

Thomas Nölle

www.thomas-noelle.net



Thomas Nölle, Playa de Macaé (Rio de Janeiro), 1979 ©

Nölle was born in Soest, Germany, in 1948, and lives in Barcelona since 1988. He made his first photography exhibition with fifteen years.

In 1970 he moved to Bonn, where he studied social education at the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn. He commenced his artistic career in the mid-1970s. From his first artistic stage until today his work is characterized by transdisciplinarity: pictorial, objectual, audiovisual and installation work is combined with collage, assemblage, photography, mix media.

In 1977 he held his first exhibitions at the **Merseburger Hall** in his hometown of Soest (Germany) and at the **Produzenten Gallery** in Zurich (Switzerland). In 1978 he celebrated an individual exhibition at the **Kurhaus Dangast**, which was known at the time as the gathering place of the Freie Akademie Oldenburg [Oldenburg Free Academy] revolving around the figure of Joseph Beuys.



Untitled, 1977, mixed media assemblage ©

The following year he exhibited at the **Werkstatt Gallery** in Bonn. During this early period, he investigated the possibilities of black-and-white photography and of working with objects, assemblages and collages. Marked social undertones, a sensibility for capturing and addressing relevant

issues related to the complex relationship between humans and nature, and a critical approach to political-economic, cultural and environmental issues are themes that were reflected even in his early photographic and three-dimensional works, and were destined to maintain a constant presence in practically all of his subsequent artistic productions.

It was a period characterised by several journeys to various European nations and Russia, as well as the Caribbean and the United States. Nölle's most relevant experiences took place in Pompeii (1970), Egypt (1970) and India (1973), which were instrumental in the development of certain thematic lines that would serve as the backbone of many of his future series. Between 1979 and 1981 he travelled extensively throughout various Latin American countries, including Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay and Brazil. He visited places charged with symbolism, like Machu Picchu, Manaus and Salvador de Bahia, which greatly fascinated him and also heightened his awareness of the importance of native cultures and of their tragic decline and collapse at the hands of colonists. He was particularly impressed by the historical injustices that live on in racial, economic and class divisions, which continue to plague the majority of Latin American countries and perpetuate the endemic state of poverty and marginalisation of a large social stratum that primarily consists of Indians, mestizos and the descendants of Indians or Africans. He has used photography to portray different situations observed in public places, and one of the most interesting is his series on the relationship between Bolivian soldiers and the ecclesiastical institution, a very powerful alliance that exists in the military dictatorships of several Latin American nations.

In Brazil he created his first series dedicated to the Indians of the Amazon: black-and-white photographs of the artist himself, subsequently electrographically treated and hand-painted, in which he dons traditional Indian adornments and simulates the grotesque, burlesque and yet dramatic situation of the unsuccessful integration of the native peoples in mainstream civilisation. With a suit and tie or an executive's briefcase, but with a *cocar* (the feathered headdress worn by the Indians) and a painted face, he dramatises the situation of an Indian forced to adapt to civilisation, who finds himself faced with the technical advances that characterise urban life such as lifts, houses with doors and refrigerators.

During the time he spent in Brazil (1979–1981) he created three other photographic series: one on the life of the caboclos (people of mixed European and Indian ancestry) and mulatos (people of mixed African and European ancestry) on plantations in the country's interior (Nölle spent several months on a plantation in Guarapuava, in the heart of the state of Paraná; in Formosa, Goiás; and Italva, Rio de Janeiro); a series on Pope John Paul II's visit to Brasilia; and another about the lesser-known side of *Carnival in Rio de Janeiro*. The first employs a certain sense of humour—one might almost say a Brazilian

sense of humour, halfway between the caricature and the sinister—to portray the typical peasant, a simple poor man who makes weapons and brute force his weapons of survival. The series *Carnaval no Rio* [Carnival in Rio] (1980) also shows ordinary people during the days of the carnival, who celebrate their popular festival on the streets of Rio de Janeiro far from the tourists, official parades or social clubs. Street scenes, some candid shots and others posed for the camera, comprise this series which was published in the form of artistic postcards in 1983.

