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Book Author(s): Annie Sprinkle, Beth Stephens and Jennie Klein

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INTRODUCTION

Rolling around on the Theoretical Ground

Nineteen years ago, we fell in love and immediately began making art projects together about our relationship, love, and pleasure. We could not have imagined that one day we would call ourselves *ecosexuals* and take the Earth as our lover, or that we would make work about environmental issues. Yet here we are, *ecosexuals*, following our muse, our desire, imaginations, and our conscience as we engage in the daily practices of living *ecosexually*. After we did a performance where we married the Earth, we started using the word *ecosex*, because it sounded like what we were doing. Then we adapted it to fit our needs. When we first used *ecosex* to describe what we were doing and *ecosexual* to describe our sexual identity and our work, we were being a little tongue in cheek. But then after a while we saw that there really was something to it. Suddenly things got serious. We started asking ourselves: What is *ecosex*? Who are the *ecosexuals* and what do they do exactly? Where did the concepts behind *ecosexuality* develop? How can *ecosex* art and activism help bring about much needed change? And what inspired us to assume the *ecosexual* position?

Becoming *ecosexual* was an unexpected move for us back in 2008. *Ecosex* and *ecosexual* were words that were floating around on a few dating sites. We couldn't put our fingers on a genuinely good definition, one that we could really get behind. For example, Wiktionary defines an *ecosexual* as "an environmentally conscious person whose adherence to green living extends to their romantic and/or sexual life (particularly their choice of partner)."¹ Being *ecosexual* could mean anything from being a nature lover or vegan to refusing to wear leather clothes or use leather sex toys. Both of us came of age during third-wave, sex-positive feminism. We thought these definitions were inadequate and decided they needed to be expanded in order to create the

deeper meanings that interested us. We eventually created a definition of our own, which we published in 2011 in our *Journal of EcoSex Research*:

ECOSEXUAL \ 'ɛ:kəʊ 'sɛkʃ(əw)əl: eco from ancient Greek *oikos*; sexual from Latin, *sexuales*. 1. A person who finds nature² romantic, sensual, erotic, or sexy, which can include humans or not. 2. A new sexual identity (self-identified). 3. A person who takes the Earth as their lover. 4. A term used in dating advertisements. 5. An environmental activist strategy. 6. A grassroots movement. 7. A person who has a more expanded concept of what sex and orgasm are beyond mainstream definitions. 8. A person who imagines sex as an ecology that extends beyond the physical body. 9. Other definitions as yet to be determined.³

For many people, *ecosex* and *ecosexual* immediately conjure images of Birkenstocks, tree-hugging hippies, and New Age Californians. We were very conscious about the negative perceptions of New Age environmentalism as a mostly white, middle-class endeavor. Granted, Annie was a hippie for a couple of years in the sixties, and Beth had some older hippie cousins she loved and admired, and we do live in California. But for us, *ecosexuality* is more of a punk-rock, queer, drag, pinup grrrl version of environmental activism rather than the New Age stereotype that often gets hurled our way. We align ourselves with the AIDS activist organization ACT UP, sex-positive feminism, ecofeminism, Fluxus performance art, and, sometimes, the hippie movement. We recognize that hippie culture was problematic, especially in terms of its habitual patriarchal treatment of women and neocolonial appropriation of Indian and Indigenous American cultures. But we also recognize that the hippie movement challenged the status quo and rebelled against capitalism, sexual repression, imperialism, war, and the destruction of the environment. Hippies embraced a collective utopian future, and we too aim to create a better society for all!

Performance Memories

BETH So let's look back at some of our inspirations and give credit where credit is due. While we have always been, and still are, multimedia artists, a large part of our work has been performative in nature. Let's start there.

Growing up in West Virginia, I didn't have access to the same kinds of cultural events as kids who lived in major cities. My mother taught piano and had briefly studied at the Juilliard School of Music in Manhattan as well as at the music conservatory in Ann Arbor, Michigan, so music was always in our house.

I vaguely remember going to see *Hello, Dolly!* with my mother in Charleston, West Virginia, in the midsixties. Family lore has it that I was too scared to go backstage after the play to meet the lead actress. The music ended when my mother died in 1968, the year I turned seven. My dad wasn't a theater, art, or classical music kind of guy, but he loved his sports. So I swapped out the piano for the playing fields.

We went to a lot of ball games together: high school basketball, farm league baseball, and college football games. Having spent my summers on my grandparents' farm, I was attracted to horses and learned to ride at a young age. I loved to compete in small-town rodeos. I roped calves and did pole bending and barrel racing, as well as keyhole and pickup racing. I can't even remember how many times I've been bucked off a horse, not to mention being kicked. Attending a livestock auction or county fair was high performance art in my youth. Being physically present in my body and hyperaware of what my body could and couldn't do turned out to be wonderful training for becoming a performance artist. I never felt I was missing anything.

When I started college at Alfred University in upstate New York, a lecture by Vito Acconci was the first artist's talk I remember attending. He talked for three hours, and most of the other students and professors left before he finished. But I stayed, and by the end I understood that he was wild in a way that really turned me on to performance art. At Alfred, I met my first female lover, Mary, and the following year moved with her to Boston.

Eventually I enrolled in the Museum School, where I attended lectures by Marina Abramović and Ulay, Holly Hughes, and Robert Irwin. I lived right around the corner from Mobius, founded by Marilyn Arsem in 1977 as one of the first spaces dedicated to performance art in the United States. I loved learning about performance art there, and I was enamored with Marilyn Arsem's work. I particularly remember a piece called *Dreams (breathe/don't breathe)* of Home from the series *Pig Baby* that she did with her husband, Bob Raymond. The *Pig Baby* series inspired my first performance art piece, *Fish Anger*, at Mobius in 1986.

