

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.17682260

THE CRITICALITY AND EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL OF ECO-ART: A STUDY THROUGH ZHENG BO'S PRACTICE

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Received: 30/06/2025
Accepted: 23/09/2025

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ABSTRACT

This manuscript centres on the critical condition and pedagogic worth of eco-art by examining the work of a contemporary Chinese artist Zheng Bo. The research is concentrated on how Zheng criticises the anthropocentric worldview, suggesting more multispecies alliances and its alternative to mainstream education on ecology, grounded in insights into posthumanism and critical pedagogy. His most famous, such as Pteridophilia, Botanical Curriculum, The Forest Curriculum and Living Archive; they illustrate that eco-art can be both a cultural argument and a philosophical investigation and pedagogical transformation all at the same time. The paper follows a qualitative case study research design where art-based research (ABR) and critical thematic analysis are embraced to examine Zheng visual and performance work. Video recording has also been applied to secondary data, artist interviews, curatorial essays and exhibition documents. This observation indicates that the eco-art, which Zheng produces, suggests a posthumanist ethos, as it decenters human capability, supposes a queer ecological orientation, and prioritises interspecies cooperation. Freirean principles of dialogical and embodied education are preconditioned by his collaborative and place-based practises and inspire ecological literacy and social change. The discussion is part of a broader understanding of eco-art as a tool of environmental cognition-education and criticism.

KEYWORDS: Eco-Art, Post-Humanism, Critical Pedagogy, Zheng Bo, Ecological Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Eco-art is an interdisciplinary study and artistic practice that bridges art and ecology practices with activism, and it serves as a potent form of cultural intervention to the growing global environmental crisis. Das (2019) argues that with degradation in the environment, the climate crisis, and biodiversity loss becoming more prevalent, artists have increasingly turned to environmental themes and practices to raise awareness, undermine mainstream narratives, and spearhead change. Eco-art is a form of creativity but also a mean of critical thinking and social education. It is a cross-disciplinary practice; a fusion of aesthetics, science, and activism; that combines many fields to discuss the interconnection between humanity and nature. In this regard, Kiang Malingue (2025), asserted that contemporary eco-artist Zheng Bo in his work is simply monumental. Hong Kong artist and theorist Zheng Bo is internationally recognized as a practitioner who combines ecological awareness with social and political commentary. Additionally, Zheng et al. (2024), highlighted that his body of work; encompassing drawing, video, installation, performance, and work with communities centers the connection between the plant life and human systems of knowledge, labor, sexuality, and governance. Zheng is highly inspired by Daoist thought, indigenous knowledge systems, and ecofeminism theory, and his practice is a radical re-imagining of art as a platform of ecological education and change. His writings question human-centric worldviews, and instead pursue multispecies perspective that aims to foster empathy, solidarity and co-existence with nonhuman life.

Pteridophilia, one of the most celebrated series of Zheng Bo, highlights his methodology. As part of her continuous video art piece, Zheng examines the more personal and seductive communications between people and ferns in the Taiwanese forests. These texts challenge the existence of strict divisions between nature and culture, and the heteronormative/capitalistic structures that have traditionally dictated the way humans interact with nature and one another. With breathtaking sceneries of substituting ecological imaginations, Zheng encourages viewers to envision their location within a planetary ecosystem not necessarily as the ones that dominate, but as a co-inhabitant (Chan & Bo, 2024). The practise of Zheng eco-art also has great pedagogical value. His projects generally involve multidisciplinary research teams consisting of scientists, scholars, activists, and communities,

creating participatory situations whereby ecological knowledge may be created and produced in a collective fashion. His work fosters ecological literacy by making abstract environmental problems tangible and personally engaging in form, whether through masses of people at the workshop, walking performances or open discussions. He employs art not only as a communicative tool, but as a form of inquiry and pedagogy; that can be called critical eco-pedagogy (Wang, 2019). In this view, his practice may be viewed as an intervention against existing paradigms of education focusing on abstract or technocratic formulations of environmental problems, and, by contrast, advancing embodied, relational, and situated learning.

1.2. Problem Statement

When confronted with ever-growing environmental crises, traditional environmental communication and educational practices do not always spark any meaningful action or change of systems. However, Eco-art becomes a critical and pedagogical response to this lapse, though it has not been studied to its full potential. The eco-art practice of Zheng Bo can provide a distinct perspective through which to analyze the ways in which art can question anthropocentric worldviews, lead to multispecies perceptual attitudes, and serve as ecological pedagogy. Limited research exists, however, that critically examines the intersections of artistic expression, ecological thought, and environmental education in his contributions (Zhou, 2024). The paper fills this gap by examining the criticality and educational aspects of the artwork of Zheng Bo to help establish a better understanding of eco-art as a radical cultural and pedagogical practice.

