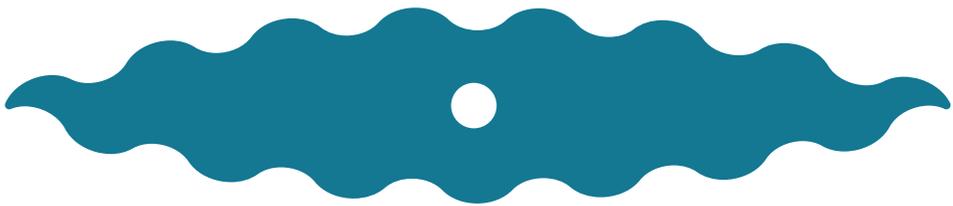


THE MANY

HEADED HYDRA

**Imagination Speculation
Dissolution of Space and Time**



SEA BODY

INFRASTRUCTURE

IMAGE



For Istanbul

CONTENT



Sea Body Infrastructure Image

Emma Haugh and Suza Husse

Following the waters, a different cultural cartography appears; the hydra as postcolonial and queerfeminist reference organism; surfacing from the waters of the Atlantic Ocean between the shores of the European peninsula, Iceland and West Africa.



Crash or Breathe: On the Question of Violence and Costs of Vulnerability

Natasha Ginwala in response to *Between the Waves* by Tejal Shah

How does one stay porous in a social space of embedded violence and practical terror?; a toxicity that reminds us this blue planet is only partly solid; a human-animal sociality; Where love-making is imagined as an eopolitical practice; what might it mean then “to be in interminable dialogue with the earth”?



The Quota Queen

Bryndís Björnsdóttir

Performing sorcery; a subaltern of the Quota kingdom in Iceland; the eradication of witchcraft during the rise of capitalism; a sticky hand that grasps, slaps, spansks and plunders.



Speaking as Fishes:

Workshop participants from the *Hydra Workshops #01 Speaking as Fishes* by Emma Haugh and Suza Husse in Leipzig and Reykjavik: Valur Anttansson, Ólöf Benediktsdóttir, Bryndís Björnsdóttir, Ulrike Gerhardt, Candace Goodrich, Andrea Caroline Keppler, Evelyn Kliesch, Gísli Pálsson, Bryndís Hrönn Ragnarsdóttir, Julia Santoli, Eirún Sigurðardóttir, Aldís Snorradóttir, Arna G. Valsdóttir, Nine Eglantine Yamamoto-Masson.



The Many Headed Hydra: Introduction

Poster: Interrupted reading, audio recording made visible.

Whalers, whalers, whalers; The circular transmission of human experience corresponded to the same cosmic forces that set the Atlantic currents in motion; Icelandic trawlers in African waters; The creature born of Typhon (a tempest) and Echidna (half woman, half snake).



Hybrids

A mythical tale of deep-sea transformations; a radiological being, a territory; We are hermaphroditic creatures in the process of becoming, mid stage; This other planet that I was never part of; And these movements stretching into thin lines of desire; Reconfigure the inside and outside; This process must have some kind of spiritual connotation to it.



Raps

I emerge between her thighs as she exhales; I pass from machine to machine; I flow like money now; she hurls us against the cold smooth monolith wall; /It was never my choice to shit in his pussy; This filthy, stinky surface; The subaltern has “hersay” ways.



Fistfuls of Water

Nine Eglantine Yamamoto-Masson

Ghost ships; Speaking of shrimp; How does capital organise movements in the oceans?; Bodies in and over the sea; a maritime space of trauma and community of the Black Atlantic Diaspora; Decolonising knowledge; #RhodesMustFall; coloniality is not “past”; resistance and world-making.



Mother Water

Hannah Black in response to *On fait Ensemble* by Ato Malinda

The sea goddess; The bourgeois among the colonisers; (the perspective of the discovered) is mostly missing; Living is not a line but a spiraling pattern, crisscrossing years and ancestries; A new third image forms in this flickering; Creole is post-media; She births herself on the shoreline between what is felt and what is known.



Чайка: Half frame views of Reykjavík, Ásbrú, Reykjanes Peninsula

Emma Haugh

Chaika (Russian: Чайка, English: Seagull) Soviet 35mm half-frame cameras, the call sign of the first woman in space.



Occupational Hazard: Image Conversation

Bryndís Björnsdóttir and Tinna Grétarsdóttir

Unresolved narratives of the present in the shifting geopolitical conditions and emerging new waters of the Arctic; transformation from a fenced off system to a public-private civilian site; As the ice cap melts and the ‘Warm War’ unfolds, the North Atlantic once again faces complications



Hydra Conversation Research Notes: Reykjanes peninsula and Reykjavík, Iceland

Federation of Fulminating Fish; Iceland—a small American state; Soldier sickness; Local ‘witch hunts’; porous lava soil contaminated; ‘malady zone’—fear of infection; Aluminium palm trees—colonial aesthetics; different tasks of care, repair and maintenance.



Even just looking at them, you know there is something different about these fish

Sea stories from a conversation between the workshop participants in Reykjavík accompanied by images of Olga Bergmann’s and Anna Hallin’s *LAMENT/Cod Choir*

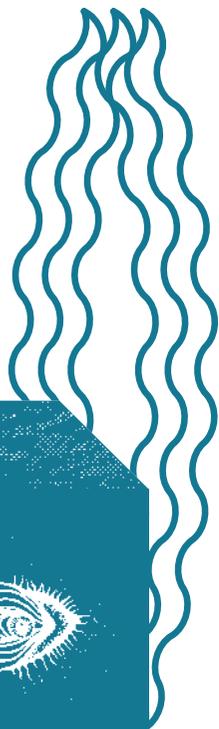
It’s freezing and thawing and breaking and re-freezing; a female beast that lived in the swamp; sea use where new agents can arise and disappear as you interact; A living soup; where women still can’t get an abortion; we are controlled by the moon, just like the ocean; people they do drown, in their own bodies



SEA BODY INFRASTRUCTURE

IMAGE

Emma Haugh and Suza Husse



**“We sweat and cry salt water,
so we know that the
ocean is really in our blood.”**

Teresia Teaiwa

Moving through lands, cities and buildings, through intimate, forbidden and public spaces, through bodies and between shores and ever slipping from control or containment, bodies of water are linked to an imaginary of crossing, to movements of passage. Following the waters, a different cultural cartography appears—one that flows through the geography constructed by demarcations of national territories, of property and of linear histories. *The Many Headed Hydra* explores the waters as rhizomatic narrative space and as potential infrastructure of commons.

The Hydra is a serpent-like mythological water creature whose snake heads reproduce uncontrollably. Within the project this figure is evoked as postcolonial and queerfeminist reference organism. Used as a legitimising trope for white Herculean dominance over the global multi-ethnic ‘monster’, the ancient Greek myth of Hercules killing the Hydra re-entered the Euro-

pean colonial imaginary during the 16th century. Giving voice to deviate heads and crafting tales of other socialities, *The Many Headed Hydra* works to reclaim this early capitalist symbol of the unruly proliferation of ‘dangerous’ alterity¹.

Developed with people from different islands, continents and peninsulas, *The Many Headed Hydra* is a hydro-political art project that involves research, performance and publishing based on collaboration and modes of storytelling. Nurtured at the art space District in Berlin and through conversations with cultural and political practitioners and thinkers *Sea Body Infrastructure Image* is the first head of *The Many Headed Hydra*. It surfaces from the waters of the Atlantic Ocean between the shores of the European peninsula, Iceland and West Africa.

In the format of an artistic research symposium², workshops, this magazine and its site specific translation into performative and discursive transmissions, *Sea Body Infrastructure Image* discusses the North Atlantic as a territory of passage undergoing social and ecological transformations. The material and symbolic meanings of this shifting geopolitical entity flow in the streams of technology and capital, in the histories of diasporas and of the Cold War, in the desires and discourses that cross its waters. But the Atlantic waves also resonate the fluid embodiments from the archaic and futuristic realms of a different shoreline, of in-between landscapes inhabited by queer, inter-species forms of existence. Bodies of water are considered as hospitable public spaces for post-national as well as post-human imagination in order to rethink notions of rights, citizenship and belonging and to acknowledge natural beings and planetary earth forces as political subjects in their own right.

Navigating puddles, rivers, fountains, oceans or pipes, tears, sweat and spit *Sea Body Infrastructure Image* proposes to draw connections between different expe-

riences, crossing temporalities and contested geographies. With their first motley head, we launch *The Many Headed Hydra* as a performative device, that we hope will develop its own forms of mythmaking as it slips and slides from one phase, place and performing body to the next.

- 1 We gratefully acknowledge Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker for tracing the alternative social worlds resisting the rise of global capitalism and colonial expansion. Their book *The Many-Headed Hydra. Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (2000) has been a key resource.
- 2 In collaboration with the artist run research projects *Keep Frozen* and *Occupational Hazard*—investigating harbour cultures and the geopolitical shifts in the North Atlantic from an Icelandic perspective—the first manifestation of the project became the artistic research symposium *Sea Body Infrastructure Image* (curated by Suza Husse / *The Many Headed Hydra* and Hulda Rós Guðnadóttir) in Leipzig in January 2016. The symposium ended in a Hydra-workshop called *Speaking As Fishes* whose second part happened in Reykjavík a month later, again in the context of *Keep Frozen* and enabling research and speculation towards the contribution of *The Many Headed Hydra* to the *Occupational Hazard* project in the former American NATO base in Reykjanes bay in fall 2016.

