

Rachel
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Perspectives

Eco-Images

Historical Views and Political Strategies

Edited by
GISELA PARAK

2013 / 1



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Introduction

The meaning of a picture is a slippery thing. Images are often considered a universal, non-verbal “language,” legible to the general public—or perhaps only to the experienced audience. However, images, particularly those circulated in the news, are frequently informed by special interests and used as powerful means to persuade or seduce citizens. Photographic practices of creating meaning are contested by the persistent belief in the “objectivity” of photos, contrasted with the medium’s ongoing tradition of staging events and its selectivity in pictorial reproductions of the world. Since the 1960s, environmentally themed images have played an ever-increasing role in drawing attention to worldwide ecological calamities and the depletion of Earth’s resources.¹

Since the notions of global warming and climate change have entered the public consciousness, the prevalence of environmentally related imagery has gained further momentum. It has been the topic of a large number of exhibitions,² including all kinds of photographic genres such as landscape and nature photography. The term “eco-images” is frequently used in this context, but a general consensus on what this new category of images is, or is not, is lacking.³ Borrowing from a long history of related images, this introduction defines eco-images as images informed by a decisively environmental agenda. They are distinguished from other forms of landscape and nature depictions by their purposeful, non-verbal communicative function. The formative intention in this player-oriented approach is not necessarily provided by the producer of the image; it may also be created by the author of the narrative of the images’ dissemination. This understanding of eco-images draws attention to the conceptual framework of the images, and asks how the context determines the interpretation and reception of the image. According to this definition, eco-images are introduced

- 1 Stuart Allan, Barbara Adam, and Cynthia Carter, *Environmental Risks and the Media* (London: Routledge, 2000), 4.
- 2 See Gisela Parak, “‘Our Only World’—An American Vision,” in this volume; Joanna Lehn, ed., *Ecotopia* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2006), Exhibition Catalog, International Center of Photography, New York; Claude Bailargeon, ed., *Imagining a Shattered Earth—Contemporary Photography and the Environmental Debate* (Oakland: Oakland University Press, 2005), Exhibition Catalog.
- 3 Finis Dunaway uses the term “ecological sublime” to characterize photographs that were used in the Sierra Club publications. But, however productive his assessment is, it does not cover the whole body of different photographic styles and their conceptual disseminations emerging since the 1960s. See Finis Dunaway, *Natural Visions: The Power of Images in American Environmental Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

into the public sphere with an explicit political intention behind them, meant to alter environmental convictions. The subject of the picture is not obvious; on the contrary, its subliminal political agenda is concealed. This contradicts the common practice of immediately labeling a depiction of nature as an advocate of an environmental cause. It distinguishes between pictures that represent aspects of “nature” and those that reveal political intentions. The suggested definition is useful, because it opens up the discussion for more complicated examples, such as the pseudo-environmental campaigns created by companies to conceal their modes of production and to greenwash their brands and products.

Although interest in visual material and the productive function of such sources is noticeably rising in the fields of humanities and environmental history, there is still a dearth of detailed studies. While there is considerable literature on the utilization of environmental images in contemporary media, the historical dimension of so-called eco-images and the iconographic legacy of environmental imagery are often omitted in academic literature. A workshop held at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society in Munich in April 2012, entitled “Eco-Images: Altering Environmental Discussions and Political Landscapes,” asked for case studies on photographs, paintings, logos, posters, and cartoons to explore the notion of eco-images in more depth. The evolution of the genre was discussed with the intention of establishing a theoretical framework and highlighting the previously lacking historical dimension. What visual vocabulary has been coined for environmental issues in the course of the twentieth century and which motives persist? Bringing together environmental histories with visual studies and identifying pictorial traditions may trigger questions of iconicity as an explanation for the widespread influence of certain images.

In order to explore these wider iconographic traditions, the workshop’s intention was to identify such images and debate the connections apparent in their pictorial styles, as well as in backgrounds, strategies, and the intentions behind them. A larger comparison of representations from different periods would be useful for gaining insights into cultural specifics and global commonalities. A sample of the case studies from the workshop, this volume of *RCC Perspectives* analyzes a wide range of images and national campaigns. Its methodological diversity offers varied approaches for analyzing eco-images. The goals aspired to from the beginning were, however, too comprehensive to be accomplished in a single session.

Among the first eco-images in history to gain global attention by portraying environmental pollution for a transnational audience were photographs pointing out the effects of environmental disasters, such as the Santa Barbara oil spill in 1969, or rivers that were covered with foam and trash or discolored by poisonous effluents. Photographs of oil-clotted sea birds or of slaughtered seals created emotional symbols of suffering creatures, highlighting the moral implication of mankind's actions. Similar images have disappeared from news reports today thanks to the restriction of toxic sewage, though contamination persists in many countries. As a reaction to and consequence of the global outcry over environmental devastation in the 1970s, logos by companies such as BP and Shell have been appropriated and their iconography has been subverted by activists in order to demonstrate the corporations' failure to address wide-reaching spills. Along with recording incidents and disasters, images have captured the rise of the environmental movement, and supported its spirit and its burgeoning sense of identity.

Probably the most renowned icons of global environmentalism remain the Apollo portraits of planet earth from outer space taken in 1968/72. Since then, images of *The Blue Marble* have been printed over and over again, and furthermore, have been transformed and modified. Transformations of and supplements to the original images have been invented to stress the explicitness of the environmental message underneath, like the imprint of a "carbon footprint," to give a more accurate description of human behavior. Other alterations have used more iconographic heritage, such as the pollution of the earth with spilled petroleum (as a follow-up to the oil spills in the 1970s), the future-generations metaphor, or the adaption of a gas mask as a war symbol and its alteration as an environmental symbol.

Whereas some symbols are altered over time, some disappear and have been abandoned, such as the hourglass metaphor sending warning signals about the vulnerability of the planet. Although there are consciously generated continuities in pictorial traditions, sometimes the meaning of depictions can change over time. When Arthur Rothstein took his famous photograph of a skull on eroded soil during the Dust Bowl era, the photograph—though immediately decried as being socialistic/governmental propaganda—served as a metaphor for the suffering farmers and the hard circumstances of the time. Alternatively, in 1969, a similar image of a skull lying on drought-ridden soil was used in a special edition of *Life* magazine, intended to represent the

environmental problems of the 1960s. In 1969 the photograph was employed to point out the ecological coherence of the human race and the environment, picking up on this later understanding of nature. Images today frequently borrow the characteristic features of eroded soil.

In some examples, the meaning of images may not be improved or expanded, but rather completely altered to represent the contrary of what they originally did. At the end of the nineteenth century, images of smoking factory stacks visually assured us of the improvement of society, and served as symbols of modernity and progress. Since the 1970s, however, these images have clearly been associated with the topic of air pollution, symbolizing the exploitation of Earth's resources. Some other symbols, having once had a vivid presence, are losing their value and have been forgotten, like the representation of whales and the images showing the hunting of this endangered species. In the 1980s, German media frequently covered the topics of acid rain and forest decline, but both of these visual categories have lost their currency in modern debates.

While some symbols—having once been associated with a vivid message—have lost their value and been forgotten, new icons have been introduced; every new food scandal today creates a new set of shocking images, like the caging of poultry. Since the notion of global warming, the famous polar bear alerts us to melting glaciers, as well as the images of the fusing ice floes. Relatively new in the field are images of people who serve as environmental advocates. For example, each climate summit is accompanied by images of politicians, apparently engaged in “saving the climate.”

In summary, strategies of employing images to express environmental concerns could be placed in categories such as preservation, prevention, deterrent, advertisement, counter-advertisement, appropriation and subversion, documentation, and education, but this list is not exhaustive. While some eco-images remain in the public consciousness, others have been transformed, adapted, and updated, and still others have completely disappeared from the collective memory. In future years, visual studies will be challenged to examine how and why the categories change over time, responding to newly pressing environmental problems, while also creating continuity and enduring global icons. We will have to discuss why some images became icons and debate the specific national circulation of their influence, while other important images never became widely published or recognized for their messages. In brief, there remains a lot

for future investigation to explore about different players' employment of images and about the national specificity versus global ubiquity of environmental icons.

Articles presented in this volume assess the impact of eco-images on politics and society, using case studies from different cultural backgrounds. Starting off the volume, Robin Kelsey and Erika Bsumek give examples of first-generation eco-images. Kelsey offers an analysis of the role of Sierra Club calendars in both marketing the environment and raising ecological consciousness. Drawing on another case study from the United States, Bsumek examines the use of Navajo imagery in reclamation projects in the American West from 1945–70, particularly in the campaign against the Colorado River Storage Project. Ryan O'Connor provides an example of a consciously planned newspaper campaign in the early 1970s in his examination of the advertising and branding of the environmental movement in the Canadian Pollution Probe campaign. Expanding the definition of eco-images even further, Oluwafemi Alexander Ladapo demonstrates in his essay how political cartoons functioned as eco-images in Nigerian newspapers, while Gisela Parak profiles the Documerica photography exhibition from the 1970s as a role model for American environmentalism. Rounding off the volume, Paolo Peverini discusses the appropriation of iconic images by artistic groups, corporations, and environmental non-profit organizations.

Robin Kelsey

Sierra Club Photography and the Exclusive Property of Vision

As executive director of the Sierra Club from 1952 to 1969, David Brower used photography to transform a California climbing and recreation group into one of the most influential environmental organizations in the United States. Under his direction, the Club issued photographic books, cards, and calendars featuring charismatic images of nature in a state of pristine grandeur or untrammelled intimacy to expand its membership and promote its environmentalism. This historic use of a darkroom art for the sake of preserving outdoor spaces established, through a curious series of trials, a new visual rhetoric for celebrating and defending nature as form.

The Sierra Club Discovers the Power of Photography

In the spring of 1951, the Sierra Club broadcast its national ambitions when it changed its statement of purpose from “explore, enjoy, and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast” to “explore, enjoy, and preserve the Sierra Nevada and other scenic resources of the United States.”¹ Two years later, Brower began fulfilling these ambitions by launching a campaign against federal plans to build dams in Dinosaur National Monument in Colorado. Brower believed deeply in the persuasive power of images and shaped the campaign around them. He had films made to represent a trip through the Monument and convinced Alfred Knopf to publish, and Wallace Stegner to edit, a photographically illustrated book extolling the scenic wonders threatened by the dam.² Brower distributed copies of the book, *This Is Dinosaur*, to members of Congress and other influential persons.³ When the federal government dropped its dam-building plans in Dinosaur the following year, the political triumph and its confirmation of the power of image-driven lobbying permanently transformed the Club.⁴

1 Michael Cohen, *The History of the Sierra Club, 1892–1970* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 100.

2 Wallace Stegner, ed., *This Is Dinosaur: Echo Park Country and Its Magic Rivers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955). See Edgar Wayburn, “Sierra Club Statesman, Leader of the Parks and Wilderness Movement: Gaining Protection for Alaska, the Redwoods, and Golden Gate Parklands,” interview by Ann Lage and Susan R. Schrepfer, Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, 1985, 194.

3 Richard L. Fradkin, *Wallace Stegner and the American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 189; Cohen, *History of the Sierra Club*, 168–71.

4 Richard Leonard later recounted, “Dave [Brower] changed the whole course of the Club’s political effectiveness in this campaign. It was at that time that the Sierra Club became a truly national organization.” Richard Leonard, “Mountaineer, Lawyer, Environmentalist,” interview by Susan R. Schrepfer, vol. 1, Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, 1975, 112.

Photographs take pride of place in *This Is Dinosaur*. It opens with 36 pages of them, mostly in black and white but a handful in color, taken by several photographers, including Philip Hyde, Martin Litton, and Harold Bradley. The title of the book operates as an introduction (i.e., Dear Reader, “This is Dinosaur”) but also as an index or caption (i.e., “*This is Dinosaur*”). The demonstrative pronoun of the title—*This*—points not to the Monument directly but rather to the book’s photographically driven representation of it. Or rather, the title assumes that pointing to that representation is equivalent to pointing to the Monument. In this respect, the title piggybacks on the photograph’s status as a representation beyond language, inherently laminated to what the photograph is of. As Roland Barthes once said with a touch of hyperbole, “the Photograph is never anything but an antiphon of ‘Look,’ ‘See,’ ‘Here it is.’”⁵ *This Is Dinosaur*: the title promises a showing rather than a describing, a presentation rather than a representation. If you want to see what will be ruined if dams are built, the title insists, here it is.

The Sierra Club’s use of photographs as a substitute for first-hand experience of places targeted for conservation assumed that the value of those places was primarily visual. The new mission statement had more or less explicitly affirmed this assumption in the phrase: “the Sierra Nevada and *other scenic resources* of the United States” (italics added). Centuries ago, the words *scenic* and *scenery* had little to do with natural places. On the contrary, *scenic* derives from the French *scénique*, a word that in the fourteenth century meant “of or belonging to the stage or drama.” By the late seventeenth century, the English word *scenery* came to be associated more specifically with the decoration of a stage rather than with the drama as a whole. With the rise of the picturesque in the late eighteenth century, scenery and its cognates came to be applied to views in nature.⁶ To speak of “natural scenery” or “scenic resources” is to speak as if nature were a theater set, a motionless array of visual features awaiting human action and intended for a human audience. Photography, which emerged out of the picturesque and bore a reputation for faithful replication of the visual world in a still image, was a promising means by which to assess, communicate, and promote nature as scenery.

5 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 5.

6 The Sierra Club’s mission statement under Brower drew on a long history of associating land preservation with the preservation of scenery. In his foreword to *These We Inherit: The Parklands of America*, Brower quoted a passage from Frederick Law Olmstead written in 1865: “The first point to be kept in mind . . . is the preservation and maintenance as exactly as is possible of the natural scenery; the restriction, that is to say, within the narrowest limits consistent with the necessary accommodation of visitors, of all artificial constructions and the prevention of all constructions markedly inharmonious with the scenery or which would unnecessarily obscure, distort, or detract from the dignity of the scenery.” Ansel Adams, *These We Inherit: The Parklands of America* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1962), 9.

The photographs in *This Is Dinosaur* represent the Monument as a recreation area. We encounter pictures of its headquarters, a display of local fossils, and many scenic views. Although some of the views contain no human figures, most include a small group of hikers, kayakers, or river rafters. Some views are distant, revealing a majestic landscape that dwarfs the figures; others bring us close to the recreational fun they enjoy. As Stegner said in his foreword, the purpose of the volume was “to survey [Dinosaur’s] possibilities for human rest and recreation and inspiration, in the belief that the people and Congress of the United States should have a very clear idea of what they would be losing if they chose to sacrifice this National Monument to make a reservoir.”⁷ *This Is Dinosaur* was a way of educating people on the values that the Monument made available, but it was also a way of photographically supplying a spectacular virtual experience of these values. Brower understood the importance to the Club and to its mission of mingling the pleasure of looking at beautiful photographs with the imagined pleasure of being in a beautiful place. The conflation of these pleasures would become a mainstay of the Club’s efforts at advocacy and self-promotion.

This Is Dinosaur mainly construes recreation as a re-creation of the exploration of the American West. The notion that wilderness recreation was an invigorating way to reconnect to frontier experience was a core principle of the US environmental movement in general and of the Sierra Club’s program of conservation in particular.⁸ Most of the essays in *This Is Dinosaur* recount and celebrate the exploration of the Colorado River region by US government explorers such as William Henry Ashley and John Wesley Powell. Many of the photographs follow suit, offering us images of sublimity that echo those made by early survey photographers such as William Henry Jackson. The paddlers in the photographs may use neoprene rafts, but they still exemplify the exploratory spirit of earlier days.

A pamphlet tucked in the back of *This Is Dinosaur* advocates resistance to the federal dam project in more explicit terms. In it, we find the Club supplementing certain photographs with graphic notations to overcome the difficulty of using photography to convey hypothetical or counterfactual conditions. This begins with the pamphlet’s cover, which

7 Wallace Stegner, foreword to *This Is Dinosaur*, v.

8 On the role of frontier re-creation in wilderness preservation generally, see William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995), 69–90; see also Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 29–62.

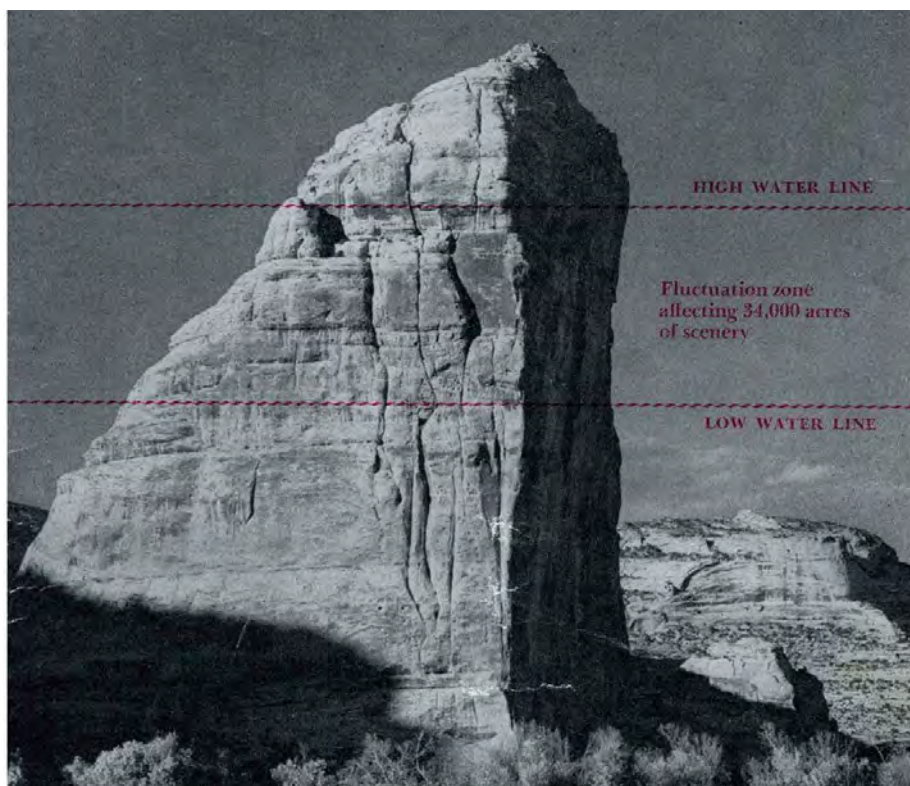


Figure 1:
Photograph by
Martin Litton,
untitled (1955).

bears a photograph of Steamboat Rock, rising as a colossal mass above the canyon floor (fig. 1). Superimposed on the photograph are two wavy lines and captions indicating what the low and high water lines of the reservoir would be if the dams were built. Another caption designates the area between the lines a “fluctuation zone” that would affect “34,000 acres of scenery.” The cover image thus combines the reality effect of the photograph with the visual clarity and hypothetical reach of graphic displays. The photograph vividly depicts that which is, while the graphic marks prompt us to imagine what *would be* were the dam project to go forward. The visual richness of the scenery depicted below the lines thus becomes a rhetorical measure of our possible loss.

