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THE LINES NO LONGER HOLD



the lines no longer hold critiques Cartesian systems of mapping the deep sea. Type of output: Performance and Exhibition *by* Rona Lee

Cover: View through gallery window showing carbon map tracing. *Photo credit: Rona Lee*

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SUMMARY

the lines no longer hold (tlnlh) was a 5-hour action by Lee, commissioned to close the exhibition *Dark, Liquid. Vom Wissen und Nicht-Wissen über das Meer* at Galerie Nord, Kunstverein Tiergarten, in Berlin.

The exhibition addressed the positioning of the sea within various discourses and knowledge systems. *tlnlh* built on Leverhulme funded research by Lee into scientific methods of deep sea survey (2009-12), extending that enquiry to address bathymetric systems of representation. Historically, western imaginaries of the sea have positioned it legally, conceptually and economically as a mere surface or space of transit; a circumstance reflected in the common cartographic practice of representing it as a blank (Steinberg 2001). Technological advances, in tandem with moves to territorialise undersea environments and growing levels of threat to marine eco-systems, necessitate that this lacuna be rethought. It is to this oversight that *tlnlh* was directed, bringing processes of fixing and flattening the fluidity, variability and depth of the sea into question and investigating how artistic methods and processes might obviate the tendencies of these to occlude the materiality of undersea environments.

Working with two bathymetric maps *tlnlh* utilized the slippages occasioned by processes of manual mark-making, tracing, transfer and working blind (without the capacity to see the under layers of the work) to discursively engage with processes of mapping the sub-maritime/ submarine seeking to assert depth as more than quantifiable.

tlnlh was performed between 4pm and 9pm on January 12th, 2018; it generated three drawings which were presented in the window of the gallery from then until 9.00pm Sunday 14th January. In addition to *tlnlh*, three earlier works by Lee were included within *Dark*, *Liquid* which ran from 8th December 2017 to 13th January 2018 and was funded by Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe with support from GEOMAR Helmholtz Center for Ocean Research, Kiel.

INTRODUCTION

Curated by Julia Heunemann, *Dark, Liquid* addressed different ontologies, ecologies and phenomenologies of marine space. Lee's work was featured alongside that of Angela Glajcar, Reiner Maria Matysik, Jenny Michel, Gregor Peschko, and Roger Wardin.

Located in Moabit, Berlin, Galerie Nord is a publically-funded institution providing an international forum for the presentation and mediation of contemporary art with innovative, critical and socially relevant potential, alongside a variety of cultural projects, scientific events and artistic programmes.

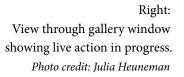
> Below: Section of exhibition flyer. Image credit: Gallerie Nord



RESEARCH CHALLENGE

The material turn across the humanities and social sciences, along with new bodies of Anthropocene thought, have given rise to revised thinking around human / water relations (Barnes & Alatout 2012). However, while scholars such as historian Helen M. Rozwadowski (2009) have sought to chart the emergence of the deep sea into representation and analysed the operation of different methods of surveying depth, little research within either the arts or humanities has focussed on contemporary bathymetric practice.

Critically, *tlnlh* constitutes an important contribution to cross disciplinary reflection on the imperative occasioned by climate change to rethink human / non-human relations while simultaneously calling cartographic conventions of describing the sea into question. It highlights the ways in which methods of geophysical study and representation subjugate nature - asking how an artwork might assist us in recognising the dimensionality, spatial materiality and temporality of marine depth in an embodied manner.





