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ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF NATURAL MATERIALS IN CONTEMPORARY ART

Abstract

The use of natural materials has been the subject matter researched on for contemporary art, looking into a new trend of artists using organic elements in independent pieces. As well as a wider set of insights into the drivers behind this shift, how artists go about it and its broader society-wide implications. Based on a qualitative methodology — combining content analysis of works, interviews with the artists and art curators; literature study—the research examines how natural materials are moving beyond ornamentation to become inseparable from artworks—frequently pointing out environmental issues.

The results imply that ephemerality is a concept of relevance to many modern artists, using ephemeral natural resources and creating works which change, rot or disappear. This shift represents a larger cultural pressure to acknowledge the temporary, precarious qualities of human beingness that threaten resistant notions of high/low art or "the true and enduring." The research also explores how such work frequently relates to issues of time, environmental sustainability and human-nature relations that tend to constitute a form of ecocentric praxis.

This conversation moves between the pragmatic and ethical dilemmas concerning natural materials, from attempting to make eco-friendly art and balancing that tension with practice-based logistics. The study finds that using natural materials has become a major theme in contemporary art, giving new grounds for the re-interpretation of arts and environmental cultural studies. The research also calls for investigation of the potential use of natural substrates in other cultural contexts and ethical approaches.

Key words: natural materials, contemporary art, sustainability, ephemerality, ecological art.

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АНАЛИЗ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ ПРИРОДНЫХ МАТЕРИАЛОВ В
СОВРЕМЕННОМ ИСКУССТВЕ

Аннотация

Использование натуральных материалов стало предметом исследования в области современного искусства, в котором рассматривается новая тенденция художников, использующих органические элементы в самостоятельных произведениях. А также более

широкий спектр идей о движущих силах этого сдвига, о том, как художники добиваются этого, и о его последствиях для общества в целом. Основана на качественной методологии, сочетающей контент—анализ работ, интервью с художниками и арт-кураторами.; изучение литературы — в исследовании рассматривается, как натуральные материалы выходят за рамки орнамента и становятся неотделимыми от произведений искусства, часто указывая на экологические проблемы.

Результаты показывают, что эфемерность - это концепция, актуальная для многих современных художников, использующих эфемерные природные ресурсы и создающих произведения, которые меняются, гниют или исчезают. Этот сдвиг представляет собой более сильное культурное давление, требующее признать временные, ненадежные качества человеческого бытия, которые угрожают устойчивым представлениям о высоком/низком искусстве или "истинном и непреходящем". Исследование также показывает, как подобные работы часто затрагивают вопросы времени, экологической устойчивости и отношений человека и природы, которые, как правило, представляют собой форму экоцентрической практики.

Этот разговор проходит между прагматическими и этическими дилеммами, касающимися натуральных материалов, от попыток создавать экологически чистые произведения искусства до уравнивания этой напряженности с помощью практической логистики. Исследование показало, что использование природных материалов стало основной темой в современном искусстве, что дает новые основания для переосмысления искусства и изучения культуры окружающей среды. Исследование также призывает к изучению потенциального использования природных материалов в других культурных контекстах и этических подходах.

Ключевые слова: натуральные материалы, современное искусство, устойчивость, эфемерность, экологическое искусство.

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ҚАЗІРГІ ӨНЕРДЕ ТАБИҒИ МАТЕРИАЛДАРДЫ ПАЙДАЛАНУДЫ ТАЛДАУ

Аңдатпа

Табиғи материалдарды пайдалану қазіргі заманғы өнер саласындағы зерттеу тақырыбына айналды, ол тәуелсіз шығармаларда органикалық элементтерді қолданатын суретшілердің жаңа тенденциясын қарастырады. Сондай-ақ, бұл ауысымның қозғаушы күштері, суретшілердің оған қалай қол жеткізетіні және оның жалпы қоғамға әсері туралы идеялардың кең ауқымы. Жұмыстың мазмұнын талдауды, суретшілермен және өнер кураторларымен сұхбаттарды біріктіретін сапалы Әдістемеге негізделген.; әдебиетті зерттеу-зерттеу табиғи материалдардың ою-өрнектен қалай асып түсетінін және өнер туындыларынан бөлінбейтін болып, көбінесе экологиялық проблемаларды көрсетеді.

