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Seventh Lagoon: The Ring of Water

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Abstract

The Seventh Lagoon is an eco-activist artwork conversation – with all of us – on the rise of the earth's oceans previously exhibited and catalogued as part of the Lagoon Cycle (1985). The entire 360-foot work is now in the National Museum of Modern Art at the Pompidou Center in Paris, France. We hope that its web publication will encourage further dialogue on these issues – Editors.

"Our work begins when we perceive an anomaly in the environment that is the result of opposing beliefs or contradictory metaphors. Moments when reality no longer appears seamless and the cost of belief has become outrageous offer the opportunity to create new spaces – first in the mind and thereafter in everyday life." – ecoartists Newton & Helen Mayer Harrison, quoted at Greenmuseum.org with the introductory statement:

"Among the leading pioneers of the eco-art movement, the collaborative team of Newton and Helen Mayer Harrison (often referred to simply as "the Harrisons") have worked for over thirty years with biologists, ecologists and urban planners to initiate collaborative dialogues to uncover ideas and solutions which support biodiversity and community development.

The Harrison's concept of art embraces a breathtaking range of disciplines. They are historians, diplomats, ecologists, investigators, emissaries and art activists. Their work involves proposing solutions and involves not only public discussion, but extensive mapping and documentation of these proposals in an art context.

Past projects have focused on watershed restoration, urban renewal, agriculture and forestry issues among others. The Harrisons visionary projects have often led to changes in governmental policy and have expanded dialogue around previously unexplored issues leading to practical implementations throughout the United States and Europe."

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original mapping 6'8"x13'2" 1978

The Seventh Lagoon from THE LAGOON CYCLE. 1974-1984.
Helen Mayer Harrison & Newton Harrison.

*Upon hearing this
we took a present world map and
drew a probable world*

*It is said that if all the ice melted
the oceans would rise about 300 feet
So we drew line as best we could
at the 300-foot level
and thought about how the land would shrink
as the oceans grew*

*One morning we heard the ocean singing
Increase in heat decrease in ice
Increase in water decrease in land*

*Ice into water water to ice
Stated changes changes of state*

*Decrease in heat increase in ice
Decrease in water increase in land*

*Melt at the South Pole rise in LA
Ice into water not water to ice
so
Increase in heat decrease in ice
Increase in water decrease in land
After all the ocean whispered*

*I am the beneficiary of your garbage can
as you are the beneficiary of my abundance
and everybody knows that ice into water
and water to ice are changes of state*

***Upon hearing this
we took a present world map and
drew a probable world***

***It is said that if all the ice melted
the oceans would rise about 300 feet
So we drew line as best we could
at the 300-foot level
and thought about how the land would shrink
as the oceans grew***

*And the waters will rise slowly
at the boundary
at the edge*

*redrawing that boundary
continually
moment by moment
all over
altogether
all at once
It is a graceful drawing and redrawing
this response to the millennia of the making of
fire*

*As the waters rise slowly in the Red Sea
and the Dead Sea the Caspian
the North the Baltic and the Black
the ocean gyres will redraw themselves
as will the currents and the tides*

*And over time gracefully
this rising tide will flow up every river
that once flowed down to the sea
and each freshwater tongue will withdraw
before the advance of the salt
Up the Saint Lawrence the Columbia
the Amazon the Hudson the Mississippi
the White Nile and the Blue
the Volga the Don the Danube
and the Thames*

*the Seine and the Loire
the Rhone and the Rhine and
the Garonne
the Ganges the Congo
the Tigris and the Euphrates
the Yellow the Amur the Irrawaddy
the Lena the Potomac and the Snake
and all rivers named and unnamed*

*And the flood plains that are farmed upon
and lived upon
will become marshes or swamps or bogs
or beds for swollen rivers
or shallow inland seas
and the tropics will become uninhabitable
and the far north will become temperate
and corn and rice and wheat and beans
and plantain manioc and yams
and all the grains and starchy roots
known and unknown
named and unnamed
will have to grow elsewhere than now
and most life
known and unknown
will have to go elsewhere than now
as vast parts of the eastern seaboard
of the United States,
and parts of Europe near the North Sea
and much of South America near the Amazon
and China somewhere
and Russia in some parts*

*And in this new beginning
this continuous rebeginning
will you feed me when my lands
can no longer produce
and will I house you
when your lands are covered with water?
so that together
we will withdraw
as the waters rise?*

Text from The 7th Lagoon 1978