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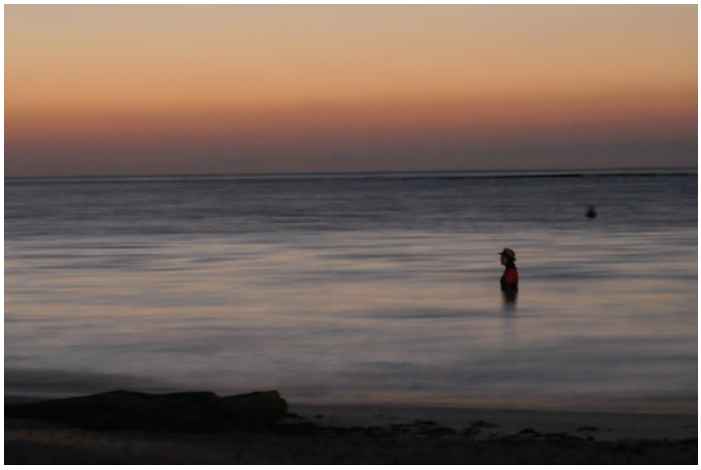
Contents

Special Issue

SIGNALING THROUGH THE WAVES: ESSAYS ON *36.5 / A DURATIONAL PERFORMANCE WITH THE SEA*, BY SARAH CAMERON SUNDE



36.5 / Akumal Bay, 2014. Sunrise. Photo by Scott Brown.

The Work

SARAH CAMERON SUNDE

In seas spanning the globe, I stand in water for a full tidal cycle. Film and sound compositions based on the performance events become video installations. *36.5 / A Durational Performance with the Sea* is a radical call to reconsider our contemporary relationship to water—as individuals, as communities, as a civilization, and as a species.

The project began in 2013 as an impulsive poetic response to Hurricane Sandy; I walked into Bass Harbor, Maine, at low tide, faced the sea, and stayed there for twelve hours and forty-eight minutes, as the water engulfed my body and then receded. Since then, *36.5* has grown into a large-scale series of site-specific works involving communities around the world.

In its current form, each work in the *36.5* series consists of a live performance event, a time-lapse video, varied ephemera from that specific coastal location, and a long-form cinematic video work that is the same length as the performance (twelve to thirteen hours).

I travel to a location threatened by sea level rise and work with a local team over several weeks to create a site-specific participatory experience. On the day of the performance, the public comes and goes, sometimes standing with me in the water, sometimes participating to mark the passing of the hours from shore. In collaboration with a local cinematographer and film crew, the entire event is filmed from multiple perspectives, also live streamed, and then edited and screened on location within ten days of the performance. Shown in real time, the shots are purposefully slow, lasting five to twenty minutes before switching frames. A musical drone based on local sounds and climate data is cre-

ated by collaborator Joshua Dumas and layered in. The final form for the series will be an immersive twelve-channel video installation (two channels per fully filmed location) with six layers of audio (one per fully filmed location), merging time and space and surrounding the viewer with a slow sensory audiovisual experience.

Ultimately, *36.5* will be performed in tidal areas of six continents, highlighting a human-scale potential for collaboration with the sea. Works in Maine, Mexico, San Francisco, the Netherlands, Bangladesh, Brazil, and Kenya are complete; the last four performances were filmed in their entirety. The two final works are in process. They were both scheduled to take place in 2020 but will now happen in 2021, due to COVID-19, first in Aotearoa (New Zealand) and then a culminating event in New York City.

March 29, 2020, was to be the performance and shoot date for the eighth work in the series, *36.5 / Te Manukanukatanga ō Horuroa*, Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa (Auckland, New Zealand). After months of planning and three weeks on site working with local partners, artists, and community members, we had to suspend the project. Due to the increasing intensity of our global climate crisis, it has felt urgent and necessary to complete the *36.5* series in 2020. But the lessons I am learning from my Māori collaborators about listening; reciprocity; honoring the land, water, ancestors, and other species; adaptability; and overall resilience make me trust that this pause will deepen the work. The project takes on new relevance in this moment when the vulnerability of our species is being tested in such an extreme way.

How can we learn from our Indigenous sisters and brothers, from the mountains, water, trees, and other plant and animal species in order to reconfigure our lives on better terms? I am to weave these ideas and questions into the final work that I create in, with, and for my beloved New York City, which is under great stress right now.

On September 5, 2020, *36.5 / Hallet's Cove* was scheduled to take place, and it was always envisioned as a homecoming—after meeting bodies of water and people around the world, I would bring new knowledge back home to New York. Eight years after Superstorm Sandy, we would take a critical look at where we stand, reigniting the conversation around extreme weather events, climate change, and sea level rise.

I began the process of finding a New York City site in 2018. With 520 miles of New York City coastline, you would think the choices were endless, but my criteria are a challenging combination of practicalities and poetics. I needed to find (1) relatively calm waters protected from wind and boat traffic; (2) a site that was inundated during Hurricane Sandy and vulnerable to sea level rise in the future; (3) easy access to the water's edge, with space for an audience to gather and hang out; (4) potential for meaningful engagement and collaboration with the hyperlocal community and nearby organizations, a site where a story can emerge in relation to the past, present, and future; (5) clean water, not too close to a CSO (combined sewage overflow) outfall; and (6) a point of view where I can face the sea and where we see the cityscape in the shot, as the image I'm creating is of urban people who are unprepared for the water to rise.

With the help of countless New Yorkers and after several thrilling location-scouting trips, Hallet's Cove and Socrates Sculpture Park in Queens emerged as the ideal site. A citywide event including programming at New York University and with the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council has been planned. Now it will all happen in 2021, as long as the planet wills it.

Combining formal aesthetics of land art (on a monumental scale), performance art (on an individual-body scale), and video art (on a digital scale) with socially engaged practice in relation to contemporary environmental concerns, *36.5* is part of an emerging field of water art—interdisciplinary artworks that are made on, in, and with the water, such as those highlighted by the Works on Water website (https://www.worksonwater.org/).

The image at the center of the work transforms an abstract concept into an embodied experience—my body, dressed in red, facing the elements through a full cycle of change, articulates a parallel between the individual struggle to survive a day and humanity's challenge to survive in the face of a changing environment. Through *36.5*, I seek to engage audiences in conversations about deep time, human embodiment, and sea level rise, ultimately contributing to a global shift in public consciousness.

List of works in *36.5 / A Durational Performance with the Sea* series:

Initial Performance Works:

36.5 / Bass Harbor, Maine, 2013
36.5 / Akumal Bay, Mexico, 2014
36.5 / San Francisco Bay, California, 2014

Full Works (Performance and Durational Video Works):

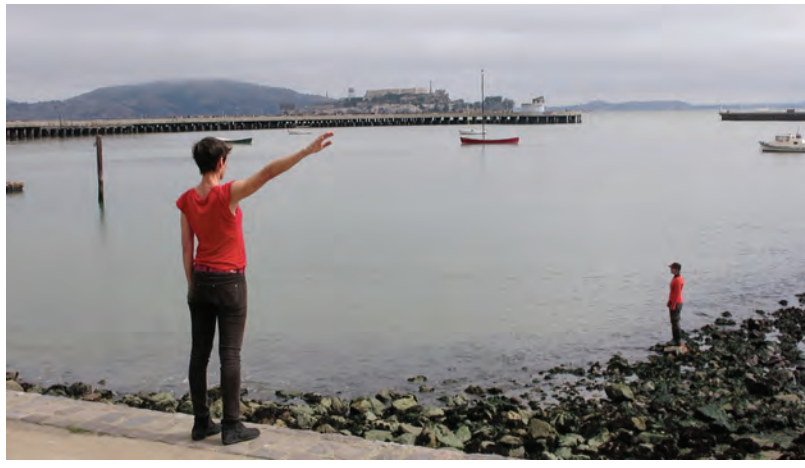
36.5 / North Sea, Netherlands, 2015
36.5 / Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh, 2017
36.5 / Bay of All Saints, Brazil, 2019
36.5 / Bodo Inlet, Kenya, 2019

Upcoming Works:

36.5 / Te Manukanukatanga ō Hoturoa, Aotearoa (New Zealand), 2020–21
36.5 / Hallet's Cove, New York City, 2020–21

For more information on *36.5*, go to 36pt5.org.

36.5 / Bodo Inlet, Kenya, 2019. The participants and audience in Bodo Village celebrate the completion of the performance. Photo by Swabir Bazaar.



36.5 / San Francisco Bay, 2014. As Sunde's performance begins, local collaborator Sasha Petrenko performs the very first "human clock". Photo by Irina Patkanian and Gus Ford.

Introduction

UNA CHAUDHURI

Fig. 1. Sarah Cameron Sunde in *36.5 / A Durational Performance with the Sea. 36.5 / Bay of All Saints*, Brazil, 2019. Photo by Juh Almeida.

The first time I saw an image of Sarah Cameron Sunde in a performance of *36.5*, I was reminded of a poem that has haunted me all my life, Robert Frost's "Neither Out Far Nor In Deep," with its opening image of people standing on the seashore, gazing out to sea:

The people along the sand
All turn and look one way.
They turn their back on the land.
They look at the sea all day.[1]

Since beginning work on this collection of essays for a special section of *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*, I have returned to that poem many times, now in the company of Sunde's larger project as well as of the responses it has elicited, both here and elsewhere. The line of the poem upon which divergent interpretations often turn is the second to last of the first stanza. Many readers and critics have read the people's "turn[ing] their back on the land" as a figure of willful ignorance, even irresponsible denial. For me, however, the image of persistent outward gazing has always carried strong notes of hope, even courage. Such concerted and collective contemplation of the vast beyond—be it literal or figurative—has always evoked in me a feeling of tenderness rather than impatience toward my fellow humans. I have read the image as encouragement rather than warning, especially in the context of the final stanza's reminder of human limitations:

They cannot look out far.
They cannot look in deep.
But when was that ever a bar
To any watch they keep?

Now, in the context of climate change and of the Anthropocene, I read the image also as an invitation, even an exhortation, to reflect on what it means for human beings to "keep watch." How shall we hold a steady and responsible gaze upon the oncoming, unavoidable suffering of climate chaos? We know now, beyond a shadow of doubt, not only that there is catastrophe ahead but also that *this has been known for some time*, known to those who could have done something about it—scientists and politicians and CEOs. As Nathaniel Rich chronicled in "Losing Earth: The Decade We Almost Stopped Climate Change," there was a brief moment in the last century when a model of collaboration and responsible action almost managed "to raise the alarm and stave off catastrophe."[2] As a prefatory note from the editor puts it, "It will come as a revelation to many readers—an agonizing revelation—to understand how thoroughly they grasped the problem and how close they came to

Fig. 2. *36.5 / North Sea*, Netherlands, 2015. Dutch government officials and water engineers join Sarah in the water for an hour of performance. Photo by Florian Braakman.

solving it."[3] Even now, with the eleventh hour upon us, the subject of climate change jostles for a place on national agendas and media platforms, frequently overshadowed by scandals and sensations. (Indeed, the fact that the entirety of that issue of the *New York Times Magazine* was devoted to the aforementioned article was in itself a powerful—but all too rare—acknowledgment of the topic's urgency.) In light of this history of inattention, of looking neither "out far" nor "in deep," Sarah's silent, embodied exhortation issues a powerful and urgent challenge.

