



Amalia Pica: *ears to speak of*
The Power Plant, Toronto
29 September – 31 December 2017

CURATOR: CAROLIN KÖCHLING

ASSISTANT CURATOR: NABILA ABDEL NABI, RBC CURATORIAL FELLOW

The nature of language, semiotic systems, metaphor, and the shaping of thought through communication has been an ongoing thread in Amalia Pica's work. Antiquated and analog systems of technology are of interest to Pica due to their "physicality"—an ontological proximity to the user or the recorded object. Her work has previously addressed both verbal and nonverbal modes of communication and the translation that takes place between ideas and objects, artist and audience. She has also explored the role of communication in the public sphere, engaging with the material mechanisms and relations of power that allow one to speak.

For her exhibition *ears to speak of* at The Power Plant, Amalia Pica developed *Ears* (2017), a new work, which continues her engagement with the failures and impossibilities of communication and obsolete technologies. The artist created monumental cardboard reconstructions of acoustic radars, also referred to as "listening ears", found in Denge, Kent in the UK. These devices were built along the coast of England between the 1920s-1930s. Designed to pre-empt aerial attacks by detecting the sound of incoming aircraft, these radars were quickly outmoded, due to the rapid evolution of aircraft and radar technologies. Now the structures stand as ruins, monuments to failure. Pica re-activated them in the context of The Power Plant, which is located at Toronto's Harbourfront, and is enveloped by the sound of aircraft taking off and landing at the neighbouring airport. She previously created *Acoustic Radar in Cardboard* (2012), another precursor to radar technology from World War I, to, "make an image about listening, rather than making a functioning device." By rendering these outmoded technologies in cardboard—a material which absorbs sound—Pica highlights the uselessness and ephemeral quality of the structures. But the work also evokes the question: if thought and space are created through articulation, what are the potentialities in failure, and how can the subjectivity of interpretation be productive?

The exhibition at The Power Plant also features works from Pica's *In Praise of Listening* (2016) series; large-scale sculptures of hearing aids rendered in marble, granite and soapstone. At the

heart of these devices is the active intention to make listening possible on a personal level. By reproducing the devices in a medium that both monumentalizes and renders them mute, Pica makes visible the multitude of ways that humans attempt to communicate more effectively with one another, even as we seem to grow increasingly reluctant or unable to do so.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication, co-produced by The Power Plant and the IMA Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, where Amalia Pica will present a solo exhibition from 18 November 2017—10 March 2018.

Amalia Pica (born in 1978, Neuquén, Argentina) lives and works in London, UK. She has held solo exhibitions including Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia (Forthcoming); NC Arte, Bogotá, Colombia (2017); Kunstverein Freiburg (2016); Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands (2014); Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2013); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, (2013); MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, USA (2013); Modern Art Oxford, UK (2012), among others. She has also participated in group exhibitions around the world, including Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), The Netherlands (2016); Mass MoCA, Massachusetts, USA (2016); Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria (2016); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2015); Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK (2015); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2014). Her work was featured in the Gwangju Biennale (2016) and the 54th Venice Biennale (2011).