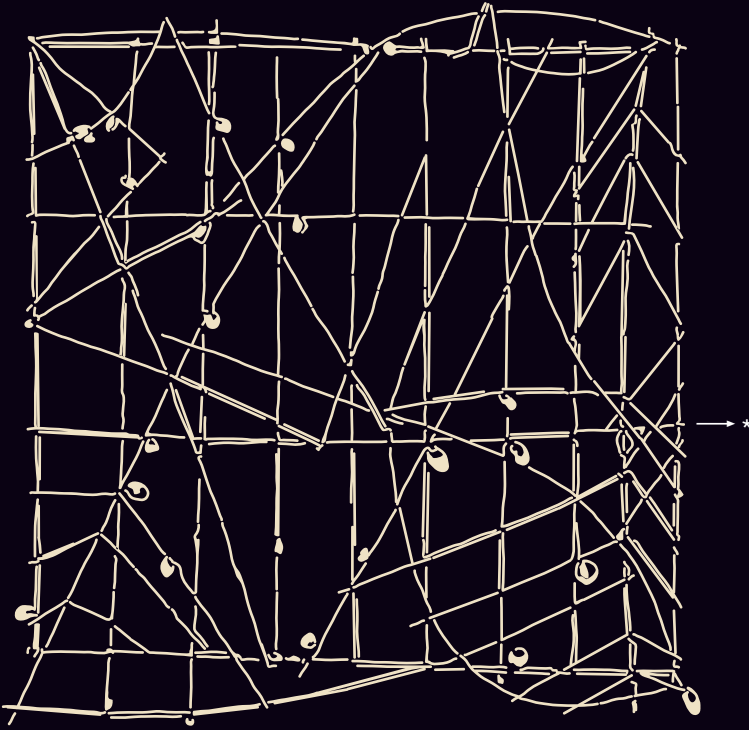


Tidalectics

02.06. — 19.11.2017

English



T 2 Thyssen-Bornemisza
B Art Contemporary
A Academy

Atif Akin
Darren Almond
Julian Charrière
Em'kal Eyongakpa
Tue Greenfort
Ariel Guzik
Newell Harry
Alexander Lee
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Sissel Tolaas
Janaina Tschäpe & David Gruber
Jana Winderen
Susanne M. Winterling

Curator
Stefanie Hessler

Tidalectics

Tidalectics is an experiment to formulate an oceanic worldview, a different way of engaging with the oceans and the world we inhabit. Unbound by land-based modes of thinking and living, the exhibition is reflective of the rhythmic fluidity of water and the incessant swelling and receding of the tides. *Tidalectics* emerges from the Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (TBA21)–Academy, an experiment itself, initiated in 2011 by Francesca Habsburg and Markus Reymann. The Academy understands itself as a site of cultural production without a fixed locale, moving aboard the Dardanella research vessel, temporarily inhabited by artists, scientists, and other thinkers and practitioners.

The voyages have led us to some of the most remote places in the Pacific—Papua New Guinea, French Polynesia, Fiji, and Tonga—as well as to Iceland, North America, and the Caribbean. It is through the Academy’s journeys, friendships, curiosity, and its collective processes of learning and sharing of ideas that *Tidalectics* came into being. The exhibition joins new commissions by participants in the voyages with works by other artists whose practice is profoundly involved with the oceans, next to pieces from the TBA21 collection. Since its inception, the Academy’s entire program is dedicated to fostering engaged ways of caring for the oceans. If our thoughts and actions fail to grasp these vast bodies of water that cover two thirds of our planet, let alone take care of them, perhaps it is time to consider other, oceanic, ways of being. *Tidalectics* sets out to do exactly that.

