Commentary

Culture and the Climate Crisis: An Emotive Transformation of Openness Art as a Foundation for Reconceptualising the Anthropocene

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The climate crisis is not just a problem of the environment; it is a problem of the senses and a questioning of the ethics of existence. This paper critically reconceptualises the notion of the 'Anthropocene' and deconstructs the politics of universalist violence and ecological imbalance hidden within it. Based on this, it proposes a philosophical perspective that art should function not as a tool of reproduction but as a training ground for sensitivity. Focusing in particular on the concept of 'Openness Arts', it draws attention to the ways in which art relationally generates presence in entanglements with technology, the body, and non-human actors. Sensitivity is not just an emotional response, but an ethical capacity to dwell in the suffering of the other, and art should work as an exercise in sensitivity. This thesis uses examples from Forensic Architecture, Cooking Sections, and SUPERFLEX to flesh out the philosophical possibilities and practical sensibilities of such art, and proposes a transfer of ontological empathy to art education.

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1. Introduction; Re-asking Art at the Boundaries of Existence

Art was once thought to reproduce beauty and uplift the emotions. Today, however, art is increasingly being invoked as a site of reflection to re-question existence at the sensory edge of uncertainty. Particularly in the face of the collective climate crisis, we need to ask not what art can do, but how it can respond. This sensitivity is not a matter of technical solutions, but more of an ability to re-tune our senses, to feel present again, to dwell in relationship with the Other.

The concept of the ‘Anthropocene’ is the philosophical starting point of this discussion and the crux of the problem. The Anthropocene reveals the structural impact that anthropocentric perceptions of the world have had on the global environment, while masking the multi-layered structures of responsibility based on the fictional unity of ‘humanity in general’. As a result, we need to reconceptualise the Anthropocene, and art becomes a practical space for this conceptual reconfiguration.

This paper revolves around three questions. Firstly, what ontological shift does the concept of the Anthropocene require for art and culture? Secondly, how does the concept of sensitisation reposition the ethical and political thinking of art? Thirdly, in what ways does openness in art realise sensitisation, and what educational transferability does it hold? These three questions are developed by integrating the dimensions of philosophy and art, being and sensation, practice and education.

This research does not offer answers. Rather, it explores the courage to dwell in the absence of answers, the ability to be sensitive in delayed responses, and the quiet ethics that art can perform in all its contexts.

2. Theoretical Background; Reconceptualising the Anthropocene and the Philosophical Foundations of Openness Art

2.1. The Anthropocene: the origins of the concept and the politics of deconstruction

The ‘Anthropocene’, a concept proposed by Crutzen and Stoermer in the early 2000s, was born out of the recognition that human activity is causing changes so profound that they affect even geological strata. However, the concept soon faced intense criticism for its universalist premises. It was argued that the indiscriminate designation of ‘humanity’ was politically dangerous in that it invisibilised those responsible for industrialisation and concealed histories of ecological exploitation by colonial and capitalist systems. Jason Moore[1] has renamed it the ‘Capitalocene’, pointing out that the problem is not humans in general, but capitalist modes of production. Donna Haraway[2] proposes the ‘Chthulucene’ as an alternative to the Anthropocene, emphasising the complex entanglements between human and non-human, life and machine, past and future. The political reconfiguration of the concept of the Anthropocene presupposes an ethical turn in culture and art, and art is invoked as a site of liminal thought.

2.2. Ontology of Responsiveness: Sensation, Delay, and Relational Generation

Responsiveness is the new ethical language of art today. This concept goes beyond emotional identification or reflexive response and calls for thinking based on ontological relationality. Jacques Derrida's 'différance' points out that meaning and being are always delayed and unfinished. Sensitivity can also be understood not as an immediate response, but as the ability to remain silent while maintaining a distance from the other[3]. Jacques Rancière[4] describes this rearrangement of the senses as a 'politics of aesthetics', in which art is not merely a representation of the senses, but a political act that reconfigures 'what can be seen and said'. The ontology of sensibility means that art is a practice that reorganises the ethical order of the senses, which is directly in line with the cultural discourse of the post-anthropocene.

