

*Embodying Water in the Anthropocene:
Aquatic Immersion in the Work of Joan Jonas and Jacynthe Carrier*

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Abstract

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Responding to Etienne Turpin and Heather Davis' argument that "art and aesthetics are central to thinking with and feeling through the Anthropocene," this thesis examines the transformative possibilities of immersive, embodied, and sensory artistic practices in addressing environmental change. Two case studies – *Moving off the Land* (2016-ongoing) by American artist Joan Jonas (b. 1936) and *brise glace soleil blanc* (2016) by Quebec-based artist Jacynthe Carrier (b. 1982) – explore how art can enhance awareness of aquatic ecosystems and provide critical ways of engaging with endangered bodies of water. This research project focuses on the artists' commitment to water as a pressing environmental concern but also as a medium of embodiment and immersion that evokes alternatives to patriarchal, colonial, and capitalist relations to nature. Furthermore, the combination of performance, video, and photography in these two artworks is examined as a sensory strategy that amplifies perceptions of contemporary aquatic environments.

Keywords

Contemporary art, Immersion, Embodiment, Anthropocene, Water, Performance art, New Media, Phenomenology, Jacynthe Carrier, Joan Jonas

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Introduction

According to the most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world's global temperature should increase by a minimum of 1.5°C, when compared to the pre-industrial level, in the next twenty years.¹ This global warming would cause “widespread, pervasive impacts to ecosystems” and provoke “weather extremes, including [...] heavy precipitation events, drought, and fire weather.”² This pressing reality of the Anthropocene, a term designating “the most recent period in the earth's history when human activities have a very important effect on the earth's environment and climate,”³ points to the need to differently inhabit the planet's changing contemporary landscapes. The supplementary terms “Capitalocene,” “Plantationocene,” and “Chthulucene” have also been employed by scholars such as Anna Tsing and Donna Haraway to emphasize how the interconnected structures of extractive capitalism, colonialism, and racism are the main cause for the current state of environmental degradation.⁴ This new terminology emerging in recent decades signals the necessity to generate paradigmatic shifts in response

¹ H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, M. Tignor, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, “IPCC, 2022: Summary for Policymakers”, In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, Cambridge University Press, 11.

² Ibid. 11.

³ *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus*, Cambridge University Press, “Anthropocene”, Accessed March, 26 2022, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/fr/dictionnaire/anglais/anthropocene>

⁴ Donna Haraway. “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin.” *Environmental Humanities* 6, no. 1 (2015): 159–65. <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3615934>. TJ Demos as well as Indigenous scholars Zoe Todd and Kim Tallbear have similarly criticized the Anthropocene discourse for positioning all humans beings (The Anthropos) as having equal responsibility for the destruction of the environment and universalizing humans' lived experiences of climate change. In this thesis, I employ the term “Anthropocene” while acknowledging its various issues. I agree with Anna Tsing's argument that, despite its numerous pitfalls, the term Anthropocene allows interdisciplinary conversations between science and humanities and points to problematic ideologies that need to be dismantled. (For more information see: Gregg Mitman, “Reflections on the Plantacionocene: A conversation with Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing,” *Edge Effect*, June 18, 2019, Podcast, 1:19.)

to environmental change. This thesis explores how contemporary artists have contributed to this ecological re-thinking by using art as a mode of experimentation and speculative thinking.

Two case studies: *Moving off the Land* (2016-ongoing) by American artist Joan Jonas (b. 1936) and *Brise Glace Soleil Blanc* (2016) by Quebec-based artist Jacynthe Carrier (b. 1982), will explore how art can enhance awareness of aquatic ecosystems and propose critical ways of engaging with endangered bodies of water. This thesis will focus on the artists' commitment to water as a pressing environmental concern but also as a medium of embodiment and immersion that evokes alternatives to patriarchal, colonial, and capitalist relations to nature. Furthermore, the combination of performance, video, and photography in these two artworks will be examined as a sensory strategy that amplifies perceptions of contemporary aquatic environments.

*Moving off the Land*⁵(Fig.1) is an ongoing series of performances by Joan Jonas presented first at the 2016 Kochi Biennale in India and then in numerous venues in collaboration with the TBA21–Academy. This series of performances assembles and demonstrates the results of the artist' transdisciplinary research in aquariums from all around the world and off the coast of Jamaica. Jonas and her performers immerse their bodies into projected images of aquatic ecosystems while discussing scientific facts, literature, and poetry related to

⁵ Jonas' artistic exploration of oceans has taken several names. It was first named in 2016 *Moving Off the Land. Oceans – Sketches and Notes*, *Moving off the Land* in 2018 and then *Moving off the Land II* in 2019. These iterations are presented by the artist as the same continuous project, and this thesis considers them together as a whole. I will refer to Jonas' artwork as *Moving off the Land* to lighten the text.

oceans. The artist's embodied research challenges anthropocentric epistemologies and ontologies.

Jacynthe Carrier's *brise glace soleil blanc* (Fig.2) was presented at the Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran in 2016. The exhibition consisted of a series of photographs and a video installation that showcased a performance on the rocky banks of the Saint-Laurent river⁶ in Kamouraska. The video and photographs capture in detail the performers' confrontation with the coastal elements. A scene presenting a man and a woman colliding with a structure made of white plaster walls evokes the destruction of the gallery's white cube but also registers the material and emotional toll of inhabiting the eroding coastlines. In their hard repetitive physical labor, it seems that the performers are both inhabiting the landscape and being inhabited by it.

The 2014 book *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments, and Epistemologies* edited by Etienne Turpin and Heather Davis generated various lines of inquiry that stimulated the development of my two case studies.⁷ Through a collection of interviews, art projects, poems, and essays, the book generates rich interdisciplinary conversations around art and aesthetics engaging meaningfully with environmental change. In the segment “Aesthesis and Perceptions,”⁸ the editors emphasize how the Anthropocene is a “sensorial phenomenon” experienced through the body.⁹ Turpin and Davis argue that, while environmental changes are tangibly and viscerally experienced,

⁶ “Saint-Laurent” is the francophone name for the “St-Lawrence” River. This river is also called “Gichigami-ziibi” in Ojibwe and “Kaniatarowanéhne” in Kanien'kehá:ka. In this thesis, I will employ the Francophone name to tally with the francophone background of the artist.

⁷ Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, (London: Open Humanites Press, 2015).

⁸ Turpin and Davis, *Art in the Anthropocene*, 11.

⁹ *Ibid.* 3.

the temporalities and scales of the Anthropocene are difficult to seize. Notably, they ask: how is it possible to perceive “the deep history of geophysical processes that cross into the brevity of flesh?”¹⁰ For the editors, there is a need to recalibrate modes of perception to the Anthropocene’s temporal and spatial frameworks. As a phenomenon that is both global and local, both overwhelmingly large and operating on microscopic scales, the Anthropocene permeates collective and individual existences in a complex and differential manner. The editors expose how “art can become a way of attuning to new realities,”¹¹ not simply on a rational level, but also in a manner that brings into play subjective, sensory, and affective structures of perception.

In this thesis, I argue that an affective and visceral attunement to the Anthropocene’s reality can facilitate the mourning of past and present ecological losses while offering the possibility of imagining different futures. Philosopher Frederic Jameson wrote that “It has become easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.”¹² In the same line of thought, the overwhelming number of images of climate catastrophes, statistics, and previsions about the climate crisis (but also the numerous Hollywood movies about the eventual world apocalypse), have limited the possibility to envision human and non-human survival in the Anthropocene. Art and aesthetics invoking the irrational, affective, and embodied experience of environmental change, offer the possibilities of developing such an empowering ecological imagination, giving rise to transformative narratives.

¹⁰Scott Volz, “Review of *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environments today, and Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments, and Epistemologies*”, *College Art Association*, (March 12, 2018), doi: [10.3202/caa.reviews.2018.65](https://doi.org/10.3202/caa.reviews.2018.65).

¹¹ Turpin and Davis, *Art in the Anthropocene*, 12.

¹² Matthew Beaumont, “Imagining the End Times: Ideology, the Contemporary Disaster Movie, Contagion” in, Matthew Flisfeder, and Louis-Paul Willis, eds. *Žižek And Media Studies : A Reader*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014

This thesis departs from Turpin and Davis's main argument that art and aesthetics are "central to thinking with and feeling through the Anthropocene."¹³ But how exactly can art achieve that? While the editors raise inspiring questions concerning the role of art in the Anthropocene, I wish they had provided their readers with more concrete examples of how contemporary art can shape public engagements with the Anthropocene. Which mediums, imaginaries, and modes of perception can reflect the urgency and complexities of climate change? In this thesis, I would like to take up this challenge and consider some possible responses to these questions by investigating how Joan Jonas' and Jacynthe Carrier's artistic practices mediate embodied, sensory and affective encounters with aquatic landscapes. In order to analyse and theoretically situate these art practices, I draw on a range of art-historical and interdisciplinary scholarship that can be divided into three interconnected categories related to: Water; Atmospheres; New media and Performance art.

Water

Firstly, this research project considers water's immersive and embodied quality and asks how this element might impact our thinking of the Anthropocene. In *Moving off the Land*, Jonas adopts an underwater perspective to propose more fluid modes of thinking and being. In *brise glace soleil blanc*, the performers immerse themselves in a coastal hydrology to become sentient and responsive to damaged landscapes. These experimentations with thinking and perceiving through the aquatic can be placed in relation to what has been called the "Blue Humanities;" a wave of scholars turning their attention to how the qualities of water, such as its fluidity, transparency and mobility, can become a set of critical tools

¹³ Turpin and Davis, *Art in the Anthropocene*, 3.

and sensibilities to rethink the climate crisis.¹⁴ This “Oceanic turn”¹⁵ (as Joan Jonas' title “Moving off the Land” so eloquently evokes) takes on the ontologies of water as well as the mechanics of hydrological cycles to unsettle anthropocentric structures of being and knowing.

Environmental humanities scholar and cultural theorist Astrida Neimanis has significantly contributed to the place of water in contemporary scholarship on the Anthropocene by emphasizing how this element shapes our environmental relations. Her book *Bodies of Water; Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* takes as a point of departure the fact that, “We are bodies of water;”¹⁶ humans are made of approximately 80 percent of water. While the human body is also made of plenty of other materials and elements, the author makes a persuasive case for “figuring ourselves specifically as bodies of water”¹⁷ to activate an ecological consciousness and responsiveness towards environmental change. Her concept of “Hydrocommons” considers water as a shared element that has cycled across human and nonhuman bodies for millennia. In Neimanis’ writing, water becomes a matter of memory that “carries histories of deep times.”¹⁸ The concept of hydrocommons provides a framework to imagine and speculate on how, for instance, my watery bodily existence is interconnected (not only metaphorically but also in a deeply material way), to the breast milk of our grand-mothers, to the bodily fluids of now-extinct animals and to the waters

¹⁴John R. Gillis, “The Blue Humanities,” *Humanities; National Endowment for the Humanities*, Volume 34, Issue 3 (May/June 2013).

¹⁵ The expression “Oceanic Turn” is employed by Elizabeth Deloughrey in “Submarine Futures of the Anthropocene,” *Comparative Literature* 69, no. 1 (2017): 32–44. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00104124-3794589>.

¹⁶ Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016). Accessed April 28, 2022. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/97814742754151>.

¹⁷ Neimanis; *Bodies of Water* 5.

¹⁸ Astrida Neimanis interviewed by Elena Hight in “Our Waters, Our Selves: A Conversation with Astrida Neimanis” by University of Wisconsin–Madison’s Center for Culture, History, and Environment (CHE). *Edge Effect*, 17 November, 2018, Podcast, 44:23, <https://edgeeffects.net/astrida-neimanis/>.

that will be contaminated in future pipelines leaks. This embodied concept shows water to be a relational element that transcends the frontiers distinguishing humans and nonhumans, global and local territories. In this manner, Neimanis' hydrocommons provides a framework to extend “our bodies' physical and ontological boundaries”¹⁹ to a more-than-human scale and temporality.

Neimanis' scholarship challenges humanist and masculinist notions of embodiment that understand humans “as discrete and coherent individual subjects, fundamentally autonomous”²⁰ and separated from nature. Her writing does not fit into dominant articulations of Posthumanism in which the belief in human exceptionalism motivates bioengineering and technoscientific projects. For the author, this kind of Posthumanism “translates into a form of super-humanism”²¹ where humans are disavowed and saved from their embodied connections to the world by modern technologies. Neimanis' posthuman feminism counters this discourse by showing how humans are inherently embedded in, and therefore indebted to more-than-human relations. Her concept of embodied hydrocommons represents the line between humans and nonhumans as highly porous while centering humans' differential ecological and political responsibilities. For the author, thinking of ourselves as bodies of water is inseparable from “the water crises that our planet currently faces.”²² Notably, the author highlights how in the Anthropocene, water is not only a life-giving substance but also carries toxicities such as PCBs, microplastics, or estrogen and that these contaminants circulate differently depending on race, gender, class, and ability.

¹⁹ Neimanis, *Bodies of Water* 41.

²⁰ *Ibid*;2.

²¹ Neimanis, *Bodies of Water*,10.

²² Astrida Neimanis in Hight, “Our Waters, Our Selves: A Conversation with Astrida Neimanis.”

Neimanis also discusses how “the breast milk of Inuit women in the Canadian Arctic contains two to ten times the amount of toxicity”²³ as the rest of the Canadian population. She also describes the massive amounts of contaminant (more specifically polychlorinated biphenyls PCBs) ejected by the car company General Motor in 1978 and poured into pits adjacent to the Kanien'kehá:ka reservation, explaining how the toxic water that streamed out of these pits continues to affect the community in an embodied way, infiltrating the political, social, cultural, economical life of the nation.²⁴ Therefore, attending to the local constitutions of water and the mechanics of global hydrological cycles reveals how humans' watery relations are embedded in structures of environmental racism, extractive capitalism, and colonialism. The author argues that water is an important medium to think with in the Anthropocene because it renders visible systems of domination that have shaped contemporary landscapes and reveals the unequal bodily burdens of climate change. This aspect of Neimanis' writing resonates with Zoe Todd's discussion of water and fish as being central to Indigenous legal order, community life and political struggles. In “Refracting the State Through Human-Fish Relations: Fishing, Indigenous Legal Orders and Colonialism in North/Western Canada,”²⁵ Todd shows how colonial violence is enacted through water in the Paulatuuq's community and the Canadian prairies. Todd considers fish as bearers of situated knowledge and witnesses to histories of colonization and extraction. The author urges readers to cultivate ethical relationships with fish and

²³ S. Trainor, and al. “Environmental Injustice in the Canadian Far North: Persistent Organic Pollutants and Arctic Climate Impacts”, in J. Agyeman, and al. (eds), *Speaking for Ourselves: Environmental Justice in Canada*, (2010), 144–162, Vancouver: UBC Press as quoted in Neimanis; 36.

²⁴ Neimanis, *Bodies of Water* 35.

²⁵ Zoe Todd, “Refracting the State Through Human-Fish Relations,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 7, n° 1 (31 août 2018).

water and to be attentive to the troubled human-fish, human-water, settler-Indigenous histories that circulates through water.

Neimanis states that her scholarship “is sustained by the conversations and commitments it shares with these [Indigenous] imaginaries that disturb the Anthropocene narrative.”²⁶ However, I would have liked the author to acknowledge more clearly how her concept of “hydrocommons” and its emphasis on water as a radically relational element, is not a new idea, but rather, this approach to the non-human world has been central to Indigenous ecological knowledge and world views for millennia.²⁷ I do believe that Neimanis’ concept of hydrocommons offers a framework to develop the type of ethics and attentiveness that Todd describes. Notably, it brings forth strong feminist ethics and a politic of location²⁸ as it attends to the ways humans differently intersect with the world beyond their bodily boundaries. Neimanis asks readers to situate themselves through water to cultivate responsibility and accountability towards planetary relations.

Neimanis’ scholarship has informed the theoretical foundations of my analysis of Joan Jonas’ and Jacynthe Carrier’s artworks, and her concept of hydrocommons grounds my understanding of the artists’ engagement with aquatic ecosystems. In this thesis, I argue that Jonas and Carrier are not simply reflecting on the aquatic, but also seeing through, feeling with, and thinking as water. Water troubles humans’ sensorium. It affects humans’

²⁶ Neimanis; *Bodies of Water*, 171.

²⁷ This understanding of water as a relational element is long-standing to a plurality of local Indigenous ecological knowledge. These specific place-based systems of belief are numerous, and it would be impossible to meaningfully engage with all of them in the context of this thesis. In the article “Indigenizing the Anthropocene,” Zoe Todd describes settlers’ appropriation of Indigenous ecological knowledge in academic discussions emerging around the Anthropocene thesis. Todd urges readers to question and challenge such systems of power relations by provoking sustained dialogues with Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. In this manner, Todd’s scholarship informed my criticism of Neimanis’ book.

