

WATER SCARCITY: PERPETUAL THIRST

TAHIR CARL KARMALI
CANNUPA HANSKA LUGER
LUCY + JORGE ORTA



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GLYNDOR GALLERY

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MAY 21–AUGUST 28, 2022

We acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, unceded homelands of the Lenape, the Munsee, the Manahatin, the Canarsie, the Matinecock, the Shinnecock, and other Indigenous nations. We respect that many Indigenous people continue to live and work on this land and recognize their ongoing contributions to the region. We also acknowledge the enslaved Africans whose labor built and developed the Northeast during the colonial era and beyond.



LUCY + JORGE ORTA
Epicerie – Vitrine, 2014



WATER IS ESSENTIAL FOR LIFE AND IS CRUCIAL FOR ECOLOGICAL CYCLES ON THE PLANET

With water covering more than 70% of the earth's surface, it can be hard to imagine that there is a global water crisis, yet billions of people experience a lack of available water. Only 3% is freshwater, including that which is encased in glaciers, and only half of that is usable for drinking and other necessities. While water scarcity is a worldwide problem, different regions face different challenges, such as resources being polluted or drying up. *Water Scarcity: Perpetual Thirst* features artworks by Tahir Carl Karmali, Cannupa Hanska Luger and Lucy + Jorge Orta, who use a range of approaches to raise awareness about the issue of access to clean water. The exhibition explores the impact of water scarcity on people's physical, spiritual and social well-being. Specific areas of focus include the climate-refugee crisis in Africa; adaptive strategies for sourcing, conserving and dispersing water; and speculation on how a world without potable water might create the need for a nomadic way of life.

In this exhibition, Karmali's work focuses on refugees seeking asylum in Kenya due to the intense desertification of the areas surrounding the Sahara. In his interactive sculpture made of wood and sheet metal, visitors are invited to walk across the piece, which spans the length of the gallery and transmits a range

of sounds that reference water. Luger presents *New Myth*, a video installation from his ongoing *Future Ancestral Technologies* series, with a narrative that expands on the ways in which Indigenous people have developed sustainable technology to live nomadically in deep attunement to land and water. Lucy + Jorge Orta are motivated by ecological and social issues, developing sculptures, installations and drawings that highlight a range of topics, including the fragility and resilience of the human condition when faced with extreme circumstances and how to distribute clean water to communities in need. The projects in this exhibition reveal water scarcity as an urgent concern that is interconnected with other issues, such as food insecurity, land rights and refugee crises.

Although the projects on view in *Water Scarcity: Perpetual Thirst* represent far-flung sites from Africa to Antarctica to the American Southwest, water scarcity is an issue that affects communities on both a global and a local scale. Even areas that boast high levels of annual precipitation are susceptible to polluted water sources and the effects of climate change that can create unpredictable periods of drought. The gallery exhibition is supplemented by topic-related public programs, which address local and domestic water issues and policy. These include a conversation between an exhibiting artist and climate scientist, as well as a talk among artists whose projects consider how to prepare for water shortages anticipated by drastic climate fluctuations. In the face of this impending scenario of devastating scarcity, how will we respond when a water crisis affects our own city or town?

We are grateful to the artists and lenders: Tahir Carl Karmali, Cannupa Hanska Luger and Garth Greenan Gallery, Ginger Dunnill, Lucy + Jorge Orta and Jane Lombard Gallery, and the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University.

— Gabriel de Guzman and Eileen Jeng Lynch

Water Scarcity: Perpetual Thirst is organized by Gabriel de Guzman, Director of Arts and Chief Curator; Eileen Jeng Lynch, Senior Curator of Visual Arts; and Jesse Bandler Firestone, former Assistant Curator. This exhibition continues Wave Hill's ongoing investigation of environmental issues of escalating concern, including shows such as *Sound the Alarm: Landscapes in Distress* (2008), *Remediate/Re-vision: Public Artists Engaging the Environment* (2010), *Wrath—Force of Nature* (2015), *Ecological Consciousness: Artist as Instigator* (2018) and *Eco-Urgency: Now or Never* (2021).