While in Boston, I attended concerts and performances by artists such as Patti Smith, Laurie Anderson, Meredith Monk, Lily Tomlin, and even the Boston Symphony conducted by Seiji Ozawa. At heart I was still a kid from West Virginia, so I always loved going to Red Sox games in Fenway Park with my dad, who would visit from time to time.



Beth Stephens's first public performance was *Fish Anger* in 1986 at Mobius, a performance art space in Boston, Massachusetts. Beth sat in a wheelbarrow full of fish to explore the derogatory comparison between the odor of fish and the odor of women. Photograph by Diane Bonder. Authors' collection.

ANNIE Growing up mostly in Los Angeles, my family went to a lot of museums, Renaissance Fairs, and plays. I saw a lot of good shows. Dad was a playwright, singer, tap dancer, and a huge fan of musicals when not doing his day job as a community development social worker. My parents were open-minded, so they even took me and my three siblings to see *Hair* at the Aquarius Theater when I was fourteen. I was shocked by the nudity! By the time I was sixteen, everyone in my family had acted in plays, except me. I was excruciatingly shy and I couldn't imagine getting onstage—ever!

Fast forward: I became a porn starlet at eighteen, surprising everyone, especially myself. At that time, many porn movie scripts had actual parts, but I was really uncomfortable with acting. I was excited by the creative possibilities of combining real sex and filmmaking. By my early thirties, porn stars had become a popular feature in burlesque theaters, and I was getting lucrative offers to go onstage. I was hesitant to accept because I wasn't a very good dancer, and I didn't have the courage to do it anyway. I was tempted by the money because I wanted

to pay for tuition to go to the School of Visual Arts (SVA) near where I lived in Manhattan and study photography.

Luckily for me, Willem de Ridder came to my rescue. Willem was a Dutch Fluxus artist and the European chairman of the Fluxus art movement. He had been my boyfriend for a couple of years when I was in my midtwenties. He was a masterful storyteller and radio personality. He helped me create a new genre of burlesque he coined “strip speak,” which was stripping while telling sexy stories, dirty talking, and vocalizing orgasms. This gave me the courage to tour the bumpy burlesque trail around the USA for four years during my college breaks. That’s how I got my stage chops and my BFA in fine arts.

While I was attending SVA, Kathy O’Dell’s history of performance art class blew my mind the most. She covered the Fluxus artists, which I already knew a lot about thanks to Willem, but also introduced me to many other great artists. It was my favorite class, and I became enthralled with performance art. Living in Manhattan, I was able to see the great performance artists at work, such as Karen Finley, Laurie Anderson, Martha Wilson, Lydia Lunch, Pauline Oliveros, the Kipper Kids, Carolee Schneemann, and Marina Abramović and Ulay. By the time Beth and I got together, I had been touring one-woman theater pieces that I had made about working in the sex industry for twelve years. My theater pieces included *Annie Sprinkle: Post-Porn Modernist*, *Annie Sprinkle’s Herstory of Porn*, and *Hardcore from the Heart*.⁴

After touring these shows very successfully for many years, I was tired of mostly traveling and performing alone. In December 1995, I did a week-long collaborative theater piece, *Metamorphosex—The Arts of Love*, a sacred sex workshop that climaxed with a sex magic ritual performance on three consecutive nights. I co-created the piece with my friend Barbara Carrellas at Bonnie Cullum’s Vortex Repertory Theatre in Austin, Texas. Barbara was a Broadway theater manager when I had met her during the AIDS crisis, and she became my manager for a few years. Barbara later became an internationally acclaimed sex educator, teaching what she called Urban Tantra.

Performance artist Linda M. Montano, who at the time was a professor of performance art at the University of Texas at Austin, was our spiritual advisor and also performed with us. That’s when I knew that I loved working collaboratively with others onstage. So when Beth came along, I was very open to the idea of collaboration with the right person.



Annie Sprinkle performs “Public Cervix Announcement” in her first one-woman show, *Post-Porn Modernist*, in 1990 at the Kitchen in Manhattan. Photograph by Ephraim John Gonzales.

Wrestling as Performance Collaboration

BETH From the start of our romantic relationship, we began to work together on various performances and actions that addressed radical constructions of love and embodied affect. Gradually our work shifted to incorporate love for the environment, celebrated by a series of weddings to nonhuman entities. When we started doing ecosexual art projects, we turned to identity politics, science, and ecological thinking to inform our work. Our collaborative work was informed by our engagement with each other and our previous work.

At first collaborating wasn't easy. When we became romantically involved, we were already established artists with our own careers. Doing performances together was awkward and scary. We got into heated, emotional, and painful arguments to the point where we reconsidered working together on any project. We could argue for days simply about what to name a performance or exhibition. After a performance had ended, we processed the work differently. Annie immediately liked to critique what didn't work, and I wanted to stay in the afterglow of whatever worked for a little while. While Annie had performed before, I was best known as a sculptor and photographer. Because Annie's

name was more widely recognized, she would often receive most of the credit for the performance from the press, while my name was often misspelled or simply omitted.

The Earth never received any credit either—this frustrated both of us. Nevertheless, we persisted, and it has paid off. Together with the Earth we have created something unique. But first, let's go back to how we got here at all.