The exhibition takes its title from a play on words by the celebrated Barbadian poet and historian Kamau Braithwaite. With *Tidalectics*, Braithwaite crystallizes our terrestrial “obsession for fixity, assuredness, and appropriation”¹ and mirrors instead the fluctuating tides, the rhythmic soundings of the waves, and their curling ripples as they wash onto the shores. If dialectics is the way that “Western philosophy has assumed people’s lives should be,”² then *Tidalectics* involves a range of different readings and interpretations—for water is a transitory element, and a “being dedicated to water is a being in flux.”³ Braithwaite’s poetry radiates with music and rhythm. It is crafted on “riddims” that are deeply

rooted in (post-)colonial anger and hope. A key thinker of creolization, Braithwaite makes us aware that hybridization is not restricted to land, but begins in maritime spaces and at the coast. Just like navigators who land at a new shore, bringing with them their living and constantly shifting stories, myths, and beliefs, the concept of *Tidalectics* can migrate from its original context in Braithwaite’s writing to other geographies and realms. The exhibition carefully transfers the term, mindful not to obscure its specificity but considering the notion as starting point for an oceanic worldview.

Tidalectics merges the anchored with the itinerant and moves back and forth between being waterborne and touching land. It allows us to think of hybridity, cross-cultural syncretism, incompleteness, and fragmentation. The influence of the ocean is not restricted to the waters and aquatic beings, it affects land and terrestrial life just as much—as a source of food and as a threat when sea levels rise. The exhibition seeks to comprehend our histories as trajectories tossed by waves, from ocean crossings to systems of exchange, myths, and microbial origins. It highlights processes of cultural adaptation and material change, presenting a rich framework for understanding the coalescing polarities of contemporaneity and history, science and poetics, the global and the local, routes and roots, and ourselves with the oceans and their many and diverse inhabitants.

1. Franco Cassano, *Southern Thought and Other Essays on the Mediterranean* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 18.
2. Kamau Braithwaite, *ConVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey* (New York: We Press, 1999), 34.
3. Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter* (Dallas: The Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1999 [1942]), 6.

Works in the Exhibition

Brathwaite's term *Tidalectics* originates in the Caribbean, joining the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans that form the liquid subfloor for the history of migration of the past 500 years—a history, however, extending its roots into distant waters millennia ago. This interconnectedness, the “webbed network” of what Paul Gilroy refers to as the Black Atlantic, “between the local and the global, challenges the coherence of all narrow nationalist perspectives.”⁴ Ocean voyages and narrations of migration are the pivot of **Em'kal Eyongakpa's** work in the exhibition. Reminiscent of a boat, his newly commissioned installation, *Gaia beats/bits III-i/doves and an aged hammock* (2017), destabilizes the ground under visitors' feet. The moving floor is accompanied by a fishing net swinging back and forth suspended from the ceiling, filled with debris found by beachcombers and personal objects of oceanic travelers, from voluntary voyages to forced migration. Connected by water and maritime ties, the movements of people, animals, goods, and ideas transcend the biographical and point to global webs of power and of solidarity.

Newell Harry charts creole and pidgin languages, alternative modes of exchange, and notions of value and currency in the Pacific. The exhibition features two works from the TBA21 collection: *Untitled (Objects and Anagrams for R.U. & R.U. (Part II))*, which employ the Kula Ring, a traditional system of ceremonial gift exchange; and anagrams printed on hereditary Tongan *ngatu* cloths, titled *Untitled (Anagrams and Objects for R.U. & R.U. (Part I))* (both 2015). *Ngatu* is a fabric obtained from the bark of trees, initially for making clothing, and still utilized in formal occasions today. The cloths are passed down from one generation to the next and, similar to the *Kula* objects, acquire value and meaning due to provenance. Harry, who has traveled extensively in the South Pacific, prints four-lettered terms on these organic banners, juxtaposing words like “KULA” with “R2D2” and “GOYA” with its anagram “YOGA,” resulting in a potpourri of references from diverse contexts that span Pacific geographies, art history, and popular culture. Harry's plays on words resonate with Brathwaite's fluid language: “The hurricane does not roar in pentameters.”⁵



Em'kal Eyongakpa

*Gaia beats/bits III-i/
doves and an aged hammock*, 2017

Recycled wood, multi-channel sound, electronic
interfaces, analog motor, nets, plant fibers, mycelium
Dimensions variable

Commissioned by TBA21–Academy



Newell Harry

Untitled (Anagrams and Objects for R.U. & R.U. (Part I)), 2015

Hand-beaten Tongan *ngatu*, ink

7 parts, each 310 x 100 cm

TBA21 Collection, Vienna



Newell Harry

Untitled (Objects and Anagrams for R.U. & R.U. (Part II)), 2015

L4L formply tables, ceramics, various artifacts,
found objects, paper, ink, Tongan *ngatu*, chalk