CANNUPA HANSKA LUGER

Future Ancestral Technologies—New Myth, 2021 (video still)



LUCY + JORGE ORTA

WITHOUT WATER, THERE IS NO LIFE

Working collaboratively since 2005 as Lucy + Jorge Orta, the artist duo creates sculptures, drawings, installations and performances, staging workshops to examine ecological issues affecting the social and cultural wellbeing of humanity. Their research-based practice is concerned with the conditions that affect survival and safety. They propose poetic solutions while pointing to the compounding factors—particularly climate change—that have led to this dire situation.

The pieces on view investigate how to address the diminishing supply of and access to our planet's resources. For *Antarctic Village - No Borders*, the Ortas embarked on an expedition to Antarctica, where they temporarily installed sculptural dome-shaped tents, aided by a logistical crew and international community of scientists, as part of the End of the World Biennale in 2007. Protected by a treaty, the continent is not owned by any one country and is meant for peaceful and scientific purposes. The Ortas imagine Antarctica, an endangered ecosystem, as a place for a collaborative existence defined by possibilities, rather than restrictions. The nomadic domed-structure comprises fragments of clothing and flags and serves as a portal into self-sufficiency and hospitality, embodying freedom of movement and the ability to cross political boundaries.

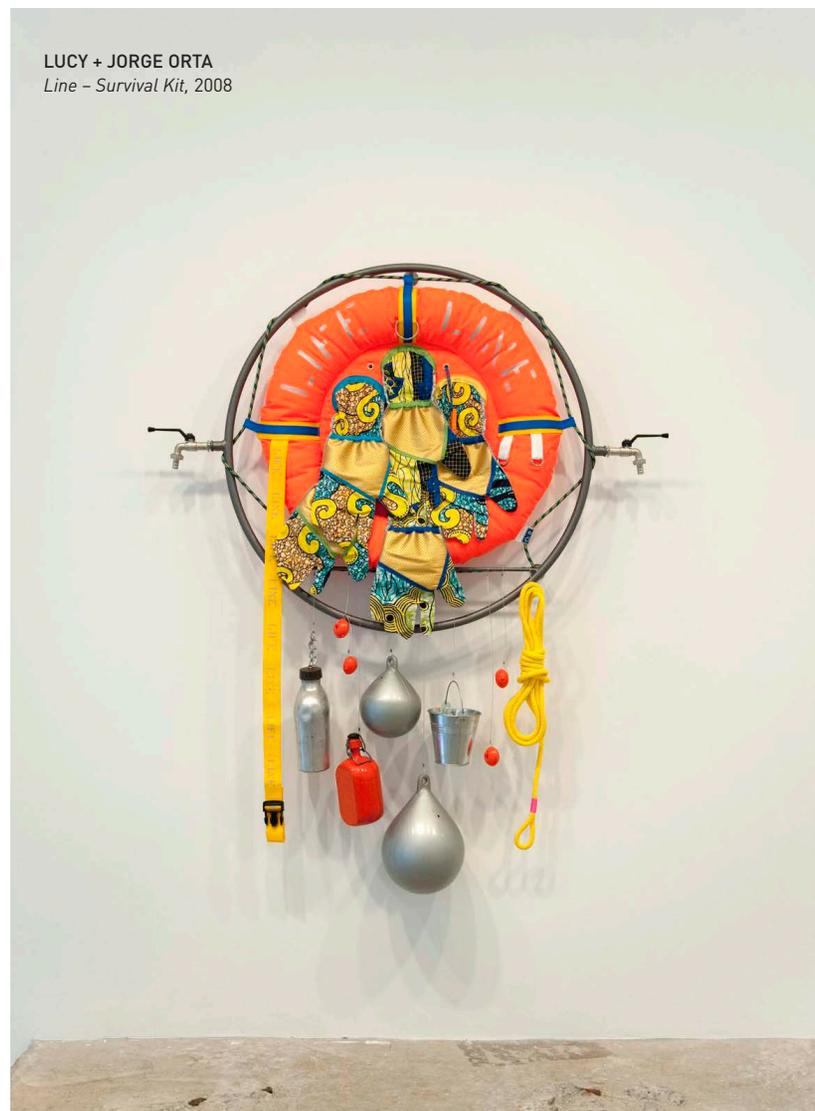
Inspired by that experience, other sculptures provide visual cues to the water scarcity crises. *Life Line - Survival Kit* depicts a life jacket, flask and other emergency objects one might need when in danger. *OrtaWater - Antarctica* comprises a miniature-scale boat, oars and photographs of people impacted by a lack of clean water resources. The work envisions new ways to obtain potable water from glacier ice. The bottles allude to a solution and to the problematic privatization of fresh water and distribution. *Epicerie - Vitrine* references portable and reusable solutions for carrying liquids and food. Investigating environmental sustainability, the Ortas explore the cyclical system of water and food insecurities and how they are entwined. —EJL

