



ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES
IN PRACTICE

Oceanic Curating

PANDORA SYPEREK

Institute for Creative Futures, Loughborough University London, UK; V&A Research Institute, UK

SARAH WADE

School of History and Art History, University of East Anglia, UK

Abstract Oceans have proliferated in artworks and exhibitions in recent years, coinciding with a surge of scholarship in the blue humanities and critical ocean studies. However, despite the extensive art history of the sea, artistic and curatorial knowledge has been relatively underrepresented within marine explorations in the environmental humanities. Meanwhile, an abundance of curatorial projects that take the sea as a subject forms a rich repository of innovative thought and practice, pioneering in both oceanic content and methods. This article examines the various curatorial strategies deployed and critiqued in recent exhibitions, drawing on the authors' long-term research project *Curating the Sea*, which has involved both primary art historical research and collaborations with curators of art and natural history as well as contemporary artists. Here the authors chart a shift from the display of contemporary marine-themed "cabinets of curiosity" toward more localized and politicized curatorial responses, from awe in the face of the aquatic sublime toward commitment to interdisciplinary and multispecies collaboration. They argue for curatorial practice's unique capacity to respond to the plurality of oceans and their communities, histories, geographies, and ecologies, demonstrating that such activity does not merely reflect but itself constitutes recent oceanic cultural and theoretical currents.

Keywords curating, exhibitions, museums, blue humanities, critical ocean studies

In the 2010s a profusion of art exhibitions and curatorial projects began to focus on the oceans.¹ This phenomenon coincided with a parallel wave of oceanic popular science, from large-scale renovations of natural history museums to the enthusiastic reception of David Attenborough's BBC television series *Blue Planet II* (2017). Although the surge in marine-themed exhibitions and visual-material culture clearly corresponded to

1. At the time of writing this trend shows no signs of slowing; a recent search for "water & the sea" on the contemporary art and exhibition platform *e-flux* brings up hundreds of entries.

mounting ecological concerns, as did the steady growth of the interdisciplinary fields of the blue humanities and critical ocean studies,² exhibition making and art history pertaining to the sea have been relatively underrepresented within the environmental humanities.³ Such oversight attests to how curatorial practice is often rendered invisible rather than acknowledged as a critical and creative form in its own right. This tendency is especially apparent in scientific museum contexts, where curation is commonly equated with “communication” and curators are rarely publicly acknowledged.⁴

Curating the Sea emerged as a collaborative long-term research project in 2017 in response to this exhibitionary development, its interdisciplinary dimensions, and the lack of scholarly attention to the field.⁵ As art historians researching curatorial studies and museology, we maintain that curating makes a distinctive contribution to current debates at the intersections of climate and colonialism, aligned with scholars of the Anthropocene who recognize the natural-cultural devastation of the earth as an aesthetic event as much as a geological one.⁶ The project thereby highlights the oceanic dimensions of this creative-critical work, amid recent scholarship that has examined ecological breakdown in relation to art history, curating, and museums.⁷

This article documents the plethora of recent curatorial projects that take the sea as a subject, positioning this work as a rich repository of innovative thought and practice. These projects have pioneered the development and display of oceanic content as well as the adoption of oceanic curatorial methods informed by the movement and materiality of the sea.⁸ Drawing on various aspects of research for Curating the Sea, we make a case for the important contribution of the curatorial to debates in the environmental and blue humanities.⁹ In what follows we chart the evolution of this strand of curating in recent years, observing how it has yielded more situated, collaborative, and even multispecies practices. We argue that oceanic curating is particularly potent for examining the pressing issues of the time—including climate crisis, migration, and other legacies of colonialism and slavery—and that this accounts for the prominence of the sea in recent exhibitions.

2. See Mentz, “Towards a Blue Cultural Studies”; DeLoughrey, “Toward a Critical Ocean Studies”; and Alaimo, “Science Studies and the Blue Humanities.”

