

Love, Labour & Loss: 300 years of British Livestock Farming in Art

When Tillage begins, other Arts follow¹: Contemporary Life

Clive Adams, 2002

*It remains the sobering fact that even in the age of global communications and the Internet, civilisation continues to depend on a few inches of topsoil for its very existence.*²

Here, we draw together some of the artistic, agricultural and social themes from previous essays and show how they become interwoven in the twentieth century. We explore how our sentiments towards the countryside and animals have been focussed by our art and culture, and how these now conflict with the pressures that contemporary life puts upon them. We look at how artists have adopted a plurality of approaches, from re-awakening a sense of the pastoral ideal and framing our national identity, to the advent of environmental art. Finally, the perseverance of past landscape and pictorial conventions will be questioned, arguing that in the period of radical change that is likely to affect the future of the countryside, artists will engage with new ways of working and envisioning our relationship with the land, animals and, ultimately, with each other.

The first works of art painted in caves around 25,000 years ago recognised the extraordinary powers that set animals apart from their hunters: the strength of the bison, the speed of the deer, the ability of birds to fly and of fish to swim.³ With the advent of agriculture, nature was transformed and society's life-style, ideas and art forms reflected a new relationship between the earth and its human inhabitants. Animals such as sheep, goats, oxen and cows were domesticated, and herds became property. As people transformed the environment they also developed beliefs that mediated a balanced relationship with the earth. The arts dramatised rituals that revolved around the powers of nature – growth, death and renewal – and these evolved as an integral part of life. The development of agriculture thus bequeathed an organic and nurturing conception of nature; it also sowed the seeds from which blossomed the first cities and civilisations.

In both China and Europe, the art of landscape painting evolved with the growth of cities and wealth. Landscape paintings were as intrinsic to society's values as were the artworks made by the hunters-and-gatherers and early agriculturalists. The first landscape paintings appeared in Rome during the first century B.C. and their making coincided with a period of environmental stress – the over-cultivation of land and deforestation. Landscape painting also fulfilled the spiritual yearnings of urban patrons in China, where it evolved during the eighth to tenth centuries. From the sixteenth, the word 'culture' itself, originally meaning a 'cultivated field', increasingly came to be used figuratively: as the soil was improved by tillage, so then the mind was improved by education and the arts. During the seventeenth, as Christiana Payne has described in her essay, Claude and Poussin offered an Arcadian vision of nature, as a form of solace in an increasingly complex world. The appreciation of rural scenery by the aesthete in the eighteenth century depended on an acquaintance with the tradition of European painting: rural scenery only merited being called a 'landscape' when it was reminiscent of a painted 'landskip' and 'picturesque' when it looked like a picture.⁴

¹ Daniel Webster (1782-1852) The quotation continues '.....the farmers therefore are the founders of human civilisation'.

² Graham Harvey, *The Killing of the Countryside*, London, 1998, p.194

³ For a historical overview see Barbara C.Matitsky, *Fragile Ecologies*, New York, 1992

⁴ For a recent survey of landscape painting which discusses a range of interpretations of rural scenery see Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, Oxford, 1999

Over the centuries, the intimate relationship established between people, animals and the earth slowly eroded, but this estrangement accelerated during the industrial revolution. Many artists, such as Blake and Turner, continued to maintain the essential bond, but the environmental changes of the revolution mirrored a new philosophy that substituted an organic conception of nature, based on the process and rhythms of the seasons, with a mechanistic one, based on the new machines that propelled early capitalism.⁵

With varying fortune, the peasant remained in possession of the land until the General Enclosure Act of 1845. The wide-scale dispossession of the peasantry was linked with the rise of a landed class which quickly realised the value of its assets by seizing the commons, evicting the commoners and consigning a previously landed people to the squalor of nineteenth-century town life. Britain was the first country to enter the industrial age: it was also the most ruthless in forcing its rural population off the land and into the factories.

In 1851, the year of J.M.W. Turner's death and the Great Exhibition, the census showed that for the first time the urban population of England exceeded that of the rural but that 20% of the national income still derived from agriculture. The 1850s were years of great agricultural prosperity, mixed farming thrived, and the 'golden age' of British farming continued well into the 1860s when it was the turn of enterprising tenant farmers to prosper, encouraged by the growth of agricultural societies. Up to this time, artists such as Constable, Garrard and Weaver were men who lived in or were in close contact with the countryside but, by 1850, artists' patrons were increasingly the new industrialists rather than the landed gentry.⁶ Birmingham, which by 1850 contained the worst industrial slums in Britain, spawned not realists intent on exposing poverty and hardship but 'naturalists and dreamers' such as David Cox and Burne-Jones. Most artists fled the industrial centres at the first opportunity and many came to London, the centre of the art market. City-based artists then tended to pay only brief visits to the country, helped by an expanding railway network.