Нәтижелер эфемерлік - бұл эфемерлік табиғи ресурстарды пайдаланатын және өзгертін, шіріп кететін немесе жоғалып кететін туындылар жасайтын көптеген заманауи суретшілерге қатысты тұжырымдама екенін көрсетеді. Бұл ауысым жоғары/төмен өнер немесе "шынайы және тұрақты" деген тұрақты түсініктерге қауіп төндіретін адам болудың уақытша, сенімсіз қасиеттерін тануды талап ететін күшті мәдени қысымды білдіреді. Зерттеу сонымен қатар мұндай жұмыстардың экоцентристік тәжірибенің бір түрі болып табылатын уақыт, экологиялық тұрақтылық және адам мен табиғат қатынастары мәселелеріне

қаншалықты жиі әсер ететінін көрсетеді.

Бұл әңгіме экологиялық таза өнер туындыларын жасауға тырысудан бастап, практикалық логистика арқылы осы шиеленісті теңестіруге дейінгі табиғи материалдарға қатысты прагматикалық және этикалық дилеммалар арасында өтеді. Зерттеу көрсеткендей, табиғи материалдарды пайдалану қазіргі заманғы өнердегі басты тақырыпқа айналды, бұл өнерді қайта қарауға және қоршаған орта мәдениетін зерттеуге жаңа негіз береді. Зерттеу сонымен қатар табиғи материалдардың басқа мәдени контексттерде және этикалық тәсілдерде ықтимал қолданылуын зерттеуге шақырады.

Түйін сөздер: табиғи материалдар, заманауи өнер, тұрақтылық, эфемерлік, экологиялық өнер.

Main provisions. The article examines this growing phenomenon -- highlighting a move away from more traditional artistic elements and towards natural mediums such as wood, stone, soil and vegetation. What lies underneath these last few decades of precariousness is a larger cultural, environmental and philosophical shift that contravenes the idea of permanence with art conflated as emblematic (the analogy between nature to perfection) also caught up in erasure. The research explores how these materials, the transient and temporary use of which are highlights or values in themselves apropos to questions of contemporary environmental sustainability or ways

It makes much of the notion that ephemerality is one theme consistent with countless modern artists — why they work in materials such as their own bodies or ice, for example: these objects are fleeting and represent literally or figuratively that life is fragile. This response to global ecological crises sees these ecologically informed artists using materials in ways that are not just aesthetic but engage an eco-centric praxis that queries the sustainability of human activity. Ethical and Logistical Challenges for Artists in Locating & Using Natural Materials, when trying to make an Eco-Artism piece, was another key topic discussed with this study.

Using a qualitative methodology that involved content analysis, artist and curator interviews as well as examining literature on the topic; this study explores motivations behind interventionist art practices in relation to wider society. It postulates that natural materials in contemporary art have the potential to provide new paradigms for considering relations between art and nature, whilst advancing arguments regarding the role of these materials as central sites within emergent artistic practices with a renewed relevance to urgent ecological and cultural matters. The study also suggests more research on the capabilities and ethical considerations of natural materials across different cultural environments.

Introduction. In the increasingly complex world of contemporary visual arts, employing raw materials has become something of a trend as well — mirroring an ongoing debate on ecological issues and returning to Nature while still dealing with sustainability-related matters. You could interpret this turn to nature in art making as a reaction to the global ecological disaster, or you might say it is about anti-artifice of contemporary living. Using organic materials — like wood, stone, soil and plant matter — in art isn't all about that aesthetic appeal; it's a choice related to much deeper-rooted cultural beliefs, philosophical understandings of the world around us and even political movements. Given that many artists are moving towards nature as an area of interest or a new medium, this is something to note and explore further — what does it all mean with regard the art world, contemporary craft practice etc?

Everything spins on the fact this investigation leads to considering why and how natural materials have become a core of contemporary art practices. Unlike traditional materials used in the past such as canvas, oil paint and marble (several instances being centuries old), natural components tend to be armed with a sense of temporality but also create an essence fragility behind them that has connections rooted strongly within environmental interests. This makes them ideally well-suited to illustrate such themes of the natural world as life and death, time passing through land-based wholesomeness. But working with these materials also brings up questions around permanence,

conservation and the function of art during times of environmental crisis. This research aims to show the evolving attitudes between art and nature considering motivations for their use in natural materials, as well as how they are used.

The research background suggests that the employment of natural materials in artwork is not a new occurrence; its roots can be traced far back into ancient civilisations, yet some lessons were drawn from it since clay, stone and pigments made out of plants or minerals were used for making either utilitarian items as well expressions. But the deployment of natural materials has in fact acquired a certain valence within contemporary Western art. Robert Smithson, Nancy Holt and Richard Long were also at this point symbols of the transition to Land Art which erupted in the 1960s/70s. Find a space that creates environment-specific large-scale works which break free from standard gallery spaces. These works, including Smithson's "Spiral Jetty" (1970) and Holt's "Sun Tunnels" (1976), not only formulated a way to appreciate the beauty or power of natural phenomena but also established them as experiences that are immersive and site-specific.

