Breath(e): Toward Climate and Social Justice, installation view. Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, September 14, 2024–January 5, 2025. Photo: Jeff McLane

Hammer Museum | Breath(e): Towards Climate and Social Justice

09/14/2024 – 01/05/2025 (16 weeks)
11-25 artists
75+ artworks
15,000 sq ft

Breath(e): Toward Climate and Social Justice, organized by guest co-curators Glenn Kaino and Mika Yoshitake, considers environmental art practices that address the climate crisis and anthropogenic disasters and their inescapable intersection with issues of equity and social justice. *Breath(e)* features works by more than 20 artists, including works by Mel Chin, Ron Finley, Cannupa Hanska Luger, Garnett Puett, and Lan Tuazon, commissioned specially for this exhibition.

Breath(e) was conceived during the height of the global COVID-19 pandemic and America's racial reckoning in 2020, and as such explores pressing issues related to the ethics of climate justice, while proposing pragmatic and philosophical approaches to spur discussion and resolution. The exhibition strives to challenge and deconstruct polarized political attitudes surrounding climate justice and offers new perspectives around land and indigenous rights of nature.

Climate Initiatives Overview

For PST, the Hammer Museum committed to an exhibition that centered climate change and social justice. As such, the climate initiative associated with *Breath(e): Toward Climate and Social Justice* begins with the curatorial thesis which foregrounds an essential dialogue within the space of the exhibition and the pages of the publication. The project centers a community of artists and seeks to amplify their work to our community of visitors.

When developing the exhibition, we sought to make each decision regarding our project's environmental and social impact an intentional one, aligning the curatorial thesis of the exhibition with the implementation of the project.

To coordinate organizational decision-making, we met with each of the museum's departments, collectively and individually, to discuss every aspect of the show's organization. Through these meetings we identified structural, high-impact opportunities to minimize our emissions, such as expanding our climate controls to the Bizot Green Guidelines throughout the duration of our exhibition.

We also embraced an opportunistic approach to reducing exhibition waste that includes the reuse of internal resources and a proactive effort to borrow other materials and equipment from local colleagues.

However, the curatorial team also determined to avoid greenwashing the exhibition and felt it was critical that the exhibition feel like all other Hammer Museum exhibitions. We therefore made sure that the integrity of artworks was prioritized, which at times increased our emissions (e.g., flying artists in to install their work) and material waste (e.g., providing custom fabricated elements that could not be recycled or reused).

Emissions

Travel - COVID curtailed much of the travel associated with the research grant reducing the overall emissions.

Shipping - The shipping calculations include forecasts for intervenue tour shipping to Houston and Davis. Sea freight shipping was isolated to catalogue shipments and one shipment from Vietnam. Sea freight for artworks was quoted but proved in-feasible due to budget, insurance, and timeline.

Energy - The Hammer is delighted to have implemented the BIZOT standards for this exhibition. The exact reduction in energy is not possible to estimate given seasonal changes in temperature.

