



# THE ICE MONOLITH. Platform

Stefano Cagol

interviewing

Ombretta Agrò Andruff, Francesca Bacci, Lucia Barison, Guido Bartorelli,  
Malgorzata Basinska, Alessandra Benacchio, Stefan Bidner,  
Camilla Boemio, Iara Boubnova, Giulio Bursi, Giusy Caroppo,  
Chiara Casarin, Alfredo Cramerotti, Blanca de la Torre,  
Gianluca d'Inca Levis, Federica Forti, Peggy Gale, Idis Hartmann,  
Gregor Jansen, Luba Kuzovnikova, Esther Lu, Mihovil Markulin,  
Daria Mille-Rassokhina, Chiara Parisi, Emanuele Quinz, Maren Richter,  
Michele Robecchi, Saverio Simi De Burgis, Maddalena Tomasi,  
Fatos Ustek, Kamila Wielebska, Eric M. Wilcox,  
June Yap, Raul Zamudio





Stefano Cagol is artist participating in the  
55th International Art Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia,  
Maldives Pavilion.

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Stefano Cagol, THE ICE MONOLITH, 2013, public performance, ice block, 50 x 200 x 120 cm, 72 hours melting process, 72 hours video shooting. Last Day. Riva Cà di Dio, Venezia  
Back cover

Stefano Cagol, THE ICE MONOLITH, 2013, public performance, ice block, 50 x 200 x 120 cm, 72 hours melting process, 72 hours video shooting. Second day. Riva Cà di Dio, Venezia

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1. How not to disappear?
2. What is affecting the Earth?
3. How does art influence society?

THE ICE MONOLITH is the project I realized for my participation at the 55th International Art Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia, Maldives Pavilion.

It is a video installation by the Pavilion venue; has been a 72 hours performance during the Biennale opening days on Riva Cà di Dio documented by a 72 hours video shooting; and is a Platform.

The Platform is developing in various ways from dialogues to concerts, in different moments along all 6 months of Biennale, and in several places – by the Maldives Pavilion in Venice, by my studio at VIR Viafarini-in-residence in Milan, on the web, on alpine glaciers.

As part of the platform I conceived an extended interview involving a wide circle of players – since Sanskrit name of Maldives Mālā-dvīpa literally means garland of islands – and choosing as questions 3 FAQ asked by the global mass to Google.com.

Curators, and researchers have been invited to face dilemmas, to answer to THE ICE MONOLITH.

In following pages at random, the answers given by each of the more than 30 involved players.



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Eric M. Wilcox, scientist of Division of Atmospheric Science, Desert Research Institute, Reno, Nevada (USA)

### 1. How not to disappear?

How not to disappear is exactly the question society has been struggling with for decades now. Significant impacts from melting glaciers and rising sea levels are at this point virtually unavoidable as further warming, ice melt and thermal expansion of the ocean are guaranteed by the increases in greenhouse gas concentrations we have already caused. The worst impacts, including total disappearance glaciers and islands could be avoided by curbing emissions of greenhouse gases. However a successful mechanism to achieve this goal continues to elude mankind. Some trivialize this challenge as merely one of summoning the will to conquer it, or chalk up our failure in this regard to the nefarious activities of global fossil fuel corporations. However, access to energy is fundamental to human well-being in the modern era, and societies both rich and poor continually seek the cheapest and easiest means of accessing it. Until non-fossil sources of energy become the cheapest and easiest to access for people around the world, we will not conquer this problem. This is no small feat.

### 2. What is affecting the Earth?

The evolution of Earth is affected by factors external to Earth such as the energy from the Sun and the gravitational attraction of the sun and moon. It is also affected by a myriad internal processes such as Earth's own gravity, vulcanism, biological and chemical processes ranging from global to molecular in scale. And Earth's evolution is now

inexorably linked to the actions of mankind. Some regard this view as evidence of hubris. But evidence of its validity is clearly illustrated in the footprint of our cities and agriculture on the landscape and is plainly evident in the changing chemistry of the ocean and atmosphere. Which is dominant - mankind or the forces of nature? Settling such a debate is not essential - only the recognition that our collective actions are a significant force.

### 3. How does art influence society?

The answer to how art influences society may be one of the keys to determining the best course for mankind. That our actions are clearly affecting the trajectory of our planet, with major consequences for societies and ecosystems, is not enough to guide us to the correct course of action. We must decide, both individually and collectively, what we value and how our choices impact that which we value most. Science can tell us what effects our actions have, but it cannot tell us whether the things we have lost or gained were worth it in the end. Art has the power to compel us to reflect on our own values. The challenge of the artists and storytellers is to help us understand what it is we value and to help us make those connections between our actions and their consequences for that which we truly care most about.

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Alfredo Cramerotti, director of Mostyn, Lladudno, curator (as part of CPS) of the Maldives Pavilion at 55th Venice Biennale (I, UK)

### 1. How not to disappear?

By appearing everywhere at all times, one disappears as it

becomes ubiquitously present. It's a social network strategy in the information age. I never tried not to disappear.

2. What is affecting the Earth?

Mainly mobility, of goods and people. That's what changes not only our idea of the Earth, but its physicality too. In good and bad terms, at the same time.

3. How does art influence society?

How does it not influence it? Society is an organisational human model, of which art is a key marginal feature. The previous was an oxymoron, and we all are in it.

—

Peggy Gale, independent curator & critic, Toronto (CA)

1. How not to disappear?

2. What is affecting the Earth?

3. How does art influence society?

THE ICE MONOLITH is a physical construction, frozen evidence of a natural property of water, freezing in below-zero conditions. The monolith is then in dialogue with other natural forces: melting back into water as the freezing conditions subside.

We will know THE ICE MONOLITH briefly through personal contact, and finally via documentation – words and images – and memory.

More commonly, ice in Venice appears in hand-held glasses, at celebrations, in cooling and refreshing drinks: a

modern intervention.

Ice also recalls ancient stories and history, a time when our whole earth was frozen, as is still the case for other worlds in our universe.

Art recalls and projects forwards: known worlds, acknowledged hopes and fears. THE ICE MONOLITH in Venice 2013 is testimony to and witness of our concern(s).

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June Yap, curator in residence at Guggenheim Museum, New York (SG, USA)

\* As the subject is of disappearance, I have provided for my contribution quotes by other people.