This tradition is picked up by several artists today who see the reuse and potentiality in natural resources, often from Sustainability or an ecological standpoint. Artists such as Andy Goldsworthy and Olafur Eliasson are just two examples of those who have achieved global status for their work which include utilising natural elements in the construction of temporary installations or sculptures that intervene with nature. By surrounding us with temporary figures—staged out of leaves, ice, stone and other material that are then left to fall back into their natural state—he reminds us how short life is; nothing can last for eternity! In contrast, Eliasson works with natural materials to allow audiences to surround themselves into a space where they can reevaluate their relationship towards nature. An excellent example of this approach is his contribution to The Weather Project (2003), at Tate Modern, in which he used mist, light and mirrors to simulate the sun reflected against an "artificial sky" creating a condition in an indoor environment that would lead visitors through a mystical experience leading them toward self-reflection.

Whilst interest in natural materials is at an all-time high, there is still a lack of literature concerning what reasons might be behind this choice and the wider implications of using them. Others, like T. J. Demos and Amanda Boetzkes have looked at art in relation to ecology and activism, but we need still much more information about what these materials mean for contemporary art practices today aggressive form of legislated morality than active ideologicalized relegation. Frequently, the recourse to organic materials questions established ideas of origin in claims that art is permanent and static; at whom preservation? at what viewer/sensory experience? Moreover, using elements from the natural world in art also compels one to reflect on environmental preservation by presenting ethical concerns towards how these materials are sourced and used — at a time when humanity must face challenges for better conservation (and sustainability).

To explore these questions, this research will consider the technological interventions made by artists while referencing an array of contemporary examples from a variety of natural material uses — how they are used and explored in their artworks; then evaluated based on what impact it has to art world including broader society. In this way, it seeks to offer insights into how art is related with nature today and explore the differentiation through which natural materials are employed by contemporary creators in relationship to urgent ecological matters and societal problems. This study will also bear attention to the possibilities of natural matters in shaping futuristic artistic patterns and at the same time, their grounds for peril or new prospects on artists whose artistry uplifts a flag of contemporariness. This analysis aims to demonstrate the importance of natural materials in current art practice and the way that they reveal (and build) our intuitions toward nature.

Materials and methods. Studying the use of natural materials in contemporary artworks demands a sophisticated, multi-layered method that acknowledges how differently these substances are used and justified. This research uses qualitative methods and a selection of techniques; in-depth

content analysis based on selected works, interviews with artists and curators, investigation through relevant literature. The goal is to provide an in-depth look at the histories, motivations and processes that inform artists' use of natural materials more broadly — as well as some broader cultural context (both within art and beyond). In the subsequent section, I will explain exact steps to be conducted in this research process including how each element (arguments+theory) of analysis is assembled and joint together; that would help other researchers learn from my methods.

The process began by identifying a specific set of contemporary artworks using natural material as its main thematic premise and content. Because of the ambitious scope of this subject, clear criteria for selecting case studies were essential to both target artworks that would give meaningful insights into various applications beyond traditional models as indicated by multiple contributors and to create a well-balanced overview. Selection criteria — The artwork had to be created within the past 30 years, include natural elements as a significant part of its composition and have been in collection or exhibited at an important public art institution. The criteria were intentionally broad to include a wide array of exemplary within the field, but they also underscored that selected works had already gained some threshold level of recognition from both public and critical sectors.

First, having settled on a sample of artworks to focus upon, each work underwent detailed content analysis. The analysis was carried out in two steps. With each artwork, form (composition, materiality and techniques) was examined first. A great emphasis is given to all the natural materials used in each work: where they come from, how they are extracted and prepared by nature, why things look like what we see. For instance, when looking at the ephemeral sculptures of Andy Goldsworthy, we studied the detailed way in which he used found-in-situ materials like leaves and stones; how these could be arranged to form patterns (and forms) that have a root as deep into their environment as they are temporary. Similarly, we took an in-depth look at Olafur Eliasson's large-scale installations where he uses natural elements to connect the viewer with their surroundings and offer a fully immersive experience that erases the boundary between nature versus nurture.