Blue Whiting Torus

We are a common fish in the North East Atlantic Ocean from Morocco to Iceland and Spitzbergen and we also swim in parts of the Mediterranean. We can turn inside out (like a rolled up pair of socks, turning into themselves endlessly). So we are a kind of portal that is continuously pulled inward, but we can also penetrate. We reconfigure the inside and outside and change what surface is considered in a permanent revolution. A geometrical phenomenon.



CRASH OR BREATHE: ON THE QUESTION OF VIOLENCE AND COSTS OF VULNERABILITY

**Natasha Ginwala in response to
Tejal Shah's multichannel video installation
Between the Waves (2012)**

1.

How does one stay porous in a social space of embedded violence and practical terror? And, what is the proof that a body is still vulnerable?

In her text, *Understanding and Politics* (1953), Hannah Arendt has noted: "If we want to be at home on this earth, even at the price of being at home in this century,



we must try to take part in the interminable dialogue with its essence."¹

When discussing the character of violence of the last century—its “implements” and capacity of remaining an obscure and obscuring phenomenon, Arendt remarks on it essentially as an instrumentalising force, “whose tools are designed and used for the purpose of multiplying natural strength.”²

I'm interested in investigating Tejal Shah's multi-part work, *Between the Waves* within the continuum of violence, yet doing so without taking leave from the underlying condition of vulnerability.

When totalitarianism is seen as a rupture in civilization, its magnification of strength impacts the core of individual bodies to a breaking-point—releasing a fracture. It is through this fractured state that the body is continually speaking “back” to civilization as material evidence, in testimony and in rebellion.

“We have all been injured, profoundly”:
states Donna Harraway's *Cyborg*

Manifesto—“We require regeneration, not rebirth, and the possibilities for our re-constitution include the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender.”³ As re-engineered organic and machinic political form a new bodily surface comes to meet itself. The spirit of this being is one that raises a unique type of intelligence challenging the meshing of techno-capital and the body politic.

Captured in one of the five-channels from *Between the Waves*, we see: the scorching lunar figure, apprehending a sense of finitude, what Elizabeth A. Povinelli has elaborated upon as the carbon limit⁴. And a toxicity that reminds us this blue planet is only partly solid; ultimately captured as vaporous substance—simmering in a disquieting climactic order.

The moon's radical disfiguration into sediment, as an abject blackness, is therein a signifier of the Anthropocene: an anticipated geological epoch, which marks the negative condition of human-led terrestrial transformations hinged upon violent extremities.





Here, symbolically turning celestial life into fossilised debris, *Between the Waves* captures an “eclipse”—where the transitional surfaces of polymorphous desire periodically replace circuits of hot and cool death, via regeneration.

2.

To further investigate Arendt’s quote: What might it mean then “to be in interminable dialogue with the earth”? Moreover, what space of terrestrial and extra-terrestrial belongings might then open up?

The dialogical space in *Between the Waves* is characterised by a human-animal sociality towards the “being” of the earth. Where lovemaking is imagined as an ecopolitical practice towards an altered order of existence.

In another scene, we enter a condition of aftermath, which also appears as an eroded past. A barren landscape is made to quiver through a queered velocity—as bodies wash ashore and lie in parallel to a horizon. In the moorings of intimacy, that pull both plastic and organic debris into entanglements, Tejal’s creatures defy the cunning of an algorithmic globe.

3.

With the outward markings of a skeletal frame and unicorn-like antennas, these are not cyborgs (cybernetic organisms: systems which embrace organic and technological components), but rather interspecies beings at the edge-of-worlds, living amidst gnarled roots, filth and unpredictable shorelines. In fact: they don’t engage in world-making, instead, these creatures dance upon landfills, breathing in poisonous skyscrapers and industrial excess.

Their agency lies in assuming an anti-sovereign position. Rather than performing within the power symmetries of territoriality—they take pleasure in forms of

“unmaking”—in exposing their analogue tools of desire, through acts of muddy bondage, contamination, and in the contrapuntal moves of sucking in and deep expulsions. *Between the Waves* charts nature as a construction site—building truths in shifting states of flesh. Through, what writer-philosopher Paul B. Preciado might call a biocamp modality⁵, there is a refusal towards the terrorising pulls of naturalisation of race, sex and class.

4.

In reflective surfaces that release solar signals like the heliograph or the distressed blip of morse code backgrounded by ancient seals, the film adopts an ambient spatiality. There is the evidence of a ‘return of energy’ from earth entrapment, such as shimmering signals across an excavation site, a message inscribed in dashes and dots, or a bent spine that is seen as a column of stones in one moment and is made elastic in the very next as it plunges into the deep sea.

5.

While expressing an interest in disability, in nonfunctional bodies, other forms of functionality and cognitive experience, Paul B. Preciado, notes: “Democracy and the (active) model of democracy is still too much about able bodies, masculine able bodies that have control over the body and the individual’s choices, and have dialogues and communications in a type of parliament. We have to imagine politics that go beyond the parliament, otherwise how are we going to imagine politics with nonhumans, or the planet?”⁶

Let us imagine another protagonist within this work, the Mangrove, as an extra-parliamentary space, whose inverted roots energise the atmosphere hosting and protecting a micro-society of species. While remaining located in self-knowledge and a sense of “place”, the amphibious man-

grove counters violent temporalities of hypermobility. In the resistant flesh and dense fertility of the aerial root, we find the radical feedback of self-exposure.⁷

Animating new technologies of governability and community Tejal's work struggles to counteract violence as a common denominator of present lives. In this effort, one might align her recent practice with Haraway's notion of 'a new politics of hope.' Since, while persisting in its anti-establishment predisposition and attending to the live ambit of oppression, it unleashes a cinema of exuberance.

21 December 2014, New Delhi



Images: Tejal Shah, *Between the Waves*, stills from the multichannel video installation, HD video, colour, surround sound, 26:14 min, 2012. Images 1, 2, 5: Channel I—*A Fable in Five Chapters*; image 3: Channel IV—*Moon Burning*, image 4: Channel II—*Landfill Dance* (courtesy of the artist, Barbara Gross Galerie, Munich and Project 88, Mumbai)

- 1 See: David Macauley, *Minding Nature: The Philosophers of Ecology*, Chapter: *Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Place: From Earth Alienation to Oikos*, Guilford Press, 1996, pp. 102–103
- 2 *ibid*
- 3 Donna Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto, Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism In the Late Twentieth Century*, in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York: Routledge, 1991, pp. 149–181
- 4 See: Interview with Elizabeth Povinelli with Mat Coleman and Kathryn Yusoff, *Society and the Open Site*, March 6, 2014
- 5 Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*, The Feminist Press at CUNY: 2013
- 6 Paul B. Preciado, *Pharmacopornography: An Interview with Beatriz Preciado*, by Ricky Tucker, 2013, theparisreview.org/blog/2013/12/04/pharmacopornography-an-interview-with-beatriz-preciado
- 7 Natasha Ginwala and Vivian Zihlerl, *Sensing Grounds: Mangroves, Unauthentic Belonging, Extra-Territoriality*, e-flux journal, journal #45, 05/2013 e-flux.com/journal/sensing-grounds-mangroves-unauthentic-belonging-extraterritoriality/

Special thanks to Vivian Zihlerl for developing these ideas with me in a collaborative research process as part of the curatorial project, *Landings* (2012–2015).

QUOTA QUEEN

Performance by Bryndís Björnsdóttir



The *Quota Queen* performs sorcery, alluding to the eradication of witchcraft during the rise of capitalism, conceiving of a new aggregated material from the by-products of fish in the form of a sticky hand. The *Quota Queen* embodies a subaltern of the Quota kingdom in Iceland, which has reigned over the natural resources of the island since the privatisation of fish quota in the 1980's. The kingdom has in recent years expanded its nautical territory by plundering fish stocks in North West Africa while consistently receiving tax lenience from the Icelandic state. The *Quota Queen* performs a slapstick version of capitalism's aid-lending hand as well as a neo-colonialist small state's hand that grasps, slaps, spanks and plunders.

