

perceptual field, how we are impacted by forces and conditions in operation far beyond our spatial and temporal range, and how things might interact on their own. Tom Rand supplies an apt example of what Morton is getting at: “Atmospheric chemistry is a thing,” he writes, “and there is a complex causal chain between that thing and us [with] political, economic, and social repercussions.”<sup>103</sup>

Isabelle Hayeur’s photographs and videos bring together explorations of water, borderlines, and affect. In an early artist’s statement she emphasizes her exploration of landscape and land use, especially the exploitation of arable land for suburban expansion in her *Model Homes* series of 2004–7: “It seems clear that our visions and lifestyles have a much greater impact on the world we occupy than in the past. It thus becomes particularly important that we assume responsibility for the landscapes we create and the worlds we imagine.”<sup>104</sup> The seventy images in her *Underworlds* series (2008–15) powerfully show the global implications of eco-suicidal habits of the Anthropocene while also dwelling on its material intimacies. Although this series of underwater photographs was taken in navigation canals and ship graveyards in the United States, *Underworlds* explores threatened individual ecosystems that stand in for the mistreatment of waterways globally. Visually seductive in their rich coloration, Hayeur’s images are also distinctly disorienting for two reasons. Though many of the images were shot in southern Florida, this is not the vacation spot we are used to seeing in advertising, and her images are anything but celebratory. Her technique is also unusual in that she shoots from a partly submerged position, so that we register two horizon lines, that of the water close to us and that between earth and sky in the distance.

“The aquatic landscapes I probe have been considerably altered,” Hayeur writes. “They are sometimes actual deserts where nothing is left to see. The images I capture bear witness to this absence.”<sup>105</sup> As we see in the upper quarter of *Substances* (2012; fig. 59), the day is bright and the water calm. Houses preside along the shoreline at the right. Commanding most of the image, however, is a close-up view of an underwater plant. Placed front and center as a “portrait” despite its smallness, it is a sickly specimen. Moreover, this marine plant is the only one that manages to stand and grow toward the light. Others wilt on the bottom amidst the silt—one aspect of the “substances” of her title—that makes the water through which Hayeur photographs brown and opaque. The waterline in this series is an uneven and unstable horizon that we nonetheless measure with and against as we see reminders of human domination here, a distant apartment building or ship, as well as the dying aqueous ecosystem in which she immerses us.<sup>106</sup> Conditioned by the stereotypical pictorial celebration of natural beauty in this area and by the normalizing conventions of landscape, we might be confused by Hayeur’s unusual perspective. It does not take long, however, to notice that the human landscape above the waterline, which she always includes, is the source of the destruction in

