

Interactive comment on “From soil in art towards Soil Art” by C. Feller et al.

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That is the somewhat megalomaniacal elevation of the topic into the realm of so-called Soil Art, which is defined by the authors as “artistic work about, in, or with soil or soil protection issues, that is produced by artists in a multitude of genres and media, to be

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understood, among other things, as artwork that may contribute to wider environmental and soil protection discourses”

As is amply illustrated in the article, soil and soil related aspects now and then appear, more or less explicitly, in visual art. But what is the point of calling this Soil Art? I hope it is not meant to be an art historical category. In the conclusion of the article, emphasis on Soil Art by soil professional is suggested to help making their work much more appealing and relevant to lay audiences and for decision-makers. What evidence is there for this expectation? In my experience as a gallery owner, a disappointingly small percentage of individuals in the general lay public, as well as among natural scientists and policy makers (< 10 %) is truly interested in art, and could be expected to become enthused by Soil Art!

Soil, by its very nature, is normally hidden from view and is therefore not something that is very often visualized or given attention to in art (in this respect the authors deserve credit for what they have dug up!), and therefor not very appealing to the general public. Compare that with the frequency with which, e.g. flowers, trees, skies, mountains, rocks, rivers, lakes and seas, and medical conditions (to name but a few) turn up in art works! Just imagine art lovers among horticulturists coming up with Flora Art; they would have much, much more material available to illustrate their favorite to art works! Similarly, foresters could come up with Arboreal Art, meteorologists with Meteo Art, geologists with Geo Art, limnologists & oceanographers with Aqua Art, and medical professionals with Medical Art. Clearly the list could be extended easily. And work of a given artist would often appear in different of these categories: Walter de Maria in Meteo Art (his Lightning field), herman de vries in Flora-, Arboreal-, Geo- and Aqua Art, etc. etc.

Due to the normally invisible nature of soil horizons, soil profiles with horizons rarely appear in landscape paintings, with the painting “The planting of the tree” by Grant Wood as a rare exception. That the authors therefor consider the soilscape, and not the content of the title, as the main subject of the work and the source of inspiration

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for the artist, in my opinion reflects more their attitude of dreaming up Soil Art than anything else. Fortunately the authors are aware of this pitfall. Landa honestly states about the distinct soil horizons popping up in Lech Majewski's film *The Mill and the Cross*: "The choice of the pit site was just chance – the look of the soil had nothing to do with the selection of the filming location; rather, the slope was chosen to give a good view of the monks in the same shot. The lesson to me was clear – Not all depictions of soil, even if eye-catching for a soil scientist, are conscious acts of filmmaking. But one can dream. . ." I wish they'd been always so critical. . .

Interactive comment on SOIL Discuss., 2, 85, 2015.