

Artists for the Earth — Earth Day 2020

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This is the fifth in a series of six articles about Earth Day Network's five campaigns for the 50th anniversary of Earth Day.

Like everything else this year, the 50th anniversary of Earth Day is going to be much different than planned. The pandemic has forced cancellation of many Earth Day 2020 events, and others have moved into the digital sphere. But not every campaign has been seriously impacted.

[Artists for the Earth](#) is a digital campaign that anyone can participate in wherever they are. It might also be as [beneficial to our mental health](#) during a time of physical distancing as it is beneficial to the environmental movement.

Art and Community

As the flood of creative expression on social media in response to isolation – from the [Getty art challenge](#) to a burst of [meme-making seniors](#) – demonstrates, art becomes [more important to us](#) during times of crisis. It serves a [dual purpose](#) of presenting a lens through which to view the problem and creating hope that we can fix it.

“Art is the way we digest things, internalize things, and make sense of the world,” said Shelley Rogers, Artists for the Earth Coordinator at Earth Day. And although all attention in recent weeks has rightfully focused on the immediate response to the pandemic crisis, “Climate change is the major challenge of the 21st century,” she said.

Dealing with climate change requires the same focused, collective response as a pandemic, but despite years of solid data and scientific consensus, climate change has generally been treated as a special interest issue.

“Scientists and environmentalists began to realize that a lot of it is just not getting through to people. Artists make issues personal and reach people on an emotional level. That’s more powerful, many times more powerful than just a science lecture,” Rogers said.

Artists for the Earth

Earth Day Network developed the Artists for the Earth campaign as a way to connect with arts organizations and artists around the globe. Together, they are working to engage the public with environmental issues, especially climate change. The campaign is inclusive of all kinds of arts and media, from ballet to graphic arts, photography, and film.

Earth Day Network began by studying the existing involvement of various artistic disciplines with climate issues. In each field, they looked at what kind of environmentally themed work artists were doing. They identified the kinds of themes that emerged in various fields. Then they selected significant works of environmental

art that exemplified those themes, and they shared them one by one on their [campaign website](#).

“At first, our pages were really just the people that were most important in each of their fields. You know, someone like Olafur Eliasson for sculpture,” Rogers said.

Watch video of the arctic ice art installation in Paris by artists Olafur Eliasson and Minik Rosing:

“But then we realized what we really want to do is have this for everybody. Many people are very artistic and they’re taking on these subjects everywhere. They are writing about them, painting them, they’re knitting for them.”

At the end of 2019, Artists for the Earth redesigned their website. They still have pages featuring work from well-known artists in a section of the website sorted by art form. But the top of the page features a new gallery of submitted works.

“Now we have hundreds of people signed up,” Rogers said.

Getting Involved

If you are an artist of any kind who works with environmental themes, you can participate in the campaign by [registering](#) as an artist for the earth. You can upload works of art with a statement about the piece and a link back to your own website. You can also register events like exhibitions, projects, programs or performances, once the pandemic subsides and those types of events resume.

“It’s adding a new dimension to the environmental movement that’s very gratifying,” said Rogers.

Artists and nonartists alike can browse the gallery pages to experience environmental art. When you find something that speaks to you, share the link to the work on social media and talk about it with friends. Most artworks do not include specific prompts for action. But if you feel so moved, you can click over from the Artists for the Earth pages to other Earth Day Network [campaigns](#) for climate action ideas.

And if you are a parent coping with pandemic homeschooling, be sure to visit the campaign’s [Learning Through Art](#) resources.

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