

Fishing for Islands

6 pm, October 27 – 6 am, October 29, 2017

Curated by Stefanie Hessler, Chus Martínez, and Markus Reymann

Organized by TBA21–Academy in collaboration with Nationalgalerie – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

***Fishing for Islands* stirs up a wave of oceanic activities that washes through the historic hall of the Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin. The title is inspired by a Polynesian creation myth, according to which the archipelagos' islands were fished up from the bottom of the sea. Within 36 hours, or three tidal cycles, the project introduces key lectures by leading thinkers in the maritime field, and invites visitors to delve into a series of performances, smells, and soundscapes until the early morning hours by renowned artists whose work is deeply anchored in oceanic spaces.**

Each part of the program of *Fishing for Islands* is reflective of a new island emerging in the vast field of issues concerning the current state of the oceans. According to Oceanian legends, Tangaloa, the father of the gods in the pantheon of many Pacific Islands, or Maui, his trickster stepson and demigod, fished up the archipelagos' volcanic islands and coral atolls from the ocean floor. These ancestral myths mirror the geological activities of earthquakes and volcanoes whose eruptions result in the creation of new land and convey meaning and genealogy across generations.

The talks, performances, smells, and sound works appear ephemerally, like islands emerging from the sea and being washed over by the incessant swelling of the waves – or disappearing as sea levels rise. The program mirrors tidal movements and coalescing polarities of not only ebb and flow, but also land and water, day and night, intensity and space for reflection. It imagines flows of local specificity merging with the web of global connectedness that the oceans support, by touching on some of the most urgent predicaments affecting water, coasts, and land today.

The program begins on Friday evening with an experimental 'circus' organized by Chus Martínez with a ballet conceived by Eduardo Navarro for two mimes and four mechanical hands. It is followed on Saturday afternoon by panels and lectures featuring artists, curators, scholars, and other thinkers whose practice is deeply engaged with the oceanic space. Key lectures by Davor Vidas, Susanne M. Winterling, Trevor Paglen, Tamatoa Bambridge, and Lars Eckstein home in on questions of legality and biodiversity, the effects of pollution on ecological balance, infrastructure and migration, as well as mythologies and ancestral ways of protecting the world's hydrosphere. Throughout the weekend, artist projects open up new perspectives on the oceans: Christopher Myers intervenes with moments of oceanic storytelling, Tue Greenfort's floating sculpture "Dræbergople" (2017) alludes to the otherworldly consciousness of jellyfish, Sissel Tolaas' "Ocean SmellScape" (2017) disseminates ecological information conveyed in smell molecules, and Armin Linke's new video installation "Oceans – Dialogues between Ocean Floor and Water Column" (2017) shows recordings from scientific studies that are conducted in the deep sea up to 5.000 meters below sea level to explore mineral deposits at the ocean floor. A panel with experts on ocean governance, marine biology, and international environmental law discusses Linke's work and the geopolitical and ecological implications of anthropogenic interventions in the seabed. A series of sound performances by renowned artists such as Jana Winderen, Carl

Michael von Hausswolff, and Peter Zinovieff invites visitors on Saturday evening to immerse themselves in soundscapes of the sea until the early hours of the next morning.

Fishing for Islands arose from the program of TBA21–Academy, which was founded in 2011 as an itinerant site of cultural production and transdisciplinary research, hosting artists, scholars, and other thinkers and practitioners on board the ship *Dardanella*. The Academy's expeditions led to some of the most remote regions in the Pacific – Papua New Guinea, French Polynesia, Fiji, and Tonga – as well as to Iceland, North America, and the Caribbean, to name just a few. Using an interdisciplinary approach, the Academy's program is dedicated to fostering engaged ways of caring for the oceans. The sites that *Fishing for Islands* is conjuring up from mythology are some of the places the Academy has visited during its expeditions.

This event is part of a research and exhibition project of the Nationalgalerie, which is supported by the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation) as part of the "Museum Global" initiative. The project culminates in an exhibition at the Hamburger Bahnhof from March 23 to August 19, 2018, which will explore the Nationalgalerie's collection in regard to its international and transcultural ties.

Armin Linke's work "Oceans" is an official project of the *Year of Science 2016*17 – Seas and Oceans*, a program of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The project was commissioned and co-produced by TBA21–Academy. Armin Linke's installation was realized in collaboration with the Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art.

Additional support by Art Institute, FHNW Academy of Art and Design in Basel.

Food and drinks are available for purchase at a food truck by Electric Espresso.

We hope you stay until late and are providing bean bags for you to lie down on. Feel free to bring your own blankets!