In 1981, upon his return to Germany, he settled again in Bonn where he presented the solo exhibition *Yves Klein unter anderem* [Yves Klein, Amongst Other Things] in 1983 at the **Kunsthistorisches Institut** of the University of Bonn. In this show he exhibited his series of electrographs on the theme of the forced “adaptation” of Indians to civilisation, as well as the installation entitled *Earth Organ*, in which a mechanical handle simulates rolling up a long snakeskin—a metaphor of the way nature is being progressively swallowed by the technical world operated by human hands.

He also showed a new series dedicated to Yves Klein, whose influence on his oeuvre can be seen above all in the poetic and conceptual way he approaches the work of art. The Kleinian blue (IKB) and gold colours—the gold that re-emerges in the series presented in this exhibition in clear reference to the legend of *El Dorado*, but also to the colour employed symbolically by Klein—are used by Nölle in assemblages and installations: a table painted entirely in blue, upon which rest a golden plate with a blue background and golden cutlery; two installations in display cases, one covered with pages taken from the Financial Times newspaper and two paint rollers, one dipped in gold paint and the other in red; and another display case painted blue all over, with a single hole at the top through which visitors can see the completely empty interior by standing on a stool.

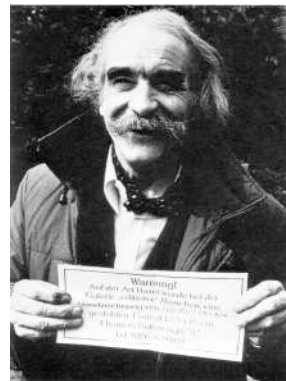


Earth Organ, 1987, mixed media assemblage ©

In this exhibition, Nölle reinforces one of the essential thematic lines that surface in his work: the bridge between the courses that art and its myths follow—the relationship between art and commerce—and the path of humanity and nature, controlled and destroyed by capital. A deeper reflection allows the observer to establish a nexus between the figures of the heroes defeated by the system: Klein (the paradigm of a certain way of understanding and creating art) and the Indians.

Nölle participated in several group exhibitions, most notably *Nehmen Sie Dada Ernst* [Take Dada

Seriously] (1984) at the **Bonner Kunstverein**, where he met Jean Tinguely and Joseph Beuys who were also participating in the show.



Jean Tinguely with advertisement used in the performance piece *Das ist doch keine Art* by Nölle and Jürgen Pech at the Kunstverein Bonn, 1984 ©

At the opening, he presented the performance piece *Das ist doch keine Art* [That's Not Art] with Jürgen Pech, in which they arrived at the event wearing German police uniforms and pretended they were searching for a stolen work of art. (See Jean Tinguely's photograph with the advertisement.) The **Kunstpalastr in Düsseldorf** hosted this exhibition, where Nölle carried out the public art action entitled *Kunst ist Gesundheit – Remember Yves Klein* [Art is Health – Remember Yves Klein]. This phrase, printed in white letters against a background of Yves Klein's characteristic blue, occupied the spaces reserved for advertisements on the outside of trams in the city of Düsseldorf, which ran for the duration of the exhibition. The exhibition's itinerancy ended at the **Mülheim Art Museum** in 1988.

In his new studio in Bonner Talweg Street in Bonn, he worked intensely on medium- and large-format paintings, developing specific techniques that allowed him to integrate various materials. The graffiti and cave paintings were some of his aesthetic and gestural references, but above all he investigated the palimpsest technique in which various layers are superimposed, although traces of earlier writings still remain.

Nölle researched the processes used by memory and history to filter, code, store and transform information that, regardless of its relevance, eventually becomes lost, fragmented and distorted with the passage of time and the speed with which new information is constantly generated. In fact, from this period on, the theme of memory, the passage of time and its connection to the way in which personal histories and human history are constructed began to acquire special relevance in his work *Road to Cairo* (1986), *Living in the Box* (1987), *Casa da infância* [Childhood Home] (1990) and *Für Elisabeth* [For Elisabeth] (1990) are a few of the paintings from this time that allow us to analyse the thematic spectrum of his output in this pictorial phase.