3. Syperek and Wade, *Oceans*, 12.

4. Lowe et al., “Curating Ocean Ecology.”

5. Curating the Sea, <https://curatingthesea.wordpress.com/>.

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

7. Demos, Scott, and Banerjee, *Routledge Companion to Contemporary Art*; Fowkes and Fowkes, *Art and Climate Change*; Patrizio, *Ecological Eye*; Fenner, *Curating in a Time of Ecological Crisis*; Newell, Robin, and Wehner, *Curating the Future*; Wade, “Ecologies of Display”; Wade, “Emerging Exhibition Ecologies”; Cameron and Neilson, *Climate Change and Museum Futures*; Jørgensen, Robin, and Fojuth, “Slowing Time in the Museum.”

8. Syperek and Wade, “Curating the Sea.”

9. Key activities and outputs include the symposium Curating the Sea: Ecological Vulnerability and the Oceans in Contemporary Exhibitions (UCL, 2018), a special issue of the *Journal of Curatorial Studies* (2020), and the anthology *Oceans: Documents of Contemporary Art* (2023).

Curatorial Crossings

Based in the UK, Curating the Sea was catalyzed by the Natural History Museum, London's replacement of the decades-old display of the diplodocus skeleton cast, "Dippy," with an articulated blue whale skeleton, named "Hope," suspended from the ceiling as if diving down into the museum's central hall in 2017. This "new paradigm of scientific display" placed an anthropogenic extinction narrative center stage, replacing a long-extinct, land-based dinosaur with a marine mammal that human cooperation brought back from the brink of extinction after an era of overexploitation.¹⁰ The transformation slightly preceded the second installment of the BBC's marine wildlife television series *Blue Planet* and anticipated the corresponding popular awareness of the oceans' perilous ecological status.¹¹ Significantly, it also came in the wake of multiple ocean-themed art exhibitions in the UK and abroad. Although varied in their marine orientations, together these different exhibitions posited curating oceans as a necessarily interdisciplinary, international, and transhistorical endeavor. Beyond the common theme, moreover, curators had started mobilizing coastal, tidal, and watery conceptual frameworks.¹²

The synchronicity of activity across natural history, popular culture, and the art world demonstrated shared concerns and mutual influence between fields, in a collective movement clearly motivated by the increasingly undeniable ecological threats facing the oceans. Project outputs cumulatively demonstrated that as a spatial and material practice that can mediate between different disciplines, particularly across the arts and sciences, curating is uniquely placed to bring disparate oceanic fragments together across eras and locations in new and unexpected ways, offering generative strategies for considering multifaceted environmental breakdown. We observed that the approaches used by curators offered ways to diversify the ocean by embracing multiple perspectives and adopting methodologies that deviate from dominant Western epistemologies and models of representation, presenting alternatives to so-called rational taxonomies and linear exhibition narratives and instead prioritizing process, site specificity, flux, and embodied or affective modes of knowledge.¹³

Nevertheless, curating is not a homogeneous practice; context is key, and curatorial roles and responsibilities vary significantly. In contrast to the relative autonomy of a freelance art curator, museum curators are tasked with delivering on the institution's wider missions, collections, vision, and strategy. The challenges for curators who must

10. Lowe et al., "Curating Ocean Ecology."

11. Syperek, "Hope in the Archive."

12. For example, *SALTWATER*, the Fourteenth Istanbul Biennial (2015), curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, was inspired by the Bosphorus and informed by the politics of knots and waves; *Streamlines: Oceans, Global Trade, and Migration* (Deichtorhallen Hamburg, 2015–16), curated by Koyo Kouoh, focused on trade and immigration using "navigation" as a curatorial model; and *Tidalectics* (TBA21-Academy, Vienna, 2017), curated by Stefanie Hessler, used the Barbadian poet Kamau Braithwaite's eponymous theory as the basis for a curatorial method that reflected the rhythmic and fluid character of the sea.

13. Syperek and Wade, "Guest Editors' Introduction," 160.

function according to institutional frameworks and funding are exemplified by instances of fossil-fuel-funded exhibitions with environmental themes, which have been called out in the media for greenwashing. The consequent negotiation of aesthetics, ecological concerns, politics, and institutional priorities points to the important capacity of curatorial studies for making critical interventions that remain sensitive to curatorial constraints.

