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CURRENTS OF EUROPE

Cover: Lea RASOVSKY, Fluent In Isolation (2015) ©EP 2026

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This publication was produced in Luxembourg, for information purposes, for the Currents of Europe exhibition, featuring works from the European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection. It is intended to provide educational details about the background and artistic legacy of the artists whose creations are displayed, and to preserve and promote their contribution to Europe's cultural heritage.

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CURRENTS OF EUROPE

An art exhibition presenting
water as a resource for nature,
industry and everyday life.

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INTRODUCTION

The European Parliament decides, together with the Council, on the European Union law and budget, to improve lives of more than 450 million EU citizens. The Members of the European Parliament, directly elected by people in all 27 EU Member States, represent their voters' interests and engage in free, democratic, political debates on key issues, including the environment.

European citizens' perceptions on climate-related issues may change according to their exposure to environmental changes, country culture and other personal factors. **Water** stands as an area of interest linked to several aspects of current and future generations' lives, but also for industry and prosperity. Specific Eurobarometer surveys have been conducted to measure Europeans' awareness on environmental topics, and respondents are almost equally split into self-referred well-informed (51%) and self-referred not well-informed (48%). Over three quarters (78%) of Europeans, however, consider that the **EU should propose additional measures to address water-related problems in Europe**¹.

Listening to people's concerns, water was high on the parliamentary agenda, with milestones like the adoption of the **European Water Resilience Strategy** resolution² in May 2025 and the deal with the Council on the **Protection of groundwater against pollution**³ in 2026.

Water is a shared yet scarce resource, essential for a healthy environment, key to ensure **prosperity and the quality of life**, and increasingly critical to agricultural sustainability.

1 Attitudes of Europeans towards the environment survey (2024)

2 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2025-0091_EN.html

3 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2026-0093_EN.html

The Parliament action in this area clearly shows that the European legislative body listens to citizens' concerns, acting as first-mover and bringing both the European Commission and the Council to tackle the topic within their respective areas of responsibility. This initiative paves the way to interinstitutional long-term cooperation and represents an important first step in the set-up of a forward-looking, comprehensive framework aiming to secure a water-smart Union by 2050.

This ambitious regulatory path brings together an environmental perspective with a water-smart economy and social cohesion. Main goals include restoring the natural water cycle to improve resilience against droughts, floods and climate disasters, but also exploiting the full potential of digitalisation technologies – including AI models and Digital Twins to monitor and predict water usage – to modernise infrastructures and to improve water management. At the same time, the regulation aims to guarantee water security and safety, ensuring affordable access to clean water while looking for innovative ways to mitigate pollution.

Against this background, the Water Resilience Strategy is an example of how the European Union takes joint responsibility in addressing common challenges by agreeing on common standards and cooperation in the management of one of the key shared resources, like water.

Art offers an unconventional, unique language to explain complex topics and convey messages, bringing parliamentary democracy closer to people on issues touching on their everyday life. An exhibition designed around water as a common resource aims to inform and raise citizens' awareness on the importance of water. Using art to catch and retain people's attention is not just a communication tool, but an unexpected way to explore what resonates with people's interests and how they want to engage with the European institutions, including the European Parliament.

The exhibition takes visitors on an artistic journey across four areas, putting together examples of how artists have seen and interpreted water:

Nature

Joy

Industry

Threats and disasters

ARTWORKS

Watercourses play a crucial role in shaping European civilization. From the earliest times, they served as natural orientation landmarks, sources of livelihood, and meeting places. Later, they became key transport and trade routes. Rivers influenced settlement patterns, enabled cultural exchange, and contributed to the formation of cities and states.

A major change in the role of water was brought by the Industrial Revolution, especially in the 19th century. At that time, watercourses were reduced to technical tools – sources of energy for factories, means of cooling, drainage channels, and transport routes. Water was stripped of its ecological, cultural, and symbolic meanings and became a resource that could be exploited without limits. This approach led to massive pollution of European rivers because of industrial production, mining, the use of chemicals, and the rapid growth of urban areas.

A similar fate awaited some marine areas some decades later, when fishing became an industry with far-reaching negative impacts on marine ecosystems.

