

***The interplay between the local and the global in the project in the Maldives National Pavilion.***

Visual arts have always been interested in interpreting and visualizing nature's many changing manifestations and the complicated, organic growth processes that have created them.

However, it was not until the 1960s that Environmental and Ecological Art began to appear. Robert Smithson (1938-73) and Robert Morris (1931-) established *Land Art*, which consisted of monumental interventions in or reconstructions of the natural surroundings. A number of other artists, for example Michael Singer (1945-) and Alan Sonfist (1946-), were occupied forming the landscape from the standpoint of nature itself, with a new ecological awareness. Joseph Beuys (1921-86) also created works from an ecological perspective, which he called social structures.

These artists have together with their colleagues created the premises for what later was called sustainable art or green art. They have shown how art, architecture and design can innovatively address environmental, social, political and economic concerns, as well as provide solutions that promote regenerative outcomes.

After these artists had embraced ecological problems and taken them into the world of art, increasing numbers of artists have followed their

lead - for example, Rosalie Gascoigne, Maria Michails, Erwin Timmers and Nohra Corredor.

The Danish installation artist, Søren Dahlgaard (1973-), has also taken up the ecological challenge into his artistic practice. An illustration is his large project, *Growing Vegetables*, on the coral island Hibalhidhoo, which he worked on from 2002-2004. He found out which vegetables could grow in the humid and hot tropical climate of the Maldives in order to produce fresh vegetables for the local residents and tourists. The author of *Eco aesthetic: a manifesto for the twenty-first century* (2009), Rasheed Araeen, has stressed that Søren Dahlgaard has contributed in a productive way to "demolish the difference between instrumental productivity and artistic creativity."

For the Biennale in Venice in 2013, Søren Dahlgaard's contribution to the Maldivian's large project, *The Portable Nation*, is an inflatable island placed on top of the caravan pavilion. It will function as a unifying visual symbol for the many different activities in and around the pavilion that highlight the local political and ecological problems of the Maldives. These have global significance because they will raise consciousness of the key role that the relationship between society and nature will play in the challenges of the 21st century. This perspective is especially noticeable in the inventive collaborative work *Playing around nature*, created by Amani Naseem, who was born in and grew up in the Maldives.

The project in the *Maldives Pavilion* contains original solutions regarding the relationship between art and ecology. It has a global perspective and transcends the given boundaries of the present art world in an inspiring way. It will enable us to become more active in the efforts to protect nature and create sustainable growth and solve ecological issues, which will benefit nature and our society. We will be drawn into a fascinating artistic space of experience that widens our perspective in our daily world.

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