

UR URREAK
AGUAS TURBULENTAS
EAUX AGITÉES
TURBULENT WATERS

interdisciplinary
Lab

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NEW LIQUID SCENE

From a philosophical perspective and from the phenomenology of poetic imagination, Gaston de Bachelard asserted in 1942 that "everyday death is the death of water"¹, alluding to the infinite loop of waters, whose cycles end in horizontal deaths.

Pre-Inca, Greek and Roman civilisations invoked real and imagined waters. The Neolithic pictographs of the Cave of the Swimmers on the Gilf Kebir plateau between Egypt and Libya prophesied past and future desertifications.

Today, the material imagination of water and the aquatic symbolism proposed by Bachelard and other intellectuals has moved from the visual, aesthetic or narrative plane to become a complex subject of multiform analysis for the current culture: a culture attached to the new emergencies caused by the consequences of climate change.

The unsustainability of human activities on land and sea is leading to migratory and food crises, but also, very quickly, to irreversible consequences in terms of global warming and the acidification of the oceans. Oceans make up 70% of the planet and are home to 80% of life.

Their water temperatures are rising steadily while the creatures that inhabit them are forced to move to new areas or die. Coral reefs and seagrass meadows could be lost worldwide by 2050 as a result of climate change. Populations of fish, key to food security, are declining at a worrying rate, with some species almost at risk of extinction, according to an analysis published in the WWF-World Wide Fund for Nature's Living Blue Planet report. The study of the status of marine mammals, birds, reptiles and fish shows that populations have been halved globally on average over the past four decades, with some fish disappearing by as much as 75%. The latest findings are revealing issues that have serious consequences for all nations, especially those in developing countries where fisheries are an essential resource. However, the threats endangering the oceans are still avoidable and it may be possible to implement solutions to mitigate their consequences.

This is a task that must be endorsed by scientists, technical specialists, national governments and the consistent action of all the world's inhabitants.

For some time now, art and culture have been developing actions of protest and awareness-raising education. Some of these have come from what is known as Environmental Art, such as

that of Betty Beaumont (*Ocean Landmark*, 1978/1980); others come from more introspective research outside any movement of the art system, while others, in exceptional cases, come from management, such as the work carried out by Hans Ulrich Obrist. The artistic director of The Serpentine Galleries in London has already stated that “Ecology will become the heart of everything we do”³.

There have also been some seminal, landmark exhibitions shaping this contemporary commitment, inspiring new visual and sound perspectives on the present, but above all visionary perspectives on the future and our responsibility towards it. In November 2008, the exhibition *Terre Natale, Ailleurs commence ici*, conceived by filmmaker and photographer Raymond Depardon and urbanist and philosopher Paul Virilio together with Hervé Chandès, opened to the public at the Fondation Cartier in Paris. The graphic image of the show was a photograph taken by Depardon in the Argentinean pampas in 2005 which synthesised the ideas of speed, exodus and disappearance of socio-geographical space presented by this project’s discourse from a territory affected by colonisation. The screens and charts displayed in the exhibition rooms provided information anticipating the problem of the migratory crises which are expected to intensify until 2050 amidst thaws and desertifications. The question Virilio asked was: “What is left of the world, of the homeland, of the history of the only habitable planet?” The legacy from that project were his brilliant essays and a committed pedagogy for different generations of visitors who came to the Fondation Cartier, as well as a large video installation, *Exit?*, which can now be seen on the internet. Among other analyses, *Exit* presented six cartographies, one of which was devoted to the oceans under the title: *Des mers qui montent, des villes qui disparaissent*. The video installation was later presented in 2015 at the Palais de Tokyo to accompany the Cop21, the United Nations meeting on climate change, and was extended to other places such as the Azkuna Centre (Bilbao) as an artistic work, but also as a visual animation of a constantly evolving alert. *And this is what is happening*, *Exit* is in itself already a myth and a driving force behind work processes between the interdisciplinary and the artistic.

In just a few years, new technological findings that are useful both for scientific research and for contemporary creative projects have been rapidly introduced. Today, using the Google Earth tool, we can have a graphical representation of reality from any home, thanks to cameras capturing the outside visible world. If it has been filmed, it has existed.

We find ourselves on a 4.6-billion-year-old planet, where over the past 100 years human civilisation has engaged in an exponential ecocide of dire consequences. Recovering the wisdom and memory of the ancestors, preserving the landscapes beyond the walls of the museums or the aquariums’ tanks implies new methodologies.

To understand this, we need to collect and manage data in an educational way in order to be able to compare them. Only this change of mentality can help to reduce the environmental footprint, preserve memories and species. Labels such as green for environmentalism or blue

for the seas, just as purple for feminism, are not enough. In this respect, interdisciplinary laboratories are increasingly necessary as a kind of a testing ground for courageous adisciplinary decisions.

We are said to be in a geological time period metaphorically called the Anthropocene. In our increasingly accelerated development, human beings have shaped the earth, the seas and the atmosphere according to our economic and social needs. As a result of the intensification of production brought about by the industrial revolution from the 18th century onwards, in the Anthropocene Era a global environmental change has ensued. The Anthropocene is more a political statement than a scientific proposal, and, in the same vein, new terms have also been coined in art and science projects. One of the most prominent is by artist, architect and performer Tomás Saraceno, who since 2015 has been talking about the Aerocene period, developing an open community for projects of atmospheric and ecological awareness (see Manifesto at: aerocene.org). If Saraceno's group proposes to articulate new relationships with the sun, the air and the cosmos, in the project that emerged in 2011 in the Aquarium of San Sebastian we are working on a new liquid scene.

As early as the mid-1990s, the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman had already expressed his thoughts on a visionary idea: liquid modernity. By liquid modernity he meant a society that finds it difficult to keep its form and direction. In post-modern times, solid realities disintegrate and the fluid and volatile appear. *Turbulent Waters* draws precisely on the opportunities to build for the long term in our unstable present. Between our whirlpools and in our waves, laboratories of art and science that are flexible to change are being set up.

The models of human management are already trying to incorporate the oceans and their lives into our protected heritage in order to promote a change of educational and cultural register to accompany the different emergencies. This is why we demand a new conscious exploration of the oceans from committed imaginaries driven by artistic creation and focused on the protection of air, water, land, micro-organisms, human and non-human animals.

Mindful of the possibility of practising intuitive testing from the cultural sphere and that, from pilot areas, methods developed together with the scientific community are necessary, we set ourselves up for continuous learning.

Liquid scenes are scenes of technology and of the female touch of bodies interacting gravitationally in intermittent physical exchanges. Like abyssal fish in the unavoidable depths — seemingly sheltered from turbulent waters — we understand that metamorphoses are collective and slow.

¹Bachelard, Gaston. *El agua y los sueños. Ensayo sobre la imaginación de la materia* (2013) México: Fondo de Cultura Económica P. 15

² For more information <https://vimeo.com/3911618>

³ For more information <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/archive-leaders-hans-ulrich-obrist-look-to-artists-to-shape-the-future>

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