1.3. Objectives

- To analyze the critical dimensions of Zheng Bo's eco-art practice, examining how his work challenges anthropocentric narratives and fosters alternative ecological perspectives.
- To evaluate the educational potential of Zheng Bo's art, exploring how his projects function as forms of ecological pedagogy that engage audiences in environmental awareness, reflection, and action.
- To situate Zheng Bo's practice within the broader field of eco-art, identifying key methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and socio-political themes that inform the intersection of contemporary art, ecology, and education.

1.4. Research Questions

- How does Zheng Bo's eco-art practice challenge anthropocentric narratives and promote alternative ecological perspectives?
- In what ways does Zheng Bo's artwork function as a form of ecological pedagogy that fosters environmental awareness, reflection, and action among audiences?
- How can Zheng Bo's practice be situated within the broader field of eco-art, and what methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and socio-political themes underpin his approach at the intersection of art, ecology, and education?

1.5. Significance

The manuscript stands out as it links the recent art and ecology to environmental education through a special study of Zheng Bo practise. The analysis of his work reveals how eco-art can contribute to effective critical reflection and eco-learning. It also leads to the development of scholarly interest in art-based environmental engagement and has provided insight into how creative practises can build more inclusive, empathetic, and transformative human-to-nature relationships. The results can be used in eco-art work, eco-environment education and interdisciplinary sustainability education in the future.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review aims to explore some of the key scholarly debates regarding eco-art, posthumanism, and critical pedagogy to position the practise of Zheng Bo within those frameworks and establish its critical and pedagogical importance to the current ecological and socio-political problems.

2.1. Challenging Anthropocentrism

The eco-art practice of Zheng Bo represents one potent challenge to anthropocentrism, reorganizing the human perception of the natural world as a synthesis of aesthetic, philosophical, and political action. Liu (2024) argues that his work challenges the power structure of human-centered narratives, which places economic growth and control over technology over ecological balance. Instead, Zheng Bo celebrates the autonomy and vigor of non-human life forms; plants, fungi, the ecosystem; encouraging the audience to contemplate the interspecies interactions and interdependence of all life forms. Moreover, as Carroll (2017) expounded, via works including *Pteridophilia*, *The Forest Curriculum*, and *Dao is in Weeds*, Zheng breaks

down strict nature-culture distinctions, putting plants not in the background, but in the sidekick and star role. Zheng Bo's Daoist-inspired practice fosters deep connections with nature through daily rituals and ecological reflection, as depicted in figure 1.



Figure 1: Zheng Bo on Lantau Island, in Quiet Dialogue with the Forest. Source: (Zheng Bo-The Good Life-The Nomad Magazine, 2023).

His use of queer ecology and Daoism pushes us towards a radical decentering of a human identity, through a fluid and imbricated relationships that defy binary conceptions and linear progress. This is not a criticism of modernity as an anthropocentric perspective; an alternative ontological outlook of empathy, humility, and mutual co-existence. Figure 2 depicts a series of immersive plant-based installations by artist Zheng Bo that explore ecological and social entanglements through the challenge of human-centred vision



Figure 2: Zheng Bo in His Living Installation, Merging Art and Nature. Source: (Das, 2019).

It is noteworthy that Zheng techniques are process-oriented. His time practise often involves participatory practises, including walking, planting and meditating with plants, which challenge the commodification and spectacles of the contemporary art. In the process, he fosters slowness, presence, relationality; traits that are essential in the development of eco-consciousness. This is why the practise of Zheng Bo is simultaneously a critique and a suggestion (Xu, 2025). It criticises the bases of ecological devastation within the West and demands the introduction of a new cosmology based in mutuality among the species. His approach is aligned with the overall posthumanist and new materialist discourse, which envisions art as an area of ethical thinking and ontological reconceptualization (Pan, 2020). Advocating against anthropocentric assumptions and encouraging the flourishing of multispecies, Zheng Bo enacts an inspiring template of ecological art that is antagonistic, symbolic, and utterly disruptive.

2.2. Art as Ecological Pedagogy

The artistic practise of Zheng Bo may not be restricted to the contribution to the visual or conceptual representation in particular; it is a way of ecological pedagogy of environmental awareness, critical thought, and collective action. It is in this context that Skold (2020) claims that his projects serve as open-ended learning experiences, which are not necessarily constrained within the traditional classroom setting, but are completely framed into natural and social landscapes within which learning occurs via embodied, communal processes. Zheng based his pedagogical thoughts on the concept of learning with nature.

Also, Kaimin (2023), evaluated that Botanical Comrades and Living Archive anticipate the concept, that plants, ecosystems and human relationships might be co-teachers. Moreover, clarified by Anran (2025), in promoting viewers, listeners, and engagement in more-than-human world, Zheng confronts passive viewing and instead promotes multisensory learning.

His focus on dialogue, ritual, and collaboration opens up possibilities of experiential education that cannot be absorbed by the extractive logic of traditional environmental discourse. Zheng Bo *Pteridophilia 4* examines eco-queer intimacy by sensual relationships between human and fern, in figure 3.