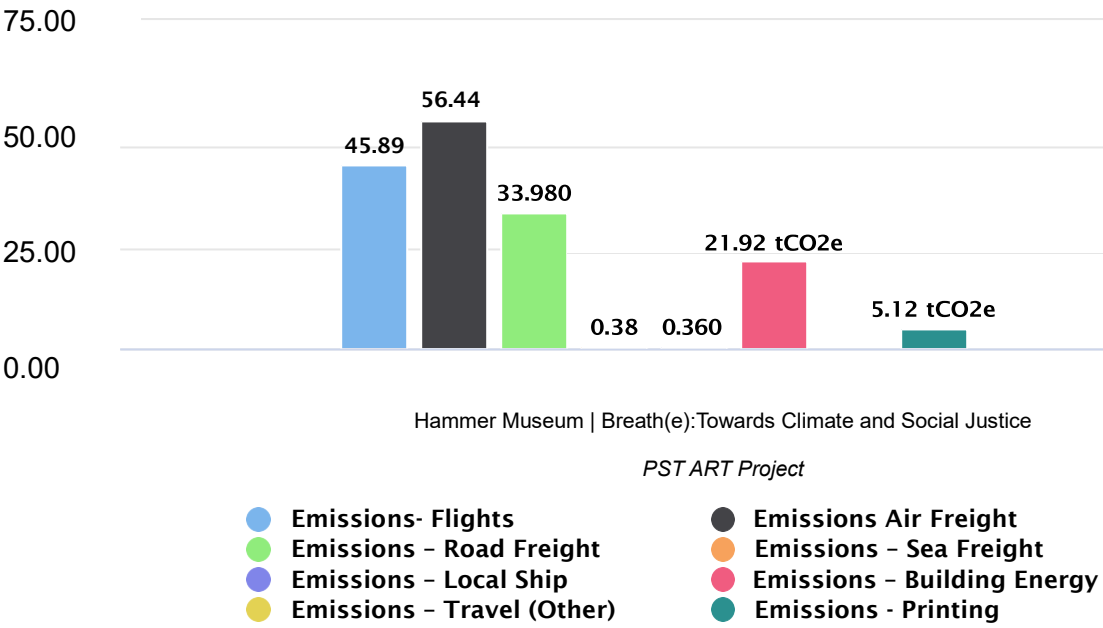
Furthermore, this exhibition featured a few energy intensive projects. While we cannot accurately estimate the savings, we know the changes reduced the overall footprint. It is also worth noting that the Hammer's building is inherently energy efficient but also recently switched to LED bulbs and made improvements to our HVAC systems. Collectively, these conditions make our building energy efficient.

Printing - The exhibition catalogue proved to be a very successful and while the total emissions are low, we expect the 5.12 tCO2e is overcalculated since the printer operates on 97% renewable energy.

Tour - The emissions calculation encompasses all activities funded by the museum's exhibition budget, including travel, building energy, transportation associated with *Breath(e)*, and transportation for the tour to the Moody Center at Rice University and the Manetti Shrem Museum at UC Davis. The tour maximizes the exhibition's impact, but it also increases the overall emissions. The calculation does not include the projected building energy for its display at each venue, but we are pleased that both partnering museums will apply the BIZOT climate conditions following the Hammer's lead.

Not included – Standard museum operations (e.g., energy used by the administration offices, seasonal printed calendar, etc.) are excluded as they are not funded by the exhibition budget and serve all museum programs.

Emissions by Category



Travel

46.07 tCO2e

Flight (international), Flight (domestic), Car, Taxi, Public transit, Bike/ walking/ other zero emission travel, Research grant related travel (reported)

Shipping

91.16 tCO2e

Air Freight (international), Air Freight (domestic), Sea Freight, Road Freight - Dedicated Truck (long haul), Road Freight - Shuttle (long haul), Road Freight - Local, No dedicated shipment (i.e. hand carried, produced on site), Courier required

Building Energy

21.92 tCO2e

We have access to energy data, This exhibition included work with unique energy consumption , This exhibition incorporated energy saving initiatives, This exhibition adopted BIZOT Green Protocol climate control standards