Yet there is a unique role for ecological exhibition making beyond the “climate communications” framework frequently perpetuated by environmental organizations and sometimes museums themselves. This is especially true within scientific display, which is regularly positioned as imparting authoritative truth,¹⁴ while artworks in these contexts are often presented to aid interpretation.¹⁵ The natural-cultural causes and effects of planetary crisis suggest that artistic research should be taken as seriously as scientific data.¹⁶ A curatorial model that positions artistic knowledge as secondary to scientific knowledge follows the same empirical, top-down approach motivated by rationalist, modernizing progress that has arguably led to climate destruction in the first place.

There is a particular irony for the case of oceanic exhibition making, as the sea has become a fulcrum for thinking beyond fixed places and ideas and corresponding hierarchies. In marine explorations many researchers and practitioners have turned to theories of diffraction espoused by Donna Haraway and Karen Barad as dispersed and wavy alternatives to the unidirectional logic of reflection.¹⁷ Instead of the subject-object dualism of a reflective model, in which art and exhibitions are seen as mediating scientific certainties, diffraction offers a fitting model for curation’s unique propensity for meaning-making, which, like art, science can learn from. Moreover, the geographically connective nature of oceans defies the compartmentalization of epistemologies of the Global North, a point that exhibitions have increasingly engaged with.

Historicizing Oceans in Exhibitions

Although exhibitions about the sea have proliferated since the early 2010s, their historical roots are equally worthy of investigation. Recent oceanic art and curation link to past display practices including cabinets of curiosities, aquariums, oceanographic and maritime museums, and nineteenth-century natural history displays. In responding to the current ecopolitical crisis, contemporary curatorial practices have adopted these historical modes of display as both carriers of meaning and objects of critique. Thus, while an exhibitionary fascination with oceans is hardly new, it has resurfaced prominently in conjunction with the rise of the blue humanities, testifying to the widespread, renewed appeal of the oceans for thinkers and makers alike as issues of ocean ecology,

14. Bal, *Double Exposures*, 50.

15. Rossi-Linnemann and de Martini, *Art in Science Museums*, 13.

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

17. See Haraway, “Promises of Monsters”; and Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 88–94.

migration, decolonization, and the legacies of the transatlantic slave trade have become increasingly urgent.

A riff on the early modern *Wunderkammer* appeared in *Aquatopia* (Nottingham Contemporary and Tate St. Ives, 2013–14), which charted the “imaginary of the ocean deep” in art and culture across different time frames and regions, harnessing the creative potential of oceanic abundance.¹⁸ The cross-cultural and transhistorical approach resulted in juxtapositions such as Hokusai’s nineteenth-century octopoid erotica *The Dream of the Fisherman’s Wife* (1814) with the contemporary photographer Jürgen Teller’s *Spaghetti Nero, Venice* (2007), a portrait of the pop icon Björk as a squid ink spaghetti-eating sea monster, imparting the shared erotics and horrors of the sea across epochs. The American artist Mark Dion deployed the *Wunderkammer* aesthetic more explicitly in a giant marine cabinet of curiosities that explored humans’ paradoxical relations to the sea at a time of ecological distress as part of *Oceanomania: Souvenirs of Mysterious Seas, from the Expedition to the Aquarium* (Oceanographic Museum of Monaco, 2011).¹⁹ Here the overwhelming display of varied objects drew attention to how the sea has been both celebrated and exploited throughout human history.²⁰ The cabinet of curiosities, with its visual allure, has resurfaced as a curatorial device in numerous contexts from natural history display to contemporary art galleries, medical museums, and historic houses. Yet its colonial and imperial origins in extraction and exploitation necessitate a careful curatorial return to this mode of display.²¹ Sensitivity to this context may explain a more recent move away from this exhibition type.

