

Platform cooperativism

An extension of worker cooperativism into the realm of digital services and distribution, in reaction to the developments in digital (platform) capitalism. Its stated goal is the creation of online platforms that are owned by workers and users, as opposed to private capitalists. (See also: distribution, commons)

Commons

A mode of resource distribution and knowledge sharing that emphasizes horizontality and community-based organization.

(See also: platform cooperativism, distribution)

Distribution

The allocation of products and means of production among societies, both spatially and in terms of class. Distribution in the simplest form deals with questions of how products reach their respective consumers, but within more complex social structures this extends to the distribution of the means of production and the distribution of power — which in turn decides who is able to organize the structures of distribution themselves.

(See also: platform cooperativism, commons, extraction, liquidity)

Migration

While originally describing the simple act of an individual or group to settle in a different location, migration becomes a political category through the notion of nation-states as legal entities and their borders. The crossing of these borders is regulated by the state in order to control the composition of its (legal) subjects. Within the logic of capitalist nation-states, migration policies serve to govern the composition of the national workforce by defining the figure of the migrant as an priori threat to national security, while simultaneously creating a secondary “illegal” workforce of non-citizens that are excluded from labor laws and social securities.

(See also: globalization, liquidity, desire lines)

Land reclamation

The process of creating new tracts of land by raising the elevation of a waterbed or low-lying area, or by pumping water out of an enclosed area. In the case of Singapore, the former technique has been in use since the state began leveling its own hills in the beginnings of the 1960s. The term, however, focuses on a state’s sovereign right to geo-engineer its territory, rather than the environmental effects it may have elsewhere. (See also: extraction, desire lines)

Extraction

Refers to a process of removal and withdrawal. In terms of industries, resources are exhumed from the ground, including oil, gas, minerals, and timber. Often results in an adverse or irreversible impact on the environment. In comparison, many Indigenous communities in Southeast Asia are known to forage or harvest seasonally when gathering resources. (See also: distribution, land reclamation, circulation / circular economy, vectors / vectorialist)

Globalization

Globalization describes the set of social and political processes that create, multiply, stretch, and intensify integrations and interdependencies across the surface of the earth. Often, it is used to refer to the global flows of goods, information, and labor, thus creating a global market economy. However, the history (and historiography) of globalization remains a contested debate.

(See also: circulation / circular economy, migration, liquidity, vectors / vectorialist)

Glossary Terms 2, 8, 13, 20

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Martha Atienza

Clelia Coussonnet

The effects of climate change on watery environments and biodiversity are massive and exponential. They generate a combination of paradoxes, from desertification to extreme flooding, from phreatic resources drying up to rising waters, along with increases in salinity and contamination and in erosion and extinction of endangered species. This non-exhaustive list raises anxiety, as we know the future of all beings, human and non-human, is affected by ecological breakdown.The modification of liquid ecosystems is one of its most pregnant consequences, especially when recalling that life in most forms is bound to water.

Throughout our planet, many communities have been living in a symbiotic way with, through, and along their surrounding waterways. For decades, however, the ongoing alterations of the climate crisis have been forcing them to redefine their relationship with endangered and unstable environments. But how to reinvent a common path and experience when facing such upheavals? How to move from powerlessness to action, protest, and resilience?

These questions are crucial in the artistic practice of Martha Atienza, which largely focuses on communities from the Philippine archipelago, comprising 7,641 islands. In her video and photography installations, she works hand in hand with islanders—including residents of Bantayan, where she is from—prominently featuring fishermen and sailors, but not solely. Her experimental, documentary approach immerses viewers into the interstices of their daily life, labor, and habits. The artist’s practice is likewise informed by her in-betweenness as a Dutch-Filipino from a seafaring family. Displacement, migration, and movement can be read in the waves of her works, as in *Endless Hours at Sea* (2016), in which the artist, aboard cargos, documents the movements of ships and water, and in *Gilubong Ang Akong Pusod Sa Dagat (My Navel Is Buried in the Sea)* (2011), which follows, among others, the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW).

Focusing on these hyper-local communities, Atienza addresses how they experience the impacts of climate breakdown through the prism of cultural loss, socioeconomic disparities, and working conditions. Her videos are often intimate, her camera following the waves, flows, and tempests. At times, she submerges her lens in the depth of the ocean to capture changes in the seabed, coastal erosion, pollution, and rising water level.As several fishermen and sea-farers are recorded at and within the sea, she highlights how much their survival is dependent on their interactions with their environment. Yet, there is no room for miserabilism, as each participant comes across with dignity and agency. As witnesses of disrupted ecosystems, they call out to the audience.

On the facade of the Contemporary Arts Center, two videos by Atienza—*Tarong 11°16’12.0”N 123°45’23.4”E 2019-08-06 Tue 2:27 PM PST 150 Meters High Tide and Kaongkod 11°16’12.0”N 123°45’23.4”E 2019-08-03 Sat 12:14 PM PST 2.03 Meters High Tide* (both 2019)—are projected in a loop. Through them, we see, at the edge of the water, two generations of fishermen diving and resurfacing cyclically. The movement narrates a story of resilience and courage. Heads swinging along with the breathing of the tide tell of the adaptive qualities local communities are forced to develop. Atienza shot the video in 2013 after Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) devastated the coastal area of Bantayan, where increased extreme natural disasters, like floods and typhoons, severely destabilize the local marine ecology.

Previously, in *Gilubong Ang Akong Pusod Sa Dagat (My Navel Is Buried in the Sea)*, the artist recorded fishermen from Madridejos diving with makeshift (and dangerous) compressor divers, exposing how industrial (over)fishing has affected them. Compression diving is, in itself, a technique that has proliferated with the reduction of available fish closer to the surface. Atienza’s filmic practice combines with concrete actions for social change. She is currently working with the Goodland initiative to help realize a project to replace the dry-cell batteries used for the fishermen’s flashlights with renewable batteries that can be recharged at solar stations.

The two videos shown for *Breaking Water* echo another work, similar in aesthetic: *Panangatan 11°09’53.3”N 123°42’40.5”E 2019-10-24 Thu 6:42 AM PST 129 meters High Tide, 2019-10-12 Sat 10:26 AM PST 140 Meters High Tide* (2019). In it, the camera is pointed toward the coastline, revealing a shrinking shore, with houses (to be) abandoned by the waterside, while people retreat inland. The three works, all shot in black and white, blur temporalities. They examine the present by turning to the past—and speculate on a future under pressure.

Another angle of Atienza’s practice has been to document festivals on the islands, as in *Anito 1* (2011-15) and *Anito 2* (2017) in which she follows the Ati-Atihan festival, a syncretic event mixing animistic precolonial spirituality, cult ancestral traditions, and Catholicism. Filming the works across years, she measured a disinterest in the festival locally as many inhabitants grew more concerned with ensuring their families’ survival. She has reenacted the procession underwater, on the dead corals, in her immersive video *Our Islands 11°16’58.4”N 123°45’07.0”E* (2017). Such cultural shifts are emblematic of a loss of connection to a symbiotic and spiritual relation with the environment.

On the islands of the Cebu Sea, where Bantayan is located, the ecological crisis is further entangled in power relations: Between 1981 and 2019, the region was a protected wilderness area in the Philippines. The revocation of this status, for economic, political, and touristic reasons in 2019, dealt a blow to local efforts to find harmonious ways of coexistence with their environment. Yet Atienza’s work reminds us that everyone will soon be affected by such revocations. In any spot of the planet, a decision undermining communal endeavors to protect ecosystems is a crime against all that will further weaken unstable environments. As the artist observes, “Our goals are for islanders to unite, and find solutions together. Bringing experiences from our Bantayan Island-based projects, we want to connect to other islands across Oceania and the Pacific, to build bridges relating to major issues we have in common such as climate change, loss of cultures, and displacement.”

Marcos Ávila Forero

Clelia Coussonnet

The power of collective thinking, discussion, and action are at the center of Marcos Ávila Forero’s practice. Emphasizing the strength gained by a community that joins energies and ideas for common objectives, he never operates alone. His research-action work is based on collaboration, exchange, and reciprocity with the local actors with whom he engages. Spending time on the ground, meeting a variety of residents, grassroots leaders, and fellow researchers, Ávila Forero opens space for togetherness. Straying from any kind of hierarchy in which he would be the “knower,” he co-creates actions with local communities, to both learn and give back, generating sustainable projects and outcomes with lasting impact felt on site. Most of his practice is embedded in remote territories of Colombia and focuses on invisibilized, neglected, or marginalized groups, with a clear commitment to social and political questions. He looks into how labor and economic and territorial conflicts affect communities—their needs, rights, and ability to speak up—and how these issues provoke a gap between them and people in power. Back in art spaces, the artist continues to amplify their struggles by translating the material he has collected on the ground and composed with the community into multifaceted installations, rooted in local context and culture, that explore domination, self-expression, and resistance.

Hills of coffee plantations, the Caribbean Sea, the Amazonian region, high peaks, spectacular waterways: the Colombian landscape is a constellation of territories, identities, and cultures to which Ávila Forero has turned much of his attention, offering a platform for the voices of their communities. In his work with waterscapes, the artist has engaged in the retrieval of lost knowledge and myths, demonstrating strong bonds between two rivers and, respectively, the Cocama community in the Amazon and a rural Afro-Colombian community in the Chocó forest. In both contexts, he has contributed to reactivating old traditions that were dissolving, despite attempts at maintaining oral transmission alive. Water becomes the site for commonality.

First, in 2011, the artist worked with two families from the Cocama community living close by the Tarapoto river. Together, they carved out of memories a sculpture of a *manatí*—a marine mammal, said to be a guide to other worlds, that has disappeared from the ecosystem, almost slipping solely into the realm of riverine legends—after which a *taíta*, or initiated person in magic rites, rode the sculpture toward the Tarapoto lake, ultimately letting it drift with currents to find its own way.

The second project, completed in 2014, relates to the Atrato river as both a neuralgic point of the armed conflict in Colombia and as a landmark space for Afro-Colombian identity. The Atrato river’s location made it an axis of clashes between the government and the guerrillas,

spilling over into local communities caught in the crossfire. The conflict has left both visible and invisible scars on the landscape and the people, including massive forced displacements.

In the midst of such militancy, Ávila Forero and the local community set to revive the *tamboleo*, an Afro-Colombian intangible heritage of drumming on water. This practice is found in other areas of the world, like the Vanuatu Islands, but most especially in Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, strongly linking the Afro-Colombian community to the trans-Atlantic trade history when their ancestors were brought across the ocean and enslaved. Depending on cultures, water drumming has been used for worshipping marine deities; for celebrating cycles of life, fertility, and crops; and for communicating from one village to another. The act of slapping or punching the surface of the river or ocean, of creating eddies, sound waves, and resonance, is often associated with body percussion, and in some cases singing. In specific contexts, drumming in general, not only aquatic, has been used as an amplifier of social struggles and as a revolutionary tool of protest.

In the video *Atrato* (2014), a group of young percussionists learns the *tamboleo* technique. In the Chocó forest, where the Atrato river carries memories and traumas of the Middle Passage and of local armed conflict, the collective act of drumming on water can be seen not only as the reapropriation of a vanishing cultural tradition but also as resistance against powers that have transited through this territory for their own political interests without caring for local communities. In a context of displacement and instability, the *tamboleo* exemplifies a way of learning, through water, new subversive actions and communication systems. It vibrates with the liquid bodies of the youth performing, becoming one with the river. In some occasions, the rhythms and ruffles mimic rifles, bombing, and deflagration as a catharsis and, potentially, as a way of informing others about an attack or a danger.

Beyond the Chocó forest, Ávila Forero drives the viewer into considering the potency of water as a communication vessel and as an engram that can release its memories. How can we learn distinct nonverbal tools inspired by more-than-human beings to address our degraded environments? In which ways are liquidity and ecopolitics bound? In 2017, three years after the project, the Atrato river was granted legal rights by the Colombian government. This recognition as an Ecoregion and Collective Territories of Afro-Colombian and Indigenous Communities emphasizes the interconnectedness and symbiotic relationship between the river, its biodiversity, and various inhabitants. Yet sadly, the situation remains tense as geo-economic interests jeopardize the future of the area. Ávila Forero and the community’s call to protect water and its knowledge is yet to really be heard.

