Indoor Land Art installations:

materialising nature in the gallery space

By Bronte Isabella

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Preface

The contrast between the Dutch landscape, my newly adopted home, and the Australian Landscape, the country where I was born and raised, provokes the question 'what is nature?' From my experience growing up in Australia, nature is synonymous with the wild. Comparatively, the Dutch landscape is extremely flat, neatly segmented, and aggressively cultivated. While there is an abundance of Land Art dotted throughout this small country, to me, The Netherlands is almost like one giant Land Art piece, masquerading as nature. This juxtaposition has made me re-evaluate my understanding of nature, and sparked an interest in exploring the relationship between perceptions of nature and presentations of nature in art.

The Dutch landscape blurs the lines between what is nature and what is man-made, fundamentally questioning the legitimacy of such a categorical distinction. While I initially perceived nature to be wilderness, the idea that any part of nature is untouched by humanity is a misconception. From the towering heights of Mount Everest[1], to the depths of the Mariana Trench[2], to the expanse of low Earth orbit[3], we have left no corner of our world untouched. All nature is on a spectrum from relatively uncompromised to completely transformed. With the intensifying consequences of climate change, our ability to transform the world around us is only accelerating. The omnipresence of human influence problematises our relationship with nature.

This thesis is site-specific. In the eight-months I have been working on this thesis, there were only 11 days between when the fires in Australia where considered "contained" on the 4th of March[4] and when I started self-isolating, as a direct response to the coronavirus outbreak, in my apartment in Rotterdam on the 16th of March 2020. The due date of this thesis is the 3rd of July 2020, which marks 110 days since the pandemic radically changed day-to-day life here in The Netherlands. The influence of such ever-present, large-scale disasters has undoubtedly influenced my tone throughout this thesis.

[1] National Geographic Society, "Trash and Overcrowding at the Top of the World."
[2] Gibbens, "Plastic Bag Found at the Bottom of World's Deepest Ocean Trench."
[3] National Aeronautics and Space Administration, "Space Debris."
[4] Guy, "After more than 240 days, Australia's New South Wales id finally free from bushfires."

Introduction

The topic of this thesis is Indoor Land Art installations. For the purpose of this thesis, I have coined the term Indoor Land Art installation to characterise large-scale, site-specific installations, stemming from Land Art, made from organic materials, displayed in a confined art space, with conceptual connections to nature. This term is seemingly a contradiction; it is this tension – between conventional Land Art and the enigma of installing large-scale land art pieces indoors – that drew me to this topic. More specifically, this thesis will explore the relationship between perceptions of nature and Indoor Land Art installations. Precisely because this is a new concept, I must first examine the defining characteristics of Indoor Land Art installation and explore the genres divergence from Land Art, before I can delve into the structure of the thesis proper.

Indoor Land Art installations

The term 'Indoor Land Art installation' can be broken down into three parts: 'Indoor', 'Land Art', and 'installation.' **'Indoor'** is the defining characteristic of this kind of installation as it differentiates them from the wider Land Art movement. Walter De Maria (1935-2013), an American Conceptual and Land artist, created the first Indoor Land Art installation *The Munich Earth Room*[5] in 1968.[6] This work consisted of tons of excavated earth being temporarily installed in the Galerie Heiner Friedrich in Munich, Germany. De Maria created three iterations of this *Earth Room* series. The third and final version *The New York Earth Room* was installed in a 335m^2 white-walled apartment in SoHo, New York City filled with 197 m^3 of earth (Fig.1). This work was installed in 1977 and is still on public display to this day. The *Earth Room* series is an anomaly in De Maria's oeuvre and Land Art generally. The same year De Maria created *The New York Earth Room* he also installed the iconic Land Art work *The Lightning Field* (1977). This work consists of 400 stainless steel poles arranged in a 1 km x 1.6 km rectangular grid in the high desert of New Mexico, USA. As the title of the work suggests, during a storm the large steel poles attract lightning, creating a spectacle of dancing lighting strikes (Fig.2). *The New York Earth Room* and *The Lightning Field* function as artworks in jarringly different ways. *The Lightning Field* is remote, expansive, dynamic and dramatic –

[5] This work was originally titled *Level Dirt/ The Land Show: Pure Dirt/Pure Earth/Pure* Land, but later changed to *Earth Room*. [Herzog, "Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Munich, Cologne, New York, 1963- 1980."]

[6] Kivland, "Introduction," 8-9.

which are all characteristics typically associated with famous Land Art works. *The New York Earth Room* is more subdued, accessible, and physically contained. The juxtaposition between conventional Land Art and the enigma of De Maria's *Earth Room* is what first intrigued me about this research topic.

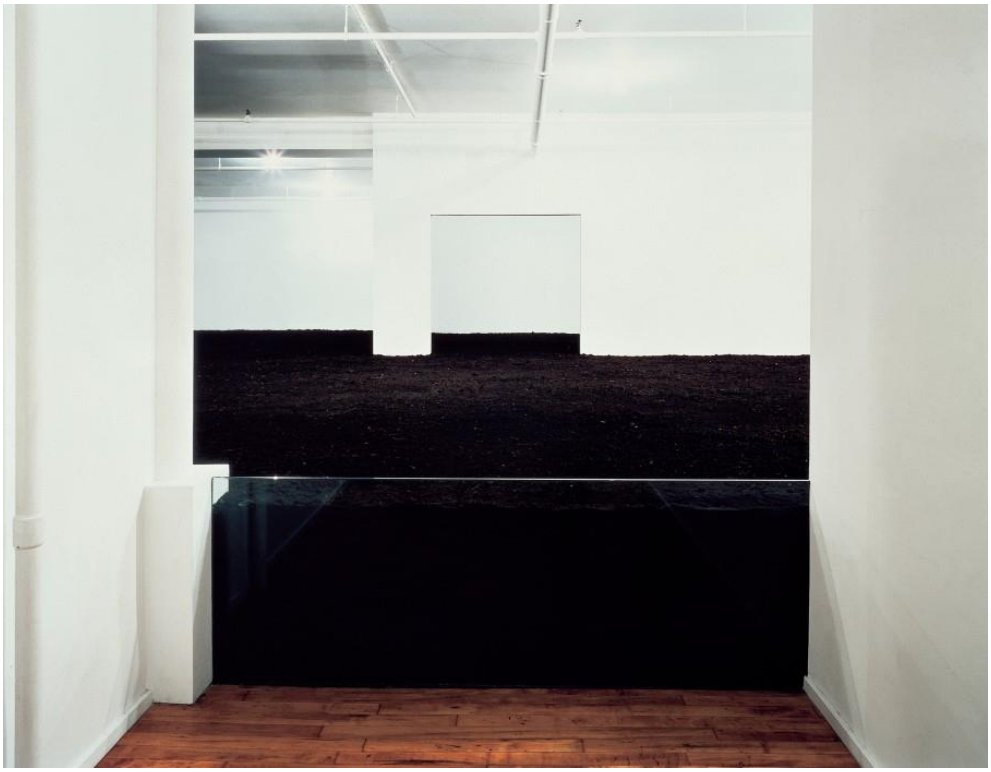

Fig.1: Walter De Maria, *The New York Earth Room,* 1977, 197 m^3 soil (335m^2 floor space x 56 cm deep), at 141 Wooster Street, SoHo, New York City. © Estate of Walter De Maria. Photo: John Cliett.

Fig.2: Walter De Maria, *The Lightning Field,* 1977, 400 stainless steel poles with solid, pointed tips, arranged in a rectangular 1 mile x 1 kilometre array, at Catron County, New Mexico. © Estate of Walter De Maria. Photo: John Cliett.

'Land Art' is intentionally included in the term Indoor Land Art installation, to signify the connection between the two terms. Land Art, also known as Earth Art or Earthworks, was a movement that originated in the United States in the late-1960s.[7] Throughout this thesis I refer to this movement as Land Art, defining this term as art made within or involving the landscape. This movement had no manifesto or overarching thesis: it is a catch-all term that groups together a dispersed collection of artists, all experimenting with similar ideas and using natural material as a way to emphasise human connection with the land.[8] Land Art falls under the umbrella of the larger Conceptual Art movement. Conceptual Art emerged in the 1960s and refers to art in which the idea (or concept) behind the work takes precedence over the physical object.[9] Lucy Lippard (*1937), an American art critic and curator, was the first to discern the dematerialisation at work in Conceptual Art. In the text *6 Years: The Dematerialisation of Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (1973), Lippard argued that Conceptual Art sought to decouple art from the object.[10] Dematerialisation was a radical break from modernist formalism and was a way to separate art from commodification.[11] The American writer and art critic Harold Rosenberg (1906-1978), in reference to Land Art stated that "the reduction of the arts to their material components corresponds to an awareness of the decomposition of inherited art forms."[12] The influence of Conceptual Art, specifically dematerialisation, manifested itself in Land Art with the creation of 'objects' that attempted to exist outside the bounds of commodification and the traditional art spaces.

On the surface, the idea of indoor Land Art seems like a contradiction, as one of the base tenets of Land Art is a radical rejection of the museum space. In 1965, Donald Judd (1928-1994), an American artist associated with Minimalist Art, declared that all painting had become 'spatial', which was a rejection of European art's illusions of literal space.[13] French contemporary art historian and curator Jean-Marc Poinsot (*1948) argued that this rejection of traditional representational space in paintings was transferred to the spaces of galleries

[7] Chilvers, "Land art (Earth art; Earthworks)."
[8] Green Urist, "The Case for Land Art | The Art Assignment | PBS Digital Studios."
[9] LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art."
[10] Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, vii-xii.
[11] Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," 100-110.
[12] Rosenberg *quoted in* Tiberghien*, Land Art*, 230.
[13] "Pollock's paint is obviously on the canvas, and the space is mainly that made by any marks on a surface, so that it is not very descriptive and illusionistic… three dimensions are real space. That gets rid of the problem of illusionism and of literal space… which is riddance of one of the salient and most objectional relics of European art." [Judd, *Complete Writing 1959-1975*, 182.]

and museums.[14] This led to one of the base principles of Land Art being a radical rejection of the museum space. The pioneering Land artist Robert Smithson (1938-1973) stated that Land Art strived to fully dissociate from these "axiomatic space[s]".[15] This institutional critique resulted in a rejection of art spaces, which led Land Artists to find alternative, often very remote, locations to install their works. A work that emblemises Land Art's rejection of traditional art space, with its colossal scale and remote location, is Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970). *Spiral Jetty* is a 460m long x 4.6m wide spiral-shaped sculpture located in the Great Salt Lake Desert, Utah, USA (Fig. 2).[16] This is one of the most well-known Land Art works. Richard Serra (*1938), an American sculptor, pointed out that some of these works are so colossal that they can only be comprehended when seen from the air. This makes them exclusionary as, in order to view the artwork in its entirety, one would have to hire a helicopter (which is not a possibility for most people).[17] This critique extends to the inaccessibility of the works location. The American Land artist Michael Heizer (*1944) defended this inaccessibility by equivocating secluded artworks to famous monuments people travel great distances to see.[18] However, Heizer's defence fails to address that in-person these works are so immense that they are essentially incomprehensible. There is a reason why, when you google image search 'Spiral Jetty', you are presented with page after page of beautiful aerial shots, rather than first-person perspective photos. This is because even if you managed to get past the first obstacle of reaching the work, without access to a drone or a helicopter, one cannot grasp the totality of *Spiral Jetty*. The inaccessibility and ineffable scale has resulted in works like *Spiral Jetty* being primarily known through photographic reproductions.

[14] Tiberghien, *Land Art*, 240.

[15] Smithson, "The Monuments of Passaic," 57.

[16] Ibid., *The Writings of Robert Smithson: Essays with Illustrations,* 110-3.

[17] "Works in remote landscapes involve a contradiction that I never been able to resolve. What most people know of Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, for example, is an image shot from a helicopter. When you actually see the work, it had none of that purely graphic character, but then almost no one has really seen it. In fact, it has been submerged since shortly after its completion." [Serra, "Interview with Douglas Crimp."]

[18] "Many people complain that no one will see these works because they are too far away, but somehow people manage to get to Europe every year… You don't complain that you'll never see the Giza pyramid because it's half way around the world in the middle of Egypt, you just got and look at it." [Heizer, "Interview, Julia Brown and Michael Heizer," 42.]

Fig. 3: Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1970, basalt rock, salt crystals, earth, water, 4.6 m x 460 m, at Rozel Point, Great Salt Lake, Utah. © Holt/Smithson Foundation and Dia Art Foundation/Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Photo: George Steinmetz.

The experience of visiting Land Art goes beyond the aesthetic qualities of the work. Nancy Holt described *Sun Tunnels* (1976) as a participatory experience and, as such, this work has a complicated relationship with photography (Fig.4). This work consists of four concrete tunnels arranged in an open 'X' shape situated within the sprawling expanse of the Great Basin Desert in Utah, USA. Each of the cylinders has holes that represent celestial constellations, which contextualise this work within the vastness of the universe.[19] The changing light of the day casts an ever-moving shadow through these celestial holes. The light and weather conditions of the surrounding environment transform the work from moment to moment. The openings of the cylinders line-up with the rising and setting of the sun in the summer and winter solace, capturing the sun in the cylindrical lens of the concrete tunnels four times a year. *Sun Tunnels* brings together the time-based elements of sunlight, geography, and the Earth's alignment in an ever-changing work that connects the audience with time. Holt stated, "I have a strong desire to make people conscious of the cyclical time of the universe."[20] Through photography, the changing state of this work can be documented.

[19] Utah Museum of Fine Arts, "Sun Tunnels."
[20] Nancy Holt *quoted in* Tiberghien*, Land Art*, 147.

Displaying photographs of *Sun Tunnels*, and other remote Land Art works, in museums or online[21] makes the work accessible to a wider audience. Nancy Holt, when discussing her work *Sun Tunnels,* stated that "photographic images of these works do not have a uniquely documentary function," arguing, "that the photograph is not only a substitute for the work, but also an enticement to visit the site."[22] However, I argue it is just as likely that rather than enticing the audience to see the work, photographs satiate the audiences' desire to go and experience the work themselves.

Fig. 4: Nancy Holt, *Sun Tunnels,* 1973–76, concrete, steel, and earth, each tunnel: 5.5m x 2.8m, at Great Basin Desert, Utah. © Holt/Smithson Foundation and Dia Art Foundation/Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: ZCZ Films/James Fox, courtesy Holt/Smithson Foundation.

Furthermore, I contend that photography circumvents the experiential quality of Land Art. This is because Land Art is about more than the aesthetic quality of a captured moment, the atmosphere, time with the work, and the experience of being outside in an unconventional environment, and many other factors, all work together to make up the

[21] Dia Art Foundation, "Nancy Holt, *Sun Tunnels*."
[22] Nancy Holt *quoted in* Tiberghien*, Land Art*, 251.

experience of the work. Fig.2 is a photograph of De Maria's *The Lightning Field* in the throes of a dramatic moment, as a lightning strike cracks atop the tip of two of the 400 steel poles. This photo gives the audience a feeling of awe and adrenaline. While this photo accurately reflects a heightened moment, it does not accurately capture the experience of being with the work, because a photograph cannot capture duration. Most of the time De Maria's *The Lightning Field* is a stoic and tranquil field of perfectly aligned poles, in an expansive flatland, backdropped by rolling hills. It is a work designed to be viewed over an extended period of time, in both dramatic and quiet moments.[23] Fig.2, and photos of Land Art in general, fail to capture the nuanced complexity of these works because they only capture the work in a single moment, when they are meant to be experienced over a multitude of moments. Moreover, the experiential quality of Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels* and De Maria's *The Lightning Fields* is compromised because of photography's inability to express duration.

