

FLOATING CITIES

Monumental sound artwork in augmented reality



Elsa Mrozievicz, visual artist
Cécile Palusinski, author

www.villes-flottantes.com

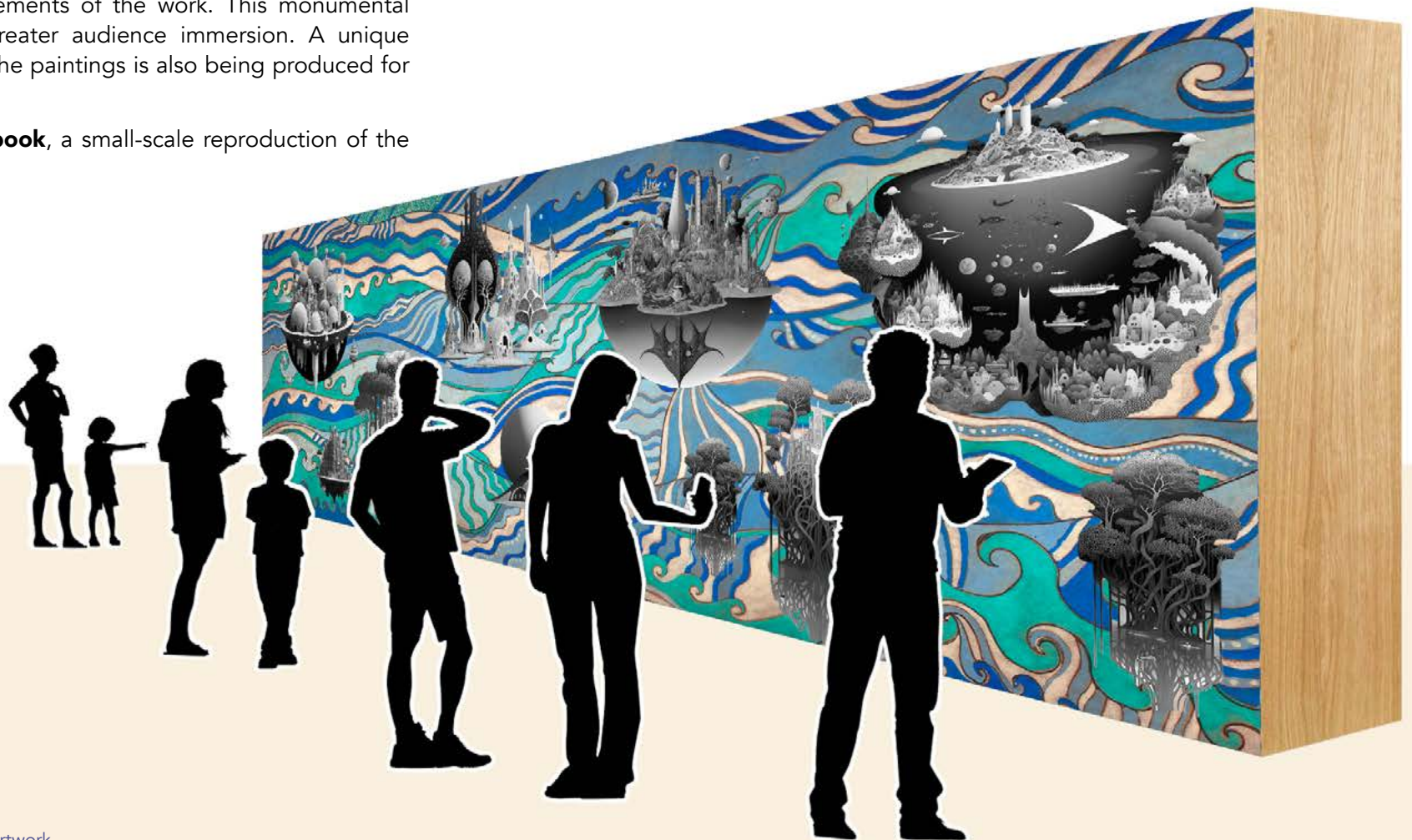
THE CONCEPT

Villes Flottantes / Floating cities is an artistic project led by visual artist Elsa Mroziewicz and sound designer Cécile Palusinski.

