Educator Guide

Breaking Water

May 6 - August 14, 2022

CAC
Contemporary Arts Center
Welcome!

Dear Educators,

We are delighted for you join us, as the Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) presents the group exhibition, *Breaking Water* on view from May 6, 2022 – August 14, 2022.

In this newest CAC exhibition artists explore an array of approaches to the subject of water, liquidity, and feminism. The 16 artists included in the exhibition bring forth a wide range of mediums, such as installation, video, photography, painting, sculpture, and performance. In these artworks water allows for a sprawling investigation into fluidity, connectivity, resistance, and complex topics such as water rights, climate change, and the effects of natural disasters.

We invite you to explore, create, immerse yourselves, and discover what stories, connections and lessons can be found within this exhibition.

Enjoy!
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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Martha Atienza

- Born 1981, Bantayan, Philippines; Lives and works in Bantayan, Philippines
- BFA, Academy of Visual Arts and Design, Netherlands
- Baloise Art Prize, 2017
- Thirteen Artists Awards, Cultural Center of the Philippines, 2015
- Artist in residence, Kuvataideakatemia art program Finland, 2005

About the work

*Tarong 11°16’12.0"N 123°45’23.4”E 2019-08-06 Tue 2:27 PM PST 1.50 meters High Tide*, 2019
Color video
44 min.
Courtesy of the artist and Silverlens Galleries, Manila

*Kaongkod 11°16’12.0"N 123°45’23.4”E 2019-08-03 Sat 12:14 PM PST 2.03 meters High Tide*, 2019
Color video
14 min., 32 sec.
Courtesy of the artist and Silverlens Galleries, Manila

In her experimental, documentary video and photography installations, Martha Atienza often collaborates with Filipino islanders—mostly from her hometown Bantayan—delving into their daily labor and habits. Informed by her in-betweenness as a Dutch-Filipino from a seafaring family, her work engages themes of displacement, migration, and movement. She addresses how her communities are affected by climate breakdown through the prisms of cultural loss and socioeconomic disparities by capturing changes in the seabed, coastal erosion, pollution, and rising water level. As witnesses of disrupted ecosystems, the figures in her films are presented with dignity and agency. In these works, projected on the facade of the Contemporary Arts Center, we see two generations of fishermen at the edge of the water, diving and resurfacing cyclically, evoking the adaptive qualities local communities are forced to develop.
Quotes

“I have always been filming so that I could hold on to time as everything around me changed.”

Discussing, Our Islands 11°16’58.4 N 123°45’07.0 E, “As a result, our community started to see themselves from a different perspective. The video images triggered questions and highlighted social, environmental, and economic issues.”

Resources

Martha Atienza - QAGOMA
Silverlens (silverlensgalleries.com)
Martha Atienza | Biography (mutualart.com)
Rising Tides: The islands of Martha Atienza - QAGOMA Blog

Marcos Ávila Forero

- Born 1983, Paris, France
- Lives and works in Paris, France
- 2008-10 DNSAP with jury’s congratulation, ENSBA Paris, Studio Giuseppe Penone, Paris, France
- 2002-06 DNAP, École Supérieure des Beaux Arts of Rueil - Malmaison, Rueil Malmaison, France
- Exhibition at Kyoto Art Center, Kyoto, Japan, 2019
- Desde de las montanas, ADN Galería, Barcelona, Spain, 2018
- Marcos Avila Forero, Pori Art Museum, Pori, Finland, 2018

About the work

Atrato, 2014
Color video, with sound
13 min., 52 sec.
Courtesy of the artist and ADN Galería, Barcelona
Marcos Ávila Forero prioritizes collective thinking and action, offering a platform to neglected and marginalized groups. Together with a rural Afro-Colombian community living near the Atrato River, he revives the tamboleo, an intangible heritage that consists of drumming on water. The river carries memories and traumas of both the lasting impact of slavery and local armed conflict in Colombia—with the community trapped between the government and the guerrillas. In this work, the collective act of drumming on water can be seen not only as the reappropriation of a vanishing cultural tradition, but also as resistance against colonial and imperialist powers that have moved through this territory for their own political interests. In the context of displacement and instability, the tamboleo exemplifies a way of enacting subversive actions and covert communication systems through water.

Quotes

“My work exists first and foremost where I do it.”

“It is one thing to write as a poet and another to write as a historian: the poet can recount or sing about things not as they were, but as they should have been, and the historian must write about the, not as they should have been, but as they were without adding or subtracting anything from the truth.”

Resources

Galerie Dohyang Lee | Marcos Avila Forero
ADN Galería - Artnum International
Marcos Avila Forero (lmno.be)

Cecilia Bengolea

- Born 1979, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Lives and works in Paris, France
- Award de la Critique de Paris in 2010
- Young Artist Prize at the Gwangju Biennial in 2014
- 2022 Mistake Room, Los Angeles-Installation and performance program collaboration with Ceramica Suro
- 2021 Animations in water, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao
About the work

*Mosquito Net*, 2019/22
Vinyl mounted on wood, 5 parts
Courtesy of the artist and Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm/Paris

*Synchronized Serpent*, 2021
Color video, with sound
8 min., 2 sec.
Courtesy of the artist and Andréhn-Schiptjenko, Stockholm/Paris

Cecilia Bengolea creates work that engages the body as an animated sculpture capable of communicating profound emotions and meanings. In her installation at the Contemporary Arts Center, Bengolea represents the potential for interspecies equity, where binaries between the human and non-human are de-hierarchized toward planetary balance. In *Synchronized Serpent*, a collaboration with the synchronized swimming team of Jamaica, Bengolea captures the swimmers’ serpentine movements as they glide through the water, transitioning back and forth between individual and collective bodies. In *Mosquito Net*, a series of hybridized figures that merge the human and the animal, the sacred and the profane, are interspersed within the space. Through the juxtaposition of these two works, Bengolea explores how movement, mutation, and liquidity can imagine new possibilities for interspecies kinship and environmental restoration.

