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A Sea of Beauty and Wonder: An Underwater Journey Through Adela Andea's World

JACKY CORTIAUS([HTTPS://GLASSTIRE.COM/AUTHOR/JACKY-CORTIAUS/](https://glasstire.com/author/jacky-cortiaus/)) |

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Adela Andea, "Midnight Zone," 2023, hybrid materials: flex neon, LED, various plastics.
Photo: Alin Andea.

Jules Verne described the sea as the “embodiment of a supernatural and wonderful existence,” a life force of exemplary love and emotion. In concept, the sheer vastness of the ocean has fascinated humankind for centuries and inspired artists with its otherworldly inhabitants. *Midnight Zone(s)*, Adela Andea’s sixth solo exhibition at Anya Tish Gallery in Houston, is an otherworldly adventure for those looking to explore an oceanscape depicted with unconventional materials. This exhibit includes a stunning new LED installation that allows viewers to experience Andea’s brilliant use of light, form, and space.

As the title suggests, *Midnight Zone(s)* refers to the high-pressure, lightless layer of the ocean and the creatures that adapt to survive in those conditions. This exhibit layers themes of survival, exploration, and imagination, and confronts viewers with the impact of ocean debris. Inspired by the fiction of Jules Verne, Adela Andea’s work creates an experience that encourages audiences to journey through each zone of the exhibit to explore the fantastical pieces, which juxtapose ocean life with technology.

Midnight Zone, the centerpiece of the exhibit and Andea’s newest installation, illuminates the room from the back wall of the gallery. A white behemoth composed of multiple glowing pieces in organic shapes invites viewers with its brilliant light. Large bulbous forms, some the size of an adult, suspend from the ceiling and wall and are positioned to allow viewers to walk under and around the installation. Covered in small white circles, the center of each is filled with a colored insert, some red, some blue, and some green. The white circles were sliced from pool noodles, leaving a hollow center that Adela filled with repurposed cutouts from European pool noodles, which were used for her installation at the Center for International Light in Unna, Germany. This reuse of materials becomes a personal metaphor for Adela, as she was born and raised in Romania but has lived the past twenty-four years of her life in the United States. Walking through *Midnight Zone* truly invokes the same awe that Jules Verne described in *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*; it’s a nearly supernatural experience of genuine love and emotion.

Midnight Zone draws in viewers with its whimsy and imaginativeness, but also calls for reflection on the effects of technology and plastic on ocean life. Additionally, as the title references the lightless layer of the ocean, it allows audiences to revere nature’s — and by proxy humans’ — ability to adapt to stressful environments. It’s impossible not to read into the metaphor of how the ocean’s inhabitants evolve to survive in its high-pressure zones. As

viewers walk through Andea's installation, the experience encourages one to imagine an exciting journey through the sea, but also consider how nature adapts to survive while considering humankind's impact on the ocean itself.



(<https://glasstire.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Midnight-Zone.jpg>)

Installation view of "Midnight Zone(s)" by Adela Andea at Anya Tish Gallery. Photo: Alin Andea

Scattered artfully on a wall is a collection of candy-colored pieces made of various plastics and LEDs. This wall collection includes *Bioluminescence 1* through *Bioluminescence 4* and *Yellow Lantern*, which together demonstrate Andea's ability to reinterpret nature in a meaningful way. These pieces harmonize together in their collective use of color, texture, and composition. *Bioluminescence 3* stands out as the largest of the pieces; shaped like a chunk of

coral reef, small circles, thin strings of plastic, and bits of perforated plastic panels make up the shape and texture of the artwork. "Forms such as these," says the artist, "are first envisioned without the materials, then constructed one unit at a time until the piece comes together in an organic way that reimagines nature." Together, the collection of pieces simulates an underwater ecosystem, referencing coral reefs, seaweed, and rocks.



(<https://glasstire.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Bioluminescence.jpg>).

