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Science Inspires Art: OCEAN / sustaining life & our imagination

(New York, New York – September 3, 2017) "With every grain of sand, sod, and soil spoken for on the shore, the artists in this exhibit are deeply connected to the mystery and great unmined truths of the last thing no one can claim: the sea," begins the Art Juror Statement of Diana Moore for the up-coming *Science Inspires Art: OCEAN* exhibition organized by Art & Science Collaborations, Inc. (ASCI) opening at the New York Hall of Science on September 16, 2017.

This large group exhibition is the result of an international Open Call that asked both artists and scientists to help create a new public perception of OCEAN by sharing creative visions of our deep connections to her, the health issues she faces and/or possible solutions, and feelings she inspires in us. The forty-three 2D images from the 36 selected participants create a dramatic visual story about OCEAN from a multitude of personal perspectives and some intriguing strategies and novel media.



Joan Wheeler's fantasy painting (above left) of a young girl in a rabbit-pulled go-cart racing across a sun-drenched seashore sets the tone of this OCEAN-inspired exhibition -- "expect the un-expected". It is immediately followed by a still-image of Weiheng Quian's imaginative, video-mapped installation of a surrealistic open doorway-to-the-sea. (above right) For most humans, seascapes are their only perception of OCEAN. However, the keen vision of our six photographers by-passes the mere spectacle of dramatic "horizon events" to reveal OCEAN's magical visual complexity. Here, OCEAN's "real" surface patterns are relished for their abstractness (Anita Getzler) or their geometry (Helen Glazer); and OCEAN's extraordinarily subtle colors are embraced as she shape-shifts between liquid, solid, and gas in the Arctic regions (Anna Davidson), or as part of her eternal tidal dance (Magrit Schwarz), or facing an ominous hurricane (Sandra Gottlieb), or evoking the sublime peace of OCEAN resting in a protected bay (Karen Cohen).

For another group of artists: Margaret Juul, Marta Beltramo, Edwin Salgado Villarreal, and Ray Koh, the sheer materiality of OCEAN as a powerful liquid changed by motion over time and captured by light, inspires them during their physical painting process to uncannily yield "realistic abstractions" of OCEAN. Koh's process diverges in that "video captures" from his flying drone become his paintbrush.

Moving slightly from abstraction are those artists who make symbols, and who mix together and synthesize images from reality to create something entirely new. Robert Patrick's squid-like shapes, Pnina Gagnon's whale cut-outs, Ryuta Nakajima's cuttlefish digital montage, and Cynthia Beth Rubin + Susanne Menden-Deuer's jelly fish/krill composite images, all reflect on some of OCEAN's most wondrous (read: "intelligent") marine species. Perhaps seeing ourselves in them is a way to provoke empathy and a desire to protect them. Two other artists translate scientific data into visualizations: Carrie Bodle (coastal ecosystems) and Rebecca Rutstein (maps of the ocean floor) which are uniquely 21st-century visual abstractions. And Hunter Cole (also a geneticist) utilizes the light of bioluminescent bacteria in fish guts as an unusual medium for composing her DNA-inspired photographs.

For those artists who believe in the power of art to communicate conceptual ideas, OCEAN inspired Lyubava Fartushenko's placement of the mighty orca inside a small fish bag to deplore ocean plastics, Susan Hoenig's tight circular design invokes the fragile food web of OCEAN's largest creature (the whale), Mary Ann Biehl's whale fluke today can fortunately symbolize a target for precious preservation rather than killing, and the in-sync gaze of both human and whale towards our skyward cosmos in Lenny Marignier's composition projects a hopeful potential of peaceful species co-existence.

And then there are scientist-artists whose art reflects both first-hand knowledge and remarkable awe from experiencing OCEAN intimately! Véronique Robigou's trips in submersibles to OCEAN's deep hydrothermal vents provide both illustrative accuracy and impressionistic memories, Amanda Levine's painting captures the ferocious energy of a marine food-web "feeding frenzy" in the Atlantic off New York's shores, and marine biologist Jenny Rock's colograph of fish eggs from the Southern Ocean near New Zealand stimulated her to question their sustainability in today's warming waters.

This exhibition thankfully includes a significant group of artist-activists whose cautionary OCEAN tales are designed to viscerally affect the viewer in hopes of creating change. Vanessa Nilsson's city plunged underwater speaks to the consequences of ignoring global warming, and Bob Barancik's Fukushima nudges us to consider the possible unseen and yet unknown effects of its massive radioactive releases on OCEAN and her wildlife. Three artists offer close-ups focusing on ocean species that may serve as "canaries in a coal mine" regarding the negative effects of climate change on OCEAN. The collaborative watercolor of Helen Klebesadel and Mary Kay Neumann is a lament on Sea Star Wasting Disease, Wo Schiffman's reef painting seeks to portray corals trying to recover from ocean bleaching, and the exquisite structures of Marguerita Hagan's white ceramic sculptures immortalize OCEAN's delicate diatoms responsible for providing a quarter of our planet's oxygen and which are threatened by ocean acidification.

And tipping its hat to new creative forms of expression, this exhibition embraces the work of four artists committed to sharing OCEAN's pressing issues via art-sci public engagement projects. Dennis Summers constructs "crying posts" that literally give voice to Earth and OCEAN pain (here from the 2006 Prestige Oil Spill off the coast of Spain), Danielle Baudrand has enlisted community members in braiding and crocheting 6,000+ plastic bags over 4-years as a metaphor for the ever-growing health hazard of ocean plastic pollution; Colleen Flanigan designed and welded an iron sculpture and installed it along with a 24/7 "web-cam" in the waters off Cozumel, Mexico so the public can see (in real-time) how OCEAN can heal herself if we just protect her; and Sarah Cameron Sunde's durational performance piece where she stands fully-clothed in a tidal area for 12-13 hours (and members of the public are invited to join her) while the sea rises and falls around their bodies. Perhaps the power of physically feeling sea-level rise will be enough to shock people into finally seeking effective ways to prepare and adapt.



This exhibition ends serendipitously (and perhaps most appropriately) with Ken Knowlton's mosaic portrait "Jacques Cousteau." Composed of sea shells and designed by the artist's own software program, it was commissioned by/for the Exploratorium in San Francisco. Jacques Cousteau (1910-1997) was a French naval officer, and renowned explorer, filmmaker, co-inventor of the "Aqua-lung"(first scuba gear), photographer, and a researcher, author, educator who studied all forms of life in the sea and importantly, pioneered marine conservation.

The artists in this exhibition truly embody Cousteau's love for art, science, and OCEAN. And, we concur with John Stegeman who ended his Science Juror Statement with: "Altogether, this exhibition will captivate the viewer, and evoke memories, wonder, and contemplation." *Science Inspires Art: OCEAN* is on-view September 16, 2017 through February 25, 2018 at the [New York Hall of Science](#) located in Flushing Meadows Park, Queens, NYC. The online exhibition launches on September 16, 2017 at: www.asci.org

Art & Science Collaborations, Inc. (ASCI) is a 30-year old nonprofit organization founded in New York City by artist/science enthusiast Cynthia Pannucci. ASCI was instrumental in revitalizing the "art & technology" movement in the United States during the 1990s and

pioneered the international art-science field by organizing four seminal ArtSci Symposia on collaboration held in New York City (1998-2002). ASCI was also the first to organize public panels and exhibitions (1998) educating about and promoting the digital print as a legitimate fine art medium, and was first (2006) to initiate the practice of having both art and science co-jurors for its annual "Science Inspires Art" exhibitions. More info and archive link at: <http://www.asci.org>

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