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Department of the Arts

Making the Case for Ecosocial Art: The Next Epoch Seed Library, Multispecies Thriving, and Ecological Justice in Ruderal Landscapes

1. Background

Whether we call it the Anthropocene, Chthulucene, Capitalocene or simply *climate chaos*, it is undeniable we've entered an age of global change stemming from massive human impact across ecological systems.¹ As an artist, educator, and amateur ecologist, I'm part of an evolving community of artistic practice that has emerged over the past decade in response to this new epoch of environmental crisis.² This practice, which I've termed *ecosocial art*, blends socially engaged art, ecology fieldwork, and embodied learning. Practitioners of this art form interact with overlooked and under-appreciated landscapes and lifeforms as a means of cultivating fresh modes of environmental consciousness suitable for navigating our fraught biopolitical reality.

Described variously as postindustrial, disturbed, or *ruderal* the habitats ecosocial artists specialize in bear the weight of centuries of colonialism, industrialization and extraction. Ruderal, from the Latin for ruins or fragments, describes landscapes that are depleted, polluted, and fractured, but also full of possibility. Increasingly these sites are being recognized as lively zones full of novel ecological relationships, providing insights into how ecosystems might evolve under extreme environmental conditions.³ For practitioners of ecosocial art, ruderal landscapes provide a widespread and accessible habitat-type in which to seek methods to adapt and thrive together across cultures and species in the face of environmental degradation.⁴ Ecosocial artists reframe ruderal landscapes as informal greenspace capable of providing benefits ascribed to formal parks and gardens, while also supporting a diverse and complex example of how multispecies communities can be woven into urban life.⁵ With a future that will see the majority Earth's human population dwelling in cities, working in ruderal sites requires a justice-based approach to environmentalism that draws on feminist, decolonial and multispecies strategies in striving for the most equitable version of that

¹ Vandana Shiva, "Diversity Is the Key to Halting Climate Chaos," *The Guardian*, June 6, 2006; Donna Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin," *Environmental Humanities* 6 (2015): 159–65; John Schwartz and Tik Root, "Could a Future President Declare a Climate Emergency?," *The New York Times*, January 18, 2019.

² Ellie Irons, "Weedy Resistance: Multispecies Tactics for Contesting 'The Age of Man,'" *Inhabiting the Anthropocene* (blog), May 3, 2017, <https://inhabitingtheanthropocene.com/2017/05/03/weedy-resistance-multispecies-tactics-for-contesting-the-age-of-man/>.

³ Richard J. Hobbs, Eric S. Higgs, and Carol Hall, *Novel Ecosystems: Intervening in the New Ecological World Order* (New York, UNITED KINGDOM: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013).

⁴ Bettina Stoetzer, "Ruderal Ecologies: Rethinking Nature, Migration, and the Urban Landscape in Berlin," *Cultural Anthropology* 33, no. 2 (May 30, 2018): 295–323.

⁵ Christoph D. D. Rupprecht, "Informal Urban Green Space as Anti-Gentrification Strategy?," in *Just Green Enough*, ed. Winifred Curran & Trina Hamilton (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 209–26.

future possible. Amplifying the ethos and impact of ecosocial art through longterm, public-facing projects like the The Next Epoch Seed Library (NESL) is one strategy of many needed to bring the future we want into being.

Founded in 2015 in collaboration with environmental sculptor Anne Percoco, NESL provides an ideal case-study for analyzing, testing, and magnifying the potential of ecosocial art. Drawing on Anne's background working with repurposed and waste materials and mine in environmental science and botany, we re-imagine the conventional seed bank for our new epoch. Rather than focusing on agricultural plants, we gather, store and share the seeds of plants that thrive in ruderal landscapes, from sidewalk cracks to superfund sites. These weedy species harbor ecological adaptability, nutritional attributes, and healing properties that have been overlooked, forgotten, and even demonized under pressure from monoculture cultivation and suburban lawn aesthetics. As NESL, we work to reframe our relationships with these plants through the lens of reciprocity rather than animosity, in a bid to disrupt what Jason W. Moore has referred to as "the taming cycle," an ever escalating arms race between corporate herbicide producers and weedy resistance.⁶

Alongside other ecosocial artists, NESL seeks to contribute strategies for identifying and dismantling the systems and ideologies that perpetuate environmental inequities, among both human and multispecies communities. This means breaking down false binaries between nature and culture, ecology and sociality. As in Carolyn Merchant's ecofeminism or Donna Haraway's *naturecultures*, to be *ecosocial* is to refuse to separate ecological and social systems.⁷ Inextricably entangled and co-produced, remedying issues with one system requires contending with the other. In the case of NESL we focus on human-plant relationships, in dialogue with growing interest in vegetal life in both science and philosophy.⁸ We create installations, objects, and experiences that help participants comprehend weedy plants as active beings that respond to and shape the landscape around them, rather than as a passive green mass to be controlled or exploited for human gain.

While there are ample overlaps, this binary-breaking, relational orientation distinguishes ecosocial art from related fields like ecoart and land art.⁹ Although these influential fields laid the groundwork for ecosocial art by addressing environmental concerns and working with the land as a medium, methodologically ecosocial art is most closely

⁶ Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (New York: Verso, 2015), 273-274.

