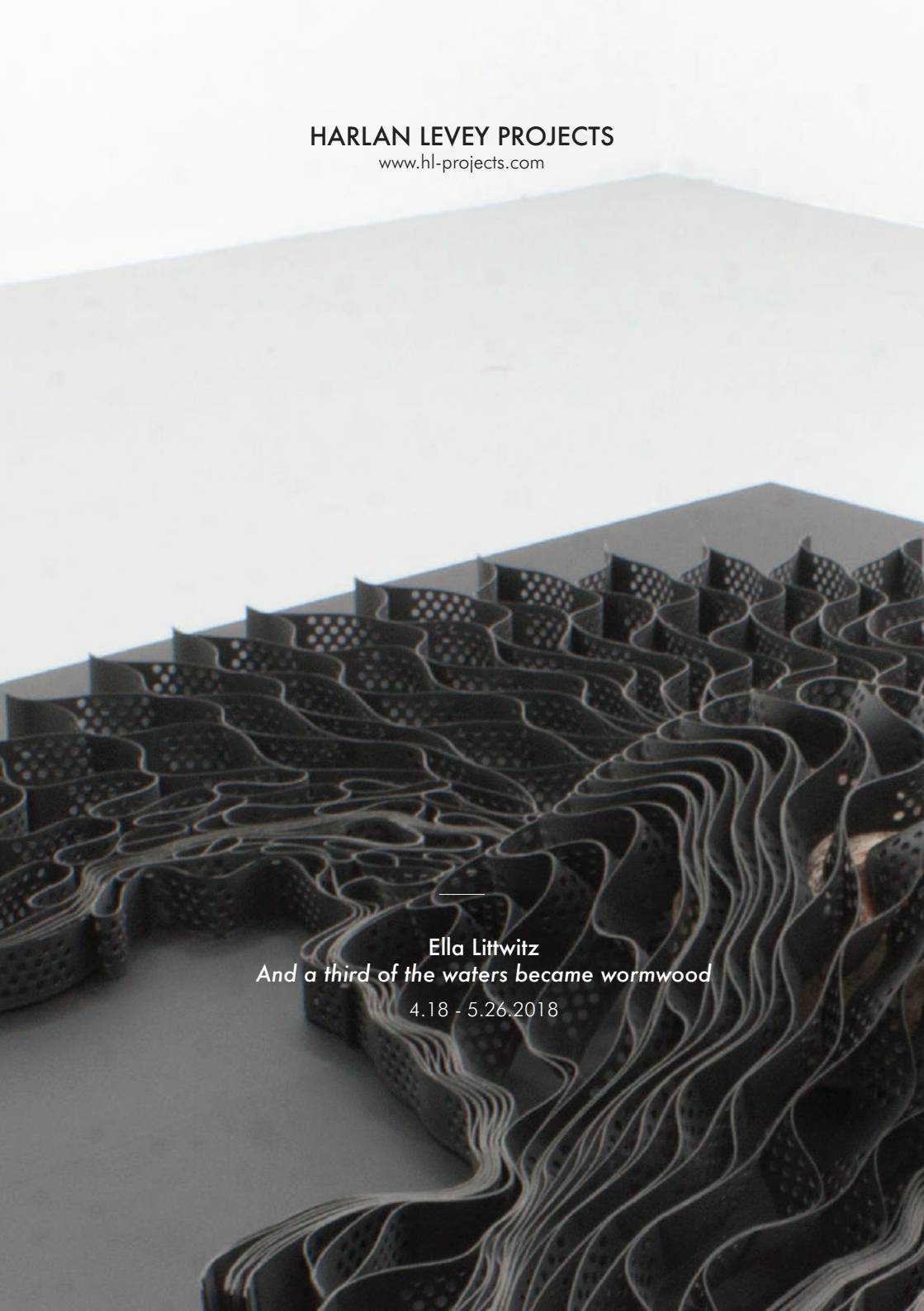
HARLAN LEVEY PROJECTS
www.hl-projects.com



Ella Littwitz
And a third of the waters became wormwood
4.18 - 5.26.2018

Ella Littwitz

and a third of the waters became wormwood

April 18th - May 26th, 2018

HARLAN LEVEY PROJECTS

46 Rue Jean d'Ardennestraat, 1050 Brussels, Belgium
www.hl-projects.com

For further information please contact the gallery at
info@hl-projects.com or at +32 485 69 91 46

Ella Littwitz

and a third of the waters became wormwood

Ella Littwitz's first solo exhibition with Harlan Levey Projects continues a line of investigation into cultural, political and natural geographies established throughout her past work.

