Now, more than one year into Trump’s maniacal presidency—a regime spreading military violence, producing ever greater wealth inequality, revoking social protections, health care provisions, and environmental regulations, led by a corrupt corporate brand—we’re living through a time when growing mass resistance to petrocapitalism is abetted by nature itself. Even while the season of disastrous hurricanes—Katia, Irma, and Jose pictured above—flooding, and wildfires have brought untold misery and costly infrastructure damage, it has revealed profound environmental injustice built on institutional racism and neocolonial domination. Whereas those least resourced—the impoverished in Houston, the exploited in Puerto Rico, the submerged in India, Bangladesh and Nepal—have suffered untold losses, the cynical maneuvers of disaster capitalism only seek to exploit catastrophe for further economic gain, opening up new territories (the Arctic Refuge, previously protected national parks, new colonies) for extractive sacrifice.

All this, as recent events reveal the fundamental illogic of conventional climate governance—exemplified recently at COP 23, the annual UN climate summit
delegates, especially those of developed nations, continue to insist on failed market-mechanisms and nonbinding agreements as priorities, with the US and its allies backing nuclear, coal, and gas as “climate solutions,” opening the way for further extreme forms of extraction such as fracking as the only way forward (as did even Jerry Brown, governor of California, at COP 23, to a reception of boos and protest). In other words, environmental wellbeing continues to be sacrificed on the alter of economic growth.

Meanwhile, in recent months, reports on our environmental situation have grown more dire. In New York Magazine, journalist David Wallace-Wells contemplated a worst-case scenario for our near future, assuming no interruption to greenhouse emissions. Gazing upon an unstoppable cascade of unimaginable tipping points, the result is an “uninhabitable Earth,” the end of civilization as we know it, within the next century. A future of heat death, with temperatures up 5-10 degrees Celsius; agricultural failure and drought; climate plagues released from millennia-old melting ice, bringing biological annihilation and destroying coastal cities with catastrophic sea-level rise of poisoned oceans; unbreathable polluted air; and perpetual war exacerbated by economic collapse (Fossil by Heartless Machine). The closest geological precedent is the Permian-Triassic mass extinction event that occurred 252 million years ago. The Great Dying occurred when 97 percent of all life on Earth expired owing to a carbon-warmed environment. By contrast, according to Wallace-Wells, “we are currently adding carbon to the atmosphere at a considerably faster rate; by most estimates, at least ten times faster. The rate is accelerating.” Accused of irresponsible alarmism and fact-stretching reporting, he has since doubled down, providing an annotated version of his essay to support its claims with scholarly research.
At the same time, multitudes are refusing to surrender to such scenarios, rescuing the future from its colonization by the Capitalocene. Operating under the slogans of *Respect Existence or Expect Resistance!*, thousands of environmental activists associated with *Ende Gelände* (Here and no further!) realized their most recent action against the fossil-fuel economy and in particular lignite coal mining—among the dirtiest and most polluting variety—this time against a mining operation in Weisweiler Germany near the meeting of COP 23. Based in their longstanding protest camp in the *Hambach forest*, and with thousands of allies, they form part of the network of worldwide grassroots resistance known as *Blockadia*, newly mapped in this *Environmental Justice Atlas*. As with efforts to halt the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock in the US, opposition against destructive oil production in Nigeria’s Niger delta, and environmental justice campaigns to force oil majors like Texaco, Chevron, and Petroecuador to clean up 60 billion liters of toxic waste and 650,000 barrels of oil spilled in the Amazon forest, the *Ende Gelände* action is the latest flashpoint in the shifting rift-zone between petrocapitalism and radical system change. Utilizing nonviolent direct action, activists successfully shut down the power station run by RWE (the German electric utilities company based in Essen, North Rhine-Westphalia) on the site of the biggest opencast mine and largest source of carbon emissions in Europe. Unleashing uncontainable creativity founded upon ethical conviction, *Ende Gelände* exemplifies the *arts of living otherwise* at a time of climate emergency. Refusing silent complicity within an untenable politico-economic system, their *creative ecologies of practice* have taken a path that, in joining experimental aesthetic forms to social justice convictions, bears enormous cosmopolitical ramifications and geontological stakes; indeed, with its and other such conflicts’ outcomes, we glimpse the shaping of our collective future.
Recent Activities and New Resources