2.3. The aesthetic terrain of Openness Arts: postmedia and the expansion of the senses

Openness Arts is an attempt to move beyond traditional genre, medium, and institutionalised notions of art. It refers to an aesthetic practice in which technology and the body, data and emotion, human and non-human are intertwined, and is defined as relationally generative, process-driven, and sensorially disciplined, rather than a formalised notion of 'artwork'. Nicolas Bourriaud's relational aesthetics was a pioneering attempt to see art as the formation of social relationships, but today openness art is a much broader concept, asking how art can 'open up experience'[5]. Haraway's 'ethics of coexistence', Timothy Morton's 'dark ecology', and Hannah Landecker's intersection of life and information provide philosophical support for how openness art reorganises the layers of sensation from sensation, time, life, and code[6]. In the end, openness art is not an aesthetic, but an ontology, an ethical deployment of affect, not an emotion.

3. Analysing Practices; Affective Scenes of Openness Art

3.1. Forensic Architecture: Sensationalised Truth, Politics of Ethical Space and Time

Forensic Architecture[7] is a research and art collective based at Goldsmiths, University of London, that reconstructs events of state violence, refugee repression, and environmental degradation as 'sensible facts' through methods such as data visualisation, spatial modelling, and satellite image analysis. They don't just present evidence in a legal context, but transform it into an empathetically constructed arena of sensitivity. For example, their project to recreate the 2014 Gaza hospital bombing through 3D modelling

and survivor testimonies is an artistic manifestation of the ethical tension between the human sense of memory and the data of recording. They demonstrate that art is not just an aesthetic vehicle, but a sensitisation structure that constitutes public sensory justice.

3.2. Cooking Sections: The Sensation of Eating, the Taste of Ecology

Cooking Sections[8] is a practice-based arts collective that connects food and the environment, exploring the relationship between diet and ecological change around the world through their 'CLIMAVORE' project. Based on the destruction of fish farms on the Isle of Skye in Scotland, they worked with the local community to develop a shellfish-based diet instead of salmon, and expanded this into an art and food project that supplies restaurants, schools, and hospitals. Rather than simply cooking as art, the ecological practice of eating is transformed into a politics of sensitisation. This practice is an example of artistic citizenship based on 'sensory coexistence'.

3.3. SUPERFLEX: Interventions between playfulness and systemic disruption

The Danish-based art collective SUPERFLEX[9] performs playful yet critical work at the interface of social systems and ecosystems. 'Power Toilets' (2010) replicates the toilet structures used by the world's elite in public spaces, both comicising and codifying the physical forms of power. Vertical Migration (2021), meanwhile, was created on the occasion of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) and features a 3D animation of deep-sea swimming creatures, bringing the invisible rhythms of life and the environment into the 'urban visual sensibility'. They demonstrate that art can mediate between social structures and biodiversity, and can be a platform for sensitisation to imagine unstable coexistence.

3.4. Ecological sensitisation in micro-narratives: poetic practices as community art

More invisible and micro-level examples are also worth noting. Practices such as the 'plant storytelling' project carried out by local women's communities in Colombia or the 'wildflower gathering art class' in Gangwon Province, South Korea, are not large-scale structures or technology-based experiments, but they lay the groundwork for sensitisation through the fine-tuning of the senses. They expand the terrain of openness art in the form of 'caring responses' and 'invisible coexistence', and position it as an ethical art practice between survival and creation.

Together, these examples demonstrate that art is not just a means of expression or reflection, but can also be a place to reconfigure existence and train sensitivity. Openness art has the power to weave

together elements such as technology, food, memory, biodiversity, and locality to sensually ‘experience’ the transitions of the world. And this power is achieved not by impressing but by feeling, not by representation but by ‘delayed participation’.

