

Heta Ἡτα

[EN]

At the threshold between silence and sound, the archaic Greek letter H —*Heta*—once marked the breath: that faint aspiration preceding language itself. Derived from the Phoenician *heth*, H vanished from the standard Greek alphabet, yet it lingers as a half present trace. An in between glyph, *Heta* straddles ancient and modern scripts—a bridge both solid and porous, linking temporalities, bodies, languages and ecologies.

Camille Pradon's research unfolds like a palimpsest across coastal geographies and submerged histories: in Tunisia, with the sponge fishers of the Kerkennah Islands, in former sponge treatment factories in Sfax and in the waters of Mahdia; in Marseille, through an ongoing dialogue with marine biologists at the Endoume Marine Station; in Heraklion, in contact with researchers at the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research and in the southern Aegean—on Kalymnos and Rhodes—where economies and memories remain deeply tied to this form of fishing. Throughout her fieldwork, she explores how sponges carry memory, shaping centuries of relationships between communities through contact and exchange.

Sponges are among Earth's earliest multicellular beings, predating humanity by more than 600 million years. Their fossilized bodies record primordial ecologies, yet their lives remain interwoven with human histories—especially around the Mediterranean, where diving for sponges became not merely a livelihood but a collective archive of memory, history and multiple identities. By the nineteenth century the practice was industrialized; by the twentieth it propelled migration from the Greek islands mainly to the United States. Then, in 1986, an underwater pandemic swept the South Aegean: entire sponge populations vanished within months, a rupture linked to warming seas and over harvesting. Unlike mobile fauna, sponges could not flee; their disappearance exposed ecosystems still tender, still unrecovered.

In the wake of the recent respiratory pandemic, COVID 19, these silent organisms speak again—reminding us of our own corporeal precarity and of the asymmetric vulnerabilities that map onto social and ecological injustice. They surface as emblems of necessary care, urging a renewed ethics of listening and response to the more than human world, to plants, animals and bodies of water of our shared planet.

The exhibition includes ceramic sound vessels, *Μελωδός* (*Melodos*), that pulse with breath like frequencies: murmurs, hums, sub audible oscillations. In ancient Greek, “spongy” (*σπογγώδης*) described organs such as the lungs—an early acknowledgment of our shared porosity as breathing beings.

The three pastel drawings titled *Shh* emerge as an invitation to silent contemplation. Their shapes, evoking the curves of sponges, gently assert themselves. The pastel, with its powdery and fragile materiality, unfolds a tactile texture. Throughout history, sponges have been intimately tied to the human body—used in daily hygiene, healing and gynecological care. This ancestral knowledge echoes in the soothing textures of Pradon's work, a gentle reminder of our deep connection to sponges.

Two ceramic masks, 海女 (*Ama*) and *Σφουγγαράς* (*Sfouggaras*) summon the feminine spirit of the marine world and the anonymous figure of the sponge diver—not fixed portrayals, but ritual invocations, fragments of embodied memory that resist erasure.

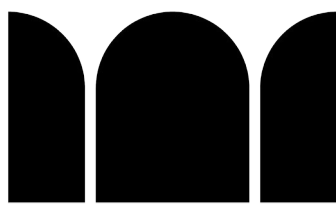
Other sculptural forms punctuate the space—evoking underwater shapes: sponges, corals—tangible condensations of the ocean's layered vitality. Together, they reject the extractive gaze of modernity and invite an ethic of reciprocity and recognition.

Pradon's photographic series *Miroirs* hangs as luminous portals. Using the traditional *gyali*, a circular glass lens once wielded by sponge divers, she records light not as surface but as mutable medium. The *gyali*, planet like in its convexity, yokes intimate and cosmic scales: from the sponge's micro porosity to planetary currents and migratory flows. Each image traces deep time, insisting that the small and fragile bear the weight of millennia. Seeing becomes an act of care, a recognition of our place within a porous continuum where vulnerability and resilience coexist.

A particular attention to the breath shapes *Les Profondeurs*—a video in which the artist undertakes an underwater journey into a submerged cave in Kalymnos—is structured around the rhythm of breathing, echoing the memory of generations of divers endlessly traversing the shores of the Mediterranean. The soundtrack is pared to the cadence of her own breath. As the image darkens and the pressure increases, each breath becomes a metronome of time, subtly emphasizing the profound sense of absolute vulnerability of the submerged body. A breath that symbolizes all breaths in a common history of all organisms.