Installations

Makemo, Tuamotus Islands, French Polynesia

Armin Linke, "Oceans – Dialogues Between Ocean Floor and Water Column" (2017)

Armin Linke's multi-channel video work "Oceans", an official project of the *Year of Science 2016*17 – Seas and Oceans* of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, emerges from his long-term Anthropocene research project and his participation in three expeditions to the Pacific Ocean with TBA21–Academy's exploratory program The Current, on invitation of curator Ute Meta Bauer. In the work, interviews with leading scientists and researchers are juxtaposed with images that Linke makes available to the public for the first time, which have been recorded by a remotely operated vehicle (ROV), used by biologists and geologists to explore the ocean floor in a depth of up to 5.000 meters. Linke directs our attention towards the predicaments facing the oceans, particularly their administration by human institutions and bureaucracies whose conflictual understanding of the world's hydrosphere as a resource and as common heritage of humankind continuously challenges the navigation between ecological protection and political and economic exploitation.

Efate, Vanuatu

Tue Greenfort, “Dræbergople” (2017)

Tue Greenfort’s sculpture “Dræbergople” (2017), a giant balloon in the shape of a jellyfish – floats above head level in the historic hall of Hamburger Bahnhof. Having roamed the seas for at least 500 million years, jellyfish are among the oldest animal species to populate the planet after cyanobacteria and sponges. With warming ocean temperatures, they spread into regions where they were not found previously. As gender and environmental researcher Eva Hayward has shown, jellyfish are beings with ways of knowing and sensing that challenge anthropocentric logics and epistemological taming. Their alterity challenges our ideas of consciousness, ethics, and relationships to more-than-human entities, urging for a shift in planetary awareness.

Toau, Tuamotus Islands, French Polynesia

Sissel Tolaas, “Ocean SmellScapes” (2017)

Ecological change is the pivot of **Sissel Tolaas**’s project “Ocean SmellScapes” (2017). Tolaas collected oceanic smells from the Caribbean and the Pacific coasts in Costa Rica, one of the most speciose places on the planet. Olfaction is our primary sense and it informs us of our surrounding reality, evoking specific emotions and causing substantial reactions in the perceiver. Tolaas has assembled smell data with the aim of preserving olfactory information about the different invisible levels of the oceans—cultural, historical, geographical, social, and linguistic—in light of their imminent disappearance from their site of origin.

Friday

6 pm

Tongatapu, Tonga

Diving into *Fishing for Islands*

Welcome by **Udo Kittelmann**, director Nationalgalerie – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

Francesca von Habsburg, founder and chairwoman Thyssen-Bornemisza Art

Contemporary (TBA21), introduces how the foundation transformed from commissioning unconventional artistic projects to becoming an agent of change at the interdisciplinary intersection of art, science, and policy-making

Markus Reymann, director TBA21–Academy, presents the exploratory arm of TBA21, its activities dedicated to knowledge production, and its program The Current, whose next three-year cycle is led by Chus Martínez and SUPERFLEX

Stefanie Hessler, curator TBA21–Academy, introduces the program for *Fishing for Islands*

Chus Martínez, expedition leader TBA21–Academy The Current, introduces “Fishes should not be taken from the deep! Films, Mime, and Misticismo”

6:45 pm

Vava’u, Tonga

Christopher Myers intervention I

Artist **Christopher Myers** comes from a long line of storytellers. His performative interventions between the different acts approach new and vernacular forms of globalization in sound, media, and culture, thinking about how urban music, film, dance, images, and marketplaces are connected by transoceanic travel. Myers traces how flows of migration and refuge-seeking travelers transcend the local, and considers new models for transnational communication.

7 – 10 pm

Tahuata, Marquesas Islands, French Polynesia

Circus convened by Chus Martínez, “Fishes should not be taken from the deep! Films, Mime, and Misticismo”

The beginning of the program is marked by an experimental “circus”, convened by Chus Martínez, expedition leader of the TBA21–Academy The Current cycle 2018-2020. Martínez considers neither only swimming or researching in the sea, nor thinking about the sea as crucial, but suggests that a new mimesis of the seas is at the heart of developing a new sensorium with the oceans. “Untitled Hands” (2017), a ballet conceived by Eduardo Navarro for two mimes and four mechanical hands, is accompanied by an image installation emerging from the visual archive of TBA21–Academy The Current conceived by artist Tiphane Mall and a series of activations – acrobatics – conceived by circus artists and mimes Ferkel Johnson and Silent Rocco. They are joined by the voice of musician and performer Shabnam Virmani singing the songs of Kabir, one of the most interesting personalities in the history of Indian mysticism.

Saturday

Fishing for Islands continues on Saturday afternoon with a variety of panels and talks on legal frameworks for the oceans, scientific and ancestral approaches of relating to marine life, and efforts to counter the degradation of marine ecosystems and the loss of biodiversity, destructive politics of logos, infrastructure, and sensory as well as emotional approaches towards our environment. A series of performances, spoken-word interventions, and sound works highlight traditional, mythological as well as more-than-human noises and perspectives and invite the audience to dive into a sea of sound until the early morning hours.

