

Just Add



*** Small smuggler's boat from which MSF rescued 345 people in the Mediterranean on June 19, 2015 [source - YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kx1KfJQZ0c]

Water

"The awakening of active interest in the exploration of the sea came during the Second World War, when it became clear that our knowledge of the ocean was dangerously inadequate. We had only the most rudimentary notions of the geography of that undersea world over which our ships sailed and through which submarines moved...The practical need having been so clearly established, the governments of the United States and of other leading sea powers began to devote increasing effort to the scientific study of the sea. Instruments and equipment, most of which had been born of urgent necessity, gave oceanographers the means of tracing the contours of the ocean bottom, of studying the movements of deep waters, and even of sampling the sea floor itself. These vastly accelerated studies soon began to show that many of the old conceptions of the sea were faulty, and by the mid-point of the century a new picture had begun to emerge. But it was still like a huge canvas on which the artist has indicated the general scheme of his grand design but on which large blank areas await the clarifying touch of his brush." — Rachel Carson, *The Sea Around Us* (1951)

BY DYLAN GAUTHIER — In her preface to the classic *The Sea Around Us*, Rachel Carson calls the sea "a realm so vast and so difficult of access that with all our efforts we have explored only a small fraction of its area." Historically, the sea has functioned

as unrestricted space, open to adventure, chance, exploration, freedom — but also frequently to slavery and exploitation. Today, the idea of a vast and unknown sea feels like the vestige of a time before we began to recognize the interconnectedness of everything and everyone — epitomized by the water cycle itself and the movement of water molecules from our bodies to the ocean, and back.

Today, the ocean's surface is not a vacant terrain. On any given day, close to 70,000 vessels are at work on the high and low seas. Over one million seafarers are employed by the shipping industry alone. As marine traffic increases every year, so does our concern. Shipping and pollution have begun to enclose upon the long held idea of the "open ocean." Container ships transporting goods made mostly of plastic become larger and larger — as do the ocean's five plastic gyres. Then there are the too-frequent stories of dramatic rescues, or catastrophic drowning deaths, of migrants seeking passage to a better life via the ocean waves. The ocean is complicated by these reports. The sea itself becomes a threat, bolstered by media obsession on everything from ocean plastics, piracy, and ocean migration, to acidification and mass sealife extinction. It is no longer perceived as a space of liberation, but of danger.

Landscape architect and critic Pierre Bélanger, an open-ocean swimmer, employs the term "Oceanic Turn" to signify how our attention has shifted and the idea of the ocean has been reinvigorated in the cultural imaginary. For Bélanger, this turn has created new fields for study and exploration, but also for exploitation and regulation.

Recently, the UN has even suggested that new international legal structures might be necessary to police and control the sea, and the secretive Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a proposed trade agreement between twelve Pacific Rim countries, attempts to enact the same.

The ocean that Bas Jan Ader tried to sail from New York to Amsterdam may appear at first glance to be the same ocean as our ocean — the sea is both the ever-changing and the ever-the-same. Yet, we can't imagine Bas Jan Ader attempting his crossing today without a radio or a GPS tracker (a marine radio was an expensive item at the time and Ader opted not to buy one). It is far easier to imagine that Ader's tiny ship would be caught in a great plastic gyre, or run over by a blindly cruising container ship. The "search for the miraculous" takes on a new meaning when applied to the economically desperate pirates, or migrants, whose motive for being on the sea outstrips an artist's metaphorical search. Uncountable migrants seeking passage to a better life via a risk on an ocean wave have captured our imagination and seem to embody the worst parts of the structure of our society. In a single weekend in 2015, British and Italian navy ships staffed by mariners wearing hazmat suits rescued over 3500 migrants who had taken to the Mediterranean waters in unsuited wooden fishing boats and rubber dinghies. The HMS Bulwark, a British ship, alone rescued more than 1000 migrants, including 10 pregnant women.

Video: Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) working in the Mediterranean as part of campaign #SafePassage. It is 19 September, 2015. Another big day of rescues. The MSF search and rescue ship *Bourbon Argos* rescues over 900 people from four different boats and brings them to safety in Sicily. The ship has 26 people on board, including an experienced search and rescue team and medical staff. The video begins at night. The sea is a monster. Sea spray washes over the ship's decks. A mass of orange tarps and ruddie ponchos rustle in a service bay. People, refugees, huddle beneath them. The scene is of a catastrophe averted. These are the rescued. The image zooms out to an aid worker, who addresses the camera:

"These are the conditions people are forced into in order to get to Europe. There have to be proper channels opened up, it cannot continue like this. If these people had not been rescued there is no way the rubber boats, the fishing boats, the wholly inappropriate boats they put out to sea in could have made this journey."

