

# INTRODUCTION

## significance and interpretation

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The theme of launching bottles to the sea is not new. Like most good ideas, this is an old one, with a long and distinguished history and many different facets. It has been explored in works of literature, such as the poem by the Uruguayan poet Mario Benedetti, entitled “Botella al mar,” the anthology of poems *Botella al mar* by the Cuban poet Nancy Morejón, and the novel *Message in a Bottle* by Nicholas Sparks. Many visual artists also have created works in which they depict bottles with messages. Indeed, there is an entire genre in China that involves writing messages inside bottles. But the idea has also been used with utilitarian purposes in mind. Scientists have thrown bottles to the sea as a way of tracking ocean currents; explorers have used it as a means of communicating results of their travels; and sailors have employed them when seeking help, particularly in times of war, when other means of communication have been unavailable to them. There are even those who throw bottles to the sea just for the sake of communication, without any literary, artistic, or scientific aim in mind. What we have in Carlos Estévez’s installation, however, is something quite different.

Many works of art that depict bottles do so in the context of a still life whose purpose has nothing to do with the function of bottles as a

medium of a message sent by the sea. Bottles have interesting shapes and the fact that they are usually made of glass makes them intriguing motifs for paintings. Major artists throughout history have used them. Bottles have been commonly included in drinking or homely scenes. A well-laid table and appetizing meal asks for a nice bottle of wine to accompany it. We frequently see these used by baroque and impressionist artists. Cubists also seem to have found the depiction of bottles enticing, and perhaps even challenging insofar as their work aims to decompose objects into geometrical shapes and bottles do not easily lend themselves to this purpose. But the drawings that constitute the core of Estévez’s installation do not include depictions of bottles. The bottles are part of the installation not because the artist has drawn them, but because he uses them to transport the drawings.

Artists and literary authors who have been interested in the topic of bottles at sea generally consider a particular bottle and the message it carries, as well as its affective significance at both its origin and its destination. They are usually concerned with particular experiences or predicaments that affect those who throw the bottles or those who receive them. On the contrary, Estévez does not focus on any one of the bottles

that are part of the installation, the messages they contain, or the impact the bottles have on their receivers. His installation includes one hundred bottles with one hundred messages that cover a rich array of situations and experiences, rather than one overall theme or experience.

In addition, unlike artists who are interested in bottles because of their potentially challenging and interesting aesthetic features, Estévez pays no special attention to these factors. True, he picked particular bottles because they appealed to him in some, perhaps aesthetic, ways but he does not especially focus on the aesthetic dimensions that other artists have found in bottles. The rationale for the use of bottles is conceptual. Estévez is interested in the bottles as carriers of messages traveling by sea to an unpredictable destiny. He also is not interested in the utilitarian or scientific angle the bottles may have, or the act of throwing them to sea. It is not aesthetics, science, or any other of their common uses that leads him to the bottles; it is the human condition.

The project is surprising in part because the probability that any one of the bottles in the installation, and even less that more than one, would be recovered by someone who will understand and be interested in its content is very low. Imagine the vicissitudes that these bottles face in an ocean full of large animals that may swallow them thinking they are food, ships that accidentally ram and break them, rocks against which the waves and currents can throw and shatter them, and well-meaning ocean cleaners who pick large aggregations of garbage and dispose of them in garbage dumps. Some bottles might land in uninhabited lands, deserts, or in Antarctica, and so languish in solitude for centuries before they are found, if they ever are. Even if someone finds any of these bottles and opens it, what is the likelihood that the person will understand its contents or sympathize with them? It is possible that those who find the bottles come from cultures that forbid creating images, and so they might consider the drawings blasphemous or idolatrous, and de-

stroy them. Still others might regard the images as uninteresting or useless, and thus proceed to discard them. Yet, some bottles thrown to the sea have been found, often many years after they have been at sea. The Internet is full of bizarre stories about such cases. But the odds that the bottles thrown to the sea by Estévez will be found and kept are minimal. Indeed, of seventeen bottles that Estévez has thrown to the sea, only one is known to have been found.

Estévez's installation is an original work of art with quite a different aim from that pursued by artists who have previously explored the themes of bottles, messages in bottles, or messages in bottles thrown to the sea. It is in part because of these differences that the installation uniquely serves to investigate many dimensions of human experience, some of which have been ignored in the past. The core of *Bottles to the Sea* are the one hundred drawings contained in the bottles (Temin 2002). This might be taken to suggest that these drawings are intended as a series of art works devoted to the exploration of a theme or set of interrelated themes, as happens frequently with the work of many artists. The theme or themes may be conceptual, such as a certain human passion or idea like love, death, or justice. Or it may be plastic, such as a certain style or technique whose various dimensions are tested. Other Cuban artists, for example, have created series around the topic of the *balseros*, Cubans who have attempted to escape the island in *balsas* or rafts. And much medieval art consists of series depicting the lives and miracles of Christ and the saints.

Estévez's *Bottles to the Sea*, however, is not a series in this sense. The unifying theme of the installation is the idea of bottles being thrown to the sea and traveling through perilous conditions to undetermined destinations. But none of the individual drawings contained in the bottles explores such an idea or any dimension of it. Moreover, although some themes are explored more than once in the work, they are not related

to the general idea behind the installation. Nor can we say that the unifying factor of the drawings is a certain style or technique initiated in it. Of course, it does not take much to notice that the drawings do have a unique style that is quite evident and recognizable by an observer. However, this is not new, proper to the drawings, or intended to be explored in these drawings in particular. Rather, the style and techniques revealed in the drawings are simply the style and techniques idiosyncratic to the work of Estévez as a whole. There is nothing stylistically unique that separates the drawings in the installation from the rest of Estévez's work.

In many ways, *Bottles to the Sea* is like a notebook of ideas that echoes some of the artist's past work but, more significantly, charts a course for future work. Indeed, although the ideas it explores are drawings, an examination of past or subsequent instances of Estévez's art show that some of the drawings revisit previous work or have served as blueprints for future projects, often in different media. For example, the sculpture-installation *Nadie puede ver por mis ojos* (No One Can See Through My Eyes) that Estévez created in 1994 (see Gracia 2009a, 27-33) served as inspiration for a message with the same name in *Bottles to the Sea*, whereas the message "*Escenas del circo. El manipulador*" (Circus Scenes: The Handler) was the source of a work on paper, *El malabarista* (The Juggler) in 2002 (see Gracia 2009a, 91-97), and the idea explored in "*Tratado de los puentes del amor*" (Treatise on Love's Bridges) was revisited and developed further in *Las distancias entre nuestros vecindarios* (Distances Between Our Neighborhoods) in 2001 (see Gracia 2009a, 115-23). This makes *Bottles to the Sea* an important document for understanding Estévez's work, apart from its significance as a work of art in its own right.