In addition to famous large-scale works by the likes of Smithson, De Maria and Holt, other Land Artists produced ephemeral, gestural manipulates of the landscape captured with photography. The British Land artist Richard Long's (*1945) *A Line Made by Walking* (1967) is emblematic of this more subtle manifestation of Land Art (Fig.5). Long created this work by walking back and forth in a line in a field until the turf was noticeably flattened. He then photographed this physical intervention in the landscape. This photograph is the only record of the work.[24] The use of the artists body as a tool for intervening in the landscape gives this work a performative quality. Ana Mendieta's (1948-1985), a Cuban-American feminist artist best known for her 'earth-body' works, *Silueta Series* (1973-1980) blurs the lines between Performance and Land Art. Mendieta's works explore the organic quality of entropy[25], creating impermeant works that exist solely in photographic form. In Fig. 6, Mendieta used her body to create an imprint of her silhouette in the sand, filling the cavity with bright red pigment, then allowing the rising tide to eroded the work.[26] Mendieta's work emphasises human connection to the land, by articulating the cycle of life, death, and renewal. The temporality of both of these works makes them dependent on photography. Long's and

[23] Dia Art Foundation, "Walter De Maria, *The Lightning Field*."

[24] TATE, "Richard Long: A Line Made by Walking, 1967."

[25] Ana Mendieta explored ideas concerning transience and entropy with her small-scale Land Art works, by designing her works to be only temporary interventions in the landscape, that would be dissolve by nature 'back' into the landscape. [Guggenheim, "Online Collection: Ana Mendieta."]

[26] Ibid.

Mendieta's work represent a form of Land Art that is based in the medium of photography, and is therefore inherently dependent on photography.

Fig. 5: Richard Long, *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967, photograph, gelatin silver print on paper and graphite on board, 37.5 × 32.4 cm, Tate Liverpool. © Richard Long.

Fig. 6: Ana Mendieta, *Untitled* from *Silueta series*, 1973–77, Silver dye-bleach print, 61.6 × 46.4 cm, Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Gift from The Howard and Donna Stone Collection. © MCA Chicago. Photo: Nathan Keay.

Land Art's dependence on photography has circumvented the movement's rejection of the art establishment, as many major museums have photographs of Land Art in their collection. For example, the Guggenheim, New York has several of Mendieta's *Silueta Series*[27] photographs in their collection and Tate Liverpool owns Long's *A Line Made by Walking*.[28] Additionally, the American contemporary art organisation the Dia Art Foundation manages De Maria's *The Lightning Field,*[29] Holt's *Sun Tunnels*,[30] and Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*.[31] Land Art's

[27] Guggenheim, "Online Collection: Ana Mendieta."
[28] TATE, "Richard Long: A Line Made by Walking, 1967."
[29] Dia Art Foundation, "Walter De Maria, *The New York Earth Room*."
[30] Ibid., "Nancy Holt, *Sun Tunnels*."
[31] Ibid., "Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*."

complicated relationship with the art establishment goes beyond acquisition, as several Land Art works were funded by art institutions. For example, Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* was partly financed by a $9,000 USD grant from Virginia Dwan Gallery of New York.[32] This raises the question, can a work funded by an art institution engage with institutional critique? At the very least, this muddies the waters of said critique. Overall, these examples showcase that Land Art's rejection of the art space has never been unequivocal. Moreover, photographs of Land Art becoming mainstream art objects, merely shine a light on this ambiguity.

Additionally, Land Art has failed to evade the art market. Initially, Land Art functioned outside the bounds of commodification. However, once Land Art gained popularity (in part through photographic reproductions), demand grew, and the market swiftly adapted to meet this new demand. For example, while it would be physically impossible to sell Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, the status of this work as an icon of Land Art has resulted in related ephemera (like sketches and letters) becoming valuable. For example, in 2019 four preliminary sketches of *Spiral Jetty* by Smithson were valued at $62,500 USD.[33] Beyond the sale of Land Art paraphernalia, the increased value of Land Art, caused by increased market interest, has compromised the artistic intention of some works. For example, *Spiral Jetty* was initially created to be naturally eroded by the elements; however, due to the fame and value of the work, it is now a maintained site.[34] This adaptation changes the meaning of the work by removing its connection to entropy. Much like Mendieta's *Silueta Series*, the natural decay of *Spiral Jetty* was designed to emulate the cyclical nature of life and death. By being a preserved site, *Spiral Jetty* has become an enduring symbol of man's ability to sculpt the landscape, rather than a humbling depiction of decay. Overall, due its popularity (perpetuated by photographic reproductions being both widely distributed online and displayed in traditional art spaces) Land Art has been commodified.

Land Art's development is characterised by a search for a new form outside the bounds of the aesthetic and physical space of the art establishment. Land Art pushed beyond the conditions that make representation possible, to a point where Land Art has become reliant on photography. Photography is commodifiable, easily installed in the art space, and

[32] Buskirk, *Creative Enterprise*, 306.
[33] PBS, "1970 Robert Smithson Spiral Jetty Plans."
[34] Green Urist, "The Case for Land Art | The Art Assignment | PBS Digital Studios."

only captures the aesthetics of Land Art (ignoring atmospheric and experiential qualities). I assert that Indoor Land Art installations are a reaction to the ramifications of Land Art's reliance on photography. Moreover, Indoor Land Art Installations reject this dependence on photography by returning to traditional art spaces.

'Installation' is included in 'Indoor Land Art installation' to classify these works as a form of installation art. Installation art works are typically three-dimensional interior spaces, often site-specific and temporary, designed to alter the viewer's perception of a space.[35] Claire Bishop, in her book *Installation Art: A Critical History* (2005), asserts that the defining characteristics of installation art are that "the space, and the ensemble of elements within it, are regarded in their entirety as a singular object" and that "it addresses the viewer directly as a literal presence in space."[36] Furthermore, what differentiates installation art from other forms of more traditional art (like sculpture or photography) is that the space is presented as a unified experience, rather than a display of separate objects in a space.[37] Installation art priorities the viewers experience of the work, allowing the viewer to have an *embodied* experience of being *with* the work (embodied experience will be discussed further later in the introduction).

The way the body moves through space was a great concern for Land artists, with immersive Land Art blurring the line between art and architecture. For example, the pioneering Public Art artist Mary Miss's (*1944) *Perimeters/ Pavilions/Decoys* (1977–9) installation at the Nassau County Museum in Roslyn, New York is a work that intervenes in how people interact with a particular landscape.[38] This work consists of five related installations spread-out over 15,000m^2 of woodland: three towers, an earth mound, and a subterranean courtyard (Fig.7). Each section of the installation created a space for the audience to interact with the landscape in a new and unconventional way.[39] Indoor Land Art installations continue Land Art's interest in interactivity, by functioning as immersive experiences. Lara Almárcegui's (*1972) *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space* (2011) is an Indoor Land Art installation that presents the exact materials used in the construction of

[35] TATE, "Art Term: Installation Art."

[36] Bishop, *Installation Art,* 6.

[37] Ibid.

[38] This work was a major inspiration for Rosalind Krauss's 1969 essay *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*. [Krauss, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field,* 31.]

[39] Lucarelli, "Mary Miss's 1977-1978 Perimeters/Pavillions/Decoys."

TENT, Rotterdam, central exhibition space to the viewer in the form of piles of pulverised materials (Fig.8).[40] The viewer is invited to walk through the piles, towering over some of the smaller piles and being dwarfed by other larger piles. The experience of being in the installation allows the viewer to contemplate the material costs of urbanisation. Olafur Eliasson's (*1967) *Riverbed* (2014–2015) was a sweeping riverbed landscape installed in the south wing of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark, complete with a running river meandering through the gallery spaces (Fig.9). This is a highly interactive installation, as the only way you can see this work is to be physically on the work.[41] Walter De Maria's *The New York Earth Room* (1977) is less physically immersive than Almárcegui's and Eliasson's works, as the work is designed to be viewed from a platform and visitors are not permitted to touch the installation (Fig.1). This viewing platform does not allow you to see beyond the first room of the apartment, leaving it up to the viewer to imagine that the soil continues through the rest of the apartment.[42] *The New York Earth Room* uses the installation space as an immersive canvas to create a large-scale indoor landscape, prioritising internal engagement over physical interaction with the work. Furthermore, while many Land Art works discussed in this introduction demonstrate an interest in being experiential, Indoor Land Art installations, with their immersive design and physical accessibility, demonstrate a prioritisation of experience.

[40] TENT, "Lara Almárcegui – construction materials, excavations, wastelands."
[41] Juul Holm and Engberg-Pedersen, *Riverbed*, 12.
[42] Dunning, "Thoughts on Dirt," 24.

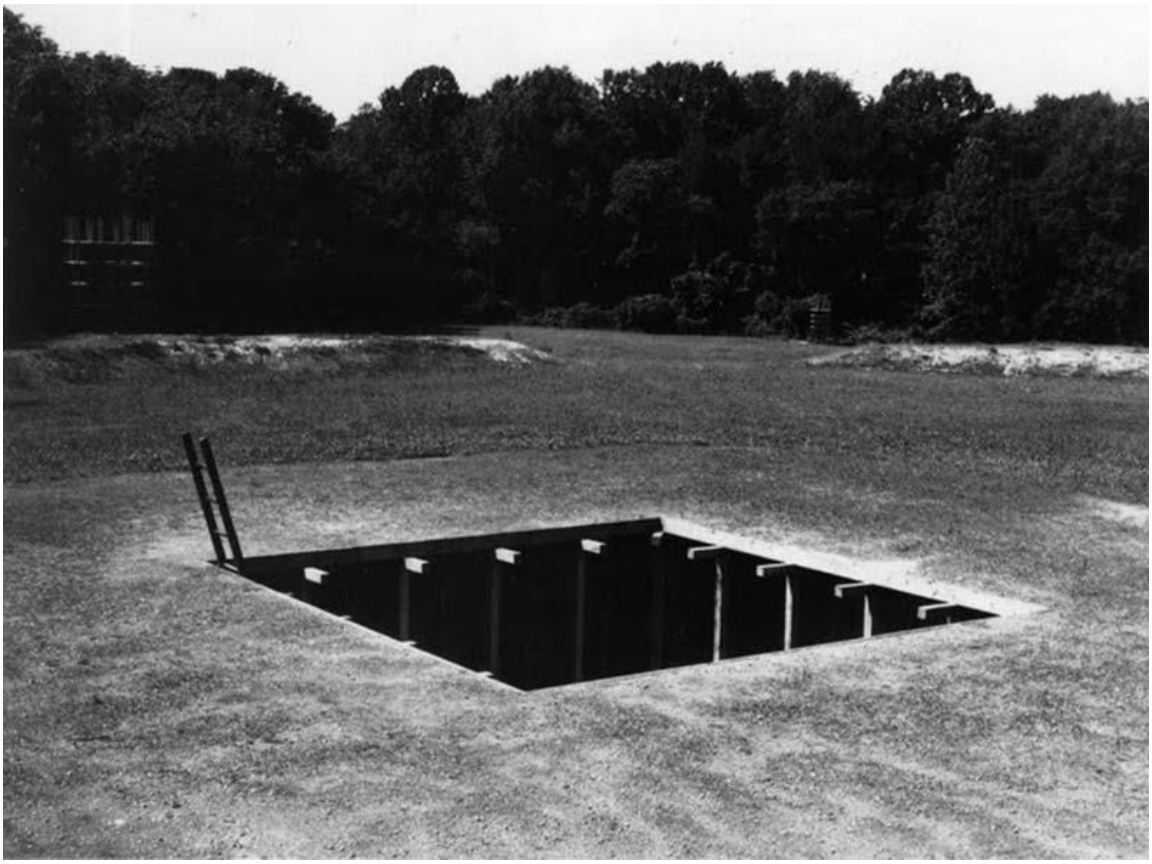

Fig. 7: Mary Miss, *Perimeters/Pavilions/Decoys*,1977-8, subterranean courtyard view, at the Nassau County Museum of Art, Long Island, New York. © Mary Miss.

Fig.8: Lara Almárcegui, *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space*, 2011, at TENT Rotterdam, Netherlands. © Lara Almárcegui. Photo: Job Janssen/tentrotterdam.nl.

Fig.9: Olafur Eliasson, *Riverbed*, 2014-2015, 180 tons Icelandic volcanic rock, gravel, water at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark. © Olafur Eliasson. Photo: Anders Sune Berg.

Structure of thesis

In the following, I will position Indoor Land Art installations with regards to experience, place, performativity and post-humanism. This thesis will use Walter De Maria *The New York Earth Room* (1977) (Fig.1), Lara Almárcegui's *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space* (2011) (Fig. 8), and Olafur Eliasson's *Riverbed* (2014–2015) (Fig.9) as case studies. The aim of this research is to gain insight into how Indoor Land Art installations relate to contemporary views of nature. Following from this, the main research question is: To what extent do Indoor Land Art installations such as Walter de Maria's *The New York Earth Room* (1977), Lara Almárcegui's *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space* (2011), and Olafur Eliasson's *Riverbed* (2014–2015) relate to contemporary perceptions of nature? And the sub-questions are:

1. What kind of experience do Indoor Land Art installations trigger?
2. How can Indoor Land Art installations be understood as site-specific?
3. What is the performative quality of Indoor Land Art installations?
4. How can Indoor Land Art installations be understood as reflecting a post-human connection to nature?

The thesis is structured so that each chapter will answer one sub-question. Through problematising these case studies within the aforementioned theoretical frameworks, this thesis will assert that Indoor Land Art installations have the potential to recalibrate our relationship with nature. Furthermore, while the topic of this thesis is not New Materialism itself, there is clear New Materialist undercurrent woven throughout this thesis.

Chapter One will examine the phenomenological experience of being *with* Indoor Land Art installations. The French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1908-1961) book the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) emphasises the role of the body in the fabrication of human experience, asserting that embodied experiences give meaning beyond that of thought alone.[43] As touched upon in the 'installation' section of this introduction, Indoor Land Art installations are experiential works. The immersive materiality of these installations allows the viewer to have a embodied experience of being *with* the work. Moreover, the experience of being with the work constructs the meaning of the work. Building upon this assertion, I argue that the materiality of Indoor Land Art installations, when understood from a New Materialist perspective, has a communicative power, shaping the viewer's experience of the work. New Materialism is a form of philosophical monism that understands matter as universal. My understanding of New Materialism is based in the Italian-Australian contemporary philosopher and feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti's (*1954) "more radical sense of materialism" (both monism and New Materialism will explored further in 1.2).[44] This chapter positions Indoor Land Art installations as demonstrating an expansive material awareness of the world.

