

# PROTEUS

## A NINETEENTH CENTURY VISION

A Film by David Lebrun

61 minutes / color / 2004 / 35 mm



*WORLD PREMIERE*  
*2004 Sundance Film Festival*

*OUTSTANDING CREATIVE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD*  
*2004 Santa Barbara Film Festival*

*BEST DOCUMENTARY*  
*2004 Philadelphia Film Festival*

*BEST DOCUMENTARY*  
*2004 Santa Cruz Film Festival*



*"The most dazzling film I saw at Sundance this year...  
A broad... free-associative consideration of mankind's epic aspiration  
to reconcile art and science, terra and technology,  
evolution and religious dogma."*

—Scott Foundas, LA Weekly

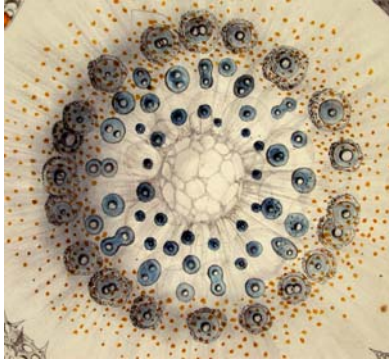
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## Synopsis 1

*The ocean is a wilderness reaching 'round the globe, wilder than  
a Bengal jungle, and fuller of monsters, washing the very wharves  
of our cities and the gardens of our sea-side residences.*

- Henry David Thoreau, 1864



For the nineteenth century, the world beneath the sea played much the same role that "outer space" played for the twentieth. The ocean depths were at once the ultimate scientific frontier and what Coleridge called "the reservoir of the soul": the place of the unconscious, of imagination and the fantastic. *Proteus* uses the undersea world as the locus for a meditation on the troubled intersection of scientific and artistic vision. The one-hour film is based almost entirely on the images of nineteenth century painters, graphic artists, photographers and scientific illustrators, photographed from rare materials in European and American collections and brought to life through innovative animation.

The central figure of the film is biologist and artist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919). As a young man, Haeckel found himself torn between seeming irreconcilables: science and art, materialism and religion, rationality and passion, outer and inner worlds. Through his discoveries beneath the sea, Haeckel would eventually reconcile these dualities, bringing science and art together in a unitary, almost mystical vision. His work would profoundly influence not only biology but also movements, thinkers and authors as disparate as Art Nouveau and Surrealism, Sigmund Freud and D.H. Lawrence, Vladimir Lenin and Thomas Edison.

The key to Haeckel's vision was a tiny undersea organism called the radiolarian. Haeckel discovered, described, classified and painted four thousand species of these one-celled creatures. They are among the earliest forms of life. In their intricate geometric skeletons, Haeckel saw all the future possibilities of organic and created form. *Proteus* explores their metamorphoses and celebrates their stunning beauty and seemingly infinite variety in animation sequences based on Haeckel's graphic work.

Around Haeckel's story, *Proteus* weaves a tapestry of poetry and myth, biology and oceanography, scientific history and spiritual biography. The legend of Faust and the alchemical journey of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner are part of the story, together with the laying of the transatlantic telegraphic cable and the epic oceanographic voyage of HMS Challenger. All these threads lead us back to Haeckel and the radiolaria. Ultimately the film is a parable of both the difficulty and the possibility of unitary vision.

The images and words of *Proteus* are complemented by the narration of Tony and Obie award-winning Broadway actress Marian Seldes (*Three Tall Women, A Delicate Balance, Ivanov, Equus*) the sound design of George Lockwood (*The Living End, Water and Power, The Decay of Fiction*) and Yuval Ron's score for piano, keyboards, string quartet, woodwinds and percussion.

