

EDITORIAL

# Why Innovations in Art and Culture Matters in the Quest for Solutions to the Global Environmental and Biodiversity Crises: Introducing the Journal of Innovations in Art and Culture for Nature Conservation and Environmental Sustainability

Dickson Adom <sup>1\*</sup>, Evans Kwadwo Donkor <sup>2</sup>, Daniel Boamah Asante <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Educational Innovations in Science and Technology, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana, [dickson.adom@knust.edu.gh](mailto:dickson.adom@knust.edu.gh) / [adomdick2@gmail.com](mailto:adomdick2@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Department of Sculpture Technology, Takoradi Technical University, Takoradi, Ghana, [evans.donkor@ttu.edu.gh](mailto:evans.donkor@ttu.edu.gh)

<sup>3</sup>Department of Cultural Studies, Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, [13ddab@queenssu.ca](mailto:13ddab@queenssu.ca)

\* Corresponding author: [dickson.adom@knust.edu.gh](mailto:dickson.adom@knust.edu.gh)

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0559-4173

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## Abstract

Global communities are facing serious environmental and biodiversity crises. The prevailing condition is threatening the existence of life on Earth. There is a need to proffer solutions from diverse academic disciplines to salvage this environmental threat that keeps escalating every day. This editorial paper is aimed at introducing the Journal of Innovations in Art and Culture for Nature Conservation and Environmental Sustainability (JINCES) with the overarching goal of promoting discourse between scholars working in the interdisciplinary, intradisciplinary, and multidisciplinary fields of art, culture, environmental sustainability, and nature conservation. The work relies on studies in innovation by

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demonstrating that art and culture are significant components in offering proactive solutions to the global environmental and biodiversity crises. We conducted a scoping review that largely relied on the published works of the authors, who are the editors of the journal, on the nexus between art, culture, and nature/environmental conservation while involving the loud voices in this field to join the discourse. The editorial discusses the need for artists and cultural experts to be innovative while transcending beyond their usual silo roles of awareness creation to collaborative practical projects with other scholars to forge more fortified weapons to ameliorate all forms of nature and environmental degradation. Our position is that it is only when scholars in art and culture become innovative would they be able to find a more robust approach to saving the environment and its rich biodiversity resources.

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**A**rt and Culture have been Siamese twins that have marshalled their weapons in fighting against all forms of nature abuse since time immemorial. They have stood as perpetual defenders of biodiversity and held the principles of environmental sustainability in high esteem. Art and culture have the power to raise awareness and inspire action. They create a sense of urgency around environmental issues and help people understand the interconnectedness of all living things. Cultural experts and artists are partnering with scholars from diverse fields in conducting trans-disciplinary projects to find solutions to arrest the daunting challenges faced by the environment and its indispensable biodiversity resources (Wakeman, 2015). Indeed, the fields of science, art, and culture are intricately interwoven. As scientific technology monitors the earth's condition, art aids in understanding our complex relationship with nature. Recent studies on innovation have greatly emphasized the contribution of art and culture to the development of truly novel concepts and the testing of potential solutions, along with technology and science for nature conservation and environmental sustainability initiatives (Bompan, 2022).

Throughout history, the various fields of art have served as representations of civilizations in which the environment has been vital to human growth (Petroniené & Juzeléniené, 2022). Irony, allegory, metaphor, and satire are just a few of art's special tools to depict the human world, along with facts and narratives. When art is told or done well, it can significantly influence how our future

develops. The power of art opens our eyes to new ideas. It shows us how vital we are to the ecosystem as a whole—saving the environment and ourselves. The public's awareness of the global environmental problem and the decline of biodiversity can be effectively increased using art and encouraging cultural projects that aid in defense of environmental conservation and biodiversity preservation (Adom et al., 2016). The pivotal role of art in nature conservation and environmental sustainability in the past decades has been in raising awareness of the detrimental impacts of the negative attitudes and activities of humans on the environment and its rich biodiversity resources (Zhang & Zhou, 2019). In recent times, efforts by artists have transcended beyond just an awareness creation of the degradation of the environment to the production of works of art from waste materials in various environmental aesthetics and sustainability projects. There has been a paradigm shift in contemporary art because there has been an increased interest of artists in material approaches such as reuse, re-purposing, and reconstruction of waste and unconventional materials that would have been a menace in the environment into functional and aesthetically pleasant works of art in the quest of addressing the global environmental crisis and deterioration of biodiversity (Ankrah et al., 2022; Asamoah, 2022; Eshun & Donkor, 2022; Donkor et al., 2021; Meade, 2008). The difficult task of repairing and containing these environmental complexities has significantly contributed to the development of the natural environment (Cowan, 2021). Artists from all walks of life have become crucial in using art as a vehicle to develop and promote these environmental concerns, where finding practical answers to them is of utmost importance. Environmental artists and eco-artists are challenged to address these issues from a global perspective and offer a foundation for re-imagining a better future for environmental preservation (Posey, 1999).

