

D O R S K Y  
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Curatorial Programs



AT SEA

Zalika Azim, Esteban Cabeza de Baca, Heide Fasnacht, Scherezade Garcia, Shirin Kazemi, Franck Lesbros, Roger Clay Palmer, Sky Pape, Jennifer Wynne Reeves, Charlotte Schulz, Adrien Segal, Eve K. Tremblay

Curated by Zeljka Himbele

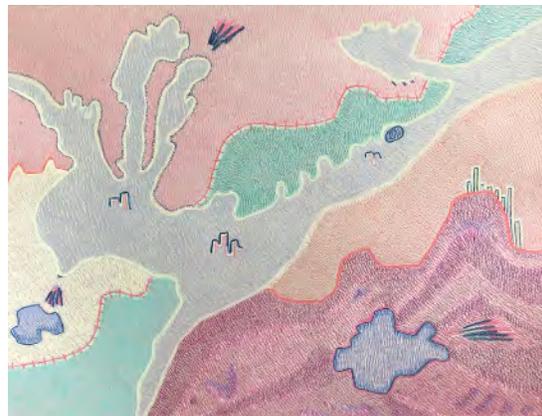
September 29–December 8, 2019

Opening reception: Sunday, September 29, 2:00–5:00pm

Throughout history, the sea has been used in art and popular culture to suggest uncertainties associated with momentous voyages and humankind's reckoning with the formidable forces of nature. In medieval times, cartographers drew turbulent waters inhabited by fearsome monsters to represent the dangers of ocean exploration. At the height of the Industrial Revolution, JMW Turner painted his sea vistas, breaking artistic conventions of the time with his largely abstract vision and fierce handling of materials. Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* captured society's imagination and sense of dread as well as fascination with the depths. With wide-reaching impact, *Jaws* cinematically stoked a collective angst about the unpredictable, and often invisible, deadly menaces of the sea. Bas Jan Ader's studies of Caspar David Friedrich's landscapes and his critique of the commodification of romanticism led the artist to possibly seek to restore genuine experience through a real-life action — envisioning a solitary performance of crossing the Atlantic Ocean in a boat; a quest for the sublime from which he never returned, disappearing into the sea.

So much has the sea been incorporated into art, culture, religion, and more, that the phrase “at sea” has entered the language as a metaphor for being adrift, unmoored, lost, ungrounded, without purpose. It appears in contexts far removed from ocean travel – in political and social analysis, in literature and in the visual arts, in psychology and behavior, and much else. In this exhibition, distinct creative voices survey the verisimilitude and richness of the “at sea” metaphor. The artists explore existential uncertainty and alienation as well as the psychological trauma of feeling unsafe. They delve into ecological issues interrelated with global economy and politics. Some reference colonialism and history's impact on identity construction, revealing the philosophical and physical aspects of being estranged from the feeling of certainty and familiarity. By using oceanic imagery, the artists in the present exhibition create poignant statements and dialogues connoted by the phrase “at sea.”

Eve K. Tremblay employs factual and subjective narratives in order to speak about transience of memory. For her installation *Stratipodes Recollection*, 2019, Tremblay focuses on La Mer Champlain, a part of the Atlantic Ocean that in the last glacial period covered parts of the artist's native Quebec as well as Ontario, areas of Upstate New York (where she currently lives) and Vermont. The artist playfully combines personal recollections with depictions of real and imaginary landscapes and wildlife, almost in a stream of consciousness way in which respective objects formally and thematically bounce off each other, expressing the artist's own experience of crossing borders and living in-between places. In the artist's words, “stratipod



**Eve K. Tremblay** Detail of *Stratipodes Recollection*, 2019

is an invented word implying beings that live in the stratification of imagined and/or personal geologies.” The installation provokes contemplation on natural formations vs. man-made borders as well as human time vs. geologic time.