Elsewhere in the pamphlet, the Club pits textual and graphic messages against a photograph to suggest a gap between government assurances about Dinosaur and the probable effects of the proposed dams. A quotation from Secretary of the Interior

Secretary McKay: “What we have done at Lake Mead . . .



Figure 2:
Photograph
by Harold C.
Bradley, Lake
Mead (1954).

Douglas McKay runs across the top of the page: “What we have done at Lake Mead . . . is What We Have in Mind for Dinosaur.” Lake Mead was the reservoir created by the construction of the Hoover Dam and thus an indication of what the new reservoir in Dinosaur might be like. McKay had been using Lake Mead as an exemplary model, but the photograph below the quotation in the pamphlet depicts it as a dry and silt-choked lakebed (fig. 2). To accentuate the disparity between federal promises and actual outcomes, the Club adorned the photograph with a smattering of little graphic fragments illustrating the pleasures of aquatic recreation, such as boating and water-skiing, that the reservoir could provide if full. In the rhetoric of the composite image, the special truth-value of photography (no, Mr. Secretary, *this* is Lake Mead) consigns the sketches to the flimsy status of wishful thinking.

The Exhibit Format Series and the Taming of Text and Image

In the wake of the successful Dinosaur campaign, Brower and the Sierra Club initiated the Exhibit Format series, large volumes combining high-quality photographic images with short passages of text. Whereas *This Is Dinosaur* was a means to arouse opposition to a particular dam-building scheme, Brower intended the Exhibit Format books to foster a broader environmental ethos in support of the Club and its conservation program. The photographer Ansel Adams and the curator and writer Nancy Newhall collaborated to produce the first volume in the series, *This Is the American Earth* (1960), based on an exhibition they had organized under the same title.

Today, *This Is the American Earth* seems a ponderous piece of Cold War propaganda, bearing a title that elicits snickers from globally minded undergraduates. It patches together a pop cosmological attitude for the atomic age, offering up photographs and snippets of text as epiphanies concerning the sacred mysteries of nature and humankind. Even when it was published, one reviewer called the title “repellent” and warned that the “effusive overstatement” of Newhall’s text lent itself to mockery.⁹ The book makes cosmic symbols of a dizzying array of photographic subjects, from a spiral nebula to a flock of geese, and the text hammers each big noun—*life, music, habitation*—as if it were a gong to call the faithful. As the book progresses, these echoing beats of reverie give way to a jeremiad against the rapaciousness of economic development and the “Hell we are building here on earth.” This critique ends in a humorous photographic anticlimax, in which the moral tale is cast as an intrastate rivalry: Los Angeles, via pictures by William Garnett of smog and housing developments, appears to be Hell, while San Francisco, in a picture by Adams, receives the glorious role of the city on the hill.

What feels most remarkable—and perhaps most dated—about *This Is the American Earth* is its unbounded faith in photography as a means of re-enchanting the world. The book suggests that the magic of nature is to be found in its beautiful forms, which are to be perceived and communicated through photography. Even the heedless force of evolution, acknowledged by the text to entail a brutal winnowing of the weak, is redeemed as an engine of formal refinement. “Forever the forms survival chooses,” Newhall remarks, “become more beautiful, sensitive, diverse.” Below her words are two photographs by

9 Edward S. Deevey, book review, *Science* 132, no. 3441 (1960): 1759; Deevey, letter to the editor, *Science* 133, no. 3456 (1961): 844, 922.

Cedric Wright proffered as a revelatory correspondence: the swirled wood of junipers at timberline and a newborn fawn still curved into a fetal circle. This is nature as god the designer, who gives us the wondrous spiral.

This faith in the photographic revelation of form now appears naïve or disingenuous. The relationship between the twisting of junipers and the curling of fawns is far from clear (the junipers are not conserving heat), and evolution produces plenty of monstrosities that *This Is the American Earth* ignores, such as hideous parasites that devour their hosts' organs. What purports to be a natural disclosure of an evolved beauty is really a photographically constructed ideal. Moreover, the book begs the question of its own place within the moral scheme it imagines. Books are, after all, industrial products, and film photography entailed the mining of silver and the disposal of various toxic chemicals (Kodak was routinely listed as a top corporate polluter in the United States during the last few decades of the twentieth century). But in *This Is the American Earth*, photography is treated as nothing but a transparency, a way of seeing, a point of view. This dematerializing treatment enables the book to perpetuate the myth that photography belongs to the wild and pastoral landscapes it is asked to celebrate.

Despite these blind spots and stumbles, *This Is the American Earth* is a serious book. Its seriousness derives from its double ambition to invest relatively undeveloped lands with sacred value and to establish an unexpectedly lively relationship between text and image. Both aims are evident in the book's prelude, which begins with a page bearing the words "THIS IS THE AMERICAN EARTH" punctuated with an en-dash that draws us into a two-page spread of Adams's famous *Sierra Nevada from Lone Pine, California*. Below the picture, a caption reads: "This, as citizens, we all inherit. This is ours, to love and live upon, and use wisely down all the generations of the future."¹⁰ By suggesting that the visual plenitude of nature is something inherited by the citizenry, the text gives it the status of property passively and rightfully received from the state, a formula that suppresses the history of conquest by which it was violently wrested from others. The assertion of collective ownership in the prelude is more radical and adumbrates a critical grappling with the economy of landscape aesthetics, and its

¹⁰ The picture has been a source of special interest because Adams later admitted that he had assistants "spot-out" the initials of the town, which had been spelled out in white stones on the hillside. See Errol Morris, "The Chimera of the Perfectionists," *Cartesian Blogging, Part Three, Opinionator*, *New York Times*, 12 November 2008. So the very first photograph in the Exhibit Format series of books had been adjusted to make the landscape more pristine.

incompatibility with the routine operation of markets. The role of photography as a proxy for scenic resources is established by the repetition of the titular “this,” which reinforces the indexical bond of text to image, and image to referent.



Figure 3:
Photograph by
Ansel Adams,
Nevada Fall, Yo-
semite National
Park (1946)
(Source: Collec-
tion Center
for Creative
Photography,
University of
Arizona ©The
Ansel Adams
Publishing
Rights Trust).

The next two pages juxtapose text by Newhall and a low-angled photograph of Yosemite’s Nevada Falls by Adams (fig. 3). The text reads:

“In all the centuries to come
Always we must have water for dry land, rich earth be-
neath the plow,
 pasture for flocks and herds, fish in the seas and
 streams, and timber in the hills.
Yet never can Man live by bread alone.

Now, in an age whose hopes are darkened by huge fears –
– an age frantic with speed, noise, and complexity
– an age constricted, of crowds, collisions, of cities
 choked by smog and traffic,
– an age of greed, power, and terror
– an age when the closed mind, the starved eye,
 the empty heart, the brutal fist, threaten all life
 upon this planet –

What is the price of exaltation?”

Newhall thus posits our inherent need for the pastoral—the rich earth, the pasture for flocks and herds—but suggests that we need or desire something beyond it. But what is that something? The facing pages offer two possibilities for the sublime that must supplement our pastoral sustenance. One is the sublimity of nature, as represented by the photograph of Nevada Falls. The other is the sublimity of modern society and its industrial infrastructure, as represented by the text. The ambiguity concerning which sublime lies beyond “bread alone” returns in the final question: What is the price of exaltation? If we interpret the exaltation in question as arising from our contemplation of the majesty of nature (the waterfall as sublime), then the question concerns the cost

we must bear to preserve the natural wonders of the West. If, on the other hand, we interpret the exaltation as arising from an unrelenting desire to control nature (modernity as sublime), then the question is about the cost of exalting ourselves and our modern powers over nature, as paid out in environmental impoverishment. The remainder of the book does not resolve this ambiguity. In defense of the first interpretation, one could point to a passage in which Newhall alludes to the traditional sublime of nature: “You shall see storms arise, and, drenched and deafened, shall exult in them.” In defense of the second interpretation, one could point to a passage in which Newhall admonishes humankind for its arrogant pursuit of the industrial sublime (our desire to be “borne up on vast abundance and colossal waste”). At the outset of the book, the notions of sublimity and its price oscillate restlessly between photograph and text, between the cascade that Adams depicts and the accelerated depravity of modern life that Newhall describes. This toggling renders the waterfall an ambivalent sign, standing both for nature’s refreshing antidote to modernity and for the uncontrollable torrent of modernity itself.

Other writings by Newhall suggest that this semiotic instability was no accident. In a brief essay included in the first issue of the journal *Aperture* (1952), she sketches out a theory of the caption. She begins by speculating that, “The old literacy of words is dying and a new literacy of images is being born.” Great photographs, she writes, “speak a language beyond words” that derives its power “from the same deep source as music.” According to her, relatively few people, such as photographers and editors, have learned to read this new language, most people still need “verbal crutches to see with.” To understand these verbal crutches, Newhall proposes a taxonomy of four caption types. She derives the first three from the regular practices of the news media. The fourth and newest form, and the focus of her essay, is what she terms the additive caption, which “leaps over facts and adds a new dimension.” According to Newhall, the additive caption “combines its connotations with those of the photograph to produce a new image in the mind of the spectator—sometimes an image totally unexpected and unforeseen, which exists in neither words nor photographs but only their juxtaposition.” By defending the additive caption in these terms, Newhall renews the aspirations of the interwar avant-garde. The new additive caption, she remarks, “may be one of the many rare and fantastic forms those intrepid explorers, the Surrealists, domesticated for the rest of us.”¹¹

11 Nancy Newhall, “The Caption: The Mutual Relation of Words / Photographs,” *Aperture* 1 (1952): 17–19.

In *This Is the American Earth*, the play of text and image has certainly been “domesticated” beyond the standard set by the Surrealists. The book has nothing like the jarring relations between text and image that one finds in André Breton’s *Nadja* or in the pages of *La Révolution Surréaliste*. Indeed, in many places, its words and photographs dovetail to deliver a clear and predictable message. But in some parts of the book, such as the prelude passage about the sublime, Newhall successfully ventures into semiotic instability to produce unexpected mental images. When one compares *This Is the American Earth* to other photographic books of the day intended for American coffee tables, such as Edward Steichen’s *The Family of Man*, this ambition to open up the play of meaning becomes all the more striking. Brower deemed *This Is the American Earth* the greatest success of his publication program at the Club. “It really hit,” he recalled in the 1970s. “No other book has had that response.”¹² He attributed much of the success to the “counterpoint” in the book between the photographs and the poetic passages, which had “its own power” and “got through to people.”¹³ He recognized and supported Newhall’s provocative style. “Newhall chose a method of presentation that she hoped would jar readers out of the Conventional Response,” he wrote soon after the book was released. “The result may not be comfortable,” he added, “but then it wasn’t intended to be.”¹⁴ By venturing into semiotic instability in image/text relations, Newhall had harkened back to the revolutionary tactics of the interwar avant-garde; and by questioning the capacity of economic thinking to recognize the value of wildness, she had anticipated and fostered strains of discontent that would intensify as the 1960s progressed.

The provocations of *This Is the American Earth* appealed to the zealous Brower and helped to mobilize support for the Wilderness Act of 1964, but they also stirred up controversy. As Finis Dunaway has noted, some supporters of wilderness preservation found the book’s dire tone and broad indictment of modernization and industry to be gratuitous, scientifically unsound, and otherwise misguided. Many longtime members of the Club were industry executives who believed that wilderness preservation had been made possible by a modern economy and its efficiencies. To them, the antagonism that the book posits between modern technology and wilderness preservation made no sense.

12 David Brower, “Environmental Activist, Publicist, and Prophet,” interview by Susan Schrepfer, Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, 1975, 269.

13 Ibid.

14 David Brower, letter to the editor, *Science* 133, no. 3456 (1961): 844.

After *This Is the American Earth*, the Club issued a spate of less controversial books in its Exhibit Format series. Later in 1960, it published *Words of the Earth*, a book edited by Newhall of photographs by Wright, Adams's friend and mentor. The book adhered to the same basic format as *This Is the American Earth*, with Newhall variously combining Wright's black and white photographs with passages selected from his writings. The photographs offer a resplendent view of scenic Northern California, with many backlit, silver-lined clouds and reflecting waters. We come across a couple of trail signs and a few figures communing with nature, but we otherwise see few indications that the world has any human history. Wright's prose, as selected by Newhall, is full of cosmic murmur and natural wonder. In both photographs and text, *Words of the Earth* largely echoes the upbeat and untroubled parts of *This Is the American Earth*, while eschewing its contentious subjects and semantic ambiguity.

In 1962 the Club issued *These We Inherit: The Parklands of America*, a book featuring photographs by Adams from the national parks and other scenic places. *These We Inherit* includes brief writings by Adams at the beginning and end, but the bulk of the volume consists of photographs with captions in a tiny font, identifying only the subject and location of each image. The photography, like that of *Words of the Earth*, is narrow in scope. No park headquarters or exhibits appear, and we see no kayakers or hikers. Aside from the modest inclusion of a few particularly harmonious traces of civilization—a rustic wooden fence running through a grove of redwoods, a ribbon-like highway hugging the coast near Point Reyes, and Anasazi ruins in a cliff wall—the photographs suppress the existence of human life and industry. The camera moves in to capture droplets on a leafy plant, and backs out to take in a mountain vista, but the framing of most scenes carefully maintains the feel of Eden. In format, *These We Inherit* is conservative, alternating throughout the bulk of the book a caption page on the left and photograph on the right. Between the publication of *This Is the American Earth* and the publication of *These We Inherit*, the Exhibit Format series rapidly shed its radical forms of layout and argument.

The Emergence of the Calendar Aesthetic

Later in 1962, the Club issued the fourth book in the series, *In Wildness Is the Preservation of the World*. *In Wildness* was the first of the Exhibit Format books to feature

Figure 4:
 Photograph
 by Eliot
 Porter, Maple
 Leaves and Pine
 Needles (1956)
 (Source: Amon
 Carter Museum
 of American
 Art).



color photography, as well as the first to focus on landscapes outside California and the West. In it, color photographs by Eliot Porter of intimate Eastern woodland scenes are paired with short passages from the writings of Henry David Thoreau to take the reader through the seasons, one chapter each, from spring to winter (fig. 4).

In layout, Porter's book follows the simple alternating structure of *These We Inherit*. Apart from the pages introducing each chapter, a Thoreau passage appears on each left page and a single Porter photograph on each right. The format gives the seasonal cycle of the book a calendrical regularity, marking time in rectangular increments. But the aesthetic bounty of the different seasons is unequal: spring is allotted 22 photographs and autumn 24, whereas summer receives 17, and winter only 10.

The photographs of *In Wildness* are both like and unlike those of the preceding Exhibit Format books. Like them, they have a discriminating scope. No people and few traces of civilization appear. One or two winter hillsides offer subtle hints of a pastoral past, and we encounter a nest of swallows in the corner of a barn, but otherwise we remain in Eden. (Well, I suppose that a reader with the necessary expertise might recognize

invasive species or evidence of past logging in some pictures, but most of us will detect no sign of human history in them.) The photographs of *In Wildness* are unlike those of the earlier books in their adherence to depicting a particular ecosystem with great intimacy. We encounter one forest scene after another, none offering a view into the distance, and most pressing the foreground to our noses, inviting us to inspect the lovely detail of bark, leaf, blossom, and moss.

The shift from the West to New England of *In Wildness* thus entails a curious shift in photographic comportment. While Adams and Wright occasionally brought their camera in close to capture a twisted juniper or a tuft of mountain wildflowers, they always drew back again to offer a majestic vista. The persistent myopia of Porter's pictures seems a natural consequence of the intimate beauty available in the eastern woodlands, as if the exquisite particulars along the forest floor drew the camera in. More skeptically, one could interpret the proximity as a necessary accommodation of the greater visibility of human activity and infrastructure in the East. In other words, there are numerous mountains in New England, but if you want to suppress all signs of civilization, you had better not look very far. Taking advantage of scenic resources requires a discriminating eye, and what is kept out of the frame is every bit as essential as what is kept in. When undeveloped land is scarce, bring the camera in close.

Was Porter, by interweaving his photographs with passages from Thoreau, training readers to look at nature or to look at photographs, or both? If the correct answer is "both" (and I suspect it is) then can we really know where the one training ends and the other begins? If the correct answer to that question is "no" (and I suspect it is), then we need to understand better the implications of this confusion. Equating photographic beauty with wilderness value was a cornerstone of the Sierra Club's efforts under Brower to extend its membership and political reach. How might we take the historical measure of this conflation?

Porter's care in pairing photographs and text could not entirely suppress the gap between his photography and Thoreau's nature. For example, beside a photograph of a pond, a passage reads, "Our vernal lakes have a beauty to my mind which they would not possess if they were more permanent. Everything is in rapid flux here, suggesting that Nature is alive to her extremities and superficialities." Elsewhere, a kindred passage opposite a photograph of leaves in a shallow pool contains this dictum: "If we see Nature as pausing, immediately all mortifies and decays; but seen as progressing, she is beautiful." Thoreau's

emphasis in these passages on nature's ceaseless flux is consonant with the seasonal cycle that organizes the book as a whole but discordant with the photographs as individual pictures. Contrary to Thoreau's philosophical preference, the photographs force nature to pause, to become more permanent. In these instances of friction between text and image, *In Wildness* seems as blind to photography's technological limits as *This Is the American Earth* seems to its material economy. In both books, photography is passed off as a natural way of looking in a way that now seems jejune.