The dramatic hygiene and health impacts of this development – such as the spread of cholera and typhoid epidemics – contributed to the development of modern medicine and epidemiology. At the same time, they led to the creation of the first laws protecting the quality of drinking water and water resources, as well as to the construction of sewer systems and wastewater treatment plants.

However, we still live with the legacy of rapid industrialization and intensive agriculture of the 19th and 20th centuries. Although today technology is progressively making watercourses' protection and restoration more effective, and life and recreational functions are returning to many rivers, water is still under strong pressure from human activity. Its role in industry, agriculture, energy production, and transport remain irreplaceable – and this very ambivalence between use and protection makes water one of the key issues of current times.

NATURE

Water is not just a simple chemical compound; it is a fundamental element, making it impossible to imagine the existence of life or the functioning of human civilization without it. Since time immemorial, it has shaped the landscape, smoothing rocks into gentle forms and giving life to everything that grows. For artists, it represents an inexhaustible source of inspiration; the recurring waves of the sea or a calm, contemplative surface can fascinate us with their constant change. This changing nature of water offers endless possibilities for artistic representation. In the European Parliament's Contemporary Art Collection, we find several artworks that celebrate the beauty of water in its original, natural form.

Romanian artist **Lea Rasovszky** created a simple light installation of a waterfall. The use of blue LED lights highlights the main subject of her work—water falling from a rocky cliff. Rasovszky does not use light installations often, as she is typically known for her caricatured portraits. The form and meaning of this light installation are very simple yet captivating, much like natural waterfalls themselves. Light installations have a surprisingly long tradition in European art, having been used as early as the 1920s by avant-garde artists such as László Moholy-Nagy, El Lissitzky, or Zdeněk Pešánek. Through the subject and the material used, this installation celebrates the beauty of nature by shedding light on the regenerative power of water that always flows. One of the main goals of the European Water Resilience Strategy is to protect the ecosystem and namely, the water cycle from leakages, by for example implementing green infrastructures to boost water retention on land.

A wonderful example of reinterpreting an older artwork is the photograph *Wonderlust* by Finnish artist **Elina Brotherus**. The author loosely follows the world-famous painting *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* by the German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich. Her photograph offers several layers and stories, with the key moment being the replacement of the male hero with a female figure, which opens questions about gender. The change of environment is also interesting: while Caspar David Friedrich had his wanderer look out over a sea of fog in the Central European setting of Saxon Switzerland, Elina Brotherus places the scene in a typical Finnish landscape full of lakes.

From the tranquillity of Finnish lakes to the thundering waves on the Irish and Maltese' coasts, and across different techniques, artists invite us to reflect upon the marine environment's vulnerability. Rising sea levels due to climate change are worsening coastal erosion, especially in the Baltic and Mediterranean regions, with peaks of 100 meters shoreline retreat in Latvia, and alarming erosion rates in EU Southern regions and islands. Restoring wetlands, mangroves, and reefs to serve as natural defences, as a long-term, cost-effective measure to protect European shores against erosion is one of the nature-based solutions identified in the upcoming EU legislation.

Seas and oceans have been popular landscape motifs since the early modern period, when artists gradually moved away from purely religious themes and began to focus more on the world around them. Irish artist **Sean Fingleton** and Maltese **James Vella Clark** both captured the same motif of a rough sea near the coast, yet each achieved a different expression. *Coastal Scene* by Fingleton can be linked to the dramatic coastal landscapes of the so-called Barbizon School, with which it shares an emphasis on painting outdoors (*en plein air*). In contrast, Vella Clark reduces the sea waves to almost abstract surfaces and shapes influenced by expressionism.

Dramatic and wild waves also fascinated the Slovenian sculptor **Drago Tršar**, who allowed them to “petrify” and used gold colour to emphasize the reflection of sun rays. Tršar was one of the most influential Slovenian sculptors of the second half of the 20th century. In 1957, he developed a new concept called “crowd or mass composition,” which he applied, for example, in the sculpture *Manifestants* in Middelheim Park in Antwerp. He further developed this principle toward abstraction, reaching his peak in the sculpture group *Monument to the Revolution* in Ljubljana (1975).