Preoccupations with time are also present in surreal charcoal drawings by **Charlotte Schulz**. Her landscapes teem with numerous sophisticated details, ominously lacking the presence of people. Executed in different tones and various applications of charcoal onto paper, as well as gentle erasures that interplay with cuts, tears and folds of the paper, these staggering melancholic compositions are inspired by natural imagery, poetry and documentation of catastrophic events such as Hurricane Katrina. *An Early Map with No One to Say When the Ocean Begins*, 2017, features an underground space with curious archaeological objects and forms of life that seem to be gradually covered (or unearthed) by glacial flattened formations, along with objects resembling containers floating on sea surface. In *Skirting Obstructions to Travel Toward an Unblocked Stream*, 2016, a similar ample landscape is captured in transformation and observed by



**Charlotte Schulz** *An Early Map with No One to Say When the Ocean Begins*, 2017



**Franck Lesbros** *Sea of Instability*, 2017

a penguin in the far right side of the artwork. Both scenes seem like fragments of larger areas in which an enigmatic, timeless process is unfolding, its vastness underscored by a bird-like perspective.

The expanse of the ocean is further present in the video *Sea of Instability*, 2017, by **Franck Lesbros**. With the static camera positioned just above the dark water that trembles and flows, reflecting light off its dynamic surfaces, the work makes viewers feel themselves immersed in the waves. The camera in fact depicts a miniature set; a water basin being submitted to enactments of different weather conditions – water’s movements and changes of light. Slowly but continuously changing scenes feature an array of objects floating by – a house, a bridge, a sunken ship, among others – a result of some unknown disaster. For this project Lesbros collaborated with the Japanese experimental music group Tenniscoats, who provided a contemplative score further underlying the artist’s poetical meditation on the power of natural forces, their influence on our history and daily life and the notion of destruction and rebirth.

Using photographs from scientific documents, newspapers, magazines and the internet as resources for her multimedia work, **Heide Fasnacht** focuses on changeability and conversion, in both the empirical and metaphorical sense. *Mid-Ocean Explosion*, 2000-2001, depicts a moment in which the elements transform; a bomb explosion is a glimpse of time that comprises not only of a release of energy and the transmutation of matter but also instantaneous (and persistent) change of its wider surroundings. The image which inspired this particular drawing features a mid-20th century bomb test – one of many executed by the US Military and their Western allies in the “peripheral” zones of the Pacific – that eventually caused severe disturbances of both water and land ecosystems as well as the lives of local populations. The



**Heide Fasnacht** *Mid-Ocean Explosion*, 2000-2001

work points towards the complexity of historical events and the instability and delicacy of relations between humans and nature.

Scientific knowledge likewise informs **Sky Pape**’s practice, where the artist confronts the limitations of human perception for navigating the world around us. Her works on paper contrast calligraphic lines of Sumi ink with confounding forms of vivid, opaque vinyl-based paint. The titles of both *CelNav*, 2017, and *Tidal Diamond*, 2017, refer to aspects of traditional navigational arts still in use alongside new technologies; while *CelNav* is the abbreviation for celestial navigation, tidal diamonds are symbols representing the direction and speed of tidal streams. The continuity of the more spontaneously drawn ink knots is interrupted by

the exactly-painted geometric shapes, reflecting the dynamic interplay between order and disorder, between knowledge and the unknown.

Overcoming the disconnect between scientific rationality and the emotional nature of human experience is the focus of **Adrien Segal**’s practice. She inquires into specific phenomena as they change over time and transforms the patterns and data into sculptural forms. *Sea Ice/Albedo*, 2017, explores the Albedo effect (a measure of diffuse reflection of sun’s light) and its relations to sea ice. The white color of ice has a high sun reflection potential; the growing disappearance of polar ice areas produces an increased absorption of solar energy by the ocean’s dark areas, exacerbating the ocean’s warming. Segal sources landscape photographs of Arctic Sea disappearing ice patterns, then digitally renders them into 3D surfaces and molds, and finally casts them in glass, whose translucence captures the pattern of the ice. The resulting intricate sculptures depict oceanic water with all its depth and variation of color.