Tables: each 90 x 79 x 190 cm; overall dimensions variable

TBA21 Collection, Vienna



Atif Akin

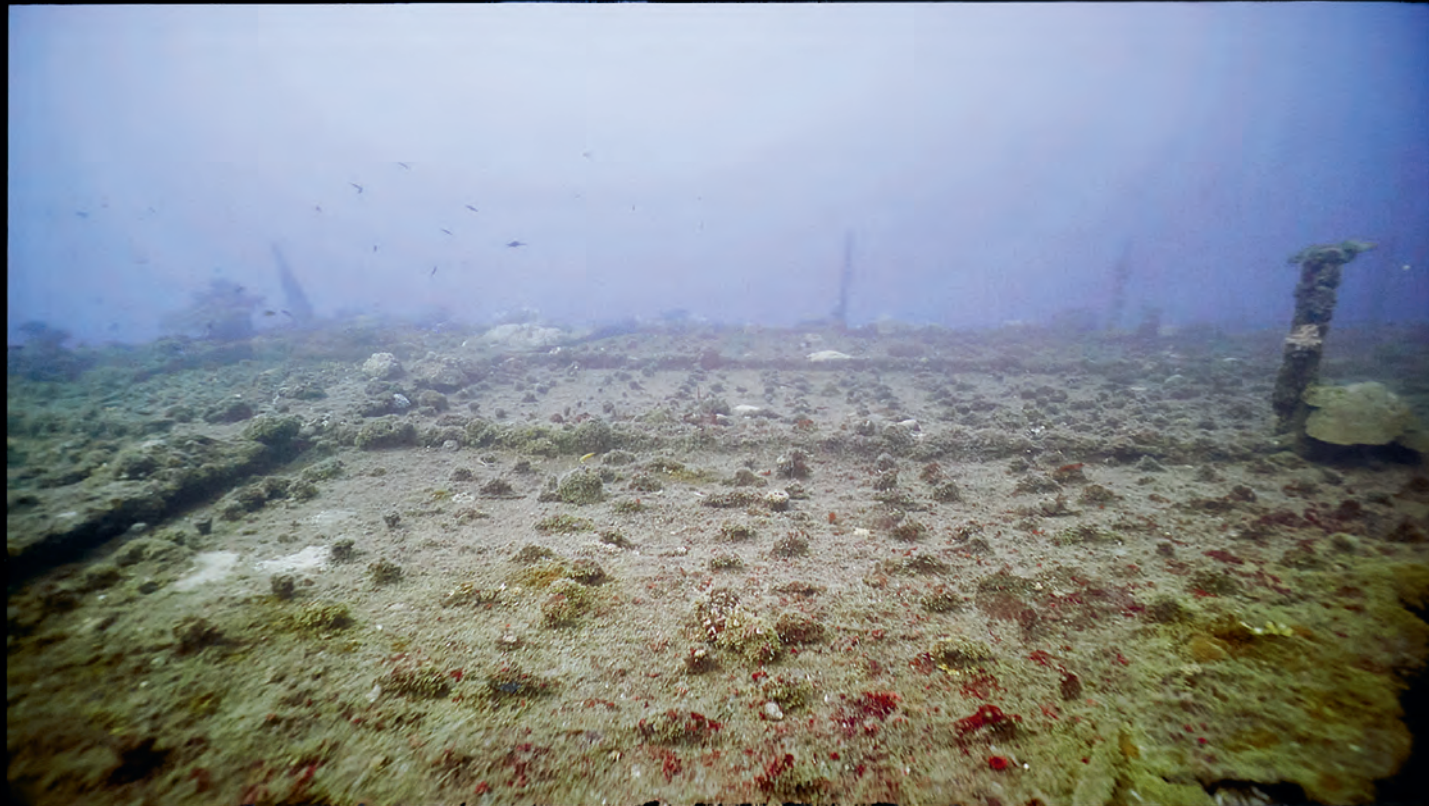
Tepoto Sud morph Moruroa, 2017

Poster and HD animation

Poster: 68 x 98 cm; animation: 2 min 40 sec

Commissioned by TBA21–Academy

The European Romanticist notions of the ocean as a sublime trope rather than biotic mass have made it appear as an inexhaustible resource. Born to Tongan parents and a citizen of Fiji, anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa's writing is directed against the belittlement of the West that renders islands as small, vulnerable, and peripheral—emphasizing instead the seafarers' transoceanic voyages that span the most distant places on the globe.⁶ Nonetheless, narratives of insignificance are persistent, facilitating imperial projects in which islands are mere entrepôts for whaling, illegal fishing, militarization, and other activities efficiently hidden at sea. In his work emerging from a TBA21–Academy expedition led by Ute Meta Bauer to the Tuamotus in French Polynesia, **Atif Akin** reflects on the creation of new mythologies analogical to radioactive deformations of code and matter resulting from the 193 nuclear tests that took place in this island archipelago. *Tepoto Sud morph Moruroa* (2017) consists of a poster presenting his research next to a computer-generated 3D rendering of the atolls Moruroa and Tepoto Sud in the Tuamotus archipelago continuously morphing into one another, the first of which was subjected to nuclear tests and the latter was visited by TBA21–Academy in 2016. The atmospheric and subterranean nuclear explosions on Moruroa left radioactive residues in water and on land, not only affecting the local population and numerous animal and plant species, but presumably also being the cause of a crack below the lagoon of the atoll. Using an equation developed by mathematician Felix Klein in the late 19th century to model ocean swells and waves, Akin transforms the animation in a way analogous to how radiation mutates matter. By placing the digitized geological structures in constant correlational transposition between creation and degeneration, the project confounds science and fiction and participates in the creation of new myths in the face of changing ecological conditions.



Julian Charrière

Iroojilik, 2016