Although Brower clearly thought the argument of *In Wildness* less weighty than that of *This Is the American Earth*, the newer book sold well and was deemed "an immense success."¹⁵ This success would mark a watershed for Sierra Club publications. In the course of publishing its Exhibit Format Books, the Club had stripped its texts of contemporary political bite and its photography of signs of human civilization; it had idealized nature as a regular seasonal cycle of encounters with exquisite form and color. The result was an eminently marketable symbolization of its mission. In a telling shift, members of the board and staff of the Club began using the term "propaganda" to describe the publication program. August Frugé, a longtime editor of the University of California Press and a member of the Club's Board of Directors, called *In Wildness* "general nature propaganda."¹⁶ A few years later, when the Club's publications committee began discussing a possible price increase for Sierra Club books, the sales manager John Schanhaar responded: "I am certain I do not have to point out to you the club's obligation to see the greatest possible number of books [sold] because of their propagandistic function."¹⁷

A Cheaper Line of Wilderness Images

The brilliance of the Club's pictorial campaign was widely noted and admired. A writer in the *Collector's Quarterly Report* wrote: "The Sierra Club's peculiar effectiveness in this new climate is largely traceable to a series of publications through which it has successively celebrated America's natural and scenic resources with unparalleled

15 Wayburn, "Sierra Club Statesman," 194. Brower interview by Susan Schrepfer, 269.

16 Quoted in Cohen, *History of the Sierra Club*, 296.

17 Report by John Schanhaar, sales and promotion manager, to the publications committee, n.d., 3, Sierra Club records, carton 304, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA. At issue was whether to postpone a price increase from 1 September 1967 to 1 January 1968.

beauty. Fresh from the perusal of Club books like Ansel Adams' photographs of American parklands or Eliot Porter's record of the changing seasons, almost any responsible citizen can be looked upon as a potential vigilante in the protection of the American wilderness."¹⁸ The membership numbers bear this out. The Club grew from fewer than seven thousand members when it launched the Dinosaur Monument campaign in the early 1950s to 55,000 by 1967.¹⁹ According to Wayburn, the books "undoubtedly . . . played a great role" in this expansion, making the Sierra Club "a nationwide organization before its membership did."²⁰

Despite strong sales, critical praise, and swelling Club membership, Brower's publication program was a mixed success. Publishing such high-quality photographic books was exceedingly expensive and ran the Club into debt. As the operating losses of the program swelled from \$14,665 in 1963 to \$119,144 in 1966, tensions mounted between the autocratic Brower and the Club's Board of Directors, some of whom contemplated cutting the program to keep the Club out of bankruptcy.²¹ In an effort to appease the Board and salvage the publishing program, Brower began to issue cheaper paperback publications, as well as color posters and calendars. He hoped in this way to make profits that could offset his expensive hardcover ventures, as well as to promote the Club and its activities.

When the Board decided to begin producing photographic calendars in the fall of 1967, it was pursuing an idea that had been around for years. In 1957 Club photographer Philip Hyde had suggested in a memorandum that the Club should issue "a Conservation Calendar, made up of a fine reproduction for each month, of simple and dignified layout, with a short conservation message."²² In the early 1960s, the Club began selling sets of "Wilderness Greeting Notes," featuring photographs by Adams, Porter, Hyde, and others. The photographs on the cards were drawn from, and expressly linked to, the Exhibit Format series of books. In this way, the Club sought to make profitable sales from a cheap line that in turn would boost demand for its more expensive publications. By 1967, however, the pressure to disseminate promotional

18 Preprint from *Collector's Quarterly Report*, 1963, Sierra Club records, carton 304, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA.

19 Wayburn, "Sierra Club Statesman," 194–95.

20 Ibid. Cohen concludes that by 1969, "Brower's publishing program had made the Club a national force." Cohen, *History of the Sierra Club*, 429.

21 See Cohen, *History of the Sierra Club*, 345, 410; Wayburn, "Sierra Club Statesman," 196.

22 Jonathan Spaulding, *Ansel Adams and the American Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 442–43, note 78.

imagery more efficiently had intensified. Brower launched a series of colorful posters that sold well. In September, the board accepted the offer of the publisher Ballantine to assist in the production and distribution of “a Sierra Club Wilderness Calendar.” In the notes from the meeting in which the Board approved the plan, Brower noted that the calendar would be “designed by us from Exhibit Format books to sell at \$3.95.” When Brower noted that production would begin in mid-October, Board member Martin Litton chimed in, “Should be a sure-fire seller.”²³

Although the Wilderness Calendar was introduced as a supplemental way to raise funds for the publication program, in many ways it represented a culmination. The calendar form extended the program’s tendency over time to shrink the text and its importance. In the calendars, the text consisted at most of a single page inside the cover, invisible once the calendar was hung on a wall. Adhering to the precedent set by Porter, the photographs were in vivid color and followed the seasons; and like the photography of the Exhibit Format books after *This Is the American Earth*, they represented scenic places as though human civilization did not exist. In this way, the calendars established scenic beauty as the antidote to ordinary life. Each image appeared above the monthly grid, in which quotidian appointments—“3pm dentist,” “Judy’s recital”—could be recorded. Rising above this monotonous geometry and mundane scribbling, the gorgeous views offered an elegant and untainted world, a sanctuary apart from the daily grind, a beckoning reconciliation of the eternal and the momentary. The Exhibit Format books came to an end, but the wilderness calendar became an enduring emblem of the Club and its mission. Even today, it offers the perfect confusion of ideal nature and ideal photograph. Propaganda, indeed.

23 Minutes of the 5 September 1967 board meeting, Sheraton-Palace Hotel, San Francisco, Sierra Club Records, Carton 54.

Erika Bsumek

Imagining Indians and Revisiting Reclamation Debates

By the 1950s the United States Bureau of Reclamation, the governmental agency in charge of water storage projects, had proposed the construction of nine large dams along the powerful Colorado River in the states of Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming. This article examines the Colorado River Storage Project Act of 1956 (CRSP) as well as subsequent efforts by the Bureau of Reclamation to build dams on the Colorado River from the vantage point of some of the original inhabitants of the region—representatives of the Navajo Nation. Much has been written about the environmental controversies surrounding the CRSP, especially the proposal to construct the Echo Park Dam in Dinosaur National Monument (DNM), and the ways that non-governmental organizations, including the National Parks Association, Izaak Walton League, Wilderness Society, and the Sierra Club, launched a successful campaign to kill the proposed dam and save DNM. However, few have asked how the residents along the Utah-Arizona border responded to the promise (or threat) of these dams, namely, Echo Park Dam, Glen Canyon Dam, Navajo Dam, and Flaming Gorge Dam. Throughout the 1950s, western politicians, the Bureau of Reclamation, state water and power boards, the Mormon Church, and local residents formed a powerful pro-dam constituency. Like the environmentalists, they organized a “grassroots” campaign that fought for the construction of large-scale water storage projects. Yet despite the fact that much has been written about the CRSP and the controversies it generated, little has been written about the roles that Navajos played in debates over the dams, both as historical actors and as symbols of either environmentalism or American national character.

From 1950 to the early 1970s, both pro- and anti-dam activists used powerful visual images in the fight surrounding reclamation. Environmental organizations, such as the Sierra Club, both drew on and helped set the stage for the emerging visual trope of the “ecological Indian” through their use of eco-images, a specific genre of visual representation that placed Native Americans squarely within contemporary environmental debates. Environmentalists, for example, utilized images that cast Native Americans as symbols of the careful stewardship of nature. Such imagery took iconic form in a 1970s public service announcement for the Keep America Beautiful campaign that featured the actor Iron Eyes Cody as the “crying Indian” in a television ad and used

Figure 1:
Keep America
Beautiful,
advertising
campaign,
1971 (Image
courtesy of
Keep American
Beautiful, Inc.).



the famous tag line, “Some people have a deep abiding respect for the natural beauty that was once this country and some people don’t. People start pollution, people can stop it.”¹

Figure 2:
Mass. Bay Colony
Seal in use from
1629–1886
(Source: Com-
monwealth of
Massachusetts).



Pro-dam organizations, however, drew on another set of eco-images that cast Native Americans as emblems of the unique American landscape, but also as a people in need of assistance to thrive on the land. This particular trope or use of eco-images has a long history. American colonists, for instance, cast Native Americans as traditional people who needed help from non-Indians in order to fully utilize the land they inhabited. Note the way in which the Indian in this early illustration from the Massachusetts Bay Charter is cast as a product of nature (fig. 2). The Indian wears a loincloth made of foliage and is flanked by two underdeveloped trees. The imagined plea is simple: “Come over and help us.”² During the CRSP debate, pro-dam constituents refashioned such symbols, casting Navajos as a traditional people who would benefit from American ingenuity

- 1 Keep American Beautiful, “People start pollution. People can stop it,” Advertising Campaign, Keep America Beautiful (1971).
- 2 Massachusetts Bay Colony Seal, Courtesy of Massachusetts Archives, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Archives Division.

and the technological know-how that enabled engineers to harness the power of the Colorado and San Juan Rivers for their economic and social benefit. Visual depictions of Navajos and the land they inhabited circulated in such debates. This article traces the ways different participants in the debates over the damming of the Colorado River deployed images of Navajos, and it briefly connects that story to a discussion of actual—as opposed to imagined—Navajos’ responses to the hydroelectric projects designed to transform their homeland.³

Constructing the Ecological Indian

The history of the long political, economic, and environmental debates surrounding the Colorado River Storage Project have been chronicled in many different academic and popular texts. As scholar Mark Harvey notes, the most contentious part of the original reclamation plan was to build a dam at Echo Park in Dinosaur National Monument. Opposition came from a variety of organizations and groups, and the mobilization against that dam is largely seen as one of the more important manifestations of the modern environmental movement. The successful anti-Echo Park campaign led the Sierra Club to launch a series of books that demonstrated how and why large-scale reclamation projects were ill-conceived.⁴ As Scholar Finis Dunaway notes, the first photo essay book, *This is Dinosaur*,⁵ provided Sierra Club leaders “with a new tool of propaganda, a concept they would refine in the years to come.”⁶ One of those experiments involved Indians. By the late 1960s, the Sierra Club had co-opted the Navajo into their anti-dam campaign in spite of the fact that leaders of the Navajo Nation had, only a few years earlier, actively supported the construction of Glen Canyon Dam.

The incorporation of Indians into the anti-dam movement marked a shift for environmentalists. From the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, environmentalists had either ignored or excluded Native Americans from their causes. Not only did John

3 Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999). On Indians as representatives of a unique American character, see Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 37.

4 For a detailed analysis of the Sierra Club’s photo book series, see Robin Kelsey, “Sierra Club Photography and the Exclusive Property of Vision,” in this volume.

5 Wallace Stegner, ed., *This Is Dinosaur: Echo Park Country and Its Magic Rivers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955).

6 Finis Dunaway, *Natural Visions: The Power of Images in American Environmental Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 123.

Muir, for instance, view Native Americans with disdain, but even the National Park Service had worked to limit their access to hunting and fishing grounds in the newly formed National Parks of Yosemite, Glacier, and Yellowstone. American Indians might be acceptable entertainment for tourists in such spaces, but the National Park Service prohibited them from utilizing the land they had relied on for food for generations.⁷ Little changed until the 1960s, when American Indians began to fight for sovereignty, treaty rights, and access to the natural resources guaranteed in those treaties. At that time, environmentalists slowly came to view them as potential allies. As Sherry Smith notes, environmentalists like Stewart Brand began to convey a new message about Native Americans. He traveled throughout the United States telling people, “Indians are still here . . . and have important lessons to teach, particularly regarding how to use the land, honor it, and maintain a continuity with it for decades.”⁸ Eventually, the Sierra Club would come to embrace a similar position in its fight against dams on the Colorado River.

In particular, the anti-dam contingent used images of Navajos, the Navajo Reservation, and text from Navajo ceremonies and creation myths to make their case that dams wrecked the environment and violated the wishes of area Navajos. In short, they utilized the language of Navajo primitivism to cast Navajo Indians as protectors of the environment.⁹ Under Sierra Club President David Brower’s direction, images of ecological Indians, who tread so lightly on the Earth’s surface that they leave no trace, abounded. Regretting the construction of Glen Canyon Dam, and coordinating a larger campaign to promote wilderness and the passage of a legislative act to protect wilderness, Brower sought out photographers such as Ansel Adams, Eliot Porter, and Philip Hyde to assemble beautifully illustrated coffee-table books to draw attention to the organization’s mission: saving rivers from being dammed and trees from being logged, while establishing wilderness areas and building the organization’s coffers to enable additional fighting.¹⁰ No place figured as prominently in the photo campaign as Glen

7 Mark David Spence, “Crown of the Continent, Backbone of the World: The American Wilderness Ideal and Blackfeet Exclusion from Glacier National Park,” *Environmental History* 1 (1996): 29; Donald Worster, “John Muir and the Modern Passion for Nature,” *Environmental History* 10 (2005): 13.

8 Sherry L. Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1161–62. Kindle Edition.

9 On language of Navajo primitivism, see Erika Bsumek, *Indian-Made: Navajo Culture in the Marketplace, 1866–1940* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), chap. 1.

10 Dunaway, *Natural Visions*; Michaelann Nelson, “Voices of Glen Canyon: The Influence of Place on Imagination and Activism,” PhD Diss. (University of New Mexico, 2009).

Canyon—the area Brower felt he had sacrificed when he agreed to the Echo Park Compromise.¹¹ Regretting this compromise, Brower pushed the Sierra Club to produce the award-winning *Navajo Wildlands: “As Long as the Rivers Shall Run”* and the stunning *The Place that No One Knew* to combat the Bureau of Reclamation’s plans to build additional dams along the Colorado River.¹² Brower hoped that the books, full of vivid photographs of the monumental Grand Canyon area as well as the recently dammed Glen Canyon and surrounding areas, would evoke a deep sense of loss in readers. The large format books were intended to galvanize the public to fight further reclamation of water.¹³ To strengthen the sense that man and nature were one and that no one knew this better than American Indians, each large, full-color photograph was accompanied by text drawn either from a Navajo ceremonial chant, from the Navajo Creation Story, or from some of the region’s most famous residents or advocates, including Willa Cather, Frank Waters, Wallace Stegner, Clarence E. Dutton, and Owen Wister.¹⁴

The introduction of *Navajo Wildlands* claimed that the construction of dams represented the loss of more than land: it represented the continued war on Indian tribes. “‘As long as the rivers shall run and the grass shall grow,’ was used in many Indian treaties to say ‘forever’ in a way that both the conquered tribes and the United States government could understand. But that forever was only a few short years . . . Many Indian nations were to find the rivers of the tribal domains fettered like themselves.”¹⁵ While many areas were at risk, the book’s primary author—anthropologist Stephen Jett—rightly noted that Navajo Country was especially vulnerable to conquest via dam building. Jett further claimed, once ignorant of the importance of their “wild Glen Canyon country,” by 1967 Navajos had recently “awakened to the danger their wild rivers face, and are becoming increasingly aware of the value of their natural resources.” The accompanying photograph showed a free-flowing section of the Colorado River with a caption from a version of the Navajo *Myth of the Mountain Top Way* ceremony that was meant to convey the importance of moving water to Navajo thinking: “That flowing water! That flowing wa-

11 Not wanting a dam to be built in a national monument, Brower agreed not to fight the construction of Glen Canyon if Echo Park Dam was killed.

12 Stephen Jett and Philip Hyde, *Navajo Wildlands: “As Long as the Rivers Shall Run”* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1967); Eliot Porter and David Brower, *The Place that No One Knew: Glen Canyon on the Colorado River* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1968).

13 For a good discussion of the Sierra Club Grand Canyon campaign see Jared Farmer, *Glen Canyon Dammed: Inventing Lake Powell and the Canyon Country* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004), 152.

14 Jett and Hyde, *Navajo Wildlands*; Porter and Brower, *The Place No One Knew*.

15 Jett and Hyde, *Navajo Wildlands*, 16.

ter! My Mind wanders across it.”¹⁶ Flowing water was a core feature of their traditional culture—and necessary to its survival. Navajos needed free waters to be a free people.

While photographs throughout the book featured important Navajo landmarks and representations of the locations often referred to in Navajo myths and creation stories, it should be noted there were no photographs or images of the Navajos as a contemporary people. Thus, the eco-images employed by the Sierra Club subtly pulled Native Americans into an environmental debate by depicting, for example, their ancient dwellings and rock art. The impression the editors meant to convey was that Navajos were an ancient population so intimately connected with the land only nature itself could fully represent them. In one photograph titled, “Juniper, west side of Redbud Pass,” a lone juniper stands adjacent to a red-rock canyon wall. The editors used Willa Cather’s words to explain its relevancy: “Each tree grows alone, murmurs alone, thinks alone. They do not intrude upon each other. The Navajos are not much in the habit of giving or of asking help. Their language is not a communicative one, and they never attempt an interchange of personality in speech. Over their forests is the same inexorable reserve.”¹⁷ In the last section of the book, Brower and Jett used the words of Oliver La Farge, the Pulitzer Prize winning author and director of the American Association of Indian Affairs, to speak for Navajos. Alongside a photograph labeled “Canyon of Aztec Creek above junction with Bridge Canyon” was this quote from La Farge:

It is characteristic of Indians when not under overwhelming pressure that they never lose sight of the great, fundamental question: What makes life worth living? This is one of the factors which makes white men find them exasperating to deal with, for our theory of profit is extremely simple and so deeply rooted that we cannot understand a man who decides that under the circumstances the money offered is not worth the sacrifices demanded for it.¹⁸

Below that, readers encountered a “traditional” Navajo voice in the form of a quote from the Navajo “Song of the Earth Spirit,” that read, in part, “I, I am the spirit within the earth . . . the feet of the earth are my feet . . . the legs are of the earth are my legs . . . the voice of the earth is my voice.” Between La Farge’s description of non-capitalist, anti-market Indians and the words of the ancient Navajo song, Navajos were rendered

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.

as the ancient protectors of the earth who alone had a unique responsibility to speak for the land itself. The Navajos who lived in these “wildlands” were not farmers or livestock managers, not drivers of Ford trucks or modern consumers of Buster Brown shoes, nor were they looking for what Paul Jones, Chairman of the Navajo Tribal Council, had only a few years earlier called “a new dawn” in the age of prosperity. Father Latour, Willa Cather’s fictional protagonist in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, was referenced at the end of the book to show that Navajos actually shunned modern values because they realized how damaging they could be. The authors seemed to be implying that Navajos realized that America’s commitment to irrigation, farming, and progress had, literally, taken nature’s breath away: “Latour had noticed that this peculiar quality in the air of new countries vanished after they were tamed by man to bear harvests . . . the moisture of plowed land, the heaviness of labor and growth of grain-bearing, utterly destroyed it; one could breathe that only on the bright edges of the world, on the grass plains or the sage-brush desert.”¹⁹ This quote was placed next to a photograph of the free-flowing “San Juan River below Navajo Dam.” As the Sierra Club fought dams, they drafted Navajos onto their front lines; they created a series of American Indian eco-images that referenced people, but did not represent them directly.

Why did it matter that such eco-images were created by non-Indians? Although many Navajos would join the fight to save some of their sacred natural sites, such sentiments did not reflect an earlier generation of Navajos, who had actively supported the construction of Glen Canyon Dam. In the 1960s, the Sierra Club helped craft a vision of the “ecological Indian” that would become a mainstream image by the early 1970s, but they did so with almost complete disregard for the opinion voiced by leaders of the Navajo Nation only a few years earlier.

Why did Brower and the Sierra Club go to such lengths to place Navajos in the essentialist position of one-dimensional, ecologically minded “primitive” Indians? Brower may have done so to win a political fight over the contested diversion dam designed to protect Rainbow Bridge National Monument.²⁰ Upon losing the last court challenge

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 156.

