

SALT
MODA Critical Review
Issue 03

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The *MODA Critical Review* is dedicated to exploring and presenting artistic research, forms of criticism, and creative work beyond the academic format. Edited by current MA in Modern Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies (MODA) students at Columbia University, each annual issue is organized around a keyword that serves as an origin point for a diverse body of textual and visual contributions.

In choosing our keyword for this year's publication our editors were concerned with finding a generative term which also encapsulated the fluctuating aspects of our current climate. Elemental, salt conjures a resource derived from oceans and mines. It is a resource, mundane and accessible, yet the host of many myths. It protects against spirits, preserves decay, and instigates buoyancy. These intersecting concepts form the framework for this issue.

The contributions included in this issue approach the topic with as much vastness as the mineral itself, navigating both temporal and geographic spaces. Through works that span the macro and micro, personal and political, and supernatural and scientific, *Salt* ties that expansive nature of contemporary art criticism and creation to conversations about the granular world around us. Some of the pieces, such as Anoushka Mariwala's contribution, *State of the Union: On the Roles and Residues of Salt in the Indian Independence Movement*, and Fadl Fakhouri's piece, *Salt as Preservation, Salt as Wound*, look to salt as a historic vessel for ideas, connectivity, bodies, and complex geopolitical issues. Others, such as Ho Won Kim's *How to See and Feel the Salt Dissolved in the Sea - On Emma Safrir's Woven Mirrors I*, and Linnéa Gad's *Saltliths*, examine the element itself as material and medium. In Jean Wong's *Home Cooked*, salt is something familiar and deeply personal, and in Chloe Power's *Christen Clifford: Seeing Red* salt is bodily, both speaking to the fundamental ways salt is rooted in being. This thread is picked up in Austin Janisch's work *Still Salty: Floating Outside the*

Letter from the Editors

Academy, where salt is the setting and the preservation for alternative artistic communities. The sea is also the setting for Theodora Bocanegra Lang's *Let the Sea Enter!: The Poetry and Painting of Etel Adnan*, returning us back to the vast temporal and geographic threads upon which salt travels.

We would like to extend special thanks to MODA Director Dr. Janet Kraynak, Graduate Programs Director Nicole Meily, and Financial Coordinator Sonia Sorrentini for their support. We would also like to thank our graphic designer, Jinu Hong, for collaborating with us to create our print publication, and finally to the Columbia University Arts and Sciences Graduate Student Council for their generous grant, which made this year's first distributed print issue possible.

Theodora Bocanegra Lang is a rising second-year MODA student from New York, and previously received her BA from Oberlin College in Art History. She is currently curatorial assistant at Dia Art Foundation, where she most recently worked on exhibitions with Maren Hassinger, Joan Jonas, and Jo Baer, among others. She previously worked at Gavin Brown's enterprise and The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fadl Fakhouri is a graduating MFA candidate at Columbia University. He centers on dots and lines as a method of pursuing definition and positionality. Through the utility of images and contextualized objects, they formulate poetic statements of determination. Sometimes, they use their body as medium. Fadl has exhibited work at SFAI (San Francisco), A.I.R. (New York), Times Square (New York), Jacobs Institute (Berkeley), and Worth Ryder (Berkeley).

Linnéa Gad is an artist from Stockholm, Sweden. Her art springs from collaboration with materials that are animated and surrender to processes beyond her control. She currently works with limestone, oysters, cardboard, bark, and other shell materials that she happens upon. She received her MFA from Columbia University in 2022. Her ongoing research and work with lime was part of an exhibition and public program at SixtyEight Art Institute, in Copenhagen (2021). In 2023, she will release her first artist-research book, to be published by RSS Press. Gad is the recipient of several grants from The Swedish Arts Grants Committee and was short-listed for the Frankenthaler Climate Art Awards in 2022.

Austin Janish is a graduating MODA student focusing on moments where the work of artists transformed, critiqued or inspired society. Passionate about cultivating his creativity through his art practice, Austin's work seeks to blend History and Art to bring the contemporary period in conversation with the past and through analysis highlight those continuities that are parallel with and can inform the present. His research seeks to develop cross-cultural and temporal comparisons to address issues which have re-emerged in the contemporary period. Austin earned his Bachelor of Arts in both History and Art along with a Minor in Museum Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Ho Won Kim is a writer and curator and a rising second-year MODA student. He is interested in the intersection of art and technology. His research focuses on the issues of artistic material and practical sensory behavior in contemporary art, especially the hybridization between the conventional artistic mediums and the new media. His practice spans academic writing, critical review, media production, and exhibition-making, reflecting the ever-changing communication environment. He received his BA in French Literature and Media Contents from Chung-Ang University and is a 2023 MODA Curates Fellow.

Anoushka Mariwala is an M. Arch I candidate at Columbia GSAPP. She enjoys using her hands: these days mostly for writing, sewing, and cooking.

Chloe Powers is a rising second-year MODA student with an interest in contemporary women artists and designers. With a focus in performance art, fashion, and digitization, her research explores the use of identity as a vehicle to address crucial issues confronting people of color, queer populations, and the working class. She graduated from The University of Texas at Austin, where she earned her B.A. in Art History Honors with a Business Minor and a Museum Studies Certificate (2021).

Jean Wong is an artist working in drawing, painting, performance, and installation. She is interested in collaborative art practices that negotiate intergenerational trauma and individual and collective healing, particularly in Southeast Asian communities. Her research centers on technological infrastructures in Southeast Asia that were developed during the Cold War, and the impact of these constructions on the everyday mobility of those living in the region as well as its diasporas.

Leah Denison

Editor-in-Chief

Leah is a graduating MODA student from Massachusetts, holding a BFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University. She is also a dual degree student with the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. Her research interests vary widely, but her current work focuses on fashion, collaborative practice, the intersection of contemporary art and science and the influence of cult science-fiction on commercialized aesthetics. Feel free to contact her at LCD2155@columbia.edu

Michelle Huynh Chu

Editor-in-Chief

Michelle is a historian of art, architecture and design. Her current research and writing addresses modernization and Enlightenment-thinking in Victorian Britain in relation to historical styles, urban planning and media technologies. She is also interested in landscape architecture, garden history, and climate-related topics. She received her MA in Modern Art (MODA) from Columbia University and her Bachelors in History and Film from New York University.

Emily Small

Editor-in-Chief

Emily is a graduating MODA student who focuses on queer and feminist studies within the mediums of contemporary craft, performance, and video. She received her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, department of textiles and is a 2022 MODA Curates Fellow.

Victoria Horrocks

Editor

Victoria is a rising second-year MODA student interested in narratology, image/text relationships, theories of display, and exhibition cultures. She received her MST in History of Art & Visual Culture from Oxford University, and her BA in English literature from Cornell University. She is also the co-founder of *Poltern: Confronting Issues in Art History*.

Darcy Olmstead

Editor

Darcy is a rising second-year MODA student from Fayetteville, Arkansas. She is currently focusing on digital archival silence within the museum. She is primarily interested in museum studies; archival silence; and how contemporary artists engage with questions of memory, grief, and preservation. She received her BA from Washington and Lee University where she focused on Film, Art History, and conservation science.

Carlota Ortiz Monasterio

Editor

Carlota is a curator and art historian from Mexico City and a rising second-year MODA student. Her research focuses on theories of the archive, narrative strategies and practices that explore notions of identity, diaspora and embodied knowledge in relation to Latin America and the Caribbean. She received a BA in Art History from Universidad Iberoamericana and is a 2023 MODA Curates Fellow.

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*State of the Union: On the Roles and Residues of Salt
in the Indian Independence Movement*
Anoushka Mariwala



1

“With this salt, I am shaking the foundations of the British Empire.” — *Mahatma Gandhi*¹

It was this very declaration, uttered by Mahatma Gandhi moments before this photograph was taken, paired with a gesture towards the salty mud in his fist, that set off the Indian Independence Movement. The declaration has also been recognized as a cornerstone of Gandhi’s philosophy of self-rule that underpinned the

¹ Evan Andrews, “When Gandhi’s Salt March Rattled British Colonial Rule,” *History.com*, October 2, 2019.

struggle for independence which transcends this specific moment in April, 1930. Today we read this proclamation as resistance, specifically one that relies on *material* (salt) and *place* (salt pan) to be both understood by the colonized, and effectively endured by the colonizer. It is a rhetoric that effectively yokes the success of the reterritorialization project to a single grain of salt, the manual labour of crude desalination to the “shaking of the empire.”² The performed change of state (saltwater to grain of salt) that effects statehood transcends metaphor; we can consider scale as integral to the independence manifesto, and salt as a medium through which to consider the conditions of the independence struggle, as represented in photographs of the Salt March.

The 1930 Salt March was a national act of civil disobedience against the British salt tax, through which the colonizer effectively took control of the manufacture and sale of Indian salt. In response, Gandhi began a march 200 miles up the western coast of the subcontinent, culminating at the salt pans of Dandi in Gujarat, where he publicly performed the production of salt by evaporation, and encouraged others to follow suit, thereby rejecting the tax and undermining colonial rule. To consider British colonization as a capitalist venture, is to then read the salt march as a return of both the commodity and its means of production to the colonized, Indian body.³ In other words, it allowed the Indian people to “enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities for growth.”⁴

Photographs emerge as crucial archival resources, or evidence, through which the march is studied and remembered — I imagine this essay might be considered as much a study of material as it is a study of material *remains*, doubled. As salt emerges as the constructive remainder of desalination (and evidence of produc-

² Ibid.

³ Acherāiōu Amar, *Rethinking Postcolonialism: Colonialist Discourse in Modern Literatures and the Legacy of Classical Writers* (Basingstoke England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁴ Indian Const. Declaration of Purna Swaraj (January 26, 1930).

tion), so too are photographs revealed as visual residue of a watershed historical moment and the archival evidence of its real associated labor.



2

Why salt? Salt materialized the abstraction of a foreign rule into tangible consequence. In the deeply divisive subcontinent, salt emerges as the lowest common denominator across socio-economics and geographies, and its taxation was met with an indignation that hurt the poorest Indians most. Gandhi recognized this, “Next to air and water,” he suggested, salt is “perhaps the greatest necessity of life.”⁵ Through the Salt March, the Indian body became not only a laboring producer of salt, but also a producer of unrest and independence as well, through performative operation; each encouragement to make one’s own salt along the coast generated personal investment and belief in the cause, and the recognition of a contribution beyond the self unto a body politic. It turned the active condition of doing and manufacturing a dietary staple into a typology of productive protest and put the production of salt grains in the hands of Indian fists that subsequently turned into a discernible, tangible marker of dissent.

⁵ Anna Reading, Tamar Katriel, and Ornit Shani, “Gandhi’s Salt March: Paradoxes and Tensions in the Memory of Nonviolent Struggle in India.,” *Cultural Memories of Non-Violent Struggles: Powerful Times* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 32-51.

The photograph of masses at the salt pans formally acknowledges the synergy of the protest. Embedded in the very idea and success of the black and white photograph is contrast — white grains (of salt, pixels, protestors at respective scales) against brown bodies and a darkening landscape accumulate first as image to produce an effect on the viewer, and second, as a historical event to pressure the colonizer into political change. That the march was also called the White Flowing River itself indicates a subsumption of the bodies into the sea, the origin site of salt — the ultimate return.⁶



3

The salt pan — the site of the march's culmination, is a triadic space of liminality. Geologically, it is inherently unstable land, built from layers of mineral saltwater sediment. Geographically, it represents a boundary between territorialized place and unterritorialized land. And finally, politically, it emerges as the space between subservience and disobedience, reliance and independence. The sea that inundates these low-lying pans is the natural perimeter of occupy-able land to which a claim could be staked. This is particularly meaningful when considering that it is via this very body of water (the Arabian Sea on the west coast of the Indian peninsula) and its

⁶ A nod to the homespun khadi cloth that the protestors wore, in the same lineage of economic independence as the Salt March.

ports that the first colonizers entered the country as traders, once more evoking the Acheraiounian understanding of imperialism as inherently capitalist. It was through ocean trade that much of later economic exploitation occurred. The act of reclaiming the sea, so to speak, as a uniquely Indian space, is one that has significant political value.



