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Artists tackle 'man vs nature' debate

By **Ivana Kottasová**, for CNN
July 20, 2012 -- Updated 1015 GMT (1815 HKT)

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This sculpture by Cathy Ward and Eric Wright could be used to grow corn. It is an artistic solution to the problems of sustainable agriculture and water management.

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Sculpture show aims to make people engage with nature

Curator David Worthington says art is capable of changing people's habits

Artists communicate through emotions, rather than by placing demands, he says

(CNN) -- Forget the extreme environmental campaigns involving chaining oneself to an oil refinery or egging local politicians. The next big thing of environmental campaigning? Aesthetics.

A group of 20 artists decided to step away from slogans and campaigns and unveiled a sculpture exhibition designed to make suggestions, rather than demands. Called "Pertaining to Things Natural" the show at London's Chelsea Physic Garden puts together art pieces that respond to the environment and the current ecological debates.

Cathy Ward and Eric Wright are among the artists involved in the show. Their sculpture "Skyfield" addresses the issue of sustainability.

"As populations expand, pressure increases to produce more food on the limited and shrinking land that is available for cultivation," Ward explains.

We can affect people ideas of environmentalism on an emotional level through art and creativity.

Dave Worthington, curator

"Scientific advances in the genetics of plants as well as increased knowledge on the effects of diet on health are opening new and vital debates on our future," she says.

Her bright pink, double deck structure might not convey that message straight away, but a closer look shows that the sculpture could be used as a corn grower, suggesting a solution to the lack of cultivated land.

James P. Graham's "Golden Cage" is one of those more metaphoric pieces. The cage-like structure of volcanic rocks wrapped in gold wire symbolizes man's "attempts to imprison and control nature," a much discussed theme within the environmental debate.

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The connection between art and environment is not a new one. From the pioneer Friedensreich Hundertwasser, who designed underground highways lined by trees and rooftop gardens, to sculptures made of recycled materials, creative souls have long tried to send out the environmental message.

But this latest addition to the dialog between art and environment carries more subtle message.

Sculptor Michael Shaw installed large inflatable balloons on trees.

"There is no 'Greenpeace message' in the piece," he says. "But it relates to environment, it is responsive to it. Where the sculpture is depends on the wind."

The curator of the show, David Worthington, says this is the way art can add to the environmental debate -- even without straightforward messages.

"We can affect people's consciousness about environment on intellectual level, through campaigns and information," he says and points out environmental groups around the world.

"But we can also do it on emotional level through art and creativity," he says. "The emotional level is more powerful."

