

THE ICE IS LEAVING

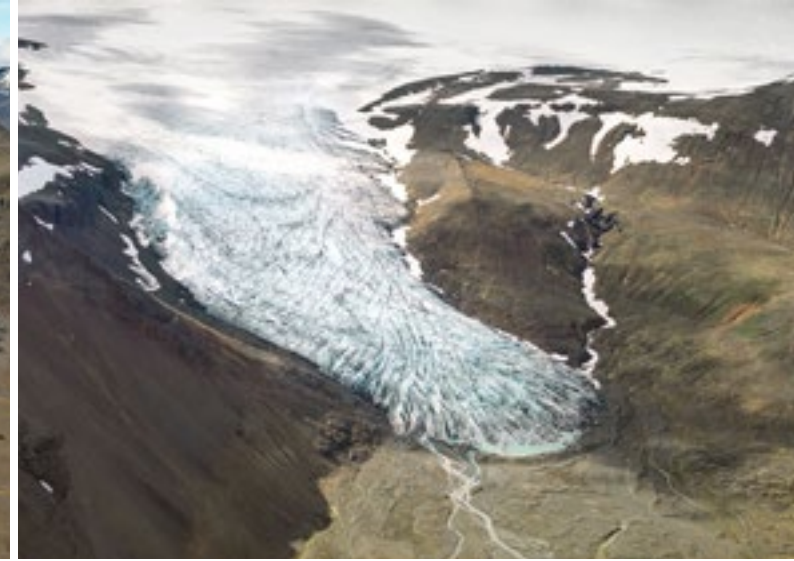
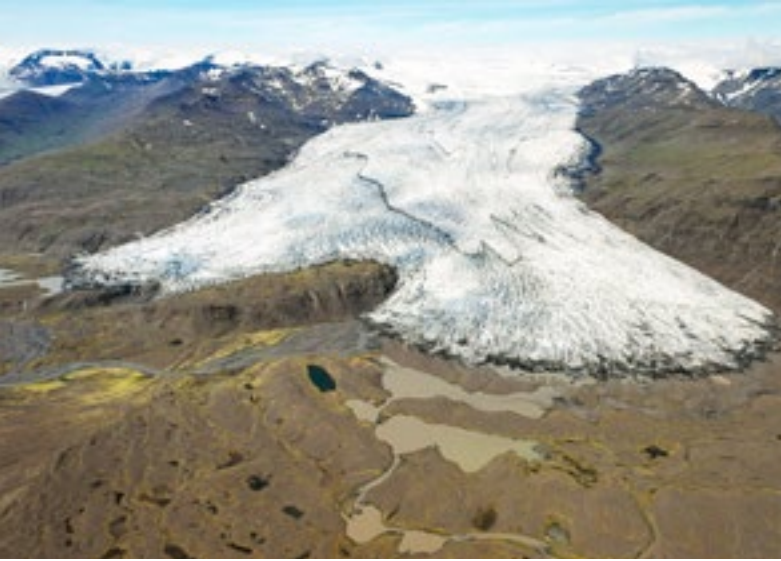
OLAFUR ELIASSON



These are the words of Iceland's Prime Minister, as climate change begins to seep beneath the country's glaciers and turn them to water. In 2018, in the midst of the urban jungle, twelve boulders of ice travelled all the way from Greenland to reside in a circle outside the Tate Modern, until the day they fully melted. The circle formation resembled the ticking imminence of a clock, the intimate space of a campfire, a little parliament of ice having to make an important decision. The installation 'Ice Watch' stemmed from a collaboration between artist Olafur Eliasson and scientist Minik Rosing, planted firstly in Copenhagen then in Paris and London, to raise awareness of climate change. The blocks had been cast off and harvested from a fjord near Nuuk, where they had already been lost from the ice sheet, before being sent to London as the testimonies of melting arctic ice. During their brief decaying life, many citizens paid a visit, touched and engaged with them in many different ways. The primary aim of this installation, in the artist's words, was to contextualise the cold facts of the climate crisis in a public space and generate small physical dialogues, literally breaking the ice that lies between our disengaged attitude and the imminence of the issue. The clarity of the ice itself, in fact, was used as a raw material to communicate through crackling sounds, a wet surface or a luminous slab what is often translated into a science of numbers. By rediscovering the beauty of what is being lost, we can move empathy and create positive engagement.

