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Jia-Jen Lin, *Treading on Thin Ice*, 2022.

Jia-Jen Lin: *Treading on Thin Ice*

Treading on Thin Ice contemplates human conditions under progressive catastrophes resulting from social issues and climate change. By employing the concept of landscape as traces of human history as a battleground and an extension of the human body, Lin presents a post-landscape where nature, human activities, and materiality intersect. By utilizing body imagery as a receiver and reflector, the artist explores using our physical bodies as vehicles for reconstructing the events and environments to which we have directly or indirectly been exposed. The project integrates sculpture, video projections, and sound into a large site-specific installation.

In the installation at Locust Projects, Lin presented a manmade natural environment to explore adaptation, the psychological space, and subtle changes in our everyday lives under the inevitable—our changing environment. Manipulating our senses of familiar and unfamiliar, the center of the exhibition is a backyard-like installation that situates the artist's sculptures with concrete pavers and artificial grass, which are commonly used for patios in Florida. The main video is projected onto a large screen above a blue-mirrored plexiglas that symbolizes a backyard swimming pool.

With footage that includes natural and artificial landscapes, an interview at a genetic laboratory, a scene with actors and a scenic panorama captured on Mars, the video creates a cross-path dialogue exploring

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our existence and the connections among change, adaptation, hope, human behavior, and emotions. The single-shot improvised acting by two actors, An-Ru Chu and Christopher J. Staley, explores our current moments and the fine line between genuine human reaction and sophisticated acting, based on the concepts found in Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days* and *Waiting for Godot*. An interview with scientist Dave Jackson about his blue-sky research at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in New York provides a neutral explanation of why artificial changes and genetic exploration have become inevitable and reflects the parallel path that both artists and scientists pursue to prove a concept. Lin also explores the boundary between artificial, natural, and imagined landscape through the eye of a digital camera while visiting a Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Florida.

Lin collaborated with Berlin-based sound artist Cedrik Fermont and new media artist Chun-Li Wang on the soundtrack and 3D animations for the video. Fermont created sound and music that respond to the imagery and channel the emotions of the video. Wang animated both 3D patterns to visualize Lin's concepts and an imagined landscape based on images of a collapsing iceberg, Mars (by NASA), and the online texture library Megascans. The sculptures are inspired by scholar's rocks, naturally occurring stones of various colors and abstract shapes that were famously admired by Chinese scholars during earlier centuries. These represent a micro landscape that allows for contemplating our current world. The sculptures appear deformed by outer forces and represent a combination of the human body, animals, and rock with no specific contoured reference.

Treading on Thin Ice premieres at Locust Projects and will continue its expedition in the Arctic Circle in Svalbard, Norway in 2022. The exhibition is commissioned by Locust Projects, and supported, in part, by the National Culture and Arts Foundation of Taiwan. Video production advisory by Manuel Molina Martagon.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jia-Jen Lin is a Taiwanese-American artist based in Brooklyn. Her installations mediate the body, space, human condition, and our society. Lin's practice explores human experiences and how they inhabit our bodies despite different space and time. She creates visual presentations to investigate the human body and its surroundings as a reflection of our psyche. With an interdisciplinary approach, Lin's installations often span several media, including sculpture, photography, video, sound, text, and performance.

Her interest developed around transforming experience through modifying materials and objects into three-dimensional presentations. By employing her body and mind as an experiential interface, she looks into the subjects of cultural identities, struggles, correlated relationships between our physicality and psychology, and

the resemblance between art making and manufacturing in social content. *Photograph by Kuo-Heng Huang.*

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R. Eric McMaster, Still from *Drift*, 2022.

R. Eric McMaster: *Drift*

Drift is a two-channel video installation featuring two musicians playing an original, reactive composition as they are set adrift in the ocean on separate, custom-built rafts. As the musicians physically drift away from one another, their ability to hear each other diminishes causing the duet to slowly fall apart.

To produce *Drift*, a scouted location was selected south of Miami at the start of the Keys. The Keys have a rich history of separation and loss and also serve as a geographical divide between the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. Vulnerable to sea rise and hurricanes, the Key's region is a perfect contextual backdrop for the recorded action, as a sense of serene, but inevitable loss looms over the area and is further emphasized by the dissipation of the duet participants.

The custom rafts the musicians float on were made out of the same curly maple as violins. The decorative 'flame' of this wood echoes that of the instruments used in the performance; the instrument a vessel of transporting sound, the boats a vessel for transporting musicians. The 'flame' of the wood also plays with the eye in a similar way that water reflects dancing light on the underside of floating objects.

