

# Manifesto: Artistic Articulations of Engagement<sup>1</sup>

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Peter J. Schneemann

## The Revival of a Format

Something manifests itself in both a material form and via an aesthetic expression. A force or idea turns real, becomes evident and obvious through this operation. In other words, the manifesto implies the transformation of a vision into something palpable. How does an idea, an artistic concept, gain *bindingness* – a categorical obligation? In this essay, I want to discuss the manifesto as an artistic format of articulation, more precisely as a mode of claiming art's direct relevance to society, if not the world. The manifesto has become the rhetorical mode for voicing a concern, announcing urgency, and identifying the need to act throughout artistic discourse's long history and development.<sup>2</sup> There is no manifesto without the gesture towards engagement. This might be the reason for this avant-garde format's revival.<sup>3</sup> To phrase it differently, the manifesto offers an opportunity to analyze the aesthetic constitution of engagement.

By using the term 'manifesto', I want to extend the reflection of engagement to notions of rhetoric and speech acts. The verb 'to manifest' stands for a certain ideal of communication, commitment, and the will to act. Moreover,

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1 This essay appeared also in 2022 in the CIHA Journal of Art History: <https://doi.org/10.57936/terms.2022.1.92645> (accessed 19/10/2023).

2 The genre of the manifesto has received extensive treatment in research, especially in its position for the avant-gardes. Cf., for example, Karl Heinrich Peter: *Proklamationen und Manifeste*, Stuttgart: Cotta 1964; Wolfgang Asholt/Walter Fähnders: *Manifeste und Proklamationen der europäischen Avantgarde (1909–1938)*, Stuttgart: Metzler 1995; Hubert van den Berg: *Manifeste: Intentionalität*, Amsterdam: Rodolpi 1998; Friedrich Wilhelm Malsch: *Künstlermanifeste: Studien zu einem Aspekt moderner Kunst am Beispiel des italienischen Futurismus*, Weimar: VDG 1997; Marjorie Perloff: "Violence and Precision: The Manifesto as Art Form", in: *Chicago Review* 34 (1984) 2, pp. 65–101; Burcu Dogramaci/Katja M. Schneider (eds.): *Clear the Air: Künstlermanifeste seit den 1960er Jahren*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2017.

3 Silke Peters: "Für klare Stellung: Neue Manifeste für die Kunst" (2009), on: <http://manifeste.twoday.net/> (last accessed 10/08/2022).

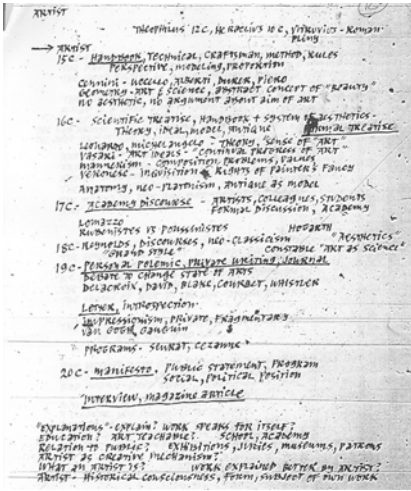


Figure 1: Ad Reinhardt: undated manuscript, *Ad Reinhardt Papers, Microfilm, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.* © 2022, *ProLitteris, Zurich*

the manifesto corresponds to the distinctive self-definition of both artists and art historians alike. A close reading of the manifesto as format reveals several issues that touch upon developments in the tension between aesthetic design and the content-driven agenda; this is also a tension that occupies the foreground of academic writing.

One finds an undated note that deals with the typology of artistic discourses in the papers of Ad Reinhardt (1913–1967), whose work is representative of Abstract Expressionism (Figure 1).<sup>4</sup> The abstract painter, a highly articulate voice of 1950’s New York, reflects on the link between the development of art and the paradigmatic formats of artistic articulation.

Reinhardt’s single sheet outline leads from the technical manual of the fifteenth century ‘handbook’ on perspective and proportions up to the ‘interview’ – a format that started an unprecedented career in the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> One thinks, of course, of Andy Warhol as the master of the interview, but also of Hans Ulrich Obrist, who built his career as a curator on the collection of interviews.<sup>6</sup> Reinhardt attributes the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the age of academic ‘discourses’; the nineteenth century, by contrast, expressed itself in ‘private writing’ and ‘letters’.