*Ice Watch by Olafur Eliasson and Minik Rosing
Supported by Bloomberg
Installation: Bankside, outside Tate Modern, 2018
© 2018 Olafur Eliasson*





Olafur Eliasson
The glacier melt series 1999/2019, 2019, detail (Fláajökull)
 30 C-prints, each 31 x 91 x 2.4 cm
 Courtesy of the artist; neugerriemschneider, Berlin; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York / Los Angeles © 2019 Olafur Eliasson

Olafur Eliasson
The glacier melt series 1999/2019, 2019, detail (Rótarjökull)
 30 C-prints, each 31 x 91 x 2.4 cm
 Courtesy of the artist; neugerriemschneider, Berlin; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York / Los Angeles © 2019 Olafur Eliasson

Olafur Eliasson's artistic commitment to the breaking landscape however stretches further back into the past. In 1999, the artist had captured several dozen glaciers in Iceland, to document this natural phenomenon in a series called 'the glacier series'. The awe-inspiring geology of the country and the greatness of the glaciers appeared eternal and untouchable by the futility of human time. Twenty years later, Eliasson decided to return and capture the same glaciers again, from the same perspective. The contrast was dramatic: in fact, he decided to bring it together in a collection of photographs entitled 'the glacier melt series 1999/2019', where thirty pairs of images speak of the silent yet present tragedy of global warming. The same immobile and solid glaciers from twenty years earlier had moved throughout time, some even becoming difficult to find again. Although aware of the incumbent warming, the artist recounts the bewildering shock of being faced with the fragility of decaying glacier ice which, unlike sea ice, once melted is gone forever. In these photographs, the impact of human actions is measured against an unexpected extent of environmental change: they make it clear that our actions have the power to move mountains or dissolve

glaciers. The bridge between the twenty years that separate each couple of glaciers is represented by our shared responsibility: the consequences of our choices are made felt through the landscape that surrounds us. Every lost glacier represents the blindness of human activity which refuses to open its eyes and offer its hand. Every saved glacier speaks for the triumph of hope and the turning of humans into custodians.

In one of Eliasson's latest projects, Earth Speakr, the fundamental communicators of ecological change become the children: through an app and interactive website which makes use of augmented reality, they are able to record their ideas regarding the wellbeing of our planet and share them with others. Through this portal, adults in particular are invited to listen to the voices of empowered kids and open themselves to receive the message of those who will be directly affected by the climate struggles we are already starting to face today. In this way, we are able to reflect ourselves in the children of the present, innocent and hopeful, as they incarnate an essential antidote to our glacial perspectives.

The survival of the ice, along with that of life on earth, can only represent one thing: that the bridge between knowledge and action has been crossed in the shoes of responsibility. The day we will have redefined our spatial contract and included within our moral landscape the very grounds we stand upon, will be the day we can offer our true legacy of hope to the generations to come.

Olafur Eliasson
The reflected polar reversal, 2014
 partially silvered glass sphere, acrylic paint (black), stainless steel, paint (black)
 150 x 36,5 x 36 cm
 glass sphere: ø 32 cm
 unique
 © Olafur Eliasson
 photo by Jens Ziehe, Berlin
 courtesy of QiaoZhibing collection and neugerriemschneider, Berlin



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ANTROPOCENO! : A CONVERSATION

CHRISTOPH H. MÜLLER AND EDUARDO MAKAROFF

Taken from a conversation between Müller & Makaroff from Gotan Project, this interview presents the ideological backdrop to their new project Antropoceno!, where music and science come together in an urgent call for action. In 1998, the Swiss and Argentinian musicians met in Paris, where they started creating music inspired by tango and intertwined with rhythms from all over the world. In their new project the merging of folkloric and electronic music still survives, entangled with the voices, languages and music of many other 'messengers' who collaborate in this comprehensively human project.

The Anthropocene is a particular historical moment through which we are living: humans have taken over nature and created an imbalance which is destroying the soil, polluting the air and sea, and killing the biodiversity that surrounded us. We are the only mammal capable of inflicting such dangers but, at the same time, the only one who is able to change this. Antropoceno! is a hymn to the bright future that we must choose and fight for.

