

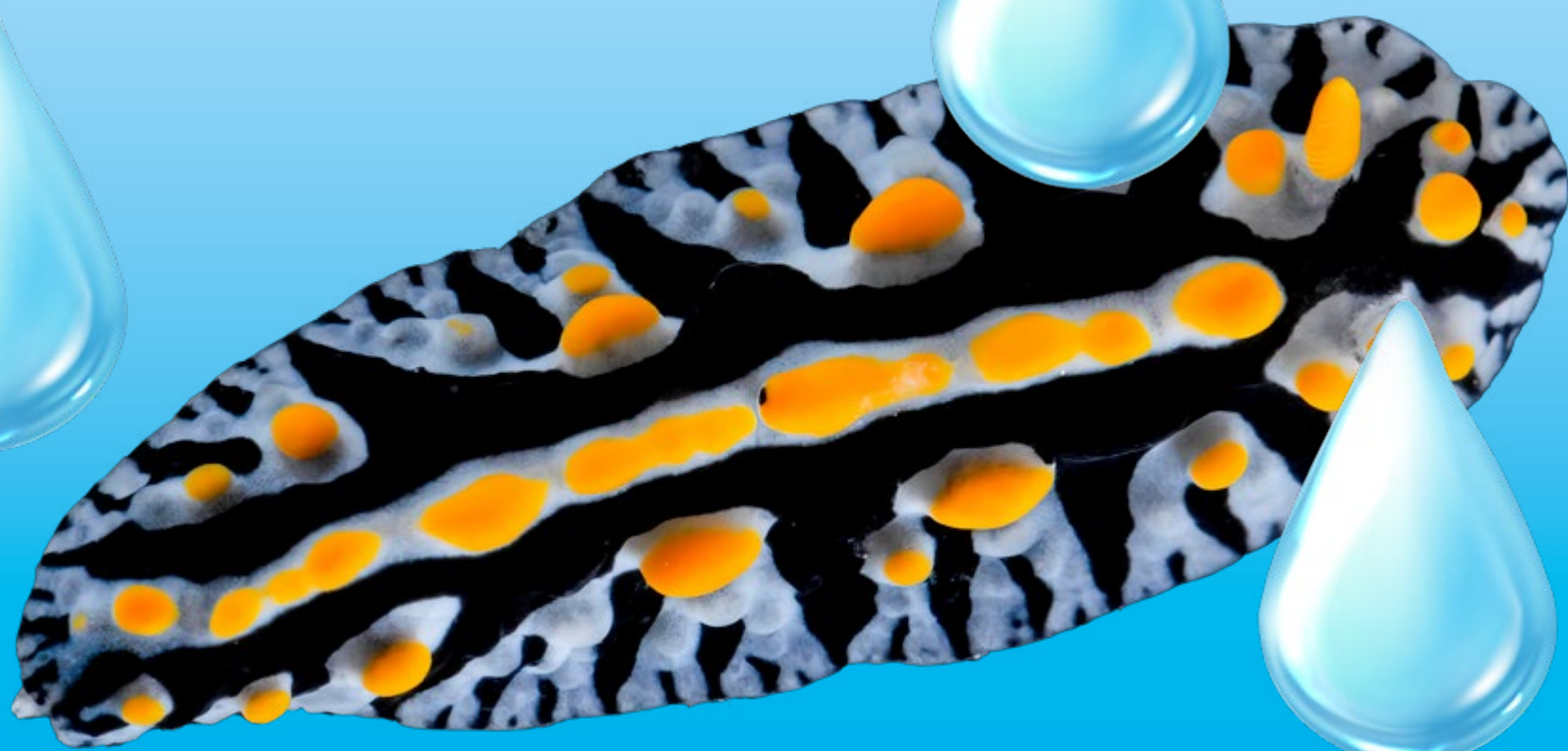
TBA21 ■ Madrid
■ Museo Nacional
Thyssen-Bornemisza
■ Exposición



Liquid Intelligence




Anne Duk Hee Jordan
Saelia Aparicio
Lucas Arruda
Inês Zenha
Ana Mendieta
Beatriz Santiago Muñoz
Jumana Manna
Sonia Levy





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More than a decade ago, TBA21 set itself a challenge to explore how an art institution could have a significant impact on the most pressing issues facing our world. A serious analysis of the contemporary condition cannot ignore the fact that the climate crisis is at the heart of everything and impacts all our relationships. The climate crisis spells struggles for resources, poverty and inequality, land dispossession, geopolitical tensions, health concerns, waves of migration and refugees. It is strange to see how, even though the Ocean is a crucial element in the fight against climate change, it has so far been given a very small role.

As a response we created TBA21–Academy, a research center fostering a deeper relationship with the Ocean and other bodies of water through the lens of art to inspire care and action. Since its inception, the Academy has worked as an incubator for collaborative inquiry, artistic production, and environmental research and advocacy.

The foundation’s mission is to center artistic practices in the urgent investigations of today and unlock the transformative potential of art within societies and ecosystems.

By nurturing artistic practices, we promote the establishment of innovative forms of governance that can incorporate unrepresented sensitivities, claiming legal entities for threatened ecosystems. In our work around the rights of nature we have focused, for example, on advocating against deep-sea mining.

As we defend a regenerative approach to culture, we need to invite nature as a collaborator, to create with instead of in opposition, to turn uncertainty and anxiety into resilience. We lean into collective intelligence and strive to embrace complexity in pursuit of a transdisciplinary and multifaceted way of seeing. We fight for inclusivity and defend a radical sensitivity since we recognize the responsibility to reject hierarchies and separation and commit to radical care on a planetary scale. A resilient and active community is not only a network, it’s an ecosystem. To build a



resilient world, we need to grow kinship within and across our communities.

This exhibition *Liquid Intelligence*, curated by Chus Martínez with Soledad Gutiérrez and María Montero Sierra at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza marks a turn for both TBA21, as it is the first exhibition to open under new co-directors Rosa Ferré and Markus Reymann, and TBA21–Academy, as the foundation’s research arm establishes a third pole in its constellation with the inauguration of *Organismo / Art in Applied Critical Ecologies* an independent studies program in Madrid in partnership with the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza. Following the threads laid out in the works on view in the exhibition, the study program will investigate topics such as conservation and ocean futures to think about how to fundamentally shift conservation practices and imagine the oceanic futures we would like to inhabit.

Together, *Liquid Intelligence* and *Organismo* deepen the foundation’s commitment to working with artists in imagining a world otherwise. And beyond imagining, collaborating across all necessary spheres – policy, governance, science, activism, and so on – to bring this world into being.


TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza
Art Contemporary



Liquid Intelligence


Chus Martínez

The expression “liquid intelligence” implies a change in human mentality. The expression, which a few decades ago would have been understood only as a metaphor or a poetic way of expressing a correspondence between human intelligence (which until recently many people considered the only possible form of intelligence) and the intelligence of water is seen today in a much more literal way. Western culture, perhaps due to monotheism, has a natural inclination for pyramidal structures. Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution reinforces this kind of scheme. The human species is—in the absence of God—the measure of all species and the possessor of all the traits that define what we understand today as intelligence: traits such as language, imaginative capacity, and the ability to project the future, all of which we have carefully cultivated, and all of which we wish to pass on to the artificial inorganic species made up of machines programmed to replicate and surpass our qualities. If all goes according to plan, we will soon cease to subjugate other species and instead be subjugated by that new artificial life form designed to surpass us.



Although this vision of the world is not shared across all cultures, it is difficult to escape from this evolutionary pattern. Partly because colonialism has spread it throughout the world in a categorical way, creating a system capable of effectively silencing any other form of explanation of the relationship between species. We have lost a lot of time and only recently have we opened up to a different and more complex understandings of the ways in which different organisms and life forms interact. These other forms of understanding have made their way from narratives that can initially seem “lateral” or secondary, but that are slowly but surely creating an imaginative and scientific space from which we can affirm that water has intelligence, mushrooms have memory, and the forest an imagination.