Cecilia Bengolea

Diana B. Campbell

Cecilia Bengolea has long understood the transformational relationship between breath and consciousness. Through our breathing, water transforms from sky to ocean and back again, unleashing energy as it transmutes across solid, liquid, and gaseous states, animating life. Bengolea’s powerful interdisciplinary works remind us that water is “trans-national, trans-species, and trans-corporal” as they choreographically connect the movements of bodies to the movements of the planet. She is inspired by figures such as French choreographer Francois Malkovska, who conceived dances highlighting the disharmony between the human and the non-human world brought on by the Industrial Revolution, striving to create a movement that would restore planetary balance.

For Bengolea, dance is likewise trans-national, trans-species, and trans-corporal, and transcends the limits of language. As her long-term collaborator François Chaignaud observes, “we make performances because we cannot communicate with animals.” Calling upon writers, artists, filmmakers, and other storytellers to imaginatively restore agency and voice to non-humans in his 2021 nonfiction parable for a planet in crisis, *The Nutmeg’s Curse*, Amitav Ghosh issued a rallying cry to open up other perspectives that have been silenced through histories of extractive capitalism. Attuned to these non-human perspectives, Bengolea often returns to a latent memory of riding with her pony Flor as an asthmatic child in Argentina. While classical ballet, which the artist both references and departs from in her practice, carries names for steps derived from animals—“pas de cheval” (step of the horse), “pas de chat” (step of the cat)—Bengolea’s interest in dance is not in emulating the movement of any animal, but rather becoming “more than human” by moving with animals as a composite, hybrid being, transforming herself in the process and transcending her own body’s limits in the way she was able to “run” with Flor.

Mosquito Net (2019) and *Synchronized Serpent* (2021) are two of many examples of Bengolea’s work intertwining human and animal movements enabled by water, and are found within the Contemporary Arts Center in the form of an installation and a moving-image work. Originally commissioned for Desert X 2019 in the Coachella Valley of California, *Mosquito Net* is a configuration of eleven hybrid, more-than-human forms that were installed in the Salton Sea, one of the most toxic sites on Earth. Increased waterflow due to thawing permafrost (a side effect of the climate crisis) caused a drainage system to accidentally overflow about a century ago, creating an “accidental sea” in the middle of the desert. Today, intense heat and salt concentration prevent oxygen from dissolving in the water, suffocating the algae and fish that live there and waiting toxic clouds that extend far beyond its seemingly removed desert location. Mutation seems, to the artist, to be the only way to adapt on a planet that increasingly demands amphibious forms of living, given the violent and unpredictable movements of water, and, in turn, Bengolea’s work inspires hope out of a place of desperation, as a bestiary where the ancient and modern, the sacred and the profane can coexist in harmony.

Further engaging the power found in hybrid-amphibious-mutant-living, in Bengolea’s *Synchronized Serpent*, a collaboration with the national synchronized swimming team of Jamaica, the boundaries between individual and collective movements dissolve as an aerial camera zooms out and the swimmers’ serpentine, ocean-inspired movements transform into a collective body with the planet below. As a dancer and choreographer, Bengolea is concerned with how bodies transfer movement from one to another across cultural contexts and generations, and Jamaican culture—particularly the hyper-corporal genre of Dancehall as well as the country’s land and water features—is another recurring motif in her work. The artist’s recent encounters with pollution in the Caribbean, the Salton Sea, the Yucatán Peninsula, and Bangladesh (among other locations) have pushed her water to perform in some of the most polluted contexts on the planet, and have opened up a nuanced artistic inquiry: how might the toxicity of our planet impact how we move in the future? How might we alter our movements and choices to give us more space to breathe with the planet and its many forms of more-than-human life?

Andrea Carlson

Roxanne T. Ornelas

For Ojibwe artist Andrea Carlson, her homeland in northern Minnesota, the land of 10,000 lakes in the Great Lakes region of the United States, is not only a place of spiritual grounding but a culture unto its own, a way of being. It was here, and in neighboring Canada, where the water protector environmental movement—comprising activists, organizers, and cultural workers focused on the defense of the world’s water and water systems—emerged in the early 2000s, as an extension of the traditional role of Ojibwe women and the Indigenous beliefs that all life, all land, all water is sacred. In works that both subtly and not so subtly engage this culture of conscious opposition, Carlson resists the erasure of the ancestors who came before her and of those who will follow, challenging us to face the ugly truth of our shared present and our past. With works like *Portage* (2008) and *Famished for Blonds* (2011) and the short film *Crude Hands* (2016), she offers the mistreatment and near genocide of Indigenous peoples and the health of our environment as stark parallels—and as omens.

In *Portage*, the viewer is led into a barren dystopian world, an imaginary space devoid of humans, or of any life at all. Yet, one feels compelled to grasp onto something familiar, anything, to make sense of it. Is this a peek into a future global wasteland? A climate warning of what may come? The framed decked edges of paper surrounding the portal seem to anchor it against intrusion. But can venturing into this imaginary frontier be a form of resistance and unthought opportunity? If the answer is yes, then let us leap into that new beginning.

In *Famished for Blonds*, various invasive water species—the Sea Lamprey, Silver Carp, and Zebra Mussels—feed parasitically on the blood and bodies of their fellow water dwellers. Carlson uses a fine literary cursive script to inscribe the title directly on the work, as an

invitation to place ourselves in the scene, and below it the title of a Tennessee Williams play, *Suddenly Last Summer*. As the work’s layers unfold, fragmented pieces of incongruent body parts emerge, floating around the macabre scene. Its title hearkens to the Williams play, in which the character of the tourist claims those words, after exploring dark-skinned Indigenous boys on a beach while on holiday. In Carlson’s work, facing what appears to be certain death, the local species struggle to survive, in constant resistance to assimilation.

In late February 2022, many of Carlson’s extended Ojibwe relatives joined together in northern Minnesota to stop the construction of oil pipelines from Canada. The pipelines are planned for construction across their traditional homelands, across sensitive animal habitat and sacred waterways. (One of the largest concerns is the protection of the beds of wild rice—a traditional Ojibwe food—growing in the water here.) These lands, these waters, these life-giving resources remain under terminal threat from a merciless invading parasite retching its waste through oil spills and chemical contamination.

In the short film *Crude Hands*, we return to the artist’s early life in northern Minnesota, bearing witness in ways both deeply personal and voyeuristic. Carlson shot the film on her grandmother’s land on Lake Superior, and in the film we see the artist holding out her open hand over the waters. Carlson was born from these waters, and her work speaks for the voiceless—in it and of it. “If we do not speak for them—our water, our earth, our people—who will?” she seems to say. Has there never be a hand dripping crude black oil held over the waters of Lake Superior.

In the poem “Water” (1994) by Amishinaabe author Al Hunter, he writes:

It is said that the amount of water that covers the earth’s surface directly correlates to the amount of water that makes up the human body. We are the same. ...Water is the blood of the earth. Water sustains all life.’

Yes, for Carlson, as for us all, water is life.

Carolina Caycedo

Amara Antilla

Expanding conventional creative methods, Carolina Caycedo’s artistic practice is a direct result of field work and research conducted with communities and on the sites of ecological disaster, exploitation, and local resistance against corporate and government agents of destruction. The artist’s capacity to work on-ground with activists and laborer communities, such as fishermen, informs a body of work that often functions in myriad ways, both within and outside the museum. In the artist’s *Water Portraits* series (2015–20), Caycedo pictures bodies of water as social and political subjects/agents, capable of affecting their surroundings and the course of history both past and future. Attuned to Indigenous knowledge systems that recognize water as part of a diverse ecosystem, she rejects Western conceptions of knowledge that seek to categorize forms of life as separate and therefore consumable commodities. In contrast, the *Water Portraits* recognize water as an integral element, deserving of its own rights and protection.

Within a gallery setting, Caycedo’s works are often suspended and draped in various arrangements in response to the specific architecture of the space, and are usually encountered from below. Often, visitors experience a waterway that flows upward and toward the sky. This reversal is a political act, for which Caycedo cites precedents such as the practice of hanging a national flag upside down as a symbol of civil disobedience, disagreement, and protest. By changing the orientation and relationship we have with water, Caycedo asks us to reflect on the ways our governments, often in close partnership with corporate entities, have been complicit in the process of environmental exploitation and collapse, alluding to the urgent need for advocacy and systems change in the face of colonial, imperial, and industrial states of domination and misuse.

Medula, *Maligna*, and *Multiple Clitoris* (2016) all feature imagery sourced from the Iguaçu river (Cataratas do Iguaçu), the body of water that runs between Argentina and Brazil and the largest waterfall system in the world. Documentation of cascading water dropping from dramatic heights—of, at times, nearly 300 feet—are knit together with their mirrored images to create a disorienting patterned appearance that seems to vibrate, swell, or flow. The optical phenomena suggest movement but also the existence of anthropomorphic elements within the waterways. Using words such as *clitoris* or *medula*, Spanish for “marrow,” Caycedo draws parallels between human bodies and bodies of water. Indeed, the composition of *Medula* features water flowing over and gushing between rocks, formally recalling the series of vertebrae that stretch from head to pelvis and protect the soft tissue within. As a title, *Medula* also references the material within all plant stems that serves to transfer water and nutrients throughout the entire structure.

Caycedo’s *Water Portraits* offer an alternative way of picturing water. In opposition to the colonial underpinnings of the traditional genre of “landscape” that visualizes nature as something apart from humanity, Caycedo has fashioned an open-ended, fluid, dynamic format devised from printed fabric. The objects are conceived as mutable, both in their display method and in their location—the portraits can be hung, stretched, wrapped, and even worn, within institutional spaces but also in the public realm. In 2019, Caycedo activated a selection of the *Water Portraits* at the point where the Wanawaana (Santa Ana) and the San Gabriel Rivers meet in Orange County, a location that provides the majority of freshwater to Los Angeles, where she lives and works. The resulting video *Thanks For Hosting Us, We Are Healing Our Broken Bodies / Gracias por hospedarnos, estamos sanando nuestros cuerpos rotos* documents that action, in which eight performers, who were all immigrants and women or femmes, activated a choreography designed by Marina Magalhães to explore personal ideas of identity, migration, and displacement, and the ways in which these experiences are echoed in the mistreatment of waterways, which have likewise been exploited, polluted, and dammed or “broken.”

The cinematography achieves close-up views of multiple bodies that are never visible in their entirety. At one point in the film, Caycedo quotes ethnic studies professor Charles Sepulveda (Tongva and Aqache-men): “I believe we continue to feel the essence of the stories and know deep within us that our lands and waters are sacred ... the loss of these stories for humans is retained by the spirit of our lands and are never completely lost because of this. They are waiting to be re-learned, elevated, analyzed and applied in ways I can only imagine.” On the banks of the river and in the water, limbs caress the landscape, the water, and the works themselves, which seem to envelop the bodies, making them appear as one entity. As the camera pans out, we see a single figure, whole and nude, floating in the river, suggesting the capacity for water to heal and be healed.

Jes Fan

Stefanie Hessler

Water knows no boundaries. It floods land as much as it coalesces multispecies bodies in its toxic and simultaneously reproductive soup of ovulation, spermatozoa, bacteria, viruses, microplastics, and other pollutants, as well as regenerative processes. Water is fluid but far from a smooth, blank space. It is thick with history, with grief, with waste, but also with resilience and reproduction—sexual and otherwise.

In Jes Fan’s practice, water is sometimes explicitly, if not always implicitly, present. It is an apt element for thinking through the artist’s work, in which boundaries are similarly in constant negotiation. In the artist’s *Diagram* series, of which two works are included in the *Breaking Water* exhibition, divides between organic and inorganic, between natural and artificial, between living and nonliving, are pushed to dissolution. The sculptures resemble body parts turned into shelves or other utilitarian pieces of furniture, propped up with amorphous piping against the gallery walls. The works are made from carefully sandred Aqua resin casts of lovers’ and friends’ body parts. Their patchy surfaces are dyed with various levels of melanin—the biomolecules that give our epidermis its tones, lend squid ink its blue-black color, and which also, in the case of some fungi, are able to absorb gamma radiation.

