LUCY + JORGE ORTA

VITA EXTREMIS

1992-2022



ABOUT VITA EXTREMIS

by Alice Audouin

Art Advisor Alice Audouin is a pioneer and specialist in the link between contemporary art, ecology and sustainability. She organised the first international symposium on the subject at UNESCO in 2004, 'The artists as a stakeholder' She is the founding president of the association Art of Change 21, supported by Olafur Eliasson, which carries out art-ecology related actions on an international scale and publishes the Impact Art News. Guest curator of Art Paris 2022 on the theme 'Art and Environment', Alice has curated exhibitions on climate and biodiversity including, Novacène (2022), Biocenosis21 (2021), Warmingland (2018), Post-Carbon (2015). She has taught the Master 'Art and Sustainable Development at the Sorbonne University, Paris (2017) and lectures regularly on the subject internationally.

On July 19, Uccle's meteorological station (Brussels) measured 38.1 degrees Celsius. Another temperature record in that summer 2022 which saw heatwave after heatwave, forest fires and drought. All resulted in increased animal and plant mortality and put human beings to the test. A "hottest" summer social media called #thecoldestsummeroftherestofourlives, a reminder of the irreversible aspect of global warming, which will worsen if we don't take action. With major social and migratory consequences and aggravated world hunger, among others.

Anthropocene seems to have reached its climax. The tipping point to general collapse looks imminent.

Conscious and prescient of those major social and environmental issues, Lucy + Jorge Orta respond, since they joined together in 1992, with "catalyst" art that provides with solutions and optimism. Mobilising participation and empathy, it stimulates and federates its spectators around "eco-awareness", nurturing common good through art, and vice versa.

The Vita Extremis exhibition retraces the couple's itinerary and celebrates their 30th anniversary. It offers a colourful, abundant and challenging journey alongside a couple of whistle-blowers

concerned with all major issues of our time, global warming, refugees, biodiversity, water shortage and pollution, hunger,...

Their prolific artistic output combines utopia and activism around large scale and long term meta projects (Antarctica, Food, Amazonia, OrtaWater, Clouds, Nexus Architecture,...) and relies upon multiple media: sculpture, needlework, painting, photography, performance, drawing, video and so on.

Presented by the most prestigious Biennales (Venice, Kwangju, Johannesburg, Shanghai, Havana...), museums and art centres (Barbican, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Pirelli Hangar Bicocca, MAXXI, Museum Bojimans Van Beuningen, and next November Centre Pompidou-Metz), the pair was also commissioned for prestigious public installations (Saint Pancras Station, Marseille Capital of Culture, Friesland European Capital of Culture in the Netherlands, Emscherkunst in Germany, ...).

Laureates of the famous Green Leaf Award in 2007 (granted by the Natural World Museum and the United Nation's environmental programme to honour environment's most prominent advocates), the duo's activity includes fieldwork with numerous expeditions to the Amazon or Antarctica and they collaborate with scientists and NGOs. They take

artistic actions at the heart of institutional or militant highlights, on issues they feel concerned with. Like, for instance, at The Migration Forum by the Nansen Initiative in 2015 or more recently the 2021 COP26 where they collaborated with Art of Change 21 to create a participative action on climate with "Nexus Architecture". The collective action used clothing to interconnect people, a regular among their "intervention objects" alongside parachutes, tents, life vests or stretchers, used to evoke a tense world where survival becomes an issue.

Vita Extremis offers a retrospective glance on the couple's prolific body of work for the last 30 years, built around their main meta projects. It also proposes a large number of new pieces from their Amazonia project.

A dazzling series of new paintings called "Fabulae Florae" enter into a dialogue with the blooming textile creations and reveal the couple's reinvented commitment to their long-time project Amazonia, dedicated to biodiversity since 2010. A "Life Guard" keeps watch on the diversity of the living and a collection of porcelain objects (dinosaur eggs and bones) invite to a journey through the history of evolution. A large embroidered poem gives a voice to Gaïa, whom "progress" concedes to. This passionate ode to biodiversity and the Amazon's lush flora calls to us for protection. The couple have imagined a certificate of Amazon Forest protection for each work of art sold, "Perpetual Amazonia", a sanctuary plot. It is an unprecedented way to connect art-acquisition to environment protection and preservation.

