

The Language in Common

September 14 - December 12, 2021

The Language in Common presents artistic practices that site language in the space between poetry, visual art, and their performance. Moving beyond the spectacle of the origination of poetry or art, this project seeks to allow memory as a creative act in the process of making experience common. The exhibition brings together five international and intergenerational artists including Cecilia Vicuña (b.1948, Chile), Tanya Lukin Linklater (b.1976, Alutiiq), Julien Creuzet (b.1986, France), Jasper Marsalis (b.1995, U.S.), and Alice Notley (b.1945, U.S.).

This exhibition takes its title from the eponymous essay written by Steve Lyons and Jason Jones, published by e-flux journal in 2020.¹ Their essay lays out the possibilities for establishing commonalities on the political left and argues for the existence of a space, imagined or real, outside of the demands of capitalism. Locating that space as already existing within Indigeneity, the authors propose that through the 'language in common' it is accessible to all. Poetry, as a counter-hegemonic force, grounds the material operations of the works in the exhibition, making space for a new imaginary amidst the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism. The artists in *The Language in Common* engage with politics on the periphery of hegemony, whether through Vicuña's "quipu" that materializes a 500 year old indigenous language form; Creuzet's hybrid "French banana" highlighting the colonial carcinogenic health crisis in Martinique; Lukin Linklater's embodiment of Indigenous knowledge and resistance to its widespread consumption; the poet Notley's dissident meditation on resisting answers to unsolvable questions in a series of drawings all sketched on an iPad; or through a critique of "black spectacle and the way blackness is consumed by people" in the work of Jasper Marsalis.

Featuring works encompassing installation, sculpture, video, sound, drawing, poetry, and performance, as well as newly-commissioned works developed in response to the exhibition, *The Language in Common* aims towards activating what the poet Alice Notley has identified as the language that existed before we were born, "the language that holds all being together."

This exhibition is supported by Co-Sponsor the Shapiro Center and Writing at Wesleyan, the Allbritton Center for the Study of Public Life, Latin American Studies, the Thomas and Catherine McMahon Fund of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, the History Department, Connecticut Humanities, and the Center for the Arts. Additional support by Etant donnés Contemporary Art, a program developed by FACE Foundation, Villa

¹ Steve Lyons and Jason Jones, "The Language in Common", e-flux Journal #113 (November 2020). <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/113/359927/the-language-in-common/>

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Albertine and the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States, with lead funding from the French Ministry of Culture and Institut Français-Paris, Ford Foundation, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Chanel USA, and ADAGP.

The Language in Common is curated by Benjamin Chaffee. Special thanks to Exhibition Manager Rosemary Lennox and Art Installer Paul Theriault, to Tony Hernandez, John Elmore, Kyle Beaudette, Andrew Chatfield, and to Zilkha's 21' and 22' Exhibitions Interns Joseph Cohen, Gabby Farina, Helena Girardoni, Maya Hayda, Joshua Merkin, Gabby Farina, Justin Ross and Karen Xu, and the Zilkha Exhibitions Committee. The exhibition will run from September 14 through December 12, 2021. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Sunday, Noon to 5pm.

Exhibition Programming

A related series of events will take place over the exhibition, including:

An online poetry reading by **Tanya Lukin Linklater**. October 6, 2021 at 4:30pm EST
Tanya will read from her first book *Slow Scrape* (Anteism, 2020), which is in the words of poet Layli Long Soldier, "an expansive and undulating meditation on time, relations, origin and colonization.")

RSVP via [zoom](#)

An in-situ performance and artist talk by **Cecilia Vicuña**. October 13, 2021 at 6pm EST
Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery
Hosted by Writing at Wesleyan

Artists in Conversation: **Tanya Lukin Linklater + Raven Chacon**. November 2 6:00pm EST
Tanya Lukin Linklater in conversation with Raven Chacon, a composer, performer and installation artist from Fort Defiance, Navajo Nation. The artists will discuss the concepts of the score as related to their work.

RSVP via [zoom](#)

Language as a Site of Struggle: a round table discussion with **Professors Lou Cornum, Jeffers Lennox + Steve Lyons**. November 11 at 4:30pm EST
Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery

An online artist talk by **Julien Creuzet**. November 15 at 12:00pm EST

RSVP via [zoom](#)

Follow Zilkha on [Instagram](#) for more programming events and updates throughout the course of the exhibition run.