Chapter Two will explore Indoor Land Art installations relationship with place. Indoor Land Art installations have a complex relationship with site-specificity that is based in, but diverges from, Land Art's relationship with place. Land Art opened up a whole new way of interacting with 'place'. For example, in 1982 Agnes Denes installed *Wheatfield – A confrontation* in a landfill in lower Manhattan, two blocks from the World Trade Center (Fig.10). Denes planted, grew and harvested wheat over a three-month period. The over 8,000m^2 wheat field was planted on land worth $4.5 Billion USD in 1982 (which, adjusted for inflation, is over $12 Billion USD in 2020). The location plays a pinacol role in the meaning of

[43] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* 45.
[44] Braidotti, "Teratologies," 158.

this work. According to the Agnes Denes Studio, this works creates a powerful paradox between the act of planting and harvesting wheat and the billion-dollar value of the land, this juxtaposition highlights societies misplaced priories, calling attention to how society manages, and mismanages, its resources.[45] Nearly forty years later, in an era of climate change, the message of her work rings more urgent than ever.

Fig. 10: Agnes Denes, *Wheatfield—A Confrontation*, Summer 1982, two acres of wheat planted and harvested by the artist on the Battery Park landfill, Manhattan. © Agnes Denes. Photo: John McGrall.

The relationship between place and art established in Land Art is foundational to Indoor Land Art installations relationship with the site. Whether in the remote desert or a gallery space, all sites are site-specific. Miwon Kwon (*1961) is a Korean-American curator and art historian, whose work focuses on contemporary art, Land Art and site-specific art; Kwon's seminal text book *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity* explores the significance of 'place' and examines the evolution of the term 'site-specificity.'[46] Based on Kwon three paradigms of site-specificity, I argue that Indoor Land Art installations have a *discursive* relationships with a multitude of *sites*. Then, departing from Kwon, I assert that Indoor Land Art installations have the ability to be both site-specific and mobile. This assertion is based on a more expansive understanding of the relationship between the work and the site.

[45] Agnes Denes Studio, "Wheatfield - A Confrontation."
[46] Kwon, "One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity," 1-9.

Chapter Three will examine the performativity of the three case studies. For the purpose of this thesis, performativity is understand as art's ability to affect the mind of the viewer, and in turn, potentially affect larger social and political issues. A works relationship to specific sites can give the *performative effect* of the work a clear social and political direction. For example, from the 11th of December 2018 to the 2nd of January 2019, to coincide with the UN Climate change conference COP24, Olafur Eliasson installed the third iteration of his *Ice watch* series in front of both the Tate Modern, London and Bloomberg's European headquarters (Fig.11). This work consisted of 12 large blocks of glacier ice arranged in a clock formation. According to Eliasson's Studio, "the work raises awareness of climate change by providing a direct and tangible experience of the reality of melting arctic ice."[47] The timeliness of this work, to coincide with the COP24, gives the meaning of this work a clear political direction. The site, in this instance, is expanded to include time, in addition to locality. By presenting the melting clock formation at the feet of world leaders currently discussing how mankind will address climate change, *Ice Watch* is emphatically underscoring the need for urgent action. Chapter Three asserts that the performativity of Indoor Land Art installations have the expansive potential to engage with and affect social and political issues.

Fig. 11: Olafur Eliasson*, Ice Watch London*, 2018, glacier ice, at Bankside (outside Tate Modern), London.
© Olafur Eliasson. Photo: Justin Sutcliffe.

[47] Olafur Eliasson Studio, "Ice Watch."

Chapter Four will explore the extent to which Indoor Land Art installations can be understood as post-humanist representations of nature. Post-humanism is a philosophical viewpoint that examines both the historicization and conceptualisation of agency and the human, in order to examine the position of humanity within the wider-world, from a distinctly non-humanist perspective.[48] There are many critical strands of philosophical thought that can be classified as post-humanist;[49] for the purpose of this thesis, I will be employing Rosi Braidotti's theory of critical post-humanism outlined in her texts *The Posthuman* (2013) and *Posthuman Knowledge* (2019) in order to establish a framework for post-human art. I contend that post-human art is art that recalibrates the human perspective into an inter-connected bio-network. Moreover, post-humanism manifests itself in Indoor Land Art installations by recalibrating the human relationship with nature. This reading of Indoor Land Art installations demonstrates a New Materialist understanding of the vitality of matter. Overall, I contend that from a post-humanist perspective, Indoor Land Art installations offer the viewer a new way of being in the world.

[48] Keeling and Lehman, "Posthumanism."

[49]According to philosopher Francesca Ferrando, 'Post-humanism' is used as an umbrella term that covers seven different definitions that follow different schools of thought and enquiry: antihumanism, cultural posthumanism, philosophical posthumanism, critical posthumanism, new materialism, metahumanism, and posthumanities. [Francesca Ferrando, "Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations," 26.]

Chapter One: The experience of Indoor Land Art installations

In this chapter, I will explore the experience of encountering Indoor Land Art Installations. These installations depart from Land Art by prioritising the experience of being *with* the work. Based in the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1908-1961) articulation of phenomenology outlined in his book *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), experience is understood as embodied.[50] The materiality of these works constructs an immersive situational experience for the viewer. The materials themselves have a communicative power, determining the way the receiver interacts with the space, which can understood as the materiality demonstrating a form of non-human agency. Furthermore, Indoor Land Art installations connect to a new awareness of the world around them, expressing a New Materialist understanding of the vitality of matter.

1.1 – From object to experience

The shift from Land Art to Indoor Land Art installations represents a shift from an interest in the object to experience. In the introduction, I hypothesised that Indoor Land Art installations are a reaction to Land Art's dependence on photography. This dependence on photography is a result of Land Art's attempts to 'dematerialise.' The term dematerialisation refers to conceptual art's attempts to disassociate the concept of art from the object, in order to separate art from commodification.[51] Dematerialisation manifested itself in Land Art with the creation of temporal, remote, and/or large-scale artworks; which, arguably, led to a dependence on photography. I argue that the meaning of Indoor Land Art installations is generated through the viewer's phenomenological experiences *with* the work. This form of meaning-making is separable from the physical object and therefore escapes commodification. This can be understood as an alternative expression of dematerialisation.

Phenomenology is a method of describing human perceptual experience in the world which reinvigorates the Hegelian concept that art 'presents man with himself'[52] for the post-modern era. According to Merleau-Ponty, bodily experiences give perceptual meaning

[50] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* 45.

[51] In the essay *Escape attempts*, Lippard presented conceptual art as one of the last great attempts to escape capitalism. Lippard determined that conceptual art sought to decouple art from the object, in order, to separate art from commodification. [Lucy Lippard, *Six Years*, vii-1.].

[52] Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics,* 607-8.

beyond that generated by thought alone.[53] "Insofar as, when I reflect on the essence of subjectivity, I find it bound up with that of the body and that of the world, this is because my existence as subjectivity [= consciousness] is merely one with my existence as a body and with the existence of the world, and because the subject that I am, when taken concretely, is inseparable from this body and this world."[54] While we engage with or observe objects, experiences are unique because we experience them by living *through them* or *performing them*.[55] In all three Indoor Land Art installation case studies, you cannot see the entirety of the work at a glance; you can only see installations in fragments as you move through them, building your own work in your mind through your bodily interaction with the space. This constructs an entirely different spatial relationship than with a painting. With the Almárcegui's (Fig.8) and Eliasson's (Fig.9) works, you see more of the work as you walk through them; while, with the De Maria work (Fig.1), you are left to imagine that the soil continues throughout the rest of the apartment by constructing the unseen part of the installation in your mind. Moreover, you don't observe an Indoor Land Art installations, you have an experience *with* the work.

Dorothea von Hantelmann (*1969), a German Contemporary art historian and curator, in her text *The Experiential Turn*, argues that the concern with the artwork's effect on the viewer has been a dominant feature of contemporary art since the 1960s. [56] Minimalist installations produce meaning through the experience of the work relating the viewer's body in the installation space. A work that exemplified this situational shift is Bruce Newman's (*1941) *Green Light Corridor* (1970). As shown in Fig.12, this work invites you to squeeze yourself through two parallel wallboard panels, only 50cm apart, and to drench yourself in the fluorescent green light. Nauman insists that the aesthetic and bodily experience of the work supersedes the importance of the physical object, demonstrating a strong adherence to phenomenology.[57] The work imposes physical limits on the work, provoking a tactile, kinaesthetic relationship between the work and the viewer.[58] This shift towards experience

[53] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* 406-8.
[54] Ibid., 408.
[55] David Woodruff Smith, "Phenomenology."
[56] Dorothea Von Hantelmann, "The Experiential Turn."
[57] Guggenheim Collection Online, "Bruce Nauman: Performance Corridor."
[58] Ibid., "Bruce Nauman: Green Light Corridor."

reconstructs the meaning of art, to be a product of experience in relation to the installation space and the viewer's body.

Fig. 12: Bruce Nauman, *Green Light Corridor*, 1970, wallboard and green fluorescent light, 3m x 12.2m x .3m, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York Panza Collection, Gift, 1992. © 2018 Bruce Nauman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

1.2 – Materiality

In *Green Light Corridor* (Fig.12) and all three Indoor Land Art installations case studies, the materiality of the work imposes physical limits on the viewer's body, which determine how the viewer interacts with the work. For example, to experience one of Nauman's corridor works, you have to put physical and emotional effort in going through it; Because it is such a tight squeeze, some people get claustrophobic, you have to dare to enter,

and once you come out the side you feel like you have accomplished something. Functioning as a sort of small rite of passage. The materiality of this work has agency in the space, dictating how the viewer interacts with the work, which ultimately shapes the viewers experience of the being *with* the work. This New Materialist reading highlights the communicative power of materials.

New Materialism follows a monistic understanding of the world, conceiving of all matter as universal. It is a new 'ism' in philosophy, with many simultaneous interdisciplinary avenues of inquiry. In this thesis, I will be employing Rosi Braidotti's New Materialist framework. Her New Materialism is built on the Deleuzean notions of 'univocity' and 'single matter.'[59] The French philosopher Gillies Deleuze's (1925-1995) understanding of materialism is based on Spinoza's idea that everything that exists is a variation of one substance (either God or nature).[60] Baruch Spinoza's (1632-1677), a Dutch philosopher of Portuguese Sephardi origin and key early-enlightenment figure, idea of 'substances monism' posits that everything that is, has been created from one substance. [61] Deleuze furthers Spinoza's argument, by claiming that there is no one substance, that there is only an always-differentiating process of becoming.[62] Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1930-1992), French philosopher and Deleuze's frequent intellectual collaborator, summarised this complex ontology with the paradoxical formula "pluralism=monism."[63] Braidotti's New Materialist monistic understanding of the universe is, through Deleuze, based in Spinoza's idea that we are not just one body, we are made from the same material as the rest of the world. Furthermore, Braidotti's New Materialism, like all forms, prioritises the vitality of matter; however, her feminist interpretation of New Materialism resists undifferentiated perceptions of lived experience by acknowledging the differentiating forces of the world (i.e. racial or sexual differences). She argues that such differentiations must be traversed through a monistic understanding of the universe, in order for post-humanist, post-anthropocentric models of intergenerational

[59] Dolphijn and Van der Tuin, *New Materialism*, 14-15.

[60] Berressem and Haferkamp, *Deleuzian Events*, 210.

[61] Newlands, "Spinoza's Modal Metaphysics."

[62] "With univocity, however, it is not the differences which are and must be: it is being which is Difference, in the sense that it is said of difference. Moreover, it is not we who are univocal in a Being which is not; it is we and our individuality which remains equivocal in and for a univocal Being." [Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 39.]

[63] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 20.

justice and sustainability to be possible.[64] Chapter Four will apply Braidotti's post-humanist methodology to the three case studies.

New Materialism moves beyond discursive constructions and grapples with the reality of materiality. New Materialism deconstructions the material/discursive dichotomy, by examining both elements with equal importance, without prioritising one over then other.[65] Moreover, when understood as expressions of New Materialism, Indoor Land Art installations break down dichotomies of human thought, by deconstructing the culture/nature, mind/body, subject/object relationships, by instead presenting an affirmative relationship between the materiality of the work and the viewer. Indoor Land Art installations embrace materiality by establishing a material awareness of the environment, which demonstrates that we are of the same materials as the whole world. Ultimately, New Materialism aims to bridge the gap between all things. Ideas of New Materialism and embodied experience are undercurrents throughout the entirety of this thesis. The following section will analysis the experiential production of meaning and aesthetic characteristics of the three Indoor Land Art installations case studies from a New Materialist perspective.

1.3 – Visual Analysis

1.3.1 – Walter De Maria's *The New York Earth Room* (1977)

In 1968, Walter De Maria created the first Indoor Land Art installation with the first of three iterations of the *Earth Room* at Galerie Heiner Friedrich in Munich, Germany (Fig.13).[66] The *Munich Earth Room* was a temporary installation from September 20th to October 10th. This work was originally titled *Level Dirt/ The Land Show: Pure Dirt/Pure Earth/Pure* Land, but later changed to *Earth Room* (Fig.14).[67] The second iteration was installed at the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt, Germany in 1974 (Fig.15).[68] Neither of these works are still on display, as they were both designed to be temporary installations. My analysis will primarily focus on the third iteration *The New York Earth Room,* which was installed in a Soho apartment in 1977 and has been on permanent public display since the early 1980s (Fig.16).

[64] Dolphijn and Van der Tuin, *New Materialism*, 15.
[65] Alaimo and Hekman, "Introduction," 6.
[66] Kivland, "Introduction," 8-9.
[67] Herzog, "Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Munich, Cologne, New York, 1963- 1980."
[68] Cohen, "The Artist Whose Masterpiece Involved Filling an Apartment with 140 Tons of Dirt."

Fig. 13: Walter De Maria, Heiner Friedrich and assistant during the Installation of the *Dirt Show / The Land Show: Pure Dirt, Pure Earth, Pure Land* (later titled *Earth Room*), 1968, soil, Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Munich, Germany. Photo: Galerie Heiner Friedrich.

Fig. 14: Walter De Maria, *Munich Earth Room* (gallery view), 1968, soil.
© The Estate of Walter De Maria. Courtesy of Dia Art Foundation. Photo: Heide Stolz.

Fig. 15: Walter De Maria, *Darmstadt Earth Room*, 1974, soil.© The Estate of Walter De Maria. Courtesy of Dia Art Foundation Photo: Timm Rautert.