In 2008, Obrist organized a “Manifesto Marathon,” putting the format that – following Reinhardt’s list – was the twentieth century’s dominant genre, prior to the interview, centerstage.<sup>7</sup> Obrist drew a line from the historic avant-gardes to the radical manifestos of the 1960s and 1970s and, further, proclaimed the manifesto to

4 Manuscript, Ad Reinhardt Papers, Microfilm, Archives of American Art. Washington, D.C. (n. y).  
 5 Peter J. Schneemann: “Formate künstlerischer Theoriebildung”, in: Eva Ehninger/Magdalena Nieslony (eds.): *Theorie<sup>2</sup>: Potenzial und Potenzierung künstlerischer Theorie*, Bern: Peter Lang 2014, pp. 33–48.  
 6 Michael Diers/Lars Blunck/Hans Ulrich Obrist (eds.): *Das Interview: Formen und Foren des Künstlergesprächs*, Hamburg: Philo Fine Arts 2013.  
 7 Hans Ulrich Obrist: *Serpentine Gallery Manifesto Marathon*, London: Koenig 2009. Cf. Nicola Lees: *Serpentine Gallery Manifesto Marathon*, Cologne: König 2009; Viviana Birolli: “Manifestes à la carte: Serpentine Gallery Manifesto Marathon”, in: *Marges. Revue d’art contemporain* 21 (2015), pp. 61–71.

be the organ of the future. Finally, the event posited a link between the manifesto as a “document of poetic and political intent” and a situation of urgency.<sup>8</sup>

Why did Obrist celebrate the format of the historical avant-gardes, asking seventy artists to read, to sing, or to perform statements? What kind of revival of the manifesto is this? Do we see a shift from the ego-document to a new negotiation of shared values and responsibilities? The rhetoric of the manifesto certainly indicates a specific understanding of the status afforded to artistic articulation. Today, the artist is aware of the clear differentiations between personal observation and documentation, analytical research strategy, theoretical reflection, and activist exhortation. We have to acknowledge a complex typology of verbal articulation in the art world, ranging from the academies to contemporary publishing culture, in which art’s discursive dimensions manifest themselves. The mode of speaking’s implications are fundamental because they reflect the different roles assigned to the players in the field.<sup>9</sup>

We have the opportunity to reflect on the interplay between two perspectives because the long tradition of the artistic manifesto is experiencing a comeback: the intertextual implication on the formal level and the aesthetics of articulation and communication on the content level – the issues at stake today and their implications about the art’s function in society.<sup>10</sup>

## A Format in Transformation

A manifesto has a strong formal quality and a clear set of rhetorical figures. These formal features are mirrored in visual compositions that highlight the exclamatory effect of these semantic aspirations. Distributed as pamphlets and flyers or posters, manifestos have to be reproduced as facsimiles in order to preserve their visual language. This important correspondence between rhetorical means and visual manifestation can be observed equally well in the variations of Futurist experiments as well as in the typographic details like the use of capitals, small capitals, and lowercase (Figures 2–3).

Proclamations address the public directly. Descriptions and observations give way to calls and claims. Paragraphs get reduced to short and final statements; the incorporation of a rhythmic appearance of notions and idioms heightens the impact.

The manifesto as proclamation often goes together with numbered listing. The list, with its specific rhythm and repetition, creates a rule system, thereby evok-

8 Nicola Lees: *Manifesto Pamphlet*, London: Bedford Press 2008, cover. Cf. Obrist: *Serpentine Gallery Manifesto Marathon*.