⁷ Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (Harper Collins, 1990); Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 6.

⁸ Paco Calvo, "The Philosophy of Plant Neurobiology: A Manifesto," *Synthese* 193, no. 5 (May 1, 2016): 1323-43; Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* (Milkweed Editions, 2015).

⁹ Linda Weintraub, *To Life!: Eco Art in Pursuit of a Sustainable Planet* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2012); Leavitt, Thomas, Willoughby Sharp, and William Lipke. *Earth Art*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1970.

aligned with socially engaged art (SEA).¹⁰ Additional influences in the arts include new genre public art, feminist performance art, and tactical media.¹¹ Connections to fields outside the arts, most importantly ecology and pedagogy, but also feminist science studies, multispecies ethnography, and community science are also important.¹² Beyond scientific and scholarly realms, recent political and activist movements, like the Green New Deal and the new Poor People's Campaign also reflect the relevance of this approach, which might be described as a kind of intersectional environmentalism that refuses to separate ecological problems from questions of social inequity.¹³

Socially engaged art (SEA) takes artist-facilitated social interaction as its primary medium. Effective practitioners of SEA draw on expertise perfected in other disciplines, especially pedagogy and performance, skills that allow the artist to facilitate learning experiences in novel, experimental settings, from public forums to intimate classroom settings.¹⁴ Rather than a one-way flow of information from expert to novice, these learning environments blend aesthetic experience and social exchange to build, reveal or rediscover knowledge through communal pathways. In the case of ecosocial art, these principles get applied in settings in which the *social* includes exchange with multispecies communities, from plants to soil microbes. This exchange is facilitated by embodied learning practices, meaning engaging the learning process through multiple senses, including movement, both choreographed and improvised. This multisensorial approach is complimented by strategies drawn from ecology fieldwork, like biodiversity surveys and soil testing, which cultivate a detail-oriented, empirical approach to getting to know one's local habitat. The blending of these approaches emphasizes the parity of multiple ways of knowing the world, from western scientific knowledge to traditional ecological knowledge, another key tenet of ecosocial art.¹⁵

NESL applies these principles in our many relational activities. We use playful, creative, empirical and experimental teaching and learning strategies, like seed collecting in highway medians and rewilding institutional lawns, as a means of provoking dialogue and action about the value of publicly accessible informal greenspace. As we develop these strategies, we document and publish them as curricula on our website under a creative commons license so that other practitioners can use and adapt them. This

¹⁰ Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (Bethesda, MD: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011).

¹¹ Suzanne Lacy, ed., *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle, Wash: Bay Pr, 1994); Jane Blocker, *Where Is Ana Mendieta?: Identity, Performativity, and Exile* (Duke University Press, 1999). Gregory Sholette and Nato Thompson, eds., *The Interventionists: Users' Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, Mass: MASS MoCA, 2006).

¹² Maralee Mayberry, Banu Subramaniam, and Lisa Weasel, eds., *Feminist Science Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2001); S. Eben Kirksey and Stefan Helmreich, "The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography," *Cultural Anthropology* 25, no. 4 (November 1, 2010): 545–76.

¹³ Yessenia Funes, "How MLK's Vision Helped Lay the Groundwork For a Green New Deal," *Earther*, accessed March 12, 2019.

¹⁴ Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, xi-xii.

¹⁵ Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

approach to documenting, publishing and sharing teaching and learning strategies is prevalent among ecosocial artists.

Through the lens of NESL, I will use my dissertation research to further analyze and document the best practices and most pressing challenges for the growing field of ecosocial art. This will include **1)** ongoing research into the historical precedents, contemporary influences, and key practitioners of ecosocial art **2)** an autoethnographic approach to analyzing my artistic practice with NESL, including a new season of NESL's *Lawn (Re)Disturbance Laboratory ("Lawn Lab")*, which ran as a pilot in 2018 **3)** Further developing, refining and testing NESL's curriculum **4)** soliciting curriculum feedback from peers to assess cross-disciplinary potential. These activities will advance the field, making it even more effective in the pivotal decades ahead.

2. Research Questions

Multispecies Solidarity: What are NESL's most effective tools for bridging gaps between human and nonhuman life to cultivate multispecies solidarity? How does connecting with under-appreciated life forms like weedy plants open up fresh routes into environmental consciousness, and new modes for finding resilience and hope in the face of climate chaos? It is essential to understand human entanglement with other lifeforms and with the living land if we are to mitigate and begin to correct for centuries of extraction and oppression. Following Tsing and Gómez-Barris, I will look closely at how an embodied approach that involves social exchange, multisensorial learning and hands-on fieldwork in ruderal settings contributes to these goals.¹⁶

Ecological Justice: How can a justice-based approach to multispecies habitats be mindfully applied in ruderal landscapes where human communities are experiencing environmental injustice? What approaches to complicity, privilege and expertise are appropriate for ecosocial artists? Drawing on La Paperson and Nixon, I hypothesize that an intersectional approach to environmentalism that takes into account layered forms of oppression while challenging anthropocentrism is necessary but difficult to master, requiring hard work and introspection on the part of practitioners.¹⁷

Public fieldwork and the Disappearing Commons: What are the effects of performing urban ecology fieldwork in public as art? Following Born and Barry's formulation of the "public experiment," can projects like NESL's *Lawn Lab* create new publics and landscapes of inquiry (literally) around the ecosocial value of ruderal greenspace?¹⁸ As our cities churn through cycles of gentrification and decay, can

¹⁶ Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

¹⁷ La Paperson, "A Ghetto Land Pedagogy: An Antidote for Settler Environmentalism," *Environmental Education Research* 20, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 115–30; Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011); Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99.