3 pm

Eiao, Marquesas Islands, French Polynesia

Christopher Myers intervention II

3:30 pm

Nuku Hiva, Marquesas Islands, French Polynesia

Panel on Armin Linke’s “Oceans – Dialogues Between Ocean Floor and Water Column”

For more than twenty years, Armin Linke has dealt with how humankind uses technology and knowledge to transform and develop the Earth’s surface to adapt it to its needs. In his project “Oceans” (2017), Linke accompanies scientists of leading research institutions and local actors who grant insights into complex processes of marine science, the immanent threats of deep sea mining, biodiversity, and behind-the-scenes negotiations. This panel brings together a number of Linke’s interview partners for a discussion with the audience.

Matthias Haeckel, senior scientist, GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research, Kiel
Katherine Houghton, expert on ocean governance and international environmental law, Potsdam

Kai Kaschinski, activist, Fair Oceans, Bremen

Armin Linke, artist, Berlin

Sebastian Unger, ocean governance expert, Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), Potsdam

Moderated by **Markus Reymann**, director TBA21–Academy

5 pm

Aotearoa, New Zealand

Christopher Myers intervention III

5:30 pm

Tahiti, Society Islands, French Polynesia

Talk by Davor Vidas, “The Law of the Sea for a New Epoch?”

The law of the sea is a branch of international law that applies to 71 percent of the Earth’s surface area. Present international law of the sea received its frame in the near-universal 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which in turn built on some four centuries of development. Challenging the core normative and institutional structures established on these bases would essentially mean challenging international law. On the other hand, simply continuing along the same path is, given increasing impacts of human activities on the oceans, hardly a feasible option. Ocean governance and law structures may require profound re-examination of what have become accepted perspectives. With few exceptions, our current rules regulate human impacts on the ocean components of the Earth System in terms of the political boundaries of sovereignty and jurisdiction, translated into law. However, the ultimate objectives may need to be shifted, and international regulations crafted so as to enable us to channel and confine the human impact on the Earth System – as we enter the Anthropocene, a new epoch in the history of our planet.

6:30 pm

Fakarava, Tuamotus Islands, French Polynesia

Talk by Trevor Paglen, "The Cloud under the Sea"

In his talk, artist **Trevor Paglen** meditates on the global dominance of invisible images, and on how remoteness and invisibility, for instance of what is submerged under the surface of the oceans and in the deep sea, is hidden and exploited deliberately. From smart cities monitoring traffic flows to the immense repositories of photographs on social media that are continually mined for metadata by powerful artificial intelligence systems to speculative explorations of the seabed, we find ourselves in a world where most images are made by machines for other machines and often are not intended to be seen by human eyes. In this talk, Paglen explores the world of seeing-machines, articulates how images have gone from passive representations to active agents, and outlines some of the dangerous consequences for human societies.

7:30 pm

Tahanea, Tuamotus Islands, French Polynesia

Conversation between Susanne M. Winterling and Stefanie Hessler, “Toxic Sovereignties and Ecological Solidarity”

For several years, **Susanne M. Winterling**’s research has homed in on the organic bodies of dinoflagellate algae that light up when touched or moved. Increased algae reproduction rates in the shape of blooms caused by warming waters are known as “red tides”. For her recent work “Glistening Troubles” (2016), Winterling worked with marine biologists and communities in Jamaica to gain insight into the medicinal properties of algae for treating skin infections, known to locals for centuries. Creating an analogy to the touchscreens that surround us these days, Winterling’s research investigates dinoflagellates as indicators for the health of coastal waters with toxic potential. **Stefanie Hessler**, curator of TBA21–Academy, speaks to the artist about transformations of scales and temporality, ecological solidarity, toxic sovereignties, and post-human precariousness.

8:30 pm

Tepoto, Tuamotus Islands, French Polynesia

Christopher Myers intervention IV

9 pm

Futuna, Vanuatu

Conversation between Tamatoa Bambridge and Lars Eckstein, “Conceptions of Time-Space and the Rahui in Oceania”

Tamatoa Bambridge, research director at the National Center for Scientific Research in Moorea, deals with an ancient institution in Eastern Polynesia called the *rahui*, a form of restricting access to resources and/or territories, also known as *tapu* throughout Oceania. Currently, individual actors, societies, and states in the Pacific are readapting such concepts for environmental regulations and cultural legitimacy. *Rahui* have become a means for indigenous communities to be fully recognized on a political level, and restore them in order to preserve political control of their territory or, in some cases, to get it back. **Lars Eckstein**, chair of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures outside of GB and the US at Potsdam University, who is currently leading a research project with Anja Schwarz, Chair of British Cultural Studies, on navigation and cartography in the Pacific, discusses maps created by Tupaia, a Tahitian navigator who accompanied James Cook on the HMS Endeavour. Tupaia’s maps put the voyaging subject into the center, conceiving of him or her not as outside the territory they are traversing, but deeply embedded in the active construction of time and space. Along these maps, Eckstein discusses with Bambridge different modes of relations between humans and the sea and land surrounding them.

