

River of Rebirth

A vibrant, multi-colored fish, possibly a species of cichlid, is the central focus of the image. It has a yellowish body with a prominent orange stripe running along its side and a blue stripe above it. The fish is swimming in a river with a brown, slightly turbid water surface. In the background, there are blurred green plants and a wooden structure, possibly a bridge or a pier. The overall scene is a natural, outdoor setting.

Vleugel 19

EN

River of Rebirth

Water has always been a source of stories about creation and destruction. The oldest known written story, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, tells us already of a giant flood that marks both the end and a new beginning of life on earth. In other stories, water is the place where life is born, or a river crossing marks the passage to an afterlife. Such ideas and myths are found in cultures all over the world. Like rivers, they do not have a single origin. They spring from different sources, intertwine and branch out, and yet they flow uninterrupted from the past into the present. The artists in *River of Rebirth* draw inspiration from the many stories about water. What do these stories tell us today as we are increasingly confronted with the force of the water?

① Mickey Yang

Cosmic Current, 2023

A wall sculpture in the shape of a giant wave engulfs the space. A musing voice tells the story of a vanished city buried under a flood of water and mud. The visual motif of a thunderbolt in the meandering shape of a river is derived from Indian art. It is an omen of heavy weather to come. Mickey Yang blends fact and fiction in her work. She speculates about the role of water in the rise and fall of civilizations. By detaching stories and symbols from their original context and bringing them together in a new narrative, she creates a mythology of her own.

② Martin Belou

The Beginning of the End, 2023

Le Grand Bain, 2022

Water is a source of life and culture in this installation by Martin Belou. The artist builds a mythical world out of simple materials. He found inspiration in the marshlands of Mesopotamia, the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. In this region, the site of one of the world's first agricultural communities, reed has been used as a building material for thousands of years. The large wooden tub at the center of the installation is a vessel for transformation. It stands for the emergence of new life from the waters of the womb, and more generally, the permanence of change in human life and history.



Matthew Lutz-Kinoy, *I am writing and it is about you...*, 2019.

Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo/Brussels/New York.



Matthew Lutz-Kinoy, *Meeting the Sun (Torso Schematic); Walking the Path Worn in the Grass; Nature without Check (Lower Schematic)*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo/Brussels/New York.

③ Matthew Lutz-Kinoy

I am writing and it is about you..., 2019

Meeting the Sun (Torso Schematic), 2017

Walking the Path Worn in the Grass, 2017

Nature without Check (Lower Schematic), 2017

The amphoras by Matthew Lutz-Kinoy are made of terracotta clay and produced by artisans in Andalusia, Spain. Displayed in a series of pairs, the amphoras mirror human anatomy in their symmetry. The shape and scale reflect the body of the maker as well as the object's utility and relationship to the natural materials it would store, such as olives, water or wine. The painted triptych was inspired by the work of the American artists Georgia O'Keeffe and Anne Truitt, who were strongly influenced by the various landscapes they inhabited. The mountain landscape on the middle canvas depicts a place where clay is found, usually in areas where streams or rivers once flowed.



Jessica Warboys working on *River Painting*, Dove River, 2023. Courtesy of the artist.

④ Jessica Warboys

River Painting, Dove River, 2023

Nature is literally found *in* the work of Jessica Warboys. Her monumental *River Paintings* begin as a coarse canvas, on which she paints serpentine lines using beeswax. The canvases are then soaked and carried by the flow of specific rivers. At the liminal space, the water's edge, Warboys scatters and works pigments into the wet canvas. The beeswax resists pigmentation and the stain of the river to reveal its painterly wax body. Warboys' canvases are thus brought into being through and by the river, in this instance Dove River close to the artist's studio in Suffolk, UK.

⑤ Michèle Matyn

Study for Pulcinella, 2023
The Water Knows, 2018

Michèle Matyn ventures into nature with her cameras. The images and stories she gathers there are subsequently transformed into sculptures, installations and performances. *The Water Knows* is a paper curtain of polaroids of the Dommel River in Belgian Limburg. By leaving out recognizable details of the surroundings, Matyn gives her photos a timeless character. Yet the history of the sites she photographs plays an important role in her work. The stories about the Dommel River inspired a performance for which she designed different costumes. In the photographic print on the wall, you see a detail from one such costume. It is a water bag made of chamois cloths that the performer carries with her like a lump on her back. The water has caused the pigments to spill out.



Michèle Matyn, *The Water Knows*, 2018. Courtesy of the artist.

