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French and U.S. Artists' Responses to Climate Change, 2015-2018

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French and U.S. Artists' Responses to Climate Change, 2015-2018

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International Studies 465

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Abstract

Evaluating the link between art and politics, this paper traces the development of environmental art in France and the United States since the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) in 2015. First, this essay presents a methodology, a literature review, and the theories behind this subject. Then, to contextualize the art examples, this essay summarizes each state's governmental structure and cultural principles. Finally, referencing three French and three U.S. projects as well as related legislation, this essay discusses artists' varied forms of and successes with activism.

Introduction

Given the global dilemma climate change poses and the universality of art, artists can promote sustainability locally, nationally, and internationally. Able to both compliment and to stand alone from other forms of activism, art uniquely reaches diverse audiences. For instance, artists participated in the 2018 Rise for Climate March, yet their impact seems greater when they appeal to humanity. By presenting one aspect of climate change figuratively, artwork welcomes conversation whereas more direct activism may repel spectators. Accentuating the inclusive nature of art, Naziha Mestaoui's "1 Heart 1 Tree" projections on the Eiffel Tower connected trees to human pulses during the 21st Conference of the Parties' (COP 21). In this sense, artistic engagement mediates between public and governmental actors, shedding light on legislative decisions and indecisions to stimulate grassroots movements.

Since the COP 21 and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) established the Paris Accords in 2015,¹ artists have expanded their craft to valorize sustainability goals. Eight months after the accords entered into force, however, President Donald Trump announced the United States' withdrawal. This decision galvanized U.S. and French environmentalists who found artists increasingly among their ranks.² Differing in techniques and

¹ See the annex for a chronology of climate-change-related events discussed in this essay.

² For examples of environmental and artistic activism, other than the cases presented here, see Bob Keyes, "Sculptures of Deer in Portland Harbor Serve as Art and Advocacy," *Press Herald*, published 13 August 2018, accessed 14 September 2018, <https://www.pressherald.com/2018/08/13/waterfront-deer-installation-serves-as-art-and-advocacy/>; Alicia Eler Jean Bundy, "Art and Politics Can Be Companionable Bedfellows," *Anchorage Press*, published 9 August 2018, accessed 14 September 2018, https://www.anchoragepress.com/arts_and_entertainment/art-and-politics-can-be-companionable-bedfellows/article_960c7372-9b65-11e8-8bba-8bf33e8eabb2.html.

French works beyond those explored here include Tadao Ando's "4 Cubes to Contemplate Our Environment," displayed at Château La Coste (southern France), fall 2017, <https://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/multimedia/VideoStories/festival-of-japan/tadao-ando>; and the outdoor exposition "L'Industrie Magnifique [Magnificent

audacity, French and American artists depict climate change based on the politics and culture of their country. This engagement is necessary because, even with the UNFCCC monitoring progress, both democracies struggle to fulfill their commitments; business interests prevail over transnational ones and other issues concern voters. For the Paris Accords to be effective, therefore, individuals must recognize their significance in the international system, and it is by localizing climate change that artists render a global phenomenon a national priority.

Methodology

To evaluate this hypothesis, this essay outlines three art projects and related legislation from France and the U.S. With this small sample, this essay intends to describe artistic activism within the past three years. Although environmental artists practice outside of the Western Hemisphere, this essay emphasizes activity in Paris, New York, and San Francisco because these metropolises hosted parts of the accords. Focusing on recent and location-specific works, this essay examines the French artist Naziha Mestaoui who projected trees onto the Eiffel Tower in 2015; the French NGO *Alliance Mondaile* that sold art to support the 2017 Conference of the Parties (COP 23); and the French collective The Freaks that seeks to change individuals' behaviors. For the U.S. perspective, there is the Freedom to Breathe bus from San Francisco's Climate Action Summit as well as New York City's Audubon mural project and Climate Museum. While stylistically varied, these works do not represent all environmental art, nor do they include all climate issues because geography determines artists' themes; for example, Parisians are chiefly worried about carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions whereas New Yorkers fear rising sea levels. Other than location, politics influence artists' work, and this scope is limited to leading regional and international democracies. Connecting politics, climate, and art, this essay draws on existing literature in these fields.

Literature Review and International-Relations Theories

Current research addresses either Franco-American relations or environmental activism, thus leaving a gap between the two ideas. Art has been linked to climate change, as Malcom Miles' 2014 book *Eco-aesthetics* exemplifies.³ Further paralleling artistic engagement and international

Industry]" in Strasbourg, France from 3-18 May 2018 that demonstrated collaboration between artists, industries, and public conversations, <http://www.industriemagnifique.com/>.