Limitation and persistence are keynotes of Sunde's scale-scuttling performance, a combination captured in every image of her slight form surrounded—and increasingly engulfed—by the vast life- and death-giving element of which she herself (like all humans) is more than half constituted.

The smallness of the performer contrasts not only with the immense expanse of the sea but also with the rapidly growing size of the population she belongs to, a contrast that has everything to do with the cognitive challenges that accompany the word "Anthropocene" and with the

Fig. 3. *36.5 / Bay of All Saints*, Brazil, 2019. Photo by Vinicius de Jesus Sapucaia.

Fig. 4. *36.5 / Bay of All Saints*, Brazil, 2019. Photo by Juh Almeida.

extraordinary phenomenon it seeks to acknowledge: the geophysical agency of the human species.

The first watch we must keep, now, is on the dense linkages and networks that tie each of us together with countless others—and eventually with all members not only of our species but of all other species as well. The power and poetry of that watch can be felt every time Sunde is joined in the sea by others—sometimes friends and colleagues but often strangers who happen to be present on the seashore when she does the piece.

The elastic scale of human presence—stretching and narrowing as people enter and leave the water—is especially evident in the time-lapse videos of the performance, where the pulse of participation adds delicate social rhythms to the grand oceanic movement of the tides.

Those who join Sunde as she stands in the sea always spontaneously obey Frost's law—they all "look one way": outward, facing the watery horizon. Were they (or she) to vary or reverse that direction of their gaze, *36.5* would be a very different work—more pointedly political perhaps, certainly less archetypal in its resonance. Were she to face the land instead of the sea, the fragile monumentality of the image Sunde constructs—her embodiment of endurance—would exchange its intimations of courage (the courage to face whatever's coming) for hints of evasion, even denial. And at a time when climate denial has gone from being a frustrating case of willful ignorance to a looming and terrifying threat to the survival of many populations and species, that denial must be understood as a form of what Frans de Waal calls "anthropodenial"[4] and whose meaning, in the Anthropocene, extends beyond nonhuman animals to the entirety of the more-than-human world. Anthropodenial's refusal to acknowledge the continuities and overlaps between the human and more-than-human realms is a key symptom of what Amitav Ghosh diagnoses as a "great derangement:"[5] the madness of modernity's hyperalienated construction of the human.

Like many works of eco-art, Sunde's sea project is dedicated to reversing that alienation, to interrupting the fantasy that we humans live on Mars, bringing us back to Earth. *36.5* enacts the immersion—quite literally—of the human being in the shifting currents of planetary life, in the evolution of its species, in the movements of its atmospheric forces, in the elements of its construction. The elements that are foremost

Fig. 5. *36.5 / Bay of Bengal*, Bangladesh, 2017. Photo by Shahriar Shaon.

here are earth and water, and the stage they create together for Sarah's performances is—like all theatrical stages—both a specific, material place and a vector of semiosis, hermeneutics, affects, and intensities.

The materiality of Sunde's elemental stages—muddy, briny, shiny, slippery, sandy—grounds the work's resonant symbolism.

The liminal space par excellence, the beach, is also the culturally overdetermined site of family idylls, childhood architectures, sunbaked idleness, bonfire camaraderie, and surf-washed passions. It has served as a historical stage for liberation (e.g., Normandy) as well as of conquest and discovery (e.g., Plymouth). In a longer, evolutionary history, it is the site of radical transformation, launching the very organisms—us humans—that would eventually and disastrously alter the earth itself. The shorelines and beaches of Sunde's project each add their own national and cultural significance to the place of performance, but they all also share its insistent earthly groundedness. Whichever beach Sunde stands on—whatever its local status, uses, meanings, and histories—it is also and always a site of the global tidal cycle that causes the world's oceans to bulge twice a day. The rising and falling tides highlighted by *36.5* have symbolic associations and conceptual complexities of their own, of course, as Martin Harries's essay elucidates so brilliantly here. But the sheer act of registering one of them so directly on a single hu-

Fig. 6. *36.5 / Bay of All Saints*, Brazil, 2019. Photo by Juh Almeida.

man body evokes their originary power and mystery as part of our planet's extraordinary geophysical systems.

Like the stage, the performer's body is also always doubled, both a flesh-and-blood organism and a figure of humanity, individualized and alive. Features of the first, physical body (such as its size, shape, skin, and hair color) mobilize different narratives of identity, all of course shaped by history and geography. Sunde's appearance as an average-sized, young, white woman readily invokes a feminist imaginary (even a recently updated version of it: "Nevertheless, she persisted").

Her smallness enhanced by her location, she projects an image of physical and mental courage, stirring and inspiring. In certain locations—in Bangladesh, for instance—the feminist signification can be overwritten by a more critical one, rooted in histories of European colonialism. Sunde takes pains to process and mitigate this association in conversation with her local collaborators, and the visible support and participation of local audiences and artists turns that narrative in less painful, more hopeful directions. Sunde's intention to perform *36.5* in seas around the world has made this a planetary project from the outset, and part of the task involves reckoning with the violent histories those

seas and their surrounding lands have endured, including histories of colonization, slavery, economic imperialism, and globalization. As Stefan Helmreich's essay here reminds us, those histories are still very much in the making, pressing in on the performance from its unseen margins, the "worlding work" swirling around Sunde's still figure. In its own quiet way, *36.5* seeks to link that ongoing worlding to a different history, keyed to the geophysical temporalities and cycles of the planet rather than to the flows of global capital and its human victims.

The other poetic imagination that Sunde's still, silent, lonely figure evokes—and one mentioned in several of the essays that follow—is the Beckettian. While her disappearing body ties her most closely to Winnie in *Happy Days* (though Winnie is anything but silent), the element into which Sunde's body disappears and from which it reappears heightens a condition she shares with many of Beckett's protagonists: their fragile corporeality. The alien element in which Sunde stands reveals the porousness of that condition. As Nils van Beek's essay here vividly evokes for us, actually standing in the sea is a very particular, very strange experience. The demanding length of the performance draws our attention away from the striking figure—the monument to keeping watch—and toward the lived physiological experience of the performer. Slowly but surely, questions of—even worries about—hunger, thirst, excretion, pain, exhaustion join one's initial thoughts of figuration and symbolism. The watching that dominates one's initial experience of the piece is displaced by a suite of other, increasingly personal, sympathetic and empathetic responses—a delicate combination of concern, care, and intimacy. If the performer is keeping watch, it is, we now feel, on our behalf and with great physical sacrifice and generosity. We might think of it as a gentler version of Artaud's call for artists to be "like victims burnt at the stake, signaling through the flames."[6]

I am grateful to the critics and scholars who accepted my invitation to receive and respond to Sunde's signaling through the waves. The essays that follow reveal how rich, varied, inspiring, and subtle are the signals this performance sends out. Unpacking the work's complex temporalities and geographies, the essays draw out and extend the many ways it speaks to this moment in our species's history, when our stunning scientific and technological achievements appear to stand still, helpless, before the oncoming tides of climate change. While Sunde is, as Peggy Phelan points out, probably the only person who will witness

36.5 in its spatial and temporal entirety, the image she crafts in *36.5* starts a ripple effect of which these essays are a hope-filled part, one among many gatherings that await us at our future shores.

Una Chaudhuri is a professor of English, drama, and environmental studies at New York University. She is the director of NYU's graduate program XE: Experimental Humanities and Social Engagement and a pioneer in the fields of ecotheater and animal studies. Her recent publications include *The Stage Lives of Animals: Zooësis and Performance* (London: Routledge, 2017); *Animal Acts: Performing Species Today*, coedited with Holly Hughes (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014); and *Research Theatre, Climate Change, and the Ecocide Project: A Casebook*, coauthored with Shonni Enelow (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Chaudhuri participates in collaborative creative projects, including the multiplatform intervention entitled *Dear Climate*, which has been presented in New York, Santa Barbara, Troy, Dublin, Abu Dhabi, Houston, and the Netherlands. She is a founding member of the CLIMATE LENS and Climate Commons theater collectives.

NOTE

1. Robert Frost, "Neither Out Far Nor in Deep."

2. Nathaniel Rich, "Losing Earth: The Decade We Almost Stopped Climate Change," *New York Times Magazine*, last updated August 16, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/08/01/magazine/climate-change-losing-earth.html.

3. Jake Silverstein, "Editor's Note." https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/08/01/magazine/climate-change-losing-earth.html

4. Frans de Waal, "Are We in Anthropodenial?" *Discover*, Tuesday, July 01, 1997. http://discovermagazine.com/1997/jul/areweinanthropod1180

5. Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

6. Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, trans. Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 13.

36.5 / North Sea, Netherlands, 2015. Photo by Jonas de Witte and Sarah Cameron Sunde.

Memorial

JAMES E. YOUNG

At the very heart of Sarah Cameron Sunde's sublime *36.5 / A Durational Performance with the Sea*, I find an ineluctable, deeply ingrained memorial logic. The artist's own account of the work's origins reads like a revelatory prose poem:

> On Monday, August 12, 2013,
> I was sitting on the rocks by a tidal bay in Maine,
> thinking about New York City's current relationship to water
> and the contemporary relationship of art to suffering and sacrifice.
> The tide was rising and I marveled at how quickly the environment changed.
> Rocks were being swallowed whole.
> Oh, the strength of the moon!
> My foot was soon underwater and it looked other-worldly.
> I imagined a human being in the middle of the bay, water slowly moving upward.
> I imagined my own body being swallowed and then the water subsiding, leaving me bare.
> It had to be done—this was urgent!
> Thursday, August 15 was three days away.
> It would be my ½ birthday—an ideal moment to begin this new measurement of time.

Isn't every memorial also a "measurement of time?" This parable of birth and rebirth was just days before her half birthday, her thirty-sixth and half birthday—"an ideal moment to begin this new measurement of time." Like any birthday, or even half birthday, this would be a com-

memoration of life—of her life in particular, of her birth from water, of the lunar cycle that is also a woman's fertility cycle. Mother Earth is really Mother Water, both sustainer and inundator of life. We float atop it; sink below it; or, as Sunde would do, stand upright in and with it as a kind of tidal measure—to be swallowed whole before being reborn again.

In reference to the commemorative function of the calendar and the ways a particular day of remembrance can be assigned to and thereby shape our memory of historical events, I once wrote the following:

> As ordered by the . . . calendar, time offers itself as an insuperable master plan by which . . . lives are lived, past history remembered and understood. For only time, when patterned after the circular movements of earth around the sun, and moon around the earth, can be trusted to repeat its forms perpetually. Grasped and then represented in the image of passing seasons, in the figures of planting and harvest, cycles of time have traditionally suggested themselves as less the constructions of human mind than the palpable manifestations of a natural order. As a result, both our apprehension of time and the meanings created in its charting seem as natural as the setting sun, the rising moon. By extension, when events are commemoratively linked to a day on the calendar, a day whose figure inevitably recurs, both memory of events and the meanings engendered in memory seem ordained by nothing less than time itself.[1]

In Sarah's case, birthdays become rebirthdays, celebrations of life in concert with the rising and falling of tides.

