ring of Fire, The Ring of Water* (1978) and the most recent a 7-foot-high map of the Tibetan plateau (2009), which highlights the changes its seven rivers will undergo from melting glaciers. This one-room survey, even with only a trace of each project, communicated a sense of the Harrisons' more than 30-year commitment to creative thinking on a grand scale.

—Cathy Lebowitz