³ Malcom Miles, *Eco-Aesthetics: Art, Literature and Architecture in a Period of Climate Change* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

relationships, *Change! Combining Analytical Approaches with Street Wisdom* (2015, ed. Gabriele Bammer) encourages individuals to advocate for sustainability.⁴ In one article, Dutch scholar Martinus Vink identified the holes in climate change education and art's potential to inspire more research.⁵ However, these publications appeared before the Paris Accords, and neither these nor other works connect artistic engagement to legislation. Even less studied is are Franco-American relations in terms of environmentalism; historical and economic exchanges are well documented, but the states' collaboration since the Paris Accords is primarily conveyed in popular media.

These sources nonetheless agree that climate change poses a transnational problem and that theories, like that of "soft power," explain how art turns abstract science into concrete experience. International relations concepts of "transnationalism" and "power" underlie each state's response to climate change and to art. Climate change affects everything from economics to humanitarianism. Mitigating such a pervasive issue thus requires transnational collaboration. According to American writer Randolph Bourne, transnationalism describes the weaving of national identities into one fabric and occurs when states and non-governmental organizations merge their resources.⁶ When joining forces, though, large groups should be wary of free riders, as American economist Mancur Olson warns in his collective action theory. By coasting alongside others' efforts, free riders hinder the group from achieving optimal public good.⁷ The UNFCCC's 2016 Paris Accords exemplify transnationalism and Olson's theory seeing as all states wanted to fight climate change. For the common interest, signers exchanged some sovereignty. An internal monopoly on the legitimate use of force and an external recognition of that force, sovereignty means that a state exercises the highest authority within its borders. Transnationalism complicates sovereignty because a collective agreement that influences domestic policy resembles encroachment. As the U.S. demonstrates, however, states willingly agreed to and can withdraw from the Paris Accords.

⁴ Gabriele Bammer, ed. *Change!: Combining Analytical Approaches with Street Wisdom* (Acton: ANU Press, 2015), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16wd0cc>.

⁵ Martinus J. Vink, "The role of knowledge and power in climate change adaptation governance: A systematic literature review," *Ecology and Society*, 18, no. 4 (December 2013), accessed 31 March 2018, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.etown.edu/stable/26269416>.

⁶ Randolph S. Bourne, "Trans-National America (1916)," in *Theories of Ethnicity*, ed. Werner Sollers (New York: University Press, 1996), 106.

⁷ See Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Goods* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

By investing a modicum of sovereignty in alliances, states gain power, which is the second theory related to artistic environmentalism. American political scientist Joseph Nye defined power as the potential to influence others.⁸ That potential can be measured in economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital, as French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu noted. While GDP and military spending are quantifiable or “hard power” factors, the remaining “soft power” aspects contribute immeasurably to a state’s influence. Cultural capital includes literature, paintings, music, and institutions whereas social capital emphasizes personal networks. Symbolic capital then combines those factors’ non-monetary value.⁹ Crucial for diffusing principles, art qualifies as soft-power capital and bolsters education, which is a long-term element of power. Having a lasting effect on influence, long-term elements contrast to fleeting, short-term elements such as military power. Specifically, environmental art informs the public by uniting science and experience. With its soft-power and informative values, environmental art complements the Paris Accords. Moreover, visual art reaches broader audiences than written publications do because images speak to universal contexts. To be an effective component of soft power, then, art must satisfy its national audience while portraying a theme that invites other states to participate. Climate-change themes help artists strike that balance as they depict an issue relevant to their communities that other places experience too. A mural of an endangered bird, for example, accentuates a species with which the immediate viewers are familiar while indicating broader ecological effects to which anyone could relate. To understand French and American environmental art, the next section outlines the Paris Accords and both states’ structures.

Paris Accords and Political Structures

When the COP 21 met in Le Bourget, near Paris, from November through December 2015, 195 states in unprecedented unity agreed to sustainability goals.¹⁰ These standards aim to keep the

⁸ See Joseph Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, New York: Basic Books, 1990; and Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs Books, 2004.

⁹ Jan Rehmann, “Pierre Bourdieu: ‘Field,’ ‘Habitus’ and ‘Symbolic Violence,’” in *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjection* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 226, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/etown-ebooks/reader.action?docID=1367792&ppg=5#>.