Finding Our Glamping Spot

ANNIE When Beth became the chair of the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) art department, the two of us moved to the lush, green redwood forest in the Santa Cruz mountains. Living in the redwood forest, we gradually felt more and more connected to the Earth, and it became important for us to express our immense gratitude and love for our planet in a way that reflected our queer, feminist, and sex-positive identities and our love for experimental art. Our home in the redwoods shifted our work toward an engagement with environmental causes.

BETH In 2008, we held our first wedding ritual performance where we married the Earth, and it changed our worldview! The day after our *Green Wedding* to the Earth, we knew that we were on to something that felt fresh and different from anything that either of us had done before. We wanted a way to describe what we were doing. Given our previous work about queer sex positivity and our growing interest in environmentalism, calling ourselves *ecosexual* made a lot of sense. Once we came out as *ecosexual* and began exploring this idea, we gradually realized that *ecosexuality* could be an expanded experience of love and sensual pleasure.

After making vows at our *Green Wedding* “to love, honor, and cherish the Earth until death brings us closer together forever,” we felt a more universal, enormous love for each other and for the Earth and even the cosmos. Engaging in an *ecosexual* vision of the world expanded our notion of sex and eroticism way beyond genital contact, beyond corporeal sex, and even beyond erotic energy exchange.

In the past, Annie had studied and practiced Tantric and Taoist sexual practices (the esoteric traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism that in the West are seen as having a relationship to sexual union), while I grew up appreciating the randy Pentecostal, snake-handling, revivalist spirituality of nature in rural Appalachia. Being close to nature and God in West Virginia included energetic

exchanges with the air, rocks, water, soil, minerals, animals, the Earth, and the universe. We came to see *ecosex* as a conceptual art practice and a way of thinking beyond individual identity, and even beyond human beings, to envision a larger system—an ecology of relationships.

I started a practice-as-research PhD in performance studies at University of California, Davis, the year after our *Green Wedding*. Annie and I were now interested in thinking about variant kinds of love that extend beyond humans. I began researching and cultivating relationships with artists working on the environment. Since my undergraduate years, I had been intrigued by the German artist Joseph Beuys's concept of social sculpture—the idea that anyone can participate in shaping society, just as a sculptor manipulates raw materials to produce a work of art. This concept is useful in thinking about how artistic practices can produce social change. Beuys used social sculpture as a method to think about how to rebuild Germany after World War II. He believed that this interaction could suggest different modes of knowing and addressing social issues.⁵ As *ecosexuals*, and as artists who collaborate with all kinds of people on our projects, we embraced Beuys's famous slogan "Everyone Is an Artist."⁶

In the 1960s, Beuys was a noted participant in the art movement Fluxus, an international, interdisciplinary community of artists, designers, composers, and dancers that eschewed heroic artmaking for work that emphasized the process over the product. Fluxus had many members (including Yoko Ono and Annie's ex-boyfriend Willem), and the emphasis on collaboration, international community, and actions/happenings appealed to us.

Another reason we love Fluxus so much is due to our long-standing relationship with the Fluxus artist Geoffrey Hendricks. He had been my professor at Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University when I was earning my MFA. He was closely involved with Fluxus artists such as Yoko Ono, Allan Kaprow, Jill Johnston, Robert Watts, Alison Knowles, Dick Higgins, Joe Jones, and John Cage during the sixties and seventies. Geoff, who was gay, had divorced his wife Bici Forbes (now known as Nye Ffarrabas), who was a lesbian.

Geoff was best known for his performative headstands and his paintings of the sky, which earned him the moniker Cloudsmith. He painted clouds on traditional surfaces (such as canvas) as well as on everyday objects, including his VW Bug and a pair of bronzed work boots. For Geoff, art and life were not separate: everything was art.⁷ There was no separation between art and life in his subsequent relationships with performance artist Stephen Varble, painter

Brian Buczak (who passed away in 1987 from AIDS-related illnesses), and writer, archivist, and artist Sur Rodney (Sur), to whom he was still married at the time of his death.

ANNIE I have been hugely inspired by Linda M. Montano's approach to life as art, which had a lot in common with Fluxus.⁸ Linda's book *Art in Everyday Life* covered her performances from 1964 to 1981. Each performance had an image, then a description based in Art and a description based on Life. Everything that Linda Montano did in life was also art.

I first met Linda when I attended her *Sister Rosita's Summer Saint Camp* with my best friend Veronica Vera in summer 1987.⁹ Veronica was a writer who documented her sexual evolution along with the sexual culture(s) of New York City. *Sister Rosita's Summer Saint Camp* was part of Linda's durational *7 Years of Living Art* (which subsequently became *14 Years of Living Art* and then *Another 21 Years of Living Art*), based on the seven chakras, or energy centers, in the subtle body that correspond to the physical body but originate within the context of mental and spiritual fields. The seven chakras correspond to seven colors and seven points on the body, as well as seven different types of energy.

When Linda used the seven chakras as a structure for her piece *14 Years of Living Art*, 1984–1998, she was enthusiastic about her interest in Hindu theology as taught by her guru, Dr. Ramamurti Mishra. For her first seven-year-long performance, Linda committed to spending a number of hours in a colored space (the color corresponding to the chakra), listening to one pitch each day, speaking in a different accent each year, and wearing clothes of a single color. She visited the New Museum of Contemporary Art once a month throughout all seven years; she read palms and tarot cards and performed *Art/Life Counseling* in a colored space that the museum repainted each year to correspond to the chakra that Linda was exploring at the time.