In Fan’s *Diagram* series, the presence of melanin prompts reflection on the pigment as a phenotypical marker of the social construction of race. The artist abtains the melanin used in his sculptures exogenously. Synthetically made, it is not a hereditary trait of a human body. Fan’s works recontextualize the molecule aggregates beyond the biological, prompting new readings of melanin as a social object. As the Chinese literature scholar Ari Larissa Heinrich notes, Fan “explores the utopian possibility of repurposing [melanin] as an agent of connection.” Our skin is not only a boundary separating us from others, it is also a permeable, sensual device allowing us to connect with other bodies. The query for more complex notions of identity and queer connectivity runs through Fan’s practice. In another work, *Mother Is a Woman* (2018), the artist uses estrogen synthesized from his mother’s urine in a beauty cream that exhibition visitors are invited to apply to their skin. Through the balm, kinship beyond social ties is redistributed as a biological bond exceeding bloodlines, asking us to reconsider the very notion of family and, by extension, sexual reproduction.

Shown in *Breaking Water*, *Diagram VII* (2019) is composed of the series’ signature organic-looking tube arms, into which a pearl has been inserted. Additionally in this work, as in *Diagram VIII* (2020), also on view, glass bubbles resembling water drops are suspended in movement. In Fan’s discussion of gender, race, connectivity, and kinship beyond the biological, water and its materiality, the histories it has lent itself to, and its potential are central elements. In the 2022 exhibition *Sex Ecologies*, Fan developed a new photographic work *Mother of Pearl* (2022) along those same lines.⁹ These works emerged from a collaboration

with Professor Yan Wa-tat at the University of Hong Kong, in which Fan inserted four Chinese symbols—which read “Pearl of the East,” the monkier that British colonizers gave to the artist’s land of origin, Hong Kong—into pearl oysters. The mollusks are an emblem of female sexuality, and after insertion of the distur-bants, they metabolized the symbols, absorbing them into their bodies. Fan calls this process “productive contamination,” opening up normative environmental discourse to an approach that acknowledges our always transforming, queer world. Here, reproduction expands beyond biology to include technologies such as hormones and other forms of body modifications.

Fan made *Mother of Pearl* a decade after much media attention was directed toward a species of white ibises in south Florida in the 2010s, when reports began circulating about the birds’ changed mating behavior, likely due to water-based mercury pollution. The headlines read, for example, “Mercury causes homosexuality in male ibises,”¹⁰ and the articles largely conflated the troubling environmental contamination with queerness using heteronormative and transphobic language: “Fan’s works expose what queer theory, critical linguistics, race, and disability studies scholar Mel Y. Chen calls “animacy hierarchy.” In Chen’s work, the scholar outlines how, following the lead scare in the United States in 2007 concerning children’s toys produced in China, the paint “was animated and racialized as Chinese, whereas its potential victims were depicted as largely white.”¹¹ While mercury pollution and lead toxicity certainly are worrisome, Fan, like Chen, exposes the racialized, gendered, and class hierarchies embedded in the language surrounding incidents that are presented as threats to the white, heterosexual, middle-class family—capitalism’s favorite unit of (re)production.

In all of Fan’s works, normative, prescriptive divides between natural and artificial, or pure and corrupted, are complicated; they are dissolved. In *Breaking Water*, Fan reminds us of water’s liquidity as well as of its thickness that complicates notions of urban smoothness as much as simplifying binaries. In-deed, the series title itself, *Diagrams*, refers to the vocabulary and visual cultures of science and statistics, domains whose purported objectivity requires shattering in order to reimagine bodies and relations beyond the gendered and racialized hierarchies that are embedded within their pedagogies. Fan’s sculptures propose different kinds of formations that disintegrate categories propped up by scientific or statistical abstractions removed from social context. They are liquefied, hybrid prototypes showing us that, yes, all of this exists in the same body—mine, yours, ours.

Cleo Fariselli

Stephanie Kang

Cleo Fariselli creates ceramic sculptures that connect the body to its surrounding environment, allowing it to develop new material affinities. While she has worked with myriad materials throughout her practice, for the past four years she has experimented with raku water, a medium that allows her to cast selected portions of her own body—encasing her hip, ear, or face with clay to create a negative shell—as a tool to measure her ever-evolving relationship to the world. While in her works the physical body is transformed into an absent void, Fariselli does not perceive this emptiness as a sign of lack. Rather, she presents it as an alternative space that is full of potential, one that can forge new relational paths and imaginative interpretations of the world.

Through this indexical procedure of imprinting the surface of the clay with her body’s forms, Fariselli makes the familiar wondrously strange. What was once a hip becomes an abstracted shape manipulated beyond recognition. The artist intensifies her work’s unrecognizable qualities by covering the sculptures with glaze and firing them in the kiln, an unpredictable process that gives the finished works a pearlescent sheen. Their crinkled folds and lustrous surfaces most resemble mollusk shells, mutating the human body into invertebrate remains. The works resonate with Paul Valéry’s “Man and the Sea Shell,” a work of poetic prose that describes the author’s happenstance encounter with a seashell during a walk along the waterfront. He becomes enraptured by its beauty—a piece of tidal debris spontaneously generated by nature.

Liquidity

The property of being in a state of flow, not inherently bound to a fixed spatial location or extension. In economics, this describes the extent to which capital can be immediately (re-)invested—the most “liquid” assets being equivalent to the contemporary definition of money. One of the main challenges of capitalist businesses is to negotiate the balance between liquid (circulating) capital and fixed capital. The former can be more easily and quickly turned into profit but is more susceptible to market fluctuation and crises, while the latter promises more security by fixing value within the ownership of material objects that may persist throughout times of crisis.

(See also: migration, globalization, circulation / circular economy)

Cyborgs / posthumanism

Neither human nor machine, the cyborg is an amalgamation, an embodiment, and a complication of both. In the post-Internet era, the cyborg further entangles our charged understanding of bodies by functioning as a proxy, vessel, or aspiration in the resistance against othering and easy classification. (See also: liquidity, circulation / circular economy, multispecies)

Vectors / vectoralist

The proposal of a new ruling class whose hegemony is based on the control of information flows instead of commodity production (industrial capitalist class) or the trading of their direct derivatives (the antecedent finance capitalist class). The latter relate to the vectoralist mode in the same way labor and material relate to that of traditional capitalist production: as an interchangeable and universal resource. Vectors form a new, infinitely transposable structure, on top of the established structures of commodity production, which has rid itself of any necessity for concrete spatial materialization. (See also: globalization, migration, extraction)

Circulation / circular economy

Refers to an economical approach that positions production and consumption as points within a closed loop. While production and consumption might otherwise be thought of as two poles along a linear spectrum, circularity posits a scenario where resources and goods might enjoy a continuous life cycle, with little to no leakage, excess, or waste.

(See also: commons, distribution, globalization)

Desire lines

Also known as desire paths, desire lines are alternative routes that continued patterns of use have etched into the ground. The phenomenon is commonly observed in dense, urban environments where concrete and stone pavements and pathways are often provided. In spite of these facilities, desire lines are often found in urban areas as they allow for more convenient, smoother, or flatter access between popular destinations.

(See also: distribution, globalization, migration)

Multispecies

Often used in reference to the relationship, connection, communion, co-location, and coexistence of two or more biological species. A multispecies habitat, for example, is an environment that is home to two, or more, species of animals, fungi, plants, microorganisms, bacteria, and more.

(See also: cyborgs / posthumanism, circulation / circular economy, leaky bodies)

Fluids

Departing from Astrida Neimanis' concept of bodies of water, this idea envisions human and non-human bodies as all being porous and queer through the circulation and sharing of fluids in between cells, and without boundaries. All components—including toxins—of amniotic liquid, bodily fluids (blood, pee, sweat, drool, sexual and lubricating secretions), creams, waters, slime, and other viscous and diluted substances, are exchanged forming a primeval multispecies swarm and organic mixture that makes us interconnected. (See also: hydrofeminism, leaky bodies)

Underwater communication

Acoustic signals, optical and sound waves, or songs used by marine creatures to communicate together, facilitating their location and orientation. The electromagnetic frequencies emitted are carried by water in the open sea. Learning from underwater communication could open doors to different sensorial approaches. For some time now, military and industrial spheres have seized upon these tools to increase the speed and reach of human communication and of a globalized extractivist economy to the detriment of non-human well-being.

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highlights this ecological transformation, transitioning from a flowing river in the first half of the video to a barren desert at its conclusion. As the video provides a panoramic view of the desolate landscape, a voice intones: "I remember the sound of waves and the hum of the sea. Now those waters live only in my dreams."

Jaana Laakkonen

Stephanie Kang

Jaana Laakkonen's practice explores the mundane material and metaphysical experiences that encompass our daily lives. By blurring the binary between the irrelevant and the relevant, Laakkonen's works act as mediators between the physical and non-physical worlds, making encounters with the "elsewhere" seem more immediate and attainable. By referencing recent feminist, posthumanist thinking, the artist troubles limited understandings of Western modernity, calling attention to the entangled relationships between nature and culture, matter and meaning.

Laakkonen's work is influenced by feminist scholar Karen Barad's concept of agential realism, which theorizes that the universe is comprised of phenomena, or "the ontological inseparability of intra-acting agencies." According to Barad, everything in the world is deeply connected, forming material-discursive entanglements that reconfigure relational ontologies. Yet common habits of thought have made certain intra-actions more noticeable than others, rendering the latter completely ignored. In other words, while the physical world has long been observed and closely studied through human-centered perspectives, Barad argues that much can be discovered through alternative accounts that recognize the significance of non-humans in the social and scientific practices that shape our daily lives. Agential realism is particularly relevant to ecofeminist discourses, which consider the intersections of science and sociopolitical thought. Through her work, Laakkonen reworks space, matter, discourse, and causality, drawing attention to these connections through her artistic interpretations.

Laakkonen's installation at the Contemporary Arts Center, *Thereouch (ououëuille)* (2022), is an extension of her ongoing explorations and disruptions of nature-culture dualisms. An oblong length of linen, covered in water and acrylic, lies on the ground, gently folded to seemingly ripple across the floor. Pieces of polyamide-elastane are stretched across corner walls, creating an in-between space that pushes the limits of the material's pliable, elastic nature. A digital print hangs loosely over the surface of a small shelf, causing the thin sheet of paper to naturally bend with its gravitational weight. Its image depicts a tuft of grass emerging from the asphalt, a document of the contentious relationship between the organic and the inorganic. Another length of linen with polyester fringe hanging off its ends is spread across the floor. Its red, blue, and green hues, created with a mixture of acrylic, water, charcoal, and plant life, can be perceived as an aerial view of a panoramic landscape, although representation is not its aim.

In Etel Adnan's text *Sea and Fog*, a prosaic meditation on the natural and spiritual realms, the late poet asks, "What does it mean to be water? Can I comprehend you in ignoring intelligence, and contain your imensity?" Laakkonen's work, which incorporates water's fluidity as a volatile methodology, may reflect such queries. "At my studio, I am not alONE; water and others' make, direct, seep, stain, hide, follow, show, think," Laakkonen shares. "This results in a tenderly and violently slippery practice, and every day that breaks' me' and disturbs my habits." Through her works, which often combine fabric, paint, text, performance, photography, and other materials, Laakkonen rejects easy categories that organize the world into the material or the discursive, the abstract or the figurative, the organic or the inorganic, the human or the non-human. Despite these systems of binaries, her works discover new agential relationships that embrace being and doing as liquid phenomena.

Calista Lyon and Carmen Winant

Amara Antilla

The collaborative work of Calista Lyon and Carmen Winant examines the profound psychological impact of climate change, with a particular focus on the interconnectedness of ecological crises and the body. Both artists share an interest in the ways in which feminist and posthumanist perspectives have the potential to intervene within patriarchal and capitalist norms to radically shift the personal and political. Working from a research-based approach, Winant draws heavily on 1960s and '70s ecofeminist traditions and the lesbian feminist separatist movement to build alternative image archives that center women, collectivism, and care. Lyon, on the other hand, reflects on ecology, environmental precarity, and the historical and present-day human exploitation of land in installations combining found images, obsolescent technology, and reclaimed materials.

