

*The Ocean*

Curated by Axel Wieder

Trond Ansten/Kåre Aleksander Grundvåg, Ei Arakawa, Sol Calero, Nina Canell, Em'kal Eyongakpa, Peter Fend, Fragment, Ina Hagen, Ayesha Hameed, Alma Heikkilä, INTERPRT, Susanne Kriemann, Giulia Mangione, Hans Ragnar Mathisen, Yuri Pattison, Tabita Rezaire, Jeroen de Rijke/Willem de Rooij, Jorge Satorre, Bea Schlingelhoff, Susan Schuppli, Allan Sekula, Wolfgang Tillmans, Elin Már Øyen Vister, VUMA, Takako Yamaguchi, Explorations in Ocean Space II – Vestland North Sea Blueprints (Bergen Arkitekthøgskole (BAS), teachers: Nancy Couling, Vibeke Jensen, Julia Morrissey) and selected documents and materials

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Over centuries, the city of Bergen has been largely defined by its relation to the sea. Situated on the Norwegian coast, halfway between the fishing grounds of Northern Norway and continental Europe, the city has developed as an international trading hub and today is one of the most important cities for the oil industries and maritime research. *The Ocean* at Bergen Kunsthall uses these diverse relationships to the sea as a starting point for a large-scale exhibition with works by artists and designers, research projects, and an extensive events programme. With some of the artistic projects taking place in public space, the exhibition makes use of the city, not only as a topic, but also as an arena in which art can initiate public discussions.

The future of the oceans has become one of the most pressing issues today due to intensification of human activities. Oceans are crucial providers of necessary and valuable resources and form a giant interconnected ecosystem. Many artists and designers are working on related questions of ecology, climate change and global geographies. The exhibition looks at oceans from a local perspective, starting from the city, its history and future – in which the ocean as a resource and infrastructure is deeply ingrained. Using specific fragments and locations, the exhibition investigates larger topics, such as the extraction of natural resources, the global circulation of goods, colonial histories and ocean life, as well as their impact on the everyday reality of the city. Artists and designers present projects that map the field of conflicts connecting to the topic of the sea: as a border and a medium of relations, as a resource and a hazard, as a concrete reality and a field of imagination.

New works include a monument for feminist evolution by Swiss artist Bea Schlingelhoff, a film installation about Svalbard by Susan Schuppli, and digital seascape sunrises driven by environmental data from Yuri Pattison. The collective VUMA produces an audio app that guides visitors to sites of colonial history in Bergen. Together with students at the Bergen Architectural School (BAS), Bergen Kunsthall produced an atlas of maritime industries.

The projects are based on research and take on various formats, as sculptures and installations, printed projects, photographs, painting, interventions or performative work. Some of the projects are realized at offsite locations, in public space or in collaboration with partners from non-art contexts. The exhibition in the galleries of Bergen Kunsthall presents further projects as well as historical works and thematic projects that give a background to the topic and approach. The exhibition functions as a starting point for a visit to the works in other locations, as a self-planned tour through some of the hidden aspects and areas of the city. Throughout the exhibition period, a dense program of public events, including talks, film screenings and workshops, will expand the topics of the exhibition discursively.

### Gallery 3

The works in gallery 3 present an investigation around questions of extraction and the limits and politics of ocean resources.

The installation *NO-CCZ* by the design and research studio INTERPRT continues their ongoing visual investigation on deep-sea mining and consists of two parts. The first is a diagram that documents the Norwegian government's current public consultation process on whether to open-up its continental shelf for deep-sea mining. The second part is a video from a long-term multimedia advocacy project – developed with Deep Sea Mining Campaign and Ozeanien Dialog in collaboration with scientists and Pacific civil society organizations. The video models, visualises and predicts environmental destruction from deep-sea mining in the Pacific.

In addition to their new work *Intertidal III* located on the ocean shore in Bergen, the artists Trond Ansten and Kåre Aleksander Grundvåg also shows two parts of a previous iteration of the project, first presented as *Intertidal Shelter I* during LIAF (Lofoten International Art Festival) in 2019. Similar to the new project, *Intertidal Shelter I* was designed as a micro-farm for seaweed but consisted of carved wood that stretched vertically from the lower to the upper point of the tidal zone, located at the harbour in Svolveær.

The works by Ansten and Grundvåg are presented next to a vitrine with documents and models made by the architect and futurist Wolf Hartmut Hilbertz. In 1976 Hilbertz invented a process for self-creating structures in seawater, named Cybertecture. He also developed drafts for environmental systems and systems based on mineral accretion and shared the technology's principles often and openly, amongst others in his position as a professor at The University of Texas at Austin.

Peter Fend produces in-situ scenarios which are intended, if realised, to improve the inhabited world. In 1980, together with other US artists, he founded a company now called Ocean Earth Development Corporation, which produces art-sourced projects for non-art clients. Projects by Ocean Earth and Peter Fend are, even if seemingly utopian in scale, intended for realisation. In this ambition, Fend's works in the exhibition are rather documents or models that point to the actually intended output. The works presented relate to two connected projects: the first is a re-zoning of the world in hydrometric zones, beyond currently existing national or administrative borders, that gives each zone sufficient access to water resources. In these projects, Fend questions current geopolitical power relationships and points to the influence of politics and global finance. This approach is presented through a set of maps of Chile. A second work, *Offshore Soil Rig* (1993), is a prototype for the cultivation of the algae *Macrocystis* (Giant Kelp), which Fend proposes as an alternative energy source to oil. With access to water, this would allow communities to gain independence from the corporate oil industry.

Ina Hagen's new audio-visual work *Fire Nation* investigates the rebranding of the Norwegian state-owned energy company Statoil to Equinor in 2018, and the accompanying expansion to so-called "broad energy", with a future-oriented, socially and ecologically conscious image. At the same time, Equinor is the largest international company in terms of oil extraction volume in Brazil, projected to be one of the top five oil producing areas in the world by 2030. 82 percent of this production is in "ultra-deep water" (at depths of more than 1500 meters) risking contamination and deterioration of marine life. The Norwegian Oil Adventure's second chapter is being written across the Atlantic. What does it mean to extract natural resources from "elsewhere" whilst championing climate conscious innovation at home?

The photograph *I'm Coming Home in Forty Days* was made by Jeroen de Rijke and Willem de Rooij during a travel to Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat) in 1997. The image shows water close to an iceberg in the bay of Ilulissat that the artists circumnavigated by boat. Like an illusive monument, the artists never came close or touched the ice. The image oscillates between abstraction and realistic depiction of the landscape, confronting the viewer with a shimmering and reflecting blue surface of the sea.