

The Garden as a Site of Contemplation, Collection, and Commentary CAA, 2008—Dallas

The Garden

[SL 1] Gardens occupy a curious place as an aesthetic experience because they belong to both art and life. Historically, the relationship between gardens and art has changed from one of observation and inspiration to one of integration. Many iconic representations in the European tradition have addressed nature as a separate, often awe-inspiring, entity from the perspective of an outsider. The land, whether unadulterated or cultivated, has been appreciated, emulated, scientifically examined, and symbolically represented. [SL 2] After World War II, the development of the sculpture garden created outdoor spaces that integrate natural and human creations, sometimes emphasizing the sculpture and at others emphasizing the garden. In a 2003 article Margaret Sheffield wrote, <<Sculpture gardens...satisfy our need for repose and contemplation, and they express a sense of our relationship to nature....In [certain] outdoor compositions, sculpture is no longer an object to look at, it becomes a space to experience.>>¹ [SL 3] In recent years the artist's relationship to the land has become, in some ways, more invested. Artists have tackled issues of commodity and "misplaced priorities" in the artworld through Earthworks, troubling violations of natural order through installations, and the crucial need for environmental sustainability through art actions and interventions.² [SL 4] This paper will consider some of the issues raised in these artworks by examining the relationship between sculpture and the garden in a symbolic way through the work of two Texas-based sculptors, Meg Langhorne and Tracy Hicks.

[SL 5] An exhibition called "Personal Environments," curated by Marilyn Jolly at the University of Texas at Arlington in 2004, focused on the garden and its connection

to art.³ Jolly envisioned the exhibition itself as a garden with a smaller space that became a serene night garden and larger gallery areas that functioned more like a bright day garden. The presentation of the work in the gallery mimics a garden's cultivation of various creations, with the artworks like plants being configured to contrast or compliment one another. Also like the garden, the gallery space draws people together for the purpose of viewing the arrangement. In thinking about the work of the artists in the exhibition, especially Langhorne and Hicks, the notion of the individual and community aspects of making and presenting art become more and more intriguing. The role of the individual takes prominence in the form of contemplation; connections are made conceptually through references in the artwork and physically in the space of the gallery/garden; and community aspects begin surfacing through commentary and dialogue generated by the work.

Contemplation

[SL 6] Meg Langhorne's pool enlivens the gallery space and transports the viewer, infusing quiet dynamism into an environment that is often quite still and motionless. *Glade* (2004), a 2' X 4' green pool, replicates and serves as a reflecting pond whose vibrantly colored water is actually solid and scattered with white wax flowers. The gelatinous water allows the flowers to echo in the reflections. Langhorne explains that around the time this piece was made, her art-making was melding with her passion for gardens and animals. She says, <<My yard, mostly wild, is a kind of laboratory for some experiments I've been conducting or pretending to perform. It is a place that reflects my sensibilities with a kind of poetry that allows for individual interpretations.>> The poetic potential of her pool piece conveys the act of reflection in both literal and metaphorical ways.

[SL 7] In addition to indicating the artist's personal encounters and inspiration from nature, *Glade* also employs several important aesthetic features that are prominent in Japanese gardens. The traditional garden maker is encouraged to recall natural landscapes because "nature is already a consummate artist."⁴ The process of envisioning nature is one that must be practiced and learned. Over time one becomes more adept at allowing the natural materials-like rocks, water, and plants—to be placed according to their own inclinations,⁵ so it is important for the garden maker to follow "both nature and tradition so as to make a creative contribution to the present."⁶

[SL 8] The use of flowers in Langhorne's piece is reminiscent of the Japanese art of flower arrangement, called *ikebana*, literally, "making flowers live."⁷ According to philosopher Graham Parkes, the flower's organic life is cut off <<to let the true nature of the being come to the fore.>>⁸ The flower's existence is qualitatively enhanced by becoming an object of appreciation and, as a result, its life seems "less temporary." This kind of theoretical extension led to the manufacture of silk flowers in the 18th century so the beauty could continue indefinitely. [SL 9] If the shaping of natural elements in the Japanese garden can be correlated to the manipulation of artistic mediums mimicking natural elements, then Langhorne's pool effectively summons the important processes of contemplation and preservation in an animated and isolated landscape. The mirroring effect of the pool, simulated as it is in this example, recalls and reifies the natural world at the same time it presents the image of nature in such a way that emphasizes the act of reflection itself.⁹

