

ANNA TALENS & MAR GUERRERO. TERRITORIES IN TRANSIT / SOLO DUO: BETWEEN THE LIGHTHOUSE AND THE ABYSS

18.09.26-28.02.27

Curatorial text. Alicia Ventura

...there is nothing, only sensations translated into realities that converge in thoughts, landscapes and moments. Anna Talens and Mar Guerrero work with the abyssal, the nonexistent, the liquid, the found, the remembered, the suggested, the transformed, the travelled, the lived, the dreamt and the utopian. They work within the territory of the sea, in all its dimensions and breadth. Over the past months, we have reflected on these terms, read a variety of texts and even watched a few film scenes that have invited us to think about and engage with this liquid element and the territory it traverses.

We begin with a place, a space shaped by light and shadow, and then with a lighthouse, gradually moving into darkness, the hidden, the abyss. If we seek references for these terms, we find countless literary and narrative citations, legends and tales. What is the lighthouse? Reason, hope, guidance, an inner light, sometimes futile, sometimes desperate. What is the abyss? Death, emptiness, loss, but also a space or source of creation, knowledge or revelation.

Various authors help us decipher the rich meanings of these concepts. Charles Baudelaire, in *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857), presents artists such as Rembrandt and Goya as lighthouses projecting light into the darkness of the world. Yet the true function of these lighthouses is to reveal the abyss, for their light is measured and reflected against the dark ocean of the human soul. In this way, light and abyss coexist, establishing a wide spectrum of layers and depths that is central to this project.

Friedrich Nietzsche, meanwhile, sees the abyss as a metaphor for confronting truth and nothingness. And he warns: "He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster. And if you gaze long into an abyss, the abyss also gazes into you. (...) One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star." (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 1886).¹ Nietzsche transforms the abyss into a source of creation, suggesting that the lighthouse, the star, emerges from chaos, from the inner abyss. Light does not deny the abyss; it arises from it.

Other authors reinforce this duality. Virginia Woolf, in 1927, wrote the novel *To the Lighthouse*, which serves as a symbol of desire, memory and the passage of time. It represents a spiritual and aesthetic goal that always seems just out of reach, much like the horizon that

1. Excerpt from *Beyond Good and Evil* by Nietzsche.

recedes as we approach it. Mario Benedetti, later in 1963, in his book *Inventario Uno*, on the contrary, conversely presents the lighthouse as the persistence of love and hope amid storm and distance. These concepts, in dialogue, define the territory suspended between the two points.

These tensions, reflections and concerns continue to resonate in the work of many authors, as well as in the artists behind this exhibition, which itself takes the form of a profound and compelling visual essay on light and darkness. The sea, more than a liquid horizon, can be understood as a territory in its own right: a space in which cartography dissolves and borders are not drawn with fixed lines, but with currents, tides and temporalities. Its mutable condition makes it an unstable geography, a terrain that cannot be walked upon, yet one that sustains the movement of bodies and memories.

To think of the sea as an island is to invert the usual logic of landscape. The island no longer appears simply as a fragment surrounded by water, but as the negative of that vast marine expanse: a point of stillness that exists in contrast to movement. Within this relationship, the island becomes a trace or an interruption in a continuous surface; the sea, by contrast, turns into a fluid archipelago in which each island appears as a revealing discontinuity, exposing the sea's own scale and extension.

The idea of inverted morphology emerges when the sea is no longer considered the void surrounding the land, but the primary matter itself: an expansive body that contains and defines the solid fragments floating within it. In this reversal, the solid becomes the exception and the liquid the rule. The map is overturned: blue ceases to function as background and becomes structure, while land no longer occupies the centre, appearing instead as a brief interruption within immensity.

From this perspective, the sea is proposed as a contemporary territory, moving beyond its purely natural condition to extend into political, historical and affective realms. It is conceived as a space of constant transit, a living archive of colonial violence and, at the same time, an open surface on which to imagine new ways of inhabiting.

The island, as a condensed image of this inversion of values, ceases to be peripheral and becomes a point of departure, reminding us that all geography is, ultimately, an act of interpretation and power.

In fact, this idea is deeply rooted in history. For Ulysses, the sea was far more than a body of water: it was the fundamental stage of his existence and a complex symbol that simultaneously embodied journey, identity and learning.

This ancient conception – gradually inverted over the centuries in favour of land and arrival – is reclaimed by contemporary artists to place the sea once again at the centre of reflection.

