

Art and culture in a period of climate change

Malcolm Miles

www.malcolmmiles.org.uk

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Twenty years ago it was species conservation ...



- In the 1990s, global warming meant:
- Fields of sunflowers in England (like tourists saw in southern France);
- Tea and coffee growing in Cornish valleys;
- The spread of exotic birds (such as the Egret) to English waters and fields;
- Warmer winters = lower energy bills ...
- NOW – it's violent and unpredictable weather, floods, fires and looming economic decline

Now it's climate and waste apocalypse

[the *WEEE Man*, Eden Project, Cornwall, P Bonomini]



- BUT
- Do notions / images of an apocalyptic future render the issues a sub-plot to the disaster movie (a popular genre pre-1/11, now taking new forms such as *The Day After Tomorrow*)?
- Does preaching doom alienate people?
- Is there anything individuals can do in face of globalised business-as-usual (when we need a radical change to the prevailing economic system)?
- EITHER WAY – we can't say we didn't know

1492-20???: globalisation, capital's total imperative =

Earth as dustbowl [The Sun and New Scientist, in the same week]



- In these conditions, is it worth looking to art for intervention?
- In the 1980s, faced with seemingly impossible political change, Herbert Marcuse argues it was: art offers another realm, a critical-aesthetic dimension as antidote to present conditions;
- Does art enable / articulate an alternative imaginary?
- Does art provoke a response, or enable practical participation in a greener future?

What is to be done? Imagine no M-ways ...

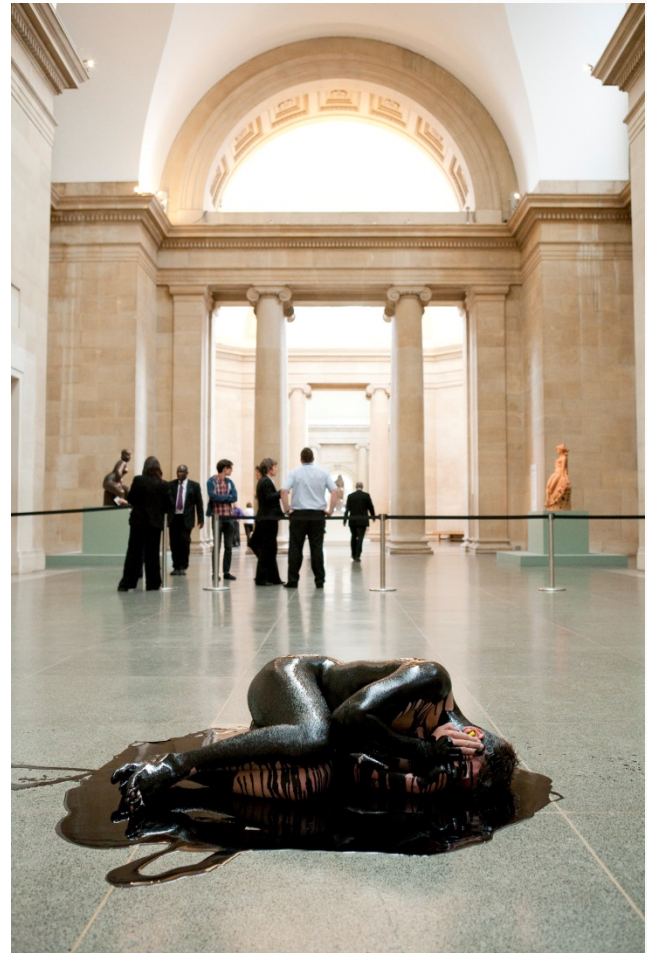
[Cornford & Cross]



Uncanny reflections – HeHe, *Nuage Vert*



Liberate Tate : art and oil made visible



Is climate change another disaster movie script? Or ...

- Is there scope for local action, such as green consumerism? (buying locally sourced products from local shops which tend to keep the money in the local economy)
- Such steps have limits – and do not reduce the need for state regulation of trade.



Anti-roads / anti-capitalism / anti-war: the same problem as facing climate change

- Since anti-roads protests in the 1990s, a groundswell of resistant action has emerged; it is messy, not coherent, and does not offer a programme (like a political party). But it is what there is, and gives hope.



Another world is possible