Much Victorian landscape painting thereafter became either a matter of 'intense looking' or 'myopic nostalgia', the latter encouraged by the urban middle class who wished to be reminded of the countryside they had left a generation or less ago.⁷ On the one hand, the writer John Ruskin maintained that landscape was an instrument of moral power. He supported Turner and his contemporaries against the conventionalised landscapes of Claude and Poussin and encouraged the close study of nature of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. On the other hand, rural landscapes offered a reassuring contrast to city life. Birket Foster's immensely popular rural scenes () and those of his follower Helen Allingham upheld a conservative vision where the cottage, however delapidated, became a symbol of English virtue.

The ten years between 1870 and 1880 were years of severe agricultural depression, leading to serious rural de-population and increasing emigration that lasted to the end of the century. Bad harvests, taxation, laws that put an end to cheap child labour, and the import of grain from the United States all took their toll. Imports of wool and mutton from Australia and New Zealand, beef from South America, bacon and dairy products from Denmark aggravated the situation. As we have read, it had been Britain that had substantially provided or improved the livestock of many of these newly exporting countries. The franchise was extended to the (male) working classes in rural districts and in 1889 a government Board of Agriculture was set up, marking the beginning of state intervention in farming.

⁵ Changing attitudes to the countryside are explored in Andrew Hemingway, *Landscape imagery and urban culture in early nineteenth-century Britain*, Cambridge, 1992; and in Peter Howard, *Landscapes. The Artist's Vision*, London, 1991

⁶ The patronage and collecting of landscape art is discussed by Andrew Hemingway, *Landscape imagery and urban cultivation in early nineteenth-century Britain*, Cambridge, 1992

⁷ See Francis Spalding's essay 'Changing Nature' and chronology in *Landscape in Britain 1850-1950*, London, 1983

From the 1880s, several London exhibitions helped to introduce French art and ideas,⁸ and many British artists began to train abroad. For reasons that are hard to understand today, the British public and artists alike tended to be suspicious of the bright Impressionist palette of artists such as Claude Monet and to prefer instead the *plein air*⁹ effects of Jules Bastien-Lepage. Although less adventurous than the true Impressionists, Bastien-Lepage was a strong influence at this time; he painted out-of-doors, often under an overcast sky, favouring the commonplace over the spectacular. To George Clausen, on whose paintings Alun Howkins writes in the previous essay, Bastien-Lepage represented an attitude towards nature of 'studied impartiality'.

In imitation of artists' colonies in France, in Pont-Aven and Barbizon, the Newlyn, Staithe and Glasgow Schools were formed and many of these artists gave more prominence to rural figures than the landscape. The Galloway countryside inspired E.A. Hornel and George Henry, members of the Glasgow School, to move away from subjects of rural labour towards more symbolic or allegorical works, close in feel to the paintings of Gauguin. As a symbol of fertility the goat appears in a number of paintings by Hornel of the late 1880s, usually accompanied by a young girl (). A contemporary of Clausen, Henry La Thangue often painted rustic Norfolk subjects with a broad, square brush technique (), later spending his time in France and Italy where he discovered a relaxed, rural way of life which was fast disappearing in England. Joseph Farquharson combined a career as a painter with the inherited role as laird of Finzean, Aberdeenshire. The work on exhibition () is a version of a large painting bearing the same title, *The Joyless Winter Day*, the first of his great snowscapes of sheep (and shepherds) caught in a blizzard. Farquharson often worked on such paintings from the relative comfort of a heated hut on wheels.