¹⁸ Georgina Born and Andrew Barry, "Art-Science: From Public Understanding to Public Experiment," *Journal of Cultural Economy* 3, no. 1 (March 1, 2010): 103–1.

ecosocial art practice help reclaim and rebuild a multispecies commons that supports mutual thriving?

Curriculum legibility across disciplines: How effective is NESL's open source curriculum for sharing strategies for ecosocial art practice beyond our immediate field? Which curriculum tools and styles are most effective in helping others explore these topics? Because ecosocial art is generally facilitated in person at small scales, it doesn't often "go viral" like more spectacle-driven forms of art. Its impact can be expanded by sharing curricula with those working in neighboring disciplines, like urban ecology or early childhood education.

3. Methodology

Primary research to define the field: This methodology will involve building on the research begun in my qualifying exam, where I described the key tenets, theoretical influences and historical precedents for ecosocial art. As my dissertation progresses I will expand this research by identifying key practitioners in the field currently, and analyzing how their projects relate to my research questions and the work I do with NESL. This will provide the early steps towards creating a survey publication of the field, in the tradition of influential resources like *To Life!*, *The Interventionists*, and *Ecovention*, but dedicated to the unique characteristics of ecosocial art.¹⁹

Documenting and analyzing ecosocial art through autoethnography: This will involve an autoethnographic approach to my own experiences developing and implementing NESL's fieldwork practice and workshops from a firsthand, situated perspective. As described by Hahn, this reflexive approach to ethnography is appropriate for interdisciplinary pursuits that involve embodied research and is consistent with a feminist epistemological stance that foregrounds self reflection, transparency, and the unity of body and mind.²⁰

Developing and testing NESL's open source curriculum: I will facilitate a series of nine workshops for the next season of *Lawn (Re)Disturbance Laboratory (Lawn Lab 2020)*. This will allow me to refine several interaction models, including workshops in turf removal, rewilding and herbarium preservation. Surveys will be distributed to participants to explore what aspects were most effective in promoting the ethos of ecosocial art. Curriculum materials will be adjusted based on feedback, and published on our website. *IRB permission will be obtained to complete this research.*

Curriculum feedback from readers outside the field: This will involve soliciting feedback on curriculum materials from educators, environmental justice advocates, urban ecologists and socially engaged artists to assess the potential for disciplinary cross over. An important aspect of ecosocial art is that it be accessible to those outside the field. By tapping a network of professionals in related disciplines who've expressed interest in NESL but are not ecosocial artists themselves, I will seek feedback on the legibility of our curriculum outside our immediate sphere. This is a first step towards working remotely with schools and other community groups to expand

¹⁹ Weintraub, *To Life!*; Sholette and Thompson, *The Interventionists*; Sue Spaid and Amy Lipton, *Ecovention, Current Art to Transform Ecologies* (Cincinnati: Contemporary Arts Center, 2002).

²⁰ Tomie Hahn, "Emerging Voices: Encounters with Reflexivity," *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice* 30, no. 2 (2006): 88–99.

NESL's reach. We've been approached by individuals and groups who want to do NESL activities, but we've never formally explored how accessible or intuitive our instructional materials are. *IRB permission will be obtained to complete this research.*

4. Timeline

- April 2018** Co-organized first annual Ruderal Ecologies Conference, with Sanctuary for Independent Media, RPI STS & Arts Department, Radix Center, Troy, NY
- May 2018:** Launched pilot of NESL's *Lawn Lab* with RPI/Vasudha, Media Sanctuary's NATURE Lab, Community Miracles in Action Cohoes (10 plots, five workshops)
- Dec 2018:** Completed qualifying exam
- Jan 2019:** Applied for grant to produce *Lawn Lab 2020* at Penn State (\$7,000 budget, pending)
- March 2019:** Begin process of IRB approval for fall 2019 research, Apply for HASS fellowship
- June 2019:** Ecosocial art research as Seedbox Artist in Residence, Environmental Humanities Collaboratory, Linköping University, Linköping, Sweden
- Aug 2019:** Dissertation proposal to committee
Determine locations/institutional partnerships for *Lawn Lab 2020* (Jan 2019: Penn State, New Jersey City College, RPI & other local partnerships pending)
- Sept 2019** Ecosocial art research as Artist Fellow, Oak Springs Garden Fdn., Upperville, VA
Dissertation proposal defense
- Oct 2019** Preparatory Lawn Lab workshops with NATURE Lab, Sanctuary for Independent Media (IRB)
- Nov 2019** Revisit and refine existing Lawn Lab workshop models/curricular resources
Begin curriculum feedback round 1: Distribute curriculum to peers for feedback
- Feb 2020** Dissertation chapters 1-3 to committee
- March 2020** Launch NESL Workshop Series 1: *Lawn Lab 2020* Plot Rewilding
- June 2020** Launch NESL Workshop Series 2: *Lawn Lab 2020* Public Fieldwork
- July 2020** Dissertation chapters 4-6 to committee
- Oct 2020** Launch NESL Workshop Series 3: *Lawn Lab 2020* wrap up/specimen archiving
- Dec 2020** Publish refined Lawn Lab curriculum on NESL website
Begin curriculum feedback round 2: Distribute curriculum to peers for feedback
Final Dissertation to Committee, Publish amended curriculum
- Spring 2021** Apply for graduation, Defend dissertation