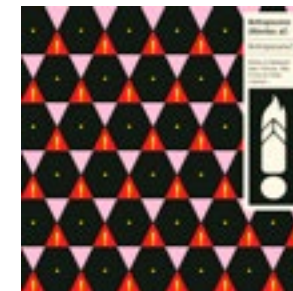
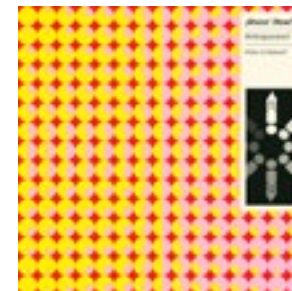
<https://antropoceno.earth>



Logo credit: Max Rompo



Credit Renaud Corlourer



Covers credit: Max Rompo



Eduardo Makaroff: So, what is music to you, Christoph? I will give you half an hour to answer, no more.

Christoph H. Müller: Music is my life. It's important for Antropoceno! because we use it as a weapon. It has a sort of power which we use to transmit in a creative, poetic or musical way the data that we have read or know regarding what's going on right now in the Anthropocene, the era of the humans.

EM: I agree with what you say. Music is part of life on earth, it is part of the universe. Physically and scientifically talking, music is made by waves that expand in the air. When these are regular and isochronous, as they are called, they create musical sounds. It is an activity as old as humanity itself. I believe this is one of the deepest connections between music and the earth, and in our project we try to influence people's awareness of this. As you say, I think that the majority of women and men on this earth aren't aware of the Anthropocene, but it is crucial to understand what is happening and how the human species is provoking such catastrophic changes. The most recent is the pandemic, which is part of the Anthropocene too. It isn't simply a coincidence that this infected us, it is fruit of the productive and expansive action of the human species over virgin

places. Science tells us that most epidemics come from animals we breed in captivity or intensive farming. We can't fight this through a vaccine, as this would counter only the effects: we must fight against the cause itself, which is the destruction of biodiversity.

CH: That is very true. And in case this virus came from a lab, then it is even more anthropogenic. I just want to add one thing to this Eduardo: as artists, we simply believe that everybody should start seeing what she or he can do on an individual level, and in order for this to happen, people must be aware of the fact they have to do something. When we became aware of it, we decided to do what we know best and that is music: we are no politicians or scientists, so we hope that through music we can at least try to change the vision in people's minds. It is important because humans have a tendency to put their head in the sand when something seems bad, just like small children covering their eyes. This simple reaction makes us believe that if we don't see the problem, it doesn't exist anymore. We cannot pretend we are able to provoke real change, but if we don't move it is even worse. So I really think that everyone has the potential to put a stone on the building of consciousness in their own way.

EM: Science is always our source of inspiration in this process. We want to make music that provokes emotions in others and in ourselves, this is always the first thing we look for. As the most known thing in the Anthropocene is climate change, we take this varied scientific knowledge and translate it into music. Many don't know that life on earth is 3.8 billion years old and we are currently living through its sixth extinction, as in the last 40 years 60% of animals and plants have disappeared. We are not predicting this: it is a fact that has already happened. Within this framework, rather than looking at the tragic side we should search for the optimism of hope, which we try to do in the most empathetic and humorous way particularly in one of our songs.

CM: We believe science is fundamental, of course. However, even if it gives us all the data, science is never 'the all-knowing truth', it is more of a work in progress. Technology can give us quick fixes, but in the end these will always be short-term solutions to a problem and more will appear. It's like a hydra: you cut one head off, three others will grow. For this reason, a mental shift has to happen in parallel with the scientific understanding of what is happening. We try to understand and communicate the data without simplifying too much, and through art we are able to fill those gaps where even science has no answers.