Figure 3: Pteridophilia 4: Bodies and Ferns Entwined in Zheng Bo's Eco-Queer Vision. Source: (Zheng Bo – White Rabbit Gallery, 2025).

The projects of Zheng are frequently site-specific and participatory that welcome individuals into slow, contemplative experiences with nature. The experiences enable profound interaction with ecological knowledge systems; native and modern; emphasising the political and cultural aspects of environmental disasters.

The artistic media such as video, installation, and performance become an instrument of inquiry as it provokes the observers to reformulate their ecological entanglement and ethical actions (Mamur & Celik, 2023).

Furthermore, the practise of Zheng overlaps with community-based education models and activist models. He was involved with collectives and grassroots organisations as a sense of dedicating himself to the democratisation of ecological knowledge, accessible and applicable to a wide audience.

Placing his artwork in open and non-institutional environments, he establishes communal learning and ecological citizenship (McGregor, 2020). By doing so, Zheng Bo re-invents the position of the artist as teacher, facilitator, and ecologist.

His practise defies disciplinary and hierarchical limits, promoting a paradigm of art. As an example, the *Pteridophilia* series by Zheng Bo addresses intimate and multispecies relations as a radical re-evaluation of queer desire and ecological kinship; visualised in figure 4



Figure 4: Close-Up from Pteridophilia I (2016), Where Human and Fern Meet in Tender, Bodily Dialogue. Source: (Sunpride Foundation | 驕陽基金會, 2022).

2.3. Positioning in Eco-Art

The practise of eco-art by Zheng Bo takes an occupied role in the wider category of contemporary ecological art, addressing diverse methodologies, theoretical orientations, and socio-political issues. Further, as illustrated by Cucuzzella (2023), his work is resonant with major currents in eco-art; most notably, those currents that focus on collaboration, sustainability, and criticalism towards systems of power and representation. Zheng is methodologically an interdisciplinary artist combining art, science, philosophy, and activism. Also, Warrington-Coetzee (2022), ascertained that his practise frequently entails protracted studies, communal involvement and contextualised knowledge, aligning with practises in socially engaged art and environmental humanities. Instead of creating fixed artworks, Zheng anticipates mobile and interactive processes; wandering with plants, meditating in forests, and playing with the forces of nature hence giving prior emphasis to art as lived experience and environmental awareness. Zheng Bo incorporates both ecological and artistic care, with multispecies solidarity and non-human kinship (as in figure 5)



Figure 5: Zheng Bo Waters Moss, Nurturing Living Art And Plant-Human Connection. Source: (Sunpride Foundation | 驕陽基金會, 2022).

Theoretically, Zheng Bo utilises various paradigms, such as the Daoism, queer theory, posthumanism, and indigenous epistemologies. These views underpin his criticism of the anthropocentric, heteronormative, and colonial suppositions, inherent to mainstream ecological rhetoric (Ren, Bo, and Wu, 2022). As an example, his Pteridophilia series reconfigures the human-plant relationship in such a way that it offers a sensual, ethical, and political closeness to nature. This is coupled with a more widespread shift in eco-art towards intersectionality; how environmental problems are knotted together around race, gender, sexuality and decolonization (Malcolm, 2020). Climate justice, biodiversity loss and urban ecology are another socio-political area discussed under the work of Zheng. His focus on East Asian ecological knowledge and practises bring a non-Western voice to the discourse of world eco-art (Tan, Kina & Chen, 2022). His exploration of local histories, local ecology, local political situations, and local traditions, contributes to the destabilisation of the universalizing components of the globalised environmental utterance, which in appearance to ecological art assumes a more pluralistic form.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

Posthumanism and critical pedagogy, which share theoretical overlaps, can be applied to the study to engage critically and pedagogically with Zheng Bo eco-practise at both levels respectively.

Posthumanism: Posthumanism opposes the anthropocentric worldview, which is prevalent in the Western tradition and which has brought about ecological destruction. It requires the de-hierarchicalization of the human subject and emphasises interdependence and agency of entities living and non-living (Dedeoglu & Zampaki, 2023). Posthumanist thinking also exerts a heavy influence on the work of Zheng Bo, in that it focuses on cross-species interaction and operating against the nature/culture dichotomy. He starts exploring sensual, ethical, and political relationships between plants and people by creating projects like *Pteridophilia*, which foreshadows a more holistic, non-hierarchical ecological ontology (Zheng, 2023). Posthumanism may help to put Zheng in its own perspective as an artistic practise and critique of anthropocentrism, but also as a philosophical exploration of how to do things in a different way and coexist with other species on the planet.

