Stolen Future, Broken Present argues that we are virtually out of time to ward off severe, irreversible climate change. As a result, our future is in doubt and, with it, the entire purpose of our present activities. All of our projects – personal, familial, political, religious – are disabled at their core; the challenge is thus to create an ethics of the ruins.

Written with uncompromising lucidity, David Collings’ Stolen Future, Broken Present argues that we have not yet undergone the ethical and philosophical shifts necessary to cope with the temporal dissonance associated with climate change. This is a deeply necessary book at a time when many of us have already become numb to predictions of environmental disaster.

– Anne C. McCarthy, Penn State University

Collings’ book is a timely and necessarily provocative exploration of the intersection between climate change’s volatile history, and an overdue re-reading of Romanticism and poetics. This book will open a new mode of thinking for the humanities of the twenty-first century.

– Penny Fielding, University of Edinburgh


Cover Image by Valerie Hegarty – Bierstadt with Holes, 2007, Foam core, paper, paint, wood, glue, gel medium, plexiglass, 103 x 85 x 7 cm (close up)
Stolen Future, Broken Present

The Human Significance of Climate Change
The era of climate change involves the mutation of systems beyond 20th century anthropomorphic models and has stood, until recently, outside representation or address. Understood in a broad and critical sense, climate change concerns material agencies that impact on biomass and energy, erased borders and microbial invention, geological and nanographic time, and extinction events. The possibility of extinction has always been a latent figure in textual production and archives; but the current sense of depletion, decay, mutation and exhaustion calls for new modes of address, new styles of publishing and authoring, and new formats and speeds of distribution. As the pressures and realignments of this re-arrangement occur, so must the critical languages and conceptual templates, political premises and definitions of ‘life.’ There is a particular need to publish in timely fashion experimental monographs that redefine the boundaries of disciplinary fields, rhetorical invasions, the interface of conceptual and scientific languages, and geomorphic and geopolitical interventions. Critical Climate Change is oriented, in this general manner, toward the epistemopolitical mutations that correspond to the temporalities of terrestrial mutation.
Stolen Future, Broken Present
The Human Significance of Climate Change

David A. Collings
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*Acknowledgments*  

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