²⁰ When Congress passed the CRSP, the Sierra Club and the Navajo Nation had asked for the construction of a diversion dam that would ensure the protection of Rainbow Bridge National Monument. Yet, as the years went on, Congress refused to appropriate the funds to construct the protective dam. Even Stewart Udall, who by the early 1960s had been appointed Secretary of the Interior, did not force the issue. Thus, the Sierra Club attempted to use the courts to press for the construction of the diversion dam—or to lower the overall water level of Glen Canyon Dam reservoir.

to get the diversion dam built, Brower's lawyer wrote to him that their biggest mistake thus far had been their failure to bring Navajos into the court proceedings and that their only hope to save Rainbow Bridge from the spillover from Glen Canyon's Reservoir would be for the Navajos to put forth a freedom of religion argument in order to protect Rainbow Bridge as a sacred site.²¹ Perhaps Brower had been hoping that books like *Navajo Wildlands* could help convince the Navajos that they had a sacred duty to protect the Colorado River—perhaps it worked.

For the Betterment of the Navajos

While Brower and the Sierra Club used photographs of landscapes and text from writers and Navajo ceremonies to make their point about Indians and their relationship to nature, the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and their supporters took a different tack to convey the importance of the Indians' need for technology to the public. In particular, a group of pro-dam activists, nicknamed Aqualantes or Water Vigilantes, created a well-organized, seemingly grass-roots movement to mobilize the public to support the construction of dams in the area. While it would take the Sierra Club until after the construction of Glen Canyon Dam to integrate Navajos into their campaign, Aqualantes made Navajos—and helping Navajos—part of the discussion from the very beginning of their fight for the CRSP.

The Aqualantes rallied their membership after conservationists, such as the Sierra Club, the National Parks Association, and Isaak Walton League, successfully lobbied congress for the elimination of Echo Park Dam from the CRSP in 1954–55.²² Aqualantes' members strove to combat the “false information (put out by organizations like the Sierra Club and all of its East Coast supporters) by writing letters to friends and associates in other states, giving them the facts and urging them to write their Congressmen.”²³

21 Tom Turner to Rainbow Bridge Cooperators, Memo January 23, 1967, David Brower Papers, Bancroft Library. The Sierra Club ultimately worked with Navajo medicine men and singers and put forth this argument: *Badoni v. Higginson* 638 F.2d 172 C.A.Utah, 1980. Decided 3 November 1980. The Rainbow Bridge case represents the next segment in the story of the Navajo and environmental debates.

22 The success of the conservationist's efforts to save DNM is often seen as a defining moment in the modern environmental movement; Mark Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness: Echo Park and the American Conservation Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).

23 “What are Aqualantes?” Circa 1955, document M-5, Untermann Collection, University of Utah Special Collections; see also Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness*.



Figure 3:
Illustration,
Dial-a-Fact card
(Source: Unter-
mann Collection,
University of
Utah).

Although much has been written about the Echo Park debate and the birth of modern environmentalism, the Aqualantes organization also warrants attention for the way that it pulled Native Americans into this national—but also intensely regional—debate.

The main arguments behind Aqualantes' support of the CRSP were national defense, industrial development, irrigation, and a plan to uplift Navajos. Aqualantes literature claimed that the CRSP would enable the “people of the Navajo Indian Tribe—the largest tribe in existence [to] help themselves. This,” the group noted, “will reduce the

need for federal aid.”²⁴ This idea meshed with the idea that it was time to “terminate” the federal government’s trust responsibilities. By addressing both the Indian “problem” and governmental concerns, Aqualantes assumed a moral high ground. They sought to build dams so that water and power could propel Navajos into the “modern” world.²⁵

Of all the eco-images produced during the debate over CRSP, perhaps the most unique was an Aqualantes “Dial-a-Fact” card (fig. 3). The thousands of people who received the cards were told to “take a whirl ... see what [the CRSP] means to you and America.” Individual tabs depicted different populations or industries that would benefit from dam construction. The card played upon the visual language of older eco-images such as the Massachusetts Bay Colony Seal that cast Indians as a traditional people who would benefit from the civilizing efforts of whites. Notice, for instance, that all of the tabs, except the ones depicting fossil beds and Navajos, had modern or contemporary imagery associated with them. For instance, on the tab marked “recreation,” a bikini-clad young woman gets ready to throw a beach ball. Or, on the National Park tab, a modern car moves along a well-defined road. The Navajo tab, however, depicts a traditional Indian dancer. In the accompanying text of a “speaker’s kit,” Aqualantes told readers just how the CRSP dam would help Navajos; it claimed that “125,000 acres of Navajo land will receive water to better the Indians’ standard of living.”²⁶ Glen Canyon Dam would facilitate the economic and social uplift of a romanticized “primitive” people.²⁷ The Dial-a-Fact card was just one part of a massive public relations campaign. Dam supporters and the BOR also used other tactics to advocate for, and later celebrate, the construction of the dam. Dam supporters would not be the only ones to use eco-images of the Navajo in such debates.

24 The idea that the dams would save the government money by helping the Navajo population was an interesting argument, because the cost of the dams that were built would eventually run into the billions. Estimates at the time figured that Glen Canyon alone would cost \$421 million to build, and this turned out to be an underestimate. Nor should we overlook the fact that the cost of the project would far exceed any payments to the Navajo; quote from Aqualantes Speaker’s Kit, “A 3 minute Talk on the Colorado River Storage Project,” undated Document 1, p. 2. Unterman Collection, Marriott Library, University of Utah.

25 Despite such imagery, Navajos had been deeply engaged with the modern world prior to the 1950s; Erika Bsumek, *Indian-Made*.

26 Aqualantes Speaker’s Kit, “A 3 minute Talk.”

27 Aqualantes, “Dial-a-Fact” Card, Untermann Collection, University of Utah.



Figure 4:
 Norman Rockwell,
 Glen Canyon
 Dam (Source:
 US Bureau of
 Reclamation).

During construction of the dam at Glen Canyon, the BOR issued multiple press releases and encouraged magazines such as *Life* and *Sunset*, as well as local and national newspapers, to profile the dam and the region it was designed to help. After it was completed, they hired 40 famous American artists, from Norman Rockwell to Fritz Scholder, to commemorate the Bureau’s “most inspiring” efforts.²⁸ In 1969 the BOR commissioned Norman Rockwell to paint a picture of the newly completed Glen Canyon Dam (fig. 4).

The story commonly told about this painting goes something like this: Rockwell agreed to paint a picture of the dam and then donate the painting to the BOR. Once on site, Rockwell had a difficult time and felt his initial drawings looked too mechanical. Either Rockwell or BOR officials decided that including Navajos in the picture would solve the problem. W. L. (“Bud”) Rusho, a young bureau employee, was assigned the task of finding Navajos willing to pose for Rockwell.²⁹ The end result was the large canvas

²⁸ Leslie Stinger and Bobbie Ferguson, “Portraits of Reclamation,” *CRM* 4 (1999), 48–50.

²⁹ Although the story is commonly told in this way by various scholars, it does not completely reflect what occurred. Correspondence between Norman Rockwell and John DeWitt of the Bureau of Reclamation reveals that Rusho and Rockwell collected numerous photographs of a Navajo, John Lane, and his family. Rockwell used a compilation of the photographs to depict the Navajo family in the photograph. Rockwell Correspondence with DeWitt, Rockwell Archives.

of the dam that currently hangs in the visitor's center; it was (and continues to be) the centerpiece of an art collection commissioned by the Bureau to depict "the imaginative aspects of the Reclamation Projects."³⁰ Rockwell's canvas represented the BOR role in the development of the region. Yet, it was also the first significant visual representation of Glen Canyon Dam—or any CRSP project—that featured contemporary Navajos, as opposed to the "traditional" representations of them seen in the Aqualantes literature. Rockwell depicted the Navajos viewing the "help" that the government had supposedly provided for them.

To date, little has been written about Rockwell's popular and frequently reproduced image of the Navajo family at the Dam. Even less has been written about the Navajos and their participation in the debates surrounding Glen Canyon Dam. Accordingly, Rockwell's insistence on including people in his picture of this new engineering marvel effectively incorporated a crucial part of the history of the Dam—the history of Navajo involvement—which scholars have either ignored or glossed over by relying on preconceived notions of how Indians should have responded to the dam. It is quite possible that some of these preconceptions derived more from the Sierra Club's campaign than from anything having to do with the Navajo themselves. In 2009, for example, Paul Lindholdt described the Navajos in Rockwell's painting as follows:

Members of this ensemble—threatened with extinction, pushed to the continent's edge—peer across a dizzying expanse toward the dam face. Their body language is more akin to resignation or forced cohabitation than to approval. The dog cringes; two hawks soar above the gulf. Life goes on, even in the aftermath of massive technology . . . the Indians in the Rockwell painting seem hindered by the concrete monolith in their way. Nomadic people historically, they see their travel baffled, slowed, constricted.³¹

While this is Lindholdt's reading of Rockwell's painting, his interpretation flies in the face of historical reality. Paul Jones, Sam Akeah, and other leaders of the Navajo Nation celebrated the construction of Glen Canyon Dam. Raymond Nakai, Tribal Chairman in 1966, even prepared remarks for the dedication ceremony. From 1954–66, different members of

30 Paul Lindholdt, "From Sublimity to Ecopornography: Assessing the Bureau of Reclamation Art Collection," *Journal of Ecocriticism* 1 (2009), 1.

31 *Ibid.*, 12.

the Navajo Tribal Council actively participated in both local and national debates over dam building and resource development, and they generally ignored the debates about the environment—siding with the pro-dam contingent over the Sierra Club. The tribal government of the Navajo Nation strongly supported construction of the dam and even worked with the local Aqualantes organizers to lobby for the dam. Perhaps most telling is the fact that the Navajo Nation provided the Aqualantes with the largest single donation the organization received. Navajos gave \$13,752 to support the pro-dam contingent.³² Leaders of the Navajo Nation believed that the dam had much to offer Navajos.

Still, Rockwell's painting has much to offer viewers. Historians Sherry L. Smith and Brian Frehner read Rockwell's painting from the BOR's point of view, reaching a different conclusion than Lindholdt. They see it as a bureaucratic rendition of public progress: "The message, perhaps not surprising, given the client, was clear: dams nestled nicely into the landscape and attracted rather than repelled wildlife." Yet, Smith and Frehner were reluctant to read much into the position of the Navajos, asking, "As for the Navajos, does their demeanor suggest acceptance? Resignation? What is the implication about the relationship between Indians and energy production?"³³ While the Navajo Indians in Rockwell's painting could not think—they were paint, not people—we do know what Rockwell was thinking when he placed them on canvas. First, he consciously placed the Indians in the "shadow" of the dam. Yet, they aren't necessarily overshadowed by it. The Navajos in Rockwell's painting evoke ambiguity rather than certainty.

Reframing the Navajos

This ambiguity aroused by Rockwell is remarkably different from what we might view as the first and one of the most significant eco-images of Indians ever produced. Edward Curtis's iconic photograph of *The Vanishing Race* was meant to evoke the nobility of American Indians in the face of land loss.

While the Indians in *The Vanishing Race* were moving out of the frame, literally and metaphorically making way for white settlers, the Indians in Rockwell's painting have

32 On Navajo donations to the Aqualantes, see "Upper Colorado Grass Roots, Inc., Statement of Receipts and Expenditures, January 1, 1955," Box 7, Series 200, George Dewey Clyde Papers, Utah Historical Society.

33 Sherry Smith and Brian Freher, *Indians and Energy: Exploitation and Opportunity in the American Southwest* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2010).



Figure 5:
The Vanishing
Race by Edward
Curtis (Source:
Charles Deering
McCormick
Library of Special
Collections, Nor-
thwestern Univer-
sity Library).

made their way to the dam. While it may not be clear whether Rockwell wanted them to stand as symbols of the American character who embraced the “help” the dam seemingly offered or whether they wished to speak for nature and decry the dam’s presence, one thing is certain: they have come to see their future. Unlike those Navajos represented by Curtis, these Navajos are not vanishing, nor are they moving out of the viewers’ field of vision.

Certainly, not all Navajos supported the construction of Glen Canyon. But many did. Many got well-paying jobs building the dam, and many others worked to pass the legislation that would make those jobs possible. What the future held for Navajos in relation to the dam, however, remained a mystery at the time Rockwell picked up his brush. Rockwell’s painting may have been in response to a Bureau of Reclamation commission, but it manages to provide a truer portrayal of the complicated meanings of the dam for Navajos than that provided by the politicians and activists who tried to enlist the Navajo Nation on their side of the dispute—or that provided by most schol-

ars who have written about the dam in succeeding decades. The Navajos in Rockwell's painting are not going anywhere. They retain a commitment to their livestock (the horse) and their traditions (at least in their dress), while simultaneously facing the power of the modern world.

Ryan O'Connor

Advertising the Environmental Movement: Vickers and Benson's Branding of Pollution Probe

Pollution Probe was the foremost name in Canadian environmental activism through the 1970s. Within two years of its 1969 founding by students and faculty at the University of Toronto, the organization had over 50 independent affiliates operating in five provinces. In addition to having its name synonymous with environmental activism throughout much of Canada, Pollution Probe at the University of Toronto—as the main group was officially known—played a leadership role within the burgeoning Canadian environmental movement, helping groups from coast to coast organize, fundraise, and plot action campaigns. Pollution Probe, it is safe to say, was a key cog in the rise of environmental activism in Canada.

This paper examines a print campaign conceptualized by the advertising company Vickers and Benson that appeared in *The Toronto Telegram* beginning in September 1969, with a particular focus on the first month of advertisements. These advertisements were widely viewed, and had a significant impact on Pollution Probe. At a time when the organization was first gaining renown, the Vickers and Benson campaign helped elucidate key issues, while effectively branding Pollution Probe as environmental stewards that empowered the public to act in their environmental interests. Likewise, in addition to helping raise the environmental activists' public profile, these high-quality advertisements lent the organization an aura of professionalism, belying the fact that Pollution Probe was, at the time, a volunteer organization with little money, operating out of space donated by the University of Toronto's Department of Zoology.

As the introduction to this collection notes, eco-images are inherently political, insofar as they are designed to shape the viewing public's environmental consciousness. This was particularly evident in the Vickers and Benson advertising campaign. In this case, powerful images were utilized in order to cajole the public into action. The agency also aimed to help instill the nascent Pollution Probe with the image and credibility necessary to lead the fight against environmental degradation. In this respect, eco-images were carefully constructed to educate the masses and to brand those working on solutions.

Birth of Pollution Probe

In 1967 the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation shocked the viewing public with *The Air of Death*, a startling exposé of the country's air pollution problems. Inspired by this environmental call to arms, Sherry Brydson, news editor at the University of Toronto's newspaper, *The Varsity*, announced in a 24 February 1969 article that she and her colleagues were forming "a group action committee, the U of T Pollution Probe." The mandate of the committee would be to investigate the origins and effects of pollution, as well as "mobilizing the public, private, and government sectors to action."¹ Brydson's article resonated with the university community. The first two meetings, held in the spring of 1969, attracted several hundred concerned parties. From the outset, Pollution Probe was based out of the university's Department of Zoology, a move that provided the group with the physical infrastructure necessary to operate, as well as scientific credibility.² While Dr. Donald Chant, Chairman of the Department of Zoology, maintained an important role as an advisor to the group, and numerous other faculty members at the University of Toronto would also provide their support, Pollution Probe's decisions were ultimately made by its student members.

Pollution Probe first gained public renown in July 1969 when it organized a public inquiry to investigate the apparent link between the use of toxic chemicals by the Metro Toronto Parks Department and the death of numerous mallard ducks found off the city's shore. One of the parties watching with interest was Terry O'Malley, vice-president and creative director at the Vickers and Benson advertising agency. Crediting the group with raising his environmental consciousness, he recalls that "I thought, 'You know, this is a chance for me to try and do something that I hadn't even thought of before.' I called them up and said anything I could do I would do *pro bono*."³ Although initially skeptical of O'Malley's offer, considering the fact that his clients included major corporations such as Ford, McDonalds, and Gulf Oil, Pollution Probe determined that his intentions were genuine and took him up on his offer.⁴

The author would like to thank Terry O'Malley, David Sharron at the Brock University Archives, Bob Oliver at Pollution Probe, and the editors of this volume for their help in making this article possible.

1 Sherry Brydson, "Pollution: Is There a Future for Our Generation?" *The Varsity*, 24 February 1969.

2 "We Have an Office," *Probe Newsletter* 1, no. 2 (1969): 1; *Probe Newsletter* 1, no. 5 (1969): 1.

3 Terry O'Malley, interview with author, 8 July 2008, conducted by telephone.

4 A short profile of O'Malley, listing his various clients and awards won, can be found in Sandra Peredo, "They Chose Toronto—The Place to 'Do Their Thing,'" *Maclean's*, October 1968, 28.

With a world-class advertising agency offering its services for free, the only thing missing was the budget necessary for a campaign. Tony Barrett and Rob Mills, two of Pollution Probe's early leaders, began a quest to wrestle some free print space from one of Toronto's prominent newspapers. After talking their way into a personal hearing with John Bassett, the owner-publisher of *The Telegram*, they convinced him to donate full-page advertising space to the fledgling organization.⁵ At first glance, Bassett and Pollution Probe appeared to be unlikely bedfellows. A prominent Tory, the businessman did not tend to sympathize with student activists. However, as Maggie Siggins explains in her biography of Bassett, *The Telegram* was on its last legs and struggling to find new niches within the Toronto newspaper market. As such, it is likely that Bassett saw connecting with Pollution Probe as a way to appeal to an emerging audience—the environmentally conscious.⁶

The Don River

In the late 1960s the state of North America's urban waterways came under increased scrutiny. A June 1969 fire on the Cuyahoga River in Ohio garnered international attention, in large part due to its intense media coverage. The ensuing calls for a cleanup far exceeded those surrounding the river's previous fires, which dated back to the nineteenth century. Likewise, the same summer saw the maiden voyage of the *Sloop Clearwater*, a vessel designed to draw public attention to the efforts underway to revive the Hudson River ecosystem.⁷ Toronto was home to its own troubled waterway. The Don River is a 38-kilometer watershed running through the heart of the city. From the time of the city's foundation, the Don served as a waste sink for industrial development and the ever-growing population. By 1969 it was reported that the river contained human sewage levels of 61 million parts per 100 milliliters of water, rendering it a health hazard to anybody foolish enough to enter it.⁸ Pollution Probe saw the Don River as an ideal, highly visible example of the degradation of the natural environment, and therefore decided to launch a campaign to draw attention to its plight.