A few years ago, on a trip to Japan, a friend took me to visit a great and wonderful exhibition on Buddhist naturalist-polymath author Minakata Kumagusu. Kumagusu left Tokyo University Preparatory School when he was nineteen years old and took off for America. He spent the following fourteen years wandering through South America and Europe until he returned to Japan at the age of thirty-three. Then he disappeared again in the forest close to Tanabe, a city in the Wakayama Prefecture where he conducted extensive biological research preserved in the form of numerous specimen samples, including slime mold, seaweed, and insects, as well as a collection of 400 mushrooms. His interest in the natural world was parallel to his interest in folk culture. Botany, dreams, the body, taboo theories, and folk phenomena are the main constituents of his incredible thinking. Nature in its invertebrate moment, in the non-divine, in genus and specimen is the origin and engine of the development of life. Kumagusu’s work and thought is at the basis of Japanese culture’s interest in understanding the real actors in the regeneration of the forest—microbes and subatomic life, which are as or more important than any other species.



Eiko Honda, a thinker who specializes in the intellectual history of modern Japan, conceptualizes this moment as “queer nature.” In her opinion, the microbial paradigm in the work of Kumagusu represents a counterpart to the civilization theory and evolutionism represented by Darwin. If in the West the idea of intelligence beyond or surpassing the human understanding is mostly embodied by a machine, in Japan this image of supreme intelligence would be closer to the sentient ocean in Stanislaw Lem’s novel *Solaris*, to the idea that slime mold and fungi can not only remember the forest but are able to work together and make decisions, as stated by Yu Fukasawa, a researcher of forest microbial ecology at Tohoku University in Japan. The notion that mycelia might be intelligent just reached Western culture and science is still trying to process this vision. The complexities of the invisible symbiotic relationships that connect one form of life to another in mycelia worlds is very far from the vision of embodied “actors” possessing a body, a voice, and a say in the historical course of events and the human species controlling all that is important in the life of the planet.


Intelligence of the Biodiversity Network and Storytelling

The introduction of a different, hard to imagine, paradigm has to do with the lack of narrative supports and images that can make these kinds of paradigm shifts transmissible in our context. It is at this point in the history of culture that art, and specifically contemporary art, become really necessary. The relevance of art lies not so much in its capacity to create an experience of what is beyond the surface but in its ability to make us understand even before we have understood the problem. Creating a sense of understanding is as important as understanding each and every element that is part of a complex problem.



In the prevailing model of today's society, the cultural aspect of analysis is particularly prevalent. Technology has made possible not only an enormous accumulation of data, but also an unprecedented reading of this data. Data analysis and statistical interpretation are presented as the great model for reading the present and as the perfect tool to design our decision making. At the same time, artists and neurolinguists like Mark Turner proclaim that the structure of our brain, language and knowledge, is eminently literary. To understand the processes of life demands to also understand the structures of storytelling and myths. Turner, an expert in cognitive science, goes further and argues that the origin of language is storytelling. In his description of the brain as a literary entity incapable of generating knowledge except through the generation of an infinite interrelation of stories, he states that the origin of language was not due to any genetic mutation but to the very structure of the stories we need to generate in order to carry out the fundamental functions of life, such as eating and drinking. Grammar is born from our capacity to generate stories infinitely intertwined with each other. As we bring our hands to the spout of a fountain, suspend them in the air and bring them to our mouths to sip the water, we can project an action that goes beyond that story and that will start another—walking along a path, admiring the beauty of a tree.


Claiming that there is no knowledge without the continuous creation and projection of stories is very different from claiming that there is thought in data analysis. In other words, data analysis cannot generate knowledge by itself if it is not linked to the creation of a story that articulates it. That is the same as saying that analysis is just another form of storytelling, a form whose main characteristic is the assumption that it can escape the literary form of our brain. It is interesting that at this particular moment in the history of the perception of the damage human actions have caused to nature and the enthusiasm



over the quantum leap in the generation of machines capable of autonomous actions and mimicry of human qualities unprecedented so far, artists and scientists are particularly interested in narrative forms and their structure. The situation we lived through during the pandemic only encouraged this interest, perhaps intuitively. The reaction of millions of people to the data and the methods of mitigating the virus was skepticism, even when confronted with evidence. It was the first time that the scientific community was faced with a situation artists and cultural workers know well: disbelief and skepticism. The certainty that historically framed research and data was called into question by narratives with no apparent foundation.

Science, like the history of Western philosophy, has no patience for stories. Data based on the continuous observation and reduced to detailed scientific essays, or, in the case of philosophy, the argumentative form of dialectics are seen the only possible foundations for progress (in the case of science) and for political life (in Western philosophy). In a conversation with the Chilean poet of Indigenous origin Nicanor Parra a decade ago, he told me that in the ancient Greek dialogues that gave rise to the political mythology of the West someone was always right and won the champion's trophy, whereas in the stories of the Aymara, Mapuche, and Diaguita cultures of Chile there was never a division of power. The goal of each story is the creation of a vision of the world independent of its relation to the truth. It is difficult to postulate the importance of stories without falling into a somewhat nostalgic or romantic rhetoric of their "power." That is why I believe that contemporary artists—like neurolinguists—can suggest in a visual way the importance of that substance so that we can access very complex forms of understanding, such as the subatomic agency of the natural world.

To speak of water intelligence is to allude to the creation of worlds from agencies that are far beyond what we can imagine. The intelligence of




water is the collective intelligence activated by the totality of the beings that form that habitat, that world. A single bird cannot perform the pirouettes that it can perform without hesitation when in a flock of thousands. Science considers this a crucial trait of complex systems. That is, individuals acquire capabilities in a group that they do not possess when they are by themselves. Who introduced this dream of simple things performing incredible effects in our minds? Artists have always done this. Science says complex systems are fundamental to life. Philosopher Paul Cilliers's definition of complex systems includes the proposal that "[t]he behavior of the system is determined by the nature of the interactions, not by what is contained within the components. Since the interactions are rich, dynamic, fed back, and, above all, nonlinear, the behavior of the system as a whole cannot be predicted from an inspection of its components." Scientists call this "emergence."

Cutting down too many trees might decrease a city's intelligence. I heard this sentence in the context of a conference in Korea on the future of architecture. These words opened my mind and my heart at once. For decades activists, the scientific community, and policymakers have been framing the bad actions of humans as very dangerous to nature. Doing so, they somehow have unconsciously stressed the binary we so badly want to surpass between the human and the nonhuman worlds. At once, this simple statement revealed what was actually happening. Mistreating the ocean and overfishing its species to death decreases the earth's intelligence.


Emergence

This exhibition can be read as a flock of birds or a large school of fish. Members of the same species—artworks—belonging to very different moments in history and geographies are brought together and set in motion to reflect on a simple notion: that all forms of life are in permanent intercommunication. Because of




the limitations of human capacities, we are absolutely incapable of seeing or hearing even a fraction of this language. That is why we have created a substance capable of carrying that message in millions of possible ways. Like a stone falling on the surface of the water, the circles that speak to us of this event are composed of works from the TBA21 Collection. These works are the direct result of a conversation with the artists about processes that are weakening certain natural habitats: the commissions, research works, and the works that we have decided to join to these two initial groups in order to add a somewhat folkloric component, which is very close to the classical forms of storytelling that I have been talking about.

The reason for this unusual form of intersectionality between works and languages is part of TBA21's aspiration to create a new method, a different form of transmission of the foundation's mission, but also of the general mission of art in the context of a global political reconstitution oriented toward the preservation of interspecies equality and freedom. The interconnection of very different systems that tried to understand the present and future of coexistence implies a diversity in languages and methods that never gives priority to a single discipline, an isolated method, a cultural form, or only one kind of imagination. There is no obvious connection between the work of Ana Mendieta and Jumana Manna, but both are part of TBA21's contemporary collection. Yet, the incredible intuitive act of Mendieta's wanting to become one with trees and the earth is very similar to Manna's interest in the organs we humans have fabricated to create the artificial body of the constructed world. Intestines like tubes are channels for fluids that are supposed to remain invisible but she makes visible. Both artists share an interest in sensing beyond what we are conscious about. Sensing with a forest but also with all the materials we extracted from the earth to produce our cities, to create our buildings, our cars, our trains.... Is it also possible to



sense a whole city? And sense the earth while sensing the city? Lucas Arruda embraces similar dreams in his atmospheres of the Amazon. Painting discovered that there were two types of nature: the one inhabited by humans and nature unspoiled, untouched. His series of paintings of the Amazon reflects the fearsome sublime character Romantic painters have given to landscapes and, in doing so, he immediately makes us recall that no such places exist today.