In the words of Amador Vega, “one does not have to stand before a work by Thomas Nölle for very long in order to sense, all at once, the immediate structures of individual memory. The closest reference is the impossibility of expressing essential signs in our paradigmatic structure: colour and history; dimension

and reflection; the absence of model and presence. [...] The artist works like a surgeon, manipulating the epidermis of the earth. And in his contemplative vision of the model, the copy has already been revealed. [...] There are elements of this piece that have recourse to the construction of a lingua universalis. Moment by moment, the language, the convention of signs, disappears. However, there emerges the structure of an ardent scenography.”

(Amador Vega. “The Art of Thomas Nölle: An Archaeology of the Primitive Soul” [August 1991] in the catalogue *Thomas Nölle. Arbeiten 1985-1991*. Bonn: Leppelt/Comed/Galerie Raue, 1991, pp. 7-8.)

The results of his production in this period were shown in 1987 in an individual exhibition at the Kunsthistorisches Institut of Bonn and, in June 1988, at the **Orangerie Schloss Augustusburg** in Brühl in a larger exhibition entitled *Room to Move*.



4 *Room to move*, 1987, installation, Orangerie Schloss Augustusburg, Brühl (Germany) ©

At the second show, and in addition to his paintings, he presented an installation about how historical events are manipulated, simplified and organised (pigeonholed). In this installation, all of the busts of historical and mythological figures—from Voltaire to Hermes—that are normally on display in the Orangerie of the Brühl Palace are placed by Nölle inside large wooden structure built in the centre of the hall, simulating numerous little filing boxes. The fragmentation of knowledge and the regulated yet simplified access to complex reality and its history are central themes in this work.

In 1988, he began travelling frequently to Spain.

In 1989 he set up a second studio in Barcelona and worked alternately between Germany and Spain. In 1990, he presented the solo exhibition *Mundus Novus* at the **Friedrich Naumann Foundation** in Königswinter, with an extensive series on the topic of colonisation and the controversial relations between different cultures. This series was crafted using a new technique of layering acetate sheets, literally applying the archaeological idea of the palimpsest, which lent depth to the image and allowed the artist to work with layers of information. This work evidences the need to review history, to resurrect and publicise the injustices and distortions that official sources broadcast and continue to broadcast as authentic information. The same year he participated in the exhibition *Out of Limits* at the **Syndikathalle, Raue Gallery**, in Bonn, which featured Spanish and German artists.

In 1992 he celebrated two solo exhibitions under the title *Mundus Novus II* at the **Städtische**

Galerie am Herrenteich, in Suhl (Thuringia), and at the **Institut für Öffentliche Verwaltung NRW**, in Hilden; the featured paintings and drawings represented a continuation of his research into colonisation in Latin America. He published the monographic catalogue of his pictorial work created between 1985 and 1991 which, in addition to his large-format paintings and the *Mundus Novus* series, included his 1991 series entitled *Notes about Dürer*. In this series, which resulted from his research into Dürer’s treaty *Vier Bücher von menschlicher Proportion* [Four Books on Human Proportion, 1528], Nölle equated the quest for a type of physical aesthetic determined by the standards of beauty set out by Dürer with pigeonholing, overcrowding and the tendency toward mediocrity exhibited by human beings, three processes characteristic of post-industrial societies.

In 1993, as mentor and co-founder, he created the **L’Angelot Contemporary Culture Association** in Barcelona, the first venue in Spain dedicated specifically to media art. Up until 1999, this association developed more than seventy activities including exhibitions, seminars, lectures, concerts, performances, workshops, video art exhibitions, multimedia and net art exhibitions, publications, etcetera.

In 1993 he started a new series of works in different formats—object boxes, assemblages, environments, photographs—dedicated to the connection between the sea (as a metaphor for nature) and the manifestations of consumer society expressed in the excessive production of waste materials or the abusive use of technologies. His interest was piqued in part by the unbelievable volume and wide variety of rubbish found on the beaches of Barcelona, particularly on Barceloneta Beach. (See *Sea-Store Project* 2016) Nölle collected this material as if he were an urban archaeologist and used it in his creations from that time on.