The work presented in the exhibition is driven by the artist's research into the Mediterranean Sea Basin's past, present and future: In the 1970s, a deep-sea drilling expedition proved that, over five million years ago, the Mediterranean sea was once dry, connecting the African and European continents by land. Today, the sea continues to act as a major crossroads but also an obstacle between the different mediterranean cultures which surround it. In the 1920s through 1950s, an alternative but unrealized future for the Mediterranean sea and surrounding area was proposed by Herman Sörgel, according to which, several dams would be installed in order to generate hydroelectric power and would lower the Mediterranean's sea level, exposing new land for settlement and connecting Europe and Africa in a utopian vision of peace and unity between Europe and Africa. The project was not supported by the Nazi party for these reasons and was never completed.

In this body of work, Littwitz addresses human migration and nationalism in the Mediterranean space, investigating the dual nature of this geographic feature to the extent that it connects and separates, acting as both a junction as well as a barrier between the Global North and South.

Then the third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star burning like a torch fell from heaven and landed on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter like wormwood oil, and many people died from the bitter waters.

Revelation 8:10-11

Its boundaries are drawn in neither space nor time. There is in 1 fact no way of drawing them: they are neither ethnic nor historical, state nor national; they are like a chalk circle that is constantly traced and erased, that the winds and waves, that obligations and inspirations expand or reduce.

Matvejevi, Predrag and Michael H. Heim. *Mediterranean: a cultural landscape*.
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. Print.

What does it matter, the traveller may think, what can it possibly matter, that the Mediterranean, an insignificant breach in the earth's crust […] is an ancient feature of the geology of the globe?

Braudel, Fernand, et al. *Memory and the Mediterranean*.
New York: A.A. Knopf, 2001. Print.

Exhibition view of “and a third of the waters became wormwood” at Harlan Levey Projects

Blood Knot
bronze
80 x 23 x 13 cm

“Knot” is one of the earliest units of measurement of nautical speed, while paradoxically a knot is something that secures a line or two lines to prevent or control movement. The blood knot is among the strongest knots for joining two separate lines, so strong that once tied it is impossible to separate the two lines again. Its resistance to slippage of wet lines and its minimal resistance while moving through the water, make it an incredibly useful knot for fishermen. The knot’s usage evokes images of seaside life, while it’s practical function literally unites two elements that were once separate into one continuous line with a secure and permanent connection.

The Horizon Under the Sea
pencil on paper
70.8 x 74 cm

From the 1950s through 1970s, various research expeditions performed surveys of the Mediterranean seabed which revealed a layer of salt buried below the surface, called the M Reflector. The presence of this deposit indicates that the Mediterranean sea had once dried up before subsequently filling with water again, an event known as the Messinian Salinity Crisis. Based on a survey of the M Reflector taken the coast of Spain [1] [2], Litwittz's drawing shows the two strata of the earth beneath the sea, revealing at once the Mediterranean's past and present.

1 Stanley, Daniel Jean, et al. "Catalonian, eastern Betic, and Balearic margins : structural types and geologically recent foundering of the western Mediterranean basin." Smithsonian Contributions to the Earth Sciences, no. 20, 1976, p. 1-67.

2 Hsü, Kenneth J., et al. "The Origin of the Mediterranean Evaporite." Initial Reports of the Deep Sea Drilling Project, 1973, p.1203-1231.

Far As Where Olive Grows, Low As The Bottom Of The Sea
olive waste, plaster, wood
13 x 96 x 19cm

In the front gallery, a cylinder composed of gypsum and olive waste- produced in the industrial extraction of olive oil and sold as an eco-heating product- mimics the form of a drill-core soil sample. In the 1970s, geologists extracted drill cores from the mediterranean sea bed containing gypsum and other salts minerals which are formed when salt water evaporates, proving that the Mediterranean had at one time evaporated and that the Mediterranean Basin had once been connected by land. Litwittz's drill core brings together two materials which connect the Mediterranean Basin- the olive tree stands found around growing throughout the entire basin, and the gypsum in the earth, now below water, which once physically connected it by land.