²⁸ Astrida Neimanis defines this politics of location in relation to Adrian Rich’s scholarship. For more information see: Adrian Rich, “Notes towards a Politics of Location,” in *Blood, Bread and Poetry*, (New York: Norton, 1986).

experience of gravity and movement into space. It distorts the hearing and blurs vision. As an element that unsettles humans embodied perceptual experience of the world, I believe that water can also significantly act upon one's cognition and awareness of one's surroundings. Throughout this thesis, I employ the expression "aquatic consciousness" to refer to how the artists let water unsettle a sense of collective and individual existence. The artworks are spaces of "aquatic consciousness" in how they adopt the flow, fluidity, transparency, and penetrability of water to develop deeper sentience towards contemporary life. Placed in relation to Neimanis' concept of a hydrocommons, an "aquatic consciousness" also refers to water as a matter of memory, that deepens one's awareness of space and time.

Atmospheres

Secondly, this thesis uses the phenomenological concept of "atmosphere" as an analytical tool to examine the corporeal and affective experiences of living in the Anthropocene as well as the social and political agencies shaping contemporary landscapes. Scholars working within the emerging field of "Atmospheric Humanities" have evoked the element of air, but also the terms "weather" and "climate"²⁹ as metaphors to investigate a range of contemporary conditions and lived experiences.

²⁹ The notion of "weather" and the act of "weathering" are used by Astrida Neimanis and Jennifer Mae Hamilton as "a particular way of understanding how bodies, places and the weather are all inter-implicated in our climate changing world." (in "Weathering," *The Feminist Review Collective*, no 118, (2018).81-84). Moreover, the terms "weather" and "total climate" are employed by Black studies and feminist scholar Christina Sharpe to describe the after-life of slavery and expose how a pervasive atmosphere of anti-blackness permeates the lives of Black people. For more information see: Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

In the article “Atmospheric Attunements,” the author Kathleen Stewart defines atmospheres as “palpable and sensory yet imaginary and uncontained, material yet abstract.”³⁰ As “a force field into which people find themselves,”³¹ atmospheres are immaterial quasi-things, yet they are physically felt and shape a material reality. The author embraces the indeterminate quality of atmospheres as it opens “a proliferative list of questions”³² that forces us to pay attention to collective and individual experiences of space and time. In her writings, Stewart chronicles the atmosphere of scenes of contemporary everyday life through layers of detailed and haptic descriptions. For the author, these discursive explorations of collective and individual livings are experiments in “writing theory through stories.”³³

The author builds on Heidegger's theory of “worlding” as discussed in the book *Being and Time* (1962)³⁴. Worlding defines an active and collective process of sense-making and world-making. This is a concept most often approached through phenomenology to describe the action of dwelling in space and time in order to make sense of collective and individual existence. Heidegger discusses “Dasein” as this essence of not only being but “being-in-the-world.”³⁵ Worlding means attending to the web of objects, tools, moods, languages that become meaningful and intelligible as we experience them in the context of everyday phenomena and as we articulate them through discourse.³⁶

³⁰ Kathleen Stewart, “Atmospheric Attunements,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29, no. 3 (June 2011): 445 <https://doi.org/10.1068/d9109>.

³¹ Ibid; 452

³² Stewart, “Atmospheric Attunements”, 445.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Martin Heidegger, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson, *Being and time*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962).

³⁵ Michael Wheeler, “Martin Heidegger,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2020 Edition, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Accessed March,26 2022. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/heidegger/>.

³⁶ Ibid.

Stewart employs the concept of worlding as an analytical tool to explore how meaning and knowledge arise from humans' embodied, sensory, affective attunements to the world. The author proposes to “approach worlds, not as the dead or reeling effects of distant systems but as lived affects with tempos, sensory knowledges, orientations, transmutations, habits, rogue force fields.”³⁷ For Stewart, attuning to the agencies and intensities that permeate the contemporary world is labor we all need to do; this is a “labor of living,”³⁸ a “labor of becoming sentient”³⁹ to what is happening around us. For Stewart, when paying attention to atmosphere, “the sense of something happening becomes tactile.”⁴⁰ In the context of the Anthropocene, attuning to atmospheres can render tangible the enduring forces of capitalism and colonialism on contemporary landscapes.

The author describes a process of “sensual world-making”⁴¹ – the sensibility and care in attending to what composes a lived reality. This sensual world-making resonates with the focus on the sense of touch in Jonas' and Carrier's artwork as a form of intimacy, care and sentience toward landscape that are being made and unmade by climate change. This thesis therefore refers to Stewart's scholarship as a framework to articulate the experience of living through climate change. I am particularly drawn to Stewart's argument that “things hanging in the air are worth describing”⁴² and I believe that the artists performative gestures elicit this form of attentiveness. As discussed by Turpin and Davis, the temporalities and scales of environmental change are, like an atmosphere, hard to visualize

³⁷ Stewart, “Atmospheric Attunements”, 446.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid. 445.

⁴⁰ Ibid; 447

⁴¹ Ibid; 446

⁴² Ibid; 447.

and pin down but they nevertheless shape reality in an embodied, material and tangible manner. How to make sense of such phenomenon that has a seething presence in our minds and everyday life? What are the agencies, affects, and emotions that travel through landscapes, across and beyond individual bodies, human and nonhuman beings during this time of collapse? The concept of atmosphere provides a framework to respond to these questions that are important in “thinking with and feeling through the Anthropocene.”⁴³

Performance and New Media

Finally, this thesis interrogates the possibilities and limitations of combining photography, video, and performance to approach climate change. My research examines how performance art might counter the legacies of visual technologies, which have been used as a tool of domination and exploitation of humans and nonhumans. In the book, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*, the author Macarena Gómez-Barris describes the use of visual technologies (such as satellite photography or drone mapping) by the military, states, and corporations to plan resource extraction projects.⁴⁴ The author explains how these visual technologies offer a distant “grand-scale view from above”⁴⁵ of the landscape, or what the author also calls an “extractive view”⁴⁶ that removes viewers from the social, political, and ecological reality of extraction. This technologically mediated perspective, that the author Donna Haraway describes as a “god

⁴³ Turpin, Davis, *Art in the Anthropocene*, 3.

⁴⁴ Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*, Dissident acts (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

⁴⁵ Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone*; 8.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

trick of seeing from nowhere”⁴⁷ presents the land as an object of consumption without sentience and agency, which can easily be manipulated. For Gómez-Barris, visual technologies become the “ocular extension of centralized power”⁴⁸ in that they obliterate the political, economic, and cultural entanglements composing landscapes in order to allow projects of resource extraction. This thesis takes into consideration these pitfalls of visual technologies when thinking about Carrier's and Jonas's mediatic approach to landscape.

In this thesis, I argue that by inscribing the body into photographic images of landscapes through the use of performance, Jonas and Carrier emphasize an embodied vision, one that is not omniscient but rather, embedded in an ecological reality. Moreover, both artists frame the landscape in a fragmented manner and through detailed close-ups. Viewers cannot visualize the whole ecosystem as only pieces of it are presented to them, and no horizon lines or spatial bearings allow viewers to grasp the whole scene. This framing hinders any possible ocular domination of the landscape. Furthermore, this detailed focus on the textures and materiality of the fauna and flora gives visibility, presence, and agency to multispecies entanglements.⁴⁹ Therefore, immersion and embodiment, as mediated through performance, become strategies to subvert of the “extractive view”⁵⁰ that visually constructed capitalist and colonial relations with nature. I will interrogate how such combination of performance, with photography and video might give rise to what Gómez-

⁴⁷Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective” in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. (New York: Routledge, 1991).189

⁴⁸ Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone*, 100.

⁴⁹ The notion of “multispecies entanglements” was introduced by authors such as Donna Haraway, Karen Barad and Anna Tsing to deconstruct the myth of “human exceptionalism and bounded individualism” (see Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. (Durham, ND: Duke university Press, 2016). 30) It is now an expression commonly used in the scholarship on the Anthropocene to discuss the complex and dynamic interweaving of relations between humans’ and non-humans’ existence and the ethical responsibilities that comes with this enmeshment.

⁵⁰ Gómez-Barris; *The Extractive Zone*;8.

Barris calls “submerged perspectives”⁵¹ – the repressed and ignored lived experiences of nonhumans and humans inhabiting zones of extractions.

Furthermore, the two case studies interrogate how new media can enhance viewers’ sensory experience of contemporary landscapes. This aspect will be addressed through the scholarship of Vivian Carol Sobchak. In *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* the author argues that films can actually heighten viewers’ perceptions.⁵² Indeed, the author describes how the film’s experience does not only solicit the sense of vision but also activates the body’s sensorium. In Jonas’ and Carrier’s artwork, the sense of touch, more specifically, is emphasized. Jonas’ hands reach into the moving images, as if the artist is trying to feel the projected image, to grasp it with her hand. Carrier’s performers are intimately caressing, rubbing, and touching the rocky shores, and this tactile exploration is carefully framed in the video installation and series of photographs. Sobchak’s scholarship helps to explain how such sensory experience can literally activate viewers’ perceptual experience of aquatic environments.

Finally, in Jonas’ and Carrier’s artwork, there is a dialectic between the inside of the art institution and the outside environment. In *brise glace soleil blanc* viewers encounter the riverbanks within the confine of the gallery’s white cube, whereas in *Moving off the Land* the viewers are absorbed into the theater’s black box. Land artist Robert Smithson’s notion of a dialectic between site and non-site⁵³ allows me to consider the possibilities and limitations of encountering an ecosystem within such mediated spaces. Notably, this

⁵¹ Gómez-Barris; *The Extractive Zone*; xvi.

⁵² Vivian Carol Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 76.

⁵³ Robert Smithson, and Jack D. Flam, *Robert Smithson, The Collected Writings*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), xiv.

dialectic between the exterior and the interior might lead viewers to a deeper awareness of their spatiotemporal conditions, giving rise to heightened environmental consciousness.

This introduction has highlighted some connections between Jonas' *Moving off the Land* and Carrier's *brise glace soleil blanc*. Beyond these connections, the two artworks are also very different, and I believe that bringing them into conversation in this thesis might uncover new aspects of both artistic practices. While Jonas's work has been analyzed in relation to climate change and the Anthropocene, this analysis still needs to be developed in Carrier's work. Moreover, by bridging the work of an emerging local artist with the project of an older and internationally recognized one, I wish to provide a larger panorama of contemporary engagement with aquatic ecosystems. This thesis therefore aims to contribute to Turpin and Davis's discussion about the role of art and aesthetics in "thinking with and feeling through the Anthropocene."⁵⁴

Case Study 1: *Moving off the Land*, Joan Jonas

Joan Jonas started her prolific career in the 1960s as part of a generation of artists radically expanding the disciplines of art and challenging the limits of the studio, the gallery, and the art institution. In her early practice, Jonas dealt with the realities and preoccupations of her epoch by testing the possibilities and limits of new photo-based technologies and playing with the conventions of gender and identity. Jonas joined other conceptual, ecological, video, and performance artists influenced by open system theory; a scientific

⁵⁴ Turpin and Davis, *Art in the Anthropocene*;3.

and aesthetic theory “associated with life, growth, and change”⁵⁵ and challenging the epistemological, ontological, and disciplinary boundaries established by scientific rationalism and Greenberg formalist modernism. Open system theory offered the possibility of countering “closed” systems that naturalized relationships of power, domination, and subjugation, such as capitalism and patriarchy. More importantly, systems theory “shaped alternative means of conceiving social and environmental relation”⁵⁶ by eliminating the frontiers between forms of knowledge, language, and bodies. In the context of the feminist and environmental movements of the 1970s, open system theory became “a tool for social critique.”⁵⁷

From this ebullient intellectual and artistic context, Jonas developed her artistic language, uniting performance, installation, video, drawing, and literature into an organic whole. By “intertwin[ing] photographic media with the human body- and more specifically her own”⁵⁸, Jonas interrogated the construction of “time, space and female subjectivity”⁵⁹. As visual technologies and the art milieu drastically changed since the 1970s, Jonas continued to disturb the boundaries between art forms. More recently, an attention to the cultural and affective dimensions of landscapes and climate change has marked her practice. In 2008, Jonas taught a course at MIT entitled “Action: Archeology in the Deep Sea,” where she led, with a group of students, an experiment-based research project on the thematic of the

⁵⁵ Christine Filippone, “A Means for Change: The Aesthetics of Open Systems in the Work of Alice Aycock, Agnes Denes, and Martha Rosler,” in *Science, Technology, and Utopias: Women Artists and Cold War America* (London/New York: Routledge, 2017), 64.

⁵⁶Filippone, “A Means for Change”, 64.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 65.

⁵⁸ Frida Sandström, “Joan Jonas: Moving off the Land,” *Art Papers*, (September 25, 2029), accessed on 2022-04-08, <https://www.artpapers.org/joan-jonas-moving-off-the-land-ii/>.

⁵⁹ “Joan Jonas: Biography”, Artnet gallery, accessed on 2022-04-08, <https://www.artnet.com/galleries/artedio/artist-joan-jonas/>

deep-sea.⁶⁰ This course experimented with the possibilities of water, performance and analogue media in generating fluid communications, and multilayered ways of seeing. In this manner, Jonas and her students interrogated how mediated explorations of oceans might bring closer to water and produce ecological knowledge. In the decade following this course, Jonas pursued this investigation in a series of oceanic works. In *Waltz* (2013), she immersed herself within the coastal landscapes of Nova Scotia and evoked humans' relationship with oceans through local myths and sagas. In *Reanimation* (2013), she explored the fragile and eerie beauty of melting glaciers. At the 2015 Venice Biennale, a room devoted to fish in the exhibition titled *They Come to Us Without a Word* tackled the rapid degradation of oceans and the subsequent collapse of cultural traditions that fuse humans with bodies of water.⁶¹ Finally, in the Vasco de Gama Square in Kochi, India in 2016, Jonas presented *Moving off the Land- Sketches and Notes*, a performance that established the foundations of a large and ambitious research project on ocean that continues to unfold. The later iteration of this project titled *Moving off the Land*, will be the focus of this case study.

Through years of research in aquariums around the world and in the endangered coral reefs of Jamaica, Jonas has collected extensive footage of aquatic ecosystems. Since 2017, Jonas has worked with marine biologist David Gruber who has given her access to videos of the deep sea and introduced her to his research on the consciousness and perception of fish. Jonas has thus carefully studied and observed aquatic fauna, learning about their biology

⁶⁰Sharon Lacey, "Joan Jonas's enduring influence at (and beyond) MIT, Part IV", MIT Center for Art, Science and Technology, last modified 2015-07 <https://arts.mit.edu/joan-jonass-enduring-influence-at-and-beyond-mit-part-iv/>

⁶¹ P. Ha, U. Meta Bauer, J. Jonas, A. Morris Reynolds, I. Schaffner, M. Warner, *Joan Jonas: They Come to Us Without a Word*. (MIT List Visual Arts Center, and Biennale di Venezia, 56th: Venice, Italy, 2015)

as well as the ecological processes in which they are embedded. Following her interest in uniting culture and nature, Jonas has in parallel also studied literature pertaining to the oceans by authors such as Herman Melville, Rachel Carson, Sy Montgomery and Emily Dickinson. Jonas also conducted research on ancient myths of the sea, looking at mermaids more particularly as an emblem of humans' intricate relation with oceans.⁶²

In this manner, *Moving off the Land* can be considered as an archive as it collects and registers multiple perspectives and forms of knowledge on the ocean. However, functioning within the logic of the open system, Jonas' artwork resists the rigid categorizations and ranking of data characteristic of science or traditional archival methods, by encouraging the exchange and flow of information between disciplines. Moreover, Jonas' collection does not consign all of these perspectives to the past but, through performance, activates them in the present. As transdisciplinary collages, each performance layers, fragments, and juxtaposes visual and literary materials about the oceans. Jonas physically intervenes in her videos through a simple performative process that built her reputation; Jonas and her performers are wearing white lab coats that transform their bodies into living and breathing screens. When they move through the projection space, the performers morph into the moving images, physically altering and expanding it into a three-dimensional space (Fig.3 and 4). Through this simple optical process, playing with the transparency of both water and the projection light, Jonas generates an embodied dialogue between humans and the aquatic and activates a multilayered space of aquatic consciousness.

⁶² Stefanie Hessler, "Joan Jonas: Moving off the Land II", curatorial statement, accessed 2022-04-08, <http://stefaniehessler.com/entries/joan-jonas-moving-off-the-land-ii>

Moving off the Land's series of performances was presented at the New York' Danspace project (2018) and The Tate Modern (2018) in collaboration with the TBA21–Academy. The project then morphed into *Moving off the Land II*, an immersive multimedia exhibition curated by Stephanie Hessler, composed of video installations, sculptures, mirrors, drawings, and sounds, which was presented at the Venice Ocean Space in 2019 (Fig.5). A live performance also accompanied this exhibition. The Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid then welcomed this combination of exhibition and performance in 2020.

It would be impossible to engage with all dimensions of this ambitious multifaceted project within the confines of this case study. My analysis will therefore focus on the live performances of *Moving off the Land* as they are key sites of Jonas' research-based and experiment-based practice. Indeed, I argue that these performances not only assemble and demonstrate the results of Jonas' research on oceans but also set in motion aquatic epistemologies and ontologies. Then, I will consider how immersive mediatic technologies intersect with the performers' bodies to enhance perceptions of water in the Anthropocene.