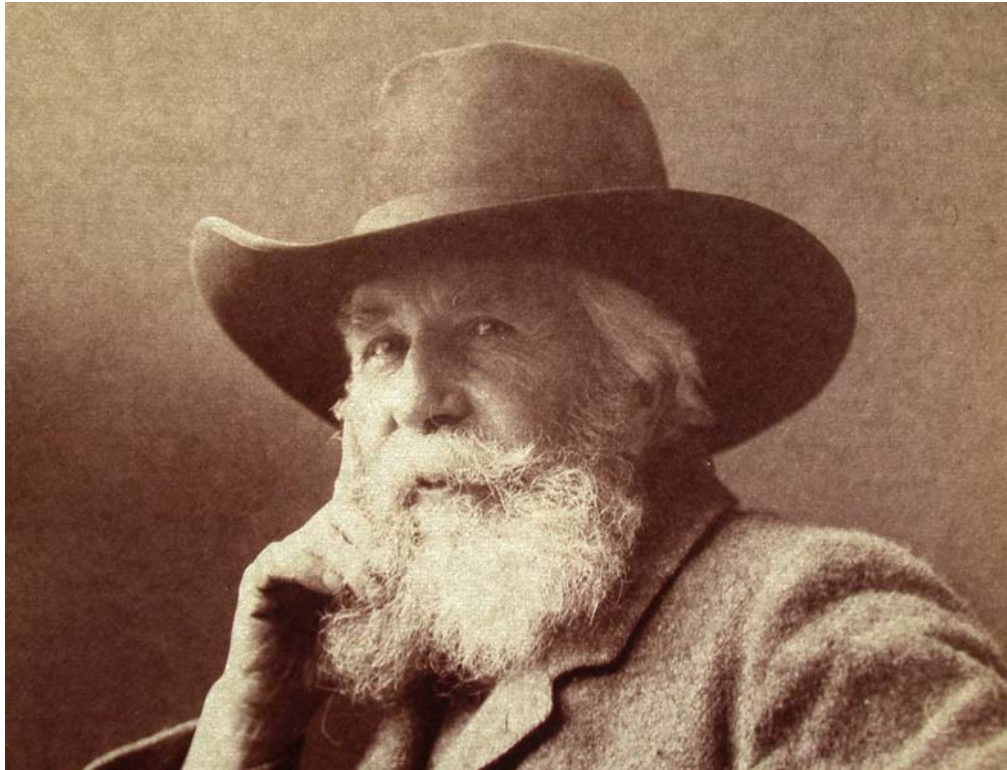
## Synopsis 2

In the 19th century, the world beneath the sea played much the same role that "outer space" has played for the 20th and 21st. The ocean depths were at once the ultimate scientific frontier and the realm of dreams and nightmares, what Coleridge called the reservoir of the soul

Based almost entirely on 19th-century scientific illustrations, paintings, and photographs brought to life through innovative animation, PROTEUS explores the undersea world through a complex tapestry of biology, oceanography, scientific history, poetry and myth.

The central figure of the film is biologist and artist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919). One of the most influential minds of the 19th century, Haeckel found himself torn between seeming irreconcilables: science and art, materialism and religion, rationality and passion.

For Haeckel, the key to integrating these dualities was a tiny undersea organism called the radiolarian. Haeckel discovered, classified and painted four thousand species of these one-celled creatures. Their beauty and seemingly infinite variety led him to a sweeping vision of nature as a single, unfolding work of art.



## Synopsis 3

An animated exploration of the 19th century's fascination with the undersea world, and portrait of biologist and artist Ernst Haeckel, who found in the sea depths an ecstatic fusion of science and art.

Review Excerpts

*"Elegant and brainy!"*

—CLEVELAND FREE TIMES

*"Majestic... A stimulating scientific inquiry that may cause audiences to look at (and think about) the world around them in dramatically different terms. Contemplates the majestic vastness of the natural universe and its complex artistic perfection in ways that even Haeckel could only have imagined. A constant visual treat!"*

—VARIETY

*"Mixing an array of visuals with a powerful script, [this] is a remarkable movie that continually urges the mind to reach beyond what is examined on the screen. PROTEUS seamlessly blends the empirical and visionary relationships to the invisible, mysterious ocean depths... Wonderfully edited and animated, the final product is an indescribable viewing experience [and] a stimulating and stunning experience in the form of a poetic statement."*

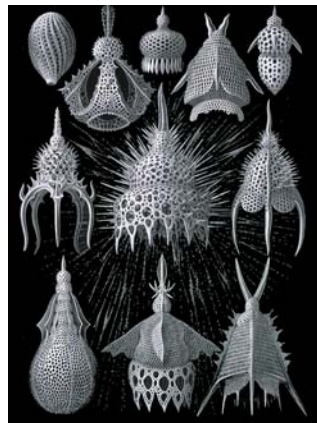
—LEONARDO: JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY  
OF ARTS, SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