Installation of pieces by Adela Andea, including: "Bioluminescence 3," 2022, 3D printed parts, various plastics, LED lights, battery source, 16 x 12 x 8.50 in.; "Yellow Lantern," 2022, 3D printed parts, various plastics, LED lights, battery powered 9 x 5.50 x 6 in.; "Bioluminescence 2," 2022, 3D printed parts, various plastics, LED lights, battery powered 16 x 15 x 10 in.; "Bioluminescence 4," 2022, 3D printed parts, various plastics, LED lights, battery powered 11 x 9 x 8.50 in.; "Bioluminescence 1," 2022, 3D printed parts, various plastics, LED lights, battery powered 9 x 14 x 6 in. Photo: Alin Andea

The components that make up these pieces also seem a bit familiar. Small plastic circles and thin strings of plastic may remind viewers of counting chips and Koosh balls from the 1990s and 2000s. A soft glow of light emitting from each object ties in with the exhibit's overarching theme of nature reimagined with technology. Between the primary pieces are scattered small cuffs of hard material in yellows and blues. They're perforated in a manner meant to evoke the image of discarded plastic 6-ring can holders, a not-so-subtle reminder of overconsumption and waste. These collective pieces may depict a thriving ecosystem, but they also warn of our

impact on its life. Plastic may survive in the sunless midnight zone of the ocean, and ocean life may be able to adapt to survive, but it's humankind's overuse of plastic that will suffocate the underwater communities of the sunless midnight zone.

Hydrophis is positioned near the entry of *Midnight Zone*, as if it truly is a sea snake prowling the entry of an ocean cavern. Built of CCFL, Plexiglas, various cords, and a power source, *Hydrophis* brings all these parts together to form a diagonal line on a wall while soft rays of colorful light create an aura around the piece. Andea's use of colorful fluorescent lights call to mind the work of Dan Flavin, who's incandescent and fluorescent light installations were groundbreaking artworks of the Minimalist movement. At the center of the work, a power source, with a colorful fan spinning in action to cool the piece's computer, powers various lights planted throughout the piece. Plastic rings hang from wires, and bright neon lights in spiral shapes give one the idea of snake coils, as the title suggests.

The circle and spiral shapes incorporated within this piece tie in with the circles used in *Midnight Zone*, but set up a dramatic contrast between the two works. *Hydrophis* reminds those who are familiar with Andea's work that she generally creates more colorful installations, while *Midnight Zone* marks a departure from that practice. By using the power source, CCFL, and Plexiglas, Andea conveys an underlying narrative of technology, power, and manmade materials. While the inhabitants of the ocean's midnight zone may adapt to live with no light, people allow technology to change them as they evolve to a more complex society. *Hydrophis*, like us humans, represents the creatures of the *Midnight Zone(s)* that have adapted to survive in, oftentimes, strenuous circumstances.



(<https://glasstire.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Hydrophis.jpg>)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR Adela Andea, "Hydrophis," 2023, CCFL, Plexiglas, power source, 42 x 44 x 11 inches. Photo: Alin Andea.

JACKY CORTIAUS

Andea's contributions to other exhibits over the past year have been impactful, but seeing a recent solo exhibition of her exploration of new forms and themes demonstrates her imagination to push boundaries. This colorful and brilliant new exhibition is as thought-provoking as it is whimsical. Her work pushes audiences to think differently about the world and take on new perspectives by examining her dynamic installations. A journey through Adela Andea's *Midnight Zone(s)* is an emotional experience inspired by the beauty and wonder of the sea that Jacky Verne so eloquently described.