[SL 10] in Tracy Hicks's *Intermittent Rain* (2004), the presence of nature is simultaneously direct and indirect. The installation of this piece in the "Personal

Environments” exhibition consisted of three 4’ X 4’ components that rise like stair steps: seeds on the ground, stacked jars and frosted glass, and stacked jars with a plant and casts of frogs. For Hicks, the modular square plots replicate the grids that humans often impose on nature. The first component, a black square of sunflower seeds on the floor, represents containment and potential.

[SL 11] The second module of *Intermittent Rain* consists of a 3’ high structure of jars and panes of frosted glass from the artist’s studio windows. Concentric rows of rusty rings mark the presence of jars no longer residing on the pane of glass. Topping the slightly narrower second tier of jars, a glass plaque contained a bas-relief cast of one of the artist’s frogs. An ongoing presence in his artwork, Hicks has studied, recorded, and raised frogs for a number of years. The entire middle component represents emergence and arrested potential. Its midway height, empty jars, and the residue of former existence refer to life indexically rather than directly.

[SL 12] In addition to jars and panes of glass, *Intermittent Rain*’s third component contains life in actuality aside traces of it. At the center of the multi-tiered structure Hicks placed an anthurium plant in a jar that was automatically watered at programmed times during the exhibition’s duration. Jars surround the plant and a spotlight heightens its significance. Inside a few of the stacked jars used in this piece are casts of frogs that serve as tiny *memento mori*. The rows of glass in this installation reference the aquariums of frogs and jars with tadpoles in the artist’s home. Hicks purchased many of the jars from the American Museum of Natural History in New York City where they had <<contained small reptiles and amphibians [for] most of this past century.>>¹⁰ These specimens represent

animals once thriving in the wild, recall the variety of flowers in the garden and remind us that containment is often a corollary for progress.

Collection

[SL 13] The act of collection perhaps subtly referenced in *Intermittent Rain* has been an ongoing preoccupation for Hicks. In the early 1980s he noticed a China doll leg in the field beside his studio in downtown Dallas. He began searching for and collecting “treasures” on his daily walks with Deb Dog. [SL 14] By the early 1990s he had accumulated multiple place settings from the fragments and, as the orientation *Freedmen’s Field* developed, he was able to share his finds with others. According to the artist, <<The only western culture inhabitants of that land were the freed slaves and their descendents [that occupied it from the 1860s to the 1960s]. These relics are their stories. I simply invited them to reveal themselves over dinner.>>¹¹

[SL 15] By the time Hicks’s piece *The Storeroom* was shown at the Dallas Museum of Art, the objects he collected had found their way into neatly lined jars on open shelves reminiscent of an apothecary’s shop, a general store, or a cellar preserving the season’s harvest. [SL 16] The title and effect of the piece recall Claes Oldenburg’s combination studio/theater in a rented storefront on 107 E. Second Street during the early 1960s. All of the goods in Oldenburg’s *Store* were handmade plaster replicas that carried the gestural paint marks of Abstract Expressionism. They also consciously brought the realm of commerce directly into the realm of art.¹² [SL 17] Hicks’s *Storeroom* creates an environment of careful order and contemplation infused with Duchampian readymades and personal narratives. Both pieces are opening the boundaries of art to encompass life, though Oldenburg tends to draw our attention to style and content while Hicks extends

our consideration to social and environmental concerns.¹³ In *Storeroom*, the discourses of consumption and commerce expands to encompass conservation and a collective experience of the past infiltrating the present through nostalgia, curiosity, and whimsy.

