

Quarter/Year

Spring 2016

Course Number

ART-HIST 450

Day/Time

W 2-5

Instructor

Eisenman

Course Title

The Ecology of Modern Art



The geologic period that contains the whole of written history is the Holocene. From the Neolithic to Andy Warhol, the period saw the rise of human impacts upon the environment and the radical redistribution of plants and animals, including significant extinctions during the early Holocene, about 11,000 years ago. A significant cold spell - an Ice Age - occurred about 8,000 years ago leading to drought in North Africa and the Middle East leading to the creation of irrigation systems and the rise of agriculture, social stratification, cities and monumental art, though this remains conjectural. During the late Holocene, around 1500 c.e., Capitalism arose in Western Europe, greatly accelerating already existing tendencies to ecological change, stratification and accumulation. By around 1850, processes of production and accumulation advanced so rapidly that the environment itself was significantly altered almost everywhere. Forests became deserts, rivers changed course, mountains were hollowed out with quarries

and mines, and in certain places, air became thick with smoke and soot. And change sped up even faster during the next century. The last 50 years have witnessed such great and destructive ecological changes that scientists and historians have begun to use a different name to describe the period: the Anthropocene. Global temperature rise, the result of the release of CO<sub>2</sub>, Methane and other gasses have created a greenhouse effect that threatens to destroy the very capitalism that brought the new geological era into being. This course, The Ecology of Modernism will examine the artistic response to the broad transformations that occurred during the late Holocene and Anthropocene, roughly coincident with the rise and decline of modern art, 1850 to 1970. The course will also address the artistic and broader cultural response to recent recognition of anthropogenic climate change. Among the themes the course will address is: 1) the rise of landscape art; 2) Romanticism, Impressionism and the idea of a return to nature and a Golden Age; 3) Primitivism and the infatuation with non-capitalist culture; 4) Orientalism (and Imperialism) as responses to crises of over-production and the simultaneous need to access a diminishing store of raw materials; 5) Post-Colonial art and war; 6) Earth or Environmental Art; 7) Art and apocalypse.

Required Textbooks

Several including John Bellamy Foster's *The Ecological Rift*.

Assessments

Discussion And Seminar Report/Paper