Thinking with Water: The White Lab Coat Dissolves

Joan Jonas's performances are often introduced as “immersive lecture performances”⁶³ or “lecture demonstrations.”⁶⁴ This way of naming Jonas' practice, between academic lecture and performance art, generates an interesting dialogue between art and education and reveals the artist's desire to challenge traditional modes of producing and communicating

⁶³ “Joan Jonas: Moving off the Land”, Danspace Project, 7 June 2021, <https://danspaceproject.org/2021/06/07/joan-jonas/>

⁶⁴ “Announcement: Joan Jonas and Jason Moran,” Columbia University School of the Arts, last modified on 2015-11-05, <https://www.artandeducation.net/announcements/106222/joan-jonas-with-jason-moran>

knowledge. In some moments of the *Moving off the Land's* performances, the artist wears a white lab coat while discussing scientific and literary accounts on oceans in front of a lectern, using the distanced, formal, and static quality of an auditorium presentation (Fig.6 and 7). In other moments, the white lab coat becomes a tool of immersion into the images (Fig.8,9,10). Far from being an insignificant detail, the white lab coat in Jonas' work can be read as a powerful symbol of the Western research paradigm. The white lab coat is hermetic; it represents the sterilized frontier between the body of the researchers and their object of study. It is seemingly a blank space onto which ideologies and values can be projected. Abstracting the bodies of researchers and erasing their subjectivity, this uniform imposes on its wearer a disembodied, anonymous, and objective stance. This textile also restricts movements, transforming the researcher into a static entity. In this manner, I would like to consider how the white lab coat incarnates the closed systems shaping Western thoughts, namely the Cartesian mind-body dualism, the separation of the researcher from their object of study, humans from their environments, and nature from culture. Of course, not all wearers of the white lab coat function within these parameters. Various contemporary scientific research has brought forth modes of producing knowledge in a more embedded and relational manner. Notably, the research of marine biologist David Gruber, a close collaborator of Jonas, diverges from this tradition. His research's emphasis on multispecies epistemologies and ontologies challenges the hegemonic posture of the white lab coat.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, I think that the visual characteristics of the white lab coat and the type of disembodiment it provokes, epitomize Western ontologies and epistemologies. What kind of shift operates when Jonas uses such a loaded symbol as a

⁶⁵ I will discuss in more details David Gruber's scientific research and his collaboration with Joan Jonas at page 24.

performative tool, letting images of the aquatic pass through her, letting herself disappear into and be permeated by her subject of study? In the words of the author and critic Frida Sandström, in this process, the artist-researcher “distort the scientific gaze.”⁶⁶

Jonas's engagement with scientific knowledge finds an echo in the writing of feminist scholar Donna Haraway. In the article “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspectives,” Haraway challenges the claims of absolute universal knowledge in the Western science research paradigm.⁶⁷ The author examines the close relationship between ideology and knowledge production and discusses the inherent biases embedded within the supposed objective and impartial scientific methodologies. The author argues that the crafting of knowledge and meaning necessarily departs from a specific point of view and therefore can never be completely neutral and objective. Haraway coined the expression “situated knowledges” to emphasize how the production of knowledge is conditioned by and embedded in specific historical, social, and political contexts. However, according to Haraway, in Western science, the vantage point of the white, male, cis, able-bodied, heterosexual human is constructed as this universal and default perspective. In this manner, the author exposes how the knowledge produced by Western science has been used as an instrument of power, naturalizing heteropatriarchal and anthropocentric systems of domination.⁶⁸ Haraway describes how Western science's claims of universal truths and objectivity have relied on a seemingly unmediated and disembodied “view from above”, or what Haraway also calls “the god-trick of seeing from

⁶⁶ Frida Sandström, “Joan Jonas: Moving off the Land”, *Art papers*, accessed on 2022-04-08, <https://www.artpapers.org/joan-jonas-moving-off-the-land-ii/>

⁶⁷ Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective” in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women : The Reinvention of Nature*. (New York: Routledge, 1991.)

⁶⁸ Ibid: 184.

nowhere”⁶⁹. This perspective is abstracted from the sociohistorical conditions through which knowledge is created. The disconnected posture of the Western science research paradigm is also what the author refers to as the “ideological doctrine of disembodied scientific objectivity.”

Haraway’s criticism of Western science echoes Macarena Gómez-Barris’ discussion of the conquering technological gaze of extractive capitalism. Notably, Haraway’s “god-trick of seeing from nowhere” is reminiscent of the omniscient eyes of satellite photography and drone mapping that Gómez-Barris considers. This disconnected perspective on the world is part of the visual grammar (along with the white lab coat) of the systems of domination and exploitation of environments that have made the climate crisis. Furthermore, Haraway and Gómez-Barris both argue that this “god-like” perspective has ignored and disqualified as merely subjective other forms of knowledge produced by the “embodied others,”⁷⁰ namely, all who do not fit into the hegemonic posture of the white, cis, able-bodied, heterosexual man. Haraway’s situated knowledges share affinities with Gómez-Barris’ “submerged perspectives” as both concepts define a multiplicity of local and heterogenous knowledge anchored within the political, economic, and cultural realities on the ground. Both concepts counter claims of a universal perspective and engage with the possibility of seeing from a plurality of points of view. Haraway describes feminist objectivity as a framework that takes into account specificities and differences and is built with the recognition of each individual’s partial perspective with regard to knowledge production

⁶⁹ Haraway, “Situated Knowledges”; 189

⁷⁰ These “embodied others” are understood in Haraway’s writing as all those who do not have the privilege or choice to abstract themselves from the political, social and historical context in which they are part of and do not fit into the hegemonic posture of the white, cis, able-bodied, heterosexual man. Haraway, “Situated Knowledges”; 183.

and meaning. It invites readers to have a reflexive posture and to open up to a diversity and mobility of knowledge.

Gómez-Barris discusses how some artists have lifted “submerged perspectives” by directly plunging the camera lens underwater. Similarly, in *Moving off the Land*, Jonas interacts with underwater footage and white lab coats allow the performers’ to be completely submerged in these moving images. In contrast with the masterful and omniscient “view from nowhere,”⁷¹ the artist-researcher’s body is embedded and immersed in images of aquatic ecosystems. In this manner, Jonas emphasizes an embodied experience of the ocean. Furthermore, a few videos also show the artist literally diving into and swimming in coastal waters, experiencing closely and with all her body an aquatic environment (Fig.11).

Moving off the Land exposes the richness and diversity of aquatic ecologies. The footage highlights the anatomy of various fish or the textures and motifs of fluorescent corals. The moving images make a detailed portrait of underwater life. The artwork reveals the complexity and singular beauty of the aquatic flora and fauna which contrasts with the distant extractive view that presents the environment as a commodity without sentience. Moreover, the omniscient “view from above” described by Haraway and Gómez-Barris, is inverted in Jonas’ artwork by many low-angle shots. Indeed, in much of the footage, Jonas’ camera is looking up at the fishes (instead of gazing down at them) making them imposing creatures that surround the viewers. In other instances, the camera frames an eye-to-eye encounter with one specific fish. These shots in particular decenter the perspective of the

⁷¹ Haraway, “Situated Knowledges:”; 189.

human by recreating the fish's point of view: viewers are positioned amongst the flock of fishes. These eye-level shots allow the artist to establish a sense of connexion, and a form of conversation with the fauna (Fig.12). This is particularly evident in a scene where Jonas playfully interacts with a seal appears to swim around her. Through the interface of the screen, the artist swims with the seal and reaches toward the image as if touching the animal – creating a playful and intimate moment of human and nonhuman relationality (Fig.13,14). In this manner, the white lab coat in Jonas' performance becomes an apparatus for embodied and embedded research on the aquatic. By letting meaning arise from her embodied mediated experience of water, the artist considers the production of knowledge as a multidimensional, active, subjective and embodied praxis.⁷² This contrast with how the Western science paradigm has treated knowledge as a finite, static entity to be discovered and extracted.

Finally, Jonas' footage was filmed mostly in aquariums, and in many instances it is possible to see the aquarium's glass and the reflected camera lens in the framing (Fig.15). Viewers get a glimpse of the aquarium space and the visitors' silhouettes through the reflective surface. This aspect makes the artist's positionality hyper-visible, and the production process transparent. Jonas' performative interventions with new media have a crafty do-it-yourself aspect that diverges from the transcendent, illusionistic visual rhetoric of Western science. The artist's interaction with film and photographs emphasizes the mediated nature of knowledge and meaning-making.

⁷² Haraway, "Situated Knowledges:"; 189.

Furthermore, in the performance, scientific facts are often conflated with mythologies, literary works, and prose about the ocean. This blurring of disciplinary boundaries creates a re-questioning of what we identify as reality and fantasy but also expose how different narratives often overlap. This ambiguity evokes the subjective and fictitious nature of knowledge. Haraway similarly discusses scientific objectivity as a myth, using the term “science fiction”⁷³ to emphasize how scientific truth claims are built on specific narratives. In this manner, Jonas activates the viewers’ cognition. As notes the author Becky Ayre on *Moving off the Land*, “audiences are invited to piece together what they are seeing on their own terms.”⁷⁴

Fish and Cyborgs: Mediating Perceptions in the Anthropocene

There are further connections between Donna Haraway's scholarship and Joan Jonas' art practice in their interest in vision, optics, and perceptual apparatuses. Haraway anchors her concept of “situated knowledges” within a discussion on the eye, emphasizing the embodied nature of vision and the importance of perception in the production of meaning. Haraway and Jonas both interrogate how the human body can intersect with technologies to produce modes of perception outside the human range. Haraway discusses how modern visual technologies can help build links between different “ways of seeing” that are, for the author, intricately connected to ways of knowing and ways of living.⁷⁵ For instance, Haraway is interested in what kind of cognition of the world is activated through

⁷³ Ibid. 192

⁷⁴ Becky Ayre, “Art, Uncertainties and systems change,” *Steps center*, (January 2019), <https://steps-centre.org/blog/art-uncertainty-and-system-change/>

⁷⁵ Haraway, “Situated Knowledges;” 190

“photographs of how the world looks like to the compound eyes of an insect.”⁷⁶ Similarly, in Jonas’ performances, the projected film becomes a prosthetic device to learn how to perceive as fish, and whales do, or from the perspective of seaweed, and water.⁷⁷ The visual technologies interface with Jonas’ body to expand her biological sensorium, evoking Haraway’s cyborgian entanglements between humans, animals, and technologies (Fig.16 and 17).⁷⁸

Jonas’ research on aquatic perception is supported by marine biologist David Gruber’s scientific research on the sensorium and consciousness of marine animals. Gruber provided Jonas with a wealth of information on the sensorium of marine animals that she refers to extensively throughout the performance. Indeed, Gruber’s research gives Jonas the scientific basis on which to speculate, imagine and perform what underwater perspectives could be and then to recreate this using film, sound, and space. Science, visual technologies, and art in this manner combine to challenge anthropocentric perceptions. The sentence “fish think and feel” is repeated throughout the performance to emphasize how consciousness and emotions are not the sole property of humans. A focus on human and nonhuman sensory systems becomes apparent as the artist intervenes by drawing on anatomical schema of whale eyes and corneas during the performance (Fig.18). In this process, she compares humans’ sensory organs with those of whales, fish, and octopuses but also interestingly with the ‘eyes’ made available in modern technological sciences.

⁷⁶ Haraway, “Situated Knowledges;” 190

⁷⁷ The anthropocentric implication of this statement is going to be discussed at the page 29.

⁷⁸ 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).

*The structures of semi-circular canals in our ear and fishes are almost exactly the same; we come from the same source (...) The eyes of the whale are like ours: a camera-eye. Whales came onto the land, they developed feet and then went back to the sea.*⁷⁹

A camera-eye is an expression that refers to “the capacity for reporting that is as detailed and detached as a photograph.”⁸⁰ By using this specific expression, the artist interestingly conflates organic and technological eyes. This quote emphasizes how humans' and whales' organic sensory organs are, like a camera lens, also visual technologies. Moreover, this quote highlights how humans and aquatic animals “come from the same source,” pointing to possible affiliations in ways of seeing and inviting viewers to remember their interconnectedness with the non-human world. Notably, Jonas discusses how human cognitive and sensory systems first developed in the water:

*The mind evolved in the sea. Water made it possible; all the early stages took place in the water, the origin of life (...) and the appearance of complex bodies, which made brains worth having.*⁸¹

For the author Frida Sandström, Jonas’s research confronts the “human construct of evolutionary theory” and aims for “a pre-anthropocentric ethics of how water might be shared.”⁸² Jonas returns to these primordial times and evokes the gestational quality of water to let possible futures emerge. Like the whales that, as Jonas explains, “came onto

⁷⁹ Joan Jonas’ monologue in *Moving off the Land*, (Gavin Brown Gallery, March 2020), video. <https://vimeo.com/400389808>

⁸⁰ *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus*, Cambridge University Press, “Camera-eye”, Accessed June 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/camera-eye>

⁸¹ Joan Jonas’ monologue in *Moving off the Land*,

⁸² Frida Sandström, “Joan Jonas: Moving off the Land” , Art papers, accessed on 2022-04-08, <https://www.artpapers.org/joan-jonas-moving-off-the-land-ii/>

the land, [...] developed feet and then went back to the sea,”⁸³ the artist invites viewers to do the same in *Moving off the Land*, but mentally, imaginatively and through the immersive experience of technologies.

Throughout the performance, aquatic perceptions are mediated through various technological manipulations. The fluorescent colors of the video and the dark lighting of the performances evoke the cavernous ambiance of the deep sea. The instrumental music creates an other-worldly atmosphere. The artist collaborated with a musician to mix electronic noises with the sounds of communicating whales, waves, and noises reminiscent of the pressure of water on the human cornea. The vibration of the music also evokes how sounds travel and are distorted in water. Finally, an entrancing spectral piece of music is repeated throughout the performance, bringing an eerie atmosphere of the depth of the sea. A man’s repetitive, hypnotic, and ritualistic singing, also rhythms the performance in a spell-binding manner. In the word of the curator Stefanie Hessler, *Moving off the Land* “conjur[es] a sonic image of the oceans as ambiguous, fluid, illusionistic space.”⁸⁴

At some moments, Jonas employs a fish's eye lens; a round wide-angle point of view that deforms viewers' sense of scale and space. Jonas also manipulates large white sheets of paper and a round whiteboard to play with the projected light. When placed in front of the screen, these props cast shadows into the moving images and act as screens that fragment the projection. Through this transparent production process, Jonas breaks with the flat

⁸³ Joan Jonas’ monologue in *Moving off the Land*, (Gavin Brown Gallery, March 2020), video. <https://vimeo.com/400389808>

⁸⁴ Stefanie Hessler, “Joan Jonas: Moving off the Land II”, curatorial statement, accessed 2022-04-08, <http://stefaniehessler.com/entries/joan-jonas-moving-off-the-land-ii>

surface of the screen and expands the moving images into a three-dimensional space. In the words of Sandström, “the layers of projections morph into watery masses that fill [the space of the performance] to its edges.”⁸⁵ The use of transparent textiles in front of the screen blurs and doubles the moving images as if one is seeing through layers of ghostly schools of fishes. In this process, the performers’ bodies are floating, they are granted a spectral presence (Fig.19 and 20). The transparent nature of the projected image in this manner evokes the transparency of water but also of ghosts. This ghostly aspect of Jonas’ work become significant especially as the artist discuss pasts and futures extinctions of aquatic fauna. In this vein, it is worth remembering that most of the footages Jonas interacts with were filmed in aquariums. Aquariums have an uncanny and troubling quality, especially when they reproduce ecosystems that are endangered. Around the world, aquatic ecosystems are facing impending devastation and aquariums are decontextualized and disconnected from this ecological situation. In this manner, they can be considered as repository of future and past ghosts.

Here lies the sensational, conjuring, and supernatural aspect of Jonas' practice that is often compared to a magic-lantern theater show.⁸⁶ Can new media extend our vision in a way that makes vivid to viewers what Anna Tsing and her colleagues refers to as the “Ghosts of the Anthropocene?”⁸⁷ In the book *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet; Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene*, they discuss how in an epoch of mass extinctions and

⁸⁵ Frida Sandström, “Joan Jonas: Moving off the Land,” *Art Papers*, accessed on 2022-04-08, <https://www.artpapers.org/joan-jonas-moving-off-the-land-ii/>

⁸⁶ This comparison is made notably by Mitch Speed, in “The Unspecific (But Straining) Politics of Joan Jonas”, *Momus*, (June 2016), <https://momus.ca/the-unspecific-but-straining-politics-of-joan-jonas/>

⁸⁷ Anna Tsing, et al., “Introduction: Haunted Landscapes of the Anthropocene,” *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 1-14.

collapsing ecosystems, ghosts point to the lost assemblages that haunt present-day ruined landscapes. Ghosts are the remnants of the pasts, and their presence points to an absence; notably, the disappearance of a multitude of aquatic species because of climate change.⁸⁸ In this sense, Jonas' magic performance extends viewers' perceptions not only to how fish feel and perceive but also expand the gaze to how structures of exploitations and destructions of nature haunt contemporary aquatic ecosystems.