The installation is complex, including diverse elements and different media. Among these are artifacts, actors, actions, records of actions, and various contexts, all important for a grasp of its significance. Its core is constituted by the

one hundred drawings created on narrow pieces of paper of various kinds intended to be placed inside the glass bottles that are to be launched to the sea. The drawings are referred to as "messages" and each is assigned a number from one to one hundred. Estévez used tracing paper for the foundation of the drawings; pencil for the texts; and tempera, sanguine, and water color pencils for the drawings. Although the works consist primarily of images, some also include texts. The artist mostly composes these, although sometimes they echo the ideas or quotations from authors whom the artist considers influential, such as Jorge Luis Borges, Ernesto Sábato, and St. Augustine.

Apart from the drawings, the installation includes the one hundred bottles of various sizes, shapes, and colors in which the drawings are placed before they are launched. Estévez sometimes picked these because of their uniqueness, whereas at other times he did so precisely because they are common. The bottles are always sturdy pieces meant to withstand stress, despite being made of glass. None of the bottles has been especially made with this installation in mind. The way Estévez went about collecting them illustrates an important component of his *modus operandi*, for he frequently uses objects he randomly finds in such places as flea markets, antique shops, and the like, and integrates them into his works.

Informative materials accompany the drawings placed inside the bottles. These contain details about the project, a statement to the effect that the drawings belong to whomever finds them, as well as instructions about how to get in touch with the artist so he can record the finding and how far and to which places the bottles have traveled. The actors who are part of the installation include the artist who created the drawings and launched the bottles, as well as the individuals who find them. The actions involve the launching of the bottles by the artist and their reception by those who find them. These actions are meant to be recorded in films, photographs, and whatever

means those who find the bottles use to preserve the moment of discovery. The contexts include the places from which the bottles are launched, the seas they travel, and the locations where they land and are picked up.

In exhibitions, the drawings are displayed hanging from strings along walls, as if they were wet laundry set out to dry, thus emphasizing the connection with water and the perilous journey that they are intended to undertake. Below them, on a ledge, the bottles are placed, one for each of the drawings. On the floor, some sand is scattered, to indicate that the bottles are launched on the shore and might be picked up on a beach. A description of the project accompanies the installation, and pictures and films of the launchings as well as the recovery of the bottles, when available, are included in the installation.

The seminal idea for the installation came to Estévez through his son, as he explains in his statement in this book. The early 1990s was a difficult time in Cuba. The aid that the country had enjoyed from the Soviet Union had come to an end, and the island found itself without proper resources, with a bankrupt economy, and isolated from the international community. Estévez, his wife Amarilys, and their son Carlitos, lived on Havana Bay and every day would walk along *El Malecón*. This promenade is a central gathering place for Cubans. It is the place where they gather when some significant event occurs, to exchange ideas, and romance (see Schneider Enríques 2002).

Once the idea of launching a bottle to the sea to establish a tie with the outside world was planted in Estévez's mind, the details of the installation followed easily. The first launching took place in Havana, at *El Malecón*, on December 16, 2001, where a bottle with the drawing of Message 54, "Everything is Written in Heaven," was launched. In all, eighteen bottles have been launched from the following countries: six from the United States; one each from Portugal, Italy, Mexico, Cuba, and Switzerland (in the Rhine);

two each from Brazil and France; and three from Spain. So far, only one bottle has been recovered whose receiver communicated with Estévez. It is possible that other bottles have been found, but the artist has not had any news of them. An uncertain fate is certainly one, and perhaps the most obvious and significant, aspect of this work of art, but there are others. Let me turn to a few that easily suggest themselves.

## IDEAS BEHIND THE WORK

As mentioned previously, the idea that unifies *Bottles to the Sea* does not seem to have anything to do with the particular messages in the bottles. However, it is significant that the title of the first drawing is *Dwellings of the Spirit*, and the last *Every Ending is a New Beginning*. The first suggests that the messages conveyed by the images are spiritual, that they have to do with what is ethereal and finest in humans, rather than with the ordinary concerns that worry people in the most pedestrian aspects of their lives. The title of the last message suggests that the process intended with these one hundred images is just a starting point. There is no end to the process, no ultimate conclusion reached, no final work. In a Faustian turn, Estévez seems to suggest that it is in the doing that we find what we are looking for, not in the completion of any kind of task. The task, as Borges would perhaps say, is infinite.

The idea that unifies the installation is that of an act, the throwing of a bottle with a message to the sea. This raises the question of its significance, the motive behind it, and the circumstances that gave rise to it. Why would anyone throw to the sea a bottle containing a message that, in this case, is expressed in a work of art? Note that the overall title of the installation is not "message in a bottle," "messages in bottles," or "messages to the sea," but *Bottles to the Sea*. There is an important difference between these. The first two titles put the emphasis on the message or messages and what they say. But the actual title puts the empha-

sis on the entire phenomenon, the bottles being thrown into the sea and, perhaps indirectly, on someone finding them. This opens a richer field of interpretation in that the object of interpretation becomes complex. Most other uses of this metaphor fail to explore many of the various dimensions possible in the case of Estévez's work because they focus on the messages, and messages are usually rendered in texts, involving a linguistic mode of communication that restricts their significance. But if the emphasis is not exclusively or primarily on the message, and the message is expressed through art, then a multitude of other interpretive possibilities open up.

A bottle is usually made out of glass or some such fragile material. So, from the very beginning, the message is in peril. If the bottle breaks, both its remnants and its message end up at the bottom of the sea. Obviously, there is something very fragile in the attempt to communicate through a message in a bottle, so why would anyone attempt it? Stories of such attempts constitute almost a genre in literature. Usually they involve a shipwreck and a lonely survivor on an island, separated from the rest of the world, but longing for communication made difficult or impossible by any other means. Most often, the shipwreck is a Robinson Crusoe, a man who finds himself isolated and threatened by circumstances far from those he could ever have envisioned; a man who is both trapped and forced to face the unknown. This brings to mind a sense of imprisonment, of being locked in a situation from which it is not easy, and might even be impossible, to break free. He is in a prison of sorts, although the character of the prison or the means that prevent escape are not part of the metaphor of throwing the bottle to the sea. And he is accidentally placed in an unknown environment, full of dangers and perhaps lethal challenges.