Our project includes :

- **A monumental sound-augmented artistic work** (deployable in 6 artworks of 2m x 2.5m or 2.70m x 3.50m) where the spectator is invited to wander through imaginary floating cities, with animations of certain elements of the work. This monumental format contributes to greater audience immersion. A unique embroidered version of the paintings is also being produced for museums.
- **An enlarged leporello book**, a small-scale reproduction of the work

Our aim in creating this **artwork of sound and augmented art** is to offer the general public a **poetic and literary vision of these floating cities**, while at the same time providing an opportunity to **discover solutions to current ecological challenges** (scientific, technological, social, political solutions, etc.).



Artistic approach

Introduction

With the world's population constantly on the rise, sea levels rising and ecosystems under threat, cities need to find new alternatives. Against a backdrop of climate migrations, creating new spaces on the oceans to live in permanent floating cities is an idea that has gained ground, moving from «utopian status» to «the study and implementation of concrete projects». Thinking about floating cities means thinking about new social projects. These new spaces are blank pages, virgin territories for the imagination and renewal of philosophical, architectural and ecological projects... While 72% of the earth is covered by water, the ocean is an ideal place to project these ideas of new worlds.

Note of intent and direction

The future is not what happens, but what we do with it (Bergson)

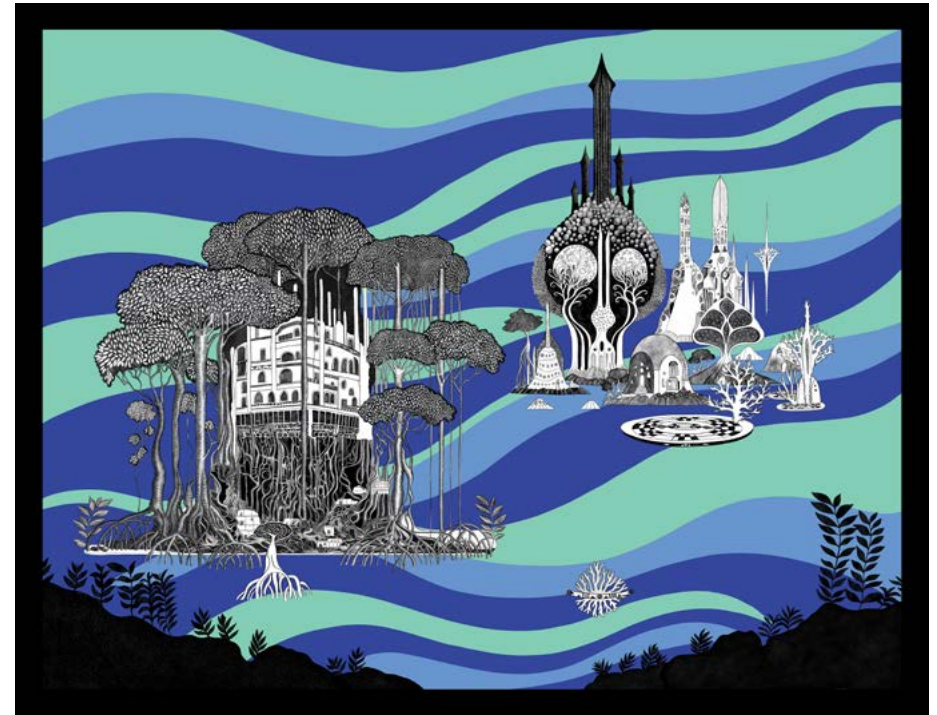
Villes flottantes (Floating Cities) follows on from our previous digital works, Arbres-Mondes (World Trees) and La Forêt universelle (The Universal Forest), which poetically convey the beauty of nature and the dangers that threaten it.

