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ART REVIEWS

As Galleries Reopen, Two Critics Find Rewards Eclipse the Angst

Holland Cotter masks up on the Lower East Side and SoHo; Jillian Steinhauer discovers eco-feminist art taking root in Chelsea.

Thomas Erben Gallery, 526 West 26 Street, fourth floor; thomaserben.com.

At my second stop, [Thomas Erben Gallery](http://thomaserben.com), for the exhibition "ecofeminism (s)," I found the curator, Monika Fabijanska, and an artist giving a small tour with everyone safely masked, although they were standing a little too close together for my comfort. Encountering a talk might have annoyed me in the old days for disrupting my concentration; now it made me simultaneously anxious and wistful.

The ambitious show (through July 24) features 15 artists of different generations whose feminism is grounded in ecological concerns. It includes important works that have been shown recently, like [Agnes Denes's "Rice/Tree/Burial"](#) (1977-79/2020) and one of Ana Mendieta's "[Esculturas Rupestres \(Rupestrian Sculptures\)](#)" (1981/2019), but widens our landscape of understanding with lesser-known, though no less impactful, historical works, like [Aviva Rahmani's "Physical Education"](#) (1973), a Conceptual work centered on written instructions that outline a series of actions representing our disregard for the planet, and [Betsy Damon's "The Memory of Clean Water"](#) (1985), a cast of a dry riverbed spilling down from the wall. The lineage extends to the present with [Eliza Evans's "All the Way to Hell"](#) (2020-ongoing), a project in which she doles out the mineral rights to several acres of her land in Oklahoma to 1,000 people (you can buy in for \$10) to prevent fossil fuel development.

Over the past few months, as I've been consumed by the pandemic and Black Lives Matter uprising, art has often looked marginal to me, at best. But "ecofeminism (s)" was one more visceral reminder that our world has been in crisis for centuries. As artists, writers, and humans, what choice do we have but to keep searching for points of connection and creative ways to respond?



Betsy Damon's "The Memory of Clean Water" (1985). Betsy Damon and Thomas Erben Gallery, New York; Andreas Vesterlund

By: Jillian Steinhauer