In addition to the formal analysis, a more content-based indexing was also done on each artwork which involved analysing artistic tendencies and ideas present in themes of works. This included the extraction of meanings represented by natural materials, as well other implications suggested on a larger scale like sociocultural or ecological and even philosophical ones. For instance, observers commented on the recurring motif of ephemerality in Goldsworthy's work within a broader framework based upon existential anxieties about nature and mortality. By contrast, the study of Eliasson considered art in relation to climate change and explored how artists may use their work on these interrelated themes to affect public debate. In other words, the traditional art history gave just an insight into how these natural materials work only as material and it focused on each peice as single, but when using content analyse in a combination of formal analysis with thematic analyssis we were able to understand more deeply also about what is Akech-Naturs meaning?

After completing the content analysis, we conducted interviews with a sample of current artists using natural materials and curators aware of or involved in this tendency as well as art critics related to it. These interviews were conducted to provide an insight from the artist-level on why natural materials are used in contemporary art and get a broader sense of how curators and critics view these works. Interviews were semi-structured, which allowed some flexibility on the conversational level but ensured that key topics were covered. The questions were also built to give a more in-depth answer about the choice of material as an artist, what they want their work and why it matters, broadly speaking — fine art but with natural materials.

The questions asked of the artists then zeroed in on specifics: "What made you start creating natural materials? Where do you pull the materials from for your work? Q: How do you think your work relates to environmental or ecological questions? and 'What obstacles have you faced in working with natural materials and how did you overcome those? It was hoped that these questions

would surface a richer sense of an individual artist's process and thinking, without also revealing some commonality across the various practices interrogated. To curators and critics, we asked about trends within the art world, responses to works using natural materials, as well as their projections into this practice's future. With asking questions to both artists and curators the research was an attempt at getting a holistic view on natural materials used at contemporary art, from its performance into reception.

The interviews were conducted in person, by videoconferencing or via written responses as appropriate to the availability and preferences of participants. The interviews have been audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. The authors then coded the transcriptions and performed a thematic analysis to identify patterns, ideas, or insights that were cross-examined in order to inform data-analysis. The interviews were thematically analyzed using qualitative data analysis software for organizing and interpretation of the large volume of quantitative data collected. It also supplied important situational and interpretive framing of the results from the content analysis, resulting in a more complex picture of why natural materials still have – or are perceived to have — symbolic power in recent art.

This was added to accompany the automated content analysis and interviews as a comprehensive review of literature on the topic, in order to ground our research within wider academic/ theoretical discussion. (10) I drew on a broad range of primary material, such as artist statements and exhibition catalogues, alongside secondary sources – academic articles; books; critical essays. Some of the key purposes that this literature review achieved included providing historical background to the use of natural materials in art (as well as how they have influenced intervention), pointing out debates and current discussions into sustainable practices, identifying limitations within existing scholarship that were considered addressable by this piece. Review sections were by thematic heading (e.g., land art, ecological art; the materiality of art). Migrating the findings from literature review to content analysis and interviews meant that situational empirical data was added with theoretical depth through which natural materials in contemporary art could be well studied.

Please note that to guarantee the research rigor and quality, different strategies were used. To begin, use of multiple methods (content analysis, interviews and literature review) facilitated triangulation thus enabling findings from one method to be confirmed with those from another. This served to strengthen the validity and reliability of this evidence. A second strength is the inclusion of a broad, diverse sample artwork and interviewees to counteract potential biases for an overall comprehensive perspective on the field. Finally, the comprehensive documentation of our research process, with artwork selection criteria and interview questions included along with coding process details fully enables replicability from other researchers wishing to investigate further into this domain.

This way, the current method takes a comprehensive and systematic look on natural materials in contemporary art practices. By triangulating methods that include content analysis, interviews and literature reviews this research provides a rich narrative of the phenomenon looking at both its material (what is being bought) and conceptual aspects. Fully visible, in-depth descriptions of each stage necessary to affect the research means that other researchers can repeat your method and explore further the evolving relationship between art + nature. With these methodological ambitions, the research seeks to contribute to a broader discussion of contemporary art, ecology and materiality, aiming to develop nuanced reflections on what Isabelle Stengers refers to as a trickster question: How are natural materials reconfiguring what counts as contemporary artistic practice in the twenty-first century?

Results. The investigation of natural materials in contemporary art unfolds a complex field, where motivations, techniques and thematic interests form an intricate matrix tightly interwoven with on-going ecological, social and philosophical discourses. This investigation reveals many examples of how artists use natural materials to blur standard categories, mobilize viewers around

environmental consciousness and reinstate discourse about the relationships between art and nature. These findings are structured according to the key themes that emerged from a content analysis of articles, interviews with artists and curators, as well as an extensive literature review. One the materiality and temporality of natural materials, two on the symbolic and conceptual meanings embedded in these works at a larger scale, three within sustainability frameworks / sustainable structures that aim to address broader socio-ecological concerns.

