0. Introduction

The difficulty of discussing nature derives from the ambiguity of what “nature” exactly means. For instance, when arguing about nature and humans, “nature being viewed as an object from a certain distance” has already been presupposed. This view of nature becomes more prominent when talking about landscape because we look at landscape as a portion of nature aesthetically framed. However what is “nature” framed, then?

Environmental art addresses the natural environment and uses it as a material. Yet environmental art deals with the contemporary complex natural environment that can no longer be grasped from the traditional point of view of Western philosophy about nature. The degeneration of environment which is hastening and progressing at an unprecedented speed and scale suggests that nature might, therefore, be understood not as an eternal circle in harmony, but as a mortal existence with history in irreversible time—like human beings.

Postmodernism must have begun with the loss of grand narrative, and postmodern art has been similarly affected. For example, the beginning of landscape painting means the liberation from the confines of narrative and the subsequent loss of narrative. Indeed, environmental art is not painting landscape, but dealing with landscape as a subject and using nature itself as the material. Moreover, narrative is removed completely. Yet, just as contemporary art stumbles down a dead-end street to find narrative at its end, environmental art has further developed the characteristic termed “site-specific.” This characteristic involves environmental art with the history of the place or landscape, and begins to relate their narrative. At the same time, being site-specific means that art also serves as a mnemonic device for narrative.

Here, I examine the state of contemporary environmental art and the natural environment addressed by the works of two British environmental artists, the Sheepfolds project (1996–2007) by Andy Goldsworthy (1956–), and Ash Dome (1977–) and the Wooden Boulder (1978–) by David Nash (1945–).

1. Sheepfolds Project

1-1. Sheepfolds

As a public art project, Andy Goldsworthy’s Sheepfolds arose from selection of the Northern Arts Board Region to host the UK Year of the Visual Arts in 1996. Originally, the project had planned to build one hundred sheepfolds in Cumbria County. However, each step taken to realize that the project was impeded. For one thing, the project was curtailed midway by foot and mouth disease. Sheepfolds ended up taking 11 years, seven years longer than expected. A total of 46 sheepfolds were constructed in 30 locations in Northern England, all across the vast area of Cumbria. Afterwards, the area was enlarged to include Yorkshire and part of Scotland as well.

In the English countryside, the dry stone walls, especially in the pasturelands of Northern England, are an
essential characteristic of the popular countryside landscape of Britain, and is vital to its sheep farming industry as well. The dry stone walls marking the borders between pastures are a subsisting evidence of British history. When British society broke away from the feudal system, they began enclosing land to create pasturelands for grazing and dairy farming. In the 16th century, landowners discarded farming in favor of raising sheep and cattle; they walled off the lands they owned as individual possessions. In fact, private landowners also took some lands that had been in common use and walled them off as well. Thus, any usage rights for areas formerly in cooperative use “disappeared.” In some cases, to open land for sheep or cow raising, residents were even evicted from their homes. Based on a legislation during the 18th and 19th centuries, boundaries were set among high-altitude lands during the vast movement to enclose fields. Most of the dry stone walls seen today result from this post-Middle Ages movement. Throughout the enclosure process, stone walls were erected, and even today they mark the English landscape, continuously, for miles and miles.

Scattered along the sections of the stone walls are different sizes of sheepfolds. Sheep are penned for shearing and milking, and afford the sheep protection during the night. Three types of sheepfolds stem from the systems of transhumance used from the Middle Ages: all-purpose sheepfolds, pinfolds used to hold strays, and washfolds used for cleaning the sheep.

From the 12th through the 16th centuries, a great number of summer-time mountain pastures, or shielings, were established in Cumbria, along with huts and pens for shepherds. Most of the sheepfolds lie at the fell edges. There, shepherds would gather the sheep, lop off their tails using a reddish stone to apply a branding mark, vaccinate them, and clip off the soiled wool. Cumbria’s geographical position made it an inevitable focus for herds and flocks being driven from the Scottish Highlands, Galloway, and Ireland toward the smoking chimneys of the Lancashire and Yorkshire industrial centers.

Since the sheep were driven long distances, a single sheep might often get separated from its flock. As the sheep farming system developed, many rules and regulations were established—along with pinfolds. Stray sheep impounded in pinfolds where they stayed until their owners could retrieve them. Found in towns and villages, pinfolds were generally in secure, visible spots in the community, and still remain standing today.

As the wool industry grew, many new techniques and practices developed. Washing sheep before shearing was a general practice for over 600 years because, until the end of the 19th century, wool manufacturers were not equipped with machinery to wash and dry the wool. It was more practical simply to wash and dry the wool on the sheep, so washfolds were constructed by streams and ponds. Washing sheep is an incredibly arduous task, and is very expensive for the sheep farmer. It also reduced the wool’s weight, which in turn reduced the pound-for-pound profit obtained from the wool. Although washed wool fetched a higher price, farmers eventually realized that the losses incurred from washing wool outweighed its profits. Thus, the proportion of wool clipped without washing gradually increased, and the number of washfolds declined.  