*"Remarkable... An exquisite tapestry of poetry and myth, biology and oceanography, scientific history and spiritual biography."*

—SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL CATALOG

*"In mesmerizing sequences of evolving shapes, animation brings to life the intricate geometric skeletons and extraordinary beauty of tiny undersea organisms called radiolaria."*

—ANIMATION WORLD



## BIOGRAPHY AND FILMOGRAPHY OF THE DIRECTOR

Director David Lebrun was born in Los Angeles in 1944. He attended Reed College in Portland, Oregon and the UCLA Film School. He came to film from a background in philosophy and anthropology, and most of his films have been attempts to get inside the way of seeing and thinking of specific cultures. He has served as producer, director, writer or editor of more than sixty films, among them films on the Mazatec Indians of Oaxaca, the Hopi and Navajo of the American Southwest, Mexican folk artists, a 1960s traveling commune, Tibetan mythology and a year in the life of a Maya village in Yucatan. He edited the Academy-award winning feature documentary Broken Rainbow. He is currently producing a film on the history of the decipherment of the ancient Maya hieroglyphic writing system, Breaking the Maya Code, under a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Lebrun combines the structures and techniques of the documentary, experimental and animated genres to create a style appropriate to the culture and era of each film. In Sanctus (1966) he intercut three Mexican rituals (the Catholic mass, the bullfight and the Mazatec sacred mushroom ceremony), using parallel gestures, symbols and structures to create a meta-ritual on film. In The Hog Farm Movie he used wide angle lenses, a constantly moving hand-held camera, optical printer layering and jagged, looping editing to capture a commune's acid-fueled bus journey across 1968 America. In Tanka (1976) he programmed details from Tibetan sacred scroll paintings into an optical printer to create an illusion of animation, bringing to life the hallucinatory after-death experience described in the Tibetan Book of the Dead. Several films of the late 1970s and early 1980s (Luminous Bodies, Wind Over Water, Sidereal Time and The Crystal Ship) were designed for live performance using multiple, variable speed projectors.

Proteus has been in the making for more than twenty years; the first version of the script was written in 1981, and major shooting was done in Jena, East Germany in 1986, well before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Proteus is Mr. Lebrun's first feature-length film.

Select Filmography (as director)

### *Selected Filmography as Director*

Sanctus (1966)	Sidereal Time (1981)
The Hog Farm Movie (1970)	Proteus (2003)
Tanka (1976)	Breaking the Maya Code (in progress)
Luminous Bodies (1979)	Metamorphosis (in progress)
Wind Over Water (1983)	

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Over the years I have worked with different animation techniques to bring life and motion to the art work of various cultures, including European signs and symbols, Tibetan Tanka paintings and Precolumbian stamp designs. When I first saw Ernst Haeckel's nineteenth century lithographs of single-celled undersea life forms, I was inspired to search for ways to animate their evolution and bring to life their extraordinary beauty and variety.

From my obsession with these tiny creatures, I found myself drawn into an ever-broadening investigation of the sea and the nineteenth century imagination. These explorations eventually encompassed marine biology and oceanography, poetry and painting, alchemy and mysticism, and led me into interaction with dozens of scientists and scholars around the world. The film *Proteus* is the end result of this long and – to me at least – endlessly surprising process.     --David Lebrun

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

MARIAN SELDES (the Narrator) is a major figure in American theatre. Her Broadway roles have included *Medea*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Ondine*, *The Chalk Garden*, *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, *Tiny Alice*, *A Delicate Balance*, *Father's Day*, *Equus*, *Deathtrap*, *Ivanov* and *Ring Round the Moon*. Off-Broadway roles have included *The Ginger Man*, *Isadora Duncan*, *Painting Churches*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Three Tall Women*, *The Boys From Syracuse*, *Dear Liar* and *The Play About the Baby*. Ms. Seldes most recently starred in *Becket/Albee* at the Century Theater. She has received a Tony Award and 5 Tony nominations, a Drama Desk Award and 5 Drama Desk Nominations, a Helen Hayes Nomination, 3 Obie Awards, including an Obie for Sustained Achievement in 2001, and other awards too numerous to mention. She was inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame in 1996, and received an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts from Julliard in 2003. Ms. Seldes also appears frequently on television and in films, most recently in *Mona Lisa Smile*.