For their installation at the Contemporary Arts Center, the artists mobilize water as a catalyst for thinking about transformation and societal paradigm shifts. Juxtaposing images of "water breaking" in the context of both childbirth and river restoration projects, the installation features videos played in rapid succession on a circular constellation of outdated CRT monitors resting on a custom table fashioned from recycled timber. Culling hours of footage from YouTube, television, and Hollywood cinema, Lyon and Winant assembled a living archive. Perhaps alluding to a shift in climate activism beyond pacifism or nonviolence, the clips feature dramatic footage of explosions and gushing water in the immediate aftermath of human-involved initiatives to liberate rivers and waterways from extractive dam infrastructure. This imagery is punctuated by kitsch, sometimes humorous portrayals of the process during labor when the amniotic sac ruptures and liquid pools on the floor. Altogether, the installation presents a dizzying array of experiences, where, in the artists' words, "water never really 'breaks' but rather shifts form, moving in and out of bodies, [and] acts as both a signal and an agent of embodied change."

Drawing in part from Andrea Ballesterò's text *A Future History of Water*, Lyon and Winant seek to capture the moment of fundamental transformation that occurs when individuals are compelled to act in support of water's protection and larger efforts combating climate change. A soundtrack features the artists in conversation, responding to the prompts that guided their process in developing the work, including: When have we experienced perspectival "breaking throughs"? How do we relate to the water in and of our own bodies? What are the most frightening or sublime encounters we have had with water? What can be learned from water? How do we move past the myth of our own powerlessness? The narration seems to echo internal dialogues we might all have had in coming to terms with the overwhelming feelings of suspension and urgency that are associated with climate grief. By using the transition between life in the womb and life outside of it and the liberation of waterways as metaphors for thinking about the kind of paradigm shift that is needed for individuals to be become politically and socially mobilized, Lyon and Winant engage in a radical reorientation of values and ethics—and prompt us to imagine a reality where we, like water, embody new modes of survival and resistance that are ever fluid, adaptable, and empowered.

Paul Maheke

Chandra Frank

Paul Maheke's newly commissioned installation *Unresolved Shadows and Reflections* (2022) is a multi-sensory exploration of water, spirituality, and movement. Featuring drawings, text, and sound, it functions as a visual poem, inviting viewers to contemplate the multiplicitous forms and shapes of water. With this installation, Maheke combines subtle reflections on place, notions of haunting, and the spiritual qualities of water, using Cincinnati as a site of inspiration.

Located on the Ohio River, a natural border with Kentucky and thus a dividing line between slavery and freedom, Cincinnati was an important way station on the Underground Railroad. While the river is often understood as a marker, underscoring the differences between enslaved and free states, its violent histories are much more complex. Yet, Maheke's installation does not directly comment on these histories. Rather, as the title suggests, the work channels emotionally charged experiences—spectral and unsettling.

Maheke uses the installation as a vessel to grapple with the ghosts the Ohio Valley region conjures, probing viewers to sit with the racial politics that inform how water is taken up in the work. Applying the lens of race, displacement, and gentrification, Maheke seeks to incorporate his own (dis)orientations toward these competing histories and realities, an intuitive way of working that allows viewers to (un)make their own connections to the city and the role of water therein. Maheke does this purposefully by bringing together distinct elements of his artistic practice, using liminal or obscure interventions to integrate the politics of place into his work in response to the ways in which memory, history, and identity are constructed.

Unresolved Shadows and Reflections can be entered from two different directions and thus, cannot be experienced singularly or all at once. At one end of a passage, a water basin sits on top of a speaker. The basin has been oxidized using ferric chloride, a natural chemical also known as liver of sulfur. The sulfur creates liquid-like black and gray shapes on the surface of the metal, and in using this free-flowing process, forms resembling faces and body parts might appear spontaneously. Drawing on a technique usually applied to etching metal plates in printmaking and etching, Maheke explores ideas of corrosion in relation to the ongoing industrial impact tied to big waterways like the Ohio River. The river, which holds

great economic significance in the region as a major source of jobs and recreation, is, at the same time, one of the most polluted rivers in the United States, according to the EPA. In the accompanying soundtrack to Maheke's work, spoken word and sound bites of water flowing signal the importance of listening to the river's rhythms.

When approaching the installation from the opposite side, viewers are met with a short fragment from a sci-fi story written by the artist titled "The Mauve Hour," which reads: "Other places are born of her rain; the kind of places we seek to discover when the world closes up." Maheke also includes a drawing of a figure lying on the floor, a self-portrait with his gaze turned away. Other, digital drawings within the installa-tion invoke the otherality of mythology and spirituality. A drawing of the Ibis bird speaks to the importance of cultural narratives in which birds serve as messengers—as in ancient Egypt, when the Ibis bird was a sacred creature symbolizing death. The other drawing, suggestive of a full moon and illuminated by the blue light projected into a passage, similarly evokes a lingering ghostly presence.

While looking at the drawings, viewers simultaneously experience the sonic installation, with the sound waves gently creating a sense of water washing away—a choreography of sorts. Indeed, Maheke also frequently uses dance within his performative practice to contemplate different narrative structures. Choreography, for the artist, is a purposefully decolonial practice. Earlier works, such as *I Lost Track of the Swarm* (2016) and *MBU* (2017), show how Maheke engages ideas of movement through visual obscurity and also reveal his specific interest in how performance is a site of speculation. By leaning into the liminal and ambiguous, Maheke probes how visibility and absence inform each other. In his performances, viewers might only catch a glimpse of the artist in between scirms with fragments of text. While the artist will not be performing in this space, the ghostly aestheticians of these previous works woven into the installation could be read as an extension of this corporeal exploration.

Ultimately, Maheke's installation invites viewers to become attuned to how water holds history and simultaneously washes away. In this interplay, water is carefully choreographed but never fixed. For the artist, experimentation—with form, visual language, text, and invisible traces—are themselves a mode of knowledge production. Leaning into this poetic praxis with Maheke, we sense and feel what water leaves behind and where it might take us next.

Josèfa Ntjam

Clelia Coussonnet

What if organisms were dissolvable? If they could spread and leak without boundaries, infiltrating interstices of worlds where time and space would not exist? Josèfa Ntjam explores these questions in her practice, seeking permeations between temporalities, histories, and hybrid—sometimes monstrous—bodies and geographies made from fragments known and unknown. A central theme of her journey is to rework History from unoffical, personal, and embodied stories, many that have been silenced and sidelined. She mends historical legacy by integrating repressed voices and accounts, gathering fiction, memories, dreams, reality, myths, artificiality, and orality. Indeed, strongly linked to sound, vibrations, and words, her works stem from areas where everything is under perpetual reconfiguration. Spoken poetry, newly coined terms, experimental music, and written incantations are all parts of her visual language, as much as superposition and collage—favored forms of expression, too. Her productions are aqueous, absorbing matter, molding it, and releasing waves of merged parcels. Liquidity in its multiplicity is central for the artist: from consciousness surfacing from the abysses to rebellion concentrating in water crevasses, from obliterated memories revealing in fluids to limitless entities turned to streams.

This "fluid-to" approach, as Ntjam calls it, produces new and speculative narratives and cos-mologies outside of a Western paradigm of knowledge production and classification. Rooted in watery mythologies, spirits, and dwellers, and embedded in archipelagic thinking, her works coalesce, in a nonlinear way, stories and traumas of the Middle Passage, colonization, and independence struggles. Mami Wata, a Vodoo aquatic deity, shares space with sci-fi figures, ablyal creatures, data and algorithms, corals and algae. They meet Drexican people, ancestors, dead and revived characters who are dissolving into opacity and morphing into shells and undefined, uncategorized forms. The cosmogony gathered in the fluids of a kind of primal ocean suggests another timeframe. Liquidity is the mother, the origin. Liquidity makes collectivity, but—careful—liquidity is inclusive. It embraces the animal, vegetal, mineral, and ancestral worlds. It is more than liquid, so to speak. It holds the stable and unstable, the solid and the vaporous. It is as much metaphorical as tangible.

In her performance *Liqueurs de Sable* (2018), the artist already described such hybrid existences, ones without borders. The journey from Styx to Saturn—two recurring motifs for Ntjam—enables this transformation and dissolution of shapes. The performance *Hilolombi #2/If our bodies in shapes of drops rubbed shoulders with the stars* (2019) is a dialogue between a hydraulic engineer and a carbon griot in which she evokes an unknown planet made of water. To access it, one has to become liquid oneself, losing corporeality. And in this transition, how to hold one's memories? Once on Hilolombi, memories' density and length determine a drop, puddle, sea, or ocean form of existence. Then again, in *Aquatic Invasion* (2020) and *Water Thoughts* (2021), Ntjam orchestrates seabed tales. In this latter performance, the artist says, "It is in the blackness of abysses that I discovered how to express myself. From the dormant darkness to the off-center lights of my invertebrate friends. I take the plunge, whirling from bass to bass, the Drexican people accompanying me. / My head is no longer the one I knew, a few gills, palms and scales have replaced a body that I wanted to forget. No need to crawl, on all fours so that you can hear me, my song is now carried by the waters, well adapted ultrasounds."

The magma of water is not only the recipient of poetical ways of engaging with otherness; it is a political space of reclamation and dissent. Édouard Glissant, his call to an insurrection of the imaginary, and his concept of right to opacity come to mind. Glissant suggested it is in the shadows and darkness that the world can be read and understood more inclusively. Empires and colonizers have wanted to model, control, and straighten an other that was escaping them. In contrast with a dangerous transparency, Glissant proposed to blur legibility. Likewise, in the video *Mélas de Saturne* (2020), Ntjam describes the melas, a black viscous substance that runs through bodies and ties the multiple planetary spheres together, as "infiltrating and disrupting established systems of perceptions and nominations of fixed (i)dentities. The work advocates for the importance of opacity, since it is required to take action, outside of passiveness or voyeurism. It is precisely in that video that the character of Personsa first appears. Interrogating algorithms, she looks for her origins in northeast Cameroon, but, as a VPN, her origin constantly gets reframed.

In the exhibition *Breaking Water*, Personsa appears again in the video *Dislocation* (2022). She pursues her initiatory journey from the internet(s) spaces to a cave floating into outer space among a constellation of asteroid-like shells and fossils—a rocky soft cave, both underwater and interstellar. There, Personsa dissolves. As she is subtly inhabited by memories and narratives from her ancestors' fight for Cameroon's independence, she loses her gender. The cave's walls and drops are a window to filmed family archives that end up melting with Personsa, whose humanoid envelope has vanished. They lose their bodies in a puddle that still carries imprints and memories engrammed by water. The camera dives into the aqueous matter, inviting microscopic views of more than liquid beings. Categories and labels are no more. Pointing at this shift of perception and break in consciousness, *Dislocation* highlights the power of transformation. Personsa's degenerated dissolution makes them more active, emancipated, and resilient than ever. They entice us to reconsider the surreptitious links between things and to explore the mystery of undercurrent narratives. Like the symbol of the Ouroboros (a serpent eating its tail), recurring in the artist's language, Personsa's journey tells of cycles, circulation, and entanglement. This is the magic of Josèfa Ntjam's works: fluidly echoing each other, with no barriers in between projects, they push viewers to enter the infinite space of perpetual reconfiguration.

Claudia Peña Salinas

Clelia Coussonnet

The multisensory experience of growing up in Mexico, close to nature, observing biodiversity, playing and spending time with rivers and rocks, has influenced Claudia Peña Salinas' approach as an artist. *Los ríos* were once part of locals' daily existence; now water is often scarce in the country and desertification has gained ground. Navigating between mediums, the artist combines, alternatively, photography, video, sculpture, and fibers, frequently incorporating natural objects and found items, especially stones, in architectural installations and wall works. While her works are minimalist, constituted with a formal economy, she drives the gaze to detailed elements that are interconnected and drenched in symbolism. Her compositions pay special attention to colors, geometric forms, and materials—their attributes, meanings, and origins.

Since 2013, Peña Salinas has centered her practice on Tlaloc, the Aztec god of rain and lightning, and Chalchihuitlicue, the goddess of water and fertility, and on the landscapes—particularly features such as hills and springs—linked to them. Traveling extensively in her country of origin, visiting waterfalls, *cenotes*, and other liquid sources, she collects the raw components that infuse her works with geographical and cultural specificities. In her ongoing study of Mexican water mythologies and figures, she ties the past and the present, confronting the sacred myths of the Aztec with the current urban development of sites that were once related to water or its celebration, like the now-halted project of building an airport on the

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former Lake Texcoco—originally depleted for building the city of Mexico itself—or the development of a railroad in Yucatán. As apart from her methodology, she also consults archaeological and anthropological material, old travel guides, vintage postcards, and readings on ruins. In a context where most ancient statues and artefacts have been museified and removed from their outdoor locations, the artist is fascinated with the notion of original and replica, in line with the Benjaminian concept of aura and reproduction. Such a multiplication of copies echoes the proliferation of images in contemporary society.

