Book Review

Sigurd Bergmann and Forrest Clingerman (eds.), *Arts, Religion, and the Environment: Exploring Nature's Texture* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2018), 220 pp., \$109.00 (hbk), ISBN: 978-90-04-35535-4.

In their Introduction, Bergmann and Clingerman argue that understanding of how humans and environments interact is not only in the realm of the sciences, but also philosophy, the social sciences, the arts, and theology. Because humans are both meaning-making and interpretive, the arts can be a conduit between environmental sciences and our daily activities, political movements, and economic systems. In light of this orientation to the arts, they and the book's contributing authors make a case for transdisciplinarity: breaking boundaries between academic and artistic disciplines with the goal of a holistic dialogue about the arts, humans, and the environment. Each contributing author works toward this goal in a range of multidisciplinary ways. The authors' focus on methodology as much as specific content is a strength of the book. It is also a good argument for using multiple disciplines, with their respective methodologies, to address questions of humanity's place in the world.

The book is divided into three sections, with two or three chapters in each section. Part One, 'Space', asks how humans can better understand space as a material entity. For theologian Bergmann, art is a medium for human awareness of the world. It helps humans understand nothing less than time and space. This is exemplified by a photograph of a forest taken at a specific time in a space that may be familiar or unfamiliar, depending on the viewer and the viewer's experiences in the world. It invites questions of continuous creation over time (the growth of a forest) and the presence of a creator (the photographer, and a Creator or creative beings, such as in Australian Aboriginal Dreamtime). Karolina Sobecka's chapter also takes on space, focusing on air. As an artist who uses the sciences in her work, she invites people to interact with the landscape in technology and data-driven ways, to help them see how they are a part of the atmosphere by visualizing it.

Part Two, 'Wondering', starts with Whitney Bauman's take on Ernst Haeckel's nineteenth-century argument for combining science and the arts: Haeckel emphasized naturalism in both disciplines. While Haeckel's thinking played into early twentieth-century eugenics movements, Bauman argues that we can revisit his ideas to think about connections between biological evolution and artistic creation, both emergent processes. Artist George Steinman reviews his collaboration with architects and construction workers in Bern as they created the new headquarters for Switzerland's primary wastewater treatment facility. In doing so, he emphasizes the place of dialogue, social relevance, and solidarity with other people and with nature in the arts. Environmental anthropologist Tim Ingold discusses how the sciences and the arts can evoke wonder through process and methodology: observing, building relationships,

studying fungi, and learning from people. In all of these, he writes, accounting for something (descriptive contextualizing of either mushrooms or people) reduces their power and effect on the world. Instead of seeking to understand and explain, we should be listening to and building knowledge in relationship with people.

Part Three, 'Connecting', features three chapters that run with the idea of knowledge through relationships. Reiko Goto and Tim Collins discuss their community-based and forest-based art work in Scotland's Black Wood forest, highlighting relationships between community involvement, artistic creative processes, experiences of the forest, and personal memory. Arto Haapala applies different perspectives on aesthetics to urban parks, particularly one in Helsinki: aesthetics as the relationship between people, nature, and semi-natural built environments. J. Sage Ebbwell's chapter features two artists who combine ideas of embodiment and the environment in their artworks; part of the chapter is an interview with one of these artists.

Forrest Clingerman's concluding chapter ties the disparate threads of the volume together, referring to both concepts and artwork from the different authors. He questions the meaning the arts have for people in seeking to understand our changing environment. We need this kind of imagination, he argues, to understand environmental sustainability, to see how we might imagine material and lived 'possibilities in order to offer new expectations for the future' (p. 202). Including the sciences, spirituality, the social sciences, philosophy, and the arts offers diverse ways to do that work of imagination.

This review, in its brevity, glosses the book's rich nuances and dense details. Grounded in the humanities in terms of writing styles, methods, and content, the authors explore ways people use the arts to realize and engage with the natural environment of which they are a part. The primary theme throughout this volume is the process of creation: 'emergent', 'creative', and 'evolving' are repeated words that take on different meanings for each author. The chapters work together in much the same way: an evolving conversation that the authors clearly intend to continue.

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