As the earth orbits the sun, and the moon orbits the earth, and as the earth rotates once every twenty-four hours, the gravitational pull of moon and sun combine to coax a kind of global swelling or bulge on the surface of the earth's oceans and large bodies of water—a repeating cycle of tides, twice a day each for a twelve-to-thirteen-hour interval, 365 days a year. It is roughly a six-hour pulse, akin to the earth's heartbeat—a sign of life—between high tide and low tide. Depending on the alignment of earth, moon, and sun and on the topographical contours of the body of water, the tides can vary from a two- or three-foot differential to twenty- or thirty-foot tidal flows in narrow-mouthed straits and bays, which exaggerate and amplify the tide by squeezing it be-

tween masses of land. Think of the Bay of Fundy at high and low tides, or of the flooding in New York Harbor and Long Island Sound during Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

It turns out that days before her thirty-sixth and half birthday in 2013, Sunde was thinking of just these kinds of things—of Superstorm Sandy specifically and of climate-linked rising sea levels more generally. As she watched the tide "swallow [those] rocks whole" in Bass Harbor, Maine, a moment of epiphany committed her to stand in a tidal area for a full cycle, usually twelve to thirteen hours, as water engulfed her body and then revealed it again. Why, and toward what end? She was inspired not only to commemorate Sandy's impact on New York City but also by the parallel to it that she saw in the struggle for an artist to survive on a daily basis and in the struggle of humanity to survive in the face of sea level rise.

Every iterative performance of *36.5* is thus a memorial stand prompted by the twin climate catastrophes of Superstorm Sandy and the ever-accelerating rising sea levels around the earth. In each, she remembers life with life, remembers water as the source of life, and remembers the seas from which we came and to which we will now seemingly return. But instead of attempting to fix a moment in time, as a monument attempts to fix an idea in the landscape (thereby passing it off as eternal and true, as natural as the topography in which it stands), Sunde's memorial performances are durational, defined by the water's ebb and flow over time. They are also transgeographical, taking place around the world, beginning with Bass Harbor, Maine, on August 15, 2013. A research version took place in Akumal, Mexico, on February 15, 2014, her thirty-seventh birthday, which happened to be a full-moon tidal cycle of exactly twelve hours duration, from 2:40 a.m. to 2:40 p.m. In a photo from this day, the birthday girl proudly wears the high-tide watermark on her orange shirt. She also shares a peek of her wrinkled fingers' skin after her hands' twelve-hour immersion in seawater.

With each iteration, Sunde's understanding of her goals has deepened and gotten more complicated. In Mexico, for instance, she realized how important it was to have at least three feet of tidal shift in order to make the visuals work. Making the visuals work was complicated by her desire to play out her ideas on a larger scale. The third iteration took place in San Francisco Bay, near North Beach, San Francisco, on August 15, 2014, her thirty-seventh and half birthday. From 9:26 a.m. to 10:31

p.m., some thirteen hours and five minutes, she stood, surrounded by people coming and going, and increasingly became an object of curiosity, her performance growing more and more legible as a commentary on climate change and rising seas. Unlike the barnacled pilings of an old pier revealed at low tide, Sunde and those who joined her stood for only the duration of a tidal cycle before returning to their everyday lives.

The fourth iteration took place in the North Sea, Katwijk aan Zee, the Netherlands, on August 10, 2015, from 8:15 a.m. to 9:01 p.m., for twelve hours and forty-six minutes. Here the artist reminds us that her husband is a Dutch water engineer who was gravely concerned by New York's glaring lack of preparation for the superstorms and sea levels he and his Dutch engineering cohort have been addressing in their work for the last one hundred years. The fifth iteration took place on St. Martin's Island in the Bay of Bengal in Bangladesh, on January 5, 2017, a twelve-hour and twenty-one-minute durational performance. The sixth iteration took place on April 2, 2019, at Bay of All Saints, near Salvador, Brazil, from 8:29 a.m. to 8:45 p.m., a twelve-hour and sixteen-minute stand. Three further iterations were to take place in Kenya in November 2019, New Zealand in March 2020, and finally in New York City in September 2020, surrounded by hometown family, friends, and climate change activists.

Each memorial stand she takes as the tide rises around her, making her average-size frame a kind of yardstick by which the tide itself can be measured, is an endurance performance both in real time and as captured in film, as a piece of video art. Here the time-lapse film and the photographic images may not do these projects justice—collapsing the long durée of the artist's performance, its essential reverie and quietude—as she stands alone with her thoughts; her memory; and moment-by-moment sensations of hunger, thirst, cold, and seaside sounds for twelve or thirteen hours, with the waters rising and falling around her. Surviving a twelve-hour tidal cycle takes planning, just as surviving day-to-day as an artist takes planning, just as surviving as a civilization in the face of climate change and sea level rise takes planning.

Sunde's emphasis on the durational properties of her work puts her in conversation with the tide-related work by landscape artist Andy Goldsworthy featured in the film *Rivers and Tides*. A stunning illustra-

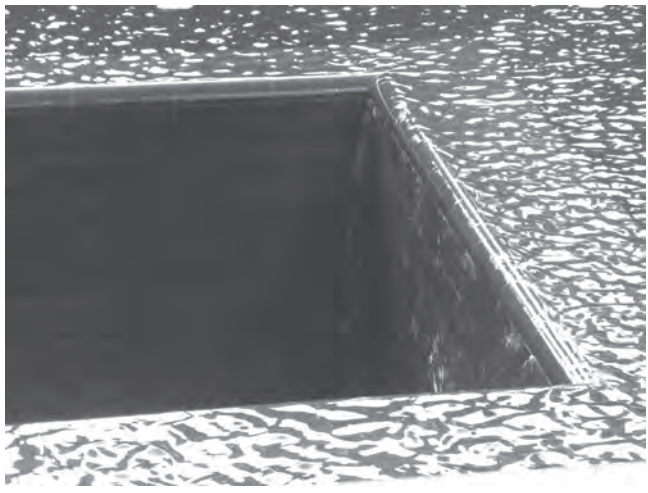


Fig. 1. Detail of inner void in *Reflecting Absence*, designed by Michael Arad and Peter Walker, which won the World Trade Center Site Memorial Competition for ground zero in New York City, opened and dedicated in 2011.

tion of the transient nature of his art, a meticulously handcrafted beach stone obelisk—constructed on land uncovered in the six-hour span between low and high tide—is inevitably inundated and toppled by the waves. Like Goldsworthy, Sunde emphasizes the durational process of art over its fixed result. This is also essential to her work's memorial logic, in that it points to memory's ongoingness over time, never fixed in a particular moment but animated by its long durée. In Goldsworthy's *Leaning into the Wind*, he is held aloft at a perilous angle on the edge of a steep mountain by a strong and steady gale-force wind, a "performance with the wind" (not against it).[2] Similarly, because hers is a "performance with the sea" (and not against it), Sunde survives the duration of her memorial stand by letting the embrace of the rising sea hold her aloft.

Here I am reminded of one of my favorite, unrealized memorial proposals for the World Trade Center Site Memorial Competition for ground zero in Lower Manhattan, eventually won by Michael Arad and Peter Walker's design, *Reflecting Absence*. In a demanding but conceptually stunning submission, another team proposed filling in the entire

five-acre "bathtub" within the slurry walls of the former World Trade Center Towers site with water by connecting it to the harbor nearby. With the rise and fall of the tides, this new five-acre lake's water level would also rise and fall, as a kind of living, breathing reminder of life and loss. I found the submission's accompanying narrative especially powerful: "The entirety of the area is flooded with waters of the Hudson, which will rise and fall with the tides. The great slurry wall designed to hold back the Hudson River is now supported by the weight of the water it was meant to hold back. The walls which withstood unimaginable trauma on September 11th are allowed, at last, to rest."[3]

Like the way in which the water would have helped hold up those damaged slurry walls, the rising tide helps support Sarah as she stands there, exhausted, after six hours into the tidal cycle and with six hours to go, buoying her up. Caused by the gravitational pull of the moon and sun, the rising tide now countervails the earth's own gravitational pull on Sarah, holding her aloft in her still and silent dance with the sea.

Like other artists of her generation, Sunde is acutely aware of the radical impermanence of art, the ephemerality of all human cultural productions, especially the kinds of art intended to convey a false sense of their own perpetuity over time. This is, of course, the sustaining illusion of the monument. By claiming themselves as kin to the landscape's geological outcroppings, monuments would cast a nation's ideals and founding myths as naturally true as the landscape in which they stand. But as an entire generation of countermemorialists has made scathingly clear, neither the monument nor the meaning it assigns to memory is really everlasting. Both are constructed in particular times and places, as conditioned by and subject to the same forces of history as we are. Thinking back on Jochen Gerz's and Esther Shalev-Gerz's vanishing monument in Harburg-Hamburg or Horst Hoheisel's inverted, negative-form monument in Kassel or Misha Ullman's *Bibliotek* memorial (a room of empty bookshelves) beneath the Bebelplatz in Berlin, among many other countermonuments, I find that Sarah's "durational performance with the sea" also challenges the traditional premises of the monument.[4]

As Maya Lin described in her original proposal for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, "The memorial is composed not as an unchanging monument, but as a moving composition, to be understood as we move into and out of it."[5] Instead of a fixed and static monument, her memo-

Fig. 2. Aerial view of man and child looking into the negative-form memorial created by Horst Hoheisel in 1987 to pay tribute to the Aschrott Fountain destroyed by the Nazi Party in 1939 (Kassel, Germany).

rial would embody "memory by means of perambulation." In a similar vein, Sarah has designed her performances as memory by means of duration, making herself a standing measure of a twelve-to-thirteen-hour tidal cycle. She would thus move into the sea and then allow it to move around her.

This, then, is the refreshing transformative memorial logic Sarah brings to *36.5 / A Durational Performance with the Sea*. In its fleeting duration, Sunde's "performance with the sea" is a sublime distillation both of her generation's awareness of art's ephemerality and of its skepticism of the traditional monument's inert fixedness, its pretensions to permanence. Like the standing figures of artists and visitors on otherwise horizontal and empty memorial plazas in Berlin, Hamburg, Kassel, and Saarbrucken, Sunde and her collaborators are the only vertical forms on an otherwise flat sea, its horizon always in the middle-distance. They are neither fixed nor fossilized but are living, breathing, and eventually moving monuments. She, and those who participate with her for briefer stretches of time, may temporarily become the climate change monument for which tourists in San Francisco's North Beach search. But hav-

Figs. 3–4. The Monument against Fascism project by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz was inaugurated October 10, 1986, and lowered eight times until the steel structure disappeared November 10, 1993, in Harburg in Hamburg, Germany.

ing gone home and warmed up after their twelve-hour tidal shift, Sunde and the participants remain monuments standing in perpetuity only in the photographs taken by tourists as mementoes of their own brushes with the ephemerality of durational performances.

Like the moments of silence observed by some nations that turn their citizens into standing monuments, Sunde turns herself into a temporarily standing monument for the duration of a tidal cycle, which is

never still. It is a durational performance, ephemeral by nature. Only the tides rise and fall in perpetuity. The only monuments that live in perpetuity are those that also allow themselves to come and go, to rise and fall, like the tides.