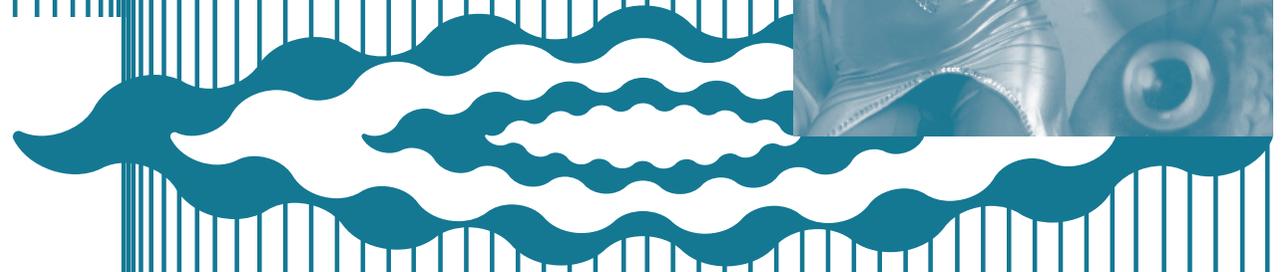
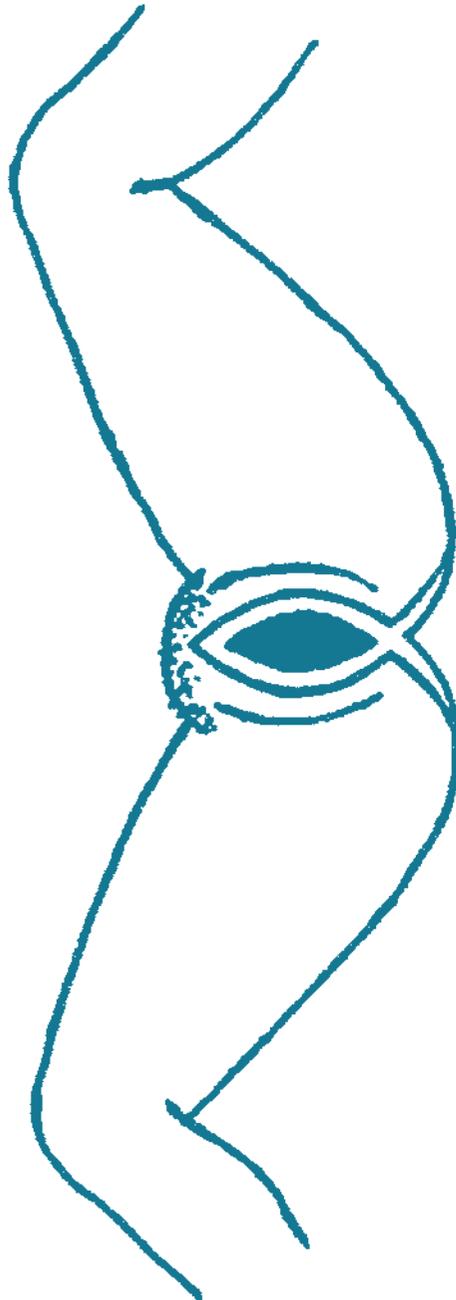
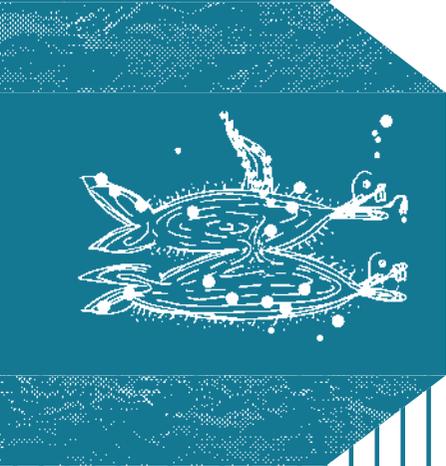
Images: Bryndís Björnsdóttir, *Quota Queen performing Slapstick Capitalist Sorcery*, in the frame of the exhibition *The Grass is Always Greener on the Other Side* curated by Kunstverein Schichtwechsel at Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, 2015.



SPEAKING

AS FISHES

Hydra Workshops #01
Leipzig 24 January 2016
Reykjavík 11 February 2016



Multidirectional Osmosis / Individuality Fish

We is thinking of quantity as physicality that is necessary to breathe through, and for that venereous flow of knowledge, preferably scattered knowledge, is of essence as the driving force that generates the movement of breath and the motion/notion of ocean. We is the appraisal of that breathing entity, our pulse is generated in a touch of clitoris and the waters that do not end but vapour.

Siamese Herring Snake

I am myself disabled to colonise or to be colonised—I am a siamese fish or a radiological being, a territory, which is self-sufficient but not useful for Herculean forces. Am I a slave, a woman, a fisherman, a CEO of the quota kingdom? No, I am an organism of cells active in transforming resources into energy. Am I a drawing, a concept tool or a phantasma? The many-headed Hydras are gone, now we only have COUPLES. Couples becoming quartets, octets. MULTIPLY!

Hydra
Workshop
#01

Raps

It was never my choice to
shit in his pussy.
He made me, while
I was getting undone.
He made me, while
I was getting undone.

The subaltern has
“hersay” ways.
It didn’t unravel my
intestines
where remains, left overs,
artefacts are dug up
by scientists
to look deeper and
understand how our
currents flow.

Their premonition doesn’t
always stick to the
yearly report
of yesterdays.

In my way, in your way.
You are in my way.
Way
doesn’t give a sense of
direction in the depths.

The flying fish, fish
that can fly,
a flying fish forgot this.

He is the man in the bakery
asking for this and that
without pointing.

To surface is always
to resurface.
You don’t get tangled
without getting
entangled.

I emerge between her
thighs as she exhales.
I sliver down along
her legs
along her skin and
the water,
both the same temperature
and smoothness.

After centuries of
swimming,
slithering, fucking,
birthing, drinking,
shitting,
I swim into a net
and am dragged against
the currents,
up to the beyond of
the warm wetness,
light sears my gills,
men’s hands and
machines
choke me, choke me,

I can’t breathe,
I can’t breathe,
I can’t breathe,

I burn up
dry out
from the inside.
I writhe,
I die,
slowly.

It becomes very cold
my dead flesh my
still blood freeze,
along with millions of my
siblings and cousins.

We are dead,
we are dead
frozen in boxes
in machines within
machines.

How much time passes
I don’t know,
my eyes are dead, my flesh
is cold as stone.
I pass from hand to hand,
from machine to machine,
from man to man.
I flow like money now.

Then there is a
small country,

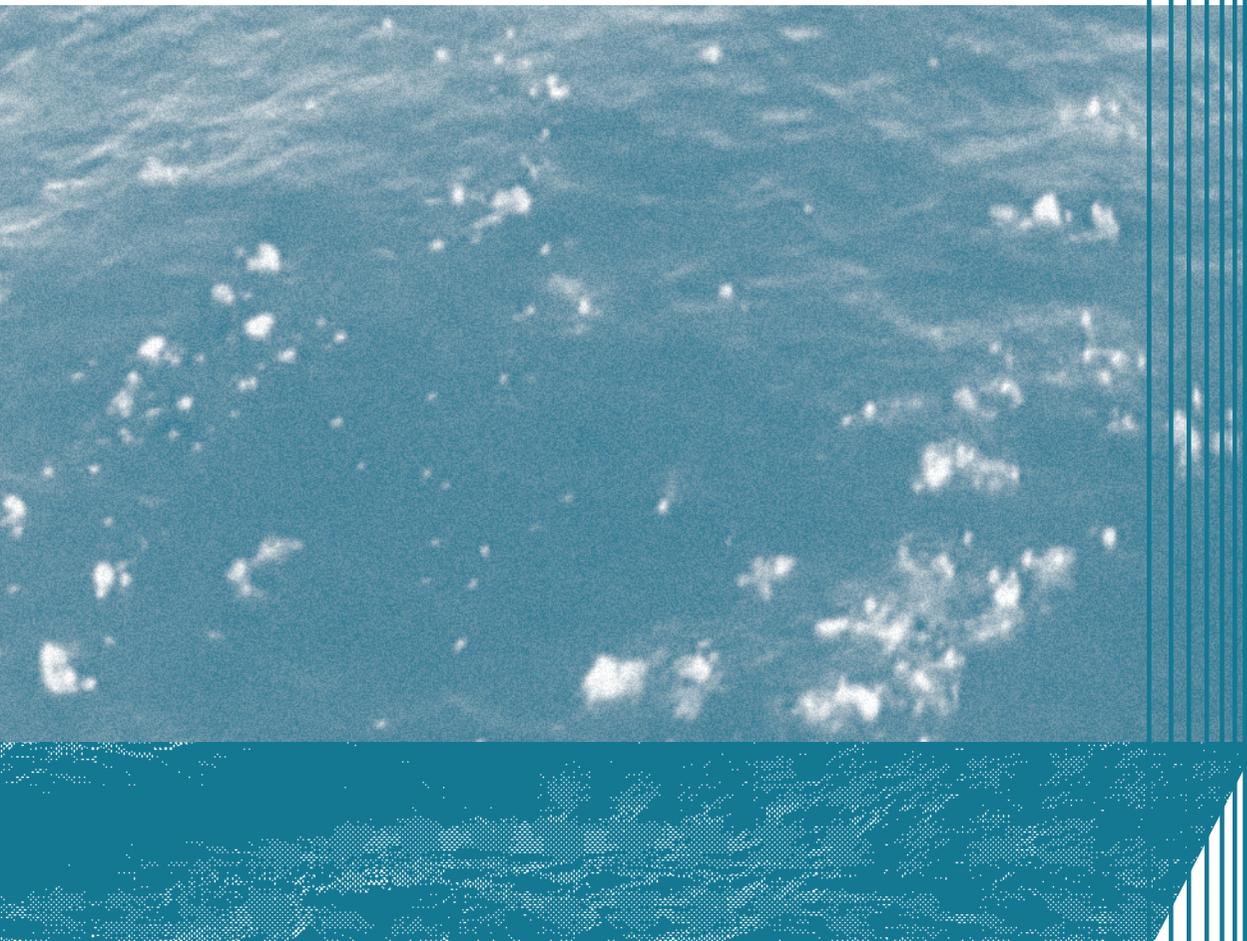
an island empire.
They thaw me. They trade
me.

I get boiled down.
My dead flesh melts with
the scalding waters,
merges,
we are glue,
we have no outside
we have no inside.

She scoops us up,
she gathers her body
in momentum,
and then she hurls,
she hurls, she hurls
us against the cold smooth
monolith wall.
We explode,
we fly through the air,
and now here I am,
finally
between her thighs again,
between her thighs
bottled between her thighs.

FISTFULS OF WATER

Nine Eglantine Yamamoto-Masson



Italian Navy rescue helicopter video shows the aftermath of the capsizing of a boat carrying African migrants on Oct 12, 2013, [bbc.com/news/world-europe-24508657](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24508657)

I. Ghost ships

Let me begin by speaking of shrimp. This was the first thing I thought of when I first heard of the *Keep Frozen project*¹. You see, the story had just broken a few days before: investigative journalists revealed on December 14, 2015 that shrimp from Thailand—sold at high profit by major US, British and other European retailers—is largely peeled by slave labourers on Thai “ghost ships” that enslave, brutalise and even kill unpaid trafficked workers, many of them undocumented migrants from neighbouring Myanmar and Cambodia.