Single-channel video installation, color, sound

24 min

Sound by Edward Davenport

TBA21 Collection, Vienna

The video *Iroojrilik* (2016) by **Julian Charrière** from the TBA21 collection charts meetings of the “natural” and the human-made in the aftermath of the atomic explosions on the Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands, where the United States government conducted twenty-three nuclear tests between 1946 and 1958. The title of the work refers to the Micronesian god of the West and of reproduction, whom mythologies associate with fertility, fish, and the ocean. Charrière’s video of breathtaking underwater footage captures the decay of infrastructure from nuclear testing in an atemporal loop of life, death, and rebirth. Accompanied by a soundtrack by Edward Davenport evoking successive moments of suspense, the film suggests continual transitions between beginnings and endings—the first light of day in a new era in the Pacific and the beginning of nightfall for pre-anthropocenic spatiotemporal constellations. In Charrière’s video, the inextricable intertwinement of technology with anything “natural” has already been assumed.

If not instrumentalized for political interests, notions of remoteness frequently imbue islands with projections of paradisaical tropical sunsets interspersed with pre-capitalist exoticism. Philosopher Timothy Morton refers to this longing for “nature” as “ecological elegy,” similar to an “imperialist nostalgia” that laments that which it has destroyed and thus searches for in other cultures.⁷ **Alexander Lee**, a participant in TBA21–Academy’s Marquesas expedition in his native French Polynesia, carefully reconsiders the imaginary of the desert island. Lee’s video revolves around Mehetia, a volcanic hotspot east of Tahiti from which all of the Society Islands have emerged. The video *Me-ti’a – An Island Standing* (2017) merges documentary images from a boat expedition by Lee and his collaborators with the legend of Vaita. In 1760, seven years before the arrival of the British naval officer Samuel Wallis in Tahiti, the Raiatean priest Vaita saw in a premonition that a canoe without an outrigger would arrive on the islands. Wallis’s arrival on the *HMS Dolphin* and his “discovery” of Tahiti vindicated the prediction and changed the fate of the region forever.