Notes about Dürer II, 1991, mixed technique on acetate and paper, 30 x 21 cm ©

In Belo Horizonte (Brazil), he held the solo exhibition *La mer-e* [The Sea/The Mother] at the **Manoel Macedo Gallery** in 1994, where he displayed microassemblages and macro-photographs.

In 1995 he celebrated two individual exhibitions: one at the Cruce Gallery in Madrid, entitled *Finis Terrae* (with Angiola Bonanni), and the other, *Fabled Sea*, at the **Trece Gallery** in Ventalló (Gerona), which featured the pieces created from the waste materials found

on the Barcelona beaches and photographs documenting the site: small bits of mosaic tile, classical friezes or a 2nd-century Roman portrait, based on the technique of digitalisation, with each mosaic representing a pixel in the picture.

The object-catalogue of the *Fabled Sea* series, exhibited in 1996 at the **Purgatori II Gallery** in Valencia, was published. The series of mosaics was also presented in the solo exhibition *Plage d'Or* [Golden Beach] at the Dada Art Gallery in Granollers (Barcelona) in 1996. That same year, in the individual exhibition *Pontes da Memória* [Bridges of Memory] held at the **Brazil-Spain Cultural Centre** in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, Nölle exhibited collages, drawings and sculptures that reflected on the continuous production and multiplication of images created throughout human history, from prehistoric cave paintings to computer-generated figures.

He participated in the group exhibition *Expanded Collage* at the **Antonio de Barnola Gallery** in Barcelona. The Spanish television channel **Canal +** dedicated an episode of the documentary television series *Basura* [Trash] to Nölle under the title *Restos del naufragio* [Remains of the Shipwreck], which was presented together with an exhibit at the Urania Gallery of Barcelona in 1998.



6 ©
Untitled, series *La mer-e*, 1994 assemblage & photograph, 100 x 100 cm

In 1999, at the individual exhibition *Symphonie technique* [Technical Symphony] held at **Transforma Espacio** (Vitoria-Gasteiz), he showed the series of paintings created in 1997 and 1998 in which diverse depictions of mechanical structures were fused with human or animal bodies: the technical world's interference in the human sphere entails the deconstruction of the subject or the destruction of nature. At the exhibition *Emcaixas* [Inboxes] (with Paulo Laender) at the **Kolams Gallery** (Belo Horizonte, Brazil) and at the **L'Angelot Contemporary Culture Association** (Barcelona) in 2000, Nölle presented assemblages and object boxes that explored the concept of the contemporary relics of human, urban-technological and natural environments. That same year, he participated in the exhibition *El porqué de las cosas* [The Why of Things] at the **Mercat de les Flors** Theatre of Barcelona.

In 2000–2001 at **Café Schilling** (Barcelona), he exhibited display cases with *objets trouvés*, transformed into miniature works of urban archaeology, which shared an obvious common reference—the Mediterranean. *Musée Méditerranéen* [Mediterranean Museum] was the first show to emerge from his collaboration with technicians Christian Konn and

Carlos Jovellar, with whom he founded the group **cv8.org**. Based on the concept of the archaeological museum as a place for conserving, studying and exhibiting the objects that illustrate human cultural activities, these works constituted the fruit of Thomas Nölle's archaeological endeavours on Mediterranean beaches and their adjacent urban centres. Through installations, kinetic sculptures and assemblages, *Musée Méditerranéen* attempted to address two core issues: the progressive erosion and loss of natural and cultural heritage due to the spread of the culture of indifference; and the complex relationship between human beings, their technologies and nature, manifested in the increasingly widespread process of wasting natural resources and preying on the environment.