See also Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1986, 46-58.

¹⁰ Neither Syria nor Nicaragua signed the Paris Accords, although both have put it into accession, or conditional acceptance. “Paris Agreement,” *United Nations Treaty Collection*, accessed 14 August 2018, https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtsg_no=XXVII-7-d&chapter=27&clang=en.

global temperature rise “well below 2° Celsius above pre-industrial levels”¹¹ because, as the accords delineate, climate change threatens economies, societies, and humanity. Left unchecked, harsh weather patterns will destroy agriculture and induce climate-refugee crises. With these anxieties in mind, most signers ratified the accords within a year, and on 4 November 2016 the accords entered into force. By August 2017, the United States submitted its intent to withdrawal. However, Article 28 stipulates that the accords must be in effect for three years before withdrawals may be processed, and then another year must pass before that state is permanently excluded; therefore, the U.S. will officially leave the accords in November 2020.

Stating that the agreement imposed “draconian financial and economic burdens on our country,” President Trump justified his decision.¹² So that all states participate equally, the accords promise to invest \$100 billion in developing countries by 2020 and another yearly \$100 billion through 2025 when a new goal will be established.¹³ Developed countries will bear more of the cost, as the president recognized, but it is dispersed among the participants. He, whether intentionally or not, interpreted the Paris Accords’ collective action as contradicting Republican’s preference for small government and withdrew to uphold his party’s platform.¹⁴ His reaction also demonstrates Olson’s free-rider concept; among 195 other participants, the U.S. can avoid reforming. Therefore, the extent to which a state prioritizes the transnational problem of climate change determines that state’s commitment to sustainability. Even two permanent members of the UN Security Council who share republican values, the U.S. and France, diverge on climate issues due to their nuanced histories and ideologies.

The United States: Structure and Role

Individualism, capitalism, and democracy punctuate the United States’ interactions. Revolting against British colonialism, the U.S. established a then-radical democracy in 1776. This federal

¹¹ “The Paris Agreement,” *United Nations Climate Change*, accessed 11 August 2018, <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

¹² Chris Mooney, “Trump’s reasons for leaving the Paris climate agreement just don’t add up,” *The Washington Post*, published 1 June 2017, accessed 2 September 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/06/01/trumps-reasons-for-leaving-the-paris-climate-agreement-just-dont-add-up/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.202d07672e33.

¹³ “Paris Agreement,” *European Commission*, accessed 11 August 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/international/negotiations/paris_en.

¹⁴ While Republicans address the environment in their platform, they focus on extracting resources from the ground, which are the more polluting resources (coal, oil, etc: <https://www.gop.com/platform/americas-natural-resources/>).

republic is organized into a bicameral legislature, Congress, that balances the executive power, the president, and the judicial branch, headed by the Supreme Court, assures laws' constitutionality. Most political actors since the country's founding have been from one of two political parties, which are currently the Democrats and Republicans.¹⁵ Having feared partisanism, the Founding Fathers installed an electoral college to filter the popular vote from the elected president.¹⁶ Direct voting, however, occurs for all other positions. Federal, state, and local levels interact through a set of shared responsibilities. Although this dispersion sometimes causes domestic inconsistencies, the United States prevails on the international stage.

After the world wars devastated Europe, the nearly-unscathed U.S. rose to global dominance. Presently holding a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, participating in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and contributing to many more organizations, the United States is at the forefront of political, security, and economic exchanges. Further signifying interdependence, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) facilitates trade among the U.S., Mexico, and Canada. While most Americans identify their country's significance in international relations, some do not recognize that solving climate change requires cooperation. Other than the individualistic spirit, lobbies deter serious climate action. To receive funding for the next campaign, politicians tend to prioritize business over science. Yet, this phenomenon exists beyond the U.S.; all interdependent societies, including France, juggle diverse interests.

France: Structure and Role

Contrary to the United States, France belongs to the Old World and was a battle field during both world wars. Nevertheless, France, like the U.S., contributes to international relations as a permanent member of the UN Security Council who belongs to NATO and other organizations. France is also an important regional actor seeing as the European Union's parliament and the Council of Europe reside in Strasbourg. To this war-scarred state, collaboration means prosperity. Though some citizens resist integration, the current administration supports France's global leadership.

¹⁵ The Republican Party is also called the Grand Old Party (GOP)

¹⁶ The popular vote rarely diverges from the elected president, but exceptions include the 2016, 2000, 1888, and 1876 presidential elections. For more information see Stone, Maureen. *Proposals for Presidential Election Reform: National Popular Vote and Electoral College Options*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 2015. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCOhost (accessed 8 September 2018).