9 Matthias Michalka/Beatrice von Bismarck (eds.): *The artist as...* Vienna: MUMOK 2006.

10 Schneemann: “Formate künstlerischer Theoriebildung”.



Figure 2: John Baldessari: *Terms Most Useful in Describing Creative Works of Art*, 1966–68, acrylic on canvas, 288.9 x 243.8 cm, © John Baldessari 1966–68. Courtesy Estate of John Baldessari © 2023. Courtesy Sprüth Magers

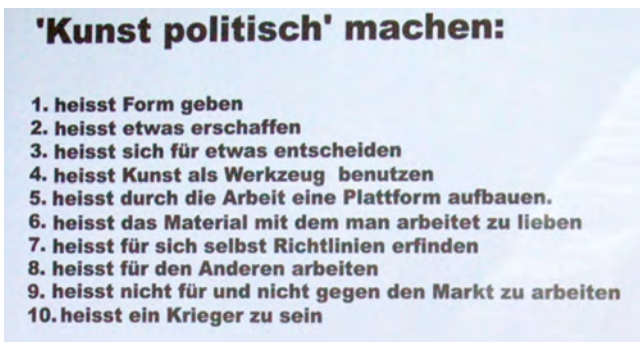


Figure 3: Thomas Hirschhorn: *Was heisst: Kunst politisch machen?*, slide of the lecture in the context of the conference *Künste und Regelwerk*, October 20–22, 2010, Gerzensee, Berne, © 2022, ProLitteris, Zurich

ing canonical texts such as the Ten Commandments. Examples can be found in the works of diverse artists: Ad Reinhardt's 'Rules', Sol LeWitt's 'Sentences',<sup>11</sup> or in Thomas Hirschhorn's pronouncements (Figure 3).<sup>12</sup>

An interesting formal feature of the manifesto and the call for change can be observed in the context of the avant-garde: the rhetorical figure of negation, of protesting a ruling system and of rejecting an established order, and a tradition that has developed a strong intertextual marker. We will come back to the thesis that the manifesto was, historically, strongly bound to a dynamic, activist, and (in some cases) destructive drive.<sup>13</sup>

ERZGEHORSAM<sup>11</sup> KUNST<sup>12</sup> = GROSSENWAHN IN DER KUNSTWELT  
 TOTALUNIVERSITÄT ERZKASSEL - HOTGESPRACH - SAALSPIEGEL-  
 NORDEN: GROSSENWAHN IN DER KUNST: ERZLAND  
 DIE "DIKTATUR DER KUNST IST VERSÄCHLICHTESTE FÜHRUNG"  
 "Kunst besitzt: Natürliche Macht ist unerschütterlich,  
 "Macht" die gewährt werden kann ist ideologiewerthalt.  
 Die "Diktatur der Kunst" benennt jede "Machtverhältnisse":  
 1. Benennt jede ideologische Diktaturmacht  
 2. Benennt jede politische Herrschaft  
 3. Benennt jede faszinationsbedingte Popsmacht  
 4. Benennt jede "ICH-VERSAUTE" DRECKSMACHT  
 5. Benennt jede Herrschaftsmacht  
 6. Benennt jede "wahlbezogene" Scheinmacht  
 7. Benennt jede religionsstiftende GOTTMACHT  
 8. Benennt jede Menschen(sich)suchtmacht  
 9. Benennt jede Menschenmännungsleistungsmacht  
 10. Benennt jede "Wichtigkeitsmenschmacht"  
 11. Benennt jede Menschenmaßstäblichkeitsmacht  
 12. Benennt jede präventive Massenindividuellkeitsmacht  
 → Benennt Alles, was sich beruft  
 der Kunst in den Weg stellt. Kehrt  
 Alles, was gegen die Kunst ist un-  
 abdingbar als "Alles was der Kunst  
 nicht dient ist leider zukunftsunfähig  
 und verabschiedet sich natürlich von selbst.  
 Die "Diktatur der Kunst" ist ihre eigene, effektive  
 Totalitätsverneinung: KUNST AN DIE MACHT.

Figure 4: Jonathan Meese: *untitled manuscript*, 2012, *manifesto of several pages*, written on the occasion of the *Spiegel Magazine event in Kassel* on "Größenwahn in der Kunstwelt", Copyright: Jonathan Meese. © 2022, ProLitteris, Zurich

- 11 Sol LeWitt: "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art", in: *Artforum* 5 (1967) 10, pp. 79–84. Cf. Rosalind Krauss: "LeWitt in Progress", in: *October* 6 (1978), pp. 47–60, <https://doi.org/10.2307/778617> (accessed: 23/10/23).
- 12 Thomas Hirschhorn: *Critical Laboratory: The Writings of Thomas Hirschhorn*, ed. by Lisa Lee and Hal Foster, Cambridge: MIT 2013.
- 13 Cf., for example, manifestos like "Le Refus global", released on August 9, 1948 in Montreal by a group of young artists and writers.

