

PETER FEND

Born 1950, Columbus, Ohio
Now residing in New York, New York

This is the first public exhibition of Peter Fend's work.

On September 7, 1976, Niccola Palladino, technical vice-president for Snam Progetti USA, a North American subsidiary of the Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI), asked the artist to detail a proposal that microorganisms produced by ENI from hydrocarbons be supplied not to domestic animals but to marshes. This proposed action was to be integrated within a sequence of urban-industrial functions, including: (1) reducing wastes by pyrolysis to hydrocarbons, ammonium and a small residue of metals; (2) harvesting wild animals and plants from large stretches of terrain affected by marshes; and (3) removing nutrients accumulated in coastal and other saltwater sinks, yielding not only foods and fibers but also the kelps that with industrial decomposition would release enough methane to meet present energy needs. The entire sequence would obviate the use of biocides, artificial fertilizers, irrigation, carcinogenic fuels and relatively inefficient composting programs.

The sequence was conceived through recollections of Josef Beuys' Fat Corner (Fettecke). In a number of Aktionen, Beuys had set a clump of paraffin in a corner of a room, entitled it Fat Corner, and suggested that it represent the energy base through which all life processes must pass. While planning a project with Columbia University students about New York City wastes, this artist—despairing of present arrangements—related the paraffin in Fat Corner to the paraffin used by certain oil companies in the cultivation of monocellular organisms. He soon learned that other hydrocarbons, including methane, were employed as substrates, and that precise mixtures of ammonium and trace minerals could yield a wide variety of organisms. Reduction of urban-industrial wastes to these ingredients had become standard technology: it seemed that a city could be subjected to the linearity of the digestive tract.

Mr. Palladino had asked precisely how the organisms would be introduced, in what form, and with what economic implications. To answer these questions, the artist turned to other artists. He focused on the work of Dennis Oppenheim and Robert Smithson. *Earth Net: An Economic System* presents a construction program for an industrial landscape in which most of the component events or structures have been modeled first by Oppenheim and Smithson. Perhaps greater coherence could have been achieved now if Smithson had not been killed in 1973.

From other artists have come ideas vital to the activation and operation of *Earth Net: An Economic System*. They have enabled this artist to form an earth architecture, a scheme for integrating the metabolic processes of human populations with the metabolic processes of other species, so creating a habitable space. Gordon Matta-Clark directed attention both beneath and above the ground: subterranean effects of placing cones near an arid sink became apparent; specific designs for stationary aerial viewing platforms could be drawn. The design of *Electric Fields* developed through study of drawings by Sol LeWitt and through unstinted replication of *Lightning Field* by Walter De Maria. The two artists seem to manifest an emerging view of space as a neurosensory continuum suited to electric organization. An overall framework, or sense of purpose, came less from architecture than from three women. Agnes Denes reinforced a view that technological evolution, including warfare, fell within the province of art; Mary Beth Edelson affirmed the premier role of oceans in fertility cycles; Carolee Schneeman set forth flesh as a standard of value. While the imagery of *Production Lines* is derived from Dennis Oppenheim, its rationale comes from Vito Acconci, Les Levine and Alan Saret. Those artists have called for a direct entry by art into the political economy—an entry not only with media but also with an architectonic organization through group venture of primary production. *Earth Net: An Economic System* was intended to help effect such an entry. If it works, it would help to make art become—as artists in Milan declare—"the appropriate response to recognized conditions."

—Peter Fend, 1978

LIST OF WORKS

Earth Net: An Economic System, 1977-78
(seven works, each composed of five images with accompanying text)

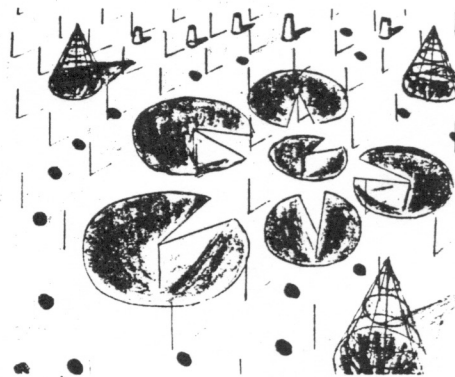
- I. "Water Hold," 1977-78
photomontage, text and mixed media
44x17" (111.5x43 cm)
- II. "Feather Form," 1977-78
photomontage, text and mixed media
44x17" (111.5x43 cm)
- III. "Vapor Rise," 1977-78
photomontage, text and mixed media
44x17" (111.5x43 cm)
- IV. "Electric Field," 1977-78
photomontage, text and mixed media
44x17" (111.5x43 cm)
- V. "Animal Snares," 1977-78
photomontage, text and mixed media
44x17" (111.5x43 cm)
- VI. "Double Spirals," 1977-78
photomontage, text and mixed media
44x17" (111.5x43 cm)
- VII. "Production Lines," 1977-78
photomontage, text and mixed media
44x17" (111.5x43 cm)

V. "Electric Field with Snares"

Plan

Pitfalls with water attract land animals; cages over waterholes attract air animals; in the competition for space, predators take advantage. Evenly-spaced electroconductive poles effect an immunological structure.

Concepts: De Maria, Denes, LeWitt, Oppenheim, Smithson

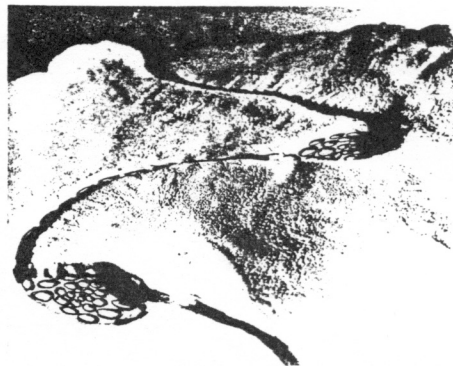


VI. "Assembled Spirals"

Low-angle aerial photograph

River is channeled into hillside, ponding there among spiraled holes and snares. Unsopped water flows gradually downward in reverse-S up the valley and onto the opposing slope, where a second spiral receives it.

Concepts: Beuys, Oppenheim, Smithson

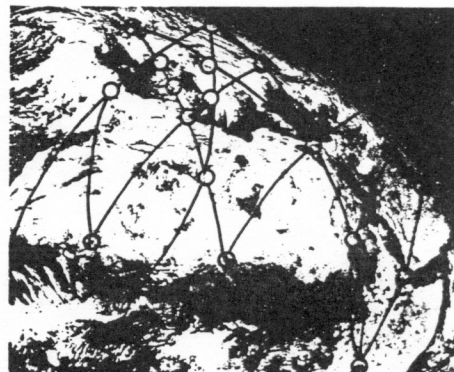


VII. "Production Lines"

Ultra-high aerial photograph

Aerial migration routes bind sites in Eurasia with sites in Africa, transferring to the uplands nutrients from salt waters. At stops, species intersect, marshes form and grasses spread, making possible the sustained harvest of mammals on land and of kelp, degradable to methane, in the sea.

Concepts: Haacke, Oppenheim



details from *Earth Net: An Economic System*, 1977-78

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