A semi-presidential republic, France has a dual executive, the president and the prime minister, with a bicameral parliament and a judicial branch. Today's Fifth Republic grew from several revolutions, which likewise shaped the dominant political blocks: socialists (left) and conservatives (right). To enact legislation, parties ally within their blocks and across the aisle. For example, President Emmanuel Macron formed a centrist party, *La République en Marche* (The Republic in Movement; LREM or EM), and selected Republican-aligned Édouard Philippe as prime minister for his legal knowledge. That choice reflects the common principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity that were defined in the Revolution of 1789. In general, extensive cultural programming reinforces shared history, perhaps making French people more aware of their community. While lobbyists do distract from those ideals, France's values and location at the heart of Europe facilitate its leadership in climate change action, as art examples elucidate.

Artistic Engagement for the Environment

Implementing policies to meet the sustainability goals has been the Paris Accords' greatest challenge. Without any legal ramifications to motivate them, states gradually address climate change. French and U.S. artists expose environmental degradation and hope to counteract lobbyists by mobilizing voters. This section explores French artists who have been inspired by COP meetings and presents artists operating in San Francisco and New York.

French Artwork and Legislation

French artist Naziha Mestaoui launched her work "1 Heart 1 Tree" during the COP 21, thus overtly linking environmental art and politics in her country. During the nights of 29 November through 4 December 2015, Mestaoui projected a virtual forest onto the Eiffel Tower. When a spectator logged onto the app, which tracked heartbeats, a new tree appeared on the monument. A self-described "citizen work of art," the campaign "synchronizes our heartbeats to collectively inspire our future"¹⁷ by planting a tree for each virtual one. To date, the project has committed to planting 53,431 trees.¹⁸ Unifying citizens, "1 Heart 1 Tree" partners with governmental actors like Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo and former-Environmental Minister Nicholas Hulot.¹⁹ Therefore, the project

¹⁷ "Plant a Tree," *1 Heart 1 Tree*, accessed 28 August 2018, <https://www.1heart1tree.org/cop21/contribute>.

¹⁸ "Live," *1 Heart 1 Tree*, accessed 25 March 2019, <https://www.1heart1tree.org/cop21/live>.

¹⁹ Hulot was the environmental minister of France from May 2017 until August 28, 2018. Before his service, he founded an environmental group and became known for his environmental journalism.

transforms notions about climate change into lived experiences, like planting a tree, while bridging lofty political structures and quotidian civilians.

A similar engagement from the artistic community appeared in 2017 when the *Alliance Mondaile* [Global Alliance] dedicated itself to supporting the COP 23. A business cooperative, the *Alliance Mondaile* sells environmental artwork to help fund the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which monitors climate science. Directed by sustainable economist Bruno Carrier and his business Plantation Bio, the *Alliance Mondaile* received the UNESCO “Art for the Climate” accreditation,²⁰ thus demonstrating ties between France’s artistic and economic communities as well as international organizations. With art and enterprise merging so neatly in this example, France appears to unite around climate change, especially when cultural capital is at play. As mentioned earlier, Pierre Bourdieu proposes that cultural capital, or creative outlets like sculptures and paintings, enables states to diffuse their principles. Culture supplements monetary capital so that smaller economies can compete internationally. France, whose GDP is the seventh largest in the world, has a greater incentive to merge cultural and financial capitals than does the U.S., which surpasses all other GDPs.²¹ While the *Alliance Mondaile* suggests that soft and hard power can coexist, policies tell a different story.

On the surface, French legislation prioritizes sustainability. Shortly after “1 Heart 1 Tree” and President Trump’s withdrawal from the Paris Accords, then-Environmental Minister Nicolas Hulot proposed to ban all petrol and diesel vehicles by 2040. This plan also urged an end to burning coal for electricity after 2022 and promised a four-billion-euro investment in energy efficiency.²² Paris has experienced intense pollution, often obliging citizens to carpool when CO₂ levels become excessive. During the summer of 2018, for example, Paris restricted car circulation and discounted public transportation tickets to encourage sustainable actions. For 3 euros 80, an inhabitant could use public transport infinitely, or he/she could opt for free, short-distance carpooling through

²⁰ “Art pour le climat [Art for the Climate],” *Art Majeur*, accessed 28 August 2018, <https://www.artmajeur.com/fr/art-classified/lart-pour-le-climat/99367>.