James E. Young is a distinguished university professor emeritus and the founding director of the Institute for Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He is the author of *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); *The Texture of Memory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), which won the National Jewish Book Award in 1994; *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000); and *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces Between* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), which won the National Council for Public History Book Award for 2017. Between 1997 and 1998, Young served on the jury for Germany's national Memorial to Europe's Murdered Jews, which selected Peter Eisenman's design, dedicated in May 2005. And between 2003 and 2004, he served on the jury for the World Trade Center Site Memorial Competition, won by Michael Arad and Peter Walker in 2004 and opened on September 11, 2011.

NOTES

1. From James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 263.

2. See both Thomas Riedelsheimer, *Rivers and Tides: Andy Goldsworthy Working with Time* (New York: Docurama, 2002), DVD; and Thomas Riedelsheimer, *Leaning into the Wind: Andy Goldsworthy* (Köln, Germany: Filmpunkt GmbH, 2018), DVD—both are brilliant documentary films on the artist's work in time, landscape, and water.

3. From James E. Young, *The Stages of Memory: Reflections on Memorial Art, Loss, and the Spaces Between* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), 47, referring to entry #790143.

4. For a detailed elaboration of these and other countermonuments, including designs by Stih and Schnock and Rachel Whiteread, among others, see James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

5. Maya Lin, *Boundaries* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 4:05.

36.5 / Bay of All Saints, Brazil, 2019. Photo by Juh Almeida.

Standing

STACY ALAIMO

Sarah Cameron Sunde's *36.5* undertakes an elemental reckoning with the forces of the planet at a time when such forces can no longer be presumed to be timeless. The simplicity of the performance—one woman standing at the edge of the ocean at low tide, for twelve hours—silently proclaims that encounters with something as vast and inhuman as the tides must not too readily be cloaked in human language. The half day of still silence asks us to delay the comforting encapsulations that words grant. Perhaps the silence fosters modes of posthuman ethics, as described by Rosi Braidotti: "We are becoming posthuman ethical subjects in our multiple capacities for relations of all sorts and modes of communication by codes that transcend the linguistic sign by exceeding it in many directions." Braidotti argues that the "ethical imagination" of posthuman subjects resides within an "ontological relationality."[1] An ethics may emerge from the recognition that relationality is not confined within human scripts.[2]

The minimalist elegance of the performance suggests an ontological relationality between the body of a human being and that vast body of water we call the ocean. Sunde's striking and prolonged stillness—she does not float, swim, or tread water—removes this encounter from practices of resource extraction as well as from familiar cultural frames for aquatic experience, such as the athletic, adventurous, sublime, or touristic. Nothing is taken from the water; nor is the water put to use; nor is it—as far as viewers can discern—experienced as a sensual, exhilarating, or aesthetic pleasure. This is, instead, a steadfast, even stoic, *witnessing* of waves, flows, and tides, an invitation to imagine the vast potential for new modes of relationality to be realized through purpose-

Fig. 1. Video still from *Slurb* (2009) by Marina Zurkow. The artist statement says that "*Slurb*—a word that collapses 'slum' and 'suburb'—encapsulates a dreamy ode to the rise of slime, a watery future in which jellyfish have dominion."

fully allowing oneself to be acted on. When Sunde becomes surrounded by the seawater, her increasingly wet clothing evinces that water is not a human habitat and garments do not provide enough protection against rising seas. As saturated as they become, the clothes still trace the outline of the human as such, posing the relation between the person and her environs as an enduring question or problematic at the very root of (Western) environmental thought. However, while Sunde's performance does suggest an environmental imperative to "meet the universe halfway,"[3] through embodied epistemologies that are markedly in place, a new materialist sense of what I call transcorporeality—with its intra-actions between the physical substance of the person and the place[4]—is not illuminating, as the literal corporeality of the performer seems indexical. Rather than capturing or foregrounding transcorporeal risks, vulnerabilities, and harms of the fluctuating waters, the awkwardness and steely effort of standing still within moving tides evokes more cerebral, contemplative perceptions and speculations.

Sunde calls us to direct our attention, patiently and intensely, to the humanly altered tides, which will rise as sea levels rise, leaving many people in deep water. Even as this performance is not what I

would call transcorporeal, in that it does not emphasize the transit of material substances, such as toxins, through bodies and environments, it nonetheless could be seen as performing exposure as an ethical and political act by occupying insurgent vulnerability, an activist mode with a potent feminist history.[5] In other words, by standing with or as those who are or will be affected by climate change, the dramatization of exposure insists that within the Anthropocene, politics and ethics cannot be cordoned off to an imagined cultural and merely human sphere. Nature can no longer be imagined as an inert background or resource for the Human, as all is intertwined, entangled, intra-active. As the seas rise, more and more human and nonhuman species will be out of place, and dangerously so. As Donna J. Haraway puts it, referencing Anna Tsing, "Right now the earth is full of refugees, human and not, without refuge."[6]

Yet this performance is strangely calm, not apocalyptic. In this way it is not unlike Marina Zurkow's video work *Slurb*, in which the inhabitants of a drowned world carry on.[7] In *Slurb*, the haunting music and the repetitive paddling of the humans and the blue humanoid hybrids turn our attention from the spectacle of disaster toward the quotidian acts of survival and resilience. Both *Slurb* and *36.5* dramatize immersion within Anthropocene waters, without transcendent escapes or solid borders. However, in *Slurb* the creatures flow across the screen, whereas in *36.5* Sunde stays still. Her stillness allows more-than-human temporalities and processes to take center stage while the performer seems strangely inert. The performance could allude to the term "standing" as a key conundrum for environmental law, especially for complex global matters such as climate change, acidification, and rising sea levels. Who is permitted to pursue legal redress for rising waters and other climate injustices? How can the scale, the entangled human and nonhuman agencies, and the terribly unjust distribution of harms be accounted for and remedied? Who has standing, in what jurisdiction, and within what sort of temporality? The static stance of the performer may suggest a sort of paralysis or futility—the horror that comes with the recognition that human legal, political, infrastructural, and economic systems will most likely fail to combat the practical challenges, the injustices, and the suffering that the rising waters bring. And yet Sunde's performance, as it plays out over thirteen hours, offers opportunities for passersby to consider the rising seas and to join her in the water, form-

ing momentary collectives that call for more enduring commitments to contemplating and acting within this rapidly transforming world. Standing. Still.

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NOTES

1. Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), 190.

2. Indeed, it is important to note that many indigenous peoples practice ethical models that are robustly relational rather than narrowly human; as Kyle Powys Whyte explains, "Some indigenous people's concern with collective continuance has to do with maintaining the capacity to be adaptive with respect to relational responsibilities, or all those relationships and their corresponding responsibilities that facilitate the future flourishing of indigenous lives that are closely connected to the earth and its many living and nonliving beings and natural interdependent collectives." Kyle Powys Whyte, "Indigenous Women, Climate Change Impacts, and Collective Action," *Hypatia* 29, no. 3 (2014): 603.

3. Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

4. The term "intra-action" is that of Karen Barad. My concept of transcorporeality draws on this term and is indebted to her work.

5. Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 5, 94.

6. Donna J. Haraway, "Capitalocene and Cthulucene," in *Posthuman Glossary*, ed. Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 80.

7. Marina Zurkow, "*Slurb*," 2009, color, animation, and stereo sound, with music by Lem Jay Ignacio and additional animation by Jen Kelly, 6:00 excerpt from 17:42 (loop), YouTube video, Streaming Museum, http://streamingmuseum.org/slurb-2009-by-marina-zurkow.

36.5 / Bass Harbor, Maine, 2013. These nine photos are all that remain from the first work in the series. Photos by Maridee Slater and Sarah Cameron Sunde.

Risk

MARTIN HARRIES

Fig. 1. An adult photographer measures children against the fatality of the tides. Photograph by Mildred E. Collins, © Alfred C. Redfield, "The Tides of the Waters of New England and New York," 1980.

Two boys stand beside a massive wharf in Minas Basin, Nova Scotia, at low tide (fig. 1). The photographer, Mildred E. Collins, might have decided that they provided a sense of scale. The darkened edge of the wharf, towering over the boys, measures the tide like a colossal version of a doorframe charting a child's growth. Only, no one would ever withstand this tide; to remain there would be fatal, and long before high tide. Against this yardstick measuring an inhuman scale, the distinction between the smaller boy's shorts and the taller boy's trousers makes a poignant, if pathetically fragile, assertion of the slightest of generational differences against the sublime promise of the high tide that will erase the landscape where they stand.

The wharf measures tidal change in the Minas Basin; these tides are part of one of the most variable tidal systems in the world, that of the Bay of Fundy, where the difference between low and high tide is a matter of roughly fifty feet. This catastrophically powerful system lies in the background of *36.5*. Sarah Cameron Sunde describes the moment that inspired her series of performances: "I was sitting on the rocks by a tidal

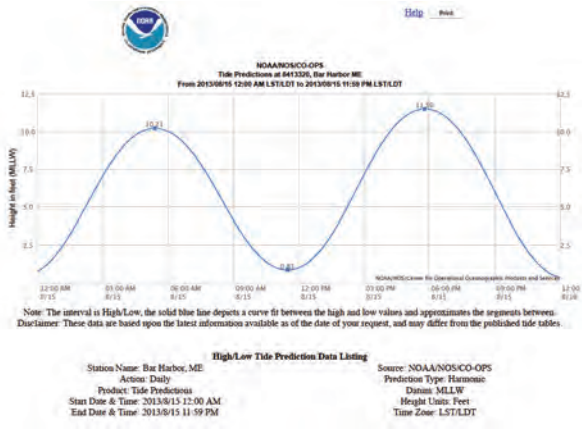

Fig. 2. NOAA tide predictions for Bar Harbor, Maine, August 15, 2013. Daily oscillations of this elegant graph are useful to everyone and yet predict nothing about a particular spot on the ocean floor. Times for Bass Harbor would have varied slightly.

bay in Maine, thinking about New York City's current relationship to water and the contemporary relationship of art to suffering and sacrifice. The tide was rising and I marveled at how quickly the environment changed. Rocks were being swallowed whole. Oh, the strength of the moon!"[1] The speed of the transformation of the environment—that ravenous ocean devouring rocks—was not only a reminder of the moon's gravitational pull but also an effect of the massive tidal system to the north. The influence of the Bay of Fundy's tides reaches south to Bass Harbor, Maine, where Sunde performed the first iteration of her traveling piece.[2] The difference between high and low tide there is not as extreme as in Minas Basin, but it is nevertheless unusually large (worldwide, the typical difference is about two feet). Sunde's *36.5* began inside the orbit of that system's daily remaking of seascapes and landscapes and lives.[3]

A graph published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration represents the tides in nearby Bar Harbor, Maine, for August 15, 2013—the day of Sunde's first performance—as an elegant curve (fig. 2). Sunde began at about the point of the dip midway through the chart when the height of the low tide is noted as .83 feet

and continued almost to the chart's final point, ending her performance at 11:52 at night, near the next low tide. At many places in Bass Harbor, *36.5* would have been, as the chart suggests, impossible to perform; the high tide in the cycle, at the highest point of the second curve, reached eleven and a half feet. A photograph on the website for *36.5* shows Sunde "testing the depth of the water with a pole," evidence of the everyday know-how required to understand what NOAA's chart means for practice; it doesn't tell you what the depth of the water at high tide will be at any particular spot, especially when the topography is as variable as that of a tidal bay on the jagged Down East coast of Maine. Indeed, all credible sources stress that tidal predictions remain predictions. Note, for instance, NOAA's disclaimer and how it throws some doubt on the mathematical elegance of its curve: "These data are based upon the latest information available as of the date of your request and may differ from the published tide tables." And this reminder that, despite all the accumulated knowledge of tides, charts are based on the best available theories also underlines the force of *36.5*, which can remind us that tides, especially before the Anthropocene, were a way of telling time.