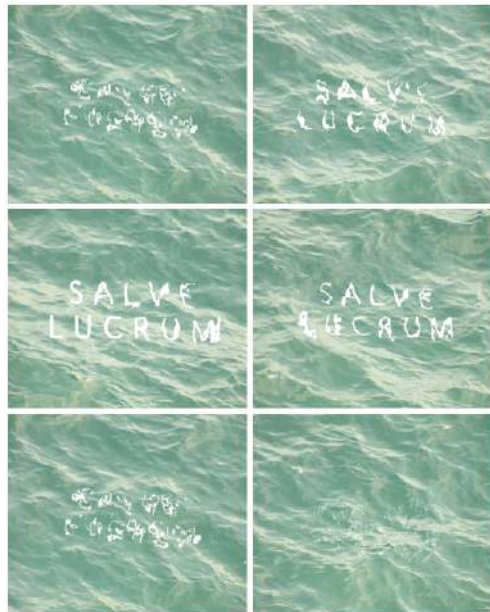
Nölle exhibited his assemblages and kinetic art creations at the Arts Centre Gallery of Barcelona in 2001 (solo). The sound installation *Silencio vicioso* [Vicious Silence], was included in the exhibition *Sin salida de emergencia* [No Emergency Exit] at the **Museu d'Art of Sabadell** (catalogue) and at the Multimedia Centre of the **National Centre for the Arts from Mexico City** in 2002. In this piece, a telephone would ring when the observer entered the installation space, and when the visitor answered he would hear a person pouring out his problems and desperately begging for help (the system randomly selected recordings by different people offering different types of narratives stored in the programme, so that the spectator would always hear a new voice when the telephone began ringing again). The piece transformed visitors into participants in and accomplices to the events. The inability to respond expressed a symbolic nexus between the apathy and indifference that are increasingly predominant in so-called First World societies and the socio-political situations that continually call us to take an active stand without any prospect of obtaining answers.



7
Musée Méditerranéen, general view of the exhibition in Observatori-III, Museum MUVIM Valencia, 2002 ©

Nölle participated in the *Observatori-III International Festival of Artistic Research of Valencia*, held at the **MUVIM, Museo Valenciano de la Ilustración y la Modernidad**, in 2002 with his audiovisual installation *Salve Lucrum* and the exhibition *Musée Méditerranéen*. In this case, the installation transformed the room into an archaeological site, replicating the provisional and uncertain situation of fieldwork (a metaphor for the contemporary situation itself), with its scaffolds and excavation area. This was the location of the central piece, *Salve*

Lucrum, an audiovisual installation in which the Mediterranean Sea was presented as a kind of dig site, from which emerged the inscription originally found in Pompeii.



Salve Lucrum I, 2002–2006. Video installation. Screenshots of the video. 8 ©

In 2003, the **Arts Centre Gallery** of Barcelona hosted the solo exhibition *Tiempos disperses* [Scattered Times], which featured the light boxes and mosaics produced by the artist in 2002 and 2003. Among other works, Nölle presented a new series of object boxes dedicated to scattered worlds: fragments of maps and geographic representations of the world were used as a metaphor for man's attempt to depict a universal reality, even though our understanding and knowledge is always fractioned, partial and subjective. Nölle participated in three group exhibitions: *Pronóstica* [Prognosis] at the **Museu d'Art Contemporani d'Eivissa** (Ibiza); *Plural*, at the **Pati Llimona** in Barcelona, where he presented the installation *Musée Privé* [Private Museum]; and *Clin d'oeil à George Sand* [Allusion to George Sand], at Can Puig (Sóller, Mallorca), which was also shown at the **Espai Mallorca of Barcelona** in 2004.

In 2005, he worked on a new series of electrographs on canvas in which he used his own photographs, historical photographs, painting and drawing, focused on the central theme of African culture. These works were presented in the solo exhibition *Collector's Dream* at the **Arts Centre Gallery** in Barcelona. For Thomas Nölle, collecting is an act of drawing closer to the world through objects. He views creating and collecting as adjoining terms that entail the ability to rescue the memory of things and generate a nexus between pieces of the most diverse origins. In 2005 he exhibited works using mixed techniques on paper and electrographs at the individual show *Danza del tiempo – Arte de dos continentes* [The Dance of Time – The Art of Two Continents] at the **Kumbi Saleh Gallery** in Barcelona, alongside tribal art sculptures and objects.