5. Impact

This research will solidify and promote best practices for an emerging field that contributes to the essential task of promoting a justice-based approach to the environmental crisis. Through the following avenues, ecosocial art can foment a shift in consciousness towards multispecies solidarity, an essential step towards a more equitable future: **1) Communal knowledge production to counter narratives of despair:** An exchange based, pedagogical approach that strengthens social ties through physically engaged, playful, and locally grounded responses to global environmental ills can encourage practitioners and participants to build new knowledge together, rewriting narratives of despair or denial in favor of strategies for clear-eyed resilience in the face of environmental collapse. **2) Bridging gaps for multispecies solidarity:** Projects like NESL provide a platform via which new insights and age old

wisdom can travel between disciplines, communities, and species, bridging gaps that hobble our response to the environmental crisis.

3) Expanding environmentalism by cultivating local expertise: Ecosocial art can provide new pathways into environmentalism via an intersectional approach, helping communities recognize their own expertise as invaluable in assessing, interacting with and coming to care for ruderal landscapes and their multispecies inhabitants.

6. Strengths/Limitations/Assessment

Strengths: The strengths of this work arise from its discipline traversing potential, its applicability to pressing environmental issues, its flexibility across settings and populations, and the possibility of implementing it with relatively few resources. The curriculum development aspect of the work is a first step towards expanding its reach, which is essential to amplify the potential of the impacts described above.

Limitations: The intimate nature of of ecosocial art practice limits its reach. Thus developing an effective model for sharing curriculum is important. My dissertation research begins this task, but additional research, practice and outreach will be required. Additionally, ecosocial art is only one thread in a complex web of initiatives advocating for a multispecies-oriented, justice-based approach to the environmental crisis. It offers one route to beginning to undo centuries of oppression and inequity, but political reform towards the rights of multispecies stakeholders, redistribution of wealth and property, and concrete reparations for past injustices are outcomes that this approach supports but won't foment on its own.

Assessment: My research will be successful if: **1)** I carry out an expanded season of *Lawn Lab* with more workshops, and greater participation and visibility than the 2018 pilot **2)** I receive valuable feedback from participants and peers regarding the legibility and efficacy of NESL's curriculum and translate it into improved materials **3)** I continue to get engaged responses from individuals and organizations in other disciplines, for example invitations to present at conferences, publish, or be an artist in residence in fields like urban ecology or environmental humanities. **4)** I deepen my connection to ruderal ecosystems, finding new ways to engage questions of ecological justice and multispecies thriving, allowing me to share these insights even more confidently and passionately with my community, students, and public.

7. Future Goals

I aim to continue my professional art practice, continuing my collaborations with the goal of solidifying a robust network of practitioners with whom to work on strategies for multispecies thriving. To compliment and support this work, I will seek employment as a tenure-track faculty member in a forward-thinking department that prioritizes interdisciplinarity and embraces my commitment to teaching and learning through ecosocial art practice. This could be a progressive arts department at a large research university, or a flexible arts department at a small liberal arts college, where I might seek a joint appointment in environmental humanities or environmental studies. Regardless, I will continue my research to develop and define the field of ecosocial art, presenting in outlets that cover the range of disciplines I draw on, from urban ecology to science and technology studies, with goal of eventually creating a publication and related exhibition that surveys the field but reaches an audience well beyond it.

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Weintraub, Linda. *To Life!: Eco Art in Pursuit of a Sustainable Planet*. First edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

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EDUCATION:

Ph.D. Electronic Arts Department, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, expected 2021
M.F.A. Visual Art, Hunter College, City University of New York, 2009
B.A. Studio Art with Honors, Minor in Environmental Science, Scripps College, 2003

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

2014-2017 Adjunct Instructor, Fine Arts Department, Brown University
Courses: Media Foundations, Visual Foundations (original syllabi)
2013 Adjunct Lecturer, Digital & Interdisciplinary Arts Masters Program, CCNY, CUNY
Course: Artist in the Anthropocene (original syllabus)
2011-2015 Adjunct Lecturer, Studio Art Department, CCNY, CUNY
Courses: 2-D Design, Introduction to Drawing, Watercolor
2010-2013 Adjunct Lecturer, Electronic Design & Multimedia Dept, CCNY, CUNY
Course: Multimedia Design (original syllabus in collaboration with Dan Phiffer)