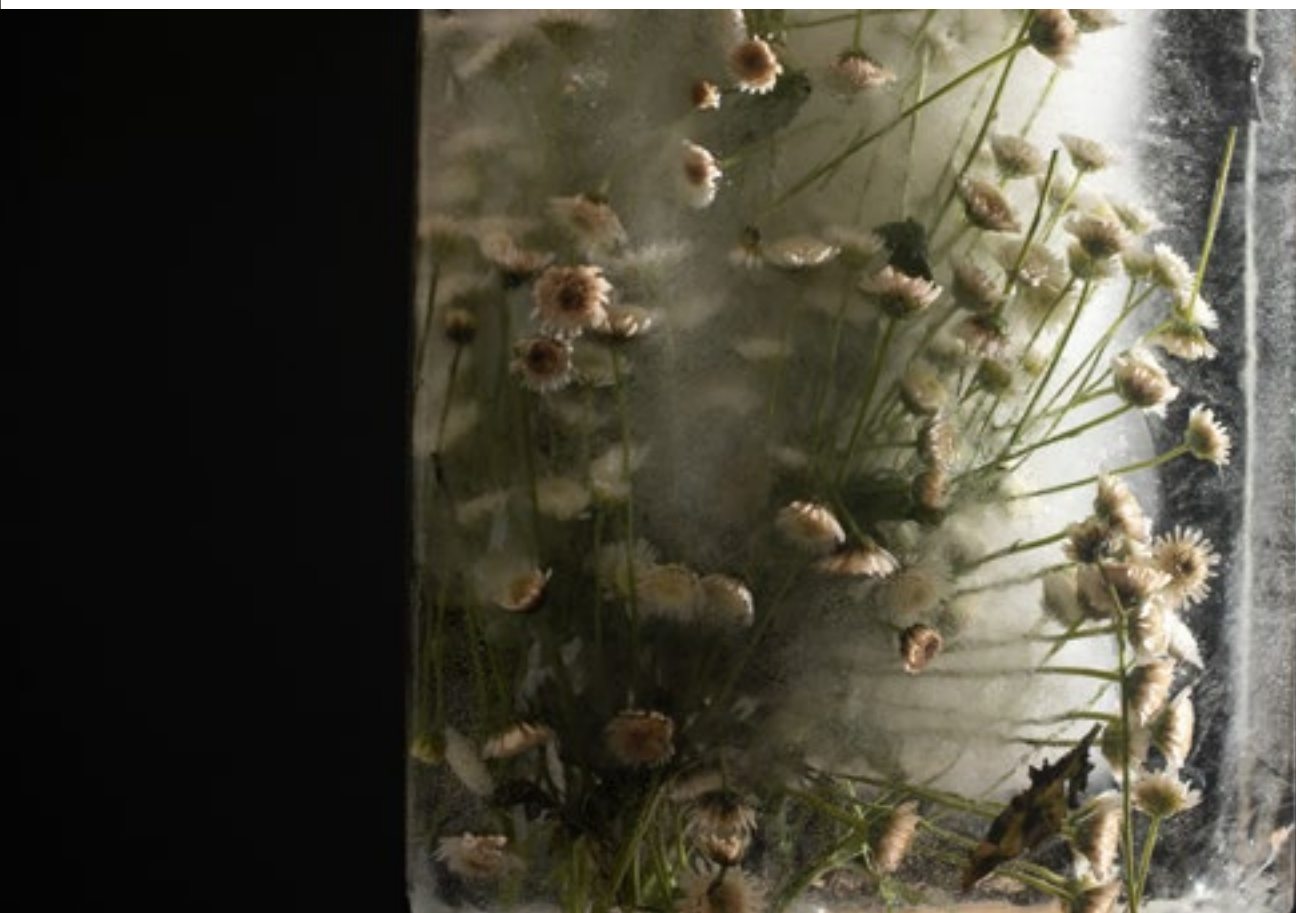
EM: I agree with you, art is another way of approaching and analysing reality, as an approximation of it. With art, in fact, we are not looking for the truth, we are looking for beauty. The true beauty, if you want. I think that with

poetry, art, music we can understand reality, and then transform it.

CM: Actually, if you think about it, many of the things we see in nature we consider as beauty, whilst for the animals or plants who employ them, they are functional. There is always a connection between beauty and function. We believe in the power of beauty to also have a connection to what is happening, which could be something like a change of mind or awareness. Beauty is a good device not to manipulate, but to attract and gain attention.

EM: Let me talk about our music though, because you and I started to experiment with tango music at first, particularly with our past musical group Gotan Project. In fact, for many years we were working with the material of tango, transforming it with electronics and technology. Tango is a musical genre native to the Rio de la Plata, the natural border between Argentina and Uruguay. We have always been inspired by the folklore of Argentinian provinces and Latin American music more generally. Now with Antropoceno! we continue to follow a musical line with us for a long time, always in the sonorities of tango, which has somehow contributed to the whole Latin American music scene.