Similarly, the aquarium, a display system that emerged in the nineteenth century as “a moving work of art,” has influenced artists and curators ever since, not least due to its problematic paradigm of captivity and spectacle.²² Although aquariums are now synonymous with popular “edutainment,” the theorist Eva Hayward reconsiders Monterey Bay Aquarium’s immersive display of jellyfish as a “virtual dive” that facilitates an experience of affective proximity rather than a spectacle of difference.²³ On a smaller scale, Sonia Levy’s film *For the Love of Corals* (2018) captures the pioneering coral conservation project in the aquarium at the Horniman Museum and Gardens in Southeast London with close-up footage of developing embryos, which documents and cultivates a sense of care.²⁴ In these instances of reimagining and responding to the aquarium, its historical associations with the spectacular otherness of marine life is turned on its head in an attempt to foster affinity.

18. Farquharson and Clark, *Aquatopia*.

19. Dion, *Oceanomania*.

20. Wade, “Ecological Exhibitions.”

21. Wade, “Ecological Exhibitions,” 169.

22. Endt-Jones, “Monstrous Transformation,” 17; Desmond, *Staging Tourism*.

23. Hayward, “Sensational Jellyfish,” 174.

24. Wade, “Ecologies of Display,” 103.

Nineteenth-century natural history museum display has also informed relevant artworks over recent years. These range from Brian Jungen's *Shapeshifter* (2000), a suspended, articulated whale skeleton made from white plastic garden chairs, which at once recalls these specimens' common presentation in the colonial museum and invokes transmutation in Indigenous cosmologies, to Pinar Yoldas's speculative series *Ecosystem of Excess* (2014), which adopts the form of the wet specimen—creatures preserved in spirits in glass jars—in an installation premised on the evolution of marine species to adapt to ocean plastic pollution. In addition to informing artistic practice, natural history museums have served as sites of curatorial intervention. The Art/Nature program (2014–18) at the Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin, presented artist Elizabeth Price's *BERLINWAL* in 2018, curated by Bergit Arends and informed by the history of that museum via its archives and collections to draw attention to the industrial exploitation of marine species.²⁵ In other cases, natural history specimens have been presented in exhibitions of contemporary art, as with the late nineteenth-century glass models of marine invertebrates produced by Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka, which have been transferred from natural history museum storage to the art gallery on more than one occasion, testifying to the fluidity inherent in how these objects are understood.²⁶ Such exchanges demonstrate the enduring influence of historical modes of marine display and moreover how the Western oceanic exhibitionary impulse has become an object of self-reflexive critique in recent art and curation.

Situated Exhibition Making

Monumentalizing the global environmental crisis risks overshadowing issues of sovereignty, decolonization, and community health and well-being that may be equally if not more integral to postcolonial and Indigenous thinkers and artists.²⁷ Typically, ocean ecology has been presented as a separate realm that is infringed on by human activity, a notion that overlooks diverse communities living by and with oceans worldwide. This dubious sense of oceanic purity is guarded against by many exhibitions in which entanglements of climate, capitalism, and colonialism are indissoluble. In addition to mounting ecological threats to the oceans, curators and artists alike have recently addressed the impact of colonialism on Indigenous groups' relationships to the sea, the legacies and imaginaries of the Middle Passage, migration routes as sites of cultural memory and technological surveillance, and the urgent interrelations therein.

The *Wunderkammer* exhibitions of a decade ago that showcased oceanic heterogeneity have more recently given way to projects highlighting increasingly specific geographies and issues, resulting in more focused and pointedly political exhibitions. One example would be the 2021 exhibition held at Bergen Kunsthall simply titled *The Ocean*,

25. For more on the program, see Hermannstädter, *Art/Nature*.

26. Syperek, "No Fancy So Wild."

27. DeLoughrey, *Allegories of the Anthropocene*, 121, 192.

which took a geographically situated perspective, here in relation to the coastal city of Bergen and its multifaceted historical and contemporary relationship to the sea. The critic Andreas Schlaegel's description of the exhibition's subject as "a commons that is so big we underestimate it" brings home the uniquely local and global, universal and plural character of the ocean, as well as the neglect and exploitation it has both suffered and transmitted.²⁸ Situated political perspectives have also provided curatorial narratives, for example in Alaina Claire Feldman's touring exhibition *The Ocean after Nature* (various sites, USA, 2016), which approached capitalistic extraction under globalization through an ecofeminist lens; or the curator Ekow Eshun's *We Are History* (Somerset House, London, 2021–22), which featured artists' reflections on the interrelation between colonialism and the climate crisis and its racial implications along an incidental oceanic register.