- Several of the sculptures contain sexually suggestive content
- This installation is a combination of two previous works, *Mosquito Net*—wood sculptures of hybrid human and animal figures—and *Synchronized Serpent*—video created in collaboration with synchronized swimmers in Jamaica.
- Bengolea references the interspecies connections—emphasizing fluidity and attempting to break down the division between human and non-human

Quotes

“Space is magical, like being underwater—filled with fantastic creatures as well as typical ones.”

Resources
Andrea Carlson

- Born 1979, Grand Portage Ojibwe, USA
- Lives and works in Chicago, IL
- 2005 MFA Minneapolis College of Art & Design
- 2003 BA University of Minnesota
- Most recent solo exhibitions, 2020 Red Exit, Bockley Gallery, Minneapolis, MN
- 2017 Ravenous Eye, TCNJ Art Gallery, Ewing, NJ
- Collections: Denver Art Museum, Minneapolis Institute of Art, and National Gallery of Canada
- McKnight Fellow, 2008
- Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors grant, 2017
- Represented by the Bockley Gallery

About the work

**Crude Hands**, 2016
Color video, with sound
1 min., 36 sec.
Courtesy of the artist and Bockley Gallery, Minneapolis

**Famished for Blondes**, 2011
Oil, acrylic, color pencil, and graphite on paper, 4 panels
Courtesy of the artist and Bockley Gallery, Minneapolis

**Portage**, 2008
Oil, acrylic, color pencil, and graphite on paper, 16 panels
Courtesy of the artist and Bockley Gallery, Minneapolis
Andrea Carlson depicts intricate scenes in paintings, drawings, and videos that imagine futuristic and, at times, dystopian worlds. In *Famished for Blondes*, invasive water species feed upon a collection of fragmented body parts, representing ongoing struggles for survival against parasitic forces. Carlson’s works often depict ambiguous landscapes, as in *Portage*, which presents a passageway leading to an inaccessible, yet idealized, non-colonized land. The looped video *Crude Hands* takes a more personal approach to Carlson’s themes, showing the artist’s hand stretched out toward her grandmother’s land on Lake Superior, a gesture that reads as an invitation and sign of longing. By referencing Indigenous histories of colonization and assimilation, Carlson resists the erasure of ancestral practices and the imperialistic possession of lands.

**Quote**

“… looking across Lake Michigan, a tranquil, shimmering lake that cared for the Anishinaabe and Ho-Chunk people. I often think about the many people over countless generations who have gazed the “thousand-yard stare” across this lake while traumatic memories of violence, slavery, war, epidemics and starvation plagued their minds. I think about how many people have loved this water and who are part of this water. If a place can help heal the mind, the Great Lakes are a place of healing and renewal.”- Andrea Selese Carlson, Red in the Morning

**Resources**

HOME - Andrea Carlson (mikinaak.com)

Bockley Gallery :: Artists :: Andrea Carlson

Andrea Carlson: Red Exit | Whitney Museum of American Art

Red Exit: Andrea Carlson and SANTIAGO-X in conversation - YouTube

**Carolina Caycedo**

- Born 1978, London, UK; Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA
- Colombian descent
- MFA, Roski School of Fine Arts. University of Southern California. Los Angeles.
- BFA, Los Andres University, Bogotá, Colombia.
• **Artist in residence**, The Huntington Gardens, Libraries and Art Collections in San Marino, California DAAD artists-in-Berlin program

• **Recent solo exhibitions** include, Care Report at Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź; Wanaawna, Rio Hondo, Other Spirits in Orange County Museum of Art, Cosmotarrayas at ICA Boston, Bottom of the River at MCA Chicago.

• Currently, the 2020-2022 Inaugural Borderands Fellow, Center for Imagination, Boarderlands-Arizona State University

**About the work**

*Maligna*, 2016  
Photocollage printed on cotton canvas  
Courtesy of the artist and Instituto de Visión, Bogotá

*Medula*, 2016  
Photocollage printed on cotton canvas  
Courtesy of the artist and Instituto de Visión, Bogotá

Carolina Caycedo’s *Water Portraits* series seeks to picture bodies of water as social and political subjects capable of affecting both their surroundings and the course of history. Working with documentation of specific bodies of water in Latin America and her home state of California, Caycedo digitally modifies the imagery to create symmetrical patterns, reminiscent of body parts or cellular forms. The objects are conceived as changeable, both in their display method and in their location. The portraits can be hung, stretched, wrapped, and even activated as wearable objects, as seen in the adjacent video, *Thanks For Hosting Us, We Are Healing Our Broken Bodies* (2019). In response to the colonial underpinnings of traditional art-making formats, such as two dimensional “landscapes” that visualize nature as something apart from humanity, Caycedo’s *Water Portraits* are an open-ended, fluid, dynamic platform for thinking about water as an active agent.

*Thanks For Hosting Us, We Are Healing Our Broken Bodies / Gracias por hospedarnos, estamos sanando nuestros cuerpos rotos*, 2019  
Color video, with sound  
8 min., 48 sec.  
Courtesy of the artist and Instituto de Visión, Bogotá
Thanks For Hosting Us, We Are Healing Our Broken Bodies documents a site-specific performance in which Caycedo activates her Water Portraits on view in the adjacent gallery. The series seeks to picture bodies of water as social and political subjects, capable of affecting both their surroundings and the course of history. Working with a team of dancers in the Santa Ana River, which bisects Los Angeles where the artist currently resides, Caycedo created this film to reflect on water as an element of healing and connection. Throughout the film, the viewer sees fragments of different bodies interacting with the river and the Water Portrait itself, demonstrating the ways in which humanity, and in particular migrants, experience a fragmented relationship to place as well as foregrounding water's role as a healing, life-giving force.