The strong intertextual tradition is immediately recognizable when we look at contemporary reinterpretations of the manifesto. A prominent example of a strategic and informed use of the intensified statement is Jonathan Meese's extensive writings (Figure 4).

His long manifestos, distributed as authenticated, 'facsimiled outbursts' or theatrically performed readings, allude overtly to the avant-gardes. A manifesto attacks and negates the existing order. The artist calls for an art that represents itself as a radical force by deploying coarse language, allusions to fascist rhetoric, and rhythmic (often numbered) repetition. Here, a term, a conviction or rule, as subject and even as label, becomes defined *ex negativo*:

"Die 'Diktatur der Kunst' verneint jede 'Machtwahl'

1. verneint jede ideologische Drecksmacht
2. verneint jede politische Kackmacht
3. verneint jede furzdemokratische Pupsmacht."<sup>14</sup>

There is also a complex relationship with performative expression, spoken language, and theatrical performance, much like how the format of the manifesto has a close relationship with graphic design. In recent years, these artistic strategies have become explicitly evident and differentiated in the development of the lecture-performance.<sup>15</sup> It is noteworthy that artistic research has led to an experimental interrogation of this genre, situated as it is in teaching institutions; examples range from Robert Morris to Robert Smithson, Joseph Beuys, and Andrea Fraser.<sup>16</sup>

14 Publication of the facsimile: Ulrike Knöfel/Marianne Wellershoff: "'Furzgrößenwahn'", on: [www.spiegel.de/kultur/furzgroessenwahn-a-f41ead4e-0002-0001-0000-000086403015](http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/furzgroessenwahn-a-f41ead4e-0002-0001-0000-000086403015) (2012) (accessed: 22/06/2022). For the use of facsimiles, cf. Robert Eikmeyer (ed.): *Jonathan Meese: Ausgewählte Schriften zur Diktatur der Kunst*, Berlin: Suhrkamp 2012; Jonathan Meese/Jan Bauer: *Diktatur der Kunst: Das radikalste Buch: Die Diktatur der Kunst ist die ultravisionärste Totalstutopie aller Zeiten!*, Cologne: König 2011; Harald Falckenberg: "Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Das Phänomen Jonathan Meese", in: Carl Haenlein/Carsten Ahrens (eds.): *Jonathan Meese: Revolution*, Hannover: Kestner Gesellschaft 2002, pp. 21–42.

15 Gabriele Klein/Wolfgang Sting: *Performance: Positionen zur zeitgenössischen szenischen Kunst*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2015.

16 Patricia Milder: "Teaching as Art: The Contemporary Lecture-Performance", in: *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 33 (2011) 1/97, pp. 13–27.

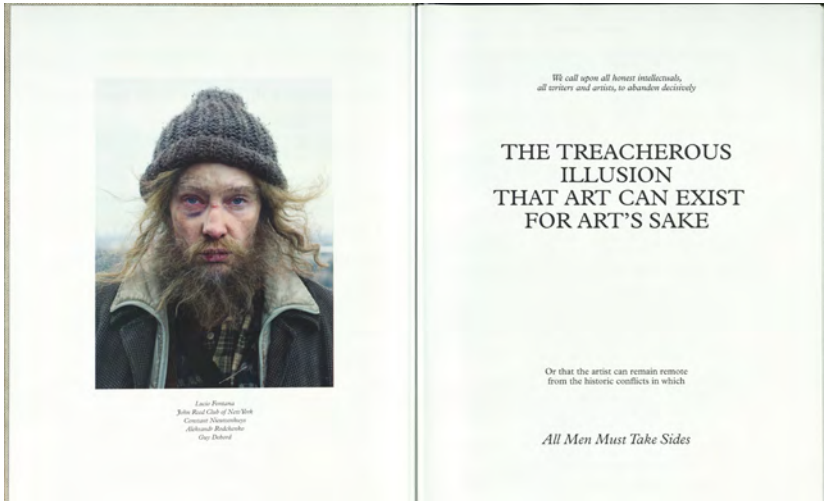


Figure 5: Julian Rosefeldt: *Manifesto*, 2015. In: Anna-Catharina Gebbers et al. (eds.): *Manifesto Julian Rosefeldt: A film installation in twelve scenes*, [Exh. cat.], London: Koenig Books 2016, pp. 6f., © 2022, ProLitteris, Zurich

