



Allora & Calzadilla
Antoine Bertin
Samuel Bollendorff
Seba Calfuqueo
Stephanie Comilang
Anne Duk Hee Jordan
Simone Fattal
Nicolas Floc'h
Max Hooper Schneider
Kapwani Kiwanga
Sonia Levy
Armin Linke
Courtney Desiree Morris
Asunción Molinos Gordo
Ingo Niermann
Diana Policarpo
Christian Sardet and the Macronautes
Robertina Šebjanič
Allan Sekula
Janaina Tschäpe
Laure Winants
Susanne M. Winterling

Curatorial Team

Hélène Guenin
Nice Biennial of Arts and the Ocean

Chus Martínez
Fundación TBA21 |
Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

Sébastien Ruiz
Tara Ocean Foundation

Marie-Ann Yemsi
Villa Arson Art Center

An exhibition is like an assembly, a reunion of specific artworks, in this case at Villa Arson, with artworks from the TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection and from the Tara Ocean Foundation's artists-in-residence program as well as a collaboration with the project Artists at Sea of the Schmidt Ocean Institute.

Becoming Ocean: a social conversation about the Ocean is an exhibition co-curated by three international institutions – Villa Arson, TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary and Tara Ocean Foundation – underlining the essential role of collaboration and the conviction that art and culture are drivers of social and environmental change.

Becoming Ocean reflects on our understanding and ignorance of the Ocean and its future. The exhibit is a manifestation of the values and methods shared by the participant institutions to bring from the art perspective and through its uncountable forms, an open social conversation about the Ocean challenges that we all face as a planet and our opportunity to rethink our connection with the Ocean and act differently for its preservation.

The massive fishing effects, the pollution that affects the bodies of water, the progressive increase of the oceanic shipping, the imminent ecological risks that could trigger to allow the activity of the deep sea mining industry, and the negative effects that all these human actions have on the marine biodiversity are the results of the contemporary human relation with the Ocean...but, is there any other possible relation that we can imagine, or even regenerate from the past?

This exhibition is presented as part of the UNOC3 Conference, in the context of the urgent need to reformulate our relationship with the Ocean into a more respectful and conscious one in order to make better political decisions.

For the past few decades, art and artists have been actively working to foster an understanding of climate change from the perspective of Nature. Art has played (and still plays) a crucial role in translating abstract and complex planetary phenomena, as well as large-scale systemic global changes, into narrative imagery, first-person storytelling, and Indigenous perspectives, helping us to name and experience these challenges.

Artists have stepped beyond their studios and traditional workspaces to collaborate with experts, policymakers, and scientists, forging a shared horizon where we can strive for a genuine encounter with nature and its interests.

Artists – coming from diverse backgrounds and contexts – have been inventing exercises and gestures that address the rupture caused by colonial and capitalist greed, paving the way for the birth of a new history. A history defined by better choices and a deeper connection to the mythical dimensions of the Ocean, whose echoes reach our present from ancient times.

The purpose of *Becoming Ocean* is to immerse ourselves humbly in these meaningful approaches. The exhibition opens with an installation by Courtney Desiree Morris, an altar that welcomes us by connecting with the ancestral traditions of respect for the Ocean as the birthplace of all living things.

Becoming Ocean brings together diverse voices to initiate a social conversation, offering personal

perspectives on global issues such as industrial fishing and global shipping across the Ocean (Allan Sekula) or the colonial past and neo-colonial present (Stephanie Comilang), where the Ocean and the stories it holds serve as a map of colonial histories through the tracking of natural biodiversity (Diana Policarpo).

The bond between liquid bodies and humanity emerges as a reflection of our social, economic, cultural, and political history, as exemplified by the elegant and poetic work of sculptor Simone Fattal about the Mediterranean sea.