De facto
International water, Coca Cola bottle
31x 8.5 x 8.5 cm

On the far right wall of the main gallery, a coke bottle holds sea water collected from the international waters of the Mediterranean. Sea water may circulate freely between national jurisdictions, or into a space of non-jurisdiction, belonging to no country in particular. The water that Littwitz has collected from this zone is in a way state-less, like so many of the people crossing the Mediterranean. However the sea waters' ease of movement is in stark contrast with the limited freedom of movement of people between these same borders.

Aerosol
dust on paper
98 x 67.5 cm

Based on a satellite capture of Saharan dust traveling across the Mediterranean toward Europe, "Aerosol" illustrates the movement of airborne particles of earth. Using dust itself as a medium, Litwittz depicts the migration of a material whose movement is completely uncontrollable as it travels from one continent to another irrespective of man-made borders.

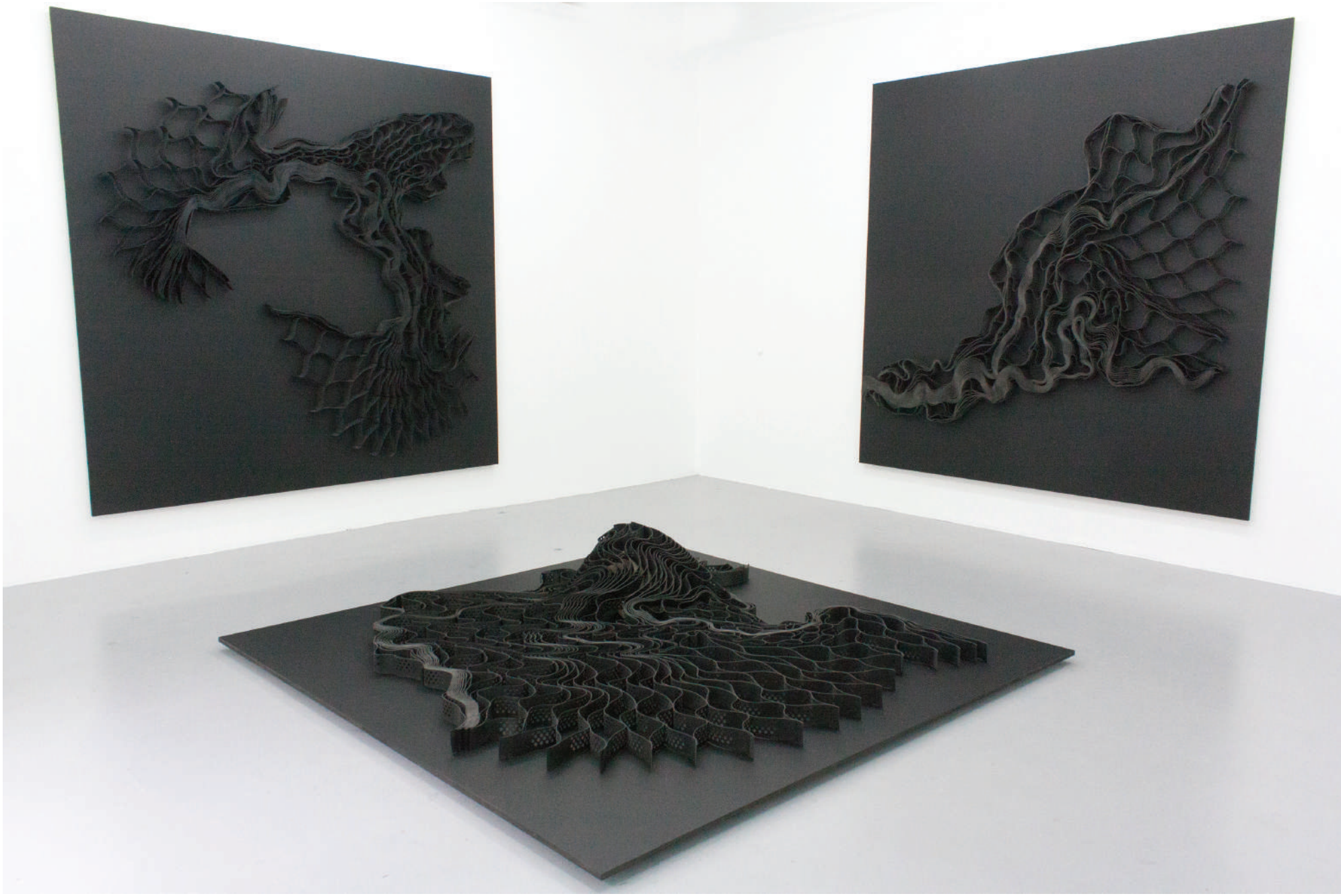
Blood Rain
seven laboratory bowls, red alga
12 x 10.5 x 10.5 cm