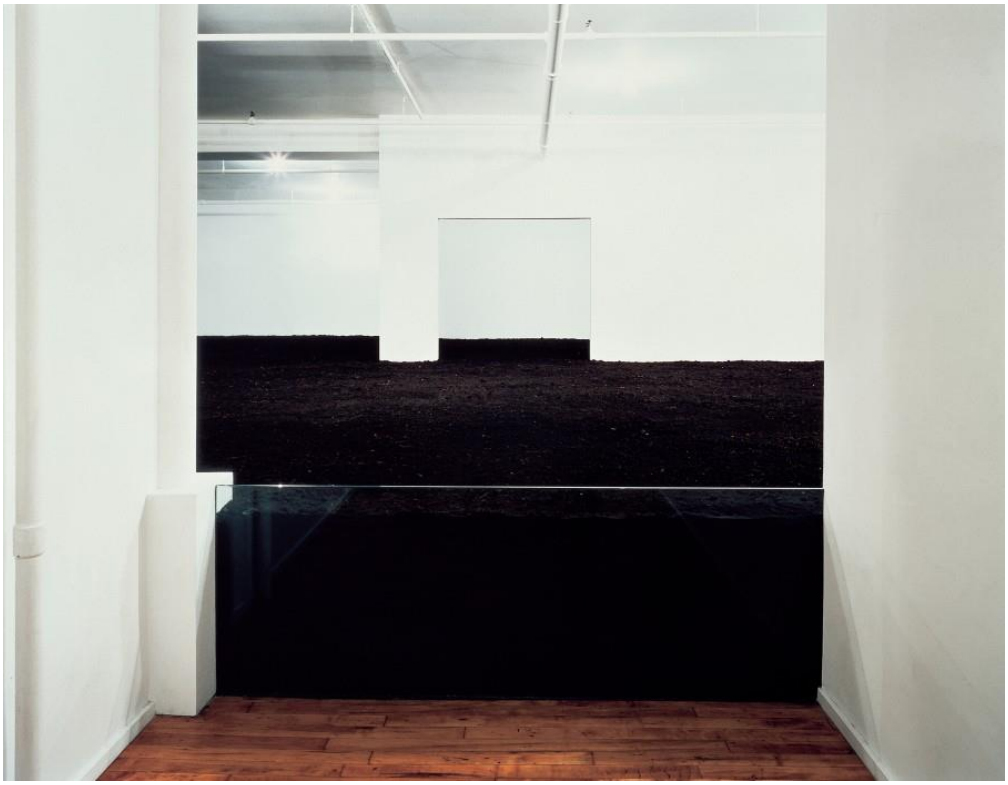

Fig. 16: Walter De Maria, The New York Earth Room, 1977. Photo by John Cliett. Dia Foundation. © Estate of Walter De Maria.

On October 1, 1977, *The New York Earth Room* was mounted at 141 Wooster Street, Soho, New York City (Fig.16). *The New York Earth Room*, despite what the titled suggests, is not one room. The entire 335m^2 apartment is filled with 197m^3 of earth, which weights a colossal 127,300kg.[69] However, visitors can only see one room of the work from a viewing platform. According to the Dia Art Foundation (the custodians of this work), "the New York Earth Room is a work of art meant to be viewed, not entered."[70] Jeanne Dunning, in her essay *Thoughts on Dirt* (2017), described her first time seeing the work, stating that when you view the work, you are left to assume the dirt continues through the rest of the apartment in the same fashion as the room you can see from the viewing platform. Dunning noted that the east and west walls of the space are lined with factory style tall windows. In the morning light and with street lights at night, these windows cast uniform, regimented, rectangular beams of light on to the surface of the earth sculpture.[71] This light and the architectural details (the doorways, the crown moulding, etc.) gives the space a lived-in feel. These details reference both the outside world and the inhabitants who would live in this space, if it wasn't otherwise occupied. These homely details emphasise the fact the earth in *The New York Earth Room* is alive.

When you walk into the room, the smell of pungent earth fills you nose.[72] Earth (or soil) is alive with living organisms (such as bacteria, worms, insects, fungi, and seeds). Earth can support life. As *The New York Earth Room* is comprised of soil, it is a literal living work. The technical difference between dirt and soil is that soil is alive, while dirt is dead.[73] However, colloquially, "dirt is matter out of place."[74] Soil is classified as dirt when it is somewhere it doesn't belong. For example, if the soil in the garden is brought inside on the tread of your shoes it becomes classified as dirt. By titling this work *The New York Earth Room*, rather than 'The New York *Dirt* Room', De Maria is asserting that the earth belongs there.

The New York Earth Room, like its two predecessors, was not planned to be a permanent installation.[75] This work was installed for the last show at the Heiner Friedrich Gallery in Soho;

[69] Dia Art Foundation, "Walter De Maria, *The New York Earth Room*."
[70] Ibid.
[71] Dunning, "Thoughts on Dirt," 24.
[72] Cohen, "The Artist Whose Masterpiece Involved Filling an Apartment with 140 Tons of Dirt."
[73] Dominy, "What's The Difference Between Soil and Dirt?".
[74] Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 36.
[75] Kivland, "Introduction," 9.

the work was simply never uninstalled when the gallery closed. After a few years of solitude, this work was reopened to the public on January 1, 1980, and has remained open to the public for forty years and is still on display.[76] De Maria did not leave care instruction for the work; lacking specific instruction, the owners of *The New York Earth Room* have decided to try and maintain the work in more-or-less its original condition. The work is watered and raked once a week, to keep the earth from drying out and becoming dust, and to prevent seeds and mushrooms sprouting.[77] The endurance and unchanging state of *The New York Earth Room* have become significant to the work's meaning over time.

The New York Earth Room has been maintained by Bill Dilworth (*1954), an American abstract painter, for over thirty years. Dilworth described his enduring experience of being the custodian of the work, stating that, "my life and my experience here is immersed in art, earth, quiet, and time. It's a continual growth of time."[78] This work is about the sheer sensory experience of being in the presence of so much earth. *The New York Earth Room* is, both in a literal and a metaphysical sense, grounding. While De Maria stayed deliberately silent on the meaning of this work, Dilworth's interpretation of the work has evolved over time in reaction to contemporary environmental concerns (such as Climate Change). He interprets this work to be a symbol that the Earth is worth preserving.[79] The meaning of this work is based on the experience of being *with* the work. Experience is highly individual and reflective of external influences. So it is logical that the meaning of this work would evolve over time and maintain a connection to contemporary topics. *The New York Earth Room*, through the use of natural materials, evokes nature, but the minimalist landscape leaves much room for interpretation. Furthermore, all three case studies were created at three different times; however, because these works prioritise and are activated by the viewer, these experiential works are inherently *of the now*. This is because contemporary experiences *with* the work recreate the meaning of the work within the contemporary context of the viewer's mind. Therefore, anachronistic reading of these works are sensical, because these works function anachronistically with one foot in the past and the other in the present.

[76] Dunning, "Thoughts on Dirt," 26.
[77] Ibid., 38-42.
[78] Bill Dilworth *quoted in* Chayka, "The Unchanging, Ever Changing *Earth Room*."
[79] Ibid.

1.3.2 – Lara Almárcegui's *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space* (2011)

Fig.17: Lara Almárcegui, *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space*, 2011, Installation view at TENT Rotterdam, Netherlands, 2011. Photo: Job Janssen/tentrotterdam.nl.

In 2011, Lara Almárcegui installed *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space* in the exhibition space of TENT, Rotterdam (Fig.17). This installation was the central work in the solo exhibition *Construction Materials, Excavations, Wastelands.*[80] This work consisted of eight neat cone-shaped piles of different pulverised materials of varying sizes installed in the TENT central exhibition space. These piles mirror the exact quantity and type of materials used to build the TENT exhibition space. This work, like De Maria's, is highly material. In this site-specific installation, Almárcegui calculated the construction materials that were used in building this space and represents the literal material cost of its construction with this installation (this works relationship with the site will be explore further in Chapter Two). These piles consist of 0.9 m^3 of ground glass, 63.8 m^3 of concrete rubble (Fig.18), 2.7 m^3 of wood chips, etc.[81] Visitors are invited to walk through the space, between the piles of materials; dwarfing some of the smaller piles and being towered over by the larger ones. The

[80] TENT, "Lara Almárcegui – construction materials, excavations, wastelands."
[81] Goosen, "Lara Almarcegui."

duality of being both in the space and surrounded by the amount of material needed to construct said space, helps quantify the fabric that makes up our manmade environments. We live in a world transformed by agriculture and urbanisation. Construction and demolition is a part of the lifecycle of our contemporary environment. This work examines the urban environment, by taking a closer look at the materials that comprise it.

Fig. 18: Lara Almárcegui, *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space* (detail view), 2011, at TENT Rotterdam, Netherlands. © Lara Almárcegui. Photo: Job Janssen/tentrotterdam.nl.

While this work was specifically created for this space, this matter-of-fact representation of the materials used in the construction of the TENT exhibition space fits firmly within Almárcegui's oeuvre. Her artistic practices focuses on wastelands, ruins and undefined areas that sit between desertion and urbanisation, finding freedom in unarticulated sites of urban environments. She defines wastelands as places "where almost anything is possible because there is nothing in them."[82] In a time of rapid urbanisation, she shines a light on these overlooked and often forgotten sites. In addition to the *Construction Rubble* installation, her solo exhibition at TENT also showcased some of her photographic

[82] Lara Almárcegui *quoted in* Goosen, "Lara Almarcegui."

work and ephemera related to her long-term wasteland projects. The Dutch title of Almárcegui's wasteland projects *braakliggende terreinen* translates to 'fallow terrain;' this is a historical term that refers pieces of farmland that are purposefully left uncultivated, as a method of allowing the land to recover from agricultural use.[83] In a project that has lasted twenty years and is still ongoing, Almárcegui has preserved a one-hectare (1076m^2) neglected plot of land in Genk, Belgium (Fig.19). Her goal with this project was "to intervene in urban codes and preserve the wasteland."[84] This wasteland is considered 'preserved' by leaving it in a state uncompromised by human interference and allowing nature to shape the land. In a similar vein, Almárcegui's photographs are an unromantic, practical and pragmatic representation of wastelands. She documents waste lands as a way of advocating for the land to be valued for what it *is*, not for its *potential use* (Fig.20). A consistent thread throughout her oeuvre is making conscious the decision not to intervene with nature.[85]

Fig. 19: Lara Almárcegui, one-hectare plot of land between two highways in Genk, Belgium, a part of the *braakliggende terreinen*, 2000-ongoing. © Lara Almárcegui. Photo: Arte Útil.

[83] Goosen, "Lara Almarcegui."
[84] Arte Útil, "Archive / Wasteland."
[85] Almárcegui, "Creative Time Summit | Accessing The Green City."

Fig. 20: Lara Almarcegui, *Abandoned river park* (originally *Parque fluvial abandonado*)*,* 2012, photograph, Léon, France.

In addition to *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space* (2011), Almárcegui's has created several other *Construction Rubble* works, including *Construction Rubble of Secession Main Hall* (2010) at Secession, Vienna, Austria[86]; the Spanish Pavilion at Venice Biennale (2013)[87]; and *Abandoned River Park* (originally titled *Parque fluvial abandonado*) at Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León (2013-2014).[88] Every work in this series reflected the materials used in the construction of the space it was installed in. On the surface level, it may seem somewhat contradictory that Almárcegui is criticising the materials used in the construction of this space, by literally using the same materials in her installation. However, in my opinion, these installations should not be understood as straight criticism. Almárcegui is examining what we preserve to be normal. When walking through one of these *Construction Rubble* installations, the viewer comes face-to-face with materials necessary to create such a space; an everyday fact that is so normalised that it often goes unnoticed. With

[86] Vienna Secession, "Lara Almárcegui."
[87] E-Flux, "Lara Almarcegui."
[88] Public Delivery, "Why does Lara Almárcegui create massive piles of rubble?."

these installations, the artist unravels our understanding of inhabiting, by confronting the viewer with the material reality of the space we live in.[89]

1.3.3 – Olafur Eliasson's *Riverbed* (2014-2015)

Fig. 21: Olafur Eliasson, *Riverbed,* 2014-2015, 180 tons Icelandic volcanic rock, gravel, water at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark. © Olafur Eliasson. Photo: Iwan Baan.

Olafur Eliasson's *Riverbed* (2014-2015) installation transformed the entire south wing of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark into a sweeping landscape that blurs the lines between nature and the manmade (Fig.21).[90] A layer of rocks, stones, and gravel blanketed the museum floor, creating a riverbed starkly juxtaposed with the museum's white walls and bright overhead lighting. The work consists of 180 tons of volcanic rocks, imported from Iceland. [91] The work is monochrome in colour and the uniformity of the rocks look as if they were sourced from a singular location.[92] The space is not flat, with the installation sloping uphill. There is a small stream of water meandering through the different galleries spaces (Fig.22). The running water makes the space dynamic. The sound of the water adds a sensory

[89] E-Flux, "Lara Almárcegui."
[90] Juul Holm and Engberg-Pedersen, *Riverbed*, 12.
[91] Jeppesen, "Olafur Eliasson: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art."
[92] Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark., *Riverbed: Visual Tour*, (no page numbers).

element, giving the space a sense of liveliness. Without the water, the work would seem static and desolate.

Fig. 22: Olafur Eliasson, *Riverbed* (gallery view), 2014- 2015, Icelandic volcanic rock, gravel, water at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark. © Olafur Eliasson. Photo: Iwan Baan.

Riverbed is an experiential work.[93] The only way to see the work is to walk through it (Fig.23). There is a difference between the visitor's expectation of the work and the reality of it. On first sight, the space looks like a natural landscape and you approach walking on it like walking in nature. But, the moment you step onto the work you are physically destabilised, as the gravel shifts beneath your feet. Entering this installation is a decalibration of expectations and physical presence. When most people walk on the work, they have to look at their feet and stop walking when they want to look around. The water gives a narrative to the space, as visitors are encouraged to walk upstream, using the river as a guide.[94] This work

[93] Juul Holm and Engberg-Pedersen, *Riverbed*, 30.
[94] Olafur Eliasson, interview.

invites visitors to be both *at* and *on* the exhibition. The immersive and destabilising experience provides the viewer with a unique experience of both art and nature.[95]

Fig. 23: Olafur Eliasson, *Riverbed* (with visitors), 2014-2015, Icelandic volcanic rock, gravel, water at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark. © Olafur Eliasson. Photo: Iwan Baan.

This work is a reprieve from discussions of aesthetic taste. This work does not ask you to contemplate the colour palette of the monochromatic stones. Instead, it is a work about experience. Like with anything based on experience, there is a multitude of ways this work could be interpreted, which differ depending on the person and the conditions in which they are having the experience. One could have a soothing, contemplative experience. Taking the time to freely walk through the space. Interpreting the space to be like visiting a Japanese Zen stone garden. Or, feeling rushed by the crowds, uneased by the shifting stones under their feet, and disarmed by the unfamiliarity of interacting with art in this way, you could just as easily have an entirely different experience with the work. Eliasson described this possibility,

[95] Juul Holm and Engberg-Pedersen, *Riverbed*, 38-42.

as interpreting the space as a post-disaster landscape, as if "lava from a volcano" had just torn through the museum.[96]

The site-specific installation was designed in relation to the nature surrounding the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art. This museum is located on the Danish coast and visitors first enter the museum by walking through a beautiful garden. According to the exhibition catalogue, this installation is deeply tied to "the unique connection between nature, architecture and art that characterises Louisiana."[97] The south wing of the museum slopes with the natural contours of the surrounding landscape. The stream of water follows this slope. The low gallery archways, coupled with the natural incline, creates the illusion that there are meters of rocks below your feet. The low archways force the visitors to stoop and bend when walking through the installation, making visitors interact with the museum space in an unorthodox way (Fig.24).[98] This unique way of interacting with the gallery space works to break down the preconceived ideas and expectations that people have of museums.

Fig. 24: Olafur Eliasson, *Riverbed* (detail view with visitors) 2014-2015, Icelandic volcanic rock, gravel, water at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark. © Olafur Eliasson. Photo: Iwan Baan.

[96] Olafur Eliasson, interview.
[97] Juul Holm and Engberg-Pedersen, *Riverbed*, 12.
[98] Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark. *Riverbed: Visual Tour*, (no page numbering).