The commissioned research works are represented here with films by of Beatriz Santiago Muñoz and Sonia Levy. These two works have somewhat different methodologies. In both, the images are the result of a detailed observation of concrete cases, focusing attention on a specific place and a delimited time in history, which makes it possible to establish the conditions for an analysis of the impact of life and human action on an ecosystem. Artistic research has become a defining way in which artists in the first two decades of the twenty-first century work. Almost like the plein air painters of the nineteenth century, combining observation with documentary reconstruction of facts and events allows artists to compose an image that narrates in a different way the effect of actions prolonged in time. If history painting focused on major events, contemporary artistic research concentrates on the effects of the kind of events we are not used to paying attention to. Here, the actors are the pollution, the bacterial action that defends itself from the substrates, the winds, the tides—the environmental agents that react to the changes. The images that emerge from these works are an invitation to reflection. A reflection that does not need text or words but is accompanied by the testimonies, the memory, and the feelings of those who are in contact with these situations. In this book, vision, listening, and reflection combine to create a sense of perception that goes beyond aesthetic pleasure and presents sensorial experience as a way to introduce the political dimension of sensing the world.



The third family of works in the exhibition is composed of pieces by Saelia Aparicio, Anne Duk Hee Jordan, and Inês Zehna. These works add a different dimension to the works in the collection and the artistic research projects. All three have in common an interest in aesthetic exuberance and historical moments in which art created a language to speak of crisis. These three artists' works emphasize experiences possessed by imagination and fantasy that are capable of overcoming realism and facts, or the supposed rigor of the facts, to propose way of thinking that could overcome all the obstacles presented by the real situation. Aparicio sees this in the exuberant and gothic fantasy of the Victorian era; in Zenha's work this proposal is evident in the stimulationeity of sensual experience through the fascination with nineteenth-century exoticism; and in Anne Duk Hee Jordan's work this is proposed through ideas of immersion in the present.

As awareness of the situation grows, so does the sense of disaster. The creation of a gigantic, pantagruelic field of perception that could explore all the different ways that the senses open to thought means believing fervently in art as the place from which the invention and production of a new world could be born. This exhibition helps to create a field of connectivity between systems. Imagining intelligence is difficult, but it is a wonderful exercise that invites us to understand a world that wants and wishes to be in permanent contact with itself and of which we are all a part. Liquid intelligence is a pedagogical substance, a network of impulses that keep the world attentive to the dangers that lie in wait, capable of correcting the course of harmful actions, capable of telling stories, capable of allowing itself to be caressed by artists and to show itself in their works again and again to enlarge our understanding of it.



Photo: Roberto Ruiz



Photo: Roberto Ruiz





Photo: Roberto Ruiz






deep, deeper

María Montero Sierra


Under the water, below the sea, submerged in its oceans, we embark on a journey to reconnect with the aqueous environment, which both surrounds us and affords us a place of refuge, where we can reimagine ourselves anew in the continuous present. This journey starts with our most liquid selves, where the land caresses the sea and descends into the abyss. It passes through places which remain largely imperceptible by our senses; places which, precisely due to their indefinable nature and the physical barriers that prevent us from drawing close to them, embody many of our desires to apprehend ourselves in a more respectful manner. This is an invitation to stop gazing at the horizon—an act which has led to a very anthropocentric vision—to imagine our bodies in a new dimension that the sea provides. As we float, we enter a more-than-human world.

We gaze at the sea from afar as it defines the horizon line; from the coast out, deep into the distance, until it merges with the sky. However, the coastline is a space in constant flux. It never stops dancing, shaken by water, and is greatly exposed to the uncertainties brought about by climate change, such as rising sea levels and the increase in hurricanes and cyclones. It



is there, at that constantly changing line, in full view of the vestiges of the Anthropocene, that the artist Beatríz Santiago Muñoz pauses to reflect on the situated knowledge of those who possess a sensitive wisdom and experience the sea as more than mere horizon. Salty water gushes forth from a small burrow-like opening in the ground, a tunnel connecting the depths of the sea with the sky above, and permeates what was once thought to be dry. Luis, the protagonist of Santiago Muñoz's film *Pájaro, cómeme* [Bird, Eat Me] (2022), bears witness to this process as the salt slides across his skin and saturates his senses. The experience of someone who lives almost exclusively outdoors and cautiously continues to read the landscape, with its cycles and signals, teaches us the value of understanding the terrain and respecting a knowledge that is in sync with what we are being told by the earth, water, wind, and the animals with which we coexist. Chus Martínez coined the term “conductive intelligence” to describe this type of knowledge; knowledge which draws on learnings from beyond the human realm to manifest itself in various ways, as demonstrated by the works that make up this exhibition.


Unlike the sea, the ocean makes us fully perform our bodies. Its depth unshackles us from our gaze, from our sense of sight, and forces us to prioritize other senses as the center of our thought shimmers and expands. In the all-engulfing, all-sustaining ocean, suspended bodies live in its full three-dimensionality that seems almost impracticable to humans. When floating, the ocean is our center—a space in which we can reconsider our perceived authority and adapt to others around us—and we understand not only how the seabed is formed and maintained but also how, under its command, we can destabilize the modern view of the world to transcend the usual practices of capital and extraction which, with their colonial and imperial processes, have neglected the sentient world along with other forms of knowledge. Learning about the many forms of parallel intelligence which together make



up conductive intelligence allows us to apprehend ourselves through the body, respecting the material that flows—and grows—between encounters.

Sonia Levy privileges a more-than-human perspective and constructs a new narrative for Venice by giving agency to water and the creatures that inhabit it, from the tiniest of invertebrates to the mollusks that come together to form underwater infrastructure and the fish that survive decades of contaminated water. These form the backbone of the artist's audiovisual installation *We Marry You, O Sea, as a Sign of True and Perpetual Dominion* (2023). Levy submerges the camera and focuses on sea level, avoiding the bird's-eye view that oversees everything, thus reversing the perspective from which the city's history of commercial and military expansion has traditionally been told. Drawing on the waters that converge in the lagoon, she embarks on a quest to offer an ocean-centric image of the world that is both sensitive and full of life (even in her intentional black-and-white depiction), but also stops to contemplate the details, give priority to micro-perspectives, and pay attention to that which is otherwise imperceptible. The position taken is intentionally “from below” (in reference to the historiography of those who, often subjugated, remain outside of political, economic, and social power) and in this case extends to the world of the more-than-humans that literally inhabit the depths of Venice.


This perspective “from below” brings the marginalized into focus and provides a platform for alternative narratives. But it also gives us an opportunity to pull together and attract others, like a new true north that recalibrates our physical and conceptual orientation. The explosion of imagery, sensibilities, and imagination presented by the artists in this exhibition invites us to dive to the seabed itself, not as part of an exercise in escapism or futurity but as a strategy for renouncing attempts to control nature. Revisiting distant and recent pasts, we feel that the present is wetter than ever, and this spirit infects our earthly



bodies. Liquid is a constantly changing state that encourages us to disrupt existing categorizations and surpass male/female, human/animal, and nature/culture dichotomies. Moreover, the works on view offer new perspectives through the artists' choice of materials, processes, and entanglements, developing sensitivities and interpretations based on other possible ways of inhabiting and relating to the world, which owe much to hydrofeminist and ecofeminist thinking. They invite us to consider the potential offered by the world's fluid processes, suggesting ways of understanding ourselves as subjects capable of surpassing the principles of modernity.

