

Confluence

Exhibiting artists: Romana Drdová, Pavlína Čambalová, Beata Hlavenková, Lukáš Likavčan, Matyas Pavlik, Daniel Viček

Curated by: Lucie Drdová and Mária Gálová

Venice has always been essentially material and yet imaginary. This ambivalence is constantly present in the almost decadent reality of the city's finality, while it is also associated with a mystical essence of eternity and beauty. Besides the eclectic harmony of its rich history and architectonic heritage, Venice also encompasses a unique ecosystem which could become the key to understanding our ever more vulnerable world.

More than a decade ago, Geoff Dyer wrote: "A city built on water. What an impractical and wonderful idea."¹ The Venetian Lagoon represents a complex and dynamic ecotone between the land (terra firma) and the Adriatic Sea. It has also become a scene of ecological-historical events linking the city to the urgent global present. It could even become a milestone in our understanding of what it means to be human, or at least indicate the necessity of crossing the boundary between human and natural, environmental history. In *Introducing Lagoonscapes*, the authors call Venice a "hybrid artificial organism of land and water" which is nothing less than a "planetary kaleidoscope for all the dynamics that characterize the Anthropocene."²

The materiality of water, dominating the Venice environment, and biological material, seen from the artistic perspective, are a metaphor for time, memory, and the act of common creation between humans, animate, and inanimate nature. In the interdisciplinary exhibition *Confluence*, artistic voices from several fields mingle like water currents on the backdrop of scientific knowledge of the Venetian Lagoon. The debate is held by visual artists Daniel Viček and Romana Drdová, glass artists Pavlína Čambalová and Matyas Pavlik, composer and musician Beata Hlavenková, and philosopher and planetologist Lukáš Likavčan in open dialogue with biologist Giovanni Cecconi and multimedia artists Antonín Gazda and Tomáš Kocka Jusko.

The original interpretation is articulated within a shared message of the actors. What is significant is not only the final form but also the creative process. It reflects the diversity of different personalities with different artistic approaches while stimulating close collaboration and collective responsibility. In these new forms of cooperation between art, science, and preservation, artists seek solutions to environmental issues through the prism of art. The results include interdisciplinary overlaps in the form of multimedia installation and live performance.

Based on historical events, human and environmental histories have fully intertwined in the lagoon and cannot be perceived or treated separately.

Venice and its beauty could only "survive" for so long because its inhabitants have learned to

¹ Geoff Dyer, *Jeff in Venice, Death in Varanasi* (Vintage, 2010), 23.

² Serenella Iovino and Stefano Beggiora, "Introducing *Lagoonscapes*. *The Venice Journal of Environmental Humanities*," *Lagoonscapes: The Venice Journal of Environmental Humanities* (2021): 8.

adapt to the varying and volatile environment. With visionary grace and lightly apocalyptic irony, the artists and authors created a biocultural metaphor through a living organism, sound sculpture, body, object, word, and acoustic composition. The medium of glass has become a symbolical material to express the fragility of mutual relationships.

Text by Lucie Drdová and Mária Gálová

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