²¹ “World Economic Outlook Database,” *International Monetary Fund*, updated July 2018, accessed 11 November 2018, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2018/01/weodata/index.aspx>.

²² “France will ‘ban all petrol and diesel vehicles by 2040,” *Independent*, published 6 July 2017, accessed 28 August 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/france-petrol-diesel-ban-vehicles-cars-2040-a7826831.html>.

partners like BlaBlaLines, Clem', and Covoit'ici.²³ Despite this responsive legislation, Hulot resigned as Environmental Minister on 28 August 2018 because, he noted, these small steps would never reach the 2016 goals and pressure from lobbyists bars real advancement.²⁴ Reminding voters of their influence, Hulot's departure coincided with plans for a Rise for Climate March. On September 8, thousands of French people demonstrated their solidarity with Hulot and with the upcoming Climate Action Summit in California.²⁵ With pressure mounting, Paris committed to tripling bike usage as of 14 September and to having a monthly car-free Sunday starting on 7 October.²⁶ Although French artists hardly affected these changes, they joined the marchers and will continue to engage with individuals. By concentrating on the public conscious, art functions as an organic social movement. Art likewise shows individuals their implications in climate change, thus, in terms of Olson's collective action theory, turning potential free riders into collective-action participants.

A French art collective is striving for that individual-level action to spark greater national and industrial reforms. Having toured with Hulot's Foundation for Nature and Man (*Fondation pour la nature et l'homme*) after the Paris Accords were adopted, the French electro-rock band Shaka Ponk recognized the link between their daily choices and the sustainability goals.²⁷ Debuting on YouTube 3 July 2018, The Freaks launched amid automobile restrictions in Paris and about one year after President Trump resigned from the 2016 Accords. The members, therefore,

²³ "Covoiturage gratuit [Free carpooling]," *Ile de France*, published 6 August 2018, accessed 7 August 2018, <https://www.iledefrance.fr/toutes-les-actualites/pic-de-pollution-forfait-antipollution-covoiturage-gratuit>.

²⁴ "Nicholas Hulot annonce qu'il quitte le gouvernement [Nicholas Hulot announces that he's leaving the government]," *Le Monde*, published 28 August 2018, accessed 28 August 2018, https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2018/08/28/nicholas-hulot-annonce-qu-il-quitte-le-gouvernement_5346903_823448.html.

²⁵ Ganley, Elaine, Chris den Hond and Christopher Weber, "More than 18,000 March in Paris to Show Support for Climate Change Ahead of California Summit," *Associated Press*, published September 9, 2018, accessed September 9, 2018, <https://apnews.com/864b92585b184149b87baede1e8c8b16>.

²⁶ "Le Centre de Paris sera piéton un dimanche par mois [The center of Paris will be pedestrian one Sunday per month]," *Paris*, published 7 October 2018, accessed 8 October 2018, <https://www.paris.fr/actualites/le-centre-de-paris-sera-pieton-un-dimanche-par-mois-6098>; Geert de Clercq, "France Wants to Triple Bike Use with Better Cycle Lanes," published 14 September 2018, accessed 15 September 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-bicycles/france-wants-to-triple-bike-use-with-better-cycle-lanes-idUSKCN1LU24H>.

²⁷ Fondation pour la nature et l'homme [FNH ; Foundation for Nature and Man], "Le Groupe Shaka Ponk, avec le Soutien de la FNH, lance The Freaks : Le 1^{er} collectif d'artistes et de personnalités engagés pour la planète ! [The band Shaka Ponk, supported by the FNH launches The Freaks: The first collective of artists and celebrities engaged for the planet]," *Fondation pour la nature et l'homme*, published 27 June 2018, accessed 13 October 2018, <http://www.fondation-nature-homme.org/et-si-les-artistes-sengageaient-pour-la-planete-puis-incitaient-leurs-fans-faire-de-meme/>.

want to effectuate change beyond legislation. Rooted in the principle that individuals, as consumers and voters, drive society, The Freaks identify thirty behaviors that when widely adopted will shift consumption in favor of sustainability. As a group of artists and celebrities, The Freaks employ soft-power capital, their names and fame, to build a network that will obligate hard-power forces, the government and industries, to follow. U.S. artists are similarly frustrated with President Trump's withdrawal and target individuals to motivate larger climate action.

