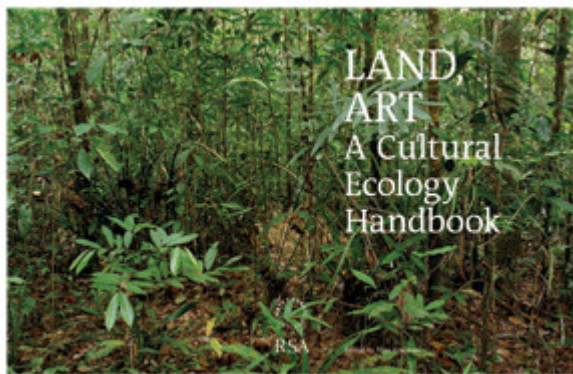


<http://www.worldchanging.com/archives//005341.html>

## LAND, ART: A Cultural Ecology Handbook

[Sarah Rich](#)

November 15, 2006 8:49 AM



I just took electronic delivery of a newly released anthology published by [The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce](#) (RSA) in London, entitled [LAND, ART: A Cultural Ecology Handbook](#). I learned about the book when I ran into Paul Schmelzer ([WC Twin Cities](#) blogger, among other things) at our Minneapolis book tour event last week. Paul, who frequently graces the pixels of [his own blog](#) with yet-undiscovered inspiration, is one of several dozen phenomenally brilliant writers and artists on the cast of *LAND, ART* contributors.

It is a truly rich compendium of text and artwork exploring ecology in the most cross-disciplinary sense, "as the study of the relationships between an individual and their cultural, social, economic and natural domains." The foreword, by Michaela Crimmin and Bronac Ferran, describes the original impetus and evolution of the book concept, which emerged from the Arts and Ecology program at the RSA:

*Developing the programme has involved travelling -- including to Ghana, Canada, and within Europe -- and playing out of all the contradictions of contemporary life. Whether noting felled trees north of Vancouver from a carbon-hungry airliner, polluted streams in Africa, then drought in Spain, social engineering in China that allows the West our cheap white goods, or the streetlights blazing across London, we were tut-tutting, guilty and complicit in the same second.*

A number of symposia, conferences and conversations from London to Guangdong Province and elsewhere on the globe brought out voices that speak to our morphing ideas of 'land' and 'nature' -- from the 1960s earth art movement and work like Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, all the way to today's land reclamation and remediation projects conceived as giant art installations, such those of the [Center for Land Use Interpretation](#) or Andrea Zittel's desert works.

The tone of the book ranges from scholarly to journalistic, featuring such revolutionary players as Wangari Maathai, Rirkrit Tiravanija, [Cameron Sinclair](#),

[Futurefarmers and Free Soil](#), Bruce Sterling, and Alfredo Jaar, who recently blew us away with his current installation at the [MCA Chicago](#). The subjects emerge from a vast geography and have been synthesized into an engaging flow by editor Max Andrews.

Suffice to say, I would like to get my hands on a physical copy (much as we prefer to preserve the forests), as my PDF scan left me wanting to sit with it for hours. Congratulations to everyone who helped put this together. It strikes me as an illustration of how a decades-old art movement has come into its 21st century skin and earned currency as a vehicle for cultural commentary today and into the future.