By combining genders and partially metamorphosing into plants, the non-normative bodies depicted in the six paintings that comprise Inês Zenha's series *Entanglements* (2023) embrace each other and thus model a queer community that welcomes the vulnerability of bodies with a fraternal, familial, and affectionate love. These new aquatic totems have much in common with the hybrid sculptures of Saelia Aparicio portrayed in her installation *Bodies of Water* (2023), including a spirituality that encourages new rituals and celebrates rhythms and sensibilities, which in turn merge the human and the more-than-human into a single continuum. This sense of community is amplified in Anne Duk Hee Jordan's immersive installation *Ziggy and the Starfish* (2016–2022), which celebrates the androgynous character of Ziggy and illustrates how sexuality in the underwater depths is multifaceted and largely responsive to the community of those who inhabit that space. The eroticism and scientific data attesting to a queer ocean abandon all preconceptions and confirm that the act of opening up to other forms of love and coexistence is intrinsic to being. Floating is no longer simply for the “other,” for healing what has been damaged by the norm, but is also now part of the continuous present.

We become part of these complex and diverse worlds whenever we dive into the water, spend time




on the coastline, or pay attention to the land-based infrastructures that channel our encounters with the ocean. Guardianship also involves denouncing and exposing the structures that continue to harm human and more-than-human bodies. As if it were a single body, Jumana Manna's sculptural series *Thirty Plumbers in the Belly* (2021) reminds us of the close morphological, vital relationship between pipelines, plumbing, and our digestive system. Absorbed by the vastness of the ocean, we momentarily forget how the water we use to quench our thirst becomes part of our body, flowing between dependent subjects through an extended pipeline. The obsolescence of the infrastructure—pipelines and plumbing—depicted in this series of ceramic sculptures bears witness to the intentional nature of these ruins which, when laid bare and exposed, reveal living processes of colonization, or *ruination* (a term coined by scholar Ann Laura Stoler).

These immersive journeys represent the various strategies that the artists have adopted in order to decolonize non-normative territories and bodies and bring us closer to nature, reversing and retracing the processes of industrialization and resource extraction, blurring the lines that have hitherto coerced and restricted that constant movement, flow, and flux.

This oblique journey allows us to encounter different geographies and realities: the coast of Puerto Rico, the Venetian Lagoon, the occupied territories of Palestine, and the depths of the sea all around the globe, as well as non-normative human worlds. Submerged in bodies of water, which provide us with a place of refuge and enhance our perception of what is possible, we are transported by the currents flowing through them and are thus able to surpass outdated narratives and observe those around us, changing them and ourselves.

However, there remains a place that is deeper, darker, and even more inaccessible than the hidden recesses of the deep sea, an unknown depth that allows us to connect with the abyss of the ocean.



With her film, Santiago Muñoz ultimately invites us to follow the call of the unconscious that feeds our dreams and captures our perceptions before we can rationalize them. As a resource for contemplating the inaccessible, freed from established constructs, dreams provide a bridge between what we already know and what we still do not recognize in that conductive intelligence. The dreams of those who immerse themselves in these sensitive, aquatic worlds offer us a world of images and possibilities, recorded through encounters between materials that take place in the depths, in the constant flow of an omnipresent and ever-growing liquid intelligence.



Artists

Anne Duk Hee Jordan
Saelia Aparicio
Lucas Arruda
Inês Zenha
Ana Mendieta
Beatriz Santiago Muñoz
Jumana Manna
Sonia Levy

Anne Duk Hee Jordan

South Korea, 1978

Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

Photo: Roberto Ruiz



Ziggy and the Starfish , 2016–2022

Single-channel video installation
(color and sound) and wooden structure
16 min 28 sec

Anemone, 2018

Soft sculpture, various textiles
80 × 80 × 70 cm

Electric Clam, 2019

Soft sculpture, various textiles
45 × 30 × 20 cm

Starfish, 2019

Soft sculpture, various textiles
Body: 30 × 30 × 10 cm; arms: 110 × 5 × 5 cm

Film commissioned for the exhibition “Agency of Living Organisms” (2016), produced by Tabakalera - International Centre for Contemporary Culture (Donostia-San Sebastian, Spain). Installation commissioned by The Polygon Gallery, Canada, 2022.

Courtesy of the artist and alexander levy, Berlin



Ziggy and the Starfish is a totalizing installation where several sculptural elements and a film contribute to create an environment that explores the diversity of sexuality in the ocean and the influence of climate change on the hydrosphere. The work —named after David Bowie’s *Ziggy Stardust*, a fictional stage persona, an androgynous Martian who indulged in apocalyptic thoughts— is the precursor of a trilogy. In these works, the invisible Ziggy acts as a counterpart to the starfish and stands for the beauty, strangeness, queerness, and exoticism of the sea creatures, who are exposed to various mutations and changes to their sexuality as a result of climate change. Through visualizing the sex life of sea slugs, sponges, octopuses, and starfish, among others, and their vibrant and seductive performative play, the human spectator is drawn into this intimate and hallucinatory sexual world.

After a month of free diving, hours of underwater filming, and several interviews with marine biologists and geologists on the Basque coast, the artist combined footage from different sources to create this mesmerizing film that allows the viewer to dive into this other world. Duk Hee pays special attention to extraordinary and unusual species, such as the ones that are capable of asexual reproduction, that



can change sex throughout their lives based on the needs of their community, that are hermaphrodites, or species that can fully regenerate themselves departing from a fragment of their own bodies, a fluidity that most mammals do not possess.

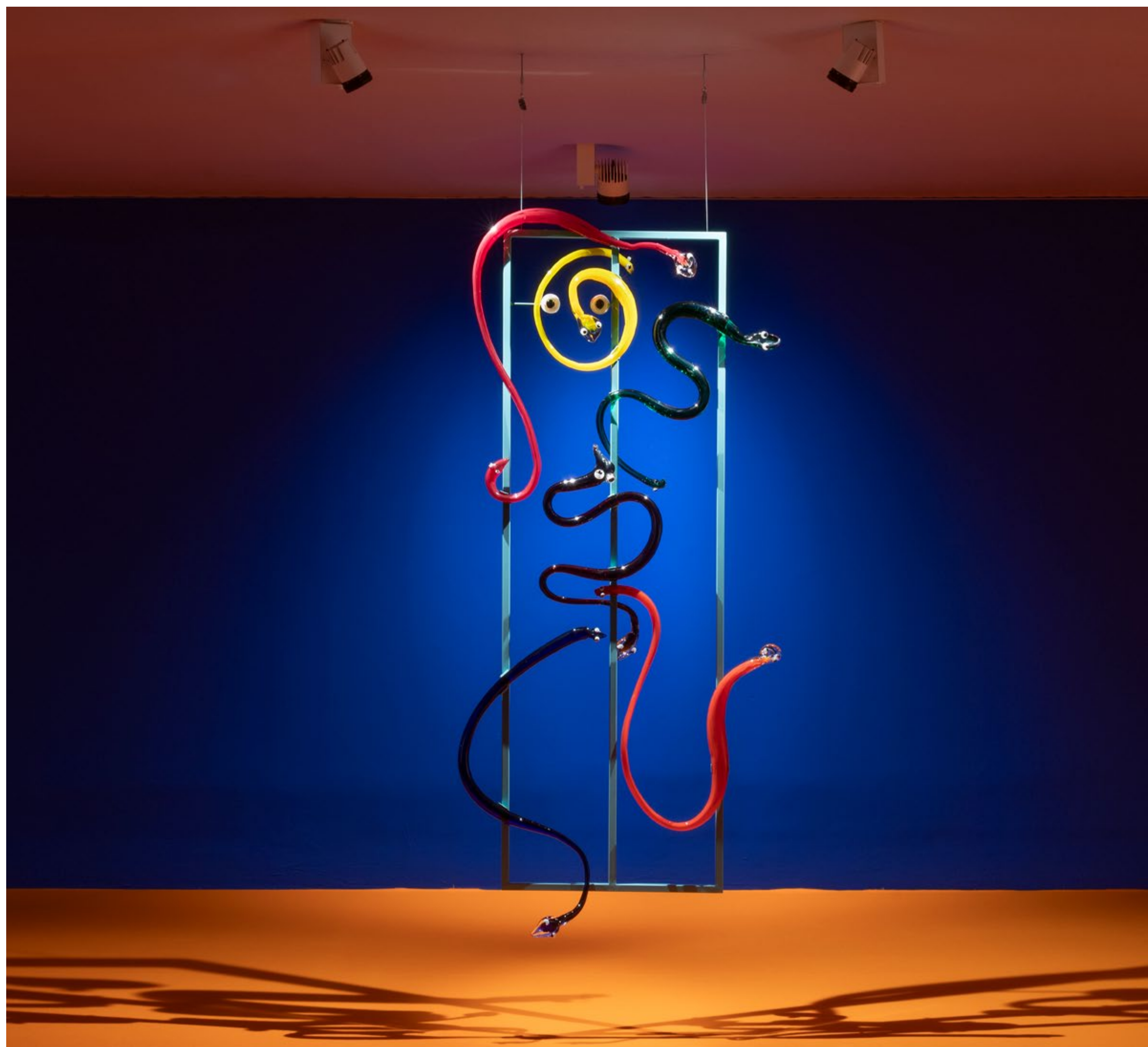
The original score by Duk Hee and musician Nevo Ron is essential in creating an atmosphere of suspense, tension, and humor, slyly drifting from classical music to tunes from vintage erotic movies. The exuberance and vibrancy of color in the film is combined in this installation with the tender, humorous, and enigmatic soft sculptures *Anemone*, *Electric Clam*, and *Starfish*, which, together with the soundtrack, produce a certain bewilderment in the viewers, as at times it feels as if the sculptural environment has turned into an underwater fantasy world. There is a certain nostalgia for a sense of lost time in the work, a time in which sexuality was not binary but rather hybrid, and which, in the end, responds to this powerful need for adaptation.