The scholarship of Vivian Carol Sobchack similarly evokes the bewitching quality of the film experience. Her writing on embodiment and moving images illuminates the potential of Jonas' unique engagement with new media in enhancing humans' aquatic perceptions and making their nervous system quiver. In "What my Finger Knew: The Cinesthetic Subject, or Vision in The Flesh," Sobchack theorizes how viewers engage and make sense (literally and figuratively) of mediatic experience through their bodies.⁸⁹ The author draws on phenomenology to explore humans' "carnal" engagement with contemporary media. Sobchack challenges the focus on sight and hearing in film studies by noting how the viewers' eyes and ears are situated within the body and thus are not isolated from other bodily sensations. Rather, vision and hearing inform and are informed by our other senses. The author defines film viewers as "cinesthetic subjects"⁹⁰; this neologism emphasizes how the viewers' interacting senses ground their intellectual and affective engagement with a film. More importantly, the author argues that the film experience is "an enhancement of our sensual being."⁹¹ Indeed, the author explains that because viewers can not literally

⁸⁸ Tsing, "Introduction: Haunted Landscapes of the Anthropocene," 6G.

⁸⁹ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 53-84.

⁹⁰ Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 67

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 76

touch, smell or taste a moving image on a screen, they have a “partially fulfilled sensory experience.”⁹² Viewers have to fill the gap between their literal bodily experience and the senses that the images on the screen suggest to them. For the author, in this process of filling that gap, viewers have to reflect on their own sensuality: they have to recreate their own sense of touch, taste, and smell. As the author writes, they project themselves “in the fleshy and subjective situation onscreen.”⁹³ Therefore, according to Sobchack, compared to a literal sensual experience, films heighten viewers' awareness of their sensorium.⁹⁴

When immersed in the projection space, Jonas is gesturing with her whole body. There is a very tactile aspect to Jonas' performative interactions with the moving image. Her arms reach into the projections as if she is trying to sense the moving image and decipher with her hand the aquatic fauna appearing on screen. This tactility challenges the overemphasis on the visual in modes of encountering contemporary environments. Jonas mimics the movement of the fish and merges with their image in order to feel through them, transfer their perceptions to her body, and communicate with them. This sensorial entanglement with the aquatic fauna is particularly apparent in a scene where Jonas merges, through the screen's interface, with a starfish. The artist expands her arms and legs in a star-shaped manner while images of various starfish are projected on her body (Fig.21). The artist is blindfolded and holds in her hands small bells. She blindly moves through the image while ringing these bells. This specific moment of the performance evokes a form of metamorphosis. Abandoning her human vision, the artist seems to adopt the starfish's

⁹² Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, 76

⁹³ Ibid.63

⁹⁴ Ibid.

sensory and nervous systems. The moving images show the starfish pedicellariae; small appendages through which starfish can perceive their environments.⁹⁵ These sensory devices help the starfish touch, smell and sense vibrations. On their extremities they also have small compound eyes that are sensitive to lights and shapes.⁹⁶ While it is hard for scientists to conceive how starfish can perceive with such sensory systems, Jonas' performance allows viewers to imagine such perceptions. In this manner, the projected image becomes a prosthetic device to explore and experience outside of humans' usual modes of perception.

Can Jonas actually perceive like the fish she interacts with? Mostly certainly not. Thinking that humans can successfully adopt, through the use of technologies, the perception of other nonhumans beings is an anthropocentric and anthropomorphist reflex. I rather believe that by trying to sense and feel like other nonhumans, Jonas develops a form of care and accountability. Sobchack's fleshy and carnal engagement with the moving image evokes a form of sensuality and intimacy but also an introspection regarding one's own systems of perception, and an attentiveness to other modes of seeing. Jonas' experimentation with multispecies sensorium can be described, using the words of Donna Haraway as "the loving care people might take to learn to see faithfully from another's point of view."⁹⁷ Turpin and Davis notably describes how this sensibility to others' perception is a matter of survival in the Anthropocene: "If we are to learn to adapt in this world, we will need to do so with

⁹⁵ Anders Garm, "Sensory Biology of Starfish—With Emphasis on Recent Discoveries in their Visual Ecology", *Integrative and Comparative Biology*, Volume 57, Issue 5, November 2017, Pages 1082–1092, <https://doi.org/10.1093/icb/ix086>

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Haraway, "Situated Knowledges"; 189

all the other creatures; seeing from their perspective is central to re-organizing our knowledge and perceptions.”⁹⁸

Finally, Sobchack's scholarship resonates with Astrida Neimanis' belief that art is an amplifier our more-than-human corporality. For Neimanis, art and science are proxy stories that can “give us access to an embodied experience of our wateriness that might otherwise be too submerged, too subcutaneous, too repressed, or too large and distant (or even too obvious, mundane, and taken for granted), to readily sense.”⁹⁹ I argue that Jonas' artwork is a beautiful incarnation of Astrida Neimanis' “embodied Hydrocommons,” a concept that was defined in detail in the introduction. Indeed, the dissolution of Jonas' and her performers' bodily boundaries into the image evokes Neimanis' transcorporeal definition of the human. Can this immersive mediatic experience brings viewers to experience in their flesh, as Sobchack argues, hard-to-grasp phenomena such as ocean acidification or the action of water on a molecular level?¹⁰⁰ In this manner, Jonas' immersive, embodied, and sensory performance might not only challenge Western epistemologies and ontologies but also amplify collective and individual consciousness of environmental change.

Case Study 2: Jacynthe Carrier, *brise glace soleil blanc*

Jacynthe Carrier is an artist from Quebec working with the mediums of video and photography. Acclaimed as one of the “rising figures of Quebec’s contemporary art scene,”¹⁰¹ Carrier has participated in numerous collective and individual exhibitions in

⁹⁸ Turpin and Davis, *Art in the Anthropocene*; 13

⁹⁹ Neimanis, *Bodies of Water*, 55

¹⁰⁰ Neimanis, *Bodies of Water*, 42

¹⁰¹ Manon Tourigny, “Jacynthe Carrier, Parcours”, *Ciel Variable*, no. 94, (Spring-Summer 2013), <https://cielvariable.ca/numeros/ciel-variable-94-art-public/jacynthe-carrier-parcours-manon-tourigny/>, translation by the author.

Canada and internationally.¹⁰² The artist was nominated in 2017 for the Sobey Art Award and recognized for her scenes of embodied and intimate inhabitation of environments. In the last decade, the artist collaborated with different groups of performers, or what she describes as “ephemeral communities,”¹⁰³ to generate a dialogue between bodies and ecologies. These performative interventions in the landscape are framed and captured through Carrier's lens and presented as a series of photographs and video installation. For the artist, the camera is a tool “to work with life.”¹⁰⁴ Central to her art practice is a sense of collectivity and an attention to the affective and social fabric of landscapes.

Carrier intervenes in what she calls “scarred landscapes;” sites bearing the traces of human activity.¹⁰⁵ The artist is interested in environments that are not usually considered “landscapes” but are rather thought of in a context of productivity and exploitation.¹⁰⁶ These landscapes are notably marked by heavy industrial machinery, the tools of settler colonialism, and capitalist extractivism. These technologies have marked the skin of the landscape, creating zones of ecological wounds and collapse. For instance, an abandoned quarry (*Parcours*, 2013), a snow dump (*Rites*, 2011), or the space under a transmission tower (*Exercice énergétique, from the series “Scènes de genre 2,”* 2009) are landscapes that Carrier considered as “scarred.” These environments are often “ambiguous, transitory spaces placed in the margins of the city,”¹⁰⁷ that do not quite enter into the category of

¹⁰² Jacynthe Carrier, “Info”, 2022 <https://jacynthecarrier.com/en/info>

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Jacynthe Carrier, “The 2017 Sobey Art Award- Jacynthe Carrier,” interview by The National Gallery of Canada, September 2017, video, 3:06, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGViudh752Q>

¹⁰⁵ Jacynthe Carrier’s concept of “Paysage cicatrice” has been translated into “scarred landscapes” by the author, Jacynthe Carrier, “Les Territoires Cicatrices de Jacynthe Carrier”, interview by *La Fabrique Culturelle*, February 2021, video, 0 :40, translated by the author, <https://www.lafabriqueculturelle.tv/capsules/13194/les-territoires-cicatrices-de-jacynthe-carrier>

¹⁰⁶ Jacynthe Carrier, interview by Jeanne Blackburn, November 5, 2021, translated by the author

¹⁰⁷ Jacynthe Carrier, “Jacynthe Carrier- Images instantanées”, interview by Manif d’art de Québec, January 2011, video, 0:15, translated by the author, <https://vimeo.com/19035340>

“nature” nor of the “urban” and it is this ambiguity that makes them particularly significant landscapes in the Anthropocene. Like many contemporary artists working with environments, from Robert Smithson to Eduard Burtynsky, and Isabelle Hayeur, Carrier is not interested in the image of the picturesque, idealized landscape devoid of humans' traces found in traditional landscape painting. For Carrier, such intact nature does not exist anymore, and scarred landscapes invite us to consider humans as part of the shaping of contemporary landscapes. The concept of “scarred landscape,” by using the body’s skin as a metaphor, activates an embodied understanding of landscape. Indeed, Carrier’s performers embrace the landscape, entwine their bodies into its skin through what the artist calls “maneuvers of inhabitation.”¹⁰⁸ These rituals of occupation are characterized by rhythms of repetitive and poetic gestures and actions. For Carrier, these corporeal, sensual, affective embrace of the landscape acts as a form of care, reparation or suture of these scars.

Carrier has also considered the coast of the Saint-Laurent river as a wounded landscape. On a beach of Baie-des-Chaleurs (*Amarrer le Ciel*, 2020) or in an industrial port of Quebec City (*Cycle*, 2014) the artist has investigated the Saint-Laurent’s riverbanks as zones of dialogue and negotiation between humans and their changing environments but also as a contested site of inhabitation. Carrier’s coastal interventions evoke the significance of this monumental body of water in an ecological, political and social ecosystems. It is in the region of the Bas Saint-Laurent that the Great Lake’s fresh water and the Atlantic Ocean’s

¹⁰⁸ Jacynthe Carrier, interview by Jeanne Blackburn, November 5, 2021, translated by the author

salty streams meet, creating a rich and diverse, transitory, fluvial ecosystem.¹⁰⁹ This estuary, that connects the inland waterways to the ocean, is considered as one of the largest and deepest in the world. The estuary and the river “form a hydrographic system that penetrates 3,058 km into North America”¹¹⁰ and is a site where a variety of the biggest sea mammals feed and gather, such as belugas, blue whales and humpback whales.¹¹¹ While ecologically, the Saint-Laurent river can be considered a place of connectivity, similarly its shores, and those of its tributaries “are home to over 80% of Québec’s population.”¹¹² The banks of the rivers were strategic sites of settlements for Europeans that established cities such as Montreal, Quebec, and Trois-Rivières. Today, it is the “most important commercial waterway in Canada and as well as a [significant] source of electric power.”¹¹³

As importantly, the artist communicates her own local and intimate experience of the river. The artist describes how growing up in Lévis, the Saint-Laurent river shaped her psychic and affective attachment to Quebec’s territory.¹¹⁴ The artist has often visited cities of the Bas-Saint-Laurent such as Rivière-Ouelle and Kamouraska and was inspired by their proximity to the water and how their inhabitants’ economic and social life is attuned to this monumental body of water.

¹⁰⁹ “The Estuary and the Gulf of St. Lawrence”, Government of Canada, last modified 2020-01-28, <https://www.qc.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/tides/en/estuary-and-gulf-st-lawrence>

¹¹⁰ James H. Marsh, “St-Lawrence River”, *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, February 7, 2006, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/st-lawrence-river>

¹¹¹ “Marine Mammal Observation Network – Species”, St. Lawrence Global Observatory, Canadian Integrated Observing System (CIOOS August 13, 2019,) <https://ogsl.ca/en/biodiversity-marine-mammals-romm-species/>

¹¹² “St. Lawrence River”, Ministère de l’Environnement et de la Lutte contre les Changements Climatiques du Québec, last modified 2020-01-28, https://www.environnement.gouv.qc.ca/eau/flrivlac/fleuve_en.htm

¹¹³ Marsh, “St-Lawrence River”

¹¹⁴ Jacynthe Carrier, interview by Jeanne Blackburn, November 5, 2021, translated by the author

In the artwork *brise glace Soleil blanc* (2016), Carrier brought together a group of performers on the rocky shore of the Saint-Laurent River in Kamouraska to foster a collective, intimate, and sensual dialogue with the river. This artwork was presented at the Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran in 2016 and consisted of a series of photographs and a video installation. In the gallery's main space, the photographs capture in detail the performers' physical and affective encounters with the riverbanks. In a second room, a double projection juxtaposed various perspectives on the performance's actions. The artist captured the intervention in a fractured manner emphasizing the tensions and dualities between humans and the coastal elements, land, and water. The artwork is permeated by water in all its states. The camera frames a coastal hydrology in transformation contrasting the melting ice cap with waves hitting the rocky shores. Some scenes were filmed in summer and others in winter, in this manner revealing the coast as a zone of mutability and metamorphosis (fig.22 and 23). The video features sounds of breath, wind, water, and clinking of rocks creating a sensorial immersion into the riverbanks.

A scene presents a man and a woman in large blue winter coats actively destroying with their bodies a structure made of white plaster walls that has been installed on the ice cap. This scene alternates and is juxtaposed with sequences showing performers immersed up to their knees in coastal water, displacing, hitting and crumbling rocks and scrambling on the slippery banks. Their choreographed work lingers ambiguously between reparation and degradation, care, and confrontation. The reason for their difficult physical and repetitive

labor is unknown but, as notes the author Sylvain Campeau in the book *Écrans Motiles*, it seems to be activated by a sense of necessity and survival.¹¹⁵

While the concept of scarred landscapes situates Carrier's art practice in relation to extractive capitalism, I believe it is also a pertinent framework to consider interconnected systems of exploitation and domination that shaped contemporary landscapes. Most notably, authors such as Anna Tsing and Macarena Gómez-Barris have discussed how extractive capitalism and settler colonialism have worked conjointly in the Anthropocene.¹¹⁶ For Tsing, both these systems rely on values of progress, expansion, and individualism. The author refers to the concept of scalability, a process of human and nonhuman alienation through which local and social ties are severed for the increase of productivity and the "salvage accumulation"¹¹⁷ of capital. The loss of interconnectivity inherent to this process of transforming resources into commodities is what, according to Tsing, has generated the ruins of the Anthropocene. Therefore, my analysis of *brise glace soleil blanc* extends beyond the artist's conceptual engagement with extractive capitalism to also take into consideration the Indigenous and colonial histories of the land on which the artwork is staged. I argue that Carrier's collective inhabitations of the Saint-Laurent riverbanks calls to mind complex and entangled histories of settlements and interactions with the river. The river is named "Gichigami-ziibi" (Sea River) in Ojibwe,¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Sylvain Campeau, *Écrans Motiles*, (Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2021), 236.

¹¹⁶ For more information see Anna Lowenhaupt. Tsing, *The mushroom at the end of the world: on the possibility of life in capitalist ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).63 and Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*, Dissident acts (Durham: Duke University Press, 201

¹¹⁷ Tsing, *The mushroom at the end of the world*.63

¹¹⁸ Charles Lippert, "The Great Lakes in Ojibwe", The Decolonial Atlas, Last modified December 1, 2014, <https://decolonialatlas.wordpress.com/2014/12/01/the-great-lakes-in-ojibwe/>

Kaniatarowanéhne (Place of the big river) in Kanien'kehá:ka¹¹⁹ and it plays a central role for these nations inhabiting its border.¹²⁰ It is through the Saint-Laurent River that the first colonizers came on Turtle Island, and its riverbanks became the theatre of colonial violence and histories of dispossession. These are also some of the scars that need to be considered when thinking about the Anthropocene.

I am interested in how Carrier's artwork *Brise glace soleil blanc* triggers through performance, video and photography an embodied and immersive dialogue with the Saint-Laurent river and its eroding coast. Carrier's concept of scarred landscape will be discussed in relation to the riverbanks to demonstrate how these coastal ecologies are significantly shaped by the agencies of capitalist and colonial structures. I will argue that Carrier's sensory attunement to the coast provokes a deeper awareness and responsiveness to what permeates damaged landscapes. From the riverbanks to the gallery space, *brise glace soleil blanc* activates the bodies to unsettle ways of inhabiting contemporary landscapes.

Inhabiting the Scar; the Riverbanks as Ruins of the Anthropocene

On the riverbanks of the Saint-Laurent River, the consequences of human-induced environmental change are increasingly perceptible and tangible. According to the research made by the Chair in Coastal Geoscience of the Université du Québec à Rimouski (UQAR), around 2100 kilometers of the Saint-Laurent's eastern littoral are affected by erosion and

¹¹⁹ Karonhí:io Delaronde and Jordan Engel, "Montreal in Mohawk", The Decolonial Atlas, February 4, 2015, <https://decolonialatlas.wordpress.com/2015/02/04/montreal-in-mohawk/>

¹²⁰ Notably the Kanien'kehá:ka, Wolastoqiyik and Anishnabeg. According to the interactive map of "Native Land Digital", 2021, <https://native-land.ca/>

coastal flooding.¹²¹ In the last decade, the erosion' average annual rates stands between 0.5m and 2m.¹²² The Bas-Saint-Laurent's region, where the *brise glace soleil blanc's* performance took place is more particularly affected by this anthropogenic phenomenon.¹²³ In Quebec, erosion is a notable consequences of the rapid reduction in the ice cap on the Saint-Laurent River due to global warming and the increasing commercial activity on the river. Without the protection of the ice cap, the littoral zone becomes vulnerable to wind, waves, and precipitation and thus more prone to coastal submersion and erosion.¹²⁴ As a result, the land's edges and rich riparian ecosystems collapse more and more every year.