ART EDUCATION EXPERIENCE:

2018 Mentor, Sanctuary for Independent Media/Rensselaer Youth Employment
Program, Summer 2018, Troy, NY
2014-15 Teaching Artist, Nurture Art, Bushwick, Brooklyn, NY
2012 City Studies Teaching Artist, The Center for Urban Pedagogy, Brooklyn, NY
2011-2014 Teaching Artist, Learning Through Art Program, Guggenheim Museum, NY
2011-2013 CASA Teaching Artist in New York Public Schools, Brooklyn Arts Council
2010-2011 Photography Instructor, Creative Arts Workshops for Kids, IS 326 & 328

PUBLICATIONS:

Book Chapter: Irons, Ellie, and Jean Louis Morel. "The Soil Assembly and Dissemination Authority (SADA): A Thought Experiment in Building Tomorrow's Soils Today." In *Field to Palette: Dialogues on Soil and Art in the Anthropocene*, edited by Alexandra Toland, Jay Stratton Noller, and Gerd Wessolek, 1 edition., 625–36. Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2018.

Blog post: Irons, Ellie. "Reflections on the Urban Evolution of White Clover" and "Why Say Weed In the Anthropocene," *Inhabiting the Anthropocene* blog, University of Oklahoma, Fall 2018.

Blog post: Irons, Ellie. "Weedy Resistance: Multispecies Tactics for Contesting 'The Age of Man,'" *Inhabiting the Anthropocene* blog, University of Oklahoma, May 2017.

Magazine article: Irons, Ellie and Christopher Kennedy. "An Atlas of Endangered Surfaces," *Temporary Art Review*, January 18th, 2016.

Journal Article: Irons, Ellie. "Invasive Pigments and Novel Hues: The Palette of an Urban Landscape," *Landscape Architecture Futures*, Volume 3, Issue 5, November 2015, 110-119.

Newspaper article: Irons, Ellie. "Feral Landscape Love: Novel Ecosystems in the Studio and the Street," *The Brooklyn Rail* ("Social Ecologies" Issue), November 2015.

SELECTED GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS AND ARTIST RESIDENCIES

2019 Eliza Moore Fellowship, Oak Spring Garden Foundation, Upperville, Virginia
2019 Seedbox Artist in Residence, Environmental Humanities Dept, Linköping University
2018 Advisor and participating artist, Headlands Climate Change Theme Residency II: Equity
Headlands Center for the Arts, Sausalito, CA
2018 Ecotopian Toolkit Fellowship, Penn Program in Environmental Humanities, University of
Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA (with Environmental Performance Agency)
2018 National Endowment for the Arts funded residency through Media Sanctuary's "Bio-art
Futures and (Forgotten) Urban Ecologies," with Next Epoch Seed Library
2017 Rensselaer Fellowship for graduate study, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY
2017 Asian Cultural Council Fellow, Travel and research in Taipei, Taiwan
2017 Creative Talent Residency, Bamboo Curtain, New Taipei, Taiwan
2017 Wave Hill Winter Workspace Residency, Wave Hill, Bronx, New York
2016 Climate Change Theme Residency I, Headlands Center for the Arts, Sausalito, California.
2016 Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant for Open Fields Festival, Riga, Latvia.
2015 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship Award in Interdisciplinary Art
2015 Art Sci Exchange Artist in Residence, Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory, Gothic, CO
2015 Turbulence Commission (in collaboration with Dan Phiffer)
2014 Participant, The Anthropocene Campus, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin
2013 Institute for Electronic Arts Residency, Alfred University, NY
2013 Bronx Museum of Art AIM Program
2012 SVA Summer Residency: Interdisciplinary Practices in Bio-Art, New York, NY
2012 PSC-CUNY Adjunct Professional Development Grant
2011 In Process Residency, The Carriage House, Islip Museum of Art, Islip, NY
2010 Outpost Residency, Signal Fire Arts, Portland, Oregon
2009 Visiting Artist, Vassar College Earth Sciences Department, Poughkeepsie, NY
2008 Leeman Boksenbaum Scholarship for study abroad, Hunter College
2006 Alumni Foundation Scholarship for Graduate Study, Hunter College, CUNY

INVITED TALKS AND WORKSHOPS

2018 "Plant Talk/Human Talk: Scores for Cross Species Interaction: Considering
Place and Language in the Work of the Environmental Performance Agency,"
Penn Program in Environmental Humanities, University of Pennsylvania
2018 "Public Fieldwork and Weedy Resistance: Practicing Social-Ecological Art in the (so-
called) Anthropocene," Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
2018 "Invasive and Feral Pigments," Sustainable Systems Course, Parsons, NY
2017 "Public Fieldwork and Weedy Resistance: Practicing Social-Ecological Art in the (so-
called) Anthropocene," Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY

- 2016 "The Next Epoch Seed Library," Environmental Art Seminar, Princeton University.
 2015 "Urban Ecology and the Anthropocene (Art Practice & Research)", Ecocentric Practices Course, Rhode Island School of Design.
 2013 "Urban Cultivation: Art, Ecology and Agriculture," Bio-Art Program, School of Visual Arts

