

Artists and Maritime Technology

A digital seminar series curated by Gabriel Gee (Franklin University, TETI Group), with the Center for the Art and Architectural History of Port Cities “La Capraia”

Going out to sea was long a perilous affair. Whether to secure access to fishing grounds and trade routes, to satisfy curiosity about the distant and the unknown, or simply to enjoy a day out on the deck in choppy waters, maritime spaces required specialized skills and technologies. Cultured craftsmanship gave communities the means to travel through the uncertain undulating expanses. Through increasing political and cultural connections, and with the development of commerce across the globe, the ingenuity that informed modes of transportation was further applied to the design of ports, which served as coastal interfaces between land and sea. In this vein, maritime technologies have introduced new forms in land-based societies, ranging from communication methods to transportation of goods; on the other hand, maritime technologies have channelled new mechanical inventions designed for land purposes – for example, the steam engine – which are then applied to specific maritime necessities.

In relation to such technological activities, artists have occupied varied positions over time. Considered as visual and material producers and innovators, artists could take part in the development of maritime technology; as such our line of enquiry can focus on the role and understanding of craftsmanship, as well as the relation between art and science, in particular that of the mechanical arts – as known and theorised in Western culture, but more generally approached through physics and engineering in different geographical contexts. As providers of visual materials, artists were also mediators of technological progress, representing the changing nature of material maritime forms. Representation, though, must not be seen as mere passive duplication. The depictions of maritime infrastructure contributed first to its understanding, second to its critical discursive appropriation, which can in turn inform material processes. As agents of ‘imagination’, artists partake in a cognitive capture of the world, which can lead to its renewed invention. This research seminar on ‘artists and maritime technology’ aims to bring together art historians and artists to consider past and present relations between artistic practices and maritime technology, which we see as a strategic nexus of historical and contemporary cultural transformation.

All seminars begin at 10am US Central / 11am US Eastern / 4pm UK / 5pm Central European

INFO

The series takes place on Zoom:

Meeting ID 895 0056 3290

Password Maritime

For questions write to lacapraia@gmail.com

1. TO MEASURE (7 April 2023)

Nicola Foster Artists, *Visual Technology and Navigation*

It is generally accepted that from Plato to Descartes vision, at least in European thought, was regarded as 'the noblest of all the senses'. However, it was interpreted in the context of mimesis, that is intellectual vision was perceived as superior to actual vision which was understood as an attempt to imitate the mind's vision. Visual artists sought to overcome this problem through a variety of technological and cultural solutions. It is in this context that perspective was developed and a wide range of theoretical and technological approaches were developed. During the Renaissance these were further helped by developments in navigational instruments.

The paper will discuss early developments in art which helped develop the concept and technology of visuality. However, in modernity, artists and philosophers moved away from art attempting to visualise a 'higher truth' and argue that art itself constructs the visible. In this context, the visible was no longer prioritised. As digital technology developed the visual became more complex and moved away from the debate on mimesis. The digital, developed in the context of theoretical debates and practices of artists amongst others, introduces very different approaches to the visual, as yet to be developed.

About: Dr. Nicola Foster is currently leading Visual Arts research students at two Universities, both are close to major sea ports: Solent University Southampton, and the University of Suffolk. Coming from an academic background in art practice (MA Goldsmiths College), Continental philosophy (MA & PhD Essex) and history of art (BA & MA Essex University), Nicola became actively involved in the debate that led to the establishment of 'practice-based' research in the UK. Nicola was a member of the Editorial Board of Women's Philosophy Review (1998-2004) and the Editorial Board of the European Journal of Artistic Research (2011-2016). Her publications include books and journal articles on global contemporary art practice and curatorial works including exhibition history, often with a focus on gender and race.

Chang Chih Chung, *The Catastrophic Coastlines Shaped by Others - Relocation, War and Shipwreck*

In this presentation, the artist/cultural researcher will focus on his research subjects and related art practices from recent years. He uses waterfront environments around Taiwan Strait as a metaphor to explore the organic yet fluid processes of geopolitics, locality, and identity construction. The presentation will showcase two project-based artworks, *Marshal of the Sea* and *Darling*. These artworks respectively explore the "Hongmaogang (Ginger-haired) Harbor Relocation Program" and the island fortification/reformation of Matsu Archipelago amid "White History", which leads to his current project *Between Submergence* referred to Hendrick Hamel, so-called "Dutch Marco Polo".

About: Chang ChihChung regards ocean as a worldview reflecting the current terrestrial civilization of Anthropocene, and regards water as a medium penetrating everything from the inner to the outer worlds and embodying the unstable state of transition, flow and anti-subjectivity corresponding to his homeland Taiwan under subtropical monsoon climate. His art deals with those rapid-changing environments like ship, island, water as well as port, in which he tries to unveil the universal experiences and grey areas inside the tensions amid human, civilization and nature constantly shaping each other.

