

WE MARRY YOU, O SEA



2021
2030
United Nations Decade
of Ocean Science
for Sustainable Development

European
MARINE BOARD
Advancing Seas & Ocean Science

Impact Report

EMBracing the Ocean artist-in-residence project

Reporting period April 2023 - August 2024

"I really liked the film as it represents the beauty of the lagoon and port environment, but highlighting the anthropic disturbance and degradation of habitats. The symbiosis between humans and the lagoon is not simple. The film gives a voice to the lagoon and the life that inhabits this environment and persists despite our impact. Perhaps leading some observers to think about how we could coexist better."

- Audience member, film screening at Palazzo Grassi, Chioggia



Co-design process: Artist Sonia Levy delivered this project in collaboration with [Alberto Barausse](#) ([Stazione Idrobiologica Umberto d'Ancona](#), University of Padova, Italy) and curator [Chiara Famengo](#) with the support of [TBA21 Academy](#). The project aimed to shed light on the socio-ecological dynamics of the Venice Lagoon, particularly focusing on the impact of its industrialisation and the construction of petrochemical refineries. This topic was explored through discussions with scientists and artisan fishers. The goal was to enhance public understanding of the damage to the ecosystem and its causes, and to engage stakeholders in efforts to restore and protect the lagoon. Sonia undertook two 'residency' periods at Stazione Idrobiologica Umberto d'Ancona, the first to collect video material during field trips guided by scientific collaborators, and the second to conduct participatory workshops with fishers, scientists, humanities scholars, local stakeholders, artists and architects.

Project outputs:

- Creation of film "We Marry You, O Sea, as a Sign of True and Perpetual Dominion", aiming to shed light on Venice's submerged histories and altered biogeomorphologies, offering a rare glimpse of the Lagoon from an immersed perspective. The film integrates underwater footage with rarely-seen archival images capturing the industrialisation of the Lagoon.
- Development of an original choir piece to emulate the Lagoon's underwater environment and communicate socio-ecological narratives, combined with sound recordings of the Lagoon, as a soundtrack to the film. Developed in collaboration with conductor [Esmeralda Conde Ruiz](#) and the [E_ensemble](#) international group of singers.
- Premier of film at [Cinema Galleggiante](#) Floating Cinema, Venice, 1 September 2023.
- Film screenings and discussions at Spiazzi, Venice, during [Unruly Nature](#) workshop (26 January 2024); [Palazzo Grassi](#), Chioggia (29 February 2024); [Royal College of Art](#), London (6 March 2024); [Goldsmiths University](#), London (14 March 2024); [Art Explora Festival](#), Venice (20 April 2024); [Riga Pasaules Film Festival](#) (26 April 2024).
- Presentation of aspects of the film and workshops to researchers as part of a guided boat tour of the Venice Lagoon during the [Unruly Nature programme](#), 24-26 January 2024.
- Presentation of the project at [Morecambe Milieux, Aqueous Futures](#) event, Lancaster University (6-7 September 2023); [Tributaries: Reflections of Art and Water](#) event, London Metropolitan University (4 October 2023); [TU Delft](#), The Netherlands (April 2024).
- Discussion of project during panel discussion of [EurOcean](#), Vigo, Spain (10-11 October 2023);
- Development of a two-channel installation with surround sound version of the film, shown at "[Liquid Intelligence](#)" exhibition at Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, 9 October 2023-28 January 2024, curated by TBA21 affiliates Chus Martínez, Soledad Gutiérrez and María Montero Sierra.
- Commissioned text "[Becoming Lagoon Literate](#)" written by Karin Ingersoll to accompany the exhibition of the film, focusing on shifting focus from land- to ocean- centric perspectives.
- Four [participatory workshops](#) at Stazione Idrobiologica Umberto D'Ancona, led by Sonia Levy and facilitated by Chiara Famengo. These provided a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue and knowledge exchange between scientists from various disciplines, humanities scholars, local residents, artists, architects and artisanal fishers towards sustainable solutions to issues impacting the Lagoon. The film served as a tool for discussion and engagement.
- [EMB Third Thursday Science Webinar](#), 16 May 2024.
- Discussion of the project during the [Architectural Association \(UK\) Terrain Lab GEOBODIES](#) course, Venice (July 2024).

Key impact:

- Raising awareness of issues facing the Venice Lagoon by engaging diverse audiences locally and internationally from art, academia, local fishermen and the general public.
- Advancing transformative and art-science collaborative approaches towards developing solutions for sustainable development.

Project longevity:

- Continuation of collaborations established during the project e.g. with researchers at Stazione Umberto d'Ancona looking at cuttlefish survival and erosion mitigation.
- Creation of "[How Like a Reef](#)" website to cultivate and showcase the collaborative partnerships and methods established during the project, and to foster new partnerships for interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Establishment of international network of practitioners working on Ocean challenges through interdisciplinary collaboration, together with [Chiara Certomà](#) (University Sapienze, Rome) and the [SAP&O](#) initiative.
- Organisation of seminars and meetings with environmental humanities researchers from the [NICHE](#) (Centre for Environmental Humanities, Ca'Foscari University, Venice) network aiming to cultivate new alliances for future impact of the work.
- Sonia is a member of the Steering Committee at the [UN Ocean Decade Coordination Office on Connecting People and the Ocean](#).

IMPACT IN NUMBERS

1 EXHIBITION

Attended by 38,191 visitors

4 TALKS

Discussing the project

7 FILM SCREENINGS

Including interactive discussions

4 PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOPS

Attended by scientists, humanities scholars, local residents, artists, architects and artisanal fishers

401 YOUTUBE VIEWS

Of Webinar and film trailer on EMB YouTube Channel

521 PAGE VISITS

To project webpage on EMB website

64 INSTAGRAM POSTS

From the EMB and other instagram accounts

“The organizers were capable to weave the insiders and outsiders experiences, perceptions and values to frame the peculiar lagoon socio-ecologies as a co-produced ‘hydro-citizenship’. The methodology allowed the exchange of different visions, enabling the rediscovery of lagoon waterscapes and new narrative setting. At the end of the experience, there was a sense of community among the participants, due to the successful seeking out of ‘lesser heard’ voices. My experience was enriched by the unusual co-working with both local fishers and waterscapes experts, thus enabling and empowering my personal engagement with places and local water issues.”

- Workshop participant

