

Underwater Sculpture Park – The Cacti Series by Claudia Comte Installed on the Seabed of East Portland Fish Sanctuary in Jamaica

Developed during Comte's TBA21–Academy Residency at Alligator Head Foundation,
The Cacti Series Stands as a Permanent Monument to Marine Protection
and Community Engagement



Image credits: Left – Claudia Comte, *Aurélien (Underwater Cacti)*, 2019, photo credit: F-Stop Movies;
Right – Claudia Comte installing *Underwater Cacti*

Portland, Jamaica—August 2, 2019—Renowned artist **Claudia Comte, together with TBA21–Academy**, has installed the latest series of her iconic cacti sculptures on the seabed in Jamaica, creating a permanent underwater exhibition in the East Portland Fish Sanctuary accessible by diving and snorkeling. Designed as a monument for marine protection and a tribute to the collective effort of the local community to restore the ecosystem, the sculptures will also support the reinvigoration of the reef and coral regrowth as they are overlaid with coral in January 2020.

An advocate for the protection of biodiversity in forests, Comte was inspired to create a work promoting care for the local marine environment during her TBA21–Academy Residency, hosted at **Alligator Head Foundation (AHF)**, the Academy's conservation science partner. Through this partnership, TBA21–Academy offers residents a profound and immersive experience working within the protected conservation area of the East Portland Fish Sanctuary. The residency also includes access to the Alligator Head Marine Laboratory, where artists can investigate and collaborate with scientists, conservationists, and the local community. The sculptures were created in close collaboration with **Nathaniel Petre**, the Academy's first ever technology resident, who was investigating disruptive distributing manufacturing and how 3D printing with waste products can support economic transformation.

The installation of the sculpture park and the end of Comte's residency this July coincided with the third anniversary of the East Portland Fish Sanctuary, which is managed by AHF and has seen an overall 200% increase of biomass and a 16% increase in species diversity as a result of facilitating alternative livelihood and

training programs for local fisherman. The sculpture park is dedicated to the local community, whose commitment to the regeneration of the reef inspired the artist.

Comte's residency also included the creation of a body of new works in wood, carved from 40 fallen tree trunks. Inspired by the shapes of corals, sponges, and other reef dwelling organisms, and commissioned by the Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Foundation, a selection of these sculptures will premiere at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid in a 2020 exhibition curated by Chus Martínez.

ABOUT THE PROJECT PARTNERS

Claudia Comte (b. 1983) is a Swiss artist who works in a variety of media, including sculpture and painting. Her approach is defined by her interest in the memory of materials and by a careful observation of how the hand relates to different technologies. Comte's residency at Alligator Head Foundation builds on her participation in TBA21–Academy's *The Current Expedition #1* to New Zealand in summer 2018 and the premiere of her performance *The Day that Wood and Matter Wanted to Become Salt Water* at Convening #1 at Ocean Space in Venice in September 2018, both led by Chus Martínez.

[TBA21–Academy](#) is dedicated to fostering a deeper understanding of the ocean through the lens of art and to engendering creative solutions to its most pressing issues. Founded by Francesca Thyssen-Bornemisza and led by Director Markus Reymann, the Academy leads artists, scientists, and thought-leaders on expeditions of collaborative discovery across the globe.

[Alligator Head Foundation](#) (AHF) is the scientific partner of TBA21–Academy. Based in Portland, Jamaica, the nonprofit organization manages the East Portland Fish Sanctuary and supports the research efforts of the Alligator Head Marine Lab, with a mission to advance conservancy, protect marine life, restore habitats, and regenerate local economies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND IMAGES, PLEASE CONTACT:

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