A small but captivating scene of a coastal landscape was captured by Belgian **Maurits Van Saene**. Only upon closer inspection can we distinguish the typical Belgian coast within the abstract lines, with bands of sky, clouds, sea, and sandy shore. Van Saene began his career after World War II as a realist, but in the late 1950s, he turned toward abstract painting, remaining faithful to it for the rest of his professional career. In his legacy, we find several similar coastal landscapes characterized by gentle colours and the reduction of motifs to simple horizontal lines.

Traditional artistic formats, such as painting or sculpture, can capture the visual form of reality, but they find it difficult to convey other sensory perceptions. Nevertheless, the Finnish graphic artist **Tapani Mikkonen** attempted this in his lithograph *Sounds of Sea*. Mikkonen’s graphics have many layers; similarly, the sea can be described as calm and quiet, stormy, rustling, or roaring. Mikkonen was initially inspired by local Finnish production, but over time, he was influenced by exotic sources such as wall paintings in Spanish caves, Japanese woodcuts, or West African art. This resulted in a unique artistic style of large-format lithographs, which many describe as reformativ.

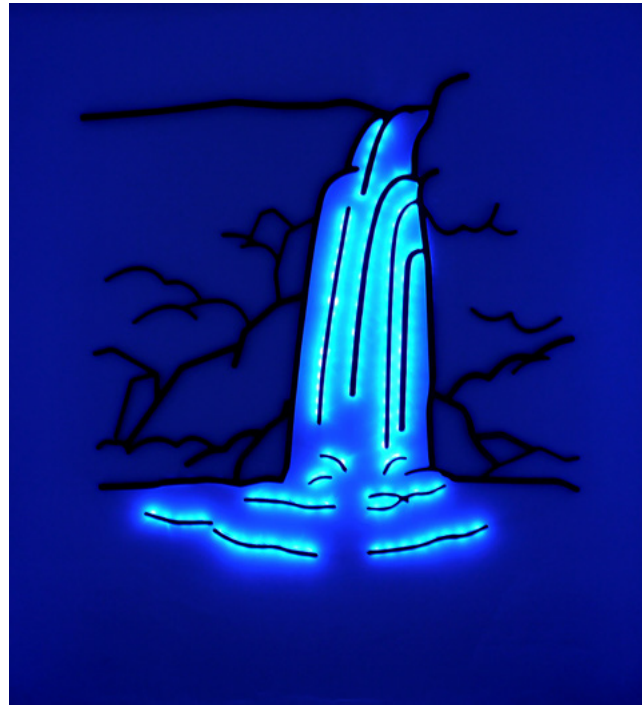
The sepia tone of Lithuanian **Remigijus Treigys's** photograph highlights the magical realism of a seemingly ordinary or even banal scene from Vilnius. The author uses the urban landscape as a theatrical stage, usually without human figures, and through a mysterious emptiness, he forces us to think about the history of places, the traces of our ancestors, and the present and future of the location. Will the future be clear, or “tearful” like in the photograph? The rain in the photograph symbolises the beginning of the watercourses and seas that we follow throughout this exhibition project.

The first chapter of the exhibition concludes with a tapestry by Romanian artist **Aurora Király**, who focuses on questions of identity, the individual's relationship to society, and the connection between the private and public spheres. The tapestry *Soft Drawings_Subconscious Narratives* is based on memories of specific places and events from childhood without explicitly explaining them. The individual objects on the tapestry are merely flashes of memory put together like in a dream. Across this exhibition path, it is essential that a fountain appears in her memories. Fountains have served as water reservoirs since the beginning of human civilization—from simple tanks to richly decorated structures. However, they always testify to the human effort to control water and use it for their own needs.

This chapter presents water as a source of inspiration and as an element that forms both the landscape and the human imagination.