2. TO PROPEL (14 April 2023)

Alan Dunn, *Hear Us O Lord*

'Hear Us O Lord' is a network of artists, musicians, poets and students that has been meeting at sea between Liverpool and Isle of Man. They have been unpacking some short stories from Wirral-born Malcolm Lowry (1909-57) that first considered the impact industrialisation was having on oceans. Lowry used the IoM as a model of what was possible with increased environmental awareness and the network has met with the IoM Government, recycling agencies, beach cleaners and local bands to gather material for podcasts that, with 85% of the island marine territory, include underwater recordings by Chris Watson. See www.malcolmlowry.com

About: Dr Alan Dunn (b. 1967, Glasgow) studied at Glasgow School of Art and School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He was curator of Bellgrove Station Billboard Project (Glasgow 1990-91), lead artist on community internet TV project tenantspin (FACT, Liverpool 2001-7) and completed his PhD on sound art in 2014. Through these projects Dunn has developed collaborative content with Bill Drummond, Douglas Gordon, Yoko Ono, Philip Jeck and Bikini Kill, including projects with ICA, Tate Britain, Channel 4 and BBC Radio. He lives and works in Liverpool and is a Reader in Fine Art at Leeds Beckett University. See www.alandunn67.co.uk

Mona Annette Schieren, *Draft for a proposition for a cargo sail shipping cooperative* (AT)

The best transport is the one that never takes place. The best goods are those not transported. Every transport costs not only money and adds to the Co2 footprint. Colonial violence and "logic" still largely structure global transports. Nevertheless, transoceanic contact zones produce encounters, cultural exchange, and commodities that humans of the Global South and North, at least, don't dare to go without today. Coffee, chocolate, spices only grow in tropical climates and microcosms. Hops, wheat, and barley, for instance, better thrive in more temperate climate zones and latitudes. In planetary environments we further need milder transatlantic and -pacific travelling facilities than airplanes or cruise ships for travelers. In this contribution we share our first lines of thinking in this scientific-artistic search for maritime technology that nurtures all human and more than human participants equally in this voyage.

About: Dr. Mona Schieren is Professor of Transcultural Art Histories at the University of the Arts Bremen. Before her studies of art history in Hamburg/Nice, she received a diploma from the University of Economics and Social Science, Hamburg. Topics of her current research on transcultural studies in modern and contemporary art include history and theory of body practices/technologies, history politics, trauma theory, social infrastructure. Her book "Transcultural Translation in the Oeuvre of Agnes Martin" was awarded the CAA International Publication Prize. She was research fellow of the DFG Scientific Network Entangled Histories of Art and Migration: Forms, Visibilities, Agents (2018–22).

3. TO STORE AND CARRY (21 April 2023)

Antje Kemp, *The Wardian Case*

The invention of cargo containers revolutionized global trade not simply in transportation but also in the port cities and hinterlands. Also, the development of so-called Wardian cases named after the English physician and botany enthusiast Nathaniel Baghewat Ward (1791–1868) was no less profound for changing landscapes as it enabled carrying plant species over oceans. Based on the historical use of the Wardian Case and its reception in contemporary art, the talk aims to show the connection of science and maritime technologies to the commercialization of plants. It thus sheds light on a fragment of the history of colonial exploitation and its long-lasting impact.

About: Antje Kempe is an art historian and senior researcher at the University of Greifswald. She works on a "Shared Heritage" project at the Interdisciplinary Research Centre Baltic Sea Region (IFZO). Her research interests include ecological art history, focusing on garden and landscape architecture and related artistic practices. Her recent project "Liquid Environments" is dedicated to exploring the role of seawater as co-author in landscape architecture in early modern gardens up to the present day.

Anna Lascari & Ilias Marmaras, *Cargonauts: a game in progress*

For centuries shipping ports have been a key marker of imperial power. This is no less the case in the age of supply chain capitalism, where standardization enables – in principle – the integration of global spaces through the infrastructure of containerization and enterprise management software. The imperial infrastructure of logistical apparatuses – ports, railways, warehouses, software – inspire unforeseen acts of sabotage, which gives rise to an informal economy of scrap metal work. The subject of labour escapes regimes of measure special to software operations designed to extract value through the calculation of movement on global scales. The borders of the concession within which port activity is governed begin to unravel. *Cargonauts* envisions a logistical world of infrastructure, of transport economies, of zones and concessions, of nocturnal possibilities for sabotage and revenge.

About: Anna Lascari's practice encompasses audiovisual installations, virtual environments, 3D animation, sculpture, video and drawings, as well as archival management methods for the creation of projects and spaces of participation, knowledge and memory. She has exhibited internationally in venues such as: EMST, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; Caracas 1st Biennale, Venezuela; Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; the Goethe Institute, Ankara; vkunst, Frankfurt and Onasis Cultural Centre, Athens She has presented her interactive projects in venues, conferences and universities including: Documenta 14, Public Programs, Athens; Dutch Art Institute, Netherlands; Transmediale, Berlin; Automatic Transmission, Greece.

