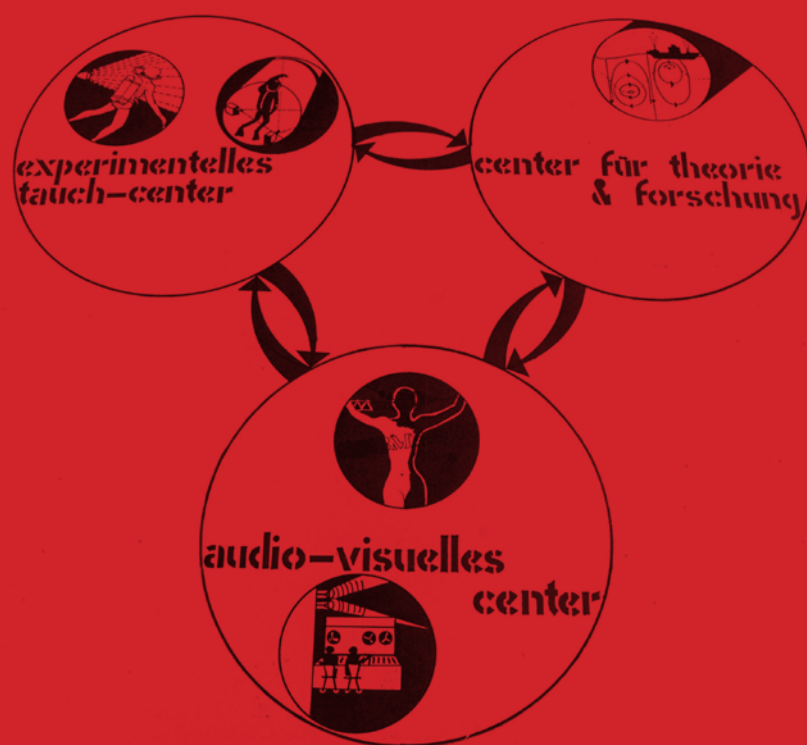


Le Bulletin № 6  
IKOB – Museum of Contemporary Art  
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# Lexicon of Images and Media



Jürgen Claus  
JE SUIS ATOLL – Images and Media 1968-2018

21.03. – 27.05.2018

# A

## Art Forms of Nature

Entry by Jürgen Claus

‘Art Forms of Nature – Nature Forms of Art’ was the subtitle of my exhibition ‘World Under Water’ at the Nature Museum in Lucerne in 1979. As in my artistic work, I used the text to draw attention to the researcher-philosopher-artist Ernst Haeckel from Jena, and even today I continue to use some of his discoveries in my pictures and drawings. In 1979, I wrote in this regard:

‘Some discoveries come too late. This was the case for me with Ernst Haeckel, the man to whom this exhibition owes its subtitle. I was 42 years old when I happened upon his portfolio “Art Forms of Nature”, which he publicly presented in Leipzig right at the turn of the century. I gathered some impressions of the life he led and learned that it was as fulfilling as one can possibly imagine a life dedicated to research to be. He became a friend of mine – and a mentor, because this antiquated word is justified here. When I go diving in the Red Sea, I wish for him to be my conversational partner. He went diving 105 years before me (editor’s note: 1879) in the Red Sea, near Tur on the Sinai. With heavy, copper-hat equipment, he undertook what he called “submarine wanderings” through the coral reefs. Things would have been much easier for him today as an autonomous diver. He would have been spared many injuries that he records in the diaries of his journeys. From his perspective, everything comes from the sea.’

≈> [See also: Scuba Diving](#)

## Atoll

‘It’s funny how this thing of writing (*sic effatus Ubu*), once having turned professional, seems appalling and distances you from yourself (...). The underlying situation hasn’t changed; you know that it’s quite simple. But things and other persons have raised a *ring made of corals* between *Me* and *me*. I am Atoll.’ (in the French original: ‘Je suis Atoll.’)

[Paul Valéry to André Gide, in Gide, André; Valéry, Paul: Correspondance 1890-1942. In Cahiers André Gide n° 20, edited by Peter Fawcett, Paris 2009, p. 508 \(translation by editorial staff\).](#)

≈> [See also: Corals](#)

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# B

## Biography

Jürgen Claus, born in Berlin in 1935, works as an artist in various techniques and ≈>[media](#): painting, film, video, light- and solar-installations and underwater art. As an author, he has written numerous works on contemporary art and its theoretical foundations.

Claus studied drama, philosophy and art history at such institutions as the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (Munich). In 1967, he began to develop an environment-related art that involves the ocean, water and the sun. He was a fellow and

research associate at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). In 1991, he was appointed professor at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne, which he had helped to found starting in 1987. Claus became known from the late 1960s and the 1970s for spectacular underwater art events that he recorded on film.

Together with Hans Hass and Jacques-Yves Cousteau, he went diving in all the oceans of the world. During the 1970s, he organized underwater performances in Australia; he fastened floating, star-shaped sculptures to the ocean floor in the Caribbean; in the Red Sea, he filmed an underwater installation; and he still found time from 1974-78 to serve as chief editor of the scuba-diving magazine *Submarin – Magazin der Unterwasserwelt*. From 1986, he held a lectureship for art, technology and the environment at the Academy of the Visual Arts Munich, and from 1969 to 1972 he was an artistic associate at the Summer Olympic Games in Munich. Later there followed, together with Nora Claus, solar sculptures in public spaces at Geislingen/Steige and Aldenhoven. The broad spectrum of his art was demonstrated in solo exhibitions at the Kunsthalle Nürnberg, the Natur-Museum Luzern and the Museum Reich der Kristalle in Munich. Works by Claus can be found at such places as museums in Duisburg, Munich and Rio de Janeiro as well as in many private collections.

Claus lives and works in Baelen (Wallonia) where since 1989, together with his wife Nora, he has directed the Centre Overoth that focuses on biospheric art.



2

## Biosphere

Entry by Jürgen Claus

As soon as Nora and I moved from Munich to the Overoth district of Baelen in 1989 and acquired space for events, discussions and exhibitions, we set up the Centre Overoth, a centre for biospheric art. What were the referential systems for this sort of transfer from the biosphere to art? ‘The biosphere,’ states the Russian scientist Vladimir Vernadsky (1863-1945) in his book of the same name, ‘can be understood as that part of the earth’s crust that is capable of transforming cosmic rays into active telluric energy. The rays of the sun determine the major characteristics of the mechanisms of the biosphere.’<sup>1</sup> Under the formative influence of the sun, myriads of atoms in the solar space create a planetary, biospheric field of light recipients, light transformers and light conductors that corresponds to living material.