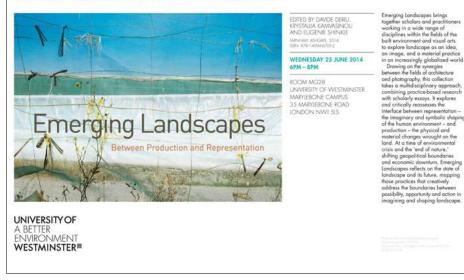
CONTEXT

Critical revision of mapping practices within cultural geography is an established field of enquiry (Cosgrove 1999). Artists too, such as Layla Curtis and Kathy Prendergast, both of whom have made a large number of works utilizing maps have addressed mapping practices as contestable, influencing thinking across a range of disciplines. More recently Astrida Neimanis' work; who cites Lee's body of practice 'That Oceanic Feeling' 2009-12 as a reference; around hydrofeminism and related concepts has afforded embodied understandings of water and geographies of fluidity a new centrality within academic discourse.

Lee's enquiries extend this dialogue towards consideration of ontologies of the sub-maritime. Her essay 'Truthing Gap - Imagining a Relational Geography of the Sub-maritime' (Lee 2014) addressed ways in which artistic practice might engage with depth as an immersive medium, making reference to Maurice Merleau Ponty's distinction between primordial and quantifiable depth. *tlnlh* takes these ideas forward by performatively critiquing Cartesian systems of mapping which seek to make the phenomenal world readable, utilising live presence in order to bring an embodied dimension to the endeavour.

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EMERGING LANDSCAPES BETWEEN PRODUCTION AND REPRESENTATION



Above: Book cover. Image credit: Ashgate / University of Westminster

METHODS & PROCESSES

Following an approach from curator Julia Heuneman, an extensive series of experiments designed to foreground the sea as an entity were undertaken between March and December 2017 in support of *tlnlh*, including drawing over an illuminated globe and cutting away the land from different maps.

On first encountering a printed bathymetric map some 15 years previously (a circumstance which triggered her interest in deep sea environments) which reversed the normal conventions of cartographic practice - detailing contour changes to the ocean floor while the land was depicted as featureless - Lee was prompted to imagine the deep as a kind of inverse world. Subsequently, during her research at the National Oceanography Centre 2009-12), she became familiar with the practice of utilising artificially generated shadows (the deep sea is after all a dark space) within computer generated oceanographic models to render the seabed readable.

In *tlnlh* these two-awareness's combined, prompting her to explore the metonymic properties and possibilities of working with carbon paper (sourcing large sheets from the only remaining UK producer). A dialogue was also conducted throughout with the exhibition curator about how the work might intersect with and be located alongside others within the exhibition. These explorations led to the decision to work with two identical bathymetric maps, placed one on top of the other, with carbon paper inserted between. Over five hours Lee progressively filled in each area of depth on the top map by drawing over it, working from the deepest to shallowest, an action which obliterated the detail of both maps while generating a third 'reverse' map on the carbon paper. All three maps were subsequently displayed in the gallery alongside three other works by Lee.

Lee has pursued questions of 'appearance' and visibility, conceptually, materially and performatively across many projects, researching strategies of actively deconstructing and destabilising normative constructions. *tlnlh* drew processes of redaction and generation together as one so that the action of obliterating the printed maps simultaneously gave rise to a third 'negative' outline (only visible once they were separated). This reversed the original of which it was an imprint, producing a mirror image that reversed light and dark, depth and height. After five hours of drawing, the map was only partly obscured - allegorically suggesting the scale of the endeavour needed to affect a re-emergence of the materially repressed.

View through gallery window showing altered maps. Image credit: Julia Heuneman

DISSEMINATION

The exhibition was attended by over 1060 visitors and received the following press:

http://www.art-in-berlin.de/incbmeld.php?id=4487

http://www.berliner-woche.de/moabit/kultur/dunkel-und-fluessig-d139068.html

http://www.berliner-woche.de/moabit/kultur/video-undperformance-d140234.html

http://www.kultur-mitte.de/magazin/veronika-witte-und-ihr-galerieschiff

https://www.artconnect.com/events/dark-liquid-vom-wissen-und-nichtwissen-uber-das-meer

