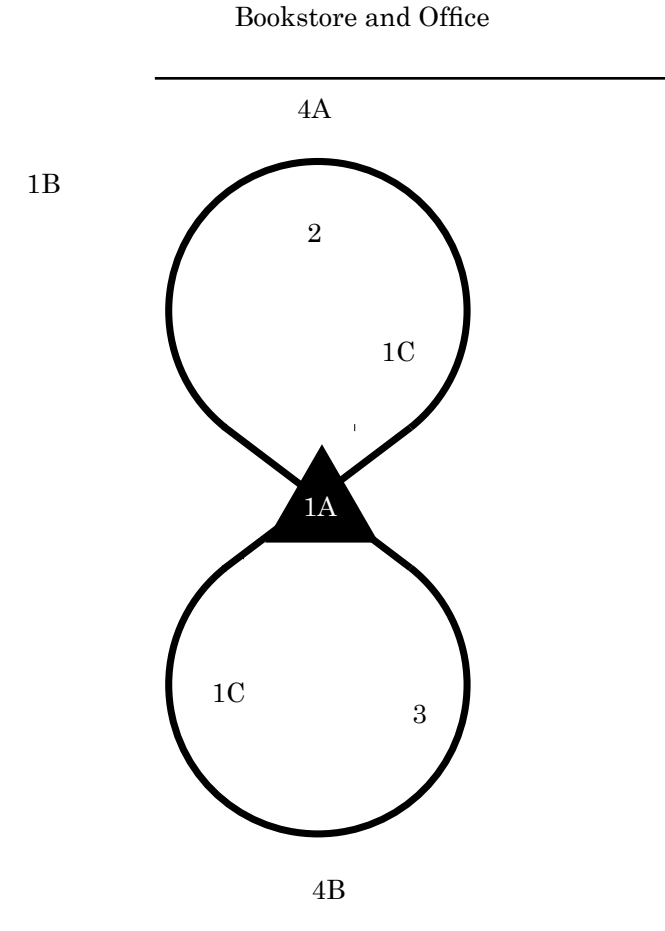


PAZ GUEVARA
MICHELLE- MARIE LETELIER
AUGUST 28- OCTOBER 2
*AM I ANCIENT OR A HUMAN-
MADE MACHINE?*

Or Gallery//



1. AM I ANCIENT OR A HUMAN-MADE MACHINE?

Cards, Rope, Table, Papers, Seating

1A. ON TABLE

Compass

Preserved bones and otolith of Norwegian farmed Salmon, 2017
Drawing of a Peladilla (*Aplochiton marinus*) from the territory of the Yámana (Yahgan) community in the South of Chile. The drawing departs from a scientific image, courtesy of Cristian Correa and Pablo Savaria, 2021

Collected seaweed from *xw̓m̓əθkw̓əy'əm* (Musqueam), *Skwxwú7mesh* (Squamish) and *Selilwitulh* (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations territory seashore, Vancouver, Canada, courtesy of Kitt Peacock, 2021

1B. CARDS

Ancient & Human-Made

Please pick a card upon entering the exhibition space. This card will suggest you which group you can start your journey through the exhibition: Ancient at the front; Human-Made at the back of the room.

1C. PAPERS

Excerpts from the Bone's script, 2019

Excerpts of the journal for The Bonding, 2020

Open letter from the Yámana (Yahgan) community of Bahía de Mejillones, Chile, translated by Michelle-Marie from Spanish to English, 2019

2. THE BONE, 2019-2021

Virtual reality, sound (English + Spanish language) approx.
18 minutes (total experience)

Idea and concept: Michelle-Marie Letelier

Production: Art Republic, OCEANS21 and Interactive
Media Foundation

Executive producers: Diana Schniedermeier & Daniela Arriado

Creative directors: Ina Krüger & Dirk Hoffmann

Script: Martin Lee Mueller

Script editing: Michelle-Marie Letelier

Script translation and adaptation to Spanish: Adrián Lara &
Michelle-Marie Letelier

Art direction VR: Robert Werner

3D Artist: Christian Rambow

Technical lead: Torsten Sperling

Programming: Dennis Timmermann

Sound design: Christian Barth & Julian Ferreira da Silva

Salmon's voice in English: Martin Lee Mueller

Salmon's voice in Spanish: Nicolás Lartaun

Yoik singer: Ánde Somby

Skull: UiB – University of Bergen Natural History Museum

3D scanning: Fredrik M. Salhus, Faculty of Art, Music and Design,

UiB; courtesy of Lars Ove Toft, Bergen Centre for Electronic Art

Scientific advice: Anne Karin Hufthammer, Arild Folkvord, Karin

Limburg, Karin Pittman & Johnny Magnussen

Research advice: Prof. Harald Gaski, Ánde Somby, Sápmi Center

for Contemporary Art, Karolin Tampere & Daniela Arriado

Project Manager 2019: Florian Köhler

This artwork has been commissioned by Screen City Biennial, co-
produced by Art Republic, OCEANS21 and Interactive Media Founda-
tion; co-created with Artificial Rome.