4

These liminalities materialize in the photograph of the march, featuring Mahatma Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, and other freedom fighters making their way through the salt pans on a narrow precipice of solid land. They tread unstable ground, on the brink of rebellion and subsequent disorder. Certainly, we might also read temporality as integral to this narrative; the pathway on which they tread only reveals itself during the hot summer months and remains entirely submerged during high tide and the monsoon months. Timing, then, becomes crucial, not only in considering the seconds it might have taken the photographer to frame the two leaders, Gandhi and Naidu, in the center of the composition, but also in months — planning the march for late spring when routes emerged, finally accessible, from the water — and even years spent conceiving of a manifesto for the freedom struggle. All these factors considered, it is only natural to read the image as a deliberately conceived return (political, industrial, and temporal). This is a reclamation: a return to beginnings, of salt production and its consumption, and so a subsequent return of

power to the very (Indian) bodies that are engaged in its production and consumption once more.



5



6

What is the legacy of salt in a country that is founded on it? We might look to Tata Salt, the country's first packaged, iodized salt brand, as a descendent of the condiment's legacy. Launched in independent India in 1983 with the tagline "Desh ka Namak" [transl: the "Nation's Salt"], the iconic Indian brand continues to affiliate salt with statehood — the brand routinely draws on Gandhi's fight for independence to market itself to the masses, where the term desh (nation) references both territory (the actual land from which the salt is extracted) and community (the masses, nearly 200 million households across India that purchase the product routinely).⁷ If Gandhi's Salt March returned power to, and made visible, the Indian body politic, then fifty years later, it was Tata Salt's industrialized manufacturing and iodization that appended hygiene and public health to this narrative of salt in the modern Indian body.

⁷ "Tata Salt: About Us," Tata Salt. Tata. <https://www.tatasalt.com/about-us>.

Image 1

Mahatma Gandhi at Dandi, South Gujarat, picking salt on the beach at the end of the Salt March, 5 April 1930. Behind him is his second son Manilal Gandhi and activist Mithuben Petit.
via https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Salt_March.jpg.

Image 2

Swiss photographer Walter Bosshard's image of the scene at Dandi, the culminating point of the Salt March, where crowds gathered in the hundreds to participate in the anti-tax protest by producing their own salt.

Image courtesy Fotostiftung Schweiz / Archiv für via https://fss.e-pics.ethz.ch/latelogin.jsp?recordsWithCatalogName=FSS:111434#1647751670198_4.

Image 3

A group of protestors, all wearing khadi, collecting salt water to harvest into salt. Gujarat, April 1930.

Image courtesy Hulton Archive / Archive Photos / Getty Images via <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/nationalists-in-water-preparing-to-break-indias-salt-laws-a-news-photo/515167036>.

Image 4

Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu, leaders of the Independence Movement, flanked by accompanying protestors, all walking between salt pans at the site of the march's culmination.

via <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/mahatma-gandhi-and-some-of-his-followers-on-their-way-to-news-photo/514981262?adppopup=truerule>.

Image 5 and Image 6

Tata Salt's contemporary advertisements, via <https://www.tatasalt.com/about-us>, both featuring iconography of the Independence Movement – a render of Gandhi at the salt march. An accompanying slogan evoking the legacy of the Salt March (right). [via <https://www.facebook.com/TATASalt-DeshKaNamak/>].

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Salt as Preservation, Salt as Wound

Fadl Fakouri



1

I woke up this morning wanting white people to see me die
Not white as Caucasian, but white as salt
White as unmarked, but leaving marks
White as in lacking relation to the traumas of targeted identities,
but drawing lines
I was born with salt in the womb.

ماما و بابا قالوا انه قلبك في
الأرض و وطنك بالعرض

It's been passed down for generations: Trauma
But if I am not the original, a father, am I still legitimate in my wounds? Do my cuts not burn?
Some have said I wield the knife. That's not true,
But I hang among wielders, villains, offenders, x's y's and z's.
Can I spread my salt?
Distribute the wounds?
The supply we call bloodline
Or am I an abrasion in the blood of a few?
Is my salt not sweet? Is it cake-based food?
Is it rancid, toxic? No more? No good?
Can I tell you a secret?
Affirming the images I've been taught to name with words like
oppressive and sane?
Can I share with you one sampling or are you too full? Too new?
Too old? Too tired? Too 2?
Like dancing ballerinas, you said a dancer can never cry.
Only be thankful and keep smiles at bay.
Today I turned 22, if you discount the two years of trauma, patrony,
agony, and sin.
Spiteful of 24. Half of 48, half of death, half of sin, half of blood,
half of them.
I left you because the string was weak, invasive, provocative like
hair in my mouth.

المستقبل الماضي له
نفس الشيء المكان الموضوع

Even salt looks like sugar too.

Image 1

I in Self, Fadi Fakouri.

How to See and Feel the Salt Dissolved in the Sea
- *On Emma Safir's Woven Mirrors I* -
Ho Won Kim

Emma, have you ever dreamed of floating in the sea?

I had that dream last night. I'm not sure which sea it was or if it ever existed, but what does that matter? In any case, it was just a dream. What I remember is that it was so relaxing but also made me feel a little unsettling. The temperature of the seawater was just right, neither too cold nor too warm, and the feeling was very soft. But, at the same time, I felt as if I was surrounded by something so colossal that I couldn't grasp or even identify it. Like a message in a bottle drifting in a vast ocean, I felt scared and alone. And that's when I had an epiphany about salt. The salt that is dissolved in the sea. The salt that helps me stay afloat and keep my balance. The salt that will gently embrace me, even though I never see or feel it. With that salt in mind, I felt like I could muster up the courage to sail across the sea. Then, I woke up.

It's such a silly dream, isn't it? The dream that began with floating in the sea and ended with a thought about salt. But I haven't been able to get the dream off my mind. I can't stop thinking about the salt dissolved in the sea. I've been pondering what that means to me.

Suddenly, while scrolling down on my phone, I realized what the dream was about. It reflected my constant feeling of alienation caused by the disembodied viewing experience of screens. The digital screens that have become the most prevalent way for me and for us to experience the world. In a way, scattered screens are an ocean connected by massive lightning-fast networks, and the images that appear on them are fleeting and ephemeral waves. Thanks to the hyper-networked connection, we see more images than ever before, but they're also escaping our eyes and fingers as we constantly scroll down the screen. There are more visual spec-

tacles than ever before, but they don't provide an actual viewing experience. Then, I wondered, what was the salt about? Perhaps the salt represents the relationship between the image and ourselves. The material relationship that, even though we can't perceive it, elicits affection and allows for an embodied experience. The bodily relationship that keeps us from getting lost and helps us find meaning in a sea of screens and waves of images. So, how can we reestablish our relationship with the image? How can we see and feel the salt dissolved in the sea?

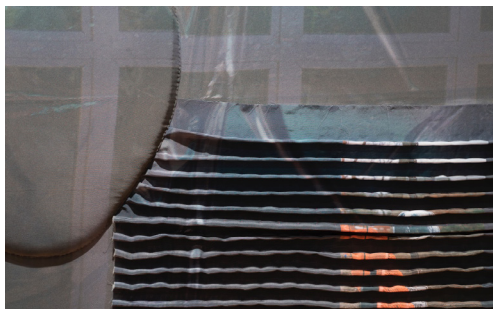


1

I believe your *Woven Mirrors* show us a way to reclaim the senses that have been taken away from our eyes and fingers—a means of reconnecting with the waves of images and making meaning in the sea of screens. But *Woven Mirrors* are not screens. Unlike screens that display images, mirrors reflect them. *Woven Mirrors* aren't even mirrors. In contrast to glass mirrors, which reflect light, *Woven Mirrors* appear to absorb light because of their soft and dark surfaces. Nonetheless, I believe that *Woven Mirrors* still offer a chance to reflect on today's viewing condition. Even though they are not screens, they do display our disorientation among screens. They aren't glass mirrors, either, but they do reflect our struggles to find meaning in overflowing images.

In *Woven Mirrors I*, the two images in the background and center appear to delay the generation of meaning by creating a collision of

two pairs of concepts: the private and the public, and the inviting and the unwanted. To begin, I see a window, grids, plants, and drop-lets of water. The domestic garden seen over the grid appears warm and welcoming, saying, “come here and rest.” At the same time, the grid is blocking my view and pushing me away, telling me that “you can’t move or even see from out there to here.” This tension between accessibility and inaccessibility is echoed in the smaller image in the center. I see a bright orange safety net, a mirror and a road sign on a steel pole, as well as grass and buildings. They depict a public space in contrast to the larger image of an indoor environment. However, the half-covered sign only reveals the word “private,” conflating the notions of the domestic and the public. Furthermore, neither the photographer nor the camera is reflected in the mirror, implying an absence of, or a refusal to, any gaze. The more I look *at* these two images, the more perplexed I am in attempting to make sense of them. The more I look *into* them, the more I am repulsed.



2

I think *Woven Mirrors I* reveals our volatility in the waves of images and our struggles to understand their meanings by interweaving the ideas of the private and the public and the inviting and the unwanted. However, as *Woven Mirrors I* suggests, weaving can also become a way to re-engage with the images. The images in *Woven Mirrors I* are literally interwoven on both glass and fabric. First, on the screens, the images are digitally collaged and rasterized. The images

are then printed and reprinted on silk before being patterned with various weaving techniques. The algorithmic code virtually knits the images on the screens, while the images on silk are physically weaved through threads. This latter, material act of weaving, I believe, allows us to drop anchor and seize the meaning in a sea of screens and waves of images. This visible act of weaving enables us to reclaim the embodied experience of the image and re-establish our relationship with it.

In *Woven Mirrors I*, particularly, an oval-shaped appliqué and two straight and winding smocking decorations appear to granularize the affective relationship between images and us. I see their bumpy, soft, and tactile surfaces. Unlike flat and hard glass screens, these raised surfaces seem to approach us directly and evoke tactile feelings. Unlike glass screens, where we don't think about our fingers scrolling them down, these tangible surfaces make us imagine your hands and the labor of weaving. These gracefully curved surfaces, I believe, allow both our eyes and fingers to grasp an image that has been alienated from us.

But I also think that the appliqué and smocking patterns make the images harder to read. The two images in the background and center are still legible, despite the confusing meanings they produce. But, the appliqué and wrinkled decorations make the images illegible. Even as I look at them, I'm not sure what they represent. Only the bright orange traces in the two patterns hint that they were created with the small images of the safety net. Some might say that they are thus alienating us from the images, but I would say that they are paradoxically reconnecting us with the images. The illegibility caused by the appliqué and smocking patterns slows down the flow of images and lets us think about how they are created and circulated. It is the sliver of the orange safety net that allows us to see your hands and weaving labors to manipulate the images.

In this way, the material act of weaving, I believe, becomes an effort to see and feel the dissolved salt in the sea. The bumpy, soft, and tactile surfaces produced by weaving encourage us to interact

physically with the images. The illegible image created by weaving invites us to consider the unseen labor involved in creating and circulating images.

Your weaving, I imagine, goes beyond the literal meaning of sewing to a new way of seeing and feeling the image. Here, I'd like to stitch together an essay by anthropologist Tim Ingold.* In that piece, he suggests to rethink the act of weaving by looking closely into a basket. He claims that a weaved form of a basket demonstrates that it's the result of forces both internal and external to the its material. In other words, the form of the basket indicates the reciprocal dialogue between the weaver and the material, rather than the weaver's unilateral application of forces to the material. He describes how the word and concept of "making" hide this interactive process, turning a basket into a passive and finished object. As a result, he proposes thinking of making as weaving, returning objects to their likeness, and restoring reciprocal activity between the object and its human creator. In that sense, I think *Woven Mirrors I* eloquently reveals the mutual relationship between the image and us. *Woven Mirrors I* allows us to reconnect with the waves of images and weave the meaning in the sea of screens by literally weaving the images with threads but also by weaving, not making, a new relationship.