In 2006 he celebrated the solo exhibition *Entre las imágenes* [Between the Images] at the **5th International Image Festival in Manizales** (Colombia), where he presented five audiovisual installations. Thomas Nölle sketched a critical landscape of post-industrial society, in which the need to rethink the complex relationship between past and present, time and space, civilisation and nature, individuals and mechanisms of consumption and the fictionalisation of reality, global economy and survival, is becoming increasingly more pressing. One of the participatory installations was entitled *Wunderland* [Wonder World] and featured a drawing on the ground of hopscotch squares, the well-known children's game referred to as tejo in Spain, golosa in Colombia, avión in Mexico and Peru and amarelinha in Brazil. When the spectator jumps on a square, his action activates a chain of images projected onto the screen located in front of the squares. Each square corresponds to a conceptual group of images whose sequences, as the player moves ahead in the game, are linked to different iconographies: nature, colonisation, post-colonisation and globalisation, consumption and destruction. Their sequences contain a possible, albeit random, narrative made of fragments, echoing Julio Cortázar's literary style. Like someone reading Cortázar, the person interacting with the installation can also jump between the images and determine his own route.

The solo exhibition *Silencio vicioso* (cv8.org) was shown at the **Spanish Cultural Centre in Mexico City** in 2006.

That same year, Nölle participated in the exhibition organised by the **Drap-Art'06 International Festival of Artistic Recycling** at the **CCCB, Centre de Cultura Contemporània of Barcelona**, and presented the audiovisual installation *Hall of Fame* in the exhibition entitled *Los Caprichos* [The Whims] at **Gran Canaria Espacio Digital** in the context of Canariasmediafest, the 12th International Arts and Digital Cultures Festival of Gran Canaria.

Hall of Fame consists of a metal structure with a latex balloon at its upper end, which is inflated automatically to its maximum size and suddenly deflates at certain times following a cyclical rhythm. A projection inside the balloon, achieved thanks to a complex system of mirrors, shows a series of celebrity faces (singers, actors, athletes, politicians, etc.). Two sound channels installed in the room broadcast rounds of applause, ovations and whistles, simulating the atmosphere of a concert hall with pre-recorded, tinned audience participation. When the acclaims stop, the balloon with its stars begins to rapidly deflate until it loses its shape and the entire process is paralysed to then start on a new cycle of rising to stardom. The installation ironically suggests reflections on the new logic of the star market or star-system: the accelerated rotation of shooting stars, momentary and fleeting, the effects of trends and the allure of coolness, of the "use it and lose it" culture. The same dizzying pace of obscurity reaches into every social sphere, from intellectuals and artists to politicians and consumers.

In 2007 Nölle began working on a new photographic series that linked analogue photography to the digital image.



9 *Luz celeste*, series *Cosmos Delight*, digital photograph, 100 x 89,5 cm

Conceptually, he addressed the theme of the cosmos viewed from different perspectives: the Universe as the great enigma for humanity, both fascinating and awakening ancestral fears within us, and the unbreakable ties between life on earth and the cosmic system—human existence depends on something that is largely a mystery to us.

In 2008, the video installation *El salto del ángel (Qué será, será...)* [Angel's Leap (Whatever Will Be, Will Be...)] was presented at the exhibition *El discreto encanto de la tecnología. Artes en España* [The Discreet Charm of Technology: Arts in Spain] at the **MEIAC, Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo** (Badajoz) and the **ZKM Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe** (Germany), and **Neue Galerie Graz** (Austria).



10 *El salto del ángel (Qué será, será)*, 2008. Audiovisual installation, 3-channels. MEIAC, Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo de Badajoz, 2008. Photo: Vicente Novillo. ©

For Nölle, the three videos presented as audiovisual books placed on a shelf are a representation of the dance in the volcano—the collective naïve and escapist act—which contrasts with the leap into the

void—the symbolic act of humanity's unconditional faith in itself and in its capacity to overcome any law (not just the law of gravity)—while in the central video a street musician constantly plays the well-known tune *Qué será, será* (Whatever Will Be, Will Be) on an accordion.