I loved that piece, and I got some *Art/Life Counseling* there. In the gift shop of the museum, Linda sold her signed used clothing as art. Each year she invited an artist or two to the *Art/Life Institute* in Kingston, New York, near the house where she grew up. Artists would come to live with her there for a week for the *Summer Saint Camp*. In 1987, the third (yellow) year, Veronica Vera and I responded to Linda's invitation after Veronica saw a flyer advertising the camp in the bathroom stall at Franklin Furnace, an avant-garde performance art space and gallery in New York City. The following day Veronica sent our application. One week later, Linda accepted us.

At *Summer Saint Camp*, Linda introduced Veronica and me to a number of performance exercises, some of which were inspired by her two years as a nun. Linda's art/life was about conserving resources and avoiding unnecessary waste, and many of our performance exercises were also exercises in ecofriendly living. We were instructed to flush toilets sparingly, use very little toilet paper, take very short showers, and consume every bit of food on our plate. For the entire week, the three of us wore only yellow clothes. *Summer Saint Camp* was a lesson in sanctity and conservation! Fifteen years later Beth and I would launch our project the Love Art Laboratory, which would become a satellite project to Linda's *Another Twenty-One Years of Living Art, 1998–2019*.

BETH Other influences were Newton Harrison (born 1932) and Helen Mayer Harrison (1927–2018), pioneers of ecological art and longtime collaborators with each other. In 2007, I hired Newton as a consultant for creating a master's of fine arts (MFA) program at UCSC. In 2008, Newton and I came up with the idea to write a proposal for a PhD program titled *Art Practices: A Whole Systems Approach with a Global Reach*, which unfortunately was not implemented by the UC Santa Cruz art department.

We spent a lot of time with the Harrisons and became friends.¹⁰ Beginning with the premise that their client was always the Earth, the Harrisons would collaborate with a broad spectrum of experts in order to propose solutions to environmental problems. Our work, which is about being in a better relationship with the Earth and helping others to achieve this as well, is very different from that of the Harrisons, but we were inspired by their collaborative practice and their lifelong commitment to addressing ecological issues.

ANNIE We were also intrigued by earlier and contemporary queer, sex-positive environmentalists. We have numerous friends who were and are Radical Faeries. This community was founded in 1979 by Harry Hay, Mitch Walker, Don Kilhefner, and John Burnside. The Radical Faeries were a pagan counterculture group of gay men who wanted to resist the assimilationist attitude of the mainstream gay community.¹¹ We also met some of the radical community-building lesbians who had lived in rural enclaves with cheap real estate and plenty of land. One day we would love to have a co-housing community farm where we could all make art together with our loved ones, friends, and collaborators.

Another group, Fuck for Forest (FFF), a nonprofit environmental organization founded in Norway in 2004 by Leona Johansson and Tommy Hol Ellingsen, has a website of sexually explicit videos and photographs for which

they charge access. A portion of the funds raised are donated to saving the rainforest. As far as we know, they were the first eco-porn organization created specifically to raise money for environmental causes. When we were in Germany giving a talk at a symposium, they came to see us. They credited me and my one-woman show Annie Sprinkle's *Herstory of Porn* as their early inspiration for creating Fuck for Forest!

BETH We were excited to learn that other people out there were making sexually explicit environmental activist art.

Sex-Positive Feminism

ANNIE Beth and I came of age during the third-wave, sex-positive feminist movement. Third-wave feminists embraced radical sexuality and alternative gender identities. Sex was a way of embracing life and love. Sex was liberating, fun, and creative. A great adventure! Carol Queen, writer and founder of the Center for Sex and Culture, and the longtime resident sexologist for the adult toy store company Good Vibrations, defined sex positivity as “a simple yet radical affirmation that we each grow our own passions on a different medium, that instead of having two or three or even half a dozen sexual orientations, we should be thinking in terms of millions. ‘Sex-positive’ respects each of our unique sexual profiles, even as we acknowledge that some of us have been damaged by a culture that tries to eradicate sexual difference and possibility.”¹²

Any kind of work about sex can be controversial, especially in the United States, which has been so heavily influenced by religious conservatives who preach that any sex outside a heterosexual marriage is a mortal sin and any person who is not modest or monogamous should be expelled from the flock. Our work pushes up against those kinds of ideologies, and we get plenty of blowback, as evidenced by the stories and critiques included in this book. We would not have had the courage or opportunities to do the things that we have done and are still doing without the brave feminists and queer-positive theorists who challenged these ideologies with their work.

BETH I have to admit that I learned most of what I know about sex-positive feminism from the women I dated. My first big love, Mary, turned me on to Carol S. Vance, who edited the anthology *Pleasure and Danger*, one of the most exciting feminist anthologies I encountered.¹³ Gayle Rubin's essay “Thinking Sex” blew my mind because it so clearly critiqued the binary between acceptable and nonacceptable sex.¹⁴ Who knew? Then there was Judith, who turned me on to

Monique Wittig's novels *The Lesbian Body* and *Les Guérillères*, both of which mixed white hot anger with French erotica.¹⁵

Around my Boston years I also started reading the Semiotext(e) books and was particularly struck by the issue on polysexuality¹⁶ as well as later issues edited by Eileen Myles¹⁷ and Michelle Tea.¹⁸ Other influences include the art and writings of Deborah Bright, whom I first met at Rutgers.¹⁹ I had obvious interests and connections to the work of Dorothy Allison, especially her book *Bastard Out of Carolina*.²⁰ I had read Angela Davis and bell hooks. Working at UCSC, an institution where Davis taught and hooks attended for her doctorate, has always made me feel closer to their writing. Davis has been writing about prison abolition,²¹ and bell hooks moved back to Appalachia. Her book *Belonging: A Culture of Place* inspired me to reconsider my relationship to where I was born and grew up.²²

I have been lucky to have been able to read and attend the lectures of so many brilliant feminists. I have also been lucky to have known and worked with so many sex-positive feminists, including my beloved sex radical and post-porn activist, Annie Sprinkle.