Alexander Lee
Me-ti’a – An Island Standing, 2017
Single-channel video projection, color, sound
20 min
Commissioned by TBA21–Academy
Supported by Air Tahiti Nui



Darren Almond

A, 2002

Single-channel video installation, color, sound

22 min

Sound by Lyle Perkins

Commissioned by Public Art Development Trust, London

TBA21 Collection, Vienna



Sissel Tolaas

Ocean SmellScapes, 2017

03.2017 : 10.5438700 / -84.4537700 / 10.5 / 84.5

Smell

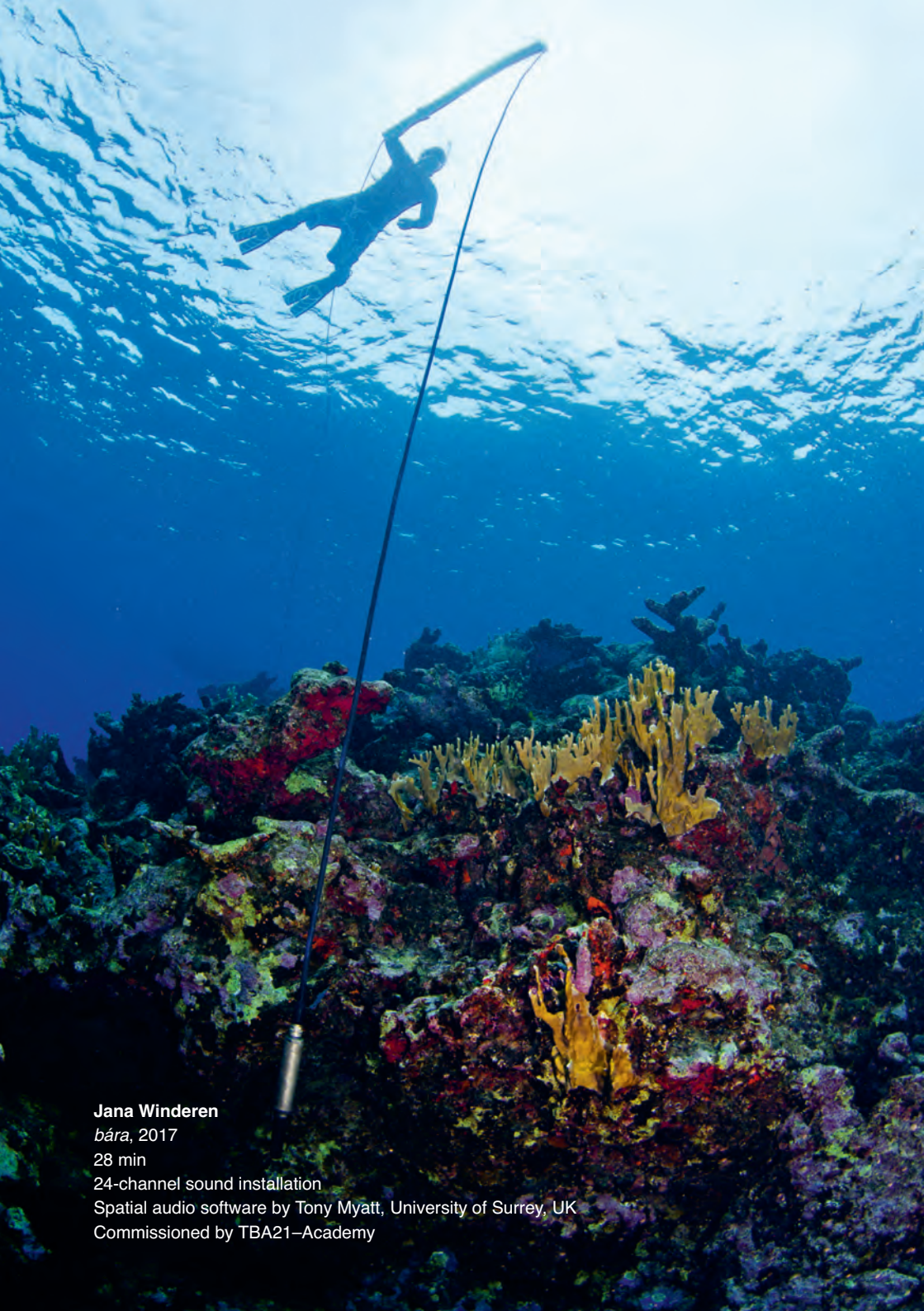
Dimensions variable

Commissioned by TBA21-Academy

Supported by International Flavors & Fragrances (IFF)