“You love the sea, captain.”

“Yes, I love it! The sea is the be all and end all! It covers seven-tenths of the planet earth. Its breath is clean and healthy. It's an immense wilderness where a man is never lonely, because he feels life astir on every side. The sea is simply the vehicle for a prodigious, unearthly mode of existence; it's simply movement and love; it's living infinity, as one of your poets put it. (...) The sea is a vast pool of nature. Our globe began with the sea, so to speak, and who can say we won't end with it! (...) And now, how can I convey the impressions left on me by this stroll under the waters. Words are powerless to describe such wonders! When even the painter's brush can't depict the effects unique to the liquid element, how can the writer's pen hope to reproduce them? (...)

“Sir, just what is a pearl exactly?”

“My gallant Ned,” I replied, “for poets a pearl is a tear from the sea.” (...)

“Farewell, O sun!” “Disappear, O radiant orb! Retire beneath this open sea, and let six months of night spread their shadows over my new domains!”²

The works of Mar Guerrero and Anna Talens occupy that threshold where the sea is understood not merely as nature, but as an archive of experiences and resonances. Mar Guerrero works with residual materials from the ocean – eroded plastics, driftwood – which she collects and transforms into sculptural pieces. In her hands, these remnants cease to be waste and become witnesses to transit, pollution and resistance. Each piece retains the memory of its marine journey, proposing an aesthetic where beauty emerges from what is discarded, inviting reflection on our relationship with the environment. Anna Talens, meanwhile, approaches the horizon as a perceptive and spiritual experience. Her works explore the boundary between the visible and the invisible, between what expands and what fades. In her practice, the horizon is not a vanishing point, but a moving presence that structures the gaze and embodies the possibility of the unattainable.

Both artists inhabit the pleat between the material and the immaterial, between the terrestrial and the abyssal. The sea becomes mirror and threshold: a surface of transit and a space of symbolic depth. In its presence, the gaze does not withdraw but opens. This exhibition invites viewers to dwell in that ambiguity, recognising in the unfathomable sea the possibility of imagining new ways of being and seeing the world. The unfathomable is not emptiness, but access. It opens in two directions: towards the seabed, with its dense silence and infinite penumbra, and towards the cosmos, vast and boundless, streaked with flashes of light.

Between the terrestrial and the immeasurable, the intimate and the cosmic, the luminous and the dark, stretches a space of ambiguity where opposites do not exclude one another but complement each other. This pleat, which both submerges and expands, opens the unknown as a field for imagination and transit. The works gathered in this exhibition inhabit that tension: they evoke depth and lightness, confinement and openness, silence and eruption. The gaze does not retreat; it expands, recognising in the abyss the possibility of new languages and sensibilities.

The sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it. Gradually as the sky whitened a dark line lay on the horizon dividing the sea from the sky and the grey cloth became barred with thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually.³

Let's move through the exhibition space and pick a direction: we can go from light into darkness, or from darkness into light. In any case, we are greeted by a large mirror installation, *Alba mobile*, by Anna Talens, which, like a lighthouse, uses its latent light to guide us.

Fernando Pessoa's reflection from *The Book of Disquiet* (1982) resonates here: “I am like a lighthouse that guides no one; I only illuminate myself to look at the abyss into which my thoughts fall.”⁴ This piece serves as guide and light, almost kinetic, full of sensations, which it radiates outward, allowing us to glimpse *Falsa sirena* (False Siren) by Mar Guerrero, who has worked with residual materials from food overproduction – such as oyster and scallop shells – together with reclaimed wood from the island of Mallorca, producing these hybrid, colloidal forms that function as records of materials and their memories. These pieces occupy the

2. Excerpt from the novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne.

3. Excerpt from the novel *The Waves* by Virginia Woolf.

4. Excerpt from the novel *The Book of Disquiet*, by Fernando Pessoa.

intersection between the natural and the artificial, the mythical and the speculative, exploring new mythologies of the sea. Beings that dream, watch over us, and point to a place and a memory.

Craftsmanship underpins the entire exhibition, in both Mar's and Anna's works. Ancient traditions are brought into the present, recovering a patient, unhurried approach in which the handmade becomes a kind of musical score. Cabinetmakers, weavers and glassworkers form a chorus that interprets this symphony, rich in colour, nuance and texture. Some pieces could almost function as small jewels; sculpted by the artists, they become part of a discourse that flows across the exhibition. The interplay of manual gestures, now visible in contemporary art, enriches its language with entirely poetic forms of expression. The assemblage folds the pieces to reveal their most primordial, pure and unknown content.