ANNIE Perhaps my greatest inspirations have been the women I've met whom I count as friends, women who have worked to help decriminalize prostitution, fought for the freedom to make and see sexually explicit art and pornographies, created new genres of sexually explicit media, and fearlessly delved into the low brow.

I met Margo St. James in 1975 when I was working in a Manhattan massage parlor. She started the Prostitutes' Rights movement in the United States. She said prostitution should be decriminalized! That idea was unheard of at that time. She put out a newsletter, *COYOTE Howls*, which was about the politics of prostitution and published work by sex workers. I was smitten.

Then there were two of my brilliant porn star friends who were two of my closest friends: Candida Royalle started her own company, *Femme Productions*, and became a producer, director, and the mother of feminist erotica; and Gloria Leonard, a fierce feminist porn star who became director of the Free Speech Coalition and debated *Women Against Porn* on college campuses in the 1980s. They, along with badass sex educator and artist Betty Dodson, were on the front lines of the Culture Wars of the eighties.

I also owe a debt to two women scholars who were the pioneers of porn studies: UC Berkeley film professor Linda Williams, the author of *Hard Core: Power*,

Pleasure, and the Frenzy of the Visible,²³ and Constance Penley, professor of film and media studies at UC Santa Barbara who taught the first class on the culture of pornography in 1993 and has been teaching it ever since. She coedited *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure* in 2013.²⁴ These two professors made me think in new ways about the porn I was making. They embraced my work and invited me to lecture in their classes over many years.

These six women have been brave, insightful, innovative sex-positive sheroes who fought for our freedom to express our individuality and true sexual desires without being shunned, shot, put in jail, or burned at the stake.

Manifesto Destiny

BOTH We needed a manifesto! We learned in art school that any self-respecting movement needs a manifesto.²⁵ With brainstorming help from Natalie Loveless and Sha LaBare, we wrote an Ecosex Manifesto and officially launched the ecosex movement in 2011. By the power vested in ourselves, we announced that the Earth was our lover, that ecosexual was a new sexual and gender identity, and that ecosex could be an environmental activist strategy. We described the different kinds of human ecosexuals there are, what we do, and how we operate as activists. Figuring that the Manifesto would grow, change, and evolve over time, we called the first iteration Manifesto 1.0. In June 2015 we wrote a shorter, more poetic Manifesto 2.0 in collaboration with artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña for a performance, and most recently in May 2020 we wrote a Manifesto 3.0 to recognize the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the years, we have pollinated the Ecosex Manifesto widely around the world. It has been published in books²⁶ and journals,²⁷ exhibited in art galleries,²⁸ displayed in a Manhattan storefront window,²⁹ printed two stories tall in Spanish on the exterior wall of a community art center in Costa Rica,³⁰ and distributed as flyers at various art events. It has been translated into at least seven languages that we know of.

ECOSEX MANIFESTO 1.0

(I) WE ARE THE ECOSEXUALS.

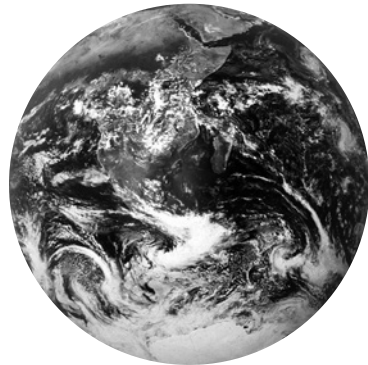
The Earth is our lover. We are madly, passionately, and fiercely in love, and we are grateful for this relationship each and every day. In order to create a more mutual and sustainable relationship with the Earth, we collaborate with nature. We treat the Earth with kindness, respect, and affection.

(II) WE MAKE LOVE WITH THE EARTH.

We are aquaphiles, terraphiles, pyrophiles, and aerophiles. We shamelessly hug trees, massage the Earth with our feet, and talk erotically to plants. We are skinny dippers, sun worshippers, and stargazers. We caress rocks, are pleased by waterfalls, and admire the Earth's curves often. We make love to the Earth through our senses. We celebrate our E-spots. We are very dirty.

(III) WE ARE A RAPIDLY GROWING GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF ECOSEXUALS.

This community includes artists, academics, sex workers, sexologists, healers, environmental activists, nature fetishists, gardeners, businesspeople, therapists, lawyers, peace activists, ecofeminists, scientists, educators, revolutionaries, critters, and other entities from diverse walks of life. Some of us are sexecologists, researching and exploring the places where sexology and ecology intersect in our culture. As consumers we aim to buy less. When we can, we buy green, organic, and local. Whether on farms, at sea, in the woods, or in small towns or large cities, we connect and empathize with nature.





(IV) WE ARE ECOSEX ACTIVISTS.

We will save the mountains, waters, and skies by any means necessary, especially through love, joy, and our powers of seduction. We will stop the rape, abuse, and the poisoning of the Earth. We do not condone the use of violence, although we recognize that some ecosexuals may choose to fight those most guilty of destroying the Earth with public disobedience and with anarchist and radical environmental activist strategies. We embrace the revolutionary tactics of art, music, poetry, humor, and sex. We work and play tirelessly for Earth justice and global peace. Bombs hurt.