<sup>1</sup> Vernadsky, Vladimir Ivanovich: *The Biosphere*, Arizona 1986, p. 11.

[Buckminster Fuller, Richard](#) ≈> see: [Geodesic Structures](#)

# C

## Corals

The proposal to consider objects such as the *Amphiroa Orbignyana* as a work of art as soon as they are singled out by researchers and transferred into collections had the goal of emphasizing that natural structures also possess a cultural power. With respect to the rhizome, with which they share an aversion to trees and genealogies, the natural models of the net, bush, coral and seaweed constitute models that have scarcely ever been achieved again in their radicalism. They represent the search for that variability in nature which expressed itself in an anarchy that resists all concepts of order. The fact that they are not oriented towards the criteria of advancement and objectives negates both a teleology of the fittest from the narrow perspective of Social Darwinism and the certainty of creationists about an underlying plan.

[Cf. Bredekamp, Horst: Darwins Korallen. Frühe Evolutionsmodelle und die Tradition der Naturgeschichte, Berlin 2005, p. 78.](#)



3

≈> See also: [Atoll](#)

[Cousteau, Jacques-Yves](#) : ≈> see [Biography](#)

## Creative Ecology

The initially immobile things in the world organize themselves through some intrinsic energy into large, more complex structures – cosmic dust becomes stars, stars become galaxies; atoms turn into molecules, molecules into organisms. The principle of self-induced movement is characterized by the fact that at some point things emerge which don’t want to cease this movement. They have not only cause but also effects: they wish to continue to exist. We also belong to these things.

[Cf. Weber, Andreas: Alles fühlt. Mensch, Natur und die Revolution der Lebenswissenschaften, Berlin 2007, p. 43.](#)

## Crystal-Atoll

**Mussel & Crystal, 11 October 1997**

In the summer of 1997 at my studio in Baelen, I resume the labor, repeatedly interrupted for thirty years, of doing pictures on canvas. Crystalline structures take up a permanent appearance in the gouaches from 1995 and complement the thematic diversity of the molluscs, which have fascinated me for much longer. This puts two actors on the stage of the picture.

⇒ Ernst Haeckel gave an initial impulse together with the sensual delight in the two objects of my eager desire. On the one hand, the folio collection of his *Kunstformen der Natur* – I bought the original portfolio at a flea market in Munich in the mid-1970s. I took motifs from it into my ocean drawings of the 1970s, together with inspiration derived from Andreas Feininger's *Traumgebilde des Meeres* and the book by Carl Chun, *Aus den Tiefen des Weltmeeres*, Jena 1900. The crystal-line impulse also came from Haeckel's last book *Kristallseelen* (1917). The third point of the trilogy was to be the plant, the leaf, the blossom. This found a pictorial resonance in many works on paper, but not yet – except for the short series of oil paintings from the years 1983 / 84 – in pictures on canvas. But that just might still be addressed someday. So molluscs and crystals: both not orthodox and docile, but instead associative. It may be that these pictures have to do with constant ⇒ metamorphoses of form, that even a primal form is being sought: or more precisely, played with, drawn and painted around, reshaped. Perhaps the mollusc stands as a visually effective ⇒ sign for the sea, and the crystal as a visually effective sign for light and sun, with the leaf and plant representing earthbound growth.

[Cf. Claus, Jürgen: Der Wille zur Imagination. Bild-Dinge, vom Künstler aus gesehen. Munich 2007, p. 53.](#)

## Crystals



By means of crystal (crystallized, brought to order and modification of order, to beauty as sensed by us), culminating 'passionately' in it, rock becomes a carrier for this sort of painting / graphic art; the other carriers are molluscs (the self-constructed, self-carrying containers, the spiral as an ageing process et al.) forming themselves in the fluid medium of the ocean / water and the vegetable / floral of nature that arises and decays, returns, is predetermined and seed-defined. A sufficient number of form-⇒ Metamorphoses in order to inspire the artist, who moves between cool, precise drawing and ecstatic form-colour 'parallel' to the ⇒ Biosphere.

[Cf. Claus, Jürgen: Der Wille zur Imagination. Bild-Dinge, vom Künstler aus gesehen. Munich 2007, p. 56.](#)

With crystals, I oscillate between viewing the specimens and their reproduction or the second invention in the picture. Belonging to the former is an exhibition *Calcite* at the Museum Reich der Kristalle in Munich, which I visited several times in February 1999. Numbering among the latter is a magnificent volume *Traité élémentaire de minéralogie pratique* by F. Leter, Librairie Delagrave, Paris (published before the 1900 millennium), with 29 plates, which I purchased at a flea market in the Belgian city of Spa; since then, it has been a source of inspiration for me. Here as well, everything is 'subjectified' and presented along the temporal axis of the late nineteenth century (in contrast to the present-day, glossy books about crystals).

[Cf. Claus, Jürgen: Der Wille zur Imagination. Bild-Dinge, vom Künstler aus gesehen. Munich 2007, p. 57.](#)

A crystal, a flower, a mussel set themselves apart from the customary disorder of the totality of perceptible things. They are preferred objects for us, more comprehensible to the gaze, even if they are more mysterious to thought than all other things that we see indistinctly.

[Paul Valéry, in: Bachelard, Gaston: Poetik des Raumes, Ullstein Buch No. 3136, Frankfurt/M et al., 1975, p. 134 \(translation from the German by the editorial staff\).](#)

⇒ See also: [Crystal-Atoll](#)

# D

## Deep Time

Entry by Jürgen Claus

After having painted pictures, I sometimes wish to accompany them with texts. The lists of works that I published in 2016 contain occasional, frequently spontaneously written footnotes. I inquire into what happens with respect to the pictures: what is the source and what is the meaning of the isolated 'ciphers' that sometimes seem to me to be like picture puzzles? I investigate whether the concept of deep time possesses an adequate relevance for my cipher-pictures. What is the deep time so often discussed today and what could it be in relation to my painted pictures? I orient myself initially according to the biologist Stephen Jay Gould (1941-2002).