Eco-anxiety and a feeling of powerlessness in the face of the impacts of climate change and human activities are very present today, particularly among young people. In response to this, the desire was born to highlight solutions that instill hope and inspire the desire to act and think of a future for the next generations. No doubt Guillaume Apollinaire would have whispered in our ears that it's ***«high time to turn the stars back on»...***

While we initially thought we'd find the answers in scientific research and innovation, as our residencies and encounters progressed, we realized that we also had a lot to learn from indigenous peoples, who have a sacred relationship with nature. People for whom the word **«wealth»** means **«water»**.

«The future will be ancestral», a thought from a Brazilian movement dedicated to amplifying the voice of the world's indigenous peoples, which echoes the famous phrase coined by André Malraux ***«The 21st century will be spiritual or it will not be»...***

A thought that also nourishes our project and reminds us of what the ancients already knew: our place is within a living Whole, of which we are



both heirs and protectors. And it's up to all of us to become Guardians of the Ocean and of nature.

While the ocean is invisible to our eyes, (re)creating an imaginary world, drawing also on mythological characters and entities linked to water, is for us a key to reconnecting with nature, as experienced by root peoples and other communities with a spiritual link to nature.

«That's why we also need another language to explore the question of meaning and shared values, and to accomplish the processes of metamorphosis so necessary today to adapt to a rapidly changing world.»

Our work is about bringing together innovative, scientific and technological solutions, but also about rediscovering the original human being who lived in harmony with nature and cultivated a spiritual bond with it.

A nature whose beauty can also, as Dostoyevsky wrote, save the world and transform our outlook...

The challenge of our artistic and literary approach is to show the poetic dimension of nature in order to inspire the desire to protect it.

Re-enchanting the world too... a path which is now at the heart of our projects and which grew out of our residency in Brazil, the land of the encantados (translated from Portuguese into English as «enchanted»), who, in Afro-Brazilian tradition, are those mystical, playful and joyful entities whose presence makes natural places sacred, thanks to the almost magical power of music...

Bringing the magic of nature to life, valuing people and their stories linked to the ocean or rivers, weaving human and inter-cultural links, becoming storytellers of a mythological imaginary, are undoubtedly part of the re-enchantment of our disorientated societies.

Aren't we all linked by a single ocean, under a single starry sky? Have we not remained those beings who, since the dawn of time, have sought answers to their questions in stories?

With Villes flottantes, our aim is to create a new narrative around the ocean, one that allows us to discover the singularity of each country's vision that we've crossed, in our successive residencies in Taiwan, India, Tunisia, Brazil, the United States and France.

The encounters we had in the various countries where we did our residencies brought out different and complementary solutions: In Taiwan, we discussed natural barriers (coral reefs and mangroves) to reduce the impact of rising water levels, as well as the use of waste materials to create works of art; in

India, in Kerala, we discussed rice and fish farming, constructions adapted to rising water levels, floating gardens... and water recycling with the creation of closed circuits; in France, building with bricks that trap carbon, recycling plastic and using hair to absorb hydrocarbons; in Tunisia, the importance of political and legal levers, but also of environmental education. Finally, our residency in Brazil was resolutely turned towards spirituality and the need to take the path of metamorphosis in our relationship with Nature. Our residency at the Villa Albertine should lead us to explore innovations in architecture... but our onsite research will undoubtedly lead us down unsuspected paths...