10 pm – 6 am

Nendo, Solomon Islands

“Soundwaves”

Fishing for Islands culminates in “Soundwaves”, a series of sound works mirroring the increased flow of water in the oceans during high tide. Artists who have been recording underwater sounds make audible a world usually inaccessible to our ears, and call attention to issues like sound pollution, melting icecaps, and endangered biodiversity. Wavering through the historic hall of the Hamburger Bahnhof until the early morning hours, the performances divert from anthropocentric biorhythms and amplify mythological as well as more-than-human noises and perspectives.

Jelena Glazova’s sound performance “speech islands” (2017) is based on digitally processed speech recordings, deconstruction of vocal elements, as a form of expressing unpronounced speech, which is a metaphor for subconsciousness as an ocean of infinite possibilities. Speech processing in this project serves as a metaphor for eternal flowing development of “primordial”, “primary” matter on a macrocosmic level (ocean) as opposed to the microcosm of the human body’s physicality (islands of speech).

David Rothenberg presents “The Longest Song in the World” (2017), a new work based on his efforts collecting the most beautiful humpback whale songs from scientists all across the globe. He remixes and interacts with these whale songs as he did on his book and CD *Thousand Mile Song*, where he played live along with humpback whales in Hawaii.

Peter Zinovieff presents “South Pacific Migration Party” (2017). This is an extended computer work, derived from hydrophone recordings of blue whales recorded by oceanographer Susie Buchan off the coast of Chile and curated by **Andrew Spyrou**. Unlike the song of the humpback whale, blue whale song consists of repeated low-frequency vibrations followed by a contrasted high-frequency chirrup. A single complete call from the largest creatures ever to have existed on Earth has been manipulated to create an immersive soundscape. Earlier in 2017, a quadraphonic version was played in Athens as part of *documenta 14* and a full B-Format rendering was presented at TBA21 as part of the exhibition *Tidialectics* in Vienna this June. The present version is for two separate quadraphonic systems.

Jana Winderen ’s sound performance “bára” (2017) is composed from hydrophone recordings collected during various expeditions with the TBA21–Academy, among other journeys. Submarine worlds are extremely sensitive to sound pollution and the sonic level of underwater ecosystems can be indicative of the health of marine habitats. “bára” comprises diverse sounds, from waves to the clicking of crustaceans, from smaller fish species grunting and interacting with corals to larger mammals whose songs take shape as they waver through the space.

Jacob Kirkegaard’s “MELT” (2016) is composed of recordings of different stages of ice melting. Moving from surface recordings of creaking ice and the tiny bursting bubbles inside ice sheets to underwater recordings of the powerful booms from calving glaciers and ice caps grinding against each other. “MELT” is a sonic image for the flow and change in the Arctic right now. All recorded in Greenland by Kirkegaard in 2013 and 2015.

Zavoloka has composed a sound piece “V” (2017) inspired by submarine volcanoes. Underwater exploding volcano sine waves and tectonic rhythms evolve with submarine sounds. Sizzling lava echoes are erupted with low frequencies. Deep sea glissando created by the slow release of bursting gigantic magma basses. Warped with time volcanoes fill in on hardened sonic lava and build up above the ocean high resonance surface, forming soundscape islands.

Carl Michael von Hausswolff 's new piece created for *Fishing for Islands* is entitled “Ocean Dome Revisited” (2017) and is partly composed with the use of sounds from the oceans and sea mammals and partly improvised using sine wave oscillators.

22:00 Jelena Glazova

23:30 David Rothenberg

1:00 Peter Zinovieff

2:30 Jana Winderen (summer time)

3:00 Jacob Kirkegaard (winter time)

4:00 Zavoloka

5:00 Carl Michael von Hausswolff

Note: Due to daylight saving, there is one more hour in the night from October 28 to 29.

About Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

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

About TBA21–Academy

TBA21–Academy is the exploratory soul of Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, and an itinerant site of cultural production and transdisciplinary research. Conceived in 2011 as a moving platform on the oceans, it brings together artists, researchers, and other thinkers and practitioners from various fields concerned with today's most urgent ecological, social, and economic issues. Through its expeditions on sea and land, the Academy seeks to reinvent the culture of exploration in the 21st century, while inciting knowledge creation, new modes of collaboration, and the co-production of solutions for the pressing environmental challenges of today.

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