Quote

‘Caycedo describes her process as “spiritual fieldwork” aimed at “developing relationships with the human and nonhuman entities of a particular place . . . not keeping an objective distance with my case study, but actually getting implicated in it.”

Resources

Carolina Caycedo | trust each other

Carolina Caycedo: From the Bottom of the River | MCA Chicago Exhibition Tour - YouTube

artforum.com

Jes Fan

- Born 1990, Ontario, Canada
- Lives and works in New York, NY
- BFA, RISD
- Current Pollock Krasner Foundation Grant 2022
- Solo exhibition, The Milk of Dreams, curated by Cecilia Alemani, 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia 2022

About the work

Diagram VII, 2019
Glass and Aqua resin with pearl
Private collection, New York
Diagram VIII, 2020  
Aqua resin, mica, glass, and pigment  
Collection of Diego Radivoy, New York

Water, whether explicitly or implicitly, always factors into Jes Fan’s practice. For Fan, water is loaded with meaning, history, grief, and waste, but also with resilience and reproduction—sexual and otherwise. In his *Diagram* series, the artist dissolves divides between organic and inorganic, natural and artificial, living and nonliving. The sculptures resemble body parts that have been turned into shelves or other utilitarian pieces of furniture, propped up with amorphous piping against the gallery walls. The works are made from carefully sanded body casts of the artist and his intimate circle of lovers and friends. The series title, *Diagrams*, refers to the vocabulary and visual cultures of science and statistics as a way of challenging their purported objectivity. Fan’s sculptures propose different kinds of formations that reframe established categories as liquefied, hybrid prototypes, proposing that bodies are contingent entities.

**Quote**

“A lot what I’m trying to do with what we consider as gendered materials, or racialized materials, they’re just really, really absurd,”

**Resources**

[jesfan](https://jesfan.com)  
Jes Fan | Art21  
Jes Fan In Flux | Art21 "New York Close Up" - YouTube  

**Cleo Fariselli**

- Born 1982, Cesenatico, Italy  
- Lives and work in Turin, Italy  
- Degree in theater, The Academy of Brera, Milan, 2007  
- Artist in residence at Dena Foundation, Paris, France 2009  
- BAR Project, Barcelona, 2013
Recent solo shows include Dy Yiayi, Operativa gallery; Calipso, Clima Gallery, Milan; Snakes in gutters, GAFF, Milan; U., Fonderia Artistica Battaglia, Milan; Samus Viridis X-9, Espacio Sant Pere, Barcelona

About the work

*Untitled (hip)*, 2019
Raku ceramics
Courtesy of the artist

*Untitled (half face)*, 2019
Raku ceramics
Courtesy of the artist

*Untitled (ear)*, 2019
Raku ceramics
Courtesy of the artist

*Untitled (ear)*, 2019
Raku ceramics
Courtesy of the artist

Cleo Fariselli creates ceramic sculptures that connect the body to its surrounding environment, allowing it to develop new material affinities. She encases her hip, ear, or face with clay to create a negative shell of her body. 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 becoming an abstracted shape manipulated beyond recognition. In her practice, Fariselli represents water’s transitional nature, where the conscious and the unconscious, the solid and the liquid, the terrestrial and the aquatic, brush up against each other and convolute established orders that separate the world into a system of binary forces. Standing at the borderland of a dream state, Fariselli’s works reorient the limited perceptions of reality that live within our physical bodies.

Quotes

“If I had been born in another era…I would have been lame and blind in one eye…living together with the unknown is not easy but, over the years, I have learned to draw a very personal strength from it.”
“It is not yet clear to me what powers my small shortcomings instilled in me, it is certain that they made me attend the threshold assiduously.”

Resources

Home | cleofariselli

Cleo Fariselli – Google Arts & Culture

Cleo Fariselli | Artoday

Saodat Ismailova

- Born 1981, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
- Lives and works in Tashkent, Uzbekistan
- Tashkent State Art Institute, Cinema
- Artist in residence, Research and communication centre, Italy, 2002, DAAD program, Berlin, 2005
- Award winning documentary, Arial: Fishing in an Invisible Sea
- Began a production company 2008, MAP (Development of young central Asian Cinema)
- Currently working on a feature film, 40 Days of Silence

About the work

Stains of Oxus, 2016
Three-channel color video, with sound
22 min., 30 sec.
Courtesy of the artist

In the three-channel video Stains of Oxus, Saodat Ismailova centers the local histories and changing landscapes of the Amu Darya (historically known by its Greek name Oxus), the largest river in Central Asia. The video presents panoramic views of the river alongside the stories and dreams of three generations of people who live along its banks. A fisherman recalls the legend of Soman, who transformed herself into a body of water to escape an unwanted marriage; a young girl shares an illusive dream, which she tells to the river upon waking. The work’s final account comes from an old man, who recollects a dream in which he was approached by a mermaid in the river. In Uzbekistan, one of only two double landlocked countries in the world, water is a critical and precious resource. In Stains of Oxus, Ismailova explores the relationship between dreams and collective memories of water, documenting the ways in which her protagonists’ lives are intrinsically tied to the river’s ebbs and flows.
Quote
On why spiritual practices are represented as the central theme her art. “It happened quite naturally. Ritual practices surrounded me my whole life and seemed pretty mundane until I reached a certain age. I have grown up sharing a room with my grandmother for 21 years and she passed her knowledge of spiritual practices to me. I remember her performing the rituals of «kinna» and «muskul kushod» – common national rituals performed by women.