While the installation mimics nature quite convincingly at first glance, in reality, this work is dead. A real-landscape would be full of life, in the form of worms, bacteria, insects, etc. This is a sterilised presentation of nature. There is no sign of vegetation to break up the monotony of the grey stones. This lack of plant life gives the space a sense of suspense. It is almost as if, not long ago, water had covered the whole riverbed; or the riverbed, and the surrounding gallery space, will soon be filled with water.[99] There is only artificial light in the space. The sounds of the running water, while indicative of nature, act differently in this space than in nature, producing a slightly-off, non-natural, sound. On top of that, the noise of the other people in the installation – which was intensified by the success of the exhibition with over a thousand people per day visiting the installation[100] – is not something one is likely to experience when hiking through a forest in Denmark. *Riverbed* is an immersive installation that creates an experience akin to nature within the museum space.

1.4 – Experiencing nature

Indoor Land Art installations are highly-material immersive installations, which create embodied experiences that construct the meaning of the work. Viewing *The New York Earth Room* is an experience. The meaning of this work is created through the experience of being with the work. As the smell of soil fills your nostrils, you are visually confronted with the sheer amount of earth in front of you. De Maria uses the materiality of *The New York Earth Room* to construct an experiential situation for the visitor. Similar to De Maria's work, Almárcegui's installation is also experiential. The defining difference between these two works is that Almárcegui's work invites viewers to walk through the gaps in the piles, to have a more intimate, immersive experience with the work; while, De Maria's work only permits visitors to view a part of the work for a viewing platform. Eliasson's *Riverbed* furthers the idea of immersion seen in Almárcegui's work, by constructing an environment in the museum space that attempts to mimic nature; this environment is designed so that that visitors have to have a tactile experience with the work, as there is no way to see the work without physically walking through the installation. In all three case studies, the materiality can be understood as shaping the visitors interactions with the space, demonstrating a form of non-human agency.

[99] Olafur Eliasson, interview.
[100] Ibid.

All three case studies problematise the idea of nature through their materiality, connecting to a New Materialist awareness of the environment. De Maria's work is connected to nature through its use of soil. Almárcegui's *Construction Rubble* is connected to nature, but in a more abstract, less explicit way than the other two case studies. Unlike Eliasson's work, Almárcegui is not depicting a natural landscape, instead, this work deconstructs a sample of the urban landscape, in order to emphasis its connection to the natural world. With *Riverbed*, Eliasson created a faux-natural landscape in the exhibition space, constructing an experience of nature, within the museum space. Moreover, it is my contention that all three installation are New Materialist presentations of nature, as they emphasises the shared materiality of the world. This expansive awareness of the material environment will be explored further, in the context of place and site-specificity, in Chapter Two.

Chapter Two: The sites of the three case studies

This chapter will examine Indoor Land Art installations' relationship with place. These installations depart from Land Art's site-specificity, problematising this idea of the site. Based on Miwon Kwon's comprehension of site-specificity articulated in her texts *One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity* (1997) and *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2002), I argue that Indoor Land Art installations have a *discursive* relationship with a multitude of sites. Then, coming from a distinctly New Materialist perspective, I depart from Kwon, arguing that the expansive relationality of Indoor Land Art installations connection to many sites makes it possible for these works to be mobile (in the form of iteration or recreation) without the meaning being "destroyed."[101] Moreover, I contend that this mobility allows the work to evolve, developing new layers of meaning in different contexts. Furthermore, this interpretation of Indoor Land Art installation relationship with place, offers a new expansive way of thinking about site-specific artworks.

2.1 – Site-specificity

Indoor Land Art installations demonstrate an expansive understanding of the term 'site-specific.' Site-specific art first emerged in the wake of the minimalist art movement, in the late 1960s and early 1960s.[102] Initially, the *site*, in 'site-specific' art, was an actual location. Conversely, Indoor Land Art installations have a far more expansive relationship with a multitude of physical and conceptual sites. Miwon Kwon, in her texts on site-specificity, discusses the importance and evolution of art's relationship with place. Kwon describes early site-specific art as "establishing an inextricable, indivisible relationship between the work and its site, and demanded the physical presence of the viewer for the work's completion."[103] In these same texts, Kwon argues that the term site-specificity is in crisis. That today, the term site-specificity, is used as an umbrella term to encompass characteristic such as: site-sensitive, site-aware, site-related, and site-sensitive projects. Kwon attributes this confusion to the concepts inability to embrace complexity. The confusion present in contemporary discourse is a result of artists, academics and institutions trying to deal with the inherent limitations of

[101] "…to remove the work is to destroy the work."[Serra, letter to Donald Thacker, January 1, 1985, 38.]

[102] Kwon, "One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity," 85.

[103] Ibid., 86.

the term by all attempting to recalibrate our relationship with place and the critical capacity of location-specificity within the limitations of this term.[104]

Kwon breaks down the development of this concept into "the three paradigms of site specificity"[105]: (1) minimalist art's phenomenological understanding of place; (2) socio-institutional notion of institutional critique; and (3) a discursive understanding of contemporary practice. Kwon's presents her three paradigms of site-specificity following the development of site-specific artistic practices as somewhat chronological. However, these are not exclusionary definitions, often overlapping, operating simultaneously in a singular work.[106]

In this first paradigm, the artwork and the place of its installation are inextricably linked.[107] This phenomenological understanding of place is based on the site-specific art of the late-1960s and early-1970s.[108] American artist Richard Serra, associated with early site-specific art, stated that "to remove the work is to destroy the work."[109] By and large, Land Art works have a paradigm one relationship with site-specificity. In the second socio-institutional understanding of place, the site is formed by a border framework and informed by cultural, social, economic and political influences. The expansion of the site has continued in more recent cultural practices and can be understood within the third *discursive* paradigm of site-specific art.[110] Paradigm three understands site-specific art's relationship with place as a discursive construction. When describing paradigm three, Kwon stated that, "the distinguishing characteristic of today's site-oriented art is that way in which both the art work's relationship with the actuality of a location (as site) *and* the social conditions of the institutional frame (as site) are *subordinate* to a *discursively* determined site that is delineated as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate…this site is not a *pre*condition. Rather, it is *generated* by the work (often as 'content'), and then *verified* by its

[104] Davidts, "Miwon Kwon. One Place After Another."

[105] Kwon, "One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity," 95.

[106] Ibid., *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*, 43.

[107] Ibid., 11-12.

[108] "Emerging out of the lessons of minimalism, site-specific art was initially based in a phenomenological or experiential understanding of the site, defined primarily as an agglomeration of the actual physical attributes of a particular location (the size, the scale, texture, and dimensions of walls, ceilings, rooms; existing lighting conditions, topographical features, traffic patterns, seasonal characteristics of climate, etc.), with architecture serving as a foil for the art work in many instances." [Ibid., 3.]

[109] Serra, letter to Donald Thacker, January 1, 1985, 38.

[110] Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*, 16-18.

convergence with an existing discursive formation."[111] According to Kwon, third paradigm artworks prioritise engaging with discursive sites over the works' physical location and the socio-institutional notion of institutional critique. Moreover, paradigm one demonstrates that site-specificity was initially only considered the site of the art space; while contemporary iterations of site specific artworks have a more expansive relationship with a multitude of *sites* that together construct the works locational identity.

In her essay, *One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity*, Kwon argues that the homogeneity of locational differences, as a result of the commodifying and sterilising forces of the capitalist expansion, has disrupted site-specificity.[112] She posits that a discursive understanding of place is corrupted by these capitalist forces, which has turned artists into a supplier, rather than a creator, of an aesthetic service.[113] This position is reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's aura of the authentic argument, articulated in his 1936 essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, in which he claims that "even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: Its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be."[114] Benjamin argues that mechanical reproduction leads to a loss of the work's aura because the work is detached from its original state. Kwon argues that the contemporary mobilisation of site-specific artistic practices has led to "spatial indifferentiation."[115] Moreover, mobilisation is indicative of a works *unspecific* relationship with an homogenized site. As will be expanded upon in 2.2, all three Indoor Land Art installations – either through recreation or iteration – are mobile works engaging in a discursive relationship with place. Does this mean that these Indoor Land Art installations, by going from 'one place after another' are homogenized and the uniqueness of both the site and the work are lost? This chapter will analyse the sites' of the three case studies, demonstrating that Indoor Land Art installations have an expansive discursive understanding of place (including the sites of mobility) and resist homogenisation. This is because the meaning of Indoor Land Art installation is produced (in part) by the specific relationship between the work and the site; therefore, if the location of the work changes, the meaning

[111] Kwon, "One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity," 92.
[112] Ibid., 100-10.
[113] Ibid., 103.
[114] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 219.
[115] Kwon, "One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity," 8.

of the work changes, a dynamic that is innately resistant to homogenisation. Overall, this chapter will use Kwon's site-specificity framework but argue against her conclusion.

2.2 – The mobility of Indoor Land Art installations

All three case studies – through either iteration or re-creation – are itinerant works. De Maria's *The New York Earth Room* is the third iteration of his *Earth Room* series. Almárcegui's *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space* is a part of the on-going *Construction Rubble* installation series. Both De Maria and Almárcegui use the same formulaic method for each installation in their series. Eliasson's *Riverbed* (2014) is inspired by the physical sites of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark and Iceland's rocky landscape (with the work being comprised almost entirely of volcanic rock sourced from Iceland). Recently, from December 2019 to April 2020, Eliasson's *Riverbed* installation was recreated in the Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA) in Brisbane, Australia. Rather than this installation being adapted to fit the new display context, the GOMA exhibition space was shaped to reflect the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, and much effort went into mimicking the aesthetic qualities of the original installation. In 1990, the art historian and curator Susan Hapgood, when discussing site-specific art's new mobility, stated that "the once-popular term 'site-specific,' has come to mean 'moveable under the right circumstances'."[116] Evidently, it is not uncommon for 'site-specific' art to be mobilised; which is why it is important to consider the implications for this mobility beyond a blanket criticism. Indoor Land Art installations reject the notion that the mobility of site-specific art, to use the Richard Serra's word, "destroy[s]"[117] the work. Furthermore, the mobility of Indoor Land Art installations complicates their relationship with the *site*, as their location identity is expanded, now determined by a multitude of *sites.*

2.2.1 – The Site of *The New York Earth Room*

Chronologically, De Maria's *The New York Earth Room* (1977) sits somewhere between Kwon's first and second paradigm, however, I argue that this work can be understood as possessing a discursive relationship with place, in accordance with paradigm three (Fig.16). *The New York Earth Room*'s locational identity is formulated by a discursive array of internal,

[116] Hapgood, "Remaking Art History," 120.

[117] "To remove the work is to destroy the work." [Serra, letter to Donald Thacker, January 1, 1985, 38.]

external, and self-generated *sites*. It is the third iteration of De Maria's *Earth Room* series, as such, *The New York Earth Room* is influenced by the sites of the pervious *Earth Room* installations. This is because the ways De Maria choose to interact with this art space (i.e. installing tons of earth) was predetermined by his experiences with the previous works in the series. This iteration inextricably links *The New York Earth Room* to the phenomenological idea of place and the social institutional notions of critique at play in the first two versions.

As outlined in 2.1, Kwon's paradigms are not exclusionary, as such, characteristics of paradigm one and two can still be seen in works with a paradigm three relationship with the site, such as *The New York Earth Room*. In the late-1960's and early-1970's, site-specific art "gave itself up to its environmental context, being formally determined or directed by it."[118] The space the work was installed in was considered a part of the work, which is a rejection of the modernist idea of the gallery being a blank slate. *The New York Earth Room* is located in a 335m^2 apartment in SoHo, Manhattan. This location represents money, status, and exclusivity. This site works as a powerful framing device, elevating the otherwise banal materiality of the work, giving it an aura of significance. Outside the context of the site, *The New York Earth Room* would just be a pile of dirt.

De Maria did not specify where the earth in *The New York Earth Room* was excavated from, as such, the location of this unspecified site does not impact the work; however, I argue, that rather than the materiality of the work connecting it to a specific site – like Eliasson's use of Icelandic volcanic rock in *Riverbed* (2014) –, this work is connected to the abstract *site* of 'the Earth.' This *site* is so expansive, that it goes beyond a physical location, connecting the work to a concept. By understanding the work as connecting to the Earth itself, the reach of this work is radically expanded. As discussed in Chapter One, interpretations of *The New York Earth Room* have evolved over time – from relating to the concept of dematerialisation to being anachronistically connected to climate change. This discursive understanding of the relationship between art and place expands the works relationality to a field of knowledge that evolves with time, which, in turn, allows the work's meaning to evolve over time, making anachronistic reading of this work sensical.

[118] Kwon, "One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity," 86.

Site-specificity is a generative art form. *The New York Earth Room* occupies a unique position, as it was created in the late-1970s, but still exists today; when considering the work in a contemporary context, a multitude of discursive, non-material sites can be understood to be produced by the work. *The New York Earth Room* continues to create meaning because of its connection to a myriad of evolving *sites*. According to Kwon, discursive functionality considers public art's role in public memory.[119] As discussed in 1.3.1, this works unchanging, endurance has become integral to its meaning (even if it wasn't originally intended to be a permanent installation). This is an example of one of the many discursive site-specific meanings that have been produced by *The New York Earth Room* by the *site* of its contemporary context.

2.2.2 – The Site of *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space*

Lara Almárcegui's *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space* (2011) has a discursive relationship with place (Fig.17). This work has an interdependent relationship with the site of the TENT exhibition space. The TENT exhibition space informs the size and content of the piles of pulverised material. This work it a literal showcase of the material cost of the space, highlighting the materiality of the urban environment. This work is incomplete without the context of the site, because the meaning of this work is constructed through the dualistic relationship between the site and the work. Outside the relationship with this specific space, these piles would be indistinguishable from construction materials. However, this work, as understood as apart *Construction Rubble* series, manages to be 'mobile' without being "destroyed."[120] Each work in this formulaic series establishes a new interdependent relationship with each new site. Moreover, by understanding mobility as being achieved through iteration, it is possible for 'site-specific' art to be mobile without being destroyed.

Similar to *The New York Earth Room*'s relationship with the other works in the *Earth Room* series, *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space* is connected to the site of all previous works in the *Construction Rubble* series. This is because the inspiration for this work is not singularly informed by the TENT exhibition space; instead, the way this work interacts with this space is determined by the previous sites in the series. Furthermore, this makes the

[119] Kwon, "One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity," 87.

[120] "To remove the work is to destroy the work." [Serra, letter to Donald Thacker, January 1, 1985, 38.]

sites of all previous *Construction Rubble* installations co-actors in Almárcegui's *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space*, as they inform the conceptual and aesthetic character of this installation. Following this logic, the site of this work will be linked to any future iterations of the series.

