

NEWS RELEASE

Press contact:

Patricia Watts
tricia@ecoartspace.org

For Immediate Release
June 15, 2022
[Digital images available upon request]

On Our Watch is an immersive multi-media installation by Perri Lynch Howard at the New Media Gallery, Jack Straw Cultural Center

Seattle, Washington - *On Our Watch* (July 15 - August 12) is a multimedia installation by Northwest artist Perri Lynch Howard that harnesses the power of art to reveal the stalwart past and tenuous future of Seacoast Defenses in the United States. Through sound, image and storytelling, this new work explores the historical strengths and current vulnerabilities of The Harbor Defenses of Puget Sound, known culturally as “The Triangle of Fire.”

Visitors to *On Our Watch* will enter a large darkened room where they will hear sounds panning through the space from a 4-channel system, recordings that Howard made at the decommissioned seacoast defenses—Fort Casey, Fort Flagler, and Fort Worden. They will also be immersed in three large-format floor-to-ceiling video projections of black and white photographs in a slow moving montage. The experience offers a contemporary perspective of emplacements that share a military past, transitional present, and tenuous future in a changing climate.

While Artist-in-Residence in 2021 at Centrum located in Port Townsend, Howard conducted interviews with Greg Hagge at the Puget Sound Coast Artillery Museum, Steven Kobylk at Fort Casey, and Mark Berhow with the Coast Defense Study Group. She then documented the three forts with photography, video and sound recordings. After realizing there was no audio archive for these sites, the artist chose to identify historical recordings of marches, the reveille, and tunes that mark the passage of the day for the troops. She also created contemporary readings of the orders and instructions for staging artillery, firing guns, and various communications related to the forts and their operations. The overlay of the recordings while standing in the presence of decaying embattlements leaves visitors with many emotions to reconcile.

The Modern Era Seacoast Defense System is a series of 72 forts that ribbon the coasts of the US. Built and retrofitted between 1890-1945, 80% of these emplacements have been decommissioned into state parks or historic sites, many of which have become stunning travel destinations. On the front lines of climate change, these sites face an unknown future due to sea level rise, and are symbolic of a new form of conflict that humans must address in order to survive extreme weather, on land or sea. The bluffs, bunkers, and batteries mirror the changes we are fighting for today. It is Howard's instinct that art can play a role in illuminating this visualization.

...I sensed the important lessons that these places hold, about war, peace, and the role of our nation in a global context. I became inspired to craft artworks that illuminate the irony, dissonance, and enduring presence of these forts in and around our communities. Perri Lynch Howard

Exhibition Dates: Friday, July 15 to Friday, August 12, 2022

Opening Reception: Friday, July 15, 7-8:30pm

Youth and Family Workshop (accessible for visually impaired): July 23, 2022

To attend the reception, the workshop or to schedule a visit, email:

jsp@jackstraw.org or call 206-634-0919 / 4261 Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105

About the artist

Perri Lynch Howard forges new narratives from the front lines of climate change. Working in the context of extreme environments, she has a driving curiosity to seek a deeper sense of place, beyond the dichotomy of near and far. Her charting or mapping of sites and situations is expressed through painting, drawing, sculpture and sound. Howard received her BA from Evergreen State College, BFA from the University of Washington, and MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art. Her work is represented by the Seattle Art Museum Gallery. Honors include an Artist Trust Fellowship, McMillen Fellowship, Seattle City Artist Grant, and multiple 4Culture Special Project Grants. Howard's work has been exhibited internationally including in South India as a Fulbright Scholar. www.perrilynchhoward.com

About the New Media Gallery, Jack Straw Cultural Center

The Jack Straw New Media Gallery supports installation art with an emphasis on sound. Located in Seattle's University District, the Gallery exhibits artists' work through an open call and by invitation. As one of the most exclusive sound art spaces in the world, it has attracted applicants nationally and internationally, and is committed to local artists. www.jackstraw.org/program/new-media-gallery/