1. How not to disappear?

“To free yourself is to trespass. To trespass is to exist. To free ourselves is to exist.” Augusto Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed, London: Pluto Press, 2008 (first published 1974, Teatro del Oprimido)

2. What is affecting the Earth?

“There is no doubt that in the context of a contemporary civilization more or less completely dominated by the market, everything can be interpreted as an effect of market forces in one way or another. For this reason, the value of such an interpretation is null, for an explanation of everything remains unable to explain anything in particular.” Boris Groys, Going Public, e-flux journal: Sternberg Press

### 3. How does art influence society?

“We can smell the scent of a steaming pot of jasmine rice... Sunlight pours in from an October afternoon, and already we feel the compression of the gallery lifted from our shoulders... As one sits down for the bowl (white enamel with blue rims) of food, one begins to realize that this is a distinctively different experience from others we have had in an art gallery or with art.” Rirkrit Tiravanija, *No Ghosts in the Wall*, 2004

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Maren Richter, curator, Vienna. Associate curator, Maldives Pavilion at 55th Venice Biennale (A)

#### 1. How not to disappear?

Disappearing or appearing is strongly linked to the concept of identity – along an axis of space and time. Power structures like bio politics for example are in charge of defining disappearance by rules, regulations and borders. They define who is forced to live a hidden life, a “naked life.”

So one has to ask first: Who and what is allowed to appear? Who and what must disappear? Who and what defines “being” – that of human beings as well as that of nature.

#### 2. What is affecting the Earth?

The idea of earth as an endless commodity within a political and economical power game between the west and the global south.

#### 3. How does art influence society?

Art has always been part of developing society. Therefore it has the capacity to create alternatives to existing forms, it has the capacity to build alternative channels of knowledge production, it has the capacity to create alternatives to politics of images, it has the capacity to comment but also to produce new technologies of resistance and protest, as we have been able to witness in Arab spring, European summer, American winter and right now in Turkish summer...

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Camilla Boemio, writer, University consultant and curator, Rome. Associate curator, Maldives Pavilion at 55th Venice Biennale (I)

### 1. How not to disappear?

Act as a museum preserving values and eternal truths. Creating a structure, physical and mental, open-generating new energies, trading and permanent dialogue trans-generational.

The slogan “sculpture in the expanded field,” coined by Rosalind Krauss had in mind the strong penetration of confusing categories of art.

“Art in the expanded field” more and more involved in global issues, eg climate change, science, politics, society.

### 2. What is affecting the Earth?

The land is affected by monopolies of power (just think of the oil), the use of whole continents tight, hegemonies and struggles, from “Historia if repetit” courses and historical claims of Vico.



### 3. How does art influence society?

The art influences society when it fails to grasp the ropes of the structural change in the coming debate the major issues, anticipating: the content, the terms of visions and triggering real change.

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Chiara Parisi, director of cultural programs at Hôtel de la Monnaie, Paris (I, FR)

#### 1. How not to disappear?

By becoming Maurizio Cattelan

#### 2. What is affecting the Earth?

The ecological thought

#### 3. How does art influence society?

By being where we do not expect

---

Gregor Jansen, director of Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (DE)

#### 1. How not to disappear?

Culture as a kind of immaterial Holography as a storage medium, as the soul of society. It helps to remain and survive!

#### 2. What is affecting the Earth?

Time normally heals all wounds. But our global world has a terminal illness!

#### 3. How does art influence society?

It is a dual education system – art is influenced by society in needs for achievement and affiliation and in a permanent correlation, therefore art is the best force for the understanding of society & culture (so please go back to FAQ 1)

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Mihovil Markulin, preparator at Viafarini, Milan (HR, I)

1. How not to disappear?  
make pyramids
2. What is affecting the Earth?  
the moon
3. How does art influence society?  
insegna a vivere

---

Blanca de la Torre, associate curator of Artium, Vitoria-Gasteiz (ES)

1. How not to disappear?  
Keeping the quintessence of everything in an ESSENCE MONOLITH
2. What is affecting the Earth?  
Specially some decisions and not decisions taken and not taken by POLITITIANS MONOLITHS.
3. How does art influence society?

By allowing people to see the world through a different  
KNOWLEDGE MONOLITH.

—  
Esther Lu, independent curator, Taipei, curator of Taiwan  
Pavilion at 55th Venice Biennale (TW)

1. How not to disappear?

Forget about the concept of time.

2. What is affecting the Earth?

Gods, people and maybe others that smell fishy.

3. How does art influence society?

It always breaks the idea of society, but communicates  
human emotion, perception and imagination.

—  
Fatoş Üstek, independent curator & art critic, London (TR,  
UK)

1. How not to disappear?

Appearance and disappearance, both, are dependent on the  
faculties of perception. Perceiving something means that  
there is a certain level of sensorial input generated by that  
something being perceived. Although perception does not  
immediately imply cognition, let alone recognition. That is  
to say, the filters of perception juxtaposed with the domain  
of the familiar titillates the nerves, hence allows the subject  
to conceive something as there, with its “accountable”  
features. Yet, there is always a subject as no object can  
cognize, let alone perceive. The division of the subject and

object ontology acknowledges why we owe to Spinoza. Thus, there is a sufficient necessity of a differentiation between the disappearance of an object and a subject. As the former can be recovered rather easily than the latter. In other words, the disappearance of an object means the change in its location, at most its state (i.e. From solid to liquid). Although, for subjects the consequences might be fatal. How not to disappear might be more challenging than answering How to disappear (even in today's current technologies of tracking down movement and social interaction). If the question is about the struggle of an object on redeeming its appearance, there is not much that can be done: everything is changing all the time. In the course of a subject, answers vary according to his/her geotemporalities.

## 2. What is affecting the Earth?

This question is incoherent, in a way in which, it may never be answered fully. You might see it as an unsolvable puzzle. It may not be, although its parameters are both variables. What does "earth" stand for? A biased entity that is only recipient of "exterior" factors? How can the relational condition of "affect" be conditioned as mono-directional? What would Badiou, of all other thinkers, say about this? Hence, the only answer to such a question can be as obliterative as itself: Nothing or Everything.