Studio Orta is located in central Paris and Les Moulins, a cultural complex founded by the artists in Seine-et-Marne, France. Les Moulins is an extension of their practice, to establish a collective environment dedicated to artistic research and production of contemporary art. Over the past two decades, Lucy Orta (b. Sutton Coldfield, UK) and Jorge Orta (b. Rosario, Argentina) have exhibited at the 46th Venice Biennale International Art Exhibition, Italy; The Curve, Barbican Art Gallery, London, UK; Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, Venice Biennale, Italy; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands; Biennial of the End of the



LUCY + JORGE ORTA
OrtaWater - Antarctica, 2013

World, Ushuaia and the Antarctic Peninsula; Natural History Museum, London, UK; MAXXI National Museum of XXI Century Arts, Rome, Italy; Shanghai Biennale, China; Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK; Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Ithaca, NY; London Museum Ontario, Canada; Attenborough Arts Centre, Leicester; City Gallery and Museum Peterborough, UK; Emscherkunst, Rhur, Germany; Humber Street Gallery, UK; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK; Palazzo Vecchio, Museo Salvatore Ferragamo, Museo Novecento, Florence, Italy; Les Tanneries, Amilly, France; Drawing Lab, Paris, France, among others.



INTERVIEW APRIL 2022

EILEEN JENG LYNCH: *Having created social awareness of and devising poetic responses to issues of access to clean water over the past two decades, what are your reflections on those earlier works especially with the continuously increasing threat of climate change? With the urgency of now, how does it affect your current practice?*

LUCY + JORGE ORTA: When we began exploring the causes of major social issues, as we did for migratory movements at the start of our collaboration in 1991 when we founded Studio Orta, we noticed the growing role of environmental factors in migration. From 1995, the problem of water scarcity soon became one of our research angles. In 2005, we finally had the opportunity to present the first of our artistic responses to a wider public in the exhibition *Drink Water!* at the Bevilacqua La Masa Foundation in Venice, during the biennale. Since then, we have worked on almost every possible environmental issue: the decline in biodiversity, food waste, the climate, pollution and more!

What interests us most is expressing how all these issues depend on each other and linking them to humans. By going to Antarctica, with its extreme climate conditions, or to the Amazon rainforest, we can approach these challenges from our own sensory experiences. We are driven by a sense of urgency to grasp and respond to global challenges and to accelerate awareness of the interdependency of social and environmental issues. Creating artistic formats that have the potential to stimulate a collective change.