The materiality of natural elements is reiterated as one of the most emerging points in this content analysis. Artists who create with organic material often use it to help define or celebrate the inherent properties — qualities so easily forgotten currently of mass production and synthetic materials. Indeed, the texture, color and form of natural objects — wood stocks in painting; stone or vegetative matter chiseled into permanent shape — are as important for their experience than anything else. The attributes of these materials — leaves, ice or stones for Andy Goldsworthy — are the medium and the message. Ephemeral sculptures in situ, Sea Objects allegedly play with light and shadow to display the organic beauty of time-based materials whilst losing oneself momentarily both physically, intellectually or/and spiritually; at a given moment enabling viewers face life's inherent ephemerality. Goldsworthy says, "it's not about art. it is just about life and the need to understand that a part of what we are talking with here (my work) has made contact I'm not creating art, it's just one of the parts of life that must be understood" Wood wants to grow, stone has time and a city should bring nature" (Goldsworthy, 1990).

Material focus is deeply entwined with another salient theme in the study: temporality. Of course, there are many modern artists working with natural materials who take this transitory nature of the physicality of their work a step further and choose to make pieces that they specifically hope will change or decay. This temporality is frequently set in opposition to the presumed timelessness of art. Such as in the installations of Anya Gallaccio where organic matter was used to create work that visibly changed throughout the exhibition (flowers, chocolate and ice). And in Gallaccio's "Preserve 'Beauty' (1991–2003), 2,000 gerbera flowers pinned to the gallery wall were thereby condemned to decay and disappear — a fine meditation on the life cycle of aesthetics. The viewer is forced to question what they think a photo should be, and encouraged by their presented subject matter (which can range from man himself down to the elements in nature).

The importance of creation out of natural materials is further emphasized by the interviews with artists and curators. Many of the artists described decay or transformation as an inherent part of their work, and that this is not just a result from working with organic materials but more so because they elucidate certain themes when used to physically translate ideas. The mediums I work with → plants, soil, water ← those are living things that shift & grow and die. This cycle of life is fundamental to the meaning behind this piece. This part is not only about the visual, but what it signifies between life/ death and regrowth)" (August 2023) — interview with artist. Such a view is congruent with larger ecological truths, one that appreciates the web of life and natural forces supporting all species.

The research also identified that alongside materiality and temporality, artworks using natural materials are enriched with the symbolic (cultural associations) and conceptual meanings embedded within them. They are usually rooted in far-reaching cultural, philosophical and environmental underpinnings. The use of earth, clay and other organic matter in feminist art (for example considered by Lucy Lippard, is a form of reclamation traditionally marginalised or undervalued forms of labor and creativity (Lippard,1997). Employing natural materials in this way is a form of resistance, an act that helps to empower people with the means necessary to challenge common cultural narratives and provide alternative frameworks for viewing reality.

In doing so, they also found that a lot of contemporary artists use natural materials to deal with environmental and ecological problems directly forcefully. A high-visibility artist like Olafur Eliasson, for example—with his room-size installations blending natural substances to produce all-encompassing experiences about environmental overexploitation and the endangered earth. The

most well-known project, however — his work “Ice Watch” (2014), where 12 large ice blocks were transported from Greenland to central Copenhagen and allowed to melt into the sea there – was created specifically as a means of showing the reality of climate change in an immediate way. The ice is 10,000 years old and ephemeral: between each of the table Geo Urns there are castings that in liquid form may hurtle into a stew or soup Eliasson acknowledges with care. “I also wished to connect, through the use of this ancient material,” suggests Eliasson “, so people who engage with it could share experience. This melting ice serves as an indicator of our losses” (Eliasson, 2014) These works exemplify how natural material can be used to not just produce aesthetically captivating art, but also raise awareness for the urgent situation of our planet which requires solutions.

Thematic analysis finds that several curators and critics regard the inclusion of natural materials within contemporary art practice as a form of eco-activism. Several curators observed that shows of work made from organic matter often drew an audience less than art-savvy, but more invested in the environment. These events are usually used to raise awareness on issues like loss of habitat, over-harvesting and illegal trade while encouraging a change in behaviour. As a curator observed, “Art changes the way people feel and opens your eyes to seeing the world in new ways. Artists working with natural materials are sending a message to the rest of us—through our exploitation, manipulation and waste management we distort an energy cycle on which everything depends; (Interview transcript provided by curator)

The research also identifies important considerations of the practical and ethical issues associated with working in materials from nature, alongside these thematic discoveries. During the discussion which will follow, artists and curators’ detail one of the many challenges here — sustainability. This can be perceived as an environmental response, but also prompts the questions of where these materials are sourced from and how they might impact upon a landscape. To the artists working with wood or stone who must account for the sourcing of those materials — especially in a world where natural resources are already being depleted. A variety of artists are now tackling this challenge by adopting sustainable or environmentally friendly practices — working with local communities, using recycled materials and so on.