Turning to a different geography, **Darren Almond's** *A* (2002) from the TBA21 collection, presented in the KIOSK, shows a world of infinite whites empty of human presence in Antarctica. The video springs from Almond's participation in a Mission Antarctic Expedition with the aim to clear ecological waste from the continent's shores in early 2002. His lens glides over the margins where the snowy expanse of Antarctica meets the freezing sea. The images are accompanied by a soundtrack created in collaboration with the artist Lyle Perkins that amplifies the near-silence of the landscape, flooding the listener's body with blood-thumping menace at one moment and dreamy serenity the next. The work stands in contrast to some of the other pieces in the exhibition, yet as temperatures increase and the ice at the poles melts faster and streams into the oceans, sea levels will continue to rise all around the world, affecting land across latitudes and spanning apparently disconnected geographies.

The ocean is always outside until it floods your home. For societies like Kiribati and Tuvalu, rising sea levels are already palpable. Escalating water levels destabilize notions of fixed land-based embeddedness and collapse tropes of time and space as the pre-modern capitalist past meets the planetary future of climate change—a future that is becoming more oceanic as carbon colonialism turns the sea into a source of destruction and into the threatening other. Ecological change is the pivot of **Sissel Tolaas's** project *Ocean SmellScapes* (2017). Tolaas collected oceanic smells from the Caribbean and the Pacific coasts in Costa Rica, one of the most speciose places on the planet. While the land has seen decent environmental protection measures, the surrounding oceans have largely been neglected. Olfaction is the most primary sense and it informs us of our surrounding reality, evoking specific emotions and causing substantial reactions in the perceiver. Tolaas has assembled smell data with the aim of preserving olfactory information about the different invisible levels of the oceans—cultural, historical, geographical, social, and linguistic—in light of their imminent disappearance from their site of origin.



Jana Winderen

bára, 2017

28 min


24-channel sound installation

Spatial audio software by Tony Myatt, University of Surrey, UK

Commissioned by TBA21–Academy

As science and technology scholar Sheila Jasanoff points out, climate is everywhere and nowhere, it is unbounded from specific locations and beyond time scales perceptible to humans in calendrical periods.⁸ Brathwaite's *Tidalectics* may offer us strategies to grapple with the shifting spatiotemporal constellations produced by changing climatic conditions. While it allows us to experience time and space beyond their fixity rooted in land, we must not forget our relationships with other organisms. **Jana Winderen's** sound installation *bára* (2017) is composed from hydrophone recordings the artist collected during various expeditions with the TBA21–Academy among other journeys, from the North Pole to the Caribbean and Pacific Oceans. The composition comprises diverse sounds, from waves to the distinctive clicking noises of crustaceans, from smaller fish species grunting to larger mammals like cetaceans. The oceans' ecosystems are extremely sensitive to sound pollution and the sonic level of the underwater environment can be indicative of the health of marine habitats. The piece plays at different times each day, which shift according to the lowest and highest water level in the tidal calendar of Trieste, the geographically closest coast near Vienna.

Musician, researcher, artist, iridologist, herbalist, and inventor **Ariel Guzik's** *The Nereida Capsule* (2015) from the TBA21 collection is an instrument designed to search for communication with cetaceans. It materializes an intention of encounter with inhabitants of the sea, devoid of utilitarian or scientific research interests. For thirty years, Guzik has explored physics, mechanics, electricity, and magnetism with his *Nature Expression and Resonance Research Laboratory*, leading to the invention of mechanisms that give nature a voice through music. The *Nereida*, a quartz submersible capsule, contains a set of extremely tight strings, whose vibrations emit subtle sounds that constitute a gestural signal before the sonic gaze of marine mammals. *Nereida* is an instrument whose creation responds to a drive for encountering cetaceans as *others*, bringing about an out-of-time bubble and a space where chant and sonority might be greeted by a ceremonial context.