In 2015, the artistic investigation into the tradition of the political statement climaxed in Julian Rosefeldt's work *Manifesto* (Figure 5).<sup>17</sup> In a monumental 13-channel film installation, he presents a looped collage of historic artist's manifestos, translated into performance. Cate Blanchett's acting augments the artificial aesthetic and fictitious quality of this 'restaged declamation'. Although the paratextual discourse of the installation positions itself as a homage and as a kind of critical review of the political potential of the avant-garde rhetoric, a different, much more radical question surfaces. Through explicit play with the manifesto's formal rule system, a certain aestheticizing, in the sense of *over forming* or *super shaping*, becomes evident. The staged rhetoric, the acting-out of an attitude, empties the manifesto of its content and leaves us with a nostalgic mood of remembering failure. The public no longer feels addressed, but instead experiences their displacement from a lost language of utopia. One could observe a similar effect at the Venice Biennale 2015, where Okwui Enwezor staged a reading of all three volumes of the iconic *Das Kapital*. The reading by professional actors was directed by the artist Isaac Julien and was performed in the 'Arena', a stage designed by the architect David Adjaye for the celebration of the spoken word.

17 Julian Rosefeldt: *Manifesto* 2015, 13-channel film installation, Colour, 26-channel sound (13 x Stereo). Shot on HD, Aspect ratio 16:9, Loop, 4 min (plus 12 x 10 min 30 sec, 130 min total running time). Cf. Anna-Catharina Gebbers/Anneke Jaspers/Udo Kittelmann/Justin Paton/Sarah Tutton (eds.): *Julian Rosefeldt: Manifesto* [Exh. cat.], London/Cologne: Koenig 2015.

Much like an echo of a paradigm from the past, the exhortation acquired a rhythm and melody of its own right. Indeed, one could refer to a number of other examples that demonstrate the complex play between formal mannerisms and urgency.<sup>18</sup> A format's emancipation directs the focus to the tension between the 'message' and an artistic 'realization'. One is often confronted with the imaginative power of performative language while discussing instruments of engagement.<sup>19</sup>

## The Call to Act and to Care

There is, however, a species of manifesto that indicates a clear refusal of any aestheticization – it is neither a game nor deconstruction; it is, instead, an expression of urgency. Rasheed Araeen's contribution to Obrist's 2008 Manifesto Marathon is one such example. He published his widely acclaimed "Manifesto for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" in *Third Text* 2009, albeit with a significant shift in the title: "Ecoaesthetics: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century."<sup>20</sup> Araeen, born in 1935 in Karachi, is the founder of *Third Text* and participated in Documenta 14 (2017).

His contribution is interesting because we can read it as a manifesto about manifestos themselves. More precisely, he deploys the key terms that define and, thus, redefine the manifesto:

"Art today is trapped by the facile idea of confrontation which merely produces media scandals [...], its function is merely to provide the artist with success in the art market. This inflates the artist's nar-ego further and turns him or her into a celebrity, providing spectacular entertainment for the public but without any significant critical or social function."<sup>21</sup>

Here, Araeen not only addresses the artists as a public figure but also reflects on the art world's intrinsic rituals, the economy of attention. One could claim, however, that the value of 'scandal', which he laments as a problem of contemporary art, is a natural rhetorical *topos* of the manifesto. Since the time of the Futurists, the rhetoric of the manifesto has played with the connection between the personal statement and the theatrical, inherently public claim that stirs up established val-

18 For an example, see the discussions around the Berlin Biennale curated by Artur Żmijewski.

19 Cf. Boris Groys: "On Art Activism", in: *e-flux Journal* 56 (2014), [www.e-flux.com/journal/56/60343/on-art-activism/](http://www.e-flux.com/journal/56/60343/on-art-activism/).

20 Rasheed Araeen: "Ecoaesthetics: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century", in: *Third Text* 23 (2009) 5, pp. 679–684, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09528820903189327> (accessed 23/10/23).