U.S. Artwork and Legislation

Organized to pursue the Paris Accords despite President Trump's withdrawal, the California Climate Action Summit united entrepreneurs, politicians, scientists, and civilians from all continents between 12 and 14 September 2018.²⁸ With one hundred of these actors committed to carbon neutrality among other sustainability efforts, the summit's efficacy will be judged in time since, like the Paris Accords, the only consequence is social rejection. However, programs related to the summit continue to take place and convey hope that the goals will be achieved. A tour bus emblazoned with the slogan "freedom to breathe" travels the U.S. showcasing environmental artwork and promoting climate action.²⁹ Although the medium seems contradictory to the purpose, the bus and the artists are sensitive to political action. Rather than sparking new legislation, they validate nascent policies, which could inspire further regulations. Evolving from private to public spheres is possible, as a mural project in New York demonstrates.

Following a 2014 report from the Audubon Society, street artists in Upper Manhattan have endeavored to paint murals of endangered birds. According to the study, climate change threatens 314 of 588 North American bird species. As weather patterns intensify, birds are forced to alter their migration patterns. If they cannot adapt, the birds will become extinct. Given John James Audubon's creative talent and passion for birds, his society and artists from his former neighborhood started partnering in 2016 and will paint murals for each of the 314 endangered species.³⁰ Even though the project aims to build public awareness, as artist Avi Gitler explains, there may be an influence on legislation. In May 2016, the Audubon Society worked with New

²⁸ See <https://globalclimateactionsummit.org/>.

²⁹ Christina Colón, "When the Freedom to Breathe is a Privilege," *Sojourners*, published 7 September 2018, accessed 9 September 2018, <https://sojo.net/articles/when-freedom-breathe-privilege>.

³⁰ As of November 2018, 101 of those murals were completed, accounting for nearly 33% of the project; Audubon Society, "The Audubon Mural Project," *Audubon*, accessed 14 November 2018, www.audubon.org/amp.

York State to install fishing line disposal cans, thus eliminating waste that birds often mistake for food.³¹ Therefore, the project inadvertently reinforces existing animal-sensitive laws and may mobilize the public to seek broader legislation for birds and general climate change. Highly-visible, the Audubon murals indicate that artists are poised for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Particularly dedicated to bridging disciplines and stirring public interest, Manhattan's Climate Museum exposes current and projected disasters while offering solutions. Miranda Massie, a former civil-rights lawyer, conceived of the museum after Hurricane Sandy devastated the Atlantic coast in 2012. Astounded by the gap between weather extremes and ecological action, Massie determined to establish "climate citizenship," and modeled her vision after institutions in Germany and Hong Kong. A climate museum in New York seemed even more necessary when Massie discovered that non-scientists "hunger for information" as they attempt to identify their place in the environment.³² Satisfying that desire, the museum channels ideas into social, physical, and emotional experiences, thus inspiring people to live more sustainably.³³ Notably, in 2018, the museum went beyond its walls. Using roadwork signs to warn of impending disasters, museum staff created an exposition in the city from Labor Day until Veterans' Day. The 10-sign exposition flashed messages in English, Spanish, Russian, French, and other languages, and during certain hours, staff stood by the signs to engage passersby in conversation.³⁴ Not only are professionals dedicated to the museum, but young activists are as well. 17-year-olds Alyssa Chen and Johanne Neggie sit on the museum's Youth Advisory Council, which encourages the upcoming generations to confront climate issues.³⁵ Chen and Neggie helped coordinate youth in the Zero Hour March on

³¹ "DEC, Audubon Team up to Protect Wildlife," *Department of Environmental Conservation*, published 4 May 2016, accessed 11 November 2018, <https://www.dec.ny.gov/press/106077.html>.

³² Laura Raskin, "A Trip to a Museum for Convincing Americans About Climate Change," *The Atlantic*, published 5 February 2018, accessed March 30, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/02/climate-museum-new-york/552335/>.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Laura von Straaten, "Climate Museum Sends Distress Signals to Stimulate Discussion," *The New York Times*, published 30 August 2018, accessed 31 August 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/30/arts/design/climate-museum-signs.html>.

See also Erin Blakemore, "Signs of Climate Change Pop Up in New York – Really," *The Washington Post*, published 9 September 2018, accessed 9 September 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/signs-of-climate-change-pop-up-in-new-york--really/2018/09/07/5bf687bc-b1eb-11e8-a20b-5f4f84429666_story.html.

