

DUE PROCESS

The Art and Design of Nadège Lamy

I remember as far back as the age of five eagerly asking my father how to make my own oil paint. I wanted to paint as well as or better than the modest paintings that were hung in my parents' house. My mother had bought them at the local market and I was as confident as only a five year old can be.

My father was a house painter who also painted architectural embellishments, friezes, marble, wood, texture and tromp l'oeil. A very talented man. He taught me what he knew and from then on I was self-taught and I could not resist experimenting with ideas, design, technique and materials. This excitement to experiment has never left me.

At around the age of 12 I developed problems with my eyes and had to wear glasses whenever I was doing art. At that time I was teaching myself to do pen and ink drawings from Albrecht Durer's engravings and prints, from art books. All that crosshatching was very demanding on young eyes. It was then that I understood the meaning of apprenticeship and I realised that to be a good artist demands sweat and tears.

At 17 I went to study fine art at l'École des Beaux-Arts, Caen. In my first year I found it stuffy, old fashioned, and too regimented for my soaring spirit— it was just two years after the notorious student unrest of May '68 and the changes in education had not begun as yet.

I have come to realise that the core of my art practice is driven by ideas, curiosity, experimentation, mistakes and problem solving. I see myself in general terms as an artist rather than a painter. By this I mean that over the years I have used many different mediums and techniques, whatever was best suited to express an idea — from alternative and classical print making, to stencilling (pochoir), mixed media, collage, to pouring techniques. Most recently I have painted with encaustic, having made my own colours by mixing pigment with beeswax and then painting when the medium is hot and liquefied. I am pushing my art in new directions, always enjoying the process.

As a young woman in Paris I worked as a freelance photographer and audio-visual designer primarily on European Formula One racing circuits. A team of cameramen, photographers and sound engineers would go on location during the weekends of



Ochre Fugue 2004, drawing

Nature for me exposes chaos and order and therefore patterns. I see rhythm, patterns, in the way wind blows in a circular motion twigs and leaves to where they collect at the base of a tree or on the edges of a lake. This appears chaotic but there is order as well - nature creates a visual feast and amazing fractals.

