

Anti-Monumentality and the Afterlives of 'Land Art' (Leeds, 22 Oct 25)

Henry Moore Institute, 74 The Headrow, Leeds LS1 3AH, UK, Oct 22, 2025

Deadline: Jul 28, 2025

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Anti-Monumentality and the Afterlives of 'Land Art' in Britain.

This one-day symposium sets out to stimulate new inquiry into the histories and futures of 'land art' in Britain.

The label of 'land artist' has been contentious for many artists working in the UK. Hamish Fulton and Richard Long both rejected it and looked to distance themselves from the aggressive interventions of heavy earthworks associated with American land art. The term is similarly inadequate when applied to a later generation of artists including Tacita Dean and Anya Gallaccio who make work that directly or implicitly gestures to the lingering influence of land art.

How, then, do we understand the afterlives of 'land art'? Or perhaps, as a defined movement, it never 'lived' at all... Poised on the verge of dissolution, what do we make of the loose set of approaches, techniques, materials, and modes of documentation associated with land art as it continues to inform contemporary art today?

Amid this breakdown in terminology, there is a tendency of much land art in Britain to work with natural processes rather than against them. They emphasise transience or entropy, rather than monumental permanence. They foreground narrative rather than stasis – a dramatic contrast with North American works in a 'heroic' register by, for instance, Robert Smithson and Michael Heizer.

Consider David Nash's *Wooden Boulder* (1978-present) or Andy Goldsworthy's *Midsummer Snowballs* (2000). These are not works to which we can pilgrimage. The pilgrimage is instead taken up by Derek Jarman in his film *Journey to Avebury* (1971) or Tacita Dean in her audio work *Trying to Find the Spiral Jetty* (1997), where they go out in search of monuments but transmute them into the airy impalpability of time-based media.

All anti-monumental in their differing ways, these works are evasive, fleeting, but conceptually concentrated. They question humankind's strained relationship with the natural environment brought into focus through our contemporary moment of the Anthropocene and the climate crisis. By prioritising process and transition, they speak against the commercialisation and commodification of the natural world. Largely freed from dependence on the investment of major patrons (see David Nash's laconic summary of his place-based practice as 'have axe, will travel'), their accessible techniques and simple materials signal the radical democratisation of both artmaking and land access.

This event is programmed to coincide with Passing Strange: British Land Art Through Time at Henry Moore Institute:
<https://henry-moore.org/whats-on/passing-strange-british-land-art-through-time/>

Topics and themes of discussion.

Questions to be addressed may include:

What methods do we associate with land art and how do they shape contemporary art?

How have such methods been used by artists of the global diaspora to reveal and critique the legacies of colonialism and racial exploitation?

How can we expand our consideration of land art beyond its supposed origins in conceptualism and minimalism in the 1960s and 1970s?

What new political and social urgency might this expansion reveal?

How has land art informed creative media which are not usually associated with it, such as painting, literature, and architecture?

How does the climate crisis shape our perception of the past, present and future of land art?

Submit a proposal.

We welcome 15-minute presentations or creative responses. Applicants are kindly asked to submit:

a brief abstract (no more than 250 words).

a short biographical note (100 words).

The deadline to apply is Monday 28 July 2025, 17:00.

Please email your proposals to: research@henry-moore.org.

If you would like to apply in another format, such as video or audio, this is also welcomed. Please contact research@henry-moore.org if you would like to discuss this.

Speakers will receive an honorarium of £100, and travel and accommodation costs within the UK will be reimbursed.

Reference:

CFP: Anti-Monumentality and the Afterlives of 'Land Art' (Leeds, 22 Oct 25). In: Arthist.net, May 27, 2025 (accessed Aug 31, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/49374>>.