

**Where the Tides Ebb and Flow** – a reflection from Paris by Carmel Bracken

Walking through Montsouris Park in Paris, my curiosity was aroused by the sight of electric blue busts that seemed to rise out of the water. This land-art installation, entitled *Where the Tides Ebb and Flow* was created by Argentinian artist Pedro Marzorati as a visual commentary on rising water levels caused by Climate change. The more or less submerged sculptures represent people who are already sinking into the sea or are under threat of being overwhelmed by the water. This electrifying artwork is a wonderful example of the power of poetic activism.



Mark Patrick Hederman, in *Tarot, Talisman or Taboo*, speaks of the sinking of the Titanic as the event of the last century that told in ‘miniature’ what would unfold as a whole century of ‘crashing and sinking’. He refers to Thomas Hardy’s poem which sees this event as one “that symbolised the clash between the old world of nature and the new world of science and industrialisation and summarised the recklessness and mechanised slaughter upon which humankind was about to embark.”

*“And as the smart ship grew  
In stature, grace, and hue,  
In shadowy silent distance grew the iceberg too.”*

Hederman sees the ship “representing our successful and glamorous progress along the surface of the ocean” and the iceberg as all that lies buried beneath our consciousness. The problems we faced in the last century were the result of neglecting our unconscious motivations. If we continue on this path, there are greater dangers lurking in the deep.

Just as the sinking of the Titanic was the event that mesmerized the last century, the 9/11 terrorist attacks of 2001 and the 2004 tsunami may be the two events whose ripples are felt in this century in recurring earth disasters and terrorist attacks

Artists, Hedermann suggests, have an ability to read the significance of the present “in terms of what it will produce in the future when its implications have unfolded.” If this is so, what do these eerie blue figures in Montsouris Park have to say to what is unfolding in our world.

If the last century was one of ‘crashing and sinking’ this century is one of ‘melting and sinking’. Global warming is causing icebergs to melt faster than before, causing sea levels to rise. There are a billion people living in low lying regions that are in danger of being submerged by rising water and numerous small islands are in danger of disappearing.



Ice Watch Paris – Photo courtesy of Marianne Comfort

As well as the severe flooding that threatens us with annihilation there is the rising tide of terrorism that threatens to overwhelm us.

When I look at those blue figures another possibility emerges. The blue figures sinking into the water reflect the disaster of climate change and terrorism but the people’s events in Paris were a clear reflection of an awakening, of a rising up out of the waters. A growing number of people are waking up to the urgency of the state of the planet and are mobilizing in ways unthinkable of before. Many of the talks and workshops and events organized by

activists in Paris recognized that no old formulas and stop gap solutions will do and reflected a desire to change the values that underlie our decisions, to move from top down solutions to a network of people working together. The Rights of Nature conference was evidence of a desire to take a great leap into a fundamentally different way of perceiving ourselves and the world we inhabit.

Activists gathered in Paris were supported by activist meditators ( e.g. Shift network and Global Coherence movement) who were aware of the power of subtle activism and the importance of the marriage of radical action with inner meditation.

As the icebergs of our institutions melt, a new set of values is rising within us and around us. Jean Houston suggests these values are “holistic, syncretic, relationship and process orientated, organic , spiritual”. The way humans have been living is being re-imagined and reshaped and many are now aware that this reshaping needs to emulate the elegant design of nature. All over the globe people are starting to imagine what a better world could look like, a world that works for all of life . We are now beginning to think as a planet and a great leap in our evolution is looming.

That leap depends on each of us for as Ben Okri reminds us : “*You cannot remake the world, without remaking yourself.*”