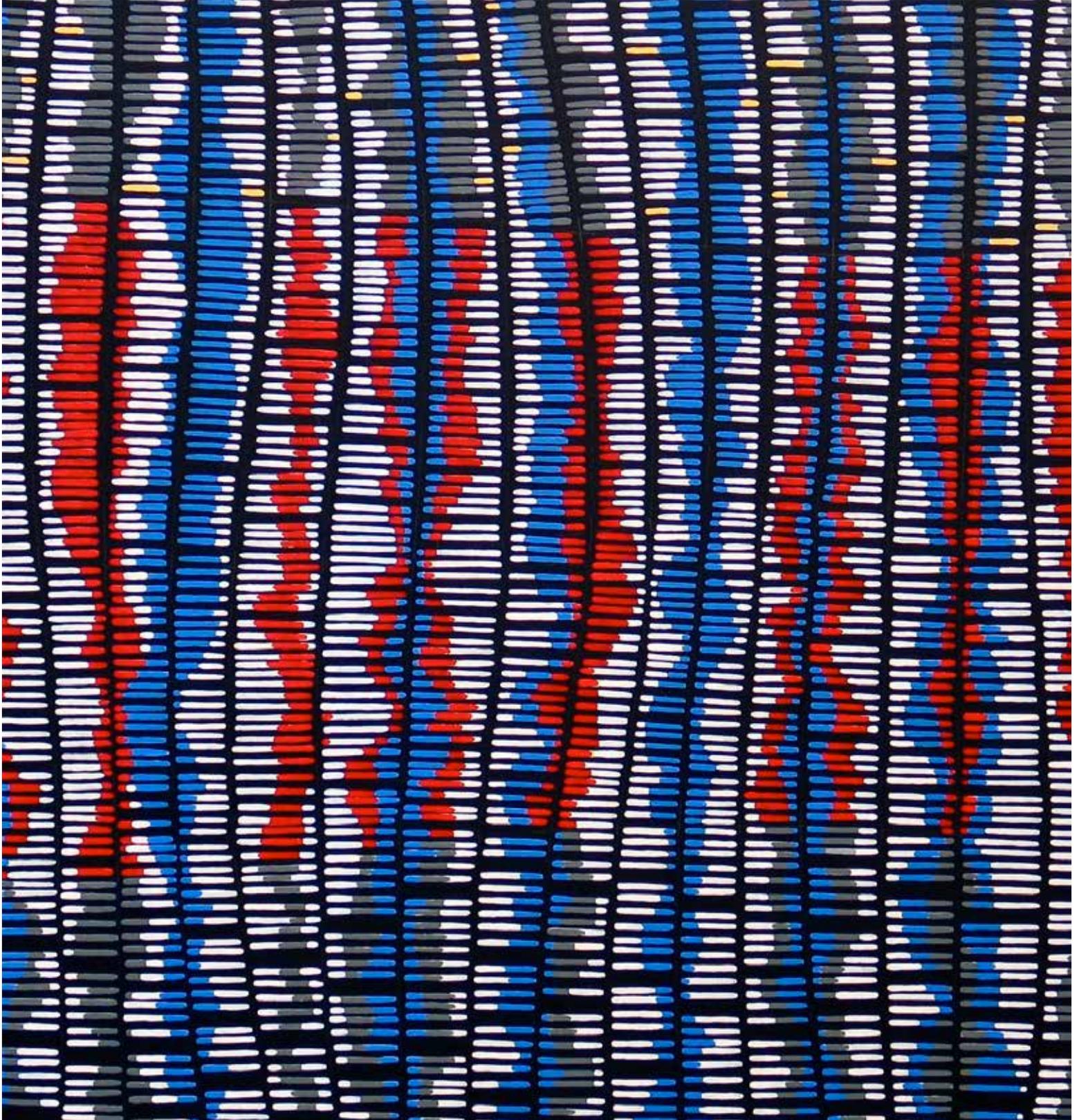
the racing season. We would carry out our respective jobs by following a script which indicated precisely our individual positions, locations, from what angle and with what focus etc. I remember on one assignment taking photos of cars from the rear, on a strategic curve where the cars would spit so much fire and flames it looked as though it had engulfed the cars. Back in Paris on weekdays, we would design sliderama shows to promote the company, to be projected like a movie only made up of slides we had taken in situ— the effect was spectacular.

My adventurous streak brought me to Australia in 1981. In my first business in Sydney I adapted a stencilling technique for my own printing design and hand painted t-shirts, which friends sold at various Sydney markets for me. Design and composition have been at the forefront of my practice.

I even worked as a glorified graphic designer at the Botanic Gardens in Sydney for a while. When I applied to study graphic design I was told I was 'too fine art' and was turned down by the school— life can do wondrous things.

See the Sun in the Mist of the Rain; Scoop Clear water from the Heart of Fire, 2012 (detail) Acrylic on canvas

In 2012 I curated a group exhibition of 6 artists for Blacktown Arts Centre entitled The Idea Of Water: For my body of work I focused on Japanese koans related to water. A koan is a succinct paradoxical statement used as a meditation discipline for novices. Each of my titles is a koan. I am very moved by the meditative ambiguity and the humility of the koan and this one in particular touched me deeply as it connects the climate and bush fire we experience in Australia.



Handwritten signature

In 1994 I received a Bachelor of Visual Arts at UWS Nepean and since then I have had many solo exhibitions and participated in group shows and been a finalist in a number of art prizes.

I came to live in the Blue Mountains in 1988, with a strong desire to devote all the time I could to my art practice. Australia gave me the physical and mental space to be me, to dive in and feel free and I know that only in Australia could I have found my artistic voice, the expression that I'm proud of now. It has been a long learning process, of thought and meditation on life and art.

This special landscape which has enthralled visitors and artists from around the world from the time it was first accessed by Europeans in 1813 also feeds the spirit of the artist and has led me to ask just what is landscape, because an artist is expected to paint landscapes. In the nearby Conservation Hut at the top of the walks to the Valley of the Waters in Wentworth Falls, hang two enormous triptychs by a much-loved resident and artist, Reinis Zusters, gifted by him to the people of the Blue Mountains. Before he died, I enjoyed talks with Reinis, artist-to-artist (although I felt very much the student) and shared his views and his understanding of this unique land as seen through the eyes of those of us born elsewhere.