Resources
Her Five Lives (2020, Saodat Ismailova) on Vimeo
Saodat Ismailova - e-flux
Saodat Ismailova - IMDb
the-steppe.com

Jaana Laakkonen
• Born 1985, Joensuu, Finland; Lives and works in Helsinki, Finland
• 2016-2017 MRes, postgrad. master's degree in Master of Research in Art and Design Programme, Sint Lucas School of Arts, Antwerp, BE
• 2012-2014 MFA, University of Arts Helsinki, Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki, FI
• 2006-2010 BA, TAMK University of Applied Sciences, The Degree Programme of Visual Arts, Tampere, FI
• 2004-2005 Pohjois-Savon opisto, Fine Arts School, Kuopio, FI
• Upcoming projects include, 2023 HAM gallery, Helsinki, FI (solo), 2022 Breaking Water, Cincinnati CAC, Cincinnati, US, 2022 The First Room Makes for Willows, K17 Space for Art And Ecology, Sipoo, FI (solo)
• Most recent residencies, 2021 Titanik A.i.R., Turku, FI, 2018 Mustarinda, Hyrynsalmi, FI 2017 Treignac Projet, Treignac, FR

About the work
Acrylic ink, acrylic paint, polyester, water, polyamide-elastane, cotton, jute, charcoal, plants, paper twine, linen MDF board, modeling paste, digital color prints, and more

Courtesy of the artist

Jaana Laakkonen’s practice explores the mundane material and metaphysical experiences that encompass our daily lives. By blurring 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. *t/hereouch (ouoùouille)* includes two linen works that lie directly on the floor and a hanging piece of translucent polyester that is stitched together and painted, alongside small pieces of fiberboard that hold digital prints, one of which shows grass cohabiting with the asphalt as a document of the relationship between the organic and inorganic. Triangular fabrics are also stretched across two corners in the space, rethinking the positions of the horizon, the viewer, and the surrounding architecture. With these fabrics, paints, photographs, and other materials, Laakkonen disrupts the categories that organize the world as material or intangible, organic or inorganic, human or non-human. Despite these binary systems, her works entangle new relationships that embrace being and doing as liquid phenomena.

**Quote**

**Resources**

[works (jaanalaakkonen.com)](https://jaanalaakkonen.com)

[Jaana Laakkonen - Bio, Artworks, Exhibitions and more - Artland](https://jaanalaakkonen.com)

[https://treignacprojet.org/exhibitions/jaana-laakkonen-ouououille/](https://treignacprojet.org/exhibitions/jaana-laakkonen-ouououille/)

**Calista Lyon**

- Born 1986, Nagambie, Australia
- Lives and works in Charlottesville, VA
• Ruffin Assistant Professor of new media, University of Virginia
• Grants include, Australia Council for the Arts, National association of the Visual Arts, Foundation for Contempary Arts, The Regional Art Fund, and the Ohio Arts Council
• Residencies include, Ruffin Distinguished Artist-in-Residence at University of Virginia, fellowship at Oak Springs Garden Foundation, The Ohio State University, Center for Performing Arts at UCLA.
• Exhibitions include, Centere for Contemporary Photography, Australia; Luckman Gallery; Barry Art Museum; Sydney Musuem; Murry Art Museum, among others.

Carmen Winant

• Born 1983, San Francisco, CA
• Lives and works in Columbus, OH
• MFA, California College of the Arts. San Francisco, CA 2011
• Resident, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, ME 2010
• BA, Fine Art and Museum Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 2006
• Currently the Roy Lichtenstein Chair of Visual Art, Associate Professor, Ohio State University
• Most recent solo exhibitions, Title Tbd, Fortnight Institute, New York, NY (May, 2020)
  Title Tbd, Melanie Flood Projects, Portland, OR (September, 2020)

About the work

Breaking Water, 2022
Multi-channel color video installation, with sound
11 min., 12 sec.
Courtesy of the artists

The collaborative work of Calista Lyon and Carmen Winant examines the profound psychological impact of ecological breakdown, with a particular focus on the interconnectedness of water crises and the body. For their installation at the Contemporary Arts Center, the artists mobilize water as a catalyst for thinking about transformation and perspectival breakthroughs. Juxtaposing found imagery of “water breaking” in the context of both childbirth and river restoration projects, the work asks: What can be learned from water? The clips feature dramatic footage of explosions in the immediate aftermath of human-involved initiatives to liberate waterways from extractive dam infrastructure combined with kitsch, sometimes humorous portrayals of the
process during labor when the amniotic sac ruptures. A soundtrack features the artists in conversation, ultimately exploring what it might mean to embody new modes of survival and resistance that are ever fluid, adaptable, and empowered.

This is the first collaboration between the artists. They both focus on the intersectionality of Feminism—believing feminism to be inherently nurturing and supportive.