## 3. How does art influence society?

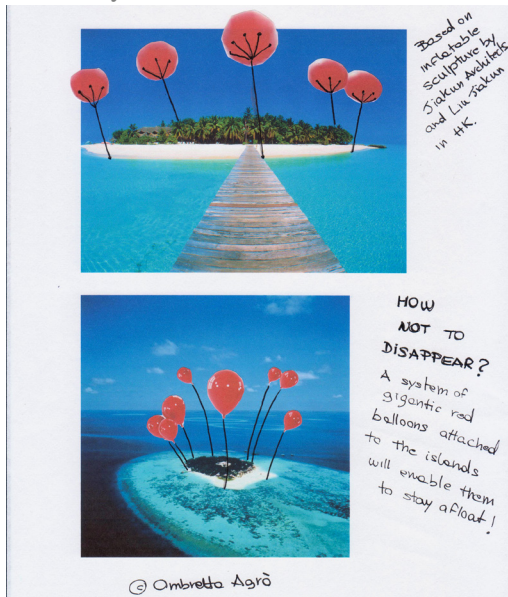
There is not an easy answer to such a question, which aims to evaluate "a social intervention." For a coherent answer, a stratified random sampling shall be carried among the society that is addressed in the question. With a contingent

definition of society via its subjects, the questioning body may find an answer. Although the assessment of such intervention may exceed its monetary value, as different societies shall be targeted for the cause to reach an approximate society, in order to attain an answer that applies to all.

Ombretta Agrò Andruff, independent curator and art critic, Miami (I, USA)

### 1. How not to disappear?

A system of gigantic red balloons attached to the islands will enable them to stay afloat!



## 2. What is affecting the Earth?

...other than 2 billion people bustling around, trying to make a living (some with vastly more success than others) without much consideration of the consequences on the planet?

## 3) How does art influence society

Books have been written about this issue and I am sure many can answer in a much more eloquent way than I would. So I'll provide instead an example about art can uplift at least one human being, and that would be me. Whenever I have the blues or get moody I read this incredibly simple and beautiful poem by William Blake, and life gets rosy (at least rosi-er) again:

“To see a world in a grain of sand,  
And a heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,  
An eternity in an hour.” William Blake

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Emanuele Quinz, maitre de conférences at Université Paris VIII (I, FR)

## 1. How not to disappear?

“There ain't no answer. There ain't gonna be any answer. There never has been an answer. That's the answer”.  
Gertrude Stein

## 2. What is affecting the Earth?

The human time. The human notion of time: irreversibility.

## 3. How does art influence society?

“Turn on, Tune in, Drop out” Timothy Leary

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Raul Zamudio, independent curator, co-curator of La Biental del Barrio 2013, New York (MX, USA)

1. How not to disappear?

In a world where surveillance and digital “foot-printing,” among other modes of tracking are becoming ubiquitous, the question is moot. What needs to be asked is the inverse; everyone needs at least one alter-identity to move stealthily through the global Panopticon. In the future now, the flâneur’s stroll is of the interior variety, for the Delphic adage of Know Thyself is more pertinent than ever.

2. What is affecting the Earth?

Psychological, social and political alienation coupled with post Laissez-faire economics are exacerbating the global condition. As John Donne stated in Meditation XVII (1624): “No man is an island, entire of itself. Each is a piece of the continent, a part of the main....Each man’s death diminishes me, for I am involved in mankind. Therefore, send not to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee.”

3. How does art influence society?

In an exchange-based society, art is emptied of its meaning and becomes a vehicle for something other than what the work may have originally signified or artist intended. This may be a cynical view of society’s subsuming of art, but only through the latter’s critical potential can there be hope for what this question alludes; that is, the redemptive

and affirmative power of art. While any creative endeavor including art making must be politically self-reflexive, this doesn't mean throwing out the aestheticized baby with the bathwater. There is nothing worse than a doctrinaire view of art.

---

Luba Kuzovnikova, art director of Pikene på Broen,  
Kirkenes (RU, NO)

1. How not to disappear?

I believe in visionary capacity and personal responsibility on the part of top-politicians and local politicians, business-owners, engineers, researchers, writers, artists - so that they take full responsibility for decisions they make and words they say – each and every one of them/us on their/our own level and in their/our field of activity, so that warmer areas that are getting hotter will not burn away, dry areas that are getting drier will not dry away, the rising water will slow down, and the ice will freeze again.

2. What is affecting the Earth?

We, billions of people, breathing and producing CO<sub>2</sub>, developing technology and aspiring to go faster, fly higher, drill deeper, with super good intentions to overcome shortcomings of the previous ages and to do things in a new and better way. It is a puzzle that I am trying to solve for myself - how can I combine a week in the open tundra and iPhone 5 (frankly, my first iPhone that I have just bought) ?

3. How does art influence society?



Like a magnifying glass, making the invisible visible, Like an amplifier, making the unheard heard... The question is how to install the magnifying glass and the amplifier into the society?

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**Kamila Wielebska, curator and art critic, Warsaw, (PL)**

### 1. How not to disappear?

This is a rather ambitious question, especially, since we all are going to disappear which is quite an obvious process. However, throughout the ages people have tried to do many things to somehow pass on their existence. In the context of art, this basic need to record a trace of life is perhaps the main cause of creation. Not only in the direct meaning of commemorating somebody's life and death or even as a more or less plain subject of an artwork but also in a more hidden and metaphorical way. Not only in art is the process of annihilation counteracted. But art depicts it and in this way emphasises this natural reaction. Famous Dutch still lives from the 17th century of vanitas meaning are compositions filled with different kinds of objects and only some of them, like skulls or hourglasses, could be obviously connected with death. To "read" the rest of them it is necessary to have special knowledge about visual codes from the past ages. Paradoxically, in contemporary art it could be even more difficult to find this kind of vanitas interpretation contained within pieces of art. Is it possible, for example, to see Andy Warhol's colourful series of images of the same face or object in the mortal context without knowledge of his obsession with death? But yes, they are like frozen

images of life come to a halt and reproduced in almost the same constantly repeated frame. Appearances produced to prevent destruction.

Stefano Cagol's *THE ICE MONOLITH* also reminds us of this threat of disappearance. Actually, the work will be vanishing during the time of the show. And what to reply if Cagol asks "How not to disappear?" and in the same time he brings a monolith of ice from the Alps to Venice during summer? It is quite certain that the ice cube will be melting and probably will disappear. But what does "disappear" actually mean? In this particular case the ice will become water. Honestly, it doesn't sound like nonentity. It means just another state of being.