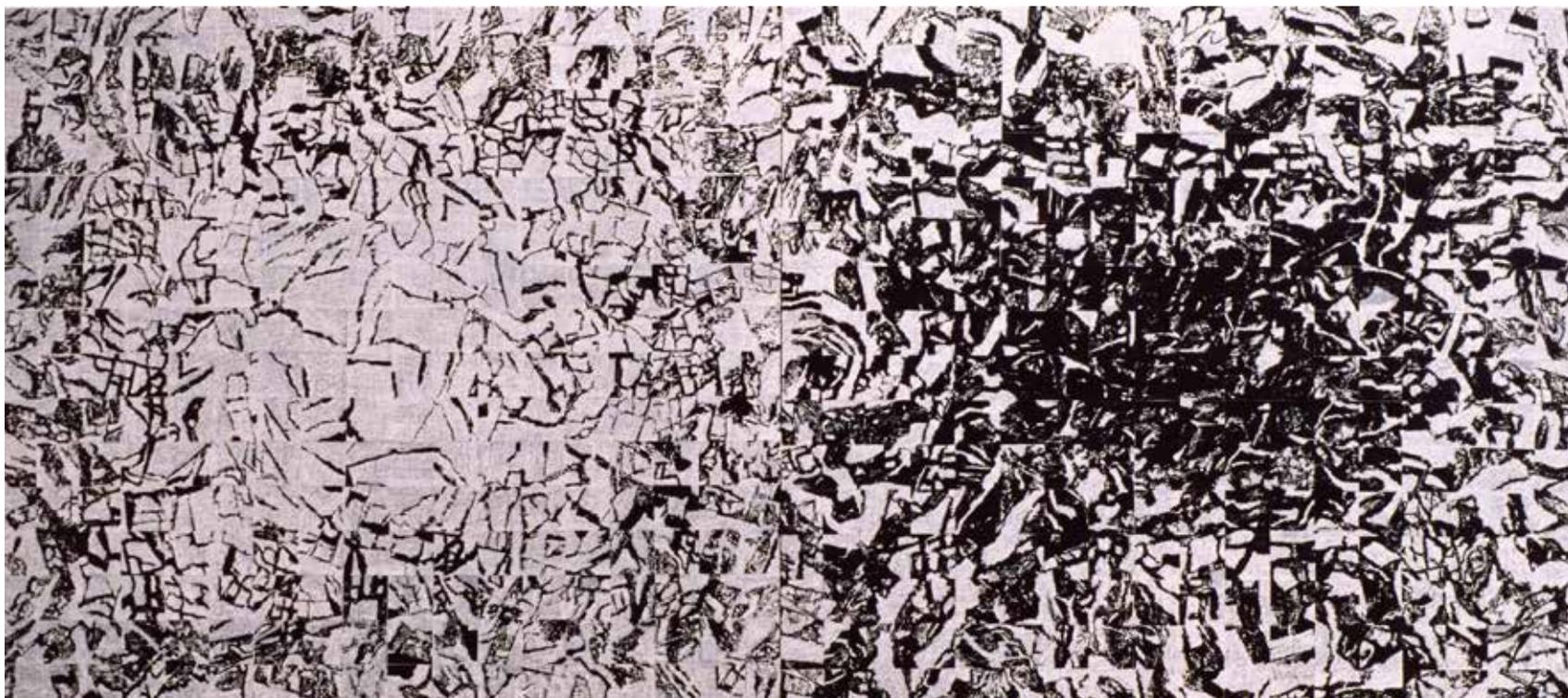
Reinis and I were in agreement that frequently the beauty of a country is more apparent in the poignant impressions of a stranger:

I do not consider myself a landscape painter: What captivates me in the landscape is nature and I want to capture the unseen, unknown, the ephemera, the microscopic, and patterns. Seeing fractals in nature is the most exquisite discovery that drives me in my attempt to paint nature.