EJL: *In addition to being metaphors for change, your projects have included functional water purification systems in China, France, India, The Netherlands, among other countries where you've exhibited. How do you work with the local communities, including scientists and non-experts, on these projects?*

LO + JO: Our work is contextual, meaning we create work according to the local reality, adapting processes and methods experimented with previously. The topic of water in Rotterdam and Venice meant taking into account the geographic situation of these two cities, which are literary 'floating' on water. The over-abundance of water and the dangers of flooding provides a stark contrast to communities that suffer from severe droughts. This paradox is what we explored through concurrent workshops we ran with art and design students in the two cities.

The main focus of the installation *Drink Water!* was the sculpture 'Water Purification Unit'. When the same work was presented at the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum, it required the expertise of Dutch engineers who analyzed the pollutants in the local canal water and adapted the filters used previously to purify the Grand Canal. We asked the same engineers to meet with young designers and artists, to exchange knowledge on innovations in water purification and to consider the potential for their application in drought-stricken

LUCY + JORGE ORTA
Antarctic Village – No Borders,
Dome Dwelling, 2007



communities. We wanted the audience to partake in this process. To see the filthy canal water pumped through the museum and witness the simplicity of the purification process. The general public could drink the clean water being emitted from the sculpture whilst watching the creative process of the workshop unfold inside the museum and listening to the conversations emerging. The installation provided a dynamic forum for cross-disciplinary activities and a conduit for sensory experiences and learning.

EJL: *As your collaborative practice also explores food sovereignty, how do you see water scarcity as interrelated to this and other larger global issues?*

LO + JO: At the 2001 G8 Summit in Trieste, Italy, we presented a major public work comprising two Red Cross military ambulances that we had customized with images and texts expressing interwoven planetary issues. These include food and water shortages, forced migrations, faced with the paradox of the intensive

industrialization of food and its consequences, such as food waste, or the horrific outbreak of foot and mouth disease that resulted in the slaughtering of six million sheep and cattle in the UK that same year. The two strikingly visual vehicles were parked, facing each other, in front of the town hall where the negotiations were taking place. We wished to present a powerful message referring to the interrelations of social and ecological issues affecting both industrialized and developing countries.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the whole planet has directly experienced the massive acceleration of communication and interdependency of our world. The current war raging in Ukraine has also drawn our attention to food insecurity and the imminent possibility of world shortages. We have learnt that Russia and Ukraine produce 30% of the world's wheat and that 400 million people rely on Ukraine's next harvest. This heightened awareness due to our interconnectedness, across continents will lead to radical changes as we realize that problems can only be solved collectively and at a planetary level.



EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

TAHIR CARL KARMALI

kiangazi, 2022

Steel, base shakers, amplifier,
copper wire, wood
192 x 48 x 6 inches

scraped knee, 2022

Silk, steel, nails, soil, dissolved
police guns, soy milk, rubber
108 x 48 inches

Untitled, 2022

Corrugated steel, wood
192 x 144 inches

All of the above courtesy of the artist

CANNUPA HANSKA LUGER

*Future Ancestral Technologies—
New Myth*, 2021

Three channel video installation
for projection mapping, with
ceramic objects

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and Garth
Greenan Gallery, New York

CANNUPA HANSKA LUGER

*Future Ancestral Technologies—New
Myth*, 2021 (video still)

LUCY + JORGE ORTA

*Antarctic Village – No Borders,
expedition diary*, 2006-2007

Pencil, pigment ink, water colour
on Fabriano paper
22 1/4 x 30 inches

*Antarctic Village – No Borders,
Dome Dwelling*, 2007

Coated polyamide, various textiles,
nation flags, silkscreen print,
secondhand clothes, webbing, clips,
3 telescopic armatures
70 7/8 x 70 7/8 x 59 inches

Life Line – Survival Kit, 2008

Steel frame, textiles, webbing, acrylic
paint, flasks, buoys, floats, rope
56 1/2 x 35 1/2 inches

Life Line – Survival Kit, 2008

Steel frame, 2 taps, piping, various
textiles, silkscreen print, webbing,
2 flasks, toys, rope
59 x 31 1/2 x 6 inches