I wondered: what else in our everyday life has travelled the seas and carries within it or is constituted by these untold messy stories of violence, commerce and capital?

As I reflected on this configuration: sea/body/infrastructure/image/labor/Atlantic, my thoughts kept on coming back to the question “What are the streams of capital that traverse the sea?” or rather “How does capital organise movements in the oceans?”

radio10.sr/nieuws/politie-nickerie-en-lbb-onderscheppen-partij-illegaal-geviste-zwampgarnalen/40205

II. Bodies in and over the sea

Our oceans and seas connect continents and islands as a fluid space of shared history and trade, and, for many of us, migrant genealogies. In a more literal way, we are connected via the oceans through the undersea cables that link the Internet across continents. Yet too often the connections are surveilled, contested, not readily accessible, ruptured or become blockages.

The juxtaposition of the words Sea, Body, Infrastructure, Image (the name of this symposium that situates its reflection in the symbolic and material space of the Atlantic) triggered in me thoughts about one of the most brutal episodes of human history: the founding paradigm of modernity and of neoliberal capitalism as an infrastructure and ideology, the transatlantic slave trade.

The Atlantic is a repository of corpses and ghosts, a maritime space of trauma and community of the Black Atlantic Diaspora, a cultural highway of shared identity con-



necting Africa, Britain, the Caribbean and the Americas.

In their depths, the oceans cradle countless bodies, are inhabited by legions of ghosts and traversed by untold stories of unimaginable cruelty, loss and trauma. It is impossible to talk about the sea in connection with bodies, infrastructures, knowledge and labour without talking about chattel slavery, along with its underlying ideological constructs and economic drives.

The oceans are full of bodies. (...) The waters speak of the necropolitical creation of disposable classes that are subject to vanishing. (...) The wind and the waves are always already full of ghosts, the particles of all the bodies rolling together with marine debris. (...) Western modernity (...) is always already prepared to dispose of these othered humans along lines of racialised poverty. Jenna Brager²

For centuries, vessels have carried snatched and scarred bodies over the waters, traded as units of labour, as future profit, lives reduced to production value, factoring in calculated and expected shrinkage (deaths)—shaping the geopolitics of the past half millennium, our lives, creating the infrastructures we inhabit today³. The toxic effects of the necropolitics of white supremacy, with anti-Blackness as its fulcrum, have deeply scarred the entire world, and continue to oppress and kill billions of people worldwide. Contemporary configurations of power, brutal conflicts and environmental catastrophe are direct results of white supremacist racial ideology implemented as colonialism and slavery.

The oceans are saturated with the debris of modernity, the untold stories of the nameless dead. Stories we try to grasp but we grab only fistfuls of water, sweat, spit and tears.

... for someone who is fleeing their home country in order to stay alive,

who considers that the life they risk losing is worth nothing—this person's strength is unimaginable. Because they are not afraid of death. (...) When I wrote The Belly of the Atlantic almost twelve years ago I was speaking of dozens of dead migrants in the Atlantic. People said I was exaggerating. Now they're being fished out by the thousands. Fatou Diomé⁴

III. A clean slate

It's convenient for many to forget and erase the enormous profit white Europe made from plundering the colonies and from the slave trade. It's easy to sanitise history, since educational curricula and institutions of knowledge still operate under a colonialist ideology. Even language itself and its limitations can be a tool of oppression.

Power and privilege centres itself by creating and keeping control over narratives, weaponising them and controlling the institutional frameworks through which it operates. Our media and institutions are constructed in the service of the social elite and are mobilised as tools of the structural violence that maintains that exclusive and fantasy construct of privilege as norm.

Jamaican philosopher Sylvia Wynter's work explores the history and structure of what she called a "hierarchy of humanness". She calls the construction of a threshold of humanness the "referent-we"⁵: it is based on the Western man as a reference point for humanity. This is who is considered human, complex—and who is empowered by classic Western thought.

Actualised on a massive scale of unparalleled brutality through imperialism and colonialism, the ideological system of white Christian supremacy is responsible for multiple genocides, centuries of violent terror and oppression of people that it considered subhuman. Its effects are still pain-

fully felt by billions of people today. This is not taught in school, hardly addressed in the media or at universities. Only very limited research funding is available to produce more knowledge about these censored histories. Those who question and resist this structural violence and the whiteness of institutions are often sidelined, silenced, erased, pathologised, excluded, told they are the problem.

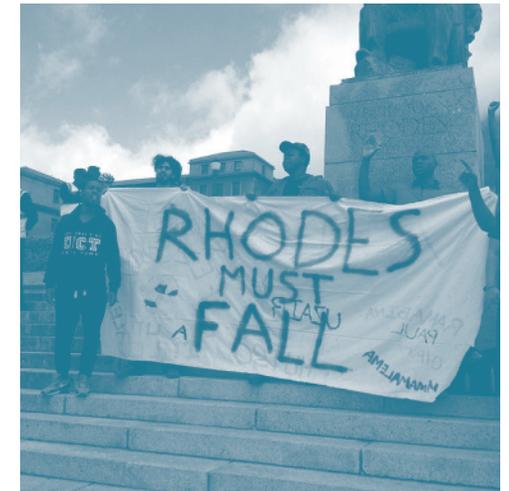
Institutions reproduce the oppressive structures that created and sustain them. They have developed legal and epistemological apparatuses that construct and enforce standards. Institutions are disciplinary devices that subject, exclude, pathologise and invisibilise certain types of knowledges, individuals and cultures.

The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them. Edward Said⁶

Western societal elites have developed rigidly regulated institutions that define and control what counts as knowledge, culture, intelligence, i.e. attributes of leadership. These institutions were calibrated upon and have invariably been engineered to center the elite while marginalising and oppressing the rest. European elite universities are built on the plunder of former European colonies.

Even today these institutions continue to glorify colonisers and racists, and have remained complicit in maintaining European hegemony throughout the world.

Therefore most research and efforts in decolonising knowledge are conducted outside of the traditional institutions, must rely on knowledges, methodologies and processes not sanctioned by the classic academic establishment. Methodologies like artistic research for example can ask: "How can we contest the monolithic conceptions of "knowledge", "certainty" and thus of the (academic) authority they confer?"



University of Cape Town

IV. Decolonising knowledge

It is the language of the oppressor, yet i need it to speak with you. Adrienne Rich⁷

The movement #RhodesMustFall began on March 9, 2015, protesting a prominent statue at the University of Cape Town that commemorates Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902), a notoriously racist British mining magnate who is part of a long history of colonialism, imperialism, slavery and genocide in Africa. His name has often been invoked in the past year in connection with global movements to decolonise knowledge and challenge eurocentrism and historical revisionism in much of academia and the "art world". After a month of student demonstrations against this symbol of centuries of white oppression, the University of Cape Town (South Africa's oldest university, built on land "donated" by Rhodes) bowed to the student protests and removed the memorial.

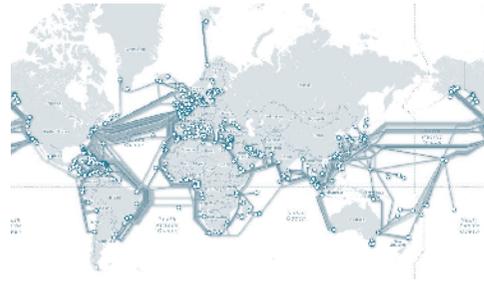
Oxford University, arguably among the most prestigious and respected universities in the world, whose history is deeply entangled with that of Great Britain's colonial Empire, still proudly celebrates Cecil Rhodes. His likeness, made of stone,

adorns the front of Oriel College's Rhodes Building for example, overlooking Oxford's High Street—a testament to the complicity of the Academy with his worldview. #RhodesMustFallOxford campaigner Ntokozo Qwabe, law student at Oxford university, pointed out in an interview that “so-called ‘British institutions’ were built on the colonial plunders of my resources and on the labour of my people who were enslaved,” and argued that the effigy of Rhodes is symptomatic of a broader issue: “The statue is an emblem. We find it deplorable that only 24 black British students were accepted last year into undergraduate body. It’s not just about the statue.”⁸

V. Art, knowledge production, research as resistance and world-making

For people who have been hitherto actively marginalised and underrepresented to thrive, we need a critical analysis of the structures that need to be dismantled and of how these ideologies pervade the Western mainstream understanding of culture, intelligence, ontology, spirituality and the definition of knowledge itself. At this stage, for people with leisurely access to Internet and education, it’s a choice to be lazy and not change, to not make an effort to broaden their horizon, to step out of their comfort zone. The fiber optic internet cables at the bottom of the sea connect continents, provide access to a wealth of knowledge and offer more than enough resources for people to read up on and educate themselves on ways of thinking that are outside of the narrow group they’re part of.

Decolonising knowledge and culture means: to reveal and challenge the structural violence of Christian white supremacy and the apparatuses of cultural institutions, cultural authority and cultural canons it has constructed, along with legal and aesthetic codes. Decolonising means



99.7% of all global internet connection is based on underwater cables that connect the continents. submarinecablemap.com

decanonising, knocking the violent white men off the pedestals. Decoloniality is resistance to white supremacy and patriarchy, the examination and dismantling of its ontology and infrastructures, the pushback against its toxic logic and effects.