In November 2008, he presented a big individual exhibition entitled *Tiempos dorados* [Golden Times] at the **MEIAC, Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo of Badajoz**. Professor Siegfried Zielinski, Rector of the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design, Germany, wrote in the wide catalog of the exhibition: “The alienations that Thomas Nölle works with are extreme. They organise “chock” experiences, as Benjamin characterised Dadaist image strategies in his famous *Work of Art* essay—they fly like bullets at the viewer. Colourful macaws, still exotic birds to European eyes even if they are outside a cage, sit dazed on rusty iron poles and a workbench in an abandoned building pit.”



11 *Oasis*, 2007, 120 x 82 cm. Photography ©

“In this sense, Thomas Nölle's works can also be understood as gifts, as gifts given back within an economy that accepts only one currency as valid: the uncompromising respect towards what is different in close connection with aesthetic surplus value. Art that is developed from this is pure extravagance. Yet increasingly this is becoming the most essential art, the more everything is sacrificed to the delusion of productivity.” (Siegfried Zielinski, *Tiempos dorados*, p. 30)



12 *Collector's Dream II*, 2008. Installation, cabinet room. Showcase, photographs and various objects. Exhibition T. Nölle *Golden Times*, MEIAC, Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo de Badajoz, 2008. Photo: Vicente Novillo ©

In the installation *Collector's Dream II* (2008) the collector's poetry by Thomas Nölle does not so much set out to decode real signs as to track the sedimentations of significance, muddle meanings and (re)compose the memory of the possible.

Siegfried Zielinski wrote about the artistic attitude of Thomas Nölle, a passionate gatherer: "He spent many years of his life roaming through cities and landscapes, along rivers and especially beaches beside various oceans where he picked up—in all senses of the word—what others no longer considered valuable, had thrown away or lost. He assembles the found objects into arrays with new aesthetic and physical tensions, makes collages of them, and arranges them in a new context in such a way that they become condensed, poetic celebrations of what can be found.

Something is expressed in this that is one of the most valuable things artists can have: respect for what is ignored by most people on a daily basis; respect for what is different, for what creates a difference in our experience. Here it is not a question of the size or absolute meaning of the Other. It can be a human being, an animal, a gear Wheel or some other manufactured object; a stone, broken glass, colour, wood, a fragment of graffiti, rusty metal, or an old, 'dead' newspaper, as García Márquez would say." (S. Zielinski, *Golden Times*, 2008, p. 26)

The solo exhibition *Way of Light*, photographs and video art, was shown at **Factoria Santiago de Compostela** (Spain) in 2010. The main features of this production are the research of light potential and the construction of images in conjunction with movement.

In 2012 he has produced the photographic series and published the photo-book *Musa* (2013), which were exhibited in **Arte Periférica Galeria de Arte, Centro Cultural de Belém**, Lisboa, Portugal (2014), and in Laie Barcelona, Spain (2015).



13 *Musa XIII*, 2012, 60 x 60 cm, Inkjet pigment print on paper. ©

In 2015 his artist-book *By the Way* has been presented and/or exposed in **Blue Project Foundation** (Barcelona); **Museum MEIAC** of Badajoz; **EsBaluard Museum of Contemporary Art**, Mallorca; **Parque Lage Center of Art** (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). *By the Way* is not a series in

a sequential sense, but rather an essay on the momentary experience of the gaze in movement. Nölle's artist book brings together a set of 21 photographs, whose common denominator is the relationship between travel, the fleeting gaze and the landscape. With their highly personal style, the photographs in this book work as exercises to help awaken our poetic sensibility, something so sharply marginalized nowadays by the wave of instant, trivial images inundating us. Nölle clearly sets himself apart both from documentary objectivity and from realist staging, stepping clear of a practice where the external world is simply reflected.