The exhibition does not present a closed narrative but fosters a fluid dialogue between two modes of inhabiting matter and void, mediated through a translucent surface that simultaneously separates and connects. Here, art becomes both filter and threshold, a sensitive membrane enabling us to look beyond, even if the "beyond" remains elusive.

In this dynamic between surface and depth, memory is activated – not just personal memory, which emerges as images and emotions when confronting the unknown, but also a broader memory that links the body to ancestral experiences: the remembrance of the sea as origin. In the works, materials preserve invisible traces, vestiges of lived and dreamed experiences. Engaging in dialogue with them awakens resonances that seemed dormant. Memory thus becomes another layer of the journey – a territory as elusive as the abyss, as tangible as the earth beneath our feet.

On the shores of transparent waters, what brushes against our legs? A catalogue of organisms: Mar Guerrero's *Bestiario del océano profundo* (Bestiary of the Deep Ocean). Drawing inspiration from the most remote marine habitats and debris collected along Mallorca's coastline, these black-and-white organisms evoke X-rays of human bodies, forging a dialogue between scientific research, imagination and ecology. The work invites reflection on the fragility of marine environments and the extent of pollution beyond what is visible, linking ocean and cosmos in an inventory of forms and beings that inhabit deep, little-known spaces, brought here to make the hidden visible.

Accompanying them is the large *Amuleto corallium* (Coralium Amulet), crafted from dozens of coral beads salvaged from antique necklaces. It reminds us of the beauty and richness that our seabeds could once have held, and acts as a call for conservation, preserving memory of what is on the verge of disappearing. Anna Talens' practice navigates the space between the tactile and the conceptual, the artisanal and the existential, probing tensions between nature and artifice, emptiness and presence, visibility and invisibility.

Seven forms emerge at the intersection of the organic and the artificial: *Ensamblajes fósiles* (Fossil Assemblages). Each sculpture is born from the meeting of a plastic fragment found in the sea and a clay shell, fused through 3D printing using spirulina filament. Cultivated on an industrial scale, this alga creates a tension between its natural origin and the mechanical processes that now allow it to be reproduced and transformed into material for new objects. The work establishes a twofold dichotomy: first, between algae cultivated in artisanal trays, connected to manual practices and life cycles, and its industrially produced counterpart; second, between the reproducibility of form inherent in 3D printing and the transformation of natural elements into serially produced materials. Through this assemblage, the pieces merge into fossil-like organisms from an intermediate time – hybrid relics where life, waste and technology intertwine – creating a floating universe of unknown, perhaps nonexistent, beings.

At the centre of the space, a collaborative work by both artists serves as a kind of workspace – a marine archaeological table. The objects bear traces of wear, erosion and the friction of water, displaying fragments of small maritime items as visible testimony to the passage of the ocean. At the same time, the piece draws attention to silenced environmental urgencies – ecological destruction, but also poetics and resistance. The residues become sculptures and photographs that do not conceal the damage, but expose it as trace; that do not erase it, but reframe it to provoke critical reflection. The works coexist like pulses that attract and repel, like fragments that build a shared space without relinquishing their individuality. This laboratory, shared by both artists, has gathered countless treasures, memories and materials expelled by the sea – remnants of lost or longed-for objects. A small treasure chamber recalls childhood rituals, when families and friends made the act of collecting these objects a moment of surprise and delight: discovering ‘jewels’ for our little treasure, which was kept in beautiful boxes in bedrooms, often under lock and key. Something intimate and biographical, personal and non-transferable.

Later, we brought a ‘little piece of beach’ into the museum: a fragment of sand that Anna herself sifted to recover objects, remnants, memories and traces of the sea. Resting on this miniature shoreline is a large *Collar de sirena* (Siren Necklace). The piece could almost be the artisanal product of a group of women who, to the rhythm of gentle music and the sea breeze, perform offerings and celebrations, freed from their moorings. Alongside it are hybrid objects and assemblages representing myths and metaphors, such as *La llorona* (The Weeping Woman), *La alegoría de la transitoriedad* (The Allegory of Transience), *Territorio mar* (Sea Territory) and *Oannes nadando en el infinito* (Oannes Swimming into Infinity) among others. Fragments of chandelier crystals cling to a beam, speaking to the fragility of the vivid colours that inhabit the ocean’s depths.