Saelia Aparicio

Valladolid, Spain, 1982

Lives and works in London, United Kingdom

Photo: Roberto Ruiz



Bodies of Water, 2023

Spiral Dance, 2023

Blown glass, iron

Metamorphosis, 2023

Wood, wood dyes, and India ink

Door to the Chthulucene, 2023

Crystal and iron


“All is Full of Love”, 2023

Wood, wood dyes, and India ink

*Between the World Above and the World Below
[A Nod to Angela Carter], 2023*


Wood, wood dyes, India ink, and mirror

Commissioned by TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary



For this exhibition, Saelia Aparicio has created five new sculptural works. Their practice takes inspiration from the many moments in history that artists turned to fantasy as a language able to overcome the hardships and limitations imposed by the real. Water serves not only as an inspiration but also as a model for the composition of their work. The hybrid mutants of indeterminate gender emerge from the core of the Ocean to give life to a new practice in our planet. It is for this reason that their movements on land are not very safe, they have little balance, as they are not yet used to the lack of water. Some seem to dance in precarious balancing acts, others are transfixed with defiant gazes or depicted in close embraces, displaying an awareness of our temporary nature—*tempus fugit*. They all come together in *Bodies of Water*, an installation by Aparicio, who invites the viewer to consider the possibilities offered by a liquid or fluid body. A body that pays little attention to its visible boundaries but rather communicates with its surroundings, with plants, animals, and bacteria, responding to an “expanded ethic”—a concept which the artist associates with empathy toward the other, toward that which falls outside of the norms established by our own eyes. Aparicio creates worlds inhabited by duality and paradox in which the artist’s quest to create in-between spaces is translated into the visual realm through sculptures that mimic furniture and other objects arranged in such a way that they do not fulfil their function: hinges for doors that lead nowhere or murals detaching from the wall, invading the space.

In *Spiral Dance*, individual snakes form the joints of a body that dances while light filters through its various components. The snake motif—very common in both religious and mystic stories—is cast for incongruous roles; sometimes it is treated as a god and on other occasions as a demon, but its meaning remains rooted in its transformative capacity. Aparicio brings a joyful element to things that could be construed as monstrous by playing with colored lights



and incessant movement, so the sinuous forms of this hybrid body are reflected ad infinitum.

In *Metamorphosis, Door to the Chthulucene and Between the World Above and the World Below [A Nod to Angela Carter]*, the androgenous figures that inhabit the structures appropriate the space by spilling beyond conventional boundaries. Inspired by demonology, church doors, and religious symbology in an alchemy that also draws on the imaginary worlds of science fiction and fantasy, these figures emanate sexuality and confidence, eliciting horror and attraction simultaneously. The depicted bodies borrow elements from our world and fuse them with elements from the Chthulucene, a term first introduced by the esteemed biologist and philosopher Donna Haraway to describe the space-time in which humanity finds itself in the midst of ecological crisis and social challenges. The fluidity between these bodies—between the human and the nonhuman, the material and the ethereal—is conceived as a means of re-establishing relationships and “making kin” with other species and entities in collaboration and in solidarity.

“*All is Full of Love*” is conceived as a functional sculpture and is named after a song by Björk in which she calls on the listener to trust that love is everywhere and in everything, even though it may not be directly requited. Like twins, the two figures in the work embrace, caught in a moment of affection, they encourage the public to do the same and to embrace not only the human, but all living beings.

Lucas Arruda

São Paulo, Brazil, 1983

Lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil

Photo: Everton Ballardin.
Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM



Untitled (from the series Deserto-Modelo), 2019

Oil on canvas

30 × 35 cm

Untitled (from the series Deserto-Modelo), 2023

Oil on canvas

18 × 24 cm

Untitled (from the series Deserto-Modelo), 2019

Oil on canvas

18,2 × 24,5 cm

Untitled (from the series Deserto-Modelo), 2021

Oil on canvas

40 × 47 cm

TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection



At first glance Lucas Arruda's dense, atmospheric paintings appear like fields of pure abstraction, but upon closer inspection, they reveal dreamlike depictions of oceans, twilight or dawn, and rolling banks of fog or clouds—the compositions remain ambiguous enough for multiple readings. Arruda paints these enigmatic scenes from memory, unmooring them from geographical specificity and letting them pulse with imagined serenity and power. The artist generates a mysterious ambience with his muted palette, the colors subtly shifting and the brushwork evocative and scratchy.

The four paintings from the TBA21 Collection belong to the series *Deserto-Modelo*, where different scenery invokes the genre of landscape using minimal elements that can be reduced to a subtle horizon line. Arruda's paintings capture the enigmatic nature of time, inviting contemplation and resisting the fast-paced rhythms of our world with an evocative and poignant power. Despite the fact that the artist frequents the tropical forest near Barra do Una in the state of São Paulo, where his father has a home, he does not intend to replicate that specific landscape, but rather to depict an irresistible landscape that becomes a symbol of a historical density yet to be explored, a landscape that dreams of escaping the

Photo: Everton Ballardin.
Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM



small, rectangular canvas it is limited to. Never losing sight of the paintings' sensual and sensuous appearance, Arruda is in dialogue with artists from different periods who shared this reflection on atmospheric changes, like English painter J.M.W. Turner (1775–1851).

These paintings act as a place meant to re-calibrate our senses so that we could accept the agency of the many existing forms of life and overcome the widespread Western notion of “nature,” often conceptualized as a blank space to explore and colonize.