We have, then, several areas from which the act of throwing bottles with messages to the sea acquire significance. The bottles themselves, the identities of those who throw them, the conditions in which those who throw the bottles find

themselves, the motivations for throwing the bottles, the places of origin from which the bottles are thrown, the intended destinations of the bottles, and the actual destinations at which the bottles arrive.

The significance of a bottle in particular lies to a great extent in its character. Bottles are generally made of glass, and indeed Estévez has often used this traditional medium in his art. But glass is easily broken. An impact with any hard object shatters it. Still, there is considerable strength in a glass bottle. Its shape makes it nimble and adaptable to different circumstances. It floats easily in water as long as it is corked properly. And it offers little resistance, so that it can be carried swiftly by a current, adapting itself to the waves, and moving with a grace generated by its dynamic design.

Bottles are meant to be filled with liquids and can float on liquids. But a bottle with a message written on paper, another very fragile medium, adds another dimension to our understanding of the installation's metaphor. The fragility of the bottle is replicated, although in a different way, by the fragility of its content, while the strength of the bottle is also replicated, *mutatis mutandis*, by the strength of its content: Paper is both fragile and tough. It can be easily destroyed but it can also last for a long time. We have two-thousand-year-old papyri whose condition of survival is a dry environment. This is precisely what a bottle provides: An enclosure that is dry despite being surrounded by water. Safety inside, peril outside.

Now we may surmise one place where this leads us. Bottles may be taken as symbols of the individuals who throw them, of their fragility and strength, and of the perilous situations in which they may find themselves. Their circumstances may be idiosyncratic, or they may be similar to those of Robinson Crusoe, to those of Estévez, or to those that apply to readers of this book or to this writer. We become the bottle. On the one hand, there is the fragility of our bodies. We can be killed; we can die; we can be sick. Our lives are easily terminated and our existence is limited.

But we are also strong in that we are adaptable to different circumstances; we are made to survive under changing situations, some of which may be extremely difficult. We are, like a bottle, tough and resilient. And like it, we have secrets that may make us vulnerable. As individuals we are bundles of thoughts, emotions, ideas, beliefs, and goals. And although much of this will pass, we also, as Averroes would say, reach divine immortality through the universal ideas we are able to understand. Through these, we transcend our particularity. The understanding of unity, truth, and goodness makes us immortal insofar as those thoughts are the same for everyone and, as Plato argued, imperishable.

The bottle becomes a symbol for me and for you, for our selves, revealing something important about our nature and our identity. The bottle contains a drawing, and a drawing is a construction of an artist, which suggests that our selves are also constructs. We become the artist who selects the bottle, draws the picture, and folds the paper to fit the bottle. We establish the conditions of our identity, and create it. The question of whether we create our identity or whether we have little to do with the process of its creation, is one that philosophers most frequently debate. Are we self-made or are we the result of circumstances and forces out of our control? Are we created by nature or by nurture? The idea of the self understood as a bottle thrown into the sea that contains a message helps us meditate on who we are and how we have come to be it.

But there is another dimension of this symbolism that should not escape us, because just as each bottle guards its secret, so do we. A bottle is one, alone, and its content is not revealed unless it is opened and someone looks inside it. Indeed, even if the bottle is opened, whoever looks inside it must have some way of understanding its content. Estévez often has added texts to the drawings he has placed inside the bottles, and the texts are in Spanish. This means that whoever

wants to understand the meaning of the messages carried by the bottles has to know or learn Spanish, or use a dictionary to decipher the text. Bridges have to be built between the sender and its message on one side and those who find it on the other, and this is true of us as well. There must be a bridge between us, otherwise, nothing will happen. Bottles with messages symbolize our loneliness and illustrate the difficulties of trying to break out of it.

A bottle may symbolize not just each of us as human beings, trapped in our particular existence, but our attempt to move beyond our isolation and communicate with others. This idea is universal because we all share a similar condition. We are born alone and die alone. And between birth and death we are constantly attempting to share with others who we are, our inner thoughts and feelings, but it is hard to penetrate the thoughts and reality of others. This is why novels that narrate the inner struggles of their characters are so enticing. They tell us about the other, that foreign being who is also a brother or sister in our predicament. We are islands, lonely souls that struggle to communicate throughout our lives. We want to break through, to get into the thoughts of others, to analyze them, to shatter the bottles in which we are trapped, and which contain something we need to communicate but never quite succeed, for we see each other only through a glass darkly. And when we succeed in breaking another bottle in order to look into its contents, we often find that the inside hides something we cannot read, and at best consists of a picture that could mean many things. We want certainty, the imaginary certainty we often think we have of ourselves, but what we find is more elusive, escaping us the moment we think we have it.

And yet, the mere act of throwing the bottle to the sea indicates both the situation of the one who throws it and the desire and intention to communicate with another. Loneliness forces us to make the effort to communicate with others.

And a lack of effective means of communication leads us to use a bottle. Lonely survivors of shipwrecks throw bottles to the sea. People on the mainland don't usually throw bottles with messages to the sea because they think they can easily communicate with others. They are part of a continent, not isolated islanders. It is only when one is stranded, in one way or another— isolated, separated or segregated, secreted from and by others—that one seeks help by throwing a bottle to the sea. The act of throwing the bottle indicates an involuntary imprisonment and a desire to escape. Indeed, the motivating idea of *Bottles to the Sea* was, as Estévez explains in his statement in this book, a reaction of his son to the claustrophobia they were experiencing in Cuba at the time. As an island, the seas surround Cuba. A walk along El Malecón both reminds Cubans how close they really are to the rest of the world, while at the same time how difficult it is to cross that sea and be part of the mainland. And this image reminds us of our own particular situation.