⑥ Cecilia Vicuña

Quipu Mapocho, 2016–2017

In *Quipu Mapocho*, Vicuña visits Chile's Mapocho River, which the artist has described as a "river of death." She notes that while the river has been heavily polluted with sewage and chemical waste, it was also a site where the Chilean dictatorship dumped bodies of individuals they had killed and tortured. Constructing *quipus* along the river, Vicuña creates weavings and knots with unspun wool in an effort to bring healing to this site of immense ecological and political violence and to recover the landscape's status as a sacred place in indigenous history and culture.



Cecilia Vicuña, *Quipu Mapocho*, 2016–2017. Courtesy of the artist, Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York and Xavier Hufkens, Brussels.

⑦ Thierry De Cordier

ÉCUMES (Zeeberg), 2017–2019

NOORDZEE, nr. 9

(3^e poging), 2013–2019

NOORDZEE, nr. 9

(2^e poging), 2016–2018



Thierry De Cordier, *ÉCUMES (Zeeberg)*, 2017–2019. Private collection. Courtesy of the artist and Xavier Hufkens, Brussels.

Thierry De Cordier is an atypical artist who paints, among other things. In *River of Rebirth* there are three paintings from his series, *STORMEN*. At the center, the large canvases *NOORDZEE, nr. 9 (2^e poging)* and *NOORDZEE, nr. 9 (3^e poging)* are hanging side by side like twins. On the adjacent wall hangs the panel painting *ÉCUMES*, also known as *ZEEBERG*. It is a key work depicting the transition from sea to mountain as well as their unification. When asked by a critic if he has to be near the sea to be able to paint the sea, De Cordier, who lives between Ostend and the mountainous region of Las Alpujarras in Spain, retorted:

“By the sea I paint the sea, and in the mountains, I paint mountains. However, it happens that by the sea I paint mountains and that in the mountains I paint the sea. And it also happens, although less frequently, that a painted sea resembles a mountain, and that a painted mountain resembles a sea.”

Importantly, the artist prefers to explain as little as possible about his work, so that viewers have to interpret the paintings themselves.

⑧ Mary Beth Edelson

Shells: The List, 1973

Great Mother Thinks Things into Being, 1972

Selected wall collages, 1972–2006

The mother goddess is center-stage in the work of Mary Beth Edelson. As a feminist artist she looked for strong images of women. She found inspiration in *The Great Mother* (1955), a book by psychoanalyst Erich Neumann in which he describes the mother goddess as an archetype throughout history. Edelson wanted to reinvigorate this symbol of female, creative power. In her collages it is possible to recognize the face of the goddess Venus as found in the famous painting by Botticelli. According to Greek mythology, she was born from the sea. The adornments of various statuettes also refer to water. Shells and spirals, for instance, are symbols of rebirth.

⑨ Aimée Parrott

Ever Becoming Body, 2021
The Spiral, 2020
Doggerland, 2019
Trawler, 2019
Heavenly Body, 2015

The abstract motifs in the work of Aimée Parrott are imbued with a sense of fluidity and movement. Perhaps they remind one of organisms, or primordial life forms, or fossils from the sea. The title, *Doggerland*, is in reference to the land mass which long ago connected the British peninsula to the European continent. For thousands of years, people lived there before it disappeared beneath sea level. Parrott's motifs echo throughout her practice, there are elements in *Doggerland* that recur in *Trawler*. To make her monoprints, she works the ink into a copper plate, puts it through a press which then transfers it onto the surface of her work. Often, she uses the faint traces left on the plate after the initial press in another image. This process gives a sense of seriality to her explorations of the relationship between the microscopically small and the infinitely large.



Aimée Parrott, *Doggerland*, 2019. Courtesy of the artist and Parafin, London.

⑩ Laure Prouvost

Blue Blume Roots (Jung), 2022
Blue Blume Roots (Kim), 2022
Four for See Beauties, 2022

What would it be like to be born again? Laure Prouvost takes you back to the origin of life. Once you are past the soft velvety curtains, you enter an intimate space with the temperature of a human body. It feels as if you go into a womb or are standing on the bottom of the ocean. Words have no meaning yet, you experience the world through feeling and listening. The octopus symbolizes such experience. This animal's senses *and* brain are all found in its tentacles. The octopus thinks through feeling and feels through thinking.



Laure Prouvost, *Four for See Beauties*, 2022. Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, carlier | gebauer and Lisson Gallery.



Jennifer Tee, *Tampam World Mountain, Tree of Life*, 2021. Collection FRAC Alsace, Sélestat, France. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Fons Welters, Amsterdam.

11 Jennifer Tee

Tampam Sessile Beings, Sacred Shrine, 2022

Tampam World Mountain, Tree of Life, 2021

Jennifer Tee makes collages using pressed tulip leaves. The designs in her works are based on “tampans”: ceremonial, woven cloths made in Sumatra, an Indonesian island close to a major trade route. This is why the motif of the ship, surrounded by ocean creatures and human figures, recurs regularly in her work. In *Tampam World Mountain, Tree of Life* you see three figures depicted next to a tree of life. The work symbolizes transitional rituals: the ship transports the human soul to new lives.