Artist Bios

Julien Creuzet

Based in Paris, France, Julien Creuzet is a French-Caribbean visual artist and poet. Working primarily in sculpture, film, performance, language, and video, he considers the relationality of his works as fragments of a larger whole exhibited in space. Creuzet meditates on the Caribbean archipelago—both as a place of cultural identification and as a metaphor for an art practice that defies an end; his work is both “composite and unified” with “uncertain boundaries”.

Creuzet’s work has been exhibited internationally in the late 2010s. His most recent solo exhibition, *cloud cloudy glory doodles on the leaves pages, memory slowly the story redness sadness bloody redness on the skin*, was held at Document Gallery in Chicago, Illinois, where he is represented. He has had solo exhibitions at Palais De Tokyo, Paris (2019) (resulting in his first monograph, *Julien Creuzet (Paris, France : Palais de Tokyo, 2019)*, Fondation d’Entreprise Ricard (2018), Bétonsalon, Paris (2018), Sketch Gallery in Bogotá (2017), Fonds Régional d’Art Contemporain Basse Normandie in Caen (2015), among others. His work has been included in numerous group shows; the Gwangju Biennale (2018), the Biennale d’Art Contemporain (2018), the Biennale de Lyon (2017), the Frac Pays de la Loire (2016) and La Galerie, Centre d’Art Contemporain (2015).

Creuzet, as reviewed by Amy Sherlock in *Frieze*: “The sea – what it brings and what it takes; what its distance separates and its depths conceal – is central to these exhibitions. The artist himself grew up in Martinique – which is to say that his identity, in part, has been defined by the great in-betweenness of the water, the *outré-mer* that separates France from its overseas administrative territories. Each show is a constellation of objects that might have been deposited by a storm tide. Creuzet has previously referred to his whole-show installations as ‘archipelagos’, borrowing Edouard Glissant’s vocabulary of ‘mondiality’. [...] Clumped mattings of natural and synthetic materials are circled with threads that evoke both fishing nets and the paralyzing tentacles of the Portuguese man o’war.”²

Tanya Lukin Linklater

Tanya Lukin Linklater's performances, videos, installations, and writings work through orality, embodiment, and conversation – investigating histories of Indigenous peoples’ lives, lands, structures of sustenance, and knowledge production. She investigates insistence in both concept and application and often produces performances with dancers, composers, musicians and poets, in relation to the architecture of museums, objects in exhibition, scores, and cultural belongings.

² Amy Sherlock, “Julien Creuzet: After the Storm”, *Frieze Magazine* (March 2018) <https://www.frieze.com/article/julien-creuzet-after-storm>

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Her recent exhibitions include *Soft Power* at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2020), *Next Year's Country* at Remai Modern (2020, 2017, 2016), *...and other such stories* at Chicago Architecture Biennial (2019), *Art for a New Understanding: Native Voices, 1950's to Now* at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art (2018) as well as show at the Art Gallery of Ontario (2017), Winnipeg Art Gallery (2017), La Biennale de Montréal (2016), Art Gallery of Alberta (2016). Current and new works, including a performance, were to be included as part of Tate Modern's in the BMW Tate Live Exhibition 2020, *Our Bodies, Our Archives*, in London (cancelled due to COVID-19).

Lukin Linklater is a doctoral candidate at Queen's University, she holds a Master's of Education from the University of Alberta (2003), and a Bachelor of Arts from Stanford University (1998). Her writing, including poetry and essays, has been published in journals and other publications, and in 2019 she received the Art Writing Award from the Ontario Association of Art Galleries. *Slow Scrape*, her first book of poetry, was recently published by The Centre for Expanded Poetics and Anteism and can be read alongside Lukin Linklater's practice as a visual artist and choreographer. In the words of Layli Long Soldier, *Slow Scrape* is "an expansive and undulating meditation on time, relations, origin and colonization" which draws upon documentary poetics, concrete-based installations, event scores, and other texts composed in relation to performances written between 2011 and 2018. The book cites memory, Cree and Alutiiq languages, and embodiment as modes of relational being and knowledge, unfolding a poetics of relation and action to counter the settler colonial violences of erasure, extraction, and dispossession.

Jasper Marsalis

Jasper Marsalis (b. 1995, Los Angeles), also known as Slauson Malone, is a multi-media, interdisciplinary artist whose work encompasses painting, sculpture, music and installation, and performance practices. Through these multi-disciplinary forms, Marsalis explores concepts of the black spectacle and the consumption of blackness within artistic practices, media, and pop-culture. Although descending from a line of famed jazz musicians, Wynton Marsalis and Ellis Marsalis, Malone/Marsalis' musical explorations are non-linear, and genre-defying. Blending experimental jazz, hip-hop, and other forms, Marsalis's music seeks to engage in the unknown spaces where "correct" music theory can be debunked in order to open space for critique in relation to black political thought, consciousness, and existence, interrogating the subjectivity of the contemporary black identity through modes of recontextualization, omission, and variation in music, text, and form.