Coloniality and settler governance are transnational in scope and include territorial occupation, conquest, removal, economic exploitation, resource extraction, displacement, and dehumanization. Settler colonialism is also a way of knowing that permeates institutions, including education, the law, science, economics, politics, and religion. Decoloniality disrupts and departs from settler logics, structures, myths, stories, archives, institutions, affects, embodiments, aesthetics, desires, ontologies, categories, cartographies, and politics. It has a long, diverse genealogy and can be understood as an ongoing process of co-resistance and alliance. As an approach to thought and action, decolonial work exposes how coloniality is not “past”: simultaneously, it traces forms of critical and creative resistance and shows possibilities for (and the necessity of) decolonial being/knowing/loving/resisting/creating. Leanne Simpson⁹

In the so-called “West”, where we are, decolonising knowledge and culture means: to denaturalise colonialist logic and violence, to reveal the structural violence of Christian white supremacy that has

both constructed the apparatus of cultural institutions, cultural authority and cultural canons, along with legal and aesthetic codes. We need to examine how these ideologies pervade our understanding of culture, intelligence, ontology, spirituality and the definition of knowledge itself. Decolonising means unlearning patriarchy. Decolonising means solidarity with the oppressed, the erased and silenced, protesting the dehumanisation and brutalisation of certain classes of people by the state, the prison-industrial complex, reclaiming a voice, writing and amplifying counter-narratives and counter-research. For those used to being in the centre, it means de-imperialising, making space, listening and self-educating.

We must each of us recognize our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and share them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives. Audre Lorde¹⁰

In the complicated project of decolonising, we heed and honour the absences, the ghosts, the silences, the never-mourned, the nameless dead, the grieving, the forgotten, the debris of lives, the incommensurable loss.

And yes, it will be lonely.

Leipzig, 23 January 2016

Fistfuls of Water is the edited script of Nine Eglantine Yamamoto-Masson’s lecture performance at *Sea Body Infrastructure Image*, an artistic research symposium curated by Suza Husse / *The Many Headed Hydra* and Hulda Rós Guðnadóttir in the frame of *Keep Frozen Projects* from 22 to 24 January 2016 in Leipzig.

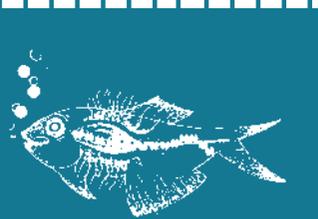
- 1 *Keep Frozen* is a project by the artist Hulda Rós Guðnadóttir. On the occasion of its presentation at Kunstkraftwerk Leipzig in January 2016, the Artistic Research Symposium *Sea Body Infrastructure Image* took place.
- 2 Jenna Brager, *Bodies of Water*, in: *The New Inquiry* (May 12, 2015) thenewinquiry.com/essays/bodies-of-water
- 3 For an in-depth discussion on the Black Atlantic and the slave trade by European colonial powers as the genesis of modernity, I recommend reading Paul Gilroy’s book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, 1993
- 4 On a French TV talk show, April 24, 2015, French-Senegalese writer Fatou Diomé spoke about the “migrant crisis” in Europe and France’s hypocritical stance towards its immigrants. [youtube.com/watch?v=AZk6xopE6IM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZk6xopE6IM) I translated her and made subtitles for the video, because I wanted others to hear her too. Diomé is known for her bestselling novel *The Belly of the Atlantic*, published in 2001.
- 5 Katherine McKittrick (editor), Sylvia Wynter: *On Being Human as Praxis*, 2015
- 6 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1993
- 7 Adrienne Rich, *The Burning of Paper Instead of Children*, 1971
- 8 independent.co.uk/student/news/ntokozo-qwabe-student-who-accused-oxford-of-propping-up-existence-of-systemic-racism-says-he-is-a6790991.html
- 9 Leanne Simpson (writer, scholar and First Nations activist), 2015
- 10 Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 1984





Antanaquon Tentaclidei

Is stability a euphemism for timidity? Some will look at us—the newly discovered species antanaquon tentaclidei—and say yes. We plot across the seabed, fastening our glistening tentacles to anything we encounter, never letting go as we roam slowly across the seabed. Our flowing antennae are almost always hung low, rarely responding to our surroundings. But every so often they fan out seeking some unclear source of interest. And these movements stretching into thin lines of desire. Seeming as if we are about to come apart, will we ever let loose our anchors?



Separatist Fish

I am a separatist fish. I live in and around the West African coast. I spend most of my time organising education for the other fish who don't know much of history. My separatism takes many forms as you can see. I have myself a transhuman vagina form. Humans and fish share more than we would like to admit. Most of my time is spent mapping the movement of trawlers from Iceland. We are fish who do not want to be fished. So I gather the schools together and warn them, suggest hidden places to avoid the nets. We are Moroccan fish I suppose, although I am not so sure fish have nationalities. We know no borders, only our schools, reefs and depths. We are getting organised and growing wings.

MOTHER WATER

Hannah Black in response to Ato Malinda's video performance *On Fait Ensemble* (2015)

I have awakened to go to the jetty to reason with Yemaya, the goddess of the ocean, to entreat her to help me with a certain problem... I ask Yemaya why, what is it that we must live like that? She answers like a man hanging onto a pole on a bus in Colombo: 'So what.' Dionne Brand¹

The Black Radical Tradition is not a biological reflex, but a reconstitution of historical, cultural, and moral materials, a transcendence which both transfers and edits earlier knowledges and understandings among the several African peoples enslaved. Cedric Robinson²

The bourgeois among the colonisers kept diaries of their travels and accounts of their first meetings with the people they met. They admired their gentleness or the refinement of their arts, sized up their lack of knowledge of modern European weaponry and cavalry, and/or assessed their quality as raw labour. The other perspective (the perspective of the discovered) is mostly missing, or reflexively filtered through the first point of view.

This missing perspective is returned to like the bedrooms and kitchens of childhood recur in dreams and memories, rotated like 3D models in the architectural head, in a search for the viewpoint that would unlock the long spell of those rooms, those buildings. History is not a development from childhood to adulthood, in which white men appear like parents to scold and tidy the children's mess, and nor even is a hu-

man life. Living is not a line but a spiralling pattern, crisscrossing years and ancestors. This pattern is not machine-made but made by the hand, a pattern into which accident is introduced, fatigue, desire, surprise, whimsy, constraint. Like the cell that moves by distorting its membrane, momentary transformations are all that any organism has in the way of future; the rest is all past and present.

The sea goddess Mami Wata is a creole figure, hybridised from the confluences of trade, culture and violence that converged along the west coast of Africa with the invention of modern capitalism, the invention of race, the invention of "world culture".

For the creole being, no meaning is permanently fixed in place, not because Black creole unfixes meaning but because it acknowledges meaning as a liquid, cooling into forms at the poles, molten at the equator, and circulating between. The meaning of the white face paint that adorns her, for example, flickers back and forth between the clay paint used as sunscreen and decoration in the region, and the white skin of Europeans. A new, third image forms in this flickering.

Creole is post-media: pure mediation. The artist Sondra Perry wrote on Facebook, "Plain text is my term for a cobbled together higher learning, lived experience and reclaimed somethingorother, a creole of sorts that's still totally subjective and is really aware of its subjectivity but tries to have a grounding in a knowledge that doesn't have to be brought." Plain text, in Perry's usage, is a creolization of subject



and object, formal and informal, outside and inside, mixing institutional and popular meanings. Unicode defines plain text like so (descriptions listed on a Wikipedia entry):

Plain text represents the basic, interchangeable content of text.

Plain text represents character content only, not its appearance.

It can be displayed in a variety of ways and requires a rendering process to make it visible with a particular appearance.

This legibility criterion constrains the range of possible appearances.

The relationship between appearance and content of plain text may be summarized as follows: Plain text must contain enough information to permit the text to be rendered legibly, and nothing more.

The creole or plain text god can live anywhere in her amorphous simplicity, moving from Nigeria to Haiti to New Orleans to Berlin to wherever and back, a simple enough system (the terror and beauty of the ocean, what it takes and what it delivers) to be encoded and decoded in many variations: she can make a woman barren or fertile; she can herself be a man or a woman; she can make or break a love story; she can represent African subjection or African subjectivity; she can demand allegiance or leave without a goodbye, and so on. She can appear as image, as flesh, as dream, as moving light, as sensation. Only the “legibility criteria”—when she appears, something of the ocean should appear with her—constrains her many forms.

Mami Wata is not one of the meaning-making gods, not like the god of the monotheists who holds the meaning of living transcendently away from the social. Unlike Father-God, unlike the god of profit, Mami Wata does not relieve her worshippers of the task of giving life meaning. Thus from the view of those saturated in

monotheism and its development, scientific atheism, Mami Wata is a trinket-like god, fit for natives, children and animals, a god too sunk in nature to be like a god at all. She births herself on the shoreline between what is felt and what is known, what is shared (life) and what is only yours (death), or vice versa. She is seen walking alone in crowded places.

The dark-skinned face wears its surface of white. Communication requires transformation; even a shared look, a burst of laughter, writes and translates itself. A photo negative is produced when fast-acting chemicals respond to light by becoming darker, fixing an image onto the strip of plastic by reversing the original pattern of light and shade that fell onto the film in its little windowed prison cell. A trace of experience is stored in the half-lie of its modification, a schematisation of colour, aimed at a private audience, secret until held up to the light.