Aquaculture for All: CCE'S SPAT Program

In early April of 2016, we take a drive out along the North Shore of Long Island to the site where Cornell Cooperative Extension is based, on a sandy beach on the Peconic, just outside of Southold. We have been corresponding with Kim Tetrault, the founder of SPAT (Suffolk Project in Aquaculture Training), about the different types of boats they build and what they use them for. As part of Radical Seafaring, Mare Liberum might design a new boat, and SPAT has a need for something smaller than the large, motor-driven Bolger Skiffs they build in their workshops. The week of the visit, the volunteers and members at SPAT begin incubating 36 million oysters, of which several million will come to populate the Peconic Bay this year. The members work close to shore, where a small, stable, human powered craft might get them where they need to go.

SPAT defines the question of how are we to live within this new thought space—within the Oceanic Turn, let's say—through a praxis situated both on and beneath the ocean itself. SPAT functions as something like a floating community garden or undersea urban farm. A farm, perhaps like the idea of church, is indistinguishable from its community of volunteers and workers. Shared sentiment binds people to their waterways and to each other. They are aquaculture stewards, algae growth innovators, oceanographers of their particular patch of ocean. By most accounts, the fisher population on Long Island is waning, the storied "hull seines" and "bay men" increasingly sparse. SPAT is envisioning new possibilities for aquaculture on the island.

BY KIMBERLY BARBOUR — Cornell Cooperative Extension's SPAT Program has proven to be a wonderfully effective community based effort that has become a prime example of the power of environmental stewardship. Kim Tetrault started the SPAT program over 15 years ago in efforts to engage the public in aquaculture, and with that enhance the local shellfish population. In the time since establishing the program, over a thousand volunteers have been recruited, and retained, through the years; a testament to the effectiveness of the program.

The goals of the SPAT program are centered on helping natural stocks of shellfish rebound to pre-Brown Tide episode status, and fostering environmental stewardship in the process. This formula helps build community awareness and involvement opportunities, and the resulting efforts of SPAT ultimately does a whole lot in terms of helping the marine environment, and a local economy that is very much tied to the health of our marine resources. Millions of shellfish have been produced with the help of SPAT volunteers at our Marine Environmental Learning Center facility Southold, supplementing what our Aquaculture Specialists already produce in support of our organization's overall shellfish enhancement project goals.

Each SPAT member receives 1000 seed oysters a year to help grow out for the purpose of resource enhancement. Members are not permitted to commercially sell the shellfish they tend, although many of them do enjoy them for personal consumption, which is permitted and encouraged! Some SPAT members don't even like shellfish from a culinary standpoint;



*** Dylan Gauthier, Ben Cohen, Kendra Sullivan, and Kim Tetrault in the algae lab at CCE SPAT, 2016.

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"These are the conditions people are forced into in order to get to Europe. There have to be proper channels opened up, it cannot continue like this. If these people had not been rescued there is no way the rubber boats, the fishing boats, the wholly inappropriate boats they put out to sea in could have made this journey."

The obvious message: a boat as a means of escape or survival is a last ditch attempt. It is clearly not enough. The sea is a frontier you only cross when you have no other choice. There is a need for policy change. Cultural change.

Mare Liberum, or "Freedom of the Seas," a dissertation by Hugo Grotius, is recognized as the first legal argument toward keeping the sea open to all. Published in 1608/9, first anonymously, just to test the waters. It is subtitled: "A defense of the freedom of the seas, or the right which belongs to the Dutch to take part in the East Indian trade." For Grotius, the importance is not so much "open seas" as "seas open to the Dutch fleet." Grotius, whose dying words are: "By undertaking many things, I have accomplished nothing," accomplishes much. The sea becomes a commons, like air, at least between nations — and, at the time, there are only nations.

Grotius writes:

"The air belongs to this class of things for two reasons. First, it is not susceptible of occupation; and second its common use is destined for all men. For the same reasons the sea is common to all, because it is so limitless that it cannot become a possession of any one, and because it is adapted for the use of all, whether we consider it from the point of view of navigation or of fisheries."

Mare Liberum denies the Portuguese the right to "title by discovery, by occupation, by papal gift or by war," and concludes therefore that the Dutch had, as against the Portuguese, the right to trade freely with the East Indies and, if necessary, in order to do so, wage war. There were, and are, of course, disputes on this point. In 2007 we choose the name Mare Liberum for its rough translation as "the Free Seas," a tongue-in-cheek designation in line with our desire to get on the waters of New York City as cheaply as possible. We are not thinking of Grotius, or much about the broad sea beyond New York Harbor, but of course we keep returning to Grotius, and to the difference being on the water—the same water—here or somewhere else.

MS Freedom of the Seas is a cruise ship operated by Royal Caribbean International. It is the namesake of Royal Caribbean's Freedom class, and can accommodate 3,634 passengers and 1,300 crew on fifteen passenger decks. Freedom of the Seas was the largest passenger ship ever built (by gross tonnage) until construction of the Royal Caribbean International's Oasis-class ships in 2009. For its first cruise and maiden voyage on June 4, 2006, MSFoS sailed to Caribbean locations in Mexico, the Cayman Islands and Jamaica as well as Labadee (Haiti). MSFoS is owned by Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd. an American global cruise company incorporated in Liberia and based in Miami, Florida. MSFoS is flagged Bahamas, registered to Nassau. MSFoS is operated by Royal Caribbean International which was founded in Norway and is based in Miami.