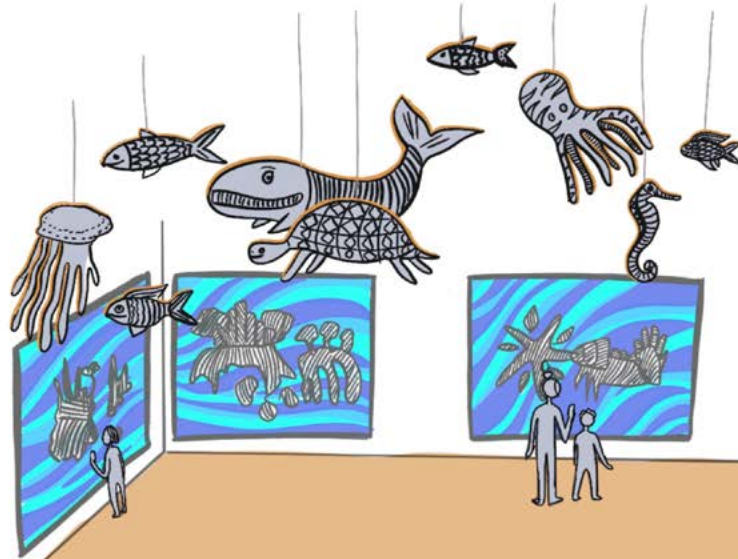
Given the eminently poetic and aesthetic dimension of the ocean, we will also be producing an embroidered version of some of the paintings making up our artwork, in collaboration with embroiderers in countries where the practice of embroidery is still very much alive (India and Brazil). Our aim is to bring the seabed to life by making it more striking and perceptible through this technique. In thread techniques, the notion of time is also primordial: it's a time to be taken in a society that doesn't take any, it's a counter-time that seems symbolically important to us when we talk about our relationship with the world, and more specifically with nature. A necessary time for contemplation. With the idea of returning to an ancestral art. It's a way of bringing the past closer to us, weaving links between past and present, and restoring materiality to a digital work, using ancestral craft techniques. A way of reconciling two visions of the world...

Finally, while we consider our artistic work to have a social dimension and to bring to light people affected or concerned by climate change and the impact of human activities, we approach embroidery as an «art of weaving links» and as a means of conferring a universal dimension on our artistic project.

Cécile Palusinski & Elsa Mroziewicz

SCENOGRAPHY

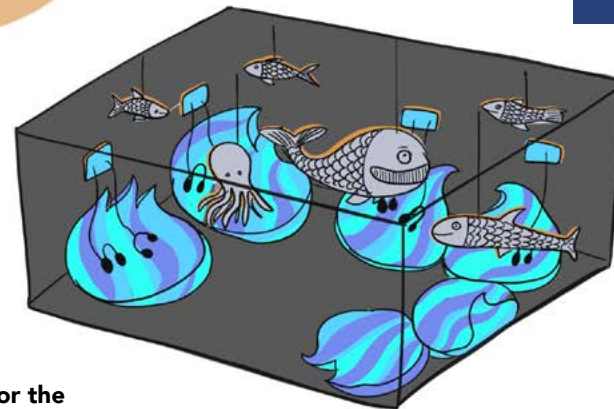
Artwork for each floating city



Hanging sea animals print



Fabric poufs for listening area



Listening space for the logbook

The imaginary floating cities are inspired by real cities/countries we've explored during artistic residencies.

Floating city 1 :

- Taiwan - Art residency Villa Formose October/November 2023

Floating city 2 :

- Strasbourg (2024)

Floating city 3 :

- India (project launch at the Villa Swagatam of the French Institute of India + MAD Salon+lab in November/December 2023 and continuation in July 2024)

Floating city 4 :

- Tunisia (September 2024 during the Forum de la mer, in partnership with the Alliance française de Bizerte) +Marocco

Floating city 5 :

- Brazil (October/November 2024 - with the support of the Institut français, the Consulate General of France in Recife and the Centro cultural Vale Maranhao)

Floating city 6 :

- United States (February 2025 - Miami - Villa Albertine)

June 2025

- Launch of the integral work in the run-up to the UN OCEANS 2025 conference

Sound content

18 haikus with sound, approx. 1 minute long

A logbook made up of 6 chapters, each about 12 minutes long, giving an insight into life on these imaginary floating cities.

Augmented reality animations

Augmented reality drawings to discover innovations to meet today's ecological and societal challenges.

Each event will be accompanied by a haiku, a poetic evocation of each initiative.

A collaborative website

An evolving site featuring video interviews with scientists, architects, authors, etc., met during our residencies, and the results of artistic workshops carried out with the public.