• Revolution at 100: Culture and Politics at the Centenary of the October Revolution. As we approached October in the year 2017, we came upon the hundredth anniversary of the momentous event that was the Russian Revolution. Reconfiguring the fundamental conditions of modernity from a radically anti-capitalist perspective, the Revolution realized the potential for a collective form of life according to an emancipatory cultural-political horizon. The Revolution made the seemingly impossible suddenly inevitable, even as its incredible potentiality gradually diminished through its unfortunate unfoldings, ultimately rendering lived communism co-terminus with tyranny. Initiated by T.J. Demos, Amber Hickey, and Chessa Adsit-Morris, the Center for Creative Ecologies invited responses from leading cultural producers, artists, theorists, and activists, to a short questionnaire to see where radical imagination and practice exist in a contemporary world that has entered new levels of unsustainability and injustice. View the responses of Alyssa Battistoni, Ashley Dawson, Angela Dimitrakaki, John Foran, Marc Herbst, Brian Holmes, Josh MacPhee, MTL, Eric Selbin, Imre Szeman, McKenzie Wark, and Bo Zheng.

Eric Selbin, Imre Szeman, McKenzie Wark, and Bo Zheng.

• In this new essay contribution to the
writer, curator, and CCE affiliate Rachel Nelson provides a piercing analysis of Berlin-based artists Angela Melitopoulos and Angela Anderson’s *Unearthing Disaster I & II*, which document socio-environmental injustice in Greece’s Halkidiki Peninsula. During May-June 2017, the Institute of the Arts and Sciences of UC Santa Cruz presented *Unearthing Disaster I & II*, in coordination with the 2017 *Extraction* research project organized by A. Laurie Palmer and T.J. Demos of the CCE, which investigated decolonial visual cultures in the age of the capitalocene. Expertly curated by IAS founding director John Weber at Minnesota Street Project in San Francisco, the double video installation examines the destruction of a pristine, mountainous forest region in Northeastern Greece by a Canadian mining company, set within the anti-democratic conditions of EU-imposed Greek austerity, and considers what resistance means today to economic-environmental devastation.

• Meanwhile, T.J. Demos provides a related review of the mega-exhibition *documenta 14*, which took place this last summer in Kassel, Germany, and Athens, Greece, and featured Angela Melitopoulos’s *Crossings*, a large-sale video installation that in many ways follows up on the *Unearthing Disaster* project. Published in *Third Text*, the review also focuses on projects by Bourchra Khalili and Forensic Architecture, and asks what we learned from *documenta 14* about the failing state of democracy in Europe, the colonized and indebted situation of Greece, and the crisis of migration that might also offer hopeful possibilities for a paradigm shift, against all odds.

• Last May, Vienna-based artist Oliver Ressler visited UC Santa Cruz and the Center for Creative Ecologies, where he spoke about *Everything’s Coming Together While Everything’s Falling Apart*, his recent series of films from 2016-17. The three short pieces variously address international climate governance, its challenges and failures, and showcase select artist-activist grassroots movements seeking to transform the way we live and how society is organized on the most fundamental of levels. Ressler’s body of work—established over more than two decades of practice at the intersection of experimental art and radical politics—is exemplary for seeking out viable and collectively organized alternatives, the arts of living. Emerging from social movements, they oppose the disastrous course of petrocapitalism, a regime of corrupt political governance, growing economic inequality, and violent social injustice founded upon the destructive exploitation and transformation of environments including Earth’s natural systems. Read more…

• On October 23, 2017, the Center for Creative Ecologies co-sponsored the visit of Urban Theorist and
Urban?” Brenner argued that geographies of urbanization can no longer be conceptualized exclusively with reference to cities and metropolitan regions, with discreet separations between urban and rural zones, but today encompass relational pathways across the planetary sociospatial landscape, from Manhattan to the Tar Sands, from the Pearl River Delta to the Amazon, from the Nile River valley to the Pacific Ocean. Director of the Urban Theory Lab, and drawing on his forthcoming book *New Urban Spaces: Urban Theory and the Scale Question* (2018), Brenner offered cartographic resources to visualize the spread of cities deep into the hinterlands and seas, and revealed innovative ways to map the terrain of growing opposition to such extractive urbanism.

