

Ecofeminist exhibitions (Grenoble, 21. Mar 25)

Grenoble Alpes University, Mar 21, 2025

Deadline: Dec 1, 2024

SAARBACH

Ecofeminist exhibitions: contents, forms, evolutions and histories.

At a time when ecological concerns are at the heart of every debate, the major revival of interest in the ecofeminist movement in the West has highlighted the influence that this current of thought and action has had in various fields of the human sciences, and more particularly in contemporary art. The proliferation of exhibitions on the subject in recent years reflects a desire to bring to light a movement that is still little known in the history of art, and to consider contemporary ecofeminist productions in the light of the pioneering artists who, from the 1970s onwards, questioned the common links between the domination of women and that of nature.

Strongly criticised and long marginalised, ecofeminist art has developed in a wide variety of forms, from the spiritual and ritualistic practices of cultural feminism to the militant actions and committed performances of women artists fighting to protect the environment. While recent exhibitions have attempted to reflect this plurality, the vagueness of definition surrounding these practices seems to pose a number of difficulties in terms of constituting a corpus or proposing a convincing classification. If, as art historian Paul O'Neill points out, exhibitions remain the 'principal means by which contemporary art is mediated, experimented with and historicised', we need to ask ourselves about the work of selection and exclusion that goes into presenting such an eclectic movement, to which very few artists have actually claimed to belong.

In 2020, the curator Monika Fabijanska organised the exhibition *Ecofeminism(s)* at the Thomas Erben gallery in New York, which drew up an initial artistic genealogy between historical works and those of the 21st century, not without reproducing the pitfalls of the orthodox ecofeminism of the 1970s and 1980s and its tendency to ignore women of colour and artists from the 'South'. Three years later, a major exhibition at London's Barbican Centre entitled *Re/sisters: A Lens on Gender and Ecology* (2023) offered an intersectional and inclusive reading, with a thematic organisation that reflected the multiple approaches of ecofeminist art. We are also seeing the emergence of collaborations between curators and scientific advisors or ecofeminist theorists (*Reclaiming the Earth*, Palais de Tokyo, 2022). While cultural events devoted to ecofeminist art are now becoming large-scale events presented in major institutions - as shown by the exhibition *Life on Earth: Ecofeminist Art Since 1979*, recently presented by The Brick in Los Angeles (15 September 2024 to 21 December 2024), this study day will bring together researchers and curators to explore issues relating to curatorial practices, the history of ecofeminist exhibitions and their impact on art historiography.

In the field of the history of exhibitions by women artists, the lack of visibility of pioneering ecofeminists has been closely linked to the debate within the feminist movement itself between the proponents of constructivist and anti-essentialist theories and the cultural and spiritual feminism that associates women with nature. At the heart of this polarisation, art critic and curator Lucy Lippard played an important role, writing in support of ecofeminist artists and staging some of the first exhibitions to tackle these issues. In the light of these debates, it is possible to take a closer look at feminist curatorial practice and the figure of the curator whose work implies political and social commitment and positioning. Looking at the history of ecofeminist art, it will also be interesting to study the mechanisms and obstacles that have contributed to the invisibilisation of ecofeminist artists within institutions.

Papers may thus address contemporary and historical exhibitions, the critical theory that influences production, and the impact of exhibitions on the historiography of ecofeminist art. Other approaches may focus on the careers of exhibition curators, the specific places where exhibitions are received, the choice of works exhibited, the genealogies rediscovered, and broader inscriptions relating to multiple sexualities, other species, indigenous populations, etc.

Submission procedures:

Proposals must be sent before December 1st, 2024, to the following two addresses:

fabienne.dumont@univ-st-etienne.fr

pascale.saarbach@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr

They should include a title, a summary (max 1500 characters) and a short biography.

The talks should be no longer than 20 minutes and be given in French or English.

A publication is envisaged.

Successful applicants will receive a notification by December 10, 2024.

Organising committee:

Fabienne Dumont, Professor of Contemporary Art History, Université Jean Monnet-Saint-Étienne, ECLLA.

Pascale Saarbach, lecturer and researcher in the history of contemporary art, Grenoble Alpes University, LARHRA.

Location:

Grenoble Alpes University

Maison de la Création et de l'Innovation

339 avenue Centrale, 38400 St Martin d'Hères

Amphitheatre

Reference:

CFP: Ecofeminist exhibitions (Grenoble, 21. Mar 25). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 4, 2024 (accessed Jun 18, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/42835>>.