4. Philosophical Reflections; The Delay of Art and Being, and the Temporality of Sensation

4.1. Induction is not instantaneous: Delayed Response and the Reconfiguration of Being

Responsive art in the age of climate crisis does not demand a quick response or an outburst of emotion. Rather, it is a ‘deferred response’, which is closely linked to Jacques Derrida's notion of ‘différance’. For Derrida, all meaning is not immediately arrived at, but is postponed, shaken, and constantly recontextualised. Art, too, requires an ethic of pausing, lingering, and waiting for the pain of the other to become familiar within one's own sensory structure, rather than reacting immediately to it. In suspending the moment of reaction, sensitivity becomes a device for deeper internalisation of reflection on existence.

4.2. The technological-bodily-inhuman triad: The polyphonic re-mediation of being

Today, the affective forms of openness art do not consist of human subjects alone. The body is extended through technology, and the senses are distributed through interaction with non-human actors. Donna Haraway's concept of the ‘companion species’ symbolises this rebalancing of ontology. In this ‘entanglement’, where humans and non-humans live together in mutual influence and interaction, art becomes not just a tool for expressing human emotions, but an act of revealing ontological entanglement. It is also a practice that moves the ‘ethics of cohabitation’ emphasised by feminist science and ecological philosophy to the level of art.

4.3. Ontology, not aesthetics: what does art generate?

The ultimate goal of affective art is not representation, but presencing. Martin Heidegger[10] once described art as a ‘field of presence’ that opens up the truth of being. These ideas are not just philosophical embellishments. Inductive art does not reproduce the world, but rather mediates the rhythms by which the world becomes newly ‘present’. Openness art allows us to tentatively listen to the wavering voices of the Other through sensitivity, and in doing so, re-tunes our sense of the reality we

inhabit. Art is a discipline of listening to these subtle tremors of being, and is itself a form of ethical response.

In the end, the art of sensitivity is an ontological attitude that goes beyond technological advancement or creative experimentation; it is an ontological attitude that, through the rhythm of quiet and attentive thought, quietly responds to the questions we are not asking today: what is it to be human, and how can we be together?

5. Discussion and Proposals; Social Responsibility and Educational Transference of Sensitive Arts

5.1. The art of responsiveness and ethical companionship

The climate crisis is not just an environmental issue, but a question that fundamentally challenges our sense of life and our collective way of being. In this context, art is no longer limited to the creation of aesthetic objects, but acquires the status of an 'emotional companion' that participates in the ethical response to the other and the co-construction of existence. Art becomes a practice that considers not only what to express, but how to coexist with whom. Sensitivity is not just a reaction, but the ability to dwell in the uncertainty of existence and the suffering of the other, which is at the heart of the social ethics of art. The art of sensitivity provides a direction for responsible art at all levels of society, from citizenship education and social art practice to cultural policy for ecological transition.

5.2. Educational expansion of openness art: the transition to sensitivity training

Arts education today needs to be redesigned beyond skill-based training to become a transitive education that re-aligns the senses and fosters ethical sensitivity. Openness Arts work at the heart of this transition. Through the art of openness, learners are transformed from being 'answer seekers' to 'beings who respond and stay with', which is an ontological shift in education. In this case, inductive transfer is not just the transfer of knowledge, but a creative experience that trains emotions, relationships, and invisible rhythms together. This heralds a new horizon for arts education that fosters 'sensory literacy' that goes beyond conventional subject knowledge and functions as an experimental arena where educational sensitivity and artistic ontology are combined.

5.3. Future challenges and calls for an ethical imagination

This study has critically reframed the concept of the Anthropocene and explored the ontological and practical possibilities of openness art. However, art is always in a movement of 'becoming', and this discussion should be understood not as a fixed conclusion, but as a nested pathway of affective thought. Future research could be expanded to include comparisons of climate arts policies across countries, the elaboration of educational models based on sensitisation training, and the possibility of artistic collaboration with non-human actors. And we can't help but ask. How far can art take us together? How far can we perceive the other through art, and how do we live after that perception? Art should touch the most delicate threads of human existence, not by touching, but by sensitising. Isn't that the quietest and most elegant responsibility that art has to offer us today?

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