Ariel Guzik
The Nereida Capsule, 2015
Underwater capsule
with fused quartz sound
instrument, carved wood
control cabinet, works on
paper, demonstration video
Sculpture: 190 x ø 150 cm;
paper and video:
dimensions variable
Commissioned by TBA21
TBA21 Collection, Vienna



In an installation centered around jellyfish titled *Tamoya Ohboya* (2017), **Tue Greenfort** explores complex ecosystems and the consciousness of these aquatic organisms. Having roamed the seas for at least 500 million years, jellyfish are among the oldest animal species to populate the planet after cyanobacteria and sponges. With warming ocean temperatures, jellyfish spread into regions where they were not found previously. For this new work, Greenfort presents an aquarium with living jellyfish, with a projection showing videos the artist filmed during expeditions with TBA21–Academy to Papua New Guinea and the Marquesas. As gender and environmental researcher Eva Hayward has shown, jellyfish are beings with ways of knowing and sensing that challenge anthropocentric logics and epistemological taming.⁹ Their life cycles and modes of reproduction differ from human and many land- and sea-based organisms; they lack bones, a centralized heart, or brain; and their nerves are distributed in a net spread over their bodies. Their alterity challenges our ideas of consciousness, ethics, and relationships to more-than-human entities, urging for a shift in planetary awareness.




Tue Greenfort
Tamoya Ohboya, 2017
Stainless steel table,
Aurelia aurita, aquarium with
technique, single-channel
video projection of *Chironex*,
glass panel

Table: 85 × 260 × 100 cm;
tank: 80 × 80 × 80 cm;
video: 5 min 14 sec

Commissioned by TBA21–Academy

Susanne M. Winterling's installation *Glistening Troubles* (2016) results from the artist's residency at the TBA21 Alligator Head Foundation in Jamaica. The work investigates the bioluminescence of dinoflagellate algae as indicators for the health of coastal waters with toxic potential. For several years, Winterling's research has homed in on these organic bodies that light up when touched or moved, reminiscent of the touch-screens that surround us these days. The computer-generated imagery of enlarged individual algae in her animations transform scale and temporality, and blur the borders between "nature" and culture. A video interview with a Rock-based fisherman, which Winterling shot during her residency, grants insight into the medicinal properties of algae for treating skin infections, known to locals for centuries. The work places the skin—our outer boundaries, with which we touch our surroundings—and luminescent screen technologies—our interfaces to digital realities—in metaphorical proximity. Mirrored columns are interspersed between the monitors like corporeal agents, both reflecting and masking vision, similar to the overlapping information in analog and virtual worlds. Winterling's research delves into interspecies solidarity and points to our vibrant entanglement with other bodies as "having-the-other-in-one's-skin."¹⁰

Janaina Tschäpe's work is inspired by her ongoing exchange with marine biologist and ocean explorer **David Gruber**, and their voyages among others on board the *Dardanella*. Gruber's research focuses on marine microbial ecology and fluorescent proteins, in an attempt to understand the perception of aquatic creatures from within their own perceptual experience. In joined drawing sessions, Tschäpe creates fantastical visual worlds springing from Gruber's accounts of deep sea creatures and extremophiles. The process is reminiscent of artists joining exploratory voyages or creating drawings based on specimen brought back by expeditions during the 19th and 20th centuries by travelers like Alexander von Humboldt or Charles Darwin. In *Tidalectics*, two leporellos filled with drawings by Tschäpe and scientific annotations by Gruber are shown. Titles like *Blood, Sea* (inspired by Italo Calvino's short story) and *Fictionary of Corals and Jellies* (both 2017) point to the merging of an inventory and dictionary of underwater life with fictional elements.



Susanne M. Winterling
Glistening Troubles, 2017
Mixed media installation and CGI animation
Dimensions variable
Co-commissioned by Contour Biennale 8,
TBA21–Academy, Alligator Head Foundation
TBA21–Residency, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter
(HOK), and the Institute of Contemporary Art,
University of Pennsylvania with additional
support by the Research Fund of Oslo
National Academy of the Arts
With the kind support of IFA (Institut für
Auslandsbeziehungen) and Goethe-Institut
Belgien



Janaina Tschäpe & David Gruber

Fictionary of Corals and Jellies, 2017

Blood, Sea, 2017

Watercolor pencil on paper

2 leporellos, each approx. 20 × 21,5 × 800 cm (flat)