(V) ECOSEXUAL IS AN IDENTITY.

For some of us, being ecosexual is our primary (sexual) identity, whereas for others it is not. Ecosexuals can be LGBTQIA+, heterosexual, asexual, and/or Other. We invite and encourage ecosexuals to come out. We are everywhere. We are polymorphous and pollen-amorous. We educate people about ecosex culture, community, and practices. We hold these truths to be self-evident: that we are all part of, not separate from, nature. Thus all sex is ecosex.

(VI) THE ECOSEX PLEDGE

I promise to love, honor, and cherish you, Earth, until death brings us closer together forever.

¡VIVA LA ECOSEX REVOLUCIÓN!



Earth as Lover, Earth as Mother

We respect the Indigenous and Aboriginal cultures, as well as ancient western and eastern civilizations that have embraced, and still embrace, Earth as mother. We both learned from these traditions. These knowledges have influenced our practices for much of our lives. We have and sometimes still do embrace the Earth as mother: the Earth does give us life and takes incredible care of us, giving us what we need to survive. Our manifesto, however, boldly states that we see the Earth as our lover, that we love the Earth and find erotic potential in nature, and we are turning our love for the Earth into revolutionary actions. Even as we move to embrace the Earth as lover rather than Earth as mother, we do so with respect.

But we don't relate to the Earth only as a lover or mother. The Earth can morph and be imagined as any archetype interchangeably or in combination with other archetypes: friend, host, caregiver, sister, empress, magician, crone, patient. . . . The Earth lover can also be imagined as a sexy Earth mother—after all, many women have sex to become mothers. Given the virgin-whore dichotomy that still pervades western culture, many people find it abhorrent to think of mothers as sexual beings. Someone on one of our Ecosex Walking Tours commented that the Earth could be imagined as a MILF (Mother I'd Like to Fuck). Given that MILF is not about incest, and in the porn lexicon an "older" woman can be in her late twenties or beyond, we see this as a term that eroticizes women beyond a certain age. Some folks don't want to think of the Earth as anything but Mother Earth, and we respect everyone's choices in this regard.

Our version of ecosexuality has quite a bit in common with ecofeminism, even though we don't always see eye to eye with ecofeminists. The ecofeminism movement emerged in the 1970s as a critique of both the oppression of women and the destruction of the Earth as mutually reinforcing systems of patriarchal oppression.³¹ For ecofeminists, embracing the construction of Earth as Mother was a means by which nature could be anthropomorphized and thus understood as something that should not be harmed. We are in agreement with that ideal.

After coming out as ecosexuals, we began thinking about how the Earth had been described as female and mother in the stories and spiritual traditions of contemporary and ancient cultures. In western literature the "Earth" has always been constructed as feminine, a trope that was not challenged by second-wave feminist theory, which posited the idea of Earth as mother as an alternative to patriarchy. We wanted to go beyond the gender binary when it came to thinking about the Earth. As bad grrrl feminists, we were skeptical of binary constructions of the Earth as Mother/Other. As queers, we were eager to embrace the concept of the Earth as nonbinary or



We imagine our Earth lover as all genders, transgender, gender fluid, gender bending, and sometimes male or female. Authors' collection.

trans. Mothers (including Mother Earth) have not been treated terribly well in popular culture, which tends to construct the ideal mother as either asexual or heterosexual, self-sacrificing, white, and Christian. As feminists, we have a great deal of empathy and respect for the first generation of ecofeminists who promoted the idea of Earth as Mother to bring attention to the need for environmental activism. As queers and eco-sexuals we wanted to expand the idea of environmentalism by combining it with the sex-positive feminism of the nineties, the cultural context from which our art careers were nourished. Today, as aging women whose bodies are no longer taut, we want to acknowledge the materiality of nature, a materiality that doesn't always conform to patriarchal anthropomorphizing fantasies of nubile, beautiful, fertile women or of dangerous vagina dentatas ready to do away with humanity at the drop of a hat. To counter these stereotypes, we adopted the metaphor of the lover instead.

An important event for us was Joanna Macy's workshop *The Work That Reconnects*. Macy basically argues that all of our connections to the Earth are intimate and ancient. Attending her workshop brought us together with like-minded participants who were also thinking about more profound, more loving connections with the Earth.³² We love the queerness of the idea of Earth as lover, and we align our practice

with ecofeminist scholar Greta Gaard, who has explored the connection between ecofeminism and queer theory and called for both movements to learn from each other.³³ Gaard writes:

A queer ecofeminist perspective would argue that liberating the erotic requires conceptualizing humans as equal participants in culture and in nature, able to explore the eroticism of reason and the unique rationality of the erotic. Ecofeminists must be concerned with queer liberation, just as queers must be concerned with the liberation of women and of nature; our parallel oppressions have stemmed from our perceived associations. It is time to build our common liberation on more concrete coalitions.³⁴

Embracing the Earth as our lover, rather than our mother, radically changed our relationship to the planet that we share with billions and trillions of living and non-living material entities. To be someone's lover is more open-ended than being their mother. The lover assumes a relationship based on romance, sexual attraction, and sensual pleasure. The lover's relationship does not assume identities that conform to the gender binary and power dynamics of male and female. The category of the lover is more slippery than that of parent and avoids heteronormative family ideology. Our metaphorical and material shift to Earth as lover holds the potential to create relationships between humans and nonhumans that might lessen destructive and controlling practices such as taking resources (mining) or domesticating (damming rivers and streams). The lover archetype evokes pleasure or *jouissance* based on mutual needs and desires. Earth as lover has the potential to inspire humans to give as well as receive both love and support from the Earth.