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

- 2018 "*Plant Talk Human Talk: An EPA Training for the Beginning of the World*," Open Engagement Conference, Queens Museum, Flushing Queens, May 13, 2018.
 2018 "The Environmental Performance Agency: Social-Ecological Art in the (so-called) Anthropocene," *Role/Play: Collaborative Creativity and Creative Collaborations Student Fellows Symposium*, March 12, 2018 National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C.
 2018 "Asbestos to Asphalt: Earthbound Agency from Land Art to Public Fieldwork," Post-Human Network Graduate Student Conference, Feb 22-24, 2018, Arizona State University.
 2017 "In the Field with Weeds: Artisanal Strategies for Art and Ecology," Ecological Society of America annual meeting, Portland, Oregon, August 2017.
 2017 "Metal Lovers: Weedy Resistance in Post-Industrial Landscapes", Association for Literature & the Environment Biennial Conference, Detroit, Michigan, June 2017.
 2017 Panel organizer: "Weedy Resistance: Multispecies Tactics for Contesting the 'Age of Man'," Decolonizing the Anthropocene Workshop, New York University, June 2017.
 2017 "The Next Epoch Seed Library," *Libraries and Archives in the Anthropocene*, Annual LAAF Conference, New York University, May 2017, (with Anne Percoco).
 2017 "Weedy Resistance: Biodiversity & Adaptive Agency in Urban Landscapes," Ecologies of the Future Present symposium, New York University, April 2017.
 2017 Plenary panel: *Vegetative Resistance: Weeds and Wildness in Human Dominated Landscapes*, Rixc Open Fields Conference, Riga, Latvia, September 2016.
 2016 "Art and Science Collaborations at Biological Field Stations", Association for Environmental Sciences and Studies Annual Conference, June 2016, Washington, DC.
 2014 "Invasive Pigments and Feral Ecologies," Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences Annual Conference, Pace University, New York, NY, June 2014.

SOLO AND 2-PERSON EXHIBITIONS AND PROJECTS:

- 2019 *Ellie Irons and Jenny Odell*, Reese Bullen Gallery, Humboldt State University Arcata, California
 2018 *EPA meets EPA: The Department of Weedy Affairs*, Transformer Gallery, Washington, D.C. (with the Environmental Performance Agency)
 2016 *Chroma Botanica: Ellie Irons and Linda Stillman*, Arsenal Gallery, New York, NY
 2016 *Beneath Our Feet and on the Surface of Things: Graciela Cassel and Ellie Irons*, (Residency Unlimited and New Rochelle BID), New Rochelle, NY
 2015 *Monument to Weediness*, 1067 Pacific People, Brooklyn, NY (garden project)
Invasive Pigments Gen 2, Sure We Can, Brooklyn, NY (garden project)
 2014 *Speculative Arboriculture: Invasion Ecology*, Flora Ars + Natura Cabinet Program, Bogotá, Colombia
 2014 *Invasive Pigments: A Spontaneous Urban Pigment Garden*, Center for Strategic Art and Agriculture, Silent Barn, Bushwick, Brooklyn
 2013 *Ellie Irons: Invasive Pigments*, Queens Botanical Garden, Flushing, Queens, NY
 2013 *Migrant Studies (Trees and Networks)*, Umbrella Arts Project Space, New York, NY

- 2013 *Ellie Irons: Stasis and Spasm* (video screening event with Dan Phiffer), Microscope Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 2011 *Neversink Transmissions: Documentation and Ephemera*, Old Stone House, Hasbrouck, NY (in collaboration with Dan Phiffer)
- 2009 *Ellie Irons: Masses and Tributaries*, DeFKa, Assen, The Netherlands
Watershed, MFA Thesis Show, Hunter College Times Square Gallery, New York, NY

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS, SCREENINGS, AND EVENTS (2013–PRESENT)

