

Report on Artist-Residency Albalate del Arzobispo, Teruel, Spanje.
4 Periods between april 4th and december 8th, 2018

When I had the opportunity to submit a project proposal for an Artist-in-Residence in the Spanish Albalate del Arzobispo, located in the province of Aragon, the theme of 'water' soon surfaced. Not only because the Alabaster in which I would work was formed in water, but mainly because the (semi-) transparency and the drawing of the material cause so many associations with the liquid good. And not least because it would be a nice result of my long-term theme 'clouds'.

In April 2018 I arrived in the town on the Rio Martin, where I had participated in a sculpture symposium six months earlier. It was a warm reunion despite the fact that the temperature was far below expectations (even significantly lower than those in the Netherlands) and I had to purchase extra clothing. In the spacious workplace of the Centro Integral de Desarrollo del Alabastro, I moved in with two other residents to be able to concentrate on my project for more than 4 months altogether.

In the beginning of the period, it was the first organized residency for the center, it was not clear which material could be made available for our projects, apart from the pieces and remnants that were there. That is why we used a lot of small residual pieces initially. That gave both a turn and an impulse to the interpretation of my sub-themes. Also the fact that all the pieces had to be able to be transported by no more than two people meant that I had to abandon my preference for large work. A quantity of small detailed pieces replaced this. By working so intensively and exclusively with this project and being able to experiment in Alabaster, I got to know the material well.

During my stay in Albalate, the river and the city further inspired me to complete the themes and to connect them. The Rio Martin, in its beautifully worn-out bed that already provided prehistoric people with water, food and shelter, and from which tunnels were made in Moorish times ingenious channels for driving grain- and olive-oil mills, still moves like a green ribbon through the landscape to the Ebro. The town was built there, at a ford, and on a strategic rocky point. The archbishop's palace, which gave the city its name (seat of the bishop), still watches over the city and the river. Outside the valley, however, you see the desertification of the Spanish agricultural land advancing. Where nowadays practically nothing grows without irrigation, and then every few years, and the farmers' shelters turn into ruins, was once a large forest.

I was told that one day the squirrels could migrate through the branches of the trees from northern to southern Spain. That image impressed me. I thought that Holland (Holzland) must have once been overgrown with a primeval forest. Through logging, intensive agriculture and urbanization, we therefore promote soil erosion, and therefore climate changes. I became even more motivated to make this exhibition. With this project I want to draw attention to the consequences of our industrial water pollution and the effects of climate change. In the works I have accomplished, I follow the cycle of water from the cloud, the rain, the river, its use by humans, to the sea.

Titles of the exhibition 'Water', Albalate del Arzobispo 2018,
Alcañiz 2019, Pueblo de Hajar, etc

- 1 Cloud
- 2 Time
- 3 River
- 4 Dimensions
- 5 Still-life
- 6 Manhold; under our feet
- 7 Theatre
- 8 Source of life

- 1 CLOUD: Water is a material of a constant changing character and together with air one of the quickest traveling life-necessities. Some years ago I sculpted clouds in Sweden and Holland, to bring to our consciousness the importance of water. I try to make clouds all over the world. This cloud for Spain (Albalate) is caught in a frame; 'A cloud is a cloud, this is an image of a cloud.'
- 2 In 'TIME' I bring together drops and drought. With the image of two pending drops I refer to the two hefts of a pendulum; Time runs short concerning the global issue of drought.
- 3 RIVER: After drops have fallen, rivers arise and draw their lines into the landscapes. They are sources for our drinking-water, for all kinds of life and for transport. When reaching the sea, the river is slow and broad, and contaminated.
- 4 LEVELS AND DIMENSIONS: Our relationship with water can be seen and shown in all dimensions; from the drops that fall on our heads, to the cup of tea on our table, the bath we take and the sea on which we transport our commerce. And water remains water.
- 5 The 'STILL-LIFE' represents all containers of our daily needed drinks. Bottles, waterjars, cups and glasses, and the contemporary plastic waterbottle, are displayed in this still-life. The plastic bottle is of the brand 'Agua del Rio'.
- 6 MANHOLD: Under our feet in the streets a city exists of pipes and cables in which are transported electricity, gas, internet and water. Drinking water and drainage of our houses. How would our world look like without them?
- 7 THEATRE: Rivers are our biggest drainage-ways. They discharge into the sea. Not only the rain but also our dirt and wastes reach the sea and endanger the life that begins in it. Plastic bottles that contain water are carrying water to the sea.....and remain there....We receive information about global- and environmental contamination from framed sources, like mobile-phones and televisions. These media can cause a distance between information and experience. By putting the message in an oldfashion coulisse-theatre I hope to disrupt our mental-conditioned information-line and achieve more awareness. We can see the floating bottles of 'Agua del Rio'.....
- 8 SOURCE OF LIFE: As water is our first source of life, and all life begins there, I'd like to conclude my exhibition with the unborn baby in the womb. I hope to personalise my exhibition in this way. Who does not care about new life.....the hope....

In the Centro Cultural, on the Plaza Iglesia, my exhibition opened on December 8, 2018 and that ended my work period. Many people I had been dealing with, from the municipal administration, municipal employees, and also shopkeepers, restaurateurs and befriended artists, and for me unknown Albalatezers, came to see the exhibition. The opening was a wonderful conclusion to a successful and satisfying project. The exhibition is now traveling through Northern Spain. I thank the organization and the municipality of Albalate for the residency offered, the hospitality and helpfulness to make this project a success.

Anja Roemer
Utrecht, April 2019