

Ivy Hong

# Extended Critical Analysis



When I looked at this series of photographs, I was deeply moved. The expressions and emotions conveyed by the people in the photos resonated with me on a profound level, evoking a sense of fear and panic regarding the crisis our planet faces. “Hope? And How to Grieve for the Planet” by Neal Haddaway, an environmentalist and photographer, had a powerful impact on me. The exhibition, which took place at CSM’s green house, showcased a captivating body of work that provided profound insights into my research on environmental crises.

Neal Haddaway, with a background in environmental and sustainable development studies, possesses a keen understanding of climate crises, biodiversity loss, and the escalating social inequalities. This led him to explore the connections between different individuals, cultures, and the surrounding environment, and the role of photography in achieving social justice. In this photography project, Haddaway pondered the perspectives of those at the forefront of environmental research, the individuals who generate and transform knowledge and evidence to help us make the best decisions when addressing the environmental crisis. What is their view of the Earth? How do their insights and emotions differ from those of ordinary individuals? Have they ever contemplated the state of affairs we find ourselves in today?

With these reflections and inquiries in mind, Haddaway primarily delved into the emotional connection between scientific researchers, communicators, and the Earth, as well as their efforts to protect the planet. He explored the significance of knowing what the future holds. Through in-depth conversations and a collaborative design process influenced by social science methodologies, Haddaway presented the experiences, fears, and hopes of frontline workers who are fighting against the environmental crisis on a global scale. His work shed light on the unique insights into the environmental crisis, his adept use of social science methods, and his professional presentation through photography, all of which I find highly valuable and influential for my own research projects. I am deeply grateful for the outstanding contributions Haddaway has made to environmental conservation.

In addition, I greatly admire and appreciate Haddaway's photography style, which beautifully presents the notions of beauty, poetics and social justice. However, in contrast to my own approach, my work in the "Positions through Contextualising" project, although utilizing photography as a visual medium, left the audience with a somewhat romanticized impression through the final creation of the "Exploration Journal" publication. I have become aware of this issue myself. I tend to explore the world, address problems, develop projects, and create works from a poetic and optimistic perspective. I may have spent more time focusing on the visual composition of photographic framing and publication design, aspects of graphic communication design, without truly immersing myself in the environmental crisis. As a result, I failed to convincingly engage the audience. This is something I need to reflect upon in both projects of Unit 2.

Discussing serious environmental issues using romanticized language is inappropriate. Perhaps, as suggested by my tutor and fellow group members, narrating from a different angle could have a different effect and power. For instance, combining two images—one capturing anthropogenic plastic pollution and the other depicting the devastating sight of a whale killed by humans—creates a more persuasive and impactful composition that can ignite the audience's environmental awareness. Just like Haddaway's work, which personifies his dialogues with those working on the forefront of climate and environmental research, he delicately captures their emotions, inviting the audience to immerse themselves in the experience, to merge their own emotions with those of the researchers, and to engage in discussions about the impact of climate change on science and mental well-being. Undoubtedly, this work is powerful. It successfully sparked in me, as a viewer, a heightened awareness and desire to protect the environment, providing me with fantastic inspiration!

Haddaway, N. (2021). Hope? And How to Grieve for the Planet. Neal Haddaway. Retrieved from <https://www.nealhaddaway.com/hope/hopemobile.html> (Accessed 9 May 2023).