Blood rain is a phenomenon in which rain takes on a red color, and was once believed to be actual blood falling from the sky, marking a terrible omen. Literary references to blood rain are scattered throughout history, with the earliest mention in Homer's Iliad. In the Book of Revelation, seven angels sound trumpets announcing seven apocalyptic events. At the sound of the second trumpet, a flaming mountain crashes into the sea, turning a third of the sea to blood and killing a third of the creatures in it (Revelation 8:8-9). Later, seven angels pour seven bowls, each containing God's wrath in the form of a different plague, onto the earth, the second and third of which cause the sea and fresh water to turn to blood (Revelation 16:3-4). In recent years, there have been multiple occurrences of blood rain. In one case in Karela, India, the red color of the rain was found to be caused by the presence of spores of red algae which was not native to India but to Europe and was transported between continents by clouds.[3] This marked the first time that a scientific explanation was given this phenomenon. Littwitz has recreated blood rain using the responsible algae, and has allowed it to dry in seven laboratory evaporating dishes, reminiscent of the angels' sevel bowls. In this dried specimen, disparate places, epochs, and beliefs are linked together.

3 Bast F, Bhushan S, Ahmad John A, Achankunju J, Nadaraja Panikkar MV, et al. "European Species of Subaerial Green Alga Trentepohlia annulata (Trentepohliales, Ulvophyceae) Caused Blood Rain in Kerala, India". J Phylogen Evolution Biol, vol 3, no. 1, 2015, p. 144.

GEOCELLS

In the main gallery, three sculptures follow the trajectory of the three mediterranean migration routes into the EU in recent years. The three pieces are constructed of geocells, a material which is used to prevent erosion and the movement of soil. The eastern mediterranean route into Greece represents the arrival of 1,066,636 of immigrants by sea since the onset of the current migrant crisis. The sculpture on the left wall specifically follows the passage from Turkey to the Greek island of Lesvos, one of the shortest sea routes into the EU, and therefore one of the most frequented paths within the eastern route. The sculpture on the back wall depicts the movement of 38,933 of migrants who have entered Europe by western mediterranean route, primarily crossing from Morocco to Spain. In the middle of the gallery lies the form of the most perilous mediterranean route, the Central Route from northern Africa to southern Italy, representing 461,493 immigrants.



1,066,636 (East - left) 461,493 (Central - floor) 38,933 (Western - right)

[4] Numbers represent the latest available figures of sea arrivals to Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Malta and Spain, dating back through 2015 when the European migrant crisis began, as published by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency at https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean.

More information on the sources of these figures can be found at https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/55964.

