



# La restauraton écologique : une nouvelle formation du monde

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## VI. Transformation of industrial sites. Landscape Art and Structural Transformation. The concept of – “Archaeological Park” –

**Hermann PRIGANN, Artiste. Translation by Aisha Prigann**

The end of heavy industry – coal / steel – in the countries of western Europe in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to two deciding changes with far-reaching repercussions:

- The understanding that there is no growth without end, that eventually the limits of “always more of the same” are reached. This led to the paradigm “Change without Growth” – “From Quantitative to Qualitative Growth” – from a “Use-and-Discard Industry to a Circulatory Industry”. Since the Rio Conference we speak of the necessity for sustainable development.
- The fact that the former industrial sites turned into fallow land. Since only a few of these areas were re-used for industrial projects, the question was and is the following: How and in what way can these areas be worked on that is beneficial to the general structural development of a region?

In the nineties some regional development planners realized that the value of a region lies partly in its industrial history, not only in the preservation of its traces but even more so in the staging thereof. Until then landscape architects had mostly pursued a recultivation that closely mimicked nature, something that largely led to the destruction of historical traces and did not produce landscapes of any aesthetic interest. As a result new impulses and points of view were provided by landscape artists, articulated the practice and theory of a “dialogue” with nature and the history of the site. Today we speak of an “Ecological Aesthetic” – and “Eco Art”, as the basis for work in and with the environment.

In the Ruhr Area during the period 1989-1999 at the Inter. Bauaustellung / IBA and thereafter, it became possible to realize this idea for the first time. Although we will focus on two projects in the Ruhr Valley, we will also mention projects that have been realized and/or planned in the context of the EXPO 2000 in the area Bitterfeld – Landscape Art Goitzsche – and in the area Cottbus (please see listed websites). We developed the project Terranova for work related to the transformation of former industrial areas and within this framework the criteria and strategies can be found ([www.terranova.ws](http://www.terranova.ws)).

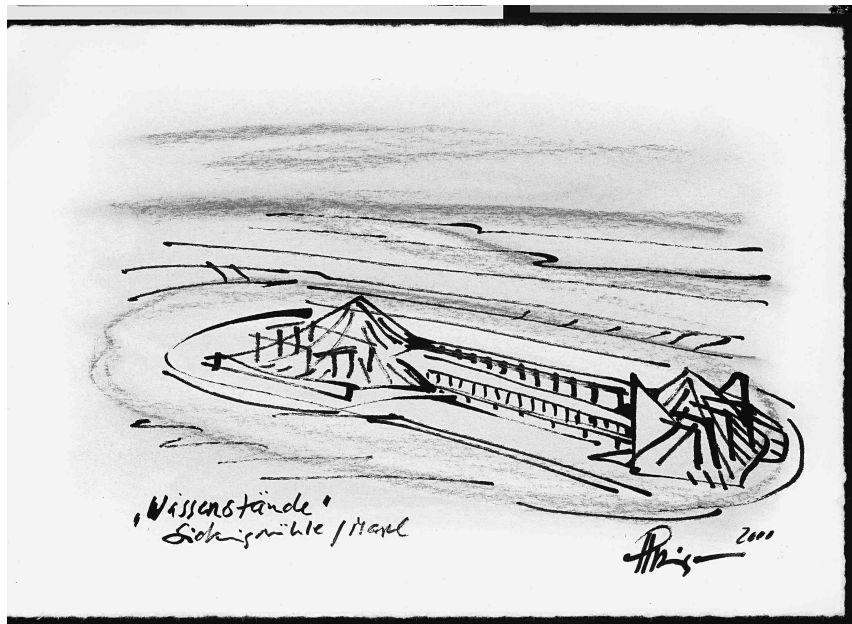
Projects in the Ruhr Valley: “Large Stone Field”, former open-cast mine, Mont Cenis in Herne. “Water Levels” near Marl and the ‘Sculptural wood’ in Gelsenkirchen



### “LARGE STONE FIELD”

The open-cast mine (coal pit) Mont Cenis belongs to the oldest open-cast mines in the Ruhr Valley. The facility was dismantled completely and a new glass structure was erected that now houses an academy for continued education. The surroundings were to be shaped. Our approach to shaping the area pursued two aspects: the contrast of breaks set against the large, transparent, glass architecture. To let the architectural remains – the stones – speak in remembrance of the industrial history of the site. Thus, an “archeological field” grew from the concrete blocks of the former open-cast mine Mont Cenis. The opening was in October 1999.