If seasteading, which seeks to reanimate Grotius' text by establishing sovereign floating nations as an alternative to such constraints as land, history, or Enlightenment-era theories like democracy, feels a bit like old news, it's because it is. Private corporations and the wealthy have been building independent enclaves upon the waves for at least the past century, flying flags of convenience of whichever nation will register their ships with the least amount of oversight or taxation. Royal Caribbean, who run their "own private paradise" on the Haitian peninsula of Labadee is just one example. Royal Caribbean is "one of Haiti's largest foreign investors." They spent \$50 million developing Labadee. After the 2010 earthquake that destroyed Port-au-Prince, RC continued to bring tourists to Haiti. The company was, according to a spokesperson, "very sensitive to the idea of delivering a vacation experience so close to the epicenter of the earthquake," but decided to continue to dock in Labadee as scheduled. Over 700 Haitians are directly "impacted" by Royal Caribbean, it turns out.

Sixty miles south of Labadee, in Port-au-Prince, thousands fight over food and their own private paradise. But they are also helping with the recovery efforts by spending their money in the "traditional Haitian market" located on the Labadee grounds and staffed "by real Haitians." Of course Royal Caribbean faces criticism for continuing to allow paradise to happen so close to disaster. Their error, according to the publication ad age, is simply in trying to combine commerce and relief. It seems crass. Had RC come in with a ship as a humanitarian base (or allowed

their dock to be used by vessels engaged in the relief efforts) rather than a PR campaign, it would not have become "one of those narratives that tend to linger around a brand."

Last November, we waited in vain for signs of the vanished El Faro, a US-flagged, 730-ft-long container ship with 28 American and 5 Polish crew members, lost in the ravages of Hurricane Joachim, in a nautical tragedy reminiscent of another era. Disappearances on the high seas are not uncommon today, even if they barely make the news. It is quaint how our compunction increases with our proximity to the catastrophe. The stakes are higher, perhaps, for ships flagged by ports of convenience, whose dubious labor practices have also been detailed in recent New York Times articles. But there are faraway ships staffed by foreign crews.

If we can begin to understand the complexity of the sea, and its connected strands—continental waterways, rivers, streams, creeks and lakes—it is less easy to fully or accurately depict the water as a complex and interwoven system. More than fifty years after Rachel Carson wrote *The Sea Around Us*, physics and technology still prevent our easy access to the sea's deepest realms. Most plant and animal life is crowded into the top 200 meters of the ocean, a region called the "photic zone." Beneath that, the ocean continues, to depths of almost seven miles in the Mariana Trench. The ocean's average depth is about 12,100 feet. There are over 250,000 waterways classified as rivers in the United States which run somewhere in the range of 3,500,000 miles in combined length. (To give a sense of scale: the Earth is about 230,000 miles away from the moon.)