At the centre of the gallery, a parachute's curve emerges above the cyma. Surrounded by tent fragments decorated with multiple flags, it refers to the peaceful and universal universe of the meta project Antarctica. Antarctica is a common good, a precious continent with no border nor army and

at the same time a very inhospitable place where survival is at stake due to extreme temperatures. Combining the symbolism of emergency and common good, Lucy + Jorge Orta illustrate one of the last "real utopias" of our world and unite their supporters with the "Antarctica World Passport", which has brought together over 50 000 citizens since 2008

Water, precious and threatened in the same way, flows around the exhibition. *OrtaWater* (a meta project started in 2005) joins with *Clouds* (another meta project, started in 2011) to address both the water and plastic pollution issues. A blue cloud made of recycled plastic bottles on a cargo tricycle floats on paddles and objects like a life vest or a tiny boat remind of the sea and many a refugee's dangerous exodus. In 2005, a machine they created halfway between a sculpture and a mobile water treatment unit, "Purification Unit", was used to clean up the waters of Venice's Laguna, Dutch canals or the Huang Pu river.

In position all over the exhibition, "Life Guards" are on watch. Defenders of joie de vivre, they are represented by coloured stretchers arranged vertically, ready for their rescue duties.

"This isn't the end of history (...), only its beginning. We are barely conscious of how much we have been transforming the Earth. Now we have the opportunity to confront this, as well as our coexistence with every being" announces philosopher Timothy Morton in his founding book "The Ecological Thought".

Anthropocene is coming to an end and the Ortas are on the side of those who serenely observe the current changes (sustainable energies, biodiversity sanctuaries, less carbonated lifestyles) pushed forward by eco-lucid and militant younger generations.

For they know that post-anthropocene is already here. Call it Symbiocene like Australian philosopher Glenn Albercht or Novacene like famous English scientist James Lovelock, the new era spells happier times and calls for a new alliance with the living. "It may be that the Novacene becomes one of the most peaceful ages of the world" prophesises Lovelock. Glenn Albrecht is as optimistic: "This period (...) will be a positive affirmation of life and it will offer the possibility of the complete reintegration of human body and psyche and culture with the rest of life".

Aware of our time's dangers, the Ortas add a poetical and symbolic dimension, a positive and optimistic blueprint aimed at protecting and preserving both global biodiversity and social bonding.

Vita Extremis establishes the meeting point between life, beauty and emergency. Alerted by multifaceted aesthetics, empowered by urgency, it is now the human being's duty to act "in extremis" to secure the treasure that is life on Earth.

LUCY + JORGE ORTA 30 YEARS

17 JANUARY 1991

Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm)

Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, providing comprehensive protection of Antarctica - last great wilderness on earth

1994

Ateliers 94. Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris

Encounter philosopher and urbanist Paul Virilio

Develop **Body Architecture** and **Nexus Architecture**, interconnected social sculptures

1992

1996

Begin research into food waste and start of weekly gleaning in Paris markets

French Farmers' mobilisation against EU free movement of agricultural goods

1997

Nexus Architecture. 2nd Johannesburg Biennale (curator Okwui Enwezor)

Develop co-creation protocol for Nexus Architecture workshops, with migrant women in Johannesburg

1999

HortiReycling Enterprise, act II. Secession, Vienna

Prototype first citizen initiative for recycling food waste

2001

Lucy Orta nominated Head of first Master in sustainable design 'Man & Humanity' at Design Academy Eindhoven

"9/11" World Trade Centre attack

2001

Transforms. Trieste (curator Roberto Pinto)

Research on humanitarian potential of military surplus with transformation of **M.I.U.** (Mobile Intervention Units)

G8 Summit, Trieste

2002

Lucy Orta nominated as Professor, University of the Arts London World Summit

2003

first humanitarian

convoy of M.I.U.

(Invasion of Iraa)

2nd Gulf War

on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg

2004

Casey's Pawns.
Performance,
Victoria and Albert

Explore human resilience and fragility, deconstruct stretcher beds to create first **Life Guards**

Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami Battle of Fallujah, Iraq

2004

Begin research on water scarcity. Develop workshops uniting engineers, artists and designers to reflect and co-design solutions

2006

Facebook made accessible to general public

2007

2nd Bienal del Fin del Mundo, Ushuaia

Antarctic Village No Borders. Antarctica

Expedition to Antarctica and collaboration with scientists at Marambio base. Launch of meta-project ANTARCTICA, foundation of Antarctic Village No Borders and raising of Antarctica World Flag

1992

Imprints on the Andes. Light Works in Cusco, Machu Picchu, Sacsayhuamán, Qengo, Peru