Often, there is an intended destination, or kind of destination if not a particular one, for a bottle thrown into the sea. Survivors of shipwrecks want the bottles to reach those who can rescue them and take them away from the cursed isolation in which they find themselves. Yet, they do not know where the bottles will end up, or who, if anyone, will find and open them. This uncertainty is disquieting, and even frightening. Perhaps the wrong person will get the message. Maybe those who are responsible for the imprisonment of the person who threw the bottle will find it and use that knowledge to exact revenge. No one knows where a bottle thrown into the sea will end up, or when, if in fact it does not break, it will be found. The where and when it does is a matter of currents, winds, tides, and human actions. Ultimately, it is a matter of chance. And thus we return to the cluster of themes that have to do with human destiny and how chance rules our lives. We are bottles at

sea, humans immersed and barely floating in a world of forces we cannot control but that affect our destiny. Where will we end up? What will become of us? We think that we control much in our lives, but perhaps the only thing we truly can control is what we think, what is inside us, just as the content of a bottle is the only thing that is controlled by the bottle. But perhaps not even that, because our passions and unconscious drives often derail the plans we have for ourselves. If there is anything that jumps at us in the messages that *Bottles to the Sea* carry, it is the centrality of chance in our lives.

The references to an origin and destination bring out another dimension of the metaphor, namely, the journey of the bottle, and through it, of ourselves. With the increasing process of globalization and the numerous individuals who are on the move throughout the world, the notion of a journey has become common place in literature and art. Cuban art itself has explored this notion in various ways. One of these, to which I have already referred, is the *balsas* that have been used by Cubans seeking to leave the island and travel to the United States in search of refuge. Many Cuban artists have created works of art that are interpretations of this theme, including Luis Cruz Azaceta and Alberto Rey, who have explored many dimensions and aspects of this experience (see Bosch 2004; Gracia, Bosch, and Alvarez Borland 2008). Another is the thought of abandoning one's origins and migrating to an unknown place, fleeing from danger and facing challenges of a different sort than those in the place of origin. The image of the traveler is again found frequently in the art and literature of the twentieth century in particular. In Cuban art it is ubiquitous; we find it, for example, in the well-known interpretation of José Bedia in *Siguiendo su instinto* (Following His Instinct; see Stavans and Gracia 2014, 123-137). The notion of a perilous journey that can end in disaster and death, or in success and a new life, is easily associated with the journey of

a bottle. The journey involves discovery by those who undergo it and by those at the receiving end. The bottle finds a new place, but it is also found by someone whose encounter with it may be enlightening or distressing. Travelers may bring good or bad news, and they may turn out to be dangerous or benign. The journey can be that of life itself—beginning in birth and ending in death. For after all, when a bottle reaches a destination and is taken out of circulation, it resembles death insofar as death also is a kind of ending of our journey.

A journey may also function as a metaphor for the trip that artists undertake. The entire life of artists, and the path of exploration and discovery in which they are engaged, is a trip that begins at some point and ends in an unforeseeable destination. Artists do not know quite how their work will evolve and change, or the reception it will elicit, and I am sure that Picasso, despite all his bravado, never really thought that his art was going to succeed in the way it did. The realistic early work of Picasso does not anticipate the transformation of cubism. Even in each work under creation, an artist cannot anticipate the shape the finished product will take. Artistic creation does not work that way. Art does not have predetermined destinations for the most part. It is in the act of creation that the details of the journey and its fate are worked out in part through accidental currents and winds of inspiration, and through the overcoming of unanticipated obstacles and happy coincidences.

A bottle is thrown into the sea, and the sea itself is full of connotations and symbolism. The sea stands for the subconscious, that which is below the surface of our awareness, a dark and foreboding place that is part of us but to which we have dubious access. It is the habitat of monsters that appear and disappear at unexpected times, sometimes propitious and sometimes not. It is a place of storms and danger, of adventure, sacrifice, and heroism. It is a place of survival and struggle. It is, like life itself, a mixed bag of good

and bad. It can lead to the sublime and the pedestrian, to triumph and tragedy. It surrounds lands and it is surrounded by land, depending on how one looks at it. And the places where we access it may be rocky or sandy, and thus break us or help us survive. The shore itself is a line, an imaginary landmark that disappears in the sea. Sand also is unstable. It moves, comes and goes, and is regularly sinking into the depths of the sea or surfacing on a beach. A constant indecision permeates it. We cannot build enduring, let alone permanent, structures on it. To build on sand is to be doomed to destruction.

Water itself has suggestive qualities associated with it. It is generally translucent, but not frequently transparent. We see something through it, but unclearly, and what we see gets distorted by the visual effects created by movement in the water and by its volume. It is a malleable medium that in itself seems to be nothing in particular. It takes its color from something else, from the sky, a bottom, or a wall, as does its shape. Yet, water is fundamental. Ancient philosophers considered it one of the basic four elements, together with fire, air, and earth. Water's changing shape makes it stand for the emotions, whereas fire stands for love, air for thought, and earth for solidity. The uses of water are multiple. It is essential to our bodies and it quenches thirst. It is a vital component of our mass. But even more important perhaps, it cleans, so it has been used as a metaphor for getting rid of sin. Immersion in water is a sign of joining a group, of dying and being born again, and of washing away our transgressions. Water serves as an offering to the gods, and it is the basis of many of our drinks. To throw a bottle into water is to open up these possibilities, for bottles can be washed clean and turn toward new directions, and this can be the mark of a new beginning.

And what are bottles used for? To transport valuable substances, such as olive oil, perfume, medications, potions, and wine. Oils serve to soothe. Medications are curative. Perfumes are



mysterious substances that appeal to our sense of smell, arousing our imagination, our thoughts, and our passions. Potions make us do things for which we are not responsible, having magical effects that can end in death or love. And wine makes us happy by helping us forget; it brings us together with others in fellowship, and it serves religious and ritual functions. Wine looks like blood, the substance of life, and drinking wine unites us in a community and reminds us, in the Christian faith, of the divine blood spilled for our sins. Bottles seldom contain money. Their function is the preservation of something more basic than money, something precious and vital. In Estévez's installation the bottles are filled with something dear, the drawings that stand at the core of this work of art. They are unlike oil, medications, potions, or wine, but they can do what these also do, soothing, making us healthy, appealing to our senses, and uniting us with others. They are expressions of thought, images preserved for others.

The fact that in Estévez's installation bottles contain images drawn on paper is significant. The choice of paper is particularly important because, as mentioned earlier, it duplicates the fragility of the bottle as well as its toughness. Paper can be ruined by water or destroyed by fire. Paper can be, but is not necessarily, fragile, just as glass, but it is more ephemeral. Paper is not like stone or metal that can last an eternity. But paper is tough in the sense that it can stand pressure, some of it is difficult to tear apart or break, and it endures difficult conditions. It gets wet and it dries; it is flexible and molds itself to its surroundings. And it can support images. In the bottles, it becomes the counterpart of our minds, where our thoughts, just as images on paper, are drawn.