Mar Guerrero then presents *Marsopeo* (Porpoising), a work that evokes both the oscillating movement of cetaceans and the aerodynamic rebound of Formula 1 cars, forging a link between marine and mechanical bodies. Constructed from car fins, these forms operate as marine creatures suspended between the organic and the artificial. The piece reflects human overproduction and its impact on natural elements, which are transformed into mechanisms straddling the boundary between the human and the animal, saturating landscapes – and often our shores and coastlines – while coexisting within human logic under entirely different rules. As Mar herself explains: “It dialogues with the hydrodynamics of cetaceans, designed for fluidity, in contrast to the rigidity of human materials.”

Not long ago, shifting sands inhabited the seashore and its vicinity. As they settled, they formed elegant dunes – a protective wall, crafted by the sea and its edge, difficult to traverse, shielding the land from harm. Few such dunes remain in the Mediterranean, yet Anna Talens calls on us not to forget them with *Estratigrafía de una duna* (Stratigraphy of a Dune), crafted from strips of fabric that form a horizon between epidermis and earth. The fabrics simultaneously reveal that what appears stable is in constant transformation. The work engages with ideas of layering, sedimentation and geological time. Anna conceives matter as fragments of memory, as an archive that is not human but natural – a dune recording the epidermis of time, a time that, in some places and moments, comes to an end. It is a reflection on how we situate ourselves in the world, particularly in a present marked by environmental crises, displacement and accelerated change.

Adjacent to this, Anna’s *Acariciar un campo peligroso* (Caressing a Dangerous Field), in navy blue, invites being touched. The wildness of the sea is expressed through hundreds of needles, while the dark silk speaks of a surface, a place that appears monochrome yet can be entered and danced with by the body – though with the care demanded by a turbulent sea that could carry us into the abyss.

... Mrs. Ramsay could not help exclaiming, “Oh, how beautiful!” For the great plateful of blue water was before her; the hoary Lighthouse, distant, austere, in the midst; and on the right, as far as the eye could see, fading and falling, in soft low pleats, the green sand dunes with the wild flowing grasses on them, which always seemed to be running away into some moon country, uninhabited of men.⁵

At this point, Mar presents *Double Eclipse*, a work using car front hubs arranged as if they were metallic shells – hardened remnants that evoke marine forms. On each sits a blown-glass piece encasing dog hair: one white, the other black. The transparency of the glass preserves yet exposes this intimate trace, while the heavy, technical metal evokes a fossilised organism lifted from the seabed. Between these elements, a play of dualities emerges: light and shadow, fragility and strength, the living and the mechanical. Like a double eclipse, the two pieces symbolically orbit one another. The contrast of colours emphasises the idea of two complementary forces that conceal and reveal, transforming everyday materials into a small poetic system of attraction and mystery.

From here, the light continues to guide us across the space, revealing other false sirens rising above the surface, accompanied by remnants of materials carried by the sea. Assembled textures, blended colours and mixed debris create new poetic forms.

Along one side of this large gallery, a *Fragmento de horizonte* (Fragment of Horizon) separates us from the darkness. Anna Talens sketches an abstract, kinetic surface using delicate Japanese silver-leaf threads – the start of a woven structure. There is a palpable tension between the ideal and the real. This is not merely a visual intervention; it is also tactile, emphasising slowness, care, dedication and tension. Looking becomes a poetic act. By tracing this horizon subtly and with almost invisible strokes, Talens invites us to inhabit a more romantic perception, prompting reflection on memory, place and light. In another part of the gallery, in her exploration of this imagined line, she ventures into the impossible with a *Horzizonte vertical* (Vertical Horizon), created by separating the warp from the weft of a silk fabric. Similarly, in her *Horizontes* (Horizons) series, three landscapes are translated into overlapping horizontal threads: kinetic landscapes in which a golden horizon emerges – the meeting place of sky and sea.

Following this route through the exhibition, we descend into the depths of the sea, beyond the reach of the lighthouse’s illumination. Here, only our minds and wide-open eyes gradually reveal beings, creatures, objects and fleeting visions. Anna Talens presents small works on lighthouses, horizons, maps and shipwrecks that remind us that light exists even above the darkness. On old postcards and nautical charts, she draws with gold leaf or silver lines to reconstruct and connect places, like temporary scars, turning what gleams into a metaphor for care and the fleeting moment. Romantic images are merged with contemporary interventions, tracing lines that push towards an imagined horizon. Inspired by the poet Friedrich von Schiller, these works evoke a happy, golden ending. What is broken is rebuilt; the horizon is reached. An ideal horizon projected through the gaze, a place where hope, aspiration and memory converge. These postcards and textiles rest on the seabed – perhaps lost in a shipwreck, carried to the bottom by the tide, or misplaced during a stroll along the shore.