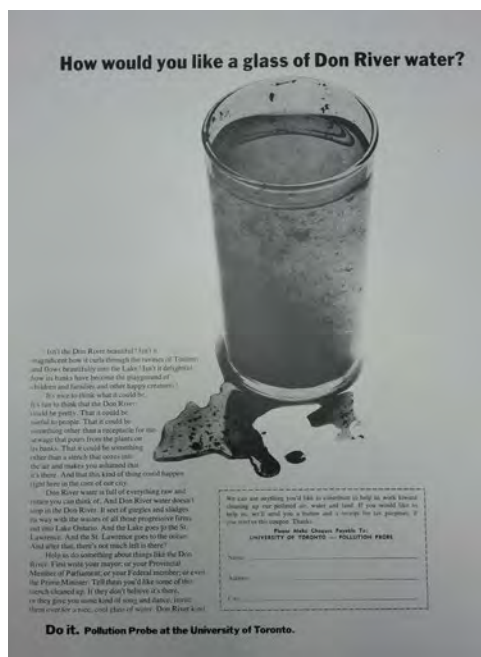
5 Rob Mills, interview with author, 25 September 2008, conducted by telephone; Sarah Elton, "Green Power," *University of Toronto Magazine*, Winter 1999, <http://www.magazine.utoronto.ca/feature/canadian-environmental-movement/> (accessed 15 February 2013).

6 Maggie Siggins, *Bassett* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, Publishers, 1979), 173.

7 See Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2005), 137, 176; David Stradling and Richard Stradling, "Perceptions of the Burning River: Deindustrialization and Cleveland's Cuyahoga River," *Environmental History* 13, no. 3 (2008): 515–35; Tom Lewis, *The Hudson: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 269–70.

8 Thomas Claridge, "Pollution Probe mourns for beloved, dead Don," *Globe and Mail*, 17 November 1969.

Figure 1:
“How would you like a glass of Don River water?”
Toronto Telegram,
29 September
1969 (Pollution
Probe advertisement, RG 72 Terry
O’Malley Fonds,
Brock University
Archives).



On 29 September 1969 their first full-page advertisement appeared in *The Telegram* (fig. 1). Bold letters at the top of the page asked the reader “How would you like a glass of Don River water?” Below was a black and white photograph of a glass spilling over with a sludge-like substance. The accompanying text sarcastically addressed its condition—“Isn’t the Don River beautiful? . . . Isn’t it delightful how its banks have become the playground of children and families and other happy creatures?”—before inviting the reader to imagine an alternate scenario where a clean and resuscitated Don River could be enjoyed by the general public as “something other than a receptacle for the sewage that

pours into the air and makes you ashamed that it’s there.” Having addressed the Don River’s pollution problem, as well as the river’s possibilities, the advertisement then emphasized the public’s ability to bring about change. Readers were encouraged to write to their mayor, federal member of Parliament, or even the prime minister, and to “tell them you’d like some of this stench cleaned up. If they don’t believe it’s there, or they give you some kind of song and dance, invite them over for a nice, cool glass of water. Don River kind.” To the right of this message, and directly below the image, was a coupon inviting the public to make a contribution to help fund Pollution Probe’s work.

Central to Pollution Probe’s message was the idea that the general public was empowered to act on behalf of the environment. Rather than simply leaving the work to its members, Pollution Probe hoped that it could engage the public by focusing attention on important issues and disseminating information. As would become standard in Vickers and Benson’s work with Pollution Probe, this particular advertisement highlighted two simple ways people could help resolve the issue: by making a financial contribution to their continued work and writing to their elected officials. This

approach was summarized in Pollution Probe's new slogan, created by Vickers and Benson, which made its debut in this advertisement: "Do it. Pollution Probe at the University of Toronto."

The imagery contained within the advertisement's text was both eloquent and evocative. Its greatest impact, however, came from its use of shocking imagery. The glass of water featured in the advertisement was actually derived from the Don River, effectively demonstrating its wretched condition.⁹ Having initiated the public conversation regarding the state of the Don River with this advertisement, Pollution Probe went on to hold a mock funeral for the waterway on 16 November 1969. This publicity stunt earned the environmentalists their first national media coverage, and would go down as one of its hallmark activities.¹⁰

Ontario Hydro

Following the Don River campaign, Pollution Probe's focus shifted to air pollution. As with most major industrial cities, Toronto had a notable problem with smog. The chief culprit identified was the Richard L. Hearn Generating Station, a downtown, coal-fired plant that emitted 80,000 tons of sulphur dioxide in 1966. In order to alleviate the problem, Ontario Hydro, the Crown corporation that operated the generating station, announced that it would replace the eight existing smokestacks with a seven-hundred-foot "superstack." As George Gathercole, chairman of Ontario Hydro, explained at a 22 September 1969 meeting of the Toronto Buildings and Development Committee, "A higher stack reduces pollution by achieving greater dispersal or dilution." According to Gathercole, sulphur dioxide concentrations would be reduced by 90 percent in the city's downtown, and yet the effluent would not harm those living further downwind as it "is measurably weakened and changed by the combined influence of weather and dilution."¹¹ For the members of Pollution Probe, Ontario Hydro's response that "the solution to pollution is dilution" proved wholly unsatisfactory, as it would merely disperse effluent over a greater distance.

9 O'Malley, interview with author, 8 July 2008.

10 Claridge, "Pollution Probe mourns"; "Mock rites mourn death of Don River killed by pollution," *Toronto Star*, 17 November 1969.

11 "City told giant stack will help cut pollution," *Globe and Mail*, 23 September 1969.

The 6 October 1969 edition of *The Telegram* featured Vickers and Benson's second Pollution Probe advertisement (fig. 2). Featuring a black and white photographic image of a smokestack filling the sky with dark effluent, the advertisement asked the reader a disturbing question: "If smoking gives you lung cancer, you give up smoking, right? Now, if breathing gives you lung cancer what are you supposed to give up?" As the main text notes, the dangers associated with smoking cigarettes were well known; however, everybody living in the city was being exposed to dirty air. In addition to smoke, citizens regularly encountered airborne materials such as pesticides, fumes, and exhaust "that somehow just can't be a great help to you, your body, your land or your total ecological system (that means everything in your environment)." In keeping with Pollution Probe's message of empowering the public, the advertisement encouraged readers to contact their elected officials in order to express their concerns about air pollution. This advertisement is unique insofar as it pairs the growing concern over health issues linked to cigarette smoking with the broader environmental problems caused by urban air pollution. It is worth noting that cigarettes were not otherwise on Pollution Probe's environmental agenda. Rather, it appears that the juxtaposition of the effects of cigarette smoke and urban air pollution was designed to play the increasing awareness of the former off the dangers of the latter.

The next advertisement, which appeared in the 14 October 1969 edition of *The Telegram*, featured a cartoon image of six anthropomorphized smoke stacks (fig. 3). Their brows furrowed and cheeks ruddy, the smokestacks concentrated their energy on blowing their smoke to the land below. On the ground, a solitary flower can be seen, keeled over and dying as a result of its exposure to air pollution. The headline at the top of the page reads, "If we left it to most industries, the only plants that would ever grow in Toronto would be manufacturing. Not natural." As the text notes, industry provides employment for many Torontonians, which is highly beneficial. On the downside, it is noted that industry has polluted the city's air and waterways. Dismissing industry's claim that pollution is a necessary byproduct of progress, and that cleaning up their act would require tax breaks, the advertisement adopts an incredulous tone: "It's kind of hard to believe that this is possible when to begin with it's our water. And our land. And our air that they're dumping all this junk into. And now it would appear to get it cleaned up or even to get someone to think about cleaning it up will cost us to have it done. Somehow that doesn't seem right." Having identified the problem, the advertisement encouraged the reader to write to their political representatives and to urge them to rein in industry.

If smoking gives you lung cancer, you give up smoking, right? Now, if breathing gives you lung cancer what are you supposed to give up?

Everybody seems very concerned that you know all the hazards that are supposed to be connected with cigarette smoking. You can't go anywhere or see anything without someone reminding you that a puff of this stuff is poisoning you.

But what about the people that don't smoke. Heck, all they have to do is go around breathing and they might end up with the same problems that a pack or a pack-and-a-half smoker might have. If you don't think so, one day soon when you're walking down one city street just wipe your nose with a handkerchief or a tissue. See all that black smudge stuff? Well, notice you got it there yourself. It's a part of the great bargain we call progress.

But there's a lot more in the air than just smoke. There's pesticides, chemicals, fumes, exhaust and a lot of other lovely things that somehow just can't be a great help to you, your body, your life or your total ecological system (that means everything in your environment).

We'd like to get something done about the air (and other polluted things) that we need help. From me, you, or your Federal Member, or even the Prime Minister, and ask for a little help to clean the air. You'll probably get a story about some studies being made and investigations and other similar stuff in our system, that's not enough. And we hope you feel this way, too.

So remember even if you give up smoking, you've still got one air to get up with. And notice we do something about that all you can really do is take a long deep, deep breath and hope we get it better if gets you.

Do it. Pollution Probe at the University of Toronto.

We are not assuming part of this is to continue to help us work toward cleaning up our polluted air, water and land. If you would like to help us, we'll send you a form and a receipt for the amount of you need to discontinue. Thank.

Checkers payable to University of Toronto - Pollution Probe.

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____
Do it. Pollution Probe at the University of Toronto.

If we left it to most industries, the only plants that would ever grow in Toronto would be manufacturing. Not natural.

Pollution is a great job! It means a huge business and a tremendous amount of money. It means a lot of jobs for a lot of other things, too. It means a lot of money for a lot of other things, too. It means a lot of money for a lot of other things, too. It means a lot of money for a lot of other things, too.

If you don't think so, one day soon when you're walking down one city street just wipe your nose with a handkerchief or a tissue. See all that black smudge stuff? Well, notice you got it there yourself. It's a part of the great bargain we call progress.

But there's a lot more in the air than just smoke. There's pesticides, chemicals, fumes, exhaust and a lot of other lovely things that somehow just can't be a great help to you, your body, your life or your total ecological system (that means everything in your environment).

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So remember even if you give up smoking, you've still got one air to get up with. And notice we do something about that all you can really do is take a long deep, deep breath and hope we get it better if gets you.

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Checkers payable to University of Toronto - Pollution Probe.

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____
Do it. Pollution Probe at the University of Toronto.

Figure 2: "If smoking gives you lung cancer, you give up smoking, right?" Toronto Telegram, 6 October 1969 (Pollution Probe ads, RG 72 Terry O'Malley Fonds, Brock University Archives).

Figure 3: "If we left it to most industries, the only plants that would ever grow in Toronto would be manufacturing. Not natural." Toronto Telegram, 14 October 1969 (Pollution Probe ads, RG 72 Terry O'Malley Fonds, Brock University Archives).

This advertisement clearly lays the blame for urban air pollution at the feet of industrial companies, and portrays them as a group that needs to be closely regulated by the government. However, this should not be taken as an indication that Pollution Probe had an anti-industry stance in general. While Pollution Probe was never shy to critique those that warranted it, it had a reputation for seeking to work with others, including the business community, in order to resolve problems. This characteristic, which made Pollution Probe unique within the broader environmentalist community, was the result of a small but influential membership core that came from elite backgrounds.

The use of a cartoon, as opposed to the photographs utilized in the previous advertisements, provided an artistic change of pace. Whereas Vickers and Benson's first two advertisements highlighted the very real consequences of pollution within Toronto, this advertisement portrayed an equally strong message while adding a comical touch—an important element in order to prevent the readership from losing interest due to earnest heavy-handedness.

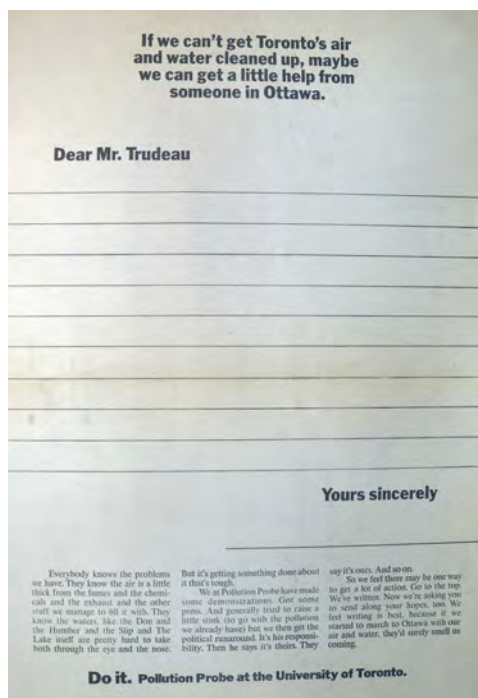


Figure 4:
“If we can't get Toronto's air and water cleaned up, maybe we can get a little help from someone in Ottawa.” Toronto Telegram, 20 October 1969. (Pollution Probe ads, RG 72 Terry O'Malley Fonds, Brock University Archives).

The fourth advertisement, published in the 20 October 1969 edition of *The Telegram*, focused on the power of individual action (fig. 4). The message at the top of the page stated, “If we can't get Toronto's air and water cleaned up, maybe we can get a little help from someone in Ottawa.” Below is a blank note, addressed to the Canadian prime minister, Pierre Trudeau. In the accompanying text, it is noted that Pollution Probe had taken its concerns to local politicians, but were repeatedly told that jurisdiction for the problem rested with someone else. Sick of being given the runaround, they announced that “we feel there may be one way to get a lot of action. Go to the top. We've written. Now we're asking you to send along your hopes, too. We feel writing

is best, because if we started to march to Ottawa with our air and water, they'd surely smell us coming.” Playing on the theme of personal empowerment, this advertisement also demonstrates environmentalists' frustration with the lack of clearly defined jurisdiction over pollution during the period in question.

Pollution Probe took direct aim at Ontario Hydro in its fifth advertisement (fig. 5). Published in the 27 October 1969 edition of *The Telegram*, the advertisement bore the headline, “The Ontario Hydro is getting ready to give it to you from great heights.” On the left side of the advertisement was a cartoon of a giant smokestack, with a dark plume coming out in the form of a monstrous creature. At the bottom of the smokestack stood a small crowd of men, women, and children, looking up towards the plume. The text dismantled Ontario Hydro's claim that the superstack would be a positive development. As it opened, “There are lots of polluters who are filling the air with poisons but around Toronto, there is none as blatant as the Ontario Hydro.” As it continued, the superstack would indeed result in “less ground sulphur dioxide poison around the plant areas but the 80,000 tons

still have to go somewhere. As of now, it looks like that somewhere will be Scarborough. Or Pickering. Or out in the Lake [Ontario].” Having addressed the manifold dangers associated with sulphur dioxide, the advertisement notes that Gathercole had publicly rejected converting the generating station to natural gas, a cleaner fuel, saying it was impossible to secure an adequate supply. However, the advertisement highlights the fact that a local supplier had expressed a willingness to supply the station. Readers were then encouraged to fill out the attached coupon—which stated their opposition to Ontario Hydro’s plans and support for an alternative to the sulphur dioxide-emitting plant—and to send it to George Kerr, the Ontario minister of energy and resources management. Like the advertisement printed on 14 October 1969, this one juxtaposed a harsh message with a cartoon image that, while still portraying an urgent situation, managed to provide a moderating influence.

Following this Vickers and Benson campaign on air pollution, Pollution Probe sponsored a public inquiry into Ontario Hydro’s superstack plans in February 1970. This event featured a variety of health and environmental experts, as well as Gathercole. The opposition led by Pollution Probe would pay dividends. On 29 June 1970 Gathercole announced that plans to build a superstack for the Richard L. Hearn Generating Station had been scrapped, and that it would be converted at year’s end to burn natural gas. This move would require an increase in energy rates, due to \$4 million in renovations. Nonetheless, Gathercole informed the media that it was the correct choice, explaining that “Anti-pollution measures are costly but our customers have indicated to us that they are prepared to pay for them.”¹²

12 “Hearn to Switch to Gas, See Rise in Hydro Rates,” *Globe and Mail*, 30 June 1970.



Figure 5: “The Ontario Hydro is getting ready to give it to you from great heights.” Toronto Telegram, 27 October 1969 (Pollution Probe ads, RG 72 Terry O’Malley Fonds, Brock University Archives).

Conclusion

The Vickers and Benson advertisements appeared at a pivotal time in the history of Pollution Probe, as it was just then gaining renown beyond the University of Toronto campus. As Pollution Probe's first executive director Peter Middleton notes, the Vickers and Benson connection "made an impact. It made us look professional"¹³—a significant achievement for an upstart organization with limited funding at its disposal. Furthermore, the advertisements helped the organization set its public agenda, while advancing its recognition as a group that empowered the public to act on behalf of their environment. Pollution Probe's Vickers and Benson advertisements would continue to appear in *The Telegram* on a regular basis until the newspaper ceased publication in October 1971.

13 Peter Middleton, interview with author, 21 February 2008, Toronto, Ontario.

Gisela Parak

“Our Only World”—An American Vision

On 24 May 1974 Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Russell Train opened an extraordinary photo exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution’s Visitor’s Center. Entitled “Our Only World,” the show consisted of 113 photographs of environmental pollution. After being dismantled, six exhibition sets toured the United States until 1978, intended to be a visual display of American environmentalism. The exhibition was employed not only to enlighten American pupils and adults; it was also sent to the 1976 World Environment Exhibition in Tokyo to promote the United States’ transnational vision. “Our Only World” is conceivably the first example of a photo exhibition in which a national government consciously employs photographic eco-images to emphasize the complexity of environmentalism and to sanction specific behavioral patterns. Employing visual mediation to campaign for environmental awareness at a governmental level was a vanguard in environmental policy in 1974. Simultaneously, the design of the exhibition was to function as a reaction to the debates that were emerging from the new global environmental movement: a proposal to the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council in July 1968 suggested a UN Conference on the Human Environment be held in Stockholm. Despite the concerns about environmental depredation prevalent in many industrial nations, the implementation of this proposal was purposefully delayed until 1972 to give national governments the opportunity to take action in advance, such as passing environmental legislation.¹ In the United States, President Nixon signed the National Environmental Policy Act in January 1970 as a reaction to the growing national environmental conscience, and in December the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was founded as an answer to both domestic and international appeals.

“Our Only World” was influenced considerably by these political circumstances. The show merged several of the period’s most important catch phrases into its design. First, the omnipresent metaphor of “Spaceship Earth,”² initially used by Ambassador Adlai Stevenson in his 1965 Geneva speech, served as the overall theme of “Our Only World” and was quoted in almost every review of the exhibition. Second, Barbara Ward’s and René Dubos’s

1 Wade Rowland, *The Plot to Save the World* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1973), 33.

2 Among others, the “Spaceship Earth” metaphor was picked up by UN Secretary General U Thant in 1970 and elaborated on at book length by Howard Odum, *Environment, Power and Society* (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1971); Peder Anker, “The Ecological Colonization of Space,” *Environmental History* 10, no. 2 (2005): 246.

book, *Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet*, was paraphrased to become the exhibition's slogan. Discussing the just, global distribution of resources and wealth, this book contributed significantly in coining a postwar critique of both Cold-War science and technology, and of the imperialistic separation of the world into so-called developed and developing countries. And Barry Commoner's first law of ecology, "Everything is connected to everything else,"³ was project director Gifford Hampshire's inspiration to photographically emphasize the connection between pollution and its effects.