# E

## Exhibitions

Selected Exhibitions of Jürgen Claus

*The Ocean – Celebration of the Ocean*, Kunsthalle Nürnberg 1975

*World under Water*, Naturmuseum Luzern 1979

Katholische Akademie, Freiburg im Breisgau 1996

*Pictures–Ocean–Sun*, KempenKrause Ingenieurgesellschaft, Aachen 2008

*Paradises and Arks*, Galerie Perplies, Aachen 2008

*Art Meets Crystal*, Museum Reich der Kristalle, Munich 2009

Galerie Marion Grčić-Ziersch, Munich 2011

*SunOcean*, BRF Funkhaus, Eupen 2013

*Articulation of Time: Dialogue-Exhibition Jürgen Claus – Hans Richter*, Aachen 2014

*Sky & Ocean: Otto Piene – Jürgen Claus* Aachen 2015

*JE SUIS ATOLL – Pictures and Media 1968-2018*, IKOB – Museum of Contemporary Art, Eupen 2018

## Expansion of Art

Entry by Jürgen Claus

The ⇒ media that arose during the 1960s went past film and were oriented towards interaction. They fetched the studio resident (in 1965, I was thirty years young) out of what occasionally felt like a splendid isolation. This 'Moving Into New Realities' (as I formulated the subtitle of the exhibition *Art and Technology* that Nora Claus and I organised in 1984 at the Research Ministry then located in Bonn) is the focus in one part of the later book *Die Expansion. Medien & Performative Kunst*, which features a list of works. Who and what do persons born in a subsequent era find interesting in the birth of an expanding art whose procedures suddenly include crystallography, pneumatic bodies, tension- or underwater-structures, bio-technical systems, cybernetics and computers? Don't networks provide access to everything today? What constitutes the difference?

The difference between the expansion of art and the precarious situation of the second decade of the twenty-first century consists of the fact that these new systems based on art and science were simultaneously examined with respect to their social-political value. And this examination occurred under 'tough' conditions. The artists were subjected to questioning from an entire clique of hard-core nihilists, mere followers, anarchists and Marxists who saw nothing of value in the mediatory world of artists up to then (galleries, museums, etc.) but on the contrary homed in on, cited or attacked those artists as

individualistic disturbers of collective ‘reason’.

The question of ‘what to do with art?’ couldn’t be avoided. It stuck like slime to each and every work of art – whether in music, theatre, literature or the fine arts. For my part, I chose to react by expanding my artistic activities into the farthest reaches of the environment: or more precisely, into the [Biosphere](#). The [Planet Ocean](#) was my own planet for pioneering. I took the available Media into the ocean, into the space of water (as is precisely expressed by the Japanese language). And I translated these experiences into all the various media that were available.

[=> See also: Multimedia, Publications, Submarine-Atoll](#)

# F

## Foreword

Frank-Thorsten Moll

The most felicitous encounters most often come unexpectedly. My first visit with Jürgen and Nora Claus at their home in Baelen in the autumn of 2017 was definitely that sort of encounter. Unburdened by preconceptions and filled with curiosity, I came visiting at the invitation of Jürgen Claus. I had not expected that it would be possible to meet one of the most important figures in the history of German media art less than three kilometres from the IKOB and a hundred kilometres distant from the site of his last professorship – the Academy of Media Arts Cologne.

After only a short while, I was immersing myself in the cosmos of the artist Jürgen Claus amid the creative chaos, the vast quantity of his stacked books and papers. He opened up his archives with no diffidence or restriction and offered me an insight into his more than sixty years of artistic production. He mentioned in passing Roger Malina and Otto Piene who in 1990, along with other artists and scientists, had gathered in the very same studio where I was now sitting and together had prepared the Art Transition Conference at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) that would have such a significant impact on the history of media. As an art historian, I considered this information to be particularly valuable, because Piene’s importance is uncontested for art in general and for the American media-art scene in particular. Upon hearing of the long friendship between the two artists Piene and Claus, one can imagine on an anecdotal level that, through their meeting in Baelen, this section of Belgium was abruptly drawn into a whirlpool of contemporary avant-gardist history – something that heretofore was most likely not even suspected by local art experts. This demonstrates once again that progress and innovation proceed along what are most often strangely intertwined paths, that they seldom pay heed to attributions of periphery and centre.

That anecdote alone, of course, would not have been sufficient justification for an exhibition project at the IKOB; the scales were tipped solely by the undeniable quality of the great number of works that had been gathered, stacked and put aside throughout the studio. The artist, born in Berlin in 1935, is presenting at our exhibition more than 150 works and documents that have been divided into three thematic areas. These works make use of highly diverse [media](#): on display are videos, photographs, drawings, collages, manuscripts, letters and – as a further surprise – paintings. Only superficially does it seem to be a contradiction that Jürgen Claus, known primarily as a media artist, has for years been involved in painting in a concentrated fashion. On a pragmatic level, the simple and stirring fact is that he penetrated the realms of film, photography and electronics decades ago and was already experimenting with them before others did so. For him, painting has basically been a return to experimentation which, on the level of contents, led him back to the beginnings of art – to the Renaissance, to the Middle Ages and even much further, back to Antiquity and the early civilisations of human history.

His [expansion of art](#) beneath the surface of the world’s seas and oceans and his advocacy of solar energy bear witness to his heartfelt desire to preserve nature and to prepare the way for alternative energy concepts. This means Jürgen Claus is not simply an old-school humanist who endeavours above all to understand the world. He translates comprehension into action and uses all the means available to him to oppose the decline and fall of human civilisation. Already for this reason alone, figures from the history of science such as Alexander von Humboldt and [Ernst Haeckel](#) have repeatedly been sources of inspiration for him; he shares their unfettered urge towards research and their intent focus on the tiniest details of nature which he, like his role models before him, views as a medium of cognition. [Crystals](#), sea shells, [corals](#) and the ensuing [atolls](#) are the forms of nature that have always been of special interest to him as a natural scientist.