Emma, can we decide what dreams we'll have before going to bed?

If I'll have a dream tonight, I'd like to dream of weaving waves through threads. What does it matter if they are fabrics with wave images on them or the wave of images on screens? It'll be just a dream anyway. I just want to see the invisible and feel the untouchable by weaving. to get a better sense of what's out there in the ocean.

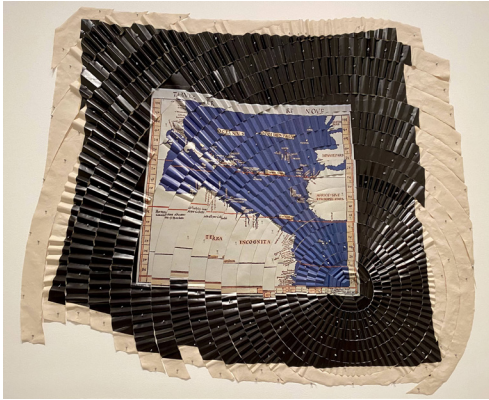
* Ingold Tim. "On weaving a basket." In *Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, 426-38. London: Routledge, 2011.

Image 1 and Image 2

Emma Safir. *Woven Mirrors I*, 2022.

Photograph by Mahsa Biglow, image courtesy of the artist.

*Rippling Cartography, Colonialism and Modernity:
Miguel Angel Ríos's Columbus Making Ripples (1993)*
Carlota Ortiz Monasterio



1

Walking through the galleries of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, I found myself unable to take my eyes off *Columbus Making Ripples* (1993), a work by Argentinian artist Miguel Angel Ríos. While the paintings in the adjacent galleries hung, for the most part, neatly stretched in their canvases, I was standing in front of what looked like an irregular piece of canvas that had been torn into strips and spit back onto the wall. Precariously attached only with pushpins, the work reproduced an early colonial map of the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Islands. The map, however, had been completely disrupted. It had been cut into thin strips, pleated, and arranged onto a set of concentric circles that emerge from its bottom corner. The whole surface seemed to powerfully ripple outward: from the map's frame to a vast black space surrounding it, to the remaining bare canvas and onto the museum wall. I couldn't help but think it looked like an earthquake razing both the cartographic and picture planes.

I soon found out that the work is part of a series titled *Mapas* (Maps), created in response to one of the most heated cultural debates of the 1990s: the fifth-hundred anniversary celebration of the so-called discovery of America in 1992. Using colonial maps to create intricate wall installations that involve both industrial techniques and manual craftsmanship, these works proposed to rethink long histories of power and colonial experience while referencing traditional indigenous arts in the Americas such as the Andean quipu. The piece installed at the MoMA is an early example of the artist's aesthetic disruptions to cartographic documents that questions the objectivity of maps as a graphic form and poses a sharp critique on the ideological implications of the map-making enterprise.

As I stood in the museum's gallery space engulfed by the work's commanding presence, so many questions came to my mind. Why did the artist choose to depict the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Islands, and how are these places represented? What could the vast black space and the accompanying bare canvas surrounding the original colonial map suggest? Why did the artist privilege such a fragile and unfixed structure? What might the ripple, reflected in the work's title and in every aspect of its material structure, symbolize? Through a close reading of the work, alongside the concepts of various theorists and thinkers, I set out to discern the layers of meaning in the piece.

For more than five decades, Ríos has explored the structures of Western systems of knowledge and the violence they have exerted throughout history. His multidisciplinary practice ranging in video, installation, sculpture, drawing and photography, has long questioned the myth of modernity and foregrounded ancestral forms of knowledge from the Americas. In *Columbus Making Ripples*, these concerns of coloniality and modernity seem to be intricately tied to its own materiality.

My attention was drawn first to the piece's title, which alludes to the charged concept of the ripple. Although its etymology stems from the art of navigation, 'ripple' is now a roomy term that has

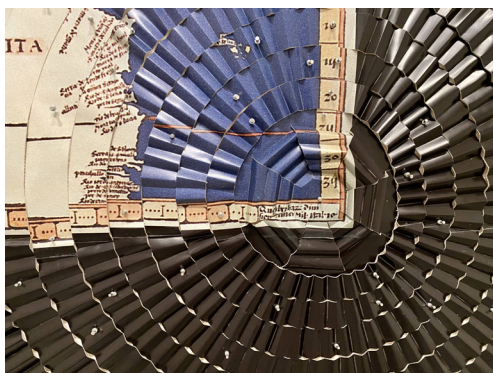
many connotations. It evokes movement from the passage of a boat and the undulating wave that forms on the ocean's surface. It refers to a disruption of a liquid surface by the intrusion of an external object. It can be used to describe a sound or feeling that reverberates, impacting people and places. In short, it connotes causation of some *thing* and the radial effect of a centrifugal force. In analyzing Ríos's work, it seemed to me that perhaps no other work I had seen negotiated the concept to such a degree that centered its conceptual and aesthetic dimensions. My curiosity led me to trace these dimensions to consider how the materiality of the work embodied its conceptual ambitions.

First, I turned to the map represented at the center of the piece. It depicts the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Islands framed on the sides by what seems to contemporary eyes as distorted representations of Mediterranean Europe and West Africa on the East and an enlarged South America in the West. The vibrant blue of the ocean and the clusters of islands, pleated in sharp creases, visually and spatially dominate the composition. Continental spaces, by contrast, were left uncreased. The emphasis on the Atlantic Ocean—as a spatial gap, between lands, or a cultural discontinuity between the Old and New World—evokes notions of passage, crossing and exchange. This centering of the ocean and the Caribbean Islands reminded me of Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1993) and its meditations on this ocean as a space not only of relentless violence but also one pregnant with potentiality.

More related to Ríos's own context of Latin America, however, I thought of Édouard Glissant's concept of "archipelagic thought." Using the Caribbean as a conceptual metaphor, archipelagic thought stands as an alternative epistemological system to what Glissant considered "continental thought," that in which "we see the world as a single block, as a mass, as a projection, as a kind of imposing synthesis."¹ In contrast, archipelagic thought strives for the knowledge of the minute and the musings of the local, foregoing any claim to totality.² Where continental thought sees unity, archipelagic thought acknowledges plurality, multiplicity and, above all,

relation.³ As a set of separate yet interconnected pleated canvas strips, the structure of *Columbus Making Ripples* echoes this relationality. Held together only by pushpins, its form suggests an unstable surface that could be rearranged at any moment, and which rejects any form of stasis.

In addition to the work's subject matter and structure, the composition of the piece seemed to contain further significance. The low-resolution of the image of the colonial map, which was likely taken from a reference book, covers less than half of the surface of the work. It is surrounded by a vast expanse of black photographic paper which is exceeded by bare canvas. In its scale and resolution, the colonial map feels small and insignificant, and what comes out is its uncomfortable relation with what is outside of it.



2

Ríos's critical approach to cartography reveals a keen awareness of the power exerted through the colonial mapping and naming enterprises. It reminded me of what cartography historian Denis Wood

¹ "Archipelagic thought: the thought of an essay, of intuitive temptation in apposition to continental thought, which is above all systems of thought." (Emphasis in original) Édouard Glissant, "Archipelagic Thought," *Purple* (Spring/Summer, 2021), <https://purple.fr/magazine/none/archipelagic-thought/>

² Glissant, "Archipelagic Thought"

³ See: Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

once noted: that “the cartographic impulse was profoundly implicated in the Spanish conquest; the dominion... of the land during the subsequent centuries was secured and perpetuated in maps.”⁴ In line with this, I recalled Michel de Certeau’s argument that in enclosing the spatial practices and “eras[ing] the itineraries of their production,” maps effectively “colonize space.”⁵ Through this framework, Ríos’s deconstructions of colonial maps—slight in the work analyzed and to the point of illegibility in other pieces from the series—become active disruptions and postcolonial acts of reclamation.

My attention then turned to the labels and markers of the map. As is well known, the mapping enterprise of the Portuguese and Spanish empires involved both the setting of physical borders and the naming of the so-called “new” territories, which effaced native designations. These new names—such as Venezuela meaning little Venice, or Hispaniola (now the island encompassing Haiti and the Dominican Republic) meaning little Spain—inscribed the lands within a European colonial discourse that described, classified and differentiated its colonies according to Western standards. In *Columbus Making Ripples*, the legibility of these designations is challenged. The cutting and pleating of the map’s surface makes most of the names unreadable. The most visually salient one, which has been left uncreased, is Terra Incognita. This marker that hangs over continental South America, however, is a non-name: a temporary and unstable category to describe the land which is not yet known. It immediately suggested Homi Bhabha’s theorization of colonial spaces. As he argued, “the colonial space is the terra incognita or the terra nulla, the empty or wasted land whose history has to be begun, whose archives must be filled out; whose future progress must be secured in modernity.”⁶ Akin to how the size of the map called attention to what was beyond it, by blurring the legibility

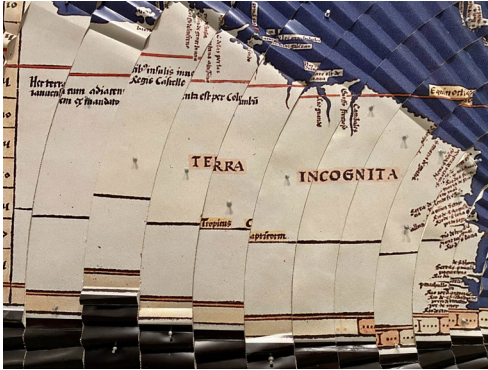
⁴ Meyer Raphael Rubinstein, “The khipus and maps of Miguel Angel Ríos: Radical Measures,” *Art Nexus*, 12: 48-52.

⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 121.

⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 352-53, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203820551>

of most names yet leaving Terra Incognita fully legible, Ríos calls attention to the spaces beyond colonial knowledge.

In a similar way, the map's calculated degree of formal disruption to the map challenges the authority of the cartographic document. While it is not distorted beyond recognition, my eyes struggled to read the image for full legibility and meaning. If maps are containers and organizers of information through grids and coded surfaces, the one in Ríos's work struggles to find a solid shape. In carefully towing the line between conforming to or defying standards of measurements in the depiction of space, it powerfully reveals the constructed nature of the very language used to define it—simultaneously participating and critiquing traditional methods.



3

With so much at stake in this piece, I decided to pay a second visit a few weeks later. What had seemed like a complete mystery at first—its materiality, process, and the many possible intentions, not to mention my own interpretation—now felt like cohesive parts of the same argument. The work's deconstruction of the colonial map and embrace of the ripple as a conceptual and aesthetic strategy articulates a rebuttal of the continental and a forging of new ways to conceptualize the archipelagic. Its formal structure, a whole created out of a multiplicity of parts, privileges relationality and inter-

connection. Its composition, where the early colonial map is made to feel insignificant, underscores the arbitrariness and limited scope of Western knowledge systems. And finally, its recentering of the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Islands—sites of circulation, exchange, mobility, and relation—proposes a relational understanding of colonialism and modernity that rejects and literally fractures traditional epistemologies in favor of a multidirectional outward rippling.

Looking at it again, I realized that the earthquake impression I had was perhaps accurate after all. Like how a ripple disrupts surfaces, an earthquake shakes the foundations of the built environment and of the geographical strata of the Earth. Its shattering force, however destructive, also compels a deep restructuring and rearticulation. In its aim to disrupt historical myths and norms while paving the way for new epistemologies, it may not be accidental that Ríos's work evokes this natural phenomenon. Perhaps *Columbus Making Ripples* is itself meant to be a humble but mighty earthquake.