14 *Vilassar » Barcelona*, 2016, From the series *By the Way*, Inkjet pigment print on paper. ©

In the text by the theoretical specialist of the image Norval Baitello (Sao Paulo, Brazil), written especially for this book, attention is drawn to the pictorial quality of these "capricious windows, showing while hiding and hiding showing."

In 2015, he participated in an exhibition at the **Künstlerhaus Vienna** (Austria).



15 *Bremen » Hamburg*, 2013, From the series *By the Way*, Inkjet pigment print on paper. ©

The Project *Mare Rostrum*, commissioned by Marviva – Agencia de Residus de Catalunya, Port de Barcelona, Drap-Art, was exhibited at the **Center for Contemporary Culture of Barcelona**, Spain, in 2015. The photographic series addresses the real threat of debris at sea, taken away by fishermen from deep-sea areas on the Mediterranean coast, in contrast to luxury consumer products such as red prawns. También en 2015 participa en exposición en el **Re:NEW Festival**, Pittsburgh, USA, y en la Intendencia de Montevideo, Uruguay.

In 2016 he developed the Project *SEA≈STORE*, presented at the Drap-Art'16 Festival, in collaboration with CCCB Center for Contemporary Culture Barcelona,

Spain. It consists of performances in the public space with *Portable Micro-Museums*, and the installation of the *Ephemeral Museum* consisting of an eco-building dome using reeds in the Plaça dels Àngels square, in front of the Museum of Contemporary Art MACBA in Barcelona. Both parts of the Project approach the question of the fragility of ecosystems as well as of human memory and history.



16-17-18: *SEA≈STORE*, project in public space and performance, Barcelona, 2016, in front of the Museum of Contemporary Art MACBA. ©

The *Portable Micro-Museums* use a classic "vendor tray" design. They exhibit the Thomas's small boxes with objects. Each piece in *SEA≈STORE* is both an art object and an object of urban marine archaeology, recovered from the sea and the beaches of the Barceloneta by Thomas Nölle in the 1990s, before and after de Olympic Games. During the performances with the *Portable Micro-Museums*, the artist donates his work to people committed to the preservation of the marine ecosystem. Grounded in the sharing economy, each participant sends a tweet or selfie with his or her new work to the *SEA≈STORE* social media network.

In this way, the participant's followers on social media and new art collectors preserve uniquely genuine fragments of Barcelona's history, while simultaneously contributing to the cleaning of the oceans.

<https://youtu.be/oEZODodK1oA>

<https://vimeo.com/206446543>

Instagram: [seastore_art](#)

Twitter: [@seastore_art](#)



18 Thomas in the Barceloneta sea in the 1990s and 2015. ©

His photo-book, along with Carlos Gasparinho, *Elsewhere* (2016) has been exhibited in the Angeles Baños Gallery, Badajoz (Spain) in 2016.

With Gasparinho he has the exhibition *Elsewhere – An Improbable Journey* in *Goethe-Institut Lisbon* (March 8 – June 30, 2017). This thematic exhibit comprises diptychs created by Gasparinho and Nölle, and individual photographs by both. The idea for the *Elsewhere* project aroused from the conceptual and thematic affinities in the photographic production of both artists. Their common interest for the landscape and for the notion of contemporary urban archeology, paved the path for this dialog, giving form to complementary, either antagonistic or synergetic, diptychs.

February 13 to April 15, 2018 Thomas Nölle celebrated the solo exhibition *By the Way* at the *Museo Nacional del Romanticismo*, in Madrid, with a selection of works of the photographic essay. Two thematic subjects make up the backbone of Nölle's exhibition. One focuses on vision through the window, making it possible to capture unique and unrepeatable instants distinguished by the mobility of the voyage, whether of the artist behind the camera or of the features portrayed in the exterior realm. The other prioritizes immersion in the landscape, as a way of setting up dialogues between human beings and nature, between inner and outer worlds. [Lecture presentation by Dr. Amador Vega:

<http://thomas-noelle.net/en/by-the-way-english>]



Museo Nacional del Romanticismo, Madrid, *By the Way* exhibition, 2018

Credits

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