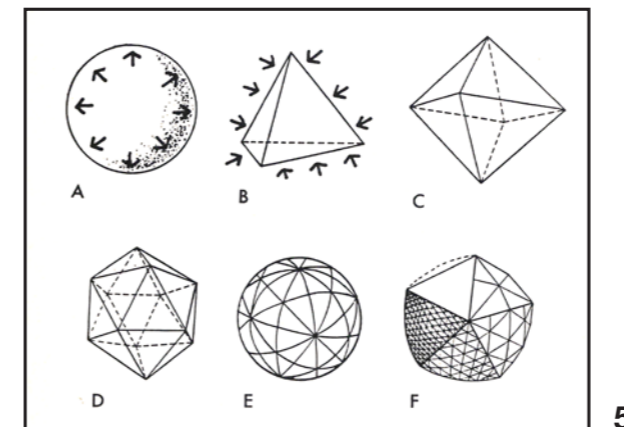
Atolls have provided him with the most potent metaphor for his art and his artistic identity. An atoll – in spite of its almost closed form and its insularity with regard to the surrounding ocean – is in no way closed in its development: it is the site of complicated processes of exchange; corals and mussels create a special [biosphere](#) that makes every atoll one of a kind, imbues it with an irreproducible unity. [Paul Valéry](#) long ago used the poetic potential of this geological form when he wrote the title-endowing sentence ‘Je suis Atoll’. In this exhibition, Jürgen Claus accordingly looks both far into the past and far into the future of a humanity that must ask itself how it intends to treat the earth in order not to do away with itself completely. In this exhibition, art should become legible like a book – or more appositely, like a hypertext – in which referential relationships are not produced in a linear fashion but instead arise in free fall, as if during a deep-sea dive. The tables within the presentation themselves become atolls and serve to host the themes and contents of the exhibition – just as atolls shelter mussels, fish and crystals.

I am grateful to Peter Weibel for his spontaneous willingness to open the exhibition as a speaker. Not least of all, my thanks go to the entire team of the IKOB – namely Serge Cloot, Miriam Elebe, Friedemann Hoerner, Ingrid Mossoux and Nadja Vogel. They have achieved something great and conjured up an exhibition of extreme complexity and exalted ambition in the spaces of the IKOB. My deepest expression of thanks goes, of course, to Jürgen and Nora Claus – not only for their stoical patience and inexhaustible hospitality, but above all for their love of art which, in countless visits and conversations, they repeatedly made manifest. Even in the most stressful situations of preparation, that love could always be felt; precisely therein lies for me the hidden treasure and hopefulness which, with this unique exhibition, we have ushered into the light of day

# G

## Geodesic Structures

The high degree of visual impact, of structurally contingent beauty, became evident to a wide audience with [Buckminster Fuller’s](#) geodesic dome at the Expo in Montreal in 1967. Questions involving the art of buildings become irrelevant with this sort of structural construction, where there is a complete identity between functionally determined and visual structure.



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The development of geodesic structures by Buckminster Fuller proceeds from the sphere (A) and tetrahedron (B) past the octahedron (C) and icosahedron (D) to the icosahedron applied to the sphere (E) and the geodesic network (F).

[Text, Illustration and caption in: Claus, Jürgen: Expansion der Kunst. Beiträge zu Theorie und Praxis öffentlicher Kunst, Hamburg 1970, pp. 27-28.](#)

[=> See also: Polyhedrons, Solar-Atoll](#)

# H

[Haeckel, Ernst ≈> see: Art Forms of Nature, Foreword](#)

# I

## Illustrations

[≈> See list of image captions on last page](#)

# J

[Jorn, Asger ≈> see: Signs and Symbols](#)

# K

## Kamp, Irmel

‘The house walls lined with zinc sheets dotted the slightly hilly, meadow landscape of the ‘butter-countryside’ with its tiny towns and scattered farm buildings and houses. These features become particularly evident if one travels from Liège to Aachen on a sunny afternoon, when the metal-plated facades literally come to light. Approximately one fourth of the wall coverings have been preserved.

[≈> See also: Presentation of the Collection](#)

# L

## l'age solaire

Entry by Jürgen Claus

*l'age solaire*, 1991, artwork

Metal frame, argon-gas systems, 150 × 500 cm

*L'écriture de gaz argon rappelle, comme une métaphore, l'âge solaire à venir.<sup>1</sup>*

A sequence of eleven letters, fluorescent in argon gas, affixed and wired to a metal framework one-and-a-half metres high

and five metres long, spells out the words *l'age solaire*. Thereby closely linked to the outlook of the artist is an embodiment of hope, the prospect of a beginning solar era in which clean and decentralized energy will be sufficiently available to all of humanity, so that no wars will have to be fought over it. Since the late 1960s, Jürgen Claus has oriented his creative output to a great degree toward the environment. His focus is above all on the ocean, water and the sun; an awareness of the necessary reorientation of eco-technology serves as a basis for his many varied activities. These have included a professorship at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne and the organisation of the SolArt Global Network, an initiative for presenting works of art advocating a solar era and describing its context. Standing at the heart of his artistic oeuvre is the motivation to usher the solar aesthetic more fully into practical application, which Claus considers to have a task commensurate with the economic, political and technical requirements: ‘The solar aesthetic practice, represented by solar art in public spaces, by the integration and synthesis of various solar materials, by the expansion of solar technologies through a wide array of ideas, issues a ceaseless call for acceptance of a design utilizing renewable energies.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The writing of the argon gas, just like a metaphor, is reminiscent of the coming solar era.

<sup>2</sup> Exhibition catalogue *Lichtkunst aus Kunstlicht*, ZKM Karlsruhe, 2005/2006. Cf.: [http://hosting.zkm.de/lichtkunst/stories/storyReader\\$46](http://hosting.zkm.de/lichtkunst/stories/storyReader$46), Status 14.02.2018.



6

[≈> See also: Solar-Atoll](#)

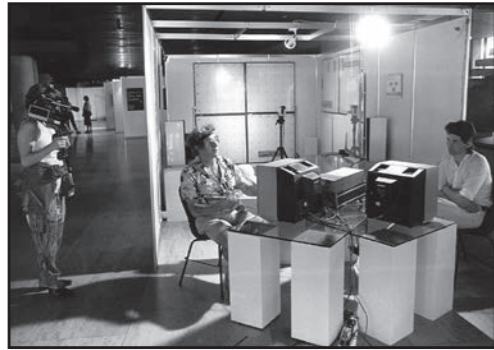
## Leisgen, Barbara & Michael

‘Within the cycle of our “Mimetic Landscapes” from the 1970s, we repeatedly endeavoured to give visual form to elements of nature and landscapes marked by human intervention, with the rear view [of a human figure] as an ideogram. At that time, we were living in East Belgium (in Raeren, to be precise), where we were deeply impressed by the hedgerows that delineate and define this landscape.’