Photo: Everton Ballardin.
Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM



Inês Zenha

Lisbon, Portugal, 1995

Lives and works between Paris, France
and Lisbon, Portugal

Photo: courtesy of the artist



***Entanglements [Enredos]*, 2023**

Acrílico sobre lienzo


200 × 267 cm (cada una)

Commissioned by TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary



The six paintings that comprise Inês Zenha's *Entanglements* evoke intimate and almost ritualistic scenes that link nature with queer identities. The artist portrays a world where air is actually water, as if all the good things —the values, the transformations that guide us into the future— would originate from the Ocean. The works play with scale and color, delving into the realm of love and the sacred, proposing a redefinition of love that extends beyond the romantic, encompassing community, family, and self-love as integral components of queer identity and reclaiming a genuine sense of spirituality sought within oneself. Each scene can be read from left to right or vice versa, with the bodies on view entering or exiting watery landscapes, partially or fully submerged, embracing this journey: they seem to be at ease, as if levitating in this utopian aquatic space. In this monochromatic universe, the choice of the color blue is not naive: typically linked to masculinity, power, or divinity, Zenha's reappropriation of the shade aims to symbolize vulnerability and femininity.

The characters in this series enact acts of companionship, like teaching one another to breathe underwater while they hug and caress each other. With closed eyes, this gesture takes different meanings: on one hand, it suggests a state of meditation, self-



navigation, a profound stillness in response to the imperative to look inward for answers. On the other hand, it serves as a metaphor for the historical silencing of queer voices and marginalized others. Love, portrayed not only as affection but also as a narrative that can reshape norms, becomes a powerful tool to morph pain into strength and vulnerability into force, embracing the limitless forms of nature in this transformative process. The deliberate ambiguity interwoven into the characters renders visible a gender hybridity that the artist compares to water, liquid that flows through and across difference. Indomitable and elusive, water becomes a metaphor for queer embodiment, it knows no boundaries, re-adapting, shifting, finding its paths, and redefining its own existence. Zenha's inclusion of underwater scenes represents an act of surrender to a new territory without constraint, unfolding in scenes of co-dependency and mutual support among characters and plants, mutating toward other ways of living and interacting with one another.

Ana Mendieta

Havana, Cuba, 1948

Died in New York, the United States of America, in 1985

Photo: Roberto Ruiz



Untitled, Iowa, 1981

Silver gelatin print

67 × 50,5 cm

Untitled, ca. 1984–85

Leaf rubbing cut into shape of leaf on paper


23,9 × 16,7 cm

TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection



The Cuban-born American artist Ana Mendieta is celebrated for her “earth-body” works from the 1970s, sculptural interventions in the landscape that placed her body or its haunting silhouette in a symbiotic relationship with its natural surroundings. The ephemeral materials she often employed, like fresh leaves, amate (bark) paper, mud, earth, and plant roots express Mendieta’s search— informed by her exile experience as a child—for a return to Mother Earth, to the origin, but also to life and regeneration, privileging what she referred to as the “omnipresent female force.”

The black-and-white photograph *Untitled, Iowa* captures one of the limestone carving sculptures dedicated to pre-Hispanic and Indigenous Caribbean deities from the series *Esculturas rupestres* (Rupestrian Sculptures) that Mendieta realized that summer in



the Escaleras de Jaruco Park in Cuba. While in her renowned series *Siluetas*, 1973–1980, the imprinted silhouettes of bodies vanished quickly due to the ephemeral nature of the medium, these carved sculptures are a rare example in Mendieta's work of something intended to be rediscovered over time. Their dimensions are particularly significant, completing the cycle of return to the origins, healing a womb bond with her motherland and reconnecting with Taíno cosmogonies. Mendieta completed an MA in the intermedia program at Iowa University, which informed her interdisciplinary practice and her understanding of the combination of mediums, considering the performances and sculptures as continuous with their capture in photographs, 35mm slides, and Super 8 film.

In 1983, when she was granted the Prix de Rome fellowship by the American Academy in Rome, Mendieta concentrated on studio-based sculpture, drawing, and printmaking as exemplified in this leaf rubbing frottage work *Untitled*. The silhouette of the leaf was, to Mendieta, the perfect shape that she could reduce her body into, falling into the ground and decomposing into the soil. Even in simplicity, her works profoundly bring up the movement of bodies, absorbing multiple cycles of life and recognizing in that matter the essence of the liquid intelligence.

Beatriz Santiago Muñoz

San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1972

Lives and works in San Juan, Puerto Rico

Still image: courtesy of the artist



Pájaro, cómeme (Filoctetes)

[Bird, Eat Me (Philoctetes)], 2022–2023

Three 16mm films installation

(black and white, color and sound) and five drawings

6 min 45 sec

Commissioned by TBA21–Academy and
TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary




The installation *Bird, Eat Me (Philoctetes)* reflects on the constant movement of the coastline traced between the land and sea. The artwork introduces us to the people who inhabit the coast and possess a deep knowledge of its ecosystem, based on their daily observation of various indicators and demarcations of the way it changes. It also shows the daydreams that these isolated places incite. The analogue film's materiality, color scheme, and close relationship with its location lend themselves to a portrayal of Puerto Rico's southern coast—a region that has been particularly impacted by climate change following a series of earthquakes, hurricanes, and rising waters which blur the boundaries between the dry and the wet. Through what the artist calls the “sensory unconscious,” we observe how constant geological transformations are manifested in human and animal bodies, consciously and unconsciously accentuating certain sensibilities that connect them to their environment. The protagonists of this piece bear witness to a sensorial intelligence that can be linked to the notion of movement.

Caves, tunnels, burrows, and various other lines connect the underwater world with the open sky, or



at least that is what Luis feels from his hammock, having decided to live on the coast despite the difficulties caused by constant flooding. There is another figure here; a man in self-imposed exile in his cave by the sea, a disparate reflection of Luis caught in the same internal debate about existential conflicts. He has an open wound, a physical affliction and a moral resentment, and he recreates a contemporary Philoctetes, who is protected, as in Sophocles's tragedy, only by a cave that shelters him and the spear he uses to catch fish. His wounded foot is a symbol of our planet's own rotten condition and the constant doubt about who its future depends on and what powers are responsible for letting it continue to waste away. He and Luis embody a banished ethic, a wisdom born from self-exile that keeps them in a state of coexistence with nature. We are now called to learn from them how to enter that same state of coexistence with nature, despite their internal doubts, as our only route to salvation.

What do those who live by the sea dream of? Does the ocean—and its water—seep into their dreams, painting new images and giving new meaning to the watery space that encloses and defines the



island? Is it possible to see the potential for change and abandon self-imposed barriers and complaints? In her work, Beatriz Santiago Muñoz investigates ways of decolonizing the imagination through the subconscious, creating an implosion of images capable of subverting such an extensively mediated and visually and conceptually defined space as the Caribbean. Beyond the conception of the coast as a place of tourism and leisure or of exploitation and militarization, the connection of these unique flesh-and-bone characters from Greek mythology allows us to find vital archetypes that expose the existential doubts with which we face the future of the planet. Through hints and dreams that eschew linear narratives, the artist challenges and revises the conventional imagery imposed on the island region and thus, in a way, provides a means for the ocean to overcome the traumas associated with its waters, which not only carry the dead, and many other stories, but also bear witness to an enormous capacity for resilience, giving voice to other sensitive forms.

This installation emerges from *Bird, Eat Me* (2022), a film commissioned by TBA21-Academy for the online platform TBA21 on st_age and TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary.

Luis Rivera as Luis Rivera
José Ángel Vega Ortiz as Filoctetes

Makeup: Geisha
Assistant Director: Pati Cruz
Development: Colorlab

Jumana Manna

New Jersey, USA, 1987

Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

Photo: Roberto Ruiz



S-pipe, 2021

Ceramics, glass, wood, and metal

35 × 80 × 70cm

Gutted, 2021

Ceramics

46 × 38 × 45cm

Mouth, 2021

Ceramics

48,5 × 56,5 × 49cm

TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection



The three sculptures by Jumana Manna, *Mouth*, *S-pipe*, and *Gutted* belong to the series *Thirty Plumbers in the Belly*, a body of sculptures that moves between the worlds of sewage, digestion, and building sites. These infrastructures, traversed by the flow of water in the arid landscapes of the Mediterranean, show the prominent place that fresh water occupies, which despite its apparent scarcity, resonates through all liquid bodies, reconnecting our very entrails with the core of the globe, the ocean. The limb-pipes simulate drainage tubing in use within urban and agricultural infrastructures from ancient times till today. Normally hidden behind walls, under pavements, moving unwanted sights and smells from our bodies, gardens and cities out of sight, they come back to the site of the exhibition as uncanny conduits. Shriveled, stretched, astonished and relaxed, they embody a metamorphosis. They are in-betweens: undulating sexual or digestive organs, hard cloths, reptilian skins, and gaping mouths; stained, strange and truncated but learning to be at ease, even proud of their imperfections.