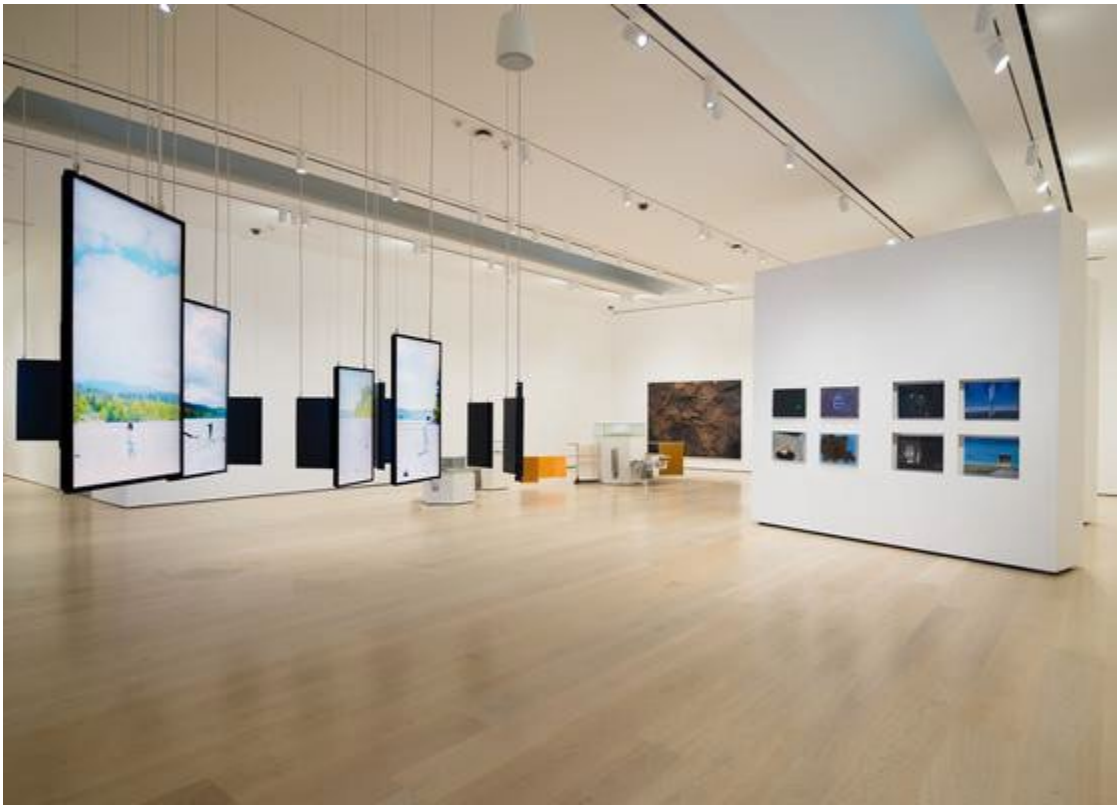
Printing

5.12 tCO2e

Catalog - Hard Cover

Print Materials/Catalog Shipping, Waste / Material, Artwork Fabrication, Programming / Events, Food / Meals / Catering, Accommodations

Total Emissions 149.80 tCO2e



Breath(e): Toward Climate and Social Justice, installation view. Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, September 14, 2024–January 5, 2025. Photo: Jeff McLane

Materials & Waste

Pedestal/Plinth, Vitrine/Display, Frame, Single Use Packing, Reusable Packing, Artwork/Fabrication, Walls, Wall Paint, Wall Vinyl, Carpet

Material Sources

New, Reused (Internal Source), Reused (External Source), Reclaimed/Diverted

Material Destinations

Waste reduction strategies implemented, Designed for disassembly, Plastic/petro-based materials, Bio- based materials, Other waste/material considerations

We focused on producing an environmentally conscious show by considering the lifecycle and longevity of exhibition walls and materials during the planning stages. This included evaluating material lifecycles and prioritizing reuse, such as locally sourcing and repurposing construction materials

To avoid greenwashing the exhibition and ensure the exhibition felt like all others at the Hammer, we used standard materials including vinyl for signage and finished drywall for building.

Required Fabrication - Notable installations by Ryoji Ikeda, Mika Tajima, and Garnett Puett, as well as artworks by Zheng Mahler, Mel Chin, and ikkibawiKrr, required significant fabrication. Some materials used for these displays were bespoke and could not be reused or recycled. Wherever possible, we prioritized reusing materials, such as carpeting and curtains from the installations, or redistributing them to support a circular economy. For example, the soil and materials used in Ron Finley’s large-scale garden installation will be returned to him, sand from ikkibawiKrr’s piece will be repurposed for sandbags, and carpeting from Ryoji Ikeda’s installation will be stored for future projects.

As always, standard exhibition design elements, such as casework and plinths, were taken from and subsequently added to the museum's inventory.

Not Included - Waste calculations include activities funded by the exhibition budget. As such, waste from standard museum operations (e.g., seasonal opening party or facilities waste related to cleaning the museum galleries) are not included.

Catalog

There is a hard-cover print publication connected to this project.

At the outset of the catalog process, we decided to produce a printed book rather than a website. From that point forward, our goal was to create the most sustainable book possible. This involved partnering with Polymode, a BIPOC-led design studio known for its commitment to sustainability and community engagement. Their approach aligns with values such as reducing emissions, minimizing waste, and fostering partnerships with community-focused organizations.