Image 1

Miguel Ángel Ríos, *Columbus Making Ripples*, 1993,
Pleated silver-dye-bleach print (Cibachrome) in pleated canvas
with steel pushpins, Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Photograph by the author.

Image 2

Detail of Miguel Ángel Ríos, *Columbus Making Ripples*, 1993.
Photograph by the author.

Image 3

Detail of Miguel Ángel Ríos, *Columbus Making Ripples*, 1993.
Photograph by the author.

“Saltliths”
Linnéa Gad

White flecks of windmills lit up the landscape just as a tiny
highlight brings life to a painted eye
— W. G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*

One of my professors once told me that when painting a landscape, I should always add “the white” at the very end. That very last detail—perhaps a passing sea gull or ocean froth—would make the whole scene come alive. I often come back to that idea: how a fleck of light functions as a sign, a glittering blank that seduces the eye and has the potential to foster deep learning.

My uncle is a farmer and, whenever I visited his farm as a child, I vividly remember seeing and touching salt licks in the field where he kept his sheep. In the early winter, before the first snow, the licks shone brightly in the muddy field. I probably didn’t think of them in terms of sculpture when I was younger, but I do recall their striking form and texture. They stood out from the rest of the environment—anomalies in the landscape. Their silky smooth surface felt like a suspension, a confusing mix that seemed to be both liquid and solid at the same time.

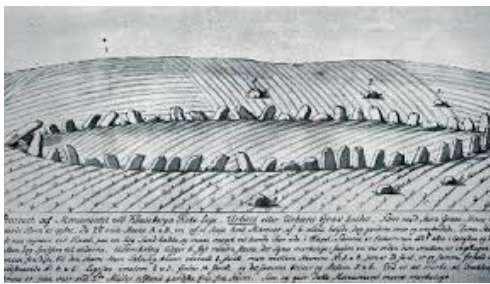
In 2019, I started to think of the salt lick again. I was doing an outdoor piece for an exhibition at Spencer Brownstone Gallery and I was looking for a material that could transform over the course of two months. My childhood memories of their elusive shapes inspired me to make a mineral lick installation at the gallery’s courtyard. But it wasn’t until I began to work with the saltlicks that I fully understood their purpose: to provide a reliable source of salt for domesticated animals who could no longer roam free. Before fences segmented the landscape, wild animals could travel far distances to find natural mineral licks in the form of brackish water, brine springs, and rock salt. In fact some historians theorize that

early human trails and roads can be traced back to the paths that animals took in order to find salt and minerals.



Aerial view of sheep in fields.

The summer leading up to the exhibition I was living in Upstate New York, where I was working on a series of ceramic sculptures for the show. During this time I also mapped out the dairy and sheep farmers nearby who might be using salt licks and reached out to them. I asked them if I could get their old salt licks in exchange for new ones. After a two week search, I finally found a sheep farmer in Redhook who thought my idea was interesting and was down to do the trade. His name was Dan and he sent me some images of all the dimpled salt blocks across his farm. When I went to Tractor Supply to get seven new industrially-made mineral licks it really struck me—seeing them in their full form—how incredible it was that the sheep could turn those unremarkable blocks into wavy amorphous landscapes. The sheep-sculpted licks I got from Dan remind me of scholar stones, naturally occurring or shaped rocks, who are prized traditionally by Chinese scholars because of the astonishing ways they have been sculpted and eroded by time. Sometimes scholar stones are perforated with pitted holes and hollowed out resembling birds in flight or a rising wave, other times they are as smooth as the sculpted saltlicks simulating a veiled mountain or silky folds in the sea.



Drawing of Ales Stenar by C.G.G Hilfelings in 1777. Ales stones is a megalithic monument from the nordic iron age located on the coast in the south of Sweden.

After cleaning the salts from the dirt they collected in the muddy fields, I installed the licks lined up in the gravel of the gallery courtyard, each like a contained landscape model with varying terrain. I titled the piece *Saltliths* as a nod to the risen megalith stones that prehistoric humans marked landscapes with. In many cases, the stones used for neolithic monuments that had no quarry nearby had been deposited there by glacial ice. The exhibition, curated by Jae Cho, was titled *Erratics*, in reference to glacial erratics, stones that migrate with ice sheets to landscapes far from their origin and often dropped in peculiar places and positions. The works on view all explored, in various ways, how to connect physically with the vastness of geologic time. It included sculptures that I had made in clay which felt to me as compressed performances on how stones are made and how they weather over time. As I was working on the ceramic pieces I was thinking of how the clay was sediment: shaped, sponged smooth and then fired to sedimentary stone like structures.

Similar to how water or wind can smooth the rock, repetitive licking of the sheep's tongue had created a seductive softness. The *Saltliths* were installed in July in the New York summer heat, they looked like ice glistening, almost sweating, in the sun. The impossible sight of suspended ice in the summer heat made me recall another childhood memory, when I was looking through the car window of the passing landscape and was very confused by seeing white silage bales, sprinkled across fields in the summer, from the

distance. I was sure they were snowballs in an uncanny size and was puzzled by how they could remain intact in the heat. If the salt licks had been ice, they would have been gone the same day as they were installed. But, as the salt licks remained outside for two months, summer rain storms started to shape the works anew. The rain hollowed out the works to the point that one of the smaller licks got completely obliterated and, to my surprise, the rain also made them sharp. Their changes, however, were not instantly dramatic; you would have needed to observe the work over time in order to acknowledge its transformation. This made me think that, in its formal resemblance to ice, the piece was a good analogy to climate change: a subtle change over a longer period of time that led to a sudden absence.



Silage bales in a field.

One of things that interests me about the Sebald quote that I included as an epigraph is the idea that the flecks in our landscape appear and disappear over time. Sebald sees the brick ruins of windmills and, with the help of a friend's memory, imagines their white sails lighting up the landscape. I like to think of the white flecks as moving marks of the human presence here on earth; the way windmills have been replaced by wind turbines. And further, I like to muse about what these flecks are, or have been, across time: shells in middens, golf balls in seabeds, AirPods in our ears, wrapped silage bales in fields, chewing gum on sidewalks, airplanes in the sky, and declining glaciers. Why I'm drawn to these light punctums is still a bit of a mystery to me. Perhaps they are simply focal points

that have in the past caught my attention and led me down curious paths. A flickering light code, transmitting a message that I need to decipher. Just as light from a star races through the atmosphere and bumps through layers of hot and cold air that bend the light before I can see it, these white flecks and salt licks have served in my work as openings or beginnings of a search. My eyes translate the light as twinkles against the dark night sky. The white flecks are that to me: glitter, fragments, visual glitches, a translation of something carried through time and space with missing pieces. An invitation to learn something unexpected, the highlights that continue to bring life to the sculptor's eye.



Documentation of *Saltliths* installed at Spencer Brownstone Gallery in July 2019. Image courtesy Adam Kremer.



Documentation of *Saltliths* installed at Spencer Brownstone Gallery in September 2019. Image courtesy Maximilian Thuemler.



Detail of *Saltliths*, 2019. Image courtesy Adam Kremer.



Saltliths leaving the farm, 2019. Image courtesy Linnéa Gad.

Let the Sea Enter!': The Poetry and Painting of Etel Adnan
Theodora Bocanegra Lang

“Sea: mirrored mirror that distracts the soul from ecstasy. The uncontrollable desire to think the fleeting elements of the world, to fuse them into images, into words, is probably the most hypnotic of Eros’ manifestations.” — *Etel Adnan, Sea*²

Etel Adnan (1925–2021) worked at the edges. She defies simple categorization; even within a single medium, her work raises questions of how it should be considered. Her wide-ranging practice spans many media, though she is most known for her painting and poetry. Analyses of the two have often been kept separate, discussing her as either a poet who paints or a painter who also writes poetry. She did not align wholly with either of these descriptions, instead maintaining that each form is a part of the same whole. Though they may seem like disparate methods of expression, both evolved simultaneously and informed each other continuously. Thus, her work presents a multiplicity of commonalities that has yet to be fully explored. Of her process she has said “I consider paintings as poems. They are the same. Poetry is a spirit. And it can come into anything you do.”³

Among the most prominent themes and subjects linking Adnan’s work is the sea, which makes frequent appearances in both her poetry and paintings as a setting or even as a protagonist. Though Adnan painted the sea countless times, one such work is perhaps the best-known. Her small oil painting *Untitled* (c. 1980s), only 7 7/8 x 9 7/8 inches, occupies the space in between abstraction and landscape that Adnan’s paintings frequently enter. Though there are

¹ Adnan, Etel. *Surge*. Nightboat Books, 2018. p. 9.

² Adnan, Etel. *Sea and Fog*. Nightboat Books, 2012. p. 15.

³ “Hans Ulrich Obrist Visits Etel Adnan; Hans Ulrich Obrist and Etel Adnan in conversation, Paris, 2019.” *HENI Talks*, henitalks.com/talks/hans-ulrich-obrist-visits-etel-adnan/#transcript. Accessed December 16, 2021.

no recognizable forms or figures, thick and energetic swipes of paint in shades of blue and gray overlap and crash into each other, recollecting a tumultuous sea of waves.

In Adnan's work, the sea assumes myriad meanings, perhaps most notably the artist's own migratory life. Born to a Greek mother and Syrian-born Ottoman officer father shortly after the empire fell, Adnan's entire life was one of movement and adjustment.⁴ As an adult, she lived in Lebanon (both French-mandate and independent), France, and the United States. Over the course of her life, she made several circuitous moves between the three, returning to California and then Paris after fleeing Beirut in 1977 due to the civil war.⁵

Adnan wrote about her early connection with the sea, where she often swam as a child in Beirut: "I developed from my early years a sensuous response to the sea, a fascination, a need that I lived like a secret. It enchanted me, and it isolated me. It has lasted all my life."⁶ The recurring form chronicles a constant and riotous movement. In her book on Adnan's life and painting, writer Kaelen Wilson-Goldie identifies the surf as the Mediterranean Sea of Beirut, the Pacific Ocean of California, and the Atlantic Ocean of Brittany—three of the most prominent seas in Adnan's life, though the hazy yet energetic depiction in *Untitled* could easily be a snapshot from anywhere.⁷ Its perspective is also muddled: it could be the ocean gazed at from ashore, or seen from a boat in the midst of a voyage. The sea is both a literal force that links and carries people and objects elsewhere, as well as an undulatory metaphor of departure, memory, and impermanence.

A passenger is boarding a ship. Let's live before dying.⁸

Adnan's poems often consist of short thoughts and associations.

⁴ Wilson-Goldie, Kaelen. "Rue Madame," in *Etel Adnan*. Lund Humphries, 2018. p. 26.

⁵ Wilson-Goldie, Kaelen. "Skies Streaked with Red Fire," in *Etel Adnan*. Lund Humphries, 2018. p. 95.

⁶ Adnan, Etel. *The Cost for Love We Are Not Willing to Pay (100 Notes – 100 Thoughts, No 006)*. Documenta 13 and Hatje Cantz, 2011. p. 5.

⁷ Wilson-Goldie, Kaelen. "The Cost for Love," in *Etel Adnan*. Lund Humphries, 2018. p. 128.

⁸ Adnan, Etel. *Night*. Nightboat Books, 2016. p. 26.