Meanwhile, even the category of "ocean" is limiting. Oceans are by their nature boundless, transmuting into weather systems and waterways and inseparable from bodies, both human and nonhuman, and their corresponding imaginaries. Much recent curatorial activity has been inspired by developments in watery thinking in close dialogue with other areas of critical ocean studies. The 2021 Shanghai Biennial was named after Astrida Neimanis's influential book *Bodies of Water* (2017), while the relational emphasis of such wet philosophies is shared, for example, by the curatorial ethos guiding the 2022 Toronto Biennial of Art, titled *What Water Knows, the Land Remembers*.²⁹ Centered on the city's site on Lake Ontario, along with the biannual Estuary festival sited in various locations along the Thames Estuary in Southeast England, such exhibitions demonstrate the materiality of oceans and other bodies of water beyond fluidity, including in relation to land. Specific oceanic materials and life-forms have provided focus for curated experimental projects such as the "Kelp Congress," a week-long public programme held as part of the Lotofen International Art Festival, Norway, in 2019, to explore the cultural dimensions of algae, with themes including "Curating with Kelp."³⁰ Although watery and liquid thinking may dispel the discrete bodies and binaries of modernist thought, other oceanic materialities—whether frozen, lithic, botanical, or viscous—can embody the multimodality and polyvocality of oceans.

Ocean Spaces

Like the colonial modes of display located in the modern museum and the aquarium, the ship has also emerged as a catalyst for creativity and critique in exhibitions. The "expedition" can evoke a colonial sensibility,³¹ yet in a curatorial capacity it can also be a vehicle for forging a creative community upon a vessel such that it might be conceived, following

28. Schlaegel, "Ocean, Bergen Kunsthall."

29. Hopkins, Lawson, and Bastien, *Water, Kinship, Belief*.

30. Methi et al., *Kelp Congress*. See also the artist Bryony Gillard's project *Unctuous between Fingers*, <https://www.unctuousbetweenfingers.co.uk/> (accessed April 11, 2024); and Melody Jue and Maya Weeks's edited series of photo essays *Holding Sway*, <https://uchri.org/series/holding-sway> (accessed April 17, 2024).

31. See Reymann and Bauer, "Trusting the Oceans," 20.

Michel Foucault, as a heterotopia,³² providing a generative space for responding to marine environments in new and unexpected ways.

The art organization Cape Farewell was an early instigator of the ship as a catalyst for artistic work and exhibitions. Set up by David Buckland in 2001, the organization invited numerous artists on a series of three expeditions with scientists and educators to make work in response to the Arctic, much of which addressed climate change. This long-term project precedes other interdisciplinary curatorial expeditions, including the first and only Antarctic Biennale (2017) and TBA21-Academy's ongoing fellowship program *The Current*, both of which have brought together international curators, artists, and scientists to explore different oceans and exhibition models on a ship. While this expeditionary impulse has been creatively generative in terms of the work and exhibitions that have emerged from such initiatives, the privileged space it creates for (to date) participants largely from the Global North is disquieting when contrasted with the dire consequences so many face in their attempts to cross oceans fleeing trauma and seeking refuge. This is highlighted, for example, in the experimental artist collective *Forensic Oceanography's* documentation of migrant boats and governmental response or lack thereof, as well as in the controversy surrounding Christoph Büchel's presentation of one such capsized vessel at the 2019 Venice Biennale.³³