[≈> See also: Presentation of the Collection](#)

# M

## Media



7



8

Is the ocean a medium for scuba-diving humans? Just like photography or film or video are a medium for me? If one simply accepts these premises, then the following becomes apparent: having dived into the primal energy of an element like water, the carrying or documenting medium (photography, film, video, etc.) comes to be of little importance. How should it convey temperature, skin contact, the experience of movement? But then in reverse: enclosed in the post-processing facility of the video-editing site, the medium counts for a lot, indeed for everything. The fictitious reality of the medium has an authoritarian or at least defining, determining impact. [...] Media are mirrors that possess the strange magic of preserving the images which they take up in the appearance of realities, at least for a certain time. [...] They are the pieces of coal in the memory. They are fossils, actually something that has died from which, however, energy can be derived. They unfold a new reality which, for its part, is capable of being treated in artistic terms.

[Cf. Claus, Jürgen: Planet Meer, revisited, Lab. Yearbook 2005 / 2006 für Künste und Apparate, Cologne 2006, pp. 215-229.](#)

## Metamorphosis

Entry by Jürgen Claus

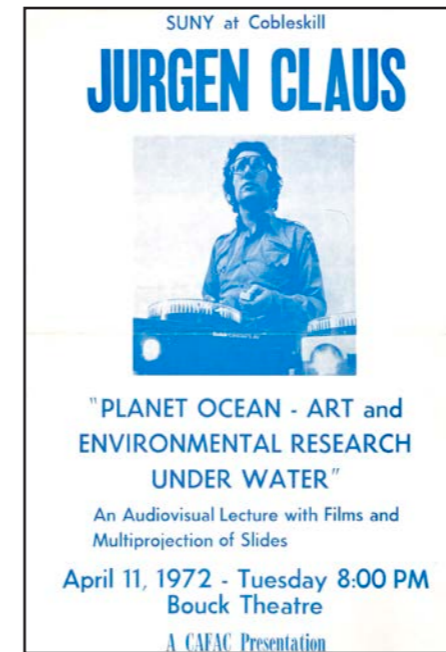
A term favoured by poets, observers of nature and philosophers for many centuries: (Greek: *meta*, 'behind, next'; *morphe*, 'shape, form'). Appropriately translated into German as 'change of form'. Morphology. From Ovid's *Metamorphoses* past Goethe's observations about metamorphoses to the shifting shapes of the gods in the case of Leopold Ziegler. Alexander von Humboldt also focused on metamorphoses. A quotation from his *Kosmos* (1845-1862): 'The multifariousness and periodic transformation of living creatures allows the constant renewal of the primal mystery of all formation; this, I should say, is the problem of metamorphosis examined so felicitously by Goethe in a solution which corresponds to the need for an ideal derivation of forms from certain fundamental types. Increasing insights deepen the feeling for the unfathomability of the experience of nature; one recognizes that the bold scientific conqueror will not "lack the space of the universe" – even after millennia – upon the fixed earth, in the airy canopy surrounding the earth, in the depths of the oceans.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> von Humboldt, Alexander: *Kosmos. Entwurf einer physischen Weltbeschreibung*, Vol. 1, Stuttgart 1845, p. 22.

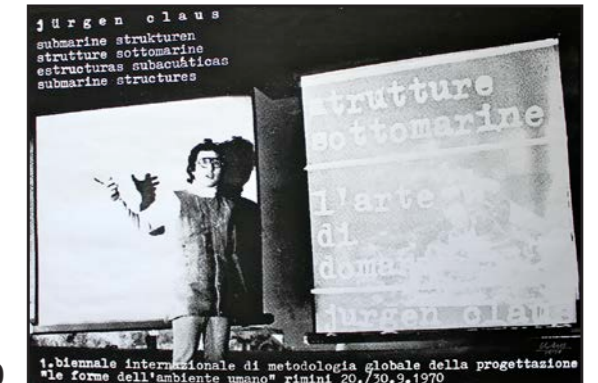
## Multimedia

Actually the technology, involving the simultaneous utilization of several projectors and tape recorders, is quite familiar; but Claus succeeded in giving it a concise form, a totality that facilitates the grasping of what is being demonstrated. The space itself is used, in order to show either a continuation in time and mental process or simultaneous opposites.

[Cf. article by E. H. Johnsrud in: Aftenposten, 29.08.1969.](#)



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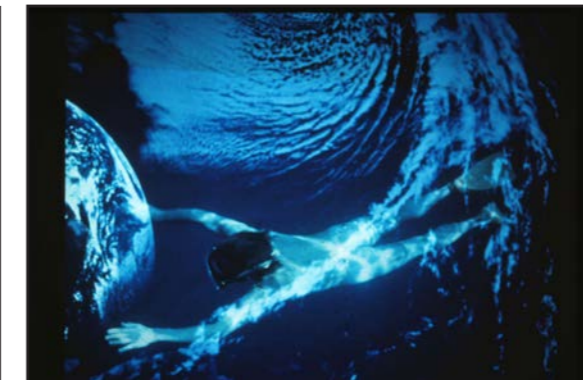


10

≈> See also: [Expansion of Art, Media, Publications, Submarine Centre](#)

# P

## Planet Ocean



11

It is intriguing and convincing that now an artist and thinker, Jürgen Claus, puts aside his paintings and devotes his imagination and energies to the search for a humanistic environment under water. He explores and envisions the new impressions and experiences which a life, submerged in the ocean, will create. I look forward with great interest to his ideas and projections of a submarine culture. What may at first look like an environment biologically foreign and unnatural to man after all becomes an extension of the human environment on land into the waters of the planet. Man was not made to live like fishes do, but then he was not made to fly either.