Her 58–page poem “Sea” is a rolling list of reflections, connected but disjointed, surging and receding like the waves they describe. It focuses on blurry details, layered feelings, and evocative memories. Similarly to her paintings, Adnan’s poems reside among disparate thoughts. Her gnomic fragments occasionally mention other poets, painters, or writers. These flow or crash from visual description to personal accounts or mythological references, usually in non–narrative streams. They investigate the smallness and temporality of the human experience, juxtaposed with the ancient mystery of nature and her figures, most notably, Adnan’s “primordial and beloved sea.”⁹

Her poetry calls to mind theorist Édouard Glissant’s ideas expressed in *Poetics of Relation* (1990), describing a “discloseable aesthetics of a Chaos, with every least detail as complex as the whole that cannot be reduced, simplified, or normalized. Each of its parts patterns activity implicated in the activity of every other.”¹⁰ Adnan’s poetry feels chaotic, but inevitably so, as it reconstructs the horrors of her life and of all life. It is imbued with complexity in its own web of simultaneous specificity and ambiguity. This dynamic extends to her painting; the abstract yet recognizable leaning of *Untitled* opens space to hold and illustrate multiple synchronous realities, eschewing a single account.

Wilson–Goldie writes that *Untitled* “captures in its fulsome textures and dramatic juxtapositions an immediately knowable landscape of real emotional turmoil—it is also Adnan’s wildest, most beautiful, and tempestuous depiction of the sea.”¹¹ The expressive and violent swipes and stabs of Adnan’s palette knife impress the remnants of one particular person’s specificity, anchoring the painting as personal, and from her hand. Her written ideations on the sea can all be considered as in conversation with this painting. They each show a discrete approach to express the same impulse.

⁹ Wilson–Goldie, Kaelen. “Pastel Crayons,” in *Etel Adnan*. Lund Humphries, 2018. p. 66.

¹⁰ Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*, translated by Betsy Wing. University of Michigan Press, 1997. pp. 32–33.

¹¹ Wilson–Goldie, Kaelen. “Rue Madame,” in *Etel Adnan*. Lund Humphries, 2018. p. 31.

Humanity is an ocean, each person a bubble, appearing, disappearing, and reappearing on its turn.¹²

Adnan once said that “A single designation—whether ‘painter,’ ‘musician’ or ‘architect’—is too narrow.”¹³ She was speaking about artists she admired, as well as herself. As curator and art historian Tatiana Flores writes on the expansion of the canon of Latin American art, “I have long believed that artistic production in Latin America, the Caribbean, and their diasporas disrupts the master narratives of art history, but, rather than being recognized as paradigm shifting, it is subsumed into linear narratives based on stylistic or structuralist categories derived from a Europeanist canon.”¹⁴ Adnan’s work similarly exists in a space that Western art history is not flexible enough to accommodate. Accordingly, her work has been divided into pieces and sent to their appropriate departments. This model illustrates a misunderstanding of Adnan’s practice, to which an innovative reinvention of hybridity is central. To Adnan, these practices were inextricable. Considered together, her painting and poetry show a mixed and fractured reflection on creation, indicative of Adnan’s transient and globalized life. She described her painting as emerging from her writing. Of her process she said: “I paint on the table, it comes from writing ... the first painting I made, I cut the canvas with scissors and I put it flat like a page. I consider the canvas as a page.”¹⁵

The great slaughters consistently perpetrated throughout history are jamming the conduits to the sea, claiming anonymity. She washes carefully the humiliated bodies thrown to her, before annihilating them in the oblivion she harbors.¹⁶

¹² Adnan, Etel. *Sea and Fog*. Nightboat Books, 2012. p. 37.

¹³ As quoted in “Hans Ulrich Obrist Visits Etel Adnan.” *HENI Talks*, henitalks.com/talks/hans-ulrich-obrist-visits-etel-adnan/#transcript. Accessed December 16, 2021.

¹⁴ Flores, Tatiana. “Disturbing Categories, Remapping Knowledge,” in *Routledge Companion to African-American Art History*, edited by Edward Chambers. New York and London: Routledge, 2019. p. 140.

¹⁵ “Hans Ulrich Obrist Visits Etel Adnan; Hans Ulrich Obrist and Etel Adnan in conversation, Paris, 2019.” *HENI Talks*, henitalks.com/talks/hans-ulrich-obrist-visits-etel-adnan/#transcript. Accessed December 16, 2021.

In Adnan's signature scale, *Untitled* is compact. Her standard canvases are sized to be easily handled; they are small enough to move and hang without help, and manageable so as to fit on a lap or desk to be worked on. The size allows for portability: the paintings can be picked up, easily carried, and fit in a suitcase or bag to be transported without too much hassle. The scale is simultaneously personal and indexes a relationship with a moving body. Her rarely mixed paints speak to their ability to be completed anywhere, and without particular space or tools. Her materials were easily replaceable and her paintings were quickly done, always completed in single days. Adnan's simple creative process allowed her to work in the same way everywhere she went, on any day, warding against rupture in the continuity of her practice.

In Adnan's case, the process of writing was also untethered, divided into individual fragments on scraps of paper, written at different times.¹⁷ Many of her books are similarly sized and scaled to her paintings. When collected and published, the text is organized in short bursts, single paragraphs if not single sentences, and in this way does not demand the reader's extended and uninterrupted attention.

Adnan's nomadic story should be understood through her transnational context. Her work is informed by networks of mediations between disparate places and crossings. The forces of colonialism, war, and immigration necessarily impacted the trajectory of her life and work. The subject of the sea maps these influences as the site of their meetings. Her creative process accounted for her own history and story of displacement. A complicated and resource-hungry method or technique could not be weathered by the volatility of her life, and so her process was portable. The scale, form, and techniques that together yield her paintings and poetry specify a necessary mobility, shown in the many dislocations and relocations of her

¹⁶ Adnan, Etel. *Sea and Fog*. Nightboat Books, 2012. p. 37.

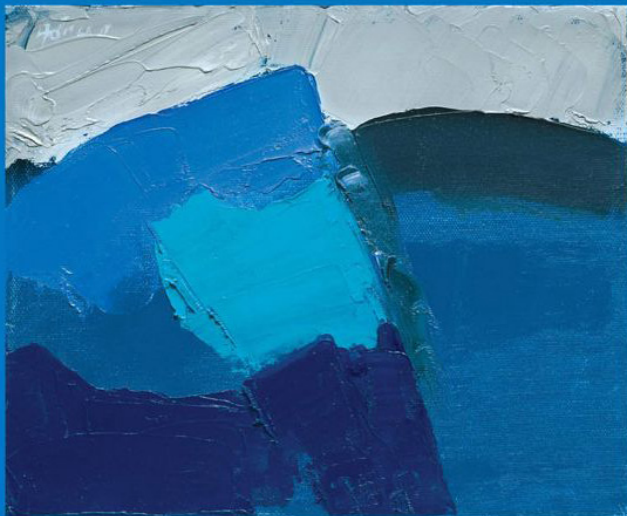
¹⁷ Wilson-Goldie, Kaelen. "Two Desks," in *Etel Adnan*. Lund Humphries, 2018. p. 38.

life. Her work incorporates her origins as well as their Western colonial influences, and her forms cleverly play upon her uniquely articulated bond between painting and poetry. Furthermore, the portability of all branches of her practice is what enabled her work to continue and flourish. As Adnan wrote:

I am assimilated into Western culture...but I am also very attached to the Muslim world... There's a duality in my life as in my thinking, and it works because I accept it rather than favoring one side or the other... I accept that the same things please me and displease me, that something can be true and not true in the same time, that I am one thing and its opposite.¹⁸

¹⁸ As quoted in Wilson-Goldie, Kaelen. "The Cost for Love," in *Etel Adnan*. Lund Humphries, 2018. p. 128; Originally quoted in Obrist, Hans Ulrich. "Etel Adnan in Conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist," in *Etel Adnan*. Sfeir-Semler Gallery, 2012. pp. 79–80.

ETEL ADNAN
SEA and FOG



NIGHTBOAT BOOKS

The cover of *Sea and Fog* by Etel Adnan, published by Nightboat Books in 2012.

Christen Clifford: Seeing Red

Chloe Powers

Blood is composed of cellular material (99% red blood cells, 1% white blood cells and platelets), water, amino acids, proteins, carbohydrates, lipids, hormones, vitamins, electrolytes, dissolved gases, and cellular wastes.¹ Sodium is an electrolyte that is electrically charged to help maintain fluid levels and balance chemicals in your body called acids and bases.² Of that blend, the percentage of sodium in blood is about 9 g/L — or .9 percent by weight.³

Salt and sodium are often used synonymously, but are not the same. *Sodium* is a mineral that occurs naturally in foods or added during manufacturing.⁴ *Salt* is a chemical compound made up of sodium and chloride. Salt is a chemical element, a resource derived from oceans and mines; it preserves decay and instigates life.

The dichotomy between salt and blood is in opposition; the loss of one leads to the gain of the other.

What do we make of blood removed from the body — does it lose its purpose? Does it lose its value? What does the loss of blood imply? Loss of life, loss of sense, loss of being?

Menstrual blood is not just blood. It's a complex biological fluid composed of blood, vaginal secretions, and the endometrial cells of the uterine wall as they exist immediately prior to menses.⁵ It's loss

¹ Helmenstine, Anne Marie. "What Is the Chemical Composition of Blood?" ThoughtCo. *ThoughtCo*, November 3, 2019. <https://www.thoughtco.com/volume-chemical-composition-of-blood-601962>. Accessed on March 3, 2022.

² "Sodium Blood Test: Medlineplus Medical Test." MedlinePlus. *U.S. National Library of Medicine*, July 31, 2020. <https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/sodium-blood-test/>. Accessed on March 3, 2022.

³ Heltzel, Paul. "Was Kennedy Superbowl Ad Worth Its Salt?" *Seeker*, February 2, 2015. <https://www.seeker.com/was-kennedy-superbowl-ad-worth-its-salt-1769477178.html>. Accessed on March 4, 2022.

⁴ "Sodium Sources: Where Does All That Sodium Come from?" *www.heart.org*, January 12, 2021. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/sodium/sodium-sources>. Accessed on March 3, 2022

is involuntarily and ceases in gestation. It comes from where life is instaged, and the place of departure.

The use of blood in an artwork is nothing revolutionary. Artists like Marc Quinn and Andres Serrano have used their own blood, and women artists Carina Ubeda and Casey Jenkins have used their menstrual blood, but Christen Clifford's project differs. Her use of blood in *I Want Your Blood* is the collective blood of various participants (women, trans men, non-binary, and gender queer people) who donate their menstrual blood. Clifford even shared that she has "some vaginal blood from a trans women friend from after her vaginoplasty [who] joked it was her period."⁶ Clifford states, "by using menstrual and vaginal blood from people of all genders, I think the work reflects the society we live in, where art made with menstrual blood has expanded out from the 70's feminist essentialist body art."⁷

Clifford is a writer, curator, feminist, performance artist, professor, and mother. She uses her identity to explore controversial topics such as rape, censorship, and power dynamics. Much of Clifford's artwork is documentary; she digitally documents her life and her projects through Instagram and Tumblr. With the exploration of body and space, Clifford works in dialog between loss of body and the creation of a new form.

In the three-part series *I Want Your Blood*, Clifford addresses reproductive rights and gender equality. She collects, preserves, displays, and serves menstrual blood in order to deconstruct period taboos. Describing the work as a 'Feminist Public Action,' Clifford uses creative strategies to provoke issues surrounding sexuality, gender, and motherhood within the art world.

The first part of *I Want Your Blood* is the collection. Clifford sought

⁵ Yang, Heyi, Bo Zhou, Mechthild Prinz, and Donald Siegel. "Proteomic Analysis of Menstrual Blood." *Molecular & cellular proteomics: MCP. The American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology*, July 12, 2012. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3494145/>. Accessed on March 5, 2022.

⁶ Email exchange with Christen Clifford about *I Want Your Blood* on April 6, 2022.

⁷ Ibid.

for people to donate their menstrual blood. According to Jasmine Wahi, curator of *Abortion Is Normal*, Clifford's "been collecting this material since 2003 from all over the place, from people with different gender identities whom all have uteruses."⁸ She combines all she has received and turns the blood into a paint. Clifford created an online digital site just for her project that breaks down her goals, requests, and process. The site <https://1wantyour3lood.tumblr.com/> acts as an archive of the performances, the influences, and the press surrounding the work.