Epicerie – Vitrine, 2014

Steel structure, 28 cast aluminum
polychrome, glass, 1 carafe,
8 OrtaWater bottles, 2 taps
53 1/8 x 61 7/8 x 13 3/4 inches

All of the above courtesy of the artists
and Jane Lombard Gallery, New York

OrtaWater – Antarctica, 2013

Wood, textiles, steel, laminated
Lambda print, water flasks, OrtaWater
bottles, Royal Limoges porcelain, oars
Approx. 59 x 59 x 24 inches

Collection of the Herbert F. Johnson
Museum of Art, Cornell University.
Acquired through the Stern Family
Contemporary Art Acquisition Fund

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

TAHIR CARL KARMALI: *Kiangazi, The Dry Season*

Saturday, June 25, 2022, 3–4PM, Onsite

In this sound performance, Karmali turns their sculptural installation into an instrument for an in-person listening experience.

WATER CRISIS AND CLIMATE CHANGE: An Artist and Scientist Conversation

Thursday, June 30, 12–1PM EDT, Virtual

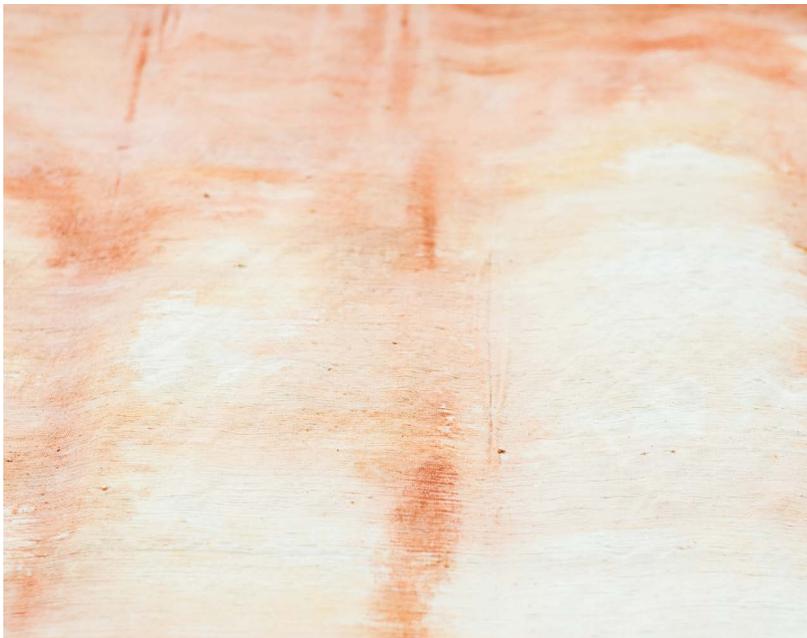
Join artist Lucy Orta and climate scientist Dr. Peter Gleick for a conversation on Zoom about water scarcity, a global issue exacerbated by climate change and other factors, as well as possible solutions for distribution, consumption, and conservation.

ARTISTS' CONVERSATION ON WATER SCARCITY

Tuesday, August 9, 2022, 6–7:30PM EDT, Virtual

Join exhibiting artist Cannupa Hanska Luger in conversation on Zoom with artists Christine Howard Sandoval and Shayok Mukhopadhyay, who have each made projects that address the issue of water scarcity.

GALLERY TOURS: Thursdays & Saturdays at 2PM, Onsite



TAHIR CARL KARMALI
scraped knee, 2022 (detail)



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Wave Hill is a public garden and cultural center in the Bronx overlooking the Hudson River and Palisades. Its mission is to celebrate the artistry and legacy of its gardens and landscapes, to preserve its magnificent views and to explore human connections to the natural world through programs in horticulture, education and the arts.

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Audio-Visual Technician: Javier Maria
Graphic Design: Melanie Roberts Design

COVER
CANNUPA HANSKA LUGER
*Future Ancestral Technologies –
New Myth*, 2021
Photo by Gabe Fermin

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