Related concerns extend to certain recent attempts to literally curate the sea. The grandeur of the ocean has in the past given it a leading role in conceptions of the sublime, as manifest in romantic painting; more recently a comparable sensibility emerges in monumental sculpture installed on the ocean floor. Artist Doug Aitken's *Underwater Pavilions*, produced by the environmental organization Parley for the Oceans with the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), are large-scale geometric sculptures engineered from materials ostensibly suitable to their submarine environment, and yet clearly produced for the visual benefit of a human viewer. Similarly, Jason deCaires Taylor's *Underwater Museums* comprise permanent installations of figurative sculpture to be viewed by human divers or in reproduction. Although intended as "living sculptures" that merge the human figure (modeled from real individuals of local communities) with marine life-forms, they nevertheless prioritize a certain class of viewers—wealthy and physically able tourists.³⁴ Such monumental underwater sculptures can be likened to a form of undersea colonization; if not directly harmful to ocean life, they still exhibit a modernist ethos of anthropocentrism.

Collaborative and Multispecies Curating

Increasingly, exhibitions have responded to calls to consider the nonhuman otherness of the sea and the interspecies encounters it facilitates. Reversing the tendency to insert

32. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces."

33. Ruiz, "Fierce Debate."

34. Jason deCaires Taylor, artist's website, <https://underwatersculpture.com> (accessed April 11, 2024); for more on these works, see Jue, "Underwater Museums."

humanistic figures and structures onto the ocean floor, the artist Shimabuku brings the collecting practices of sea life into the gallery. Since 1990, when the artist inadvertently staged an “Exhibition in a Refrigerator” featuring an octopus tentacle for the benefit of his squeamish college roommate, Shimabuku has used display tropes and collecting practices as central to his ongoing cephalopod collaborations.³⁵ *Octopus Stone* (2013) presents the stones, shells, pieces of sea-weathered glass, and other ocean detritus that these creatures are often found holding when captured in octopus pots. In this way it acts as an archive of the octopuses’ collections, displaying the range of objects amassed by these nonhuman collectors to suggest that they each have their own taste and preferences. Humorously transposing museum practices to a cephalopod activity, Shimabuku attributes curatorial agency to octopuses to explore how the ocean might appear from their perspective, thereby decentering human perceptions and experiences of the underwater realm.

The art historian Marion Endt-Jones has observed how coral, in particular, has become a popular organism in exhibitions of recent years, frequently positioned as a “harbinger of climate change.”³⁶ Exhibitions include Endt-Jones’s own *Coral: Something Rich and Strange* (Manchester Museum, 2013–14); the ongoing collaborative *Crochet Coral Reef*, started by the artist and scientist sisters Christine and Margaret Wertheim, which has been staged in numerous contexts from art biennials to science museums since 2005; and *Coral Reefs: Secret Cities of the Sea* (2015), curated by Miranda Lowe at the Natural History Museum, London. The cumulative craft efforts that result in the *Crochet Coral Reef* installations are the result of international collaboration by tens of thousands of participants around the world, echoing the collective symbiotic creation of reefs in the wild.

Meanwhile, the Drexciya mythos of the Black Atlantis, originating from the eponymous Detroit electronic music act, has informed numerous artists over the years and facilitated what can be viewed as a transhistorical collaboration that maintains its momentum today. Ellen Gallagher, whose artwork has incorporated Drexciyan imagery throughout much of her multidecade career, enacted a curatorial gesture as part of *In the Black Fantastic* (Hayward Gallery, 2022), a group exhibition on Afrofuturism in art curated by Ekow Eshun, in which she drew attention to the early foundations of this legacy. Gallagher displayed her own paintings and works on paper alongside a canvas by the seventeenth-century Dutch painter Albert Eckhout that portrays the new Dutch colony of Brazil’s abundant flora and marine fauna in what Gallagher terms a “commodity map” centering on an enslaved African man. In alliance with those diasporic artists who precede her, the artist’s curatorial juxtaposition highlights oceanic collecting’s history of imperial extraction.