In addition to the influence of physical sites, conceptual *sites* also inform the locational identity of the work. The subject matter of this work is intrinsically connected to Almárcegui's oeuvre. As discussed in 1.3.2, Almárcegui's work explores uncultivated and unurbanized sites, as a way of advocating for the preservation of wastelands. Urbanisation is understood in contrast to a previously uncultivated state. Her artistic interest is informed by external cultural, social, and political influences that make up the contemporary urban landscape. These sites – the site of the contemporary urban landscape and the site of the historically unurbanized landscape – inform Almárcegui's creative practice, which, by extension, influences the *Construction Rubble* series. Another site of considerable influence is the site of external influences on the viewer's experience of the work. Atmospheric influences – such as the number of people in the installation at one time, sound leakages from another work in nearby spaces, etc. – and personal influences – such as social, cultural, political views – are individual to each visitors and play a significant role in shaping the way each person experiences the work. For example, if the exhibition space is crowded, a visitor could interpret this work to be about urbanisation and the threat of over-population. Or, if a visitor has a cultural and political belief system that has led them to be environmentally conscious, it is likely they would read this work to align with their already pre-established beliefs, interpreting this work to be a comment on environmental issues. Overall, from this brief analysis, it is clear that *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space* is deeply interconnected with a multitude of discursive *sites*.

2.2.3 – The Site of *Riverbed*

In accordance with the aforementioned Indoor Land Art installations, Olafur Eliasson *Riverbed* (2014-2015) installation has a discursive relationship with place (Fig.21). It is in my contention that this work is connected to five main sites. Firstly, the site of the installation space. The space of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art and the surrounding coastal landscape inform both the physical and aesthetic quality of Eliasson's installation. Secondly, the site of nature. As discussed in 1.3.3, this installation is inspired by the natural landscape,

but is not referencing an actual location. This installation possesses the aesthetic qualities of a natural environment but is installed in the artificial shell of the exhibition space. This work relies on the audience projecting their previous experiences with nature onto this work, in order for this work to be understood as being akin to a natural environment. Thirdly, the site of Iceland. The rocks used in this installation are mostly volcanic rocks imported from Iceland. The entire surface of Iceland is made up of volcanic rock, as Iceland is one of the most volcanically active places in the world.[121] This site brings ideas of destruction and renewal to an otherwise controlled environment. Fourthly, the site of Eliasson's dual Danish/Icelandic heritage influenced his decision to create a work that draws influence from both Nordic countries. Fifthly, the site of experiential influences. As explored in 1.3.3, this work can be interpreted in a multitude of different ways. External factors – such as atmospheric, social, cultural and political influences – shape the audience's experience of the work. Overall, these five main sites construct the locational identity of *Riverbed* (2014-2015). This five-prong relationship with place is grounded in the works display context, as such, unlike Almárcegui's iterative mobility, *Riverbed's* locational identity changes significantly when re-created in another space.

In late-2019, a restaging of Eliasson's *Riverbed* was installed at the Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA) in Brisbane, Australia (Fig.25).[122] This second iteration of *Riverbed* has a more complicated relationship with place. The double story ceiling-height and the large scale of the GOMA is a starkly different space than the domestic scale of the modernist Louisiana Museum of Modern Art (Fig.26). This resulted in the scale of the work being significantly increased (to approximately 600m^2) to fit this much larger space.[123] To make it possible to install a flowing river in the middle of the installation, the GOMA recreate the sloped floor of the original space by propped up the installation on wood panel scaffolding (Fig.27).[124] Additionally – as it was not environmentally or economically reasonable to ship the 180 tons of Icelandic rock from the original installation (to Australia from Denmark) – none of the materials from the first installation were included in the remake. According to the GOMA, they put a lot of effort in trying to source local stones that matched the aesthetic look of the volcanic Icelandic stones

[121] ICELANDIC INSTITUTE OF NATURAL HISTORY, "Rocks."
[122] Rose, "OUTSIDE IN: BEHIND THE SCENES OF 'RIVERBED' BY OLAFUR ELIASSON."
[123] Ibid.
[124] QAGOMA, "Water/ Watch 'Riverbed' come to life."

used in the Demark installation.[125] The rocks and stones in the GOMA installation were sourced from around Australia and the Asia Pacific region,[126] achieving a somewhat similar aesthetic quality. However, with the inclusion of more warm-tone brown rocks, the monochromic grey of the first installations was not achieved (Fig.28 & Fig.29). From this analysis, I argue that the *site* that informed the stylization of *Riverbed* (2019-2020) is the Louisiana Museum of Art, with the QAGOMA exhibition space being used, more or less, as a space to be filled.

Fig.25: Olafur Eliasson, *Riverbed installed at the Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia* (with visitors), 2019-2020, Asia-Pacific sourced rocks, gravel, water. © Olafur Eliasson. Photo: Natasha Harth.

Fig.26: Olafur Eliasson, *Riverbed* (detail view), 2014-2015, Icelandic rocks, gravel, water, at The Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark. © Olafur Eliasson. Photo: Anders Sune Berg.

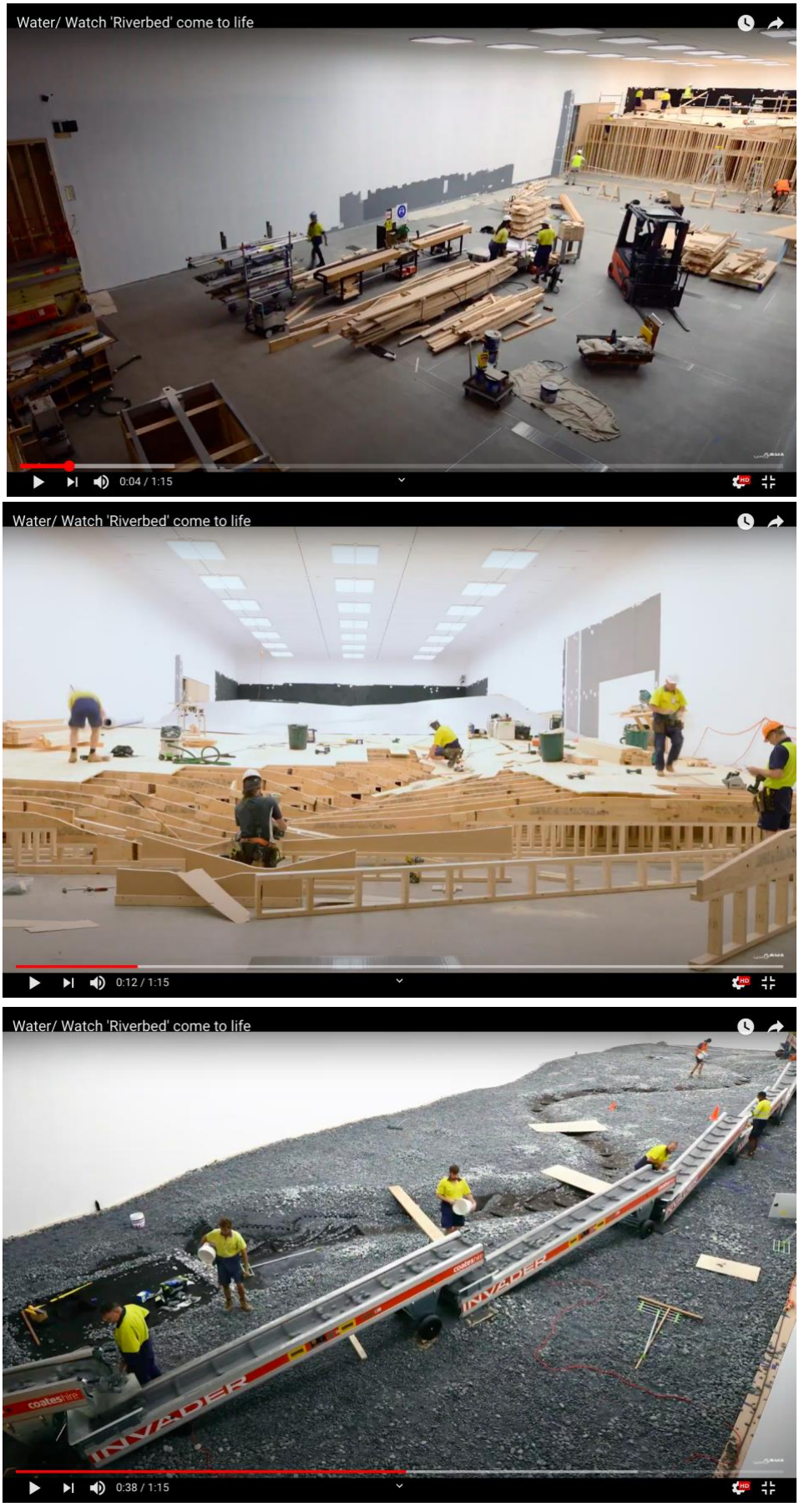

Fig.27: Three screenshots of the YouTube video "Water/Watch 'Riverbed' come to life", which is a 1m 15sec time lapse video of the construction of *Riverbed,* 2019-2020, at the Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia.

Fig.28: Olafur Eliasson, *Riverbed* installed at the Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia (installation view), 2019-2020. © Olafur Eliasson. Photo: Natasha Harth/QAGOMA.

Fig.29: Olafur Eliasson, *Riverbed* (installation view), 2014-2015, at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark. © Olafur Eliasson. Photo: Anders Sune Berg.

The wider-exhibition context and the social and political climate of late-2019 and early-2020 Australia significantly influenced the meaning of *Riverbed* (2019-2020). This installation was removed from the Danish coast, and recreated over 15,500 km away, in the middle of a blistering Australia summer during the worst bushfire season on record, colloquially known as the 'Black Summer.'[127] The second iteration of *Riverbed* was a part of the larger exhibition 'Water.' Chris Saines, Director of the GOMA, stated that "'Water' examined the significance of one of life's most vital elements and addressed some of the major environmental and social challenges faced by the world today."[128] The meaning of *Riverbed* (2019-2020) is constructed by social and political *sites* of the display context, in addition to the physical site, exhibition context, and the site of the original installation. The original installation referenced nature, but did not explicitly engage in a political message or environmental activism. Conversely, the second iteration, because of the work's relationship with a different set of discursive sites, gained levels of social and political meaning that made this work far more explicitly political in comparison. This analysis demonstrates that the locational identity of *Riverbed* (2014-2015) and *Riverbed* (2019-2020) are not homogenous; conversely, the mobility of *Riverbed* opened up the work to new spatial relationships and new layers of meaning.

2.3 – The site-specificity of Indoor Land Art installations

The New York Earth Room, *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space*, and *Riverbed* all have an expansive relationship with a multitude of different sites. That, contrary to Kwon's argument, the mobility of site-specific works does not lead to homogenisation. Contrariwise, mobility adds layers of meaning to the work. Moreover, iteration further expands Indoor Land Art installations' discursive relationship with the *site*. As every connection to place is a construction, these connections can be constructed in a way that makes the work adaptable in different contexts. Indoor Land Art installations' discursive relationship with place expands the work's relationality by allowing the work to be influenced by many *sites*. This more

[127] The 2019-2020 Australian bushfire season burnt an estimated 186,000km^2 (an area over four and half times the size of The Netherlands), emitted 308 million tonnes of CO_2, destroyed nearly 6,000 building, killed 33 people, and killed over one billion animals (resulting in the presumed extinction of several species). These fires started in June 2019 and on the 4th of March all fires had either been extinguished or contained to a degree where the fires were no longer considered a danger to life. [Lisa Richards, *et al.* "2019–20 Australian bushfires—frequently asked questions: a quick guide."]

[128] QAGOMA, "'WATER' OPENS AT GOMA," (Media Release, December 6, 2019).

expansive comprehension of Kwon's discursive sites is influenced by New Materialism's expansive relationship with the surrounding environment. It is my contention that this expansive understanding of place allows Indoor Land Art installations to engage deeply with social and political issues. Chapter Three will explore the social function of Indoor Land Art installations by examining the performativity of the case studies.

Chapter Three: The social and political influence of performativity

This chapter will explore the performativity of Indoor Land Art installations. In order to evaluate the performativity of the case studies, this chapter will establish a framework of performativity. Firstly, I will briefly explore the history of the term. Secondly, focusing on Ernst Van Alphen's (*1958) understanding of performativity outlined in his book *Art in Mind: How Contemporary Images Shape Thought* (2005), I will examine the persuasive power of performative art. Thirdly, inspired by Van Alphen's phenomenological comprehension of the embodied effects of performativity, but departing from his framework, I outline my own framework of performativity based in New Materialism. This performativity framework will then be made operational in the three case studies. Overall, this chapter will assert that the performativity of Indoor Land Art installations impacts the receiver on an embodied level, which allows these works to engage with, and potentially impact, contemporary social and political issues.

3.1 – Performativity

'Performativity' and 'performative' are popular terms in the contemporary art lexicon, both widely used and colloquially vague, employed to describe the relationship between artistic influence and the receiver's reactive thoughts and actions.[129] The term 'performative' was coined by John L. Austin (1911-1980), a philosopher of language, in 1955 to described 'performative utterances' during his William James lectures at Harvard University, which led to the 1962 publication of the book *How to Do Things with Words*. 'Performative utterances' are understood as words that change the social reality of what they are describing. An example of a performative utterance is the western tradition of brides and grooms saying "I do" during a wedding ceremony to seal their union. Austin chose the root word 'perform' because "it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is a performing of an action."[130] It triggers people to do something, to act. By acknowledging the performative quality of language, Austin was attempting to overcome a purely descriptive understanding of languages' function.

[129] Isabella, "Accessing Art in the 4th Dimension."
[130] Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, 6

The term performativity has evolved significantly since its inception. In 2000, the American literary critic Jonathan Culler (*1944), in the article "Philosophy and Literature: The Fortunes of the Performative," traced the evolution of performativity from Austin in the 1950s until 2000.[131] In 1980, the Algerian-French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) expanded the meaning of performativity with his deconstructive theory. Derrida discussed the term 'performativity' in terms of cultural agency, positing that certain utterances effect culture at large.[132] In 1990, Judith Butler (*1956) reconceptualised performativity in terms of gender in her seminal text *Gender Trouble*. Butler conceived of gender as something one *does*, rather than something someone *is*; that gender is an inherently performative act.[133] Butler's gender-focused theory added further nuance to performativity, extending the term so that in addition to language, matter and the body are now considered a part of the performative domain.[134] This conception of performativity considers the social processes of meaning-making by incorporating the role of the individual in the production of performative actions. When applied to art, the reception of the work is key to understanding it as performative.

Dutch literary scholar Ernst Van Alphen, in his book *Art in Mind*, understands art as a performative event that has the power to shape thought and influence social actions. For Van Alphen, art is a performative event in the mind of the viewer, which leads to his overarching thesis statement "art thinks."[135] Van Alphen's conception of performativity is based in French philosopher and art historian Hubert Damisch's argument that painting is a form of thought. In *The Origin of Perspective* (1987), Damisch argues that linear perspective has allowed artists to make 'statements' with their paintings, and that, therefore, painting has the capacity to function as a mode of thought.[136] Whereas his statement applied exclusively to early modern oil paintings, Van Alphen expands Damisch's claim, by arguing that, in fact, all art thinks. However, I argue, that Damisch's dramatic declaration that art has the power to think, is a form of anthropomorphism enabled by poetic license. While this statement attributes agency to art, he fails to prove said agency. Van Alphen builds upon Damisch's argument, offering no critical reflection on this attribution of agency, asserting that art is a form of critical

[131] Culler, "Philosophy and Literature," 48-67.
[132] Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," 1-23.
[133] Isabella, "Accessing Art in the 4th Dimension."
[134] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 13-16.
[135] Van Alphen, *Art in Mind*, xv.
[136] Damisch, *The Origin of Perspective*, 446.

understanding that actively reflects society, which allows the viewer to rethink cultural meaning; hence, art affects thought.