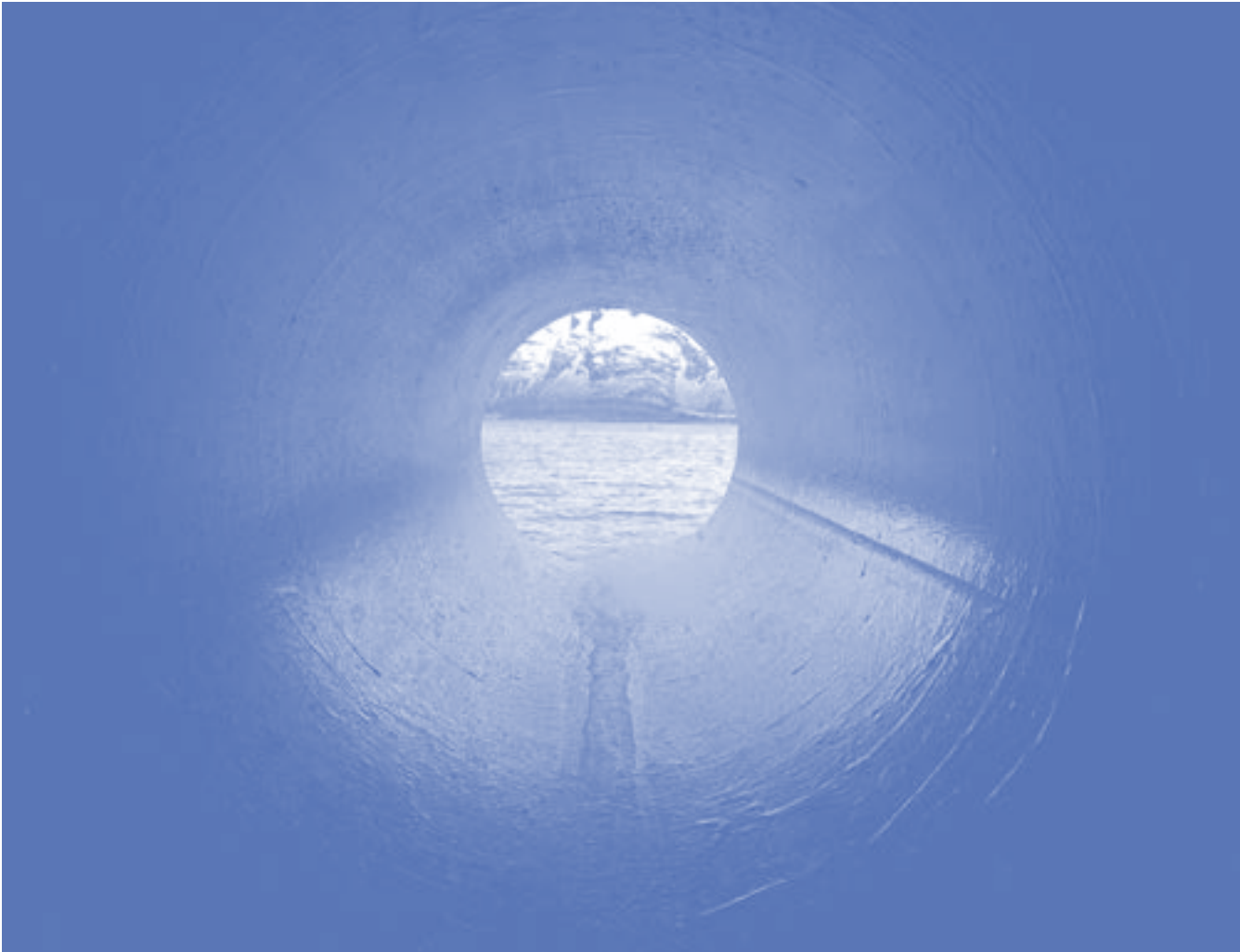
For an artist, the question arises: how can we make art about the water when we can only begin to see and/or experience its scale and complexity? Two initial options: abstraction or aestheticism. Perhaps the sea is the perfect motif for a world impossible to truly sense or reproduce through traditional singular media forms. It is no accident that the art historian and theorist Rosalind Krauss called her book on media heterogeneity and the breakdown of the medium-specific artwork *A Voyage on the North Sea* (1999) after Marcel Broodthaers' video-book work of the same name from 1974. For Krauss, fiction (at least of the type created by an artist) is a fullness and an absence. It is a creation that can contain all of the resulting inconsistencies, contradictions, and multitudes simultaneously. As Krauss writes:

"In both encompassing and enacting such desire, fiction is, then, the acknowledgment of this very incompleteness. It is the form that an unappeasable lack of self-sufficiency takes as it sets off in a search for its own beginnings or its own destiny as a way of imagining the possibility of achieving wholeness. It is the impossible attempt to transform succession into stasis, or a chain of parts into a whole."

Mare Liberum is also an attempt to make art that contains the wholeness of its own incompleteness. Fiction is at play, in this case the fiction of direct experience, or reported occurrences of those experiences. Next to fiction, only direct experience can bring the viewer into a closer relationship to the complexity of systems where water, humans, and animals interact. The resulting passages in this collection of research and reflections on water draw a little from both.

See Also: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0Lc1A8PA. Coast Guard Rescues 14, Continues Search for 2, from *Rollins of MSB Bounty*, 98 Miles Southeast of Hatteras, NC, During Hurricane Sandy, October 29, 2012.

Dylan Gauthier is an artist and writer, and co-founder of Mare Liberum, based in Brooklyn, NY. Sections of this essay were published as harmonized code entries in *Marina Zurkova's MoreMore (A Guide to the Harmonized System)*, Punctum Books, NY 2015.



*** Anne Lydiat, following the wake of Louise Arner Boyd, Norway, 2014.

The Charting of Absence

In 2015, Mare Liberum is a finalist for the GOAL Prize for Art and Environment. While attending the award ceremony in Paris, we meet Anne Lydiat, who tells us about Hermitage Community Moorings, the floating river barge co-operative that she and a small, dedicated community have built on the River Thames in London over the past decade. We visit the Hermitage on successive trips through the UK, spending time with Anne and her husband Chris, and learning about her artistic research on the lost (or unrecorded) histories of women seafarers.

BY ANNE LYDIAT — My doctoral research, entitled *A Ship of One's Own*, explores the artistic, social, political and somatic dimensions of my fluvial existence aboard a ship moored on the River Thames. I photograph out onto the River through the glass portholes, the eyes or lens of the ship, creating a reflected and reflexive, voyeuristic experience of the interior and exteriority of the space, evoking both a sense of intimacy with, and distance from, the River, as a means of locating my presence and sense of place within a gendered maritime historical past and present. The research exploration is also within the wider context of the place of women in maritime historiography and to construct an alternative narrative that redefines the concept of the model of the ship as a highly gendered, masculinized space. I had attended various lectures on voyages of exploration and was struck by the absence of references to women except when husbands, or fiancés had named islands or glaciers after them. I had wondered, where were they?