Goldsworthy included these three kinds of sheepfolds in his Sheepfolds project. Potential locations were identified by the word ‘sheepfold’ on maps with a scale of 1:25000. Historical sources published between 1890 and 1905, especially the first edition of the Ordnance Survey maps, were used to locate the faded remains of historical sheepfolds and to consider whether these sites were fitting to the artwork. Pinfold sites in towns and villages are used in addition to sheepfolds and washfolds in the pastures to allow the project to serve as a connection, between the past and present of the landscape of Cumbrian countryside’s history, as well as between the urban and the rural.

The Sheepfold project built sheepfolds in a way that shows a historical continuum, grounded in the tradition of the dry stone walls and sheepfolds. As opposed to building in new areas, sheepfolds were rebuilt where they had already existed, and not with stones freshly cut from the quarry, but with the old stones from portions of derelict walls or folds. Old walls are destroyed and breathe life into new walls. The cycle of growth and decay repeats itself continuously similar to the cycle of life within nature. Walls move from where they used to stand to a different
place while retaining its essence. Walls that run around meadows are “a line moving through the landscape.” They form a line that moves from the past to the present, penetrating both space and time. When they have fallen to decay somewhere through the flow of time and they are restored in another place. For the Sheepfolds, Goldsworthy works with a team of skilled wallers, because this project is embedded in “the social nature of the landscape,” and making through the traditions of building walls and raising sheep are its essential element.

There are 46 sheepfolds all across the vast areas of Cumbria. Individual folds were constructed as individual artworks as well as a series of works as a whole responding to the landscape of Cumbria. By recreating them as artwork, Goldsworthy reinvigorated these sheepfolds, that is, traditional common constructions with new energy.

1–2. Memory of Sheep Farming or Memory of Life
The Casterton Fellfoot Drove Folds (1996) are a series of small sheepfolds built all along the unpaved Fellfoot Road at Casterton. The track, where shepherds bring down from the fells and drive their sheep, goes on for miles with dry stone walls on either side. Alongside of Fellfoot Road, for over four miles, Goldsworthy built 16 folds. Some of these are old and others are new structures surrounding field boulders along a drove route.

In each fold a massive boulder has been installed, transported from the nearby field. These boulders come in all shapes and measure, roughly, from 60 cm to 2 m on all sides. Some folds have sufficient space for sheep to gather around the boulder, but some boulders placed in them are so large that no space is left for the sheep. However, the folds in Casterton were not built to gather sheep, rather to keep them out. Thus, when compared to practical sheepfolds, their artistic character is more prominent.

When you walk along the unpaved gravel track the dry stone walls seem to go on forever, and the sheepfolds are sited at intervals on either side inspire a certain rhythm. Yet, the sheepfolds are not constructed directly at the side of the road, but are integrated into the dry stone boundary wall at the corners of the adjoining field. Flatter slabs, which act as steps jut from the roadside wall, show you where the sheepfolds are and invite you to enter. Standing on this slab, you can observe flocks of sheep and herds of cattle grazing on sweeping pastures at some distance from the wall. If you then look down at your feet, you can see the sheepfolds directly below, and if you straddle the wall and step down, you can walk right into the enclosures.

Castern’s Fellfoot Drove Folds express the daily routines of sheep farming, the movement of sheep and the passage of sheep travelling along the drove routes. The gait of the people walking on the track takes on a unique rhythm as shepherds drive their sheep, with the dry stone walls on either side, all the while searching for the next sheepfold. The Cumbrian climate—with its rain, wind, frost, hail, and snow—ensures that the landscape is ever changing. Visitors can walk on top of these Drove Stones and touch them with their hands. Penned-in sheep might add some lanolin luster from the wool by rubbing themselves against the boulder. These factors incite subtle changes in the boulders inside the

Figure 1 Andy Goldsworthy, Casterton Fellfoot Drove Folds, 1996 Cumbria, England.
Photograph by Takako Itoh
folds as each one wears away, little by little, as time flows on.

However, in doing so, the passing of time sculpted on stone expands like the surrounding landscape. It internalizes not only the rhythm of the drove embedded in the Casterton Fellfoot Drove Folds but also the sheepfolds in all of Cumbria, as well as the history of sheep farming.

In the Mountjoy Tree Folds, 2001 of Mountjoy Farms in Underbarrow, two sheepfolds face each other north to south. A boulder lies in the middle of each fold, and in the middle of each boulder, a hole is bored into the ground, where a rowan tree is planted. Both boulders came from the area around the sheepfolds, and the rowan trees were seedlings chosen from among the trees close by. The trees growing out of the boulders give an immediately powerful sense of life—the impression that the work itself is the very “Tree of Life,” or even that it is connected to existence itself, a “tree growing from stone” that recalls the ancient image of the Axis Mundi, the World Tree, or a great chain of being, “Tree of Life”6 like Darwin’s evolutionary genealogical tree.

