

Liquid Intelligence:
how intelligence surpassed the human body to become plural and able to embrace the values of the Ocean

A group exhibition organized by TBA21 at the Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum, Madrid

October 10, 2023 - January 28, 2024



- ***Liquid Intelligence* offers an immersive experience that plunges the visitor into the Ocean and its ecosystems to ignite positive action and research on care for the planet.**
- **TBA21 brings this group exhibition to Madrid, focusing on the Ocean as an indispensable element for planetary wellbeing.**
- **The exhibition showcases the works of eight international artists and will bring together curators, artists, musicians, performers, scientists, philosophers, and researchers in an extensive public program.**

Madrid, October 9 - **TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary** presents **Liquid Intelligence**, a group exhibition curated by Chus Martínez with Soledad Gutiérrez and María Montero, addressing the critical state of life in the Ocean. An extensive public program convening leading curators, artists, musicians, performers, scientists, philosophers, and international researchers will accompany the exhibition from October 10th through to January 28th, offering encounters, talks, performances, and screenings. The exhibition is supported by Urbaser.

While the health of the Ocean is indispensable to our shared planetary wellbeing, it is also integral to the climate crisis. The indiscriminate exploitation, noise, and chemical pollution of the Ocean, their present situations, and those on the horizon –such as the ambition of large-scale seabed mining– have unimaginable implications for their deterioration and our future as a species.

To recognize the Ocean as liquid intelligence implies opening our imagination and our capacity to admire the complexity of its ecosystems, to feel it as a body that not only transports oxygen and makes life possible but has its own intelligence and agency, and whose rights must be respected. Chus Martínez, curator of the exhibition, states: “One of the great dichotomies built into our culture is a way of thinking that prioritizes solid matter and sees fluids and liquid life as secondary. Understanding the Ocean as liquid intelligence not only allows us to care for it and love it, but also requires that we accept it as an entity with agency and the capacity to decide and propose futures from its own perspective.”

The exhibition departs from the concept of artificial intelligence, so prevalent today, and suggests focusing on a more precise and inclusive one: **conductive intelligence**. This term conceives of intelligence as a force that connects life, experience, and knowledge production. A capacity that, using imagination and fantasy, territories that artists have always explored, allows us to project multiple possible futures based on the coexistence of all species.

The exhibition **Liquid Intelligence** presents artistic proposals employing various languages that bring us closer to the Ocean and their aquatic ecosystems, generating immersive experiences. The lush expressiveness of the works as well as the wide range of activities to be held in conjunction with the exhibition, have one goal: to immerse us in the substance of perception to understand and comprehend liquid intelligence.

This group exhibition features works by eight artists that transport visitors to aquatic landscapes, and envelope us in tides and currents.

The **commissions** in the exhibition exemplify a fundamental way of working for TBA21: Artistic research and investigation, following questions through the creation of artworks, can translate facts and data into an experience-oriented understanding that is key to opening these issues to broad audiences and to foster our societies’ growing understanding of the complexity of the climate emergency and its consequences. These works are crucial for raising awareness about the planet's climate transformation and its consequences. **Beatriz Santiago Muñoz's** work, *Pájaro, cómete* (2023), focused on the Caribbean, and **Sonia Levy's** work, *We Marry You, O Sea, as a Sign of True and Perpetual Dominion* (2023), which studies Venice and its lagoon, exemplify artistic practices that incorporate research and the analysis of specific case studies.

The works from the TBA21 Collection include pieces by artists such as Ana Mendieta and Jumana Manna. Both artists share an interest in sensing beyond what we are conscious about;

sensing with a forest in the case of Mendieta or feeling with all the materials we extract from the earth to build our cities, as does the Palestinian artist Jumana Manna.

The **works produced in situ** include new pieces such as the video installation *Ziggy and the Starfish* (2016-2022) by **Anne Duk Hee Jordan**, *Entanglements series* (2023) by **Inês Zenha**, as well as **Saelia Aparicio's** *Bodies of water* (2023). Jordan's work creates immersive situations where the changing intensity of the water's blue color turns into code. She reflects on the willful ignorance, the "artificial stupidity" predominant in our species when it comes to the liquid, conductive, and organic intelligence of the Ocean. Playful and empathetic, it connects with the widespread tradition in Asian cultures of understanding natural intelligence from the subatomic life of larvae, viruses, bacteria, insects, and animals, which are normally denigrated in the evolutionary pyramids created in the West, first by religion, and later reinforced by the theories of Charles Darwin.

Religion and mysticism in Victorian times are starting points for Aparicio to recreate historical attempts to enter the water, to change shape and become hybrid beings, a species-of-species, to reach non-binary goals through the creation of a symbolic language and an immersive experience with magical components.

Finally, Zenha's work creates a symbolic language of the importance of being water, of understanding the relations of an all-enveloping oceanic intelligence, creating the possibility of a new expressive, affective, fertile imaginary, oriented toward a pedagogy of coexistence. Like the symbolist poets, Zenha's work places confidence in imagination and fantasy but, unlike in symbolism, she does not associate these faculties only with humans, but also with water.

In addition to showcasing the artists' work and research, the exhibition will become a space where they, accompanied by scientists and thinkers, will propose their approaches to aquatic life in the form of performances, encounters, and conversations. *Liquid Intelligence* will be a place for learning and discussion, starting from artistic and scientific perspectives, and imagining a place where our senses operate differently and perceive the multiplicity of existing life forms. A place where all forms of life and their intelligences coexist without resorting to hierarchies, violence, or destruction.

Liquid Intelligence will mark the start of a series of projects run by the Foundation that will take place at the museum with the aim of understanding and debating on the different topics that the exhibition proposes in relation to the knowledge and care for the Ocean.

TBA21 strives to make visible the need for the preservation of the Ocean as a collective and shared public responsibility and to create, through artistic and scientific projects, a community of care and concern for the Ocean. By raising awareness for the broader problems of environmental injustice we are placing an intention to heighten collective sensitivity to the changes in our immediate environments. To explore the interaction between art and science and respond to the belief in art and culture as vehicles for social and environmental transformation, is the basis from which all TBA21 activities are conducted.

Liquid Intelligence

How intelligence surpassed the human body to become pluralistic and able to embrace the values of the Ocean

October 10, 2023–January 28, 2024

Artists: Saelia Aparicio, Lucas Arruda, Anne Duk Hee Jordan, Sonia Levy, Jumana Manna, Ana Mendieta, Beatriz Santiago Muñoz and Inês Zenha.

Curated by: Chus Martínez with Soledad Gutiérrez and María Montero.

More information: <https://tba21.org/liquidintelligence>

BIOS

IMAGES

Note to Editors

For further information and images, please contact Scott & Co:
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About TBA21

Fundación TBA21 is an international art and advocacy foundation fundamentally driven by artists and the belief in art and culture as a carrier of social and environmental transformation. The Foundation's mission is to center artistic practices in today's urgent investigations and unlock art's transformative potential within societies and ecosystems. Art rehearses new worlds through joy, curiosity, and play. It holds space for diversity by facing tension and embracing complexity. Artistic thinking opens spaces and provides strategies to engage broader society as allies in the fight against the climate crisis.

TBA21–Academy is Fundación TBA21's research center fostering a deeper relationship with the Ocean and other bodies of water through the lens of art to inspire care and action. Working as an incubator for collaborative inquiry, artistic production, and environmental advocacy, the Academy is catalyzing new knowledges emerging from the exchanges between art, science, policy, and conservation.



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