Four years ago I was faced with a changed reality when life sent me a new challenge. I was diagnosed with close angle glaucoma and I have lost a bit of vision that will not return. What has been hardest for me has been adjusting to my limitations, learning what my eyes can and can't do. No more small detail work when I used to go into a meditative state. In the early stages of diagnosis I was really distressed and worried, and that was when I embraced a new medium and technique: encaustic. It is a challenging medium to master and I was so involved with it that at that time it was the best remedy. Now I find that encaustic is no longer what I want to paint with — the medium simply does not suit the subject matter I became involved with about a year ago.

Folded Land, 2004, drawing

I initially chose a collection of photos I had taken in nature and I imagined myself creating order by drawing from my photos, and then chaos by cutting the drawings into small squares and reassembling the hundreds squares in a random way, to create rhythm and order:



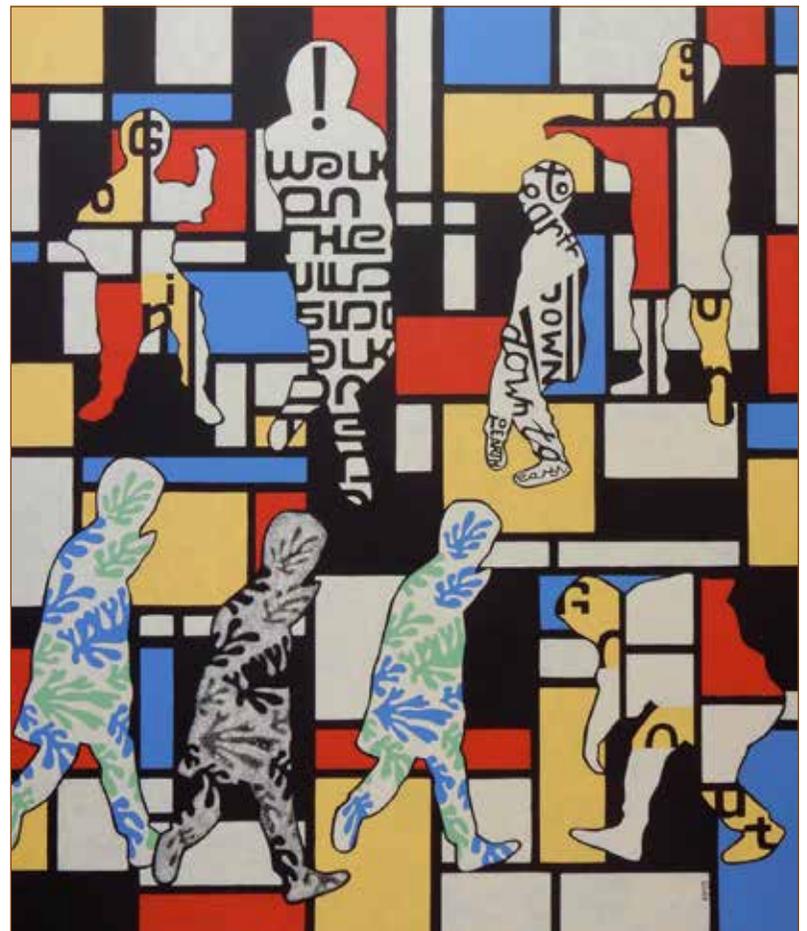


Left: *Skull in Bloom*, 2018, Pochoir

A woman from each continent so of course O'Keeffe could not be ignored and I could not resist the temptation to play with preconceived ideas. The flowers so much associated with O'Keeffe are for this work from Warhol. I thought the hard edge of the skull worked well with the brightly coloured round flowers. For me this painting is very lively. I do not see death and O'Keeffe did not see the skull as death. She simply saw it as 'a beautiful object worth being painted' - and more than once.

Below left: *Matisse Paging Gascoigne* 2017, Pochoir
 Rosalie Gascoigne is on the top of my list. I had to paint in reference to her iconic cut off/assemblage reflective yellow road signs. She was able to tap into that quintessential Australianness even though she was born in New Zealand. Revolutionary! Her work demanded another revolutionary - Matisse. Giving birth to 'Matisse Paging Gascoigne' was effortless and rewarding and is one of my favourites.