The foci of my study and retrieval efforts is the discovery of the autobiographical discourses of women who have voyaged through their logbooks, journals and memoirs, many of which have now been WITHDRAWN or DISCARDED utilizing the wake as a metaphor for charting the apparent fleeting presence, then subsequent absence of women in maritime history.

In 2014, inspired by the discovery of the amazing expeditions of the American explorer Louise Arner Boyd, I made a voyage on the postal ship (Hurtigruten) from Bergen, Norway up into the Arctic Circle to follow in her wake. To chart the passage of my own voyage I kept a Ship Journal and made photographs through the aperture of the portholes in my cabin. I knew that Arner Boyd had been to Norway and had docked in Ålesund with her ship Veslekari from her writings:

"We docked (in Ålesund) at noon on September 27, our journey of about 8600 nautical miles completed. It remained for some days attending to the shipment of materials that were to go to the United States and seeing that equipment and supplies to be used on the next summer's expedition were properly stored." (Boyd 1946:46)

There was no trace of evidence anywhere in the town of Ålesund of Louise Arner Boyd ever having been there. I wondered why? The next port of call was Tromsø, as the main purpose of my research voyage was linked to this particular city that I knew Boyd, from her charts and writings, had visited. She writes:

"Messrs. Flint, Washburn, and Osting left us on September 3, going by steamer to Tromsø en route to the United States. Messrs. LeRoy and Buhner

remained with me, since it was our intention, even though it was now late in the season, to attempt to carry out our original plan of seeing how far north we could continue our sounding work. We arrived at Tromsø on September 19 and after a two-day halt there went on to Ålesund." (Boyd 1948:43/46)

I embarked on the ship full of anticipation that I was to revisit a place that Arner Boyd had visited and was certain I would find evidence of her having sailed from Tromsø on her voyages. I asked at the Museum if they had any evidence of Louise Arner Boyd's Arctic expeditions — they said they had never heard of her. I wondered how could this be? My whole voyage had been with the sole intention of following in her wake and locating her presence within the gendered maritime historical context of my research. I returned to the ship and embarked leaving the port of Tromsø and the hopes of finding Louise Arner Boyd behind. I crossed into the Arctic circle and photographed the wake of the ship as we passed by the globe marker denoting an otherwise invisible boundary, holding onto the thought that Louise Arner Boyd's ashes had been spread somewhere in Arctic waters. I was sad at leaving the memory of her behind — I said farewell to Louise Arner Boyd.

Originally set in the typeface Cambria (also the name of a Thames Sailing Barge).

Boyd, Louise Arner (1948) *The Coast of Northeast Greenland*. American Geographical Society, Special Publication, No 38.

For the past fourteen years Anne Lydiat has been living and working as an artist onboard a vessel moored on the River Thames at Hermitage Moorings downstream from Tower Bridge, London, UK. She has recently exhibited artworks in relation to her research in London and Bristol, UK, Beijing, China, Taipei, Taiwan and Australia. Recent Publications include *A Maiden's Voyage*, artists book/Fla, Rocktheboat Press, London (2015), *WITHOUT*, artists book (2015), *A Place to Dream* essay in *TROUBLED WATERS* exhibition catalogue, Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei, Taiwan. I wonder where you are? Essay in *EXPEDITION*, Bright 9, COW, London, UK.



Slickwater Blues

BY CECILY ANDERSON — You can ride the Susquehanna River 444 miles, from New York State through Pennsylvania and Maryland and out into the Chesapeake Bay. When I'm building our first raft, 140 square feet of scrap wood decking topped by a canvas wall tent, I choose a section near the northern border of Pennsylvania to put it in. It isn't far from Philadelphia, where I live, and it is undammed for over a hundred miles. A junk raft is not easy to portage.

The first summer, we go for a week. We load my blue Ford Ranger with a towering stack of 56 gallon plastic barrels and wood Kelly and I have scavenged from the streets and notched into a frame that can be assembled with a screw gun on a river bank. We call it the Lusty Jamboree after the riverman in the logging trade whose task it was to bust up logjams, when spring flood carried millions of board feet of huge, virgin timber down the Susquehanna to market. The tent walls are painted with scenes from the river's American past—two handled saws threading through tree trunks, Three Mile Island's cooling towers.

There are maybe ten of us, on the raft and also in an old Mohawk canoe, until the latter goes broadside to a dead tree sticking out into the current. It fills with water, sinks, and pinned against a branch on the river bottom, snaps in half. On its surface, the river seems so slow and placid, and we have yet to learn how to read its power in the smashed trees and mud deposits coating the banks. The Jamboree has enough room for us all, as it turns out. We take a week to meander the shallow miles from Sayre to around Wyalusing, cooking out over campfires on islands in long summer twilights, unrolling the walls of the tent at night and lying next to each other above the silently flowing water, our mats lined up on the old wood rug, brushing our teeth and spitting in the river.

