

Environmental Impact Panel Discussion Questions

Submitted by Exhibiting Artists

(Questions listed alphabetical by artists' last name below;
with some editing by Curator)

2:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 14, 2016
St. Mary's College Museum of Art, Moraga, CA

Painter, Chester Arnold, Sonoma, CA
Painter, Britt Freda, Burton, WA
Photographer, Peter J. Goin, Reno, NV
Painter, Karen Hackenberg, Port Townsend, WA
Painter, Mary Helsaple, Sedona, AZ
Sculptor, Michael (Mick) Meilahn, Pickett, WI
Painter, Suze Woolf, Seattle, WA
Moderator: David J. Wagner, Curator

1. **Karen Hackenberg** (Port Townsend, WA) asks:

- a. What are the emotions that underlie your personal observations of our natural world in peril, and that spur you to devote your artistic energies to create images of environmental degradation and destruction?
- b. Do you experience a conflict between the necessities to follow the muse of activism in your artwork versus the pursuit of beauty in art for its own sake?

2. **Mary Helsaple** (Sedona, AZ) asks:

- a. Could you describe your thought process, inspiration, and concept development as it relates to the creation of environmental pieces like those you have in the exhibition?
- b. Is your art meant to educate or edify? How so? Why is this important to you as an artist?
- c. All artists seek the prestige of exhibiting their work in one-person exhibitions. But Environmental Impact is a group show. Why do you participate in group shows? What do group shows offer that one-person shows do not?
- d. Is there a social value that is important for you when creating environmental art?
- e. Do you consider environmental art different than "fine art" per se?
- f. They say that art is the bell weather to issues facing society. Is that true with environmental art today.
- g. What role can/should environmental art play in a technological society?
- h. What are the most crucial environmental issues that needs to be addressed?

4. **Michael (“Mick”) Meilahn** (Pickett, WI) asks:

- a. GMO’s (genetically modified organisms) make it possible to feed the world. On the other hand, some claim that the health and ethical risks are too great to justify genetically engineered food. What are the pros and cons of genetically engineered food and for that matter, industrial scale agribusiness?
- b. Many artworks in Environmental Impact position humanity in a negative way by showing the negative impact of human activity on nature. Yet nature itself can be brutal, while humans have the capability of repairing or correcting negative environmental impact.

Why do you think it is common for environmental artists, either explicitly or implicitly, to romanticize nature at the expense of portraying humans and/or human enterprise in a negative light? This seems so hypocritical. While there are many critics of industrial scale agriculture for example, few would want to go back to the days before modern agriculture.

[Transportation is another example where few environmentalists including artists critical of the ills of the transportation/industrial complex would want to do without the amenities of auto or air transportation.]

3. **Martin Stupich** (Albuquerque, NM) asks:

- a. In a world where Super Pacs and the Super Rich determine the economic, political, and ecological fate of the nation’s three hundred million citizens, does the artist influence culture's trajectory, or just eloquently anticipate and record it? Do artists (or art) much matter?
- b. At a recent UNM symposium on the influence of JB Jackson and photography on thinking about cultural landscape, George Thompson (noted publisher of issue-driven photo books) touted the importance of photography by citing the 8 photo manuscripts by various photographers presently on his desk - each of them addressing sea-level-rise and it's inevitable devastating impact on us; "... which shows exactly where we would be in this world in crisis without photography" he concluded.

But someone in the audience responded: "Your point begs the equally important question 'Where would photography be without crisis?'"

Does this dilemma challenge you? How have you reconciled it?

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