Below right: *Mondrianesque Folie V*, 2017, Pochoir
 For this series of seven works, before I chose Mondrian I wanted abstract and figurative and so for the text in number five I wanted something meaningful. I chose Gascoigne and Matisse. I had photos I had taken long ago of a kid, dancing hip-hop. He was so proud to show me his movements; he could not have been more than 10. His little sister was saying again and again: 'My brother is going to be famous...' I knew then that when I had the right painting I would use his moves and who knows? he might become famous! Matisse also painted dancers.



There has been a lot of talk lately about the inequality of women in society, and of course the arts are no exception. For at least two decades I have been lamenting this to whoever wants to listen (mostly my friends!). But times are changing, and so have I: I have stopped the talking and begun the walking!

About a year ago I decided to revisit art history. I chose iconic works by women artists I admire and male artists' works that I see will work well together.

Mondrianesque Folie is a series of seven paintings encompassing Matisse, Gascoigne and Mondrian. The painting *Matisse paging Gascoigne* is my favourite. My latest is *Skull in Bloom* referencing O'Keeffe and Warhol — a strange combination I hear you saying!

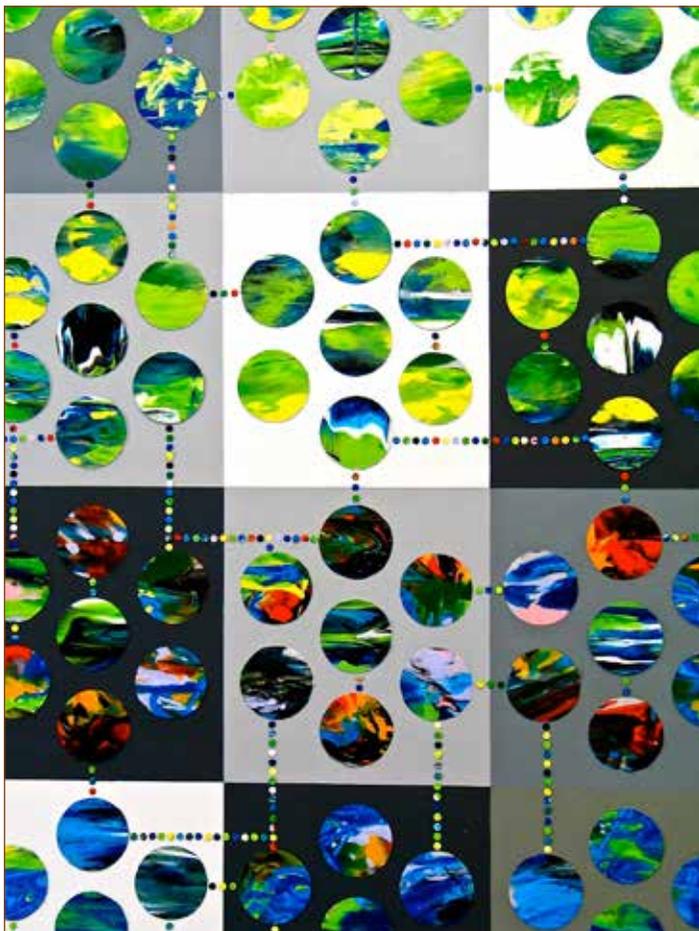
In progress in the studio at the moment is the stencil cutting period, the newest coalescing of O'Keeffe and Magritte. This is a body of work which I hope to sustain for some time. All works are painted using the pochoir (French stencil) method, where I cut each stencil by hand and use it only once, painted on a board of birch wood for rigidity and to avoid bleeding.

My aim is to respectfully acknowledge and share the greatness of these two artists by coalescing, loosely, their distinctive styles, and by creating stories of what might have been and introducing my own story in the process.

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Above:
History of Touches, 2016, Encaustic
 When I saw this black and white photograph taken in the 1930s in Germany, the photograph demanded my attention and I could not resist the call. I had to work in encaustic to see what I could do with it. The result surprised me.



Left:
One Breath in the City, 2014, acrylic collage
 A body of work on the thought that it takes one breath to stay alive. For all sentient beings and all living things, nature is breathing. This painting is about the greening of cities. I envisaged the canopy of trees - green, yellow - down to earthy colours, then to blue, green referring to water; the aquifer under the city and the sea. The circles are the air we breathe, the grey squares, cubes in the background represent the high-rise buildings, the boxes the apartments we live in.