After I told him about the piece, a friend who intimately knows Maine waters responded, "Sea-adjacent humans . . . have always used the tide as a mark of time, and of right and wrong time."[4] This emphasis on tide as a cultural force points to one of the main strengths of *36.5*. It's a reminder, to those of us mostly oblivious to nonhuman phenomena, that tides exist; and they exist not only as a fascinating and visible and variable natural force but as one of the most important natural forces—up there with seasons and with night and day—that forms the background of cultural decisions that seem so basic as to appear to be almost natural. Things are possible at high tide that cannot happen at low tide; the reverse is also true. Knowledge of tide *was* time—not a primitive version of a clock, but a differently subtle instrument. Even though noon is noon, high tide tomorrow won't be the same as high tide today, and everything hangs on that difference. Tide doesn't resemble time in the modern sense, because tides and the rights and wrongs they make necessary vary enormously, while time in the modern sense, as it is measured, remains periodic and regular, however different experience of those intervals might be. Contemporaries may imagine tides as a kind of back formation of time—more or less regular, glob-

Fig. 3. A pole to detect the spot where the laughing artist will continue to breathe as the full tide engulfs her. © Sarah Cameron Sunde, "Bass Harbor, Maine, U.S.," *36.5: A Durational Performance with the Sea*, 2013.

ally homogeneous, with adjustments based on a mean tide that resembles Greenwich Mean Time. Tides, however, vary, and this variation is a matter, as they say, of life and death.

E. P. Thompson, in his classic essay on changes in British and European time consciousness, writes, "Fishing and seafaring people must integrate their lives with the tides. A petition from Sunderland in 1800 includes the words 'considering that this is a seaport in which many people are obliged to be up at all hours of the night in order to attend the tides and their affairs upon the river.' The operative phrase is 'attend the tides': the patterning of social time in the seaport follows *upon* the rhythms of the sea; and this appears to be natural or comprehensible to fishermen or seamen: the compulsion is nature's own."[5] Several (and now mostly archaic) senses of "attend" are at work in this "operative phrase": "To watch over, wait upon, with service, accompany as servant, go with, be present."[6] This semantic range—from vigilance, to waiting, to service, to simply being present—is suggestive for Sunde's performances. The performance of waiting "with the sea," as the full name of the project has it, suggests a kind of obscure service; Sunde makes herself subject to tides and is present to them in an unusually rigorous way. In the photos of the performance in Maine, as in the later

iterations, during her time in the water, Sunde looks out, away from the shore, as if expecting something, as if something other than a change in the tide might arrive. The pattern of performance time "follows upon the rhythms of the sea." But the performance follows from no obvious obligation, and its relationship to "social time" is complex.[7] As with *36.5*, the schedules of durational performances can resemble those of (sometimes very long) working days while their work may serve no self-evident instrumental goal and speak to no compulsion, natural or otherwise. And yet around this question of necessity, another quotation from Sunde's account of the genesis of the project is revealing: "It had to be done—this was urgent!" The project of *36.5* was the result of a felt obligation, even as that urgency had obviously little to do with the compulsion that shapes the affairs of those who labor at sea.

Sunde's wooden pole is at the humble end of technologies for predicting and managing the effects of tides, but it resembles others in being designed to prevent the twin perils of drowning at high tide or, among navigators, of running aground at low. Thanks to these technologies, and with all necessary caveats from NOAA and other authorities, tides have long been reasonably predictable. Indeed, the predictable regularity of tides made and makes *36.5* thinkable, in Bass Harbor as well as in all its later iterations. Yet the piece and its global itinerary also underline the fragility of the calculations that make it performable. Sunde's *36.5* rests on the mild but real risk in every wager that our knowledge of tides today will hold true tomorrow. Here we might recall one of Samuel Beckett's wry jokes about durational performance:

HAMM: I feel rather drained.

[*Pause*.]

The prolonged creative effort.

[*Pause*.]

If I could drag myself down to the sea! I'd make a pillow of sand for my head and the tide would come.

CLOV: There's no more tide.[8]

Hamm wishes for a death that collapses the made and the natural. Sand (elsewhere used in the play as the litter in the old people's trash

cans) becomes a pillow, and the shore, in this fantasy, provides a pleasant place to die, that rare thing, a "natural death." Clov punctures Hamm's comfortably suicidal wish—the fatal onrush of the tide no longer cooperates. If, in Thompson's account, "social time in the seaport follows *upon* the rhythms of the sea," in Beckett's play the death of social life and social time seems to have led to the extinction of the tides. The wish for a tide whose inexorable periodicity could end Hamm's life is the inverse of the chaotic irregularity of tides that promise increasingly to be part of the near future. Sunde performs with the knowledge of a risk to come. Her artwork *36.5* is the performance of a proleptic nostalgia for the regularity of tides and for a time when one can know what risk one takes.

Fig. 4. Scene from a 1984 performance of Samuel Beckett's play *Endgame*. *Left to right:* James Greene, Alvin Epstein, and Peter Evans. Photograph by Martha Swope, © Billy Rose Theater Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

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NOTES

1. Sarah Cameron Sunde, "36.5 / Bass Harbor: Bass Harbor, Maine, U.S.," *36.5 / A Durational Performance with the Sea*, 2018, https://www.36pt5.org/bass-harbor/.

2. See Alfred C. Redfield, *Introduction to Tides: The Tides and Waters of New England and New York* (Woods Hole, MA: Marine Science International, 1980), 74–75.

3. For one relevant account of life at a very small scale, see Jonathan White's account of the lives of mud shrimp in the Bay of Fundy in *Tides: The Science and Spirit of the Ocean* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 2017), 29–31.

4. Edward Mitchell, e-mail message to author, April 20, 2018.

5. E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38 (December 1967): 59–60.

6. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 3rd ed. (2000), s.v. "attend."

7. Here the initial Maine performance, with no other participants standing alongside Sunde, is exceptional in the sequence to date. Those who "attend the tides" with Sunde, for shorter or longer periods, produce a fascinating and variable social formation.

8. Samuel Beckett, *Endgame* (New York: Grove Press, 2009), 70.

36.5 / Bodo Inlet, Kenya, 2019. High tide approaches. Photo by Swabir Bazaar.

Wet

NILS VAN BEEK

Fig. 1. Woerdersluis Monument in Spaarndam—the symbol of the fight against the water—in bronze, with a polished freestone base.

I admit it—it is a striking image. The novel *Hans Brinker, or The Silver Skates* published by Mary Mapes Dodge in 1865 contains a story called "The Hero of Haarlem" in which an anonymous boy plugs his finger into a hole in a dike, thereby preventing the hole from growing, the dike from collapsing, and the neighboring city from disaster. The book was adapted into several films and plays. In the Netherlands a few statues have been erected to honor this fictional character and to offer American tourists a photo opportunity. The author never visited our country, and even the legends on which her story is presumably based aren't of Dutch origin. My fellow countrymen, however, do identify themselves with the metaphor of a country conquered from the sea, which is in a continuous battle with the water and which is inhabited by people who, no matter what their social status might be, are joining forces to build ingenious constructions to keep the water out. It's very effective for populists here to stretch this metaphor to the influx of immigrants who should remain behind a wall; a fence; or in our case, a dike.

Another legend comes to mind, probably relatively unknown beyond

our dikes. In 1621 the acclaimed jurist Hugo Grotius (Hugo de Groot) escaped from his prison in a book chest and fled to Paris, after having become involved in a theological dispute and in a climate of bigotry. With his treaty *Mare Liberum*, Grotius made an invaluable contribution to the topic of the sea in Western thought. In 1493 Pope Alexander VI wrote in a papal bull that the oceans of the world should be divided between the two countries that then explored the seas (registered later in the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494). Spain would acquire all the territories west of the Tordesillas meridian (480 kilometers west of the Cape Verdes archipelago); Portugal, the parts east of it. Grotius argued that the open seas cannot be anyone's property. At open sea, he insisted, no borders can be drawn. The water is intangible and, from those times' perspective, inexhaustible. This viewpoint, which became dominant since the seventeenth century, allowed for the bourgeois and predominantly protestant nation of the Dutch Republic to cross the seas freely; to fish for haring close to Scotland; and, paradoxically, to monopolize many trades and build up a colonial empire for themselves.

In his marvelous geophilosophical book *Water: Een geofilosofische geschiedenis* (2014), René ten Bos, a prominent Dutch philosopher, shows how the cultural meaning of water has developed in the Western world. In ancient Greek philosophy, water had a positive connotation, even though it was the domain of unpredictable gods. Thales of Miletus stated that water is the principal element of things—all is water. The motto *panta rhei* ("everything flows") is attributed to Heraclitus, who uses water as a dominant metaphor to understand our position in place and time. The Greeks used three terms for the sea: *thalassa*, the sea as a mother from which, for instance, Venus was born; *pelagos*, the sea as distance; and *pontos*, the sea as a bridge, as provider of connectivity. Since then, ten Bos explains, thinkers have taken on a process of distancing themselves from the seas. Plato disrespected fishermen, for they wouldn't give the fish a fair chance in opposition to the way hunters treat their game. Harbors came to be seen as the lower, unesteemed areas of towns. In ten Bos's view, Grotius's *Mare Liberum* is one of the pillars of modern capitalism. By denying anyone the possession of nonterritorial waters, the seas created some of the basic conditions for capitalism to flourish, including the possibility of being able to connect to the whole world, for instance. More importantly, capitalism needed the sea as a place where no limitations or prohibitions would inhibit

free trade and competition. And most importantly, capitalism can only function at the expense of resources (people and planet, including the waters) that aren't included in the bill. When the sea belongs to nobody, not even to itself, it can be exploited without control, and it is, among other things, forced to receive all the (plastic) waste that capitalist consumerism produces. Ten Bos points out how dominant this way of thinking is by using the example of blue ocean strategies, which is a marketing term that means to multiply profit by opening up a market that didn't exist before (as Apple did with its iPhone), where no regulations and competitions yet apply. In the centuries after Grotius, the sea has been externalized even more by the objectifications of modern science—the sea as an accumulation of H_2O molecules.

Ten Bos completes his book with a plea for a new "natural contract" (comparable to the implicit social contract that commits citizens to each other and to society) between humankind and the sea, an idea that stems from the French philosopher Michel Serres's 1990 book, *Le contrat naturel*.