In her second act, *I Want Your Blood: Menstrual Symphony*, a dramatic performance piece, Clifford employs members of the audience, in this case, two young, naked men, whom she paints, pours, and smears with the concentration of blood paint and bleach she created to produce a subversion of Yves Klein's performance *Mono-tone-Silence Symphony* (1960). In this case, the viewers are employed as a symphony; their reactions, sounds, and responses are what add to the meaning of the performance. Much like Klein's performance, the silence or break could transfer to Clifford's performance; a shock or awe factor, causing the audience to be at a loss for words. The performance was shown at the event titled 'PERIOD PIECE: an evening of bleeding and reading,' which included other artists who aim to break the stigma surrounding periods.



1

⁸ Demopoulos, Alaina. "These Artists Want You to Know That 'Abortion Is Normal'." *The Daily Beast*. The Daily Beast Company, January 13, 2020. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/these-artists-want-you-to-know-that-abortion-is-normal>. Accessed on January 12, 2022.

A secondary aspect of the performance encourages guests to bring their own menstrual blood to the event. The second act was performed three times; in October 2015 at Grace Exhibition Space and again on November 6, 2015, and May 28, 2016, at Dixon Place, where Clifford is a curator.

The final part of *I Want Your Blood* is an act of display. Clifford creates a grid of 25 small gold shelves that hold multiple vintage perfume bottles, each filled with blood. The clean, beautiful packaging juxtaposes the nature of blood, foul and soiled. By presenting a stigmatized item in a new way, Clifford creates beauty out of a stigmatized material. Shown in “Abortion Is Normal” (2020), Clifford and other women artists address women’s rights to empower women to take ownership of their bodies. Stating, “there’s no equality without reproductive rights, there’s no reproductive rights without knowledge of the female body, and there’s no knowledge of the female body without knowledge of blood.”⁹



2

⁹ Cascone, Sarah. “Cindy Sherman, Nan Goldin, and Other A-List Artists Are Raising Money for Reproductive Rights with a Provocatively Titled Exhibition.” *Artnet News*. Artnet News, October 21, 2020. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/abortion-is-normal-minter-simmons-1748580>. Accessed on January 22, 2022.

Canning blood to preserve it materially changes the blood's purpose; the loss and shedding of uterine walls coupled with the gain of a new layer and new material alters the role of menstrual blood. When Clifford began this process, her first bottle consisted of a half-filled bottle of perfume, Shalimar.¹⁰ With the perfume Clifford plays into the perfection expected of women; to be proper, 'clean,' and beautiful. The perfume is used to conceal the stench of the blood masking its true nature. Although not proven, Clifford likes to think the alcohol in the perfume is what preserves the blood or maybe just covers the smell. Her stash of 'fresh blood' is in her home fridge and freezer in jars inside paper bags labeled 'CD's art stuff.'¹¹

Her project is still ongoing today, often receiving new blood at unusual times, whether it's someone passing it off on a lunch break, passing a jar in a sack on the subway, or even at a mutual friend's memorial. So many participants have felt empowered by contributing; it's provided connectivity among so many—the loss of blood instigating a new life brought through a communal experience many people are ashamed or embarrassed by. *I Want Your Blood* acts as a release, an outlet, where Clifford activates new life out of the discarded, decayed materials to explore powers, preservation, and period acceptance.

¹⁰ Email exchange with Christen Clifford about *I Want Your Blood* on April 6, 2022.

¹¹ Email exchange with Christen Clifford about *I Want Your Blood* on April 6, 2022.

Image 1

IWantYour3lood Part 2, The Menstrual Symphony, by Christen Clifford at Grace Exhibition Space. Credited Christen Clifford.

Image 2

IWantYour3lood Part 3, installation of 25 glass shelves holding hundreds of miniature perfume bottles filled with donated menstrual blood from all genders, 2020. Credited Christen Clifford.

Akin to those classical sculptors presented with the prospect of unadulterated marble, the sun soaked and salty haired surfboard shaper's arduous task too begins with a single unrefined form: the surfboard blank. Within this rectangular foam blank resides a surfboard. The sleek, buoyant, and hydrodynamic board must be carved out, painstakingly, one layer at a time. Placed upon a shaping rack, large swaths of foam are shaved away while the remaining form is then sanded in a subtractive process. Hours and hours of shaping later a board emerges amid a pile of excess foam and dust. With the board's shape now defined, so begins the process of glassing. Draping sheets of fiberglass cloth over the board, surfboard resin is applied both adhering to and sealing the foam board. Followed by more sanding and additional layers of fiberglass, the board is eventually polished, highlighting the craftsmanship of the smooth, oblong shape of a surfboard. From beginning to end, the creation of this highly functional and beautifully crafted object can take six to eight weeks of skilled labor. For those boards carved by the few masters of the craft who continue to endeavor to hand shape boards, their work is only complete with the riding of that first wave. Requiring highly skilled labor and a meticulous eye for detail, the creation of a surfboard is a centuries old ritualistic craft that far too often goes unrecognized.

The intersection of "surf" craft and the arts is one that continues to flourish. Recognized primarily by their dedicated patrons, surf insiders and in alternative back room or converted warehouse galleries, surfboard shapers and their hand carved surfboards exist outside the traditional bounds of the network of institutions collectively referred to as the art world. The surfboard itself remains a piece whose rich history and evolution has too often been overlooked as an art object beyond its community. This essay seeks to prompt a redressing of the historicization of the art of surfboard shaping

while posing two key questions: Why has this artform been excluded from the mainstream and, should we seek to include such a practice within the annals of art history or would such an act go against the ethos of this quotidian practice? Though there has been much historiography done surrounding the creation of surfboards, these histories seldom intersect with canonical art historical studies. Operating on the margins, surfboard shaping finds its audience amongst salt beaten back alleys, surf shop exhibition spaces and coastal community galleries and museums. One does not go to art school to learn to shape boards, nor are surfboards to be found within the sculptural wing of major museums. However, the upgrading of surf craft into a commercialized and recognized artform is ever evolving and not without its criticism. Appreciation for this craft outside the bounds of the surf community begs the question what would it mean to remove these objects from their salty aired localities and place these works within the well-lit rooms of a museum space.

Akin to any artistic medium, surfboard shaping has its own pioneers with distinct styles and various movements associated. Some of the most important modern surfboard shapers, Renny Yater, Kevin Ancell, and George Greenough, are representative of those shapers who toil over every curve and pioneered the “art of shaping.” These figures are a critical part of a niche group of outsiders dedicating their lives to a craft and product whose beauty and practicality are inextricably linked. As contemporary art history comes to redress both the overlooking and simplification of works of art that were deemed outside the western tradition, folk or craft techniques are but one such genre receiving new attention and appreciation. Contemporary study of folk art sees the bringing of those who were historically outliers into traditional art spaces. As a craft existing for decades on the margins, perhaps surfboards should be included in these efforts. It has been said within folk art discourse that “traditionally, artists have used art as a material means of reaching spiritual ends.”¹ Such a statement seems quite apt when considering surfboard craft. Throughout the 1950s and into the early 60s, considered by many in the surfing community to be the golden age of

surfing, for a surfer “his elegant, minimalist surfing and the sleek surfboards he built were his statement.”² The board and the performance of riding that same object over breaking waves is both a transformative and transportive experience. One in which the board serves as a transcendent vehicle. Further linking surfboard craft with a key tenant of folk art is the importance of community within the practice. Knowledge of shaping at this time wasn’t formalized. If you wanted a board “you just found somebody who could do one and you’d try to get them to shape the thing...”³ Word of mouth and genuine interest was the collective language and currency. Surf craft grew as a result of the fact that “when a group of people do the same thing over and over in a given place or time, it becomes a culture, a part of the local goings-on.”⁴ With this in mind, can it be that the art of surfboard shaping moves beyond an individualistic desire to fulfill a need and functions as signifier of an authentic practice of community art?

When thinking of where to view art, the first place that often comes to mind is a museum. One can expect and wouldn’t think twice about witnessing paintings, sculptures and even photographs within such a space. However, surfboards remarkably too often remain absent from museum and gallery walls. This is not to say that surfboards are excluded from all museums and galleries. Several showcases of surfboard art and design have been mounted within both museums and galleries though are relegated to coastal localities where surf culture is a large part of the broader local culture. Such exhibitions are relatively novel feats, occurring with increased frequency since the early 2000s. For instance, Santa Barbara’s Maritime Museum in 2017 mounted *Heritage, Craft & Evolution: Surfboard Design 1885 – 1959* with the neighboring Santa Barbara Museum of Contemporary Art’s *Barry McGee: SB Mid-Summer Intensive* a year later featuring surfboards shaped by

¹ Suzi Gablik, *Has Modernism Failed*, Thames and Hudson, second edition, (May 1, 2004), 93.

² Yvon Chouinard, Steve Roper and Steve Pezman, *California Surfing and Climbing in the Fifties*. T. Adler Books, (Dec 31, 2013), 18.

³ Chelsea Slayter, Renny Yater’s Practical Progression, Interview, Pilgrim Surf Supply, (May 13, 2014), <https://pilgrimsurfsupply.com/blogs/news/83317124-renny-yater-s-practical-progression>.

⁴ *Ice Cream Headaches*, 36.

local legend Renny Yater. However, the most prolific place to witness the artistry of surf craft remains within the back-room galleries of surf shops. Just one of many such spaces, the legendary Pilgrim Surf Shop, a purveyor of surf supplies in Brooklyn, NY, “doubles as a gallery and community hub, curating the works of surf shapers, photographers writers and filmmakers.”⁵ The store’s rotating basement exhibition space has come to feature both historic icons of the craft as well as contemporary reimaginations. In providing such a space, places such as Pilgrim, Mollusk and Santa Barbara Surf Shop are the stewards of surf’s collective culture functioning as “our [surf] museum curators, gathering and sharing these essential elements for community.”⁶

Though this exploration began with the intent of redressing the lacking presentation of surfboards as an artistic craft and practice, the artforms art historization can be seen to be flourishing outside the bounds of the mainstream art world through community driven efforts. Troubling this historic pattern of community presentation and preservation reveals the essence of the craft to be its outsider status which, rather than be a detriment, perhaps is its greatest strength. Rich in history, tradition and ever evolving, the practice of surfboard making contains many of the hallmarks of artistic practice. Art historians often see the benefits of contextualizing works as a means of understanding, preserving and sharing rich cultural practices. Redressing the art historical’s overlooking of surf craft can be seen to be an injustice nullifying the rich historical work undertaken by the community itself. Instead of asking whether we view these works in canonical art historical terms, such as sculptural by placing them within the larger framework of volumetric objects, we should perhaps take a step back and first ask if we should. One may argue that surfboard making belongs within the category of folk art. A category often defined as containing works

⁵ *Ice Cream Headaches*, 38.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

steeped in the elements of utility, community, individuality and symbolism, surfboards check all of the above. Moreover, museums and art history exist as institutions of empowerment and of disempowerment, able to elevate works while negating others by incorporating them into preexisting modes of understanding. Despite the gains to be made by elevating surfboard craft, one should also consider what is lost in such a formalizing process. Can inclusion within the annals of art history work in concert with the ethos of this quotidian practice? Perhaps its negation is precisely what has resulted in the crafts establishment of its own spaces. It is said that “surfers may sometimes be leery of newcomers...” but are not opposed to them.⁷ If we are to bring this rich art practice into white walled rooms a balance must be struck in order to preserve and not solely historicize a communal art history whose price of admission is a little bit of salt in your hair.

⁵ *Ice Cream Headaches*, 153.

