

PLAY PROJECT: *PRACTICE* — *AND...*

a semester-long contemplative project — for your sketchbook

part i — references

THE GREATEST ACT OF
ENVIRONMENTALISM IS TO
STOP CREATING DEMAND.

THE GREATEST ACT OF
RESISTANCE IS TO
STOP CONSUMING.

Douglas Balmain, Printed in Harper's Magazine, April & May issues, 2021
<https://www.douglasbalmain.com/environment.html>

Environment is an encompassing term with many contextual applications. It reaches into the entirety of our experience—every dusty, neglected corner that defines our perceptions and surroundings. Despite our constant and total immersion in the experience of our environments, environmentalism has been reduced to a reactive process — a process forced into the role of addressing damages already incurred.

Acts against the environment are not perpetrated solely by the world's uncaring, nor by the profiteers and/or misguidedly self-interested. The taxes we impose upon Nature are being levied by all of us — intentions, ideals, and political allegiances aside. The damages that environmentalism seeks to address stem from the very basis and structuring of our modern cultures and societies as a whole. Our demands of this Earth are hidden behind the most common, and passively accepted, ways in which we think, act, expend, consume, and live. To regain environmentalism as a progressive process, we must accept the work of unlearning.

We must unlearn destructive beliefs and unsustainable patterns of behavior. We must reconnect with our own power-of-intuition in spite of our society's motivations to keep us overwhelmed, over-leveraged, and distracted. Environmentalism must be restored to an intuitive practice — a way of living that honors connectedness and is intimately aware of what one gives-to and asks-of the Nature that we are from. When intuition and autonomy-of-Self are regained, environmentalism will cease to be a reaction, a battle, or series of concessions. It will simply become the way. To care for Nature is to care for yourself, which in turn is to care for those you love and wish to protect.

The artist is distinguished from all the other responsible actors in society—the politicians, legislators, educators, scientists, et cetera—by the fact that he is his own test tube, his own laboratory, working according to very rigorous rules, however unstated these may be, and cannot allow any consideration to supersede his responsibility to reveal all that he can possibly discover concerning the mystery of the human being. Society must accept some things as real; but he must always know that the visible reality hides a deeper one, and that all our action and all our achievement rests on things unseen. A society must assume that it is stable, but the artist must know, and he must let us know, that there is nothing stable under heaven. One cannot possibly build a school, teach a child, or drive a car without taking some things for granted. The artist cannot and must not take anything for granted, but must drive to the heart of every answer and expose the question the answer hides.

james baldwin — *the creative process from the price of the ticket: collected nonfiction*, 1962. ed: beacon press, 2021.

[DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

Experiments in Imagining Otherwise

by Lola Olufemi

Hajar Press. 2021

Past (Present/Future) pp. 07-17

[DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

OTHER REFERENCES

As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance

by Leanne Betasamoake Simpson

University of Minnesota Press, 2017

Chapter NINE: LAND AS PEDAGOGY, pp 145-173

[DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

[Dance, Dance, While the Hive Collapses](#)

By Tiffany Higgins

Poetry Foundation, January 2016

[Near-Earth Object](#)

By John Shoptaw

Poetry Foundation, January 2019

play project: *practice — and ...*

john ros

part ii — group writing exercises

1. Take a sentence (one that you take from somewhere — ideally from the above research — but really anywhere, someone else, not one that you write/wrote yourself). Do something to it (what you do could be writing, but it doesn't have to be); do something else to it; do still something else to it; do something else to it yet again, etc...
2. Take a blank sheet of paper; put a word on it; put another word on it, not necessarily next to (or above or below) the first word; put another word on it, again not necessarily next to (or above or below) either of the first two words, etc...
3. Write down a noun; find a verb for it; now write down that same verb again, only this time find another noun for it; now write down that same noun again, only this time find another verb for it, etc...

part iii — contemplations

Using the above reading and writing exercises as a jumping off point, and also considering your current creative practice, contemplate the following. These contemplations can take any form, unless otherwise prompted.

- What does it look like for artists who aim to create?
- How much do you consume to create?
- How can creatives be at the forefront of environmental activism?
- What might an environmental credo for the 21st century look like — for a practitioner? — for a creative consumer?
- With the environment at the forefront, how can we define practice and output?
- Does the environment need more production? Are we creating too much demand?

Now, consider the following questions. Answer them in any way that seems fitting for you as a practitioner — but also consider how these might be answered as someone who consumes creative things, as well as a member in your neighborhood, city, country, etc...

- What does it mean to be a steward of the environment?
- How does my practice impact the local community and environment? How does it impact the boarder community and environment?
- What do I do to offset these impacts? What can i do to offset these impacts?
- Are these changes realistic and/or sustainable?
- What is essential? What can be given up?

part iv — collection/s

Finally, reflecting all the above, consider how to record your contemplations, ideas, process, progress, practice, etc. You will engage with this concept over the entire semester. How might your creative practice promote ways of thinking, collecting, being, etc. with part iii's contemplations as a framework? How might you like to present your findings? Is there an end to this research? The only ask is that you contemplate in your sketchbook throughout the term ... if you would like to create and/or present a final object or *thing* at the end of this project, please connect with john to discuss.

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Process/progress: keep a record for ongoing thinking
- Consider the collective: you may choose to work alone or work collaboratively to discuss ideas — either way, each participant will be asked to share their own findings

Most importantly have fun! Play, day-dream, wander, find, un-fold, stumble upon... and maybe most important, surprise yourself.