The phenomenon of erosion is a latent meaning of *brise glace soleil blanc*. Carrier's camera evokes the ecological processes through which the coast is eroded and flooded. The camera frames the vulnerability of the riverbanks to the elements as waves, winds, and humans turbulently collide with the rocky shores. The double screening of the video emphasizes the flakiness of the rocks, the overpowering sound of the wind and the fragility of the shores. The performers' manipulation of hard blocks of ice, the ambient reverberations of running water, the blinding light of the sun and the close-ups of the melting ice cap are elements of the artwork that call to mind the cycle of water as a force shaping the eroding coastlines. The performers' bodies are immersed in the mineral reality of the coast as they

¹²¹ Jean-François Bouchard, "Comprendre et prévenir l'érosion côtière dans un contexte de changements climatiques", February 10, 2020, UQAR, <https://www.uqar.ca/nouvelles/uqar-info/3189-comprendre-et-prevenir-l-erosion-cotiere-dans-un-contexte-de-changements-climatique>.

¹²² Bouchard, "Comprendre et prévenir l'érosion côtière".

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

cover their skin with the coastal sand. Close framings of the materiality and textures of the rocks also activate an immersion into the eroding banks (Fig.24).

In the local context of Quebec but also globally, the riverbanks are rapidly changing landscapes. As the outlines of the Saint-Laurent river continue to be redefined by erosion, the coastlines become challenging and tense sites of inhabitation. A large segment of Quebecois residing in riverside cities needs to adapt to this new reality. While some communities consider their imminent dislocation, others take extreme measures to control the coast with dams, windbreaks, riprap. In many instances, those engineered solutions hardly keep up with the increasingly rapid pace of climate change.

The scene presenting two performers physically and affectively colliding with a structure made of plaster walls evokes the material and emotional toll of inhabiting the eroding coastlines (Fig.25 and 26). The scene is filled with a sense of urgency and precarity as the coastal elements seem to pierce through the white walls, and as the fragile habitation collapses under the force of the performers. The performers' actions are ambiguous, as they both resist the destruction of the white shelter and contribute to its disintegration. As the structure completely falls into pieces and blends into the ice cap, the performers are "confronted with their own vulnerability."¹²⁵ (Fig.27 and 28) The destructive actions of these two performers echoes those of the performers colliding with the riverbanks. These individuals are similarly engaged in a process of ruination. They are marking the rocky shores, grinding and crumbling it into mineral debris. Some performers are immersed in water up to their knees displacing large pieces of rock from the shore (Fig.29). Campeau

¹²⁵ Jacynthe Carrier, interview by Jeanne Blackburn, November 5, 2021, translated by the author

discusses the ambiguity of the performers' labor that seems to mimic the unsettling of sediments on the coast (characteristic of the process of erosion) while also being reminiscent of the construction of a riprap¹²⁶; “[an assemblage of piled] broken stones used as a foundation or to stabilize an easily eroded bank or slope.”¹²⁷ Campeau thus also alludes to the phenomenon of erosion when discussing Carrier's artwork.¹²⁸ There is in the performers' actions, both a of resistance to the phenomenon of erosion and a participation in it. In the photographs *#4 de la suite brise glace* and *#6 de la suite brise glace* the performers' defiance of the coastal elements is presented as a Sisyphean effort. Indeed, there are similarities between Carrier's photographs, and painting of Sisyphus by artists such as Titian (1548-1549), and Franz von Struck (1920); in these depictions we see the body confronting a large boulder (Fig.30,31,32,33). Sisyphus' punishment – to push a large boulder at the top of a hill and to endlessly recommence this task because it always rolls back¹²⁹—resonates with the performers' perpetual battle against the elements.

The article *Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination* by Ann Laura Stoler provides a pertinent framework to consider the eroding banks of the Saint-Laurent river as ruins of capitalist and colonial formations.¹³⁰ Stoler establishes the terms “ruins” and “ruinations” as key analytical tools for retracing the tangible and lasting effects of imperialist formations.¹³¹ For Stoler, “ruin” is both a noun and a verb to describe the active

¹²⁶ Jacynthe Carrier, interview by Jeanne Blackburn, November 5, 2021, translated by the author

¹²⁷ *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition*. Online “riprap.” Retrieved April 19 2022 from <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/riprap>.

¹²⁸ Campeau, *Écran Motiles*; 237

¹²⁹ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World* Roberts, J. W, and Oxford University Press. 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007),s.v. “Sisyphus.”

¹³⁰ Ann Laura Stoler, “Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination”, *Cultural Anthropology* 23, no2 (may 2008),191-219.

¹³¹ The terms “colonialism,” and “imperialism” have different meanings, connotations, and material consequences. They are not synonymous. In the article “Colony and Empire, Colonialism and Imperialism; a meaningful distinction,”

process in which bodies, minds, landscapes, and political assemblages carry the enduring marks of destructive and exploitative systems of relations. The author situates ruins not solely on the mountains of the Yucatan or the acropolis, but also for instance, in the traces of environmental degradations, within the bodies of climate refugees, or in the structures of racialized unemployment and incarceration.¹³² In this way, Stoler's scholarship confronts the European romantic cult of ruins that incites an introspection on a vanished, petrified past. The author rejects this melancholic and nostalgic gaze as a form of colonial pleasure and argues that, on the contrary, the past is still very much active in the present. For the author, it is important to consider ruins "as sites that can animate new possibilities"¹³³ where it is possible to perform modes of being that diverge from the past. Stoler's scholarship offers a way to think about climate change and the phenomenon of erosion as a global and local process of ruination engendered by decades of extractive activities and exploitative practices in the environments. Stoler's concepts of "ruins and ruination" provide a useful framework to locate the riverbanks of the Saint-Laurent River as unexpected, psychic, and material sites of capitalist and colonial debris. Through Stoler's scholarship, it is also possible to consider riverbanks as sites where alternative futures can be imagined and built.¹³⁴

the author Krishan Kumar exposes how colonialism refers to a permanent take-over by settlers enabled by structures of erasure of Indigenous people. Imperialism rather refers to the economic and political control of a nation by an empire. However, these systems are interconnected by ideologies of cultural, social, political, and economic domination and exploitation and function together in the Anthropocene. While Stoler uses the term "Imperialism," this thesis employs the terms "colonialism" and "capitalism" to focus on the systems of domination of nature and people in the context of the turtle Island or so-called Canada.

¹³² Stoler, "Imperial Debris", 194.

¹³³ Stoler, "Imperial Debris", 194.

¹³⁴ The concept ruin in relation to capitalism and colonialism as also been explored by the author Anna Tsing in the book *The mushroom at the end of the world: on the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. The book exposes how the exploitation of natural resources has relied on capitalist values of progress, expansion, and individualism. Informed by Marxist theories, the author explains how the losses of interconnectivity inherent to the process of transforming resources into commodities is what has generated the ruins of the Anthropocene. (for more information see, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing.

Stoler's definition of "ruins" echoes Jacynthe Carrier's concept of "scarred landscapes" and these two conceptual apparatuses both address the ways contemporary landscapes bear the memory of colonial and capitalist activities. Importantly, scars and ruins are not only material imprints of past trauma on a territory, but also a decaying of the social, political, and affective fabric of the landscape. For Stoler, ruins, like scars, are something people carry with their bodies and minds.¹³⁵ They are lesions on the affective and psychic life of humans and nonhumans. In this vein, it seems that Carrier's performers are carrying the tensions of living in a damaged ecology in their corporeal interventions in the landscape. Sylvain Campeau notably emphasizes how a sense of existential necessity animates the collective labor of *brise glace soleil blanc* and discusses the performers actions as a form of subsistence.¹³⁶ The camera's focus on the performers' gestures, and facial expressions brings an interiority to the scene. Carrier's lens captures the performers' precarity but also their introspection. In this manner, the artist describes *brise glace soleil blanc* as an interior landscape.¹³⁷

The motif of the ruin is central to the artwork. It is in the artwork's evocation of the phenomenon of erosion, in the performers' labor that both resist and contribute to a ruination and in the sense of ruination that inhabits the performers. For Carrier, the tensions between reparation and ruination, between ruining or being ruined, are inevitable when

The mushroom at the end of the world: on the possibility of life in capitalist ruins. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

¹³⁵ Stoler, "Imperial Debris", 201-202

¹³⁶ Campeau; 237.

¹³⁷ Jacynthe Carrier, interview by Jeanne Blackburn, November 5, 2021, translated by the author

inhabiting complex contemporary landscape and when negotiating restoratives and regenerative ecologies:

*Yes, there is the idea of care but there is also the necessary mark made when being in contact with a territory.*¹³⁸

While Carrier's artwork does not explicitly address capitalism and colonialism, Stoler's scholarship on contemporary ruins guides my interpretation of the performative interventions. Thinking of the riverbanks as ruins of the Anthropocene invites a consideration of the relation between bodies and environments in Carrier's art practice as something not only poetic and aesthetic but also deeply political.

Sensory Labor

Referring to Victor Turner's definition of "liminality," the author Tricia Cusack describes how the water's edge "may function as a liminal space [...] that offers the possibilities for bypassing habitual behavior and adopting a new identity"¹³⁹. The artist alludes to this aspect of liminality when describing her performative interventions on the Saint-Laurent riverbanks:

*My maneuvers of inhabitation create a space of resistance that extricate itself from the real and its social codes. They are spaces within which it is possible to find alternative ways of being together and of being in relation with the territory.*¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Stoler, "Imperial Debris", 194.

¹³⁹ Tricia Cusack, *Art and Identity at the Water's Edge*, (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2012), 3.

¹⁴⁰ Jacynthe Carrier, interview by Jeanne Blackburn, November 5, 2021, translated by the author

As ecotones, riverbanks force their inhabitants to be responsive to their environment, to negotiate living between land and water. The orchestrated inhabitations of *brise glace soleil blanc* resonate with this need to be adaptative to changing contemporary environments. In their embodied conversations with rocks, ice, liquids, dirt, lichens, sand, air, sun, and wind, Carrier's performers cultivate a sentience towards their changing ecosystems.

As noted by Anne-Marie St-Jean Aubre, Carrier's intervention on the Saint-Laurent coast “challenges the supremacy of sight as a mode of apprehending the world.”¹⁴¹ Indeed, the sense of touch is particularly activated when the artist contrasts the scene’s materiality and textures and emphasizes the performers' sensory gestures (Fig.34 and 35). The camera zooms in on the performers' hands that caress the rough texture of the plaster walls and of the rocky shores. The opacity and sharpness of the rocks is placed against the fragile porousness of skin. Carrier’s lens examines closely the fiber of the performers' hair which resonates with the wool of their coats and the fragile textile of a spider web entangled within the cracks of the rocky shores. The artist makes us see that ice burns the performer's skin and is sharp as a rock. As they handle pieces of ice, the performers protect their hands with their coats. The performers also experience the sharpness and hardness of the rock cliffs in a very tactile manner. They rub, touch, caress, and feel the surface of the shore. They are displacing, hitting, marking, scrutinizing, and slipping on rocks. The sound of stones, when struck together, creates a rhythm for the performers' actions. Furthermore, the overpowering sound of the wind and the blinding light of the sun that reflects on the ice

¹⁴¹Anne-Marie St-Jean Aubre, “Jacynthe Carrier, Les Eux – Anne-Marie St-Jean Aubre, La fonction du regard dans l’œuvre de Jacynthe Carrier”, *Ciel Variable*, no. 96, (Winter 2014), translated by the author.

generate a saturation of the senses, an overwhelming and unsettling bodily immersion into the riverbanks.

Carrier's lens presents the performers as sentient beings and reveals their bodies as porous and permeable. They are leaking and sweating bodies of water entrenched within the coastal hydrology. Some of them are submerged up to their knees in the water. Their clothes are drenched, and locks of their hair are wet. Wearing soaked shoes, the performers precariously climb the slippery rock. Sounds of running water fill the whole scene. In their labor, the performers implicate themselves within the coastal waters, participating with their bodies of water in the transmission of fluids and minerals that shape the ecotone. Notably, Carrier's close-up and detailed framings render visible the condensation of water created by the performers' heavy breathings, the sweat on their foreheads, water pearly on their cold skin (Fig.36). These are only a few of, in the words of Kathleen Stewart, "lived sensory moments"¹⁴² generated by Carrier's attunement to the Saint-Laurent Riverbanks.

Stewart uses the terms "sensory labor" and "sensual world-making"¹⁴³ to describe the labor and care of attending to the agencies and intensities that compose a site. The literal sense of touch described in Stewart's writing and evident in Carrier's art practice becomes a metaphor for an affective, emotional and cognitive form of sentience. These concepts illuminate the significance of the performer's insistent sensing of the coastal density, textures, and materiality. Beginning with a choreographed intervention, the artist then

¹⁴² Stewart, "Atmospheric Attunements", 445.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 447

allowed the performers' interiority and instinctive response to the site emerge. The hard and repetitive physical work of the performers- a kind of collision with the landscape- is fuelled by what seems to be a fundamental need to inhabit, an interior struggle, a deeper presence evoking what the author describes as the “labored viscosity of being in whatever is happening.”¹⁴⁴

For Kathleen Stewart, this is what defines atmospheric attunements. Stewart writes: “Attending to atmospheric attunements means chronicling how incommensurate elements hang together in a scene that bodies labor to be in and get through.”¹⁴⁵ When writing about the bodies’ “labor to be in and get through” a scene, the author emphasizes the struggle of inhabiting a space but also the hardship of being inhabited by its agencies.¹⁴⁶ As the eroded coast creates an uncanny absence, one that can be compared to a phantom limb, experience of dislocation, of ruined habitations, of threatened ecologies, in the words of Ann Laura Stoler “saturates the subsoil of peoples lives.”¹⁴⁷ In their sensing of the surface of the rocky coast, the performers outline “a geography of what happens, a speculative topography of the everyday sensibilities now consequential to living through things.”¹⁴⁸

In other words, “how do people dwelling in [space] become attuned to the sense of something coming into existence or something waning, sagging, dissipating, enduring, or resonating with what is lost or promising?”¹⁴⁹ How can we make sense of the seething

¹⁴⁴ Stewart, “Atmospheric Attunements”, 445

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Stoler, “Imperial Debris”, 192.

¹⁴⁸ Nigel Thrift, *Nonrepresentational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (Routledge, New York: 2007) quoted in Stewart, 445.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

threats, anxieties, affects and emotions that, like a force field, an atmosphere or a ghostly presence, exert strength on our bodies and minds but yet are not visible or tangible? What is “coming into existence”¹⁵⁰ on the riverbanks of the Anthropocene and how do we feel it? I suggest that Carrier’s tactile explorations of the coast can help develop a sentience toward the complex contemporary lived realities of the Anthropocene.

From the Riverbanks to the White Cube; Activating Viewers’ Perceptions

While I have up to now examined the riverbank as a site of tensions and possibilities in the Anthropocene, this last section will transition from the outside coastal landscape to ask how Carrier’s interventions into the riverbanks are experienced within the gallery space. What if we thought about the gallery as significant territory of the Anthropocene? The gallery space invites a very different form of occupation than the one suggested on the riverbanks. The white cube indeed traditionally imposes a disembodied, distanced stance on its occupants. It is a blank space onto which values can be projected, and it operates as a form of containment from the outside world. The white cube is atemporal in how it (arguably and only theoretically) abstracts the viewers from historical, political, and social contexts. For Carrier, the gallery is a “space that generates a contention, a spatial limit that is drawn but that is also inside of us.”¹⁵¹

A desire to confront, challenge and “pass through the white wall,”¹⁵² as the artist says, is something that appears in *brise glace soleil blanc* first as the performers are physically rubbing and caressing, but also knocking on and puncturing the white walls installed on

¹⁵⁰ Stewart, 445.

¹⁵¹ Jacynthe Carrier, interview by Jeanne Blackburn, November 5, 2021, translated by the author

¹⁵² Ibid.

the shores of the Saint-Laurent River. Central to this scene is the image of a hole in the plaster wall that the performers are both trying to patch and enlarge. The camera frames a large piece of ice directly perforating the structure. It creates a strong material dialogue between the opaque and flaking plaster and the solid translucent block of ice. At other moments, the hole becomes a window onto the coastal landscape and the blue sky pierces through the whiteness of the wall. The elements of the coastal landscape are literally passing through the wall, contaminating, and dirtying the white habitation. The motif of the punctured white wall (Fig.37) is evocative of this dialectic between the interior and exterior, the site of the gallery and the outside landscape, but also, as the artist remarks “between the body and its interiority.”¹⁵³ In this manner, the performers’ bodily confrontation with the fragile shelter evokes a precarity and vulnerability that is not only material but also to psychological, affective.

The series of photographs that frame this scene of destruction also contribute to this dialectic. Indeed, there is an unsettling formal continuity between the white structure appearing in the photographs and the gallery's white wall on which these photographs are hung. The series of photographs visually opens up the walls, operating both a suture and a rupture between the gallery and the coastal landscape (Fig.38). The whiteness of the wall also resonates with the whiteness of the snow, the ice cap, and the light of the sun. This dialogue between the content of the exhibition and its container (the white cube) troubles the viewers' experience of the exhibition space. I believe it makes them increasingly aware of their confinement in the gallery space.