[SL 18] There is a reversal of the traditional sculpture-in-the-landscape model in the work of Tracy Hicks. Like a descendent of Enlightenment classification and 19th-century wildlife collections, Hicks brings the acts of collecting objects and cultivating specimens from the world at large often, most recently, from the laboratory into the gallery space. [SL 19] In *Artful Science* Barbara Stafford discusses the phenomenon of scientific spectacles, such as Sir Isaac Newton's theatrical experiments with light shining through glass prisms.¹⁴ She explains that "learning achieved through contemplation" takes two separate forms: a "horizontal skimming [which] distinguished the *galant* or polite viewer from the vertical probing of the toiling professional."¹⁵ She further states: <<the eighteenth century notion of an instructive, cross-disciplinary, and entertaining spectacle, based on a conversational give and take, needs to be brought back.>>¹⁶

Hicks's work, like other ecologically minded artists working today, might answer Stafford's call to reenact distantly accumulated information within the realm of the arts.

[SL 20] The iconography of Hicks's work includes thriving, threatened, and extinct species of frogs. In the history of art and literature frogs appear infrequently.¹⁷ Grimm's tale of "The Frog King" is one of the more familiar stories and happens to clearly relate to the nature of frogs. After the princess agrees to let the frog be her companion if he'll retrieve her golden ball, she is faced with her own disgust and fear at having him near her. His true identity as a "king's son with beautiful kind eyes" reveals itself only after she throws the frog against the wall with all her might. The spell broken,

they are able to live happily ever after. [SL 21] In art, the frog has been a subject for jewelry, sculpture, painting, pottery, and basketry all over the world since about 3400 BCE.¹⁸ In his 1932 essay “The Amphibian in Art and Literature,” S. W. Frost notes that <<fear and sorcery were associated with the frog and toad, and apparently these decorative motifs have been used by the ancients only as charms or on sacrificial vessels.>>¹⁹ References to frogs by American Indians included sorcery, food, and celebrations (frog dances, frog songs, and frog whistles). Frogs were believed to foretell or bring rain, bring fire and wood, and assist in hunting.²⁰ Interestingly, Frost does not mention the metamorphic qualities of frogs. In the late twentieth-century, the image of the frog has taken on new significance due to the apparent connection between amphibian decline and global warming.²¹

[SL 22] Hicks’s intimate relationship with frogs began about 10 years ago. He was part of a research collection trip to Guatemala with a group of herpetologists during the summer of 1998. His goal was to <<learn about the preservation aspects of this natural history collection process and then to communicate something from the material aspects of the trip to conceptual aspects of the experience into a large-scale installation.>> Because he met with resistance when he tried to exhibit the actual specimens, he began incorporating casts of the animals.²² The following year he started to raise “poison dart frogs” indigenous to Central and South America. Though the activities remain somewhat separate, the act of making art with casts of specimens and raising frogs are certainly related.

[SL 23] The casts encased in *STILL/Life*, for example, were made at the Field Museum in Chicago and at the herpetology collection at the University of Kansas.

Among the 79 species of frogs whose likenesses reside in the 1300 jars are *Atelopus ignescens* and the Golden Toad of Costa Rica's cloud forests.²³ The golden toad was declared extinct by 2004, though there have been no recorded sightings of the species since 1984. About 67% of the 110 *Atelopus* species are also extinct.²⁴ Although the actual causes remain unknown, declines in amphibian populations triggered the awareness of global warming patterns. Scientists believe that "because most amphibians are exposed to terrestrial and aquatic habitats at different stages of their life cycles, and because they have highly permeable skins, they may be more sensitive to environmental toxins or to changes in patterns of temperature or rainfall than other [land animals]."²⁵ Changes in climate or weather patterns are more likely responsible for these fatalities than disease, habitat modification, or predation alone.²⁶ *Science News* reported in 1990 that <<Behind the mysterious decline, which apparently began 10 to 20 years ago but only recently received unified attention, lies the possibility that the dying animals are an ominous indicator of human-made environmental problems.>>²⁷ The scientific and aesthetic qualities of Hicks's installations reframe the magnitude of global warming by invoking basic questions about humanity and its relationship to nature.²⁸

Commentary

[SL 24] Recently Hicks began creating a series of animations about global warming. He sees the animations as drawings or studies as he works on his sculptures and installation pieces. The eclectic selections of music that accompany the animations either relate to the piece or indicate what he was listening to in his studio as he worked on it. The songs range from ambient renditions of Hildegard of Bingen's writings to the coarse vocals of Tom Waits. This is the most recent animation from the series:

DISK: (#19) 212 *Global Warming Study*
Tom Waits, “Presents”
(Feb. 2008, most recent)

This video contains the strength of contrast present throughout the Global Warming Study series. While the slides are here for our inspection, they transcend the spectacle of scientific display and invoke the childhood whimsy of the “The Frog King.”