The chapter "Playing the Holocaust" in *Art in Mind* demonstrates art's critical capacity by examining works of art that intersect Holocaust iconography with play. One of the examples he uses is Zbigniew Libera's *LEGO Concentration Camp Set* (Fig.30). This work suggests you can build your own concentration camp out of LEGO blocks. This work, by linking the historical reality of the Holocaust with the innocence of play, arouses the question "What is the function of play in the Holocaust?"[137] This question directly concerns contemporary social practices. Van Alphen posits that this work examines the role of the Holocaust in contemporary practices of remembrance and education. Through this example, he argues that art frames history by strongly intervening in common social practices that the viewer is regularly involved in. Overall, Van Alphen posits that art is a form of critical understanding and art's performative quality is in its ability to affect social action.[138] Furthermore, from my reading of Van Alphen's text, performativity is the way art transfers this critique to the receiver, which (may) result in social action/change.

Fig.30: Zbigniew Libera, *Lego Concentration Camp / Lego* (originally *Obóz koncentracyjny*), 1996, box with Lego bricks. © Zbigniew Libera. Photo: courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

[137] Van Alphen, *Art in Mind*, 183.
[138] Ibid., 1-20.

While Van Alphen theory is applicable to the aforementioned example, does the overarching thesis statement "art thinks" hold up to critical enquiry?[139] The major issue I have with Van Alphen's argument is the attribution of thought to the art object. As discussed in 1.2, from a New Materialist perspective the materiality of Indoor Land Art installation can be understood as having a communicative power, in the way the work modulates the viewers movements in the space. The materiality of the work influences the viewer's experience of the work; however, this influence is not prescriptive, merely directive. Van Alphen's statement "art thinks" goes beyond this, by asserting art has critical agency. I assert that a more accurate summation of Van Alphen's argument would be: 'art has the performative potential to provoke questions that challenge the status quo, which, in turn, could lead to social action and eventual change.' Furthermore, as the viewer is the one who has the thoughts and puts forth the questions which lead to supposed social change, the viewer has the agency, not the art object. Nevertheless, the connection Van Alphen establishes between performativity and social change and his expansive understanding of thought, are foundational to my understanding of performativity. Van Alphen reframes the idea of thinking to be not (only) intellectual, but expanding it to include one's body and imagination. He states that "…art influences thought on an embodied level, and it makes its influence visible, so that thought of any kind can no longer appear natural."[140] It is this embodied thinking, that operates outside purely-intellectual thought, that evokes a response from the receiver. Inspired by Van Alphen, this expansive understanding of embodied thought is central to my understanding of performativity.

My framework for performativity is built on Van Alphen's 'art thinks' argument, but with several nuanced modulations that differentiate mine and Van Alphen's comprehensions of performativity. If, like Van Alphen, I were to summarise my understanding of performativity with a small phrase, it would be 'art makes you think.' Using Van Alphen's expansive understanding of thought, the 'thinking' this phrase refers to is both intellectual and embodied. The *performative function* of art is understood to be the effect the experience of the work has on the mind and body of the viewer. By impacting the thoughts of the viewer, this work, in turn, influences the viewer's actions, which has the potential to impact social

[139] Van Alphen, *Art in Mind*, xv.
[140] Ibid., xix.

actions, that could cause social change. The *performative effect* of art is understood as the work's ability to have a social impact.

As outlined previously, a major issue I have with Van Alphen's argument is the implication that the art object has agency. My understanding of performativity assigns the agency of thought to the receiver (i.e. the audience of the work), rather than to the art object. The art object is understood, more or less, as stimuli. The subject matter of the work gives direction to the receiver's thoughts, but it is not prescriptive, as the interpretation and degree of influence of the stimuli is not ubiquitous. This is because the receiver's interpretation of this stimuli is subject to a plethora of environmental influences. Ergo, the *performative effect* of the work is dependent on the social and political climate at the time the *performative function* of the work is activated by the receiver and is dependent on the receivers baseline opinions and beliefs. Moreover, there can be no singular product of an artwork's performative influence.

3.2 – The Performativity of Indoor Land Art installations

Indoor Land Art installations have a dramatic performative character. Their grand-scale immerses the audience in the work, heightening the aesthetic experience of it. This immersion transforms viewing art from being a passive external experience into an engrossing event. It is this experiential quality that produces the *performative function* of Indoor Land Art installations. I maintain that the performative event of encountering these works ties the performativity with the materiality of the installations, which facilitates the work affecting the audience on both intellectual and embodied levels. This performativity has a lingering effect on the audience, reverberating in the minds of the receiver long after they have left the physical space of the installation.

De Maria's, Almárcegui's and Eliasson's Indoor Land Art installations are spaces for unconventional experience and reflection. These installations construct a situational reality, presenting everyday materials in an unorthodox manner, which provokes the audience to contemplate their everyday reality. They act as a catalyst for the audience to consider their own beliefs and priorities in alternative ways, which facilitates the creations of complex, nuanced meditations on a variety of larger social and political issues. Visiting *The New York Earth Room* is a multi-sensory experience of being in the presence of so much soil. De Maria has left much room for interpretation as he has never commented on the meaning of the

work or revealed the location where he sourced the soil from, resulting in the work being interpreted in a multitude of different ways. For example, in a 2019 *Artsy* article, Alina Cohen briefly argued that this work was about real estate,[141] while the caretaker of the work, Bill Dilworth, has connected this works to wider environmental issues, such as climate change.[142] Almárcegui's work *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space* is a matter-of-fact showcase of the materials used in the construction of the exhibition space. Engaging with this work is like becoming aware of something that is somehow both strangely familiar and not something you have ever actively focused on before. The performativity of this work is in its ability to reframe our normalisation of urbanisation. Eliasson's *Riverbed* blurs the line between nature and the manmade. This work has the potential to arouse questions that problematised the legitimacy of such categorical distinctions. For example: 'can nature be manmade?' or 'if all manmade spaces are constructed from materials derived from nature, why do we make a cultural distinction between these two categories?' Regardless of what specific questions the performativity of these works provoke, the direction of the *performative effect* of all three Indoor Land Art installations problematises the relationship between humans and nature.

Performativity impacts thinking on both an intellectual and an embodied way, which, I contend, helps people feel connected to larger social and political issues. The world is currently facing many challenges (global warming, the current coronavirus pandemic, etc.) and at times it can be hard to feel connected to a global community. It can be difficult to establish an emotional connection through data alone, which is why people can feel disconnected from and overwhelmed by large-scale issues. Performative installation art has the potential to connect us to these seemingly ungraspable issues, by going beyond intellectual thought. Through our senses, bodies *and* our minds, art can make us a *feel* connected to these larger issues. For example, with Eliasson's *Ice Watch* (2018) work he physically transported icebergs, that had broken off artic glaciers due to the effects of global warming, to an audience. It is widely known that the ice caps are melting, that huge chunks of ice break off glaciers and ice-shelves daily. However, it can be hard to relate to something that feels so removed from our everyday reality. Eliasson's work closes the gap between the audience and the melting polar ice caps, by giving people the opportunity to experience, in

[141] Cohen, "The Artist Whose Masterpiece Involved Filling an Apartment with 140 Tons of Dirt."
[142] Chayka, "The Unchanging, Ever Changing *Earth Room*."

real-time, what the ice caps melting *feels* like. This experience, while participating in environmental activism, provided a diverse group of people a shared experience. This work is political, but by being presented in a public forum where people are allowed to experience the work for themselves, he, arguably, manages to avoid partisan politics that plagues much activist art. I argue, that this is because *Ice Watch* is operating outside intellectual thinking, and instead provides the viewer with an experience, impacting them in an embodied way. Eliasson, when discussing the social power of art, stated that "I believe that one of the major responsibilities of artists — and the idea that artists have responsibilities may come as a surprise to some — is to help people not only get to know and understand something with their minds but also to feel it emotionally and physically."[143] This ability, to be both political and non-exclusionary, is the potential power of such performative art installations. Moreover, this idea, that art can act a bridge to connect human and non-human being, is demonstrative of a New Materialist understanding of the connectedness of all matter, which will be explored further in the following chapter on post-humanism.

The analysis of the performativity of Indoor Land Art installations, following the framework established in 3.1, argues that the performativity of the case studies extends the reach of these works beyond engaging with art world issues, allowing these installations to engage with and affect social and political issues. While there are many different ways the *performative effect* of these works can function, because of a multitude of influential variables, the *performative function* of these works offers a clear direction for these thoughts. Furthermore, as all three case studies are engaging with themes related to nature, are made of natural materials, and stem from the wider Land Art movements, it is logical that the 'real-world' issues these works evoke, are issues related to our relationship with nature. While the aesthetic experience of De Maria, Almárcegui, and Eliasson's works evoke ideas of nature, these works have a more passive, less direct, engagement with social and political issues, in comparison to works that actively engage with forms of activism. The relationship between Indoor Land Art installations and nature will be explored further in the Chapter Four.

[143] Eliasson, "Why art has the power to change the world."

Chapter Four: post-humanist representations of nature

In the previous chapters of this thesis, I have established that Indoor Land Art installations are physically, socially, and politically connected to nature through their materiality, relationship with discursive sites, and performativity. Building upon this foundation, in this final chapter I argue that Indoor Land Art installations can be understood as post-humanist representations of nature. Rosi Braidotti's theory of critical post-humanism as outlined in her texts *The Posthuman* (2013) and *Posthuman Knowledge* (2019) will be used a methodological framework.[144] Braidotti's critical post-humanism advocates for a monistic understanding of the universe, where the preservation of *zoe* ethics is central; these two concepts will be explored further in the body of this chapter. This anti-anthropocentric model positions the human as intertwined in a global bio-network.[145] Overall, this chapter asserts, that Indoor Land Art installations express a New Materialist relationship with nature, by positioning the human as indivisibly connected with the matter of the Earth.

4.1 – Critical post-humanism

Braidotti's post-humanism can be understood as an effort to reject individualism, in order to create an entirely new understanding of a non-unitary subject. The post-human subject is never an 'I', but always a 'we.'[146] Critical post-humanism is rooted in post-situationist, anti-universalist feminist and post-colonialist schools of thought, in the sense that these philosophical stands are concerned with understanding an individual subject's place in the structure of humanity as a whole.[147] In her post-humanist texts, Braidotti touches on a number of philosophical topics; however, for the purpose of my argument, I will be focusing on her post-anthropocentric monism. Following Spinoza, Braidotti advocates for a monistic understanding of the universe.[148] As explored in 1.2, monism is an ontology antithetical to dualism, which asserts that all existing things can be attributed to a single source.[149] New Materialist monism contends that all materials are made of the oneness of matter. A central theme that emerges in both of Braidotti's post-humanist texts, is a shift

[144] Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 12.
[145] Ibid., *Posthuman Knowledge*, 57.
[146] Ibid., 52.
[147] Ibid., *The Posthuman,* 57.
[148] Dolphijn and Van der Tuin, *New Materialism*, 14-15.
[149] Schaffer, "Monism."

towards *Zoe*-centric ethics. *Zoe* is the "dynamic, self-organising structure of life itself."[150] This can be understood as a shift towards an ethical model that values a not-specifically-human life-force, which decentralizes the human from ethical models, by advocating for ethical decisions that take into consideration the global bio-network. Braidotti's alternative interpretation of Spinoza argues that "…contemporary monism implies a notion of vital and self-organizing matter… as well as a non-human definition of Life as *zoe*, or a dynamic and generative force."[151] This post-human notion of monism empathetically recognises the importance of maintaining the habitability of the planet; as the Earth is the only known hospitable environment for all forms of *zoe*, this is a fundamentally unifying goal. This monistic understanding of the universe is foundational to critical post-humanism.

From this monistic perspective, Braidotti positions herself in opposition to anthropocentric worldviews. She contends that the label 'Anthropocene' perpetuates the idea that humans are a force divisible from nature. The term Anthropocene comes from the Greek words for human (*anthropos*) and new (*cene*). This term implicitly puts forth the argument that humanity is so powerful and impactful, that we are the defining geological force of the current epoch.[152] A foundational assumption of this term is that the human is divisible from nature, that we are a force outside of nature, with the power to change nature. The widespread use of the term Anthropocene is emblematic of the idea that humankind largely perceives itself as separate from nature. Furthermore, Braidotti argues that "[i]ndividualism is not an intrinsic part of 'human nature'… but rather a historically and culturally discursive formation."[153] Moreover, she reasons that the anthropocentric leanings of modern humanism has allowed for the development of civilisation and urbanisation that functionally isolates humanity from the "raw cosmic energy" of absolute reality.[154]

Braidotti proposes a three-phase post-anthropocentric model that places the preservation of *zoe* at the centre by re-inscribing the human within an interconnected global bio-network as an alternative to anthropocentrism. These three-phases are: "becoming-animal, becoming-earth, and becoming-machine."[155] *Becoming-animal* is an exploration of

[150] Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 80.
[151] Ibid., 86.
[152] Demos, *Against the Anthropocene*, 6-10.
[153] Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 24.
[154] Ibid., 55.
[155] Ibid., 66.

the discursive practices which allows *anthropos* to perceive itself as separate and above all other life-forms. She observes that the relationship between humans and non-human animals is fundamentally unequal because this relationality is understood comparative to humans, in a way that reaffirms human centrality.[156] The *becoming-earth* phase advocates for a unified, non-hierarchical planetary relationship which acknowledges our systematic interconnectedness with the Earth. It is worth noting, that this phase can be understood in opposition to anti-technologist perspectives.[157] The final section, *becoming-machine* is an attempt to move beyond symbolism. This phase is a push to understand the machine as beyond a metaphor for humanity, by conceiving of the machine as an object in its own right; by reimaging the relationship between man and machine, not as between products and consumers, but as two distinct and nonhierarchically ordered species. This new understanding would allow the post-human subject to function in an ever technologically-altered environment in a non-profit driven, experimental way. Braidotti asserts that "the point of the posthuman predicament is to rethink evolution in a non-deterministic but also post-anthropocentric manner."[158] The overall focus of these three-phases is on the process of humanity's post-human becoming. *Becoming-animal, becoming-earth,* and *becoming-machine* all question the categorical distinctions between humans and non-human others and draw attention to the dynamics of power[159] at play in society at large.

In *The Posthuman,* Braidotti points to contemporary environmentalism as a facet of society into which the reconfiguration towards a post-human subject is evident. She argues that contemporary environmentalism resituates humanity within nature, by valuing the habitability of the Earth's bio-network over the short-term goals of the human.[160] However, in public discourse concerning environmentalism, we often speak of 'disappearing nature' and how we must assume our role as the saviours of nature.[161] Such rhetoric problematically reasserts the idea of humans being divisible from nature. This false dichotomy produces a deep anxiety about the out of control destruction of the world around us. Braidotti argues

[156] Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 70-9.
[157] Ibid., 83-5.
[158] Ibid., 94.
[159] The notion of power Braidotti refers to is the Foucauldian idea that human beings are always encapsulated in the social order of power. [Ibid., 99, 115.; Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 92-8.]
[160] Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 48-69.
[161] Monbiot, "Our natural world is disappearing before our eyes. We have to save it."

that without fully internalizing the notion that we are a part of nature, we cannot fully comprehend that our mortality is tethered to our environment.[162] Furthering her point, the act of mankind destroying the planet can be seen as a form of cognitive dissonance. Critical post-humanism advocates for humans to engage with a heightened understanding of the self, humbling ourselves, in the acknowledgement that we are irrevocably intertwined with nature. When understanding humankind as a whole (inclusive of past, present and future generations), manmade natural catastrophes, that will change the habitability of the current Earth-system (like climate change), is a form of self-destruction. This looming threat of self-annihilation is a direct result of unchecked civilizational expansion based in a humanist misunderstanding of our relationship with the Earth.

