

WATER Theater - Preamble (May 2021):

The Water Theater project was conceived in the 1980s.

The first elements of reflection which gave rise, in particular, to very many drawings of the architectural project, were written on paper from the years 1985-90, for about five to seven years, while I was carrying out an artistic photography project underwater.

My friend *Bruno Lebel*, then professor of sculpture at the *Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris* as well as at the *Ecole polytechnique* (at the "X"), was the author of a major project for an archaeological, botanical and environment under construction near *Amiens, SAMARA*. We exchanged very often, and he regularly supported me on this idea of a large multidisciplinary project, such as the "Water Theater", concerning the environment (through the WATER element), art, science, ethics and education.

In the early 1980s, I had the opportunity to discover on multiple occasions the work of underwater dancers (and especially dancers); among other things, during the Olympic Games seen on the small screen. And, I had noticed in this regard, that most of this magnificent work was obscured, since we absolutely could not see what was happening under the surface of the Water...

This is what inspired me very quickly and pushed me to realize at that time (during the first half of the 80s) with one of my favorite models, a work on the body and movement in the aquatic environment ("*Flying bodies*", to see on the Ph.L. site). So I learned to dive with bottles in order to increase my diving skills, and I also quickly became interested in the different artists who like me practicing an "underwater" art.

So I got closer, during this period, to many other artists working like me, in this aquatic element. We can cite: *Michel Redolfi* (contemporary underwater musician, invested since the 70s in the *United States*, then in *France* and in *Europe*, in underwater performances of completely enthralling musical listening. Artist with which was envisaged, towards at the end of the 1980s, a collaboration for a "*Subaquatic Photo-Musical Exhibition*" at the *Center de la Mer in Boulogne-sur-Mer*, then at the "*Manca*" in *Nice*, and finally at the swimming pool of *Nogent sur Marne*, place of creation underwater views (a project which unfortunately could not see the light of day for financial reasons linked to the delay in the inauguration of the "*Center de la Mer*"); *Jacques Rougeri* (internationally renowned French underwater architect, whom unfortunately I was unable to meet); *Murielle Hermine* (underwater dancer, whom I contacted and met in *Paris on the Champs*, to whom I had presented the "*Théâtre d'Eau*" project, and who had not hesitated to tell me that this project was 30 years old 'advance'!!! She also used some ideas relating to "Theater" during some of her subsequent shows, which was in a way a token of recognition on her part). So I got interested and met many other artists: dancers, choreographers, stylists, painters, sculptors, etc.

The project was therefore finalized, in the idea of what I wanted to develop for the environment and Nature, around 1989. And in 1990, I decided to focus my interest on a professional activity concerning the preservation of our environment natural. I had been interested since my childhood in the entomological world. And I had also started photography by putting it in direct contact with this fabulous "little world"... I even wanted, around the age of 18, to do my profession of this passion and become a guard in a natural park like that of *Vanoise*, the first of its kind (in *France*); I had met *Jean-Marie Baufle* on this subject at the *Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris*, who was at that time director of the audiovisual service of the Museum... But, he had simply dissuaded me from doing a job without a future!...

Later, when I started to work, in 1977-78, I was able to collaborate in this same institution with the *Association Jeunes et Nature*, and produce with them, I believe, two or three educational audiovisual montages concerning questions environment of the time ... Subsequently, I quickly followed training in this field of ecology with these same people, all young scientists involved in environmental issues, then again a little later, with other trainers , biologists, botanists, ornithologists, etc.

During the years 1987-95 approximately, I attended numerous symposia and conferences on the question of ecology. I also listed in a paper database all the documents, articles, newspapers, on the subject, and I also organized in 1989, a meeting and working group for the preservation of the environment. Regular meetings were held at my house, bringing together 10 to 15 people interested in these problems. Questions like those posed by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster were discussed, sometimes with specialists, as was the case this time. In addition, my university studies and my deep interest in socio-urbanism and sophrology, brought me elements of understanding on our societies, and also new means of perception on this question of the ecological environment and what it is would have been desirable to build at that time (and still today)!

The project presented here is therefore in a way the synthesis of all this journey from childhood, my passion for Nature and my concerns about it, my practice of artistic creation and my interest in science, probably because I was in constant contact with excellent scientists, as part of my professional practice at l'X.

When in 1990, I proposed my "*Water Theater*" project (which is - in part - the document that follows this introduction), in order to try to obtain training at the "*Institut d'Eco-Advice*" in the east near *Strasbourg*, that my request was selected (in the first 70 proposals among almost 500 projects, to my recollection), I had to undergo, during my hearing, from the majority of the jury present to examine my proposal (5 jurors out of the 6 present I believe, mostly women), an attack in due form... The conclusion being that the project presented was a UTOPIA!!! Eh yes! But, perhaps a "achievable utopia" and useful, if we judge today by the disastrous state of our natural environment and our health (state of health obviously linked to this environment, because we do well part of this enslaved and sick Nature! So let us also undergo these attacks... And we are indeed very sick of the sick Earth!); 30 years later, *Murielle Hermine* had, I believe this time, quite right. Thank you *Murielle*, you were right! But alas, that has not yet helped to change things yet ... And now I have stopped beating myself against everyone!

This document was revised in its presentation in 1999, in order to be presented again (unnecessarily) to certain institutions! So it's in this updated version (with a few designs added) - which still dates now, as I type this introduction, to a good twenty years ago - that you have here.

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May 31, 2021.