Exploring Eco Art History

Selected artists projects and resources

Eco Art Caucus of the Women's Caucus for Art

A developing resource guide | Links reviewed October 12, 2026

This guide gathers selected starting points for exploring art, ecology, and relationships with land and water. Follow the links to hear from artists and to read the accounts offered by museums, curators, and researchers. Choose an artist, a project, or a theme that interests you and explore from there.

The selection includes early land art, ecological projects, feminist approaches, and related Indigenous artistic histories. These connections take different forms; inclusion does not mean every artist used the term "eco art." This is a resource collection that we can continue to develop, rather than a complete history.

Reading the links. "Read," "watch," and "explore" indicate what the source offers. Artist accounts, museum interpretations, and historical scholarship provide different perspectives. Exhibition pages describe past events; archive records may lead to research inquiries rather than immediate access to every document. Book links identify the publication, not a promise of free full text.

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Starting points

A few routes into the terminology and the different histories represented in this guide.

Artist movement or resource	Why explore it	Where to read watch or explore
Earthworks and land art MoMA art terms and collection	An accessible way to begin exploring work made with land, natural materials, and particular sites. Use it alongside the other resources to consider how land art and ecological care can have different aims.	Explore MoMA's Earthwork page Collection examples and related reading. A starting point for terminology, rather than a single definition covering every practice.

Artist movement or resource	Why explore it	Where to read watch or explore
Ends of the Earth Land Art to 1974; MOCA	An exhibition-based route into land art's early histories, including experiments beyond the familiar large U.S. earthworks.	Read the exhibition overview Organized by Philipp Kaiser and Miwon Kwon. This is an archived exhibition resource; its original visiting dates have passed.
ecofeminism(s) Curated by Monika Fabijanska	Explores connections between environmental concerns, feminist thought, activism, ritual, and artistic practice through historical and contemporary works.	Read the curator's account A particular curator's framework for exploring these connections. The exhibition's plural title signals a range of approaches.
Listening to the Land Nevada Museum of Art	An Indigenous-centered exhibition resource that opens a different route into relationships among art, land, responsibility, and living beings.	Read the exhibition account Read the museum's contextual account and the individual artists it names. Indigenous practices have distinct cultural histories and should not be folded into a single Western art movement.

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Artists and projects

Selected artists and projects. Use the linked accounts to investigate their particular contexts, intentions, and methods.

Artist movement or resource	Why explore it	Where to read watch or explore
Robert Smithson Spiral Jetty 1970	Land, geology, time, change, and documentation come together in this Great Salt Lake earthwork. Useful for considering both the artwork and its changing site.	Read the foundation's project page Holt/Smithson Foundation provides images and project context. Consider its material and perceptual questions alongside ecological restoration practices elsewhere in this guide.
Nancy Holt Sun Tunnels 1973–76	An entry into land art through perception, orientation, light, and astronomical cycles. Holt's work expands the conversation beyond monumental land alteration.	Explore Sun Tunnels Read Nancy Holt's Sun Tunnels text Foundation project documentation. A linked artist text offers Holt's own description of experiencing the work.

Artist movement or resource	Why explore it	Where to read watch or explore
Richard Long A Line Made by Walking 1967	A walking action and its photograph provide a compact example of how bodily movement through a place can become art.	Read the museum account National Galleries of Scotland includes context and the artist's recollection. Relevant to walking and ephemeral practices; ecological intent should not be assumed.
Hamish Fulton Walking as artistic practice	Fulton's experience-based walking practice offers another way to approach landscape, movement, memory, and the relationship between an experience and its representation.	Explore the artist profile National Galleries of Scotland profile and works. Compare this approach with Long's, rather than treating all walking practices as equivalent.
Hans Haacke Condensation Cube 1963–65	An early systems-oriented work responds to conditions around it. Useful for thinking about an artwork as a changing process rather than a fixed object.	Read MOCA's artwork account A museum explanation of the work's environmental responsiveness. This physical systems approach is one connection to ecology, not a claim that the work restores a habitat.
Agnes Denes Wheatfield — A Confrontation 1982	A wheat field planted on Manhattan landfill brings food, land values, urban life, and artistic intervention into one project.	Explore Denes's museum profile Explore the artist's Wheatfield documentation The Whitney profile places Wheatfield alongside reforestation and other interventions. Follow the artist's own project documentation for a more detailed account.
Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison Ecological proposals and research	The Harrisons' practice connects mapping, dialogue, scientific inquiry, watersheds, biodiversity, and community proposals. A central route into ecological art as sustained research.	Explore The Harrison Studio The studio's publications and career review lead to projects and texts by the artists. Read individual project accounts rather than assuming every proposal was implemented.