Receptive to a sense of loss—physical, social, cultural—in connection to water, Peña Salinas subtly wonders how, in a place where aquatic deities were revered, the disconnection to water can be so strong? Throughout Mexico, lakes have been drained, ecosystems abused, and the country largely, and ambivalently, suffers from floods and water scarcity. Turning to Tlaloc and Chalchihuitlicue, Peña Salinas contemplates another way of relating to water—a more ritualized one—hearkening to a time when water, so central to Indigenous cosmogonies, was worshipped and cared for. The flow of rivers through lands and how streams merge, then split, end up in deltas, estuaries, and return to the ocean is a central inspiration for the artist. In its multiplicity, water is somehow one—one same encompassing entity that embraces our planet as it moves through spaces and links all beings, human and more than human. Water carries its history into the elements it touches, sees, shapes, and alters. The cycle of water in its constant evolution and movement—liquid, vapor, ice; rain, storms, floods, soil infiltration—is an infinite cycle of connection and permeation.

Ohiyó-cán (2022) is a sculptural installation consisting of nine geometric, hollow brass structures maintained by stones sourced from a river in Mexico, just behind the artist's grand-parents' home, along with wood piling from Conoy Island Creek. It is conceived as a *tíalōcán*, a lush paradisaical heaven—located in the first of the ascending levels of the Aztec upper world—that welcomed souls who died from drownings, water accidents, illnesses associated with water, and lightning strikes. The title itself is a combination of the Seneca word *Ohicyo*, which means "good river" (and later became Ohio), and *tíalōcán*. The fragile balance of the structures and the experience of walking around and seeing through them convokes a sense of embedment and interconnectedness. The artist has conceived the constructions as mirrors, in which, fluidly, we can feel other bodies' experiences and change our perspective. Water is, after all, an element that enables shift; it is an actor and, most significantly, a trigger of transformation.

As in previous installations by Peña Salinas, the surrounding architecture is another element integral to the work. The artist has composed the whole installation to resonate with Zaha Hadid's design for the Contemporary Arts Center, with its strong character, marked angles, and sorts of fault lines. Peña Salinas has consciously positioned the elements of *Ohiyó-cán* in relation to a central pillar, aligning them with the oblique angle the pillar creates with other parts of the architecture on the fourth floor, literally imposing a space within Hadid's space—yet she does so with fluidity. Peña Salinas does not ignore or go against the architecture but rather flows with it. She experiments using a liquid approach to a stable structure: her work slides in the skin of the CAC, as just another membrane. The artwork and architecture enter into a conversation—a positioning that influences how the audience circulates in between, and looks at, the different stations of the installation.

For Peña Salinas, currents are intimately, and poetically, associated with movement in its many dimensions. Although *Ohiyó-cán* is not directly political, it moves beyond references to Tlaloc and Chalchihuitlicue to consider migration and displacements influenced by, or linked to, water. Before and during the American Civil War (1861–65), the Ohio River, which defines the southern edge of Cincinnati, notably demarcated between the Union and the Confederacy. Slaves escaping from the South would cross the river to find refuge in Northern free states. The work piling in the installation—elements of former bridges and other collapsed constructions that once marked spaces of passage and crossing—refers to this historical fact but also gestures to man-made points of exclusion.

The Mexican stones holding the brass components, too, bear the imprints of their original river, directly descending from the Sierra Madre mountain range to become part of a larger river that ends in the infamous Rio Grande. Like people, the rocks themselves have had to cross borders to reach their destination in the museum. In *Ohiyó-cán*, Peña Salinas connects the North and the South; waters become one again.

Painted on the wall, the meander of the Ohio River reminds us of the importance of paying attention to the landscape, of reconnecting with it, of immersing oneself in water's rhizomes.

Vian Sora

Amara Antilla

"It's at the borders of things—the borders of the rivers, the borders of the body—where the lies of *coherence* are most clear. When bodies break down, we discover that they were never really whole but always in flux, fluid, liquid, and water."

— Vian Sora

Vian Sora works with painting to explore water as a life-giving and life-taking force. Her compositions, rendered in vibrant colors, hover between abstraction and figuration to explore universal concepts of grief, mortality, the environment, and identity. Informed by feminist and posthumanist discourse, her signature approach to painting renders an evolving cast of biomorphic forms that might be interpreted as figures, cellular shapes, or underwater landscapes, which are at once coming into being and dissolving.

Based in an intuitive process, Sora's works achieve a textural complexity that defies categorization to evoke a range of emotional responses. Often drawing from personal memories, current events, and cultural references rooted in mid-century Iraqi modernist painting and architecture, she first applies an underpainting using spray paint, watercolor, or charcoal, after which ten to twenty layers of acrylic are applied and removed until the artist achieves the desired effects. In this additive and subtractive approach, compositions emerge out of a chaotic formlessness likened to the dark matter of space or the aftermath of an explosion.

In Sora's *Floodgates* series (2020–22), the artist comments on the monumental societal shifts around racial justice, economics, and mobility ushered in with the pandemic. Works such as *Embrace* and *Bathers* (both 2020) refer to the intimacy and fragility of human life. Red swaths of pooling paint seep from within loose figurative outlines into the space between, reflecting the concepts of interspecies exchange and the shifting boundaries of life under quarantine. *Bathers*, in particular, features, as Sora comments, "a vision of life in a time where the core of civilization seemed to be disintegrating in the face of uncertainty." Alternatively, *Antibodies* (2020) demonstrates internal bodily fluids and the process of fighting off illness in response to the artist's own personal health struggles.

In a more recent work *Riverbed* (2022), Sora reflects on climate change and the shifting relationships between humans and nature. She writes, "These works stem from reexamining events that took place by water, where water becomes a marker for a number of historical [traumas] that have significant regional and geopolitical impact." Citing the deadly tornadoes that ravaged her home state of Kentucky in December 2021, a collection of shapes that resemble dismembered bodies or internal organs expand across the surface of the canvas. They combine with plant-like structures that appear to grow and merge with the biomorphic arrangement, as if being transformed back into nature in a process of accelerated decay. The work is a sobering meditation on water as a witness and healer in the face of cataclysmic events and the interconnectedness and interdependence of all forms of life.

Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas

Clelia Coussonnet

Most likely, in the human mind, the word *water* primarily evokes oceans, rivers, and lakes; probably rains and floods too; maybe ice or phreatic tables. Yet in discussions of climate breakdown and ecological policymaking, certain bodies of incredible biodiversity, specificity, and environmental importance—swamps, marshes, wetlands, and deltas—have historically been neglected, even despite nearly half-a-century-old legislation like the Ramsar Convention (which was adopted in 1971 to protect wetlands from pollution and misuses) that publicly

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acknowledged the vast value of their ecological, economic, and cultural significance. In stark contrast to their widespread "murky" perception, these waterscapes are zones of extreme and extraordinary activity—buzzing, swarming, teeming with life in their swirls and stagnant puddles.

Heeding lessons from swamps and other beighted watery environments is a central concern—along with the privatization and impact of power infrastructures on public and civic space—of Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas' practice, which operates at the crossroads of art, science, technology, urbanism, militancy, and institutional critique. Based on research, study of archives, experimentations, and collaborations with practitioners from myriad other fields, their projects form an articulated web of ideas and processes—an entire dialogue altogether. The duo, known collectively as Urbonas, draws particular attention to eliciting the construction of new imaginaries and the development of ecological sensitivities, including concepts like interspecies solidarity.

A notable dimension of the artists' ethos is a playful communality. They deal with serious topics through ludic and participatory experiences in which they involve communities, mutually sharing and informing research and creation processes. This generates multifaceted and complex works. In the duo's project *Rivers Run* (2012), in collaboration with writer Tracey Warr and architect Giacomo Castagnola, mo are one of their first such investigations into water as a public commons. In the work, one axis of investigation included "riparian territory of river cultures" and stories, resulting in the design of a floating pad that allowed one to be both on and with the water, or in the artists' words, "a membrane that [allowed] one to "wear" the river." Perspectives of aquatic plants, affected estuaries, and amphibian identities were further developed through the artists' multiyear research project *Zoetics* (2013–2018), which "explored human, nonhuman, and poetic knowledge spheres, situating an artistic imagination in this context." Then, in 2018, the duo organized the *Swamp School* during the 16th International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, hosting 300 "students" in a contemplation on how architecture divides solid and liquid spaces, ultimately reclaiming marshes as complex, paradoxical, and hybrid queer spaces of inspiration.

As the artists observe, their works in *Breaking Water* engage visitors sensorially and stem from the "concept of the swamp as a form of intelligence and as a model through which we can look at the coexistence of life forms and their complex relationships. Swamp unfolds as a perfectly organized biosphere, and as a habitat with its own pluriverse of historic, cultural, cybernetic ontologies that can help to grapple with the mess of a new climatic regime. The beauty of wetlands enables the carbon and methane sink, collection and distribution of water, filtering of pollutants, caring as a habitat and as a refuge for plants and animals, and also providing a destination for social engagement, scientific and artistic research."

At the entrance of the Contemporary Arts Center, the audience is welcomed by the ambient, organic cracklings of *Amphibian Songs* (2019), a collaboration with musician Nicole L'Heulier. These sonic compositions premiered during the outdoor exhibition *The Work of Wind: Air, Land, Sea* in Mississauga, Canada, where the tracks were emitted by an environmental-scale installation made of blue water pipes, titled *Futurity Island* (2018), conceived in collaboration with architect Indré Ubrasasiti. Typically used to drain marshes, the pipes offered "a metaphor for human-centered ecology and environmental domination, and a symbol of the Anthropocene." The songs connect nature, toxicity, and amphibious species by mixing environmental pollution data with sounds of the genus *Hydropsyche*—or caddisflies—and the vibrations of their flute-like habitats. In *Breaking Water*, leaking into both the street and the museum, the sound work gives voice to silenced species.

Within the CAC, excerpts from the forthcoming publication *Swamps and the New Imagination* (2022) crawl on the wall, offering insights on the elusive nature of quagmires, the liminality between earth and water, and other intersectional topics—"transnational and speculative architecture, ecofeminist and queer theory, post-humanism, techno-ecology, materialism, visual studies and imagination, third order cybernetics, sociology, and eco-communing"—to "argue for conviviality (living together) and symposiis (making together) in imagining the future"

In the same space, Urbonas have devised a site-specific wall piece, *Swamp Index* (2022). Beneath a monochrome abstraction of a square, visitors can discover a spheric map, featuring multiple glyphs of swamp life forms, from bacteria to mammals, and painted with natural pigments under layers of mud using a near-infrared spectrum light source. This work connects to the last liquid rhizome of the duo's presentation in *Breaking Water*, a digital re-link to their *Swamp Game* (2020), initially conceived in collaboration with MIT Climate Visions Lab for the *Critical Zones* exhibition at ZKM Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe. In the game, players are invited to embody different species (plants, insects, birds, amphibians, fungi, bacteria, or algae), positioning "the swamp as a perfect milieu to sense the fragile interdependencies between organisms and their habitat. Here, every member of the community is part of every other member's environment, as well as being necessary for the survival of the whole." The game's diagrammatic index charts more than 200 glyphs that are simultaneous actors yet never accessible all together. Its geometry seems formless and monotonous, but as soon as one starts seeing what is invisible, the messiness and creativity of the swamp surfaces.

These works serve as invitations to further delve into Urbonas' research—and to learn tools to redefine our relationship with wetlands, in particular, and with solid and liquid environ-ments, at large, in a symbiotic way, escaping boundaries and containment, and embracing leakages and permeation.