## 2. What is affecting the Earth?

I like the idea of the Earth presented in James Lovelock's writings. Earth, called by Lovelock Gaia after the ancient Greek goddess of Earth, is according to him "a kind of a living organism, something able to regulate its climate and composition so as always to be comfortable for the organisms that inhabited it" and "a self-regulating entity." We, as human beings, despite our abilities to create sophisticated cultures with high technical development, are only just an element of this living superorganism. The mutual dependence of all elements of Gaia means that they affect each other, usually in a very complex, domino-like way. The strange thing is that humans who could be deeply aware of all these processes concerning Gaia behave in such a humanocentric and ignorant way. This begins with the very name of the Planet. In *Gaia. A New Look at Life on Earth*, James Lovelock's book quoted here previously, the author reminds us of an observation made

once by Arthur C. Clark: “we call it Earth when nearly three quarters of its surface is sea.” This is just a short remark but if we don’t remember this fact, it will have its consequences – some of them even hard to predict.

### 3. How does art influence society?

Does art influence society? Do you truly believe in this? Do you believe that society needs art? Who is interested in art and why? What does society really mean for you? Can you imagine all these people? Who are they? What are the specific situations in which they have a contact with art? And what percentage of the population of your country is a group of museum-, art center- and gallery-goers? Who are they? Do you always meet the same faces during openings at your nearest art institution? Do you think that art shown there influences society? Why do you believe that a role of art is to influence society and why is this question important for you?... Do you as an artist like to influence society? If yes, what impact would you like to have, on whom and why? Do you think that your question directly concern some core issues of our time or it’s just the tip of the iceberg?

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Chiara Casarin, independent curator, Venice (I)

### 1. How not to disappear?

Thinking in a different way, the way in which things disappear. I think everything changes and everything is going to modify its existence but things that remain have something special as the color, the frame, the sound, the soul.

## 2. What is affecting the Earth?

The violence, the absence of respect, the greediness, the blindness.

## 3. How does art influence society?

Art is the most important thing in society because it's able to modify the way of thinking. Art is philosophy, art can move people. Society needs art because nothing else makes someone cry or laugh, think or sleep, eat or make love.

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Daria Mille-Rassokhina, research, Museum of Contemporary Art, ZKM, Karlsruhe (DE)

## 1. How not to disappear?

A possible answer from the point of view of the mankind can be a further evolution/evolutionary salutary reversal as a result of adaptation to the changing climate conditions on the Earth. As Kurt Vonnegut pointed it out, our brains have become just far too large in the process of evolution. These brains have turned to act in an awfully destructive way. They invented nuclear weapons and continue to destroy and terrify our planet. In his novel "Galápagos" (1985) Vonnegut describes a state of the mankind after a financial crisis and other troubles caused by the „big brains“. On a desolate island (where Darwin developed his evolution theory) a million years later in the future, the descendants of the survived humans besides much smaller brains than before have flippers, beaks, and their skin is protected by fur similar to that of seals. The mankind not only appeared to be able to survive, but also have attained a paradisiac

state, since that is what most of people actually would like to do: lying on a beach and swimming in a blue lagoon...

## 2. What is affecting the Earth?

The existence of the Earth is affected by natural powers as well as by the power of human reductionism/fragmentalism. Reductionism proves to be helpful in such sciences as chemistry or physics, but applied to ecology and biology it might be harmful. For example, Renée Descartes, the founder of modern rationalism, in his *De homine* (1662), put forward a supposition that human organs function like machines and animals can be likened to “automata”. Nowadays we know that the ecological systems are so complex that on one side it is not possible to describe them as a simple sum of their parts and on the other side as a chain determined by a cause and effect. A deterministic approach to nature and to technology makes only a fragmental vision of reality possible. It hinders an adequate vision of the consequences of human actions, deprives people of an ability to forecast and evaluate all the scope of ecological catastrophes on a global scale and their effect on human culture.

## 3. How does art influence society?

Irony does not function as an instrument of subversion any longer. So the time has come for direct action and activism in art. The society seems to badly need and expect commitment, courage and disobedience from artists and the artistic community on the whole. Though a lot of art projects nowadays are community-based, they tend to remain artistic and aesthetic projects, supporting the existing neoliberal status quo. It was Félix Guattari

who elaborated the concept of Ecosophy in his essay *The Three Ecologies* (1989). It not only includes a narrow notion of environmental issues but is understood as a unity of societal, environmental and mental ecologies and their interconnections. A traditional view on ecology still includes a dualistic separation of human and non human systems. It is this interconnection and interdependency between the ecologies of society, mind and environment that is important for Guattari. So the challenges of ecological dilemmas can be met by focusing on the totality of these three ecologies. This point of view might appear naïve today, but according to Guattari, art is one of the modes to enable these three levels to become integrated: artists take a leading position in elaboration of “a new synthesis” through which the experience of art can contribute to a better balance of our lives. At the same time art thus could help decrease social and ecological troubles.

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Stefan Bidner, independent curator, Vienna (A)

1. How not to disappear?  
pain
2. What is affecting the Earth?  
satan
3. How does art influence society?  
war

—  
Iara Boubnova, contemporary art critic and curator, Sofia  
(RU, BG)

1. How not to disappear?

A list of some observation. In a corner, it's warm.  
A glance leaves an imprint on anything it's dwelt on.  
Water is glass's most public form.  
Man is more frightening than its skeleton.  
A nowhere winter evening with wine. A black  
porch resists an osier's stiff assaults.  
Fixed on an elbow, the body bulks  
like a glacier's debris, a moraine of sorts.  
A millennium hence, they'll no doubt expose  
a fossil bivalve propped behind this gauze  
cloth, with the print of lips under the print of fringe,  
mumbling "Good night" to a window hinge.  
Joseph Brodsky, 1975-76

Это -- ряд наблюдений. В углу -- тепло.  
Взгляд оставляет на вещи след.  
Вода представляет собой стекло.  
Человек страшней, чем его скелет.  
Зимний вечер с вином в нигде.  
Веранда под натиском ивняка.  
Тело покоится на локте,  
как морена вне ледника.  
Через тыщу лет из-за штор моллюск  
извлекут с проступившем сквозь бахрому  
оттиском "доброй ночи" уст,  
не имевших сказать кому.  
Йосиф Бродский 1975 -- 1976

## 2. What is affecting the Earth?

Everything, but I trust it to coup with such temporary thing as the humankind.