3. THE BONDING – LIVE STREAMING, 2021

Live video streaming of 4 farmed salmons swimming
in a tank at the Institute of Marine Research,
Matre, Norway

Idea and concept: Michelle-Marie Letelier

Cinematographer and d.o.p: Carlos Vasquez

Infrastructure: Institute of Marine Research

Technical support for underwater system: Carlo Crovato

Technical support in Matre: Lise Dyrhovden, Ivar Helge Matre,
Tone Knappskog, Torfinn Aga

Scientific advise: Lise Dyrhovden, Ragnar Nortvedt, Karin Pittman,
Per Gunnar Fjellidal

This on-going project is supported by KORO - Public Art Norway.

4A, B FROM NOW UNTIL NOW, 2018

Diptych

Coal, ashes and saltpetre (sodium nitrate) crystals on
paper, 29.5 x 42 cm (each)

THE POETRY (MATTER) PERFORMANCE, 2021

Projection runs September 25 2021- October 2, 2021

Saltpetre (sodium nitrate), water, matter, overhead projector

Online Transmission

POETHICS OF A SOVEREIGN OCEAN: ORALITY, RECIPROCITY AND GEOPOLITICAL TRAJECTORIES, 2021

Conversations with Michelle-Marie Letelier, Paz Guevara, Morgan
Guerin, James Harry, David Alday and Ánde Somby, 2021

Produced during the exhibition and accessible at:

<http://www.orgallery.org/>

Am I Ancient or a Human-Made Machine?

How do exhibitions have the capacity to create moments of communality rather than objectifying the beings that enter into its modern grid? How does the exhibition become permeable to life through orality, reciprocity, and in connection with geopolitical trajectories, struggles and potential alliances? In a partly speculative and partly documentary manner, artist Michelle-Marie Letelier weaves a series of collaborations through virtual reality, song, story telling, laboratory, matter, performance and conversations. Against the grain of extractivism, this exhibition engages the poethics of a sovereign ocean through the consciousness and memory of our fellow being, salmon: Am I Ancient or a Human-Made Machine?

Within the geopolitical embattled ground and clashes amid (neo) colonial structures and the resistance, the exhibition tackles the violence of neo-liberal extractivist narrative through which fellow beings are seen as resource,

commodity and signs of profit, and in turn invite us to listen, remember and engage with more-than-human practices and indigenous epistemologies based in relations of reciprocity, empathy and kinship. Who are the native ancient salmon creatures that struggle to complete their entire life cycle and how do communities welcome them across the oceans? Who are their captive cousins, the human-made techno-beings genetically modified to inhabit within the confines of industrial tanks that, in contrast, threaten the self-determination of the communities around? Rather than exhibiting objects only to be seen, the exhibition's installation ***Am I Ancient or a Human-Made Machine?*** welcome us with an invitation to take position and enter in relationship with those sentient beings:

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- Michelle-Marie Letelier

Apparently minimal and somewhat empty, the exhibition intends to give space to various acts of communality, weaving multiple agencies. Based on extra-disciplinary research and collaborations, in the sites of exploitation and on ancestral indigenous knowledge and post-humanist ways of remembering, connecting, listening and telling, ***The Bone***, and ***The Bonding*** emerge as acts of connection. ***The Bone***, a virtual reality that literally emerges when one connects to the simulation, and through which the gallery space becomes fulfilled by the water-world: the welcoming song by Sámi Yoik singer Ánde Somby, the flow of consciousness of an ancient salmon, and the submarine dancing forest of algae. While ***The Bonding***, on the other side of the installation, is a live video streaming that intends to create a long-term emotional bonding and encounter between people and the captive human-made salmon, aiming to regain some of the empathy and kinship lost by the alienation of industrialization. By a webcam system, both the salmon swimming in a laboratory tank and the artist from her computer camera have been face-to-face along the lifespan of the fishes,

from the egg stage to their current age.

Departing by a salmon skull that is returned to the ocean, ***The Bone*** virtual experience turns it into rock-like and large-scale undersea sculpture to listen to, while its otoliths, those tiny crystals of the inner ears that archive insights of the life history of a fish, act as illuminated cues of memory inviting us to take different narrative paths in the virtual route. In collaboration with German-Norwegian philosopher Martin Lee Mueller, ***The Bone's*** script recalls indigenous epistemologies. Based on Lee Mueller's investigation and book *Being Salmon, Being Human* (2017) in which the Salmon Boy story, that he learnt while visiting the indigenous Klallam community at the Elwha River in the U.S in 2012, plays a central role in the practice of respect with the salmon by returning the bones to the river as a gesture of reciprocity. Common to various First Nation communities of the Pacific Northwest of America, such as in British Columbia, the Salmon Boy story remind us of the significance and even of the agreement of the act of reciprocity, between humans

and the living beings in the rivers and oceans:

**“Each year when the first salmon start pushing up the river, the Klallam are there awaiting them. Songs intertwine with the mist on the river. Voices of everyone from elders to toddlers incant the familiar greetings. The lead salmon is considered the chief of the salmon people. He is cooked, cut, and gifted to the tribal elders in a ceremony led by a shaman. His head and bones are arranged with great care on a cedar mat. The raft is then placed carefully into the river’s currents, which will return the chief’s remains to his people, who live in houses below the sea. He will tell his fellow travelers how honourably he has been treated, and that it is alright for them all to move up the river”.*

Transversally and also confronting the operations of objectification, the exhibition intends in a humble but active way to connect geopolitical trajectories, struggles and potential alliances across three regions that share the resistance against extractivism, approached by Letelier’s projects, from Norway’s fjords, with the Sámi community; to the Onashaga

Channel, the Beagle Channel, within the Yaghan community in the South of Chile; until the relation and investigation that departs with this exhibition through the waterways of British Columbia, on the unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy’əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səl’ílwəta?/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations. Through a series of conversations produced during the span of the exhibition we are grateful to collaborate with cultural practitioners, activists and indigenous community members, tackling the **Poethics of a Sovereign Ocean: Orality, Reciprocity and Geopolitical Trajectories** (accessible at: <http://www.orgallery.org/>). By relying on orality and listening to stories and practices of reciprocity, the conversations bring collaborators to the front, creating moments of togetherness to weave models of respect that contest the geopolitics of extractivism. Throughout the conversations we will be hosting Ánde Somby, Sámi Yoik singer; Morgan Guerin, Musqueam Fisheries Officer and artist; James Harry, artist that works integrating traditional Coast Salish art forms with contemporary concepts and

materials; and David Alday, member and representative of the Yaghan community in Mejillones Bay, the Onashaga Channel, the Beagle Channel, in the South of Chile.

Paz Guevara
Guest Curator

*Martin Lee Mueller, *Being Salmon, Being Human*. White River Junction, VT, Chelsea Green Publishing, 2017. p. 168.

BIOGRAPHIES

Paz Guevara // is a curator, researcher and author based in Berlin, Germany. She was born in Santiago, Chile. There, she studied Literature and began working at the Theory Department at the Universidad de Chile. Since 2015, she is associate curator at Haus der Kulturen der Welt - HKW in Berlin, where she contributes to the long-term project *Kanon-Fragen* that questions dominant cultural narratives. In this context, she has curated *Afro-Sonic Mapping* (2019) and co-curated *Parapolitics* (2017-18). There, she has also contributed to the exhibition *Past Disquiet*, with research on South American artists, museums and networks involved in the Solidarity Movement. Guevara has been co-curator of the Latin American Pavilion at the 55th and 54th Venice Biennial (2013 and 2011). Along her engagement, she has conducted several conversations with cultural practitioners; most recently, she has published a conversation with Mapuche oralitor Elicura Chihuailaf at the NIRIN NGAAY Manuel of the Biennale of Sydney (2020). Guevara lectures on Exhibitions Histories at the MA on Raumstrategien at the Weißensee Kunsthochschule in Berlin. Recently, she joined Archive independent publishing house and art space as curator.

Michelle-Marie Letelier // is an artist based in Berlin, Germany. Born in Rancagua, Chile, she studied Arts at the Universidad Católica de Chile. Her installations, photographs, videos and drawings encompass orchestrated transformations of natural resources, alongside extensive wide-ranging, interdisciplinary research into the landscapes where their exploitation and speculation take place, inciting works that enter into transformation processes beyond the extractive industry and its forms of control. Since establishing in Berlin in 2007, she has focused her research on coal, copper, saltpetre, wind and, more recently, salmon. Her work has been shown internationally, among others in: The Arctic Arts Festival 2021 (Harstad); Videonale.18 (Bonn); WE ARE OCEAN 2019-2020 (Berlin and Marseille); 5th Mercosur Biennial (Porto Alegre); Gropius-Bau (Berlin); Screen City Biennial 2019 (Stavanger); Bienal Sur 2017 (Buenos Aires); El Museo de Los

Sures (New York); Kunsthall 3,14 (Bergen); Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende (Santiago); Errant Bodies (Berlin); Museum of Contemporary Art (Santiago); East Asia Contemporary Art Space (Shanghai); Museo de Bellas Artes (Santiago) and Kommunale Galerie Charlottenburg (Berlin). She has been artist in residency at ISCP (NYC, 2014), USF (Bergen, 2017), Kunstnerhuset (Svolvær, 2018), Magallanes2020 (Punta Arenas, 2018), ISLA (Antofagasta, 2018) and Troms fylkeskultursenter (Tromsø, 2019).

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Gallery Assistant : Katrina Goetjen
Projects Assistant: Nya Lewis
Curatorial Resident: Kitt Peacock
A/V and Installation Support:
Trevor Discoe, Aaron Lum
Volunteer: Liam Wright

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