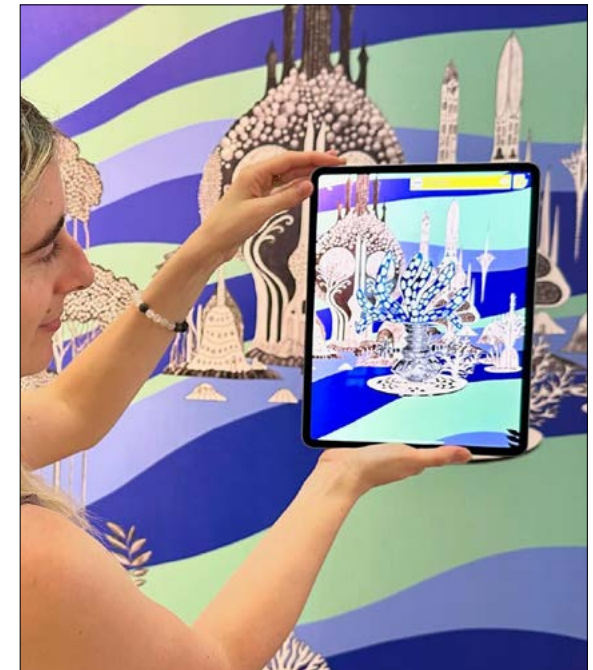
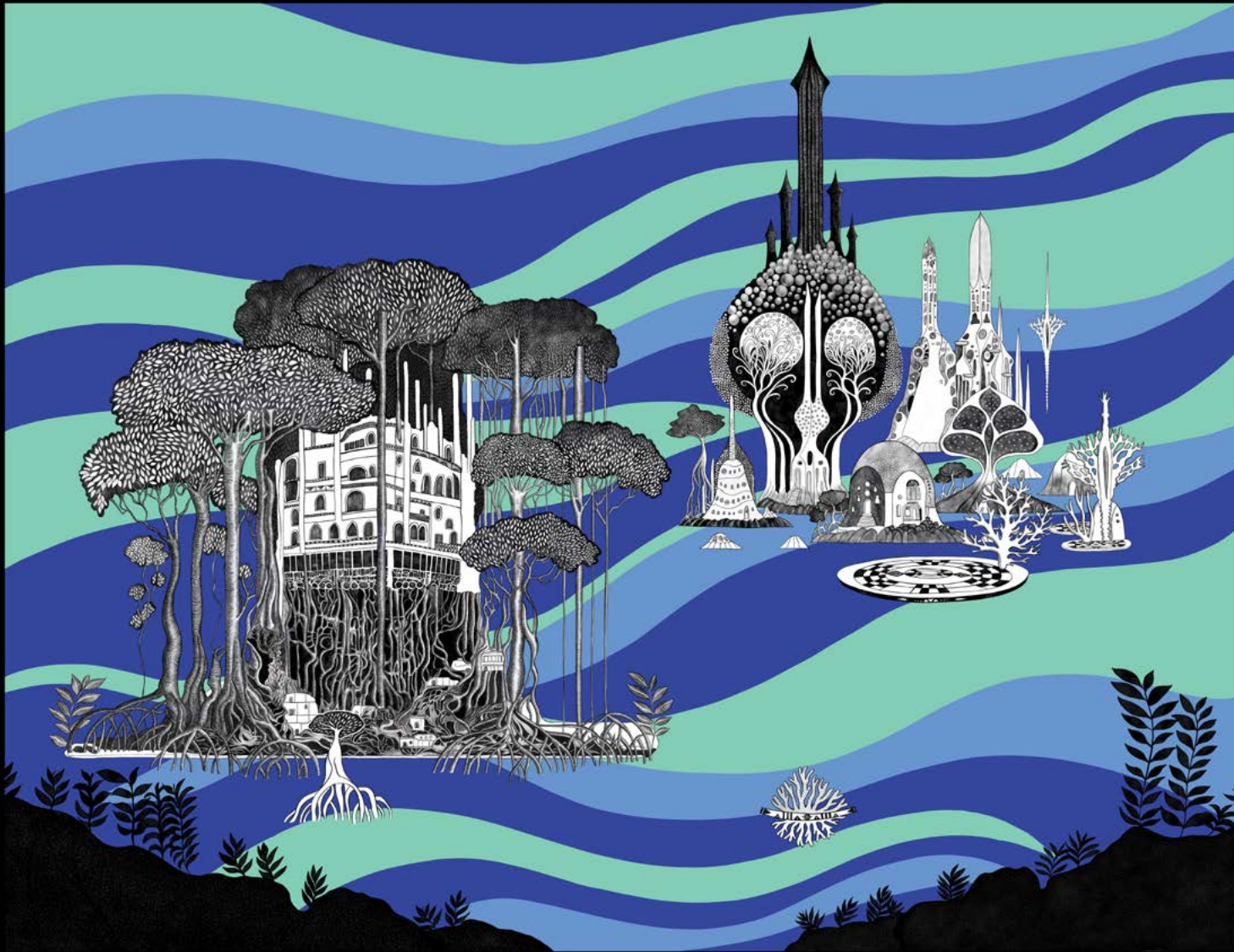
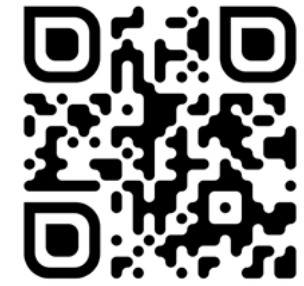
An embroidered version of the artwork