The number of bottles, one hundred, may also be taken as significant apart from the fact that it commemorates the one-hundredth anniversary of the *Malecón*. One hundred has been a number associated with longevity and even immortality. To live to one hundred has always been a feat for

human beings. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, this number has been significant from ancient times. Most notably, Abraham, the founder of the ancient Hebrews, was one hundred when his son Isaac was born. It marks a beginning, as the title of the last drawing states. The number has also been associated with individuality. Presumably, one could surmise that the use of this number of bottles indicates a desire for individual longevity and immortality. Both the significance of the installation and the messages contained in the bottles are an attempt by the artist to achieve both.

## THE LINE

So far I have been writing about what we might call the elements that play a significant role in Estévez's installation, such as the artist and the receivers, the bottles, the journeys, and the contents of the bottles in general, and I have ignored the images of the drawings that are placed inside the bottles. Yet, this is surely a most important part of the installation insofar as it is those drawings, and the images they form, that are guarded inside the bottles and intended to reach audiences. Now I turn to the drawings, beginning with some observations about a fundamental structural feature of the drawings: the line.

Estévez is a multifaceted artist who has created sculptures, assemblages, combines multimedia, watercolors, pastels, oils, acrylics, installations, ceramics, and works on paper, canvas, and other surfaces. He is particularly fascinated by different kinds of papers and has explored and made use of them in his works.

Some of the drawings included in *Bottles to the Sea* include details in other media. Because the drawings are intended to be placed in bottles, they are created on relatively narrow pieces of paper to make it possible to roll and fit them in the bottles. As one would expect of drawings, a fundamental element in them is the line. The line divides spaces, creates areas of interest, and establishes a hierarchy of importance and value.

Generally, we do not believe that lines are imaginary objects. We think we see them. If I ask readers to point to a line in this book, they will have no difficulty in doing so, finding them both in the images of the works presented in it and also elsewhere, including the letters that compose the texts. Indeed, the drawings in the bottles are full of lines, and some consist primarily of lines: straight lines, curved lines, wiggly lines, all kinds of lines. Some lines are black and others have other colors. They have been made with color pencils or sanguine, and because they are drawn on narrow pieces of paper, there is a marked verticality to them, similar to what happens with some medieval stained glass windows. This leads the observer to move up and down, rather than side to side or in any other direction when considering them, opening a spiritual dimension to the installation that goes with the title of the first drawing. Indeed, this is quite evident in some other drawings, such as Messages 8 and 12: "Man is a Project of God" or "On Lighthouses."

In spite of our common belief that lines can be seen and pointed to, their nature and reality are questionable. A line, if we are going to go by what Euclid tells us, is simply the intersection of two planes. And what are the planes? Again according to Euclid, they are not really visible and have no existence separate from something else. The surface of this desk is a plane, but it is nothing separate or separable from the desk. Yet, it is not a part of the desk, as its drawers are.

At the beginning of the sixth century of the Christian era, Boethius speculated that lines do exist in things, although we know them through a kind of abstraction. He used this metaphor to argue that universals, such as "cat" and "justice," also exist in things: Cat exists in this cat and that cat, and justice exists in this and that human. But he was not successful in convincing many others of his position. If a line is something like the meeting place between the horizontal surface of this desk on which my laptop is resting and the vertical surface of its side, I am not sure I can ar-

gue cogently that I see the line as anything other than the surfaces or the sides of the desk. And if I do not see the line, can it be said to exist? Indeed, where is it? Some philosophers have argued that such things as lines are merely in our minds, not outside them. As such, they are tools that we use for thinking about the world in which we are immersed, but are not really anything in the world. So perhaps Boethius's view that lines are known through a kind of abstraction is right after all, although perhaps qua abstractions they are not really things in the world, but rather are inventions or conceptions we create for pragmatic reasons.

Of course, the careful investigation of such questions is well beyond what is appropriate for a discussion such as the one in which we are engaged here. But the consideration of the dubious status of lines in the world contributes to a better understanding of the nature of drawing and of Estévez's work. It suggests that the lines he draws are not really lines as they exist in the world, but representations of ways in which he conceives and manages what he sees. A drawing of a head is in fact a set of lines that demarcate spaces and suggests something like what we think we see, but what we see in the drawing is certainly nothing like what is outside. The images of the art we have in this book, then, would have to be considered creations by Estévez that make us think of things he has not copied. There would not be any realism in the work, although it is far from being abstract. The tension between reality and unreality is one of the most provocative aspects of the work insofar as it points to interpretive avenues that may differ from observer to observer.

What we have here is a parting of the ways in terms of art. Some artists, such as Renoir and other impressionists, were trying to capture what we see. That is why their paintings do not have lines. Renoir in particular seems to have erased boundaries and instead presents us with merging colors on canvas in ways that suggest what we actually see. Where does the shade of green on this leaf begin and the shade of yellow end?

The entities that populate Renoir's world have no limits, no boundaries, whereas those in Estévez's world do. Because of this, we must consider Estévez to be on the side of the Cubists, for the line was fundamental in their work. The art of Picasso, Braque, and Gris had lines galore. The images they created are divided and united by lines that take us where the artists want us to go. They did not set out to reproduce what we see but rather to reproduce what we think. And so is the case of Estévez. His is a world of ideas not of visual images, although it is through visual images that we enter it.

Estévez's world is also close, perhaps closer, to the work of artists who have drawn extensively. Among these, Leonardo da Vinci stands out not only because of his use of the line, but also because of his themes. Estévez, unlike da Vinci, is not an inventor of machines, but he often draws imaginary machines. Even the images of living subjects he draws, such as those we see in many of the drawings included in this book, have a mechanical dimension that aligns the work with that of the great inventors and draftsmen of the past. These are visual images of ideas and inventions, a visual world dominated and directed by concepts rather than images.

Behind this emphasis on the line is the desire to get at the true structure of things. The Cubists were certainly motivated by a similar goal. The reduction of the images of actual objects to a limited number of basic geometrical figures occupies an important place in their agenda. And something similar is clearly evident in the work of Estévez, particularly in what we have in *Bottles to the Sea*. So much, then, about the overall characteristic of the images contained inside the bottles. Now let me turn to the particular motifs of the drawings and the themes that they tend to explore.