## 3. How does art influence society?

Ideally it makes people open minded, generous, kind, elevated, and insightful, etc. and societies will follow. Nowadays it propagandizes, produces objects of desire, scatters convictions, substitutes principles, etc. But still has that ability to make people open minded, generous, kind, elevated, insightful, etc., and some societies follow, with different speed, through their different parts. I'm optimistic.

---

Giusy Caroppo, art historian and independent curator,  
Barletta (I)

## 1. How not to disappear?

By rewriting the terrestrial habitat and social balances. That is, by spreading the culture of sustainable consumption and the re-environmentalization of productive cycles; by making solidarity and respect for man and environment the centre of our "life." Otherwise, we can only "resist."

2. What is affecting the Earth? Environmental and socio-economic imbalances, as a result of the superficiality and indifference of common man (former homo sapiens sapiens), of the cunning of political rulers, of the arrogance of multinationals.

## 3. How does art influence society?



Art has the ability to materialize the future through the language and methods of the present. By blending aesthetics and ethics, it conveys “suspended” messages that invite to meditate, softly or violently creeping into social consciousness, disintegrating clichés, waving the “flag” of the utopia of change. It does all this, now more than ever, thanks to the web, making a ticketless intercontinental journey.

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Idis Hartmann, research, Museum of Contemporary Art, ZKM, Karlsruhe (DE)

### 1. How not to disappear?

We are living comfortably in a digital world. The term “digital natives” suggests that it is our natural habitat. Paul Virilio and Jean Baudrillard had predicted that we might disappear in virtual reality, simulation, or hyperreality. By now, we send an email every few minutes, update our Facebook status, post new photos, threads, or tweets. If we don’t we might not be seen, we might disappear in the flood of digital data created by billions of people online worldwide. Things we have seen or experienced need to be spread in the digital network; otherwise it feels as if they haven’t even happened, as if they were not real. Today, however, we also think about how to disappear, how to erase our “digital footprint”? Our compulsion to make an appearance in the virtual networks as observably as possible has led to the point where we want to erase some or all of it. Therefore, Google now offers a digital last will. Surprisingly, that is not as preposterous as it sounds at first. There seems to be a wish to keep our digital self

in sync with our physical existence. Ever since the digital world has been discussed, the fear became apparent that it might control us. After the first euphoria and paranoia had settled, we have been trying to implement our ethic values in form of laws on the new digital media (crimes on the internet are just as much crimes as they would be in the analog world). If there is indeed a sense of keeping our virtual life consistent with our physical life, then, in turn, we also need to begin again to take care of our physical existence as much as we do of our virtual one. Even though it is now possible to live in a virtual world without physical presence it sure doesn't feel as good as wandering through a real landscape with its flavors, sounds and sensations. As fascinating, efficient and addictive the virtual experience might be it needs to be in sync with our physical existence. Otherwise we might disappear.

## 2. What is affecting the Earth?

Our view of it! When we invented maps we colonized the world. When we invented the telescope we integrated our planet into a solar system. When we invented the microscope we dissected the Earth. When we invented the space shuttle we watched the planet from the outside. When we invented the raster-tunnel-microscope we explored the Earth on a nano-scale. When we invented the real-time image we fought wars across the globe from a computer station via drones. When we invented the digital image we simulated the world. And this is of course only the Western view of the Earth. The question is thus: How will we see the world in the future?

## 3. How does art influence society?

Art, science and society are connected to a visual culture. Art not only reflects society, it also affects society. It can make things visible and comprehensible. It can introduce to a society new ways of seeing, of perceiving, of acting. Therefore art is either protected by a constitution of a society or censored. Either way, art can be a very powerful instrument. It can even be a means for activists that might change society.

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Giulio Bursi, researcher and film curator, Milan (I)

1. How not to disappear?

On a assez interprété les passions: il s'agit maintenant d'en trouver d'autres.

2. What is affecting the Earth?

La "pollution" est aujourd'hui à la mode, exactement de la même manière que la révolution: elle s'empare de toute la vie de la société, et elle est représentée illusoirement dans le spectacle. Elle est bavardage assommant dans une pléthore d'écrits et de discours erronés et mystificateurs, et elle prend tout le monde à la gorge dans les faits. Elle s'expose partout en tant qu'idéologie, et elle gagne du terrain en tant que processus réel.

3. How does art influence society?

Ce qui change notre manière de voir les rues est plus important que ce qui change notre manière de voir la peinture.

—  
Guido Bartorelli, professor of contemporary art history at University of Padova (I)

### 1. How not to disappear?

Why not to disappear? The only truth we do know about our future is that we will disappear, someday. Our life is a gift on a condition: death. On that, I remember an interesting point of view, that I found in my childish readings: Ilúvatar, the supreme Being and Creator of Tolkien's World, gave humans death as a gift, whereas elves stay bound to live until the end of the days.

### 2. What is affecting the Earth?

I think there are two kind of consideration. Earth is living and evolving, just like each of us and the entire Universe. Nothing is affecting ice exposed to the summer sun but heat, which changes its state in the most natural way; nothing is affecting Alps peaks, whose rocks sometimes crumble down, but geological erosion, just the same that made these peaks so beautiful. On the other hand, the dilemma is: how much in the evolving of Earth is not natural but due to human action? If it is exact that humans are influencing harmfully the course of things and are so stupid to not stop themselves, well, we have desolately to admit that humans affect the planet. But... maybe that is natural too. Every creature has its own affecting agent within the living flow. Ice has heat, rocks have ice and rain, we have bacteria and viruses. Earth has us.

### 3. How does art influence society?

Art is connected to society like a brunch to a tree. The

lymph which feeds art is the same which moves through entire society. What is this lymph? It is the great themes and questions that face us period by period. Art highlights these themes in a shining and timely way. Suggested by Stefano Cagol's project, I would say that the best piece of art is that one which shows us our "fate", or better our outcome. Having seen that, shall we be able to let art influence ourselves?

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Federica Forti, independent art critic and curator, Carrara (I)

1. How not to disappear?

Art is the only possible way not to disappear or disappear with dignity.

2. What is affecting the Earth?

The earth is suffering the effects of our exploitation and its rebellion times are too slow. We are falling inexorably without seeing the terrible consequences of our actions during the span of our existence. We are bequeathing all – more or less unconsciously.

