

# *Now Wakes the Sea*

## Contemporary art and the ocean

Artists: Tacita Dean, Marcel Dinahet, Sean Lynch, Maria McKinney, Conrad Shawcross, Lucy Skaer, Janaina Tschäpe, Andreas Kindler von Knobloch, and Anna Zacharoff

Artists have long been drawn to the sea. From naturalistic seascapes to vivid depictions of aquatic life, its vastness, timelessness and mutability has fascinated poets, writers and artists for centuries. Titled after the 1963 short story by J.G Ballard, in which a man experiences nighttime visions of crashing waves encroaching upon his landlocked, suburban neighbourhood, ***Now Wakes the Sea*** presents artists whose work explores ideas of submersion and salvaging, the lure of the ocean for seafarers, and the secrets hidden in its unseen depths.

Lucy Skaer's sculpture is based on Plato's allegory of the *Ship of Fools*, about a boat manned by mutinous, quarrelling sailors set permanently adrift by their inability to decide upon a captain. This sense of aimlessness is captured in the project; it changes form, accrues new elements and objects, as it moves from one exhibition to another. Tacita Dean's photographs are based on the doomed voyage of Donald Crowhurst, an amateur sailor lost at sea during a solo yacht race round the world. This navigational loss of bearings and sense of time, recorded in his logbook, eventually overwhelmed Crowhurst and led him to throw himself overboard. Dean's images of Berwick Lighthouse and its fruitlessly searching beacon evoke the unanswered questions surrounding the narrative.

Curated by **Chris Clarke** and **Kirstie North**

*Now Wakes the Sea* is supported by University College Cork, The Arts Council Ireland, and private philanthropy through Cork University Foundation.

## *Take to the waves*

The seductive but deadly lure of the ocean is explored in the work of several artists. Andreas Kindler von Knobloch presents materials relating to his sailing expeditions into the waters of Dublin Bay. Inspired by René Daumal's novel *Mount Analogue* about a waterborne trek to a holy mountain and the final project of the Dutch conceptual artist Bas Jan Ader, in which he disappeared at sea, the work reflects upon the romanticised desire that inspires such legendary, yet ultimately tragic, journeys.

In Janaina Tschäpe's paintings, the inscrutability of the ocean is realised through densely layered paintings that evoke aquatic flora, shimmering surfaces, and opaque depths. For Marcel Dinahet, the sea is both the site of his work and the source of inspiration. He began submerging his sculptures in the early 1990s before stopping making three-dimensional work altogether. His films here mark this point of transition, capturing these inert, underwater objects in their final resting places, abandoned to the test of time.

## *Testing the waters*

The salvaging of materials from the seabed or bobbing amongst the waves is both subject and material for artists. Sean Lynch tracked the outmoded metal casts of Belfast's bankrupt DeLorean car factory to their re-use as anchors, located at the bottom of Galway Bay. His photographs depict the crabs and lobsters that live in the coral around the nooks and shapes. Anna Zacharoff's paintings of marine life are sparsely delineated, their outlines suggested through calligraphic brushstrokes and pools of pigment, against a blank canvas reminiscent of the empty, expansive sea.

Conrad Shawcross recorded the 360-degree view from a rowing boat on the River Lea, the source of the Thames in London. His installation presents the footage and flotsam of this trip, his camcorder replaced by a projector, showing the film of the journey in real time. Panning around, tennis balls and footballs taken from the water surface are mounted on the walls like buoys bobbing along a horizon line.

## *Into the deep*

The unknowability of the sea is not only in its breadth but in its depth. Unfathomable mysteries lie submerged, impenetrable to sight or sound. In Janaina Tschäpe's film, *He drowned in her eyes as she called him to follow*, the artist re-imagines the fairy tale of a mermaid's love for a sailor. The protagonist wanders through unfamiliar settings of city streets, funfairs and karaoke pubs, before eventually returning home to the sea.

Maria McKinney's sculptural *Abyssals* appear as if literally dredged from the ocean floor, encrusted with barnacles, shells, coral, and netting. Referring to the deepest, coldest underwater layers, these pillar-like assemblages seem to have attracted and absorbed bits of floating detritus and debris into their forms.