On October 18, 2017, the Center for Creative Ecologies co-sponsored a *Public Conversation with Donna Haraway and Starhawk: Magic, Figuration & Speculative Fiction as Calls to Action*, an event in collaboration with UCSC’s Science and Justice Research Center, bringing together Donna Haraway and Starhawk to dialogue around questions about their lifetimes of activism and writing in a conversation moderated by SJRC Visiting Scholar and organizer of the event, Joan Haran. Chessa Adsit-Morris provides a report-back on the event, which explored the convergences and divergences of Haraway’s and Starhawk’s work, particularly focusing on the role of imagination and science in shaping narratives of the near future.

Following up on the London-based launch of his book *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today* at the Showroom Gallery with forensic architect and spatial politics researcher Nabil Ahmed and decolonial film historian Ros Gray, T. J. Demos also presented the project on October 17 at UC Santa Cruz, sponsored by the Institute of the Arts and Sciences, where he appeared in conversation with multispecies anthropologist Anna Tsing and visual culture professor Jennifer González; and on November 2 at McNally Jackson Books in New York, joined by architect and Center for Spatial Research Director Laura Kurgan and cultural critic and activist Yates McKee. Demos will present his work further in an upcoming December trip to Europe, where he will be speaking at the University of Gothenburg, and Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, in Sweden; at the Research Center for Material Culture of the Volkenkunde Museum in Leiden (including giving a keynote at the Arts & Activism conference in Leiden as well); at the Vrije Universiteit’s Environmental Humanities Center, Amsterdam, in the Netherlands; and in Belgium at Brussels’ Kaaitheatre.
Amber Hickey recently co-curated an exhibition entitled *We’re All in This Together* at SUNY Purchase's Richard and Dolly Maass Gallery (September 27–November 10, 2017), exploring artists’ solidarity with progressive social movements. The exhibit uses prints created by members of the Justseeds Artists' Cooperative produced in solidarity with contemporary campaigns such as Standing Rock, Close Rikers, Black Lives Matter, the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, and the Wisconsin uprising, situated beside ephemera from New York's Interference Archive that reflect those social movements.

An interview Amber Hickey conducted with Inuk activist Aaju Peter is featured in the *Journal of Aesthetics & Protest*’s Issue #10 “Climate Atlas.” The interview highlights some of the key issues related to anti-seal hunt legislation and propaganda, and how these measures affect Inuit culture and traditions. Check out the digital version of the interview excerpt, or purchase a copy of the issue.

**Curriculum**

Ashley Dawson, *Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate* (London: Verso, 2017). “How will climate change affect our lives? Where will its impacts be most deeply felt? Are we doing enough to protect ourselves from the coming chaos? In *Extreme Cities*, Ashley Dawson argues that cities are ground zero for climate change, contributing the lion’s share of carbon to the atmosphere, while also laying on the frontlines of rising sea levels. Today, the majority of the world’s megacities are located in coastal zones, yet few of them are adequately prepared for the floods that will increasingly menace their shores. Instead, most continue to develop luxury waterfront condos for the elite and industrial facilities for corporations. These not only intensify carbon emissions, but also place coastal residents at greater risk when water levels rise.”

Subhankar Banerjee, “Drilling, Drilling, Everywhere...Will the Trump Administration Take Down the Arctic Refuge?,” *TomDispatch*, November 9, 2017. “While the United States is still recovering from the deaths, suffering, and devastation caused by extreme hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, as well as historically deadly wildfires across the West, Trump’s Department of the Interior is preparing a five-year strategic plan that never once mentions climate change or climate science. It does, however, plan to open previously protected public lands of all sorts to the increased exploitation of fossil fuels—and Arctic Alaska is
Alaska Oil and Gas Association conference in Anchorage earlier this year. The secretary was visiting as part of a presidential mandate to ‘prepare our country to be energy dominant’—even though the U.S. has been the largest global producer of oil and gas since 2012 and, in this era, has often been referred to as ‘Saudi America.’ What that energy-dominance slogan signals is nothing short of the beginning of a war against environmental conservation, justice, and the planet as a welcoming habitat for all life.” Banerjee also organized The Scholars for the Arctic Refuge letter of support, which was delivered on November 29 to the members of Congress—and to the media. In little more than one day nearly 250 scholars representing a wide range of disciplines from more than 80 institutions across US and Canada signed the letter. This movement will continue until the Arctic Refuge is protected.