Villes flottantes can be printed in a variety of formats to make the project more accessible to different venues in France and abroad.

There will also be an embroidered version of the work, with paintings printed on fabric, on which the ocean will be sublimated by embroiderers from different countries.

First artwork created following the Villa Formose in Taiwan

You can test the artwork on your screen by zooming in and downloading the **Under The Starry Vault** application (see attached QR code). Content can be pre-downloaded for an optimal experience. Select «Floating cities» and the «Taiwan» artwork.



Additional experience: over 30 interviews

Video vignettes from 2 to 10 minutes + their longer versions / people met in different countries: researchers, artists, fishing communities, architects, scientists, authors, environmental consultants, NGOs... / subtitled in French and English.





Presentation of the first «prototype» artwork of «Villes flottantes» and creative workshop:

- Researchers' night at the Shadok in Strasbourg September 2023
- In the Sainte-Sophie school & the Lycée Josy Barthel Mamer (LJBM) in Luxembourg organized by the Institut français du Luxembourg - October 2023
- At the Alliance Française in Pune - India - November 2023
- At RBANMS Educational Charities in Bangalore, India - November 2023
- At the Science Gallery Bangaluru, Bangalore, India - December 2023

Distribution prospects

As part of the **Newimages XR development market**, which we won, and the **Annecy Animation Festival's MIFA**, the following organizations have expressed interest in our Floating Cities fresco project and discussed the possibility of presenting it in 2025: **Thessaloniki Film Festival, Art Explora (museum boat and museum in Saint Denis in 2026), Museul Sfer Ik Tulum - Mexico, Kaohsiung Film Festival - Taiwan, etc.**

Focus Brazil

In November 2024, we also took part in the **Rec'n'Play Festival in Recife and exhibited at the Casa Barao de Camocim in Fortaleza**, Brazil, with the support of the French Institute and the French Consulate General in Recife, in order to meet the Brazilian ecosystem, particularly with a view to the Saison croisée France-Brésil, and the **COP 2025 in Belém with our Brazilian partner the Centro Cultural Vale Maranhao in Sao Luis.**

We also met Douglas Resende and Isabelle Werneck in Rio to propose a presentation of our work for **Rio UNESCO World Book Capital 2025-2026. Our work received the UNESCO World Book Capital label in Strasbourg.**

Our first two artworks (Taiwan, Strasbourg) were presented in the following locations to raise awareness of the work's distribution from June 2025 onwards

