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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.

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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.

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."

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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 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.

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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 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.

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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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ART HAPPENS HERE.

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