Endnotes

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- Charles Sepulveda, "Our Sacred Waters: Theorizing Kuuyam as a Decolonial Possibility," in *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 7, no. 1 (2018), 40–58.
- Ari Larissa Heinrich, "Applied Co-Enmeshment," 2018, <https://www.recessart.org/jarilarissah Heinrich>.
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- Joseph Milton, "Mercury causes homosexuality in male lizards," *Nature* (2010), <https://www.nature.com/articles/news.2010.641>.
- Anne Pollock, "Queering Endocrine Disruption," in *Object-Oriented Feminism*, ed. Katherine Behar (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016). See also Evia Wilk, "This Compost—Erotics of Rot," in Stefanie Hessler, ed., *Sex Ecologies* (Trondheim, Linköping, and Cambridge, MA: Kunstthall Trondheim, The Seed Box, and The MIT Press, 2021).
- Mei Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 15–16.
- Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 333.
- Etel Adnan, *Sea and Fog* (New York: Night Boat, 2018), 22.

12

"Water never really 'breaks' but rather shifts form, moving in and out of bodies—both a signal and an agent of embodied change."

— Carmen Winant

Breaking Water features work by seventeen artists across painting, sculpture, installation, and video that considers various approaches to the subjects of water, ecology, and feminism. Departing from the material and metaphysical properties of water as an adaptable and porous liquid that connects our bodies to the environments that sustain us, the exhibition explores wetness as a framework through which to consider our relationship to nature, other organisms, and society at large. These lively inter-dependencies demonstrate humanity's entanglements with other forms of life, where water—and its various bodily forms: blood, semen, amniotic liquid, urine—act as connectors or "rivulets that make their way from our inside to out, from watery womb to watery world." By attending to the aquatic origins of all creation and the water that flows through us, it becomes possible to de-center largely capital-istic, colonialist, anthropomorphic approaches and consider what it would mean to truly embody water.

Martha Atienza

(b. 1981, Manila, Philippines; lives and works in Bantayan Island, Philippines) →



Marcos Ávila Forero

← (b. 1983, Paris, France; lives and works in Paris, France)

April, 2016
Color video, with sound
13 min, 59 sec
Courtesy of the artist and ADAM Gallery, Barcelona



April, 2016
Color video, with sound
1 min, 58 sec
Courtesy of the artist and Bookley Gallery, Minneapolis

Andrea Carlson

← (b. 1979, Ojibwe; lives and works in Chicago, IL)



A

Three, 2015
PTC, 2015
Color video
44 min
Courtesy of the artist and Steven's Galleries, Manila

—

March, 2019
Video, 4 parts
Courtesy of the artist and
Anders Skjelpens, Stockholm, Paris
8 min, 2 sec
Courtesy of the artist and
Anders Skjelpens, Stockholm, Paris

S

April, 2016
Paper
Courtesy of the artist and Instituto de Valsa, Bogota

,

2

Jes Fan

(b. 1990, Ontario, Canada; lives and works in New York, NY) →



January, 2019
Real concrete
Courtesy of the artist

Cleo Fariselli

← (b. 1982, Cesenatico, Italy; lives and works in Turin, Italy)



Summer of 2018
Still life, video
with sound
27 min, 30 sec
Courtesy of the artist

T

1

Jaana Laakkonen

← (b. 1985, Joensuu, Finland; lives and works in Helsinki, Finland)



Unfinished, 2020/22
Acrylic, ink, acrylic paint, polyester, water, polyamide-ethylene, cotton,
jute, charcoal, paper, paper, linen, MDF board, modeling paste,
digital color prints, and more
Courtesy of the artist



February, 2022
Video, 2019
with sound
11 min, 17 sec
Courtesy of the artist

2

Calista Lyon and Carmen Winant

(b. 1986, Nagambie, Australia; lives and works in Columbus, OH) →
(b. 1983, San Francisco, CA; lives and works in Columbus, OH) →

Paul Maheke

(b. 1985, Brive-la-Gaillarde, France; lives and works in Montpellier, France) →



Y

6

U

U

Claudia Peña Salinas

(b. 1975, Nuevo León, Mexico; lives and works in New York, NY) →



T

1

Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas

(est. 1997, live and work in Vilnius, Lithuania, and Cambridge, MA) →



April, 2021
Video
Courtesy of the artist and Nicoletti Contemporary, London
Collaboration with Nicolas Priou (b. 1993, France)
Kris and works by Lyon and Saint-Étienne, France

Josèfa Ntjam

← (b. 1992, Metz, France; lives and works in Saint-Étienne, France)

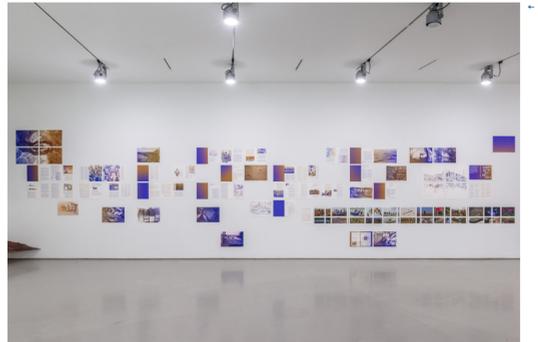


October, 2022
Mixed media on canvas
Courtesy of the artist and Movement Gallery, Louisville

Vian Sora

← (b. 1976, Baghdad, Iraq; lives and works in Louisville, KY)

Swamps and the New Imagination, *The book unfolded*, 2020–22
Indigo print on paper, excerpts from the publication *Swamps and the New Imagination* by Sternberg Press and MIT Press, 2022
Courtesy of the artist
Edited by Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas and Kristupas Sabolius
Design in collaboration with NODE Berlin Oslo
Editorial consultants: Mariel Villere, Jonathan Jae-an Crisman, Monica Hutton
Copy editor: Carolyn Shea
Supported by the Lithuanian Council for Culture, Architektūros fondas, the Council for the Arts at MIT, the John & Cynthia Reed Foundation, Iuav University of Venice, and Cecot Veneto



Carolina Caycedo

(b. 1978, London, UK; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA) →



A

G

Ohio, 2022
Bread, wood, acrylic, polystyrene, and other stones
Courtesy of the artist and Embajada, San Juan

4

O

2

Kinship

While kinship is often discussed in relation to ancestral and genealogical ties, Donna Haraway rethinks the boundaries that have been placed upon the term “kin,” allowing it to extend to all earthly creatures. In a time of ecological crisis, Haraway argues that human and non-human entities must cultivate alternative forms of inter-species relationality; only then can a new process of reworlding begin. Therefore, Haraway’s concept of kinship works to undo the bonds of the Anthropocene and Capitalocene, which center human connections and numbers, and reprioritize multi-species justice.

(See also: leaky bodies, multispecies)

Leaky bodies

In *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries*, gender theorist Margrit Shildrick both acknowledges the body’s instability and the multiple fluxes and flows that exist across all forms of matter. While the idealized body has been historically imagined as a solid, self-contained form that is controlled by constant monitoring, Shildrick argues that the leaky, unstable body can serve as the new grounds for a postmodern feminist ethic. Leaky bodies destabilize clear categorizations and universalizing representations of the body, which aim to uphold singular solidity as an epistemological ideal. All boundaries thus become permeable and indecipherable through bodily leaks and seepages. ^(See also: kinship)

Tidalectics

Caribbean poet and historian Edward Kamau Brathwaite introduced the theory of tidalectics, an analytic method that is based on water’s cyclical, undulating movements. Breaking away from the linear constraints of time and space, tidalectic thinking embraces the ocean’s constant state of rhythmic fluctuation. Additionally, tidalectics recognizes that the ocean does not only affect aquatic beings but land-based creatures as well, as terrestrial and oceanic forces continually transition back and forth through material, ecological, and cultural change. Therefore, tidalectics open a new reality of underwater submersion, an oceanic intimacy that brings together all entities through a diffractive worldview.

New materialism

New materialism or agential realism is an ontological reorientation that privileges the inherent entanglements between matter and meaning.

(See also: cyborgs / posthumanism, hydrofeminism)

Hydrofeminism

Coined by Astrida Neimanis in 2008, hydrofeminism refers to a mode of being and thinking that resists binaries to demonstrate water as an agent of interconnectivity, transformation, and emancipation in an age of post-human climate grief and feminist intellectual fatigue.

Chthulucene

A combination of the Greek words *khthôn* (earth, land) and *kainos* (new, refreshed), Chthulucene describes the need to “stay in the trouble” of the earth’s present conditions, which have reached a point of environmental crises. Providing an alternative narrative to the Anthropocene and Capitalocene, which center human beings as the most important contributors to the planet, the Chthulucene suggests the new possibilities that can emerge from interspecies stories and de-hierarchized connections.

(See also: multispecies)

Ecofeminism

Commonly refers to the concept that emerged in the 1970s to explore the ways in which women and the environment are linked.

Aquapelagic

Philip Hayward’s term “aquapelagic” describes the ways in which water that traverses between and around land, particularly islands, is inherently tied to the lived experiences and identities of the social groups that inhabit that land and its adjacent waters.

Artists

Martha Atienza was born in Manila, Philippines in 1981. She graduated with a BFA in media art and mixed media from the Academy of Visual Arts and Design in Enschede, Netherlands (2006). In her installations and videos, Atienza documents her environment to explore issues of environmental change, displacement, cultural loss, and socioeconomic disparity. Atienza has exhibited internationally at various art spaces, galleries, and video festivals. In 2017, Atienza won the Baloise Art Prize at Art Basel (Switzerland) for her work *Our Islands T1°16'58.4_N 123°45'07.0_E*. In 2016, she was one of five shortlisted artists for the Benesse Art Prize (Japan) at the Singapore Biennale. In 2015, Atienza was honored as part of the Thirteen Artists Awards by the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Atienza has participated in residencies all over the world: in 2005, she was a part of Kwataideakatenia’s art program in Finland. In 2016 and 2012, she won the prestigious Ateneo Art Award with studio residency grants in Liverpool, Melbourne, New York, and Singapore. In 2016, she was the recipient of the first Mercedes Zobel/Outset Residency at Gasworks in London. In 2018, Atienza was a part of the NTU Center for Contemporary Art’s residency program in Singapore. She currently lives and works in Bantayan, Philippines.

Marcos Ávila Forero was born in Paris, France in 1983. He received a DNAP from the École Supérieure des Beaux Arts, Rueil-Malmaison, France (2006) and a DNSAP from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris (2010). Through his videos and installations, Ávila Forero collaborates with local communities in Colombia and other locations to document their realities of post-colonial displacement and migration. Throughout his career, he has had solo exhibitions at Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2013); the Pori Art Museum, Finland (2018); and the Kyoto Art Center (2019). His work has also been presented in several international group exhibitions, including *Condensation*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2013); *Rights of Nature: Art and Ecology in the Americas*, Nottingham Contemporary, UK (2015); *Viva Arte Viva*, the 57th Venice Biennale (2017); *Post-Water*, Museo Nazionale della Montagna, Turin, Italy (2018); and *Bordes de la cotidianidad*, Museo de Arte Miguel Urrutia, Bogotá, Colombia (2019). He currently lives and works in Paris.

Cecilia Bengolea was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1979. Infused with the symbolic energies found within nature and relationships, her compositions are formed around ideas of the body—both individually and collectively—as a medium. Bengolea develops a broad artistry where she sees movement, dance, and performance as animated sculpture. Bengolea has collaborated with Dancehall artists such as Craig Black Eagle, Bombom DHQ, and Damion BG, and with artists Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and Jeremy Deller. Her collaborative work with French choreographer François Chaignaud, *Pâquerette* (2005–2008) and *Sylphides* (2009), have earned several awards such as the Award of the Critique de Paris in 2010 and the Young Artist Prize at the Gwangju Biennale in 2014. They have also co-created works for their dance company as well as for the Ballet de Lyon (2013), the Ballet de Lorraine (2014), and Pina Bausch Tanztheater Wuppertal. Bengolea’s work has been featured in solo and two-person exhibitions at the Dia Art Foundation, New York (2017) and the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao (2021). She has also had works shown internationally in group exhibitions, including *Do Disturb*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2015); the São Paulo Biennial (2016); *Favorite Positions*, Louvre Museum, Paris (2019); *Before We Die*, Performa 19, New York (2019); and the Gwangju Biennale, Korea (2021). She currently lives and works in Paris.