Lea RASOVSZKY

Fluent In Isolation, 2015



©EP 2015

70×60 cm
Installation, blue led lights,
metal outline, wooden box

Aurora KIRÁLY

Soft Drawings_Subconscious Narratives (The Fountain), 2021



©EP2026

201×169
Felt, cotton, mesh

Elina BROTHERUS

Wonderlust, 2020



©Elina 2020

120×160 cm
Pigment ink print on
Museo Silver Rag paper,
mounted on 3 mm
aluminium composite

Tapani MIKKONEN

Meren äänet; Sounds of the Sea, 1998



©EF2026

117×76 cm
Litograph

Sean FINGLETON

Coastal Scene, 1992



©FP2006

99×104 cm
Oil on canvas

Drago TRŠAR

Okameneli valovi, 2005



©EFT2026

46 cm
Bronze

James VELLA CLARK

Waves in a storm, 2007

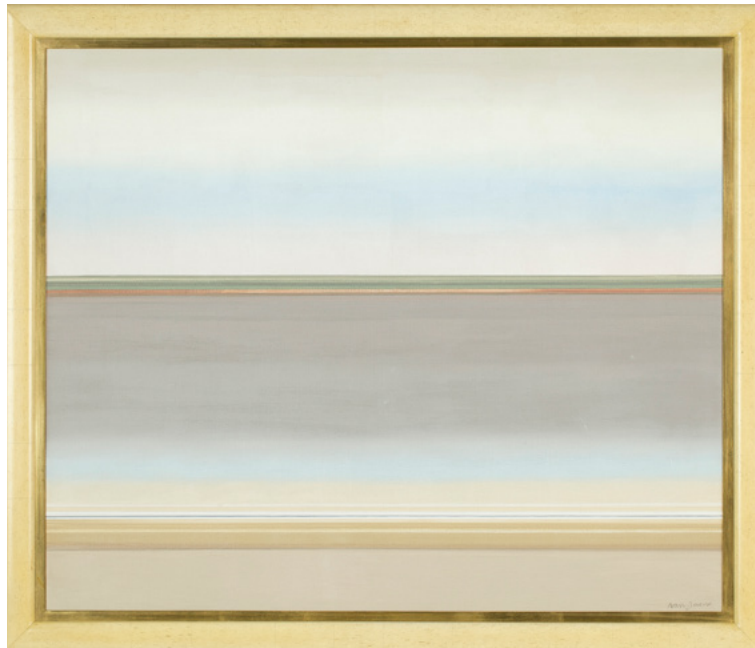


©FP2006

65×98 cm
Acrylic on panel

Maurits VAN SAENE

Marine, 1981



©SABAM Belgium 2016

98×118 cm
Oil on canvas

Remigijus TREIGYS

City from memory. Vilnius (rain), 2008



©EPD2016

315×550 mm
Toned fiberbased silver print

JOY

Water is not just a basic biological need; it also serves as a source of relaxation, joy, and excitement. A body of water can become a racetrack for top athletes, a playground for children, a place to relax on a riverbank, or a way to discover the world beneath the surface. Physical pleasure, mental well-being, and the social dimension are further aspects we explore.

The works of art presented in this section depict water not only as an environmental element, but also as a social right, a public good and a way to protect citizens' quality of life. The European Water Resilience Strategy frames access to safe waters as a human right and recognizes local communities as core players to boost investments in those infrastructures and technologies needed to achieve a water-smart economy. From pools to lakes and shores, artists on display here seem to anticipate this vision of water as an element supporting the human being as an individual, and at the same time as members deeply integrated in their local contexts.

The Turin painter **Enrico Paulucci** was influenced by Italian Futurism in his early work, later by Expressionism, and after 1945 even by Abstract Expressionism, although he never completely abandoned figurative and natural motifs. Landscapes from Liguria are among his most popular and famous motifs. The watercolour colours of the painting *Il Faro seep* through the outlines and effectively capture the nature of the seaside scenery.

While the seaside landscape was the main subject for Paulucci, for Latvian artist **Krista Vindberga**, the sea is merely a backdrop for a personal memory of a loved one. The empty space in the painting symbolically expresses the void in life when we say goodbye to someone close. The emptiness in the painting *Silvija* is a disturbing and sentimental moment; the sea in the background may symbolize eternity and infinity. The themes of time, memory, and family recollections repeatedly appear in the works of Krista Vindberga. She does not understand time and memory linearly; instead, they overlap.

For many Europeans, the sea is synonymous with summer holidays and swimming. The motif of a relaxed summer atmosphere by a swimming pool appears in the painting *Diver and Pool* by **Angus Fairhurst**. At the turn of the millennium, Fairhurst was a rising star of the British art scene and, as a member of the Young British Artists movement, participated in important group exhibitions. Realistic motifs, looking as if they were taken from promotional materials or lifestyle magazines, often appeared in his versatile work. For Fairhurst, these are not just landscapes or still-lives; they are evidence of his unique absurd humour and his belief in the absurdity of life.