Recent exhibitions include *A Star Like Any Other* shown at Kristina Kite Gallery in Los Angeles (2020) and at Midway Contemporary Art (2019). *A Star Like Any Other* included the publication *Crater Speak* (2019, edited and designed by Marsalis), a compilation of reference images and texts dismantled into excision-based collages. Lines by Saidiya

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Hartman, Jared Sexton, Damien M. Sojoyner, and other thinkers who have permeated Marsalis' work are annotated and accompanied by red footnote-like page numbers that vigorously redirect the reader across the volume, following no distinct chronology but rather embracing the potentiality of omissions, non-linearity, enacting a kind of specularized performance of circuitous wayfinding in the act of reading, perceiving and understanding. Other recent exhibitions include *Flash blindness and Approaches* at Svetlana Gallery, New York (2018). *A Quiet Farwell, Twenty Sixteen to Twenty Eighteen* (2019) is his debut album. Marsalis received his BFA in painting in 2017 from Cooper Union, and was previously a member of Standing On the Corner, a New York based experimental hip-hop and jazz group.

Alice Notley

Active in the New York poetry scene of the 1960s and '70s, Notley is often identified with the Second Generation New York School poets, though her work resists any period classification. In an interview with the Kenyon Review, Notley noted: "I think I try with my poems to create a beginning space. I always seem to be erasing and starting over, rather than picking up where I left off, even if I wind up taking up the same themes. This is probably one reason that I change form and style so much, out of a desire to find a new beginning, which is always the true beginning."

She has long written in narrative and epic and genre-bending modes to discover new ways to explore the nature of the self and the social and cultural importance of disobedience. The artist Rudy Burckhardt once wrote that Notley may be "our present-day Homer." Notley's work, which consistently pushes up against the limitations of language, seems to issue from an alternate reality.

She is the recipient of various prizes and awards, including the Los Angeles Times Book Award (for *Mysteries of Small Houses*, which was also a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize), the Griffin Prize (for *Disobedience*), the Academy of American Poets' Lenore Marshall Prize (for *Grave of Light, Selected Poems 1970-2005*), and the Poetry Foundation's Ruth Lilly Prize, a lifetime achievement award. She is also a collagiste and cover artist. She is the author of over twenty five books of poetry, including *Reason and Other Women* (Chax Press, 2010), *Negativity's Kiss* (Presses Universitaires de Rouen, 2014), *Manhattan Luck* (Hearts Desire Press, 2014), *Benediction* (Letter Machine Editions, 2015), *Eurynome's Sandals* (Presses Universitaires de Rouen, 2019). Notley's latest book, *Runes and Chords* (Archway Editions, 2021) is her first art book.

Cecilia Vicuña

Cecilia Vicuña is a Chilean poet and artist based in New York and Santiago, Chile. Her work is noted for themes of language, memory, dissolution, extinction and exile. Critics also note

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the relevance of her work to the politics of ecological destruction, cultural homogenization, and economic disparity, particularly the way in which such phenomena disenfranchise the already powerless. Her commitment to feminist forms and methodologies is considered to be a unifying theme across her diverse body of work, among which quipus, palabramas and precarious stand out. Her practice has been specifically linked to the term eco-feminism.

Vicuña has devoted a significant part of her artistic practice to studying, interpreting, and reactivating the quipus, which were banned by the Spanish during their colonization of South America. The ancient peoples of the Andes created quipus—complex record-keeping devices, made of knotted corded materials together, often of different colours, that served as an essential means of storytelling and record-keeping. Drawing on her Indigenous heritage, Vicuña channels this ancient, sensorial mode of communication into immersive installations and participatory performances.

Vicuña's work has been included in group exhibitions such as the Whitney Biennial in New York (1997); Havana Biennial (1984, 1986); WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2007); and On Line: Drawing through the Twentieth Century at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010–11). In 2017 she participated in Documenta 14, Kassel, Germany, and Athens, Greece. She has given lectures and seminars in institutions worldwide, such as the Universidad de Buenos Aires and Universidad Libre de Bogotá and Pratt Institute, City University of New York, and School of Visual Arts in New York. She received a Fondart grant in 2011 and was selected as a Messenger Lecturer at Cornell University in 2015. Her work is housed at such institutions as Tate Gallery, London, and Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Chile, Santiago.