¹⁵³ Jacynthe Carrier, interview by Jeanne Blackburn, November 5, 2021, translated by the author

In order to theorize Carrier's mode of working both site-specifically and in the gallery, it is worth revisiting the writings of Robert Smithson and more specifically his theory of "site and non-site". In the article, "A provisional Theory of Non-Sites," (1968) the prominent artist of the Land art movement interrogates how "the physical raw reality of [an outdoor] location;"¹⁵⁴ the site, can be transferred into the gallery space. Smithson gives the name "non-sites" to indoor installations, that refer to the reality of a site through photographs, film, drawings, topographic maps, and notes as well as objects. Smithson's practice brought fragments of the site such as rocks and sand into the space of the exhibition. Those raw materials are framed within geometrical containers, a strategy that points to the gallery's desire for containment and abstraction of the exterior world. The tensions between Smithson's sites and non-sites are often compared to language and semiotics: "The relation of a Non-site to the Site is also like that of language to the world: it is a signifier, and the Site is that which is signified."¹⁵⁵ The nonsites are "syntactical constructs"¹⁵⁶ of the site. While the non-sites cannot contain the whole temporal and material nature of a site, they offer a framework with which to think beyond the duality of interior and exterior space mediated by the gallery. Smithson's writings encourage viewers to travel in the "space of metaphoric significance"¹⁵⁷ between the site and the non-site. For Smithson, this trip is "invented, devised, artificial [...] devoid of natural meanings and

¹⁵⁴ Smithson, and Flam, *Robert Smithson, The Collected Writings*, 177.

¹⁵⁵ Lawrence Alloway "Site/Nonsites," in *The Writings of Robert Smithson: Essays with Illustrations*. ed Nancy Holt (New York University Press, 1979).

¹⁵⁶ Smithson, and Flam, *Robert Smithson*, 364.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

realistic assumptions.”¹⁵⁸ Like the riverbanks, the space between the gallery and the site is a sensory threshold in which perceptions and conceptions of spaces are enhanced.

Smithson's theory of sites and non-sites illuminates Jacynthe Carrier's negotiation between the gallery space she is exhibiting in and the exterior sites she is working with. In *brise glace soleil blanc*, the photographs and videos function as “non-sites” as they are fragments, framings of the sites. A sense of three-dimensionality is generated by the motif of the white wall that appears in the photographs as a reverberation of the gallery space. By bringing the outdoor landscape indoor, the artist in this manner plays with the viewers sense of space. It invites the viewers to dwell ambiguously between the gallery and the riverbanks. As Smithson writes, this dialogue between the site and the non-site creates a “new kind of continuity between notion of inside and outside.” Interestingly, the artist affirmed her disinterest in creating un-mediated performances in an outside environment. For Carrier, the filter of the camera lens and of the gallery space contributes to her ecological approach. The video and photographic screens are important interfaces through which this landscape is encountered, imagined, framed, and constructed. More than just modes of capturing the site, the photographs and video propose modes seeing that act upon the viewers’ perceptions, and relation to the environment. In Carrier’s artwork, the detailed close-ups on the materiality and textures of the riverbanks provokes a form of intimacy with the landscape but also mobilize the viewers’ cognition:

¹⁵⁸ Smithson, and Flam, *Robert Smithson*, 364.

*I am interested in the notion of the gaze. What we decide to frame [is important]. I value all that is off-camera, that the viewers do not have access but that activates the viewers' imaginary.*¹⁵⁹

In this manner, what is offscreen is very significant in the creation of meaning. The viewers are invited to recompose, rewrite, reimagine the scene through their own gaze and interpretation: “The complete panorama, it is each of us who is going to imagine it.”¹⁶⁰ For the artist, this is a process that functions in some ways “like memory”¹⁶¹ in how it involves the binding of the space and time between fragments. In this manner, art projects that are exhibited inside a gallery but that refer, through photograph and video, to an outside environment might bring into play more layers and mutability of meanings than those only situated outside exclusively. In the context of the Anthropocene, this dialectic might offer the transformative possibilities to reimagine and recompose contemporary landscapes as well as enhance viewers awareness of space and time.

Conclusion

Through the case studies *Moving off the Land* by Joan Jonas and *brise glace soleil blanc* by Jacynthe Carrier, this thesis has demonstrated the possibility of contemporary art practices “thinking with and feeling through the Anthropocene.”¹⁶² I believe Davis and Turpin's argument is valuable because it implies not only a rational and cognitive engagement with the Anthropocene but also evokes, by the use of the verb “feeling,” affective, emotional,

¹⁵⁹ Jacynthe Carrier, interview by Jeanne Blackburn, November 5, 2021, translated by the author

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Turpin and Davis, *Art in the Anthropocene*, 3.

and sensorial structures of perception. In the two artworks, aquatic ecosystems – aquariums and endangered coral reefs for Jonas, the Saint-Laurent riverbanks for Carrier – become critical sites of such environmental consciousness. Both artists activate these bodies of water through immersive and embodied art practices that combine performance, photography, and video.

Jonas' performative interventions into projected images allow her to dive deep into the aquatic. The artist and her fellow performers bathe in the projected images. Their bodies are submerged and disappear completely to merge with the aquatic fauna and flora. Conversely, in Carrier's artwork, the performers do not completely “move off the land,” as the title of Jonas' artwork invites us to do. Instead, the performers dwell ambiguously in the eroding space between land and water. Immersion in *brise glace soleil blanc* functions more on an affective and psychological level; the performers inhabit as much as they are being inhabited by the riverbanks. Close-up shots of the performers' bodies and gestures and the camera's focus on the textures and materiality of the coastal landscape invite this form of intimacy and attunement.

Interestingly, in both artworks, there is an element which becomes the antagonist to immersion; Jonas's white lab coat and Carrier's white cube similarly evoke a disembodiment, a containment, and a sterile separation from the world. These elements are central to the epistemological and ontological structures that have made the Anthropocene. Notably, they incarnate the separation between nature and culture in the crafting of knowledge and meaning. Through the scholarship of Donna Haraway, I have examined how the white lab coat represents a paradigm of disembodied scientific objectivity that has

naturalized heteropatriarchal systems of oppressions. I believe this is an argument that also applies to the gallery's white cube. Like the white lab coat, the antiseptic gallery space evokes a seemingly neutral and unmediated setting, abstracted from the outside world. The white cube is nevertheless shaped by ideological structures and is part of a specific political, social and economic context that acts upon what is exhibited.

Both artists challenge these white frontiers through different strategies of *détournement*: Jonas uses the white lab coat as a tool of immersion into the aquatic, and Carrier breaks into the surface of the white wall literally, via the performers' destructive actions, and metaphorically as the series of photographs interacts with the exhibition's space. Thus, I believe this conversation between Jonas's and Carrier's artworks illuminates the possibilities of immersion and embodiment, initiating transformative modes of thinking and being in the Anthropocene.

Furthermore, an attention to modes of perception appears to be a defining marker of the two artists' ecological approaches. The artworks challenge the emphasis on the visual in the mediatization of environmental change. Turpin and Davis discuss how the overwhelming visualization of numbers, data, statistics, and images of climate catastrophes tend to be disconnected from the embodied, subjective, and affective experience of environmental change. In both artworks, the artists reinscribe the sense of vision within the body. Jonas' interactions with the projection are corporeal and active; her hands reach into the moving images as if the artist is sensing through them. Carrier's camera emphasizes the sense of touch; the performers' hands are shown rubbing, caressing, and sensing the

landscape. The tactility of the visual experience in both artworks activates the viewers' perceptions of aquatic environments.

Furthermore, the ruins discussed in Carrier's case study and the presence of ghosts in Jonas' performance similarly challenge viewers to see beyond the realm of the visible. These elements trouble narratives of progress and allow viewers to see how enduring capitalist and colonial agencies haunt the present in the Anthropocene. By evoking what is sensed without being seen, ghosts and ruins become significant tools for approaching damaged contemporary landscapes.

These are some of the lineaments of connections, or what Astrida Neimanis has called the "hydrocommons," that cycle through Jonas' and Carrier's aquatic interventions. The two artists enter into conversation with a large and expanding cluster of art practices responding to environmental change. Thus, the avenues for reflection that I propose in this thesis are in no way the only ones. I rather see my research as contributing to a continued discussion and theorization of the possibilities of art in the Anthropocene. I was drawn to these two artworks because they do not engage with environmental change in a direct and didactic manner. These aesthetic practices do not give viewers concrete answers on how to move beyond the Anthropocene. They rather elicit reflections that I hope might transform collective and individual consciousness and gestate into laws, political actions, or social movements. This idea evokes Neimanis' discussion of the gestational quality of water and its ability to give birth to networks of relation. Between Jonas' and Carrier's practices it is not only bodies that are connected by water but also ideas and thoughts. Their experiments

in thinking, moving and seeing through water can be considered as sites of gestation, where transformative approaches to the Anthropocene's changing landscapes can emerge.

Figures



Fig.1 Joan Jonas, *Moving Off the Land. Oceans – Sketches and Notes*, 2018, Mixed Media, Commissioned by TBA21–Academy and presented in collaboration with Tate Modern. Digital Photograph © Joan Jonas. (Photographer: Brotherton Lock)



Fig.2.1 and 2.2 Jacynthe Carrier, *brise glace soleil blanc*, 2016, series of photographs and video installation, two exhibition views at the Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, digital photograph by Paul Litherland.

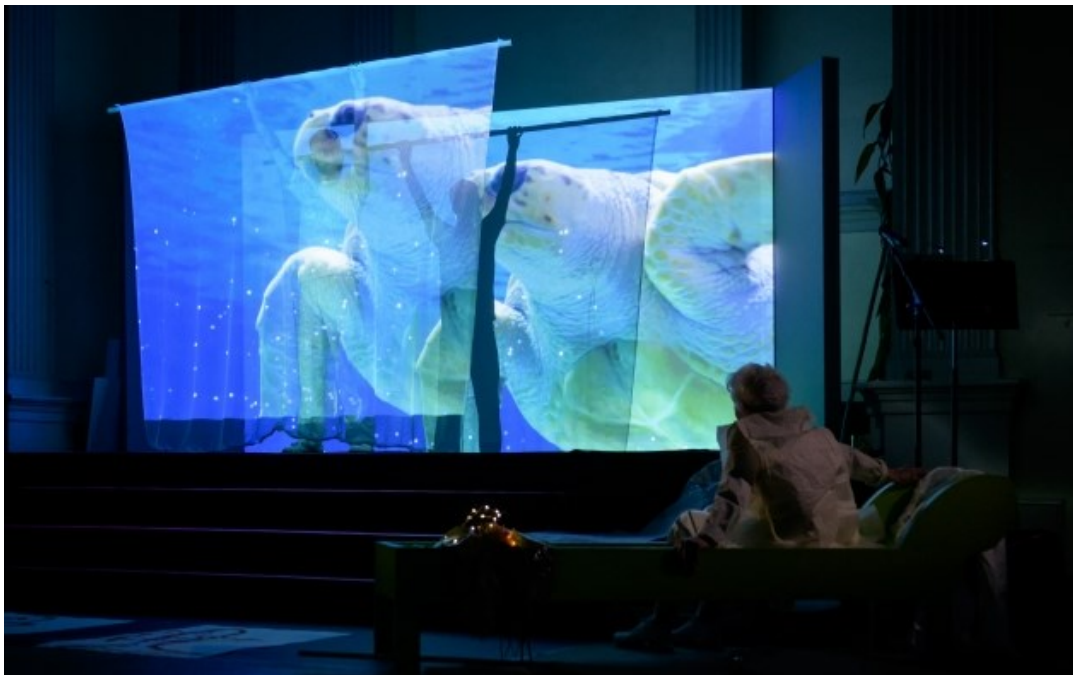


Fig.3,4: Performers' interacting with the projected images

Fig.3 Joan Jonas, *Moving Off the Land*, January 19, 2019, Mix Media, Photograph of the performance at the Cowell Theater, Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture. Digital photograph by Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture/Justine Oliphant

Fig.4 Joan Jonas, *Moving Off the Land*, 2018, Mixed media, Photograph of the performance at the *Danspace Project*, NY, digital photograph by Ian Douglas



Fig.5: Joan Jonas, *Moving Off the Land II*, March 23–September 29, 2019, View of the Exhibition at the Ocean Space, Chiesa di San Lorenzo, Venice, Curated by Stefanie Hessler, Commissioned by TBA21–Academy and co-produced with Luma Foundation, Courtesy the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York/Rome. Digital photograph Enrico Fiorese.



Fig.6, 7: Joan Jonas wearing a white lab coat while performing a formal presentation.

(From left to right)

Fig.6 Joan Jonas, *Moving Off the Land. Oceans—Sketches and Notes*, 2018, mixed media, photograph of the performance at Tate Modern Commissioned by TBA21–Academy and curated by Stefanie Hessler in collaboration with Isabella Maidmen

Fig.7 Joan Jonas, *Moving off the Land II*, 2018, Still image from a video documenting the performance presented at the *Danspace Project, NY* (Frame capture: the author) <https://danspaceproject.org/2021/06/07/joan-jonas/>



Fig.8,9,10: The white lab coat in *Moving off the Land* as a tool for immersion.

(From left to right)

Fig.8 Joan Jonas, *Moving off the Land II*, 2020, Still image from a video documenting the performance presented at Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid and commissioned by TBA21–Academy, © Gavin Brown Gallery, (Frame capture: the author) <https://vimeo.com/400389808>

Fig.9 Joan Jonas, *Moving Off the Land II*, 2019, Photograph of the live performance, Ocean Space, Chiesa di San Lorenzo, Venice, Performance with Ikue Mori and Francesco Migliaccio. Commissioned by TBA21-Academy, digital photograph by Moira Ricci. © Joan Jonas

Fig.10 Joan Jonas, *Moving Off the Land*, January 19, 2019, Mix Media, Photograph of the performance at the Cowell Theater, Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture. Digital photograph by Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture/Justine Olipha

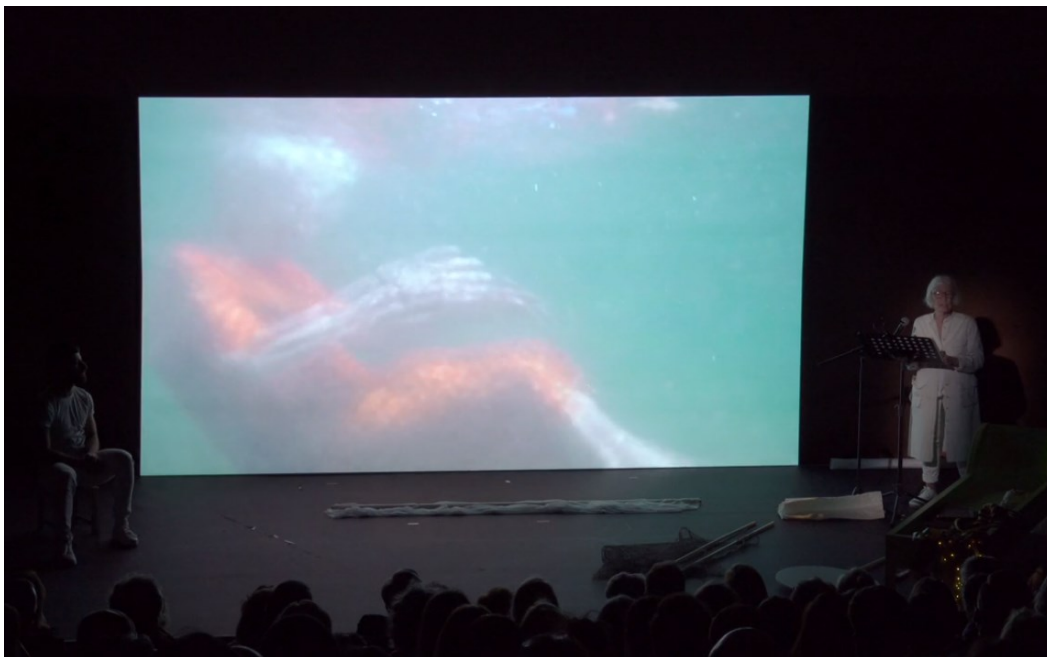
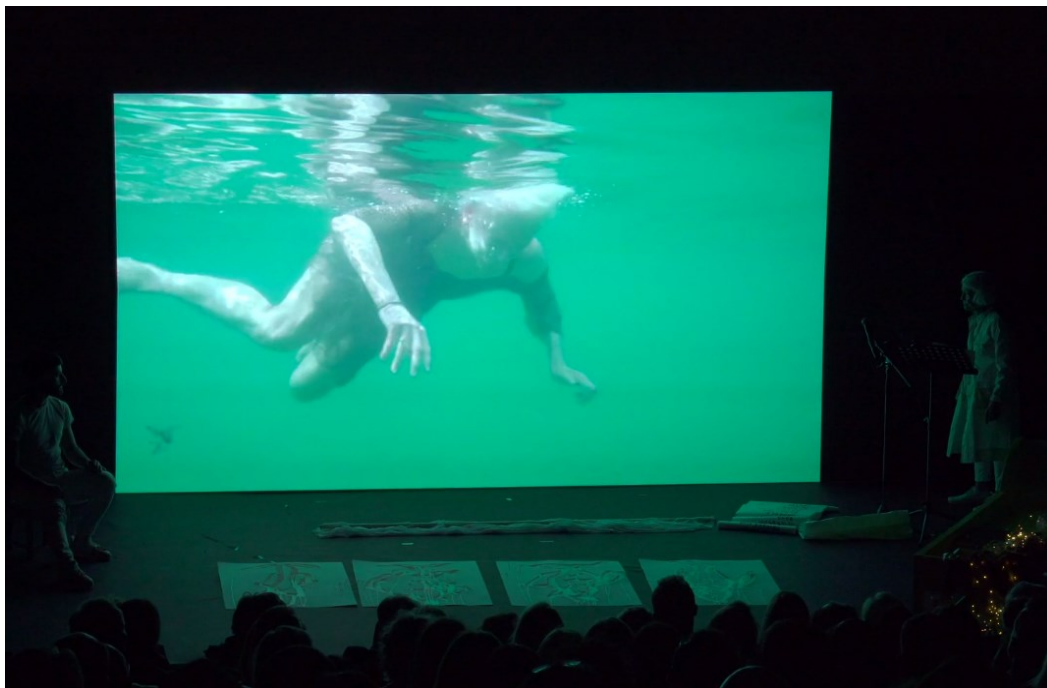


Fig.11.1 and 11.2: Footage of Jonas swimming in coastal water.