Critical pedagogy: Critical pedagogy (grounded in the concept of Paulo Freire) sees education as a tool of social change. It gives more focus to talking, reflecting inwardly and being strong, challenging traditional, top-down forms of learning (Darder et al., 2023). Such pedagogical stance can be observed in the ecological art of Zheng Bo, and participatory, experiential, and community-based methodologies. His installations can be interpreted as learning areas where audiences can reflect on environmental destruction and how they are involved in it. Examples of this practise include *Botanical Comrades* and *The Forest Curriculum*, in which aesthetic experience has been converted into an ecological educational environment that is relational, situated, and transformational.

In conjunction, posthumanism and critical pedagogy offer a combined framework to this study. Critical pedagogy explains the teaching techniques that are inherent in Zheng Bo and emphasize his participatory and performative forms of art, whereas posthumanism helps to understand the process of ontological shift the artist proposes through his work. The combination of these theories drives an enlightened inquiry into how the art of Zheng breaks paradigm and develops ecological awareness in the aesthetic, ethical, and educational dimensions.

2.5. Literature Gap

Although the study of eco-art and its role in resolving environmental problems is gaining academic momentum, little attention is paid to the field of eco-art, critical pedagogy, and posthumanism studies, especially as related to non-Western artists.

There has been some recognition of Zheng Bo in the art - critical and even art-exhibit settings, however, when it comes to academic and critical exploration of his practice as a posthumanist critique and mode of ecological pedagogy, there is a lack of deeper, analytical scrutiny. Such a gap underscores the necessity of research that looks at the ways in which his art serves as a critical intervention and as an educational practice in contemporary eco-art discourse.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Approach

The present research is qualitative and interpretive, using art-based research (ABR) and critical thematic analysis to address the critical and pedagogical elements of the eco-art by Zheng Bo. Its theoretical foundations are posthumanism and critical pedagogy, the integration of which provides an analytical framework on how Zheng expands an ecological consciousness of a participatory as well as a pedagogical nature and in critical referent term.

3.2. Research Design

The present study relies on the case study design and Zheng Bo provides an example of a contemporary artist of eco-art. The approach to the case study is particularly well-suited to the contextual, in-depth analysis, as it enables exploring the manner in which his artistic methods and themes are tied to the stake of the broader discourses of ecology, philosophy and education. This approach also facilitates the emphasis on the abundant interrelationships between his theoretical foundations of his work and its visual, performative, and participatory expressions.

3.3. Data Collection

In the development of the case study, the study relies on an in-depth analysis of secondary literature. This will include visual and textual investigation of the artworks and projects by Zheng Bo, such as *Pteridophilia*, *Botanical Comrades*, *The Forest Curriculum*, and *Living Archive*. These are evaluated in terms of content, channel of communication and mode of addressing the audience. Artist statements, interviews, curatorial essays, and critical reviews are also included to read what Zheng Bo was trying to put across and the theoretical frameworks, which some individuals in the discipline applied to decipher this work. In addition to that, there will be publicly displayed materials such as video records, exhibition catalogues, and performance archives to interpret the space-related and experience-based

aspects of his eco-art works.

3.4. Data Analysis

The article employs critical thematic analysis to describe patterns and repetition of the work of Zheng Bo especially as it applies to non-human agency, ecological interdependence, queer ecologies, decolonial thought, and the pedagogies of ecology. Contributing to the posthumanist frame, the analysis of his art reveals that it contests human-nature separation, redefines specifications, and promotes collaboration between species. Critical pedagogy will be the assessment mechanism based on the works of Paulo Freire, dialogic learning and transformative education will be evaluated to examine how the work of Zheng works as an ecological pedagogy. Specific interest will be given to his methodologies of participation, shared learning experience, and how his art stimulates reflective experiences and community-based knowledge construction.

3.5. Scope and Limitations

Although the research utilises textual and visual content widely, it is constrained by the fact that it relies on publicly accessible documents. This can limit the access to the subjective experiences of viewers or participants in the Zheng Bo live events and workshops. However, the abundance of materials accessible via exhibitions, interviews, and digital media provides multiple contents to a valuable analysis.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

The study is not directly related to human participants and, therefore, has few ethical issues. The sources and materials will be appropriately cited, and the work of the artist will be depicted both accurately and critically.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

This section examines a Zheng Bo eco-artistic practise through the prism of criticality and pedagogy dual dimensions. Using a qualitative interpretive lens and guided by posthumanism and critical pedagogy, this section discusses how the work by Zheng Bo challenges anthropocentric assumptions, presents other ecological ontologies, and creates new ecological education. With a specific interest in four main projects such as *Pteridophilia*, *Botanical Comrades*, *The Forest Curriculum*, and *Living Archive*; the given analysis is organised around three essential sections: (1) *De-centering the Human: Posthumanist Eco-Aesthetics*, (2) *Embodied and Situated Learning: Art as Ecological Pedagogy*,

and (3) *Eco-Art as Cultural Intervention*.

4.1. De-centering the Human: Posthumanist Eco-Aesthetics

The eco-art of Zheng Bo starts off with an audacious philosophical act the decentering of the human subject.

