

# Arts + Social Impact Explorer Fact Sheet

## ARTS + ENVIRONMENT

### IMPACT POINTS

#### ARTS INSPIRE 1,000s TO ACTION

Anecdotal research shows that the use of the arts to illustrate complicated issues related to the environment can inspire thousands of people to take action who would not have otherwise.<sup>1</sup>

#### ARTS MAKE COMPLEX CONCEPTS ACCESSIBLE

Researchers have found that artist-created visualizations of complex scientific concepts not only help the general public better understand, they also help scientists understand the meaning of the data and devise next steps.<sup>2</sup>

#### VISUALS GRASPED 15X FASTER THAN TEXT

The way complex concepts like climate change and sustainability of the environment are presented is crucial in convincing people of the urgency. Using the arts can drastically increase comprehension, as visuals can be processed in as little as 13 milliseconds.<sup>3</sup>

#### ARTS INSPIRE CHANGE

The right art amplifies the effect of pro-environmental messaging. Participants who view an underwater photograph with related text about plastic pollution in the ocean are more likely to change their behavior than participants who only viewed the corresponding text.<sup>4</sup>

#### OVERVIEW

Environmental issues like climate change, conservation, and sea-level rise are important issues that have grabbed the public attention, but the difficulty in mustering the political will to implement necessary changes continues to hamper environmental efforts. Moreover, the concepts and details behind issues like climate change can make it hard for people to understand or activate.

For decades, artists have been at the forefront, using their work to inspire and educate the public to change their behaviors to be more sustainable, whether through writing, photography, community engagement, performance, or innovative partnerships with scientists and environmental advocates.

The arts have been shown to amplify the uptake of pro-environmental messaging and to improve the clarity and impact of the message. Visually representing complex concepts can help people better understand problem and how they can help. The arts also positively connect and empower people, inspiring advocates and documenting change.

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#### IMAGES TURN BYSTANDERS INTO ACTIVISTS

Complex issues like climate change run the risk of disheartening people into inaction with their messaging instead of inspiring them to be part of the movement. Research shows that integrating imagery of energy alternatives and personal actions to mitigate climate damage inspire feelings of success and empowerment in viewers.<sup>5</sup>



# EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE

## KlimaForum: The People's Climate Summit, Copenhagen, Denmark



This shadow event to the 2009 UN COP 15 Climate Change Summit gathered more than 50,000 people and featured 202 debates, 70

exhibitions, 43 films, 16 concerts, and 11 plays from all over the world—all of which served to encourage policymakers to uphold the Kyoto agreement.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Klimaforum09>

**image:** Signage at the KlimaForum in 2009: The People's Summit

## Water Bar, Minneapolis, MN



Using the serving of water from different parts of the state as a base from which to create connection, conversation, and partnership, Water

Bar aims to transform culture by re-centering water and ecology in public life and create social spaces through art that reveal the interdependence of ecology, place, community, and culture.

<https://www.water-bar.org>

[hello@water-bar.org](mailto:hello@water-bar.org)

**image:** People at Water Bar in Minneapolis. credit: water-bar.org.

## Land Art Generator Initiative, Seattle, WA



The goal of the Land Art Generator is to accelerate the transition to post-carbon economies by providing arts-based models of renewable energy

infrastructure that also add value, inspire, and educate. It conducts events, education, outreach, and research into emerging clean technologies and hosts a design competition.

<http://www.landartgenerator.org>

[laji@landartgenerator.org](mailto:laji@landartgenerator.org)

**image:** Land Art Generator solar mural artwork *La Monarca*, 2017. Artwork by Cruz Ortiz and art direction by Penelope Boyer. Image courtesy of the Land Art Generator Initiative.

## HighWaterLine, New York, NY



HighWaterLine is a community initiative that works in diverse disciplines to devise climate change resiliency at a local level. It conducts public art interventions to bring awareness to the effects of climate change and facilitates skill-sharing and community collaboration.

<http://www.highwaterline.org>

[eve@evemosher.com](mailto:eve@evemosher.com)

**image:** HighWaterLine | Bristol. Photograph courtesy of Eve Mosher

## Re-Locate Kivalina, Kivalina, AL



Re-Locate Kivalina is a collective of ethnographic artists and Inupiaq Alaska Natives working to help the Inupiaq people, some of the world's

first climate refugees, prepare for a community-led and culturally specific relocation. It is building artistic and web-based platforms to raise issues, support community discussion, encourage partnerships, and create spaces where the people in Kivalina can share original media about their lives.

<http://www.relocate-ak.org>

[relocateak@gmail.com](mailto:relocateak@gmail.com)

**image:** Aerial view of Kivalina which is threatened by rising sea levels in the Arctic

**top image:** Maasai Solar, 2016. Image courtesy of the Land Art Generator Initiative. Design collaboration between Ologresallie Maasai Women Artisans, LAGI, and Idia'Dega (Tereneh Mosley).

