

**FONDAZIONE ICA MILANO
ISTITUTO CONTEMPORANEO PER LE ARTI**

**Olympia Scarry
*WHITE NOISE***

18th January – 6th March 2022

Olympia Scarry's works in dialogue with a film by Jennifer Allora & Guillermo Calzadilla and a sound composition by Stephen O'Malley

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**OPENING HOURS
Thursday - Saturday 12 - 19 PM**

For *White Noise*, the Swiss American artist Olympia Scarry (1983) produced a new corpus of sculptural works that capture traces of time and sound impressed in synthesized organic matter.

The minerals crystallized in geological time, or deep time, are transformed within the transparent hints in onyx, while the line drawings carved in the stone disrupt the tempo. Moire like lines, which in mathematical terms is a large scale interference, and which in physics is a considered a sonar “beat”, when two exact forms are overlaid but not exactly identical, here are echoed in oil paint on paper as a cascading record of conversations. Soap is a process of purification, a process of attempted unattainable preservation. Stored fats continue to combust in the interior cavity, evolving with the environmental conditions, exposing the markings of times. Borosilicate glass, the material used for laboratory experiments and optics, lies on the floor bound in bundles like a fiber optic cable connecting one element of empty space to another. Light works its wave and particle metamorphosis as conductor of light, parallel lines meeting at the point only of infinity.

The artificial interventions within the natural elements create an alchemy of stillness which sound and time defy. *White Noise*, in other words, is sound transmitted at random, which can have equal intensity at different frequencies, giving it a constant power density as in white light, which even if it appears white, is defined as the complex mixture of all the wavelengths of the visible spectrum. Scarry’s work reverberates through materiality.

On this specific occasion, the sculptural works by Scarry are put in relation with Allora & Calzadilla’s and Stephen O’Malley’s artistic practices.

Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla, artists’ duo based in San Juan, Puerto Rico, present the video *Breaking Into Trunks*, which takes the form of a meditation on the interior orders of the universe. Inspired by visits to the Gstaad-Saanenland, the film unveils the process of knocking down of a bicentenary tree that took place during the last autumn full moon of 2016, the moment when the sap-level was at its lowest, the wood the driest, and the acoustic properties the best. The music for the film is composed entirely with a violin, while the voiceover recounts parts of a short story attributed to the late 4th century BC Taoist philosopher, Zhuangzi, titled *Breaking*

into Trunks which contemplates the nature of wisdom and its effects on the ordering of the world. From the hunt for the resonant ‘Stradivarious Violin’ trees to the search for the mysterious Higgs Boson particle in nearby Cern and the tally stick system used by local farmers, it traces a path of order and disorder, beauty and chaos as it might be staged within the humble confines of a local barn.

During the exhibition, Stephen O’Malley will present his composition entitled “*Avaeken*”, on this occasion performed by Belgian electric guitar ensemble ZWERM. The composition is named after the millennium-plus-old oak on the island of Faro in Gotland, Sweden. This royal tree has survived and lived through unfathomable time and weather and serves as a reminder of the brevity of human existence in immense time-space and inspiration of consciousness place and presence. In O’Malley’s interpretation, four guitarists perform standard electric guitars and sustain microtonal pitches made purer and as steady as possible without friction sound of freeboard, string or ebow, with precise pitch control. During the performance, each guitarist performs a separate voicing intonation through a dedicated amplifier arranged in the room to display the beating phenomena of the precise harmonics in the space of the room. Throughout the twenty minutes of the performance, forms of rhythm and structure move around the space, exciting the air and bodies present in a deeply present and physical way. The performance’s date will be shared as soon as possible; the event will take place in full compliance with the international anti-contagion norms.

The artist: Olympia Scarry

Olympia Scarry (1983) is a Swiss American artist working with sculpture. Her fascination with materiality is a constant driving force in her work. Her choices reflect the ambiguities of power as they are transferred through thought and substance. Between fragility and strength, protection and vulnerability. Gravity and decay also play a role in rendering solid forms, formless, in states of flux; caught as they are between weight and weightlessness, the urge to purify and record the material memory of time. As *In Saliva* (2014), a solid form of soap evolving with time retaining only the markings and memory of toxins; *Say It As It Lays* (2019), the finest chain mail onyx metal which evokes liquid metal seeping through the floors which turns solid matter into liquid state, or *Aluminum 98%* (2019), a series of abstract drawings created with pulverized micronanons of aluminium, copper, and steel powder. Scarry diagrams possibility while at the same time withholding the very point of view that such possibility typically provides, we are asked by the artist to look at the thing that we typically look through. In *Parallel Lines Meet At The Point of Infinity* (2019), borosilicate glass rods are activated by natural light beams and artificial exposure on a constantly evolving exchange. Scarry creates drawings with crushed glass and erases them through the process, leaving only the markings of what could have been; a result of alchemy of transformation as in the diptych *The Son of Man* 2018 and *Eleven/ Eleven* 2018 a 5 meter by 5 meter permanent installation in New York City comprising of 22 glass windows. Scarry's work reverberates through materiality deconstructing architectural forms and recontextualizing them, pushing the material to transform into other. Her works continue an exploration of traces while considering site specificity through the subtleties of time. The connection between the exterior and interior is shattered, as in *"All That Is Solid Melts Into Air"*, 2014, a proposed structure of a house never to be built. And so Scarry strips the protections of ideals and body away to reveal beneath the security blanket of our own constructions a delicate and febrile world of material form.

Olympia Scarry's first solo institutional exhibition will be held at Fondazione ICA in Milano in January 2022. Solo exhibitions

were recently held at Hauser & Wirth, *Seeing Things As They Are* 2018 in Gstaad and at Apalazzo, *Parallel Lines Meet At The Point of Infinity* 2019 in Brescia. Group exhibitions include The Barbican in London, and the Venice Biennale collateral and a first permanent site-specific outdoor commission at Eleven Madison Park in NYC. She received her BFA from American University in Paris in Social Psychology and her MFA in Studio Art at NYU and Curatorial Studies at the Institute of Fine Arts in NYC. Scarry is co-founder and co-curator of the Swiss Biennale Elevation1049.

ICA MILANO

Fondazione ICA Milano – Istituto Contemporaneo per le Arti is a non-profit private foundation dedicated to contemporary arts and culture, research and experimentation, in which different personalities from the art world converge, including artists, collectors, art professionals and passionates. Directed by Alberto Salvadori, ICA is the first Institute for Contemporary Arts originating outside the Anglo-Saxon world, situated in the ex-industrial area of Via Orobica in Milan. Its activities include a public offer where sharing and participation are the key words to understand their attitude. Exhibitions, art publishing, ceramics, cinema, performance, music, literature, seminars, didactic workshops and much other, will constitute a path revolving around interdisciplinarity and transmediality. Expression of a precise Milanese identity, historically putting into relation private initiatives with the institutional dimension, ICA finds inspiration in the give-back culture, namely give back to share.