His practise is one that concurs with the posthumanist thought that challenges the Enlightenment-era perception of human exceptionalism but that affirms the relational, interdependent quality of all life forms. Within the framework of deepening ecological crisis, posthumanism demands ontological and ethical revisions of the entanglement of nonhuman life and life.

This transition can be depicted by the *Pteridophilia* series by Zheng Bo (2016 ongoing). The films are captured in the green forests of Taiwan, where the male dancers are seen to engage in sensual and philosophical experiences with ferns (*Pteridophilia*, 2016). Figure 6 presents a visual of the video



Figure 6: *Pteridophilia Series*. Source: (*Pteridophilia*, 2016).

These intimate human-plant interactions are conceptually and visually stimulating. They urge their audiences not only to challenge the heteronormative sexuality but also the assumed supremacy of humans within the hierarchy of the ecosystem. This way, Zheng queers ecological discourse as well as artistic discourse, envisioning relationships devoid of control and exploitation, unattached to productivity.

Instead of viewing plants as silent props, Pteridophilia assigns them subjectivity. The work encourages viewers to perceive plants as co-habitants with agency and emotional appeal, as Chan and Bo (2024) believe. Such a critique is further intensified by the introduction of queer ecology; a model which disrupts normative perceptions of generation, identity, and even the borders of species. Zheng does not simply render the interspecies connection; he evokes ethical reorganizations of care, desire, and co-existence. Additionally, Zheng temporal systems like meditating with plants, forest walks, or gardening; reflect an aesthetic of slowness and attention. According to Xu (2025), it was an active denial of capitalistic acceleration and spectacle. Promoting presence over production and relationality over mastery, Zheng creates an ontological change: instead of human beings as controlling actors, being humble participants in a multispecies world. In the ecoqueer practise of Zheng Bo, plants and humans encounter each other through performances that dissolve the boundary of species and recreate the form of kinship, depicted in figure 7.



Figure 7: Performer Entwines with a Plant in Zheng Bo's Beech, Pine, Fern, Acacia, and Blurring Human-Botanical Boundaries. Source: (Zheng Bo-Kiang Malingue, 2025).

Table 1: Posthumanist Shifts in Zheng Bo's Eco-Art Practice.

Anthropocentric View	Posthumanist Shift in Zheng's Work	Illustrative Work
Nature as passive resource	Nature as active collaborator	Pteridophilia
Human subject as autonomous agent	Human as relational and embedded within ecosystems	The Forest Curriculum
Binary separation: nature vs. culture	Blurring and dissolving of the divide	Botanical Comrades
Normative sexuality and social reproduction	Queering interspecies intimacy	Pteridophilia
Time as linear and productive	Time as cyclical, slow, and immersive	Meditative forest performances

This table 1 helps clarify the posthumanist orientation of Zheng Bo's work, emphasizing how his eco-aesthetics function as critical tools for rethinking human-nature relationships.

4.2. Embodied and Situated Learning: Art as Ecological Pedagogy

The rigour is more than merely philosophical; the rigour of Zheng Bo is a pedagogical radicality. His eco-art is not intended to convey pre-existing environmental knowledge but rather seeks to enact participative, reflective, situated kinds of learning, influenced by Paulo Freire and the idea of a critical pedagogy. Art is transformed into a pedagogical realm that involves viewers and participants in exploring environmental questions on the intellectual, bodily, and emotional level. The education philosophy is depicted by Botanical Comrades and Living Archive projects. As stated in Botanical Comrade, Plants Practise Politics Matters of Activity, (2020), Botanical Comrades transform plants into political symbols, inviting them to study nature not as a scientific entity but as a political comrade. These workshops may include drawing, planting, and discussion of the historical and ecological importance of specific plants, many of which are associated with anti-colonial movements and socialist experiences in East Asia. The Botanical Comrades are shown in figure 8



Figure 8: Project Botanical Comrade). Source: (Botanical Comrade, Plants Practice Politics - Matters of Activity, 2020).

Similarly, Yahp (2024), stated that Living Archive constructs an evolving body of ecological knowledge drawn from indigenous practices, local memory, and site-specific experiences. It challenges the rigidity of institutional archives by embracing incompleteness, dialogue, and co-authorship. In this sense, the project is both an epistemological and pedagogical intervention. It contests dominant environmental narratives, which often marginalize non-Western or oral knowledge systems, and instead cultivates plural, grassroots ecological literacy. Zheng's pedagogical methods often unfold in open, public, and natural spaces including gardens, forests, parks; rather than formal classrooms or galleries. These settings allow for immersive, multisensory experiences that defy passive consumption. The audience is stimulated to see, feel, smell and think. One outcome is a kind of ecological attunement that might prove more affectively transformative than data-driven environmental activism. Zheng Bo's Dance Grass Dance Tree invites multispecies kinship through intimate performance with native plants, as depicted in figure 9