The second year, there are more of us, and we stay out longer. We build a second raft, this one smaller, with a spiky bamboo A-frame on which the canvas can be rolled up in nice weather and down to shut out rain. We get the wood and the foam insulation that serves as its flotation from behind a house in Ithaca, and launch it and the Jamboree (which has spent the winter in my basement in West Philly) in a New York river town, near dusk.

There are balconies and decks overhanging the river on the old brick buildings—restaurants and apartments where people are eating dinner—music, voices, it must be Friday night. Light from the yellow doorways sluices on the water as we slide swiftly by in the shadows. A dark bridge looms suddenly. We pole off of the pylons with oars and the rafts spin, nearly wrap through—and just like that we are alone in the summer night, town left behind, the river wild and dark and arbor with insect song.

The Susquehanna is the author of this landscape. If we lived here, it would be the author of us as well. Instinctively, we know that all authority flows from the land. That is why we see those people who live closely on it—farmers/peasants/Indians—as authentic. It is why we seek our own authenticity here.

You come to the river on a lark, no problem with that. But then the narrative shifts. You find that the thread of the story you first stepped aboard up in Owego, New York, is unwinding, the voice that was speaking starts, stops, loses its train of thought, eye caught by dragonflies slipping in an old tire, fireflies rising like sparks of a dark meadow, and the uncountable shimmering threads of a landscape through which you drift.

As days pass, conversation subsides. Sentences slough off like dead skin. Even the instruments are quiet. Finally, you step out of the words you came clothed in, and as the current takes your body, you think oh, yeah, I remember this. Only you only think that in hindsight, because at the moment you're just paddling, steering. Reading the current.

If authenticity flows from the land, not just our physical survival but our psychological and spiritual wholeness is bound up in it. When our ability to live with even a marginal connection to the land is severed—by, say, industrial contamination—we have not just a public health crisis, but an existential crisis, in every sense of the word.

You're quiet, and you're reading the current. But there's something in the water. There's something in the air. A sentence

From A Secret History of American River People



Wes Modes reaches out to us last year with an email subject line "River possibilities." He asks, "Would you be interested in joining me for a short time as ship's mate on the river this summer?" Of course we are, and though we are tied to a series of projects in the North East, we follow his travels vicariously and ask him to please report back.

BY WES MODES — A Secret History of American River People, a multi-year art and history project, is the culmination of an artist's dream to build a replica of an early 20th century shantyboat from scratch and travel America's rivers, listening to the stories of river people. It is an attempt to step into the river of history. Swimming through narrative, immersed in personal stories, the project travels through the conflicting and complementary experiences of river people and their rivers. Over the last few years, I've spent months living on the Upper Mississippi River. This year I'll spend two months on the Tennessee.

Traditionally, art is expected to be about artistic expression, but I wanted to take the time to listen, to river people, to the rhythm of river communities, and to the river itself. In listening, I've gathered a strange assortment of river wisdom. I've heard from scientists, homeless people living under bridges, merchants, bar owners, river rats, artists, researchers, fishermen, boaters, and people who've lived within sight of the river every day of their lives. I've recorded over 50 oral history-style inter-

*** Dylan Gauthier, Lusty Jan Cracker and Whiskey Jane Rafts on the Susquehanna River, 2016 (with: Cecily Anderson, Janis Knight, Brice Rusak, Kendra Sullivan).

strung of chemical compounds. In the houses on the banks they are speaking it. Hunters, waitresses, school teachers, truck drivers, housewives, murmuring: radium 226, benzene, flare-off, Slickwater blues. After spending time in a couple towns along the river, you start to hear a language of worry, tension, conflict amassed around each community, a tower of babel, rising above the quaint riverfronts and dusty barbershops in an invisible hum. Like sodium lights. Like truck after truck after truck crossing the Wysox bridge, crossing the Ulster bridge, crossing the Sayre bridge, crossing the Scranton bridge...

You ask yourself, what does it mean to be a victim, to be seen and heard and have the violence continue. It is the nightmare of screaming for help and no one coming, of believing in your heart that justice will prevail, so that defeat comes not just from the poison in the air and the lies of your enemy, but from the silence and indifference of the good, just world.

We ask ourselves: what does it mean to be able to float away from all this?

As they say, "we all live downstream."

The boat launch parking lot in Owego, New York, is reached by a dirt road—a grey dot of a grey line, laid out in reassuring cartographic permanence in our battered atlas in the front seat. The river is just down the hill, separated from the grass by 15 feet of fresh brown mud, twenty inches deep; this spring's flood was a hard one. The mud is nowhere on the map. Just the clean white paper slipping under a sinuous blue line. Susquehanna. Before us, that ever-moving liquid entity, not blue but brown, is cycling the earth's water. From deep Pennsylvania springs and trans-atlantic rainstorms, 444 miles of water unfurls down its sleepy, massive gullet to the Chesapeake Bay, a silt, sun-baked Oubourbs.