Choosing Polymode was a pivotal decision. Instead of starting with design concepts, the team began by consulting with printers to explore sustainable options. This collaborative approach led to the selection of four different FSC-certified papers, ensuring the catalog met the highest environmental standards. Based on these criteria, they chose to work with Die Keure, a sustainable printer powered by 97% renewable energy (~40% generated on-site) and 3% natural gas. Die Keure was selected not only for its sustainable practices but also for its proximity to the paper mill and the shipping port. This minimized transportation distances, reducing the environmental footprint despite the overseas printing. Lastly, they opted to eliminate shrink wrap, requiring approval from distributors and warehouses for this new approach.

Instead, they collaborated with the printer to design an innovative paper wrap, further enhancing the catalog's sustainability.

Engagement

Stakeholders engaged in the Climate Impact Report

Director/Leadership, Curatorial, Exhibitions / Install, Development, Communications / Marketing, Artists, Lenders, Vendors, Fabricators, Audiences, Community Groups, Environmental Justice / Climate Justice Groups

Climate related event or public program, Climate related educational program, Climate related wall text, Climate incorporated into exhibition thematic content, Climate incorporated into messaging/communications

Our Team

Breath(e) foregrounds a community of artists and seeks to amplify their work to our community of visitors. This engagement with artist and climate justice advocates centered our Climate Impact Program through the catalogue, exhibition, workshops, lectures, screenings, and other programs.

Staff constitute the second key group of engaged collaborators. Stakeholders from every department participated in roundtable meetings during the exhibition planning process to identify opportunities for sustainable approaches. These discussions led to initiatives such as eliminating single-use plastics at events and evaluating the use of sea freight for art shipments.

Finally, we took every opportunity to engage third-party vendors extended sustainability efforts to art transporters, caterers, catalogue printers, among others.

Our Community

The exhibition connected to external communities through a meaningful partnership with Conservation International, a global nonprofit committed to sustainability. This collaboration exemplified the power of interdisciplinary alliances by bringing together the arts and environmental advocacy.

The exhibition fostered connections through community-centered programming, including:

- Workshops, performances, and discussions emphasizing equity and environmental action.
- Eco Hardware workshop by artist Lan Tuazon, exploring the future of plastics and their potential integration into the circular economy.

Breath(e) introduced lenders, artists, and other museums to the international BIZOT Green Guidelines, which provides among other suggestions, recommendations regarding expanded climate condition standards for gallery temperature and humidity. When the exhibition travels to Houston and Davis, both institutions will adopt these standards for the first time, marking an important milestone in their exposure to sustainable practices.

Reflections & Takeaways

Breath(e) provided a valuable forum to discuss the environmental impact of our exhibitions program and led to meaningful changes at the Hammer, most notably the decision to apply the BIZOT Green Protocol gallery climate standards for our exhibitions going forward.

From the onset, we focused on making structural decisions that would not impact curatorial decisions, artist projects, nor the visitor experience. The curators felt *Breath(e)* needed to show artists from around the world and include multimedia works. These curatorial decisions necessarily impacted the emissions of our exhibition through international shipments, travel, and energy intensive displays. Nevertheless, we feel confident that our approach maximized the impact of the exhibition while taking meaningful action to reduce energy consumption and waste.

The Hammer is an artist centered organization that values our community partnerships. Our partnerships with artists, Conservation International, and vendors were highlights of our sustainability strategy and we feel confident about the value of this approach moving forward.

Credits

The report is a team effort with support from all museum departments, notably facilities, registration, preparation, exhibition design, communications, and curatorial. All emissions, waste, and energy information was gathered from the relevant department by Nathalie Chybik, project manager for exhibitions and publications, who worked with Michael Nock, director of exhibitions and publications management, to assemble the report.

PST ART ART & SCIENCE COLLIDE Presented by Getty

LHL CONSULTING

This Climate Impact Report was completed as a part of the PST ART Climate Impact Program, a groundbreaking initiative integrating climate action, community building, and reporting into Getty's landmark arts event, led by LHL Consulting. More information can be found at pst.art/climate.