I was a curator of the 2015 North Sea iteration of *36.5 / A Durational Performance with the Sea*. We wanted to find a location that would meet the technical and tidal requirements for Sarah's performance but that would also be representative of the present Dutch water situation. In Katwijk we found the perfect spot, at the oldest mouth of the river Rhine. Some years before, this spot had been redesigned to deal with the sea in a contemporary way. At this so-called Kustwerk Katwijk, the sea isn't simply blocked out by building a dam of some kind. The landscape is engineered in such a way that the sea can reshape it, that it can adapt itself to many weather and seasonal conditions. At some spots, the water is allowed to come in, which takes away the pressure at other places. As a result, specific vegetation and animal life are reappearing, enhancing the safety and ecological meaning of this hybrid landscape. The idea is to work with nature, not against it.

Another important aspect to the Dutch iteration was that the project was part of the cultural program of SAIL Amsterdam 2015, a naval event attended by hundreds of thousands of visitors who came to see tall ships sailing in from all around the globe, thereby offering a nostalgic sense of the sea to a city center that has long lost its tide, its salty water, and its harbor activities.

During the preparation, I was thinking of the artwork as a beautiful,

Fig. 2. 2015 iteration of SAIL Amsterdam, a naval festival.

highly symbolical gesture, with a slight reminiscence of the corporeal endurance of classical performance art, this time set in a non-art-institutional context. The musicians, singer, and choreographers whom Sarah wanted to bring in, I honestly thought to be redundant, simply a remnant of Sarah's background as a theater maker.

But the moment I plunged into the water to stand next to Sarah for an hour or so, I finally understood the project in a completely different and, I believe, truer way. To feel the water pushing you away from where you are standing; to notice the differences in temperature at your feet and near the surface, to look at the waves rolling toward you; and most significantly, to feel the tide coming up and, much more slowly, moving out is not like any swimming experience at all. The water wants to seduce you to move along with it; it warns you that, in this situation, it can do with you whatever it pleases. It's sharing its rhythm and ecosystem with you. As a matter of fact, it's sharing a secret, because there's no other way to know this.

By thinking about the project in a conceptual, rational way; by relating to the image solely by sight; by not taking in the invitation to join in the water or even the choreography on the shore, it's clear to

the audience that the sea remains at the historically cultivated distance that René ten Bos has described so well. In his chapter on Heraclitus, he is reminded of the two paradigms that rheologists and hydrologists use when observing water: one could sit somewhere along the river and measure how much water is passing by, or one could follow a certain particle in the streaming water by moving along the shore. But to fully understand his famous statement, that you can never step into the same river twice, you have to plunge in. We are surrounded by water; water is in us. We are fragile and mortal; there is never a position outside our ecosystem. To plunge into the water is to coincide with everything there is. Getting wet is a political act.

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36.5 / North Sea, Netherlands, 2015. Screenshot of video work by Sarah Cameron Sunde and Jonas de Witte.

Sensors

STEFAN HELMREICH

The waves have vanished, but they are coming back. We can see rippled traces of them in the finely sculpted sand of Schiermonnikoog, a low-lying barrier island located in the farthest eastern reaches of the Netherlands, sitting on the southern edge of the North Sea and just north of the muddy intertidal zone known as the Wadden Sea. It is December 2016, and I am walking along a deserted and drizzly beach with Anita Engelstad, a PhD student in geosciences at Utrecht University. Although my training is in cultural anthropology and my aim in learning about Dutch sea science is to think about ocean waves as objects of social and semiotic imagination, Anita has judged me a competent-enough technical assistant for this field trip. We are checking in on pressure sensors that her research group positioned a few months ago on a stretch of beach on this sixteen-kilometer-long, four-kilometer-wide isle. She wants to know whether the sensors have recorded evidence of some parts of Schiermonnikoog being *overwashed* by waves—which would mean that waves are arriving at the highest point on the island to then slosh up and over that boundary rather than recede back toward the sea. If such overwashing waves are transporting sand up the beach as they move along, they might be helping to build rather than erode the island, at least in the short term.[1] This could mean that, contrary to conventional, old-school Dutch wisdom, protecting barrier islands like Schiermonnikoog might best be served by opening up, rather than reinforcing, dikes and artificial dunes. Grappling with sea level rise means thinking about seawater not as a solo act but as a force acting in concert with the worlds of sand and land.

Schiermonnikoog is not far from Terschelling, another Wadden

island, where in June 2016 New York–based artist Sarah Cameron Sunde invited a group of arts festival–goers to stand with her just past the water's edge, facing the sea, for as long as they liked—though at least until they could sense with their bodies the rise or fall of the water. At Terschelling, Sunde also showed video works based on her enactments of *36.5 / A Durational Performance with the Sea*, a piece in which Sunde stands in seawater at sites around the world for periods of almost thirteen hours, letting the tide rise and fall around her. Sunde's immersion (wearing street clothes over a wetsuit) in a slowly rising and falling sea (which sometimes came up to her neck), at locales in the United States, the Netherlands, and Bangladesh, was shadowed by a looming sense that one day the sea may rise up for good, never really falling back to livable levels.

Fig. 1. One of Engelstad's wave gauges positioned on beach at Schiermonnikoog, December 2016. This gauge is "a submersible self-logging, self-powered pressure sensor. It combines a temperature compensated, highly stable, pressure sensor, a Compact Flash Card Data Logger, a rugged waterproof package and 12 C size Alkaline Batteries." Description taken from the Ocean Sensor Systems website (http://www.oceansensorsystems.com/products.htm). Photograph by author.

Anita and I visited Schiermonnikoog at a time of day when we could be mostly certain that waves would not be lapping at our feet—that we would not, in the mode of Sunde's *36.5*, be immersed. Anita needed access to her pressure sensors and to other devices—like the acoustic Doppler velocimeter that we had to spend an hour digging out of recent sand cover so that Anita could ensure that it would continue its registering and recording of wave speeds (so that she could later figure out things like whether waves were becoming asymmetrically skewed as they crawled up the beach, a sign that they could be transporting sediment). Thinking and acting around a rising and falling sea at Schiermonnikoog was not the powerfully meditative—if existentially apprehensive and physically trying—encounter that I imagine is at the heart of Sunde's work. Rather,

it was a mix of frustration (Is this velocimeter broken?); brain strain (Is there anything we can discern about the kinetics of waves from ripples left in the sand?); and human questions about sea level rise delegated, along the way, to sensors, machines, and, later, computer programs.

And yet there are commonalities between Sunde's art and Engelstad's science. I think primarily of a shared sense of a coming future in which the ground beneath our feet will shift, if not always to submerge then certainly to move elsewhere. Schiermonnikoog, as it happens, has been slowly drifting southeast over the last centuries, being now two kilometers south of where it was back in the year 1250 (its official political boundaries were adjusted eastward in 2006 so that this settlement of about one thousand people could remain part of the province of Friesland, rather than sliding into the governing sphere of neighboring Groningen). I think, too, of both Sunde's and Englelstad's projects as grappling with how to sense the scale of such shifts—through, on the one hand, a mortal individual body (an unsteady and vexed synecdoche for people, writ large) or, on the other hand, distributed networks of sensors, both running on their own and on the fuel of steady human maintenance.[2] Engelstad's science, however, might add a dimension to how we think about Sunde's art, and that is that climate transformation will likely be a story of swirling sand and water both—not only a tale of pure watery inundation but also a continued sea level rise through a durational unfolding with sea and scrambled land.

And it will be a local and uneven unfolding too. Sea level, as Wilko Graf von Hardenberg has demonstrated, is not a given in nature; rather, it is a heterogeneous measure that has been conceptualized and created many times over, in many places, with idiosyncratic and local definitions (e.g., high-tide marks in Venice, Amsterdam, and Liverpool) sometimes taken up as widespread infrastructural standards, particularly in connection with national and colonial oceangoing enterprise.[3] Engelstad's science and Sunde's art, bound up, to be sure, with global concerns about sea level, still unfold in specific, local places, where sand, sea, and the social mix in different ratios, with implications for coastal and city planning, port management, near-sea agriculture, and more.

The Dutch setting of Engelstad's work and of some of Sunde's iterations of *36.5* tune to relatively slow durational rises of water (and, indeed, Sunde's *36.5* also sought relatively calm waters in San

Fig. 2. Exhibition poster featuring a still from Nicole Six and Paul Petritsch's, *Spatial Intervention I*, 2013.

Francisco and Bangladesh, presumably both for reasons of argument and because Sunde being buffeted around by breaking waves would cause bodily hazards to overwhelm her message). One can imagine much more abrupt and calamitous messages. In Jim Shepard's short story "The Netherlands Lives with Water," for instance, everything is fine with the dikes of Rotterdam until . . . it's not, and the North Sea rushes in. Or think, in a more documentary vein, of the terrible seawater rises that have killed tens of thousands in Bangladesh.[4] Such sensors as might track these looming catastrophes might faithfully note data points toward disaster, though that is no guarantee that human and institutional interpreters will connect these dots to create narratives that will prompt purposeful action. Or consider other kinds of performances that might contrast with Sunde's, such as Nicole Six and Paul Petritsch's *Spatial Intervention 1*, a twenty-eight-minute video in which we watch a man hacking at the ice of a frozen lake on which he is standing, a symbol of the vigorous but shortsighted and damaging

labor in which so much human enterprise seems today to be engaged (presented, fittingly, as part of an exhibition called *Suicide Narcissus* at the University of Chicago's Renaissance Society).[5]

The window of video prompts a final comment on Sunde's *36.5*, which is that, for many of us, the access we have to the performance is online, in videos of its enactment. In many instances, the videos offer time-lapse speedups, compressing thirteenish hours of duration into a few minutes. While one might worry that this thins the work—turning it into a small-screen visual spectacle to be watched in the distracted state we now bring to our computer screens, excising the duration of bodily experience—it also brings up questions of how to think about time, tide, sensing (human and machinic), and the sea. And it brings up the question of what is happening *off screen*. What are Sunde's relations with the people who witness or join her performance? What are their relations with one another? What I find most provocative about *36.5* is precisely the practice of iteration, of doing it again and again, repeating a performance in a world that is changing, not repeating. As I learned from Anita during fieldwork at Schiermonnikoog, even keeping instruments of measure still, ready to iterate their measures, always takes maintenance and intervention. Duration, in other words, is worldly work.

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NOTES

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4. Jim Shepard, "The Netherlands Lives with Water," *McSweeney's* 32 (2009): 189–212. For an early argument about the connection of floods in Bangladesh to sea level, see R. A. Warrick and Q. K. Ahmad, eds. *The Implications of Climate and Sea-Level Change for Bangladesh* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996).

5. See Joseph Masco, "The Six Extinctions: Visualizing Planetary Ecological Crises Today," *Environmental Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2017): 11–40.

36.5 / Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh, 2017. The passing of the hour is marked with music and dance. Screenshot of video work by Sarah Cameron Sunde and Saiful Wadud Helal.

Freedom

PEGGY PHELAN

> Before all else, we are in common. Then we must become what we are: the given is an exigency, and this exigency is infinite.
> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Truth of Democracy*

What do we have in common with each other? And what do we have in common with the earth? Water. And it is not infinite. Is it given? For Nancy, the question of the given is tied to what cannot be turned into capital; what cannot be possessed; and indeed, what cannot be avoided or fully named.[1] For to name the given is to, inevitably, transform it into trade. (*I'll trade my metaphor for two of your similes*). And that wearying process contaminates and ruins the infinite freedom carried by the current that must not become currency.