Hungarian painter **Attila Szücs** draws visual inspiration from newspaper clippings, postcards, or photographs. He is not interested in mere reproduction; he tries to create a place that lies between reality and dreams, which exists in the past and the present simultaneously. Feeling and perception play an important role in this. The painting *Swimming Woman with Stripes of Light* is a typical example of his approach: the scene is clear, and the viewer understands it as a swimmer in a pool. At the same time, the water serves as a trick—it disrupts perspective, distorts space, and creates an environment without time and space. In fact, it is a perfect capture of the feelings of a person swimming, buoyed by the water.

Czech painter **Petr Malina** reveals another layer of joy and happiness offered by the sight of a calming blue surface in his painting *Cottage by the Lake I*. Malina is a great admirer of the American realist Edward Hopper. Like Hopper, he often chooses calm or even banal subjects, building a clear and simple scenery with clean colours. His style is almost idyllic, and thanks to large areas of a single colour, he manages to achieve a sense of calm in the scene. Viewers of Malina's paintings appreciate the peace and tranquillity as a counterpoint to the hectic world.

Dutch photographer **Dindi van der Hoek** became famous for her unique photographic works with water themes. Her photographs create surrealist compositions with anthropomorphic themes. Water is the “alpha and omega” in her work—the means and the object, the path and the goal. We realize joy and happiness most when we can share them with someone.

The abstract paintings of Irish artist **Felim Egan** often feature symbols and hieroglyphs on monochromatic surfaces. Critics used to link his abstract paintings to the places where he created them: the empty beaches, horizons, and wide-open spaces of Ireland. In the case of the painting *Pool*, however, there is no doubt what served as the model – a bird's-eye view of swimmers in a pool is yet another variation on a theme that recurs throughout this exhibition project.

Water can be a source of fun and joy. But even that will eventually come to an end; the day will turn to evening, summer will give way to autumn, and the once-bustling beaches will grow desolate, filled with a peculiar nostalgic atmosphere. It is precisely this atmosphere – further underscored by the presence of an old, abandoned bicycle – that Italian **Luigi Mormino** captured. Mormino was a versatile figure; in addition to photography, he also wrote poetry, translated from French, and worked as a journalist and publisher. It is also worth noting that he worked for many years at the Secretariat of the European Parliament in Luxembourg. His native Sicily was a constant source of inspiration for Mormino.

This is how the exhibition sees the social aspect of water, as it has connected people since ancient times. It first represented a common place to live, and today, waterfronts, beaches, and swimming pools are natural places for meeting and sharing experiences. Today, proximity to water provides the peace we so desperately seek in the noisy modern world. And here is an interesting fact: did you know that the human body is 60% water? Perhaps that is exactly why we feel so “at home” near it.

Attila SZÜCS

Swimming Woman with Stripes of Light, 2008

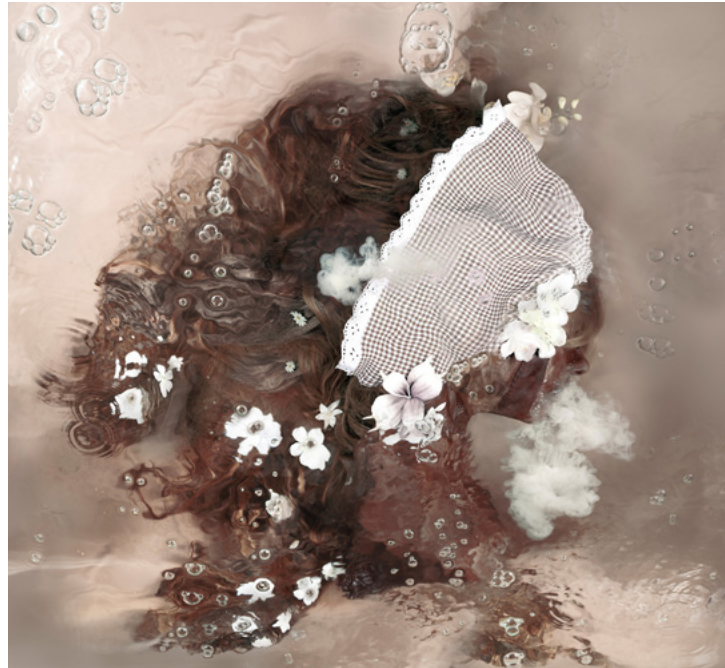


©EP71026

190×140 cm
Oil on canvas

Dindi VAN DER HOEK

Ebony, 2020



©EP2026

80×75×3 cm
Photography
(Hahnemüle Barytha
Fine Art Paper on Dibond)