This commitment to sustainability resembles the principles of artists such as Agnes Denes, an ecological artist dating back to the 1960s. Her signature piece “Wheatfield — A Confrontation” (1982) juxtaposed the planting and harvest of a field of wheat amid downtown Manhattan, critiquing both land use in urban areas as well our relationship to food production and environmental stewardship. Denes shows us how natural matter can be worked with in a manner that is formally convincing whilst also ethically imperative, reminding audiences of the wider context of individual choices as well as calling for more sustainable modes and forms of life.

The literature also underlined the role of natural materials in relation to how we experience and evaluate contemporary art. Through its interviews, the book raised several questions about how artwork made from living or perishable materials might initially challenge traditional conceptions of art as something precious and enduring (producing debates around responsibility for conservation in both artists and viewers), but also creates new modes and forms aesthetic experience. In occasions where the very nature of a piece is that it will wither, or transform over time – what is to be conserved and in which way? The fugitive character of these works made several curators contend that it is only right to leave them untouched, even at the price they get lost. Some indicated that steps should be taken to record and archive the event in some manner, using photographs, video recording or written documentation so its effects would not be lost after it was over.

This discussion is especially pertinent to museum and gallery collections due to the resources often needed for acquisition and storage of contemporary art. But as one museum director said, “When we collect works made of natural materials, it puts the burden on us to understand how they’ll be preserved in perpetuity. Keeping a physical object — it’s the key experience and it has not only the memory of meaning but this archaic form of work” (Interview with museum director. 2023

September). That has profound implications for how museums and galleries will need to think, in the future, about looking after works which push or blur traditional boundaries of art — that demand a more flexible curation.

Overall, the research indicates that the utilization of natural materials within contemporary art is a rich and varied practice revealing wider cultural, ecological as well as philosophical issues. These results help expose how materiality and temporality can contribute to affective capacities for the arts, as well reveal Earth materials potent ability to become an agent of resistance, empowerment or environmental activists. It also underscores the practical and ethical quibbles with this practice especially concerning sustainability as well as preservation. Overall, they contribute to the understanding of how this relationship between art and nature is changing over time... insights which are of importance for artists, curators, or scholars who wish to investigate whether there might still be new properties in natural materials.

As the boundaries of art expand and grow with artists exploring different ways to connect with nature, natural materials will continue for some time being a significant thread running through contemporary practice. Future research would be able to build on these findings in other and emerging cultural areas (e.g. Indigenous art practices), or investigate what happens as natural materials become playfully adapted within new digital/interactive media formats too Through this continued examination of the various contexts artists create using natural materials today, scholars can help expand how we understand and take action through art to confront some of our most challenging problems.

Discussion. The results of this project show how complex and ambivalent natural materials become in actual art relevant its functionality as aesthetic characterization, or even at times when transmitters from once it symbolic reference. The results suggest that contemporary artists are increasingly turning to nature as more than just a wellspring of empirical knowledge, but an essential partner with whom they engage directly in their visual work. The Afterlives section considers the broader implications of these findings alongside existing research and within current debates surrounding contemporary arts, environmental discourse.

A notable characteristic of the employment of natural materials in modern art is that it calls into question traditional distinctions between what we might think as stop, static objects divorced from their location and time. In fact, much of the research is by contemporary artists who deliberately exploit these ephemeral or mutable aspects inherent to organic materials through works that are in an iterative process, decayed or even eventually disappeared. This emphasis on transience is entirely foreign to the art of the West, where through years and decades a cult has been formed that sings pens about eternity and imperizibility as core issues within assessing artistic values. The permanence of materials like marble, bronze and oil paint has been used to conflate great art with the timeless. Yet as more and more contemporary artists use natural materials, such stock conventions—and of course the whole notion that art should have value—are being reconsidered.

