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Edited by Anne Marie Butler, Donna Roberts, Iveta Slavkova

# Surrealism and Ecology

CURATING AND INTERPRETING CULTURE

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### Summary

'Surrealism and Ecology' is the first volume to consider the intersections of these two fields. It addresses the contribution of the avant-gardes in thinking about the relationship of humans with their environment in the context of massive environmental upheaval in the twentieth century. This volume explores the significant role of Surrealist artists and writers within the history of critical thinking about nature and environment over the last hundred years. It approaches ecology both as a mode of thinking about the many interconnections of life and as a way of experiencing and knowing the world. The relationship of humans with their environment is of paramount significance within contemporary discourse, and the contribution of the historical avant-gardes to this topic remains largely underexplored. In addressing this gap, the book presents a diverse selection of analyses of the ways in which the Surrealists have thought about and represented nature and the human place within it. It emphasises how Surrealism's interventions in connecting seemingly distinct domains of thought and phenomena can be understood as relevant to more recent developments in the practice of ecological thought.

Surrealist practices and the academic field of Surrealism studies are broad in scope and include not only visual art, but also poetry and literature, film, philosophy, exhibition design, and experimental practice. This volume includes contributions from established and developing scholars working across disciplines and locations, who address such varied practices and engage with analyses from multiple perspectives. The international and trans-Atlantic history of Surrealism is well-represented in this book, with over half the texts exploring the work of European Surrealists in exile during the Second World War or the art and environmental and political activism of Surrealists in the Caribbean and throughout the Americas.

### About the editors

**Anne Marie E. Butler** is Associate Professor of Art History and Women, Gender, and Sexuality at Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo, MI, Land of the Council of the Three Fires, USA. Her research focuses on contemporary Tunisian art within the contexts of global contemporary art, contemporary global Surrealism studies, Southwest Asia and North Africa studies, gender and sexuality studies, and queer theory. Within these areas, she considers how issues of gender, sexuality, and queerness coincide with parameters of the nation-state and the imbrication of state authority within social constructs. She has published in 'ASAP/ Journal,' 'Journal of Middle East Women's Studies,' 'Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies,' and 'The London Review of Education.' She is an editor of 'Queer Contemporary Art of Southwest Asia and North Africa' with Sascha Crasnow (Intellect Press, 2024).

**Donna Roberts** is a scholar of Surrealism currently based at the University of Helsinki. After post-graduate studies at the University of Essex, working on the periodicals 'Documents' and 'Le Grand Jeu,' she pursued post-doctoral work in Mexico City, and has since taught in Switzerland and been resident in Finland since 2011. Her travels have strongly oriented her interest into different conceptions and experiences of the natural world, which remains her primary research interest. She has published on such topics as Surrealist periodicals, the Grand Jeu, Czech Surrealism, Roger Caillois' writings on stones and insects, Surrealism and the philosophy of Henri Bergson, Surrealism and natural history, evolutionary theory and ecology. She is currently on the Advisory Board of the International Journal of Surrealism. Roberts' main area of research concerns the presence within Surrealism of historical discourses on nature. She is currently writing a monograph on Surrealism as a life philosophy which has both drawn on and opposed various discourses on nature that emerged out of the European Enlightenment and fed into literature, art, political theory, theories of evolution, and the contested domain of the human.

**Iveta Slavkova** is Associate Professor at the American University of Paris. Her field of research is the humanism crisis and the avant-garde in the context of the two World Wars. She is the author of a monograph, 'Réparer l'homme. La crise de l'humanisme et l'Homme nouveau des avant-gardes' (1909-1929) published in 2020 by Presses du réel, co-editor of the EAM volume 'Crisis' (2022) at De Gruyter, and translator of Sascha Bru's 'The European Avant-Gardes, 1905-1935. A Portable Guide' (original edition 2018 by Edinburgh University Press, French translation 2023 by Hermann). She has published articles on the instrumentalisation of humanism in World War I propaganda. She has also written on the disillusionment with humanism after World War II, specifically in the work of Paris-based artists Camille Bryen or Wols, which led them to reconsider the place of humans in the universe and the Earth's ecosystem, calling for a new ecology of the mind. She is currently working on a book studying the intellectual trend Abhumanism initiated by French playwright and novelist Jacques Audiberti, a precursor of posthumanism. He was also a visual artist whose drawings and paintings will be analysed for the first time. An understudied aspect of post-Second World War intellectual life, Abhumanism contributes to reevaluate the vitality of the Parisian intellectual and artistic debates, and establish the continuity with the historical avant-garde preceding it, Surrealism in particular.

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