CM: That's true. What I always liked about tango and American music more generally, is that it is always a mix. It's born from the encounter of people brought over as slaves from Africa, European colonists and the indigenous peoples who lived on the land. Out of this forced meeting, all of the beautiful musical styles that you can find from the north to the south of America were created, the most



known being probably jazz or bluegrass music. However, I think this is much richer in South and Central America, where you have so many diverse rhythms and styles. Tango is one of them. A lot of people might think of it as a very specific or indigenous music, but it is fundamentally an expression of this encounter. That's what I like about it: this music is universal, a melting pot in itself. It is a very interesting material to work with and, as I originally started with synthetic and electronic music, with no instruments, I was quickly attracted to the very contrary, which is roots music. It's similar when we talk about how technology can create or develop new things, but never forgetting the roots. That's the beauty of trying to make things work together, even though they may appear in conflict at the start. I'll be honest with you, sometimes it doesn't really work out, but when it does it's like when human beings work together: something bigger can come out of it.

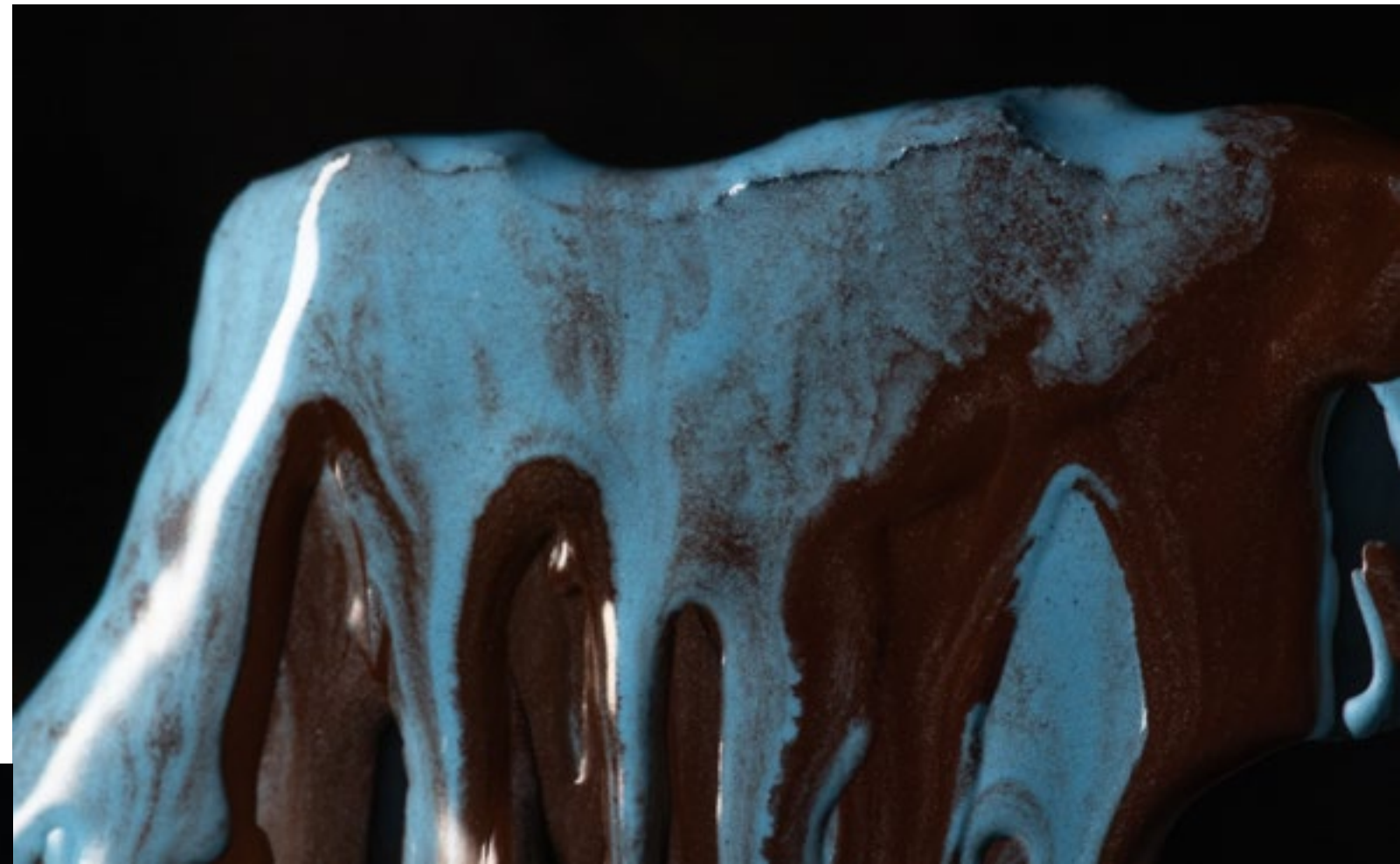
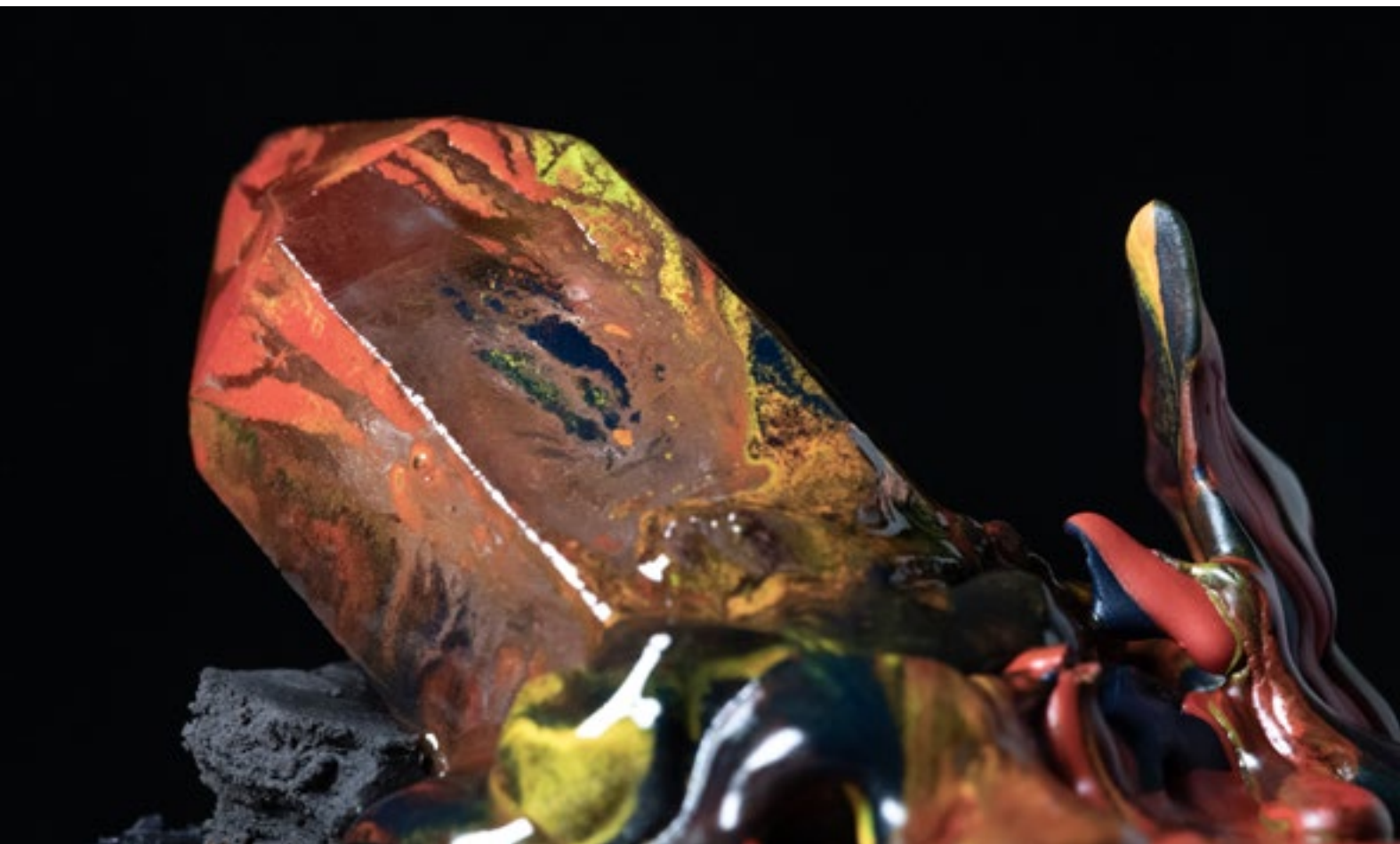
EM: Exactly, every animal is a little system of symbiosis. But it even comes down to the single individual. You, for example, are not just you: you are you, along with millions and millions of bacteria that live with you. That is what scientists today call a 'biont', the being of a human or any other mammal which is made up of all the bacteria and little creatures that we have inside us living in cooperation. This is why the other law of the jungle is cooperation.