Eleni Riga
Curator

ATOPOS cvc × Office of Hydrommons



Auberge de France

Room 1

1. Genèse #1 (Genesis), 2025

Pigment print on Fine Art paper, 18 x 25 cm

2. Μελωδός (Melodos), 2024-2025

Series of five sound ceramics, glazed stoneware, variable dimensions

3. Σφουγγαράς (Sfouggaras - The Sponge Diver), 2024

Glazed stoneware, linen ribbon, W15,5 x H10,5 x D20 cm

4. Shh, 2025

Triptych, soft pastel on paper, 22,5 x 29,5 cm

Room 2

5. Απολίθωμα I (Apolithoma - Fossil), 2024

Glazed stoneware, sand, W23 x H20 x D25 cm

6. Απολίθωμα II (Apolithoma - Fossil), 2024

Glazed stoneware, W25 x H25 x D28 cm

7. Miroirs #1, #6, #7 (Mirrors), 2023

Pigment prints on Fine Art paper, 40 x 50 cm

8. 海女 (Ama - The Sea Woman), 2024-2025

Glazed stoneware, linen ribbon and bronze bells, 18 x 7,5 x 110 cm

Room 3

9. Les profondeurs (The Depths), 2025

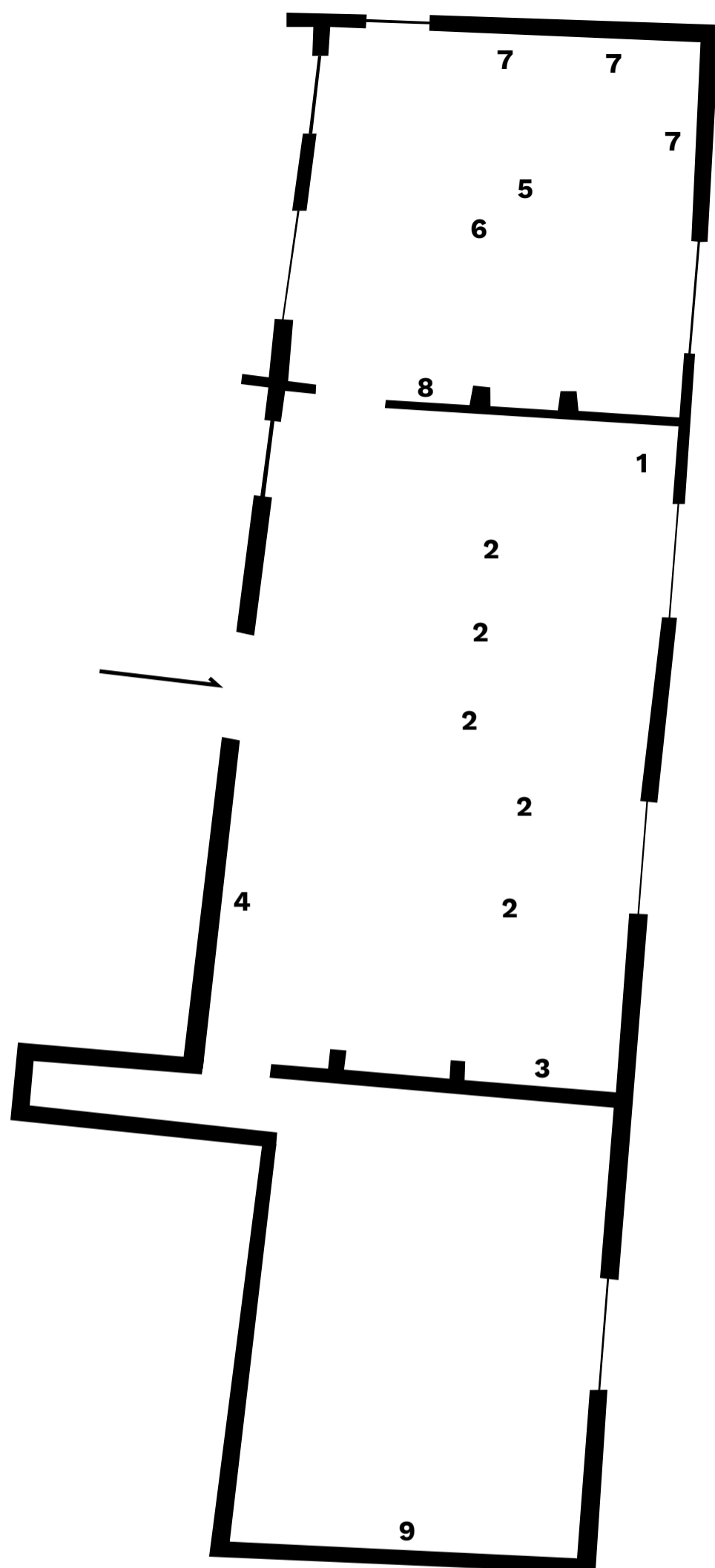
Video, color, sound, looped, 13'18"

Camille Pradon (1993) is a French artist, writer, and film programmer. She lives and works in Paris.

Using the image as a sensitive material, she conducts in-depth research into the dynamics of displacement and transmission, as well as the forms that emerge from the contact zones between memory, fragile ecologies and transforming territories. From video to installation, including photography, drawing, and ceramics, she cultivates a formal language that plays on the porous boundaries between media.

Her work has been exhibited in France and internationally, notably at the Manchester Museum of Natural History (UK), the Mucem (Marseille), the Cité internationale des arts and the Wallonie-Bruxelles Center (Paris), the Gabes Cinema Fen Festival (Tunisia), Le Portique – Contemporary Art Center in Le Havre, and the Callirrhoë gallery (Athens).

As a writer and critic, she has been published by institutions such as Frac Occitanie Montpellier, Magazine du Jeu de Paume, and Kyklada Press.



She graduated from the Higher School of Art and Design of Saint-Étienne (2015) and also studied cinema and scenography at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna, Italy.

She has been awarded residencies and international mobility programs such as the Cité internationale des arts in Paris (2020–21), Villa Salammbô (2020–21), Maison de France in Sfax (2023) – Institut français de Tunisie, Nouveau Grand Tour – Institut français Italia (2022), and Culture Moves Europe (2023). She was invited to continue her work in Athens as part of The Office of Hydrocommons program curated by Eleni Riga, in partnership with ATOPOS Contemporary Visual Culture (2023–24), and then in Rhodes at the Auberge de France, by invitation of the French Institute of Greece.

She is a member of RN13BIS – Contemporary Art in Normandy, sits on the Board of the Art Center cneai, and is represented by the lilia ben salah gallery in Paris.