35. Shimabuku, “With Octopus, 1990–2010,” 162.

36. Endt-Jones, “Cultivating ‘Response-ability,’” 183.

The Next Wave

Curating the sea presents manifold possibilities for addressing the complexity of the oceans. Over the duration of our project we have observed the inherent entanglements of art and science, climate and colonialism, humans and nonhumans, space and place, and past, present, and future in various instances of oceanic curating. A distinctive characteristic of this strand of curatorial practice is that it is not only a preoccupation with a given theme but an approach with its own set of conceptual methods informed by the poetics, politics, movements, and materialities of the sea. Furthermore, historical modes of displaying the oceans are being reconfigured for the contemporary moment, with aquariums and tropes of historical natural history display emerging afresh in art and exhibitions as vehicles of critique and creative reappraisal. In contrast to the empty seascape so prominent in Western art history, we have shown how recent oceanic curatorial practices encompass relational, collaborative, and multispecies endeavors. Moreover, the oceans' international character and significant links with climate crisis, capitalism, colonialism, migration, Indigeneity, diaspora, and the intricate relationships therein, make them a potent source for engaging with many pressing issues, both historical and contemporary.

From where we stand in time and space, Brexit, closed borders at a time of pandemic, coastal erosion and climate activism, hostile migration policies, the Windrush scandal, Black Lives Matter, decolonizing initiatives, and the so-called culture wars continue to bring about shifts in practice and priorities in artistic and curatorial work as well as within galleries and museums more broadly. The challenges and opportunities these shifts present to curators and artists continue to reveal themselves, adding new dimensions to the critical and creative methods that the multifaceted theme of the oceans continues to inspire.

PANDORA SYPEREK is currently Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at Loughborough University London and visiting research fellow at the V&A Research Institute.

SARAH WADE is an art historian and associate professor of museum studies at University of East Anglia.

Acknowledgments

Aspects of this research have been funded by Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, Leverhulme Trust, and University of East Anglia. Thank you to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful feedback.

References

- Alaimo, Stacy, ed. "Science Studies and the Blue Humanities." Special issue, *Configurations* 27, no. 4 (2019).
- Bal, Mieke. *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.

- Cameron, Fiona, and Brett Neilson, eds. *Climate Change and Museum Futures*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Davis, Heather, and Etienne Turpin, eds. *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments, and Epistemologies*. London: Open Humanities Press, 2015.
- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth M. *Allegories of the Anthropocene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.
- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth M. "Toward a Critical Ocean Studies for the Anthropocene." *English Language Notes* 57, no. 1 (2019): 21–36.
- Demos, T. J., Emily Eliza Scott, and Subhankar Banerjee, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Climate Change*. New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Desmond, Jane C. *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Dion, Mark, ed. *Oceanomania: Souvenirs of Mysterious Seas; From the Expedition to the Aquarium* (exhibition catalog). London: Mack, 2011.
- Endt-Jones, Marion. "Cultivating 'Response-ability': Curating Coral in Recent Exhibitions." In Syperek and Wade, "Curating the Sea," 182–205.
- Endt-Jones, Marion. "A Monstrous Transformation: Coral in Art and Culture." In *Coral: Something Rich and Strange*, edited by Marion-Endt Jones, 9–19. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013.
- Farquharson, Alex, and Martin Clark, eds. *Aquatopia: The Imaginary of the Ocean Deep* (exhibition catalog). Nottingham: Nottingham Contemporary and Tate Publishing, 2013.
- Fenner, Felicity. *Curating in a Time of Ecological Crisis: Biennales as Agents of Change*. New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." Translated by Jay Miskowic. *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 22–27.
- Fowkes, Maja, and Reuben Fowkes. *Art and Climate Change*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2022.
- Haraway, Donna. "The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others." In *Cultural Studies*, edited by Larry Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler, 295–337. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Hayward, Eva. "Sensational Jellyfish: Aquarium Affects and the Matter of Immersion." *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 23, no. 3 (2012): 161–96.
- Hermannstädter, Anita, ed. *Art/Nature: Interventions at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin*. Berlin: Edition Braus, 2019.
- Hopkins, Candice, Katie Lawson, and Tairone Bastien, eds. *Water, Kinship, Belief: Toronto Biennial of Art, 2019–2022*. Toronto: Toronto Biennial of Art+Art Metropole, 2022.
- Jørgensen, Dolly, Libby Robin, and Marie-Theres Fojuth. "Slowing Time in the Museum in a Period of Rapid Extinction." *Museum and Society* 20, no. 1 (2022): 1–12.
- Jue, Melody. "Underwater Museums." In *Wild Blue Media: Thinking through Seawater*, 142–66. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020.
- Lowe, Miranda, Richard Sabin, Pandora Syperek, and Sarah Wade. "Curating Ocean Ecology at the Natural History Museum." *Science Museum Group Journal*, no. 14 (2020). <http://doi.org/10.15180/201314>.
- Mentz, Steven. "Towards a Blue Cultural Studies: The Sea, Maritime Culture, and Early Modern English Literature." *Literature Compass* 6, no. 5 (2009): 997–1013.
- Methi, Hilde, et al. *The Kelp Congress*. Lotofen, Norway: NNKS Press, 2020.
- Newell, Jennifer, Libby Robin, and Kirsten Wehner, eds. *Curating the Future: Museums, Communities, and Climate Change*. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Patrizio, Andrew. *The Ecological Eye: Assembling an Ecocritical Art History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019.
- Reymann, Markus, and Ute Meta Bauer. "Trusting the Oceans." In *Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary: The Commissions Book*, edited by Daniela Zyman and Eva Ebersberger, 18–23. Berlin: Sternberg, 2020.
- Rossi-Linnemann, Camilla, and Giulia de Martini, eds. *Art in Science Museums: Towards a Post-disciplinary Approach*. New York: Routledge, 2020.