[Cf. Bayer, Herbert: Foreword, in: Jürgen Claus: Planet Meer. Kunst & Umweltforschung Unterwasser, Cologne 1972, p. 14.](#)

≈> See also: [Submarine-Atoll](#)

## Polyhedrons

Entry by Jürgen Claus

The Renaissance goldsmith Wenzel Jamnitzer (1508-1585) was an outstanding personality, investigator of perspectives and connector of natural material with artistic craftsmanship. His spatial bodies engraved in copper provided me with evidence of the accuracy of what is imagined in such a way as to create spatial depth. He took over the investigatory position first on my drawings, then (from the late 1990s) on my pictures done on canvas. I added colour to the  $\Rightarrow$ crystals which he had printed in black-and-white in an artistic legacy. Since it was impossible to consult him for advice, I devised the coloured borders according to my own inspiration, with no fixed system – something that would have seemed incomprehensible to Jamnitzer. It was the crystalline structure of the polyhedrons that interested me, the fascination of a geometrical-mathematical representation that brought order to the gestural aspect of painting and drawing. Whereas a manually formed, spontaneous ‘figure’ cast itself onto the surface, the polyhedron counteracted the liquid characteristic, stopped the flow, was able to overlay it. It was at this point of pictorial invention, ‘exposed’ to a gestural idea, that the crystalline polyhedron spontaneously acquired form. The encounter was pointedly emphasized in a scientific, investigatory manner inasmuch as knowledge arose concerning the ‘liquid crystal’. Haeckel showed the way.

$\Rightarrow$  See also: Geodesic Structures

## Presentation of the Collection

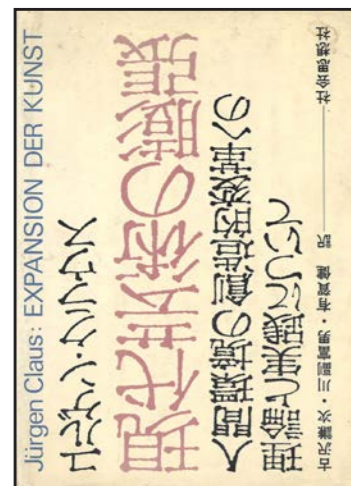
Two bodies of photographic work are presented from the collection of the IKOB, and both of them can be labeled as ‘classic’: *Buildings in East Belgium Planked with Zinc Plates* (1978-82) by Irmel Kamp, as well as the five black-and-white photographs titled *Rhombus* by Barbara and Michael Leisgen, who already in 1977 participated as an artist-couple in the documenta 6. Two different and in each case very concise ways of working with place or topos, which make visible an inhabited space within a clearly defined pictorial space that tends towards the poetic. ’

$\Rightarrow$  See also: Kamp, Irmel & Leisgen, Barbara & Michael

## Publications Jürgen Claus

The multimedia activities of Jürgen Claus as an artist, theoretician and teacher correspond to the ideal image of classic modernism such as was embodied, for example, by the Bauhaus artists. In the era of the neo-avantgarde and flourishing capitalism, the ideal was difficult to achieve. In his [...] publications and artworks, Jürgen Claus successfully asserted once more this ambition of modern art to be a universal medium.

Peter Weibel in the cover text to Claus, Jürgen: *Liebe die Kunst. Eine Autobiographie in einundzwanzig Begegnungen*, Bielefeld / Berlin 2013.



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Selected Publications by Jürgen Claus:

Theorien zeitgenössischer Malerei. rowohlts deutsche enzyklopädie [Theories of Contemporary Painting. Rowohlt's German Encyclopedia], Hamburg 1963  
Kunst heute. rowohlts deutsche enzyklopädie [Art Today. Rowohlt's German Encyclopedia], Hamburg 1965  
Expansion der Kunst. rowohlts deutsche enzyklopädie [Expansion of Art. Rowohlt's German Encyclopedia], Hamburg 1970  
Planet Meer, [Planet Ocean] Verlag DuMont Schauberg, Cologne 1972  
Das elektronische Bauhaus [The Electronic Bauhaus], Edition Interform, Osnabrück/Zurich 1987  
Elektronisches Gestalten in Kunst und Design [Electronic Composition in Art and Design], Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1991  
Kulturelement Sonne. Das solare Zeitalter [Cultural Element Sun. The Solar Era], Edition interform, Osnabrück/Zurich 1997  
Der Wille zur Imagination [The Will to Imagination], Edition RaumSolar, Munich 2007  
Die Sonne und Wir [The Sun and Us], Edition RaumSolar, Munich 2009  
Der Klee der Sonne. Ferne Gestirne, [The Clover of the Sun. Distant Stars], Edition project.claus... Aachen 2014  
Paradiese & Archen. Werkverzeichnis Bilder auf Leinwand [Paradises & Arks. List of Works, Pictures on Canvas], Aachen 2015  
Die Expansion. Medien & Performative Kunst. Kommentiertes Werkverzeichnis Vol.III [Expansion. Media & Performative Art. List of Works with Commentary, Vol. III], Aachen 2015; Der Raum des Meeres. Kunst/Architektur/Forschung [The Space of the Ocean. Art/Architecture/Research]; German/English, Edition project.claus... Aachen 2017

Autobiographies

Jürgen Claus, *SonnenMeer* [SunOcean], Wienand Verlag, Cologne 1995

Jürgen Claus, *Liebe die Kunst. Eine Autobiografie in vierundzwanzig Begegnungen* [Love Art. An Autobiography in Twenty-Four Encounters], Kerber/ZKM, 2013

# S

## Scuba Diving

Scuba diving gives rise to a strangeness that is simultaneously quite intimate. A body is extremely sensual and yet abstracted. The body can be utterly familiar to you. Your fingertips touch it through the salt water. The sensation is coarsened but changed. You glide along a body by altering your own dimension; perhaps you are standing on your head. You glide around a body, every verbal expression is dispensed with, you are now left entirely with your gestures. Your fingertips must take over the statement; you are seeing and blind at once, deaf and full of sensation.

[Logbook of Jürgen Claus, entry from 22 Dezember 1971. See: Claus, Jürgen: Liebe die Kunst. Eine Autobiographie in einundzwanzig Begegnungen, Bielefeld / Berlin 2013, p. 167.](#)



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$\Rightarrow$  See also: Art Forms of Nature



## Signs and Symbols

Entry by Jürgen Claus

When, for example, in the current forms of visualization employed by astronomers and developers of world formulas reference is made to age-old signs, when computer models make use of a stock of signs that does not deny its prehistorical predecessors, when today every type and amount of new data can be translated with familiar signs and symbols, then we raise the question concerning the extent to which we are determined by the use of images, what status the image can accordingly be said to possess.