Sinking into its muddy margin to reach the water feels like pushing through the elastic tug of the outer boundary of Town, somehow stepping through the very concept of map, into a place that is no place, only movement, either with or against the current. The river's map is gravity and texture.

The Susquehanna's muddy cradle will bound our river-bourne rafts on either side for weeks, until Japanese Knotweed, loose-strike and goldenrod creep over it with the advancing season to reclaim the sunniest spots along the riverbanks. The mud is like a body that holds onto you. Your feet sink deep into it and it reaches to receive them whenever you walk to a fallen tree to tie up for the night, or to wait out a passing thunderstorm. You feel the simple gleam of cool mud on a hot day.

But above your animal feet, your mind is rattling off the names of chemicals. You've heard about the spills and discharges and reports of trucks dumping chemical-laden fracking wastewater. You've heard about the fish kills and the disappearance of salamanders. The headaches, nosebleeds, and mysterious heart problems. Out in Colorado, where they've been fracking for years, cancer rates have soared. And yet, here you are on the north branch of the Susquehanna River, one of the most beautiful places you've ever seen, a river that possibly predates the break-up of the continents, the shape of our known world, and there are eagles and herons and muskie in the creeks. It's hard to wrap both your feet and your head around a poison river.

And so what started out as a lark, for us, was becoming a kind of journey through the underworld...

Slickwater (from petri-wiki): Water-based fracturing fluids — uncrosslinked polymers and "slickwater." A common practice in the hydraulic fracturing of gas-producing reservoirs is the use of nonviscous "slickwater" fluids pumped at high rates (> 60bpm) to generate narrow fractures with low concentrations of proppant.

Cecily Anderson is a designer and illustrator currently living in the watershed of the Huron River.

views that lasted from one to three hours. I've talked to white people, Black, Latino, Hmong, and Dakota people.

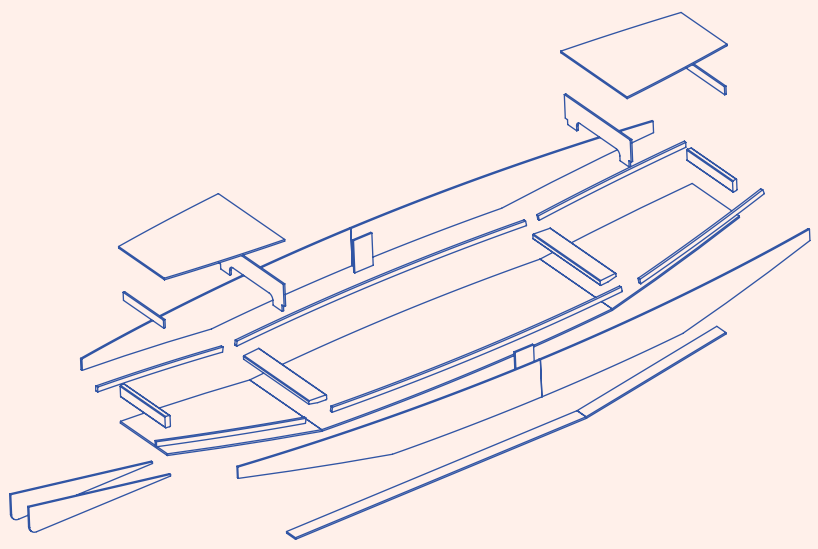
In my months on the Mississippi, I've gotten a taste of river life, but am humbled by the knowledge of people who've lived on the river for six, seven, eight, or more decades. Through the stories told by these people, I've learned a thing or two: I know that the river is cleaner than it has been in 150 years thanks to the Clean Water Act of 1972, the work of enforcers in the DNR and—to everyone's surprise—invasive zebra mussels. I know that native mussel beds are critically depleted and that no one knows this better than the river people who help depelcted them during the clamming boom of the late 20th century. I know that river authorities are tasked with the contradictory mandates of river conservation and river navigation, a schizophrenic dichotomy that created a lock and dam system that is simultaneously silting in backwaters, eroding islands and shorelines, and destroying native habitat.

One of the surprising epiphanies on the A Secret History journey is that we are all river people. The rivers that run through our towns and cities are not merely incidental aspects of local geography. Today, rivers are an actively contested landscape with the process of gentrification much in evidence. For cities attempting to reestablish a connection to their rivers, the impulse is to create a shiny, clean and sanitized parkland—a kind of mall with a river running through it—rather than a wild and natural waterway. As towns turn to face the river again, they often displace people who've lived there for generations. Urban rivers are the site of concrete abutments, river walks, riverside parks, aggressive policing, and the removal of riparian shrubs and foliage to discourage unauthorized use, such as squatting. These restrictions are a continuation of historic enclosures of the public commons, and the gentrification of boom times can be as irreparably damaging as a bust.