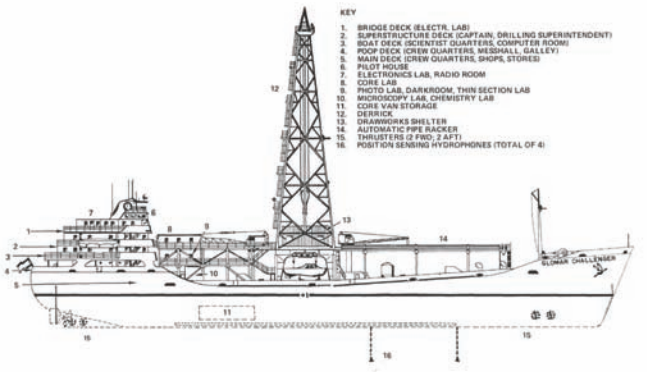
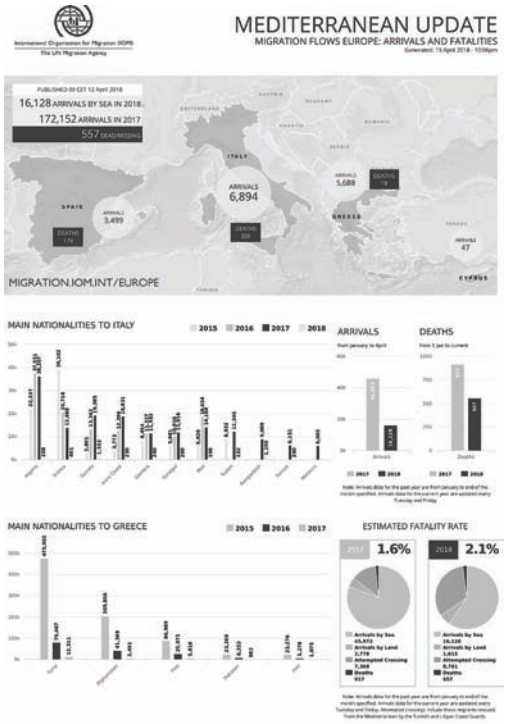
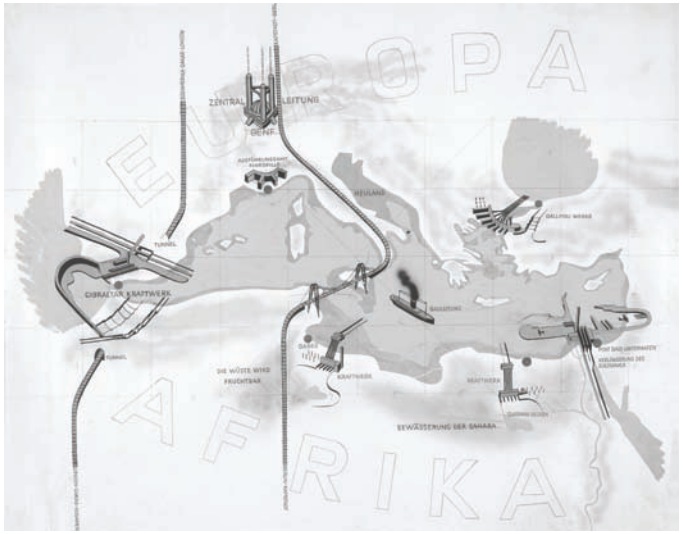


Figure 1. *Glomer Challenger.*

PAST

The Messinian Event was a geological event that took place 6 million years ago, during which the Mediterranean Sea went into a cycle of partly or nearly complete desiccation. The desiccation was proven only in the 70's by the drilling expedition of the Glomar Challenger, by analyzing the layers of soil at the bottom of the sea.





FUTURE

Herman Sörgel's Atlantropa project proposed the lowering Mediterranean sea level in order to unify Africa and Europe as one continent by damming the Black Sea and he strait of Gibraltar. The latter would have served as a transportation route, linking Africa and Europe, and as hydroelectric energy producer. According to his plan, lowering the water level would take 150 years, exposing 600,000 square kilometers of new inhabitable space which would make wars over territories obsolete. At a later stage, the establishment of the State of Israel in Palestine is mentioned in this context by Erich Mendelsohn, who proposed planning the new coastline. A bridge was planned between Tunisia and Sicily, which would have been connected by land to Italy. Sörgel believed in globalization, peace and alternative energy, which were precisely the reasons why the project was not embraced by the Hitler regime.