21 *Ibid.*, p. 680.

ues. Araeen's attack, tellingly, alludes to Dadaism, refusing to continue the European avant-gardes' manifesto tradition.

"This manifesto [...] proposes that artists should [...] stop playing the silly games of the so-called neo-Dada. Instead artists should focus their imagination on what is there in life, to enhance not only their own creative potential but also the collective life of earth's inhabitants. The world today is facing enormous violence and this will increase in the rest of the twenty-first century as the Earth's resources shrink due to the stupidity of the kind of life humans have been pursuing. Art can and should strive for an alternative that is not only aesthetically [...] productive but is also beneficial to all forms of life on our planet. We humans are the gift of mother Earth, and it is now our duty as its guardians to protect the earth from impending disaster."<sup>22</sup>

There is a tension between a formalized rhetoric, where the manifesto could be called an aesthetic form, and its content/agenda, an ethical imperative to act, whenever the manifesto attempts to redefine the manifesto. The new manifesto is one of the formats linked to the notion of an 'ecological imperative' – a stance towards human resource management built upon Kantian ethics.<sup>23</sup> Today, society is rethinking the use of visual and textual manifestations of human culture as crucial tools through which to mediate the ethics of the environmental crisis.

Araeen is attempting to use the avant-garde rhetoric beyond any *l'art pour l'art* attitude and to redefine the manifesto beyond its Eurocentric tradition in the process. He uses the rhetorical power of urgency and concern, as well as a new trope of the appeal, to call for an attitude of caring and about the necessity to repair. The 'new manifesto' demands engagement with nothing less than the world as such, the planet, and demands a radical shift in our orientation towards the world.

I have hitherto given an abbreviated reference to the manifesto's central position in the narration of modernism and the avant-garde movements – both in the self-positioning of modernist artists and in the historiographical work of contemporary scholars. This helps us to detect a fundamental shift in some of the paradigms at stake: the modernist manifesto aggravated for change, negated the past, and promised a future.<sup>24</sup> The deconstruction of existing orders and calls for

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22 Ibid., p. 684.

23 Hans Jonas: *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of An Ethics for the Technological Age*, Chicago: University of Chicago 1984 (1979). Cf. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, Cambridge: Harvard University 2012.

24 Lawrence S. Rainey/Christine Poggi/Laura Wittman: *Futurism: An Anthology*, New Haven: Yale University 2009; Elza Adamowicz/Simona Storchi: *Back to the Futurists: The Avant-Garde and Its Legacy*, Manchester: Manchester University 2017.

progress and speed shape the manifesto from Marinetti onwards. Araeen, instead, talks about preservation, care, and rejecting violence.

However, the modernist manifestos concerned themselves with mere decades or centuries. The new manifesto, the 'Anthropocene manifesto', has a different time scale entirely.<sup>25</sup> Tomorrow and the promise of the future of the avant-gardes have shifted – at present we speak about 'deep time' – and it is hardly possible to think on a larger scale than geological epochs in the discourse around the Anthropocene.<sup>26</sup> However, this shift goes far beyond a simple question of scale: it poses the question: "How can we mediate the need to protect the environment without referring backwards to a supposed (and ideological) unity and integrity?" A damaged environment urgently calls us to "reclaim, restore, and remediate."<sup>27</sup> What does it mean, though, when the cultural technique of 'deconstruction' is countered by a rhetoric of preservation, conservation, and reconstruction? What happens to the theatrical gesture, the call for utopian radicality? What happens to the postmodern quotation of and play with format itself, as in the case of Julian Rosefeldt? Ecocritical and activistic approaches want to judge art in terms of its ability to change reality. A criterion like formal innovation has lost its unquestioned authority; ecocriticism now calls for judging impact, practical consequences, or the solutions achieved by artistic acts.

Today, the most intriguing examples of the manifesto do not negate the aesthetic quality of the format and its rich intertextual history. On the contrary, there is an interest in reflecting upon the implications of the formats we use, up to a fictionalization and a merger between reenactment and preenactment.<sup>28</sup> We become aware of the ideological traps of statements that claim moral superiority and legitimization on the basis of identity. The artistic manifesto demonstrates a reflective openness, fragility and even ambivalence by means of aesthetic *evidentia*.<sup>29</sup>

The reflection on the manifesto, taking the shift asked for by Araeen's manifesto into account, exceeds the established field of Art Theory. The challenge of the

25 Aleida Assmann: "The Future of Cultural Heritage and Its Challenges", in: Torsten Meireis/Gabriele Rippl (eds.): *Cultural Sustainability*, London: Routledge 2019, pp. 25–35.