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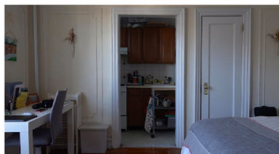
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"Home Cooked"
Jean Wong



Bodies worn down from years of
physical work



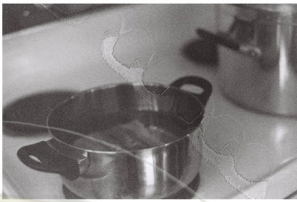
chicken wire,
I wish,
I remember—



chicken wire, grandma, don't be sad.



The dancers struggled.



chicken wire, we made this for you, I remember you.

grunting



screaming

chicken wire ties
my present to you.



twisting their bodies

Voyager: An Imaginary Exhibition Transcending Worlds
Leah Denison



Mattingly, Mary. "Wearable Homes," 2004-present. Outlast/Adaptive Comfort, Cordura, Solarweave. Images courtesy of the artist.

I. Curatorial Statement

Voyager opens viewers to the potential of the experience of the everyday as something shifting, migratory and survivalist in response to global ecological crises. Its concept stems from artist Mary Mattingly's *Wearable Homes* (2004–present), a series of works which the artist uses as DIY–environmentalist experiments for future modes of continuing to exist in a variety of extreme climates, as our current fixed and planned lives become increasingly untenable and unfamiliar. The term “*voyager*” is one which Mattingly uses to describe the subject for whom the work is intended,¹ which she often models herself. The term *voyager* also brings to mind exploration and new frontiers, as well as individual and collective travel. Additionally, immediate connotations arise such as chic farewells (“*bon voyage*”), the pre-Y2K sci-fi television show *Star Trek: Voyager*, and NASA's now doubly named *Voyager* probe, all preparing visitors for this embarkment. This exhibition explores themes of impending itinerancy hinging upon anticipated, extreme ecological shifts caused by climate change. In our fixity we have created a problem which may require us to be forever mobile.

Mary Mattingly's *Wearable Homes* project was created out of such inquiries, with the artist positing fantastical prototypes situating durable, functional materials as potential projections of the future of the everyday. Through *Voyager*, viewers are invited to become *voyagers* in a space where the gallery becomes an ersatz laboratory that transports them into climate change in hyperdrive, situating them in the midst of a series of artists' projections of the future, which now exist in the here and now. Here, Mattingly's bodily homes transform a space of dystopian anxieties to one of play, where home ceases to be defined by its familiarity and instead by its unmoored potential.

¹ Mary Mattingly, “Wearable Homes,” Mary Mattingly, accessed April, 2021, <https://marymattingly.com/html/MATTINGLYWearableHomes.html>.

Throughout the exhibition, the viewers become *voyagers* through their interaction with the works of the numerous artists who have created these means of travel. As such, the viewers subsequently become the subject for which these devices have been created. Upon entering the gallery space, they encounter various playful interpretations of future survival and are invited to voyage through this fractured laboratory full of experiments.

Voyager is prescient as it showcases not only how the boundaries of the interdisciplinary artist have expanded in terms of materials, but also how the role of artist has blurred into that of scientist: the works included show how many artists take it upon themselves to propose starting points for solutions to specific problems or general inspiration for how things like the home could be. Mattingly's *Wearable Homes* piece not only acts as a garment, but also as an individual shelter and as a portable city when connected to other units.²

Using Mattingly's work as a home base, this exhibition travels outward, looking at how other artists approach similar ideas of eco-experimentation, especially as they approach the concept of home and movement, two things typically thought of as contradictory. Showcasing the work of artists and artist collectives from around the world, the exhibition takes visitors on a journey from the 1980s to the present, allowing glimpses of change in how artists approach technology, landscape and transformation. On a chronological scale, *Voyager* includes works manifested in both the material and the digital realms. It encompasses pre-Y2K works made in a time characterized by the fear of a collapse of the technological landscape, yet also those from the present, where technology is often viewed as both a source of ecological waste and as a savior relied upon to fix ever-growing environmental concerns. While outer

² Mattingly, "Wearable Homes."

space is often thought of as the final frontier, *Voyager* plays on the idea of how the final frontier may actually be Earth. The planet or the lives of its inhabitants may change to be almost unrecognizable yet it will maintain glimmers of familiarity seen in wisps of the old ways of life, glitches of the past in the fabric of the future. This paradox of evolving familiarity will be exemplified by the idea of the home amidst constant change and movement. Environmental unfamiliarity takes place not only in the form of the voyage of people to different places, but of the voyaging of certain elements onto others, such as that of sea migrating onto land as ocean levels rise, or of light onto dark as the Earth rotates around the sun, denoting our charting of time which is at once cyclical, linear and layered; terminal yet infinite. In this way, these works act as glitches, offering fissures into possibility through the gestalt suspension of their at once nostalgic and novel components. Some of these works are part of ongoing series that are continually added to or redeployed, serving as the artist's own home base in a continued exploration. In this sense, the works themselves also act as *voyagers*, objects which continue to accompany their creators as they develop their thoughts on themes that continue to be relevant to their practice on this ever-changing planet around which it revolves.

The exhibition also presents these diverse artists as a kind of larger scientific collective of individuals who harness their creative skills to solve major problems, even if only in the form of fantastical prototypes. Many of these artists either take on a role as a scientist, researcher or engineer or seek the collaboration of such a professional. In times of emergency and disaster preparedness, aesthetics are often left out completely, thought of as extraneous, ornamental and separate from this no-nonsense realm of serious STEM strategizing.³ However, design is often actually extremely central to not

³ Alice Rawsthorn, Design Emergency, (presentation, The World Around Summit 2021: Architecture's Now, Near, and Next, Guggenheim, virtual, January 30, 2021).

only the publics' understanding of a situation or of what they are expected to do, but also in generating effective solutions and modes of presentation.⁴ As we have seen many times over, poor design and communication can lead to a meta-disaster of unraveling disaster planning.

Voyager presents a playful and aesthetic hopefulness amidst a topic that is often harnessed to incite anxiety, shock and “awareness.” What if instead of seeking to put pressure on the individual to reduce their environmental impact, we could invite artists to increase their own. *Voyager* situates these artists as a potential collective network of how artists could be seen as serving not only their own communities, but the world at large, as a kind of macro community-based practice. Perhaps in this way, art could cease to be torn between being luxury or activism and find an interstitial home between these two extremes. What kind of Harawayan flourishing and entanglement⁵ may be gleaned from continuing to complicate the relationship between these realms of art and science, design and use, playful amateur experiments and expert knowledge and research?

The methodology of this exhibition surrounds the climate emergency as something that does not just involve cloistered academics, those unseen scientists and researchers, but makes visible (and visual) the work of those aesthetic practitioners who are also thinking about these issues. Their fantastical “inventions” act as sketches of this potential reality and blend dystopian anxiety with playfulness, scientific inquiry with fictional products. In this sense, the gallery space becomes either a futuristic suggestion of what could be or a fictional archive, a retro-futuristic time capsule of things that never came to be, a sort of visual fanfiction for planet Earth.

⁴ Alice Rawsthorn, *Design Emergency*, (presentation, The World Around Summit 2021: Architecture's Now, Near, and Next, Guggenheim, virtual, January 30, 2021).

⁵ Donna Haraway, *Where Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

The method used to display the first piece seen upon entering the gallery, Mattingly's *Wearable Homes* (2004–present), will invoke the viewer by allowing them to try on the garment. While it has previously been installed on a clothes hanger and left untouched, the subsequent implication of the visitor's body will aid in displaying the full shape and function of the garment. It will invoke the sense of the viewer inhabiting it and voyaging through the subsequent visions of our future world created by the featured artists in the gallery.

Voyager seeks to be inhabited by, instead of inhibited by, the often strict and confining categories which work to keep separate the human, the animal, the terrestrial, the aquatic, and the astronomical. Although strictly terrestrial in appellation, Earth is in actuality a landing pad for all of these elements and beings, and is also a launch pad from which all of them may be explored. By allowing a more open definition of what it means to voyage and who or what can be deemed a *voyager*, the exhibition described here acts as an unhindered satellite.

The artists in the exhibition have taken something familiar to think about the potential of life when life itself becomes unfamiliar, due to extreme changes or the usurpation of one climate or landscape for another. *Voyager* opens dialogues regarding the infinitesimal of the quotidian, in that the chosen artists are taking objects or ideas of daily importance in the present and projecting them into the future to suit potential needs, or provide a sense of groundedness as the landscape underneath them shifts with each step. An escape pod has been deployed, a time machine but for homes. However, there is no need to panic, it is only a projection, a vacation from Earth to Earth. Perhaps we will all float on ok,⁶ bon voyage *voyager*.

⁶ Modest Mouse, "Float On," September-October 2003, track 3 on Good News for People Who Love Bad News, Epic, 2004, CD.

II. Checklist of Works

1. Mattingly, Mary. "Wearable Homes," 2004–present. Outlast/ Adaptive Comfort, Cordura, Solarweave. Images courtesy of the artist.

This piece serves as the starting point for the show, surrounding the ideas of protection and nomadic homes during impending (and ongoing) ecological disaster. These suits are composed of three different layers for three different climates. They are for the "voyager" and can be used individually or can be connected with other voyagers to create a "wearable city."⁷ By using the wearable home as a starting point, the implied form of the body will invoke the sense of the viewer inhabiting this garment and voyaging through the subsequent visions of our future world created by the featured artists. The single-use mode of *Wearable Homes* also evokes the isolating feeling of the individual body in the changing environment that has become increasingly technologized, speaking to the virtual aspect of a changing landscape.⁸

2. Zittel, Andrea. "Escape Vehicle," 1996. Steel, insulation, wood and glass. Interior: colored lights, water, fiberglass, wood, papier-mâché, pebbles and paint (MoMA).

Zittel's piece simultaneously serves up old Americana, with the familiarity of an RV⁹ and nomadic family vacations, alongside images of fantastical emergency escape pods one might see on a spaceship. Here escape can also be contextualized in escape from the everyday, as in a vacation, personal retreat pod or panic room. It can be planted in a backyard, hooked to a car¹⁰ or jettisoned from a spacecraft. Zittel has created many of these vehicles, each one sharing the same exoskeleton but having a personalized interior.¹¹

⁷ Mattingly, "Wearable Homes."

⁸ Mattingly, "Wearable Homes."

⁹ "Andrea Zittel A-Z escape Vehicle," MoMA, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/80878>.

¹⁰ MoMA, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/80878>.

¹¹ MoMA, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/80878>.

3. Project Fukushima! “O-Furoshiki,” 2011–ongoing. Mixed donated textiles and thread.

An ongoing artist collaborative founded by Japanese poets and musicians, Project Fukushima! seeks to transform a site of nuclear disaster into one of joy and safety by means of creative innovation. The group makes the power plant area the site of regular music festivals, the slogan of the first one being, “The future is in our hands,” which sought to reappropriate the site as a means of cultural preservation and activities that lead to a “new culture.”¹² Working with nuclear scientists and creating *O-Furoshiki* (“big wrapping cloth”) they essentially created a giant picnic blanket spanning 6000m², which acted as a barrier between revelers and remaining nuclear contaminants and which now acts as a kind of traveling landscape. The fabrics used in *O-Furoshiki* were collected from all over the world and the project has grown into a global traveling collective, sourcing volunteers from all over, developing into “a natural exchange of goods and people”¹³ through invitations received by the project to partake in other festivals. The tapestry will be hung on a large dowel, with some of it trailing off and spread out on the floor (over a non-slip rug pad to prevent slipping) so that visitors may step on this landscape as they would if they were partaking in one of these festivals.

4. Beavers, Isabella. “HEZs (Human Exploration Zones),” 2019–ongoing. Digital prints.

In this piece, Beavers muses on the concept of modeling as something used by both scientists and artists, from the still life to computer-generated scientific imagery.¹⁴ She creates images of three sites on Mars using satellite imagery, which have certain terrestrial

¹² “Festival Fukushima!” Project Fukushima!, accessed April 6 2021, <http://www.pj-fukushima.jp/en/>.