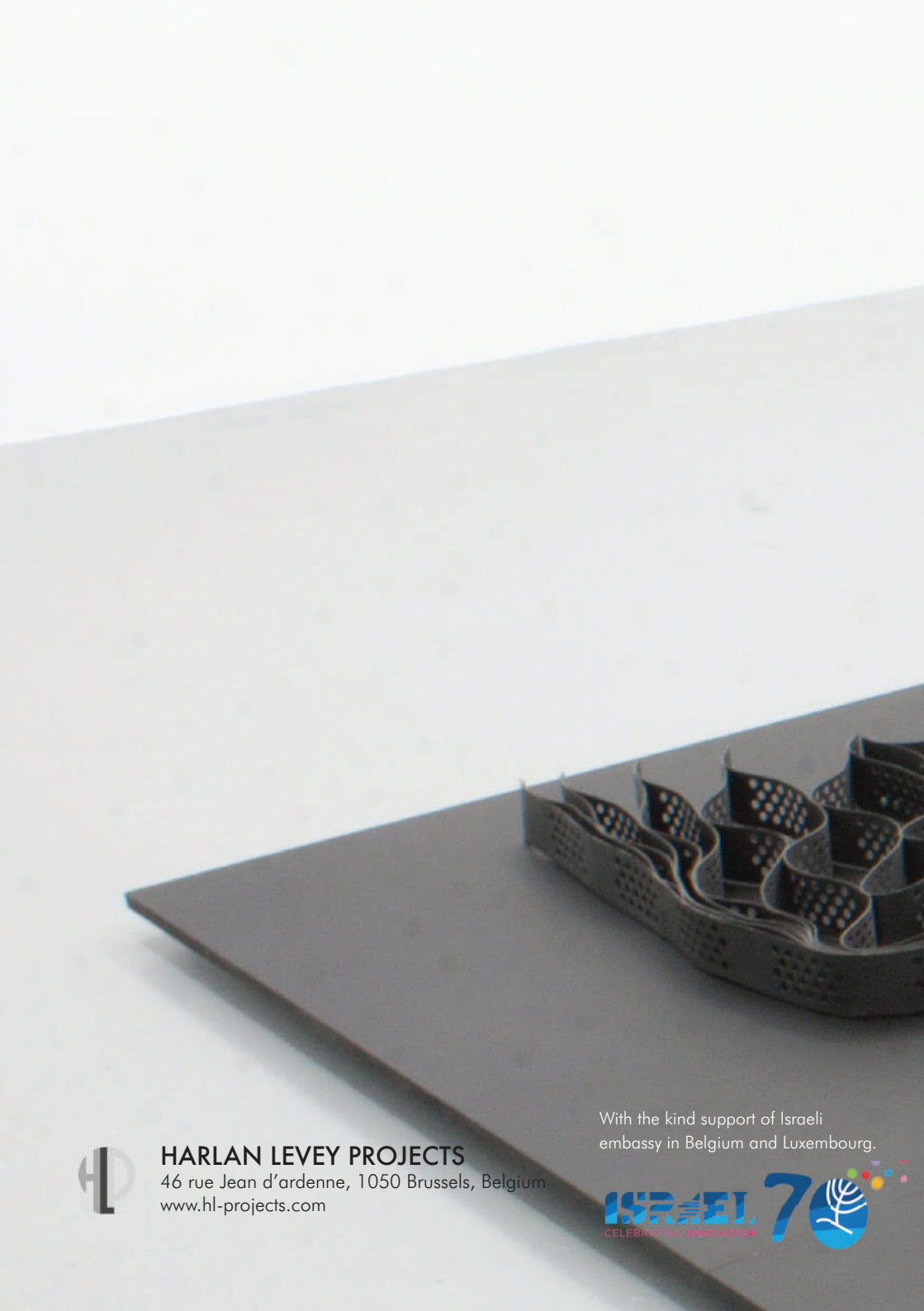
PRESENT

Today, the central marine route, and most deadly one, by which refugees cross the Mediterranean passes exactly where the proposed bridge was to be built. Fossil energy - oil, coal and natural gas, is a result of burial process of sedimentation and compression of organic materials underground. Thus, natural geological processes and human geography are bound together - The victims that the sea has taken in recent years will in the future become energy that will serve a new movement.

photo by Uri Pinner

Ella Littwitz (b.1982, Israel) lives and works in Israel. Her comprehensive artistic research explores archeology, history, botany, culture and politics through an archival approach. She is a Laureate of the HISK (Ghent, Belgium) in 2015 and received her BFA from Bezalel (Jerusalem, Israel) in 2009. Littwitz exhibited in Israel, Europe and the US including the 6th Moscow Biennial Special Program, the 12th Istanbul Biennial, Salzburger Kunstverein (Austria) and the Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art (Israel). In 2017, her work featured in exhibitions at the Center for Contemporary Art (Tel Aviv) and the Petach Tikva Museum, and at the Tallinn Kunsthall in 2018. Littwitz received the Igal Ahouvi The Most Promising Artist Prize (2013, Israel) the Botin Foundation Prize (2012-2013, Santander, Spain), Arbeitsstipendium Stiftung Kunstfonds (2012, Bonn, Germany), Mitchell Presser Excellence Award granted by Bezalel Academy in 2009, the America-Israel Cultural Foundation scholarship in 2008-2010 and the Mifal HaPayis: The lottery fund in 2017. Littwitz was also invited for a 3 month residency in the Guggenheim Foundation in Zurich, Switzerland.

www.hl-projects.com
www.ellalittwitz.com



HARLAN LEVEY PROJECTS
46 rue Jean d'ardenne, 1050 Brussels, Belgium
www.hl-projects.com

With the kind support of Israeli embassy in Belgium and Luxembourg.

ISRAEL 70
CELEBRATING INNOVATION