In February 2001, when this work of art was in the middle of its production, the UK had a massive outbreak of foot and mouth disease. Cumbria’s hundreds of farms were caught in the crisis; even the Sheepfolds project was impacted and had to be postponed. The day of plantation at the Tree Folds happened to fall two or three days after the outbreak began, so that too was halted. Finally, the trees were planted in December, several months after the foot and mouth disease was curbed. All livestock, not only those afflicted by the disease, had to be disposed of on farms within three kilometers of where the outbreak occurred.

Eventually, the numbers of culled livestock reached between 6,500,000 and 10,000,000 animals, with nearly half of all livestock raised in the UK destroyed. In the fields of Dumfriesshire, Scotland, where Goldsworthy lives, officials drew a white emergency line showing the restricted territory to keep the disease in check. “Going into the restricted area is like entering a war zone: the military cull squads, men in uniforms, police, flashing lights, areas cordoned off, and columns of smoke from the fires and the smell of burning flesh.”7 is Goldsworthy’s account of the general state at the time. Whether out of fear of infectious disease, or perhaps simply to halt the spread, there was massive slaughter, and “then afterwards the strange, empty fields.”8 The havoc wreaked by foot and mouth disease, added the meaning of not just the death within the cycle of nature but the deaths of the individuals as the existence in their replaceable history, to the Tree Folds.

Preceding this work, Goldsworthy created a work called Wool/gathered from/a decaying sheep/worked around a hole, Scotland, 22 January, 2001 at the beginning of the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. It represents a cruel, clear, and straightforward image of death, unlike Goldsworthy’s previous works. The image of dead and decaying sheep, having lost the struggle to survive, belongs in the gloomy tradition of “memento mori.” The work depicts the individual animal’s deaths as a fact within the bounds of history, rather than as a process within the cycles of nature.

“The struggle to survive and grow”9 is a central theme of the Tree Folds. According to Goldsworthy, the

Figure 2 Andy Goldsworthy, Mountjoy Tree Folds, 2001, Cumbria, England. Photograph by Takako Itoh
rowan tree rising from the heart of the rock becomes symbolic of the strong desire for regeneration, for overcoming calamity, and surviving. To people who view it, the tree growing from the heart of the stone, in the protective embrace of the sheepfold, provoke a mixture of feelings about the precariousness and difficulties of the sheep farming: strain, hardship, struggle, rebirth, fragility, and strength. This work became a memorial, particularly to the lives and deaths of the huge number of sheep from foot and mouth disease.\textsuperscript{10}

1-3. Stone Embraced by Stone Enclosure

In the two works, \textit{Casterton Fellfoot Drove Folds} and \textit{Mountjoy Tree Folds}, the boulders placed inside sheepfolds are protected by sheepfolds of the dry stone wall. The fact of the large boulders placed in the enclosures suggests that in spite of their inherent solidity and strength, they are vulnerable and need protection. Placing these fieldstones within stone enclosures makes them seem precious, almost worthy of veneration, as if they were pagan Neolithic monuments.\textsuperscript{11}

At the same time, the sheepfolds are always associated with sheep inherent in Christian symbolism and the Christian image of hortus conclusus, fields surrounded by a stone wall. Thus, because sheep and humans need protection, they are both traditionally conceived of as helpless. However, these concepts do not apply to stones as stones are inorganic—not alive. Yet, from a geologic point of view, they do have history, a past of being carried vast distances by prehistoric glaciers. Stones, therefore, contain the Earth’s energy, and Goldsworthy understood that they could be considered to contain life, just like sheep. Even stones seemingly strong, but also fragile, and carry the memory of Earth’s changes from prehistoric times. This fact clearly indicates that the landscape, nature, and environment of the Earth each contain life and continue to transform over a long period of time, and that they could therefore be considered “living” things to be protected. Stone folds are thus both “containers of life,” and “receptacles of memory”. The stones Goldsworthy placed in the stone folds harbor not only the history of sheep farming but also the memories of the region and its landscape as well. Also, for a long time, more than a hundred years, many sheepfolds, now rebuilt to surround and protect the boulders, had been neglected. With the new life now infused into the sheepfolds, they can be used and appreciated again; also, they can connect the sheepfolds’ history and tradition with modern sheep farming and to the lifestyle of the region.

As with many other contemporary projects of environmental art, the inclusion of local geography and history implies the collaboration with many people and specialists in a variety of fields and the existence of the project itself as a social entity. The bodies to whom the proposal was first made were the local authorities, the arts development, countryside and environmental agencies and the major landowning and land-managing arts and educational organizations. Their positive response to \textit{Sheepfolds} enabled the project to be developed across the county with the help of local communities, parish councils, farmers, and landowners.