**Sky Pape** *Tidal Diamond*, 2017



**Adrien Segal** *Sea ice/Albedo*, 2017



**Scherezade Garcia** *The Liquid Highway*, 2019



**Zalika Azim** *If you get there before I do (Space Traders)*, 2018

The sea, migration and her Dominican lineage are prominent motifs in **Scherezade Garcia's** multidisciplinary work. By combining everyday objects such as life jackets and inner tubes with traditional artistic techniques, the artist reflects on the complicated history of the Caribbean in a poetical yet critical way, revealing her deep concern with social issues, current politics and freedom. *The Liquid Highway*, 2019, is Garcia's participatory printmaking project, in which long rubber strips are carved with the motif of sea waves. The public is invited to make their own print of sections of this elongated seascape and, in the artist's words, "take an individual souvenir of the history that unites us all." As in numerous indigenous oceanic cultures, the sea is considered a "highway," a fluid extension of the mainland that connects people and cultures – a source of kinship rather than an obstacle to be overcome.

**Zalika Azim's** work is a poetical exploration of memory in relation to her personal experience as well as the wider African-American history. She approaches memory as a fragmentary, multilayered concept made of historical facts, personal and collective recollections and beliefs. Boasting paternal origins in South Carolina's islands area, Azim is inspired by the local oral storytelling traditions in which the maritime landscape is a container of history and knowledge as much as the site of spiritual renewal and protection.

Furthermore, the artist looks into mnemonic symbolism of traditional Southern quilt weaving. She layers photographic forms, embeds navigational information into objects and/or enlarges details of photographs, revealing their pixelized structure. The pixelated patterns allude to migration patterns, navigation, and processions, as much as the issues around Black Flight. Azim also imprints text on photographic depictions of landscape, combining text and imagery to unravel connections to past times, places and traditions, in an effort to consider how landscapes are often understood and remembered by the ones geographically and generationally removed.

**Esteban Cabeza de Baca's** practice is invested in preoccupations with hybridization as well as the disappearing values of beneficence and open-mindedness

in today's political milieu. His paintings spring from the influences of graffiti art, symbols of native cultures and gestural abstraction legacy. The artist is critical of romanticized and colonial tendencies in historical landscape depictions that approach the "other" as something wild and untamed. His works often capture a spiral motif that is universally present in artworks by

indigenous cultures around the world, while also inserting allusions to certain places through color and minimal figurative touches. In the painting *Memory Landscape*, 2019, the composition is symmetrically organized, its form alluding to the Rorschach test, commonly used for examining one's psychological make-up. Additionally, the shapes conjure cyclic motions of the ocean that optically shift and transform in front of the viewer.



**Esteban Cabeza de Baca** *Memory Landscape*, 2019

Lyrical works on paper by **Shirin Kazemi** combine collage, gouache and watercolor techniques. The artist's delicate landscapes fuse motifs of symbolic animals and plants frequently present in Persian miniatures. The atmospheric yet physical surface evolves out of using multiple layers, creating a sensual experience for the viewer. The forms of vegetation, birds and mammals are filtered out of realism. They overlap with a background sea landscape that captures the fantastic horrors hidden in crossing water, where the history of migrations is obscured. While some scenes seem tranquil, the others suggest violent acts. The artwork stems from the artist's



**Shirin Kazemi** *Sea Fog (Night)*, 2019

own mixed cultural origin, with overtones blurred by the American politics evolving in the Middle East, reflecting on our oppressive political reality.