In her sculptures, Manna considers overlaps between material ruination and psychological weight, how bodies and places respond and mutate, get



reconfigured in the process of survival. Manna's sculptural practice is both a witness to and celebration of the social afterlives of castoffs, fragments that are at once a sign of infrastructural and emotional breakdown, and of unruly potential. The selecting and making of objects is an ongoing homage of and conversation with improvisational assemblages that arise as bittersweet forces of creativity, acts of "taking matters into our own hands" in Jumana's words.

Thirty Plumbers in the Belly considers improvisational infrastructures in places where infrastructures are built to fail. The gathering of these materials and their anthropomorphic forms bears the processes of ruination and renewed symbolisation as both an aftermath and as a potentiality. The making of sculpture as a physical echo, is an insistence on openness rather than fixedness, and an act of empathy of resituating "unwanted" things, as objects worthy of care and contemplation. An empathy that brings bodies nearer to the objects and infrastructures that expose, transform and bind us to one another and to the spaces we cohabit.

Sonia Levy

Geneva, Switzerland, 1982

Lives and works in London, United Kingdom

Still image: courtesy of the artist



We Marry You, O Sea, as a Sign of True and Perpetual Dominion, 2023

Two-channel video installation (color and sound)

18 min 12 sec


Commissioned by TBA21-Academy and TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary with the support of STARTS, an initiative by the European Commission, and the European Marine Board's EMBRacing the Ocean artist in residence program, an activity contributing to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) as well as the local support of the Marine Biology Station Umberto D'Ancona, University of Padova.



The two-channel installation *We Marry You, O Sea* engages with Venice and its lagoon “from below,”¹ with the aim of focusing attention on the city’s submerged, life-giving, and altered bio-geomorphological processes rather than on its often-recounted political and military histories. Underwater filmmaking opens new ways of knowing the materialities of the Venice Lagoon and exposes a fractured and troubled environment that complicates mainstream historical narratives that start above the water’s surface. By attuning to the ebb and flood of the lagoon, we start sensing the interplay between land and water, life and decay, and the intimate processes shaping this environment. Noticing the kinds of life made possible in this damaged watery space compels us to delve into the ways it has been profoundly transformed.

We Marry You, O Sea, as a Sign of True and Perpetual Dominion takes its title from the words uttered during the Venetian ritual *The Marriage of the Sea*, which was held annually on Ascension Day between the eleventh and eighteenth century. During the event,

1. “From below” refers to the idea of history from below, a form of historiography that focuses on the experiences and outlooks of ordinary and often marginalized people rather than those who hold power. See for example E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Vintage, 1963); Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004); and Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004).




the Doge, the patriarch of the Venetian Republic, would wed the lagoon by casting a golden ring into the water, declaring dominance over the sea. The artist reframes Venice's enduring relationship with its permeating waters by reflecting on this ongoing legacy of quests for mastery over watery environments. How, this work asks, might we imagine different futures for Venice if we begin to experience the lagoon as a lively place populated by manifold ways of living and dying?

In the lagoon, a space requiring continuous modifications for human settlement, wetlands and infrastructures have long been intertwined. Venice's consolidation as a trading hub and epicenter of naval advancement during the Middle Ages prompted major hydrological engineering to maintain the lagoon's shallow depths for defense purposes. However, in the twentieth century, harrowing modernization transformed parts of the wetland into petroleum refineries and one of Italy's largest container terminals as part of an effort to turn the lagoon into an industrial frontier. Urban anthropologist Clara Zanardi has described how these transformations spatialized class divisions in a new way, while also causing irreversible ecological degradation that has profoundly altered the lagoon's lifeways.

The film presents these histories of modernization by interweaving rare historical photographs from Venice's Giacomelli Photographic Archive with submerged perspectives² of the present conditions of the lagoon. The historical significance of these photographs is emphasized by the negative black-and-white reversal of the submerged perspectives, connecting past and present and unfolding futures within the lagoon's contaminated waters. An original score, created by a chorus of human

2. Macarena Gómez-Barris, "Submerged Perspectives: The Arts of Land and Water Defense" (2020) and Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), Macarena Gómez-Barris



voices and underwater sound recordings, further emphasizes the links between submerged spaces and human domains. The composition captures the lagoon's pulses and the impact of industries—from aquatic sounds drowned out by boat noises to the rhythmic poundings of industrial activity amid surging tides—as it gestures toward the profound interplay between human activities and the lagoon's shallows.

Underwater Cinematography
Sonia Levy with the help of Sam Smith

Cinematography
Sonia Levy

Editing
Sonia Levy and Sam Smith

Underwater Sound Recording
Jez riley French with the help
of Pheobe riley Law
Sonia Levy

Choral Arrangement and Composition
Esmeralda Conde Ruiz

Score recording and mixing
Nick Powell

Researcher and assistant
Chiara Famengo

Scientific Advisors
Heather Anne Swanson
Alberto Barausse
Ifor Duncan

Choir
E Ensemble
Renata Adamcova
Vicky Annand
Madeleine Buckley
Emily Charles
Martin Colley
Belén Durán
Alison Furnham
Allan Gardam
Noriko Gregory
William Hammonds
Jane Higginbottom
Henry Milton
Alison Monaghan
Helen Monaghan
Javier Navarro
Tina Vifor
Walney Virgilio
Anne White

With the kind permission of
SEPOline: a project to apply innovative
solutions for artisanal fishing
(EMFF Veneto region – Measure 1.26
INNOVATION – Beneficiary: Scientific
Institute CESTHA, Experimental Center for
Habitat Conservation)

Archivio fotografico del Comune di
Venezia, Fondo Giacomelli
The Giacomelli Photographic Archive of
the Municipality of Venice
(Image no. GN007554, GN005374,
GN007454, GPRO0065, GPRO0063,
GPRO0069)

Archivio fotografico dell'Ente della
Zona Industriale di Porto Marghera
Photographic Archive of Porto
Marghera Industrial Zone

The artist wishes to thank the guidance of Professor Heather Anne Swanson and Alberto Barausse as well as Ifor Duncan.

Many thanks to: María Montero Sierra, Markus Reymann; Meredith Root-Bernstein, Sam Smith and Chiara Famengo; Filippo Picardi, Emily Sepe, Cristina Breggion, Andrea Sambo and Mattia Panin; Matteo Stocco and Giacomo Carraro; Federico Riccato, Riccardo Fiorin, and Giacomo Cipolato; Barbara Vanin, Roberto Ranieri and Michela Ballarin; Gianluca Palma; Federica Cacciatore and Rosella Briscò Brusà; Angela Pomaro, Irene Guarneri, Fantina Madricardo and Marta Picciulin; Jane Da Mosto; Pietro Daniel Omodeo; Francesco Visentin; Amina Chouairi; Pietro Consolandi, Miriam Calabrese and Barbara Nardacchione; Paolo Rosso; Hélène Wand-Polak and Albert Levy; Hanna Rullman; and Filip Tydèn.



Proyectos actuales y próximos

Exposiciones

Programas de investigación

Programas digitales y educativos

Préstamos

Exhibitions

[Thus waves come in pairs](#)

Ocean Space, Venice, Italy

Curated by **Barbara Casavecchia**

April 22–November 5, 2023

TBA21–Academy presents two new commissions, by Syrian-Lebanese, Paris-based artist Simone Fattal and by Berlin-based artist duo Petrit Halilaj & Álvaro Urbano—whose project is co-commissioned by TBA21–Academy and Audemars Piguet Contemporary—for the 2023 exhibition program at Ocean Space in Venice. The title of the exhibition, “Thus waves come in pairs,” takes its inspiration from the poem “Sea and Fog” by Lebanese artist and writer Etel Adnan, which refers to the necessity of thinking of, and thinking with, the Mediterraneans as plural—plural as their many languages and as the possibilities of narrating their current transformations.

