
Mythogram one - thoughts on environmental art

0.0 What is environmental art? Before we can answer this (if we can) the question must be divided into two questions: 1.0 What is art? 2.0 What is environment?

1.0 What is art? - art is a language, a means of communication.

1.1 What is communication? - Communication is an ethical listening and saying *in communion with* the other. Communication is how life survives.

1.2 What does art communicate? - art is language that interrogates language. When languages stagnate - when survival is threatened - art communicates the threat in a way that offers a solution.

1.3 How does language stagnate and how does this threaten survival? - A language stagnates when that which is written or spoken in the language becomes merely an ordering of things; at which point each iteration becomes an order as such, and not a means of communication – where none are actually listening or saying, and evolution ceases. Communication is an ethical transaction in which each one must justify its saying in this moment and in the presence of a listening other. A language stagnates when all writing and all saying has been reduced to an ‘It is Written!’ or an ‘It is Said!’. (This could be thought of as a kind of fascism of the word.)

1.4 But where and how is such a catastrophe occurring? - It is happening right here in the lines of this text. Each of these words is the ideal object in which a rich variety of awkwardness is compressed. Each could be interrogated back into its roots, and beyond, into the very structure of things – by which I mean that we could stop here and now, in this moment, and listen in depth to what each word is actually saying. But to do such a thing would itself be counter-productive to the kind of ‘ideal survival’ that this flow of words permits.

1.5 So what’s the problem? - If art is for the re-creation of language - a necessary and continual balancing of human languages, between the ordering of ideal objects as ‘knowledge’, and unknowable awkwardness of other things, then art is a fundamental human right and responsibility. Art is the constant and ethical search for a paradigm of ‘awkward survival’; but the problem is that over the last millennium, art itself has become the ideal object. The art of linguistic re-creation has been subsumed by the text it once sought to interrogate... art has been commodified, as Art!

1.6 But surely that’s just a fact of life? - In recent centuries, in Western cultures, art has been taken out of the hands of people and is nowadays re-presented to them as The Art Experience! – in which the knowing re-creation of language has been ceded to someone ‘creative’ called ‘An Artist!’ But in this move towards the power of an ‘ideal survival’, I have lost touch with the awkwardness of the Other – which would (if I could only understand it) make me what I am.