- 2019 *Digital Nature*, Los Angeles Arboretum, Los Angeles, CA, curated by Shirley Watts
The Department of Human and Natural Services, Nurture Art, Brooklyn, NY (with Environmental Performance Agency)
- 2018 *Ecological Consciousness: Artist as Instigator*, Glyndor Gallery, Wave Hill, Bronx, NY
- 2018 *Please, People, Please*. Collar Works Gallery, Troy, NY.
- 2018 *Making Life Visible: Art, Biology and Visualization*, Faulconer Gallery, Grinnell College, Grinnell, Iowa
- 2018 *Perennials*, King Street Gallery, Montgomery College, Maryland
- 2018 *Wilder City*, Flux Factory/Windmill Community Garden, Long Island City, Queens, NY (with Next Epoch Seed Library)
- 2019 *Art in the Open (AiO) Retrospective Show*, Philadelphia City Hall, Philadelphia, PA
- 2017 *Uproot*, Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, NY
- 2017 *SEEDborder CrossWALK in Crown Heights*, Part of WILD PLANTS, QUEER LANDSCAPES and Seeds of Change, Vera List Center, Parsons, New York, NY
- 2017 *Environmental Performance Agency Fall Summit*, EPA Headquarters, Crown Heights, Brooklyn (organizer, facilitator)
- 2017 *Anthrobotanical: People, Plants, Place*, Schuylkill Center, Philadelphia, PA
- 2017 *Marginal Green*, Gold Finch Gallery, Chicago, Illinois
- 2017 *Weedy Resistance 2: Networks*, Eyebeam, Brooklyn, NY (ongoing salon series, co-organizer)
- 2017 *Weedy Resistance 1: Borders*, Parsons Transdisciplinary Design Lab, Brooklyn, NY (ongoing salon series, co-organizer)
- 2017 *Landholdings*, Index Art Center, Newark, NJ
- 2017 *Wasteland*, Central Booking Gallery, New York, NY
- 2017 *Learning to Fly*, Walsh Gallery, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ
- 2016 *Living Together: Nurturing Nature in the Built Environment*, William Paterson University Court Gallery
- 2016 *Emergent Ecologies: NYC Emergence*, Kilroy Metal Ceiling, Brooklyn, NY
- 2016 *Jamaica Flux*, Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, Jamaica, Queens
- 2016 *The Biennial for Unloved Life Forms*, 3rd Klohäuschen Biennial, Munich, Germany
- 2016 *Chance Ecologies*, Queens Museum Community Partnership Gallery, Queens, NY
- 2016 *Open Fields*, RIXC Art Science festival, National Library of Latvia, Riga, Latvia
- 2016 *Nectar*, Pratt Manhattan Gallery, New York, NY (curated by Berta Sichel)
- 2015 *Social Ecologies*, Rail Curatorial Projects, Brooklyn, NY
- 2015 *Chance Ecologies*, Hunter's Point/Radiator Gallery, Queens, NY
- 2015 *Intersecting Imaginaries*, No Longer Empty Curatorial Lab, Bronx, NY
- 2015 Art Hack Day: *Deluge*, Pioneer Works, Red Hook, Brooklyn, NY
- 2015 *Systematic Sampling*, Stream Gallery, Bushwick, Brooklyn, NY
- 2015 Faculty Art Show, Bell Art Gallery, Brown University, Providence, NY

- 2015 *Green Borderland: A Walking Tour*, in collaboration with Andrea Haenggi, 1067 Pacific People, Brooklyn, NY
- 2015 *Dirt Dialogues, Soil Culture* at create, Bristol, UK
- 2014 *Flight Lines/SP Weather Station with Jenny Brockmann*, Alte Feuerwache, Berlin
- 2014 *Dirt Dialogues*, Soil Culture Forum, Falmouth, England
- 2014 *SP Weather Station Reports*, The Center for Book Arts, New York, NY
- 2014 *Dirt Dialogues*, World Congress of Soil Science, Jeju, Korea, June 2014
- 2014 *17 Days*, Video Art Screening, Alfred State College, Alfred, NY and Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI (*Phytoplasic* screened)
- 2014 Blue Egg: Visions of Nature, SVA Nature & Tech Lab, School of Visual Arts, NY, NY
- 2013 *Drawn to Nature*, Wave Hill Glyndor Gallery, Bronx, NY
- 2013 *Bronx Calling: The Second AIM Biennial*, Bronx Museum of Art, Avenue of the Americas Gallery, New York, NY (catalogue)
- 2013 *You Are My Sunshine*, Associated Gallery, Bushwick, Brooklyn
- 2013 *Now What*, Microscope Gallery/Running Rebel Studios, Brooklyn, NY
- 2013 *Cronosfera (Visions from the Future)*, Galerija 12 Hub, Belgrade, Serbia, organized by ALFAVI cultural association for Arts and Science from Milan, Italy
- 2013 *Videorover Season 5, Program #2*, Curated by Rachel Steinberg, Nurture Art
- 2013 *Wood Anniversary: Five Years of Signal Fire*, ArtGym, Marylhurst University, Portland, OR
- 2013 *Ohm 5*, Sight and Sound Festival, Eastern Bloc, Montreal, Canada (collaborative with Future Archaeology)
- 2013 Echoes of Eco: Sochi Winter Int'l Art Festival, Sochi, Russia
- 2013 *Earth and Arts Festival*, Moving Image at the Armory Center, Pasadena, California
- 2013 *Reel Water Festival*, Bethesda, Maryland

SELECTED PRESS (2016-CURRENT):