Petr MALINA

Cottage by the lake I, 2005



©EP 2006

40×60 cm
Oil on canvas

Angus FAIRHURST

Diver and Pool, 1993



©FP2006

54×74 cm
Watercolor with drill holes on paper

Krista VINDBERGA

Silvija, 2020



©EF2020

190×190 cm
Oil on canvas

Enrico PALUCCI

Il faro, 1988



©EP2016

34×49 cm
Watercolour on paper

Luigi MORMINO

La Bicicletta, 1992



©EP2026

60×50 cm
Gelatin silver print

Felim EGAN

Pool, 1992



©EF2016

140×160
Mixed media on
canvas

INDUSTRY

Water stood at the very beginning of the modern world. During the Industrial Revolution, its importance increased even further – the power of rivers became the primary driving force behind machines that permanently transformed human labour. To this day, water remains the backbone of global energy production. In addition to its energy-related role, water serves as an irreplaceable technological resource and a universal solvent in the chemical and pharmaceutical industries. In the food industry, it is a key ingredient in virtually all products. Without the precise thermal management provided by water, steel mills would stop operating, chemical reactions would cease, and even the modern data centres that keep the global internet running would fall silent.

However, the industrial importance of water extends far beyond factory walls into the sphere of global logistics. Rivers and oceans function as the world's cheapest and most efficient transport routes, enabling the movement of enormous quantities of raw materials. Yet this intensive development also has a darker side in the form of its devastating impact on the environment.

For decades, toxic chemicals and heavy metals were discharged into waterways. Today, these pollutants are joined by modern threats such as so-called “forever chemicals” (PFAS) and microplastics, which remain in ecosystems for centuries. Another often overlooked yet equally destructive form of contamination is thermal pollution. The release of heated water from cooling systems disrupts biological balance, reduces oxygen levels, and leads to the mass death of native organisms.

Companies are therefore increasingly shifting to the smart circular economy production standards. They use closed-loop systems (known as Zero Liquid Discharge), in which used water is continuously treated and returned to the production process. Recycling and circulation within closed systems are examples of the practical solutions EU legislation will support on a larger scale to mitigate the climate change.

The European Parliament is driving the shift towards the improvement of EU water quality standards by approving new measures in this regard in March 2026. New rules set the bar higher against newer scientific evidence and emerging pollution risks. Groundwater and surface waters will, for example, be subject to specific PFAS quality standards, cumulative PFAS concentrations will be monitored, and Member States will have to act when thresholds are exceeded. This is politically important because PFAS contamination has become a major public health concern for European citizens.

The fascinating relationship between industry and water is also reflected in the European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection. Coincidentally, the two oldest paintings in the collection come from Luxembourg. Their authors, **Jean-Pierre Thilmany** and **Alphonse Nies**, depicted industrial sites in the 1950s in a style characteristic of their era. These works reflect the atmosphere of massive post-war reconstruction and were created at a time when new economic, political, and social structures were taking shape. Faith in a new European society was a powerful driving force, and industrial production became its engine. It is interesting to note that a similar mood, a similar belief in the future, and similar works of art emerged on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

While industrial sites symbolised productivity and power, ports had long represented exotic distances and commercial opportunities for artists. Views of harbours filled with sailing ships became a distinctive theme in landscape painting. French **André Bricka** nostalgically follows this tradition in his scene *Vue de Strasbourg*, which recalls the faded glory of exploratory expeditions. From an artistic perspective, the works of Bricka, Nies, and Thilmany represent a traditional approach to fine art and balance the conceptual nature of other artworks in the European Parliament Contemporary Art Collection.

