

# LUCY + JORGE ORTA

## VITA EXTREMIS

1992-2022



la patinoire | galerie  
Royale | valérie Bach

# 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 #thecoldestsummeroftherestoffourlives, 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 Boijmans 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.

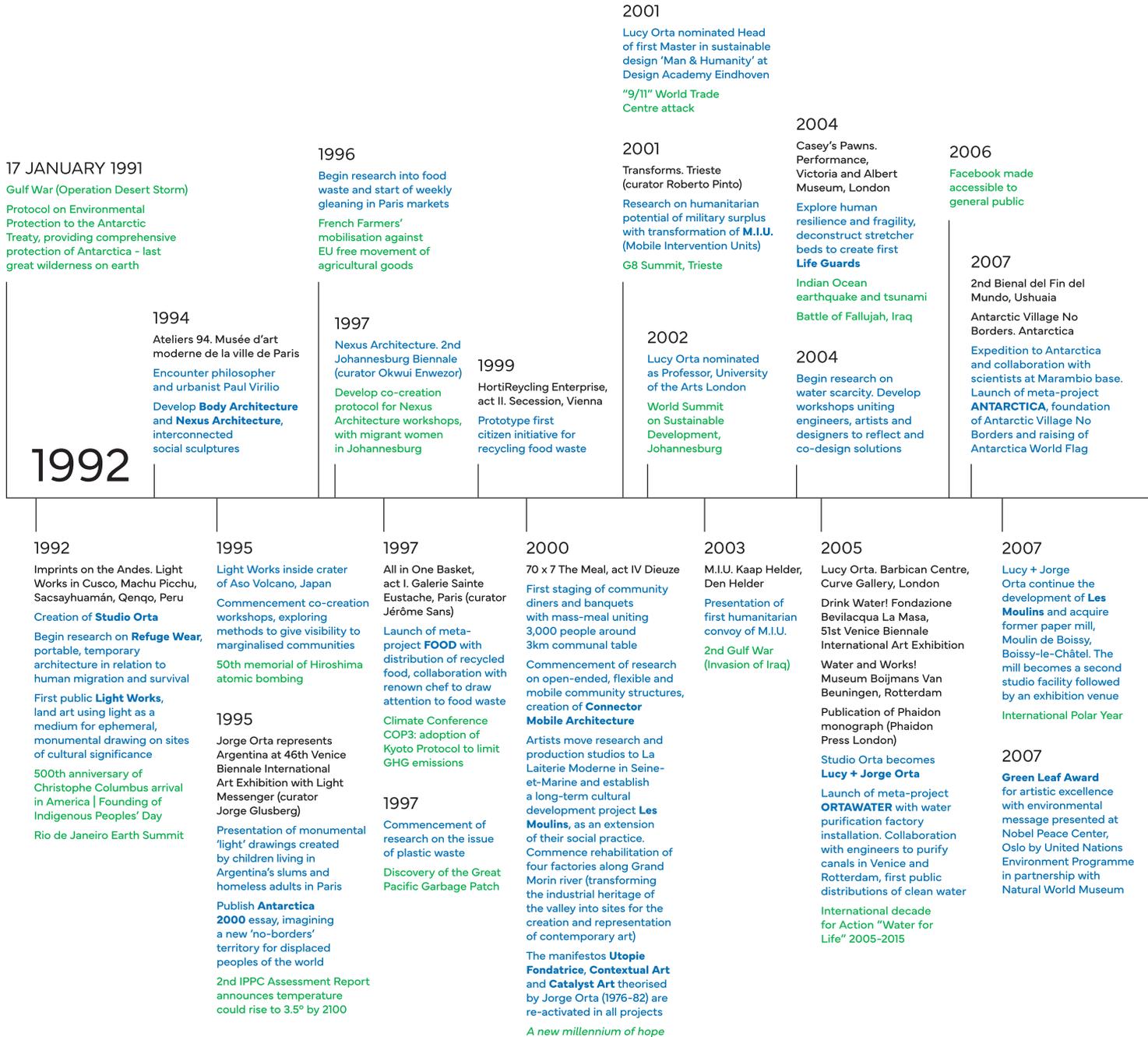
For they know that post-anthropocene is already here. Call it Symbiocene like Australian philosopher Glenn Albrecht or Novacene like famous English scientist James Lovelock, the new era spells happier times and calls for a new alliance with the living. "It may be that the Novacene becomes one of the 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 re-integration 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 Orta was born in England in 1966  
Jorge Orta was born in Argentina in 1953  
They live and work between Paris, Seine-et-Marne and London

# LUCY + JORGE ORTA 30 YEARS



● 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

2011

Amazonia. Natural History Museum, London, UK  
Fukushima nuclear disaster

2011

Clouds] Nuages. La Maréchalerie centre d'art contemporain, ENSAV Versailles  
Research trip to Zabbaleen community, Cairo. First material experiments modelling recycled plastic bottles

2009

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

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

2019

Life Guards. Palazzo Vecchio, Museo Salvatore Ferragamo, Museo Novecento, Florence  
Gazing Ball. Yorkshire Sculpture Park  
Development of **Life Guards** in relation to water scarcity and pollution  
First sculpture to enter into major public collection UK

2020

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 Year 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 art-science 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)

2018

Antarctica World Passport. Migration Week Marrakesh  
2,000 Antarctica World Passport distributed during Migration Week, further embedding charter in communication actions of Platform on Disaster Displacement  
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 Amazon deforestation from January to June

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SOLO SHOW : 09.09.22 > 27.11.22

Exposition sous le commissariat de /  
Exhibition curated by **Alice Audouin &**  
**La Patinoire Royale | Galerie Valérie Bach,**

présentée dans la Grande Nef de la galerie à Bruxelles /  
*displayed in the gallery's Grand Nave in Brussels*

This catalogue was published for the exhibition *LUCY + JORGE ORTA 'VITA EXTREMIS'. 1992-2022*  
Curated by Alice Audouin & La Patinoire Royale | Galerie Valérie Bach in Brussels  
from September 9th, 2022 to November 27th, 2022.

Texts by Valérie Bach and Constantin Chariot, Alice Audouin  
Translation by Laurent Willemart

Graphic Design and Layout by Louise Lavergne (Atelier Initial)

The printing of this work was completed in September 2022 on the press of Kolor Klinika, Zagreb, Croatia

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Photography and Visual credits : Vincent Everarts and Bertrand Huet

Cover: *Fabulae Naturae* (detail), 2022

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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ISBN : 978-2-930737-37-9

Legal deposit : D/2022/13.253/41