As with those lost and carried to the seabed, we encounter works by Mar Guerrero in *Materia abisal* (Abyssal Matter), pieces that did not wash ashore but emerged to the surface after being shaped by the movements of the sea. Over time, the ocean has transformed them into beautiful creatures, rescued by the artist. These translucent capsules evoke organisms

5. Excerpt from the novel *To the Lighthouse*, by Virginia Woolf.

suspended in an in-between state – at once familiar and enigmatic – that seem to communicate with one another from an abysmal silence, which, in this dark space, a sound piece of the same title seeks to activate.

An entire fauna is encountered in this deep, dark and mysterious sea: *Pez abisal* (Abyssal Fish), a small *Red roja* (Red Net), which Anna Talens transforms into living beings full of light – small installations with subtle interventions that call for a slow, attentive gaze, gradually brought into focus by the eye.

Through tiny perforations, Anna sketches and inscribes marine creatures – octopuses, anemones, sea urchins – in bright colours on flat surfaces. Submerged and viewed in depth, these works evoke the richness of the ocean floor and remind us of the need for its conservation. Delicate and poetic, some of these creatures seem to change as one moves around them, as if glimpsed in an underwater vision. With the shifting light of the depths, a new territory is revealed to a select few, always experienced as magical and mysterious. They bear witness to the tension between the intangible and the material.

Agua cósmica (Cosmic Waters) is the final marine treasure in this space. Mar Guerrero situates us in a realm where the marine ecosystem intersects with astronomical observation, forging connections between science and ecology. Made from plastics recovered from the sea, the artist places them on white clay spheres and hemispheres, leaving traces of these residues on their surfaces. These are then digitised and 3D-printed in oyster filament, acting as fossils or as a kind of “archaeology of the future,” in the words of Daniel Birnbaum.

Yet this exhibition is not intended to be discouraging; rather, it seeks to inspire and raise awareness about a territory – the sea – that must be observed, cared for and understood in all its depth. It concludes with Mar Guerrero’s video work *Donde nada lleva a nada* (Where Nothing Leads to Nothing), which begins in the sea and ends there. The piece introduces a strange element – another creature – that activates a play of perception and uncertainty through light and colour, blending the photographic image with the photographed subject. Nothingness is not a void here; it vibrates with possibilities, maintaining its universe in constant movement, outward or inward, from one shore to another in this ever-shifting territory.

Between surface and depth, between sunlight and abyssal darkness, a territory unfolds that belongs to neither extreme, but to the passage between them. It is a perceptual and emotional experience, where the horizon becomes a metaphor for the unattainable and the profound, a reflection of the unfathomable. Territories of inaccessibility, mystery and uncertainty.

Two lands look at one another without ever touching yet meet where their darkest waters converge. Two shores that meet at infinity, on the line of the horizon. Here the unknown occurs – from the joy of the shore to the fear of the abyss. Both artists, from distinct perspectives, approach this territory not merely as a physical space, but as one imbued with memory, transformation and ambiguity.

Through their works, Mar Guerrero and Anna Talens invite us to rethink the sea not only as a physical space, but as an expanded territory. They draw the viewer into this mutable surface, proposing an experience of dualities: between presence and absence, residual matter and golden light, the constructed and the marine. They compel us to recognise a fundamental truth: the solid – whether an island, a building or a structure – exists only as an exception, defined, framed and made visible by the ocean itself.

In this context, the horizon is no longer a distant, unreachable line. It becomes a principle of vision, a new geography and a territory that can be traversed – simultaneously poetic, political and ethical.

References

- Benedetti, M. (2024). *Inventario - I: Poesía, 1950-1985*. Visor Libros.
- Nietzsche, F. W. (2003). *Beyond Good and Evil*. Penguin Classics.
- Pessoa, F. (2017). *The Book of Disquiet*. New Directions.
- Verne, J. (2002). *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. Penguin Classics.
- Woolf, V. (1927). *To the Lighthouse*. Hogarth Press.
- Woolf, V. (1931). *The Waves*. Harcourt Brace & Co.