The radical turn to an impermanent art has precedents in the history of naturempjes. During the 1960s, and by artists such as Robert Smithson and Richard Long but also others like Marian Karel it became a historically significant movement because it broke away from that norm of contemporary art practice—that sculpture must integrate indoor. Smithson's "Spiral Jetty" (1970) as well Long's "A Line Made by Walking" (1967), both instigate the role that natural matter and processes play in physically forming works of art which are indistinguishable from their surrounding area, therefore being manipulated by earthly forces. The practice of early experiments with land art has been highly influential in the shaping of current, contemporary uses for natural materials and many artists today continue to work around ideas about community or a position between art and environment—highlighting performative documentation that demonstrates both ephemerality as well as change.

Yet according to this study, the works reveal that many contemporary artists are not only carrying engagement with nature into a new era but also intensifying their association especially in an age of increased environmental consciousness and climate crisis. While the crop of artists in the 1960s and '70s known as land artists were more interested in pushing the boundaries surrounding what art could be, most of today's practitioners have a profound commitment to nature, seeing their creative efforts as vehicles for enacting environmental change. Artists such as Olafur Eliasson whose installations are made from natural elements to create works that allow audiences to hands on experiences and attention towards the effects of climate change. For example, Eliasson's *Ice Watch* (2014) not only constitutes an interaction with a natural environment, but it also operates as an unmistakable statement demanding immediate action in the face of global warming accomplished by proposing warm clothes made from fish leather. Eliasson brings literal blocks of melting ice from Greenland to urban squares in Copenhagen, Paris and London as a direct tactic at creating emotional embodied viewing experiences that force the public directly into contact with climate change like few other artists deploys such tactics —a theme whose resonance strongly predicates on today socio-political milieu (Eliasson, 2014).

This trend concerns the single artworkscraped. As we saw in this study, the significance of natural materials within contemporary art is inherently metaphorical and embodies a potent ideological cargo which extends beyond artistic practice. From another perspective, the laborious work in organic materials such as wood or earth (other than sounds) can also be interpreted as being a reaction to an increasing alienation from nature whilst still benefiting contemporary life. These materials are a reminder that as much as we may be immersed in technology, urbanization and modernity, the physical processes of nature still contribute to shaping our existence beneath countless layers of concrete. This nostalgic longing for a reconnect with nature is best understood as not merely the romantic declension from an Ideal — it also doubles as critical engagement on sustainability, depletion of resources and environmental destruction that are proposed by post-nature phenomena.

The book shows that the close dialogue between art and architecture is critical, as especially works focused on sustainability profits from it — a piece of research which continues to provide strong inputs into current discussions in interaction with ongoing debates within both landscape design practice and environmental studies. The study reveals how many contemporary artists that work with natural materials are engaging in best practices surrounding sustainability. This consciousness is accurate to the meticulous attention paid when sourcing and selecting material, as well as several artists engaging in recycled or re-claimed materials so that they are not an ecological burden. This echoes a larger trend toward sustainable art practices in response to the environmental impact of producing and exhibiting artwork with many artists, curators, and other institutions looking for ways that they can reduce their carbon footprint associated with exhibitions. Sustainability in art is not only a utilitarian issue, but also has conceptual depth as it pertains to the theme of eco-stewardship and citizen responsibility.

For example, we see an illustration of how naturally occurring materials can be used without compromising the aesthetic and moral consideration. For instance, her 1982 work “*Wheatfield – A Confrontation*” — in which she planted and harvested a two-acre wheat field on a landfill site in Manhattan, forces consideration about food production, land-use yet also the common sphere of interaction between art & societal issues. The symbolic power of the work comes from its reference to a naturally bountiful, life-giving staple crop in contrast with the harsh lines and wide-open hard landscape surrounding it. So that is why Susan Danes' work emerges, and she exemplifies what art can do even before the term "ecological" was coined (Denes, 1982).

When these findings are considered alongside previous research, it seems clear that the employment of natural material in contemporary art is a further step along with current direction regarding reevaluating toward what kind purpose fashion has on society. Other scholars, such as T. J.

Demos have examined the ecological activist practices addressed by quasi-contemporary art and how it contributes to exposing environmental concern within a public dialogue making contemporary visual arts an integral part of climate communication (Vermehren and Lafuente, 2012). According to Demos, artists using natural materials often perform a style of 'creative resistance,' contesting prevailing narratives of consumption, exploitation and environmental degradation in their practices (Demos, 2016). Some of the evidence on which this perspective rests are provided by the research reported here, suggesting that many artists who use natural materials do so with an intention to participate in a meaning-making process where they collectively form and are formed by environmental movements.