Concluding the three-year research cycle *The Current III* led by curator Barbara Casavecchia, which began in the Venetian lagoon and reached across the Mediterranean shores in the form of walks, performances, podcasts, conversations, two semesters of OCEAN / UNI, field trips, and platforms for collective thinking, the exhibition and its associated public program will bring back to Ocean Space the voices of its many participants, for a series of lectures, performances, meetings, and screenings.

[Remedios: directions to the old ways](#)

C3A Centro de Creación Contemporánea de Andalucía, Córdoba

Curated by **Daniela Zyman**

April 14, 2023–March 31, 2024

The exhibition “Remedios” at C3A Centro de Creación Contemporánea de Andalucía unveils its second chapter, titled “Directions to the Old Ways,” inspired by a poem by Indigenous American poet Natalie Diaz. This second part of “Remedios” is an invitation to delve deeper into the manifold ancestral paths interwoven throughout the exhibition and the tapestry of practices related to repair, healing, and remediation explored in the show. It is at this crossroads where ancient wisdom seamlessly merges with contemporary perspectives, bringing together voices from the past, present, and future that a shared quest for transformative approaches to regeneration and reparation can be grasped.

Paz Justa

C3A Centro de Creación Contemporánea de Andalucía, Córdoba

Curated by **Daniela Zyman**

April 26, 2024 – March, 2025

Research Programs

The Current

Organized as a three-year-long curatorial fellowship program, *The Current* is a pioneering initiative that cultivates transdisciplinary practices and the exchange of ideas around the Ocean and its understanding. It aims to form strong connections to local networks, map the contemporary issues concerning watery worlds, and weave them into an interdisciplinary conversation, embracing the spheres of science, conservation, policy, and education.

The Current III “Mediterraneans: ‘Thus waves come in pairs’ (after Etel Adnan),”

Led by **Barbara Casavecchia**
2021–2023

Departing from the Mediterranean, *The Current III* is a transdisciplinary and transregional exercise in sensing, thinking, and learning with—by supporting situated projects, collective pedagogies, and voices along the Mediterranean shores across art, culture, science, conservation, and activism.

The Current IV “Caribbean: otras montañas, las que andan sueltas bajo el agua”

Led by **Yina Jiménez Suriel**
2023–2025

Curated by Yina Jiménez Suriel, *The Current IV*, 2023–2025, intends to contribute to the emancipatory processes in the Caribbean region that have sought to bring its inhabitants closer to the Ocean and that began in the high mountains above sea level. The project will focus on identifying, studying, and spreading the knowledge of the aesthetic strategies and tools generated from the Maroon experience in the Caribbean through the production of aesthetic thought, based on the premise that this approach will bring us closer to inhabiting the mountains that are below the level of the Caribbean Sea.



[Meandering](#)

Conceived and curated by **Sofia Lemos**

2022–2024

Meandering is a live research program organized by TBA21–Academy, exploring the possibilities of engaged and contemplative practices and poetics of the imagination for more socially just and ecologically sound worlds. Expanding from the Ocean into rivers, tributaries, springs, streams, alluvial plains, tidal marshes, wetlands, and aquifers, as well as the physical and spiritual water elements that connect all lifeforms, the program anchors TBA21–Academy’s practices and methodologies in dialogue with the environmental and social histories at the heart of the TBA21 collection.

[Culturing the Deep Sea](#)

2022–2024

Online

Part campaign and part program, *Culturing the Deep Sea* is a research project by TBA21–Academy designed to respond to the accelerating developments around deep-sea mining by opening up channels between art, science, and law to encourage a multiplicity of narratives. The aim of the project is to facilitate a shift in cultural relations with the seabed and the oceanic commons.

[Fishing Fly](#)

Conceived and led by **María Montero Sierra**

2020–2023

Are care and respect possible while eating the Ocean? Do those practices provide an imagination to act responsibly? *Fishing Fly* is a research project encompassing a reading group, a serial publication, and various manifestations in the form of new commissions and collaborations revolved around a simple premise: eating marine creatures and the crafts involved in the process also sustain relationships between the human and oceanic more-than-human ecosystems.

[Bauhaus of the Seas Sails \(BoSS\)](#)

2023–2025

The Bauhaus of the Seas Sails (BoSS) is a project conceived under the call for the development of the New European Bauhaus (NEB) by the European Union. The project aims to promote renewed ethical and aesthetic regenerative development from a diverse range of dimensions of our relationship with the sea.

In BoSS, TBA21–Academy will oversee the development of demonstrator projects across seven European cities within the three-year duration of the project. Through guidance on commissioning and curated interactions with practitioners from various fields, we will help cities develop initiatives that embrace the New European Bauhaus principles of sustainability, inclusion and aesthetics.



Digital and educational programs

[TBA21 on st_age Season 05](#)

TBA21 on st_age, TBA21's digital production platform, which is motivated by a desire for change, has launched a new season in February 2023 with projects by Pranay Dutta in collaboration with the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Ana María Millán with TBA21-Academy, and Rahraw Omarzad together with Castello di Rivoli, among others. Check out the most recent additions to the season at www.stage.tba21.org.

[OCEAN / UNI](#)

October–December 2023

OCEAN / UNI is an online art, activism, law, and science learning initiative, tuition-free and open to the general public. The program's curriculum invites fluid thinking with the Ocean as a way to move toward more amphibious actions, beyond the binaries of land and sea. Aiming to complement and enhance the land-based understanding of the earth, it covers a wide range of ecological, political, aesthetic, ethical, and scientific topics around the realities and futures of the Ocean.

<https://ocean-archive.org/>

October–December 2023

Ocean-Archive.org is an online platform that investigates the potential of storytelling and transdisciplinary collaboration within and beyond archival practices. It strives to expand critical ocean literacy in a time of great necessity and catalyzes collective action for a living Ocean. The aim of Ocean-Archive.org is to bring together the multitude of voices and journeys around the Ocean and connect those striving to nurture and protect it. With [ocean comm/uni/ty](#), the platform instigates conversations around the Ocean so that the members can connect and co-create. Designed as a storytelling and pedagogical tool, Ocean-Archive.org translates current knowledge into a shared language that fosters synergy among art, science, policy, and conservation and enables us to make better decisions for urgently needed policies.



Loans

Tomás Saraceno, *Pneuma 5.5*, 2010

“Time: An Illusion” (group show)
Collegium, Arévalo, España
20 September 2023–4 February 2024

Omer Fast, *Continuity*, 2012

“History Tales. Fact and Fiction in History Pictures” (group show)
Paintings Gallery, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna
September 27, 2023–May 26, 2024



About TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary is a leading international art and advocacy foundation created in 2002 by the philanthropist and collector Francesca Thyssen-Bornemisza, representing the fourth generation of the Thyssen family's commitment to the arts and public service. TBA21—based in Madrid, with situated projects in Venice and Cordoba—stewards the **TBA21 Collection** and its outreach activities, which include exhibitions, educational offers, and public programming. **TBA21-Academy** is the foundation's research center, fostering a deeper relationship with the Ocean and other bodies of water by working as an incubator for collaborative inquiry, artistic production, and environmental advocacy. For more than a decade, the Academy has catalyzed new forms of knowledge emerging from the exchanges between art, science, policy, and conservation in long-term and collaborative engagement through fellowships and residency programs. All activity at TBA21 is fundamentally driven by artists and the belief in art and culture as a carrier of social and environmental transformation.

An exhibition organized by **Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza** and **TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary**

EXHIBITION

Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza
Paseo del Prado, 8
29014 Madrid (Spain)
www.museothyssen.org

October 10, 2023–January 28, 2024

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and **María Montero Sierra**

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