**Quote**

“By the time you are reading this, cracked open and flimsy, I will have birthed again. I am no closer to understanding who takes possession of this process, or locating the words to make it known.”- Carmen Winant

**Resources**

[calista lyon](https://calista.lyon)

[coda – calista lyon](https://coda-calista.lyon)

[Calista Lyon | Columbus College of Art & Design (ccad.edu)](https://ccad.edu)

[Carmen Winant](https://carmenwinant.com)

[On Archives & Books - interview with Carmen Winant, artist. Moderated by Emilie Lauriola & Bruno Ceschel on Vimeo](https://vimeo.com)

[Artist Carmen Winant Explains My Birth, a Collage of 2,000 Images at MoMA | Vogue](https://vogue.com)

**Paul Maheke**

- Born 1985, Brive-la-Gaillarde, France
- Lives and works in London, UK
- Represented by Galerie Sultana and Goodman Gallery
- Open School East, London, UK 2015
- Master’s in art Practices, DNSEP 2011
- B.A art practice, DNAP 2009
- Current solo exhibitions, High Line, NY, NY; Kunsthalle Bratislave, SK; Diagonale, Montreal; Musee Tinguely, Basel

**About the work**

*Unresolved Shadows and Reflections, 2022*

Installation and mixed media

Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Sultana, Paris, and Goodman Gallery, Cape Town,
Johannesburg, and London

Paul Maheke’s commissioned installation *Unresolved Shadows and Reflections* is a multisensory exploration of water, spirituality, and movement. Featuring drawings, text, and sound, it functions as a visual poem inviting viewers to contemplate the numerous forms and shapes of water. While there is no direct reference to a place, Cincinnati’s proximity to the Ohio River, once the dividing line between slavery and freedom, inspired Maheke to evoke the racial politics of water. Within the installation, a water basin sitting on top of a speaker vibrates to the sound piece, blurring the image within and evoking ways in which memory, history, and identity are constructed. On the adjacent wall, a lying figure and a text fragment from a sci-fi story describe a scenario in which the changing states of water signify the transformative process of world-building. Digital drawings of an Ibis, a sacred bird symbolizing death in ancient Egypt, and of a full moon explore ideas of time, history, and fluidity.

**Quote**

On this exhibition at Chisenhale Gallery, “I am interested in multiplicity and overlay - multiple logics that may clash. In my work, there is always a part of me that is interested in abstracting bodies, ideas and references. In the process of abstracting, I feel there is something that references an understanding of queerness and blackness as modes of production. Through this exhibition I hope to explore a tension between moments of erasure and hypervisibility, and the seemingly impossibility of escaping this pattern when black and queer in the West.”

**Resources**

[Paul Maheke](http://chisenhale.org)

[chisenhale.org](http://chisenhale.org)
ICA Performs: Paul Maheke, The Distance is Nowhere - Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (icamiami.org)

Artist Interview: Paul Maheke - YouTube

PAUL MAHEKE - Artforum International

Josèfa Ntjam

- Born 1992 Metz, France; Lives and works in Saint-Etienne, France
- École Nationale Supérieure d’Art, Bourges, France (2015), and the École Nationale Supérieure d’Art, Paris-Cergy, France (2017)
- *and we’ll kill them with love*, CAC La Traverse, Alfortville, FR (2022); *Molecular Genealogies*, NiCOLETTı, London, UK (2021) and *Allegoria*, duo show with Kaeto Sweeney, Hordaland Art Center, Bergen, NO (2019)

About the work

*Dislocation*, 2022
Color video, with sound
Courtesy of the artist and Nicoletti Contemporary, London
Co-commissioned by the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, and Palais de Tokyo, Paris

Josèfa Ntjam and Nicolas Pirus

*Vortex*, 2021
Vinyl wallpaper
Courtesy of the artists and NiCOLETTı, London

In her practice, Josèfa Ntjam challenges temporalities, histories, and hybrid bodies and geographies to rework History from unofficial and personal stories, many that have been sidelined and silenced. Spoken poetry, experimental music, and written incantations are all parts of her visual language, as much as superimposition and collage. Her aqueous works evoke, in a nonlinear way, narratives and traumas of the Middle Passage—the forced voyage of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean—as well as colonization and struggles for independence. In the animated short film on view, Ntjam asks: What if organisms were dissolvable? What if they could spread and leak, erasing boundaries of time and space? In the work, an imaginary character journeys from the digital realm to a cave floating into outer space among a constellation of asteroid-like shells and fossils. There, telling of cycles, circulation, and entanglement, the character dissolves and is subtly inhabited by memories and narratives from her ancestors’ fight for Cameroon’s independence.
Quote

“My interest in water developed from my research into fluidity and hidden memories. I’m particularly interested in the political and utopian dimensions of seas and oceans, the receptacle of many stories of domination – slavery, colonization, capitalism, environmental crisis – but also the origin of an important number of myths and emancipatory stories in many cultures. My work often refers to water as an element that evokes permanent transformation and movement, an ungraspable substance that has the ability to symbolically teach us humans how to become ungraspable ourselves, how to upset the processes of identification and assignation that dominant discourses attempt to implement to maintain power.”

Resources

ntjamjosefa

Nicoletti – Josèfa Ntjam (nicoletticontemporary.com)

contemporaryand.com

Entretien avec Josèfa Ntjam - YouTube

Josèfa Ntjam – Prix AWARE Archives of Women Artists, Research and Exhibitions (awarewomenartists.com)

Claudia Peña Salinas

- Born, 1975, Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico; lives and works in Brooklyn, NY
- 2009 Masters of Fine, Arts Hunter College, New York, NY
- 2007 Study Abroad, Frank Mohr Institute, Groningen, NL
- 1999 Independent Study, NY Studio Program-AICAD, New York, NY
- 1999 Bachelors of Fine Arts, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
- 2016 Process Space, Governors Island, NY
- 2011 SOMA, Mexico City, MX
- 2007 Jacob K. Javits Fellowship
- 2018 “Field Station,” MSU BROAD Museum, Lansing, MI
- 2017 "Tlalotlicuetlan," Embajada, San Juan, PR

About the work

Ohi:yó-cân, 2022
Brass, wood, acrylic, postcards, and river stones  
Courtesy of the artist and Embajada, San Juan