Nancy, like Samuel Beckett, comes closest to that infinite current in the act of thinking. Not in the consolidation of thought called "philosophy" or "the novel" but rather in the still radical act of thinking—an act that Beckett called at two points an "act without words."[2] For both Beckett and Nancy, thinking seeks the unnamable, while literature and philosophy threaten to enclose it, give it titles, and sell it. For to let thinking consort with the unnamable is to expose the infinity of disaster that threatens to make life itself unbearable, forever exigent and urgent.

I think of oceans as infinite and unmeasurable. Sarah Cameron Sunde's performance project *36.5 / A Durational Performance with the Sea* invites us to stand at the edge of the sea, physically or imaginatively, and immerse ourselves in water with her. The performance stages the

ebbing and flowing of seas, as time and temperature transform the volume of their matter. Sunde's durational performances begin in light and expose the dimming of it. After about thirteen hours, the tide completes one full cycle of coming in to shore and receding. At the end of the tide cycle, the particular performance ends. Sunde leaves the water, and we see that the sea no longer appears to be the same. But each performance takes place in a larger series; and as her performances accumulate and circulate, they touch on something larger than the cycle of each tide. They flap and float in a mathematical currency we cannot yet fully calculate. How many grains of sand touch her feet in each ocean? Was William Blake's math right when he urged us, back then when we were innocent, "To see a World in a Grain of Sand / And a Heaven in a Wild Flower / Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand / And Eternity in an hour"?[3]

While seeming to embody Foucault's proposition at the end of *The Order of Things* that "one can certainly wager that man might be erased like a face drawn at the edge of the sea,"[4] Sunde's performance also pushes against that erasure by maintaining her own stalwart presence at the edge of the sea. She is often visited, accompanied even, for parts of her performance, by onlookers who join her in the water for varying periods of time. Following the insights of quantum physicists who have calculated that the act of observation, the energetic effects of looking, transform what is seen, Sunde's performances transform both the surface and depth of water. They also tilt Foucault's apocalyptic vision to something more subtle and hopeful. By insisting on duration and sociality, Sunde's performances "with" the sea wager that deliberative, focused, and enduring action can change nature, matter, surface, and water. The "with" in the work's title is crucial; offering collaboration, rather than investiture or possession, *36.5* asks us to think and feel our way to partnership with the sea. Instead of dominating it, taming it, or cowering in it, Sunde's work suggests that considering what we have in common with, rather than what we need from, the sea might ease both the sea and the human. When Sunde invites onlookers to stand with her as she stands with the sea, Foucault's lonely man, so vulnerable to erasure, becomes only one possible way to contemplate the endpoint of the history of Western philosophy. By creating a series of performances that are open to the participation of strangers, *36.5* resists the singular

apocalyptic vision of knowledge Foucault painted and suggests that collective action rather than solitary philosophy might bring us closer to the community of what we have in common.

Sunde's durational performance functions in a manner akin to Beckett's *Happy Days*. But while Beckett uses sand and fire (and a gun) to imagine a hot end of our happy days, Sunde's deliberate and careful submersion is, fundamentally, wet. It is porous and slippery, hard to get a hold of. Eel-like, it resists the critical attempt to name and frame. It flows away and regathers like the tide itself. Structuring the performance as a series in which she repeats the same act in different bodies of water, Sunde also creates a double gesture of opening out and closing off. She invites a wide variety of diverse onlookers to create the piece with her; and yet, given the large expanse and expense of time and geography, she also makes it well-nigh impossible for more than a few to see the work as a whole. Indeed, in the end, Sunde herself may be the only witness-participant to the entire series of performances. This double gesture of opening up and closing in mimes the rhythm of the tide as it rises up her body, almost fully submerging her, and then recedes, leaving only a toe or two beneath the shallow sand. We are together; we are alone.

Living in California in the season of fire and rain, mudslides and earthquakes, I'm struck by the beautiful delicacy of Sunde's performance. The earth's surface, scientists say, is about 70 percent water, quite close to the 65 percent that water accounts for in the adult human body. While the Catholic Church insists that humans "are made of dust, and to dust they shall return," it may be that humans are, rather, leviathans, only temporarily out of water. What we have in common with the earth, then, is this delicate porosity, this need to be liquid, even as we long to be solid. Sometimes I imagine flooding as the earth's heaving off of the too-heavy built environment; fire as the forest's raging demand to be watered; mudslides as the ground's desire to ooze and pour. Anthropomorphizing metaphors all, junk science for sure, and yet a way to approach, however inelegantly, what the earth and the human share in common.

When I stand at the sea edge these days, I think always of always—the infinity of the sea both as lulling lullaby and as the recurring anxiety of that which is beyond measure. From time to time, when the tide is out, I lose this anxiety and let my mind float to that rare current where neither number nor word matter at all.

As we face water disasters like the one in Flint, Michigan, or hurricanes and flooding that have felled Puerto Rico and Houston, New Orleans and Miami, to confine ourselves only to the United States in recent years, standing at the edge of the sea may seem an act more poetic than political. And yet work that asks us to stand in what we have in common is work that gives us time to think, still the most radical freedom humans possess. That freedom, and the aspiration in it, laps against the still-vast matter of the sea. The sea's incalculability is what both demands and resists metaphor, and that double gesture, in turn, risks and secures the infinite as such. For what freedom promises is the unbridled expanse of the sea churning without surcease from shore to shore. Its infinite churn is both metaphor and literal, material act. The inexhaustible rhythmic humming that binds each to each is what we search for in the act of thinking. Stepping into that sound is akin to swirling far beyond words, clutching only the durational metric of endless circles, the anchors of sentences still unwritten but beckoning . . .

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NOTE

1. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Truth of Democracy*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

2. See *The Collected Shorter Plays of Samuel Beckett* (New York: Grove Press, 2010), 35–40, 41–46.

3. William Blake, "Auguries of Innocence," in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (New York: Anchor Books, 1982), 490.

4. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 387.

36.5 / Bay of All Saints, 2019. Situated at the historically important shore between Solar do Unhão and the Museum of Modern Art in Bahia, Lev Brisa (street poet of Pretxs de Rua) performs a Candomblé ritual for Yemanjá, then stands with Sunde for the beginning of the performance. Photo by Juh Almeida.

Reflections

SARAH CAMERON SUNDE

Words cannot capture my gratitude for Una Chaudhuri and her enthusiasm for *36.5 / A Durational Performance with the Sea*. I am honored that she has taken it on as a subject, interpreted and articulated the work so beautifully, and gathered such a brilliant and astute group of scholars to illuminate some of the interlocking philosophical, environmental, and aesthetic aspects of the piece. The project began as a personal test of endurance to create a meaningful, time-based image as a metaphor for our changing environment, and it continues because of communal support and effort. I could not create *36.5* without the myriad of local partners, advisors, collaborating artists, and members of the public who have chosen to participate, witness, invest in, contribute, and experience the project in their own way.

Since 2004 I have used the phrase "specific ambiguity" to talk about my aesthetic. It may seem like a paradox, but it means that I am in constant search of the specific potential in any given moment. Ambiguity only works when the possibilities are specific. Each choice I make is based on chance *and* inevitability. Each possibility will be specific to the people I meet, to the places I encounter, and to anyone who experiences the work. Multiple meanings and possible interpretations may contrast with each other, but they are all equally true. As the project grows, it becomes more specific in its ambiguous nature. This is because, essentially, *36.5* lives in its many contrasts: simplicity and complexity, individual and collective, human and nonhuman, everyday and existential, ancient past and distant future, controlling and letting go, daily survival and long-term survival, local and global, embodied experience and conceptual thinking, live and recorded, analogue and digital, alone and

Fig. 1. *36.5 / Bodo Inlet,* Kenya, 2019. Many people joined in as the sun started to set. Photo by Swabir Bazaar.

together, stillness and movement. Each essay in this collection focuses on a different aspect of *36.5 / A Durational Performance with the Sea* and highlights a different choice I've made along the way to hold these contrasts.

Stacy Alaimo points out the silence and the forming of momentary collectives. I decided to be silent after the initial performance in Maine. While there were several helpful, supportive voices on the shore, it became clear to me that the water must be my primary collaborator and that I had to find new modes of communication. Wearing no electronics, I needed to find a way to know what time it was without having anyone yell across the water. The participatory "human clock" came into play for the first time in San Francisco Bay. I collaborated with local artist-choreographer Sasha Petrenko on creating a movement phrase to be performed as each hour passed. The public was invited to learn the phrase and join in, so the "human clock" grew and shifted each hour, creating a momentary collective on the shore, in the same way that a collective is formed when passersby choose to stand in the water with me.

Alaimo also mentions my clothing as an indicator of "quotidian acts

Fig. 2. *36.5 / North Sea*, Netherlands, 2015. Water managers and governmental officials standing in the water wearing their everyday suits. Screenshot of video work by Sarah Cameron Sunde and Jonas de Witte.

of survival and resilience." When Hurricane Sandy hit New York City, I understood for the first time that our cities were just as vulnerable as our individual bodies. During the nine months between this catastrophic event and *36.5 / Bass Harbor* in Maine, I had a recurring image playing in my mind: an individual artist, running around New York City trying to make ends meet, while the city sinks beneath her feet.

Martin Harries's essay goes into detail about the unpredictability of the tides and connects this irregularity to the risks we are facing with a changing climate. It was during *36.5 / North Sea* that I first learned that (as Harries puts it) "tidal predictions remain predictions." For the three initial works, I had looked up the tidal charts online and made estimates of where to stand based on spending serious amounts of time with the water in the weeks and days prior to the event. For the Dutch iteration, in addition to my own research, I had an expert collaborator from Delft University of Technology (the major water engineering university in the Netherlands), and I thought I understood exactly what the water would do on the day of the performance. But I was mistaken. The water pushed me gently off my spot when I least expected it. This is indeed part of the work. I never know exactly what will happen, and I must accept it.

As I've gotten to know more and more about tidal cycles, I've learned that most urban dwellers are deeply unaware that it usually takes between twelve and thirteen hours for the tide to come in and go out again. As Harries points out, it wasn't until my Maine experience that I understood tidal timing myself. My utter astonishment at learning the details about the tidal cycle and my tendency to rebel against routine was one of the things that inspired the initial stand. I regularly get the question from very smart people in New York City: How long does it take? Six hours? Twenty-four hours? How is it possible that our contemporary urban culture is so disconnected from the water that surrounds us?