https://www.geomar.de/ausstellungen/berlin-dark-liquid

https://www.artinfo24.com/ausstellung/t-8249.html



Die ist in den inneren drei Räumen auch zu sehen und zwar in 14 Werken der genannten sechs Künstlerfönnen, die sich auf vieschichtige Weise und in untrachtiedlichen Mediern mit der Beschäffnicht des Merrers aussinandersteten. Die Trefe oss Merrers stellt etwa die brücher Künstlein Rich zu den iden Vordingrund, wenn sie einen schwerzein Faderwan 11.000 Meter Länge und damit der Trefe der Murianengrabera um eine Studie aucklet. Die Mere als Raum, in dem specifische physikalische diessterz gefant, hematistieren die Gemälte des Berliner Künstlen Riger Warfal, der mitzleis Stat chemische Prozesse auf der Linnwand aublad, die Eigenständigkeit ensickeln und schwerzwirzeinerk. Direkt gegranden statt Haurenamen einen Auslaufen Machigen Trefseverankenungen damit is Bezehung, der dem Druck i nieme Trefe von A300 Metern nicht standgehalten hat und implicker ist, die weit stativ vergroßerte Motelle von Station Metern wicht Staufgehalten aus Wacht, die weit stativ vergroßerte Motelle von Station stater herers und statische nieme Dioznang plattert. Trevers sie niemen Duisigen Physikater einestigerischen eine Herers und statische einem Dioznang plattert. Trevers sie niemen Duisiger Physikater einestiger lichter auf der einer Statischabe.

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Altes was wir über die Tiefen des Meeres wissen, ist punktuelles Wissen, das von Messgeräten zu Tage geführten des wird und das sich meist in Zahlen manifestion, wie Heunemann erklät. Übersitzungsvoglinge des Karteirens, des unfurktionsterne Reise Nichol werden beiten des situat in elsem mittels statuaren hvirkingen zur Misk Bauumfurktionsterten Raum zeigt from Lee ihre Videosthet, Juha", in der das Lesen von Bindenschrift mit der Karterung des Messenbaders in Verhanding geharter wird. Zindeneha zin einer Kirten ein sogenannte betroße und eiß Bindinschrift, den Zawick einer (Diessraturg von Unitschamen in Wahnnehmasse erfüllt, einer Ahnlichen Kerbe schlagt die in Befin anteitende Kirtsterni grung Kirter die Status schlass mannt und satust, einbera maint, einer Kerbe schlagt, die in Befin anteitende Kirtsterni grung Kirter die Status schlassen und kartschnichter mit kan einsigen Netzwerken mit Kugefördinken erreichen die Status schlassen und kartschnichter mit kan einsigen Netzwerken wird im Kugefördinken erreichen die Status schlassen und kartschnichter mit kan einsigen Netzwerken und kartschnichter mit here Installation "Tragit", die in form einse risiegen Netzwerken und kartschnichter ander einsterne kan einsterne Kugefördinken erreichten die Status schlassen und kartschnichter mit kartschlassen einsterne einsterne konnen einsterne die Status schlassen einsterne und kartschnichter mit kartschlassen einsterne einsterne konnen einsterne die Kursterne einsterne die Status schlassen einsterne einsterne einsterne konnen einsterne ein

Ingesant stalt, dank, legud" eine sehr klage Ausstellung dar, die sowohl durch die Auswahl der Werke, der gelungenen Präsentation als auch durch die Inhaltlich gut nachvollsiehbare Gegenüberstellung von Künstlerschen mit wissensbahlschen Exponsien überzaugt. Große Empfehlung – nicht nur für Kerentforscher*innen!

"dark, šlquić." Galecie Nord / Kunstverein Tiergarten Turmstraße 75, 10551 Berlin Öffnungszeten: Di – 5a, 13 – 19 Uhr Einerit frei

Left: Screen grab. *Credit: art in berlin*

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> Back cover: Altered maps. Image credit: Rona Lee

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