## KNOWLEDGE

The depiction of humans, animals, plants, machines, objects, and their parts in *Bottles to the*

*Sea* are used to raise and convey ideas. These, of course, are ultimately what Estévez is interested in, given the strong conceptual leanings of his art. These ideas tend to repeat themselves and often have a metaphysical dimension (Gracia 2009a, 63-87; Luis 2002).

One particular example of an idea that Estévez explores repeatedly is that of knowledge. In *Bottles to the Sea* we have a substantial cluster of drawings that address issues related to knowledge. Estévez has been fascinated with epistemic questions throughout his career (e.g., see Gracia 2009a, 21-59). Philosophers consider many different questions concerning knowledge, but there is one in particular that is regarded as generally fundamental and is frequently explored in Estévez's art. This is the question of source: What is the source of our knowledge? The answers that philosophers have given to this question fall roughly into three categories. One is that the source of our knowledge is to be found within ourselves. This is the kind of view that Rationalists, such as Plato and René Descartes, gave. Plato was puzzled by the fact that our acquaintance in the world is with particular things, say this triangle or that one, but our knowledge is universal, not about this or that triangle, but about triangularity. Because of this, he thought that knowledge cannot derive from experience, but must come from within us, because experience is always of the particular. And Descartes was especially concerned with achieving certainty, for which he disparaged the reliability of sense perception.

Another answer is that all knowledge comes from sensation. British Empiricists, such as David Hume and John Locke, thought this is the proper answer to the question of source. They resolved the difficulty encountered by Rationalists, by arguing that our universal ideas are simply perceptions that have lost their strength or sharpness. Our universal idea of triangle is simply a vague idea of this and that triangle that has lost its precision and force, becoming a vague memory of the immediate perceptions of the individual triangles we had.

A third alternative is to argue, with Aristotle, that our knowledge comes from experience, that is, from our sensations and perceptions, but that it is not reducible to experiences insofar as it goes through a process of abstraction and generalization that turns it universal. Our knowledge of triangles comes from the sensations or perceptions we have of this and that triangle, but it is not reducible to those sensations or perceptions. These sensations and perceptions are only the raw materials out of which the mind abstracts essential common characteristics to form the universal idea of triangle.

Estévez addresses the question of origin in a variety of works. In Message 7, “*Observatorium*,” he begins by quoting Augustine: “Do not depart from yourself, return to yourself, the truth dwells inside man. . . .” Estévez follows this by noting the untransferability of the knowledge that each of us has, which is a theme to which he comes back frequently. In the text for this drawing, Estévez ties it to the stars and their movement.

The drawing is divided into two parts, each of which shows the outlines of a human head, followed by a text. The top is a face depicted frontally, but most of whose cranial area, all the way to the bottom of the nose, is occupied by a dark circle covered with inscriptions, resembling the circle of the heavens, with stars and planets and symbolizing the inner universe of each human being. The relation of the human mind to the universe is a frequent motif found in Estévez’s work. Each of us constitutes an entire world, a microcosm, if you will, using the ancient Greek metaphor, and it is in it that we find the knowledge that we seek and need (see Gracia 2009a, 83-87). The connection with knowledge is drawn in the second figure, also an outline of a head. This, however, is depicted in profile and it is drawn over a building covered with a dome that resembles an observatory, which takes us back to the title of the work. The Rationalist message is clear: Knowledge comes from within. Its key is “to know oneself.”

A second step in this exploration of the sources of knowledge is presented in Message 12, “On Lighthouses.” Here we have the outline of a lighthouse with seven levels, a number with great significance in that it is the sum of the second odd number and the second even number, three and four. Inside it we see the stairs that lead to the observation platform at the top of the building and the machinery that works the light that illuminates the night and the ocean, providing a path for ships. Do we have the power to know, and in what does this power consist? The lighthouse symbolizes the natural capacities that we have as human beings to penetrate to the truth. Going all the way back to the ancient Greeks and before, the intellect has been traditionally portrayed as a light. To know is to illuminate; casting light on darkness that makes possible sight. The reference to da Vinci in the text, one of Estévez’s most important influences, and the comparison of him to a light, support the notion that knowledge is made possible by the capacities of those whose intellects provide the light for them and others to decipher the puzzles of the universe. These lights transcend their contemporaries and their times. But Estévez comes back to the loneliness of knowers. Knowers live in a world that is neither land nor sea, surrounded by a horizon they want to supersede but whose limits are difficult to transcend.

In Message 25, “At the Bottom of the Sea,” he pursues further these themes by depicting a machine whose purpose is to dredge the bottom of the sea. At the top, on the shore, a building houses the motor that moves the machine’s very long arm that dips into the water and reaches the bottom. Again, knowledge is to be found within, but deep into ourselves, where no one but ourselves can reach. But even for us, to get at it we need more than an easy reach. We need heavy equipment that will go down and dig through deep waters that obscure that bottom where the valuable minerals are accumulated. For Plato, the way to get to these treasures, the valuable raw materials

he called Ideas, was through a process of recollection made possible because in a prior life we had been acquainted with them. Estévez does not follow Plato in this, but he accepts the difficulty of uncovering knowledge that only each of us individually can access. It is in hidden thoughts, archived in difficult to access spaces and territories, that the immensity of our true selves is revealed through strenuous and repeated efforts.

In Message 74, “No One Can See Through My Eyes,” Estévez retakes the theme of the unique perspective that each of us has on the world and what we know. Just as no one can see through my eyes and see what I see, so no one can know what I know as I know it. In the drawing, we are presented with a man standing, erect, and nude, with arms hanging on his sides and looking straight ahead of him. Important points are highlighted with circles, as is frequent in Estévez’s works: the hands, the knees, the feet, the pelvis, the belly, the heart, the junctures on the arms, the eyes, and the forehead. From his eyes come out lines that have ties to each other and eventually reach the floor. These lines form a kind of cage in which the man is encased. The man’s senses function as a prison that traps him. He can see, he has knowledge, but his eyes give him a unique perspective. He cannot transcend the information and point of view that his eyes provide for him. There is no escape. We can see only what is concordant with our knowing powers and our unique situation. Transcendental knowledge can only be a hypothesis that can never be verified. We can only know what is possible for us to know with our senses and intellectual powers. Of course, we can speculate about what is out there, beyond ourselves. But this is not the same as actually transcending our limitations and reaching it.