This bond has become brutal in modern times due to aggressive extractivist practices in our relationship with water and the Ocean. Artistic approaches such as Armin Linke's photo essay, which investigates the experiences and activism of local landowners and mine-impacted communities affected by seabed mining for copper, gold, zinc, and silver; Seba Calfuqueo's installation, which highlights the suffering of the Mapuche community due to permanent water titles granted to private companies in Chile; and sculptor Kapwani Kiwanga's critical reflection on the intricate interplay between glass production and sand extraction, all contribute to this urgent dialogue.

This bond has become toxic, as revealed in Samuel Bollendorff's work, where beneath the beauty of seascapes, samples taken from these locations tell a very different story. Sonia Levy's underwater filmmaking in the Venice Lagoon, Robertina Šebjanič's installation, which explores the pollution and threat to marine life caused by weapons abandoned on the seabed, and Laure Winants' work, which examines the impact of pollutants on coastlines using sensitive instruments and experimental photographic techniques, all contribute to broadening our understanding of the invisible toxicity hidden beneath the surface.

A more poetic approach to this issue can be found in Janaina Tschäpe's photo series or in the iconic sculpture *Petrified Petrol Pump* by Allora & Calzadilla.

But the beauty of healing and restoration offers a powerful message of hope through works such as those by Nicolas Floc'h questioning at the same time on our legitimacy and ethics, but also risks, to intervene in nature by recreating artificially the functioning of a complex biodiversity.

These works question our responsibility to react and act before the Ocean's points of no return are reached instead of acting after their destruction.

It is precisely in the context of environmental collapse that we find the narrative of the artist Max Hooper Schneider. His work speculates about hypothetical landscapes and forces humankind to abandon morality and think across longer timescales, and not the immediate.

The exhibition also presents more sensory and sensual regards that celebrate marine biodiversity, as the works by Anne Duk Hee Jordan, Christian Sardet or Antoine Bertin as well as the inspiring video *Sea Lovers* (2002) by Ingo Niermann, advocating for a more intimate relation with the Ocean, as well as pieces that highlight the commitment of local communities to respectful and harmonious relationships with the Ocean, as seen in the narrative presented in Susanne M. Winterling's installation.

Becoming Ocean aspires to ignite within us a desire for new ways of living – ways that go beyond merely repairing damage or recovering from wounds, instead fostering a fundamentally

different mindset toward the processes that shape both the Ocean and the Earth.

POROUS Ports as Interspecies Dwelling

Symposium and live program
7th–8th June 2025

Spanning over the course of two days, the international and multidisciplinary program features performance, screenings, workshops and talks regarding oceanic multispecies encounters at the crossing of the ports activities.

Can ports at our coastlines become an example of porous dwellings where encounters between the citizen and more-than-humans sensibilities occur?

With the artists: Carlos Casas, Stijn Demeulenaere, Adelita Husni-Bey, Hypercomf, Siobhán McDonald and Lara Tabet, among others.

Organised by TBA21–Academy with the support of the European Commission Initiative S+T+ARTS4Water II and curated by Maria Montero Sierra on the occasion of the Ocean Day and preceding the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3).

villa arson

Agenda
7–8 June 2025 POROUS Ports as Interspecies Dwelling
Symposium and live program
For further information and the schedule of guided tours, workshops, and other events, visit: www.villa-arson.fr

Practical information
Exhibitions opened every day (except on Tuesdays) from 2 to 6 pm, and from 2 to 7 pm starting July 1st.

An exhibition co-produced by TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary	With the collaboration of Fondation istraocéan Institut de l'Art et de l'Architecture	As part of Nice 2025 Biennale des Arts et de l'Océan Bloomberg Philanthropies
In media partnership with Beaumaris INCUBATEUR PROJETS SIREDA RISEA	REGION NÎME DEPARTEMENT DES ALPES-MARITIMES CÔTE D'AZUR	VILLA ARSON

Image [Front] Ingo Niermann, *Sea Lovers*, 2020. Video still. Commissioned by TBA21–Academy. Credit: courtesy of the artist. [Back] Diana Policarpo, *Cigua Tales*, 2022. Four-channel video installation, color, sound. Dimensions variable. TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection.

Design In the shade of a tree
Impression Perfectmix-Photoffset

nice