The overriding philosophy for realizing this project is not to impose the project on people or on the landscape. This is based on the attitude towards nature of British environmental art from the outset and \textit{Sheepfolds} as art articulates the social consciousness of living together in harmony with local residents. At a deliberately slow and careful pace, Goldsworthy explained the concept of a county-wide sculpture project to every individual community across the whole of Cumbria, cementing their complete support. Cumbria’s landscape and sheep farming history were an important aspect of the project, so countless communities across this expansive region were interested in the project, and thus, joined in. In Cumbrian schools, the project is being used to implement parts of the National Curriculum, including art, English, technology, history, and geography. Those involved surveyed prospective sites for \textit{Sheepfolds} and the consequent archive of data and information was an important resource for the development of the project. In these processes, the project came to provide a tight link between landscape, tradition in Cumbria, and their sheep farming history through contemporary sculpture.

The \textit{Sheepfolds} project by Goldsworthy expresses a way of connecting to the particular site and place through
art, in the link with the time of nature where people live. It illustrates one of the guidelines to know the nature with history and our relationship towards nature.

2. Coming Work/Going Work

David Nash, a well-known English sculptor, works mainly with wood, from withered trees, those blown over by wind and storms, or cut down to thin out a forest. He never uses a newly, purposefully cut tree for a work—always a tree that needs to be cut down for some other good reason or a tree that has already fallen. Nash calls these methods of obtaining wood as a Wood Quarry, and he uses every part of the tree. After carving a single tree into a few sculptures, he turns the smaller twigs into charcoal and uses them for sketching. Just as decaying organic matter returns to nature, everything here is reduced to art.

This paper mentions two complimentary environmental art projects created by Nash, Ash Dome and the Wooden Boulder. These two projects represent the two opposing aspects in the cycles of nature: growth and decomposition.

2-1. Ash Dome

*Ash Dome* is a sculpture made from living trees. In a circle with a diameter of 10 meters, 22 ash trees were planted and shaped into a dome-like space through continuous pruning. Lately, the ash seedlings have come to be called “Cae’n-y-Coed”, a Welsh word meaning “field in the trees”. The work was originally designed as conceptual art in 1976, but they were actually planted in February 1977, on a parcel of land sloping up from of the Festiniog Valley in Gwinedd, North Wales.

Nash sees an intrinsic problem for American land art because it is in remote wilderness too far away from cities to approach with incredible long distance transportation, an artist’s intervention in usually a remote area is documented once during its creation, and then it is abandoned. For Nash, this problem is also related to the difficulties in creating a large wooden sculpture out of doors. In its natural state, subject to wind and rain, and exposed to strong sunlight, wood cannot resist them and will quickly deteriorate. However, “time” was a big element in Nash’s work from the start. In producing art that draws out the inherent form of the trees, so to speak, the character of the original branches and trunks in Nash’s sculpture often remain intact. The work may rupture or break from cracking and warping after it is completed if the wood used was not well dried. However, phenomena like this are anticipated. These kinds of changes, which are the product of time etched into an organic tree, make the surface more expressive. They rot, deteriorate, and finally with decay, are reintegrated into the earth. One could say that they are highly regarded as works that display the entire life of a tree. With that said, however, the work is not a conceptual creation, and neither is it the process of disintegration of the art. As such, the decay process of the sculptural material while on display is undesirable. The work must genuinely of its location and actively engaged with elements of nature. Yet at the same time, it must be capable of enduring the cruel changes of nature such as the weather and the process of organic decay. In this dilemma of involvement with nature and organic decay, how can an artist really create a sculpture out of wood that will resist the vagaries of environment without deteriorating?

Nash’s response to this dilemma was to create his sculptures from living, growing trees. The trees of the *Ash Dome* were planted in a circle, and finally shaped into a dome-like structure. The work implemented the basic element in this sculpture, space, as well as time. It would take more than thirty years of careful tending to grow a "shape of space", and this "added a physical commitment to the conceptual action". Nash’s commitment to remain in a place over the course of his lifetime and stay deeply involved with this artwork shows fresh determination as an antithesis to the exceedingly temporary nature of a Land Artist’s involvement with the land.
Nash created the *Ash Dome* in the mid-1970s, a period of economic and political gloom in Britain. A general economic depression had led to a high unemployment rate, and the Cold War was still a threat and nuclear war was a real possibility. People were depressed and full of anxiety that they would not see the end of the 20th century. Besides, the environment condition was deteriorating. Under these uncertain social circumstances, the *Ash Dome* was conceived as an act of faith in the future: ‘a sculpture of the twenty-first century’. Involvement in such a long-term work stems from the deforestation of Cae’n-y-Coed, a small woods in a section of Snowdonia National Park, raised carefully for future lumber since the end of the 18th century. Local woodman cut down virtually everything leaving only the smallest trees and a single stand of birch. Only the trunks of the felled trees were hauled away and all the branches and bush were left as rubbish. Only the wreckage of the devastated woods remained, cruelly destroyed, and it appeared that regeneration would be impossible.