- Ruiz, Cristina. "Fierce Debate over Christoph Büchel's Venice Biennale Display of Boat That Sank with Hundreds Locked in Hull." *Art Newspaper*, May 14, 2019. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2019/05/14/fierce-debate-over-christoph-buchels-venice-biennale-display-of-boat-that-sank-with-hundreds-locked-in-hull>.
- Schlaegel, Andreas. "The Ocean, Bergen Kunsthall." *Flash Art*, October 26, 2021. <https://flash---art.com/2021/10/the-ocean-bergen-kunsthall/>.
- Shimabuku. "With Octopus, 1990–2010." In *Shimabuku: The 165-Metre Mermaid and Other Stories* (exhibition catalog), 162–75. Monaco: BOM DIA BOA TARDE BOA NOITE/Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, 2021.
- Syperek, Pandora. "Hope in the Archive: Indexing the Natural History Museum's Ecologies of Display." In Syperek and Wade, "Curating the Sea," 206–29.
- Syperek, Pandora. "'No Fancy So Wild': Slippery Gender Models in the Coral Gallery." In *Framing the Ocean, 1700 to the Present: Envisaging the Sea as Social Space*, edited by Tricia Cusack, 239–51. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014.
- Syperek, Pandora, and Sarah Wade, eds. "Curating the Sea." Special issue, *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 9, no. 2 (2020).
- Syperek, Pandora, and Sarah Wade. "Guest Editors' Introduction." In Syperek and Wade, "Curating the Sea," 157–61.
- Syperek, Pandora, and Sarah Wade, eds. *Oceans: Documents of Contemporary Art*. London: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2023.
- Wade, Sarah. "Ecological Exhibitions at the Musée Océanographique de Monaco." In Syperek and Wade, "Curating the Sea," 162–81.
- Wade, Sarah. "Ecologies of Display: Contemporary Art, Natural History Collections, and Environmental Crisis." *Journal of Natural Science Collections*, no. 10 (2022): 94–106.
- Wade, Sarah. "Emerging Exhibition Ecologies: Curating Contemporary Art at a Time of Climate Crisis." In *Planet for Our Future: How Do We Adapt to a Transforming World* (exhibition catalog), edited by John Kenneth Paranada and Vanessa Tothill, 12–21. Norwich: Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, 2023.