The beginnings of a Modern Movement in British painting at the start of the twentieth century replaced the Victorian preoccupation with realism by a new understanding of abstract form and structure in art. Painting was recognised as a language of signs rather than an imitation of appearances. Post-Impressionism – Gauguin, Van Gogh and Cézanne – shown in London in 1910 and 1912 had a strong impact¹⁰. Robert Bevan joined Sickert's circle of painters in Fitzroy Street and in 1911 was a founder member of the Camden Town Group,¹¹ whose artists began to use colour in looser ways but with a strong sense of design. Many of Bevan's paintings of Exmoor, Sussex and Brittany feature horses and his most successful London subjects included horse cabs. *Ploughing the Downs* () was probably painted on the Sussex Downs and clearly shows a French influence in his *pointillist* technique, a way of using tiny brushstrokes of contrasting colour to make the painting shimmer with brilliance.

Artists increasingly frequented the countryside. The patron H.B. Harrison invited artist friends, including the Camden Town Group painters Spencer Gore (), Charles Ginner and Robert Bevan, to paint at Applehayes, a large and ancient farm in the Blackdown Hills near Taunton.¹² The artistic results clearly revealed the influence of contemporary French art, particularly of Cézanne and Van Gogh. Alfred Munnings visited Cornwall where he seemed happiest painting cows, undisturbed in the quiet of the Lamorna valley a few miles from Newlyn. Munnings was so keen on the subject that he purchased a cross between a Friesian cow and a Jersey bull to act as a model, although he thought it not nearly so

⁸ The most significant of the exhibitions was shown by Paul Durand-Ruel, Grafton Gallery, London; see Kate Flint, *The Impressionists in England. The Critical Reception*, London, 1984

⁹ Literally, painted in the 'open air'

¹⁰ *Manet and the Post-Impressionists*, London, Grafton Gallery, 1910; *Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition*, Grafton Gallery, 1912. See Anna Greutzner Robins, *Modern Art in Britain*, London (Barbican Art Gallery), 1997

¹¹ For Camden Town, see Wendy Baron, *Perfect Moderns. A History of the Camden Town Group*, Aldershot, 2000

¹² See Rosalind Billingham, *Artists at Applehayes: Camden Town Painters at a West Country Farm 1909-1924*, Coventry (Herbert Art Gallery) and Plymouth (City Museum and Art Gallery), 1986

'romantic and beautiful' as a horse (). Harold Harvey was one of the few Newlyn School artists to be born in Cornwall. *A Cornish Landscape*() shows a Cornish meadow (now extremely rare) painted in Impressionist style, just two years from the outbreak of war. From around 1912, poets and writers including Rudyard Kipling and Rupert Brooke, composers such as Edward Elgar, George Butterworth and Vaughan Williams extolled England's rural virtues in an upsurge of patriotism.

In the popular imagination the British countryside was never so glorious as in those years leading up to the First World War. For much of the first half of this century Britain followed a pattern of farming that not only allowed wild species to flourish, but positively nurtured them. Much of Britain's farmland still bore the imprint of the old Norfolk four-course rotation. Devised in the late eighteenth century, the four-course replaced the traditional third-year fallow of the earlier 'three-course' rotation with a root crop of turnips or mangolds, while in the second of two cereal crops it inserted an undersown 'seeds' crop of grass and clover. Half the country's tillage area would be in grain crops for human consumption and half in fodder crops for cattle and sheep. Combined with a sizeable area of permanent grazing, the new system was to reinvigorate the farming economy. Despite many local adaptations, the basic four-course was applied over much of lowland Britain. Its main purpose was to control crop weeds and pests, and to help maintain soil fertility. It also proved hugely beneficial to wildlife. This basic pattern of farming lasted almost unaltered until the Second World War.¹³

After the Great War there was a revival of interest in landscape and painters hurried to isolated spots in search of the 'spirit of the place'. Allan Gwynne-Jones' visits to Cornwall between 1914-20 were interludes between going to the Slade School of Art, service in the War and his return to the Slade on being demobbed. His painting of *Poltesco Farm* (), like those painted from subjects near his mother's home in Hampshire, conveys a dark and almost foreboding tranquillity. Some of the most lyrical landscapes produced during this period were those by the Seven and Five Society which included Ben and Winifred Nicholson. Following Winifred's marriage to Ben Nicholson, they set up home in 1924 at Banks Head, a farmhouse in Cumberland close to Hadrian's Wall. During the heady years at Banks Head, they were joined by, amongst others, artists Paul Nash, Ivon Hitchens and Christopher Wood. Although she frequently travelled abroad, Winifred's involvement with agriculture and the rural community were all important to her; her *Black Cattle* () painting employs dappled, vibrant brushwork to depict two Blue-grey¹⁴ cows with a calf in the warm darkness of the byre. Ben rejected traditional perspective; patches of colour emphasise the flatness of pigment into which he typically drew the much simplified shapes of livestock (). In 1927 the St Ives Society of Artists was inaugurated and the following year Ben and Winifred were to visit Cornwall themselves.