**Roger Clay Palmer** grew up on a north Florida ranch surrounded by native wildlife and landscapes and later was drafted to serve in the Vietnam War. Those experiences, as well as political commentary, subversion and folk storytelling traditions all permeate his ink and wash drawings. In two works included in *At Sea*, 2010 and 2018, the animals (frequent motifs of Palmer's works) assume human characteristics in an effort to speak about empathy, friendship and current ecological issues from the melting of polar ice to the extinction of animal species. Stylistically, the artist's work reveals a mixture of influences, ranging from German Expressionist painters



**Roger Clay Palmer** *When Your Friend Cannot Swim and He Notices You Have Wings*, circa 2018

## BIOGRAPHY

Zeljka Himbele is a curator based in New York City. She is a 2006 graduate of the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College. In her native Croatia, she worked for several years at the Museum of Contemporary Art, curated exhibitions for numerous non-profit spaces in Zagreb, served on the editorial board of *Kontura*, a Croatian art magazine, and has curated numerous projects at G-MK Gallery in Zagreb. From 2008-2010 she curated a series of solo and group exhibitions for New Media Gallery at the RISD Museum of Art in Providence, RI. She was a guest critic, lecturer or exhibition juror for the institutions Residency Unlimited, Flux Factory, Chester College, Cambridge Art Association, Parsons The New School for Design, Brown University, the Rhode Island School of Design, Pratt Institute, Art Omi, Wave Hill, among others. Additionally, she was a Curatorial Fellow at Art in General, curating the exhibition at Bloomberg LP headquarters, and co-curated exhibitions at NURTUREart in Brooklyn, NY, the Big Medium Gallery in Austin, TX, among many others.



**Jennifer Wynne Reeves** *Abstract Sailors*, 2005

to Japanese haiga (a form that combines haiku poems with drawings). The juxtaposition of drawing and text in Palmer's work offers multilayered narratives infused with humor and criticism, which speak of human follies, politics and power structures.

**Jennifer Wynne Reeves** is widely recognized for her riveting artistic practice that fuses figuration and abstraction and occasional textual fragments into colorful, satirical comments on existential issues. Her *Abstract Sailors*, 2005, artwork features anthropomorphized groups of abstract shapes on a deck (one is a vertical stack of circular elements and another, a scribble made of resolute strokes in predominantly black color) against a figurative seascape. The motif of a human figure confronted with sea, also present in *Initial Impulse – Only Blues*, 1999, and *Sling Shot David*, 2013, was frequently revisited by Reeves in all phases of her career. The sea, journeying, wondering, anxiety and humor – metaphorically invoke the artist's rumination on life events, the role of the artist, and art-making.

With unprecedented, accelerated rates of change in social, technological and geopolitical issues, movement and flux have supplanted traditional notions of stability and fixedness. Through various media, the artists in *At Sea* utilize sea imagery as a vehicle to address the notion of being adrift in the face of fraught events – natural and man-made, global and personal. They suggest navigational possibilities through fluid, uncharted territories and offer multi-layered points of entry for expanding this timely discourse.

— *Zeljka Himbele*  
New York City, 2019

## CHECKLIST

### ZALIKA AZIM

*IF YOU GET THERE BEFORE I DO (SPACE TRADERS)*, 2018  
Pigment print  
22 ½ x 17 ½ inches  
Courtesy of the artist

*TO SPEAK OF A LUSH HOT BLOODED LAND, TO THE DISPOSSESSED, TOO BUSY TO VISIT*, 2019  
Twice impressed pigment print and ink  
33 x 26 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

**ESTEBAN CABEZA DE BACA**  
*MEMORY LANDSCAPE*, 2019  
Oil on canvas  
6 x 6 feet  
Courtesy of the artist

**HEIDE FASNACHT**  
*MID-OCEAN EXPLOSION*, 2000-2001  
Graphite  
20 x 30 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

**SCHEREZADE GARCIA**  
*THE LIQUID HIGHWAY*, 2019  
Interactive printmaking, carved rubber (lifebuoy material), linoleum ink  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist

*DETAIL OF LIQUID HIGHWAY INSTALLATION*, 2017  
Inflated innertube  
36 inches diameter  
Courtesy the artist