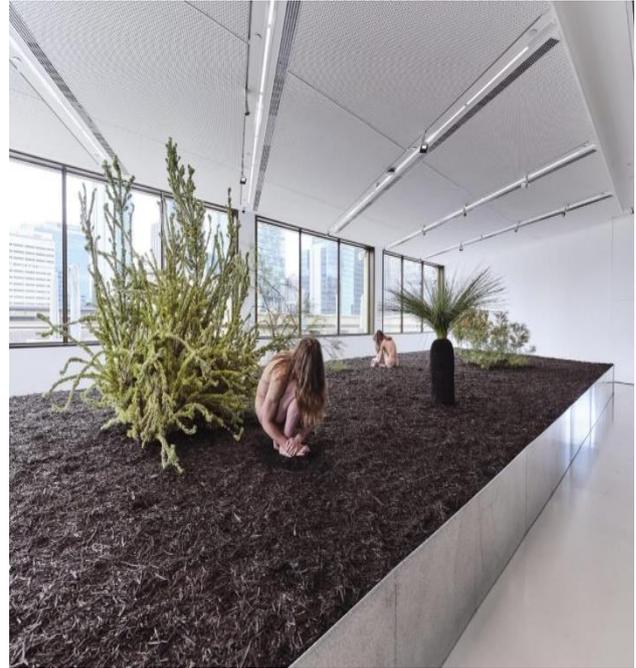


Figure 9: Dancers in Dance Grass Dance Tree Forge Sensual, Ecological Bonds with Plants. Source: (舞草舞木 Dance Grass Dance Tree-Simon Lee Foundation, 2025).

Such a practice is consistent with Skold (2020), who argues that ecological art installations may serve as transformative pedagogical spaces through the embodied, tactile process of being with places and materials. Notably, intersectional aspects of ecology are also addressed in the pedagogical work of Zheng Bo. His educational art links environmental concerns to social justice issues through allusions to queerness, indigeneity and political resistance. Ecological literacy, in this perception, involves not just cognitive apprehension about ecosystems, but opposition towards the systems of power degrading them.

4.3. Eco-Art as Cultural and Political Intervention

The eco-art created by Zheng Bo goes beyond the aesthetic and pedagogical: it serves as a spectrum of cultural analysis and political intervention. Nguyen (2022) suggests that his work is within the framework of a global environmental crisis but not subject to the universalizing impulses of the Western environmental narrative. Rather, Zheng focuses on local, situated, and culturally relevant ecologies, those grounded in East Asian traditions. The Forest Curriculum, one of his most recent works, sees Zheng work with scholars and activists to investigate non-Western systems of ecological thought and knowledge, including Daoism and indigenous cosmologies. A depiction of Daoism is presented in figure 10.



Figure 10: Daoism. Source: <https://shaolin-kungfu.com/daoism-in-china/>

The frameworks are not posited as alternatives to Western science, but as parallel epistemologies which critique the prevailing logics of control, extractivism, and linear progress. It involves performative walks, meditations, and discussions in forests landscapes that rearrange the space of learning to that of ecological immersion and students listening to each other.

Zheng Bo's work is also a critique of capitalist and colonial paradigms underlying environmental destruction. The revolutionary aspects of a plant merging with revolutionary figures in Botanical Comrades serve to point to the inseparability of politics and ecology. Plants are agents of resistance and survival rather than aesthetic objects or resources. The politicized nature of this perception indicates an eco-social justice orientation, which Zheng shares; a worldview that attributes the loss of biodiversity to very specific inequalities, land dispossession, cultural erasure. Furthermore, participatory approaches transform Zheng into a democratization of how ecological knowledge is

created. His installations and performances are mostly process-driven, unfinished, and collaborative, instead of presenting polished and closed works. This resonates with the thought of Zhou (2024): art worlds as social meshworks are fluid, distributed, collaborative networks of meaning-making that resist commodification and authoritarianism.

Zheng Bo extends the frame of eco-art to encompass spiritual and philosophical levels not present in traditional environmentalism. Their use of the Daoist concept of *wu wei* (non-action) and *ziran* (naturalness) creates alternative ethics of beneficence, patience, and co-existence. These principles challenge the Western propensity to respond to ecological challenges in technologically controlled relations and require humility, equilibrium, relationship (D'Ambrosio, 2024). Thus, the labour Zheng produced ought to be read as a multifaceted cultural intervention; a work that does not only critique existing ideologies, but proactively proposes other ways of life and associated with the Earth.

4.4. Synthesis: Eco-Art as Ontological, Ethical, and Pedagogical Practice

The two lenses mentioned above, posthumanism and critical pedagogy, are closely related as the lens used to consider Zheng Bo and his Eco-art as a highly cross-disciplinary project redefining the role of art in ecology as a discursive field. It is ontological because it raises questions about premises like what life is, agency, and self. It is moral because it requires emerging forms of multispecies care, humility, and accountability. It is also pedagogical, in the sense that it promotes profound, participatory learning processes that develop ecological consciousness and citizenship. Through his work, Zheng attempts to demonstrate that eco-art does not necessarily have to indulge in spectacularity or moral conviction. Rather, it might be a transformative space in which knowledge is co-produced, in which subjectivities are opened, and in which more just and sustainable futures can be envisaged. At a moment when the vast majority of environmental education can be so inert and unresponsive to feeling as to leave an audience unmoved, Zheng provides a truly moving, cognitively thorough and socially vital form of eco-pedagogy, as illustrated in figure 11.