[SL 25] This one was also made this month:

#11 129c-*Global Warming Study*-MOVtest2 (Feb. 2008)
Frog Calls from KU Herpetology Department
<http://www.tracyhicks.com/129c.htm>

This video conveys the poignance of Hicks’s frog studies on both scientific and aesthetic levels through their visual absence and aural presence.

#3 *Global Warming Study 3* (Jan. 2008)
John Butler, “The Hand of the The Almighty”
Chuck Pyle, “God Will Fuck You Up” from *Endless Sky*
<http://www.tracyhicks.com/125.htm>

The absence of life or references to it in this video convey the potential conclusion of our global environmental crisis. The humor in the music transcends the urgency of the situation and, hopefully, shocks the viewer into awareness.²⁹

The notion of community surfaces in Hicks’s work partially by the presentation either in galleries, museums, or on the internet. Hicks explained that frog mummies are sometimes included in pieces sold to people “concerned”³⁰ about the message they convey. His artwork is an extension of his environmental awareness and becomes a way of life as much as an activity.

[SL 26] In his balancing of nature and culture he also transcends the boundaries of art and life: his own life by virtue of his interests, literal life in the casts of frogs he incorporates, and hypothetical life in the concerns with amphibian decline and global warming. By examining the contemplative aspects of Meg Langhorne’s evocative pools and Tracy Hicks’ ecological interests, conceptual sculpture, installations, and animations it becomes clear that these works contribute to the ongoing attempt to better understand man’s relationship to nature. In her 1991 book *Fragile Ecologies*, Barbara Matilsky says

<<artists are in a unique position to effect ...environmental change because they can synthesize new ideas and communicate connections between many disciplines...Art changes the way people look at reality.>>³¹ Perhaps familiarity with these places of repose or confrontation with haunting reminder that frogs are disappearing all over the world will inspire new ways of thinking, generate dialogues, and create communities of support. Art, like science, involves the isolation and removal of plants and animals for evaluation, contemplation, and, hopefully action. Tracy Hicks says, <<For the past twenty years my work has examined what we find precious enough to preserve...My job is to learn from these fragile little animals and then to communicate what I can in various aesthetic ways to a world that is ignoring itself.>>³²

SLIDE CAPTIONS

Slide 1.

Claude Lorrain, *Landscape with Cattle and Peasants*, 1629. 42 x 58 _ “ Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia
Thomas Cole, *The Oxbow*, 1836, o/c, 51 1/2 x 76 in , Metropolitan Museum of Art
Claude Monet, *Waterlilies: Green Reflection*, 1916-1923; Orangerie, Paris

Slide 2

Valley House Gallery Sculpture Garden, Dallas
Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.

Slide 3

Agnes Denes, *Wheatfield - A Confrontation*, 1982, Battery Park Landfill, NY,
Mel Chin, *Revival Field*, 1991, Pig’s Eye Landfill, St. Paul, Minnesota
Plants, and industrial fencing on a hazardous waste landfill,
approximately 60 x 60 x 9 feet, Courtesy the Artist
Dinos and Jake Chapman, *Tragic Anomalies*, 1996, installation: Institute of Contemporary Art, London

Slide 4

Meg Langhorne, *Glade*, 2004, 2’ X 4’
Tracy Hicks, *Intermittent Rain*

Slide 5

“Personal Environments” Brochure—January 26-February 28, 2004

Slide 6

“Personal Environments,” installation view
Front Right: Meg Langhorne, *Glade*, 2004, 2’ X 4’
Back Left: David Gibson, *Along the Bamboo Walk #1, #2, #3*

Slide 7

Dry Garden, Ryoan-ji, Kyoto, Japan
Cherry Blossoms at the Temple, Ryoan-ji, Kyoto, Japan

Slide 8

Mieko Kubota, *Ikebana*, Historical Museum of Southern Florida
Kitao Shigemasa, *Cultivation of the silkworm*, 1776, color woodblock print. Queensland Univ. of Technology Art Collection, Brisbane, Australia