CM: Yes, we are a sort of ecosystem ourselves.

EM: Speaking of humans, we are part of nature but we

are very special animals. Ours species has adapted to all sorts of climate: from the polar cold, to the warmth of the desert, to the forests or the mountains, moved by a very adventurous spirit which has even allowed us to reach outer space and the depths of the ocean. We have an intelligence which is able to deeply transform nature, at the risk of destroying not simply the earth, but the only ecosystem within which life is possible. We may disappear along with many other mammals, just like the dinosaurs 66 million years ago after the fifth extinction, but the earth will keep living: we are part of this system.

CM: Yes, in the last hundreds of years, humankind has sort of alienated itself from nature. There are still people living in the virgin forests in India or Brazil, but most of us now live in cities, detached from nature. I believe the problem is that nature has no rights in the eyes of humans, it is only a source that provides oxygen, water, food... everything we need to survive. Nonetheless, it has no rights: it only has duties. Even a company, which is just a human invention, has rights and laws. Nature, on the contrary, has nothing: no rights, nobody to speak or defend it. It makes sense to say that nature should have rights so people can start defending it on a political basis... we cannot just take and take and take. There has to be a more integrated and balanced connection, and as artists I believe our work always has this political side somehow.



EM: Everything is political. I think change also has to be political. We must learn to use politics in the noble way in which humans organise and relate to each other. But I agree with you Christoph, it is quite complicated because if you don't mind about politics, then politics will come to you, and even if you say you don't care about politics, that is still political. I think that in music, many more artists are going to deal with the problems of our times. I find it quite strange that everybody, not just artists, is not talking about this crisis and the problem of the Anthropocene. What catastrophe are we waiting for now? I find it unconceivable that we are not on the streets, uniting rather than competing, to solve a problem that involves the whole of humanity. For women, men, homosexuals, rich, poor, young, old, African, Chinese, European... all the world is implicated in this, it is the general human interest.

CM: And that's the true strength of our species: working together is what made the success of homo sapiens. People not knowing each other, but still working together, is part of our evolutionary success.

EM: Yes, what they call 'mutual aid'.

CM: And it is important to consider that we have within us the competition and the fight, but also the mutual aid. We have both and can choose what we want to do. Especially during a pandemic, many have been working together at a

real distance. Yet, in our project Antropoceno! for instance, we still try to be collaborative and open to different languages, different people, different cultures.

EM: That's what we do with our music after all, or at least we try our best. But we cannot think that humanity is destroying everything and just drown in our tears. On the contrary, we have to fight in some way, even though we don't know who is going to win, living our life in the hope of betterment. Overall, I believe the future is bright.

CM: I think I will disagree, yes, allow me to disagree!

EM: Of course, please do.

CM: I think the big difference between the past and the future is that there is one past, only one. The future, on the other hand... there is no future, there are only futures. A bright future is definitely possible but we cannot be sure yet: every decision we make, individually and socially, will define this future. It's not possible to go to the future, because this will be what we make out of it.

EM: That is true, one cannot live without optimism and hope. Without hope, the things that happen around us are not enjoyable at all, and that's why we have to fight against bad things in an amusing way. It is in our nature, as human beings, to attempt to make the best of all things.



YOUR WASTE OF TIME

INTERVIEW WITH THE MARY MATTINGLY

As our environment is becoming more and more tainted with the remnants of our consumption, it is essential to take a step back to reconsider how we engage with the objects we possess, remembering the journey that not only precedes them, but also will follow once they are outwith our control. Do objects come with responsibility? This is the question which defines our relationship with the material world and lingers behind the artistic devotion of Mary Mattingly, a visual artist based in Brooklyn, NYC. Her works range through photography, collaborative sculpture, performance and land art, expressed in some of her collective projects such as Swale, an edible landscape floating on a barge in New York for fresh food foraging; Public Water, a public artwork and campaign on the city's water supply chain; or the Waterpod Project, exploring the possibility of nomadic and mobile water-communities. The building of these independent living systems represents a need to reimagine the ways we will live together as a community in the present and future. Along with these urban 'ecosystems', Mattingly has also thoroughly explored the themes of sustainability, possession and waste, tracing the maps which underlie the life of objects that surround us every day.