Claudia Peña Salinas’ sculptural installation consists of nine geometric, hollow, brass structures maintained by stones sourced from a river in Mexico, along with driftwood from Coney Island Creek, Brooklyn. The constructions function as metaphorical doorways, recalling water as an element that enables transformation, perspectival changes, and crossings. The wooden supports refer to former bridges and other collapsed elements of infrastructure that congregate along rivers, such as the Ohio River, which is one of the most polluted and industrially taxed rivers in the United States. Building off the geometries present in the Contemporary Arts Center’s Zaha Hadid-designed galleries, Peña Salinas’ installation references the Aztec rain deities, Tlāloc and Chalchiuhtlicue, and the heaven that they preside over—the tlālocān. Through Tlāloc, Peña Salinas contemplates other, more ritualized ways of relating to water, hearkening to a time when water, so central to Indigenous cosmogonies, was worshiped and cared for. Framing the sculptures on the adjacent walls, a monumental painting charts the trajectory of the Ohio River from the source to its estuary, reminding us of the ways in which water links and crosses man-made borders and disparate geographies.

**Quote**

“Since then, I have been returning in the summers, dividing my time between Mexico City and the area where I grew up. On these trips I collect material as diverse as river stones, matchboxes, wooden animals, and oranges that later make their way into my work.”

**Resources**

Claudia Peña Salinas (claudiapenasalinas.com)

Claudia Peña Salinas | Whitney Museum of American Art

Claudia Peña Salinas | Artist | Galeria Pelaires

makemag.com
Vian Sora

- Born 1976, Bagdad, Iraq
- Lives and works in Louisville, KY
- 2006-2007 – Studied original printmaking in Istanbul Museum of Graphic Art IMOGA, Istanbul, Turkey
- 2000 – Bachelor’s degree in Computer Science. Al Mansour University, Baghdad, Iraq
- 2012 – Bellarmine University, Kentucky, USA
- 2022 – TBA, Tinney Contemporary, Nashville, TN
- 2021- Art Residency studio program funded by Great Meadows Foundation, Berlin, Germany
  2020, 2019 & 2018 - Joan Mitchell Foundation Nominee Painter and Sculpture Award
- Speed Art Museum Collection - Louisville, KY; KMAC Museum Collection - Louisville, KY; The Shands Collection – Louisville, KY, and more.

About the work

Bathers, 2020
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of the artist and Moremen Gallery, Louisville

Vian Sora works with painting as a means of exploring 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. The paintings featured in Breaking Water include several from the Floodgates series (2020–22) that comment on the monumental societal shifts around racial justice, economics, and mobility ushered in with the pandemic. Works such as Embrace and Bathers 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 concept of interspecies exchange and the shifting boundaries of life after a cataclysmic event.

Riverbed, 2022
Mixed media on canvas
Courtesy of the artist and Moremen Gallery, Louisville
In this recent work, 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 death and destruction and the shared impacts of war and natural disasters.

**Antibodies, 2020**  
Acrylic on paper (framed)  
Collection of Julien Robson, Louisville

**Embrace I, 2020**  
Acrylic and sumi pigment on arches paper (framed)  
Collection of Brooke Barzun, Louisville

**Pluto II, 2020**  
Acrylic and India ink on arches paper (framed)  
Collection of Joey Yates, Louisville

**Pluto I and III, 2020**  
Acrylic and India ink on arches paper (framed)  
Private collections, Louisville

Vian Sora works with painting as a means of exploring 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. The paintings featured in *Breaking Water* include several from the *Floodgates* series (2020–22) that comment on the monumental societal shifts around racial justice, economics, and mobility ushered in with the pandemic. Works such as *Embrace, Antibodies*, and the *Pluto* series refer to the intimacy and fragility of human life. Based in an intuitive process, Sora’s works achieve a textural complexity that defies categorization to evoke a range of emotional responses. The artist’s additive and subtractive approach allows the compositions to emerge out of a chaotic formlessness likened to the dark matter of space or the aftermath of an explosion.
Quote

“People love narratives. They love winning stories. They think it’s a love story, this Iraqi girl, this American man. But it’s not that easy or glamorous or romantic.”

Resources

Vian Sora - Contemporary Iraqi-American Artist Official Website

Vian Sora - Wikipedia

Vian Sora | Kentucky Studies | PBS LearningMedia

Vian Sora talks about her exhibit, "When You Shout Into The Woods It Echoes Back" at Moremen gallery - YouTube

hyperallergic.com

undermain.art

Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas (est. 1997, live and work in Vilnius, Lithuania, and Cambridge, MA) with Nicole L’Huillier (b. 1985, Santiago, Chile; lives and work in Cambridge, MA)

• (Collaborators since 1997)
• Live and work in Vilnius, Lithuania and Cambridge, MA
• Exhibitions include solo shows at the Venice Biennale and MACBA in Barcelona, among others
• Awards include Lithuanian National Prize (2007); a Prize for the Best International Artist at the Gwangju Biennale (2006) and the Honorable mention for the best national pavilion at the Venice Biennale (2007)
• For more information on this collaborative team see, Urbonas Studio – US:Urbonas Studio (nugu.lt)

About the work

Amphibian Songs, 2018–19
Sound
Courtesy of the artists, produced by Blackwood Gallery at the University of Toronto Mississauga, with support from the National Endowment for the Arts

Learning from swamps and water environments is a central part of Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas’ practice. Trained as artists, and working on civic and environmental scales, their research has focused on the privatization of public space and the impact of infrastructures of power. The ambient and organic cracklings of Amphibian Songs welcome visitors at the entrance of the Contemporary Arts Center. The work mixes environmental pollution data with
sounds of the *hydropsyche caddis*, or net-spinning caddisflies, an endangered insect indigenous to swamps. Leaking both into the street and the museum, their flute-like vibrations reveal the silenced voices of some of the most environmentally necessary yet overlooked creatures. In doing so, the work is a reminder of the human-centered infrastructure, toxicity, and environmental devastation that has led to polluted waterways and the displacement of myriad amphibious species.