Furthermore, the category of Mother represents an ideological construction that has been used to police the excess of pleasure and ecstasy, whereas the lover represents the promise of the as-yet-unknown. A lover is someone we want to get to know better, treat well, pamper, romance, and pleasure. Most to the point, if one does not treat a lover well, the lover can leave for someone else who will treat them better. While the Earth can't actually leave us, it can become so inhospitable that we have to live in radically different ways on it—or leave it. Mars, anyone?

We understand that “Earth as lover” is a metaphor that anthropomorphizes our planet. We feel it can be a useful and fun strategy to help both ourselves and others connect with that which extends beyond human understanding. French philosopher Bruno Latour has recognized that refusing to anthropomorphize a nonhuman is the height of human arrogance because it makes the nonhuman lesser than the human.³⁵

As Latour states, “To enforce the gap between human subjects and nonhuman objects is the most anthropocentric of all modes of relation invented.”³⁶ Or, as Colette Guillaumin pointedly writes, “As soon as people want to legitimize the power that they exercise, they call on nature—on the nature of this difference.”³⁷ Both Latour and Guillaumin point out how humans use the idea of nature to justify their domination over it.

Ecosexuals, on the other hand, anthropomorphize the Earth to help examine and hopefully help heal the human–nature binary embedded in western epistemology. This binary erases our connection to nature by elevating humans above all else. Jane Bennett, in her book *Vibrant Matter*, suggests that as scholars and human beings we take seriously all things human and nonhuman. The vitality and agency of these more-than-human things wield influence on how we navigate, feel, understand, and are in the world.³⁸ Anthropomorphism can be used to take seriously the agency of nature and to position it as an active participant in the ongoing development of life on this planet, but it also means that we seek to understand nature on our own terms, yet again. We ask, as humans, what other terms can we employ given that the Earth is so much more than simply human?

Ecosexuality, the Anthropocene, New Materialisms, and Posthumanism

Our definition of *ecosexuality* deliberately reflects current ideas about posthumanism and new materialism, in which the human is understood to be one of many sentient and nonsentient beings that exist on this planet. Some people assume that sex has to be genital, or that ecosexuals primarily engage in physical sexual acts with nonhumans, but physical contact is not mandatory in the evolving field of ecosexuality, although it can be a part of it. In terms of engaging with nonhumans, many ecosexuals take a more conceptual, playful approach. This allows humans to connect with and derive pleasure from nature and ideally to be inspired to give something back to it. Ecosexuality provides alternative ways of thinking about sexuality that go beyond human reproduction, genital sex, and human exceptionalism (the belief that humans are different from and superior to all other forms of life). Since humans are part of nature, ecosexual practices can include human-to-human sexual contact, including genital sex. Ecosexuals, however, consider all parts of the body to be potential sites of sexual pleasure. We see the body as expanding beyond its own skin, in forms such as biome clouds, the unique clouds of bacteria and microbes that surround the bodies of all organic beings, animals, and plants.³⁹ Ecosex is a paradigm shift: we don't have sex with just another person, but instead we have sex with their water, minerals, bacteria, biomes, and even stardust!

We are influenced by the work of Donna Haraway, whose book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* calls for humans and nonhumans to stay with the trouble of living and dying together on a damaged Earth. Haraway was one of Beth's colleagues at UC–Santa Cruz before she retired, and we are intimately familiar with her work. Less dystopian than the idea of the Anthropocene, Haraway's alternative construction of a Chthulucene era (with a name based on the Greek word for Earth) suggests that postindustrial ecologies will be radically different from what they are today. Haraway's ideas about science, posthumanism, new materialism, and contemporary ecofeminism have been tremendously influential for us as we have formulated ecosexuality and sexecology. She is critical of the theory of anthropocentrism and has instead advocated for the self-organizing powers of nonhuman processes. Her work has guided our understanding of the theoretical underpinnings and the consequences embedded in the human and nonhuman relationships that make up the material and political worlds in which we all live and die. The knowledge we have gained from her work has helped us understand how religion, science, and other secular practices have constructed the human exceptionalism that drives culture, politics, and religion in western culture.⁴⁰ Human exceptionalism, global capitalism, and Darwinian ideologies justify the right to use or destroy other humans and nonhumans to serve one's own self-interest and guarantee one's own survival above and beyond other creatures. This is the root of much of the environmental degradation that affects our whole planet as well as the cause of other social justice inequalities.

Even as Haraway deconstructs human exceptionalism, she opens new possibilities for human beings to act with ethical responsibility. She does this in part by critiquing the destructive consequences that binary thinking such as nature/culture or human/animal has created in order to set some humans apart. Exceptionalism generates deadly real and conceptual technologies for segregating the world into what/who is, and is not, killable.⁴¹ Ecosexuality creates a new series of inclusive and intersectional relationships that change the conversation and the stories regarding who deserves to live well. As Haraway reminds us, we are all messmates at the table, and we are mutually engaged in an ongoing meal of life and death.⁴² Much of our work has been concerned with creating the kinds of mobile communities knit together by kinship and affinities of which Haraway writes.