3. How does art influence society?

The desires induced by the global economic system affect the desires of society. "Having created every man able to provide for their own existence, (Nature) declared them independent and free." Carlo Pisacane

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Saverio Simi De Burgis, art critic and historyan, professor of contemporary art history at Art Academy, Venezia (I)

### 1. How not to disappear?

I think in a certain way of consideration, not only for joking, is just a question of magic. In these years we are living still in a period where the reference to the authors of the different kind of works is very important to build their success. But at the same time there are too many authors in our age, so the consumerism involves also the names of the people who would like to be considered as the artists and a lot of times, after a certain period of success, nothing remains in particular after their death. So it is important to start thinking again about the works more than about ourselves. Fundamental is working about our ego: we should love it, but at the same time with a bit of detachment, distance from a self-satisfaction. If there is a good quality of the work, of course we will keep more connection with it, if there is a real motivation in making it, also we will be remembered in the future like the good works, well thought in the past still well living in the present with the eternal feeling of its natural ideas. That is the case of ancient remains until the middle-age and more in later centuries when the pieces of works were more important of their authors. So it's not the problem how not to disappear, it's more important how to do for our interesting presence also in the future.

### 2. What is affecting the Earth?

The Earth is affected by too much selfishness, without demurs already now at its terminate. This kind of feeling

involves every fields, from the economic one to the cultural and it is determined thanks to the will to affirm the ascendance of a few people on the others. The critical period we are living particularly in the West, is due to the necessities to develop a transformation that the majority don't think that it must succeed yet, to the contrary they try shackling everywhere calling back to anachronistic privileges. I think that the globalization problem in any case involves a consequent meditation about the local traditions in order that somebody has thought calling this aspect excogitating a neologism which is "glocal." We can see this difficult situation to solve in all its evidence. From one side multinationals and an economy which still would bet on utilizing obsolete methods of an absurd colonialism and consequent imperialism which in the west as a peculiar model of power has grown furious since XV Century, to the other side the regions in some way still virgin, with people who gradually are employing their awareness concerning the enormous natural resources to be used and distributed equally in the best way. It remains necessary not to indulge in any kind of overexploitation for human subsistence, reducing everything to a more motivating life in particular under the aspect of the solidarity so that to be possible to face the various transformations even those of the climate and those of Earth geologic adjustment whose from a long time the being selfishness is the most guilty and responsible.

### 3. How does art influence society?

In 2005, I participated at Where Art Worlds meet: Multiple Modernities and the Global Salon, an International Symposium organized by La Biennale di Venezia,

catalogue edited by Robert Storr in Venice, 2007. After the anthropologist-curator Jean-Hubert Martin's speech I told my opinion about the Art phenomenon in our time: they recorded my words (pp. 126-127). The wrong thing was that the curator misunderstood them in particular concerning my quotation about two art historians, Josef Strzygowski and Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy: Strzygowski one of the first scholar of Wien University Art History School, and Coomaraswamy, the most important expert of East Art, and charged on Oriental art section of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston until his death in 1947. But why I spoke about them? Because they are in a different way the first art historians with not only an Eurocentric reference in their theories but already connected with other cultures and consideration of Art feeling which should now to be useful to understand the phenomenon no in homologating goals but applying definitely a comparative method and a real anthropological and social meaning, starting from the connection between West and East Aesthetic so well studied at the same time in particular by Coomaraswamy in his book "Selected Papers, Traditional Art and Symbolism", printed in 1977.

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Lucia Barison, independent curator, Trento (I)

### 1. How not to disappear?

Through art. Through translation and creative interpretation of reality. Greeks, Etruscans and Egyptians, for example, sensed the power of art as timeless and alternative language comprehensible to everyone for its evocative power. Today, after thousands of years, the products of those cultures



have not disappeared but rather absorbed and reinterpreted through the art.

## 2. What is affecting the Earth?

The earth is the surface on which every thing, every behavior and action driven by man or nature fall. The art cushions, translates, interprets, justifies and sometimes hits back amplifying it.

## 3. How does art influence society?

The art influences society in the same way in which society influences art. The art translates, interprets and sometimes understands the dynamics of a population that does not fail to be triggered where itself is more fragile, more guilty. Art is a language more or less understood and spoken by the society. It's a language anyway.

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**Malgorzata Basinska, Master of Art, Oslo (NO)**

## 1. How not to disappear?

All human beings, all nations have to take serious responsibility for problems they case locally and globally. Holocene era with climate stability is currently coming to change in the natural cycles of the Earth, but rather that the change is caused human activity. There are the ten most serious environmental problems:

- 1) The Stratospheric ozone Layer
- 2) Land Use Changes
- 3) Atmospheric Aerosol Pollution
- 4) Chemical Pollution
- 5) Ocean Acidification

- 6) Water Cycle
- 7) The Phosphorus and Nitrogen Cycles
- 8) Loss of Biodiversity
- 9) Climate Change

In 2009, a group of 28 internationally renowned scientists identified and quantified a set of nine planetary boundaries within which humanity can continue to develop and thrive for generations to come. Crossing these boundaries could generate abrupt or irreversible environmental changes. Respecting the boundaries reduces the risks to human society of crossing these thresholds.

(Chemical Pollution, Freshwater, Ocean Acidity, Atmospheric aerosol load, Ozone depletion, Climate change, Phosphorus flow, Agricultural land use).

## 2. What is affecting the Earth?

Nations and cultures are increasingly dependent on one another through international economic systems and shared environmental problems such as the global effects of nuclear warfare, deforestation, and acid rain). They also learn more about one another through international travel and use of mass media. More and more, the global system is becoming a tightly knit web in which a change in any one part of the web has significant effects on the others. We experience incredible mediatization of culture and society, because of development and access.

Contemporary society is permeated by media. And I see media as huge positive globally connecting and informative power, able to move and help to influence qualitative change of human beings.

The growing interdependence of word social, economic, and ecological systems makes it difficult to predict the

consequences of social decisions. Change anywhere in the world can have amplified effects elsewhere, with increased benefits to some people and increased costs to others. There is also the possibility of same changes producing instability and uncertainty that are to the disadvantage of all. Worldwide stability may depend on nations establishing more reliable systems of doing business and exchanging information, developing monitoring mechanisms to warn of global catastrophes (such as famine and nuclear war), and reducing the large gap in the standard of living between the richest and the poorest nations.