4.2 – Post-human art

There are many schools of thought that fall under the term 'post-humanism'[163]; similarly, there are various disparate forms of art that have classified themselves, or can be classified, as 'post-human art.' Hence, it is important that I first pin-point what does, and what does not, fit my classification of post-humanist art. My comprehension of post-human art is a new comprehension of the term, based in New Materialist thought and Braidotti's post-humanist framework.

Several artistic interpretations of post-humanism have interpreted this term quite literally, employing science and technology to create a new and improved 'human 2.0.' For example, Natasha Vita-More (*1950), known as the first female transhumanist philosopher, is most well known for her *Primo Posthuman* (1997) work (Fig.31). This work explores Vita-More's vision of the technologically enhanced humans of the future, featuring colour changing skin and self-regenerating organs.[164] Vita-More posits that "[p]osthumans will be almost entirely augmented – human minds in artificial, eternally upgraded bodies."[165] The Australian performance artist Stelarc's (*1946) oeuvre explores avenues of extending the capabilities of the human body by experimenting with his own body. Stelarc's longest, and still on-going work, is his *Ear on Arm* (2006-) performance. As shown in Fig.32, the artist has

[162] Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 115.

[163] Ferrando, "Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms," 26.

[164] Gomall, "Posthuman Performance, A Feminist Intervention."

[165] Vita-More *quoted in* Wilson, "Droid Rage."

a third ear implanted in his left forearm. This ear was created out of stem cells in a lab and surgically inserted into his arm. Stelarc plans to get a remote listening device implanted in his arm, in order to share what his third ear hears 24/7 on the internet; [166] if successful, he would be able to classify himself as a cyborg. Stelarc argues that humans have reached an evolutionary plateau and the next step of our evolution is through mechanical assimilation.[167] This work experiments with the relationship between technology and the human body.

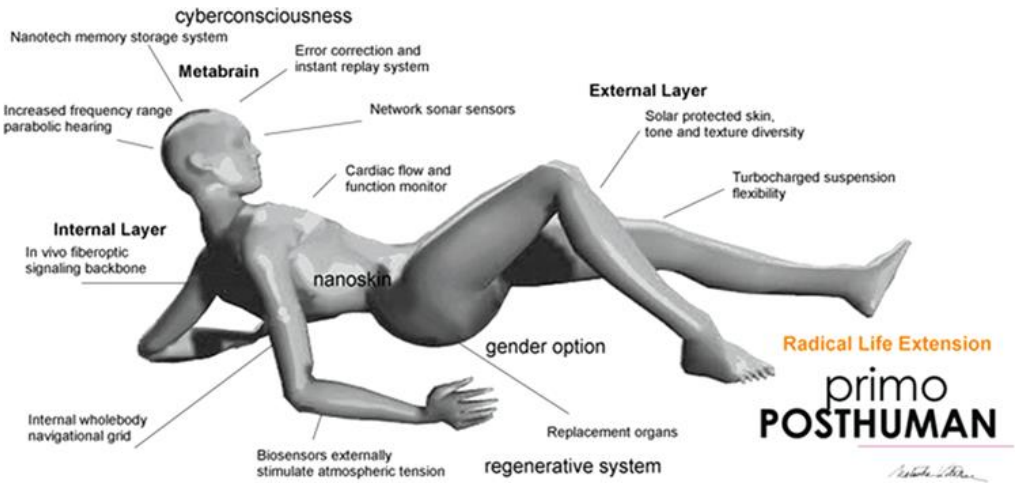

Fig. 31: Natasha Vita-More, *Primo Posthuman*, 1997. © Natasha Vita-More.

Fig.32: Stelarc, *Ear on Arm*, 2006-ongoing, bio-engineering performance piece. © 2020 STELARC. Photo: Nina Sellars.

[166] Stelarc, "Ear on Arm."

[167] "It is no longer a matter of perpetuating the human species by reproduction, but of enhancing the individual by redesigning. What is significant is no longer male-female intercourse but human-machine interface. The body is obsolete." [Stelarc, "Prosthetics, Robotics and Remote Existence: Postevolutionary Strategies," 591–595.]

Both *Primo Posthuman* and *Ear on Arm* explore physical manifestations of creating the post-human subject. This literal interpretation is in opposition to Braidotti's post-humanist theory. She advocates for an expansion of thought, that recalibrates our understanding of humankind's place in the eco-system, and not the creation of a literal new form of the human subject. Art that attempts to improve the human body by modifying natural anatomy with technological enhancements does not fit my definition of post-human art. This is because these works do not question the legitimacy of humans being at the centre of the current power-paradigm; conversely, they perpetuate it. Both *Primo Posthuman* and *Ear on Arm* implicitly accept the centrality of humans in the bio-network by advocating for the replacement of 'human 1.0' with 'human 2.0.' This change only works to reaffirm the centrality of humans (but in a modified state). These works are the antithesis of the critical post-human framework outlined in 4.1, as they suggest that man can further separate himself from the evolutionary limits of the human body through technology. My understanding of post-human art can be understood in opposition to these examples. Furthermore, I assert, that post-humanism is a way to interpret art, rather than a specific genre of art.

Art that expresses a sense of critical post-humanism, is art that recalibrates the viewer into nature. For example, I assert that the work *Time Landscape* (1978-) by the American Land artist Alan Sonfist (*1946) can be interpreted as an expression of critical post-humanism. *Time Landscape* is a 'restored' 92m^2 patch of land in Manhattan, New York (Fig.33). Sonfist restored this land by planting vegetation native to New York City area in pre-colonial times. Sonfist's intention was to create a natural memorial to the native condition of the land, akin to a war memorial. Prior to urbanisation, the island of Manhattan was a lush forest. The small green spaces now dotted through the city, in the form of parks and private gardens, are completely disconnected from the ecological history of Manhattan.[168] The materiality of this work's performativity challenges the viewer's understanding of what they consider to be nature; as the juxtaposition between contemporary New York City, and this small restored patch of land, questions the authenticity of the very environment they inhabit. Similar to Almárcegui's work, Sonfist uses materiality to de-normalised the normalised. This work acts as a bridge to this history; by shifting the viewer's perspective from that of a casual on-looker, to the seventeenth-century European settlers who colonised this land, to the native Americans who

[168] Public Art Fund, "Alan Sonfist: Time Landscape."

cultivated it before them, and to the expansive idea of the forest itself, outside of its relationship with humans.[169] This shift allows the viewer to step out of a human-centric position and to view history from the perspective of nature. The extent to which this work is understood as post-humanist is more about what is expected of the audience, than the artist's presentation of the work. Post-humanist art aims to provoke discussion, rather than act as a prescriptive monologue recited to each visitor. Sonfist's work is not a literal approximation of the post-human figure and does not prescriptively advocate for change. *Time Landscape* offers the audience the opportunity to reflect on the ecological heritage of Manhattan, momentarily separating themselves from their human-centric worldview.

Fig.33: Alan Sonfist, *Time Landscape,* 1978-present, vegetation native to pre-colonial Manhattan island, on block of uncultivated land in Manhattan, New York. © Public Art Fund.

4.3 – Post-humanist analysis of Indoor Land Art installations

In *The New York Earth Room* (Fig.16), De Maria relocates soil into the very human location of an apartment, challenging the idea that this space is exclusively for humans. As discussed in 2.2.1, because the location the soil was excavated from remains anonymous, one of the many discursive sites this work relates to is the concept of 'the Earth.' When examined

[169] Kordic, Godward and Martinique, "Posthumanism and Contemporary Art."

through a critical post-human lens, this work can be interpreted as decentring the viewer ('the human') by centring the soil ('the Earth'), inverting the typical power dynamics of this dichotomy. This inversion of spatial power relations draws attention to a subconscious power structure at play in society. This work acts as a catalyst for making unconscious social and cultural power dynamics conscious for the receiver.

Almárcegui's work (Fig. 17) has conceptual parallels with Sonfist's *Time Landscape*, as both of these works use their materiality to de-normalise socially accepted norms. *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space* enters into the power dynamics of architecture through its scale, then breaks down the architecture of the surrounding environment to its material components. The piles of pulverized material, juxtaposed with the installation space, highlights the cyclic pattern of construction and destruction necessitated by contemporary economic models of perpetual-development, endlessly using the finite resources of the Earth to create temporary human structures. This installation, as understood in the context of Almárcegui's oeuvre, maintains that non-cultivated land should be valued outside the terms of potential cultivation.

Furthermore, breaking-down this work through a New Materialist, post-humanist lens, Almárcegui's installation can be understood as highlighting how 'man-made' materials are processed forms of 'natural' materials. For example: two of the eight pulverised piles of materials in her installation are glass and concrete. Glass is made from liquid sand. Sand is created when rock breaks down from eroding, a process, that dependant on the type of rock and the conditions, takes thousands to millions of years. The basic components of concrete are water, an aggregate (either rock, sand, or gravel), and cement (common materials used to create cement are: limestone, shell, and chalk, combined with materials like clay, sand, slate, iron ore, etc.). This in-depth material analysis demonstrates that the categorical distinction between 'man-made' and 'natural' materials is a false dichotomy.

Of the three Indoor Land Art installations examined in this thesis, *Riverbed* (2014-2015) is the most explicitly connected to nature (Fig.21). While this work is an artificial construction, completely divorced from any natural-site, the aesthetic qualities and materiality of this work conjures up the idea of nature. The materiality of *Riverbed* weaves the idea of nature and technological representations of nature into an unbreakable continuum of co-existing, inter-reliance. As discussed in Chapter One, to view *Riverbed* is to

have an embodied experience of being *with* the work. This is because, in order to see the work, you walk through it, both living and performing said experience. This phenomenological experience temporarily breaks down the barriers between what is human, what is technology, and what is nature. Deactivating these categorical distinctions, re-balancing anthropocentric power dynamics, and conveying a sense of post-human becoming. In this work, art is as much an agent in the material field as the human.

A critical post-human understanding of the world requires that dominant humanist-based dichotomies, anthropocentrism, and the perception of oneself within the global bio-network be subverted. As established in the previous chapters, Indoor Land Art installations are experiential works that prioritise embodied engagement *with* the work, demonstrate an expansive New Materialist connection to a multitude of discursive sites, and have a *performative effect* on the viewer. I contend that these characteristics make Indoor Land Art installations an ideal medium for this post-human subversion. This is because, these installations performatively challenge the viewer's perception of their position in the Earth's bio-network, by literally and figurately de-centring the human. This de-centring experience acts as a catalyst for making conscious the power dynamics at play between humans and nature. *The New York Earth Room* challenges the idea that apartments are spaces exclusively for humans. This inversion of power makes conscious the unconscious undercurrents of social power that structure human perception of nature. In the context of Almarcegui's oeuvre, *Construction Rubble of TENT's Central Space* advocates for valuing uncultivated land outside the human-centric lens of commodification. Likewise, an in-depth material analysis of *Construction Rubble* challenges the distinction between 'man-made' and 'natural' materials; this demonstrates the entanglement of 'man-made' environments and nature, which questions the legitimacy of such categorical distinctions. *Riverbed* problematises the idea of nature by blurring the lines between man-made and nature. Which again, draws attention to mankind's perceived separation from nature and challenges said perception. Moreover, all three case studies demonstrate a sense of critical post-humanism in the way they challenge and recalibrate the viewer's perception of the self in relation to nature. In all, by looking at Indoor Land Art installations through the lens of Braidotti's critical post-humanism, the viewer is offered an alternative perspective on the position of the human within the universe, which, in turn, offers them a new way of being in the world.

Conclusion

From the outset, this thesis problematized the idea of nature. The question at the core of this research concerns the relationship between Indoor Land Art installations and contemporary perceptions of nature. The three Indoor Land Art installations examined in this thesis, materialise the notion that all nature is ubiquitously impacted by humanity, problematising the idea that nature is (or should be) understood as separable from the human. These works demonstrate a New Materialist awareness, by connecting to the world around them. Indoor Land Art installations challenge the dominate preconception that humans are at the centre of the global bio-network, by functioning as immersive experiences that recalibrate the human within the matter of the universe. This recalibration offers a glimpse at a new way of being *with* nature.

In Chapter One, I examined the experience of Indoor Land Art installation. I argued that Indoor Land Art installations depart from Land Art's expression of dematerialisation (which led to a dependence on photography) by functioning as situational experiences, where the meaning of the work is constructed through the viewer's experience *with* the work. The materiality of these works have agency, in the way they make the viewer's body move through space, dictating the way they interact with the space; these works demonstrated a New Materialist heighten awareness of their environment. Chapter Two discusses Indoor Land Art installations connection to many discursive sites. This more expansive comprehension of Kwon's discursive sites is based in a New Materialist understanding of the vitality of matter. It is my contention that, through an expansive understanding of the site, itinerant Indoor Land Art installations resist homogenization; conversely, mobility adds layers of contextual meaning to these works. In Chapter Three, I propose a new phenomenological understanding of performativity. I assert that Indoor Land Art installations impact the viewer on an embodied level, producing a heightened *performative effect*. This *performative effect* has the potential to have social and political effects. Building on the understanding of Indoor Land Art installations established in the three previous chapters, Chapter Four established a new post-human art framework, asserting that Indoor Land Art installations can be understood as post-humanist representations of nature. This is because these works recalibrate the human by interconnecting the post-human subject within the materiality of

the world. This New Materialist, post-humanist understanding of the relationship between the viewer and Indoor Land Art installations demonstrates a new way of being in the world.

This new way of being challenges our relationship with nature. But what is the larger social and political impact of this recalibration? How can these perceptual changes lead to environmental action? While Chapter Three of this thesis explores the social and political influence of the performativity of Indoor Land Art installation, I propose that this research should be explored further through eco-criticism. In order to shed further light on the relationship between Indoor Land Art installations and the environment. Additionally, while New Materialist thought is an undercurrent throughout this thesis, I propose that further academic inquiry into the intersections between New Materialism and the post-human art framework established in 4.2 would be valuable, in order to gain further insight into the material interactions of post-human art with nature.

Figures

Figure 11: Olafur Eliasson, *Ice Watch London*, 2018. © Olafur Eliasson. Photo: Justin Sutcliffe. Olafur Eliasson Studio, accessed February 25, 2020, https://olafureliasson.net/archive/artwork/WEK109190/ice-watch.

Figure 12: Bruce Nauman, *Green Light Corridor*, 1970. © 2018 Bruce Nauman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, accessed April 27, 2020, https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/3166.

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Figure 23: Olafur Eliasson, *Riverbed* (with visitors), 2014-2015. © Olafur Eliasson. Photo: Iwan Baan. Olafur Eliasson Studio, accessed November 22, 2020. https://olafureliasson.net/archive/artwork/WEK108986/riverbed.

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