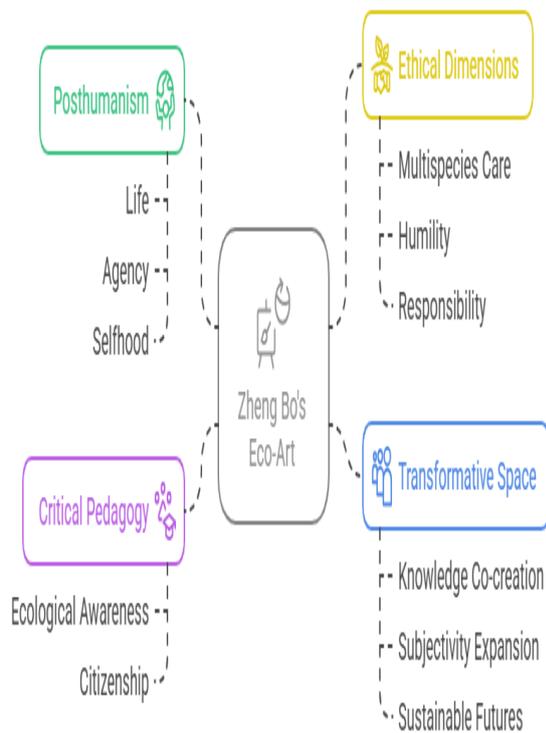


Figure 11: Zheng Bo's Eco-Art. Source: Author (Through Canva).

In rejecting disciplinary boundaries and embracing fluid identities including artist, educator, activist, philosopher; Zheng Bo advances a radical model of the eco-artist: not just as a maker of images, but as a cultivator of awareness, a facilitator of dialogue, and a participant in the planetary commons.

5. DISCUSSION

Through the analysis, Zheng Bo eco-art was able to capture many challenges to the anthropocentric worldviews by transforming nonhuman life forms creatures as participants in the ecology network. His treatments of queer ecology, Daoist philosophy, and performative intimacy with plants especially in Pteridophilia; challenge traditional human-nature dualities. This coincides with Carroll (2017) who claimed that eco-art reconceptualizes nature as not merely a passive backdrop but as a co-constitutive of the human identity and their agency. Zheng is aligned with a greater posthumanist paradigm that, as Dedeoğlu and Zampaki (2023) point out, pursues the decentralization of the human subject and raises multispecies interdependence to hierarchy. His writings offer alternative ontologies and raise issues of morality of coexistence, humility and existence

together. Xu (2025) also highlighted the topicality of time-based, process-oriented art as an antidote to the acceleration of capitalism; something to which the slow and immersive art used by Zheng is acutely sensitive. These conclusions are shared by Pan (2020) who places such art in the scope of the posthumanist turn in Chinese contemporary practise, and demonstrates how Zheng reinvests ecological agency as a corrective to human exceptionalism. By doing so, the aesthetic strategy used by Zheng is not merely a critic of the ecological failures of modernity but also a dream of other futures through co-existence and relational existence.

A related outcome is that Zheng Bo eco-art is an effective pedagogical strategy because it can promote participatory, experience-based, and site-specific learning. By offering projects such as Botanical Comrades or Living Archive, environmental education can be re-thought as engaged and embodied participation rather than knowledge transfer. This confirms Skold (2020) claim that ecological art exhibitions may serve as transformative pedagogical space. Zheng incorporates Freirean ideas of dialogic and situated learning by engaging participants in engagement activities such as walking, planting, and storytelling (Darder et al., 2023). His work is an excellent instance of what Wang (2019) referred to as a critical eco-pedagogy, in which art allows the audience to challenge the authoritative discourses of the ecological realm and engage with the co-production of ecological knowledge. The focus on plants as co-teachers, expressed by Zheng in Botanical Comrades, supports the argument presented by Kaimin (2023) that natural objects may serve as educational agents in non-traditional learning environments. Furthermore, his employment of local varieties of knowledge and Daoist orientations provides a reinforcement to the plea of Anran (2025) to incorporate culture-specific knowledge systems in environmental education. The works by Zheng thus broaden the domain of eco-art to allowing educational mode with its emphasis on disrupting hierarchy, promoting empathy, and instilling multispecies literacy.