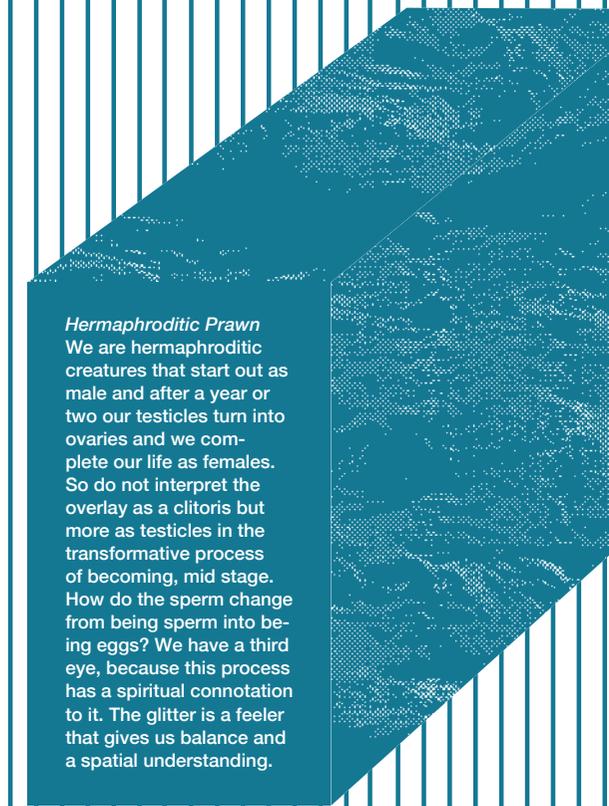
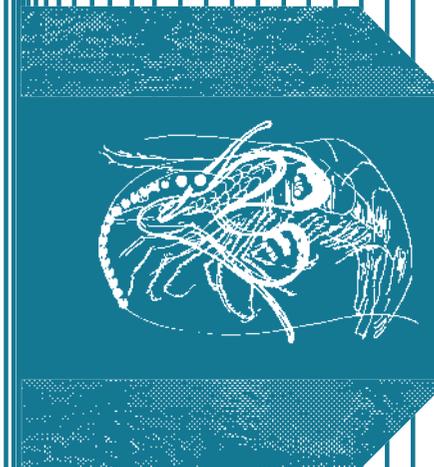
The digital abolishes this intermediary step, replacing it with encoded data from digital light sensors. This data can be recomposed into an image that is a description of light and not a reaction to it, moved to a second order of abstraction. Unlike the analogue technology of human skin, a digital photograph does not darken in response to light. It is an act of reading, another mechanised creole by which images that belong nowhere can spring up elsewhere than that nowhere, in a particular somewhere; a form of universal mediation, like the atheist god of money, that carries the smaller gods in its global currents.

Towards the end of the video, a child understands that he has entered the video’s frame. His gaze points out the heavy invisibility of the camera, more present than the figure of Mami Wata. Like the heavy silence that edges the clipped sound in the earlier sequences, a heavy absence, a perspective, delineates the camera’s presence. The boy looks into the camera, then reverses his steps. A phrase invented and

said in anger cannot be taken back, and just like that the camera’s registration is eternal, he thinks, but he can’t be sure. The camera’s gaze is more profound than that of any other passerby, because it collects together and aims all the potential gazes of the world. Because the child tries to avoid the camera, my attention stays on him: the kid stays in the picture! Flinching away from the camera, from the viewer, the child reminds the viewer of the camera’s heavy invisibility, its impermeable and indismissible invisibility, its vulnerability and invulnerability, invisible object rendered as flesh.

7 June 2016, Berlin

- 1 Dionne Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return*, 2002
- 2 Cedric Robinson, *Chuck Morse, Capitalism, Marxism, and the Black Radical Tradition: An Interview with Cedric Robinson*, 1999



Hermaphroditic Prawn
We are hermaphroditic creatures that start out as male and after a year or two our testicles turn into ovaries and we complete our life as females. So do not interpret the overlay as a clitoris but more as testicles in the transformative process of becoming, mid stage. How do the sperm change from being sperm into being eggs? We have a third eye, because this process has a spiritual connotation to it. The glitter is a feeler that gives us balance and a spatial understanding.



OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD PROJECT

Image Conversation

Bryndís Björnsdóttir and Tinna Grétarsdóttir

The OH-project, a transdisciplinary research project including artists, scholars and scientists, investigates the ways unresolved narratives of the present and the concepts of 'ecology', 'active citizenship' and 'the future' unfold in the shifting geopolitical conditions and emerging new waters of the Arctic. The project is located at a former NATO base on Reykjanes Peninsula, Iceland. It draws on and is motivated by the site's transformation from a fenced off system to a public-private civilian site. The area is currently being developed as Ásbrú Enterprise park—a constellation of innovation in technology, energy and creative industries. 'Artefacts' of the Cold War remain on the property as reminders of the past and current challenges albeit in a different context, with international cooperation, protection and exploitation. As the ice cap melts and the 'Warm War' unfolds, the North Atlantic once again faces complications and new opportunities for its resources and emerging shipping routes.

Following is a conversation in images gathered by the group during their research.

1 & 3 Image by US Military Personnel Roger L. Goodman, taken at the base.

2 A news report photo of the former prime minister of Iceland, Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson, running in Holuraun—a site of volcanic eruption in 2014 which



Dísa

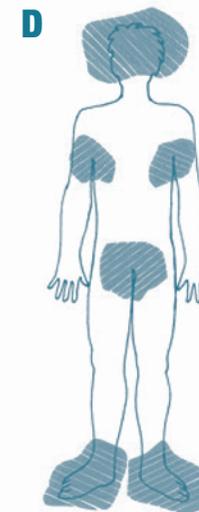
Tinna



has produced the largest lava field since 1783. Image by Völundur Jónsson.



IT'S A BIG DEAL



- D authorshiplessness
hö fundarleysi
- T collaborativesmuggle-
tactic samstarfssmyglu-
naraðferð
- D selfhelpacademy
sjálfshjálparskóli¹
- T comfortzone
þægindasvæði
Chernobyl
- D coldwar:warmwar
kaltstríð:heittstríð
- T Capitalocene
- D horizon
sjóndeildarhringur²
- T It's a big deal Stórmál³
- D Achtung Varúð



Hydra Conversation

Research Notes: Reykjanes peninsula and Reykjavík, Iceland

In the winter 2015/2016 *The Many Headed Hydra* began work with the *Occupational Hazard Project* and visited Iceland. The following are a collection of transcripts from ongoing dialogues with project members and others—Bryndís Björnsdóttir, Tinna Grétarsdóttir, Halla Kristín Einarsdóttir, Haukur Már Helgason, Björn Steinarrsson, the people of Hakkit Lab Ásbrú, Hannes Lárusson—who share some relation to the former NATO base now known as Ásbrú.

This conversation-based knowledge has inscribed itself in different ways in the making of this publication and will continue to unfold with the presence of *The Many Headed Hydra* within the *OH Project* program in Reykjavík and Ásbrú in fall 2016.

Ásbrú: former US American NATO base

Ásbrú: pagan name for the bridge between humans and gods.

Ásbrú Enterprise Park is the transformation of the base into an entrepreneur centre promoting Real



Checkpoint at Ásbrú—currently the home of OH Projects at Reykjanes peninsula, located next to Keflavík international airport 40 km from Reykjavík.

Estate, Business Incubators, Data Centre Hubs and a Green Energy research centre through a process of renaming and redesigning the face of it (logos/branding on many buildings). The NATO army base established 1939–45 grew after WWII to 50.000 people being stationed there—the fourth largest town in Iceland.

Fenced off village—built by the American army—the government wanted to minimise local interaction. A deal was made that the US would not bring in black soldiers.

Soldier sickness—disorientating—overwhelming.

Local ‘witch hunts’: Women, mostly of the ages 12–18, were displaced to a jail/farm in the countryside in the early 1940s, upon being identified as having “interactions” with US soldiers. They were called ‘Situation Girls’.

Only recently has this become public and a documentary has been made on the lives of these women: *Stúlkurnar á Kleppjárn-sreykjum* by Alma Ómarsdóttir (2015).

The Reykjanes Peninsula is porous lava soil. During the US-American presence an oil spill contaminated the environment and ground water in the area.

The site was handed back over to Iceland on the condition that they take care of the cleaning.

What does it mean to clean up after the army?

Dark continent—‘malady zone’—fear of infection—fear of the other—symptoms of malady—identity of Iceland—ruins—colony and human sexuality.

The site itself has not been explored from ethnographic—historical perspectives by Icelandic researchers.

The recent idea to locate asylum seekers in the empty buildings of Ásbrú was

refused, as the grand plan is to build up an Icelandic Silicon Valley.

Now 1000 people are living in Ásbrú—students—migrant workers—low income families—mobile—temporary residents that are thought to be easily governed and make no claims.



Ásbrú, 2016¹

The site promotes itself as a miniature version of Iceland.

The main focus is on developing the Ásbrú Data Center, close to the ammunition buildings.

Transformation—enterprise—gap between reality and delusion.

The site acts as a private company but it is run by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (responsible for the development of the area). The municipality is responsible for the schools and the streets of Ásbrú.

Ásbrú—Chinatown asbestos slum. What is the future of this place?

Hakkit Lab is the only public space in the camp. At the lab they recycle old computers and technical apparatuses of all kinds.



Quit Your Belly Aching, General Marshall visiting the army base at Keflavík (Ásbrú) in 1948

There are 3D-printers and other repurposed machines.

Hakkit have their own independent economy—different tasks of care, repair and maintenance lead to the accumulation of Hakkit currency. Depending on the amount earned you can buy parts from the old, defunct machines to recycle them into new devices.

Hakkit Lab is frequented by a group of young people, who grew up at the base when it was still a military camp, as well as at other army bases around the world. Their fathers are mostly US-American soldiers. Now that it has become Ásbrú their mothers, some of them divorced, have moved back to the site.