### 3. How does art influence society?

Modernist art reflected the deracinated experience of life in which tradition, community, collective identity, and faith were eroding. In the twentieth century, the mechanized mass slaughter of the First World War was a watershed event that fueled modernist distrust of reason and further sundered complacent views of the steady moral improvement of human society and belief in progress.

Initially an avant-garde movement confined to an intellectual minority, modernism achieved mainstream acceptance and exerted a pervasive influence on culture and entertainment in the course of the twentieth century. The modernist view of truth as subjective, often intuitive claim has contributed to the elevation of individualism and moral relativism as guiding personal ethics and contributed to far-reaching transformations regarding the spiritual significance of human life.

Art today involves masses, but still to reach that level as it could be reached, if all human beings could participate is a big challenge.

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Gianluca d'Incà Levis, curator of Dolomiti Contemporanee,  
director of Nuovo Spazio di Casso (I)

1. How not to disappear?

And why shouldn't we disappear? Everything vanishes, pretending to be eternal is puerile. However things return too, they reappear. Art as with any research is a memory in the present. A thing that disappears; it is not lost if somebody thinks about it. Perceiving by intuition and projecting with conscious actions is the way to face oblivion. Oblivion to be considered as a dimension of an uncritical ( and vulgar) laziness.

2. What is affecting the Earth?

It is afflicted by man whose carelessness and homologous thinking is worse (and more vulgar) than concupiscence. There are too many people on the Earth and therefore too much stupidity. Poets, because of their own nature, remain a minority.

3. How does art influence society?

Art, most of the time, furnishes and decorates. In this case it influences society no more than a florist and even a gardener.

In terms of concreteness (vulgar) the influence of art on society is marginal.

On the surface any colour is a game.

Art is like seeing, reading and doing . It is not a matter of the thing itself, that already exists in its essence. It concerns the deliberate and intelligent drive to explore, decipher and explain that thing. Through this process of knowledge it

acquires critical attention and move from a state of inertia to an intellectual activity that pervades it and makes it powerful.

Art is stupid (pragma) in respect to the instantaneous vulgarity of the “thing”, because of its being intelligent in respect to the “how”.

Art rescues sensitive people, it is invisible to the stones.

Art is like an unsinkable island, surrounded by waves and billows (which are Men and things). Unsinkable because, being a minority, it is predominant. And it does float.

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Alessandra Benacchio, independent curator, Bassano del Grappa (I)

### 1. How not to disappear?

“L’amor che move il sole e l’altre stelle (The love that moves the sun and the other stars)” Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy

### 2. What is affecting the Earth?

IL CIELO E’ DI TUTTI, Gianni Rodari

Qualcuno che la sa lunga  
mi spieghi questo mistero:  
il cielo è di tutti gli occhi  
di ogni occhio è il cielo intero.  
E’ mio, quando lo guardo.  
E’ del vecchio, del bambino,  
del re, dell’ortolano,  
del poeta, dello spazzino.  
Non c’è povero tanto povero  
che non ne sia il padrone.

Il coniglio spaurito  
ne ha quanto il leone.  
Il cielo è di tutti gli occhi,  
ed ogni occhio, se vuole,  
si prende la luna intera,  
le stelle comete, il sole.  
Ogni occhio si prende ogni cosa  
e non manca mai niente:  
chi guarda il cielo per ultimo  
non lo trova meno splendente.  
Spiegatevi voi dunque,  
in prosa od in versetti,  
perché il cielo è uno solo  
e la terra è tutta a pezzetti.

Someone who knows a lot  
I explain this mystery:  
the sky is all eyes  
of each eye is the whole sky.  
And 'I, when I look at it.  
And 'the old man, the child,  
the king, the Ortolan,  
the poet, the sweeper.  
There is poor so poor  
who is not the owner.  
The frightened rabbit  
has as the lion.  
The sky is all eyes,  
and every eye, if you will,  
you take the entire moon,  
the comets, the sun.  
Each eye takes everything

and not miss anything:  
 those who watch the sky for last  
 does not find it less bright.  
 Explain you then,  
 in prose or in verse,  
 why the sky is only one  
 and the land is all in pieces.

### 3. How does art influence society?

“If you treat an individual as he is, he will remain how he is. But if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

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**Maddalena Tomasi, architect, Trento & Francesca Bacci, curator, art critic and art historian at Mart Museum, Rovereto (I)**

### 1. How not to disappear?

The best way to achieve eternity is to be visible/retrievable on the web. Make innumerable copies of yourself, post them, pin them, wiki them, insert them in blogs and news-feed, email them around. Your digital trace will remain as magic dust in the Milky Way, shimmering in the ethereal world of the intertubes forever.

### 2. What is affecting the Earth?

Ideas! We can mention climate change, the impact of consumerism on our planet, pollution, wars and a number of factors which are involved in planetary changes. They

all have one thing in common: they started as ideas. It is by thinking outside of the box and starting from small changes that we can affect the “big picture”. And that is precisely what art can do.

### 3. How does art influence society?

Art is the manifestation of an infinite number of variables. It is highly specific, like a fingerprint. Art’s reception is influenced by the state of mind of its viewers. Recent neuro-scientific researches have demonstrated that our brain has an ongoing inner activity when we are not performing a specific task (“default network”). This “inner state” influences how a stimulus will be received, independently from the nature of the stimulus itself. Art can only meet us half way – we have to walk the other half – we influence art, art influence us, in an endless cycle of shaping and being shaped in return.

