

On Earth

On Earth features six artists who explore the relationships between humans and land. These artists leverage the unique capacity of film and video to capture the ever-evolving conditions of the natural world. By experimenting with image, sound, and narration, they reframe familiar sites and histories, prompting us to reconsider our understanding of the Earth.

Produced between 1975 and 2022, the artworks highlight a range of urgent and interconnected realities. Addressing environmental devastation, displacement, and land rights, the artists draw parallels between our treatment of the Earth and the people who inhabit it. While recognizing the significance of these issues, the artists also look to land as a site for gathering, healing, memory, and ritual.

On Earth includes works by Ali Cherri (b. 1976); Jeffrey Gibson (b. 1972); Sky Hopinka (b. 1984); Ana Mendieta (1948–1985); and Rivane Neuenschwander (b. 1967), in collaboration with Cao Guimarães (b. 1965).

On Earth is organized by Stephanie Weissberg, Curator at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation.

***On Earth* is on view from Mar 8 to Aug 4, 2024.**



Scan for the digital exhibition guide on the free Bloomberg Connects app. The digital guide offers accessibility features and translations into many languages.

Sky Hopinka, Ho-Chunk/Pechanga and American (b. 1984)

Mnemonics of Shape and Reason, 2021

High-definition video, stereo, color

4 minutes, 13 seconds

Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Leighton, Berlin and Los Angeles

Sky Hopinka is an experimental filmmaker and poet who layers vibrantly colored imagery with text and sound. His works center Indigenous perspectives and represent sites of personal and ancestral significance.

Mnemonics of Shape and Reason starts with a shot of a desert landscape superimposed over an inverted rocky canyon. The footage was captured from a moving car, tying into the theme of wandering that the artist frequently explores. For Hopinka, traveling is a way to reflect on his own identity while also resisting colonial notions of territory and borders.

As the video progresses, bleached desert images fade into murky green water. Overlaid text references Soaking Mountain, a significant site for the Ho-Chunk Nation, of which Hopinka is a member. Soaking Mountain sits at the confluence of the Trempealeau and Mississippi Rivers in western Wisconsin. The area contains burial and ceremonial mounds built by Hopinka's ancestors.

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Jeffrey Gibson, Choctaw/Cherokee and American (b. 1972)

To Feel Myself Beloved on the Earth, 2020

Single-channel video with stereo sound

16 minutes

Courtesy of the artist; Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York; Roberts Projects, Los Angeles; and Stephen Friedman, London

Jeffrey Gibson is best known for his work in textiles, sculpture, and performance. He produced *To Feel Myself Beloved on the Earth* during the spring of 2020, amid the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and the concurrent civil unrest resulting from systemic violence against Black and queer people.

The video features six vignettes in which solo dancers move through urban and natural environments in New York City and Upstate New York. The performers employ a range of movement vocabularies. Some gestures respond to the surrounding landscape while others stem from voguing, a style of dance that evolved from the Ballroom scene, an underground subculture created by members of the Black and Latinx LGBTQ+ community in New York, which came to prominence in the 1980s. The video features live performances by vocalists and drummers playing rhythms from the African diaspora paired with audio recordings from a 2020 Black Trans Lives march in New York, where Gibson is based.

The vibrant costumes and instruments were made by Gibson's studio in his graphic, text-based style. Phrases such as "Time for Change" and "To Be Free"

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reflect the complex demands of the moment of their creation. While the work addresses painful experiences, it also emphasizes pride, exuberance, and resilience in the face of adversity.

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**Rivane Neuenschwander, Brazilian
(b. 1967), in collaboration with
Cao Guimarães, Brazilian (b. 1965)**

Quarta Feira de Cinzas / Epilogue
(Ash Wednesday / Epilogue), 2006

High-definition video, projection, color, and sound

5 minutes, 48 seconds

Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York / Los Angeles

Rivane Neuenschwander's *Quarta-Feira de Cinzas / Epilogue* (Ash Wednesday / Epilogue) takes its title from the Catholic holiday that marks the beginning of Lent, a forty-day period of prayer and fasting leading up to Easter. In Brazil, where Neuenschwander was raised and still lives, the celebratory period before Ash Wednesday is marked by Carnival, a multiday festival that includes massive parades and elaborate, colorful costumes.

This video, which was shot in the Brazilian rainforest on Ash Wednesday, documents a colony of leaf-cutter ants as they move confetti left over from Carnival into their nest. Their efforts are set to the sounds of forest life and beats of samba music played with matchsticks. This unusual instrument alludes to the common use of matchboxes in Brazilian samba.

The work speaks to the relationships between humans and other animals that inhabit the natural world. Neuenschwander highlights the material

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evidence of celebration and excess being reintegrated into the landscape through the labor of the ants. The dazzling display of lights and color that results is reminiscent of the Carnival processions performed by their human counterparts.

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Ali Cherri, Lebanese (b. 1976)

Of Men and Gods and Mud, 2022

Three-channel video installation. Projection

18 minutes, 20 seconds

Courtesy of the artist and Imane Farès, Paris

Ali Cherri's *Of Men and Gods and Mud* follows a group of brickmakers as they produce building materials from mud at a factory in northern Sudan. The factory is located near the massive Merowe Dam, which is one of the largest hydroelectric projects in Africa. Although it brought much-needed electricity to the region, its construction devastated ecosystems and displaced more than 50,000 people, leading to civil unrest.

Cherri's video is narrated with excerpts from his *Book of Mud*, read in English and Arabic. The text references a range of global mythologies, from the ancient Greek god Prometheus, who was said to have created man from clay, to great flood myths common to many cultures in which water destroys civilization. Shots of the brickmaking factory are interspersed with images of the nearby Nile River and Merowe Dam, drawing connections between mud as the source of human life and as a material that people harness for their own creations. Amidst the backdrop of rising global displacement due to environmental crises, Cherri's work reminds us of our capacity for devastation as well as creation.

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Ana Mendieta, Cuban American (1948–1985)

Alma, Silueta en fuego, 1975

Super 8 mm film transferred to high-definition digital media, color, silent
3 minutes, 7 seconds

Exhibition Copy, Edition of 6 with 3 AP (#0/6), (GP1196)

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Alma, Silueta en fuego (Soul, Silhouette on Fire) is part of Ana Mendieta's acclaimed *Silueta* (Silhouette) series. The artist produced more than two hundred *Siluetas* between 1973 and 1980 in Iowa and across Mexico. To create these fleeting works, she traced the outline of her body onto the earth with a range of materials, including flowers, moss, and gunpowder. With *Alma, Silueta en fuego*, created in Iowa where she was a graduate student, Mendieta set the form on fire and documented as flames spread across it, burned brightly, and then turned it to ash.

Mendieta's *Siluetas* reference fertility symbols and rituals from Catholicism and the Afro-Cuban religion Santería. She related the works to the displacement she felt after being exiled from her native Cuba in 1961 at the age of twelve out of concern for her safety due to her parents' resistance to Prime Minister Fidel Castro. She described the *Siluetas* as a means to heal loss, stating, "I have no motherland, I feel a need to join with the earth."

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