Through her series 'Nomadographies and Wearable Homes' and 'House and Universe', she was able to capture the nature of humankind as a constituent part of the environment, constantly roaming and transforming with it. Through the contrast of local and non-local spaces, whose interdependency is ever so evident in supply and waste chains, Mattingly presents an allegorical collection of photographs embracing the connection between climate disasters and consumption. In 2013, she decided to bundle almost all of the objects she possessed in seven large bundles which were pushed or rolled through the streets of New York. Afterwards, she began a digital archive of all these objects, emphasizing their history before parting

with them: from their extraction from the earth, to their journey into the hands of makers and distributors, to the impact of chemicals dispersed in the air and water. In her own words, each object is embedded with trauma. Though this practice, she wished to shed light not only on the weight that reduces our mobility, but also on the material relationships within the objects themselves and their impact on others.

In her photographs, it becomes clear how the answer to the question is yes: we are responsible for our waste of time and the Sisyphean burden of objects we collect throughout our lives, but we are also able to take the lead and cultivate our lightness.



Researching each item's history is a way for me to begin an extended funeral prayer, illuminating rituals and tragedies embedded in objects in a precarious world. From the over-extraction of the earth, to the working conditions of makers and distributors, to the chemicals that enter the air and water affecting everyone, each object is embedded with trauma.





Where did it all start? When did art become your main language? My father taught me how to use a camera and I started building sculptures to photograph when I was young. I enjoyed composing in the camera and photographing something I made within the world around me, it gave me emotional distance to better reflect upon daily life. But when I started building sculptural spaces to inhabit, and life could unfold around the sculptures, art became my main language.

How did you first approach sustainability with your art? What led you in this direction? Growing up in an agricultural community where the drinking water was polluted from pesticides made me aware of how fragile access can be to basic daily needs. I also grew up in a home where we reused almost everything. I first approached ecological concerns in art through focusing on water. I built sculptural and wearable water purification systems. Eventually, I began focusing on food and shelter, two other necessities that are tied to a host of questions and concerns about access, sustainability, and environmental change.

What is the connection between art and the earth? In your opinion, what is the role of the artist in times such as the climate crisis we are facing? Often artists are in a dialogic relationship with the earth. Much of the art I make literally comes from the earth, whether the soils or plants, or the minerals mined to make the objects I reuse. Art questions and it asks the people who experience it to question as well. The questions art provokes don't necessarily have answers. Art often evokes contradiction, which is an essential human condition. I believe people like artists who imagine alternatives hold a powerful instrument for change and also need to use their gifts to contribute to a global movement combating climate change.

Could you describe your most precious creation ever made, and why it is important to you? In 2013 I bundled all of my belongings into seven boulders to iconify my own consumption. Some of the belongings I had carried with me for twenty years and had saved from when I was a child. Before I bundled them, I documented most of them, in some cases even making 3D scans. The bundling process felt like building a time capsule, it was at once a cleansing and a reminder.

In a series of your photographs you represent our relationship with possession, waste and the environment. What do you think must change in our consumer culture, in order to both avoid waste and enable our being to flourish? Consumer culture has entire industries that support it, from advertising to some news to market research. People in these industries need to help create a systemic change of purpose, and that will happen by these people doing it on their own or people outside of these industries compelling a change of purpose. What must change is purpose.





What responsibility comes with the ownership of our objects? Every freedom comes with responsibility, and I believe some of the responsibilities people hold around objects include: not to waste, to reuse and repair rather than buy something new, and to understand how the current pace of extraction is not sustainable. It affects all of us, including the land, water, air and nonhumans. When systems of production, trade, and consumption use the social and ecological space of others, it is a form of violence.

In your own words, what is beauty to you? I find beauty in most things, especially things humans do and make, but it stops me in my tracks when people consider more just and equitable worlds through utopian imagining.

Would you describe art as an extension of your life or as life itself? Absolutely, I don't see a difference. Life is filled with large and small rituals, all of which are art.

What are the main teachings you wish future generations will carry with them? That art is integral for systemic eco-social change, and of course that everyone and everything is interdependent. The future has to be interdependent with regenerative potentials.