³⁵ Justine Calma, "Teens help reimagine America's first climate change museum," *Grist*, published 24 July 2018, accessed 25 July 2018, <https://grist.org/article/teens-help-reimagine-americas-first-climate-change-museum/>.

the weekend of 21 July 2018. Concerned with the lack of time to abate environmental destruction, the march hoped to inspire legislative action now instead of later.

The race against time similarly drove the museum's construction. According to journalist Carolyn Kormann, the building "has an expiration date" because the world either solves climate change and no longer needs the museum or "there's water in the second floor."³⁶ Time has long been linked to climate change artwork, as the museum's designer Olafur Eliasson is known for doing. In 2013, the globally-recognized Dane-Irish artist brought icebergs from Greenland to Paris. Arranged in a circle to resemble both a clock and a compass, the icebergs "leave navigation to the people who are inside it," allowing spectators to reimagine the geographic distance between Greenland and Paris as much as the temporal distance between these tens-of-thousands-of-years-old icebergs and the present.³⁷ Capable of welcoming the public into discussions about solutions, Eliasson readily partnered with Massie. Upon consulting Yale's 2016 Climate Opinion Maps, both agreed that climate change demanded urgent attention.

As Yale suggests, climate denial is strongest in politically-conservative areas. On average in 2016, 69% of people living in Texas, for example, believed climate change was occurring. The rate fluctuated from 60% in Republican to nearly 70% in Democratic districts.³⁸ By contrast, 77% of the population in the mostly-Democratic New York State believed in climate change in 2016.³⁹ Despite activism from artistic and scientific communities, the nation was no more convinced in 2018; the average of believers in Texas rose 1% and New York's average stagnated much like the national average stayed at 70%.⁴⁰ Contrary to the image of California as a progressive, environmental state, the average of believers dropped 1% between 2016 and 2018. The argument could be made, then, that artists have minimal impact on public opinion. However, Yale's most

³⁶ Carolyn Kormann, "The Museum of Unnatural History," *The New Yorker Elements*, published 16 May 2015, accessed 30 March 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-museum-of-unnatural-history>.

³⁷ Cynthia Zarin, "The Artist Who is Bringing Icebergs to Paris," *The New Yorker*, published 5 December 2015, accessed 30 July 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-artist-who-is-bringing-icebergs-to-paris>.

³⁸ Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, "Climate Opinion Maps 2016," *Yale Program on Climate Change Communication*, accessed 31 March 2018, <http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us-2016/?est=happening&type=value&geo=county>.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, "Climate Opinion Maps 2018," *Yale Program on Climate Change Communication*, published 7 August 2018, accessed 9 September 2018, <http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/ycom-us-2018/?est=happening&type=value&geo=cd>.

recent survey was published in August, so responses were recorded prior to the Climate Action Summit in San Francisco and prior to the Climate Museum's sign project in New York City. Additionally, global media coverage of climate change has increased since 2015, when the COP 21 was held, as the Media and Climate Change Observatory reports.⁴¹ Although attention spikes with the release of data, art projects spur regular conversations about global warming. Since the media presents stories that attract viewers, increased news coverage reflects public concern about the environment.

In addition to media and artistic statements, popular understanding of climate change is tied to public policy. Since no coherent national legislation exists, individuals have little incentive to live sustainably. Furthermore, politicians are unlikely to pursue solutions due to lobbyists' power, which manifests in financial capital. The petroleum enterprise ExxonMobil, for example, funds state and national campaigns, tending to support more Republican than Democratic candidates and thereby giving those politicians an interest in petroleum extraction.⁴² To make its position clear, Exxon also converses with legislators. In the first quarter of 2018, when Yale would have been gathering data for the opinion maps, ExxonMobil spent \$3,140,000 on federal lobbying efforts. Although the details are undisclosed, lobbyists would have probably advocated for gradual instead of immediate regulations so that companies could adjust their business models. This conflict between economic and social interests is endemic of democracies, as former-minister Hulot expressed in his resignation. Yet, as weather intensifies and new data appears, artists will have more material to use for heightening the public conscious.

Conclusion

Whether bored or contemplative, a spectator responds to art. Environmental themes are particularly provocative for they reveal the impact of action or inaction on an international scale, thus complimenting the 2016 Paris Accords. After President Trump's 2017 announcement of withdrawal, Americans must task to live sustainably, yet 48% of the population does not believe

⁴¹ Max Boykoff, Jennifer Katzung and Ami Nacu-Schmidt, "Monthly Summaries: October 2018," *Media and Climate Change Observatory*, published 22 October 2018, accessed 11 November 2018, https://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/icecaps/research/media_coverage/summaries/issue22.html.