The Swamp Game, 2020–22
Interactive video game
Commissioned by ZKM Karlsruhe with support from the Lithuanian Council for Culture

In contrast to their “murky” appearance, marshes are zones of extreme activity, buzzing with life. The Swamp Game reveals the precise messiness and creativity that grow and thrive in wetlands. Players are invited to embody different species (plants, insects, birds, amphibians, fungi, bacteria, or algae) and are enticed to discover and explore an ecosystem with elusive boundaries. The artists reflect, “The game suggests 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.”

Swamp Index, 2022
Mud
Courtesy of the artists

Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas are concerned with the privatization of public space and the impact of infrastructures of power as much as they are with what can be learned from swamps and water environments. They study “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.” Excerpts from the forthcoming publication *Swamps and The New Imagination*
offer insight into intersectional topics, such as transnational and speculative architecture, ecofeminism and queer theory, posthumanism, techno-ecology, materialism, visual studies and imagination, third order cybernetics, sociology, and eco-commoning. On the opposite wall, a spheric visual index featuring multiple glyphs of a swamps’ life forms, from bacteria to mammals, materializes key players in the interactive online experience The Swamp Game.

**Quote**

“The artist role is to think about science and to destabilize the science right…propose different perspectives that maybe scientist would consider…research driven by the function and the idea of a better world and we want to suspend that thinking and perhaps propose a different perspective.”

**Resources**

- US:Urbonas Studio (nugu.lt)
- Nomeda & Gediminas Urbonas | The MIT Press
- Gediminas Urbonas - Art, Culture, and Technology (ACT) (mit.edu)
- Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas - Creative Folkestone Triennial
- www.youtube.com

**About the Exhibition**

Breaking Water is a group exhibition bringing together works in installation, video, photography, painting, sculpture, and performance that offer a range of approaches to the subject of water, liquidity, and feminism. The exhibition debuts four new commissions by Paul Maheke, Josèfa Ntjam, Claudia Peña Salinas, and a collaborative work by Calista Lyon and Carmen Winant, after which the exhibition is titled, alongside new and existing work by an international group of artists whose work explores themes of fluidity, connectivity, and resistance, and addresses timely concerns including water rights, climate change, and the effects of natural disasters. The exhibition is accompanied by a parallel film screening program and catalogue that extend the exhibition’s central themes.
**Vocabulary/Key words**

- Water Rights
- Climate Change
- Natural Disaster
- Feminism
- Ecology
- Biodiversity
- Middle Passage
- Colonialism
- Indigenous

**Themes**

*Interconnection* - the connection between humans and non-humans and water

*Water as a Holder of Memory* - appears in a couple of ways: water retaining physical elements such as minerals, pesticides, etc.; water “remembering” pathways and ecosystems; water being a witness to history; and, water reacting to emotions, words, and sounds

*Fluidity and Change* - the physical appearance of flow as well as the ability for things to be impermanent and changeable

*Intersectionality* - how environmentalism, anti-colonialism, feminism, anti-racism, queer identity, etc. all support and come together

*Environmental Concerns* - the commentaries on pollution, climate change, water control

**PRE-VISIT DISCUSSIONS**

**ABOUT THE CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER**

In 1939, Betty Pollak Rauh, Peggy Frank Crawford and Rita Rentschler Cushman took the advice of Edward M.M. Warburg, the founding father of the American Ballet and a founder of the Museum of Modern Art. He suggested that rather than stress about finding non-existent art jobs in New York, “Why not starting something in Cincinnati? Plenty of room there. If you decide to try, come and see me and I’ll help you.”

By August of that year, Peggy Frank Crawford, Betty Pollack and Rita Rentschler raised $5000 (about $93,000 today) and created the Modern Art Society (MAS). For almost a year their “office” consisted of a letter file and a portable typewriter set up in one or another living room. Within a few years, the MAS had exhibited Renoir, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Picasso, Beckman, Klee and many more in the lower levels of the Cincinnati Art Museum. In 1952, the MAS changed their name to the Contemporary Arts Center and in 1964 they earned a space...
of their own in downtown Cincinnati. In 2003, the CAC moved into the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art designed by architect Zaha Hadid. The NY Times called the structure, “the best new building since the Cold War.”

The Contemporary Arts Center is a non-collecting institution, meaning there is no permanent collection. All exhibitions are borrowed from artists, collectors and other art galleries and institutions. We strive to create exhibitions that allow visitors to “open their minds” to the arts, and to the dialogue that can be had when viewing contemporary art. We believe that art and the creative process belong to all people and that contemporary artists are an important part of how we see and interact with our world today.

ABOUT THE LOIS & RICHARD ROSENTHAL CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS

In the late 1990s, after acquiring the lot on which the Contemporary Arts Center now sits, a committee narrowed a field of over 300 architects chose to design the building—first to 97, then to 12 and finally 3 of the most exciting designers working in the world today. From them, a unanimous choice emerged: Baghdad-born, London-trained Zaha Hadid.