The 1920s were also years of revival in other ways. Eric Gill inspired an English revival of direct carving in stone and produced dozens of engravings, often on religious themes. In 1924 he moved to Capel-y-Ffin in Wales, soon after which he engraved *The Good Shepherd* and designed several new typefaces. Graham Sutherland, inspired by the mystical works of Samuel Palmer, attempted to revive the English country idyll in his etchings of the 1920s¹⁵. In his Pembrokeshire paintings of 1934 to 1942 (which he largely worked upon in Kent), the concern is less to do with the countryside than with the thoughts and emotions of the artist. His followers, such as John Minton and John Craxton, tended to seek out their Arcadian refuge on the Continent. Thomas Saunders Nash's painting *The Farmyard* ()

¹³ See Graham Harvey, *The Killing of the Countryside* pp.21-22

¹⁴ Blue-grey cattle were a cross of Galloway and White Cumbrian Shorthorn cattle.

¹⁵ Sutherland, and his contemporaries including F.L.Griggs and Robin Tanner, were greatly influenced by the exhibition of *Drawings, Etchings and Woodcuts by Samuel Palmer and other Disciples of William Blake* shown at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, in 1926

likewise seeks to recreate a sense of idyll; the figures and animals drenched in strong light are part of a hot, timeless summer's day on the farm.

From the mid 1920s the high corn prices of wartime fell, world markets collapsed leaving farming in lethargy, and the number of agricultural labourers fell sharply. As the 1930s progressed, the danger of a second world war led to farming incentives and subsidies. With the immense growth in car ownership there came a spate of popular publications, including the Shell guides, illustrated or written by such as John Piper, Paul Nash and John Betjamen which encouraged people to explore the countryside.¹⁶

In Cookham's fields, river and farms, Stanley Spencer saw 'Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land'. One of a large number of landscapes made at this time, his painting of a group of Large White pigs in a ramshackle sty () perhaps hints at the artist's experience of the suffering of men and animals during the Great War and to his own barely contained animality. To better understand Spencer's mind at this time, it is interesting to compare this painting with *The Leg of Mutton Nude*, a study of male, female and animal flesh painted the year before in 1937. James Bateman was born in Kendal, the son of a farming family, and became best known for his scenes of auctions and farmyards featuring cattle and horses. Bateman painted *Commotion in the Cattle Ring* () at Banbury Market; dairy bulls like this Friesian have a reputation for being unpredictable. He also specialised in harvesting scenes, intent on modern variations of old themes, and country myth. Like Bateman, Evelyn Dunbar was commissioned as a Official War Artist to paint the war effort on the land. Dunbar was sent in 1940 to the Farm Institute of Sparsholt in Hampshire, a training centre for women recruits for the Land Army. Many outstanding paintings of farming life were produced by her () during the Second World War, most particularly, *A Land Girl and the Bail Bull* 1945. Other artists like Frank Newbould, to whom Alan Howkins has already referred, were commissioned to produce enlistment posters which suggest that it was the very future of Britain's countryside – rather than its cities - that our soldiers would be fighting for ().

With the declaration of war in 1939, government involvement in farming became total. From now on agriculture was to be a publicly managed industry. Agricultural statistics for the war years were impressive and the arable acreage of England was increased by over 6 million acres. But State involvement did not end with the coming of peace. By 1945 something of a farming and political consensus had emerged with all the main parties in agreement that there must be no return to pre-war uncertainties. The 1947 Agriculture Act essentially provided 'guaranteed prices and assured markets' and was quickly followed by measures to extend the ploughing-up subsidy and to provide capital grants for hill farmers. Later, there were subsidies on fertiliser use and on beef calves. Essentially, it would be public funding that was to change for ever the look – and the life - of the British landscape. Guides to the countryside at that time, aimed largely at new-comers and visitors, included *How to See Nature* and *How to Grow your own Food*. George Orwell's political allegory *Animal Farm* was published in 1945, the same year as the Soil Association came into being to promote organic husbandry and a better understanding of the relationship between agriculture, nutrition and health. The first broadcast of *The Archers* – intended to be a kind of farming *Dick Barton* – was made in 1951.