A completely different perspective is offered by the photography of Dutch **Hans Aarsman**. His photograph *Kinderdijk* captures the essence of the Netherlands – a windmill, a canal, and a cycling path. The photograph bears witness to the successful transformation of a once industrial-agricultural landscape into one focused on sport and recreation. Aarsman's images of seemingly ordinary scenes are fascinating because of their honesty and authenticity. Originally trained as a newspaper photojournalist, Aarsman entered the field of fine art with his photographic series *Hollandse taferelen*, created during his travels across the Netherlands, from which the photograph *Kinderdijk* originates.

The relationship between industry and water has undergone a fascinating evolution – from the simple use of mechanical power to the sophisticated cooling of digital infrastructure. Legislation on this important topic follows societal evolution and reflects growing awareness amongst Europeans. Indeed, water policy is no longer framed in a fragmented way, but rather as a complex ecosystem embracing public health, industrial accountability and strategic autonomy. Water remains the essence of our life and an irreplaceable resource also in the 21st century.

Andre BRICKA

Vue de Strasbourg, 1981



©EP2026

89×150 cm
Oil on canvas

Jean-Pierre THILMANY

Usine à Gaz, 1954



©EP2026

75×90 cm
Oil on canvas

Alphonse NIELS

Usines de Belval, 1953



©P2026

69×79 cm
Oil on canvas

Hans AARSMAN

Kinderdijk, 1993



©EPD06

81×99 cm
Photography

THREATS AND DISASTERS

Water is an immense, pure, and untouched natural element. Contemporary artists strongly recognize human intervention in nature as well as the growing fragility of ecosystems. The changing identity of water therefore brings a quiet warning about the consequences for human society and life itself.

Melting glaciers are a visual symbol of climate change. However, they also represent the irreversible loss of the global “refrigerator” and the disappearance of the largest reservoir of fresh water. Their rapid melting causes short-term destructive floods, but the long-term consequence is the permanent drying up of river sources on which local agricultural production depends. The melting of sea ice could even lead to the collapse of ocean currents.

Chronic drought and the process of desertification are no longer just occasional weather fluctuations; they are a systemic failure of the landscape’s ability to retain life-giving moisture. Degraded agricultural land is losing its porosity and its capacity to absorb rainfall. As a result, the spiral of drought continues to accelerate.

Extensive industry and agriculture are creating “hunger” for water, which often leads to the local depletion of resources and conflicts between corporations and local residents. Wealthy nations and corporations can move water-intensive production to poorer regions. Through international trade, they de facto export water “virtually,” hidden in the form of imported goods.

Similarly, industrial fishing and the looting of marine ecosystems disrupt water as a living, functional entity, rather than just a chemical compound. Massive overfishing alters food chains, the entire chemical balance, and the clarity of the water.

The European Water Resilience Strategy aims to address these alarming issues such as water scarcity, droughts, and the impacts of melting glaciers in a comprehensive way; the policy shift is ambitious, moving from functional water management to the concept of resilience. The European Parliament calls for this systemic approach, foreseeing a standardization of sectoral objectives in water efficiency, and covering its use in industry, energy, agriculture, public institutions and households⁴.

Across this section, visitors see through the works of art how climate-related threats are interconnected one to each other and call for a whole-of-society response. The upcoming legislation will put together diverse measures such as climate adaptation and ecosystem restoration solutions, with civil protection and local preparedness schemes.

Today, water faces both visible and invisible dangers that cause subtle but fatal changes. Art represents the response; artists react to these issues in their work—sometimes their pieces serve as a warning or a call to action, other times they force us to reflect, and occasionally they respond with a touch of humorous exaggeration.

⁴ The European Water Resilience Strategy, text adopted by the European Parliament – 7 May 2025

In the work *Lumi sulaa II*, Finnish painter **Lasse Kempas** captures the endless cycle connected with the changing seasons. The painting carries a double symbolism – melting snow represents disappearance, but at the same time it symbolizes the certainty of recurring natural cycles. In connection with climate change, society is currently witnessing increasingly visible changes, fluctuations, and extreme weather conditions. Within the European Water Resilience Strategy, flood management is framed as inseparable from climate adaptation and land-use planning, combined with improved forecasts, reinforced satellite observations and AI-based warning systems.