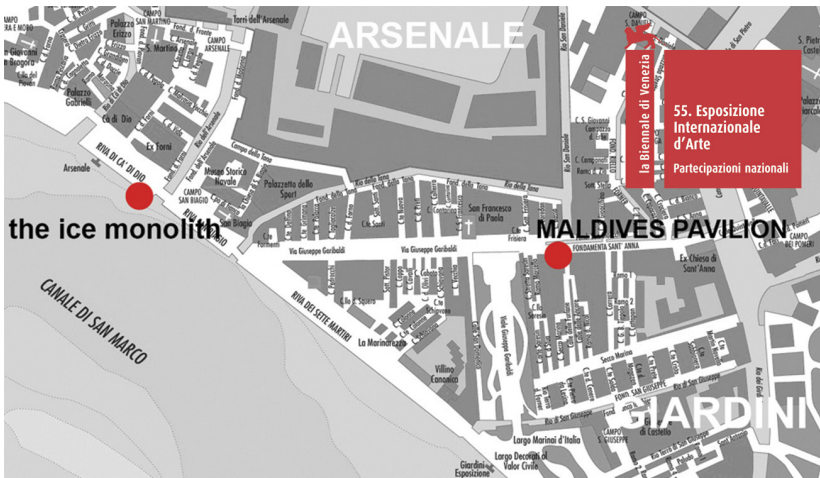


Michele Robecchi, musician, King Tongue, Milan. Editor for contemporary art, Phaidon Press, London (I, UK)



Sound performance as part of THE ICE MONOLITH.  
Platform, Maldives Pavilion, May 30, 2013, 5 pm. Playing  
Stefano Cagol's MONOLITH GUITAR, 2013, hand crafted  
electric guitar, alder, maple, mahogany, 30 x 100 x 5 cm +  
snap-fit sculpture, wood, 100 x 30 x 60 cm.









Stefano Cagol, THE ICE MONOLITH, 2013, public performance, ice block, 50 x 200 x 120 cm, 72 hours melting process, 72 hours video shooting. May 29 - May 31, 2013.. Riva Cà di Dio, Venezia





Stefano Cagol's THE ICE MONOLITH has been chosen for the cover image and for the Claudia Jolles' editorial of Kunstbulletin <http://www.kunstbulletin.ch>, Biennale issue of July-August, 2013







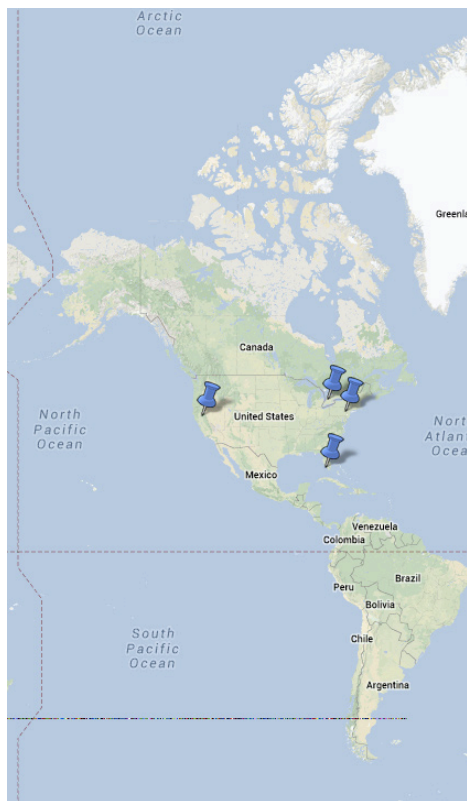
Stefano Cagol, *THE ICE MONOLITH*. Fade, 2013, video installation, 270 x 480 cm, HD video on Blu-ray disc, 7 min / loop, sound. Maldives Pavilion. 55th International Art Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia

<http://goo.gl/maps/75CnZ>

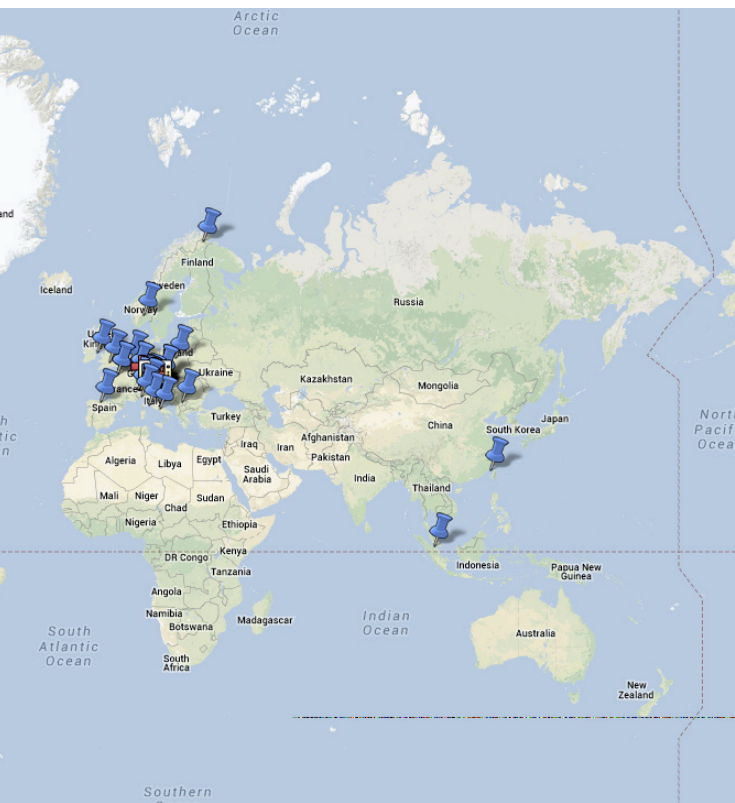


The link to the google map with contents of the platform & Stefano Cagol's studio, VIR Viafarini-in-residence, Milan.





The google map with contents of the platform and network of contributors.





“The ice monolith” by Stefano Cagol melts at an exhibition during the 55th Venice Biennale in Venice, Italy, May 29, 2013. The New York Times ©. Photo by The New York Times

## THE ICE MONOLITH. Stefano Cagol

### Project statement

What does it ask us? A monolith of ice of the Alps appeared in Venice along the shore in Riva Cà di Dio during the Venice Biennale opening week and disappeared in a 72 hours melting process, documented by a 72 hours video shooting. A 3 days public action, a kubrickian metaphor questioning about the serious course that is affecting the planet.

Stefano Cagol himself, based in a village in the Alps and just back from projects in the Arctic region, is witnessing the ongoing vanishing of the so called “eternal ice.”

Ice melts to water. The water of the monolith dissolving to the lagoon joins then billions and billions of gallons of water that in the next decades risk to overwhelm the most sensitive areas of the globe. The Maldives is one of the first, but also Venice. Alps and Maldives, ice and sun, so far but so close, connected by the same fate.

Therefore by the Pavilion, in the video installation THE ICE MONOLITH. Fade high rocks islands emerge from water – or disappear into it. In fact the shooting realized by the Lofoten islands seems to evoke an era (far in the past, and maybe again in the future) with the Alps overwhelmed.

Realized in July, 2013 at VIR Viafarini-in-residence, Milan