### REFERENCES

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2. Wilson, S. (2002). Information Arts: Intersections of Art, Science, and Technology. MIT Press: 37.
3. Jacobsen, E. Comment on "The 60,000 Fallacy." Retrieved 4 May 2018 from <https://policyviz.com/2015/09/17/the-60000-fallacy/>.
4. Turner, R. (2017). Environmental Art and Environmental Beliefs: the Case of Plastic Bag Pollution in Oceans. Economics Faculty Working Papers, 52. Retrieved 4 February 2018 from [http://commons.colgate.edu/econ\\_facschol/52](http://commons.colgate.edu/econ_facschol/52)
5. O'Neill, S., Boykoff, M., Niemeyer, S., & Day, S. (2013). On the use of imagery for climate change engagement [Electronic version]. Global Environmental Change 23(2), 413–421. Retrieved 4 February 2018 from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2012.11.006>



# READING LIST

## Arts. Environment. Sustainability. How Can Culture Make a Difference?



This research paper and report on a 2010 summit convened by the Asia-Europe Foundation provides a variety of examples of current and future practice at the arts/environment/sustainability intersection.

<http://www.asef.org/images/docs/Culture%20make%20a%20difference.pdf>  
*CultureMakeDifference.pdf*

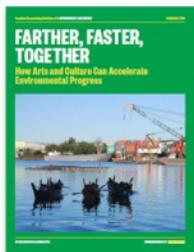
## Funding at the Intersection of Art and Environment



Grantmakers in the Arts commissioned this survey of arts funders who are supporting environment-related work. Some of the funders are actively pursuing this cross-sector work, while others are just beginning to consider whether and how to do this.

[giarts.org/article/funding-intersection-art-and-environment-field-scan26-3\\_Frasz.pdf](http://giarts.org/article/funding-intersection-art-and-environment-field-scan26-3_Frasz.pdf)

## Farther, Faster, Together: How Arts and Culture Can Accelerate Environmental Progress



This paper, the fourth in the Creative Placemaking Field Scan series from ArtPlace America, provides a literature review and project analysis of work currently happening at the intersection of the arts and environmental advocacy.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100696>

## The Arts and Environmental Sustainability: An International Overview



This report presents research across a wide range of national arts councils and ministries of culture, with the goal of broadening the understanding of environmental sustainability in connection to the arts, outlining current and future work, and encouraging collaboration and partnership to develop policies and programs related to culture and environmental sustainability.

<http://media.ifacca.org/files/DArt34b.pdf>  
*DArt34b3.pdf*

## Arts, the Environment, & Sustainability



This essay looks at changes in the environment and issues of sustainability and the role the arts may play in positively impacting those changes over the next 10 to 15 years. This article is an excerpt from the book *Arts & America: Arts, Culture, and the Future of American Communities*.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/90685>



# ORGANIZATIONS

## The Center for Sustainable Practice in the Arts (CSPA)

CSPA is a think tank that advocates for environmentally sustainable practices in the arts and culture. It engages in research initiatives, educates arts leaders on sustainability, and convenes industry leaders around the issues of sustainable arts practices.

[sustainablepractice.org/about-us/the-cspa](https://sustainablepractice.org/about-us/the-cspa)

## Center for Energy and Environmental Research in the Human Sciences (CENHS)

CENHS, a research center associated with Rice University, is designed to foster and incubate research on the energy/environment nexus across the arts, humanities, and sciences.

<http://www.culturesofenergy.com>

## ArtPlace America

Among ArtPlace's numerous focuses is the intersection of arts and environmental sustainability, with a particular focus on equity and displacement.

<http://www.artplaceamerica.org>

## Center for Art + Environment

The CA+E is an internationally recognized research center housed by the Nevada Museum of Art dedicated to supporting the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their environments. It also hosts an annual Art + Environment conference.

<https://www.nevadaart.org/ae/>

## The Asia-Europe Foundation

This wide-reaching, international foundation began commissioning research and case studies about arts and the environment in 2010. Now it has a robust set of publications, many exploring environmentally-related initiatives by cultural sectors in Asia, but which are applicable to similar issues anywhere.

<http://www.asef.org/projects/themes/culture/2381-linking-the-arts-to-environment-and-sustainable-development-issues>

top image: Water Bar in Minneapolis. credit: water-bar.org.

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



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[AMERICANSFORTHEARTS.ORG/SOCIALIMPACT](http://AMERICANSFORTHEARTS.ORG/SOCIALIMPACT)

Americans for the Arts developed this Fact Sheet as part of the Arts + Social Impact Explorer.