These are apparently questions that are fundamentally artistic in nature, or at least questions that aim at an artistic response. The question as to the status of signs and their relationship to symbols comes into play here. In relation to the work of researchers and scientists who by means of their display instruments (Asger Jorn cites photography, radar, etc. from the situational standpoint of the late 1940s and early 1950s) have to do only with signs of the object and not with the object itself, there is a reevaluation of these signs that includes art. 'This injects a great deal of confusion into the old concept of scientific truth,' says Jorn in his second extensive book *Pour la forme* (1958). 'Results in the form of signs are not less true than direct observations; they are simply more complicated and open the mind to the world of signs. That is perhaps a unique opportunity to establish an artistic science.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jorn, Asger: Plädoyer für die Form. Entwurf einer Methodologie der Kunst, Munich 1990, p. 179. See also: Jorn, Asger : Pour la forme : ébauche d'une méthodologie des arts, Paris 2001, p. 128 [first edition Paris 1958].

## Solar-Atoll

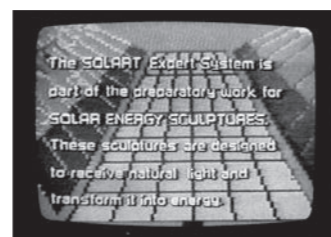
Entry by Miriam Elebe



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An end of fossil resources is in sight. And in an era of climate change, a radical shift in people's thinking seems to have become necessary. Creating electricity from regenerative sources accordingly becomes more and more important. This includes above all the utilization of solar energy, which in Antiquity was already customary in almost all cultures, with the sun also being revered as a symbol or as a divinity in the performance of rituals. The active utilization of solar power, however, is an achievement of recent times. In the year 1839, the French physicist Alexandre Edmund Becquerel discovered the photographic effect and thereby created the preconditions for today's photovoltaic batteries.

Art which is moved by the sun and the wind, which works with processes of growth, has been Jürgen Claus's main concern for more than forty years. In the Solar-Atoll section, numerous models, designs, project drawings and photographic documentation from more than three decades are on display. In 1990 together with his wife Nora, Claus set up the SolArt Global Network, a platform for artists who primarily use sunlight as an element of design. Claus calls the sun a partner and the creator of his works, because through them sunlight is channelled into holograms, installations, prisms and mirrors. In contrast to Light Art, the artist is concerned above all with solar aesthetics, which are supposed to be included more deliberately and massively in social practice, conveyed by solar art. And it is precisely this art that finds its place in public spaces. One example of this is the Solar Icosahedron from 1997 / 98: this is a six-metre-high, free-standing solar sculpture in front of the Alwerk in Geislingen/Steige. Triangular-shaped solar modules were specially produced in order to turn the five upper surfaces of the icosahedron into energy-producing surfaces. The created energy is stored in batteries and used to slowly turn the upper glass section and to illuminate it starting at twilight.<sup>1</sup>

The exhibited works and documentation provide evidence for a development typical of our era: we live in a solar era. Renewable energies, nature conservation and the preservation of biological existences are indissolubly linked with each other. This means far more than a technological change: 'If the shift to a solar era is to stabilise our civilisation, the shift must be a cultural one. Ecological stability, which must be our goal at the beginning of a new millennium, must derive support from the cultural transformation that is anchored in the various societies of our planet. Art serves as part of a continuous critical and creative reflection about our life in the biosphere,' says Claus.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.solarserver.de/solarmagazin/artikel/maerz2004.html>, Status 15.02.2018.

≈> See also: l'age solaire

## STAR WORK

Within the Star Work series, a different artwork from the IKOB Collection is displayed each time.

STAR WORK No 27

21.03.–22.04.2018 HOMMAGE À... IV Lili Dujourie

STAR WORK No 28

25.04.–27.05.2018 DISTORTION LI (51) Franck Miltgen

## Submarine-Atoll

Entry by Friedemann Hoerner

This thematic area of the exhibition outlines a decades-long focus on the ocean by the artist and author Jürgen Claus. The underwater world as a unique, special world – the ≈>Planet Ocean as the counterpart to the planet Earth, as a metaphor for productive ≈>utopias, as a space for artistic interventions that give rise to innovative concepts and images. In architecture and art, Claus invents and depicts the figure of the homo aquaticus, a human being oriented towards freedom who, conscious of his ecological conditionality, uses this awareness to make the element of water his own in artistic terms.

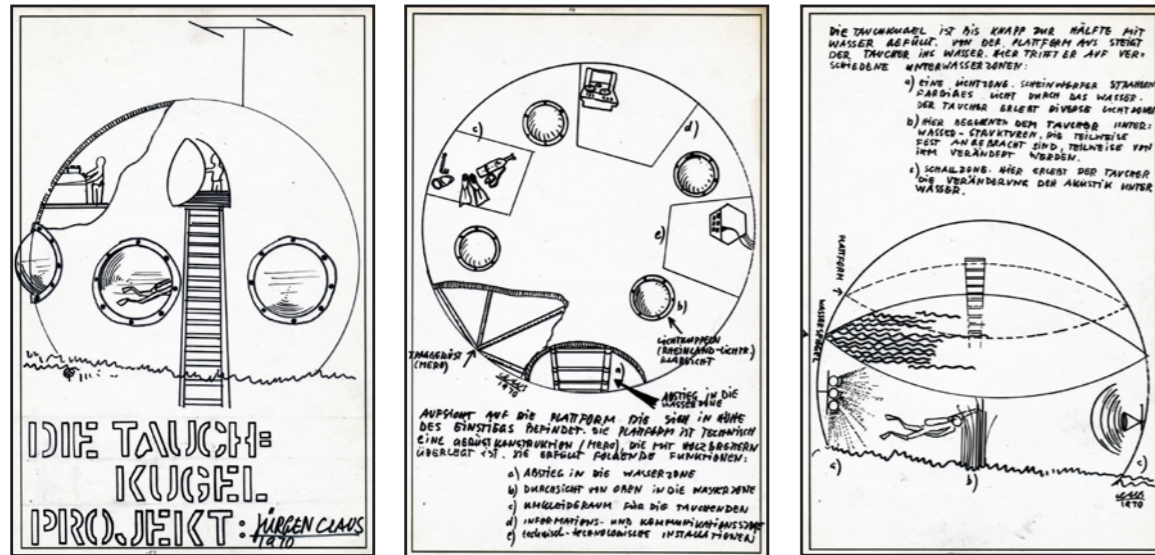
'Water is an acoustic world, a world full of sound,' says Claus, for example, during the end credits of the film *Der Planet Meer*, which was broadcast in the evening program of the German television channel ARD in 1980, with reference to his underwater bell-tower that was visible and audible during the program. Claus produces audio dramas dedicated to this theme, shows ≈>multimedia-performances, does various drawings, collages or photographs and exhibits them; he presents lectures throughout the world with such resonant titles as *The Ocean as Creative Experience – New Expanded Art and Architecture of the Sea* or *Kunst und die gesamtökologische Krise*. Already in 1969, the artist drew up plans for a ≈> Submarine Centre, designed models for a diving- and research-centre tasked with facilitating artistic research concerning and in the ocean.