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Mierle Laderman Ukeles Maintenance art and care	Ukeles makes maintenance work and systems of life support visible. Her practice connects feminist questions about labour and care with urban infrastructure.	Read and listen to Ukeles at the Whitney The collection page includes the artist's account of I Make Maintenance Art One Hour Every Day. Her 1969 manifesto provides a further historical point of entry.
Bonnie Ora Sherk The Farm and A Living Library	Community learning, growing, landscape design, and urban ecology become connected forms of artistic practice.	Read A Living Library's history The organization's own history connects Sherk's earlier Crossroads Community/The Farm with the later A Living Library approach.
Patricia Johanson Fair Park Lagoon Dallas	Sculptural paths, habitat, public access, and ecological repair are integrated into the design of a degraded urban lagoon.	Read Johanson's project account The artist explains how the commission developed and how attention to living systems shaped its design. A useful comparison with earthworks focused on form or perception.
Alan Sonfist Time Landscape	Living vegetation becomes a public monument to ecological and landscape memory, broadening what civic commemoration can include.	Read the Public Art Fund profile The presenting organization contextualizes Sonfist's ideas about biological and geological history. Project phases have different dates; this guide does not reduce them to a single origin date.
Betty Beaumont Ocean Landmark 1980	An underwater experimental work connects industrial waste, art, scientific investigation, and the possibility of a marine ecosystem.	Explore the artist's project documentation Read the project as a specific historical art-and-science experiment. Its use of processed coal waste is not a general recommendation for marine material disposal.
Ana Mendieta Silueta and earth-body work	Body, land, displacement, identity, and ephemeral traces are connected through performance and sculpture. An important route into feminist and embodied approaches to place.	Explore Mendieta's museum profile Read the National Gallery profile Hammer Museum's Radical Women resource places her work in a broader Latin American and U.S. context. The NGA profile offers additional context on earth-body work.

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Joseph Beuys 7000 Oaks initiated 1982	Tree planting and urban participation are framed through an expanded idea of sculpture and social change.	Read Dia's project account Distinguishes the original Kassel project from its later New York extension. A source for exploring social sculpture and collective action.
Helène Aylon The Earth Ambulance 1982	Feminist activism, anti-nuclear protest, ritual, and the gathering of endangered earth meet in a traveling artwork.	Read Aylon's own account in WEAD First-person history published by Women Eco Artists Dialog. Princeton's collection also holds photographic documentation of the work.
Mary Miss Site public space and City as Living Laboratory	A practice moving between sculpture, public perception, ecological histories, and urban sustainability. Her work makes overlooked environmental conditions available to public experience.	Read the artist's biography Read the Stream Trace interview The artist's site includes project documentation and writings. Nasher's interview about a buried stream offers a direct example of this approach.
Mel Chin Revival Field 1991	Artistic inquiry and scientific testing meet in an experiment using plants to extract metals from contaminated soil.	Read Chin's Art21 interview Watch Mel Chin in Consumption A direct account of how the idea developed. Art21's film adds studio and project discussion. Distinguish the field experiment from a promise of complete site remediation.
Aviva Rahmani Ghost Nets and later ecological projects	Art, restoration, research, and attention to strategic relationships within a landscape form a sustained ecological practice.	Explore Ghost Nets The artist's project page includes documentation and media about a former coastal dump site in Maine. Follow the site for related projects and writing.
Jackie Brookner Biosculptures and water projects	Sculpture is connected with plant-based water remediation, habitat restoration, and community stewardship.	Read Brookner's practice statement Explore the project archive Her project archive offers specific examples of how ecological function and public space informed the work.