Fig.11.2 and 11.2 Joan Jonas, *Moving off the Land II*, 2020, Two still images from a video documenting the performance presented at Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid and commissioned by TBA21–Academy, © Gavin Brown Gallery, (Frame capture: the author) <https://vimeo.com/400389808>

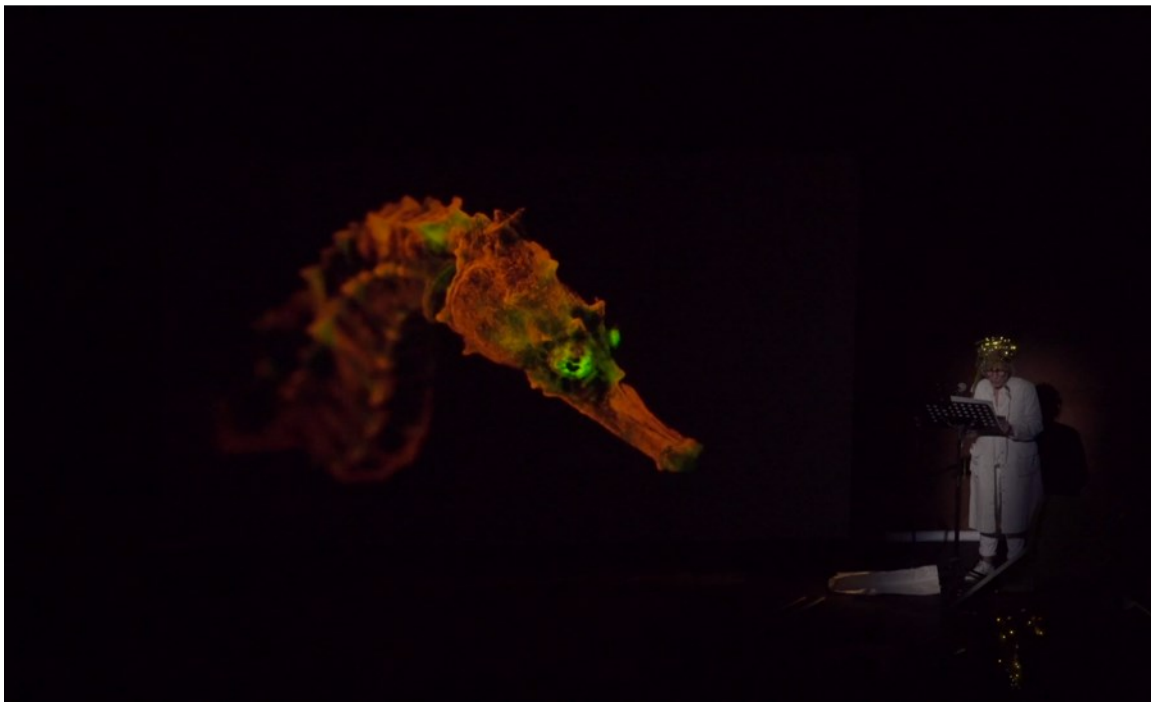
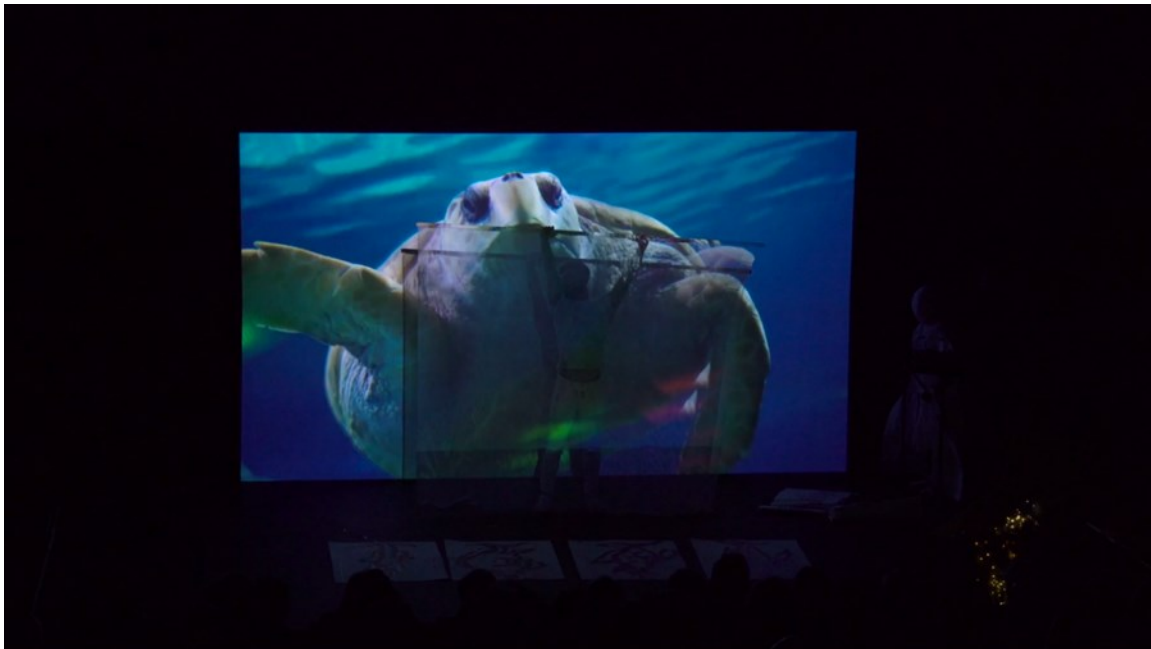


Fig.12.1 and 12.2: An eye-to-eye encounter with the aquatic fauna.

Fig.12.1 and 12.2 Joan Jonas, *Moving off the Land II*, 2020, Still image from a video documenting the performance presented at Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid and commissioned by TBA21–Academy, © Gavin Brown Gallery, (Frame capture: the author) <https://vimeo.com/400389808>



Fig.13, 14: The projected image as tool for communication with aquatic animals.

Fig.13 Joan Jonas, *Moving Off the Land*, January 19, 2019, Mix Media, Photograph of the performance at the Cowell Theater, Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture. Digital photograph by Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture/Justine Oliphant

Fig.14 Joan Jonas, *Moving Off the Land II*, 2019, mixed media, photograph of the performance at the Ocean Space, Venice, commissioned by the TBA21- Academy, digital photograph, Copyright courtesy of the artist

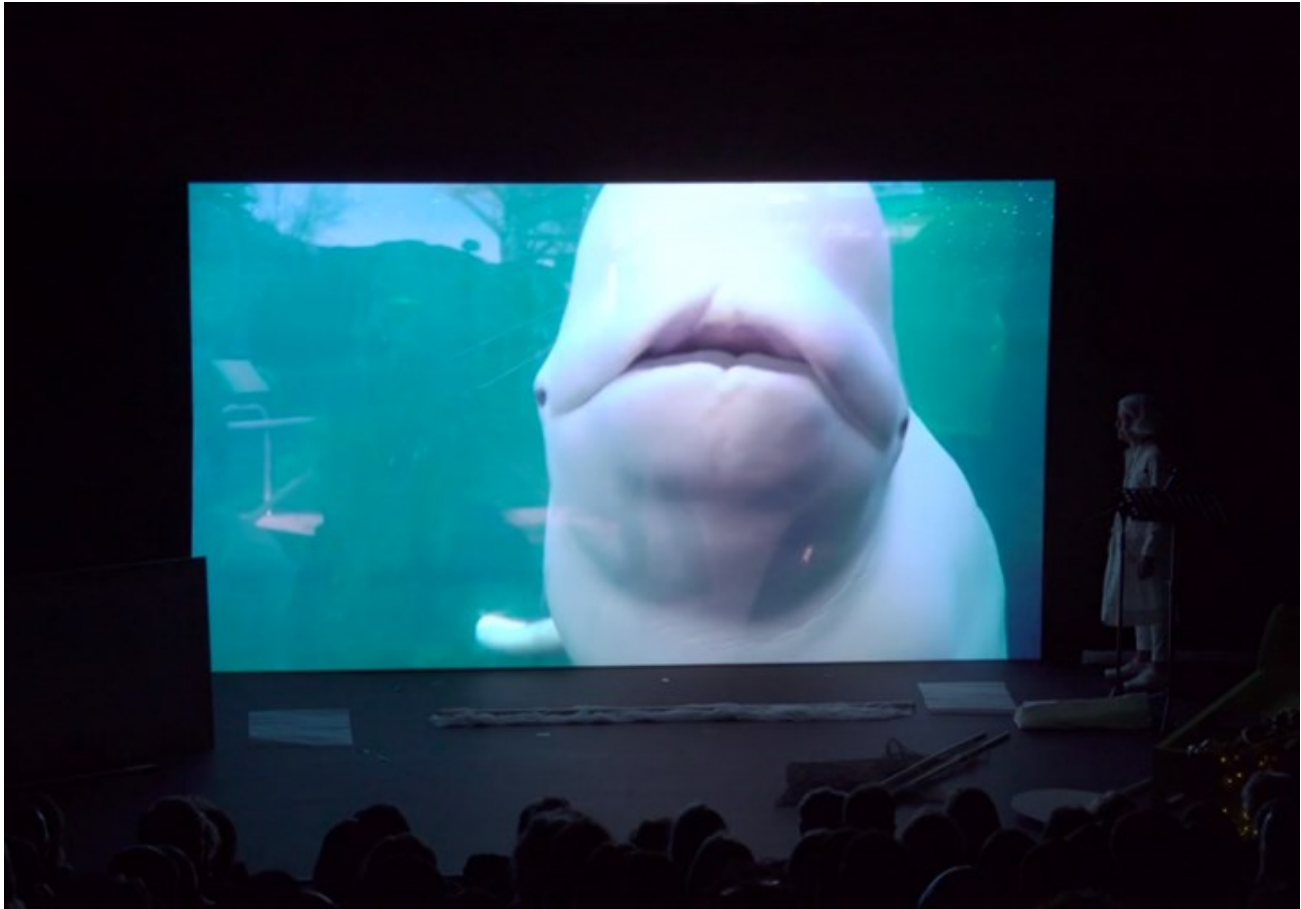


Fig.15: The aquarium glass reflecting the camera lens and the aquarium visitors.

Fig.17 Joan Jonas, *fMoving off the Land II*, 2020, Still image from a video documenting the performance presented at Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid and commissioned by TBA21–Academy, © Gavin Brown Gallery, (Frame capture: the author) <https://vimeo.com/400389808>

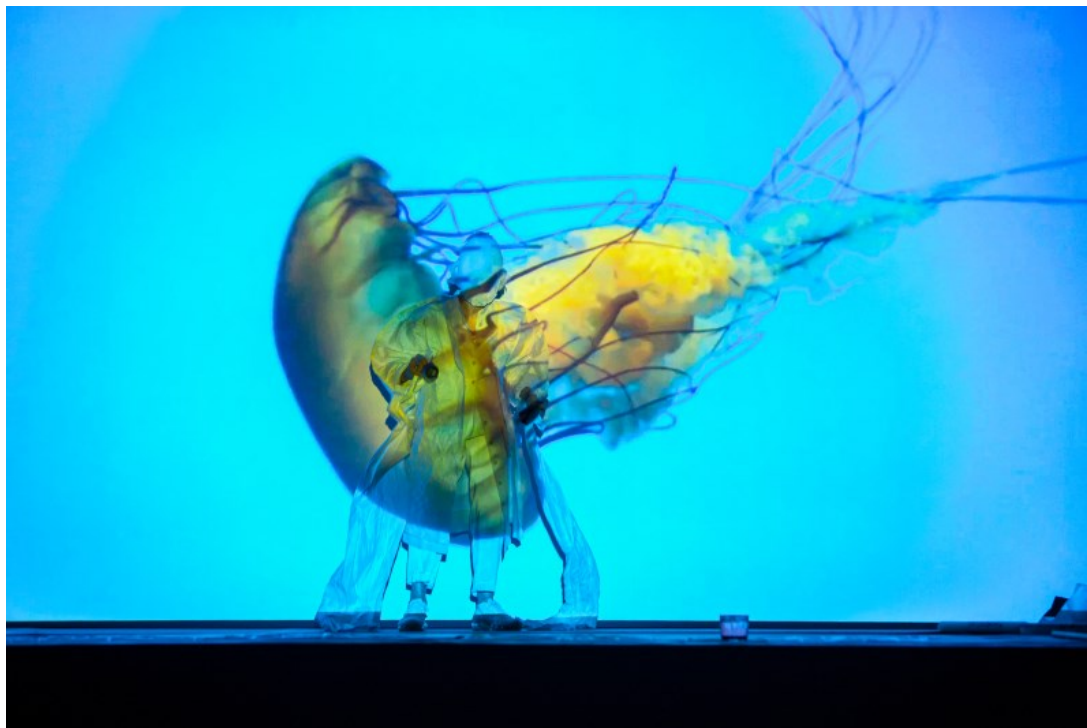


Fig.16 and 17: Cyborgian entanglements in Jonas' performance.

Fig.16 Joan Jonas, *Moving Off the Land II*, 2017, mixed media, photograph of the performance at the Sequences Art Festival, Reykjavík with María Huld Markan, digital photograph by Elisabet Daviosdotir, Courtesy Joan Jonas and Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New/Rome

Fig.17 Joan Jonas, *Moving off the Land II*, 2018, Still image from a video documenting the performance presented at the *Danspace Project*, NY (Frame capture: the author) <https://danspaceproject.org/2021/06/07/joan-jonas>

