

shines through an atmospheric underworld, and Cohen was its oracle. His work saw, sensed, and expressed the past and future through its connection to what's underneath us, buried deep inside us and in our collective histories and mythologies. Many artists on view may have attempted to worship Cohen like Apollo, but he was Dionysus in a dark bar. The power of the exhibition lies in its creation of this larger space of darkness that Cohen made so alluring and voyaged, without turning away. Perhaps this aspect is most lusciously experienced through *Listening to Leonard* (2017), which invites visitors to sit side-by-side on comfortable love seats in the shadows of a dimly illuminated room, listening to recordings of musicians Feist, Moby, Lou Doillon, and others sing from the Cohen treasury.

One view of this type of survey exhibition is that its very conceit presumes the spirit of an artist of Cohen's influence is measurable or packageable, as if compressing a god into finite form makes him somehow easier to fathom. It doesn't. Yet right now, at the Montreal MAC, something special is accessible. The work there pixelates Cohen the man and Cohen the artist into a kaleidoscopic pattern that, as a whole, offers to embrace us like a soft, esoteric blanket. Ideally we, in return, fulfill his wish: to be loved by as many people as possible.

—Caia Hagele

## Tidalectics

### Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary—Augarten (TBA21), Vienna

Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary's Vienna exhibition space, which will relocate to Prague in 2018, hosted the initial act and first "materialization" of an ongoing series of research and expeditions dedicated to the ocean as both endangered site of ecological concern and reservoir of myths, legends, and imagination. Following *Allan Sekula: OKEANOS* [February 21–May 14, 2017], a retrospective of the artist's multifaceted research on the effects of globalization exhibited earlier this year, TBA21–Academy curator Stefanie Hessler continued to develop an "oceanic worldview."

*Tidalectics* [June 2–November 19, 2017] was grounded in research within the framework of the TBA21's Academy—an interdisciplinary constellation of artists, researchers, and thinkers—whose mission is to incite "new knowledge, communicative strategies, and dynamic solutions for environmental challenges," thereby raising questions about the stakes of artistic research and fieldwork for both shore and off-shore expeditions in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Expressing a genuinely environmentalist stance combined with a sensitivity to local accounts, these expeditions seek to amplify our understanding of geopolitics and contemporary history.

The latest "maritime turn"—that is, the emergent understanding of the ocean as a site of environmental and sociopolitical concerns—connects among other things to debates on glo-



Susanne M. Winterling, *Glistening Troubles*, 2017, installation view at *Tidalectics* [photo: Jorit Aust, courtesy of TBA21]

balization; *Tidalectics* expanded this angle by combining documentary imagery, debris, soundscapes, and artistic research into such forms as smell (in the form of Sissel Tolaas' *Ocean SmellScapes* [2017]) and even living organisms (e.g., Tue Greenfort's installation *Tamoya Ohboya* [2017], which incorporated a tank filled with jellyfish). The exhibition looked into the surfeit of problematics associated with the ocean, such as humankind's relationship to the natural environment, and laid bare interactions between human and nonhuman actors. Most importantly, perhaps, the exhibition mapped out the ethical dimensions of knowledge production and sought to enhance scientific research with activism and testimony, frequently building on mythologies and local narratives and thus pointing to the fissures between Western epistemology and "native" forms of narration. This approach came across clearly in Alexander Lee's *Me-ti'a—An Island Standing* (2017), a video that revolves around the volcano Mehetia in Tahiti and confounds history, science, and local mythologies. In the same room, two fanfolds—*Fictionary of Corals and Jellies* (2017), a collaboration between artist Janaina Tschäpe and marine biologist/oceanographer David Gruber—combined research in the field of marine biology with imaginative drawings that fashioned modern artists as explorers.

*Tidalectics* opposed systems of thought and knowledge shaped by the idea of fixed geographies with a nondialectical, fluid conception of geography and history, leaving space to unveil the imagination and myths that circumscribe the topos of the ocean. *Tidalectics* equally mobilized the meaning of its title, a concept borrowed from Barbadian thinker and poet Kamau Brathwaite. Similar to Caribbean writer Édouard Glissant, Brathwaite has been an influential figure in post-colonial theory and has become known for his poems, dubbed "riddims." As the term insinuates, "tidalectics" plays on a rhythmical proximity to the movement of the waves and sug-

gests a "cyclical" understanding of geography and history rather than a dialectical model of progression.

Brathwaite's poetics repeatedly resonated in the works on view, the majority of which were specifically commissioned by Thyssen-Bornemisza's Academy. For example, Em'kal Eyongakpa's installation *Gaia beats/bits III-i/ doves and an aged hammock* (2017) consisted of *objets trouvés*, driftwood, and fishing nets, which hang above a wooden platform. Visitors were invited to sit or stand on a slightly moving platform resembling a simple wooden raft, on which they heard interlocking narrations and sounds. Eyongakpa's piece thus reflected the ocean as a space of travel and migration. On display in the last room, Julian Charrière's video *Iroojirilik* (2016) showed the ongoing effects of nuclear tests in the 1940s and 1950s in the Bikini Atoll, almost deserted and only vestigially touched by humans since. Many of the works engaged the relationship between humans and other beings, such as bioluminescent dinoflagellates, jellyfish, or whales. Susanne M. Winterling's *Glistening Troubles* (2017) took form as an installation composed of objects and animations, and it featured a video interview with a fisherman from Jamaica's Glistening Waters lagoon explaining the medical uses of bioluminescent dinoflagellates firsthand.

As an allegory of the global and as an archetype of hybridity, the ocean certainly provides a space for thinking about the borders and boundaries of epistemic life itself. *Tidalectics* rejected the terrestrial view of the West and its fascination for ordering and categorizing principles. However, in times of global waves of migration—a forced fluidity caused by natural catastrophes and armed conflicts—it may be necessary to further complicate these terms, and to call into question the problems a rhizomatic understanding of geography and history might eventually entangle.

—Christoph Chwatal