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Betsy Damon Living Water Garden 1998	Water, public art, environmental learning, and living treatment systems meet in a park developed in Chengdu, China.	Explore the artist's project account Explore Keepers of the Waters Read project credits and context alongside the artwork. Keepers of the Waters provides a broader route into Damon's art, science, and community work.
Cecilia Vicuña Precarios and quipus	Fragile materials, poetry, weaving, memory, and relationships with the living world offer a distinct approach to ecological and cultural loss.	Read the Art21 studio interview The interview connects small precarious works with large quipus. Use it to hear the artist's thinking rather than labeling all of her work within one movement.
Maria Thereza Alves Seeds of Change	Plant movement and port histories reveal relationships among ecology, colonial trade, local knowledge, and narratives about belonging.	Read the artist's project account A research-led project with multiple iterations. Useful for considering how ecological and social histories are entangled.
Nicolás García Uriburu Coloration of the Grand Canal Venice 1968	A colour intervention in water extends painting into public space and draws attention to relationships between nature and human activity.	Read the Met's artwork account The museum discusses the action and its ecological context. It took place during the Venice Biennale without being part of the official program.
Emily Kam Kngwarray Alhalker Country and painting	A distinct Indigenous artistic history in which painting, Country, living cycles, and cultural knowledge are inseparable.	Read the National Gallery introduction Explore The Alhalker suite Included as a related history of art and land, not as an artist derived from Western land art. National Gallery of Australia offers work-specific interpretation.
Jaune Quick-to-See Smith Land memory and Indigenous histories	Painting and mixed media connect land, historical narratives, dispossession, and environmental concerns.	Read My Roots Extend at the Whitney A substantial museum essay grounded in conversations with the artist. Her first-person Smithsonian interview is listed in the next section.

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Interviews, films and archives

Resources for hearing artists' voices and continuing your research.

Artist movement or resource	Why explore it	Where to read watch or explore
Groundswell Symposium Women of Land Art; Nasher Sculpture Center	Recorded presentations and artist discussion revisit histories that centered a narrower group of land artists.	Watch the symposium recordings Archived program associated with Groundswell: Women of Land Art. Explore speakers and individual recordings at your own pace.
Becoming Ecoart Elders Beverly (Bee) Naidus and Ruth Wallen; WEAD	Two artists discuss how ecological science, feminist organizing, teaching, community practice, and personal experience shaped their work over time.	Read their conversation A direct, accessible example of history told by artists through their own experiences. Includes earlier projects as well as reflections on present practice.
WEAD Magazine Women Eco Artists Dialog	First-person accounts, essays, and artist projects connect ecological art, feminist practice, and environmental and social justice.	Explore the magazine archive A source for further artist-led histories and perspectives. Access and presentation may vary between the current site and older directory pages.
Art21 Climate Crisis Collection Artist films and interviews	A route from earlier ecological approaches into artists' accounts of contemporary environmental concerns.	Watch the thematic collection A curated film theme, rather than a complete history. Related artist pages link to interviews and other films.
Jaune Quick-to-See Smith Oral History Smithsonian Archives of American Art; 2021	A long-form first-person account can add depth to shorter museum essays and artwork descriptions.	Read the interview transcript The interview covers a broad artistic life, not only ecological themes. Availability of full audio and transcripts varies across the Smithsonian's oral-history collection.
Institute for Art + Environment Nevada Museum of Art	Archive collections and research resources offer routes into project documents, correspondence, and histories across many regions.	Explore the research institute Some online information is a collection description or finding aid; full archival material may require a research inquiry or visit.

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Selected books

A small reading shelf for exploring these histories in more depth.

Artist movement or resource	Why explore it	Where to read watch or explore
Fragile Ecologies Barbara C. Matilsky; 1992 exhibition and catalog	An early museum account of artists addressing environmental problems through projects and proposed solutions.	Explore the catalog record Full title: Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artists' Interpretations and Solutions. A library or used-book route may be needed; the linked record is not a full-text edition.
To Life! Linda Weintraub; University of California Press	A wide-ranging guide to ecological artistic approaches, linking earlier projects with later responses to environmental concerns.	Read the publisher's description Full title: To Life! Eco Art in Pursuit of a Sustainable Planet. A survey by its author, useful alongside artist accounts and other histories.
Undermining Lucy R. Lippard; The New Press	Art, land use, extraction, politics, and the experience of place are considered together.	Read the publisher's description Full title: Undermining: A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West. Particularly useful for thinking beyond an isolated artwork toward its social and geographical context.
Art & Ecology Now Andrew Brown; Thames & Hudson	An illustrated survey introduces a range of artists working with nature, environmental questions, materials, and activism.	Read the publisher's description A visual reference for further exploration. Also listed in the learning directory because it supports both historical reading and artistic research.

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