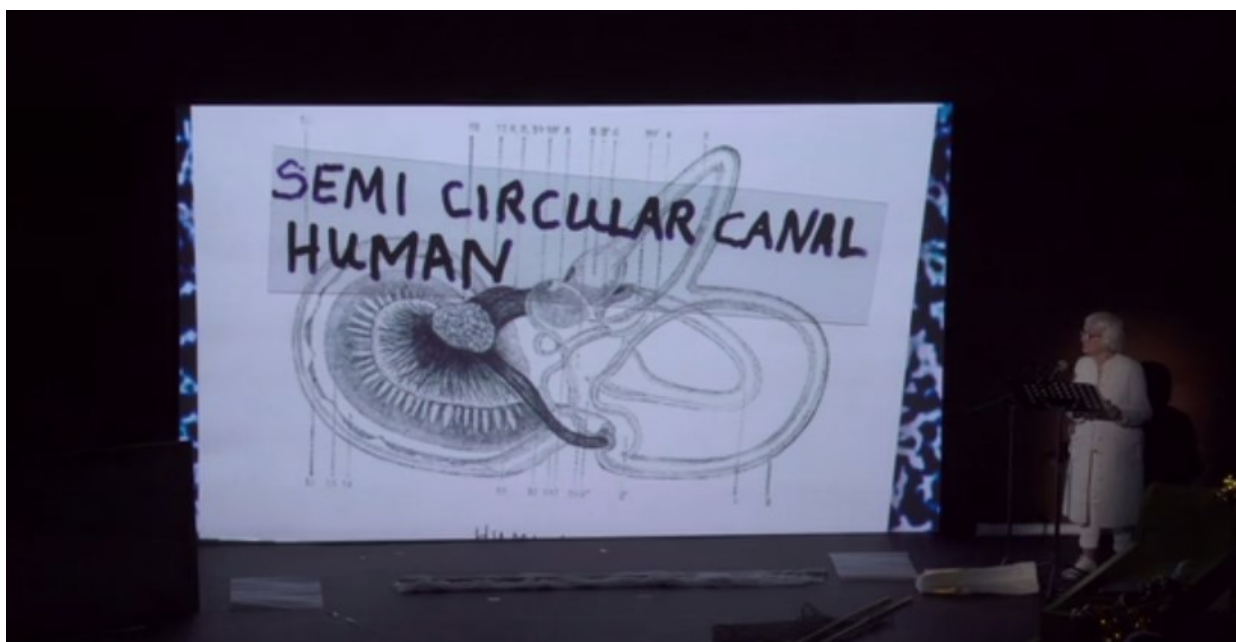
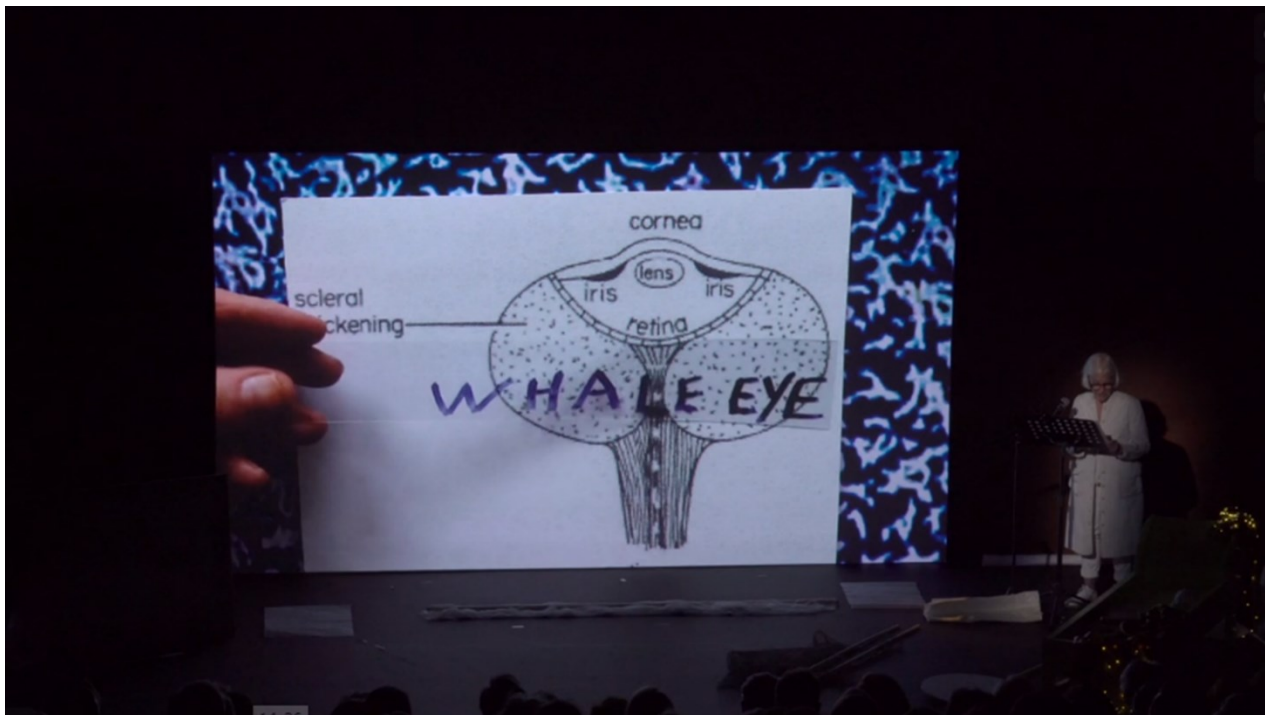


Fig.18: Jonas intervening on anatomical schema of whales.

Fig.18 Joan Jonas, *Moving off the Land*, Two video stills from the live performance, commissioned by TBA21–Academy and presented Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, 2020, Digital photograph,
© Gavin Brown Gallery <https://vimeo.com/400389808>

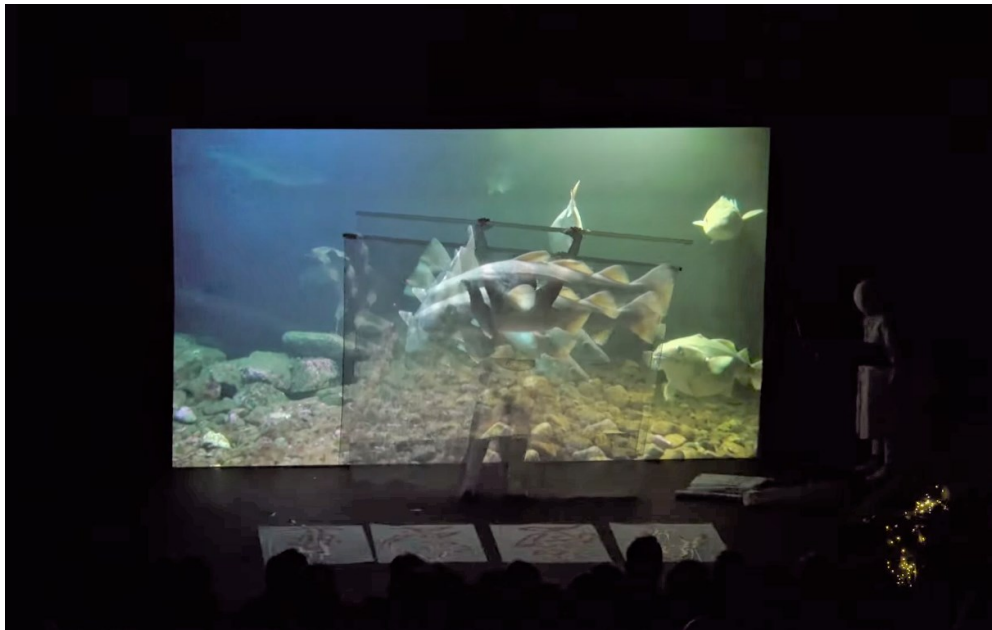


Fig.19 and 20: The performers' ghostly presence.

Fig.19 Joan Jonas, *Moving off the Land II*, 2020, video still documenting the performance presented at Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid and commissioned by TBA21–Academy, © Gavin Brown Gallery, (Frame capture: the author) <https://vimeo.com/400389808>

Fig.20 Joan Jonas, *Moving Off the Land*, 2018, Mixed media, Photograph of the performance at the *Danspace Project*, NY, digital photograph by Ian Douglas

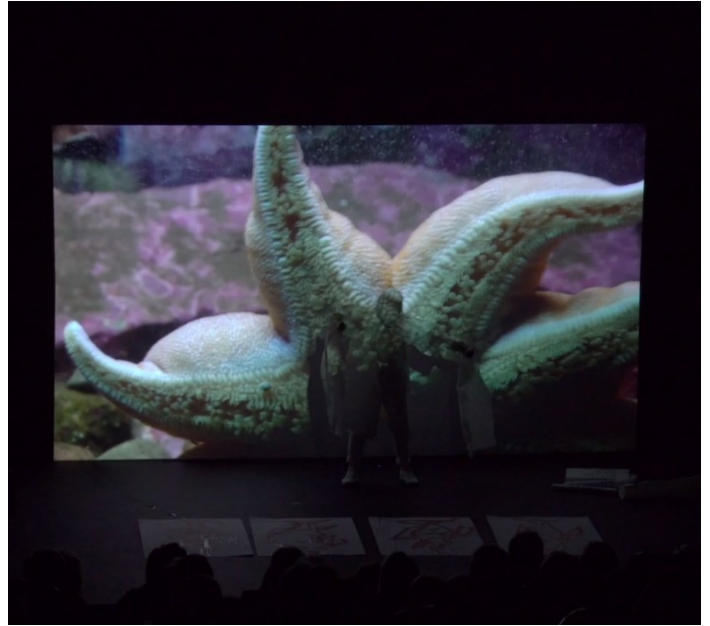


Fig.21.1, 21.2 and 21.3: Jonas performing with a starfish.

Fig. 21.1, 21.2 and 21.3: Joan Jonas, *Moving off the Land II*, 2020, video still documenting the performance presented at Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid and commissioned by TBA21–Academy, © Gavin Brown Gallery, (Frame capture: the author) <https://vimeo.com/400389808>



Fig.22 and 23: Contrasting winter and summer scenes.

Fig.22 Jacynthe Carrier, *brise glace soleil blanc*, 2016, video still, video loop, double HD video projection, 7 min 50, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, Courtesy of the artist, (frame capture : the author)

Fig.23 Jacynthe Carrier, *brise glace soleil blanc*, 2016, exhibition view, @ Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, © Paul Litherland.



Fig.24.1 and 24.2: The performers' immersion in the riverbanks.

Fig.24.1 and 24.2 Jacynthe Carrier, *brise glace soleil blanc*, 2016, Two video stills, video loop, double HD video projection, 7 min 50, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, Courtesy of the artist, frame capture : the author)



Fig.25 and 26: The performers' confrontation with the white walls.

Fig.25 Jacynthe Carrier, *#7 de la suite brise glace*, 2016, archival pigment print, 76 x 81 cm, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran

Fig.26 Jacynthe Carrier, *#3 de la suite brise glace*, 2016, archival pigment print, 76 x 88 cm, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran



Fig.27 and 28: The white plaster walls disintegrating into the coastal landscape

Fig.27 Jacynthe Carrier, *#2 de la suite brise glace*, 2016, archival pigment print, 91 x 84 cm, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran.

Fig.28 Jacynthe Carrier, *brise glace soleil blanc*, 2016, video still, video loop, double HD video projection, 7 min 50, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, Courtesy of the artist, (frame capture : the author).

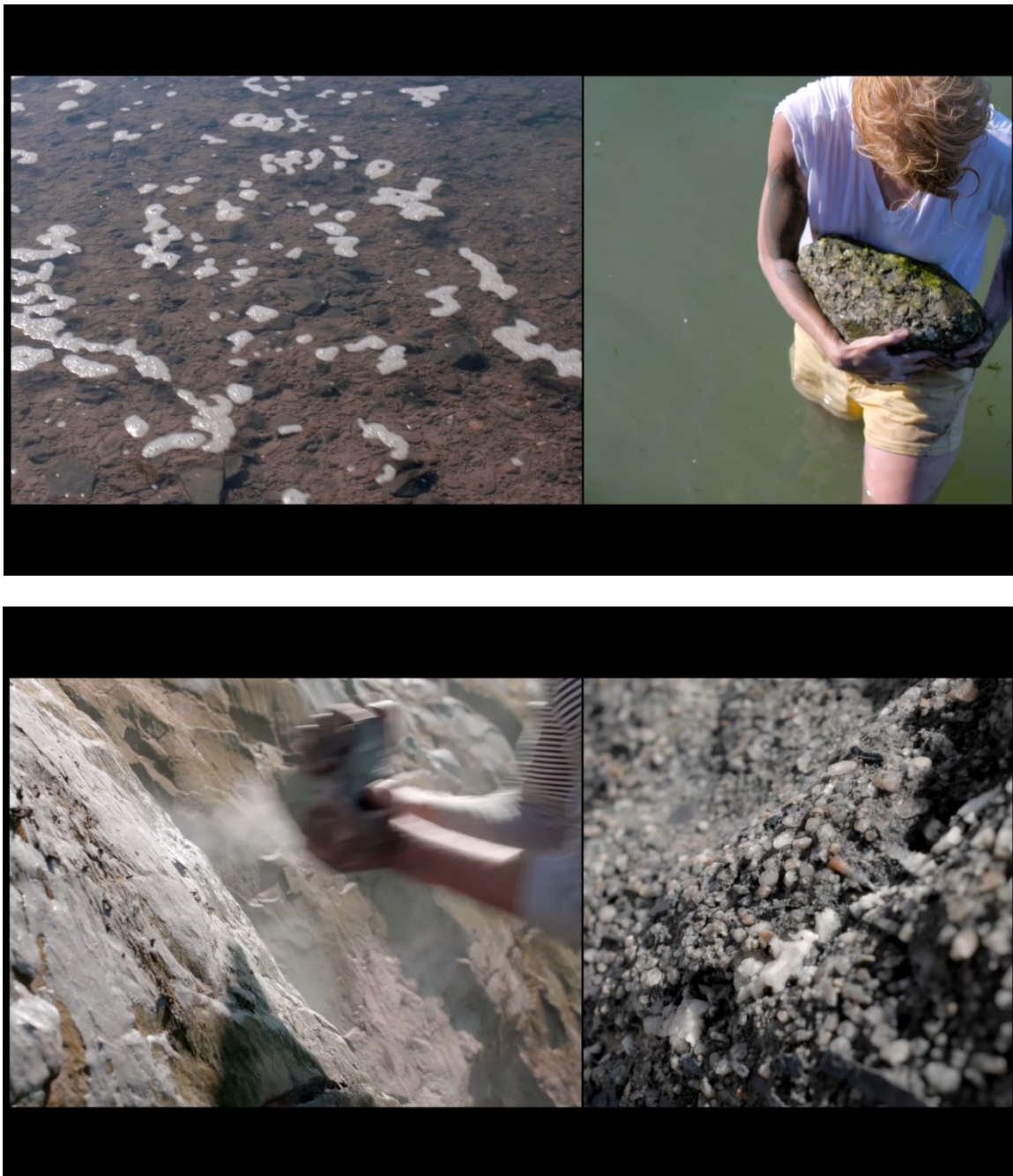


Fig.29.1 and 29.2: The performers' ruination of the rocky banks.

Fig.29.1 and 29.2 Jacynthe Carrier, *brise glace soleil blanc*, 2016, two video stills, video loop, double HD video projection, 7 min 50, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, Courtesy of the artist, (frame capture: the author).



Fig.30, 31, 32, and 33: The performers' labor compared to Sisyphus' work.

(From left to right)

Fig.30 Jacynthe Carrier, #6 de la suite *brise glace*, 2016, archival pigment print, 76 cm x 76 cm, edition of 3+ 2 AP, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran

Fig.31 Franz von Stuck, *Sisyphus*, around 1920, oil on canvas, 103 × 89 cm, Galerie Ritthaler,

Fig.32 Jacynthe Carrier, #4 de la suite *brise glace*, 2016, archival pigment print, 76 cm x 76 cm, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran

Fig.33 Titian, *Sisyphus*, 1548–49, oil on canvas, 237 cm x 216 cm, the Prado Museum, Madrid.



Fig.34 and 35: The sense of touch emphasized in the artwork

Fig.34 Jacynthe Carrier, *#2 de la suite brise glace*, 2016, archival pigment print, 81 cm x 81 cm, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran

Fig.35 Jacynthe Carrier, *brise glace soleil blanc*, 2016, video still, video loop, double HD video projection, 7 min 50, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, Courtesy of the artist, (frame capture: the author)



Fig.36.1 and 36.2: The performers' immersion in the coastal water

Fig.36.1 and 36.2 Jacynthe Carrier, *brise glace soleil blanc*, 2016, two video stills, video loop, double HD video projection, 7 min 50, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, courtesy of the artist, (frame capture: the author).



Fig.37.1 and 37.2: The motif of the punctured white wall

Fig.37.1 and 37.2 Jacynthe Carrier, *brise glace soleil blanc*, 2016, two video stills, video loop, double HD video projection, 7 min 50, Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, courtesy of the artist, (frame capture: the author).

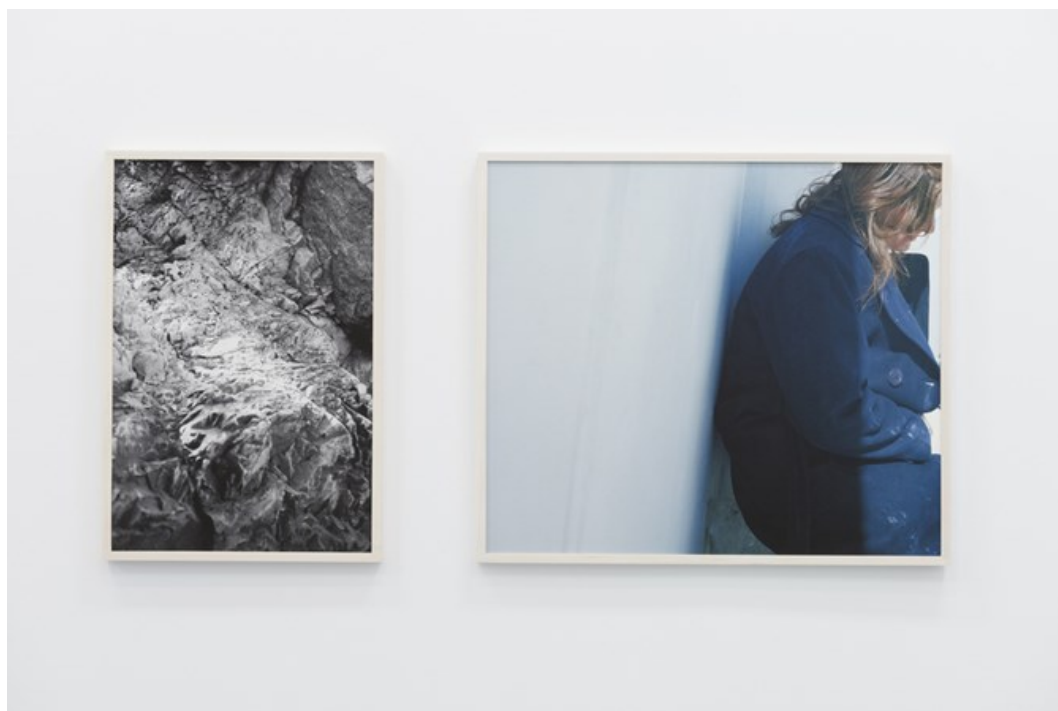


Fig.38.1 and 38.2: The visual continuity between the series of photographs and the gallery's white wall.

Fig.38.1 and 38.2 Jacynthe Carrier, *brise glace soleil blanc*, 2016, series of photographs and video installation, two exhibition views at the Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran, digital photograph by Paul Litherland.

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