

ABOUT THE COVER

Acid Rain

by Bright Ogochukwu Eke¹

The installation *Acid Rain* was shown at the exhibition RETHINK - Contemporary Art and Climate Change in conjunction with the Copenhagen Climate Conference in 2009. RETHINK was an art exposition featuring 26 international artists whose work 'creates new ways for the public to grasp complicated climate change issues'².

Bright Eke's medium is water, which links all humans and their environments. Inspired by a skin infection he developed from acid rain caused by oil companies' pollution in his native Nigeria, Eke first created a large installation comprised of small plastic sachets filled with acidified water suspended like poisoned raindrops frozen midair.

The spatial complexity of *Acid Rain*, first seen at the 2006 Dakar Biennial, evokes both our global connectedness as humans and the delicate natural networks in which we are all embedded. Bright Eke extends this metaphor in the 'waterways' he constructs from thousands of plastic water bottles. Such works as *Natural Connection*, installed for the 2008 International Festival for the Arts in the Netherlands, and *Confluence*, created for the 2008 international exhibition CodeShare in Lithuania, form tunnels or labyrinths through which visitors move, like amoebas in our intestines, or fetuses in a birth canal.

Rivers and other bodies of waters can also constitute boundaries, and the politics of water is increasingly divisive as water becomes more precious. Several of Bright Eke's works take the form of transparent walls of water bottles, evoking both the solidity and permeability of boundaries. Others focus bluntly on the ethics of water quality in different locales; we can tell a lot about people and their environments from the quality of the water they drink.

Bright Eke's site-specific works integrate the physical and social environment by using materials found locally and working with locals. Often the work has an ecological and exemplary benefit, recycling the plastic bottles that clutter the global environment. Eke explains his work as being as much about the environment as from the environment, as much about the public as from it; as much about culture and society as from it. Like the water cycle itself, his works are potentially recyclable.

In his focus on interconnectedness and working socially rather than heroic individualism, on environmental and global issues rather than individual ones, and on global identity rather than national identity, Bright Eke reflects concerns of a new non-national generation of international artists.

Bright Eke, born 1976 in Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria, obtained his MFA at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where he studied with El Anatsui. He has received numerous international awards and residencies, and has shown widely internationally, mostly in group exhibitions. In the United States he was recently featured in *Environment & Object: Recent African Art* at the Tang Museum, Skidmore College, and other venues, and in the *Global Africa Project* at the Museum of Art & Design, New York.

¹ Most of this text is taken from the artist presentation at the [Axis Gallery website](#).

² [ArtThreat 2009](#).