For three years, Nash worked to clear away this irrational destruction. He became conscious of the different characteristics of each tree species, their shapes, bends and forks, diameter and length, growth pattern of their branches, their weight, and texture. During working continually on a specific site, he experienced at close hand the changes in the seasons through the year and he could watch how trees naturally regenerate. New saplings of beech, willow, and holly began growing, some from the shoots of old stumps of felled trees, and some from seeds. While clearing the felling debris and maintaining the woods, Nash became irresistibly involved with forestry, specifically forestry established on the assumption of continuous management.

Around that time, Nash heard a striking story concerning the British Navy during the Napoleonic wars. Finding that they were running out of oak to build ships, they imported Indian teak. However, teak lumber made ships too buoyant, and thus, in an act of extraordinarily long-term planning, oak was planted all over the south of England for the purpose of building a fleet in the 21st century. Planting a forest on such a grand timescale fascinated Nash. It led to his idea of what to do with the deforested area, now flooded with light by the unfortunate clear-cutting.

Often used as hedges, ash trees are resilient and vigorous, suitable for the fletching technique of trimming off a section of the wood and bowing it. Ash trees could lean a long way from their roots in search of light, so Nash thought ash to be the most appropriate tree for forming a dome. Indeed, the World Tree called Yggdrasil in Scandinavian mythology is an ash, a guardian tree whose branches spread out above the entire world, reaching all the way to the heavens. Yggdrasil provides for the creatures that live in it and guarantees the continued survival of every single one, even while suffering from them nibbling at its roots and branches. Since ash trees already carry this mystical connotation, Nash did his best to avoid any kind of supernatural association for the number he planted; he selected 22, a number that, as far as he knew, lacked any sort of mystical connotations. It also happened to be the number necessary to create the appropriate circumference and intervals for the dome space he visualized. In his initial drawing, Nash described *Ash Dome* as "A silver structure in winter, a green canopy space in summer, a volcano of growing energy. This work represents energy, regeneration, time, and especially, trust and responsibility".¹³

When the ash trees were planted, Cae’n-y-Coed was not fully fenced off from the surrounding pasture. That was why the circle of the young ash saplings had been eaten by sheep within a short time of being planted. Nash had to begin again, protecting the area with a fence, but rabbits ate the bark from the trees this time, so they withered and died. At the third attempt, Nash took care to surround each of the 22 saplings with spiral tree-guards that could be removed when the bark grew sufficiently tough to resist the rabbits. Even so, growing the saplings properly required watching out for quite a few predators. Besides sheep and rabbits—cattle, deer, mice, and squirrels all nibble the still soft bark from young trees.

Besides protecting the young trees from animals, birch trees was planted to stimulate the growth of the ash trees and to protect them from the wind. These birch trees were removed a few years later when their role was complete. Despite all this care, plus using traditional method for hedges, mulching, grafting, and pruning, this
'sculpture in progress' needed more than 18 years before the ash trees matured enough that the dome became apparent. Nash’s ‘long period commitment as an act of faith’ was an extended duty of care, a constant need for tending. Indeed, the ash trees required constant care to gently force to do something that they are not naturally inclined to do, to make a dome shape.

Strangely enough, according to Nash, some people were discomfited by the Ash Dome and, as they saw it as his controlling, interfering process. The fact that there is a sense that it is OK for hedges but not for art reveals some kind of idealism for art as well as the difficulty of understanding the concepts and definition of nature (or artifacts). One cause for these revelations is that the word “art” originally meant of “artifact”, i.e., man-made; thus, “environmental art” conflates and complicates “art” and “nature”, because it directly make use of the natural environment in its artistic realization. It goes without saying, of course, that the concept of “nature” is relentlessly ambiguous.

Nash explains that the environmental movement in the 1970’s was split between the belief that humans are alien parasites that nature would be better off without—and the conviction that humans who work with nature, rather than attempting to dominate or conquer it, become an essential part of holistic nature. As I discuss later, “what many conservation interests want to preserve is a nature that is not controlled, shaped, or willed by us”. However, except for a very few primeval forests, every tree in a forest is maintained by us or affected by humans actions, that is, “an artificial” tree. In fact, forests are healthier for some extraction of trees, but suffer grievously if there is over extraction. Ash Dome was made under the very realistic and practical conviction that only the collaboration of nature can realize the sustainable human life. This artwork directly draws nature’s vitality and changes with each season and year and actively connects to natural forces of various elements and expresses the time of tree to grow.