Slide 9

Meg Langhorne, *Glade* (detail)

Slide 10

Tracy Hicks, *Intermittent Rain*, 2004, Installation view, “Personal Environments”University of Texas at Arlington

Slide 11

Intermittent Rain-second module

Slide 12

Intermittent Rain-third module and details

Slide 13

Tracy Hicks, *Freedman’s Field*, 1992, detail

Slide 14

Freedman’s Field, 1992, Installation view. Center for Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe

Slide 15

Tracy Hicks, *The Storeroom*, 1994, “Encounters 5: Tracy Hicks-Damien Hirst” Dallas Museum of Art

Slide 16

Claes Oldenburg, Artist at work in *The Store*, 1962, New York City

Claes Oldenburg, *Pastry-case I*, 1961-62, Museum of Modern Art

Slide 17

Claes Oldenburg, *The Store*, 1962

Tracy Hicks. *The Storeroom*, 1994

Slide 18

Tracy Hicks, *STILL/Life*, 2005, Installation view and detail, “Two Cultures: Collections” University of Kansas

Photos by Earl Richardson

Slide 19

Newton conducting an experiment with a prism, New York Public Library [also reproduced in William Hayley, *The Life of George Romney, Esq* (London, 1809)]

Members of the California Academy of Science’s first Galápagos expedition pose before the voyage. They returned with an extensive collection of Darwin’s finches, eggs and nests, giant tortoises and fossils (Photo by Caroline Kopp)

Slide 20

The Frog Prince, *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*

Slide 21

Frog Pendant, 1000-1500 AD - 4 1/8 in., Chiriqui Region, Burica Peninsula, Puerto González Viquez

Metropolitan Museum of Art

Brandon Ballengée, *Cleared and Stained Multilimbed Pacific Tree Frog, Aptos California*, ca. 1996 greenmuseum.org

Slide 22

Collection of animals made during a collecting trip with herpetologists; Guatemala, Summer, 1998, Photo by T. Hicks

Anura Denrobatidae, or “poison dart frogs.” Photo by Tracy Hicks

Slide 23

Tracy Hicks, *STILL/Life*, 2005, Photo by Earl Richardson

Slide 24

Global Warming Study (“Presents”)

Slide 25

Global Warming Study (“Frog Calls”)

<http://www.tracyhicks.com/129c.htm>

Global Warming Study (“The Hand of the Almighty”)

<http://www.tracyhicks.com/125.htm>

Slide 25

Announcement for Valley House Gallery exhibition, currently on view

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Sotiris Kyriacou, "Enclosed and Enchanted," *Art Monthly* no. 240 (October, 2000), 42-44.

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Ronald Neperud, "Art, Ecology, and Art Education: Practices and Linkages," *Art Education* vol. 50, no. 6, Art and Ecology (November, 1997), 14-20.

Michael Pollan, *Second Nature: A Gardner's Education* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1991), p. 296

Suzi Gablik, *The Reenchantment of Art*

Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*

Thoreau

Betty Beaumont, Ocean Landmark, an underwater garden

Andy Goldsworthy, *A Collaboration with Nature* (1990)

Michael Zimmerman, *Environment, Feminism, Deep Ecology, and Environmental Ethics*

Gloria ?, "The Greeting of Gaia, Ecofeminist Artists Revisit the Garden," *Ethics and Environment* (2003)

Amphibian Decline/Global Warming

R. Cowen, "Vanishing Amphibians: Why They're Croaking," *Science News*, vol. 137, no. 8 (February, 1990), p. 116.

Ross A. Alford and Stephen J. Richards, "Global Amphibian Declines: A Problem in Applied Ecology," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, vol. 30 (1999), pp. 133-165.

J. Alan Pounds, Martin R. Bustamante, Luis A. Coloma, Jamie A. Consuegra, Michael P.L. Fogden, Pru N. Foster, Enrique La Marca, Karen L. Masters, Andrés Merino-Viteri, Robert Puschendorf, Santiago R. Ron, G. Arturo Sánchez-Azofeifa, Christopher J. Still, and Bruce Young, "Widespread amphibian extinctions from epidemic disease driven by global warming," *Nature* vol. 439, no. 7120, vol. 7073 (January 12, 2006), 161-167.