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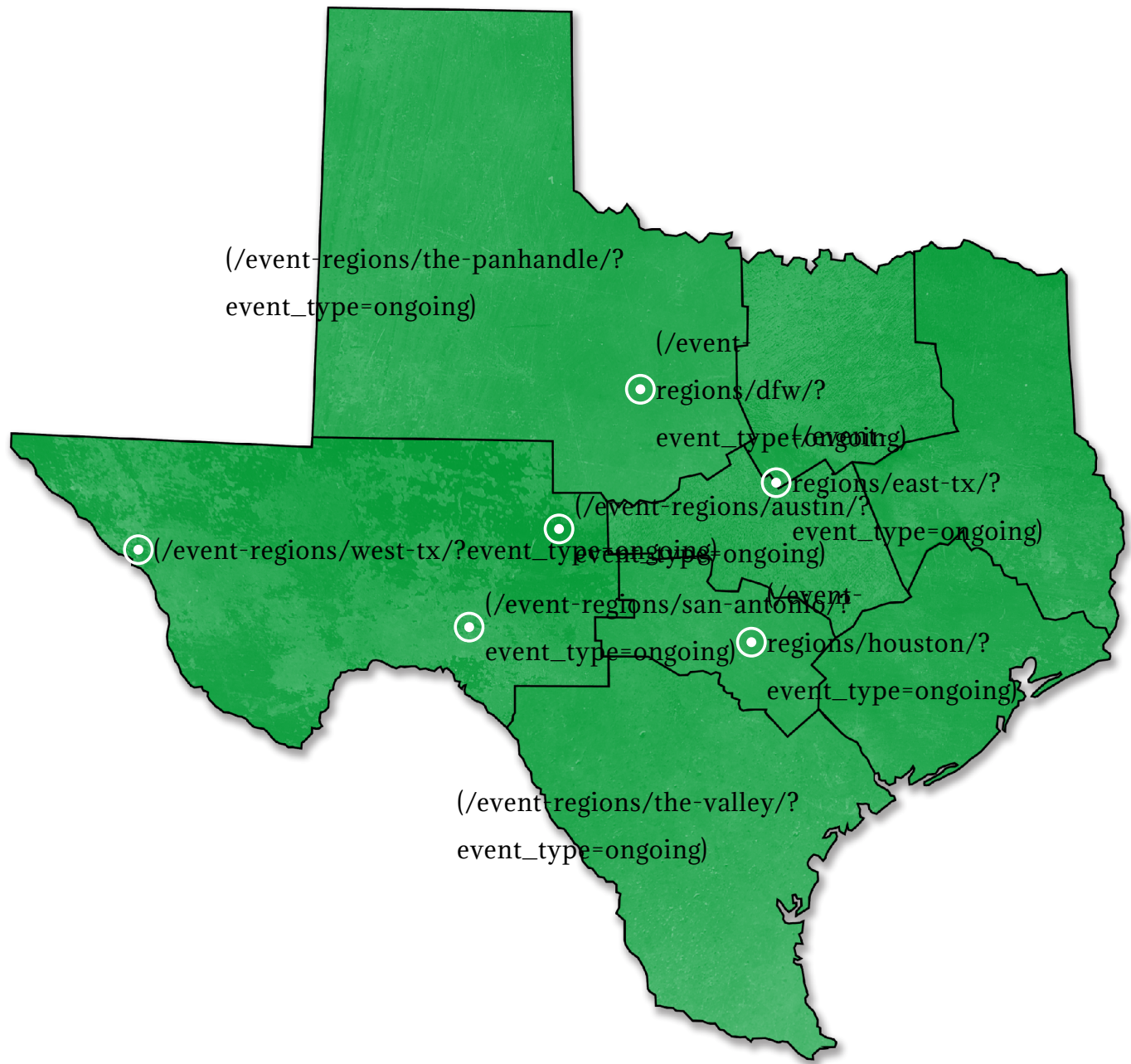
(<https://anyatishgallery.com/show/305233>) in Houston. There will be an artist talk featuring Adela Andea in conversation with collector Lester Marks on February 25 at 2 PM.

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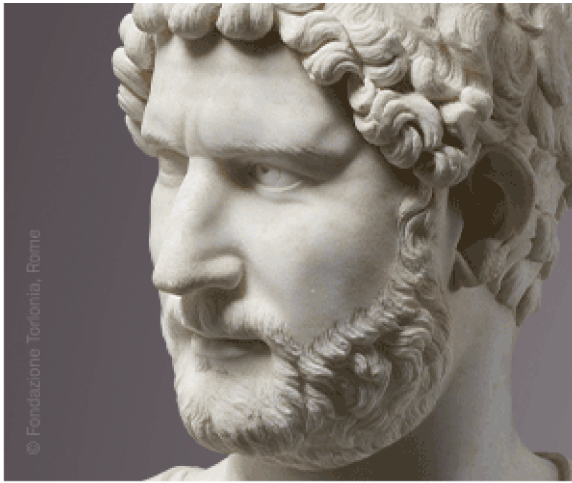
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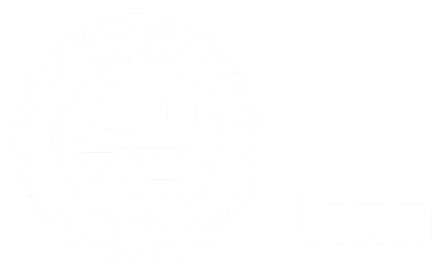
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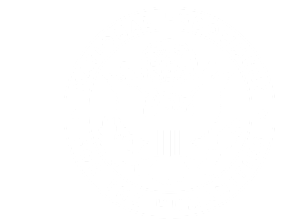
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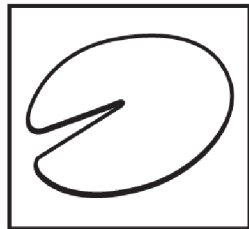


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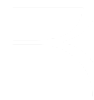


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