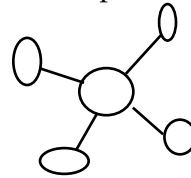


III: Down to Earth: Land Use

Chapter 1 Traces

1. On page 126, Lippard uses the term “land ethic.” What does she mean by this? What does the idea of a “land ethic” have to do with the list that follows (“gardens, plants, yards, gates. . .”)?
2. Lippard is concerned later in the paragraph with how different cultures use and shape the land differently, and then pulls in the notion that one person’s landscape of pleasure is another’s “miserable drudgery.” Keep this relatively simple model of difference and multiple perspectives in mind to help navigate the complex relationship to land that are to come in this section.
3. On the same page, she mentions a “collective sense of loss.” What does this mean? In what ways are we heirs to this feeling?
4. Notice the scope of this introductory section: land ethics, conflicting interests, ranchers, european colonists, native americans, change & progress, wastelands/wasted land, ecological history, jobs, wilderness, property. . . To gain a sense of the whole picture, draw yourself a map of Lucy Lippard’s opening thoughts on Land Use.



Chapter 2 Looking West

1. Lippard’s discussion of the West and ranching issues begins with a few general concepts: fences (symbol of property and domestication), the “two faces of nature,” the myth of the frontier (and of cowboys). . . see if you can trace these themes through the chapter.
2. How are the tensions between environmentalism, capitalism, and labor affected by the mythic sense of place that Lippard attaches to the West?
3. Right about the top of page 138, as Lippard gives us the glimmer of common ground between the ranchers and the environmentalists, I notice that there hasn’t been much talk about the influence of the arts in this section. If this absence is because really nothing has been done, why do you think it is so? What would the artist’s role be in the slight hope Lippard suggests (through the words of Wallace Stegner) at the end: “some sort of indigenous recognizable culture has been growing [which may] ‘resist and sometimes prevent the extractive frenzy that periodically attacks them’”?

Chapter 3 Landbase: Mountains and Arroyos, Grandmothers and Uncles

1. p.140 “...geographical features have served the people for centuries as indispensable mnemonic pegs on which to hang the moral teachings of their history.” What makes this important? How does this kind of connection to land vary from culture to culture? How does this variance affect other areas of life? Do you feel this way about land? What else, besides land, serves as “mnemonic pegs” for the “moral teachings of history”? How is history moral?
2. Near the top of p.14, Lippard discusses the “naturalization” of landscape. How is this a loss?
3. What does struggling against the was “space is ordered” mean?

4. Think of an example of how the ordering of space can serve privilege.
5. “As capitalism has eroded community and promoted “self-reliance” and alienation, the relationships between culture, land, and individual have changed.” How has capitalism done this? What is your experience of the alienation? How can we tell if our connections to land and culture have changed?
6. On page 147, Lippard mentions the problems associated with the appropriation of native spiritual practices and beliefs. She suggests that the “resurgence of mainstream interest in indigenous beliefs” has accompanied a concern for land use, perhaps even a concern or need for a sense of place, a sense of deep connection to land and even the local. Out of this seemingly valuable drive, appropriation has embarrassing and offensive consequences. What are some alternative means of finding or creating deep connections to place for non-indigenous peoples?

Chapter 4 Town and Country and the Futures of Man

1. p150: “...the Amish farmer’s mandate ‘to dress and keep the earth’ resists this emphasis on productivity and mechanism in favor of homeostasis.” I notice the word “resists” in this sentence. What are ways that artists can promote such effective, yet gentle[?], forms of resistance?
2. On page 151, Lippard quotes Gilbert Fite: “...since America is a democracy, it pretty much rules out radical solutions.” This notion, combined with the local (and strict) resistance of the Amish farmer, gives us more to chew on when we think about the nature of change in a multicentered society abounding in conflicting interests. What is an artist’s responsibility in the face of such complexity?
3. I can’t think of a less likely phrase than this: “[the town of Marfa] was changed forever when Minimalist sculptor Donald Judd...bought and old US Army fort on the outskirts of town.” hallelujah. Lippard condenses the story of Marfa’s revival. Take a moment and try to imagine what she’s describing. What happened there? Why?
4. On page 154: “The tension between divergent ideas about what is ugly and beautiful informs the debate on the American landscape.... Aesthetic preferences are created by tradition, necessity, academia, the mass media, and the real estate business.” What are the sources of your aesthetics preferences? How does this multicentered notion of beauty change the way we think about our work as artists?
5. On page 159, Lippard asks Wendell Berry’s question: “How can I be responsible for what I know?” I would add: “How can I know enough to be responsible?” How do such questions affect you as an artist?

Chapter 5 High Floods and Low Waters

1. In what ways have you been “made to serve as an instrument of production”?
2. “Nature cannot be controlled without the conquest of those people who cooperate with it.” Where do you see this happening today?
3. Consider how the various art activities described on page 167 have their greatest impact.
4. In your mind, what is “the role of aesthetics and imagery in social change”?
5. Consider how donning the robe of the “educator-artist” connects you to other disciplines, other causes, and consequently, how it changes your art.

Chapter 6 Death by Geography

1. Page 177: “However, too often, environmental artists fudge and generalize under the illusion that their work will have a broader impact on an ill-informed audience than it actually does.” What is Lippard referring to, and what alternatives is she advocating?
2. And: “Those using local contexts to make more general statements may reach a smaller but directly concerned audience.”

Chapter 7 Out the Picture Window

1. The quote from Deborah Bright opening this chapter says a great deal worthy of consideration. Notice the use of the words “transcends,” and “self-reflexive” to characterize the problems with traditional landscape photography. What does she mean?
2. 179-180: the “overburdened” beauty and the reinvention of beauty, and beauty as the “conveyor of difficult ideas.” Why so much talk about beauty?
3. What does it mean to “overwhelm place with image”? (p.180) Similarly: a “false image of unity is lifted from a fragmented world. No matter how aesthetically pleasing the results may be, places are boiled down into commodities.” How can this commodification be avoided?
4. On page 183, Lippard asks some critical questions for our work: “How do we bring such loving records together to heal the land and its communities? How can the contents of archives and exhibitions be made more broadly available to those whose fields and streams need help?
5. Imagine an exhibition of your work this year; imagine that it has fulfilled this ideal: “Knowledge of context is crucial. The viewer must be encouraged to look under the surface of the images to the place’s past, to the histories we are not taught in schools.” How did you do it?
6. “Art reclamation must stem from a real sense of informed urgency. It should take place only if art will improve rather than merely decorate or even comment on devastated sites, only if lessons can be learned that will have some impact on the future of local communities.” (p.183) And she goes on some more on p.184 about what seems to be required for art to be truly effective. This ideal is made unlikely by the understanding that “most artists want to make art, and they are reluctant to spend the immense amount of time and energy it takes for the community research. . . .” What will it take to create these kinds of artists? What other factors tend to keep artists from community work?
7. A good place to close: p.185, “By knowing the parts as well as the whole, by employing storytelling as a device with which to capture and inform their audiences, by using the artist’s eye in the public interest, they provide models and metaphoric solutions in the form of many brilliant art-life projects—which, unfortunately, almost never get executed. Is this because the world isn’t ready for artists who think across boundaries like this? Do they think too big for artists? Or is their approach flawed in some way that reflects the discipline or context of contemporary art itself, so long inbred and separated from common ground that its peculiarities are ineradicable?”
I hear a manifesto brewing.
p.192: “The idea of art creating community cultural realities challenges our usual notion of art—especially folk art—as a static reflection of societal values.”