Figure 1:
LeRoy Woodson:
Birmingham steel
plant, 10/1972
© National
Archives
(412-DA-11388).



Figure 2:
Alexander Hope:
Polluted salt
marsh in Middle-
town, 05/1973 ©
National Archives
(412-DA-11439).

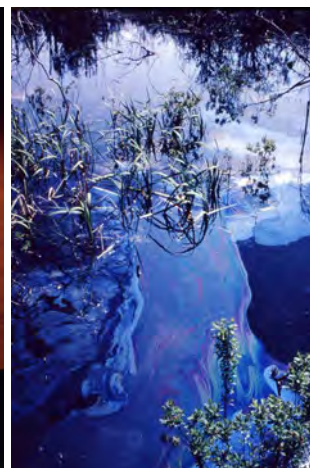


Figure 3:
Marc St. Gil:
Burning discarded
automobile bat-
teries, 07/1972 ©
National Archives
(412-DA-11382).



3 Barry Commoner, *The Closing Circle: Man, Nature, and Technology* (New York: Knopf, 1971).

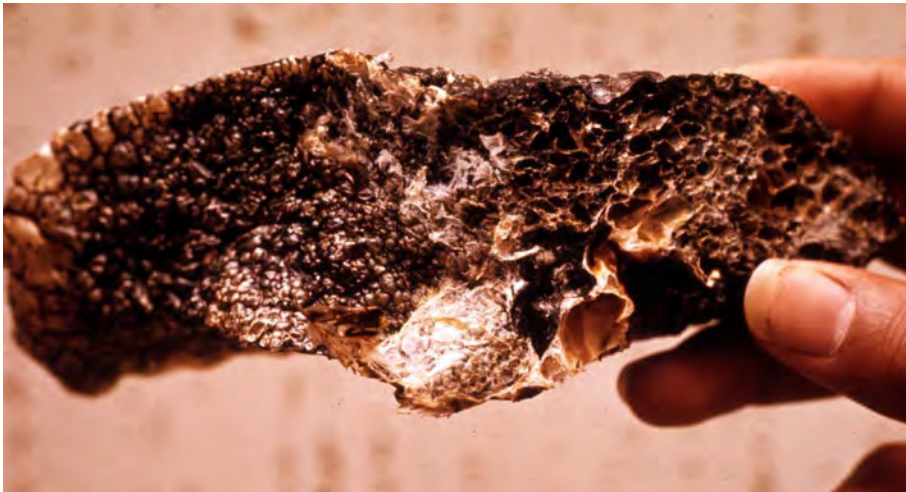


Figure 4:
LeRoy Woodson:
Birmingham coal
miner's lung
showing effect of
black-lung disease,
06/1972 © National
Archives
(412-DA-11389).



Figure 5:
LeRoy Woodson:
Normal lung,
shown for compa-
rison with lung
affected by black-
lung disease,
06/1972 © National
Archives
(412-DA-11391).

Figure 6:
LeRoy Woodson:
Robert B. Jones,
retired worker, is
totally dependent
on his home oxy-
gen machine for
survival, 06/1972
© National
Archives
(412-DA-11390).

After three general introductory sections, the exhibition concentrated on the five core areas of the EPA, visually illustrating not only environmental policy achievements but also problems of water and air pollution, waste management, noise abatement, and radiation: Photos of thick, black smoke clouds emphasized the negative implications of commercial production; rainbow-colored oil streaks and monochromatic water discoloration drove home the consequences of the sewerage-disposal system. The long-term effects of particle and air pollution were exemplified by contrasting a tar-stained smoker's lungs with lungs in a healthy state; a pulmonary patient was shown in pitiful dependence on a breathing machine.

The exhibit relied on deterrent, shocking pictures, but also—especially in its opening sections—on the beauty of nature, allowing the audience to compare the is and the *should be* state of the American landscape. In its last two sections, the political agenda motivating the exhibition—the legitimization of specific environmentally friendly behavior—shone through. Under the subtitle “Protecting Our Environment,” accomplishments such as new sewage treatment plants or air pollution test facilities were presented as technical solutions to the environmental crisis. Introducing images like these, the curators were obviously suggesting an expansion of these role-model projects. Their appeal to join a movement of environmental protection was further developed in the last section on recycling. The section challenged the audience by claiming, “It’s Up to You.” The very same motto had also been emphasized by EPA Administrator Russell Train in his speech at the inauguration of the show.⁴



Figure 7:
Jim Olive:
Children in Fort
Smith are learning
that protecting
the environment
will take more
than awareness,
06/1972 ©
National Archives
(412-DA-11452).

The function of persuasive eco-images presented in the exhibition was to promote this mandate of individual empowerment and to stress the notion that successful environmental protection depended on individuals. The viewer was not only informed but also reminded of his/her duties. A concluding photograph stressed this intention by presenting a recycling container in front of a school class. The message of the photograph was openly inscribed on the box: “Fight for Your World.”

As illustrative material to spread environmental education and to increase environmental conscientiousness, “Our Only World” was a success. The show received benevolent reviews, which

4 Russell Train, “Opening remarks, Manuscript,” 23 May 1974: Entry 412-M, Box 2, File 2, General Records of the Environmental Protection Agency, Record Group 412, Photo Division of the National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

reflected ordinary inhabitants' anxiety about environmental devastation during these days and the public agreement to do something against further pollution.⁵ Though the photographs of "Our Only World" succeeded in spreading the show's didactic message, the exhibit did not proactively add a single new issue to the discussion. On the contrary, it presented the lowest common denominator of the current state of the environmental discussion. For example, "Our Only World" did not pick up Commoner's and Dubos's call for a new "scientific ethic" or "science of civilization" to restrict technological developments, nor did it refer to the call of certain ecologists for a restriction of consumerism.⁶ The show proudly presented technological achievements to mitigate the damage, but did not suggest sustainable technologies or ideas for prevention. The need for new cars remained unquestioned, but better means of exhaust control were displayed as solutions to the problem. Although the "atomic menace" was vividly discussed among contemporaries, the show presented atomic power plants as an adequate solution to meet the nation's demand for energy. In this light, "Our Only World" disseminated a far less substantial ecological prospect than that proposed by environmental writers of the early 1960s. When on public display, the responsibility of industrial companies was lessened through the removal of references to specific firms from images of negative examples. "Our Only World," as a governmental vision, educated the public but did not reveal any unknown facts or question the model of economic growth.

Despite these deficiencies or conceptual limitations, the show was sent to Tokyo to represent US environmentalism at an international world fair. This gesture supports the argument that the United States was witnessing the birth of environmental diplomacy under the Nixon presidency, and solidified the understanding of the United States as the driver of exchange on environmental questions at the international level.⁷ The United States sought a leading position, for example, by creating environmental institutions and pressuring NATO's North Atlantic Council to create the Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society in November 1969. Today, this aspired leadership in global

5 See Evaluation Papers and Newspaper Clippings, 1972–1977, Entry 412-M, Box 2, File 2, General Records of the Environmental Protection Agency, Record Group 412, Photo Division of the National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

6 Ernst Callenbach, *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston* (Berkeley: Banyan Tree Books, 1975).

7 J. Brooks Flippen's observation of Richard Nixon's and Russell Train's efforts marginalizes protagonists from communities other than the United States, in particular the United Nations, which took an essential role in shaping international environmentalism; J. Brooks Flippen, "Richard Nixon, Russell Train, and the Birth of Modern American Environmental Diplomacy," *Diplomatic History* 32, no. 4 (2008): 638.



Figure 8:
Earth, as seen
by astronauts
Eugen Cernan,
Ronald Evans, and
Harrison Schmidt
from Apollo
12/1972 ©
National Archives
(412-DA-11344)

environmental issues is criticized for failing to have harmonized fissures between the Eastern and Western blocs.⁸ But even after the UN Conference on the Human Environment and the foundation of the United Nations Environmental Program, the United States continued to perceive itself as the international leader on environmental policy.⁹ In contrast to this belief, the implementation of environmental laws staggered at home. During a time of recession, the political administration tended to support businesses in any jobs-versus-environment questions.¹⁰ It has been pointed out that the Nixon Administration's halfhearted attempt at enforcing environmental policies was accompanied by a "continual lack of support"¹¹ from other federal agencies. Most politicians were not willing to question the ideology of abundance and "their country's right to consume so

8 Jacob Darwin Hamblin, "Environmentalism for the Atlantic Alliance: NATO's Experiment with the 'Challenges of Modern Society,'" *Environmental History* 15, no. 1 (2010): 56, 61, 71.

9 Flippen, "Birth of Modern American Environmental Diplomacy," 618.

10 Joel A. Mintz, *Enforcement at the EPA: High Stakes and Hard Choices* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 26.

11 Rosemary O'Leary, *Environmental Change: Federal Courts and the EPA* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 8.

much of the world's resources,"¹² although the problem of economic justice has become a large debate in American intellectual circles since the early 1950s.¹³

In this period of environmental endorsement, "Our Only World" provided a path-breaking technique, using the medium of an exhibition to increase environmental awareness in an easily accessible, educational, and entertaining format. However, the exhibition failed to develop a proactive, innovative agenda. It repeated popular headlines and weaved them into its own vague message. As a somehow uninspired ensemble of photographic eco-images, originally intended to enlighten visitors of American and foreign nationality, "Our Only World" cannot be considered a progressive role model for environmentalism and particularly not a transnational vision. Thomas Robertson wrote that Americans started to perceive the whole earth as "American" after World War II, as explicated by Anselm Adams's photo book *This is the American Earth* analyzed in Robin Kelsey's contribution to this volume.¹⁴ By incorporating only pictures of American examples, "Our Only World" maintained a single-minded perspective of global environmental problems. Although one of the iconic NASA views of planet Earth was used—a view focusing on the southern hemisphere—this incident did not alter or improve the show's conceptual statement.¹⁵

It can be concluded that the founders of "Our Only World" consciously employed eco-images not only with an educational intent, but especially to reaffirm and underpin the role of American environmental policy as a forerunner of and role model for international action. While the didactic component of the images is still evident today, the limited transnational perspective provided by "Our Only World" represents a gap between entitlement and reality in the American claim to its role as a precursor of global environmental diplomacy.

12 Donald Worster, "Environmentalism Goes Global," *Diplomatic History* 32, no. 4 (2008): 641.

13 For further early critique, see Fairfield Osborn, *The Limits of the Earth* (Boston: Little & Brown, 1953); Harrison Brown, *The Challenge of Man's Future: An Inquiry Concerning the Condition of Man During the Years that Lie Ahead* (New York: Viking Press, 1954); William Thomas (ed.), *Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

14 Thomas Robertson, "'This Is the American Earth': American Empire, the Cold War, and American Environmentalism," *Diplomatic History* 32, no. 4 (2008): 584.

15 Denis Cosgrove, "Contested Global Visions: One-World, Whole-Earth, and the Apollo Space Photographs," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 84, no. 2 (1994): 290; Vicki Goldberg, *The Power of Photography* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 57.

Oluwafemi Alexander Ladapo

The Contribution of Cartoonists to Environmental Debates in Nigeria: The Koko Toxic-Waste-Dumping Incident

In 1988 it came to the attention of some Nigerian students studying in Pisa, Italy that hazardous waste originating from several European countries was being dumped in Koko, a town in mid-western Nigeria. These students promptly wrote letters to all major Nigerian news agencies informing them of this development and supplying copies of the stories on the issue carried by the Italian press, with English translations. The story was confirmed by a correspondent from *The Guardian*,¹ and as of 5 June 1988, articles began to appear in this tabloid backed by pictures of stacks of drums, shipping containers, steel casks, and bags marked “radioactive.” Other media organizations rapidly joined the reportage, and within a couple of days the Koko story had been whipped up into a frenzy, with journalists covering it from different angles. There was also a lot of activity in the editorial cartoon sections and other newspaper cartoon strips, which took up the issue from diverse perspectives.

The media frenzy over the toxic-waste dumping at Koko spurred an investigation by Nigerian government authorities. The resulting reports indicated that over 3,884 tons of hazardous toxic waste had been imported into Nigeria between June 1987 and May 1988 by a company owned and controlled by two Italian nationals and aided by Nigerian associates.² The names of the Italians were given as Gianfranco Raffaeli and Desiderio Perazzi, they had used their Nigerian registered company to facilitate the dumping of the toxic waste in Nigeria for the Italian multi-national corporations Ecomar and Jelly Wax. Further investigations by Nigerian authorities revealed that the dumped waste included the following highly hazardous substances, among others: X-ray waste, methyl melamine manufactured by Dyna Cynamid of Norway, polyurethanes from Italian I.V.I., dimethyl and ethyl acetate formaldehyde from several Italian manufacturers, and polychlorobiphenyl—one of the most dangerous substances on earth—from Elma of Turin, Italy.

This incident generated a diplomatic face-off between Nigeria and Italy, which was only resolved by the intervention of the international community. Subsequently, the Nigerian

1 Segun Ogunseitan and Emeka Ogbeide, “Toxic Waste Dump in Koko Town,” *The Sunday Guardian*, 5 June 1988.

2 “Toxic Waste: Italian Ship Detained,” *Saturday Sketch*, 11 June 1988.

government sent the toxic-waste cargo back to Italy, and the Italian government was obliged to help with the cleanup of Koko, with support from other countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States.³

Eco-Images and Eco-Cartoons

A picture, it is said, is worth more than a thousand words, and as such, issues of environmental consciousness can be efficiently communicated through the agency of “eco-images.” The coinage “eco-image,” with the prefix “eco” from the word “ecology,” appears to connote any graphic representation that is intended or perceived as informing about, commenting on, critiquing, or raising awareness about the state of or interactions with the environment, including its exploitation, management, conservation, or abuse. This definition of eco-images also encompasses cartoons that depict environmental issues, which in turn can be termed “eco-cartoons.” Caricature graphics have been challenging the status quo since ancient Egypt, providing an alternative recording and representation of events to the official versions.⁴ The purpose of cartoons is generally criticism, but they act by coating the bitter pill of criticism with a caramel of humor. They act as barometers for measuring public opinion of social events.

This paper focuses on the 1987 to 1988 dumping of hazardous industrial waste in Koko. The specific focus, however, is the participation by cartoonists in the public debate over the waste-dumping incident as seen in the Nigerian tabloids in the month of June 1988. The paper critically analyzes the number, content, and contexts of cartoons that covered the toxic-waste dumping.

Occurrence of Toxic-Waste-Related Cartoons

Four newspapers were sampled for toxic-waste-related cartoons, the nationally circulated, *The Guardian* and *Nigerian Tribune*, and the regional papers, *The Republic* and

3 For a more in-depth discussion of the Koko issue see Tunde Akingbade, *On the Trail of the Environment* (Lagos: Triple “E” Systems Associates Ltd., 1991); and Greenpeace, *The Database of Known Hazardous Waste Exports from OECD to Non-OECD Countries, 1989–1994* (Washington, DC: Greenpeace, 1994).

4 Roger Pen Cuff, “The American Editorial Cartoon—A Critical Historical Sketch,” *Journal of Educational Sociology* 19, no. 2 (1945): 88.

Daily Sketch. A dossier of all the cartoons published by the four selected newspapers during the month of June 1988 was collected. These cartoons were sorted into two groups, namely toxic-waste related and non-toxic-waste related. The toxic-waste cartoons were further classified into categories based on their content and statistically analyzed in terms of these categories. The results were presented in a frequency table with percentage analysis. Finally, all the toxic-waste cartoons were analyzed according to their content and context.

In total, 255 cartoons were published during the month of June 1988. Of these, 26 of them related directly or indirectly to the toxic-waste-dumping incident at Koko, representing 10.2 percent. *The Guardian* published the largest number of these toxic-waste cartoons, representing 46.2 percent of the total number of toxic-waste cartoons published during the study period. With only 4 toxic-waste-related cartoons, the *Sketch* published the least of the four newspapers sampled, representing 15.4 percent of the 26 toxic-waste-related cartoons. The results from all the titles surveyed are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Percentage of Toxic-Waste Cartoons Published in June 1988

Source	Total No. of Cartoons Published	No. of Toxic-Waste-Related Cartoons Published	Percentage
Guardian	92	12	13
Republic	67	5	7.5
Sketch	34	4	11.8
Tribune	79	5	7.6
Total	255	26	10.2

Though *The Guardian* was the first tabloid to investigate and break the story on the toxic-waste dumping, its first cartoon on the issue was not published until 9 June 1988, a day after *Nigerian Tribune* published its first story and cartoon together.⁵ It is also worthy of note that though the *Nigerian Tribune* only published 6 toxic-waste cartoons during the month of June 1988, it published another 12 such cartoons in July 1988, when they were dying out in other tabloids.

5 "Order Removal of Toxic Wastes," *Nigerian Tribune*, 6 June 1988; and Yemi Adaramodu, editorial cartoon, *Nigerian Tribune*, 8 June 1988.

A review of the 26 cartoons identified as commenting on the toxic waste at Koko port reveals six broad categories, namely: 1. Law and Policy; 2. Critical of the Nigerian Government and Its Agencies; 3. Used to Highlight Other Socioeconomic Issues; 4. Humorous; 5. Critical of Foreigners; and 6. Informative. From the tally of cartoons in each one of these six categories, the category with the largest samples is 3, in which the toxic-waste issue was used to highlight unrelated socioeconomic issues (Table 2).

Table 2: Frequency of Publications by Categories

SN	Category	Guardian	Republic	Sketch	Tribune	Total
1.	Law and Policy	2	0	1	0	3
2.	Critical of the Government	3	1	0	0	4
3.	Used to Highlight Other Issues	5	0	1	3	9
4.	Humorous	0	2	1	2	5
5.	Critical of Foreigners	2	0	1	1	4
6.	Informative	2	2	0	1	5
7.	TOTAL	14*	5	4	7**	30

* Two of the cartoon samples published by this title have components that could be classified under more than one category.

** One of the cartoon samples published by this title has components that could be classified under more than one category.

Content and Context Analysis of Cartoons

In this section, the content and context of some of the 26 toxic-waste-related cartoons, which illustrate the perspectives and diversity of the categories, are analyzed.