Salt water was collected at the site of the shoot, boiled down until salinity saturation is achieved, and then the solution was allowed to crystallize on the rafts and instruments. Additionally, saltwater was applied in an

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aerosol fashion on the Project Space's walls, creating a sparkling luminesce to the space. The process of evaporating, of allowing the water to leave the salt behind, echoes again a sense of loss and separation.

Drift serves to highlight the poetics of separation and loss, the beauty of the inevitable, and the awe of nature in all of its complexity. At a glance, the project may seem like it was just shot with the site as a backdrop, but through the project, the site pushed back collaborating with the same resistance of a material when sanded; nature addressed in the same way as material and actions. Nature, like another collaborator, willing its influence on the project.

"We all contain water in about the same ratio as Earth does, and salt water in the same ratio that oceans do. We are poems about the hyperobject Earth." – Timothy Morton

Drift was commissioned by Locust Projects and supported, in part, by a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant. Composition by Danny Clay. Performed by Benita Dzhurkova and João Da Fraga. Cinematography by Alex Markow. Audio Mixing by John Howell. Fabrication Assistants: Rachael Starbuck and Andy Forbes. Special Thanks to Bill Haddad and Zen and Carrie Mayo.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

R. Eric McMaster's work aims to disrupt the familiar using materiality, context, or space as a means of highlighting absence, humor, and/or awe.

R. Eric McMaster has exhibited at the Hiroshima MOCA, Japan; the Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin; The Contemporary Austin; Blue Star Contemporary, San Antonio; Vox Populi, Philadelphia; Antenna Gallery; New Orleans, the Lawndale Art Center, Houston; and Austin's Testsite, among others. R. Eric McMaster was born in Clarion, Pennsylvania in 1979. He received a BFA from Pennsylvania State University (2003) and an MFA from Arizona State University (2008).

He currently lives and works in Austin,

where he teaches in the Department of Art and Art History at The University of Texas at Austin.

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Still from Ursula Biemann's film *Acoustic Ocean*

The Sea was walking the earth with a heavy heel

"I am honored and thrilled to bring the works of this exciting international group of artists to Locust Projects. I hope that viewers will be mesmerized by their sheer beauty, and touched by the powerful message behind each one of them." – Ombretta Agró Andruff, guest curator

The Sea was walking the earth with a heavy heel is the fifth in a series of guest curated video exhibitions in Locust Projects' Screening Room that launched in fall 2019. Guest curated by Ombretta Agró Andruff, ARTSail Residency and Research Initiative, the exhibition features videos by Ursula Biemann, Atul Bhalla, Tania Candiani, Shezad Dawood, and Miguel Sbastida. Water, in all its beauty, might, and potential menace, is what connects the five videos presented in the exhibition.

The show's title is borrowed from the seminal 1937 novel, "Their Eyes Were Watching God," by Zora Neale Hurston, describing the havoc brought to Central and South Florida by the September 1926 hurricane. It serves as a bridge connecting us to the present day, here in South Florida, where the consequences of sea-level rise, increased hurricane intensity, and rising overall temperatures are particularly relevant.

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ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Ursula Biemann's *Acoustic Ocean*, shot on the Lofoten Islands off the coast of Northern Norway, is an ode to the Ocean's many voices and mysterious deep sea creatures, as seen, and heard, through the eyes, and hydrophones, of an indigenous Sami biologist diver.

From the Nordic Sea we are transported to the banks of the holy Ganges River, in Varanasi, India, with **Atul Bhalla's** *Dvaipayana*, which literally means "that which is surrounded by water". The video is inspired by a story told in the sacred text called *Puranas* touching upon notions of life, death, submergence, inundation, and futures in, and of, water.

Tania Candiani's *Sireny* (Sirens in Polish) takes us to Nowy Port (New Port), in the city of Gdańsk, Poland: once a thriving commercial hub, it is now almost inactive. By recreating the sound of ships approaching the port using the voices of a local Choir, Candiani brings back some of the old life to this district, while tackling issues of the volatility of shipping industry, economic downturn, and the importance of our waterways for commerce.

We continue this aquatic journey to the majestic Moroccan seaside with *Jamila*, the fourth chapter of **Shezad Dawood's** 10-episode film series, *Leviathan Cycle*. The overall project envisions a future not so dissimilar from our present, following a variety of characters around a world that has survived a cataclysmic solar event. In this episode in particular the ethics of survival and predator-prey relationships in both human and marine species are explored.

