

In 1962, the biologist and writer Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, a bestselling book that predicted a future in which humankind’s use of pesticides threatens the lives of species the world over. Carson’s warning—combined with concerns over pollution and rampant resource use aggravated by urban sprawl—soon gave rise, in the United States, to the environmental movement, which sought to protect the natural world from the harms caused by human activity and industry. Environmentalism’s social and political influence was enormous, sparking anxious media coverage, new policies like the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency, and mass protests; on the first Earth Day in 1970, some twenty million Americans marched in the name of our planet.

The architectural field took note, and many designers began to rethink their practices in response to environmental crisis. *Emerging Ecologies: Architecture and the Rise of Environmentalism* presents their innovative, fantastical, and daring projects, from the prehistory of Environmental Architecture—that is, architecture focused foremost on environmental and ecological issues—to the development of ecological approaches during and after environmentalism’s peak in the 1970s. The works displayed here trace how earlier, technology-driven proposals—such as the production of ecological databases and computer-controlled greenhouses— informed subsequent community-led practices and calls to imbue environmentally sensitive designs with poetic meaning.

Emerging Ecologies narrates an alternative history of twentieth-century architecture, one that foregrounds those for whom environmental issues are the driving concern of their work. As we confront today’s accelerating climate crisis, these past endeavors to—in the words of landscape architect Ian McHarg—“design with nature” are more urgent than ever.

To be sure, ecological knowledge of the US did not start with architectural efforts in the last century. For generations before European colonization, Indigenous communities tended to the lands around them. *Emerging Ecologies*, a focused survey on a particular moment of the environmental history of the US, is the first in a series of exhibitions that the Ambasz Institute will present on the relationship between architecture and ecology across different regions, cultures, and geographies.

Organized by Carson Chan, Director, the Emilio Ambasz Institute for the Joint Study of the Built and Natural Environment, and Curator, Department of Architecture and Design, with Matthew Wagstaffe and Dewi Tan, Ambasz Institute Research Assistants, and Eva Lavranou, 12-Month Intern, Ambasz Institute.

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The Emilio Ambasz Institute for the Joint Study of the Built and the Natural Environment, established through a generous gift to MoMA from Emilio Ambasz, is a platform for fostering dialogue, promoting conversation, and facilitating research about the relationship between the built and natural environments, with the aim of making the interaction between architecture and ecology visible and accessible to the wider public while highlighting the urgent need for an ecological recalibration.



The exhibition is made possible by Allianz, MoMA’s partner for design and innovation, and supporter of programs that look to a more sustainable future.

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We invite you to explore the accompanying publication, *Emerging Ecologies: Architecture and the Rise of Environmentalism*, which is available in the Museum Store.

For related content, programs, and audio, visit www.moma.org/emergingecologies.