Kim TallBear has also been generative to our formulating our theories of ecosexuality. Her work examines the historical and ongoing roles of technoscience in the

colonizing and subjugation of Indigenous peoples.⁴³ We acknowledge that ecosexuality is still problematic in that it largely reflects a white, middle-class perspective toward environmental interventions. Kim, who was one of Beth's professors when she was pursuing a PhD in performance studies and is now a friend, makes it clear that for Indigenous populations ecosexuality is a hard sell:

There are occasional references in ecosex literature to Native American knowledges in ways that are what I would classify as "New Age," and I would advise caution around the appropriation of Native American knowledges and motifs to the ecosexual ceremonial and artistic repertoire. . . . There are no easy, literal translations between indigenous ontologies and ecosexuality, at least among the indigenous people I run with. Rather, there are careful conversations with much careful thought to be had.⁴⁴

We appreciate Kim's willingness to have these careful conversations with us and to engage material she doesn't necessarily identify with. Looking beyond our differences, Kim was able to see places of connection: "Beth and Annie want to diversify the environmental movement, its actors, discourses, and strategies for change. I also increasingly embrace laughter as a response to the absurdly hateful politics of our time. Laughter sustains me when anger wears me down and feels unproductive."⁴⁵

Kim's discussions with us about relations with humans and nonhumans, Earth as lover, and our deployment of humor have helped us examine our assumptions (or white privilege) when it has come to hippie or New Age strategies. We have come to recognize that settler colonialist ideology was present in these movements, and we resolved to eschew this ideology and embrace an anticolonial position. Kim was the keynote speaker at *Environmentalism Outside the Box—An Ecosex Symposium*, an event we held at UCSC in 2017. In her talk she noted that many Native Americans' concept of "all our relations" is similar to and could even influence ecosexual practices that acknowledge the vibrancy of all entities. She spoke eloquently about the urgent need to decolonize and undo settler sexuality in relation to "making kin." Decolonization is essential to begin to help heal the damage colonization has caused. We must do this work in order to build new kinds of relationships based on reciprocity rather than ownership and other forms of power that objectify life. If our ecosexual ideas and practices help create new, more open ways of thinking about sexual relationships, then we have accomplished hopeful work toward creating worlds where we can all live for the betterment of the Earth.

LGBTQIA+E Unite!

For us, ecosexuality is a new and expanded identity construct that can change the idea of relationships between humans and the more-than-human world. We proudly add an E to the growing list of letters that now expand the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans) acronym from the eighties and nineties. We strive toward radical inclusivity and see that as being foundational to our version of this concept. A person can identify as an ecosexual and still claim and maintain any of their other sexual identities. From our point of view, all humans are already engaged and intertwined in any number of long-term, intimate relationships, ecological and otherwise. Ecosexuality can be a framework for understanding ourselves within the context of larger systems. Being ecosexual can be akin to embracing identities such as pomosexual (the post-modern challenge to the assumptions of gender and sexuality), pansexual (enjoying love and sex with people of multiple genders), queer (outside heteronormativity), and metamorphosexual (experiencing sexuality as always being in a state of change and evolving from one sexual preference to the next, also called fluid). We view ecosexuality as an identity capable of including or complementing all sexual identities, orientations, and identifying terms.

Queer theorist and curator Paul B. Preciado, with whom we have worked on multiple projects over many years (and to whom this book is co-dedicated), guided us toward the realization that our work held possibilities for radical political activism through joining together queerness, sex positivity, and environmental activism. He introduced us to the work of the Argentinian social activist and conceptual artist Roberto Jacoby, who advocated for what he called “strategies of joy”: small actions that face down and confront the fear in people’s minds.⁴⁶ Jacoby, who is gay, lived through the brutal Argentinian dictatorship sometimes called the “Dirty War,” which lasted from 1976 until 1983. In these worst of times he organized celebratory gatherings such as dance parties that provided a reason for survival when all seemed lost. His idea and practice of strategies of joy resonate with us. We love his idea of navigating times of struggle through art, dance, music, and sexy fun. We believe that pleasure activism can be a path that empowers many of us who are outside the mainstream to enact change. Just as violence is powerful, pleasure can be powerful, too. Perhaps even more.

Ecosexuality in Challenging Times

We finished writing this book in the winter of 2020, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 crisis and the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder at the hands of the Minneapolis police. This pandemic has seriously damaged any facade of equality in

the United States, revealing grotesque underlying inequalities such as the historic effects of genocide and slavery. The physical reality of navigating police violence and white supremacy in a society that brutally constructs difference through skin color and other physical norms can result in physical, mental, and spiritual brutality, as we are seeing during the uprisings against systemic state violence in 2020. In our developed country, many people—prisoners, people without money, immigrants in detention—are at particularly high risk of contracting COVID-19, and politicians at the highest levels of government today don't care, as evident by the death toll.

As a Jew and a Hillbilly, we are familiar with the category of being not quite white enough, although we try to be aware of our own white privilege and do antiracist work to bring about systemic change. Ecosexuality calls out how we have abused our more-than-human companions (microbes, trees, pollinators, soil, insects, water, and so many more) who do the increasingly difficult and invisible work of maintaining ecological systems so that life can exist. For years, scientists have been warning of more killer viruses and diseases emerging from destruction of the environment.⁴⁷ We pay attention to the daily news that covers the elevated numbers of Indigenous, African American, Hispanic, and Asian people who get COVID-19 and die at rates vastly disproportionate to those who control most of the world's wealth. The fact that a grotesque percentage of COVID-19-related deaths have been elderly, vulnerable people is heartbreaking. Certainly, it is not the end they deserved. We humbly propose ecosex as one of many pathways to healing the pain of both the present moment and the horrific injustices of the past by encouraging people to love the Earth (including each other) more and to consider that we are all part of the Earth's ecosystems—and we can aim to have a good time along the way.