The last video brings us back to Europe, specifically in Galicia, in the northwest of Spain, a section of Spanish coastline highly impacted by the eroding effect of the ocean. **Miguel Sbastida** *High Tide* documents a site-responsive performance in which the artist joins forces with the ocean, laboring for the ongoing erosion process of a cliff. As described by Sbastida himself, the work is an attempt to enter "in a dialogue between my body, the movement of the tides, the never resting forces of the ocean, induced sea-level rise, and timescales that go beyond the human."

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Ursula Biemann is an artist, author, and video essayist. Her artistic practice is strongly research oriented and involves fieldwork in remote locations from Greenland to Amazonia, where she investigates climate change and the ecologies of oil, ice, forests and water. In her multi-layered videos, the artist interweaves vast cinematic landscapes with documentary footage, SF poetry and academic findings to narrate a changing planetary reality. Biemann's pluralistic practice spans a range of media including experimental video, interview, text, performance, photography, cartography, props and materials, which converge in formalised spatial installations. Her work also adopts the form of publications, lectures, and curatorial as well as

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collaborative research projects. Since 2018 she has become involved in the co-creation of the Indigenous University in Colombia with the project Devenir Universidad.

Atul Bhalla has explored the physical, historical, and political significance of water in the urban environment of New Delhi through artworks that incorporate sculpture, painting, installation, video, photography, and performance. He lives and works in New Delhi.

The work of **Tania Candiani** (Mexico City, 1974) has been developed in various media and practices that maintain an interest in the complex intersection between languages systems - phonic, graphics, linguistic, symbolic and technological. She has worked with different associative narratives, taking as a starting point a proposal to invent from reordering, remixing, and playing with correspondences between technologies, knowledge and thought, using the idea of organization and reorganization of discourse, as a structure of creative and critical thinking and as material for actual production.

Shezad Dawood works across the disciplines of painting, film, neon, sculpture, performance, virtual reality and other digital media to ask key questions of narrative, history and embodiment. Using the editing process as a method to explore both meanings and forms, his practice often involves collaboration and knowledge exchange, mapping across multiple audiences and communities. Through a fascination with the esoteric, otherness, the environment and architectures both material and virtual, Dawood interweaves stories, realities and symbolism to create richly layered artworks.

Miguel Sbastida is a visual artist and researcher working across installation, situated performance and video, in an investigation around the intersections of cultural ecologies, geologic phenomena and climate breakdown. Through an interrogation of anthropocentric cosmologies in contemporary nature-cultures, his works strive to establish new perspectives towards a sense of belonging, agency, cross-contamination and exchange in our relationship with the Earth Organism.

ABOUT THE GUEST CURATOR

Ombretta Agró Andruff is the Founder and Executive Director of ARTSail Residency and Research Initiative. An Italian-born, Miami-based freelance curator and climate activist, Ombretta brings more than twenty years of curatorial expertise with an international practice across non-profit institutions, commercial galleries, and art advisory pursuits with private clients.

Since her move to the US in 1998 she has curated solo and group shows in Europe, the US and Asia collaborating with museums, art festivals, commercial galleries and art fairs, as well as the 2006 Winter Olympic Games. She also contributes to various art publications and has written

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essays for several books and catalogues. Her most recent exhibitions, centering around art and marine ecology, were hosted by the Atchugarry Foundation in Miami, Fata Morgana, Sept-Nov. 2021; and the Art & Culture Center, Hollywood, FL, C(h)oral Stories and Collective Actions, March 19-May 15, 2022.

Ombretta employs 360-degree competence in all aspects of the contemporary art world and has served across numerous boards including IKT, the International Association of Contemporary Art Curators, and the Art in Public Places Committee for the City of Miami Beach.

ABOUT LOCUST PROJECTS

Founded by artists for artists in 1998, Locust Projects is Miami's longest running nonprofit alternative art space. We produce, present, and nurture ambitious and experimental new art and the exchange of ideas through commissioned exhibitions and projects, artist residencies, summer art intensives for teens, and public programs on contemporary art and curatorial practice. As a leading incubator of new art and ideas, Locust Projects emphasizes boundary-pushing creative endeavors, risk-taking and experimentation by local, national and international artists. We invest in South Florida's arts community by providing artists with project grants and empower creative careers by supporting the administrative work of being an artist through an onsite artist resource hub and access to pro bono legal services.



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