About: Ilias Marmaras is a media artist born in Athens. He studied Plastic Arts, Urbanism and Philosophy at the university Paris VIII. He is a co-founder of the Media Arts collective Personal Cinema. (<http://personalcinema.org/>) He works as documentary director, game designer and researcher.

Cora Piantoni, *PORT! WORKERS! STRIKE!*

Piantoni's research in different European port cities such as Gothenburg and Hamburg focuses on the changing working conditions and the ongoing protests of the dockworkers for their rights. How does a protest start and how is it organized? How do you create solidarity and a sense of community? She is interviewing members of the dockworkers' union about their working conditions and rights, about protests in the past until today and the support they get from the port community, from citizens and other unions. Their actual work, the loading and unloading of containers on vessels, is visualized by the dockworkers' hands and the sign language they use to communicate when moving the containers.

About: Cora Piantoni lives in Munich and Zurich as an artist, photographer and filmmaker. She studied at the Art Academy in Munich and in the photography department at the University of Art and Design in Zurich. Her work has been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions. Piantoni has been awarded various prizes, grants and studio residencies in port cities such as Gdansk, Genoa, Porto and Venice. More detailed information: www.piantoni.de

4. To communicate (28 April 2023)

Cliona Harmey, *The Lighthouse, the radio, the AIS*

In this presentation Cliona Harmey will use her own work to interrogate how maritime space has been shaped by a range of innovations in communication technologies including the lighthouse, the signal lamp, the radio alongside modern live tracking technologies such as AIS (automatic identification system).

About: Cliona Harmey is an artist who works primarily with technology, exploring the politics inherent in socio-technical systems using material exploration and practice to try to understand /reveal their logics. Her work is often inspired by historical narratives and historically resonant spaces. She works at a variety of scales from public art using live shipping data (Dublin Ships) to smaller works for gallery/publication and off-site exhibition/event.

David Jacques, *Drillship walkthrough*

In contributing to the 'to communicate' seminar I would like to draw upon a recent is a montage video / animation work titled 'Drillship Walkthrough' that exploits the familiar on-line format of the virtual 'walk through'. The Narrator of which is the disembodied voice of a Ships' Radio Operator - now an all but obsolete role. Alternating between allegory and reconstruction, she offers a mythopoeic take on the last days of the Shell Oil Company's ill-fated 2011 venture into the Artic Ocean with their mobile rig 'Kulluk'.

About: David Jacques is a multi-media artist based in Liverpool. His practice involves developing narratives borne out of socio-political situations past and present. These often configure as conflated, surreal tropes that visualise the subject through processes of detournement.

5. To FASTEN (5 May 2023)

Charlotte Gould, *Made in Scotland from Girders. Shipbuilding, waterfront revitalization, and public art in Glasgow*

Public art has been hailed as a central instrument of culture-led regeneration in Glasgow since the 1980s and the city's successful bid for the European City of Culture title. I wish to look into the many works commissioned in particular by Clydeport to contribute to the placemaking of the developing Glasgow Harbour Commercial District where large tracts of land along the Clyde have been transferred into private ownership since 1992. The way in which these works reference the shipyards and steelwork, or the very fact that many are made of steel, has now long been a way of fastening Glasgow's development to its maritime past.

About: Charlotte Gould is Professor of British studies at Université Paris Nanterre where she is a member of the research group CREA. The focus of her research is contemporary British art, as well as public art commissioning since the nineteen-eighties. Recent publications include *Artangel and Financing British Art. Adapting to Social and Economic Change* (Routledge, 2019) and *British Art and the Environment. Changes, Challenges, and Responses Since the Industrial Revolution* (co-edited with Sophie Mesplède and published by Routledge, 2021). She is a member of SAES, of the Association of Art Historians (AAH), and of the Public Statues and Sculpture Association (PSSA).

Andre Tavares, *To what extent can fish produce architecture?*

To what extent can fish produce architecture? This presentation sets out to explore the relationships between marine environments and terrestrial landscapes and assessing the ecological impact of fishing constructions and the natural resources they depend upon. The focus is on the North Atlantic—its shores housing diverse architectural cultures and its waters home to a wealth of fish species—and follows a time frame that runs from the industrialization of fisheries in the early 19th century to the full globalization of the industry at the end of the 20th.

About: André Tavares (Porto, 1976) is an architect and holds a doctorate from the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Porto. Since 2006 has been founding director of Dafne Editora, an independent publishing house based in Porto. With Diogo Seixas Lopes he was editor-in-chief of the magazine *Jornal Arquitectos* (2013-2015) and in 2016 chief cocurator of the 4th Lisbon Architecture Triennale, *The Form of Form*. He was a research fellow at the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture of the ETH Zurich, where he wrote his last book *Vitruvius Without Text* (gta Verlag, 2022). He is the principal investigator of the project *Fishing Architecture* funded through a European Research Council consolidator grant