

other mountains, those that are loose under the water

The Ocean is a key space in contemporary emancipatory processes because, in the case of the human species, such processes require reconciliation with the notion of constant movement. This premise, which defines the Ocean, necessitates a system of perception that is far more complex than the one with which we humans—having been domesticated over time—are currently endowed, and can inform our ability to create “imagination” in a completely novel way.¹ Humans approach the Ocean in ways that differ from one community to another. It is likely that the only approach we all share is the idea that the Ocean (as a body of water) has (like our unconscious minds) been a vessel for all that has resulted from an imagination based on the stable and the binary.

In the part of the world that has been known as the Caribbean only for the past few short centuries, continental and insular, approaching the Ocean entails the titanic task of decolonizing the unconscious.² The Current IV: “Caribbean: *otras montañas, las que andan sueltas bajo el agua*” (other mountains, those that are loose under the water)³ will focus on the above issue as well as other related themes, including: The knowledge that we inhabit a part of the planet that is in constant geological transformation and that this gives rise to very particular living beings; the generation of thoughts, in relation to aesthetic tools and strategies which play an essential role in the reconfiguration of our relationship with the Ocean⁴; and, lastly, our approach to the Ocean as a space from which to survey and create other structures for managing life, accepting constant movement as a cross-cutting principle. Another layer of complexity that we face in this investigation is the fact that, for the Caribbean region, the existence and persistence of a colonial and neocolonial geopolitical framework is inextricably linked to the body of water that defines it. The processes of enslaver and extractivism, as well as the shaping of national identities and the creation of nation-state borders (to mention just a few aspects), all took place across the part of the Ocean that we now know as the Caribbean Sea. In this context, The Current IV intends to contribute to the process of allowing those of us who were socialized in this part of the world to continue our emancipatory exploration, swimming—specifically—through all that is imbued in that body of water.

To this end, we don’t have to go very far. Analyzing the region’s most recent experiences in the search for and acceptance of this constant movement, it becomes clear that the same aesthetic tools that were created or used at the end of the fifteenth and throughout the sixteenth centuries have seen a resurgence in the last fifty years. Those of the past originated in the mountain peaks, high above

¹ In this project, the word “imagination” refers to the symbolic and material structures that allow us to manage life.

² See the essay by Suely Rolnik, “Decolonizar o Inconsciente / To Decolonize the Unconscious,” *de montañas submarinas el fuego hace islas*, vol. 1 (São Paulo: Ministry of Tourism; São Paulo, Pivô y Kadist Municipal Department of Culture, 2022), 77–91. Available at: <https://www.pivo.org.br/app/uploads/2022/02/pivo-kadist-reader-vf.pdf>.

³ This project forms part of the curatorial research project titled “*la historia de las montañas*” (the history of the mountains) and revolves around the working axis of emancipatory processes in living beings, with the Ocean as the physical epicenter. “*otras montañas, las que andan sueltas bajo el agua*” focuses on the Caribbean context and was first shared with the public in 2021 following an invitation from Beta Local, an independent space in Puerto Rico, and now continues its journey through The Current, thanks to an invitation from TBA21–Academy.

⁴ The idea of tools has been developing through the “*la historia de las montañas*” research project, and refers to different forms of sensorial knowledge generated by human beings in relation to other living beings in different parts of the world and at different times, which allow us to *touch* our desire and thus access what the psychoanalyst Suely Rolnik calls our *vital force*. There is a distinction to be made between aesthetic strategies and tools, with the former being intangible technologies that enable tools to operate as such.

sea level, with the experience of maroonage, and were gradually eroded due to the insistence on the stable, the binary, and the productive machinery of “freedom” until they all stagnated with the creation of nation states and the consequent new geopolitical sea borders. With the appearance of the Jamaican and Dominican *dembow*, as well as reggaeton in Panama, we are witnessing the emergence of certain aesthetic tools: improvisation, transmutation, flight, and floating, in addition to the aesthetic strategy of repetition. Their objective seems to be to push, continue, or even accelerate our reconciliation with all that moves. The unique aspect on this occasion is an awareness that we have not had the space, from the perspective of the unconscious, to reconfigure our relationship with the Caribbean Sea. The implicit bet was to skirt the traumatic processes that have flowed through the Ocean and thus defined our contemporary interaction with this body of water.