**SHIRIN KAZEMI**  
*WOUND II*, 2019  
Gouache, pencil, watercolor, pen, on paper  
7 x 12 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

*BALANCE*, 2019  
Gouache, pencil, watercolor, pen, on paper  
9 x 12 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

*DESERT WATER (MORNING)*, 2019  
Collage, gouache, pencil, watercolor, pen, glue on paper  
11 x 15 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

*SEA FOG (NIGHT)*, 2019  
Collage, gouache, pencil, watercolor, pen, glue on paper  
9 ¾ x 12 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

**FRANCK LESBROS**  
*SEA OF INSTABILITY*, 2017  
HD video; color, sound  
10 mins  
Music by Tenniscoats  
Courtesy of the artist

**ROGER CLAY PALMER**  
*POLAR BEAR WITH EMERGENCY MARINE RADIO*, circa 2010  
Pigment on rag  
40 x 26 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

*WHEN YOUR FRIEND CANNOT SWIM AND HE NOTICES YOU HAVE WINGS*, 2018  
Pigment on rag  
22 x 30 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

**SKY PAPE**  
*CELNAV*, 2017  
Water, Sumi ink, Flashe on paper  
51 ¾ x 39 ¾ inches  
Courtesy of the artist and June Kelly Gallery

*TIDAL DIAMOND*, 2017  
Water, Sumi ink, Flashe on paper  
44 x 59 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and June Kelly Gallery

**JENNIFER WYNNE REEVES**  
*ABSTRACT SAILORS*, 2005 Gouache on paper  
11 x 14 inches  
Private collection

*SLING SHOT DAVID*, 2013  
12 ¼ x 15 ½ inches  
Gouache, wire, pencil, string  
Courtesy of Jennifer Wynne Reeves Trust

*INITIAL IMPULSE – ONLY BLUES*, 1999  
17 ½ x 28 ½ inches  
Acrylic, pencil on panel  
Courtesy of Jennifer Wynne Reeves Trust

**CHARLOTTE SCHULZ**  
*AN EARLY MAP WITH NO ONE TO SAY WHEN THE OCEAN BEGINS*, 2017  
Charcoal on paper  
Framed: 30 x 51 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

*SKIRTING OBSTRUCTIONS TO TRAVEL TOWARD AN UNBLOCKED STREAM*, 2016  
Charcoal on paper  
Framed: 30 x 51 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

**ADRIEN SEGAL**  
*FPE/A, SEA ICE/ALBEDO SERIES*, 2017  
Cast glass  
14 ½ x 4 x ¼ inches  
Courtesy the Artist

*MCLFE/A SEA ICE/ALBEDO SERIES*, 2017  
Cast glass  
14 ½ x 4 x ¼ inches  
Courtesy the Artist

*MCLFE/B SEA ICE/ALBEDO SERIES*, 2017  
Cast glass  
14 ½ x 4 x ¼ inches  
Courtesy the Artist

*MCLFE/C SEA ICE/ALBEDO SERIES*, 2017  
Cast glass  
14 ½ x 4 x ¼ inches  
Courtesy the Artist

**EVE K. TREMBLAY**  
*LA MER CHAMPLAIN (BEFORE THE USA CANADA BORDER EVEN EXISTED)*, 2019  
Crayon on acid free paper, porcelain ceramic  
9 x 12 inches  
Courtesy the artist

*STRATIPODES RECOLLECTION*, 2019  
Installation: Photograph on fabric with porcelain with under glaze and glazes  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy the artist and Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Montreal

*STRATIFICATIONS WITH QUANTUM ENTANGLEMENTS*, 2019  
Crayons on acid free paper, ceramic porcelain  
9 x 12 inches  
Courtesy the artist and Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Montreal

*LAYERED SHIELDING*, 2019  
Crayons on acid free paper, ceramic porcelain  
9 x 12 inches  
Courtesy the artist and Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Montreal

**Cover: Sky Pape** *CELNAV*, 2017

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