2-2. Time Envelopes the Boulder
Nash accidentally created the Wooden Boulder, a work of environmental art, in 1978. High up above the Festiniog Valley, Gwinedd, in North Wales, an oak tree about 200 years old lost a large limb during a storm in 1978, which
made the whole tree unstable. As the tree became dangerous to users of a public footpath (which crisscrossed all of Britain), its owners decided to have it cut down. The big oak tree became Nash's first "wood quarry", and he excavated a rough sphere from the base of its trunk. In the beginning, Nash intended to transport this sphere to his studio to let it dry and crack and create a larger version of his earlier sculpture, *Nine Cracked Balls* 1970‒71. But how could a huge wooden lump weighing more than 500 kg, measuring 1 meter in diameter be carried out from the steep hill near the footpath? There was no road for heavy machinery or a truck. There were two possible routes; however, getting it down a very steep slope and then down a track —which would require careful control—or rolling it down to a nearby stream in the hope that the rock banks would slow its momentum, allowing the water’s flow to drift it down to a location suitable for loading into a truck. Nash chose the safer, latter route, but the sphere jammed halfway down a narrow waterfall, and he had no option but to leave it there.

The image of the wooden lump, lingering impossibly, with the stream’s ceaseless flow of water as over a boulder, captivated Nash. He discarded the idea of transporting it to his studio and instead, during many trips, over many seasons, in every sort of weather, archived this “sculpture” through drawings, films, and photos. Within a week, the iron in the water had reacted with the tannin in the fresh oak, turning the surface a very dark indigo blue. Thus, the sphere looked more and more like a rock, so Nash named it the *Wooden Boulder*, and a completely new work of ‘environmental art’ was born.¹⁵ Not in a museum or gallery, but under the waterfall, pounded by water, was truly the right place for this work. Nash thought it would be fitting for the *Wooden Boulder* to serve as “genius loci”, or the “spirit of the stream.”¹⁶ Later, the *Wooden Boulder* moved when heavy rainfall swelled the stream and created a current strong enough to free it from the waterfall, allowing it to plunge into the pool below. It seemed impossible that a storm could lift and propel the Boulder out of the pool, Nash hauled it out with a rope and moved it to another waterfall, where it remained for eight years, changing features with change of surrounding natural environment through the seasons. At that time, Nash decided to entrust the work to nature, stop intervening, and just observe without touching it.¹⁷ The natural forces, the surrounding environment, and the time the *Wooden Boulder* took to develop were important factors in this work. Once in a while, a torrential storm pushes the *Wooden Boulder* and situates it elsewhere. In the summer of 1994, after several weeks of persistent rainfall and then another sustained downpour that flooded the Ffestiniog Valley, the *Wooden Boulder* was lodged under a bridge on an old drovers’ road that runs along the valley’s edge, just before the Bronturnor stream flows into the River Dwyryd. The River Authorities would have removed the boulder if it had remained there due to risks of flooding, so, ironically, another human intervention was unavoidable. The boulder was hauled up with a winch from the triangular gap of the road, and was then safely deposited on the other side of the bridge.

After this, it took seven years for the Bronturnor current to carry the *Wooden Boulder* into the river Dwyrid, the main course of the Ffestiniog Valley. The Dwyrid flows west from Tremadog Bay and empties into the Irish Sea. Unlike in the Bronturnor stream, in the large river with an ever changing water level, the *Wooden Boulder* moved around quite a bit. The high tides of each new and full moon, would float it back up the river where it would sit, its position determined entirely by the amount of rainfall, the tide level, and the wind direction and force. When the tide was low, the *Wooden Boulder* floated it back down the estuary towards the sea. Until early summer of 2003, the boulder had found harmony with the ebb and flow of the tide, entering and exiting the area around the mouth of the river, back and forth. The last sighting of the *Boulder* was close by an island near Portmeirion in June of that year. Nash searched the estuary, checking every creek meandering across the hundreds of acres of the estuary flood plain, every ditch, cove, and group of rocks, but the *Wooden Boulder* could not be found. Nash concluded that it had gone out to sea, into the Tremadog Bay through the river mouth, carried north by the Gulf Stream flowing around the Ilyn Peninsula, and finally into the Irish Sea. A ‘going’ sculpture had taken twenty–five years to go far away.¹⁸
2-3. A ‘Going’ Work

Nash calls the Wooden Boulder a ‘going’ work. A going work erodes, decays, and reintegrates with the earth in a downwards direction. The opposite of this, a ‘coming’ work would be like the Ash Dome, ‘living and spreading upwards.’ A coming work clearly shows natural vitality through trees, and a going work, such as the Wooden Boulder, clearly shows equally natural death through trees while embodying the ‘historicity of nature.’