In *The Current IV*, we want said tools to permeate the entire research project over the next three years, in the confidence that the more people expose us to them, the more our unconscious minds will gradually be able to reactivate their processes of decolonization. The “de-domestication” of our bodies and systems of perception will allow us to approach those other mountains, loose under the water, through which we can exercise our imaginations, with constant movement being the common feature. As paradoxical as it seems, in the Caribbean the continuation of emancipatory processes must take place through the Ocean and in relation to the history of the mountains that exist below sea level, the traversing of which will undoubtedly lead us to the other mountains, those that are loose under the water, and thus collapse the imagination of the stable and the binary in the region.

If you walk along the Caribbean from the bottom of the sea, you will notice that in reality there are no isthmuses, continental lands, or islands, but rather a succession of mountain ranges surrounded by water. We simply inhabit the space above the slopes, planes, and the valleys of underwater mountain ranges. Many of these mountainous formations are volcanic, gradually moving away from the Galapagos Islands until they grind to a halt in the center of our continent. In geology, this means that the Caribbean tectonic plate is a frame of reference in terms of movement.⁵ The plate originated more than 40 million years ago and has not stopped moving eastward ever since, as evidenced by the marine fossils that have been found in locations far removed (quite literally) from the coast, as well as a number of creatures endemic to this part of the world, with which we are interested in starting a conversation. Examples of this include the family of palms scientifically known as *Coccothrinax*, which have morphological capabilities directly connected to the constant transformation of their habitat, below and above sea level, and the elkhorn coral (*Acropora palmata*), which is an important component in the make-up of reefs that host the most varied of life forms. Inter-species relationships are nothing new; they are precisely the engine that gave rise to aesthetic tools such as transmutation.

The Current IV was conceived as a program to bring together and unite living beings that have been linked to these processes for a long time because, as Ailton Krenak suggests, “many of these people are not individuals, but ‘collective people’, a conglomeration of cells transmitting their worldview over time.”⁶ They are living beings who, by virtue of their *vital force*, their desire, know that “unity is submarine,”⁷ not just because the Ocean is a shared device, but because the sea is the context in which this region of isthmuses, continental lands, and islands exists—a region that began on fire and today continues on water.

Chapter One:

In *The Current IV*’s first year, particular attention will be paid to the Garifuna communities and the volcanos which lie above sea level in the Caribbean region. Garifuna communities are the result of

⁵ Carlos Jaramillo, team geologist in the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, Panama Unit, in conversation with the author, March 2023.

⁶ Ailton Krenak, *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo* (São Paulo: Companhia das letras, 2020).

⁷ Probably one of the Barbadian thinker Kamau Brathwaite’s most celebrated quotes.

the experience of maroonage in the area which today includes the nation states of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. One of their unique features is the development of what we could call “amphibious strategies” as a means by which they were able to continue existing within rigid structures such as nation states without succumbing to assimilation. However, this knowledge has been given little space for dissemination, thus limiting its contribution to our understanding of the routes via which we can return to the Ocean.

Furthermore, according to the worldviews of several Indigenous peoples of the Central American isthmus, volcanos—in their geological role— are creative entities which, together with the Ocean, generate movement. Their creation reveals transformations that translate into new forms of life *in relation*, or relational forms of life, such as those which they promoted as they breached the land-sea border.⁸

I suggest thinking of The Current IV as an underwater volcano which for the next three years will be throwing out lava that, when in contact with water, will take unexpected forms. An initial eruption will lead to Flotación #1 (Flotation #1), a voyage that will give some of the fellows who comprise the project team an opportunity to meet in person to discuss what we are developing. **Flotación #1** will take place in Guatemala between July 7 and 15, 2023, and will focus on improvisation, active listening, and body movement through a visit to the Pacaya volcano, a brief residency at the Museo del Mundo (Museum of the World) project in Livingston, and a public event as part of the 23rd Paiz Art Biennial in Guatemala City. We are created floating and therefore, when we float, we are more willing to absorb and let ourselves be absorbed; we tune in and we go out of sync, and the waters in our bodies are experienced as inseparable from the waters of the Ocean.

⁸ This idea of life in relation is an allusion to Édouard Glissant’s Poetics of Relation.