Law and Policy

On Monday, 20 June 1988, the *Daily Sketch* published one of the three cartoons in this category. Though the cartoon was authored by the *Sketch*'s editorial cartoonist, Rinde Oladele, it was not published in the customary spot for editorial cartoons but on the back

page in the human-angle humor strip titled “Paddy.”⁶ In this cartoon, the protagonist, Paddy, is shown reading a news item with the message “toxic waste importers to face firing squad,” and in response, he retorts “for intoxicating us with waste.” This cartoon (fig. 1) refers to the policy debate among Nigeria’s military junta in 1988, about whether to punish the dumping of toxic waste with the death penalty, including execution by firing squad—a euphemism for death under a hail of bullets. The punishment of death under a hail of bullets was Nigeria’s military junta’s favored means of punishment, frequently carried out in the full glare of the public. This punishment was therefore the most punitive even among capital punishments, which also included death by hanging. Subsequently, however, on 25 November 1988, after significant local and international pressure, the military junta promulgated the Harmful Waste (Special Criminal Provisions etc.) Decree, which called for life imprisonment for the offence of dumping toxic waste in Nigeria.⁷

The Guardian in its editorial cartoon from Sunday, 19 June 1988, authored by staff cartoonist Bisi Ogunbadejo, also made an allusion to the punishment of death by firing squad. One of the characters called out, the “brains behind the toxic waste dumped in Koko should be shot.”⁸ It is, however, ironic that in a smaller human-interest cartoon piece on the front page of the same issue the same cartoonist seemed to play devil’s advocate by decrying this maximum punishment for toxic-waste offenders (fig. 2). In this smaller piece titled “Bisi,” the



Figure 1:
Rinde Oladele,
“Paddy,” *Daily Sketch* (20 June 1988).



Figure 2:
Bisi Ogunbanjo,
Editorial Cartoon,
The Guardian,
Nigeria (19 June 1988).

6 Rinde Oladele, “Paddy,” *Daily Sketch*, 20 June 1988.

7 Government of Nigeria, *Harmful Waste (Special Criminal Provisions etc.) Decree*, Decree No. 42, 1988.

8 Bisi Ogunbanjo, editorial cartoon, *The Guardian*, 19 June 1988.

main character is depicted as being engaged in a debate with a man in military uniform, presumably representing the military junta. Bisi tells the soldier that “it is inhuman to kill toxic waste offenders” and the soldier replies sarcastically, “Rubbish! Better that one million Nigerians die from SAP than one guilty importer goes free.”⁹ This piece plays on the intense attention paid by the military junta to the toxic-waste issue, attention which the poor economic situation of most Nigerians had not received.¹⁰ According to this reading, Ogunbadejo’s cartoon could also be placed in the category of cartoons that used the toxic-waste issue to address other socioeconomic ills, because of its criticism of the junta over the SAP issue.

Cartoons Critical of Nigerian Government and Its Agencies

Four cartoons were classified under this category, three of which were published by *The Guardian*. The main criticism in these cartoons was aimed at public authorities, specifically for nonchalant conduct and security lapses. They argued that this behavior allowed for the importation of the toxic waste and the attempt to suppress the story in the press.

The second *Guardian* editorial cartoon on toxic waste, authored by Osse Ogwu and published on 10 June 1988, depicted a larger-than-life father figure admonishing a diminutive child.¹¹ The father figure is most likely a representation of the Nigerian military junta speaking to the Nigerian citizenry with a note of warning to “keep your environment clean, no dumping.” In the background, however, right behind the bent-over father figure, a pipe is depicted discharging what is labeled as “Toxic waste.”¹² The irony of the cartoon is that this same sanitary compeller could not keep its own backyard—Nigeria—free of toxic waste. Another cartoon with a similar message is that of Muiyiwa Collins, published in his regular “Amebo” cartoon strip in *The Republic* on 20 June 1988.¹³ The caption on the cartoon indicts the officials of the border control agency, the Nigeria Customs Service, of figuratively sleeping on duty, and thereby leaving the borders porous enough for people to smuggle toxic waste into the country. The aforementioned editorial cartoon from 19 June

9 Bisi Ogunbanjo, “Bisi,” *The Guardian*, 19 June 1988.

10 The junta had imposed a severe austerity policy prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and referred to as the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in Nigeria in 1985, which had further impoverished Nigerians and cost many lives.

11 Osse Ogwu, editorial cartoon, *The Guardian*, 10 June 1988.

12 This cartoon may be alluding to the mandatory monthly sanitation exercise imposed on Nigerians by the junta since 1984, which took place every last Saturday of the month, under strict supervision by military personnel carrying whips.

13 Muiyiwa Collins, “Amebo,” *The Republic*, 20 June 1988.

1988 in *The Guardian* called for government agencies and officials to be held accountable for their laxities, which allowed for the dumping of the toxic waste in Koko and for mismanagement of the situation thereafter. One of the characters of the strip opined that “heads should roll at customs, external affairs and ministry of health.”¹⁴

The editorial cartoon from 16 June 1988 in *The Guardian* cryptically criticizes the military governor of Bendel State, where the toxic waste was dumped (fig. 3). Obe Ess (the nom de plume of *The Guardian*'s chief editorial cartoonist) stages a conversation in an editorial room of a newspaper, between the editor and another character, presumably a critic. The critic scolds the editor for not being the first tabloid to publish the news on the toxic-waste dumping, despite the fact that Koko is in the editor's backyard, Bendel State. The editor replies that he could



Figure 3:
Obe Ess,
“Caught Out,” *The
Guardian*, Nigeria
(16 June 1988).

not publish for fear of the “Major shareholder” and that he has become an “Observer.” The preceding quotes refer first to the rank “Major,” of the then military governor of Bendel State and the fact that the *Observer* newspaper, based in Bendel State, was also owned by the Bendel State government, of which the “Major” John Inienger was chief executive.

Cartoons Associated with Other Unrelated Socioeconomic Issues

The toxic-waste-dumping issue served as a good springboard for cartoonists to launch criticism of other issues; it was frequently used to highlight other equally important though unrelated socioeconomic issues. The cartoonists used the toxic-waste issue in multiple ways: as a background, a mirror of contrast, and a mood lightener for poking fun at other serious issues. Of the six categories, this category is the largest, with nine

¹⁴ Bisi Ogunbadejo, editorial cartoon, *The Guardian*, 19 June 1988.

such cartoons published in the period under review. Five of these nine cartoons were published in *The Guardian*, though two of these have strips that can also be classified under other categories.

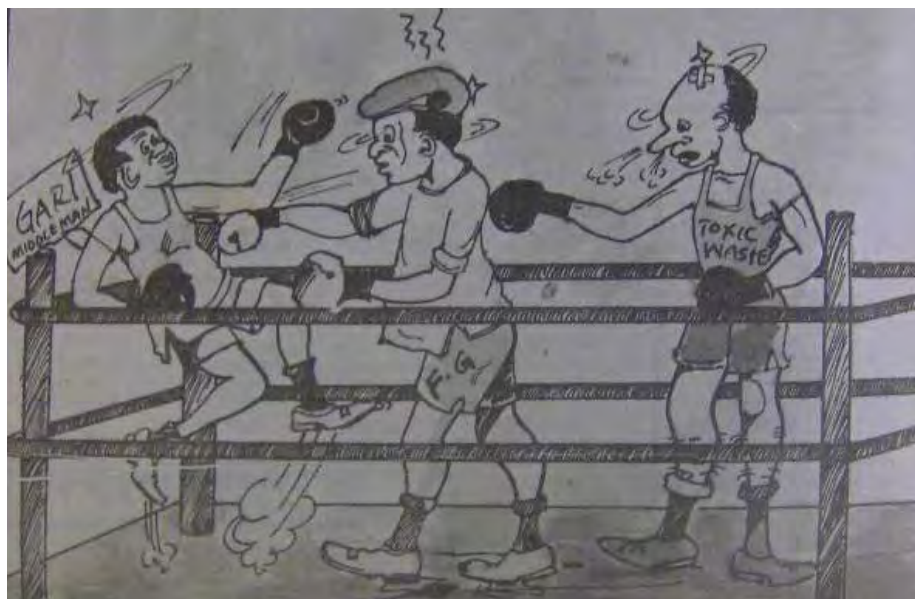


Figure 4:
Rinde Oladele,
Sketch Cartoon,
Daily Sketch (21
June 1988).

Three of the cartoons in this category highlight the challenges of locally generated waste, both domestic and industrial, in contrast to the dumped toxic waste of foreign origin. *Nigerian Tribune*, in its editorial cartoon from 27 June 1988 by Ronke Adesanya, uses the toxic-waste issue to draw attention to the pervasive corruption in the Nigeria Police Force.¹⁵ The artist first depicts a news item in the background of the cartoon, stating that police officers serving in the Koko port area are to be screened for radioactive effects, and then she has her main character retort, “Only?” A contextual appreciation of this cartoon may lead one to infer that Adesanya was implying that the police should be screened for more than radioactivity, particularly for corruption, in view of their infamy for literarily extorting and pocketing bribes at checkpoints on highways.

In an editorial cartoon from 21 June 1988, Rinde Oladele of the *Sketch* portrays a dramatic scene in a boxing ring with three characters, two are of large build while the third

¹⁵ Ronke Adesanya, editorial cartoon, *Nigerian Tribune*, 27 June 1988.

is a scrawny-looking fellow (fig. 4). One of the large-built pugilists is labeled “F.G.” (for Federal Government); he is depicted pummeling the scrawny-looking fellow who is labeled “Gari Middle Man.” Gari is the inexpensive staple food for the poor in Nigeria, and is made from grated cassava stems. The second large pugilist is labeled “Toxic Waste” and he stands behind the F.G. character, urging F.G. to “Leave him alone! Try me for size.” With this cartoon, Oladele was both emphasizing the economic hardship foisted upon the Nigerian citizenry by the Nigerian military junta’s economic policies, and poking fun at the junta, which it has met its match in the toxic waste. It is also worthy of note that the character tagged “Toxic Waste” is depicted with a pointed nose, which is used to characterize persons with European ancestry; most likely a racial profiling of the origin of the toxic waste.

Humorous

A significant number of the 26 collected toxic-waste cartoons appeared to be simply meant for humor, without any discernible secondary meaning. However, their authors used the seemingly innocuous humor to mask their own interpretations of and opinions on about several issues that emanated from the toxic-waste-dumping incident. It is worth noting that *The Guardian*, which published the largest number of toxic-waste-related cartoons from the tabloids sampled, did not publish a single cartoon that can be classified under this category. This may be due to the strictly formal editorial policy of *The Guardian*, relative to other Nigerian titles.

Yemi Adaramodu of the *Nigerian Tribune* in his regular “Kongi” cartoon strip, published 19 June 1988, had his protagonist Kongi professing affection to a lady and promising that he would die for her, until he finds out she resides in Koko, whereupon the reader is left with the impression that he recants.¹⁶ Similarly, in the “Paddy” cartoon strip on the back page of the *Daily Sketch* published 27 June 1988, Paddy pokes fun at his companion by threatening to test the other character’s beer for toxicity (fig. 5).



Figure 5:
Rinde Oladele,
“Paddy,” *Daily Sketch* (27 June 1988).

¹⁶ Yemi Adaramodu, “Kongi,” *Nigerian Tribune*, 19 June 1988.

Cartoons Critical of Foreigners and Informative Cartoons

In the editorial cartoon of *The Guardian* published on 18 June 1988, aptly titled “The Italian Mess,” one of the characters lashes out in patriotic fervor, “Those blighters! What do they take us for? Coming from Italy to dump industrial wastes here.”¹⁷ This piece attempts to rouse nationalistic sentiments of *them* versus *us* to criticize the Italians who were responsible for importing the toxic waste. And as if to drive home this point even more, the same cartoon was reprinted two days later in *The Guardian* on 20 June 1988. Even without encouragement from the media, the toxic-waste debacle further exacerbated mistrust of foreigners in Nigeria during this period, and all suspicious acts by foreigners received the label of “toxic.”



Figure 6:
Tunde Ayinde,
“Big Bros,”
Tribune
(15 June 1988).

Some of the toxic-waste-related cartoons merely relayed news items that had been published in the mainstream print media in a brief and concise manner, often with humor and little or no expression of the cartoonists’ opinions. An example of a cartoon falling within this category is the editorial cartoon of *The Republic* published 30 June 1988, where a wall was depicted with seven posters on it, all bearing several actual news headlines on toxic waste reported in the print media throughout the month of June 1988.¹⁸ However, when the Norwegian government agreed to commence the cleanup of a toxic waste dump in Guinea Bissau, *Nigerian Tribune*’s editorial cartoonist Tunde Ayinde made one of his characters retort minimally, “what of the one in our backyard?” (fig. 6). This response raised the implicit question of whether the Italian government would help in its turn with the cleanup of the contaminated areas in Nigeria.¹⁹

17 Bisi Ogunbadejo, “The Italian Mess,” *The Guardian*, 18 June 1988.

18 Emcee, editorial cartoon, *The Republic*, 30 June 1988.

19 Eventually, the Italian government, along with other Western governments, would assist with the cleanup of toxic waste in Koko.

Conclusion

The media was critical in stimulating the response of the public to the Koko waste-dumping incident, and cartooning was a potent component of this media sensitization. This was especially due to the high level of illiteracy in Nigeria, hence it was easier to communicate information about the waste dumping incident through pictorial representations. The public reaction elicited by the media sensitization spurred public outcry and protests that forced the Nigerian authorities to react by repatriating the waste and to provide radioactive screening and treatment for victims. The environmental consciousness generated spurred the establishment of local environmental non-governmental organizations, such as the Koko Defense Group and People United to Save Koko. The Nigerian people and the organizations established as a result of the media sensitization spurred the government into promulgating the Harmful Waste (Special Criminal Provisions etc.) Decree and establishing the Federal Environmental Protection Agency with the Federal Environmental Protection Agency Decree. This agency now acts as Nigeria's statutory environmental watchdog. The effect of these images on public opinion and policy illustrates the numerous possibilities of employing cartoons as eco-images.

Paolo Peverini

Eco-Images and Environmental Activism: A Sociosemiotic Analysis

“Nature never speaks by itself,”¹ least of all in ecological discourses, where the line between brand-marketing strategies and the protection of nature is continually blurred. Strategies employed by activists testify that the crisis of nature is being constantly represented and renegotiated by different social actors. The ever-growing number of unconventional advertising campaigns executed by environmental organizations is a clear sign of the changeable nature of discourses about the crisis of the environment.² One of the most interesting and yet unexplored aspects of the mediatization of nature is the continuous evolution of visual communication strategies used by environmental movements to denounce the ecosystem crisis and to influence public opinion.

In recent years, we have noted an increase in *greenwashing* practices: the intentional dissemination of misleading or unsubstantiated information by organizations in order to conceal their abuse of the environment, or to promote vaguely formulated “sustainable practices” and products to present a positive public image. If we focus on the “responsibility” of images in the context of green/greenwashed strategies, two elements become obvious. On the one hand, we can detect the communication strategies adopted by corporations to reassert their environmental commitment. On the other hand, we see the political use of images by ecological movements and organizations, in particular their creative re-appropriation of the visual imagery of sustainability. The imagery used here can be categorized as *eco-imagery*.

This essay will focus on the use of eco-images in unconventional visual environmental campaigns. The subjects of such social communication discourses face a very complex and tricky problem: to incisively depict rooted and almost unresolvable environmental problems, while engaging spectators who are already accustomed to many kinds of shocking images.³ According to the guerrilla marketing lexicon,⁴ the aim is to highlight

1 Gianfranco Marrone, *Addio alla Natura* (Torino: Einaudi, 2011).

2 Paolo Peverini, “Crisi della natura e attivismo ecologista,” in *Semiotica della natura: Natura della semiotica*, ed. Gianfranco Marrone (Milano-Udine: Mimesis, 2012), 209–32.

3 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux Inc., 2003).

4 Jay Conrad Levinson, *Guerrilla Marketing: Secrets for Making Big Profits from Your Small Business* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Compan, 1984); Levinson and Paul R.J. Hanley, *The Guerrilla Marketing Revolution* (London: Piatkus Books, 2005).

the social issue, trying to “infect” the media system like a “virus.” As a consequence, the effectiveness of unconventional ecological campaigns should be based on the ability to trigger a sort of “contagion,” in particular through the dissemination of images and videos by means of social media.

Environmental crises cannot merely be depicted; people working to draw attention to emergencies and environmental protection need to find innovative and effective ways to communicate visually. Currently, marketing tactics previously used by green activists for their campaigns are becoming one of the top trends in brand discourses.⁵ How do environmental organizations react to the fact that their own “weapons,” their guerrilla strategies, have become part of brand communication? How can they preserve their integrity, while showing as false the “transparency” of brands that use green tropes to enhance their credibility? As we will see in the following analysis of a recent Greenpeace campaign, the exposure of the deceitfulness of corporate (and governmental) green engagement takes the shape of a rich and complex discourse about environmentalists’ own identity.

It would be reductive to think that the aim of “social guerrilla” action consists merely of raising public interest in environmental crises using spectacular methods, or simply taking the audience by surprise. Environmentalists’ unconventional protests are not intended simply as tools to draw the attention of potential supporters of the green cause to the “undeniable objectivity” of environmental dramas, which are often far removed from personal experience. Ecological issues, and their constantly renegotiated visual representations (eco-images), appear rather as a communicative field of conflict where the credibility of different subjects of expression are put to the test.

Campaigns advertising corporate social responsibility, for example, are particularly interesting in this respect. Corporations aim to reinforce their credibility over time, using images to underline the topic of *ethical transparency*. They are constantly forced to renegotiate their reputation, as stakeholders become more aware of the social issues and ethical conflicts that underlie sustainable development.

Environmental issues play a strategic role in the construction of an effective policy of corporate social responsibility. In particular, companies are expected to be accountable

5 Jay Conrad Levinson and Shel Horowitz, *Guerrilla Marketing Goes Green: Winning Strategies to Improve Your Profits and Your Planet* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2010).

for the impact on the ecosystem they operate in and for pollution and the exploitation of natural resources. Companies are attempting to take advantage of the growing public concern and awareness of environmental issues by promoting an image of themselves as environmentally responsible.

As a consequence, communicating sustainability becomes a dilemma. This is due on the one hand to the competitiveness of companies and their reliability. On the other hand, ecological organizations constantly cast doubts on corporate tactics and strategies, undermining their credibility. How can false claims of environmental commitment be detected? Which are the visual counter-strategies deployed to denunciate industry's false transparency, and to depict sustainable development dilemmas more critically?

