

Michael x. Ryan

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Sustainable Societies for the Future

01.02–23.05.2021: Malmö Art Museum, Malmö, SE.



Michael x. Ryan *Ox-Bow Water-line Sand Mound* (with templates leaning against the wall as part of the installation in the main exhibition gallery) and *Ox-Bow Sand line* (in the entrance gallery in front of the title wall). Both sand drawings have been performed by members of the installation staff in conversation with the artist. (Installation view)

How can we generate new ideas and actions for a sustainable world? How can art act as stimulant for a more sustainable way of living?

The exhibition project *Sustainable Societies for the Future* springs from one of the most complex and urgent challenges of our day: how to create safe, inclusive, and sustainable societies. Twenty-four artists and artist groups are contributing works to the exhibition, that in different ways encourage dialogue and engagement with sustainability issues of local and global urgency.

Sustainable Societies for the Future highlights three dimensions of sustainability—the ecological, the social, and the economic perspective. The exhibition aims to demonstrate how these different aspects interact with one another. How do we treat our ecosystems with proper attention and long-sightedness? How can we create a society in which human rights are respected? And how do we satisfy humanity's fundamental needs, given the earth's limited resources, without negative consequences for people, plants, animals, or the planet?

The artists in this exhibition are from the Nordic countries and the United States. From photo and video art to performances and installations, the artists create a dialogue reflecting on how art can inspire social engagement, leading to a better common future by creating new ways of seeing, thinking, believing, and acting.

Artists: Catrin Andersson, Christian Falsnaes, Tue Greenfort, Max Guy, Ilkka Halso, Minna Henriksson, Ane Hjort Guttu, Hesselholdt & Mejlvang (Sofie Hesselholdt, Vibeke Mejlvang), Ingela Ihrman, Toril Johannessen & Marjolijn Dijkman, Floating Museum, (P)Art of the Biomass (Janna Holmstedt, Malin Lobell), Cheryl Pope, Sean Raspet, Michael x. Ryan, Nilsmagnus Sköld, Sophie Tottie, Wang & Söderström (Anny Wang, Tim Söderström), Amanda Williams.

Michael x. Ryan (b. 1956)

Water-line: a 20-foot line traced from a steel wire drawing following the water's edge from the Ox-Bow dock 20 feet north on Monday, July 7th, 2008 at 10:30 am

In *Ox-Bow Water-line*, by Chicago-based artist Michael x. Ryan, the site of the work, echoed in the title, is of particular importance to Chicago and neighboring cities—the Ox-Bow School of Art & Artist's Residency in Saugatuck, Michigan, which has been in operation for over 100 years. Originally founded by two students from School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Ox-Bow was independently incorporated in 1910 in response to artists needing a safe haven from the increasing industrialization of the city. Inspired by land art practices of the 1960s and 70s, Ryan's work completed at this site transforms the comparatively small gesture of a single line traced along the Ox-Bow lagoon into a seemingly universal pictogram for most any aerial representation of an island or land mass. Installed within the gallery, *Water-line* enacts a specific moment in time while also becoming a type of stateless, nameless geographical abstraction.

The original trace of the water's edge is carved into sheets of plywood. Together with instructions on how to pour sand across the line, the work can be made and unmade over and over again, both emphasizing and eternalizing the moment in time.

With the knowledge we now have of the imminent threat to our coast lines – all over the world – due to climate change, Ryan's work marks a specific moment, while also being universal and unspecified.



Aerial view of Malmöhus Castle and Malmö Art Museum. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

***Sustainable Societies for the Future* is an extensive collaboration between Malmö Konstmuseum and Expo Chicago in the United States. The exhibition is a part of Art 2030, an international organization that unites art with the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainability and its seventeen Global Goals.**

Malmo Art Museum Website

<https://malmo.se/Uppleva-och-gora/Konst-och-museer/Malmo-Konstmuseum/Utstallningar/Sustainable-Societies-for-the-Future-English.html>