- **Biennial of Creativity**
- **Researchers' Night**
- **Alliance française de Pune, India**
- **Institut français du luxembourg**
- **The #EU4Ocean Coalition Brussels**
- **Alliances françaises of Bizerte,**
- **Gabès and Djerba**
- **PiXii Festival, La Rochelle**
- **Musée national de la Marine de Rochefort**
- **Open Factory at Centquatre (December 2024)**

SUMMARY NOTE

TITLE: VILLES FLOTTANTES / FLOATING CITIES

BROADCAST FORMAT

- Immersive augmented reality art installation in public spaces
- edition in leporello format
- artistic and mediation workshops

TECHNICAL

- 2D animation
- Augmented reality application

DURATION

20 minutes in the public space

20 minutes + 60 minutes + videos in private area

DIMENSIONS

- deployable in 6 arrays of 2m x 2.5m or 2.70m x 3.50m
- Possibility of presenting some or all of the paintings, depending on the exhibition venue.

The experiment is set up for a maximum of 18 people simultaneously on the complete experiment.

TEAM

Co-direction: Elsa Mroziewicz, Cécile Palusinski

Production: Numered (Under The Starry Vault)

Leporello edition: Numered

Drawing/ 2D animation: Elsa Mroziewicz

Sound design: Cécile Palusinski

Music and sound design: Jean-Paul Le Goff

French voice: Bernard Gabay

English voice: Emma Gariépy

Brazilian voice: Marcello Lunière

English translation: Susan Pickford Brazilian

translation: Marcello Lunière

Chinese translation: Carole Wenchao

Application development: Editions Volumiques

LANGUAGES

French, English, Portuguese. Chinese to be confirmed.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Family audience

Museum audiences, oceanographic museums, large media libraries, ocean festivals and conferences/summits)

Schools



ELSA MROZIEWICZ

Multidisciplinary visual artist

Elsa co-directed the transmedia project ARBRES MONDES, shortlisted at the Bologna International Book Fair. Her giant pop-up book augmented with Baobab was shortlisted for the MEGGENDORFER FOR ARTIST BOOKS 2023 prize (USA) and is on display at the Goodplanet Foundation in Paris.

As an illustrator, she has created numerous illustrated books and animated artist's books that have been exhibited in museums, fairs and media libraries, including in New York at Columbia University (Rare Book and Manuscript Library), in Prague at the B1 Centre for contemporary design, and in Italy at Milan Design Week. Elsa has published several children's books with Minedition to enthusiastic acclaim: The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, News & Observers.

She is currently developing augmented sound artworks with author Cécile Palusinski: «La Forêt Universelle», about endangered animals (supported by the Michalski Foundation), «Le sacre des oiseaux», about migratory birds (winner of the Villa Swagatam in India, organized by the French Institute of India and MAD Salon+Lab), «Villes flottantes», about ocean protection and «Les gardiens de l'océan» (experiment in MR). In 2025, Elsa was awarded the Villa Albertine in the USA for the Floating Cities project.

VISUAL ARTIST

www.elsamro.com

www.underthestarryvault.com



CÉCILE PALUSINSKI

Author

As a writer, she has published several books since 2005. For the past 6 years, she has been involved in transmedia projects, NORD SUD, published in 2019, and ARBRES-MONDES produced in 2022. In 2023, she was the winner of the Villa Formose writing residency in Taiwan for the Villes flottantes augmented reality sound fresco project, and in 2025 of the Villa Albertine in the USA. President of the Socotra dragon blood tree association, she wrote a travelogue about Socotra, as part of a residency at the Jan Michalski Foundation in June 2023, and published a book of photographs and poems with Melrakki Editions in December 2023, in collaboration with Benoît Palusinski. She is currently taking part in the «Les gardiens de l'océan» project with Elsa Mroziejcz and in a sound project based on colors.

She is also president of the association La Plume de Paon, which promotes the development of French language audio books, and founder of the training and consultancy agency NUMERED Conseil, dedicated to cultural professionals faced with digital change. In this capacity, she is a regular speaker for the Institut Français, in France and abroad.

AUTHOR

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