Commissioned by TBA21–Academy

Courtesy the artists

Eduardo Navarro's *Hydrohexagrams (For Tahuata)* (2017) emerges from a set of serendipitous encounters during the TBA21–Academy expedition to the Marquesas. Searching for a logic that comes from the sea, Navarro created an oceanic version of the traditional Chinese divination method I Ching. He produced two sets of three enlarged bronze I Ching coins that are embossed with oceanic drawings the artist created during the expedition. In the town of Hapatoni, where the idea for the work originated, the artist proposed to the local community to use the coins and I Ching book to pose a question to the ocean. The three coins were thrown into waves six times successively, leaving the resulting divination hexagram to be defined by the force of the waves. The village decided to create a song based on their interpretation of the oracle, laying it over the oldest chant of Hapatoni, whose melody is inspired by the waves of the sea. The three coins that were cast into the ocean were brought to Vienna and are shown in the exhibition, while the other I Ching set stayed behind in Hapatoni, as a public artwork that will be displayed in the Artisan Museum and could be used by the different villages of Tahuata.



Eduardo Navarro

Hydrohexagrams (For Tahuata), 2017

Bronze coins, drawings (pastel on paper), single-channel video projection

Coins: ø 65 cm × 0,3 cm; drawings: dimensions variable; video: 20 min

Commissioned by TBA21–Academy

Courtesy the artist

The exhibition *Tidalectics* is an attempt to turn to and immerse ourselves—even if we stay dry for now—in the water covering our planet, where movement and flux prevail over static halts. Each of the artists engage in their own particular ways with the diverse questions emerging from the archipelago of cultural, political, and biological predicaments, from ancestral myths to “modern” science, fiction, poetry, and inter-species communication. *Tidalectics* mirrors the experimental methods of work of the Academy, in which open-ended situations are incited to create new ways of being and knowing. As our world is becoming more oceanic—or, more precisely, as the Oceanian awareness of the significance of the waters for our history and future is streaming out to other geographies—we are becoming more receptive to the liquid dimensions of our being. *Tidalectics* offers us the tools to think through the dissolving notions of time and space, the blurring divisions between land and water, and the coalescing human and more-than-human relationships—and to dive together into the sea of possible futures.

4. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (New York and London: Verso, 1996 [1993]), 29.
5. Kamau Brathwaite, *History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry* (London: New Beacon Books, 1984), 10.
6. Cf. Epele Hau'ofa, *We are the Ocean: Selected Works* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).
7. Renato Rosaldo, “Imperialist Nostalgia,” *Representations*, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, No. 26 (Spring 1989): 107–122.
8. Sheila Jasanoff, “A New Climate for Society,” *Theory Culture Society*, Vol. 27 (2–3 2010): 233–253.
9. Cf. Eva Hayward “Sensational Jellyfish: Aquarium Affects and the Matter of Immersion,” *differences*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2012): 161–196.
10. Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 392.

* Stick charts are mnemonic devices used by seafarers from the Marshall Islands to navigate the Pacific Ocean.

TBA21 Chairwoman Francesca Habsburg	Art Handling Stephan Kobatsch, Lucas Schmid, Jakob Neuling, Sami Mandee, Bruno Hoffmann	Design Christoph Steinegger/ Interkool
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About Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

Founded in 2002 by Francesca Habsburg in Vienna, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (TBA21) represents the fourth generation of the Thyssen family's commitment to the arts. TBA21's unique collection is the result of its ongoing commitment to commissioning and disseminating multidisciplinary art projects that defy traditional categorization, including large scale installations, sound compositions, endurance performances, and contemporary architecture. Since the foundation believes that art has the capacity to be a transformational force, it explores new modes of presentation that are intended to provoke and inspire change.

About TBA21–Academy

TBA21–Academy is the exploratory soul of Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, and an itinerant site of cultural production and transdisciplinary research. Conceived by Markus Reymann as a moving platform on the oceans, it brings together artists, researchers, and other thinkers and practitioners from various fields concerned with today's most urgent ecological, social, and economic issues. Through its expeditions on sea and land, the Academy seeks to reinvent the culture of exploration in the 21st century, while inciting knowledge creation, new modes of collaboration, and the co-production of solutions for the pressing environmental challenges of today.

Tidalectics

02.06.–19.11.17

Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary–Augarten

Scherzergasse 1A, 1020 Vienna

Tram 2&5 (Am Tabor), U2 (Taborstraße)

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Opening hours

Wed–Thu

12–5 pm

Fri–Sun

12–7 pm

Free entry