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Contemporary art and design fail in its endeavours to capture and integrate ideas of 'nature'.

In the 5th essay, Berger describes how oil paintings are like a language used by their owners to describe to themselves and to others, their wealth or their ideology. What is in the picture only needs to represent what is in the capabilities of a person's possession for it to reinforce ideas of what they own and what status they have in society.

But in this essay Berger also describes how landscape painting applies the least to this argument.

"Nature was not thought of as the activities of capitalism; nature as a whole, defied possession."

Berger describes how nature, "like the sky, can be no one thing and therefore cannot be owned". And the only exception is for landscape paintings in art seems to be for paintings such as Gainsborough's 'Mr and Mrs Andrews' where they are portrayed besides the land they own.

Kenneth Clark is quoted at this point on Gainsborough.

"The business of portrait painting left him no time to make studies from nature." (which is implied as a desire of Gainsborough.)

Though the artist may have wanted to be studying nature and committing to the capturing of a natural experience through art, this has no pay and is undesirable and therefore unpursued by the artist. This may be because of Berger's idea of nature not being thought of as the 'activities of capitalism', or it could be linked to his thoughts in the first essay about perspective and the experience of

the picture. Does the artist need to recreate an experience, true to nature, if nature is owned by no one and can be experienced by everyone? Can nature ever truly be captured in art as it is no one thing, it is a system and phenomenon constantly changing shape?

Plato in The Republic says art is always an imitation. The idea of the artist is betrayed in its realisation because it can only be a copy. This is dangerous and it leads away from the truth.

To apply to Berger's way of describing landscapes as less desirable. Landscapes and paintings that try to accurately communicate a natural experience or a view of nature, will only have one perspective and will not truly be able to recreate the experience of the painter (not true to nature).

The painter can be trying to recreate the experience or building on it, if they try to have nature among people or people's possessions, nature is lost.

In modern society there is a need for nature. When it comes to;

The consideration of green space in urban areas for reasons of social behaviour and mental health, ideas of pollution affecting public health and CO2 carbon emissions affecting the climate, dying ecosystems that threaten food sources, rising sea levels affecting lower grounds.

Design can be contradictory, un-preventative and only a façade of a solution to a problem.

One example that has lingered in my memory is from the Milano expo 2015 where the USA (Biber architects) had built a concrete

pavilion with a vertical garden on the side.



A few years ago, it was all the rage for cities to have a few tall benches with plants growing out of them, a message on one side explaining a concept for clean air in city centres through the use of more greenery about the place. On the other side of the bench would be a WIFI hotspot.

Recently, a plan formed by Johnson as mayor of London to build a garden foot bridge over the Thames river in London has been thrown out. The plan being to build a massive steel and concrete suspension system, the usual wavy lines and geometric shapes, and a few plants alongside the path.

I think its easy to see my point here. That integrating 'nature' is often used as a way of masking actually quite un-environmentally friendly schemes or ideas. Much like Mr and Mrs Andrews next to their land.

To understand these problems with the approach to 'nature' in design, I think you can recognise this as a way of understanding current attitudes towards environmental issues. Almost like a want to be seen doing something without any compromise to a way of living.

These ideas also link the Berger's first essay on the way a picture has a perspective. I know that if Ways of Seeing was written today it would have included comments on something called the internet. The internet is a sea of different reproduced perspectives in images and information, all fed back to you and passed back and forth. It allows the different ways that art and ideas propagate to become very apparent. When it comes to nature in art, one example I have recently read about, shows the same contradictions as in landscape oil painting and the reproduced image as I have described.



Andy Goldsworthy is one of the artists, in what some people call environmental art, to have developed an understanding that the beauty in nature is ephemeral, therefore art produced from nature must also be so. He creates pieces such as this one above that patterns twigs and leaves making natural hued gradients and shapes, that will only last until the wind picks up and carries them away, the rain falls down to drain them away, or they decompose into sludge and soil.

I agree the beauty in his art exists in its ephemeral status. Because real tools or manmade products were ever used, nature would often take its course in destroying the art whether it is a gust of wind, the growth of a plant, or heat causing the ice to melt. Goldsworthy believed that nothing can or should last forever. His deep work with nature obviously helped him to recognize the impermanence in all things.

The photography obviously captures it at this most intended state of 'composition' which almost defeats the idea and philosophy behind the art piece not being permanent but has the same mentality in the sense that the art piece is more the memory of it and its scattered remains, adding to this wider picture of the art piece being of this earth.

I wanted to be able to connect with nature as directly as possible.

Goldsworthy speaks of his art as if meaning something personally, how he creates his art as a connection between himself and the environment around him, and discusses at length the techniques and of the way he created his art, to mean as much as the product its self, as an object. Though this is something that makes the art inherently personal and adds a sense of individuality to the artist, it is not an aspect easily appreciated in the art piece, with this intent the piece loses its wider picture and focuses on the individual.

Though it does 'recognize the impermanence in all things', this cannot be appreciated through the permanence of a non-existent yet forever preserved digital image upon the multi instances of the cyberspace, quite the opposite of the perhaps intended effect, and the right effect for a strong comparative defence. The way the art is propagated, contradicts the meaning.

Recently, I found a term coined by Chinese and Japanese philosophers called "Wabi-Sabi". I found it in a fashion mag I briefly glimpsed while waiting for someone to try some shoes on. Having read up about it since, I now know it has nothing to do with the way it was used in the magazine.

A traveller ponders shelter for the night. He notices tall rushes growing everywhere, so he bundles an armful together as they stand in the field, and knots them at the top. A living grass hut. The next morning before embarking on another day's journey he unknobs the rushes and the original wilderness is restored but minute traces of the shelter remain, only the memory remains to the traveller and the reader.

A good visual metaphor for in what way you can appreciate something in nature within a wider picture which feels spiritual and tranquil from its subtle existence, a thing you fail to appreciate in artificial, developed material structures.

Modern western art is all based on the intent of broad metaphysical meaning and visual understanding, while the above way of appreciating something as art (as though it is a speck of sand in a desert) is damaging for an artist's sense of accomplishment or self-belief. This feeling is a product of our society and our need to develop and produce, a thoroughly un-modest process of human development with no thought to what effect an individual really has in time.

From reading back my last point, I need to question if it is truly possible for art and design to meet my requirements for a real connection or alignment with the natural world. I think maybe I'm describing all design as vain, or that technology and development is actually the evil here, and that the idea to develop a solution 'forward' to combat environmental issues, can never be as pure as being 'backwards', to revert back to primitive human existence on earth. Can humankind truly exist in nature without reverting back to primitive times? I'm not sure but I do like the idea of having an ephemeral approach to design, if we design an object with its full lifespan in mind, I would be comfortable knowing the object won't be knocking around for ever, or broken, or getting in the way or whatever.

Goldsworthy, A., 2008. *Time*. Harry N. Abrams. ISBN 0810971461

Koren, L., 2017. *Wabi-sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers*. Imperfect Publishing. ISBN 9780981484600

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