26 Cf. John McPhee: *Basin and Range*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1981.

27 Sacha Kagan: "The Practice of Ecological Art", in: [*Plastik*] 4 (2014), on: <https://plastik.univ-paris1.fr/la-pratique-de-lart-ecologique/> (accessed 27 May 2022). Cf. also Sacha Kagan: *Art and Sustainability: Connecting Patterns for a Culture of Complexity*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2011; Susan Gablik: *The Reenchantment of Art*, London: Thames and Hudson 1991; and the categorizations used in Linda Weintraub: *To Life: Eco Art in Pursuit of a Sustainable Planet*, Berkeley: University of California Press 2012.

28 Charlotte Klink: "Yael Bartanas' A Manifesto: Widerständigkeit und Entgrenzung der Kunst," in: Burcu Dogramaci/Katja Schneider (eds.): "*Clear the Air*": *Künstlermanifeste in Choreographie, Performance Art und Bildender Kunst seit den 1960er Jahren*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2017, pp. 173–191.

29 Rachel Mader: *Radikal ambivalent: Engagement und Verantwortung in den Künsten heute*, Zurich: Diaphanes 2014.

'ecological imperative' is inevitably bound to the question of 'formats'. How do the arts mediate responsibility? Which scenarios and courses of action (i.e., options to act) are evoked? How do the rhetorics of engagement address a wider public? Approaches in artistic research, in particular, mark ongoing shifts that can also be observed in academic writing. The supremacy of analysis and deconstruction is interrogated by the imperative to voice a position. The rhetoric of critical distance is being supplanted by the desire to overcome analysis and to get involved.<sup>30</sup> The way in which we communicate our motivations and our findings becomes constitutive for the role that we intend to take on.

A reflection on the formats through which we choose to communicate our work is crucial. Indeed, an interdisciplinary research group, composed of art historians, literary scholars and anthropologists, has been studying how contemporary cultures grapple with the ethical demands of climate change since 2021.<sup>31</sup> Our objects of study are palpable examples of how culture prompts us to take action and to accept the demands of the ecological imperative; however, we find that we only come close to approaching these objects on their own terms through collaboration, from within and without the academy, by utilizing our overlapping competencies, and by refusing to stay within the narrow boundaries of our 'discipline'.

In the final analysis, the manifesto, the trappings of which this essay at times adorns itself with, is both a verbal *and* a visual object, and cannot be analyzed without recourse to these two related, albeit different, ways of thinking. As Neumann and Rippl state: "verbal-visual configurations frequently point beyond existing orders of the sayable and the visible."<sup>32</sup> Although they are writing about ekphrases, and therefore about literature, the results of our interdisciplinary research – and of this essay more generally – tell the same story about other cultural products, be they manifestos or academic essays. We must leave the old ways of thinking – of researching – behind in order to tackle a problem of this scale. It might no longer be enough to investigate the verbal or the visual exclusively; climate change is a problem that calls for new competencies and new formats of mediations and it demands that we struggle beyond the already-said and the already-seen. Artists have pushed the boundaries of representation and documentation, communication and participation, and have developed strategies of engagement that investigate intertextual traditions such as the handbook, the letter, the treatise, or the interview.

30 Sara Callahan/Anna-Maria Hällgren/Charlotta Krispinsson: "A Farewell to Critique? Reconsidering Critique as Art Historical Method", in: *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History* 89 (2020) 2, pp. 61–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00233609.2020.1786159>.

31 Cf. the Swiss National Science Foundation Sinergia project "Mediating the Ecological Imperative: Formats and Modes of Engagement" (2021–2024), [www.ecological-imperative.ch](http://www.ecological-imperative.ch) (accessed: 23/10/2023).

32 Birgit Neumann/Gabriele Rippl: *Verbal-Visual Configurations in Postcolonial Literature: Intermedial Aesthetics*, London: Routledge 2020, pp. 5f.

