

# DISCOVER

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## THE ENVIRONMENT

### Eight legs good, four legs better

This image of a frog malformed by pollution is from a new book of eye-catching work by artists blurring the boundaries between art and science

How CP Snow would have enjoyed this image of a frog malformed by pollution. In 1959, in a famous lecture, the eminent scientist and novelist described a rift between the "two cultures", the sciences and the humanities, failing to anticipate that five decades later, a wealth of exhilarating art is being produced in laboratories. This frog - or *DFA 18, Triton* (2001/7) to give it its proper title - is the creation of Brandon Ballengée, an environmental artist who says his work "attempts to blur the already ambiguous boundaries between environmental art and ecological research". Over the past six years he has been studying global species decline and he has become a field observer for the United States Geological Survey's North American Reporting Centre for Amphibian Malformation.

Ballengée developed a chemical process that makes skin and other tissue transparent while leaving

bones and cartilage stained with colours.

The image is taken from a new book, *Art + Science Now* (Thames & Hudson), which features the work of more than 250 artists from around the world and claims to be the first illustrated survey of its kind. Its editor, Stephen Wilson, identifies artistic continuums - locating biological and ecological artists who work with living systems as the descendants of the Land artists of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, for instance. But some practitioners, especially the young ones, "see themselves as outside the worlds of both art and science, and are attempting to carve out a new niche of cultural experimentation and invention".

The scientific ground that's covered includes the fields of molecular biology, kinetics and robotics, algorithms and more. It's eye-catching stuff.

Caspar Llewellyn Smith

