

# Martha Rosler on Ice

**‘We want the works to sink to the seabed only as a thought in the viewer’s mind’, say the curators of *Goodbye, World*, a biodegradable exhibition installed on a remote ice floe in northern Sweden.**

By Robert Stasinski 10.03.21 News Artikel på svenska



Jonathan Monk, *The Tragic Tale of*, wooden board, spray paint, 2020.

Ten artworks installed on an ice floe in the Bothnian Bay are awaiting the arrival of spring, when the ice will melt, allowing the works to sink to the seabed. The exhibition *Goodbye, World* takes climate anxiety and the impending climate catastrophe as a starting point. It is produced by the non-profit organization apexart in New York, after an open call process in which an international jury chose the German curators Andreas Templin and Raimar Stange’s idea for a completely eco-friendly, biodegradable art exhibition in northern Sweden.

According to Templin, the original proposal was for fifteen artists, and included ideas about art-historically significant works by artists such as Albrecht Dürer and Rembrandt, which, like the other works, would have fallen to the seabed as part of the exhibition.

“We wanted the works to be eco-friendly and completely biodegradable when we contacted the participating artists,” Templin said. “We soon also realised that if we expose ourselves to criticism for not carrying out this exhibition in a completely sustainable way, the overall idea would be lost. The only concession we made was that some works were installed using petrol-powered snowmobiles.”

Participating artists include Jonathan Monk, Olaf Nicolai, and Martha Rosler, whose contribution is an edible cake entitled *Pence in Space (Space Force)* (2018/2020) with reference to the new U.S. Space Force programme, a military branch focused primarily on outer space. The works are installed in a circular formation on ice near the Arctic Circle, where the ice cover is expected to melt in March or April. According to the curators, this process will not be documented for several reasons. “This was partly because we didn’t want to set up a camera for logistical and sustainability reasons, but also because we want the works to sink to the seabed only as a thought in the viewer’s mind – a meditation on what is to come,” Stange explained.

The curators refer to Bruno Latour’s thinking on the apocalypse and his accepting and situating oneself in it. They call their project a quasi-climate-neutral exhibition, but despite the focus on biodegradable works, do not necessarily believe that the exhibition concept will spread in the art world.



Martha Rosler, *Pence in Space (Space Force)*, sheet cake, 2018/20.

“Of course we can imagine more exhibitions with eco-friendly works. That would be fantastic,” said Stange. “But I don’t think this will happen; the art industry is too powerful. At the same time, you can focus on a societal problem by partly showing this in an exhibition context. Look at Santiago Sierra, for example. It would be a real shame if there were only one possible way to address climate change in art.”

Templin and Stange worked together in 2020 when Stange curated the exhibition *2050 – Nature Morte* at Kunstverein am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz in Berlin. Stange has worked on a number of

projects that revolved around climate change, but believes that the art world has been slow to pay attention to the issue.

“Surely, there are other problems in society, but socio-critical identity politics in combination with feminism and postcolonial theory sets the discursive tone in the art industry. The topic we want to focus on – the climate catastrophe – is, unfortunately, almost completely invisible, including in large exhibitions such as Documenta,” Stange concluded.



Olaf Nicolai, *Picknick, Égoïste*, dishes, flatware, basket, 2020.