Steven M. Whitfield, Kristen E. Bell, Thomas Philippi, Mahmood Sasa, Federico Bolaños, Gerardo Chaves, Jay M. Savage, and Maureen A. Donnelly, "Amphibian and Reptile declines over 35 years at La Selva, Costa Rica," *PNAS: Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* (April 20, 2007), published online.

Notes on the Garden in Contemporary Art

Bill Viola, *Reflecting Pool*, 1977-79

“Bill Viola” Whitney Museum of American Art, 1998

22 part of a collection of videotapes that reflect the “progressive stages of the personal journey from birth to death, described through images of transition—from day to night, object to reflection, motion to stillness, time to timelessness.”

“The work describes the emergence of the individual into the natural world, a baptism into a world of virtual images and indirect perceptions.”

Thomas Struth

Charles Wylie, “A History of Now: The Art of Thomas Struth,” *Thomas Struth 1977-2002* (New Haven: Yale University Press/Dallas Museum of Art, 2002), 153.

Paradise Series: concentrates on dense forests that “for him retain the primordality of the title. Bringing into the gallery images of forests that have remained for the most part undisturbed, Struth comes closest to the Romantic idea of nature—possessing power and mystery, it is controlled by an order impossible for us to understand with our industrialized eye.”

Chapman Brothers

Tragic Anomalies

Color in Tracy’s sculpture: achieved through phosphorescent pigments and dyes and by using ultraviolet light (though some don’t need the ultraviolet light to be seen). A combination of materials produces a variety of effects that varies from jar to jar and frog to frog. [<http://www.tracyhicks.com/jinfo2.htm>]

¹ Sheffield, 41. [“these outdoor compositions”=ref. to Abakanowicz]

² In 1982, Denes carried out what has become one of the best-known environmental art projects when she planted a two-acre field of wheat in a vacant lot in downtown Manhattan. Titled, *Wheatfield -- A Confrontation*, the artwork yielded 1,000 lbs. of wheat in the middle of New York City to comment on “human values and misplaced priorities.” The harvested grain then traveled to 28 cities worldwide in “The International Art Show for the End of World Hunger” and was symbolically planted around the globe. [Greenmuseum.org]

In “Revival Field,” Chin worked with scientists to create sculpted gardens of hyperaccumulators—plants that can draw heavy metals from contaminated areas—in some of the most polluted sites in the world. [Pbs.org]

³ January 26-February 28, 2004

⁴ Parkes, 48.

⁵ See the “Taming of the Harp,” in *The Book of Tea*, pp. 42-43.

⁶ Parkes, 48.

⁷ Parkes, 55. “Flowers and greenery are arranged both to reflect the artist’s interpretation of natural forces and to create new meanings linked to the non-natural environment.” [Historical Museum of Southern Florida]

⁸ Parkes, p. 55; He cites Nishitani Keiji, “The Japanese Art of Arranged Flowers,” trans. Jeff Shore, in Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, eds. *World Philosophy: A Text with Readings* (New York, 1995), pp. 23.27. **Graham Parkes** is professor of philosophy at the University of Hawai’i and senior fellow at the Center for Study of World Religions, Harvard University.

⁹ See Parkes’s discussion of mirroring and the contrast of real and illusory elements, p. 51.

¹⁰ Tracy Hicks, “Technical information on jars of frogs” <http://www.tracyhicks.com/jinfo2.htm>

¹¹ Tracy Hicks, “Freedmen’s Field,” [tracyhicks.com/field.html](http://www.tracyhicks.com/field.html). Inserted section from “Frog Work/Art Work,” <http://www.tracyhicks.com/frogwork.html>

¹² Oldenburg’s *The Store* was very popular. People loved it, but he didn’t sell much. *The Store* closed after 2 months with a net loss of \$285 [Fineberg, 198]

¹³ See Suzi Gablik *The ReEnchantment of Art*, p. 4 for the discussion of these opposing approaches.

¹⁴ Stafford, 226.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* This model suggests that casual contemplation might not lead one to delve below the surface. (Stafford, 230.)

¹⁶ Stafford, 279.