From 1974 to 1978, Claus was chief editor of the new periodical *Submarin – Magazin der Unterwasserwelt*; in 1975, he presented the exhibition *Das Meer – Celebration of the Ocean* at the Kunsthalle Nürnberg. *Der Raum des Meeres – Kunst / Architektur / Forschung* is up to now the last in a series of books by Claus on that theme; it appeared in 2017. In it, Claus writes: 'For me, the ocean was always a space of awareness. And of techniques for fostering this awareness. With the familiar coordinate system. We enter the space of the Planet Ocean only for a limited time. It is a temporal dimension of condensed experience, squeezed out of the possibility of guiding motion. The poetry that I brought into the ocean together with my friends arose out of this new space of consciousness.'

## Submarine Centre [Center Submarin]

*My Diving Station for Art Lovers*, planned to be ten metres high, which I sketched for him [ – Harald Szeeman – ] for the documenta, would have been filled halfway with water. The art lover – equipped with underwater breathing apparatus, diving suit, etc. – leaves an upper platform that is simultaneously a changing room and a unit for insights, information and communication, then enters the water, where he encounters various experiential zones. He investigates a zone of coloured light or a sound zone. Later at the boating trade fair in Düsseldorf, there is actually an Aqua-Centre I helped to design: a diving station with genuine public impact, which includes the first experiments for a solar-powered, underwater sun pyramid.

[Cf. Claus, Jürgen: Der Raum des Meeres. Kunst / Architektur / Forschung; German / English, Aachen 2017, p. 57.](#)



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⇒ See also: Planet Ocean, Submarine-Atoll

# U

## Utopias

‘What seems to me personally to be important in addition to individual development is the improvement of the collective possibilities of humanity. First, there is the improvement of creativity throughout society, not just of individuals. Because if we only have isolated creative persons, they will always be overwhelmed by a non-creative society that is hostile to creativity. Second, the capability becomes important of no longer seeing details, but constantly seeing the totality of things. In other words, developing overall concepts. A further development that we today relegate to an unimportant status: play, beauty, aesthetics, transformation. That will become something essential, something that one ultimately wants to reach. A further possibility for ongoing development lies in cooperation.’

[Sound bite of Robert Jungk in: Typescript Claus for radio feature Experiment Meer, Hessischer Rundfunk, 1973](#)

# V

Valéry, Paul ⇒ see: Atoll, Crystals, Foreword

# W

Weibel, Peter ⇒ see: Foreword, Publications

1 Cover Illustration: Jürgen Claus, diagram with the logos of the Submarine Centre, 1969, Indian ink on paper

2 Commander Jacques-Yves Cousteau with Jürgen Claus, New York, 1981, Photo: Moshe Richards

3 Coral reef, book illustration; cf. Darwin, Charles, *The Structure and Distribution of Coral Reefs. Being the First Part of the Geology of the Voyage of the Beagle*, London 1842, plate 1, fig. 2.

4 Jürgen Claus, *Dô der sumer komen was*, 2008, Oil and collage on canvas, 150 × 100 cm

5 Drawings of geodesic structures; cf. Claus Jürgen: *Expansion der Kunst. Beiträge zu Theorie und Praxis öffentlicher Kunst*, Hamburg 1970, page 27, illustration 1.

6 Jürgen and Nora Claus, *l'age solaire*, 1991, argon-gas lettering, 150 × 500 cm

7 View of the exhibition *Terminal Kunst*, Linz 1968

8 Jürgen Claus, *Softsculpture Long Island, Bahamas*, 1979, Black-and-white photograph, 70 × 100 cm

9 Poster *Planet Ocean – Art and Environmental Research under Water*, 1972, Colour offset print, 42.7 × 30.5 cm

10 Poster *strutture sottomarine*, 1970, Black-and-white screenprint, 60.7 × 86.2 cm

11 Jürgen Claus, slide collages from the installation *Expansion des Films. Film als Organ als Material als Raum*, 1969

12 Book Jürgen Claus, *Expansion der Kunst. Beiträge zu Theorie und Praxis öffentlicher Kunst* in the Japanese, Spanish and German editions

13 *Taucherinnen am Glockenturm*, 1981, Black-and-white photograph, 70 × 100 cm

14 Construction site solar icosahedron in Geislingen / Steige, 1998

15 Solar pyramid and photovoltaic-cell-powered car by Siemens, 1983

16 Still Jürgen Claus, *The SolArt Expert System*, 1988, Video, sound, 4:14 min.

17 Jürgen Claus, designs for the project *Tauchkugel*, 1970, Indian ink on transparent paper, each 29.7 × 21 cm

18 Back Cover Illustration: Certificate confirming that Jürgen Claus is a citizen of Aquapolis, 1975

## DATES

Wednesdays April 4th and May 2nd at 6 p.m.,  
respectively: Guided Tour by Miriam Elebe

Sunday, May 6th from 2 to 5 p.m.: Family Sunday

Sunday, May 27th at 3 p.m.: Director's Tour with  
Frank-Thorsten Moll

Lecture with Films held by Jürgen Claus:

Friday, April 20th at 6 p.m.: *Can Art Save the Planet?*  
*Research Conducted on Thin Ice*

Friday, May 11th at 6 p.m.: *Solstice: How Culture will*  
*Determine the Solar Era!*

Both lectures are held in german.

Tuesday, June 7th at 7 p.m.: *Moll trifft...*

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME

For any inquiries about our guided tours and the educa-  
tional programme please refer to Miriam Elebe:  
[m.elebe@ikob.be](mailto:m.elebe@ikob.be)

## OPENING HOURS

Wednesday – Sunday 1 – 6 p.m.

## ADMISSION

With voluntary donation; recommendation 6 euros  
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Free entry on every first Wednesday and on every first  
Sunday of the month

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Ostbelgien

Province  
de Liège

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