

# Art for a New Epoch

## Naming a New Epoch

This section will include an overview of the events that have lead scientists and scholars of various disciplines to propose and support the idea that we are now inhabiting a new epoch, where a group of humans have become a primary geologic force. I will introduce the Anthropocene as the most well-known name proposed for this new epoch. 500

## What is the Anthropocene?

I will introduce the Anthropocene, as well as its social, political, geologic, and cultural context. This will include of various organizations that support the Anthropocene as well as the way in which different fields refer to it. I will focus specifically on the allure it has for artists and other culture drivers, then introduce the fierce discussion surrounding it. 500

## Contriversality of the Anthropocene

Following my introduction to the Anthropocene I will delve into critique of it, referencing perspectives of Dana Haraway, TJ Demos, and Kyle Powys Whyte. Each critique will be deconstructed as well. In particular, I will discuss the degree to which these authors oppose the Anthropocene. Some, such as Haraway point out its flaws, while maintaining that recognition of a new epoch will be a positive thing even if it is officially coined the Anthropocene. Others such as Demos, fiercely oppose the Anthropocene and argue that if it is officially recognized, we must work to escape it as soon as possible. 500

## Visual Arts and the “Cenes”

As I mentioned above, a large number of artists have been drawn towards the proposed Anthropocene when creating art, especially art relating to ecology. Much of their work engages with either present or predicted future social, political, and natural ecologies within our world. Critics of the Anthropocene have proposed different names for a new epoch, each with their own agenda. In response, many scholars have written about these proposed alternatives to the anthropocene. I argue that considering artists work that reflects these “cenes” is a powerful way to visualize and discuss them. 1000

## Materialisms of Eco-Art

Eco-art is often focused more on process than product. In addition, material becomes significant to the work of any artist engaging with environmentalism, justice, or equity because of the context in which it was made or obtained. Conventional artists material such as oil paint, canvas, and wood are often produced violently, which affects the interpretation of the work. Therefore, I consider different theoretical materialist frameworks through which to discuss artists work. These include new materialism, non

representational theory, eco-materialism, and object oriented ontology. I will use these theories to deconstruct the work of the artists I consider. 500

## Visualizations of “cenes”

In this section I will dive into discussion of artists work that I interpret as a visualization of 4 proposed “cenes”: the Anthropocene, Chthulucene, Capitalocene, and Plantationocene. In addition, I will discuss the background of each of these scenes referencing scholars and my own critique and deconstruction of them. 300

### Anthropocene

I plan to compare the work of an artist that visualizes the Anthropocene and an Artist explicitly against the Anthropocene, a “cene” that envisions humans stepping into a role as a primary geologic force. I am referencing an Indigenous artist who is making work critiquing the the universalization implicit in the root Anthropos, which places responsibility for ecological destruction of humanity as a species, instead of capitalistic greed, therefore placing responsibility falsely on those who don’t deserve it. 500

### Chthulucene

Dana Haraway coined this term that has grown in popularity due to her large and enthusiastic following. She named it after HP Lovecraft’s Cthulhu, a fearsome misogynistic monster poised to devour humanity. She insists that her conception of a Chthulucene is not connected to Lovecraft’s monster and she is just using its fearsome name. However, I would argue that she doesn’t adequately address how she uses the term, considering Lovecraft’s notoriety as a white supremacist. I will deconstruct an artist’s work that I find encompasses the Chthulucene, a Gaia-like visualisation of all the great and terrible forces that shape our world. 500

### Capitalocene

In response to the Anthropocene, the Capitalocene places responsibility for the destruction and geologic alteration of the earth on the greed and irreverence of capitalism and colonialism as a driving force behind it. I will consider an artists visualization of the Capitalocene, likely regarding mass waste, resource extraction and production. 500

### Plantationocene

Anna Tsing and Dana Haraway are the primary scholars engaged with the Plantationocene. The Plantationocene focuses on multiple types of plantations across time, as well as how plantation logic is a framework for our current society. The plantation system requires either genocide or forced labor to function, the plantationocene draws attention to colonialism, multispecies forced labor and agricultural systems. Considering visualization of the Plantationocene, I will consider an artist who is engaging with these themes in their work. 500

## Thesis

I will wrap up my paper by discussing the benefits of considering artists work regarding a new epoch to visualizing proposed names and conceptions of this epoch. The successes, failures, and curiosities of this endeavour will reveal themselves to me as I go through this process.