¹³ Project Fukushima!, <http://www.pj-fukushima.jp/en/>.

¹⁴ “HEZs,” Isabel Beavers, accessed April 6 2021, <https://www.isabelbeavers.com/hezs>.

familiarities in their mountainous appearance, but which convey a sense of distance due to the inability of Earthlings to truly grasp its alien environment without experiencing it.¹⁵ While the artist employs scientific renderings, she is also poking fun at the “absurdity of colonization of Mars.”¹⁶ It muses on the absurdity that looking outward to new worlds is the solution, as opposed to focusing on the world we live in now and will most likely have to continue to deal with, even as it becomes increasingly inhospitable.

5. Superflex. “Dive-In,” 2019. Aluminum foam, video projection.

Created as a play on the old drive-in movie theater, visitors to this piece do not look to the artifice of Hollywood, but to nature as mediated by video projections. Superflex built the structure as a proposed home for marine life, thinking about the sensorial proclivities of fish and coral flora in their design, as evidenced by their use of pink (a color which attracts coral polyps, the basis of new ecosystems) and its porous texture. The artists are thinking about the encroachment of water onto land and as a means to prepare for what they see as an inevitable migration of elements.¹⁷ In one instance they installed *Dive-In* onto the desert of Coachella Valley, CA for *Desert X*. It is part of a larger ongoing project called *Deep Sea Minding* (a play on the destructive practice of deep sea mining) which seeks to learn about adaptation from marine life. The pink is also one that is attractive to humans, and often seen in nearby Palm Springs.¹⁸ Can we learn to dwell together in an alien intermingling?

¹⁵ “HEZs,” <https://www.isabelbeavers.com/hezs>.

¹⁶ “HEZs,” <https://www.isabelbeavers.com/hezs>.

¹⁷ “Dive-In,” Superflex, accessed April 6 2021, <https://superflex.net/works/dive-in>.

¹⁸ Rosie Flanagan, “Dive-In! Climate Change Meets Art in the Coachella Valley,” *Ignant*, accessed April 2021, <https://www.ignant.com/2019/04/16/dive-in-climate-change-meets-art-in-the-coachella-valley/>.

6. Wiles, Siouxsie. "Squid," 2013. Bacteria, synthetic bioluminescent DNA in 3-D printed vessel.

This piece was created by Dr. Siouxsie Wiles, a scientist and sometimes artist and curator. Wiles is a microbiologist from the UK, based in NZ who heads the Bioluminescent Superbugs Lab at the University of Auckland.¹⁹ Wiles' research focuses on resistant superbacteria and she has employed different kinds of bacteria in temporary paintings and received numerous awards for her innovative research generating ethical alternatives to the use of animals in laboratory experiments. *Squid*, takes us on a journey to the deep sea where intelligent aliens dwell in the seldom visited depths of our home planet. Squid are only seen by everyday land dwellers if there is something wrong – i.e. they wash up dead. The bacteria used in the pieces only glow when they are alive. Wiles contains a microscopic force of nature within the vessel, which she originally had a lot of trouble keeping from leaking, much like man has trouble controlling nature. The innocuous bacteria in this piece typically travels inside of the gut of the Hawaiian bobtail squid, with which it has a symbiotic relationship. After creating an animation about these squid to present to the public, she was contacted by artist Rebecca Klee to collaborate on a piece for NZ's *Art in the Dark* festival, marking her first artist collaboration. Wiles frequently combines her sophisticated, isolated lab work with public-facing aspects such as art shows, "bacteria painting" with local school children, and is currently working on a children's book about bioluminescent bacteria, bringing the white cube of the lab out into the world where it can be experienced in a playful manner by anyone interested. Wiles has also created another animation which discusses the use of this bioluminescence by NASA to inspect space crafts for unwanted bacteria.²⁰ NZ experiences one of the highest rates of

¹⁹ "Associate Professor Siouxsie Wiles," University of Auckland, accessed April 2021, <https://unidirectory.auckland.ac.nz/profile/s-wiles>.

²⁰ Siouxsie Wiles, "Meet the Lampyridae II: From Fireflies to Space Invaders," February 13, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUUytRoI-5g>.

enteric infectious disease in the First World.²¹ Yet, unwaveringly, Wiles explores what can be learned from microbes of all kinds, finding the positive in the unfamiliar and unsettling, and looks to the similarities of the microscopic worlds which live inside all of us. *Squid* will be suspended from the ceiling as originally installed, further creating the feeling of floating and suspension in the deep ocean.

7. Saad-Cook, Janet. "Sun Drawing," 1980-ongoing. Stone, glass, light.

Saad-Cook works with scientists and engineers to use the vital element of the sun to create "drawings" which change and travel across their inhabited space throughout the day. She uses "sun stones" which harness natural sunlight reflected off of layers of glass. Her work deals with space, time and light and seeks to orient viewers in the present.²² The artist collaborates extensively with scientists, engineers and astronomers,²³ to create images which are frequently documented in nearly empty homes. Yet, in all their complexity, they still elicit the simple familiarity of window prisms one may have enjoyed in their bedroom as a child. Similar to how other pieces in the show function as projections of things that may come to pass on planet Earth, *Sun Drawing* is a projection onto the Earth, orienting visitors back in their home of Earth. The sun stone remains still as their projected movement journeys throughout the room.

²¹ John A. Crump et al., "Emerging infectious Diseases in an Island Ecosystem: The New Zealand Perspective," in *CDC: Emerging Infectious Diseases* 7, no. 5 (October 2001), https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/7/5/01-7501_article.

²² Janet Saad-Cook and M.E. Warlick, "Sun Drawing: Sculptures of Reflected Sunlight Connecting the Earth to the Sky," *Leonardo* 22, no 2 (April 1989): 151, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/602246/pdf>.

²³ Janet Saad-Cook, accessed April 2021, <https://www.janetsaadcook.com/contact>.

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The Right to Breathe
Victoria Horrocks

I spent much of summer 2020 staring at David Wojnarowicz's *Untitled (Face in Dirt)*. I stole morning glances with him from my bedside table, caught him—restrained—in a tote on the downtown 6 train, and inadvertently lathered him in residual SPF 30 at some point along the Atlantic coast. *Untitled (Face in Dirt)* was printed on the cover of *Funny Weather: Art in an Emergency* by Olivia Laing, which had been recommended to me by a friend in May, nearly three months into the Covid-19 pandemic.

It took me weeks to read the entirety of *Funny Weather*, a collection of compelling essays about why art matters. Nonetheless, Wojnarowicz covered little geographical ground. He moved mostly from bedroom to living room, although he made the occasional trip downtown for essential hospital visits or a socially distanced walk on the beach. For as much time as I spent with *Funny Weather*, though, I still wrestled with the peculiar image on its cover. Staring at *Untitled (Face in Dirt)*, one questions whether he is rising, like Lazarus, or sinking into fractured earth. Is he animated, skin touching air, after death? Or is he in anguish, eyes sealed shut and accepting entrapment, forever at the whim of the pesky preposition “in”? His eyes are closed, but they are not clenched. His mouth is open, but he is not gasping. I wondered, is he breathing?

It felt fitting, then, that *Untitled (Face in Dirt)* would make the cover of Laing's book at a time of such global emergency. Both artist and image are concerned with the right to breathe; both address life and death in a way that exhausts and reinvigorates all at once. Throughout his life, Wojnarowicz ardently questioned who was given the right to breathe as an activist during the AIDS epidemic, a time when his community was brutalised by disease. The government enacted violence in the form of neglect, and people

were dying at the expense of that violence. Crude parallels could be drawn to the moment of May 2020, when governmental inaction led to mass death, and questions spurred, once again, about who was allowed the right to breathe.

It seemed to me, four months into the pandemic, that we stood at the threshold between action and inaction—compelled to repair, to heal, and to reinvent, all while confined to various iterations of the same four walls. Still, entangled, we navigated the thorny space of reckoning. Confronted with injustice, and unsure how to take action against it from a folding table-turned-desk in a childhood bedroom, I mined all that I consumed for wisdom and answers. Disease was spreading. People were dying. Breath was as vital as it always had been, but it had immediately become more precious and more privileged.

All the while, there Wojnarowicz was, staring at me with eyes closed. The image was taken in 1990 on a trip Southwest with photographer Marion Scemama. It would be his last trip out of New York. At the time, Wojnarowicz was in a state of emergency after receiving his own diagnosis of AIDS two years prior. Passing through Death Valley, he asked Scemama to take his portrait. He dug a hole in the ground, half-buried himself in earth, and the resulting portrait captures him lying in what appears to be a shallow grave.

Untitled (Face in Dirt) recalled, to me, one of three portraits taken by Wojnarowicz of his dear friend Peter Hujar moments after his death. Taken from Hujar's hospital bed, Wojnarowicz captures a moment of extinguished breath. The 1987 portrait displays the face of Hujar, having died from AIDS, lying on his back, eyes slightly open, and mouth softly agape. *Untitled (Face in Dirt)* takes a similar angle. It focuses on facial expression, mapping life and death. Unlike Hujar, however, Wojnarowicz has his eyes closed, and his eruption from the earth breaks from some inertial state. His emergence from the grave is fraught with conviction. I sensed a resistance. Living with his diagnosis, but living nonetheless, Wojnarowicz made himself present. From the earth, he claims a breath.

In the very beginning of the pandemic, another friend of mine lent me her copy of *Bluets* by Maggie Nelson. At the time, I scribbled an excerpt in a notebook that read:

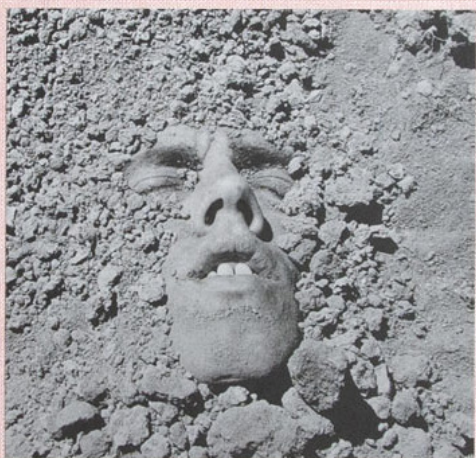
Perhaps it would help to be told that there was no bottom, save, as they say wherever and whenever you stop digging. You have to stand there, spade in hand, cold whiskey sweat beaded on your brow, eyes misshapen and wild, some sorry-ass grave digger grown bone-tired of the trade. You have to stand there, in the dirty rut you dug, alone in the darkness, in all its pulsing quiet, surrounded by a scandal of corpses.

I cannot say if this is how Wojnarowicz felt, since he died two years after *Untitled (Face in Dirt)* was taken. But I imagine he and Nelson get at something similar—that we each stand, shovels in hand, wondering how deep we must dig, only to realise there is no bottom. Then we are left with dirt on our hands and the exhaustion of the craft. Like Nelson's image of standing at the grave, surrounded by atrocity and washed in fatigue, Wojnarowicz lies in his own eerie resting place. Still, he is not at rest; he reasserts himself in the world, invigorating the lungs and taking a gentle breath, as if to remind us that in presence, there is resistance. So long as we remain, standing in the grave, breathing, we can act.

Wojnarowicz was driven by such action. Assertions of life pervade the body of his work. Fittingly, the title of his retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2018 drew from the title of his work, *History Keeps Me Awake at Night*. As the pandemic pressed on, I began to read *Untitled (Face in Dirt)* as a call to awaken. Amid a resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, desperate pleas from government officials to wear face coverings, and many other calls to arms, all at once we were confronted with the dignity of breath. There I stood—as Nelson called it—in the dirty rut that I had dug, awakened to the inflation of my own lungs. I must pick up the shovel again and begin to dig.

Funny Weather

Art in an Emergency



Olivia Laing

The cover of *Funny Weather* by Olivia Laing, published by W. W. Norton & Company in April 2020.

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