John Gilroy had worked for the Ministry of Information during the war and was responsible for such memorable posters as *Dig for Victory* and *Careless Talk Costs Lives*. A prolific illustrator who also became well known for his Guinness stout posters, Gilroy painted the shearing of Swaledale sheep in Baldersdale – an event that involved the whole

¹⁶ For a recent study of responses to the English landscape rurality and identity, see David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, London, 1998 in which the author analyses changing constructions of and the consumption of the countryside from 1918 to the present.

family, friends and neighbours – in the years following the war (). Born in 1898, the same year as Gilroy, Henry Moore was Britain's most notable sculptor of the twentieth century; he was also a prolific draftsman, producing drawings and prints of both domesticated and wild animals. His most notable group of drawings of sheep were made in a sketchbook in 1972 from animals that grazed the fields surrounding his studio in Hertfordshire (). Other drawings of the ewe with lamb clearly echo the 'mother and child' sculptural theme. The rural life of West Cumberland was painted by Sheila Fell, whose ancestors had farmed land around the Solway coast since the fourteenth century. After art school she settled in London, painting scenes of her native landscape, livestock and work in the fields. Later paintings, such as her harvest scene of 1975 () are marked by a horizontal composition and, from darker, more brooding earlier work, a lighter palette.

During the twentieth century, and especially in the 1960s, political and social changes encouraged artists to address nature in new ways. Painting landscapes as a way of seeing seemed increasingly incompatible with a new sense of our relationship with the Earth seen from space, and through the eyes of different cultures and religions. Artists and designers continued to be influenced by the imagery, colours and textures in nature, but they also sought to work in a way which reflected how nature itself worked and to understand the new scientific theories and processes underlying the natural world. The destruction of habitats worldwide and the deteriorating condition of urban life also triggered a new wave of environmental awareness and artists, designers and architects increasingly sought strategies to remedy exploitation, waste and pollution through direct action and sustainable design. Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Compassion in World Farming and the Rare Breeds Survival Trust were all originated in the six years between 1967 and 1973.

In his influential book *Man and the Natural World* published in the 1980s, Keith Thomas maintained that in order to fully understand our present-day problems we have to look back over the past 500 years; centuries which generated both an intense interest in nature and those anxieties which we have inherited today.¹⁷ The drawing of a firm line between man and beast enabled theorists to justify hunting, livestock domestication and meat-eating. The urge to distinguish the human from the animal also provided justification for the ill-treatment and subjugation of other races, women and the poor. Domestication became the pattern for all kinds of social subordination.

Over the past decade, artists have increasingly drawn on symbolic ideas involving animals: the immediate subject of those ideas being not the animal itself, but rather the artist using animal imagery to make a statement about human identity. For the 1993 Venice Biennale, Damien Hirst sliced a cow and calf in half, preserving each side in two tanks of formaldehyde and presenting them as walk-through sculptures entitled *Mother and Child Divided*. () Flattened against glass walls, each animal's interior was revealed as fascinating rather than repellent, making us reconsider the links between the meat that we eat and the quality of animality that we share. Sam Taylor-Wood's recent photographs have explored the psychological and emotional links between animals and her own fight against cancer. *Poor Cow*, () taken just before the foot and mouth outbreak, stares out at us in its loneliness from a dismal, flat field. In another work *Bound Ram*, made at a time when she was being treated by chemotherapy, she photographed a bound and terrified sheep awaiting slaughter in a Moroccan market.

Olivier Richon's work of the 1980s involved a series of tableaux of animals based on traditional allegorical scenes, the choice of creature often reflecting upon mankind's own foibles. His recent allegories shift to target the viewer of art, rather than the imagined

¹⁷ Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World. Changing Attitudes in England 1500- 1800*, London 1983

virtues and vices we might associate with the animals (). The sculptures and photographic works of Dorothy Cross enquire into the nature of sexuality and what qualities constitute the feminine. Her works of the early 1990s using cow hides, udders and teats challenge the attitude that women should be as docile and obedient as cows. Although best known in Cumbria for his painting and prints of farming life in the Eden Valley, imagery by Alan Stones of the early 1990s such as *Tumble* () frequently acts as a metaphor to suggest a personal sense of isolation and confusion.

