

30.10.
2025

04.04.
2026

W GŁĘBI

ŻYJĄCE
MORZA,

ŻYJĄCE
CIAŁA

LIVING
SEAS,

LIVING
BODIES

DOWN DEEP

PAŃSTWOWA GALERIA SZTUKI

PRESS RELEASE

*Down Deep: Living seas,
living bodies /
W głębi: Żyjące morza,
żyjące ciała*
Exhibition at the
Sopot State Art Gallery

Sopot State Art Gallery
Plac Zdrojowy 2
81-720 Sopot

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- **Opening** / October 30, 2025, 6:00 PM
 - **Exhibition duration** / October 30, 2025 – April 4, 2026
 - **Organizers** / State Gallery of Art in Sopot, Sopot
 - **Partners** / Institute of Oceanology PAS, University of Gdańsk,
British Council, LETO Gallery, Lithuanian Culture Institute
 - **Curators** / Joseph Constable, Eulalia Domanowska, Joanna Gemes
 - **Honorary patronage** / Minister of Culture and National Heritage,
Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania, Marshal of the Pomeranian Voivodeship,
Mayor of the City of Sopot, Mayor of the City of Gdynia

Abstract

Down Deep: Living seas, living bodies is a group exhibition presented at the State Art Gallery in Sopot, produced in collaboration with the Institute of Oceanology of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the University of Gdańsk. The project explores our connection to the ocean—physical, emotional, and spiritual—and asks what it means to become one. International artists combine art with science, ecology, and indigenous knowledge, proposing new narratives about humanity's relationship with the seas. The exhibition encourages us to move beyond anthropocentric thinking and discover the ocean as a living, sentient organism and a source of transformative knowledge.

ARTISTS / Akvilė Anglickaitė, Alex Ayed, Kuba Bąkowski, Seba Calfuqueo, Dorothy Cross, David Gumbs, Barbara Hammer, Sky Hopinka, Marie Jeschke, Hyung S. Kim, Agnieszka Kurant, Ange Leccia, Julia Lohmann, Goshka Macuga, Cecylia Malik, Yiannis Maniatakos, Kristina Ōllek, Jean Painlevé, Izabela Pluta, Kati Roover, Rasa Smite & Raitis Smits, Raqs Media Collective, Superflex, Yan Tomaszewski, Xawery Wolski, Laetitia Yhap

Down Deep: living seas, living bodies is a major group exhibition and research project that explores our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual interrelation with the ocean. Presented at the State Art Gallery in Sopot (PGS) and realised in partnership with the Institute of Oceanology Polish Academy of Sciences (IO PAN) and the University of Gdańsk, the exhibition begins from the context of the gallery's unique location on the Baltic Coast and expands to a wider consideration of oceanic space through a group of international artists.

Central to the exhibition is the question of what it means to become ocean, to return our human bodies to the immense body of water that covers over two-thirds of the Earth. Scientists have long been investigating the watery origins of life on our planet, initially including tide pools and hot springs as possibilities. Modern research has hypothesised that life originated near deep sea hydrothermal vents, as the chemicals found in these vents and the energy they provide could fuel the many reactions needed for the evolution of life.

Down Deep: Living Seas, Living Bodies begins from this hypothesis of life's oceanic origins at least 3.5 billion years ago to consider our innate connectivity to the water and, by extension, how we came into being and continue to exist as a collective species. In this, the exhibition moves against the philosophical, religious, and techno-industrial lineage of anthropocentrism that continues to divide us from our environments and which was furthered by the advent of modern science and agriculture, with its embedded intent to tame, categorise and contain the world around us. If we were to relinquish the binds of this human exceptionalism, how might we understand ourselves within a larger body of enveloping life and start to exist in communion with the deep and profound rhythms of the ocean?

In conceiving the Ocean as a sentient entity, *Down Deep: Living Seas, Living Bodies* draws upon James Lovelock's seminal Gaia hypothesis that posits the Earth as a super-organism with the synergistic ability to regulate its own environment as a habitable space for the biosphere. Ocean ecologist, underwater naturalist, sailor and professional diver, Glenn Edney continues this line of thinking with his proclamation that 'the ocean is alive' ... [it is] ... 'a global, living ecosystem; a self-regulating whole, more than the sum of her physiological parts'. Through processes of respiration, circulation and metabolism, as well as the energy of the many life forms that inhabit the sea, what emerges is an ocean mind founded on interbeing and interdependence; a sentience that arises as an emergent property of a self-organising system. It is through such notions of collective and nonhuman intelligence that the exhibition will explore the many layers of ocean space, with an interdisciplinary approach drawing upon the fields of ocean humanities, environmental studies, quantum biology, cybernetics, theories and histories of consciousness, science fiction, poetry, and indigenous knowledge.

Through acts of speculation, invention and transformation, visitors to *Down Deep: Living Seas, Living Bodies* will encounter creative practitioners who are telling new stories about our oceanic connection and which in turn could help us to reimagine the realities of division, extraction, and pollution that is the dominant picture of humankind's treatment of the ocean. In the face of relentless oceanic devastation, how can we explore more fluid modes of thinking in which we might lose our sense of linear time, access spaces where we can wonder/wander, both physically and mentally, and loosen the boundaries of our bodies and minds via forms of oceanic exchange. In short, how can we become more ocean? As a space of 'contextual richness, emotional depth, and interdependence', the ocean provides an important means of interspecies communication across time and space. *Down Deep: Living Seas, Living Bodies* seeks to harness the immense possibilities offered to us by this vast body by exploring it both as a potential collaborator and source of sentient knowledge.

The project co-financed by the City of Sopot

The project co-financed by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage from the Culture Promotion Fund.

The project *Down Deep: Living Seas, Living Bodies / W głębi: Żyjące morza, żyjące ciała* is supported by the British Council as part of the UK/Poland Season 2025



Ministry of Culture and National Heritage
Republic of Poland



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