



Speaking Water was curated by Anna Glynn and is currently being exhibited at Yarrila Arts and Museum on Gumbaynggirr country. (2023)

Simone Hooymans lives and works across Norway and Holland working primarily with animations based on a hand drawn world, taking viewers into new universes exploring her interest in ecological ideas about the state of the earth and the human relation with nature.

Anna Glynn is a multimedia artist, living in Australia with an international interdisciplinary art and science practice, who has a passion for investigating the connection between humans, history, nature, land, place, physical and ephemeral.

Jasmine Cederqvist practices in Sweden with a MSci in Biology, a traveller between artistic and scientific ways, looking simultaneously through two lenses exploring nature from a multidisciplinary viewpoint, combining art, natural science, ecological theories and philosophy.

Emily Jay works in both the United States and Italy and uses performance, video, bookmaking, and installation to explore how the past exists within the present and how this simultaneity creates particular places.

Anastasia Savinova is a Russian artist based in the Swedish North, whose multidisciplinary practice revolves around places, ecologies and human relationship with more-than-human world, and investigates how everything is intertwined and how we are always emerging as a part of something greater.

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In the ancient Greek myth, Tantalus kills his own son and serves the remains as a meal to the gods to test their powers of deduction. The gods realise almost immediately, and Zeus deals a harsh punishment: Tantalus will suffer an eternity of thirst and hunger. He is sent to Hades to stand in a pool of water. Every time Tantalus attempts to drink from it, the water disappears.

In the Anthropocene Tantalus's myth takes on new weight. Characterised by human impact on the planet, our epoch is defined by the displacement of our planet's climate and ecosystems. A recent discovery confirms this impact perhaps more than any other example: almost everywhere on Earth rainwater now has levels of 'forever chemicals' (PFAS) and is becoming unsafe to drink. In a nightmare of our own making, we are Tantalus.

When I think of water, I remember Tantalus. But I also think of the ocean and the snow. Of the creek that ran down the back of our house when I was a child. I think of summer storms and writing messages on foggy bathroom mirrors. Water is a kind of elemental memory. Culturally, we have always attached deep meaning to its presence in our lives, which today cannot be separated from the climate as well as its mythic and symbolic significance. →

By the time we reach our human epoch, we've seen glaciers melt and oceans collide within kaleidoscopic pattern, transitioning to Yuin Country in the work of Anna Glynn. In almost ceremonial form, Glynn begins to whisper: *The ocean whispers my name, beneath its liquid depth I am recognised. I become water, a cloud, a tear, falling rain. The ocean whispers your name.*

Throughout the collaboration, Glynn says she often thought about where each of the artists were located. "Jasmine up in the sky flying her Tiger moth airplane over Sweden, Simone walking through snow with her sons beside the Hardangerfjord, Emily silently exploring sacred incense-filled watery spaces in Italian chapels, Anastasia standing in rivers humming songs her mother taught her, me beside the rainforest watching clouds and forever chasing birds." As a transnational collaboration between five contemporary artists, the work reveals the complexity of water across these different environments and perspectives. Transformation becomes the key to the transitions between artists' works in *Speaking Water*. That is, until there's not enough.

After Cederqvist's otherworldly footage of tidelines in Iceland where boulders of ice have washed ashore, a moment of tension arrives in the work of Emily Jay, who splits her time between Italy and the United States. At the time, Jay was living in the Texas Panhandle with its arid climate and subterranean Ogallala Aquifer, one →

The exhibition *Speaking Water* reminds us of this significance. In a final moving image work, artists Simone Hooymans, Anna Glynn, Jasmine Cederqvist, Emily Jay, and Anastasia Savinova have interwoven different landscapes of water together, offering new depth into this timeless subject. To speak water in this way is to listen carefully to what it tells us in the tenuous ebbs and flows of our present, but also the ancient stories written upon the earth. In the rock formations, frozen tidelines, and watery landscapes across the world.

The collaboration began online in 2021. The artists discussed different aspects of the world they inhabit and their lived experiences. Soon water became the central thread drawing them together, sublimating differences in form across animation, video, and performance within the single subject.

Speaking Water plays in a loop, but it technically starts with Simone Hooymans' undulating waves and rocks. These hand-drawn, animated forms were inspired by the dramatic cliff and frozen waterscape of the Norwegian fjords where she lives and draws on designs of water first published by Japanese Illustrator Mori Yuzan in 1903. Texture and speed swell as the animation builds momentum. It becomes an endless, expansive seascape, returning us to primordial oceans before life on earth. Then the sun sets, and the moon rises. The water begins to firm. Everything grows still.



of the largest groundwater sources in the world. But the water here is being depleted faster than it can recharge, with wells beginning to run dry. Jay asks, "what are the ramifications of not having water?" We see her hands and bright orange nails in the dust and dirt, frantically digging for water. She begins to pray in Italian and the work transitions to cuts of Anastasia Savinova dancing for water. These artists draw the relationship between humans and water as ritualised anticipation and prayer. A holy water basin begins to overflow.

At the end of *Speaking Water*, Savinova's final performance appears like a painting, the horizon line splitting the composition in two. Another slow pendulous dance takes place this time on the frozen Baltic Sea. She is dancing in spongy wearable sculptures reminiscent of waves and drops and her feet crunch against the snow in a landscape otherwise completely silent. A landscape completely transformed by water.

Savinova's dancing feels like the right place to end. Her wearable forms change, reminding us how water is always changing in a gravitational cycle that responds to climate; it is air, it is water, it is soft snow, it is hard ice. Water is always in process of creation and transformation – like art. And we are always in relationship with water. |