Like a river itself, river knowledge is both deep and wide. In my months on the river, however, I've barely gotten beneath the surface of that wisdom.

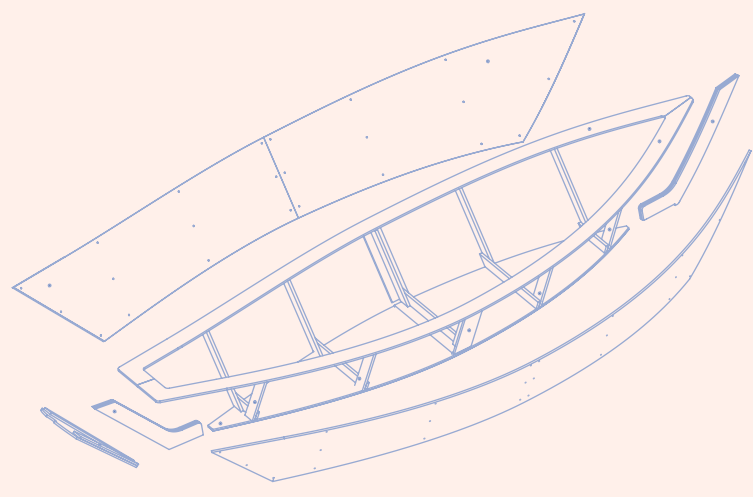
Wes Modes is a Santa Cruz, CA-based artist focused on social practice, sculpture, performance and new media work. He holds a MFA from the Digital Art and New Media program at UCSC. He has exhibited his art and performed regionally since 1996. He is also a UCSC Art Lecturer and Curator at the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History. In other lives, he is a high-tech runner, writer, community organizer, geek, and mischief-maker. For more information, please visit modes.io.

Punt



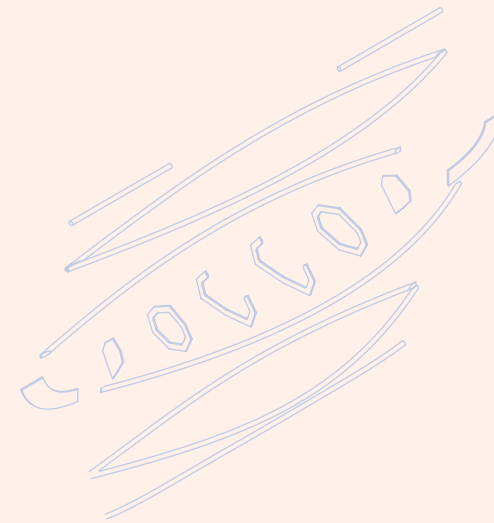
*** The punt is a flat-bottomed work boat. We designed our punt in collaboration with the students at Haverford College and refined the plans at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University in 2015. Our punts have plied the Mystic River, Boston Harbor, the Newtown Creek, and the Schuylkill River.
Download - <http://thefreesas.org/punt>

Dory



*** The dory is an easily assembled fishing fleet boat, designed to carry 1000 lbs of fish, and be stackable on the decks of a larger ship. The dory was our first boat, built from recovered plywood construction fencing in Gowanus, Brooklyn. Our dories have travelled the Gowanus Canal, Newtown Creek, New York Harbor, the East River, the Hudson, Jamaica Bay, and the Susquehanna and Delaware Rivers.
Download - <http://thefreesas.org/dory>

Kayak



*** The kayak is a lightweight skin-on-frame boat design. Our kayaks were built with bamboo harvested from invasive urban groves and finished with salvaged canvas and vinyl signage. Our kayaks have made voyages on Jamaica Bay, the Hoosic and Delaware Rivers, and regional lakes.
Download - <http://thefreesas.org/kayak>



→ This broadsheet gathers research and writings from Mare Liberum and friends we've met through our travels. Printed for the exhibition Radical Seafaring at the Parrish Art Museum, curated by Andrea Grover, May 8 - July 24, 2016. Plans for building all of our boats are available at thefreesas.org.

Mare Liberum is a collective of visual artists, designers, and writers who formed around a shared engagement with New York's waterways in 2007. As part of a mobile, interdisciplinary, and pedagogical practice, we design and build boats, publish broadsides, essays, and books; invent water-related art and educational forums, and collaborate with scientists, artists, and institutions to produce public talks, participatory works, and voyages as platforms to catalyze societal change. We also present rough and ready boat plans that novice builders can assemble in a single day.

The collective is currently made up of: Jean Barberis, Benjamin Cohen, Dylan Gauthier, Sunita Prasad, Kendra Sullivan and Stephan von Muehlen. Broadsheet design by Greg Mihalko of Partner & Partners. Typeset in Basis Grotesque from Colophon Foundry and Galleri from mediuextralod.

