The Baltic Sea Project [Part I]

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'The Baltic Sea'

This generative art is part of © The Baltic Sea Project | Concept and idea by Nadine Ethner

All images by Nadine Ethner except
Satellite images by European Space Agency – ESA and JAXA
Baltic Sea Cartography from 1743 by T. Jefferys

Music by Arystan Petzold
Sound Design by Michele Salvaneschi
Software Design by Filippo Gregoretti

Produced by Nadine Ethner and lasituazione ACT
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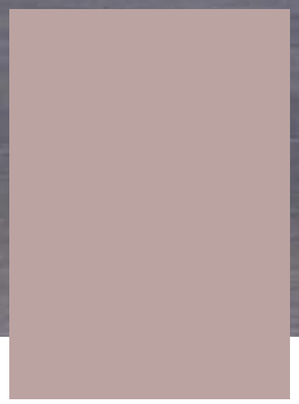
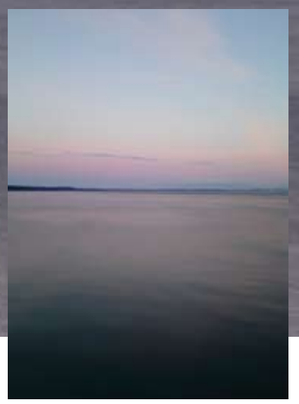
The Smile of Gray

The wind has sanded down the sky, and fine gray is floating down on all sides. The atmosphere takes on soft, shifting shades of green, blue and red. Lots of good things can be said about the colors of the Baltic Sea, but don't think the sun made them so faint and bleached out. On the contrary, it just brings this pastel palette to life.

The aesthetics of Romanticism play an integral role in Nadine Ethner's long-term multimedia project *Baltic Sea*. The sensory perception that the viewer has while looking at the photographs creates an inner image that condenses into a kind of synthetic perception. We encounter an impressionistic gesture that rests on a large number of singular conceptual nuances. Put another way, *Baltic Sea* takes the diverse colors of the countries, people and cultures surrounding this small gray-blue sea in the north and puts them into an aesthetic context.

The color underlying it all (white, baltas in Lithuanian) manages to unite even the most disparate languages and characters. [...] It may sound clichéd, but the wide variety of cultures and ethnicities around the Baltic Sea make it nothing less than the Mediterranean of the north.

The project uses multiple narrative threads. It looks at the borders between coastal states and examines the dividing lines between water, land and air. It glances to the side to see the fragile, highly unpredictable ecosystem produced by the water's low salinity and oxygenation. In a half documentary, half abstracting visual language, it refers to the ambivalence of amber and white phosphorus, an irritant found in leftover munitions swept up onto the shore that looks so similar to the golden fossilized tree resin. It's hard to imagine, but this calm and peaceful sea was once an uncrossable minefield.

Yes, there is more to these idyllic white beaches and vast expanses of blue-gray water than meets the eye. One should remember this when looking into the images for something unambiguous, precise or enduring. That something certainly does exist, but it is in a barely perceptible state of flux that sweeps over and beyond the images in long waves, altering their meaning and sense. The only solid quantity or foundation that remains is the smile of the color gray.

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