The Marshall Plan legacy

Aluminium palm trees—colonial aesthetics.

Marshall² assistance built up the economies of Iceland.

Dry out the wetlands for agriculture—the idea of progress.

‘Friends of Iceland’—hierarchy between notable guests (friends) and other immigrants.

‘Marshall building’ in the Reykjavík harbour was a herring factory built with Marshall Plan money.

Strategic position of Iceland in the Cold War³ (sounds like Cod War).

Iceland has no army.



The labeling used on Marshall Plan aid packages

Double gentrification: As part of the development of the harbour area for tourism and business, the city recently invited cultural institutions into the Marshall building that have been evicted from their spaces due to privatisation.

Marshall Plan life style—ideology.

American symbolism.

American goods—imports—guaranteed consumption in Iceland.



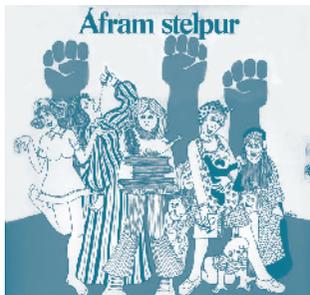
Agriculture creating a market for American companies—i.e Harris welding company holds a monopoly in Iceland and was commissioned to renovate the whole fishing fleet.

Iceland—a small American state. Iceland did not want the Americans leave in 2006.

The Cold War returns—Keflavík news from 9 February 2016—funds from the American Army to rebuild the base for airplanes and submarines—military monitoring of Russia.

A piece of the Berlin wall was given as a gift to Iceland and put in front of the building where Reagan and Gorbatschow held the Reykjavík summit in 1986.⁴

Cold war feminism in Iceland



Cover of the Red Stockings LP

Radical feminist movement in Iceland called Redstockings—emerged in 1970 in the deep-freeze life during Cold War (conservatism).

Explosive reactions to the Anti-Nato, the Hippy, the Women's Liberation and Student Riots movements.

*Things had to blow up after so much stagnation.*⁵

The women organised rage choir interventions in public space, at festivals and political marches. Choirs had played a major role in the formation of Icelandic National identity in the 19th century and now were appropriated for feminist struggle and pleasure.

In 1974 the Redstockings collaborated with women workers on the Vestmannaeyjar islands to hijack the *Man and Sea* Festival. They interviewed the local women and together made their stories into songs and speeches about conditions of labour and life and the histories of the women's struggle.

The songs stayed behind when the Redstockings left and continued to be sung and cause effects and reactions *They looked at us as if we were some weird new species. I expected them to check if we had tails or something.*⁶

There were several class and ideology conflicts in the movement. Working class women did not feel it was for them. The Redstockings were being splintered by marxist and maoist groups, some of them sent in by the predominantly male organisers of the radical leftist

organisations to take over the feminists for the cause of revolution.

*Feminists have always had a tough time. But they don't need to be pitied for standing up for themselves. It's fun.*⁷ The women involved with The Redstockings speak about the pleasure of disrupting together, of making magazines and books, organising discussions and marches, researching and demanding alternatives.

Iceland and the Atlantic



One Icelandic króna with cod image, Federation of Fulminating Fish⁸

Warm War—territorial contestations due to the melting of the ice caps.

Shipping routes are intensified in the North—Increase in sea traffic.

Dragon Area—oil drilling in the North Atlantic by Chinese and Icelandic investors.

Interest in a service point for enterprises that will

exploit Greenland and their oil—security and rescue station planned for the North Atlantic.

Greenland—last frontier—the land is still commons.

Who will be responsible for the consequences?

Disaster migrants, remember the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico: *The people hired to clean up the surface oil included local fishermen in need of replacement income and so-called disaster migrants, largely made up of Latinos who relocate to work at changing disaster sites. (...) actively forbidden from wearing protective equipment (...) For BP, whatever thread existed seemed to be divided into two irreconcilable domains: any threat to the "environment" was to the aesthetic preservation of the shore, and any threat to "humans" was only economic.*⁹

Kárahnjúkar hydro-dam built in 2005 by the labour of migrants—to generate power for the Icelandic aluminium industry—tied to the capitalisation of the fishing industries.

ALUMINIUM¹⁰—FISHING¹¹

How to relate to the neo-colonial practice in the fishing industry?

Sea of Nations—danger of disintegration of persons and nations—disappearances—maritime law.

In international waters the

captain of the ship is the king of the ship.



Postcard from Reykjavík

The turf house issue

MUDHOLE—official term used for turf houses—shame—grants made available to tear them down and rebuild.

1944—questions of what is Icelandic national identity—literature—language—conference about housing crisis—turf houses deemed below living standards.

Heritage in Iceland—political battleground. Looks innocent—but—what to show and what to hide of cultural histories?

Concrete lasts for only 70 years.

Danish passive colonisation of Iceland, re-inscribing itself into the structure of the city again and again (official Icelandic building history starts in the 19th

century with Danish¹² design).

Centre of Reykjavík is a continuous post-war zone (construction all over the place all the time).



Constructions at Reykjavík harbour, 2016

Iceland—one centralised system—Icelandic heritage and art scene are combined.

The Quota kings are on the Promote Iceland board—branding Iceland (Foreign Ministry and art industry).

Private sector—interwoven with culture—critical practices not supported.

Self-censorship.

No criticism of urban planning in central Reykjavík from architecture or art worlds—atmosphere of *positivity* encouraged.

Misbehaviour



- 1 Iceland Review Online, Iceland's PM Welcomes US Project in Keflavík, Feb. 12. 2016
- 2 The Marshall Plan (officially the European Recovery Program, ERP) was an American initiative from 1948 to 1952, in which the United States gave over \$12 billion (approximately \$120 billion in current dollar value) in economic support to help rebuild Western European economies after the end of World War II. The goals of the United States were to rebuild war-devastated regions, remove trade barriers, modernise industry, make Europe prosperous again, and prevent the spread of communism. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshall_Plan
- 3 Early in World War II, the neutral Kingdom of Iceland had declined an offer of British protection. A month after the occupation of Denmark by Nazi Germany in 1940, the British invaded Iceland, violating the country's neutrality, over the formal protest of Iceland's regent, Sveinn Björnsson. In 1941, the British arranged for the United States to take over occupation of the country so that British troops could be used in other arenas of the war. After pressure from the

- British, the Icelandic government eventually agreed to US occupation, and on June 7, 1941 five thousand US troops arrived in Iceland. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iceland_in_the_Cold_War
- 4 On the first evening in Reykjavík in February, the Hydra meets the artist Olga Bergmann who grew up in Reykjavík as a daughter of Russian dissidents in exile. She recalls being picked up at school during the first day of the summit as the BBC was in urgent need of a Russian translator. After one minute on TV it turned out that Gorbatschow had brought his own translators with him.
 - 5 From Halla Kristín Einarsdóttir's documentary *Women in Red Stockings*, 2009.
 - 6 *ibid.*
 - 7 *ibid.*
 - 8 *F.F.F.: in English, the Federation of Fulminating Fish, New York; in Icelandic, the Figures-Faking-Federation. One button costs half an eyrir over there in the West, but you have a company in New York, the F.F.F., which sells you the button at 2 krónur and writes on the invoice: button, 2 krónur. You make a profit of 4000%. After a*

month you are a millionaire. (p.21)
 "Communists!" said the Prime Minister. "Bloody Communists. I love them. I shall kill them."
 (...) "Only the West matters for the North. We live for the West; we die for the West; one West. Small nation?—dirt. The East shall be wiped out. The dollar shall stand."
 Halldór Laxness, *ATOM STATION*, 1948, 2016, p.61.

- 9 Mel Y. Chen, *Anima-cies—Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*, Durham and London, 2009, p.226.
- 10 Aluminum smelting is the most important power-intensive industry in Iceland.
- 11 Fisheries and related sectors—in recent years labeled "the ocean cluster"—are the single most important part of the Icelandic economy. Source; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Iceland
- 12 Iceland was a part of the Kingdom of Denmark from 1814 to 1918 and a separate kingdom in a personal union with Denmark until 1944, when Iceland declared independence. Source; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denmark%E2%80%93Iceland_relations

ЧАЙКА

Чайка – Half frame views of Reykjavík, Ásbrú, Reykjanes Peninsula, Emma Haugh (February 2016)

Chaika (Russian: Чайка, English: Seagull) was a series of Soviet 35mm half-frame cameras produced by BELOMO from 1965 to 1974. The name came from the call sign of the first woman in space—Valentina Tereshkova.









**EVEN JUST
LOOKING AT
THEM, YOU
KNOW THERE
IS SOMETHING
DIFFERENT
ABOUT THESE
FISH**

**Transcribed conversation between participants
of the Hydra Workshop #01 Speaking as Fishes, Reykjavík
Images by Olga Bergmann and Anna Hallin**

I have a very strong relationship to the sea.

As a young child I used to sail with the ferry from Iceland to Scandinavia. Once I hitch hiked a ride with one of the Quota king's boats from Germany to Iceland. Seven years ago I almost drowned when I was swimming in the ocean, so I developed a very big fear for deep water which I hope is now descending. But the sea has always been emotionally symbolic and I have different kinds of dreams related to the sea. They're often very hazardous, they happen by the harbour and I have to jump from boat to boat, and I'm in the water and I have to get up to the next, very like this, and sometimes they are very calm. The last one I had was quite beautiful. I love these dreams, they're powerful and I wake up and I feel very experienced.