Especially from the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th, philosophy treated nature and history as opposing concepts. Philosophers explained that there is a difference between Natural Time and Historical Time. Eternal life defines Nature, moving in repetitive cycles in which the death of an individual organism does not matter. In contrast, history is represented by the life of a human being bound to live only once towards death. After the modern discovery of the ego, Nature without a spirit became limited, as the object of natural science. Additionally, natural and historical sciences (the human sciences) were clearly differentiated, and inquiries into nature were transferred to specialize in areas of a subdivided natural science. Even questioning the meaning of nature was reduced to a scientific understanding of it. As a result, the stance taken against nature led to the deterioration of the natural environment caused by the scientific technology and the subsequent industrialization. In other words, when we truly experienced ‘an ecological crisis,’ it was imperative for us to reconsider the very definition of eternal nature, and this is a distinct development of contemporary ecology. For example, there are so many endangered species that we now ponder the life and death of certain species, which is to say that we are now aware of the cumulative effect of a single organism’s death. “Among the various traits of the ecosystem, the characteristic of biodiversity means that change is irreversible. Once a species is gone, it will never come back.” The ecosystem was, in fact, created as a product of local and global history. Its existence is a historical one, so the history of life is the factor that led to the diversity of species. In modern biology, the term ecosystem is understood as a “dynamic system in which the governing rules are non-uniformity and variability.” Finally, an ecosystem is a system of change over time, one that includes diversity and non-uniformity. Nature moves in cycles regardless of intervention, and never possesses any permanence that might allow it to return to its original state.
The fallacy that nature is eternal may have given rise to the conceptualization of nature in terms of the length of human life, and thus, to deducing, assuming, and relying on a mistaken time span. Even being aware that Nature does not simply (re)cycle to the same form, that the universe is continually expanding, and that life has evolved over millions of years (i.e., "the history of nature"), and even while coming to treat it as entirely worthless, people have tried to measure biological, geological, and cosmic time using the human yardstick.25

Of course, we cannot help but consider nature anthropocentric. For that reason, we commonly refer to "natural" as opposed to "artificial," or "history as the relationship between a series of human actions." In this way, nature is regarded as non-artificial nature, nature without human influence or human intervention, genuine, and assumed to be untouched. But generally speaking, where does "untouched nature" exist in the world?

On the topic of nature and history, humans must be discussed as an intermediary. That is to say, with humans and nature, in addition to implying the meaning of humans and history, nature and history are topicalized. Therefore, nature cannot be thought of as existing "as a thing itself." One cannot naively accept, for example, with the usual understanding that "nature itself" literally exists "independent from consciousness." Rather, perhaps "restated as a something experienced every time by humans, the subject must become nature as it correlates to human interfering. As far as there is a possibility of being shown in conjunction with the expansion of consciousness in human beings, nature must be topicalized as "nature within history."26

As Isoe indicates in this exceedingly accurate suggestion, even in a discussion of environmental aesthetics, nature is easily assumed as Kant’s die transzendente Naturbegriffe or nature without human beings.27 “Humans frequently imagine a ‘cultural world’ that is a residential area and man–made, outside of which is an area where humans do not take part, an uncontrolled domain or process, ‘nature itself’ or ‘(pristine) nature’.28 However as Nishimura argues, ‘the dichotomy of ‘pristine nature’ and the ‘cultural world’ of humans is not sustainable. This is because human beings grow out of nature, our physical bodies are unmistakably natural, and our life and actions are included in the ecosystem, thus we comply with the laws of nature.”29

Bernard Williams describes the following in his essay, ‘Must a Concern for the Environment Be Centred on Human Beings?’:

What many conservation interests want to preserve is a nature that is not controlled, shaped, or willed by us, a nature which, as against culture, can be thought of as just there. But a nature which is preserved by us is no longer a nature that is simply not controlled. A natural park is not nature, but a park; a wilderness that is preserved is a definite, delimited, wilderness. The paradox is that we have to use our power to preserve a sense of what is not in our power. Anything we leave untouched we have already touched. It will no doubt be best for us not to forget this, if we are to avoid self-deception and eventual despair. It is the final expression of the inescapable truth that our refusal of the anthropocentric must itself be a human refusal.30

Perhaps every element of nature on this planet has been influenced by human beings. In fact, it may be appropriate to think of nature as a limited historical time, already moving towards death. The complex, contemporary, natural environment disables the dichotomies of nature vs. artifact, nature vs. culture, and nature vs. history. Or, we might have to aware that the modern dichotomy itself is only an abstract model for thought.

Nash’s Wooden Boulder expresses the time of the oak tree from its germination until its death, the time the wood begins to slowly decay as a material, and then the time of the process of nature in the environment surrounding the work (the shifting of the seasons), the time of the tide coming in and going out, the time of the moon and sun that control the tide, and the time of Nash’s influence each time, the history of the affairs of the area with regard to
landownership, and the history of the region as a cultural factor that changed the river basin and the ecosystem of the river, and finally, the entire combined history and time of the people and the nature surrounding the work. In other words, the physical nature of our surroundings indicates that the history of nature and culture are complexly intertwined—impossible to separate to experience.

While Nash’s *Wooden Boulder* carries two characteristics of contemporary art, "site-specific" and "narrative,” it also indicates what the contemporary natural environment ought to be. The boulder’s journey can be seen as a metaphor of life. That being said, the stage (the natural environment) for its journey has by no means a conceptual existence, as if it were “nature without human beings” or “as nature itself.” On the contrary, it is the nature with which we humans must search for a way to coexist and which is contiguous with here and now, i.e., it carries historical time.