Culture plays a significant role in nature conservation and environmental sustainability. The importance of culture as a field of contemporary environmental governance and management cannot be dismissed or relegated to secondary consideration either – especially given that culture influences how people interact with others, including their natural environment. Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is located within the culture of a people. For many people, their TEK constitutes a significant part of their cultural values and belief system, which holds essential practices about how things are and must be in the universe (Adom, 2019a; Leonard et al., 2013). These cultural values and beliefs, often referred to as 'traditional resource management mechanisms, shape how resource-dependent societies theorize and relate to the natural environment (Adom, 2021; Asante, 2020). Furthermore, the widespread belief in cultural practices and values embedded in traditional ecological knowledge reveals deep empathy and care for nature. Thus, innovation in culture can help encourage people to live in harmony with nature. Cultural resource-regulating instruments such as taboos, rituals, regulations, and incentives are

crucial in many societies worldwide that have served as traditional instruments for nature conservation and environmental sustainability. For instance, taboo days (Adom & Boamah, 2020; Adom et al., 2019) have tactfully regulated and sustained hunting and fishing activities in most jurisdictions. Likewise, dietary taboos have restricted the use of certain flora and fauna species that, if left unregulated, would have resulted in high extinction rates (Adom, 2019b). These cultural instruments, which come in the form of norms, customs, and policies, have proven to achieve significant behaviour modification, including people's attitudes toward their natural environment (Asante, 2015; Awuah-Nyamekye, 2013) and have led to productive ecotourism activities in many societies (Adom, 2019c). They apply to every community member and, as a result, ensure that those who breach them suffer punishment and those who observe them are rewarded. The belief in and observance of such norms and customs predisposes people to conscientiousness and help sustain the potency of traditional ecological knowledge in many communities across the globe. Likewise, efforts have been made to promote traditional cultural enterprises that tactfully use abundant materials in the environment, including waste materials that would have resulted in environmental malfeasance, into wonderful traditional cultural souvenirs to serve as instruments for cultural preservation, promotion, and employment in local communities (Adom et al., 2022).

Innovation in art and culture is needed to manage environmental and biodiversity degradation because the origins of that crisis lie deep in our history. Society's capacity to properly deal with environmental problems, Marx (1992) argues, will largely depend on less tangible, largely unquantifiable cultural factors. We subscribe to this assertion and further posit that methodologies employed by scholars in the arts, social sciences, and humanities in their inquiries are potent for identifying, explaining, and evaluating the cultural factors of human relations with the natural environment. Moreover, their fundamental approach is historically informed interpretation, which helps to expand the scope and temporal dimension within which scholars in the natural sciences assess issues, including environmental problems that might otherwise be approached in deceptively historical terms. Innovations in art and culture can take many forms. Artists can use their skills to create works that highlight the beauty and fragility of the natural world, or they can use their creativity to re-imagine more sustainable and environmentally friendly ways of living. Artistic and cultural works can also help to create empathy for the natural world and encourage a sense of responsibility towards it. Cultural institutions, such as museums and theatres, can play a role in addressing environmental issues by showcasing exhibitions and performances that raise awareness and promote positive action. In addition to raising awareness, innovations in art and culture can also facilitate dialogue and collaboration with other scholars in diverse fields in a multidisciplinary approach to salvaging the environment from all of its maladies.

They can bring people from different backgrounds and disciplines together to share ideas and work towards common goals. This collaboration can help break down silos and create a more holistic approach to addressing environmental issues. Innovations in art and culture can help create a sense of hope and optimism. They can show that creating a better future for ourselves and the natural world is possible. By promoting positive messages and inspiring action, innovations in art and culture can help create a sense of momentum and motivate people to take action. Innovations in art and culture are an important part of the solution to the global environmental crisis and the degradation of biodiversity. We can create a more sustainable and harmonious relationship with the natural world by embracing creativity and imagination.

For a better appreciation of the quintessential roles of art and culture in global environmental management, there is a need for a paradigm shift from identifying environmental challenges with just their biophysical markers to a generous application of metaphysical ways of viewing biodiversity. We believe that no sufficient grip on most forms of environmental degradation is sustainable until we understand the artistic and cultural perspectives from which they originate. This is one of the reasons why the Journal of Innovations in Art and Culture for Nature Conservation and Environmental Sustainability (JINCES) is championing how the work of philosophers, historians, and anthropologists, among others, might contribute to the defense of the environment. In its efforts to foster and promote scholarly collaboration between arts, science, and technology, as well as social and cultural disciplines, JINCES offers insights, ideas, and helpful criticism for protecting the environment. The journal examines information gleaned from academics with concepts and inventions in artistic disciplines that address the global environmental catastrophe and the loss of biodiversity. JINCES is taking shape as an innovative, inter, intra, and multidisciplinary movement that fosters new thinking, dismantles silos, and creates a link between the realms of art, culture, and environmental conservation. These projected contributions to the journal would offer cultural and creative projects as examples of sustainable innovation that provide palpable and beneficial sensations in our everyday lives.

Undeniably, innovations in art and culture are key pillars in the global search for solutions to the environmental crisis and the degradation of biodiversity. They are charged with the power to raise awareness, facilitate collaboration, and inspire positive action. JINCES is now an academic hub for such discourses on all innovations from the fields of art and culture, with inputs from other disciplines, to save the earth and its natural resources. As editors of this scholarly journal, we posit that if scholars in art and culture embrace creativity and imagination, their knowledge production

can help create a more sustainable and harmonious relationship with the environment and its biological diversities.

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