It's interesting to hear you talk about the sea. Most of the people here are Icelanders and islanders,

so we're talking about the Atlantic Ocean which has very much its own character. I now live by the Baltic Sea, and what I miss most is the sea. Because it just does not feel like the ocean at all. This danger, this unpredictability, this vitality is somehow missing. When I fly to Umeå I go from wherever to Stockholm and North to Umeå over the Baltic Sea. In the winter it's frozen and you look at this frozen ocean and you think what is this? It's gentle but also it doesn't freeze without struggle, you can see that it's freezing and thawing and breaking and re-freezing, so it's cracked, it's like a window that's been cracked over and over and over again.

I don't think I have a very strong relationship with the ocean,

which is quite unusual because I'm from Iceland. I grew up quite far inland so I had this very romantic idea of the ocean, like this really humungous space. And then I moved to Reykjavík and it was just there, it just brought me really cold winds.

I wasn't born by the sea, but in Dresden in GDR times where the sea didn't really exist for me as a child.

A longing for the sea came only when I was a teenager and I think it had also a lot to do with the fact that the people I grew up with were not able to travel to any oceans. As soon as I finished school I moved to Italy so I lived by the sea. I was stunned by the fact that when you watch the sea for a long time it really enters you so much that when you go to sleep you can still feel the waves and the temporality of the sea inside of you. And I dream, for years I dream a lot about the sea, of being an animal underwater, something that swims and flies at the same time.

The Hydra, mythically, was a female beast that lived in the swamp.

So the slaying of this Hydra was in part a resistance to women's power. The draining of the swamps was seen as a way to improve the land, which happened here (in Iceland) after the forties, the wetlands were drained. And the drying of the swamps creates an incredible amount of pollution.

Obviously the quota system is not very friendly to the Hydra. We don't have a kind of Hydratic fishing system where people just go to sea.

It's very controlled, there are very few people who actually do fish, even though everyone eats it. We should call for a Hydra based land use or sea use where new agents can arise and disappear as you interact and live with and from the ocean.

Actually the fish has become a luxury also, it's become very expensive. It's a resource controlled by the few. It used to be the common dish.

The people here, they only ate one type of fish.

The haddock was favoured and the cod was exported. Icelanders didn't like cod, the taste of it. It's full of worms, people were disgusted by it, and by all fish other than the haddock. Shrimps we ate, too. These are the two fish that live off other dead sea creatures and those were the two fish we preferred. Which is interesting, because when you create a resource out of nature, you try to build something stable and under control. And then this is what you take from it: these two creatures that eat other dead creatures. It becomes very stale.

And the word in English for that is bottomfeeder,

which is of course extremely negative. Someone who is picking at whatever falls to the bottom. I remember when I was

working on a fishing ship, cutting open a haddock. Its stomach was different from any other fish. The things that you found in a haddock's stomach were terrible. You could just see that the remains there were more disgusting, more broken down than in the cod, bits of seashell, bits of sand. Even just looking at them, you know there is something different about these fish.

My son used to catch cod,

and a friend of ours came for a visit and she said I want to make a soup only from what I find here. So she used the cod that he had just caught and some blackberries from the mountain and some angelica, which is similar to celery. And she made this really tasty soup and it was mostly very beautiful. It had this white fish and blackberries and fresh green leaves and it was nice to eat also because the berries have such a nice texture. We were admiring this soup and eating it and the pot was on the table and after everyone had eaten we started to see small worms coming out from the fish. It seems that you have to boil it for longer. It was kind of disgusting but in memory it's also nice, it's a nice image. A living soup. It's not dangerous. No, it's quite healthy. They can't survive in your stomach.

It's just this idea of control. That's why we want to have it dead.

When I was sixteen I worked a summer long in a fish factory.

Before I came here today, I saw this horrible YouTube clip where there's a person by the sea and the waves are coming and they take them. You know, because people look at the sea as something romantic,

they don't realise how dangerous it is and just yesterday a person died, a tourist in Reykjanesbær. So this is a very beautiful but dangerous creature.

Yes, I think it's very much related to death. You know, the idea of a sailor and a fisherman.

It's very much related to the gap between life and death or the bordering. Like in families it's usually a rule that no more than one person from the family can go on the ship. Almost like a given that you don't send both the brothers and the father all on the same boat because if the boat sinks then all of them are gone. And children would always know when the father is coming home from sea, even if they don't know they will go to the door and wait for him. So it's life and death but you're also somehow connected to the forces.

I also come from an island. We too have a long history and mythology and also romanticism about the sea.

Like here, our local fishing industries are in big trouble. So this romanticism about the independent fisherman is something that has fallen apart and doesn't really exist anymore. I recently read John Millington Synge's *The Aran Islands*. I was interested in the idea of the seafarer's tale, because these fishermen would leave the island, travelling out to sea, and the women would stay behind. Sometimes the men would be lost to the sea or they would return with stories to tell. I was interested in the stories of those who were left behind while also thinking about the present situation in Ireland, where women still can't get an abortion. They need to travel to England. So I was thinking about this idea of a

reverse seafarers tale by these women travelling in this contemporary context and as a form for the stories they might have to tell.

There are many stories, you know, in old movies about people who travelled and their last wish was to see the ocean.

They were about to die and then were brought to the ocean to see it. I think it's a little bit like finding your other half because we are seventy per cent water and salt and minerals and we are controlled by the moon, just like the ocean. I think we feel this strong relation and it's not very rational, it's internal.

It's also very linked to death.

The sea has a sort of an edge that makes you understand your mortality underneath. For me I'm more terrified of drowning for example than being burned inside a house, you know.

I think I would prefer drowning.

For me it sounds like a very beautiful, peaceful way. The thing is that most people actually do drown. Most old people they do drown, in their own bodies.

I have one very extreme experience, I used to live in Grindavíkurvegur,

a fishing town close to Keflavík, the airport. There was a boat with five men. I was teaching there in the elementary school.



During the night the boat crashed. We were at the harbour and it was across on the other side of the bay, some hundred meters away. They drowned, all of them, and the village stood and we watched it and it was not possible to intervene or to rescue them. The children were losing their fathers there. It was really weird this village standing and watching the boat.

The ocean and the storms.

They are part of nature that we cannot contain. We've managed to contain land elements to a certain degree and then we go out to sea and it's so uncontrollable. Maybe that's why it still has this very mythical feeling to it, because we feel very deeply that we have no control over it.

Text: Transcribed conversation between participants of the *Hydra Workshop #01 Speaking as Fishes*, 11 February Reykjavík: Valur Anttonsson, Ólöf Benediktsdóttir, Gísli Pálsson, Bryndís Hrönn Ragnarsdóttir, Eirún Sigurðardóttir, Arna G. Valsdóttir.

Images: Olga Bergmann and Anna Hallin, *LAMENT/Codchoir*, Video, PAL, colour, sound, 3:04 min, 2008. Cod sounds recorded by and used with permission from The Marine Research Center in Bergen, Norway.



*The Many Headed Hydra: Imagination,
Speculation, Dissolution of Space and Time*
Magazine #01, Summer 2016
Sea Body Infrastructure Image

Published on the occasion of *The Many Headed Hydra*,
a project by Emma Haugh and Suza Husse at District,
Berlin in collaboration with *Occupational Hazard*
Project, Reykjavík, 2016.

Editors: Emma Haugh and Suza Husse
Poster: Tejal Shah, *Between the Waves, Secret*, Mixed
media collage, digital print on archival rag paper,
70x70 inches, 2012 (courtesy of the artist, Barbara Gross
Galerie, Munich and Project 88, Mumbai)
Endpaper: Emma Haugh, *The Bosphorous, Istanbul*, 2013
Design: Elsa Westreicher, Printing: Tastomat Berlin

Sea Body Infrastructure Image contains materials that
were generated in two workshops *Hydra Workshop #01*
Speaking as Fishes by Emma Haugh and Suza Husse
as part of: *Sea Body Infrastructure Image. An Artistic*
Research Symposium curated by Suza Husse/*The Many*
Headed Hydra and Hulda Rós Guðnadóttir from 22 to
24 January 2016 at Kunstkraftwerk Leipzig in coopera-
tion with District, and *Reclaimed Landscape – A Sym-*
posium on Art Practice as Research and Creative
Research Methods directed by Aldís Snorradóttir from
11 to 12 February 2016 at the Iceland Academy of Arts
and Hverfisgalleri, Reykjavík both in the frame of Hulda
Rós Guðnadóttir's *Keep Frozen Projects*, funded by the
Nordic Culture Fund, the Nordic Culture Point, the Fin-
land Institute in Germany, and the Swedish Embassy.

The *Occupational Hazard Project* is funded by Nordic
Culture Point, Icelandic Visual Arts Fund & Kadeco.

Thanks to all the contributors and Bryndís Björnsdóttir,
Anna Eschbach & Antonie Wagner, Flutgraben e.V.,
Joerg Franzbecker, Ulrike Gerhardt, Lisa Gideonsson &
Gustaf Londré, Tinna Grétarsdóttir, Jack Halberstam,
Lydia Hamann, Jórunn Edda Helgadóttir, Janine Halka,
Andrea Caroline Keppler, Ligna, Peter Linebaugh &
Marcus Rediker, Tran Luong, Ato Malinda, Nguyen
Phuon Linh, Alexandra Pirici, Johannes Paul Raether,
Elisa Ricci, Frank Sippel, Storm Janse van Rensburg,
Elsa Westreicher.

© 2016 The authors/DISTRICT, Berlin
Number of copies: 700

Published by

DISTRICT

Bessemerstrasse 2-14
12103 Berlin
www.district-berlin.com