Andrea Carlson (Ojibwe, b. 1979) currently lives and works in Chicago but has deep roots in Minnesota. She holds a BA from the University of Minnesota (2003) and an MFA from Minneapolis College of Art and Design (2005). Carlson’s paintings and drawings reference entangled cultural narratives that challenge institutional authority and colonial constructs that often govern collected objects. Her work has been the focus of several solo exhibitions in museums such as the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian George Gustav Heye Center, New York (2009) and the Minneapolis Institute of Art (2016) and art centers such as Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art, Winnipeg, Canada (2014) and Telemark Kunstsenter, Skien, Norway. Her works have been included in many group exhibitions, including *Art for a New Understanding*, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art (2018) and *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists*, Minneapolis Institute of Art (2019–20). Carlson was a 2008 McKnight Fellow and received a 2017 Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Award and a 2021 Chicago Artadia Award.

Carolina Caycedo (b. 1978) is a London-born Colombian multidisciplinary artist known for her performances, videos, artist’s books, sculptures, and installations that examine environmental and social issues. She participates in movements of territorial resistance, solidarity economies, and housing as a human right. Her work contributes to the construction of environmental historical memory as a fundamental element for non-repetition of violence against human and non-human entities. Caycedo has developed publicly engaged projects in major cities across the globe, and held residencies at the DDAAD in Berlin and The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California, among others. She has participated in numerous international biennales including the Chicago Architecture, São Paulo, Istanbul, Berlin, Havana, and Whitney Biennials. Her recent solo museum exhibitions include *From the Bottom of the River* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2020–21); *Cosmotarrays* at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (2020); *Wanaawna, Rio Hondo and Other Spirits* at the Orange County Museum of Art (2019–20); and *Care Report* at Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, Poland (2019–20). She is a 2021–22 Inaugural Latinx Artist Fellow and 2020–22 Inaugural Borderlands Fellow at the Center for Imagination in the Borderlands at Arizona State University and the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at The New School.

Jes Fan was born in Ontario, Canada in 1990. He holds a BFA in glass from the Rhode Island School of Design (2014). Through his videos and sculptural installations, which are typically composed of glass, silicone, and resin, Fan examines the intersections of biology and identity to question the materiality of the gendered and racialized body. His works have been included in group exhibitions such as *Paradox: Haptic Body in the Age of AI*, Miller ICA, Pittsburgh (2018); *An Opera for Animals*, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai and Para Site, Hong Kong; *Spectrosynthesis II*, Bangkok Center for Contemporary Art; *Forget Sorrow Grass*, Times Museum, Guangzhou (all 2019); the New Museum Triennial, New York; and *Sex Ecologies*, Kunststhal Trondheim, Norway (2021). Fan currently lives and works in New York.

Cleo Farriselli was born in Cesenatico, Italy in 1982. Through her ceramic, performance, and canvas-based works, Farriselli plays with the material’s experiential qualities, highlighting clay’s relationship to the performative body and its environment. She has had solo exhibitions at Collezione Iannaccone, Milan and Almanac Inn, Turin (both 2019). Her works have also been shown in several group exhibitions, including the Prague Biennale, Czech republic and *Estate*, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York (both 2012); and *TU35 Expanded*, Centre per l’Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato, Italy and *Intuition*, Fortuny Palace, Venice (both 2017). She currently lives and works in Turin, Italy.

Saodat Ismailova was born in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in 1981. She studied filmmaking at the Tashkent State Institute of Arts and Culture (2002). As a filmmaker and artist, Ismailova is deeply engaged in Uzbekistan’s collective memory of myths, legends, and rites. She has had solo exhibitions at the Kunstsammlungen und Museen Augsburg, Germany (2015); Tromsokunstforenen, Norway (2017); Ilkhom Theatre, Tashkent (2018); the Center for Contemporary Art, Tashkent (2020); and Aspan Gallery, Almaty, Kazakhstan (2021). Her films and video installations have also been shown in several international film festivals and group exhibitions, including *Documenta*, Madrid (2005); the Fabrica Cinema Festival, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2006); *Winter*, Venice Biennale and *Lost to the Future*, Singapore Biennale (both 2013); the Berlin International Film Festival (2014); and *An Opera for Animals*, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai and Para Site, Hong Kong (2019). She currently lives and works in Tashkent and Paris. Ismailova’s works are held in the collection of Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam and Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Jaana Laakkonen was born in Joensuu, Finland in 1985. She holds a postgraduate master’s degree from the Research in Art and Design Programme of St. Lucas School of Arts, Antwerp, Belgium (2017) and an MFA from the University of the Arts, Helsinki, Finland (2014). Through her artistic practice, which acknowledges not-aONEss of making and living, Laakkonen deviates from the conventions of traditional artmaking, presenting her painted works as fabric-based sculptures or installations. Through this unique approach, she troubles dichotomies of Western modernity that are derived from nature-culture dualisms. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at basis Projektraum, Frankfurt, Germany (2016); Treignac Projet, France (2016, 2020); and MAA-tila Project Space, Helsinki (2021). She has also had works included in group exhibitions, including *Passion Play*, Helsinki Contemporary (2013); *Alternative Acts*, Kunststhal Extr City, Antwerp (2017); and *Beings With*, Fiskars Village Art and Design Biennale, Finland (2019). Her written work has been published in the form of a book *They Inhabit While Working* by Archive Books, Berlin, Germany (2021). She currently lives and works in Helsinki.

Calista Lyon was born in Nagambie, Australia in 1986. She received a BA in studio art from California State University, Los Angeles (2015) and an MFA in photography from The Ohio State University, Columbus (2019). In response to ecological collapse, Lyon uses a research-and image-based practice to share ideas of ecology, community, and interdependence. Her works have been featured in solo exhibitions at the Murray Art Museum, Albury, Australia (2017); The Mary Ed Mecoy Hall Gallery, Murray State University, KY (2020); and 934 Gallery, Columbus (2021). She has also had works in several group exhibitions, including *Head On Portrait Prize*, Sydney Museum, Australia (2017); *Cultivating a Garden off Grid*, AUTOMAT Collective, Philadelphia (2019) and *November*, Beeler Gallery, Columbus and *Orchids: Attraction and Deception*, Barry Art Museum, Norfolk, VA (both 2021). She currently lives and works in Columbus, OH.

Paul Maheke was born in Brive-la-Gaillarde, France in 1985. He received a bachelor’s degree from the École Estienne, Paris (2007), as well as a BFA and MFA from the École Nationale Supérieure d’Arts de Cergy, France (2009 and 2011). Through improved movements and spectral sensations, Maheke’s performances and videos make the transcendental, marginalized, and invisible central to the viewer’s experience. His works have been featured in solo exhibitions at South London Gallery, UK (2016) and Triangle France, Marseille (2019). He has also had works and performances shown in several group exhibitions, including *Ten Days Six Nights*, Tate Modern, London and *Diaspora Pavilion*, Venice Biennale (both 2017); *Transcorporealities*, Ludwig Museum, Cologne (2019) and *Crystal Clear*, Pera Museum, Istanbul and *Future Generation Art Prize*, Pinchuk Art Centre, Kiev (both 2021). Maheke currently lives and works in London.

Joséfa Nijam was born in 1992 in Metz, France, and currently lives and works in Saint-Étienne, France. Gleaning the raw material of her work from the internet and books on natural sciences, Nijam uses assemblage—of images, words, sound, and stories—as a method to deconstruct the grand narratives of everyday hegemonic discourses on origin, identity, and race. She studied in Amiens, France and Dakar, Senegal (Cheikh Antia Diop University) and graduated from the École Nationale Supérieure d’Art, Bourges, France (2015) and the École Nationale Supérieure d’Art, Paris-Cergy, France (2017). Her work and performances have been shown in international exhibitions, including the 15th Biennale de Lyon, MAC Lyon, France and *Feminism, Gender, Resistance—Act 3*, Arnolfini, Bristol, UK (both 2019); *La Manutention*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris; *Paysages alentour*, Centre Pompidou, Paris; *Risquons-tout*, WIELS, Brussels, Belgium; *Climate Knowledges*, MAMA, Rotterdam, Netherlands (all 2020); *Anticorps*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2020–21); *MEMORIA: récits d'une autre histoire*, Frac Nouvelle-Aquitaine MÉCA, Bordeaux, France; and *Drift: Art and Dark Matter*, residency and exhibition at Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, Ontario, Canada (both 2021). Nijam is a member of Paris-based art & research collective Black to the Future.

Claudia Peña Salinas was born in Nuevo León, Mexico in 1975. She holds a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1999) and an MFA from Hunter College, New York (2009). Through an expansive body of work, composed of video, installation, painting, sculpture, and photography, Peña Salinas explores ancestral symbols and histories, offering Indigenous knowledge that disrupts Western coloniality and its invasive practices. Her works have been featured in solo exhibitions at Forever & Today, New York (2012); Embajada, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2017); the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, Lansing, MI (2018); and the Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, AZ (2019). She has also had works included in group exhibitions, including *The S-Files*, El Museo del Barrio, New York and El Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico, Santurce (2005–2006); *Queens International*, *Three Points Make a Triangle*, Queens Museum, New York (2012); the National Landscape Biennial, Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City (2015); and *Pacha*, *Liqta*, *Wasichay: Indigenous Space*, *Modern Architecture*, *New Art*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2018). She currently lives and works in New York.

Vian Sora was born in Baghdad, Iraq in 1976. She received a bachelor’s degree in computer science from Al Mansour University, Baghdad (2000) and studied printmaking at the Istanbul Museum of Graphic Design, Turkey (2006–2007). Through her expressionistic works on canvas, Sora reflects on her personal experiences as a diasporic Iraqi subject. She has had solo exhibitions at the Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul (2003); the Dar el Cid Museum, Kuwait City (2006); the Istanbul Museum of Graphic Art (2007), and the Moremen Gallery, Louisville (2018, 2020). Her works have also been in several group exhibitions, including the Sharjah Biennial, United Arab Emirates (2001); *One Stroke*, Lahd Art Gallery, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (2007); *Night and the Desert Know Me*, Joan Hisaoka Gallery, Washington, DC (2016); KMAC Triennial, KMAC Museum, Louisville (2019); *We All Declare for Liberty*, Quaggi Projects, Louisville (2020); and *The World Turned Upside Down: A Contemporary Response*, Speed Art Museum, Louisville (2021). She currently lives and works in Louisville.

Nomeda Urbonas was born in Kaunas, Lithuania in 1968, and Gediminas Urbonas was born in Vilnius, Lithuania in 1966. As collaborators, Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas co-founded Urbonas Studio, an interdisciplinary research practice that facilitates a diverse range of participatory projects that transform civic spaces and collective imaginaries. Their works have been shown in solo exhibitions at the Ludwig Museum, Budapest (2002); Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany (2002); the Venice Biennale (2007); the Museum of Contemporary Art, Barcelona (2008); and the 32nd São Paulo Biennial (2016). They have also had works included in several group exhibitions, including *Documenta 11*, Kassel (2002); *Manifesta 4* in Frankfurt a.M (2002); *3rd Berlin Biennial* (2004); 6th Gwangju Biennale, Korea (2006); 9th Lyon Biennale (2007); *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, International Center of Photography, New York (2008); 2nd and 4th Moscow Biennale (2007 and 2011); Baltic Trienniala (2015); Folkstone Triennial (2017); Busan Biennale (2018); *Bodybuilding*, *Performs and You and I don’t live in the same planet*, Taipei Biennial (both 2020); and *Critical Zones*, ZKM, Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe (2021). Urbonas Studio is based in Cambridge, MA and Vilnius, Lithuania.

Carmen Winant (b. 1983, San Francisco, CA) is an artist based in Columbus, OH. Her work uses installation and collage strategies to examine feminist modes of survival and revolt. Winant’s recent projects have been shown at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo; the SculptureCenter, New York; the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus; Kunststhal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen; and the CONTACT Photography Festival, which mounted twenty-six of her billboards across Canada. Winant’s recent artist’s books, *My Birth* and *Notes on Fundamental Joy*, were published by SPBH Editions, ITI Press, and Printed Matter Inc. Her work is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Minneapolis Institute of Art; The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and the Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo. Winant was a 2019 Guggenheim Fellow in Photography, a 2020 Pew Center for Arts and Heritage Grantee, a 2020 FCA Grant Recipient in Art, and a 2021 American Academy of Arts and Letters Honoree.