COREY BURTON (the voice of Ernst Haeckel) studied radio drama with the legendary Daws Butler, and has worked with nearly all of the original Hollywood Radio Theatre veterans in classic-style broadcasts. The San Fernando Valley native has voiced soundalikes and original characters for hundreds of commercials and other projects. Theatrical film work includes *E.T.*, *Total Recall*, *Poltergeist* and most of Disney Feature Animation's releases over the past two decades, including the roles of Moliere in *Atlantis* and Captain Hook in *Return to Neverland*. TV animation voice credits span several popular Disney and Warner Brothers series, among many others. Burton has been an announcer for all the major TV networks, can be heard at Disney and Universal Theme Parks worldwide and has narrated an eclectic assortment of documentaries.

RICHARD DYSART (the voice of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner) hails from Maine's Kennebec Valley. His New York career began off-Broadway with Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* and ended on Broadway with Jason Miller's *That Championship Season*. He performed in repertory theatre across America and is a founding member of San Francisco's American Conservatory Theatre (ACT). Mr. Dysart has acted in over forty films, including *Being There*, *The Hospital* and *Pale Rider*. TV-movie credits include *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, *The People vs. Jean Harris* and *Last Days of Patton*. Mr. Dysart gained nationwide TV fame as senior law partner Leland McKenzie on the NBC series *LA Law*. Now in retirement, he lives with his wife, artist Kathryn Jacobi, in Santa Monica and in Sychelt, British Columbia, where he tends an apple orchard.

PHILIP PROCTOR (the voice of Wolfgang von Goethe) is one of the four members of the legendary Firesign Theatre, founded in the sixties and still going strong. Phil sang in *The Sound of Music* and *A Time for Singing* on Broadway, and has received numerous awards for his work in theatre. On television he is the voice of the *Big Brother* series and plays Howard on *The Rugrats*. Recent film roles have included seahorse Bob in *Finding Nemo*, Charlie in *Monsters, Inc.*, the drunken French Monkey in Eddie Murphy's *Dr. Dolittle* series, and a Chef in the Academy Award winner *Spirited Away*.

JAMES WARWICK (reading the log of HMS Challenger) trained as an actor and director at the Central School in London. He played leading roles in London's West End and national

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES continued...

touring productions, including *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Dr. Faustus*, and Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*. British TV roles include *Partners in Crime*, *Lillie* and *The Bell*, all shown here on PBS Masterpiece Theatre. Since moving to the United States, Mr. Warwick has played Arthur in the national tour of *Camelot* and Sir Robert Chiltern in the Broadway production of *An Ideal Husband*, together with numerous other theatrical roles and hundreds of TV appearances. As a director, James has directed numerous productions at the Connecticut Rep, Paper Mill Playhouse, the Berkshire Theatre Festival and elsewhere. His latest production is *Suspect*, a new musical for the NYC Fringe Festival.

Composer YUVAL RON studied at the Berklee College of Music. He has composed scores for numerous feature and short films, and has done extensive television work for CBS, UPN, Fox, the Disney Channel and others. He has composed several commissioned works for chamber ensemble and symphony orchestra, most recently *Sephardic Songs of Exile*, for orchestra and soloists. Additionally, he has created 18 scores for theater and modern dance productions, notably his collaborations with the Butoh master Oguri. Mr. Ron is also the founder of the Yuval Ron Ensemble, an ensemble of Israeli and Arabic musicians, in which he plays the oud. Together with the Ensemble he has produced numerous collaborative concerts of Israeli, Arabic and other world musicians, most recently in two seasons of concerts at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. His recordings include *In Between the Heartbeat*, *One*, and *One Truth*, a collaboration with Omar Faruk Tekbilek. His latest CD, *Under the Olive Tree*, brings together the sacred musical traditions of Judaism, Sufism and the Christian Armenian Church. He has received grants from the California Council for Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, the American Composers Forum and the National Dance Project. Mr. Ron, an Israeli native, lives in Los Angeles.

Sound Designer GEORGE LOCKWOOD began his career in visual effects for motion pictures, with credits ranging from the California Raisins commercials to such films as *Return of the Jedi*, *Total Recall*, *Darkman*, and the *Robocop* features. In the mid-80's, he supervised the restoration of such classic films as *The Ten Commandments* and *White Christmas*. He has been a regular judging panel member for television's Emmy Awards in the category of Visual Effects.