• Banerjee also appeared on Democracy Now! on December 1, 2017, claiming: “The most beautiful way that the Arctic Refuge coastal plain as a nursing ground has been articulated by the indigenous Gwich’in people of northeast Alaska and northwest Canada—they call it in their Gwich’in language “lizhik Gwats’an Gwandaii Goodlit” which roughly translates to in English “the sacred place where life begins.” So to turn the sacred place where life begins into an oil field at a time of extreme global climate change—that George Monbiot calls climate breakdown—and in the midst of sixth extinction, is an epic crime.” Check out the full interview here.

• Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Déborah Danowski, The Ends of the World, trans. Rodrigo Guimaraes Nunes (London: Polity, 2017). “In this book, philosopher Déborah Danowski and anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro offer a bold overview and interpretation of these current discourses on ‘the end of the world’, reading them as thought experiments on the decline of the West's anthropological adventure—that is, as attempts, though not necessarily intentional ones, at inventing a mythology that is adequate to the present. This work has important implications for the future development of ecological practices and it will appeal to a broad audience interested in contemporary anthropology, philosophy, and environmentalism.”

• Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Heather Anne Swanson, Elaine Gan, and Nils Bubandt, ed., Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017). “As human-induced environmental change threatens multispecies livability, Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet puts forward a bold proposal: entangled histories, situated narratives, and thick descriptions offer urgent ‘arts of living.’ Included are essays by scholars in anthropology, ecology, science studies, art, literature, and bioinformatics who posit critical and creative tools for collaborative survival in a more-than-human Anthropocene.”

• Elias Vargas, Lubricated Substrates: Earth Infrastructures, Light, and the Oil Ontology (Oakland: B4BEL4B, 2017). “Lubricated Substrates is a solo exhibition with Elia Vargas featuring his expansive body of work investigating light as material, earth infrastructures, oil materialities, earth energies, and global transmissions. This culmination of his previous works and research will be presented alongside new works, including the US premiere of the video “Signal Works”.” The catalogue features “Oil as Entity and Event,” a short essay by T.J. Demos.
Culture (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2017). “Presenting a multifaceted analysis of the cultural, social, and political claims and assumptions that guide how we think and talk about oil, Petrocultures maps the complex and often contradictory ways in which oil has influenced the public’s imagination around the world. This collection of essays shows that oil’s vast network of social and historical narratives and the processes that enable its extraction are what characterize its importance, and that its circulation through this immense web of relations forms worldwide experiences and expectations. Contributors’ essays investigate the discourses surrounding oil in contemporary culture while advancing and configuring new ways to discuss the cultural ecosystem that it has created.”

Fred Magdoff and Chris Williams, Creating an Ecological Society: Towards a Revolutionary Transformation (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2017). “Because it aims squarely at replacing capitalism with an ecologically sound and socially just society, Creating an Ecological Society is filled with revolutionary hope. Fred Magdoff and Chris Williams, who have devoted their lives to activism, Marxist analysis, and ecological science, provide informed, fascinating accounts of how a new world can be created from the ashes of the old. Their book shows that it is possible to envision and create a society that is genuinely democratic, equitable, and ecologically sustainable. And possible—not one moment too soon—for society to change fundamentally and be brought into harmony with nature.”

“Contemporary art and ecology in East Asia,” special issue of Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art, vol. 3, No. 3 (2016), edited by Bo Zheng and Sohl Lee. “This special issue presents 13 scholarly articles selected from an open call, including an essay written by renowned artist Naoya Hatakeyama. We learned tremendously from these articles and from editing this special issue. The authors (living in Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Mainland China, South Korea, Japan, Spain, the UK, and the US) discuss a wide range of issues and provide insightful readings on multiple artists and art institutions’ practices. We as the editors are fully aware that this special issue constitutes only the first step in a long march, and any shortcomings presented by this issue may be seen as invitations for future efforts. In 2013, Third Text published a special issue edited by T. J. Demos titled ‘Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology’. It was groundbreaking, carefully attending to art practices beyond the West, but we noticed that East Asia was missing from the discussion. In the Third Text special issue and other writings on art and ecology to date, writers tend to leverage four reservoirs of ideas: scientific studies, theories by thinkers in the West, indigenous cosmologies, and climate change activism. As we turn to art in East Asia, and conduct ecological inquiries in East Asia, a fifth reservoir of ideas – East Asian thought – emerges as a critical anchoring point.”

Please send us suggestions for future curriculum additions!