¹⁷ Three *Aesop’s Fables*, invoke the frog as a character to promote the adages “There is always someone worse off than you,” “Better no rule than cruel rule,” and “Self-conceit may lead to self-destruction.” The fables are “The Hares and the Frogs,” “The Frogs Desiring A King,” and “The Frog and the Ox” respectively. Another called “The Quack Frog” is cited in Swift, p. 372.

¹⁸ Frost, “The Amphibian in Art and Literature,” 369. Frost cites a stone amulet of a toad from the banks of the Nile near Giza as “the first semblance of an amphibian.” He cites examples from Egypt, China, Rome, Japan, Germany, Wedgewood pottery, American Indians (Peruvians, Colombians, Cheyennes, Hopi, Pueblo Bonito [Anasazi], Okanagon, Maya, (Yaxchilan). He also cites literary references to the frog: Aristotle, Aesop, Aristophanes, Hindu fables, African folk tales, Oriental myths, Robert Dodsley, Carl von Linnaeus, Thomas Belt, Samuel L. Clemens “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveres County,” Creek Indians (with toad clans called Sopaktalgi and Sanaktcali), Mohawks, and Cayugas, Tsimshian and Tlingit myths.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 374. Western Plains groups believed that killing frogs brought rain.

²¹ In a seemingly relevant Hindu myth, a fire god called Agni “took refuge in the water to escape the wrath of his enemies. He generated much heat, which caused great suffering among the frogs. The frogs became angry, and Agni cursed them so that their speech should henceforth be inarticulate.” [Frost, 372-373.]

²² Correspondence with the author, February 16, 2008. “What do you know about the Correlation Collection show I did at UTA? Did you realize the original plans were for me to show some of the actual specimens we collected? Then the Biology Dept backed away from allowing me to use the specimen? So I shifted plans a month or so before the opening and killed 80 or so goldfish to use in place of the animals we

killed in Guatemala. Then the day before I was scheduled to install the UTA committee that rules on animal use denied me permission to show. So the opening was postponed for two weeks (until after spring break) and I worked around the clock casting specimens from molds I had pulled earlier from a few of the specimens I had personally caught. Those were the first of this series of castings. ...But I started casting in the early 1960's when apprenticed to a goldsmith."

²³ A. W. "Exhibition: In the Croak Room," *Nature* vol. 438, no. 7064 (November 3, 2005), p. 27.

²⁴ Atelopus statistics from J. Alan Pounds, et. al., "Widespread amphibian extinctions from epidemic disease driven by global warming," *Nature* (January 12, 2006), p. 161.

²⁵ Alford and Richards, "Global Amphibian Declines: A Problem in Applied Ecology," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, vol. 30 (1999), pp. 133.

²⁶ *Ibid.* See also Whitfield, et. al., "Amphibian and reptile declines over 35 years at La Selva, Costa Rica," *PNAS* (April, 2007), p. 1: "Amphibians stand at the forefront of a global biodiversity crisis. More than one-third of amphibian species are globally threatened, and over 120 species have likely suffered global extinction since 1980. Most alarmingly, many rapid declines and extinctions are occurring in pristine sites lacking obvious adverse effects of human activities."

²⁷ R. Cowen, "Vanishing Amphibians: Why They're Croaking," *Science News*, vol. 137, no. 8 (February, 1990), p. 116.

²⁸ See Barbara Matilsky, *Fragile Ecologies*, pp. 5 and 56. She discusses the way ceremonies, myths, spiritual celebrations connect people to the earth and establish respect for the entire community of life. "Nature provides us with the essential metaphors for life and an understanding of our existence. The culture we have developed is essentially the sum product of humanity's search for meaning and identity." She later writes that there are two ways to approach ecological issues in art, to propose solutions or to interpret or frame problems. As there is no clear answer to this problem, Hicks seems to be involved with the latter.

²⁹ A correlation to rock gardens can be drawn here. While they are generally devoid of plant life and organic matter, with the exception is lichen (Parkes, 53) they symbolize life, including the movement of water.

³⁰ Neperud, "Art, Ecology, and Art Education"

³¹ Matilsky, p. 3

³² Tracy Hicks, "Frog Work/Art Work," <http://www.tracyhicks.com/frogwork.html>