⁴² ExxonMobil, "2017 Political Contributions," accessed 12 October 2018, <https://cdn.exxonmobil.com/~media/global/files/political-contributions/2017-political-contributions.pdf>. At the state level in 2017, Exxon supported 141 Republican and 54 Democratic individuals. In New York, Republicans received about 10 times more finances than did Democrats even though the state is largely Democratic.

climate change affects them personally.⁴³ Given the expanding forms of environmental art, such as street art projects and museum exhibitions, the message of sustainability permeates daily life. Artists encourage individuals to exercise their rights and to push for environmental regulations. The Freaks embody this effort as they alter consumption patterns to convince the government and industries to pursue sustainability goals. While former-Environmental Minister Hulot recognized that France was making greater strides towards the goals than were other countries, he resented lobbyists' interference. Lobbies could explain the minimal reforms after Naziha Mestaoui, the *Alliance Mondiale*, and Olafur Eliasson brought massive attention to climate change. This inaction suggests that, although crucial to education and culture, soft power alone cannot offset business interests.

For that reason, comparing artistic engagement and climate legislation requires looking at a broader time frame than the three years that this essay has evaluated. To more precisely assess the impact of environmental art and the Paris Accords, future research should evaluate sustainability efforts after the U.S. leaves the agreements. Additional attention should likewise be given to countries outside of the Western Hemisphere. As much as France and the U.S., two democracies with central roles in international relations, deviate on climate change, approaches around the world must vary considerably. This divergence accentuates the challenges of transnational collaboration because national interests drive international relations. Yet, the environmental art projects already seen in France and in the U.S. demonstrate a universal interest in sustainability.

⁴³ Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, "Climate Opinion Maps 2018," *Ibid.*

Annex: Chronology

No formatting = U.S.-specific events

Italics = Paris Accords and UNFCC-related events**Bold** = France-specific events

2012 October 29	Hurricane Sandy devastates New Jersey and New York City and inspires the Climate Museum in New York City.
<i>2015 November 30 – December 14</i>	<i>21st Conference of Parties (COP 21) of the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCC) convenes in Le Bourget, near Paris. All states are represented and agree to the Paris Accords, which aim to keep the rise in global temperature below 2° Celsius.</i>
<i>2016 April 22 – 2017 April 21</i>	<i>The Paris Accords open to signatures at the UN headquarters in New York.</i>
<i>2016 October 5</i>	<i>The European Union ratifies the Paris Accords.</i>
<i>2016 November 4</i>	<i>The Paris Accords enter into force.</i>
<i>2017 June 1</i>	<i>President Trump announces the U.S.'s retreat from the Paris Accords.</i>
2017 July 6	Environmental Minister Hulot announces a five-year plan to ban all petrol and diesel vehicles by 2040.
<i>2017 August</i>	<i>The U.S. submits its intent to withdrawal from the accords.</i>
<i>2017 November 6-17</i>	<i>COP 23 in Bonn, Germany affirms commitment to pre-2020 ambitions.</i>
2018 August 28	Hulot leaves the government because progress is too slow.
<i>2018 September 3 – November 11</i>	<i>Climate Museum posts 10 warning signs around New York City</i>
<i>2018 September 8-9</i>	<i>Demonstrators in Paris, San Francisco, New York, and other cities march in response to Hulot's resignation and to the approaching summit in California.</i>
<i>2018 September 12-14</i>	<i>Climate Action Summit in San Francisco, California</i>
<i>2018 October 7</i>	<i>International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) releases a report saying that the world has at most 14 years to control climate change before it becomes irreversible.</i>
<i>2018 December</i>	<i>COP 24 scheduled for Katowice, Poland; beginning of global "stocktake" every five years thereafter.</i>
<i>as of 2019 March 25</i>	<i>195 signatories, of which 181 states are party to the Paris Accords⁴⁴</i>
<i>2019 November</i>	<i>The Paris Accords will have been in effect for three years, withdrawals will begin to be processed.</i>
<i>2020 January</i>	<i>Financing for the accords begins.</i>
<i>2020 November</i>	<i>The U.S. will officially leave the Paris Accords.</i>

⁴⁴ The U.S. still has its signature on the agreements, but Syria and Nicaragua never signed them. "Paris Agreement," *United Nations Treaty Collection*, accessed 24 March 2019, https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXVII-7-d&chapter=27&clang=en.

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