In 1989, George designed and produced his first soundtrack, Pat O'Neill's Sundance Film Festival Grand Prize winner *Water and Power*. His work in sound design also includes Gregg Araki's *The Living End*, Jefery Levy's *Drive* (winner of the Venice Film Festival's Critic's Prize), Les Bernstein's *Night Train* (on which he also did the visual effects) and O'Neill's recent *The Decay of Fiction* (on which he also served as Director of Photography). As a musician, Mr. Lockwood's experience ranges from the study of Carnatic (South Indian classical) violin with Dr. L. Subramaniam to playing Irish fiddle for James Cameron's *Titanic* and performing with his five-piece ensemble, Buzzworld. Mr. Lockwood received his MFA from the California Institute of the Arts School of Film and Video; he lives in Van Nuys, California.

# P R O T E U S

A NINETEENTH CENTURY VISION

## COMPLETE CREDITS

### Voice cast:

narrator	MARIAN SELDES
Ernst Haeckel	COREY BURTON
the Ancient Mariner	RICHARD DYSART
Wolfgang von Goethe	PHILIP PROCTOR
log of HMS Challenger	JAMES WARWICK

### Production credits:

written, produced and directed by	DAVID LEBRUN
music	YUVAL RON
sound design	GEORGE LOCKWOOD
animation design	DAVID LEBRUN
still photography	RICHARD EDWARDS DAVID LEBRUN AMY HALPERN
animation camera	CHUCK MARTIN KEVIN HAUG RICHARD EDWARDS
animation layout	HELDER SUN
cel retouching	CHRISTOPHER LEBRUN
video logging	ALAIN DUROCHER
film assembly	BRUCE LANE
keyboards	YUVAL RON
piano	BRIAN PEZZONE
violin	PHILLIP VAIMAN
violin	ALYSSA PARK
viola	SHANTI RANDALL
cello	DAVID SHAMBAN
piccolo, flute, clarinet, oboe, English horn	CHRIS BLETH
Italian cane flute, nose flute	ROBERTO CATELANA
wine glass, toy hammered dulcimer	ENZO FINA
additional percussion	STEVE FORMAN
Irish violin	GEORGE LOCKWOOD
music recording studio	PARAMOUNT RECORDINGS
engineer	GUY SNYDER



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A NINETEENTH CENTURY VISION

## Production credits (cont'd):

translations from the German	EVELYN BRINKER
narration recording, New York engineer	SONY STUDIOS VINCE CARO
narration recording, Los Angeles engineer	SUNBURST RECORDING BOB WAYNE
film and video editor dialogue editor	DAVID LEBRUN ERIC MARIN
sound effects editor, rerecording mixer	GEORGE LOCKWOOD
animation facilities	LUMENI NICK VASU, INC.
film laboratories	CFI FOTOKEM ITECH FILM SERVICES FILMWORKS MIX MAGIC SOUNDWORKS STUDIO NT AUDIO

## Consultants:

FREDERICK BURWICK	Dept. of English, Univ. of California at Los Angeles
ALEX CALDER	University of Auckland, New Zealand
ALLEN COLLINS	Dept. of Integrative Biology, Univ. of California Berkeley
PAUL DAYTON	Scripps Institute of Oceanography, La Jolla
MARGARET DEACON	Dept. of Oceanography, Southampton University, UK
MARIO DI GREGORIO	History Dept., Universita' del' Aquila, Italy
MICHAEL GHISELIN	Senior Research Fellow, California Academy of Sciences
MICHAEL KERZE	Interfaith Center, Occidental College
TIMOTHY LENOIR	History Dept., Stanford University
ERIC MILLS	Dept. of Oceanography, Dalhousie Univ., Halifax Nova Scotia
JESUS PINEDA	Biology Dept., Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution
PHILLIP REHBOCK	Dept. of History, University of Hawaii

# P R O T E U S

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## Consultants (cont'd):

ROBERT RICHARDS	Director, Fishbein Center for the History of Science, University of Chicago
TONY RICE	Institute of Oceanographic Sciences, Surrey
WILLIAM RIEDEL	Scripps Institute of Oceanography, La Jolla
HELEN ROZWADOWSKI	Dept. of History and Sociology of Science, University of Pennsylvania
JOHN WOODCOCK	Dept. of English, Indiana University

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