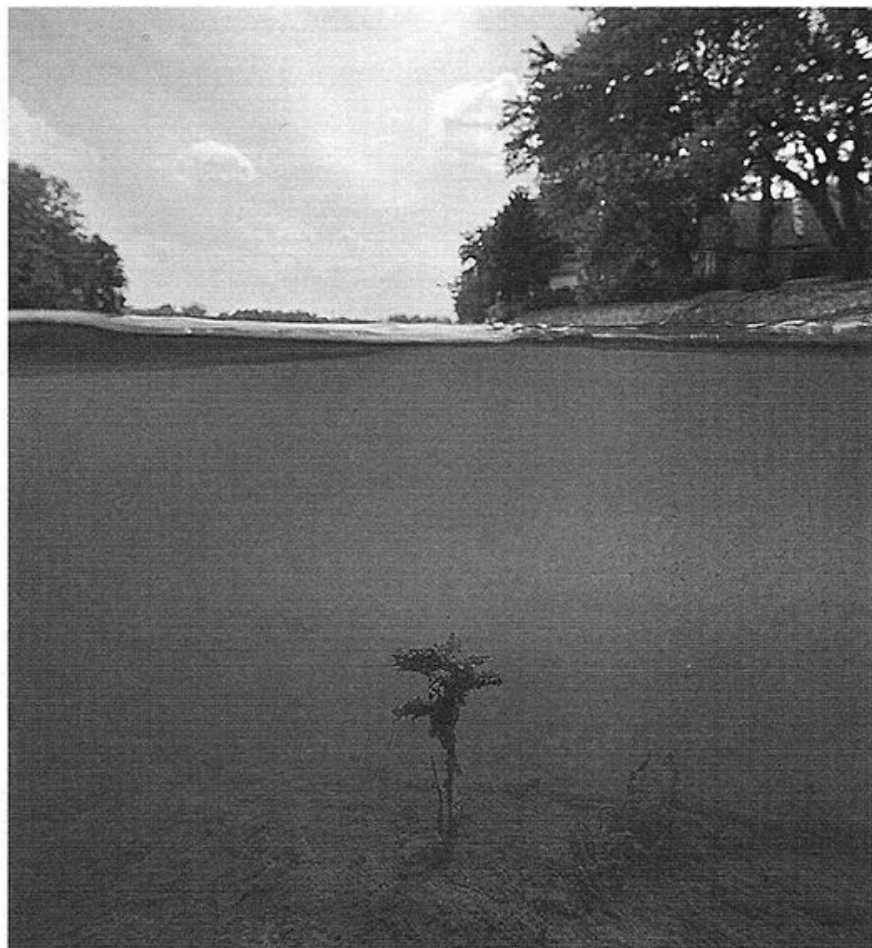


FIG. 59 Isabelle Hayeur, *Substances*, 2012. Inkjet on photo paper, 46 × 42 in. (116 × 107 cm). By kind permission of the artist.

what she calls the “aquatic landscapes” below. Such knowledge colludes with our perplexity to register a strong effect.

Hayeur multiplies affective responses in still photographs from 2011 of what she deems a “marine cemetery,” the submerged world of Witte’s Marine Salvage, a ship “burial ground” on Staten Island, New York. The collective title of these photographs is *Death in Absentia*. Again composed from under the limen of the water’s surface so that we see both the sea floor and the looming shapes of rusting hulls, the images are superficially quiet but simultaneously strange and disconcerting. In *Castaway* (2012), a video shot in this same spot, we are taken on a tour of what amount to underwater ruins. As it was in *Dark Years Away* and *Requiem for a Glacier*, sound is crucial to our absorption of this work. Where Neudecker’s and Walde’s music is stirring, however, the sound that we hear in *Castaway* even before the visuals come into focus, sound artist Nicolas Bernier’s mix of electronic overtones with echoes and clunks, is otherworldly, alien. While these noises seem to emanate from discarded human technologies, from the ships we begin to make out, they are no longer fully human. While some of the sounds seem like the reverberations of working ships in the area, to call them groans comes to seem

anthropocentric; we might think of them ultimately as registrations of nonhuman materials returning to the earth. Bernier describes his soundscape's inception and goals in detail:

I had quite specific sounds in mind even though the idea was a bit entangled: I wanted to suggest the material in the images, but also suggest something that isn't there, or something hidden, or something that was there before, or all those options. In the meantime, I wanted the sound to be abstract enough to leave some space to viewers so they could read the sound and image relationship their own way.

In the first section, I wanted the sound to give an impression of deepness. In practical terms (this might break a bit of the poetry of the soundtrack), most of the sounds come from wood, more specifically from a custom machine I have with levers and mechanisms. The sounds are pitch shifted in the low frequencies, and when adding the long reverb, we obtain those cavernous sounds. Around 3:00, the little high-pitched sounds are tiny feedbacks that I generated with some piezo microphones and small amplified speakers. There are also some notes of an instrument . . . in order to balance the noisy aspect of the soundtrack. Those instrumental sounds are tuned with the sound that will appear with the industries at 4:12 (this sound comes from a big compressor truck that I recorded near my studio a while ago, so it was well suiting the industries [in the] images). From there I wanted the sound to become a bit abstract, denser, more musical in my sense. When turning to the sky, the small feedbacks that we're hearing suddenly take another meaning. Textures of field recordings are layered. Then around 9:00, it is basically layering of noises that are, again, somewhere between that abstraction and narrative, recalling the sound of water.<sup>107</sup>