The view of knowledge that Estévez presents us with is quite consistent. Our knowledge is ours, the result of our perspective and our condition. And this knowledge is to be found only by looking inward, into the depth of our selves. Still, although there is no hope of transcending it, there

is the possibility that, as part of the universe, as the microcosm we are, we can in fact know the universe outside of us, precisely because knowing ourselves is also knowing the other. So what seemed at first like a Kantian prison may in the end be superseded.

## FREE WILL

Another common topic that may frequently be raised in the context of Estévez’s art is the question of free will and determinism (see Gracia 2009a, 133-51). Are human beings free or are they determined in some ways, either by physical causes or by a higher will? Again, philosophers have given different answers to this question. Determinists such as the Stoics, or materialists such as Karl Marx, have answered that human will is always determined. Freedom is a mere illusion. The only thing in which we may be free is in the realization that we are determined to do what we do. This jeopardizes moral responsibility, a reason why other philosophers, such as Thomas Aquinas, reject this point of view. For them, humans are free to act as they wish.

At least four works in *Bottles to the Sea* raise the question of free will and determinism, although they do it in different ways. The first is Message 8, “Man Is a Project of God.” The work depicts sixty three male figures: a large figure towering over two smaller ones, which in turn tower over four smaller, which in turn tower over eight, and so on all the way down, suggesting a never ending series. The fingers of each figure, the feet, and the head are tied to the fingers of the figure or figures above it. In short, each of the figures is a puppet controlled by some other figure all the way up. Even the largest figure is tied to something above it, although we do not know what that is. Presumably, that highest figure, invisible as it is, is God, whereas the others are human beings. The implication is that we are puppets, controlled by higher powers and wills. The piece does not tell us whether we have any freedom.

Obviously, it might be possible that the higher figures, and God ultimately, give some slack to the figures below them. But even if they do, the control is in the hands of the higher figures and ultimately God. But we do not see God's hands or anything that suggests who or what He is. Nor do we know whether it is possible for him to give lower figures some freedom.

Message 35, "The Chosen One" raises an interesting theological question also related to the freedom of the will. A well-known Christian doctrine teaches that God chooses those He will elect for salvation. This is known as the Doctrine of Predestination. Some humans are predestined to salvation, whereas others are not chosen to be saved. The drawing has a group of nine men in outline in the act of walking, presumably going about their business. They all look alike and are engaged in the same sort of activity, although they are not all going in the same direction. In the sky we see stars and among them a hand points to one of the men. From the index finger of this bodiless hand comes a blue ray that radiates from the place on the head of the man it is touching to the rest of his body, like a kind of electrical current that is beginning to transform the body. The observer surmises that this is the hand of God and the man it indicates is the one chosen for salvation. He alone has been picked and he has also received something from above, perhaps what Christians refer to as grace. One interesting thing is that, just as the Doctrine of Predestination holds, there is no apparent reason given why the elected man has been chosen because he is like the others. The Christian doctrine explains this shocking fact, that seems to go against justice, by saying that God has His reasons, but Estévez's work leaves it for us to speculate.

Another drawing, Message 36, "The Invention of Destiny," presents us with another idea. This is the notion that the very Doctrine of Determinism and Predestination, or whatever other forms this view takes, is just a human invention. The picture could not be clearer. We have a pup-

pet similar in some ways to the puppets in the other drawings and, like other puppets, this one has strings tied to his head, hands, and feet that control his movements. But unlike the case of the other puppets, the strings go up and meet the hands of the very puppet that is controlling his own movements. There is no God that has predestined us, nor are we subject to the laws of physical nature in such a way that we lose our free will. We are in fact free, and have invented the doctrine that we are not. Perhaps because we want to do away with moral responsibility? Obviously, this is the next logical question for us to ask, but Estévez leaves it to us to formulate and answer.

An interesting variation of this theme is found in Message 52, "*Creatoris*." In it, we see a man looking up. He is holding a glass in one hand that is extended upward, and is holding another glass upside down in the other hand that is extended downward. The contents of this second glass are being emptied. The glass at the top is receiving something presumably precious, judging from the expression on the face of the puppet, and the one below is being emptied of something presumably useless, judging from the carelessness with which it is being emptied. The text that accompanies the message speaks of how man dreams of creating something valuable. This work goes beyond raising the question of someone or something controlling us and determining our actions. Humans appear to be free, creators, the artists who are free despite imbibing in the nectar of originality from the muses. Freedom comes from inspiration, determinism from drudgery.

## PHILOSOPHICAL DIMENSIONS

The conceptual and philosophical depth of Estévez's art naturally leads to the question: Is this philosophy? Is what we have found in Estévez's works philosophy? Can art express a philosophy or be philosophical, and if so in what sense?

These questions are pertinent in this context because of Estévez's own convictions and the nature of his work. Indeed, how many other artists have considered as many philosophical topics and ideas as he has?

Elsewhere, I have argued that Estévez's art is highly philosophical (Gracia 2009a). But what does it mean to say that the art is philosophical? Does it entail that it is a mode of expression that uses linguistic tools, such as words? If this were the criterion of being philosophical, then some of Estévez's works would be philosophical whereas others would not be, because some of them include writing and others do not. The problem with this criterion is that it also applies to enterprises that are clearly not philosophical, like religion and science. More than the medium of expression, then, we might surmise that it is the content of a work that makes it philosophical. Is the content of Estévez's works philosophical because it tells us something akin to what philosophers tell us?

The answer, like any good philosophical answer, is both yes and no. No, because Estévez's art does not articulate for us any particular view. An examination of any piece of art by Estévez does not yield a position with respect to a philosophical problem that one can unambiguously attribute to the piece or to Estévez. The consideration of the art may lead us to think of philosophical problems and answers, but the art itself does not make any such claims. The art simply presents images that are subject to interpretation and may lead in different directions. The paths to which they lead are not fixed, although they are not completely indeterminate. Using a famous metaphor found in Borges, we might say that they are like gardens of forking paths. When confronting Estévez's works, we find ourselves in concrete, if complex, situations defined by sets of images that suggest alternative interpretive strategies but do not force us to choose any one of them. And the moment we choose one, that very choice in turn opens for us fur-

ther possible choices, other paths, from which we also have to choose which to follow.