- "Other Voices, Other Worlds," Stephen Zacks, *Art in America*, December 2018.
- "Weeds might Save the World," Lorissa Rinehart, *The Plant Hunter*, November 2018.
- "Next Epoch Seed Library: Interview with Simone Johnson," *Seed Broadcast*, issue #11, Sept 2018.
- "Urban Ecological Consciousness at Wave Hill," Louis Bury, *Hyperallergic*, August 2018.
- "Trump's EPA Is a Disaster, So These Artists Made Their Own," Claire Voon, *Vice Magazine*, June 11, 2018.
- "A Solid Artistic Argument That We Should Replace EPA Leaders With Actual Weeds", Kriston Capps, Washington City Paper, May 24, 2018.
- "Science and Culture: Painting with invasive pigments", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Front Matter Blog*, Carolyn Beans, January 23, 2018.
- "Seeding the Next Epoch", Georgia Silvera Seamans, Urban Omnibus, December 6, 2017.
- "Ecologies of Elsewhere: Giving Urban Weeds a 'Third Glance'," *The Nature of Cities*, Daniel Philips, September 2017.
- "How can Ecological Artists Move Beyond Aesthetic Gestures," Ben Valentine, *Hyperallergic*, September 2017.
- "A Group Show Rooted in Weeds", *Hyperallergic*, Kate Sierzputowski, July 12, 2017.
- "Extracting a Rainbow of Color from Invasive Plants," *Hyperallergic*, Seph Rodney, June 11, 2016
- "A Eulogy for the Weeds", We Make Money Not Art blog, interview with Régine Debatty, May 2016
- "An Ecologically Minded Artist Navigating the Nature-Culture Continuum", *Hyperallergic* interview with Ben Valentine, May 2016

Display Transcript



This is NOT an official transcript. Courses which are in progress may also be included on this transcript.

[Institution Credit](#) [Transcript Totals](#) [Courses in Progress](#)

Transcript Data

STUDENT INFORMATION

Name : Ellen L. Irons

Student Type: Ongoing

Curriculum Information

Current Program

Doctor of Philosophy

College: Humanities, Arts & Soc
Sci

Major and Department: Electronic Arts, The
Arts

***Transcript type:UWEB is NOT Official ***

INSTITUTION CREDIT [-Top-](#)

Term: Fall 2017

Major: Electronic Arts

Academic Standing: Good Standing

Subject	Course	Level	Title	Grade	Credit Hours	Quality Points	R
ADMN	6700	GR	ORIENTATION SEM FOR GRADS	S	0.000	0.00	
ARTS	6570	GR	RESEARCH METHODS	A	3.000	12.00	
ARTS	6640	GR	SCIENCE FICTIONS	A	3.000	12.00	
ARTS	6900	GR	ARTS GRADUATE COLLOQUIUM	A	3.000	12.00	
ARTS	6940	GR	PUBLIC FIELDWORK 1	A	3.000	12.00	

Term Totals (Graduate)

	Attempt Hours	Passed Hours	Earned Hours	GPA Hours	Quality Points	GPA
Current Term:	12.000	12.000	12.000	12.000	48.00	4.00
Cumulative:	12.000	12.000	12.000	12.000	48.00	4.00

Unofficial Transcript

Term: Spring 2018

Major: Electronic Arts

Academic Standing: Good Standing

Subject	Course	Level	Title	Grade	Credit Hours	Quality Points	R
ARTS	6110	GR	ELECTRONIC ARTS OVERVIEW	A	3.000	12.00	
ARTS	6900	GR	ARTS GRADUATE COLLOQUIUM	A	3.000	12.00	
ARTS	6940	GR	PUBLIC FIELDWORK 2-RUDERAL ECO	A	3.000	12.00	
STSS	6200	GR	SCIENCE STUDIES	A	3.000	12.00	

Term Totals (Graduate)

	Attempt Hours	Passed Hours	Earned Hours	GPA Hours	Quality Points	GPA
Current Term:	12.000	12.000	12.000	12.000	48.00	4.00
Cumulative:	24.000	24.000	24.000	24.000	96.00	4.00

Unofficial Transcript

Term: Summer 2018

Major: Electronic Arts

Academic Standing:

Subject	Course	Level	Title	Grade	Credit Hours	Quality Points	R
ADMN	6600	GR	SUMMER ADMINIST REGISTRATION	S	0.000	0.00	

Term Totals (Graduate)

	Attempt Hours	Passed Hours	Earned Hours	GPA Hours	Quality Points	GPA
Current Term:	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.00	0.00
Cumulative:	24.000	24.000	24.000	24.000	96.00	4.00

Unofficial Transcript

Term: Fall 2018

Major: Electronic Arts

Academic Standing: Good Standing

Subject	Course	Level	Title	Grade	Credit Hours	Quality Points	R
ADMN	6800	GR	TA TRAINING SEMINAR	S	0.000	0.00	
ARTS	9990	GR	DISSERTATION	S	9.000	0.00	

Term Totals (Graduate)

	Attempt Hours	Passed Hours	Earned Hours	GPA Hours	Quality Points	GPA
Current Term:	9.000	9.000	9.000	0.000	0.00	0.00
Cumulative:	33.000	33.000	33.000	24.000	96.00	4.00

Unofficial Transcript

TRANSCRIPT TOTALS (GRADUATE) -Top-

Events: DSYR Financial Aid Yr 18

	Attempt Hours	Passed Hours	Earned Hours	GPA Hours	Quality Points	GPA
Total Institution:	33.000	33.000	33.000	24.000	96.00	4.00
Total Transfer:	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.00	0.00
Overall:	33.000	33.000	33.000	24.000	96.00	4.00

Unofficial Transcript

COURSES IN PROGRESS -Top-

Term: Spring 2019

Major: Electronic Arts

Subject	Course	Level	Title	Credit Hours
ADMN	6200	GR	GRADUATE ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION	0.000

RELEASE: 8.7.1