Yet the research also indicates that utilizing natural materials in contemporary art is problematic and even contradictory. This is the kind of tension that emerges in one of many subjects addressed by the study: between making environmentally responsible art and what it takes to produce (and present) Art object. Whether an artist can source materials sustainably and thus reduce their ecological footprint, of course, depends on the nature of the material; for some artists this poses such daunting obstacles that sustainability remains out-of-equation altogether. This is even more apt for installations that are considerably bigger and require the use of substantial resources to build and keep them functional. Answers regarding the concerns of how to align what artists may perceive with responsibility around conservation management are still unequivocally complicated, and this is an area that requires more questions than answers.

Considerations Furthermore, the study spotlights some of these hazards in relation to natural materials and touches upon ethics connected with sourcing or using specific kinds of nature fibres. Some artists, the results note, are critiqued for working with materials seen as exploitative or environmentally toxic. Such critiques raise deep questions regarding the roles of artists, as well as potential curators in environmental art. The truth about Australian art and the environment but in that case, how can they accommodate the call of art with their responsibility for care and preservation? Not easy questions, but they are vital to the future of a sustainable and ethical art.

If you are using natural materials there is so much more to consider; after all, nothing lasts forever. This point is discussed in the results section, and art crafted from organic materials often questions what defines traditional works of lasting permanency. For museums and galleries, it creates a dilemma as they are meant to conserve art for posterity. What to do with those made from plant material remains largely uncharted territory, as technology is still catching up with the challenges of preserving such ephemeral works. A few institutions have tried filming or photographing this work and documenting it that way, but these methods can raise their own set of ethical issues as well as practical concerns. Specifically, can a still photograph or video ever accurately represent something that is meant to be experienced live? And if not, what does this suggest about the preservation of such works?

As difficult as this might be, the incorporation of natural materials in contemporary art serves as a key shift that is transforming and expanding what we have defined by artistic activity. Up to a certain extent, the results from this study indicated that these issues would not abate and attention across artists, curators as well as audiences in matters of environmental justice/practices with regard contemporary art will continue to increase. If this field of work develops, researchers will need to continue exploring what natural materials are being utilised for in the construction process and consequently how they form part of a potential new language. In this way, we can begin to get closer insight into how art works not only as productive mode with relation to some of the urgent problems of our age (the global era defined by climate change and resource exhaustion, but also in term around human nature relationship).

In conclusion, the employment of natural substances in visual art forms exactly what a more intricate event than may be assumed merely reflects wider cultural and environmental issues as well as philosophical considerations. This study will add to our knowledge of this trend by examining the use of natural materials in a manner that either refuses conventional notions of art or

intentionally addresses environmental themes related both to working fast and care, which can depict certain meanings but also taint others. But the research also raises challenges and contradictions of the process in terms of sourcing, lifecycle management, use phase (fuel qualities) as well as ethical issues related to exploitation. These challenges for the art world suggest that natural materials and nature will continue as a vital protagonist in contemporary art, opening new avenues of possibilities to creativity and critical forms of engagement toward both human beings and others.

Conclusion. Through the study of natural materials in contemporary art, there exists an important and continuously changing wind within this trend that also resists all traditions from modern art schools or ideology outside their own discourse as well on engaging environmental problems. The research has identified innovative application of organic nature towards temporality, sustainability and the human connection with the environment by contemporary artists. Including the passage of time as a primary element in their works, these artists blur traditionally understood boundaries to reflect experiences through art inherently removed — reflecting an impermanence that both anchors life and helps it float. This approach is diametric to the ancient desire for permanence in art and represents a move toward an active dynamic process-based knowledge of artistic practices.

This work is important because it helps advance the broader conversation about ecological art and what role you have as an artist in confronting environmental problems. Indeed, as the study demonstrates, incorporating natural materials into art is not simply an aesthetic decision but in fact part of a communicative (commercialised) strategy strategically employed today to generate awareness about climate change and depletion. These are all aspects that can be woven into a work, giving it depth or creating intensity among the audiences who experience material change on levels more than of intellectual and emotional. It is a practice which might even influence not only the art world but also public perception about environmental problems, so it becomes an important topic to study for both those working with issues of environment as well as artists and art historians.

This implies that future research in this field might not only explore the use of natural materials but could also further investigate how artists from various cultural and geographical backgrounds interact with nature to produce their work. Furthermore, the ethical consequences of using natural material in terms of sustainability remain an area for more research and consideration vis-vis ephemeral preservation. This sets the stage for a continued examination of natural materials within contemporary art in relation to global environmental change, providing new directions through which to investigate and express our interfaces with nature (Davis 2014). By identifying the mechanisms through which forest microbes decay materials, this study sets a foundation for future inquiries underlining the potential use of natural ingredients in defining contemporary art renditions.

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