But there is more to it than this, for the themes that Estévez's art suggest are traditionally favored by philosophy. They come from the plight of human experience, the predicaments that we all face. As one interpreter put it, they are existential (Damian 2009). Some are deadly serious and some are humorous, but all of them are authentic. This might suggest that Estévez's work should be classified as conceptual art if not philosophy. After all, from what we have been saying, the art is clearly about concepts, they are at the center of it and seem to override other concerns. There is a conceptual structure to each piece that speaks to us, not necessarily in words, although occasionally Estévez includes words in his works, but through images. However, there are major differences between standard conceptual art and Estévez's art. Contemporary conceptual artists seem to have in mind only the concepts that they are trying to convey or explore in their art. Aesthetic considerations such as balance, symmetry, weight, composition, harmony, technique, and the like, which have been traditionally the province of visual art, disappear on the face of the need to communicate concepts. The result is that most conceptual art lacks aesthetic qualities as traditionally understood and technique becomes irrelevant—indeed, many conceptual artists employ craftsmen to carry out their projects. Notions such as beauty do not arise, and it would be a mistake to judge a work of conceptual art on such bases. Some conceptual artists seem to make great efforts to show that they ignore such traditional aesthetic values as beauty and harmony and have no particular interest in technique, which they associate with craftsmanship rather than art.

The case of Estévez's art is quite different because some traditional aesthetic considerations still play roles in much of Estévez's art and he is a hands-on artist for whom technique is important. The result is that a considerable part of his

art is aesthetically attractive and exquisitely crafted. His work not only tries to convey a concept but does so in ways that tie the art to some of the great currents of traditional Western art, the medieval period, the early Renaissance, and folk art from different ages, among others, where visual pleasure and technique played a role.

## INTERPRETATION

The strong philosophical profile of Estévez's work leads us to ask whether it is acceptable to provide interpretations of it that are not philosophical. This is an important question because its answer would determine to a great extent the value of the interpretations and ultimately of the art. First, we need to be clear that an interpretation, broadly taken, is a kind of understanding that we have of something, whether an event, an idea, or a thing. But it can also be an instrument, such as a text or a picture used to make others grasp it. Witnesses of an accident have understandings of what happened—this is interpretation in the first sense—and they also may produce drawings of the accident for the police—this is interpretation in the second sense. So an interpretation of a work of art is an understanding of the work of art or an instrument to make others understand it.

To judge the value of an interpretation it is essential that we consider its purpose. It would not do, for example, to judge an interpretation that is intended to make us understand what the author had in mind with the same criteria we would use to judge an interpretation whose purpose was not to understand what the author had in mind, but how some particular audience understood it.

Interpretations come in various kinds (see Carvalho 2010; Gracia 2010, and 2012, 185-206; Ortega 2010). Particularly important are the following interpretations: authorial, audiential, work-based, and relational. An authorial interpretation seeks to understand what the author of

a work had in mind by the work. For example, it seeks to grasp how Estévez understands "*Creatoris*." An audiential interpretation seeks to grasp what a particular audience of a work understood by it. For example, it seeks to grasp what Cuban Americans residing in Miami understand by "*Creatoris*." A work-based interpretation seeks to grasp the meaning of the work regardless of what Estévez or any particular audience take it to mean. And a relational interpretation seeks to grasp the relation of the work or its meaning to something else that the interpreter brings into the process of interpretation. A relational interpretation seeks to grasp how "*Creatoris*" can be understood philosophically or historically, for example.

Philosophical interpretations are, of course, relational in that they bring into the interpretive process a philosophical idea, concern, problem, or disciplinary dimension. This means that surely they are not the only valid interpretations of Estévez's works, even if it turns out that Estévez had in mind philosophical ideas or concerns when he created *Bottles to the Sea*. But it is perfectly valid to give philosophical interpretations of Estévez works. Each type of interpretation uses different criteria to reach its goal and should be judged according to those criteria. If some readers of this book are interested in authorial interpretations, they should try to figure out what Estévez thought the images in this book mean, and their efforts should be judged according to how successful the persons in question are in achieving that end. But if the aim is audiential, work-based, or relational, then different criteria would be applicable. There is considerable freedom of interpretation for the interpreter of Estévez's works, but the freedom is not complete license. Obviously, the brief interpretations of some of the drawings that are part of *Bottles to the Sea* that I gave earlier are philosophical, insofar as my interest in them is philosophical and I have brought that interest to bear on my understanding of the art pieces (for more examples, see Gracia 2009a). But readers



of this book may have other interests in mind and therefore legitimately seek to understand the works differently.

As Aristotle reminded us at the beginning of his *Metaphysics*, it is in human nature to desire to know. We crave knowing not only for its own sake, as he meant, but I would add, because knowledge is a necessary condition of every intentional human enterprise. Nothing is possible for us without knowledge. To cross a deep river, we need to know how to swim; to feed ourselves, we need to pick food; and to love, we need to identify its object. But we have many avenues of knowledge, each of which provides something that is unique and that we need. This applies to such different epistemic enterprises as physics, psychology, chemistry, literature, religion, and the arts. With respect to the arts, I venture to say that one of their most important and idiosyncratic contributions is that they introduce an element of interpretive freedom missing in most other fields.

In science, we cannot let our imagination run free when confronted with the interpretation of its object. Scientific knowledge is good only if it is supported by empirical evidence and our inferences follow the laws of logic. Religion also has constraints, although in this case they have nothing to do with empirical evidence or even logic, insofar as most religions are concerned with a knowledge that transcends both. The constraints of religion come from authority

and law, regulations and beliefs that cannot be violated or superseded.

Art is different from science and religion in that both the artist and the interpreter of art are free to understand in ways that these other epistemic paths are not. Yes, the artist is constrained by materials and the observer of art is constrained by the objects of artistic appreciation. But both the materials and the objects are mere points of departure rather than interpretive prisons within which the interpreter must remain. Artists can make whatever they want and is possible out of the elements they have at their disposal. And interpreters can go in interpretive directions that extend beyond the artist's explicit intentions (e.g., Damian 2008; Gracia, 2009a). Instead of constraining observers, works of art set them free. Art is one of the few ways in which humans can overcome the chains that enslave them. Rousseau's famous remark that "man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains" was intended in a different sense, but it is applicable here nonetheless. Art can cut those chains. Even if we live under totalitarian regimes, even if we are forced to bow to authority, even if we must recognize the truth of facts, we can still dream and imagine through art. Art makes it possible for us to fly in spite of gravity. Art opens our eyes to a world that has no limits. And indeed, this is the function of Estévez's installation *Bottles to the Sea*. It sets us on a journey whose end we do not know, but which will be guided by our dreams and imagination.