Hayeur makes this progression clear in the video, which explores the ships from the surface for roughly its first half. In a transitional sequence, the camera looks at the refineries along the shore of New Jersey's "Chemical Coast," then at the landscape and up into the sky; we hear birds and other familiar sounds for a few moments. After visually linking the clouds in the sky with underwater clouds of sediment Hayeur throws up as she films, she then seamlessly conveys herself underwater to focus on the rotting hulls themselves. As in *Substances*, the ocean floor that we traverse is almost lifeless. The light has trouble penetrating even this shallow water. The final minutes of *Castaway* are quiet, inviting us to contemplate what we have seen. Where can Hayeur's camera go now? She films reflections of a wan sun and clouds on the surface of the water, looking down, before fading to black. Complementing Tacita Dean's intricate conversation with the novelist J. G. Ballard and Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* in her film *JG* (2013), though less directly,

Hayeur thus recalls both Smithson's intimate record of the Great Salt Lake's mineralogy and his cosmic sequence in the film version, the denouement in which he spirals toward the sun "from the center of the Spiral Jetty" in a helicopter while looking down on his sculpture and intoning, "Mud, salt crystals, rocks, water," as he lists the cardinal coordinates of the earthwork (149). Hayeur is the Smithson of water. Where he famously recorded postindustrial monuments near his home town of Passaic, New Jersey, she reveals what was hidden even to the ever-curious Smithson, the underwater underside of the landscape so close to his birthplace. Its ruins suggest not only the past of specific industries but the physical and ideological decay of modernity presided over by the Anthropocene of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Her video looks back to the heyday of generations of ships, but without nostalgia. Instead, Hayeur's focus is the baleful present in this area and the even less hopeful future of heavily polluted oceans. Her connections to Smithson—and, indirectly, to his land-art contemporaries' interests in water, Betty Beaumont's especially—figure in the long chronological sweep I have been establishing in *Landscape into Eco Art*.

In this context, though certainly not in terms of causation or intent, Hayeur's underwater pictures can also be productively contrasted with the shipping news central to J. M. W. Turner's landscapes. *Limulus* (2014; fig. 60) is an extended horizontal "aquatic landscape." The photograph was taken on Captiva Island in the Gulf of Mexico, site of Smithson's second uprooted tree in 1969. Close-up and underwater, we see the shell of a dead horseshoe crab whose genus lends its Latin name to the title. While there are plants on the seabed, the contrast with the verdant shoreline above the water is striking. This is not the Chemical Coast; we see no signs of habitation nearby, though in the distance and out of focus there are what appear to be large smokestacks. The crab shell is clearly the focus of this large image because it is seen in full detail. It is a still life, *nature morte*, embedded in a landscape. I want to suggest that *Limulus* is an image of contemporary history, another "earth-death picture" in the lineage discussed in chapter 2. It stands in sharp contrast to perhaps the only well-known image of a crab of this sort in Western art, Turner's enduringly controversial painting *War: The Exile and the Rock Limpet*, exhibited in 1842 (fig. 61).

Where Hayeur's crab is commanding, Turner's is so small as to be missed were it not for the poem he appended to the work when it was exhibited, a stanza in his extensive composition *The Fallacies of Hope*:

Ah! thy tent-formed shell is like  
A soldier's nightly bivouac, alone  
Amidst a sea of blood  
but *you* can join your comrades.



FIG. 60 Isabelle Hayeur, *Limulus*, 2014. Inkjet on photo paper, 18 × 62 in. (47 × 158 cm). By kind permission of the artist.



FIG. 61 Joseph Mallord William Turner, *War: The Exile and the Rock Limpet*, exhibited 1842. Oil on canvas, 794 × 794 mm (support). Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest 1856. Photo © 2015 Tate, London.

John Ruskin quotes these lines in his approving discussion of a painting that was otherwise much lampooned and misunderstood in its time.<sup>108</sup> With characteristic ambition, Turner addressed several historical moments in this work. *War* was paired with *Peace: Burial at Sea*, his homage to his friend the painter David Wilkie, who was laid to rest at sea off Gibraltar in 1841. *War* depicts a disconsolate Napoleon Bonaparte in full uniform, even though he is pictured as a British captive on the island of St. Helena, where he died in 1821. One occasion for this painting was the return of his remains to Paris in 1840, but Turner had already painted famous episodes from the Napoleonic wars, including the death of Nelson, and saw no reason to venerate the military leader.<sup>109</sup> *Peace* not only memorializes Wilkie's gentle disposition and laments his loss with its dramatically dark coloration but also contrasts with the