The pastoral tradition and notions of beauty and the sublime have been alluded to by other contemporary artists. After service in the Second World War Ian Hamilton Finlay worked in the Orkneys as a shepherd. Thwarted in his ambition to study philosophy, he took to agricultural labouring and writing, founding his Wild Hawthorn Press in 1961. Since that time he has pursued revolutionary and idyllic themes from a neoclassical standpoint, linking them to the burning issues of the twentieth century (). His best known work is his remarkable garden at Stonypath in Lanarkshire which he started in 1967. Karen Knorr's *When Will You Ever Learn?* () is from a series of photographs entitled *Sanctuary*, displayed at the Wallace Collection in London, which refer to the myths and allegories associated with animals in the collection of old master paintings. Sheep, wolves and birds all seem to have ventured out of the paintings and into the museum, out from culture back into nature. Here, Knorr alludes both to the pastoral tradition and to the current (at that time) foot and mouth crisis. A large photographic work in the exhibition by Siobhán Hapaska, who represented Ireland in the 2001 Venice Biennale, was made from a Polaroid taken during a walk along the North Wales coast on the afternoon of New Year's Day 2000. The artist tells of a moment of both sadness and beauty when, with the sun fast disappearing behind the dunes, the earth already seemed to be moulding itself around the body of the dying sheep.

Artists' use of new technology can help us to visualise the empathy we feel to animals, rather than the fear that keeps us apart. John Berger, in 'Why look at animals?', the opening piece in his 1980 collection *About Looking* writes about an absence of contact which is epitomized by the pathos of an unrecognising, imperfectly-met gaze, 'The animal scrutinizes him [man] across a narrow abyss of non-comprehension..... The man too is looking across a similar, but not identical, abyss...'.¹⁸ In Nicky Coutts' series *The Inheritors* () photographs of human eyes (the artist's own) have been merged into the found images of the heads of animals using digital scanning technology. Although, on the surface, these hybrids appear to be some cobbled feat of advanced genetic engineering, the work dwells on feelings of connection rather than separation in the relationship between humans and other species. The latest visualising technology can also allow us to look into minute, previously unseen, worlds. Daro Montag, who has used micro-organisms to create large photographic prints in the past, has created a new work for this exhibition () which makes visible the activities of the foot and mouth virus. This has been a collaboration with the Institute for Animal Health, Pirbright - the only place within the UK that allows the study of the living virus – which has recently been equipped with digital cameras and software able to record the activities of virus in living cells in real time.

By the early 1960s, the first damaging effects of insecticides and nitrogen fertilisers on the environment as a result of Britain's post-war farming policies were being felt. Graham Harvey's award-winning book *The Killing of the Countryside* notes how, by the 1980s, Britain's wildlife and countryside had already fallen into steep decline: 'More than thirty years of farm price protection had created a production juggernaut with a blind and seemingly insatiable urge to homogenise the landscape. Throughout lowland Britain hedges were being grubbed out, ponds and ditches filled in, marshes drained, meadows

¹⁸ Quoted in Steve Baker, *Picturing the beast: Animals, identity and representation*, Manchester University Press, pp.11-12

ploughed and woods and copses felled, all in the name of higher output.¹⁹ A livestock population explosion throughout the wild uplands of Britain also had the effect of wiping out thousands of acres of fragile habitats. Cornish meadows, such as those painted by Harold Harvey almost a hundred years ago, became 'exceptionally rare'.

The trauma of foot and mouth seems likely to become a watershed, forcing farming policy to return to first principles. A recent Government commission concluded that England's farming and food industry today is unsustainable, in every sense.²⁰ Many now believe that biological farming – farming based on natural cycles - is the only system which can provide safe, wholesome food and that it is also the only system that can be genuinely sustainable and non-destructive of Britain's soils and watercourses.

Whatever solutions are suggested – and there will be many - our challenge today is how to reconcile the physical requirements of civilisation with the new feelings that our culture has generated, and to close the gap between modern, individual self-fulfilment and the general responsibility for future generations. Against this background, ecology denotes a cultural change marking artists and art in just the same way as farmers and politicians.

Clive Adams is the curator of the exhibition and has been involved since the mid-1970s with the work of many artists who address our relationship to nature. He has held a Research Post at the University of Plymouth since September 1998 and, with his wife Jill, initiated the Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World.

¹⁹ Graham Harvey, *The Killing of the Countryside*, London, 1998, p.

²⁰ *Farming & Food a sustainable future*, Report of the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, January 2002