# “WATERLEVEL”

Marl / Germany – 1998 / 2000.

The waterpumpstation situated in Marl, which was constructed in 1938 was providing water for the chemical plant “Huels”. The coalmining process of the area caused the sagging of the earth, which provoked damages on the building, thus the waterpumpstation had to stop working. Parts of the inner structure of the building, such as concrete and steel elements were conserved within the artistic process of transformation and all not toxic materials were integrated and worked up on the site. Two hills cover partly the architecture, a moat separates the former building and surrounds an island – a “Terra incognita”. This landscapeartwork is a new biotop and a place of memory of an industrial history.





## “ THE SCULPTURAL WOODS Spiralhill and the skystairs.”

This project is realized in the area of the city Gelsenkirchen /Germany.

It is a former industrial site, a coalmine – 75 hektar large.

The transformation of this area from a devastate site to a new kind of park was realized from 1998 to 2005. The “Spiralhill” is a artifical hill and from the top the people have a far view over the surroundings. The hill is 120 m high. The “Tower” on top is made from 36 peaces of old concretblocks from the former industrialarchitecture. It is in this case a place of remembrance of the old industrial history of this region – coal and steel. We have integrated the succession of natur and in this wilderness are situated some “Metamorphic objects and sculptural places”. This different sites gives the hole area orientation and attractions. Today the people use the parc as a recreation area. It is an example how we can integrate former industrial sites back in cultural landscapes.

### **Ideas about ruins**

The fascination of ruins in the European culture starts with the beginning of the Renaissance – with the rediscovery of the antique world.

Since that time we have experienced the development of a culture of memory – the awareness of our history.

Some areas are in relation to our topic – the poetry of post industrial ruins – the English garden – and romanticism.

When I conserve and integrate traces into my work today – remains of industrial architecture – traces of mining areas - it is also a reference to this tradition of our perception of history and a romantic reflection about transiency. However, ruins today have wider associations: The fields of ruins of the second world war and Hiroshima – like a menetekel of progress at any price.

The former industrial areas – mining fields – landscapes destroyed by our industrial agriculture and the mental deserts of our societies have one reason:

The increase of profit and speed.

The goal of my work is slowness – the integration of nature's succession – and to work out the relationship between decay and growth.

The ruins in my work have an enlightening character, a reference to the metamorphosis of all remembrance within the dialectic of progress.

The phenomenon that we have survived in spite of all the errors.

### **Theses for an ecological aesthetic in the field of tension art-ecology and economy**

The title only mentions contradictions, by today's understanding of these terms even irreconcilable differences. These contradictions are illustrated in order to approximate a different perspective, one that forms the basis of my work.

The classic aesthetic, as a theory on which to base judgements of taste, doesn't speak of experiencing the beautiful, but rather about formal assessment. Its instruments are thus useless in the perception of landscape as a primarily atmospheric, natural and historical space. Therefore, it is also useless in the perception of art forms that unfold in dialogue with the material and energies of nature.

Ecology would be the science of nature considered in its entirety and that integrates human beings and their cultural intervention. At this time ecology is still far removed from this interpretation. It also operates in terms of extracts within a whole process, something that is manifested by concepts such as **biotope, biosphere reserve** or **nature reserve**.

What is missing is the scientific conversion of the fact that ecology deals with reciprocally determined processes in the development of nature and culture. Relationships in nature, as in culture, can be ecologically understood in the same way.

An ecological aesthetic would be a perspective on our environment and society as well as a theory and practice developed from thereon out. This perspective would annul current, standard contradictions such as **nature-art // nature-technology // nature-civilisation // nature-culture** and proceed towards an insight of the principle of dialogue in and towards everything.

We are the actors – the echo strikes us.