The gradual yet visible transformation of the landscape is becoming more urgent and creates a feeling of an impending catastrophe. The painting *Winterlicher Sonnenuntergang* by German painter **Bernd Zimmer**, a representative of the Neue Wilden group, can be understood as a silent warning. A seemingly calming sunset illuminates the sharp edges of a mountain massif covered with a permanent layer of snow and ice. But how long will this balance last? Mountain glaciers around the world are among the clearest signs of advancing climate change. Zimmer's painting therefore acts both as a reminder and as a warning. In his work, Zimmer transformed observed reality into abstract forms. He attempted to free himself from figurative and descriptive painting and immerse himself in pure colour painting.

Floods caused by melting glaciers and rising sea levels represent just as disturbing a threat as the opposite extreme – drought and lack of moisture. This theme inspired Bulgarian artist **Maria Nalbantova**, who used remains and waste materials from drying water areas to create large blocks of soap. She also documented the entire process in a video, which is part of this exhibition as well. From an artistic point of view, both the video and the soap blocks can be described as site-specific objects. The experience of a particular place led to the creation of artworks in which found materials became part of the final visual language. The drying of the landscape and the loss of water needed for survival and agriculture already lead, and will likely continue to lead, to migration and major changes in population distribution. Even seemingly small changes in rainfall can have far-reaching effects, and impact upon hundreds of thousands and millions of human lives.

The strongest symbol of fear is the motif recalling the biblical *Seven Plagues of Egypt*, directly referenced by Polish-French painter **Serge Kantorowicz**. Contemporary ecological threats connected, for example, with massive industrial fishing or the exploitation of natural resources, can be seen as modern biblical plagues affecting humanity. However, it is important to mention that Kantorowicz did not primarily create his painting as a symbol of ecological disaster. His parents were murdered in the Nazi extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, and biblical themes appeared very frequently in his work.

Long-term threats and dangers can cause fear and anxiety, and in extreme cases may even lead to paralysis and the inability to seek solutions. Humour and exaggeration therefore often function as a first line of defence – they can bring relief, perspective, and space for new ways of thinking. In his work *Ninfee Urbane*, Italian painter **Lucio Fanti** captures the clash between a pure environment and human activity. Advertising leaflets and visual smog pollute the water surface with water lilies both figuratively and literally. In connection with Fanti's work, the term "magical humour" is often used. As a child, he was fascinated by Soviet propaganda graphics and the Cyrillic alphabet. These elements, rooted in his personal history and aesthetic interests, shaped his distinctive style with a subtle touch of humour.

Italian artist **Maurilio Catalano** in the work *La Vita e la Morte* plays with the Darwinist idea of the "survival of the fittest," according to which each predator along the food chain might quickly turn into prey, because "there is always a bigger fish." However, Catalano uses this serious theme as a starting point for an ironic and humorous commentary, showing that humour can also be a form of defence and a possible solution. Humour allows us to name even the darkest threats without becoming paralyzed by fear. It is precisely in this lightness, in a "playful yet relevant imagery," that one can find the strength for active resistance against an approaching tragedy. Humour, exaggeration, vivid colours, and motifs inspired by fishing and marine life are among the characteristic features of Catalano's work.

The artists whose works related to water are presented in this catalogue help us not to overlook its importance. Their art celebrates this powerful element while at the same time warns us of the risks, so that water may continue to drive human progress rather than become a victim of its own significance.

Maria NALBANTOVA

Drought, 2021



©EP2025-photo by Frankish Stratos

30×30 cm (each)
Installation (soap, metal)

Laase KEMPAS

Melting Snow, 1985



©EPD2016

122×167 cm
Gouache and mixed
technique on paper

Bernd ZIMMER

Winterlicher Sonnenuntergang, 1982



©EP2016

130×160 cm
Oil on canvas

Lucio FANTI

Ninfee Urbane, 1981



©EP2006

162×129 cm
Oil and acryl on canvas

Serge KANTOROWITZ

Les Sept Plaies d'Egypte, 1980



©EP2016

150×150 cm
Pastel on canvas

Maurilio CATALANO

La Vita e la Morte, 1992



©EPD2026

110×150 cm
Acrylic on canvas



<https://art-collection.europarl.europa.eu/en/exhibitions/currents-of-europe>

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