If corporations use green strategies to seduce customers, activists are compelled to employ an equally seductive strategy to reassert the trustworthiness of their position and to uncover the deceit of corporations, using more and more sophisticated "masks" to unmask the adversary's real intentions in an unexpected process of *aestheticization of the protest*. Referring to Getty Images Collection, the world's largest royalty-free archive of images that are used in advertising and magazines to address climate issues, Hansen and Machin state,

Television and other media visualize the environment through the use of increasingly 'symbolic' and 'iconic' images rather than those which are recognizable because of their geographic/historical or socially specific identity. Through their repeated use these images replace other possible representations, particularly those that locate and connect such issues in actual concrete processes such as global capitalism and consumerism.⁶

One of the main effects of the mediatization of ecosystem crisis is the progressive loss of the significance of eco-images.

Image bank photographs tend to lose their origin in time and space. . . . An image of a polar bear on an ice floe is not about a particular animal, place or time but used to connote global warming, even if the image itself was taken at a time when there was

6 A. Hansen and D. Machin, "Visually Branding the Environment: Climate Change as a Marketing Opportunity," *Discourse Studies* 10 (2008): 779.

a different agenda about wildlife conservation. The result is that a limited number of features, attributes, and landscapes come to represent the whole of a hugely complex issue that is of a particular moment in history and is happening in precise places. So the threat to the environment by climate change can be connoted by a woman nurturing a delicate plant. She references no place or occasion, only the idea of “Hope and union.” But as such images come to dominate the visual language of climate change, to what extent do they shape our expectations of this particular visual world? What scripts are fostered? To what extent will such discourses come to dominate our cognitive models of how such problems can be formulated and addressed?⁷

The starting point for many recent campaigns to raise ecological awareness is an understanding that audiences have become accustomed to consolidated forms of environment crisis discourse. As a result, in the political discourses of nonprofit organizations (NPOs), the visual element becomes more and more essential. NPOs try to bypass the indifference of the public, moving beyond the expectation that displaying the realistic effects of the environmental crisis is enough to obtain the attention of the masses. They use different and unconventional kinds of images in a strategic and political way to depict intractable environmental problems: NPOs plan social advertising campaigns to raise awareness about social issues and influence public opinion, to encourage or discourage attitudes and behaviors, to provoke political reactions, and to raise funds.

The effectiveness of an NPO’s environmental campaign relies on its ability to break rules and subvert stereotypes about the visual representation of certain topics. In recent years, to avoid the figurative clichés often used to depict climate change, pollution, and endangered species, social advertising has started to experiment with unconventional visual strategies and techniques.

Approaches

A new social advertising practice contrasts surrealism, black humor, and visual paradoxes with the classic strategy of dramatization (i.e., *fear appeal*): the communication takes place on a different level, with the viewer’s attention and complicity being stimulated and thus also their cooperation in the interpretation. This strategy emerges in our

7 Hansen and Machin, “Visually Branding the Environment,” 787.

analysis of a wide corpus of international green campaigns:⁸ this strategy is honed over time to raise awareness of a social issue, the expression of social discourse seemingly autonomous from the severity of environmental topics. While, until a few years ago, unconventional advertising meant visual shocks and an authoritative and prescriptive tone of voice, at the moment a second approach is prevailing. An interesting communicative strategy has gained relevance: enhancing the apparent incoherence between dramatic contents (e.g., the crisis of nature) and the characteristics of visuals that aim to provide the text with a “euphoric” tone of voice. While in *fear-appeal* campaigns the aim is to shock the spectator emotionally, this second strategy has two steps. First, the visual/verbal rhetoric is used to emphasize the unpredictability of the message, forcing the viewer’s gaze to stop and look at the text. Second, in an argumentative step, copy and logo give information about the social problem, the complex scenario, its causes, and possible solutions. An exemplary case is a *trompe l’oeil* image showing the aerial view of a city completely submerged in the water of a swimming pool. Only after a moment of bewilderment do the bathers notice a web address (globalwarmingsolutions.co.in) and the logo of HSBC bank written on the pool border, the only elements that reveal that they’re involved in a climate change advertising campaign.

To strengthen the message, three very common discursive strategies in social advertising—*warning*, *suggestion*, and *condemnation*—are being continually redefined using *irony*, often sparking passionate public debates about the ethics of representing a serious situation in a humorous way. In the most relevant examples, the innovative force of the image is based on a metatextual approach to environmental protests, tending to reopen texts, manipulate signification processes, “inoculate” paradoxes within the original message, and, in other words, distort the semantic coherence.

Tactics and Examples

One of the most common unconventional techniques in social advertising is *sticker-ing*, the practice of placing uncommon, often big and spectacular, images in unusual locations in urban territory, taken out of their usual context. The experience involves firstly the passers-by, and secondly the media audience.

8 Paolo Peverini and Marica Spalletta, *Unconventional: Valori, testi, pratiche della pubblicità sociale* (Rome: Meltemi, 2009).

A very recent exemplary case is the award-winning social campaign against traffic pollution commissioned by China Environmental Protection Foundation, *Green Pedestrian Crossing*. In one of the most polluted cities in the world, Shanghai, the campaign re-semanticized a common element of anonymous urban spaces—the zebra crossing—by covering the alternate white and black stripes with a large canvas representing a leafless tree. Sponge cushions soaked in green, environmentally friendly, washable paint were placed on both sides of a busy road. Pedestrians crossing the street stepped on the green sponge, leaving green foot imprints on the tree. Each “green” footprint on the canvas looked like leaves growing on the leafless trunk: people truly felt that they were creating a greener environment by walking.

According to the official press release, the *Green Pedestrian Crossing* was carried out on seven thoroughfares in Shanghai. The campaign was then extended to 132 roads across 15 cities in China, with participation rates exceeding 3,920,000 people. Media interest, both online and offline, was significant. After the campaign launch, there were more than three hundred thousand redirects and fifty thousand posts on the Sina Microblog, the most important Chinese social network. Research revealed that general public awareness of environmental protection had increased by 86 percent. After the campaign, one of the prints was exhibited at Shanghai’s Zheng Da Art Museum.

The effectiveness of the entire guerrilla action was based on the complex relation between media and urban spaces, intended not merely as contexts but as *stratified co-texts*. As Ruggero Eugeni affirms, in the “post-media condition” where the medium is the territory,

Media are not limited to spreading within a territory, but end up losing their specificity in this movement; conversely, territories are not merely occupied by media, but become media devices themselves. In other words, within the current “post-media condition,” the medium is the territory. . . . More specifically, with regard to cities and urban spaces, it is not difficult to see that the city is not just a territory occupied by media devices, but an instrument of appropriation and creation of new territories.⁹

9 Eugeni, Ruggero. “Nikeplatz: The Urban Space as a New Medium,” Paper presented at NECS Conference, Istanbul, Turkey, 24–27 June 2010.

The tactic of semantic subversion of spaces is crucial in social advertising; it is used extensively to address selected audiences specifically. The effectiveness of such unconventional action relies on the successful preliminary observations concerning the model reader profile and the potential symbolic value of the territory to be occupied. The potential strength of this guerrilla approach consists on accurately selecting the receiver, while, at the same time, planning a temporary campaign within a territory that is so familiar to the receiver that it seems absolutely ordinary.

In many cases, protests by environmentalists play with their own typical formulas, build credibility by ironically using a huge repertoire of stereotypes, emphatic tone, hyperbole, and exaggeration in the representation of passions. The exaggeration strategy is particularly common in eco-oriented social campaigns. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) campaign displayed, once again, in China, is an emblematic case, the effectiveness of which is based on a grotesque representation of urban pollution. Creators at the Ogilvy & Mather advertisement agency played with the visual stereotype of black exhaust emissions, using the typical style of cartoon and comics. An enormous and heavy cloud, connected to the exhaust pipe of a real car, transformed a paradoxical object into an original semiotic tool, which combined irony and denunciation—one giving strength to the other—affecting both the urban setting and those passing through it. The WWF slogan and logo, thanks to their position and to the chromatic contrast, draw attention to the message: “Drive one day less and look how much carbon monoxide you’ll keep out of the air we breathe.”

Another exemplary case is the popular anti-environmental pollution campaign *Catch of the Day* launched by the non-profit Surfrider Foundation, which transformed harmless everyday objects such as plastic food packaging into unconventional guerrilla marketing weapons. They were displayed at local farmers’ markets to disturb consumers by questioning the rational and emotional mechanisms that determine their choices. Condoms, cigarette butts, rusty padlocks and chains, and spray cans have been hand-picked from various US beaches and neatly packaged in plastic food trays. The dialectic between pretense and unveiling is taken to the extreme; the campaign slogan and the foundation logo are printed on a label that perfectly reproduces the classical supermarket price and expiration date tag. The packaging and its function are invested with symbolic meaning. The plastic wrap becomes a rhetorical weapon, an instrument to motivate the public to undertake collective action for environmental

conservation. The semiotic revolution is fully completed: the object isn't protected by the plastic wrap, but denounced and presented as evidence. Metaphor and metonymy intersect, body-copy illustrates the tragic pollution scenery, leveraging consumers' competence, reinforcing the visual shock with written information. Once again, the performative nature of guerrilla action frames this text within a text. The association's slogan, "Make waves, go to surfrider.org," is a compelling call to action, fully embracing the principles of word-of-mouth marketing and aiming to become a contagion that transforms isolated individuals into a cohesive virtual movement.

Urban guerrilla marketing campaigns—conceived with the goal of maximizing what a small budget can achieve—clearly use semiotic mechanisms. Their effectiveness, thus, is not merely based on their ability to visually occupy a space and capture the attention of people in the chaos of metropolitan areas; it is based on the ability to translate reading and consumption processes of spaces in a communication project, rooted in a particular territory, which can transform the sense of a place and the identities of its inhabitants.

The communicative strength of these environmental campaigns is often based on *mimesis*: on images that appear to reproduce a place in a common-use situation and superimpose a second level of visual discourse onto it.

Cities are plural texts, subject to continuous transformation and to manifold different readings and practices. In ambient marketing campaigns space is recognized, interpreted, and played with, starting from the tracking of a deep narrative logic, through actions of *camouflage* and *trompe l'oeil*.¹⁰ Images are used to deceive the eye and catch the attention of passers-by, who suddenly find themselves at the center of fictional spaces, assuming unexpected roles. Images (stickers, silhouettes, fake objects) are used here to stage stories of heroes and victims, of desperate missions and brave acts, superimposed on the normal function of objects and spaces.

The metaphorical fiduciary contract between eco-activists and their followers takes on new shapes, and the reliability of the conservationist protest is often staged through a professedly fictional *mise en scène* (narrative).

10 Paolo Fabbri, "Semiotica e camouflage," in *Falso e falsi: Prospettive teoriche e proposte di analisi*, ed. Luisa Scalabroni (Pisa: Edizioni Ets, 2011), 11–25.

The environmental emergency appeal is expected to be more incisive, more apparently incongruous, stratified, or oblique. In particular, on the visual level, the strategy consists of enhancing the reflexive opacity more than the transparency of texts.¹¹

Consequently, a surprising, redesigned experience is the starting point for rapid, word-of-mouth diffusion, which starts in the real world and is soon shifted to social media: the aim is then to guarantee that the sociopolitical content of the environmental campaign will be amplified through its second life on the web.

Here we can see how action methods and self-representation modalities of environmental movements significantly evolve: in the search for public support, the efficacy of environmental discourse is no longer linked to the verisimilitude of images depicting the crisis of nature, spectators are “forced” to experience a situation that becomes explicitly fictional. Significantly, the communication strategies of environmental groups seem to follow the same semiotic logics of a typical brand discourse, in particular the use of interdiscursivity and intertextuality.¹²

Thus, to come back to the theme of greenwashing and to the battle of NPOs against corporations, the recent, much-discussed campaign by Greenpeace against Volkswagen’s (VW’s) fictitious green commitment is a perfect case in point. The non-governmental organization uses irony and the global popularity of the Star Wars saga to put pressure on the German car manufacturer by questioning its green credentials.

The unconventionality of the discourse about nature consists here in shifting the conflict between proponents and detractors of the green cause on an explicitly fictional level. In this campaign, the relationship between the social crisis and the verisimilitude of images is radically rethought: it is based on the effort to highlight, with irony, the dramatic information contained in a report presented by Greenpeace to the public. The provocative impact of eco-images is part of complex argumentative strategies: the seriousness of the research is enunciated by a parodic communication strategy that strengthens the message and allows it to reach a wider audience.

11 Louis Marin, *De la Représentation* (Paris: Seuil, 1993).

12 Gianfranco Marrone, *Il discorso di marca: Modelli semiotici per il branding* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2007).



Figure 1:
Courtesy of
Vintagedept, via
Flickr.

The Greenpeace narrative reverses the communicative tactics of the adversary (VW) in a stratified meta-strategy, which applies forms of reworking, typical of science fiction fandom. With a typical subvertising¹³ action, on the website VWdarkside.com, the campaign assimilates the German automaker's logo to the Death Star, substituting the famous VW brand payoff "Das Auto" with "Dark Side," while Greenpeace reserves for itself the role of the Rebel Alliance.

Our home—Earth—is in trouble. VW opposes key environmental laws we need if we're going to stop our planet going the way of Alderaan (bye bye). But all is not

¹³ The word "subvertising" refers to the practice of making spoofs or parodies of corporate and political campaigns.

lost. We feel the good in Volkswagen. All of us in the Rebellion are calling on Volkswagen to turn away from the Dark Side and give our planet a chance.¹⁴

The Greenpeace strategy is based on a complex cross-media communication project, which consists of a website, two web videos, and some guerrilla action. Volkswagen's official communications are thus the target of an intertextual parody that selects and recombines well-known preexisting texts through an *enunciative praxis*, described by Jean Marie Floch as a typical bricolage process.

As with other enunciative practices, bricolage means calling upon a number of already established forms. However, the enunciative activity involved in bricolage does not lead to the production of merely stereotyped discourse. Rather, in this case, the selection and exploitation of the facts of usage and the products of history lead to a kind of creativity that constitutes the originality of bricolage as an enunciative praxis. We can, in fact, think of this as a double creativity. For, on the one hand, bricolage leads to statements that qualify as independent entities; while, on the other hand, any such statement will give substance, and hence identity, to an enunciating subject.¹⁵

The most semiotically refined strategies used by environmental movements do not denounce the authenticity of a natural emergency, omitting signs of their presence inside the text. On the contrary, eco-activists display the construction of their discourse, the stratification of their protest, pointing out, in other terms, the intricacy of the meaning displayed. As with other typologies of advertising, social campaigns also elaborate their strategies, searching for a balance between themes, *mise en scène*, and display of distinctive and identifying marks.

Eco-images make use of texts within texts, where logos are complete semiotic entities, endowed in some cases with remarkable semantic complexity. To the spectator's eye, they condense values and incorporate the universe of connotative meanings: brands represent an explicit case of delegated enunciation, they are simulacra of the subject who commissioned the advertisement. In this sense, as happens in commercial advertising, words and images concur to reassert the emitter's identity, fields of action,

14 "Rebel Manifesto," accessed September 2012, <http://vwdarkside.com>.

15 Jean-Marie Floch, *Visual identities* (London: Continuum, 2000), 5.

and peculiarities. Caged animals, earth, rainbows, trees, and leaves are examples of essential elements that, combined with lettering, lay the foundation for the representation of themes like environmental engagement and civic cooperation.

Coming back to the Greenpeace versus Volkswagen example, groups of activists symbolically occupied central streets in London, impersonating Darth Vader's evil army, wearing the famous Star Troopers uniform with the Volkswagen logo on it (upside down) while distributing flyers to inform passers-by about the reasons for the protest. These images went viral and—thanks to a powerful and fast word-of-mouth, inside and outside eco-activism and science-fiction fan communities—reached a very wide audience.

From their point of view, the appropriation and overturning of the VW brand became part of a counter-information strategy to denounce environmental damage, not only making use of a visual imaginary seemingly unrelated to eco-issues, but also provocatively assuming the narrative role of the opposition, the villain. Even Greenpeace does not avoid brand discourses. Nature, in the shapes taken by its defenders, cannot but be branded.

My final example is a recent campaign by WWF about evidence of damages caused by global warming that brings the viewer's attention precisely to the overexposure of the ecological debate ("the effects of global warming are becoming more obvious"), while at the same time avoiding photorealistic images and leaving the brand at the center of the scene. The image here stresses at least three points:

- animals, like pandas, risk extinction; people have got used to images of threatened species;
- they have become so used to the popular ecology brand that it can disappear without the message losing strength and without the risk that the brand loses its identifiability; and
- the promoters and the cause converge in one image, and the disappearance of the first one attests to the extinction of the animal.

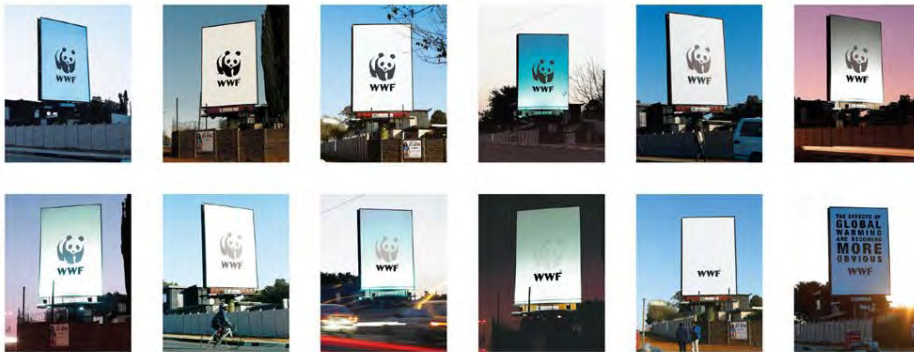


Figure 2:
WWF South
Africa – TBWA
Johannesburg
(<http://www.welovead.com/en/works/details/e3fxjnwA>).

This example attests to the crucial role of images in the context of ecosystem preservation campaigns: to denounce the evidence of global warming there's no need for words, or for realistic and shocking images of environmental crisis. Both the animal and the brand vanish: the conservationists meta-strategy scores a point, claiming the impossible transparency of any kind of discourse to express the environment, in the context of a flawless brand discourse.

Environmental movements, desperately seeking a meeting point between brand discourse and ecology, need to constantly renew their presence in the media and in the public domain to reach the maximum visibility while at the same time pretending to disappear.

The subtlety that characterizes unconventional discourses about climate change can then emerge in the most intricate forms of communication, which relate environmental claims to the identification signs of their promoters, the *eco-brands*.

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- 2010/3 Markus Vogt, *Climate Justice*.
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A picture is worth a thousand words—no less so when it depicts the natural environment. Pictures have played a prominent role in environmental discussions for years; iconic images, cartoons, and photographs have been purposefully employed to influence public opinion and advance political discussion. The phrase “eco-images” is frequently used to categorize the visual material used as a strategic tool in environmental campaigns. Taking a closer look at the history of eco-images and their influence in current debates, this issue of RCC Perspectives analyzes the role of visual material in shaping environmental discourses.



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