Contributors

Amara Antilla is a curator and art historian specializing in international art since 1960. She currently serves as the Senior Curator at Large at the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) in Cincinnati, where she has organized solo exhibitions and new commissions by Marwa Arsanios, Hellen Ascoli, Kahlil Robert Irving, Steffani Jemison, and Nora Turato, among others. Her recent group exhibitions include *Wild Frictions: The Politics and Poetics of Interruption* (2020, co-curated with Sandra Teitel) and *The Regional* (2021, co-curated with Jade Powers). Previously, Antilla was a curator at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, where she focused on the ac-quisition, research, and exhibition program of the MAP Global Art Initiative (2012–18). She also contributed to several major exhibitions including the *Hugo Boss Prize*; Simone Leigh, *Loophole of Retreat* (2019); *But A Storm Is Blowing from Paradise: Contemporary Art of the Middle East and North Africa* (2017); *Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian: Infinite Possibility* (2015); and *Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today* (2014), among others. Independently, Antilla has organized academic programs and performances for the Getty Connecting Art Histories Program (with partners Cornell’s Institute for Comparative Modernities, Asia Art Archive, and the Dhaka Art Summit), Northern Spark, and Kunstraum Kreuzberg, among others. She is the recipient of the 2022 Emily Hall Tremaine Exhibition Research Award.

Clelia Coussonnet is an independent curator, art editor, and writer interested in how visual cultures tackle political, social, and spiritual issues in different, or complementary, ways than other disciplines. She is fascinated with deconstructing the invisible power structures that shape geopolitics and with exploring resistance strategies to domination patterns. She follows artists who question norms and investigate narratives around history, memory, and knowledge production and dissemination. Lately, her research has been revolving around botanical politics, investigating political imprints on plants, circulation, and resilience in the shows *Effet de Serre—Farah Khelli*, Parc du Belvédère, Tunis (2021); *Planted in the Body*, MeetFactory, Praha (2021); *Ground Control*, Bildmuseet, Umeå (2020); *Leave No Stone Unturned (Remuer la terre)*, Le Cube, Rabat (2019); and *Botany under Influence*, apexart, NYC (2016). As a ramification, she has been diving into riverine and marine environments considering liquidity, toxicity, and contamination. Recently, she wrote essays on archaeology and water for *In Ruins*, and on the practices of Olivia Barisano, Farah Khelli (all three 2022), Minia Biabiany (2021), and Sarah Sandler (2020); and essays for the publications *Rehearsing Hospitalitys—Companion 1* by Frame Finland(Archive Books Berlin (2019) and *Theatrum Botanicum*, edited by Uriel Orlow and Shela Sheikh, Sternberg Press/The Showroom London (2018).

Diana B. Campbell is an American curator who has been working in South and Southeast Asia since 2010, primarily in India, Bangladesh, and the Philippines. She is committed to fostering a transnational art world, and her plural and long-range vision addresses the concerns of underrepresented regions and artists alongside the more established in manifold forums. Since 2013, she has served as the Founding Artistic Director of Dhaka-based Samdani Art Foundation, Bangladesh and Chief Curator of the Dhaka Art Summit. Concurrent to her work in Bangladesh from 2016 to 2018, Campbell was also the Founding Artistic Director of Bellas Artes Projects in the Philippines, a nonprofit international residency and exhibition program with sites in Manila and Bataan, and curated Frieze Projects in London for the 2018 and 2019 editions of the fair. She chairs the board of the Mumbai Art Room and is an advisor to AFIELD, a global network of socially engaged artistic practices. Her writing has been published by *Mousse*, *Frieze*, *Art in America*, and the Museum of Modern Art, among others. She is leading the international network of art educators sharing transcultural approaches to art education—edglobalforum.org—an initiative of the Fondazione Morra Greco in Naples and the Campania region of Italy.

Chandra Frank is a feminist researcher who works on the intersections of archives, waterways, gender, sexuality, and race. Her curatorial practice explores the politics of care, experimental forms of narration, and the colonial grammar embedded within display and exhibition arrangements. She earned a PhD in queer and feminist studies from Goldsmiths, University of London. She has published in peer-reviewed journals and exhibition catalogues, including *Feminist Review*, the Small Aves VLOA catalogue, *The Place Is Here* publication, and the collection *Tongues*. She recently co-edited a special issue on archives for *Feminist Review*. Her curated exhibitions include *Re(A)signifying Narratives* (Amsterdam)(Cape Town), *Fugitive Desires* (London), and *Proclamation 73* (Durban) (co-curated with Zara Julius). Her dissertation and book project looks at the everyday experiences of the transnational feminist and queer Black, Migrant and Refugee Movement in the Netherlands during the 1980s. Using an innovative methodology based on Dutch colonial water infrastructures, she looks at how water functions as a form of domination, border, and control and how, at the same time, it offers a theoretical and methodological framework to look at queer diasporic subjectivities. She has taught at Goldsmiths, School for International Training, and California State University Los Angeles. Currently, Frank is a Post-doctoral Fellow at the Charles Phelps Taft Research Center at the University of Cincinnati.

Stefanie Hessler is a curator, writer, editor, and institutional leader focusing on ecologies and its various social interactions. She now directs the international nonprofit institution Swiss Institute in New York. Prior to that, she was the director of Kunststhal Trondheim, Norway (2019–22), where she curated critically acclaimed solo exhibitions by Frida Urupabo and Jenna Sutela, and initiated international collaborations, for instance with Princeton University, the Gwangju Biennale, and The Seed Box environmental humanities collaboratory. Through the latter, she co-led the research-based exhibition *Sex Ecologies* and edited the accompanying compendium on queer ecologies, sexuality, and care in more-than-human worlds (MIT Press, 2021). Other recent curatorial projects include *Sensing Nature*, 17th MOMENTA Biennale, Montreal (chief curator, 2020–21); *Rising Tides / Down to Earth*, Gropius Bau, Berlin (2020); *Joan Jonas: Moving Off the Land II*, Ocean Space, Venezia (2019); the symposium *Practices of Attention*, 33rd Bienal de São Paulo, (co-curator, 2018); and the 6th Athens Biennale (co-curator, 2018). Hessler regularly contributes articles to international magazines and publications. Her single-authored book *Prospecting Ocean* was published by The MIT Press and TBA21–Academy in 2019, and she has edited more than a dozen volumes including *Tidalectics: Imagining an Oceanic Worldview through Art and Science* (MIT Press, 2018) and *Life Itself* (Moderna Musset and Koenig Books, 2016).

Stephanie Kang is an art historian, artist, and curator who specializes in contemporary art with a focus on new media art and theory. Her current research project examines works that critique standard modes of existence that have foreclosed the possibility of imagining an alternative future. By exploring video and performance works that reorient the logics of linear temporality, her research proposes a new trajectory for a queer future, where hope, imagination, and possibility can be activated. Her writing has been published in *Flash Art*, *Runner Magazine*, and the peer-reviewed journal *Media-N*. She has also written for institutions like the Wexner Center for the Arts and FRONT International: Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art. As a curator, she has worked with artists like Lyndon Barrois Jr., Jiwon Choi, Jesse Chun, Kara Güt, Ann Hirsch, Kang Seung Lee, Cole Lu, and Alexis McCrimmon, among others. Her visual works have also been exhibited nationally and internationally at venues like the Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts, Grand Rapids, MI; the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis, MO; and the Athens Digital Arts Festival, Greece. She received her MFA in Visual Art from Washington University in St. Louis and PhD in the History of Art at the Ohio State University. She previously worked as assistant curator at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati.

Roxanne T. Ornelas is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at Miami University, Ohio. Her area of research expertise is environmental studies and the geographies of Indigenous peoples with a focus on their traditional sacred lands and water protection. As a researcher, Dr. Ornelas collects stories from her field work experiences to share with her students in the classroom. She encourages students to look at Earth and our natural resources in a holistic relationship. One way of teaching such topics is through her use of multimedia and various forms of art that reflects a vision and expression of these interests. Dr. Ornelas helps her students to view art in its many forms as a way of understanding our present and our past. She believes that art speaks to the time in which it is created. Dr. Ornelas lived in Minnesota for six years while she worked on her graduate studies at the University of Minnesota. She is keenly aware of the challenges faced by those fighting to protect the health of water in the “Land of 10,000 Lakes” where artist Andrea Carlson grew up. It is through this lens that she wholeheartedly committed to the *Breaking Water* exhibition.

Screening Program

The film screening program accompanying *Breaking Water* expands on the exhibition’s themes of liquidity and interconnectness. By engaging water as an adaptable agent, the selected films consider how water’s fluid nature can be activated as a means of protest, resistance, and transformation. Many of the films, like Khvay Samnang’s *Papil* (2018) and Claudia Peña Salinas’ *Metzilocan* (2019), incorporate ancestral mythologies and ritualistic practices as a post-colonial tactic. Thus, they pay tribute to sources of knowledge that exist outside of Western modernity and its imperialistic intentions. Others, such as Allora & Calzadilla’s *A Man Screaming Is Not a Dancing Bear* (2008), represent water’s dynamic, immersive, and potentially destructive power, which is capable of transforming a landscape and its inhabitants.

Addressing the age of the Anthropocene, in which human activity has irreversibly affected the climate, several of the films also examine the eco-ethics of water in pursuit of environmental justice. Indigenous communities have been disproportionately displaced by these ecological changes, illustrating how the present climate crisis is tied to violent histories of settler colonialism—the forced migration and genocide of Indigenous peoples. By reflecting on issues of ecological crises and the preciousness of water, several of the films within this series, including Carolina Caycedo’s *A Gentle Rio* (*The People River*) (2016) and Marianne Fahmy’s *what things may come* (2019), imagine alternative solutions for an equitable and sustainable future. The exhibition’s screening program engages feminist theories, interspecies relationships, and Indigenous histories to consider water as a source of life that is perpetually adapting to its environment, forming bounded liquid connections.

— Stephanie Kang	
	May
	Claudia Peña Salinas, <i>Metzilocan</i> (2019)
	Shirley Bruno, <i>Tezen</i> (2016)
	Claudia Peña Salinas, <i>Tlachacan</i> (2017)
	Tash Naveau, <i>Menapwti</i> (<i>Smoked</i>) (2018)
	June
	Arjuna Neuman and Denise Ferreira da Silva, <i>4 Waters — Deep Implicancy</i> (2018)
	Carolina Caycedo, <i>A Gentle Rio</i> (<i>The People River</i>) (2016)
	Tabita Rezaire, <i>Deep Down Tidal</i> (2017)
	July
	Marianne Fahmy, <i>what things may come</i> (2019)
	Elsa Bris, <i>Sweet</i> (2020)
	Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla, <i>A Man Screaming Is Not a Dancing Bear</i> (2008)
	Khvay Samnang, <i>Papil</i> (2018)
	August
	Sky Hopinka, <i>ma’ni — towards the ocean, towards the shore</i> (2020)

Colophon

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Water legal rights

Recognizing the ecological urgency of granting legal personhood to waterways, rivers, the seabed, and oceans, so they can be represented in court and their environmental protection ensured by law enforcement. Traditionally, waters have been privatized and political, fishing, offshore, and other industrial interests have prevailed over biodiversity and environmental justice. The first river granted legal rights was the Whanganui in New Zealand (2017), followed by the Ganges and Yamuna in India (2017) or the Magpie in Canada (2021).

(See also: commons, land reclamation)

Archipelagic thinking

Inspired by the thinking of Caribbean writers Antonio Benítez Rojo, Édouard Glissant, and Derek Walcott, professors Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel and Michelle Stephens published *Contemporary Archipelagic Thinking* (Rowman, 2020). Taking the sea as a connector, the Caribbean authors explore the specificity of an epistemology born in archipelagos and studied how networks of islands in the Caribbean have fostered a unique idiosyncrasy and approach to space, politics, territory, bodies, and history that can be experienced in other archipelagic geographies too.

Liquid interfaces

Zones of contact, porosity, and permeability between earth and liquid masses, such as coastlines, shores, and wetlands. These interstitial spaces, almost membrane-like, host a fragile biodiversity and have a delicate ecological balance. Climate change, erosion, encroachment of land over waters, extraction, and the looting of underwater resources debilitate them, while preventing the protection of their unique biospheres.

(See also: leaky bodies, kinship, multispecies)

Wet ontologies

Wet ontologies challenge conceptions of space that overemphasize immaterial abstraction, or conversely, material fixity. Recognizing that both of these approaches ultimately fail to represent geographical experiences as chaotic and dynamic, yet material and voluminous, wet ontologies look to the ocean as the emblematic example of fluid spaces, which are characterized by continual