Creation of Studio Orta

Begin research on **Refuge Wear**, portable, temporary architecture in relation to human migration and survival

First public **Light Works**, land art using light as a medium for ephemeral, monumental drawing on sites of cultural significance

500th anniversary of Christophe Columbus arrival in America | Founding of Indigenous Peoples' Day

Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit

1995

Light Works inside crater of Aso Volcano, Japan

Commencement co-creation workshops, exploring methods to give visibility to marginalised communities 50th memorial of Hiroshima atomic bombing

1995

Jorge Orta represents Argentina at 46th Venice Biennale International Art Exhibition with Light Messenger (curator Jorge Glusberg)

Presentation of monumental 'light' drawings created by children living in Argentina's slums and homeless adults in Paris

Publish **Antarctica 2000** essay, imagining a new 'no-borders' territory for displaced peoples of the world

2nd IPPC Assessment Report announces temperature could rise to 3.5° by 2100

1997

All in One Basket, act I. Galerie Sainte Eustache, Paris (curator Jérôme Sans)

Launch of metaproject **FOOD** with distribution of recycled food, collaboration with renown chef to draw attention to food waste

Climate Conference COP3: adoption of Kyoto Protocol to limit GHG emissions

1997

Commencement of research on the issue of plastic waste

Discovery of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch

2000

70 x 7 The Meal, act IV Dieuze

First staging of community diners and banquets with mass-meal uniting 3,000 people around 3km communal table

Commencement of research on open-ended, flexible and mobile community structures, creation of **Connector Mobile Architecture**

Artists move research and

production studios to La Laiterie Moderne in Seine-et-Marine and establish a long-term cultural development project Les Moulins, as an extension of their social practice. Commence rehabilitation of four factories along Grand Morin river (transforming the industrial heritage of the valley into sites for the creation and representation of contemporary art)

The manifestos **Utopie Fondatrice, Contextual Art**and **Catalyst Art** theorised
by Jorge Orta (1976-82) are
re-activated in all projects

A new millennium of hope

2005

M.I.U. Kaap Helder,
Den Helder

Curve Gallery, London

Presentation of Drink Water Fondazione

Drink Water! Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, 51st Venice Biennale International Art Exhibition Water and Works!

Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam Publication of Phaidon monograph (Phaidon

Studio Orta becomes
Lucy + Jorge Orta

Press London)

Launch of meta-project
ORTAWATER with water
purification factory
installation. Collaboration
with engineers to purify
canals in Venice and
Rotterdam, first public
distributions of clean water

International decade for Action "Water for Life" 2005-2015

2007

Lucy + Jorge Orta continue the development of **Les Moulins** and acquire former paper mill, Moulin de Boissy, Boissy-le-Châtel. The mill becomes a second studio facility followed by an exhibition venue

International Polar Year

2007

Green Leaf Award for artistic excellence with environmental message presented at Nobel Peace Center, Oslo by United Nations Environment Programme in partnership with

Natural World Museum

ARTISTIC TRAJECTORY AND SIGNIFICANT EXHIBITIONS

RESEARCH AND LONG-TERM PROJECTS IN THE WORLD

2008

Antarctica. Pirelli Hangar Bicocca, Milan Publication of Antarctica monograph (Electa Mondadori)

First edition of Antarctica World Passport printed, 10,000 copies

2009

Lucy Orta becomes research affiliate at MIT, Art Culture Technology lab. Launch beta version Antarctica World Passport citizenship database

2011

Amazonia. Natural History Museum, London, UK

Fukushima

2011

Clouds Nuages. La Maréchalerie centre d'art contemporain, ENSAV Versailles

Research trip to Zabbaleen community, Cairo. First material experiments modelling recycled plastic bottles

2013

Clouds Meteoros. Barlow Shed, St Pancras International train station, London

Awarded inaugural Terrace Wires commission for Barlow Shed monumental inverted plinth

22-million people displaced by natural disasters and climate related events – almost three times more than by conflict in the same year.