Lastly, the analysis highlights that the eco-art by Zheng Bo is a culturally and politically multidimensional intervention. His writing on topics of queer identity, indigenous cosmologies and ecological justice connects environmental degradation with other forms of oppression, including colonialism and capitalism. This substantiates the opinion Malcolm (2020) holds that the enmeshed issue of both ecological and

humanitarian issues can be resolved through intersectional eco-art. Zheng does not merely criticise the narratives of technocratic supremacy in *The Forest Curriculum* but by doing so places non-Western environmental cultures like Daoism at the centre of her work, contributing to the notion of planetary art as culturally pluralistic and place-based advocated by Ren, Bo & Wu (2022). His line of thought also echoes in the concept of Zhou (2024), which posits art worlds as social meshworks by engaging in the art that disrupts the power of institutions and decentralises the ecological knowledge through collective practises. In addition, Nguyen (2022) asserts that the eco-sexual and ritualistic aspects that Zheng explores also reject the commoditization of nature and identity. Such tactics intensify the idea that eco-art may be employed as a form of activism; re-composing art no longer as a form of representation, but rather resistance and recompense in an age of planetary emergency.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has reviewed the eco-art work of Zheng Bo as a pedagogical/critical intervention into the wider field of contemporary ecological art. The paper has therefore made an argument that Zheng Bo work disrupts anthropocentric ideologizing and produces alternative ecological thinking rooted in posthumanist ethics and critical pedagogy through the application of the qualitative case study and critical themes analysis. His work is also critical of the hegemony of nature-culture dichotomy and recreates nonhuman life forms; particularly plants, not objects but as co-players in both ecological and creative processes. In the works such as *Pteridophilia*, and *The Forest Curriculum*, Zheng advocates solidarity between species, and uses artistic strategies that require relational ontologies and multi-sensory and physical response. The learning part of the art of Zheng is also crucial. His participatory installations and performances, grounded on Freirean pedagogy, are ecological learning spaces; spaces of contemplation, co-enquiry, and learning. Performances like *Botanical Comrades* and *Living Archive* offer a form of emancipatory learning far out of the classroom linking audiences to ritual, co-production, and ecological knowledge of a territory. The paper has equally demonstrated that this amalgamation of Daoist, indigenous, and queer epistemologies positions Zheng in a politically charged, decolonial manner; and how by introducing these channels to the international discourse of eco-art, Zheng is able to introduce non-western voices to the global conversation. In sum, the eco-art practise

provided by Zheng Bo is a positive example of how modern art can be both a critique, an educational, and a site of activism. The work provides a massive testament, in his review, of what artists can do to help the climate crisis not only by documenting it, but by thinking about it, and reimagining how we live, learn, and interact with each other. By aesthetic ingenuity and social and ecological responsibility, Zheng Bo can ask artists and viewers alike to help themselves create more ethical, inclusive, and sustainable futures.

6.1. Recommendations

According to the results of the given research, the five recommendations offered to strengthen the incorporation of eco-art into environmental discourse and education are as follows

Include Eco-Art into Environmental Education

In education, eco-art practises such as Zheng Bo should be incorporated into environmental education and arts education. This multidimensional inclusion can enrich the ecological awareness of the students by embedding an imaginative, embodied, and multispecies vision of environmentalism.

Fund Community-Based Eco-Art Projects

Government agencies, NGOs, and arts councils are encouraged to fund and support participatory eco-art projects to involve local communities in ecological education and ecological action. The ideas of Zheng Bo regarding collaborative, site-specific work provide a template of inclusive and effective engagement.

Promote Non-Western Ecological Interviews

Both academic and curatorial institutions should provide space to indigenous, Daoist, and queer ecological knowledge systems within the international eco-art discourse. The work of Zheng Bo exemplifies how these views can deepen the environmental discourse and challenge epistemic colonialism.

Educate Artists as Environmental Educators

Arts training programmes ought to arm artists with pedagogical instruments that allow them to facilitate environmental workshops, discussions, and community research efforts. Zheng provides an exemplary model of creative practise being combined with education through a critical pedagogy of eco.

Promote Multisensory and Experiential Learning Paradigms

Museums and schools need to embrace multisensory and immersive environmental education models. Zheng Bo's walking, meditating, and interacting with plants model teaches us how learning can be based on embodied, relational

experience.

These recommendations can make art and environmental education more comprehensive and create ecological literacy and civic responsibility through creativity and collaboration.

6.2. Future Research Direction

Further studies are necessary concerning audience response and community influence on eco-art practises, especially with the help of live observation and ethnography. Although this paper has evaluated the work of Zheng Bo based on secondary sources, field-based research might offer a

deeper understanding of how different audiences perceive and act upon eco-art pedagogy. As well, comparative analysis of Zheng Bo with other international eco-artists; particularly in the Global South can help illuminate the cultural particularities and universality of eco-art strategies. Thirdly, the integration of eco-art with climate justice movements and policymaking requires further investigation, and the possibility of art-informed environmental governance should be examined. These guidelines would add to a more comprehensive perspective on the role of eco-art in the formation of ecological awareness and systemic transformation.

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