It was thought that once the *Wooden Boulder* was carried into the Irish Sea, it would disappear from our sight, but it reappeared in May 2009. In reality, the *Wooden Boulder* was not washed from the estuary into the Irish Sea, but was instead buried deep in the mud, completely mired and hidden from view due to forces unknown, until changes in the tidal stream and the river washed the mud away, making it reappear. The riverbed is once again filled with mud. But during a low tide, when the water level is very low, it is still possible to see the *Wooden Boulder*.

According to Nash, “The Boulder was still a stepping stone for the mind into the elemental forces of the environment,” and even now the *Wooden Boulder* lingers there, helping us view the natural environment for what it is. We must hurry to develop practical thinking about the relationship between humans and nature.

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Endnotes

1 The Northern Arts Board region is one of a committee for the development of regional art in Britain that covers the counties of Cumbria, Northumberland, Durham, Tyne and Wear, and Teesside, spanning a large portion of Northern England. In 1996, chosen by sponsors of the UK Year of Visual Arts in the North East, Antony Gormley’s *Angel of the North* was made in Gateshead, and in the North West, across the whole of Cumbria County, Andy Goldsworthy’s *Sheepfolds* project was developed.

2 Dry stone wall is a method of constructing a wall using only stone without cement or mortar. Perhaps because of its simplicity, this method has a long history. The oldest walls are said to date from the Iron Age, and walls were built extensively throughout the medieval times. Today, many can still be seen in the North of England, especially in the Lake District and Cumbria County. The rocks used are not just flat, thin ones resembling boards; large round boulders are also used. Often, rocks are taken from old, broken walls and reused to make new ones.


4 Andy Goldsworthy, ibid., p.12.


6 In Scandinavian folklore, the rowan tree is foundational and gives rise to all other trees and plants.


8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 As a memorial, Goldsworthy used the image of a tree growing out of a rock in a work for the Museum of Jewish Heritage (*Garden of Stones*, 2003). He bored a hole in each center of 18 pieces of granite penetrating through the bottom, a number that represents life in Hebrew beliefs and planted an oak seedling in each of them, oak symbolizing life and regeneration. It is an expression of the struggle to survive even more powerful than that of the *Mountjoy Tree Folds*. It is devoted to the families of Holocaust survivors and their descendants, mourning the great slaughter of the Jewish people and hoping for new life and the future and they planted the oak trees. These trees certainly must not die (the rowan tree planted in the southern *Mountjoy Tree Fold* was suffering die–back and withered when left to ‘nature’ after a period of the dry weather in a summer). It is deeply etched in our history that we must never forget the precious and ephemeral nature of Life. *Garden of Stones*
supersedes any political position and communicates directly to our humanity.

17 David Nash, 2008, ibid.
18 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
24 Izumi Washitani, ibid., see p. 141.
25 For example, Schopenhauer said the following: “But this no more affects the will to live, of whose manifestation the individual is, as it were, only a particular example or specimen, than the death of an individual injures the whole of nature. For it is not the individual, but only the species that Nature cares for, and for the preservation of which she so earnestly strives, providing for it with the utmost prodigality through the vast surplus of the seed and the great strength of the fructifying impulse. The individual, on the contrary, neither has nor can have any value for Nature, for her kingdom is infinite time and infinite space, and in these infinite multiplicity of possible individuals.” Schopenhauer, Die Wille und Vorstellung. I. Band, Kap. 54, pp. 381–383. Surkamp 1986. (The World as Will and Idea, Volume 1, 7th ed. translated from German by R.B. Haldane and J. Kemp. 1910 Trübner in London, p. 356.) This book, written at the beginning of the 19th century, indicates that in nature, the death of an individual is not a problem, and this is still basic to the 20th century philosophical discussions. (For example, see Oskar Becker, “Para-existenz. Menschliches Dasein und Dawesen” in Blätter für Deutsche Philosophie XVII, 1943: pp. 62–95). However, it is difficult to adopt such a view of nature for the contemporary world experienced the environmental destruction. Kageatsu Itoe, “Shizen to Rekishi (Nature and History),” in Shin Iwanami Kouza, Tetsugaku 5, Shizen to Cosmos (new Iwanami lecture series , Philosophy 5, Nature and the Cosmos, 1985, Iwanami Shoten, p. 62.
26 Immanuel Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft 1787, p. 448. Here, “The concept of transcendental nature” is the concept of nature which transcend all experience, means nature itself, or nature as a whole, and, put another way, can refer to the concept of nature without substances.
27 Kiyokazu Nishimura, “Shizen no Biteki Kansho, (Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature),” in: Bigaku Geijutsugaku Kenkyu (Research in the Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art), issue 26, 2008, Research Laboraty of Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology and Faculty of Letters, University of Tokyo, p. 138.
28 Ibid.
29 Bernard Williams, ibid.