2013

Lucy Orta nominated as Chair of Art & the Environment, University of the Arts London

2013

Symphony for Absent Wildlife. Nuit Blanche Calgary

2015

70 x 7 The Meal act XXXIX. Peterborough

Mass-mobilisation of **70 x 7 The Meal** united over 10,000 guests around the world since 2000

2015

Lucy Orta launches Art for the Environment Residency Program (AER) at University of the Arts London

2017

Antarctica World Passport. Frieze Projects London

Record distribution of 5,000 passports over 5-days

Global Warming since 1992 contributed to around 8mm sea-level rise and 2700 gigatonnes of Antarctic ice-loss

2018

2019

Life Guards. Palazzo Vecchio, Museo Salvatore Ferragamo, Museo Novecento, Florence

Gazing Ball. Yorkshire Sculpture Park

2020

Development of **Life Guards** in relation to water scarcity and pollution

First sculpture to enter into major public collection UK

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Interrelations. Les Tanneries centre d'art contemporain, Amilly

128,918 species on IUCN Red List 35,765 threatened with extinction

2022

2010

Publication of Food Water Life monograph (Princeton Architectural Press)

Expedition to Amazon with Capefarewell and Environmental Change Institute, Oxford University. Commence research on climate change and biodiversity loss. Collaboration with scientists to mark 1-hectare art-science plot in rain forest.

Research collaboration, entomology and palaeontology scientists at Natural History Museum London, Launch meta-project AMAZONIA

International Yea of Biodiversity

2012

Food Water Life. Tufts University Art Gallery, Massachusetts (curated by C2)

Major exhibition tour across five US museums, closing at La Villette, Paris

2012

OrtaWater, Antarctica World Passport, Nexus Architecture. 9th Shanghai Biennale (curator Qiu Zhijie)

Research on water filtration and purification with engineers in China with purification of Hang Pu river

2015

Antarctica World Passport Nansen Initiative Global Consultation, Geneva and Le Grand Palais, Paris

First collaboration with Nansen Initiative, Platform on Disaster Displacement and curatorial research project Displacement: Uncertain Journeys

Creation of Antarctica World Passport citizen charter, online database and launch of antarcticaworldpassport. com

Residency expedition Brazilian Amazon with Labverde, mark out second 1-hectare plot for artscience research in the Adolpho Ducke Reserve

Climate Conference COP21
Paris, Paris Agreement (keep temperature below 1.5°)

Adoption of Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in Context of Disasters and Climate Change

Adoption of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

2016

Publication of Food and the Public Sphere monograph (Black Dog Publishing)

2,000 Antarctica World Passport distributed during Migration Week, further embedding charter in communication actions of Platform on Disaster Displacement

Antarctica World Passport.

Migration Week Marrakesh

11th Global Forum on Migration and Development Summit and UN Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Marrakesh

Great Thunberg speaks at Climate Conference COP24, Katowice: "My name is Greta Thunberg. I am 15 years old..."

2018

Procession Banners 1918-2018. Mass march from Holloway Prison across London

Begin research on women's rights with Historic England, start of co-creation workshops inside HMP Downview women's prison

Centenary of women's right to vote (UK), Representation of the People Act 1918

2021

Diversity United. Flughafen Tempelhof, Berlin, and New Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

German, Russian, French, English, Dutch language passports printed totalling 76,000 passports in circulation

2021

Nexus Architecture. Co-creation with art and design students in Glasgow and London

Publication of Lost Species Handbook and Mask Making Kit (UAL)

Research begins on Lost Species, recording species decline through historical cultural and spiritual connections to wildlife

Climate Conference COP26, Glasgow

2022

Vita Extremis. La Patinoire Royale Galerie Valérie Bach, Brussels

Gateway to Possible Worlds. Art & Science Fiction. Centre Georges Pompidou Metz. France

30th anniversary of Lucy + Jorge Orta

Launch of **Perpetual Amazonia**, uniting amazon research with ecological responsibility through public engagement

Connector Mobile Village and Antarctic Village No Borders united for first time in France

Warmest June temperatures on record over world's land areas

660,000 hectares ravaged by fire across Europe

Antarctic sea ice shrank to lowest record

28% of world's species are endangered

Record Brazilian Amazo

Record Brazilian Amazon deforestation from January to June

LUCY + JORGE ORTA

VITA EXTREMIS | 1992-2022

SOLO SHOW: 09.09.22 > 27.11.22

Exposition sous le commissariat de /
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Mixed media on canvas. Certificate Perpetual Amazonia, Dimensions: 150 x 150 x 4 cm

Backcover: Exhibition view by Vincent Everarts, LUCY + JORGE ORTA, VITA EXTREMIS, 1992 - 2022, Grand Nave

Antarctic Village - No Borders, Drop Parachute, 2007

Steel frame, various textiles, flags, silkscreen print, webbing, Red Cross crate, water gourds, buckets, utensils,

Dimensions: 120 cm diameter

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