Stefan Helmreich's discussion of Dutch water engineering and the geosciences reminds me of the adventure I went on in the Netherlands in 2015 during which I learned that no amount of preparation can keep a project entirely clear of trouble. My initial plan was to perform the work in the lagoon of the Zandmotor, arguably the country's greatest engineering feat in recent years. Like an enormous piece of land and water art, the concept of the Zandmotor is that sand gathered from the bottom of the North Sea and dumped in a half-moon shape off the coast near Den Haag would lead the tides, over time, to shift the sand and protect the coastline, thus eliminating the need to dredge and dump every year. Within a few days of arriving at the Zandmotor, we realized that it was not going to be feasible to execute the performance as planned, because the sand had shifted so effectively that there was a bridge protecting the full tidal waters from entering the lagoon, rendering a tidal shift of only one foot instead of the five feet we were counting on. Outside the lagoon, the waves were too strong. So we embarked on a massive location search to find a new site on the edge of the North Sea. Luckily, we found something better. Challenges often lead to the best outcome, and it is all part of doing the work.

Peggy Phelan highlights the need to recognize what we have in common and the connection between thinking and freedom that are present in *36.5*. I remember standing in the water in Maine, watching the sun set and the moon move slowly into and across the sky, and thinking about how a drop of ocean water in Maine is connected to a drop of ocean water on the coast of Africa. It was then that I decided *36.5* would be a series to be performed in seas around the world, working with local communities as an attempt to understand what is happening

Fig. 3. *36.5 / North Sea*, Netherlands, 2015. "The Human Clock" movement phrase is performed by audience members who are invited to participate. Photo by Florian Braakman.

with our planet from a global perspective. When I show the collected video works together, it is obvious to me which video is from where, but I understand that to most viewers, the rising tide in the Netherlands looks very similar to the rising tide in Bangladesh. And that is a beautiful thing.

Nils van Beek was an incredible partner during *36.5 / North Sea*, and he articulates brilliantly what it is like to participate in the work. As he mentions, the (new) location at Katwijk aan Zee connects the North Sea to the Old Rhine River, which was the former northern border of the Roman Empire. There is also a drowned ancient city in the water not far off the coast, and Katwijk now has cutting-edge dikes that will protect the town from the next surge of water. For me, this double connection—to the ancient past as well as the anticipated future—made it a perfect location. Nils also mentions the performance interventions, moments of music and choreography, the participatory "human clock," which came out of a desire to surprise and engage an audience subtly while communicating the time to me. For the Dutch work, opera singer

Fig. 4. *36.5 / Bay of Bengal*, Bangladesh, 2017. As the sun sets, local drummers mark the passing of the hour. Screenshot of video work by Sarah Cameron Sunde and Saiful Wadud Helal.

Carrie Dimaculangan sang at high tide and low tide, and my production team taught an adapted version of the movement phrase from San Francisco Bay to passersby, who performed it on the northern dike.

For *36.5 / Bay of Bengal*, Fahmida Sumi reconstructed the movement phrase using traditional Bengali dance references to the elements while Nasir Ahammed played his khamak, and there were spontaneous performances by a group of drummers and a recent Rohingya refugee named Islam who played his mandolin to me for an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. The Islamic call to prayer was also part of the music of that day, and for the first time, I understood that its timing is dependent on the moon, thus related to the tides.

The spiritual connection to the water has grown deeper with each subsequent work in the series. For *36.5 / Bay of All Saints* in Brazil, thanks to my collaborator, Clara Domingas (artist, anthropologist, and community mobilizer), we worked with an incredible group of street poets called Pretxs de Rua, who delivered their poetry about everyday resilience on the street and long-term resilience for the planet. They framed the performance with a Candomblé ritual.

For *36.5 / Bodo Inlet* in Kenya, the "human clock" had the most robust participation yet, with the village's town crier, an ancient ceremonial drum, and hundreds of Bodo villagers singing and dancing in honor of each hour.

The subtleties of the movement of the water have been an important

Figs. 5–6. *36.5 / Bay of All Saints*, Brazil, 2019. Pretxs de Rua (Black Poets of the Street) perform their poetry of resilience each hour throughout the day as the site-specific "human clock". Photos by Juh Almeida.

Fig. 7. *36.5 / Bodo Inlet,* Kenya, 2019. The UKT group leads the dancing and singing of the "human clock" in Bodo. Photo by Swabir Bazaar

discovery for me, as I've stood in the North Sea, the Bay of Bengal, and in Kenya, watching the water lap gently against the sand, the rocks, and the mangrove trees. When I zoom out and think about the gravitational pull of the tides, I imagine the planet breathing in and out with the tidal bulge every day. The lapping on the shore is the micromanifestation of that big breath, felt all the way down here on earth at any place where land meets the sea. During *36.5 / Bay of All Saints*, the water was wild on the performance day. The currents pushed and pulled me, and the power of the water was very clear. I learned that sometimes resilience means letting the water move us rather than holding fast and standing still.

James E. Young analyzes *36.5* from the perspective of a memorial, which connects directly to a theme that animates all my work: the temporality of place. Another one of my projects about the gentrification of Harlem is specifically subtitled "A Temporary Memorial to the Empty Space," but I hadn't thought of *36.5* as a memorial until reading Young's essay. All my work is an intimate encounter with our ephemeral nature, the fine line between complete abandon and utter control, action and

Fig. 8. *36.5 / Bodo Inlet*, Kenya, 2019. Another living memorial was created during the performance as audience members planted 700 mangrove seedlings at the Bodo shore to protect from coastal erosion. Photo by Swabir Bazaar.

stillness, freedom and paralysis. Time is my primary subject, both in content and form.

In *36.5*, I feel time passing as a sensory experience, and I hope my audience feels it too—both the live audience who participates and the secondary audience who watches the slow durational videos later in a gallery.

What happens if we really feel the scale of our tiny bodies in relationship to our enormous planet and the seven-tenths of it that are covered in ocean water? It is one thing to consider climate change intellectually; it's another to feel the water rise on your own body. Dutch water managers, Bengali fishermen, Brazilian street poets, and Kenyan academics alike have stood with me and described seeing water with new eyes.

And *36.5* is about time in many senses. It is a durational work that unfolds not only over thirteen hours but also over eight years. That second duration reveals other realities: in the years since *36.5* began, I have felt my body aging, making the physical endurance more challenging with each work. There has also been a palpable shift in

Fig. 9. *36.5 / North Sea*, Netherlands, 2015. Documentation of video exhibition at Oude Kerk during SAIL Amsterdam. The video on the left shows a moment early in the performance; on the right is 6 hours and 23 minutes later. Total running time: 12 hours, 46 minutes. Photo by Sieko Kloosterhuis.

the way people talk about sea level rise and the inevitability of massive environmental change. During my preparations for *36.5 / San Francisco Bay*, I attended a gathering of Bay Area city leaders, urban planners, engineers, and scientists. It was 2014, and I distinctly remember being told by a colleague that it was dangerous to say that the sea level might rise three feet in the next fifty years. Even in one of the most environmentally conscious parts of our country, no one wanted to be alarmist. Jump forward to 2016 when I spoke on a panel with a climate expert from the Netherlands who had no qualms about saying that it will be at least a meter of rise by the end of the century. In 2018, we saw extreme weather events occurring nearly every day somewhere in the world, with increasingly wide acknowledgment that things are changing. In 2019, global climate protests erupted as students took to the streets to demand attention to climate. Now, in 2020, we are experiencing a global pandemic that reveals our human vulnerabilities and prepares us to face new realities.

As Una Chaudhuri so eloquently points out, each work in the *36.5* series has heightened my understanding of the trauma that European colonialism has inflicted on people and the planet. In Bangladesh,

Fig. 10. *36.5 / A Durational Performance with the Sea*, New York City, 2017. Documentation of four-channel video installation for Works on Water Triennial; two-channels from *36.5 / North Sea* and two channels from *36.5 / Bay of Bengal*. Photo by EPW Studio.

Brazil, Kenya, Aotearoa, and the United States, these are critical truths to acknowledge and reflect on. At the same time, *36.5* points toward the earth's timescale and geophysical temporalities, and the project has opened my eyes to the vast amount of indigenous wisdom that has survived against all odds. This gives me hope that we can emerge from the current COVID crisis listening to our indigenous sisters and brothers and start to reconfigure our way of existing, this time in harmony with the land, the water, and all species.

Having lived in this work for the last eight years, there are hundreds more stories and anecdotes I could tell you that each reflect different facets of the project and release different kinds of meanings from it. One of the reasons *36.5* resonates is that I can describe the performance very simply in two sentences and people can imagine it and feel some empathy for the person who stands in the water for so long. But the reason I keep working on it is the ever-increasing complexity that comes from other humans encountering the work and finding their own meanings. And now you, dear reader, will draw your own conclusions about *36.5 / A Durational Performance with the Sea*. Please know that whatever your

Fig. 11. *36.5 / Te Manukanukatanga ō Hoturoa*, Aotearoa New Zealand, 2020. Documentation of process of building the performance with Māori collaborators, Amiria Puia-Taylor and Nettie Norman. Photo by Ian Powell.

ideas may be, they are also correct. Thank you for reading. I hope you will stand with me next time around.

Sarah Cameron Sunde is an interdisciplinary artist and director working at the intersection of performance, video, and public art. Her work investigates scale and duration in relationship to the human body, our environment, and deep time. Her ongoing series, *36.5 / A Durational Performance with the Sea*, has been performed and exhibited in Maine (with Barn Arts Collective), Mexico (with Akumal Artist Residency), San Francisco (with Long Now Foundation, Sustainable Surf), the Netherlands (with TAAK, Satellietgroep, Oude Kerk, de Appel), Bangladesh (with Britto Arts Trust), Brazil (with Solar do Unhão, MAM Bahía, Salvador Office of Resilience), and Kenya (with Bodo Village, UKT Group, Kwale Arts, Fort Jesus Museum, and University of Nairobi). Upcoming performances will take place in Aotearoa New Zealand (with Te Uru Gallery and AUT) and New York City (with Socrates Sculpture Park, NYU, LMCC, and Works on Water). Other ongoing series include *Across an Empty Lot: A Temporary Memorial to the Empty Space* (a site-specific work in Sugar Hill, Harlem) and *PEAKS* (in development with Joshua Dumas). With five other artist-curators, Sunde recently cofounded Works on Water, a new triennial dedicated to working on, in, and with the water. She was the deputy artistic director of New Georges (2001–17), coartistic director of Oslo Elsewhere (2004–12), and lead artist for the interdisciplinary live art cohort

Lydian Junction (2011–14). She is also known internationally as Jon Fosse's American director and translator (five US debut productions; translations published by *PAJ*). Among other venues, Sunde's work has also been seen or experienced at Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Georgia Museum of Art, 3LD Art and Technology Center, EFA Project Space, Knockdown Center, Kennedy Center, and Guthrie Theater, as well as presented internationally in Norway, China, Iraqi Kurdistan, Uganda, and the United Arab Emirates. Residencies include LMCC Workspace, Baryshnikov Arts Center, and Watermill Center. Awards and funding include MAP Fund, Princess Grace Foundation–USA, LMCC Creative Engagement and UMEZ, Creative Climate Award (first prize), Invoking the Pause Grants, and Amsterdam Fonds voor de Kunst. She holds a bachelor of arts degree in theater from UCLA and a master of fine art's degree in digital and interdisciplinary art practice from City College of New York, CUNY. SarahCameronSunde.com + 36pt5.org

36.5 / Bay of All Saints, Brazil, 2019. Pretxs de Rua and other local collaborators help Sunde walk out of the water at the end of the performance. Photo by Juh Almeida.