Zhang Xu Zhan, *Compound Eyes of Tropical*, 2022.
Courtesy of the artist and Project Fulfill Art Space, Taipei.

⑫ Zhang Xu Zhan

Compound Eyes of Tropical, 2022
Paper wall, 2023

Zhang Xu Zhan comes from a family which trades in paper figures. These are used in Taiwan as offerings to the dead. Zhang Xu applies the folding techniques to create a miniature world in his stop-motion film. The title, *Compound Eyes of Tropical*, refers to the special eyes of insects, which have an expansive yet fragmented field of vision. In a similar way, Zhang Xu offers various perspectives of the same vision. He interweaves different versions of a folktale told across Asia and beyond. In it, an animal that wants to cross a river has to fool the hungry crocodiles or crabs. The video highlights the concept of “cultural flow” by examining the similarities and universality of world cultures.

⑬ Jongsuk Yoon

Rivers, 2023
Winter Spring Summer Autumn, 2023

The paintings by Jongsuk Yoon carry you along on a journey through landscapes and seasons. She builds on the tradition of Korean landscape painters of the *Sansuhwa* (literally: mountain and water). To this she adds influences of the abstract painting tradition. Rather than imitate nature, Yoon wants to evoke the feelings triggered in her by landscapes. She starts to paint without a preconceived plan. Gradually, particular forms come into being which are reminiscent of mountains, lakes and rivers. The artist creates the illusion of depth by painting different color planes on top of each other. Clouds and mountain tops seem to fuse into each other. Because the paintings hang on both sides of the space, you are invited to traverse Yoon's poetic landscape.



Jongsuk Yoon, *Winter Spring Summer Autumn*, 2023.
Detail. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie nächst
St. Stephan Rosemarie Schwarzwälder, Vienna.



Benjamin Verdonck. *Smeermaas-Kessenich*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist.

⑭ Benjamin Verdonck

Smeermaas-Kessenich, 2021

Benjamin Verdonck has explored the Meuse River by foot. Along the way he gathered things that caught his eye, from stones and seeds to plastic packaging and pieces of sandpaper. He carefully arranged and preserved his finds, a form of “taking care of” that cannot be separated from the far-reaching human negligence of what surrounds us. In the context of the *Art on the Meuse* project, his collections were already shown in small chapels in Dilsen-Stokkem, after which they were put on display in the Museum Church in Oud-Rekem. Over time, the artist gathered more and more things and added them to his collection. They are a reflection of his trips through the area where both the river’s water and human beings leave behind ample traces.

15 Roni Horn

Still Water (The River Thames, for Example), A, C, E, I, J, M, 1997–1999

Roni Horn combines photography and literature in her series, *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)*. Despite the differences in color and texture, you are looking at six photographs of the same river. The variations are caused by the interplay of light and the tidal movement. If you look closely at the photographs, you see numbers lying on the water like driftwood. They are linked to footnotes printed under the photo. In these footnotes, Horn lets you into her stream of thoughts about water and the Thames River in particular, while also making reference to films and books. This interaction between word and image invites a more attentive look at the photos of the water surface.



Roni Horn, *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example), J, 1997–1999*.
Han Nefkens H+F Collection, on long-term loan to De Pont museum, Tilburg.

16 Maika Garnica

Subtle Matter Fluid Hands,
2021–2022

Maika Garnica's ceramic sculptures are designed as sound objects. They are molded in clay and baked at high temperatures. Each fingerprint of the artist, no matter how small, is stored in the material and influences the sound of the sound box. In the video you see Garnica and her sister Inca endlessly passing the water from one carrier to another. The path of the water symbolizes the constant movement and transformation within each living organism. The clay also carries the traces of time within itself. This material results from the slow erosion of minerals over millions of years and has traveled a long way, along rivers and through wind and rain.



Maika Garnica, *Subtle Matter Fluid Hands*, 2021–2022.
Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Lukas Neven.

17 Lennart Lahuis

Hydrology, 2023

Lennart Lahuis is known for his works in which he subjects texts and images to natural processes such as combustion and evaporation. *Hydrology* refers to the cycle of water on, above and beneath the earth's surface. The text FROM OCEANS / TO CLOUDS / TO RAIN / TO RIVERS / TO OCEANS / TO CLOUDS / TO RAIN / TO RIVERS appears and disappears as water vapor in the air. The water's journey from earth to sky becomes visible for a brief moment. The words are repeated like a mantra, emphasizing the eternal cycle of the water, which constantly changes from one phase to another, without a drop being lost.



House for Contemporary
Art, Design & Architecture