The decision was in keeping with the CAC’s 60-year history of promoting the new. Though Hadid had been the subject of adulation, study and controversy, her work exhibited at major museums with international critical acclaim, she had only completed two freestanding structures during her career. As a largely untested inventor, a woman and an Arabic Muslim, Hadid had not found the construction world easy to enter. This renowned building is Hadid’s first American building, and is the first American museum building designed by a woman. Groundbreaking took place in May 2001 and the new Center opened to rave reviews on May 31, 2003. The seven-story, 82,265 square-foot Contemporary Arts Center is named the Lois & Richard Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art after the CAC’s former Chairman of the Board and the most generous contributor to the new building. It sits on a narrow 11,000-square-foot footprint, and includes a 2,366-square-foot black box performance space.

Born in Iraq in 1950, Hadid received her degree in mathematics from the American University in Beirut and studied at the Architectural Association in London where she won the Diploma Prize in 1977. Upon graduation, Hadid became a partner at the Office of Metropolitan Architecture where she worked with influential architects Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis.
Establishing her own practice in London in 1979, she soon gained international attention with her groundbreaking plan for the Peak International Design Competition for Hong Kong in 1983. In 2004, she became the first female recipient of the Pritzker Architecture Prize, which is the equivalent to the Nobel Prize for Architecture. In 2008, she was listed as one of Forbes Magazine’s “100 Most Powerful Women,” and in 2010, Time Magazine named her one of the “100 Most Influential People in the World,” and UNESCO Artist for Peace. She was awarded the Stirling Prize for Architecture in 2010 and 2011. In 2012, Hadid was awarded Damehood by Queen Elizabeth II. And, in 2015, she received the Royal Gold Medal from the Royal Institute of British Architects. Hadid died in 2016.

RULES AND GUIDELINES

- Visitor admission and school tours are free at the Contemporary Arts Center.
- We require that must be a chaperone for every 5 students under the age of 18 for self-guided groups. For docent-led tours, the required ratio is 1 to 10 for students through grade 5 and 1 to 15 for students grades 6-12.
- No backpacks, coats or lunches are permitted in the galleries, but personal belongings may be stored in the large bins or lockers we have available. Instructors may keep any emergency bags and purses with them.
- Currently photography is permitted in all areas of the museum. The CAC encourages you to post photos to various social media sites using @CincyCAC and #CincyCAC.
- Pens are not permitted in the gallery spaces. Pencils are available for use at the front desk.
- Walk throughout all galleries- no running, climbing, or roughhousing. If visiting with students under 18 please provide guidance and supervision.

ACCESSIBILITY INFORMATION

- Our facility is ADA compliant and we will make every effort to provide accommodations when requested.
- Hearing protection is available upon request.
- Fidgets are available upon request.
- Sensory maps and social stories are available upon request.
- Large text is available upon request.
- Two quiet spaces are available—the Lower Level Lobby and the Contemplation Room.
- For further inquiries or requests, please contact Shawnee Turner at sturner@cincycac.org

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ARTWORK DISCUSSIONS QUESTIONS

These discussions can occur prior to, during and after viewing.

- Are there other artists you have heard of who use water as the subject of their art? If so, how do the artworks differ than those in Breaking Water?
- What are the different ways water plays a role in our lives? How do the artists in this exhibition use water to bring attention to those roles?
- When you hear the title of the exhibition, Breaking Water, what are your expectations of the show? After viewing the exhibition was there anything that was unexpected? If so, what?
- Was there a piece of art that stood out from the rest for you? If so, why?
- How do the pieces in this exhibition highlight important issues in our world?
- Why do you think some artists want to bring attention to these issues? Is it effective?

LESSON PLAN IDEAS

- Like artist Cecilia Bengolea, students may combine dance and visual art to express humans’ connection to nature and animals. Get started by asking students, what animal they most connect to, and why? Students could explore this connectedness through dance movements and/or sound. Through drawing students may create their own hybrid species. These could be backed with foam core so that students may move/dance and create new sounds for their hybrid species. Students may consider the environment the animals live. What do the animals like about living there, what is difficult about where they live? Other questions maybe, how can art bring awareness to important issues?
- Artist, Cleo Fariselli uses clay to create shell like sculptures. Using materials such as clay or model magic student can create their own shell sculptures. Fariselli’s sculptures, considers how her body may have “shortcomings” or flaws but by overcoming those flaws she is stronger. Like oysters, the sculptures have a rough outside with a smooth and pearlescent interior. She refers to the oyster’s process of creating a pearl as it relates to the transformation of embracing our flaws. As an irritant (such as a grain of sand) enters the oyster it creates friction between the shell and its organs. To protect itself it releases a substance called, nacre to coat the irritant, softening it. As the layers of nacre build it becomes a pearl.
- Below are resource for the Ohio River as well. This is a great opportunity for us to learn and share about our own river's ecology.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Desert X | Cecilia Bengolea

Cleo Fariselli — Google Arts & Culture

How do oysters make pearls? | Natural History Museum (nhm.ac.uk)

Ohio River Mussels | Ecology | Ohio River Foundation (ohioriverfdn.org)

Restoring the Ohio River and its Tributaries | National Wildlife Federation (nwf.org)

Home on the Ohio River (oceanfdn.org)

LEARNING STANDARDS

Common Core Standards

http://www.corestandards.org/

Ohio Common Core Links

http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/OLS-Graphic-Sections/Learning-Standards

http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Fine-Arts/Fine-Arts-Standards

Kentucky Common Core Links

https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Pages/default.aspx

https://education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/kyacadstand/Documents/Kentucky_Academic_Standards_Arts_and_Humanities.pdf

Indiana Standards Links

https://www.doe.in.gov/standards
https://www.doe.in.gov/standards/fine-arts-dance-music-theatre-visual-arts

Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change

http://www.animatingdemocracy.org/aesthetic-perspectives