



## PRESS RELEASE

### New exhibition launches FACT's year of The Living Planet



Demelza Kooij, *Wolves from Above* (2018). Video still, courtesy of the artist.

### And Say the Animal Responded?

**What would animals say to us if we listened to them? What might we learn about the state of our shared planet? On 19 March, FACT launches its year of The Living Planet with the opening of a major new art exhibition, *And Say the Animal Responded?***

At a time when billions of animals are being lost because of human activity, we still place the interests of humans above those of animals. Studies show that animals feel emotions and have distinct personalities and ways of communicating, yet we rarely consider what the destruction of habitats and species extinction means beyond their loss to us.

*And Say the Animal Responded?* brings together the work of five international artists/artist groups, presenting visitors with face-to-face encounters with the sounds and behaviours of animals from around the planet. Works by **Ariel Guzik** (Mexico), **Amalia Pica** (Argentina/UK) with **Rafael Ortega** (Mexico), **Kuai Shen** (Ecuador), **Demelza Kooij** (Netherlands/UK) and **Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg** (UK) immerse visitors in animals' sonic lives: from an ocean choir of whales and dolphins recorded by hydrophone, to the quiet interactions between wolves captured by drone camera, to a living colony of leafcutter ants 'scratching' music in the gallery.



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FACT's new Director/CEO **Nicola Triscott** curates *And Say the Animal Responded?*, featuring a series of artists' film and sound-centred installations that capture the animal voice through human technology, even (using machine learning and artificial intelligence) those of animals that have recently become extinct. The show takes its title from philosopher Jacques Derrida's essay of the same name, in which he challenges any clear boundary between human and animal. Triscott says: "At a time when we need to rethink our relationship with the planet, it is timely to consider the nature and rights of animals. Through the exhibition and a season of events and discussions running alongside, we will engage audiences in exploring animal intelligence and communication, and question the human-animal hierarchy."

One of four artists from Central and South America in the show, Mexican musician and artist **Ariel Guzik** presents a new installation, which incorporates sound, drawings and sculptural works from his long-term research project to communicate musically with whales and dolphins in the wild. Guzik designed his submersible musical instrument, **Nereida** to connect with ocean mammals – in the deep sea, its subtle sound vibrations invite a chorus of responsive sounds from whales and dolphins; in the gallery, the instrument's music and the recordings of this cetacean choir reverberate through the space. Alongside, Guzik premieres his new film, charting the expedition of his latest instrument **Holoturian** into the depths of the Pacific Ocean.

Other works in the exhibition include **Amalia Pica** and **Rafael Oretaga's Pan troglodytes ellioti and cousins**, in which a family of chimpanzees in a Nigerian Forest is startled when they trigger a camera and **Is it grunting, barking or panting?**, where the roars of primatologists imitating ape calls will resonate throughout the building. Alongside these installations will be live performances of **Catalogue of great ape gestures**, co-commissioned with MDI, where gestures used by gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees and bonobos will be performed.

Ecuadorian artist and ant scholar **Kuai Shen** presents his living artwork **Oh!m1gas**, a reactive sound installation within which a colony of leafcutter ants become DJs, controlling the movement of two turntables. The work draws analogies between 'scratching' as a form of human musical expression and the sounds that ants make with their body parts to communicate. In the installation, the growing activity within the nest creates music in response to the ants' various behaviours: from nest building to farming.

**Wolves From Above**, a film installation by Liverpool-based artist **Demelza Kooij**, captures the quiet interactions of a wolf pack filmed through a single drone shot. The elusive animals inhabit a tranquil wilderness where the sounds of growling, sniffing and licking feel oddly nearby, heightening the intimacies of communication through human-to-wolf spectatorship.

Responding to the sad reality of today's accelerating species extinctions, **The Substitute** by **Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg** is a digital artificial intelligence resurrection of the recently extinct northern white rhino. A life-size projection shows the artificial rhino roaming in a virtual world, becoming more 'real' as it comprehends the limits of the space. The rhino's form and sound toggle from pixelation to lifelike, glitching in and out of existence. Alongside, Ginsberg's sound installation **Machine Augeries** questions how our cities may sound as bird populations change and diminish. In the installation, a natural dawn chorus is taken over by artificial birds, their calls generated using machine learning.



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Throughout FACT's year of The Living Planet, the organisation will collaborate with artists working on the cutting edge of film, art and creative technology to explore pressing environmental and ecological issues. They include artist collective **Keiken** (UK), artist **Jack Tan** (UK), artists-in-residence **Carolin Liebl** and **Nikolas Schmid-Pfähler** (Germany) supported by the European Media Art Platform (EMAP) and Liverpool Biennial 2020: *The Stomach and the Port*.

*And Say the Animal Responded?* opens to the public on Friday 20 March 2020 and continues until Sunday 14 June 2020. FACT's year of The Living Planet launches the previous day, on Thursday 19 March, with FACT's *Spring Assembly: The Living Planet*, a public event that will open up and explore some of the themes raised by the exhibition.

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

### ***And Say the Animal Responded?***

20 March - 14 June 2020

FACT, 88 Wood Street, Liverpool, L1 4DQ

**Press preview:** Thursday 19 March 2020, 13:00 - 16:00

**FACT Spring Assembly: The Living Planet:** Thursday 19 March 2020, 14:00 - 18:00

**Exhibition opening:** Thursday 19 March 2020, 18:00 - 20:00, including a performance by Ariel Guzik at 18:00

**General opening:** From Friday 20 March. Open 11:00 - 18:00, Tuesday to Sunday. Galleries closed on Mondays.

### **For further information, please contact:**

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## ABOUT FACT

FACT is the UK's leading film and media arts centre, bringing people, art and technology together. Based in Liverpool, FACT's award-winning building houses three galleries, the Picturehouse cinema, a bar and cafe. Now celebrating 17 years in its Liverpool home, FACT has welcomed over 5 million visitors and commissioned and presented over 350 new media and digital artworks from artists including Pipilotti Rist, Nam June Paik, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Wu Tsang, Ryoichi Kurokawa, Agnes Varda and Isaac Julien. [fact.co.uk](http://fact.co.uk)

## ABOUT

**Ariel Guzik** (Mexico City) is a multidisciplinary artist who designs and engineers mechanisms and instruments which engage with and tap into the languages of nature, specifically cetaceans (whales and dolphins). His projects explore the phenomenon of natural resonance and its use in the natural world. Guzik's work is shown around the world. He represented Mexico at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013 and at the Edinburgh International Art Festival in 2015.

**Amalia Pica** (Argentina) is a London-based Argentinian artist who explores metaphor, communication and civic participation through sculpture, installation, photography, projections, live performances and drawings, each utilised to expose the nuances in communication. Pica is the winner of the 2020 Zurich Art Prize.

**Rafael Ortega** (Mexico) is a London-based Mexican filmmaker who works in cinematographic projects of fiction and documentary. In 2011, Ortega's collaboration with Melanie Smith was exhibited as part of the 54th Venice Biennale.

**Kuai Shen** (Guayaquil, Ecuador) is fascinated by ecosocial insect behaviour and works with ants to create audiovisual installations and performances, exploring the concept of invertebrate aesthetics. His transdisciplinary research amplifies the relationships between species using dynamic techno-ecologies.

**Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg** (UK) is an artist whose work focuses on the relationships between nature and technology. Daisy's diverse portfolio of artworks, writing, and curatorial projects explore subjects which include artificial intelligence, exobiology, synthetic biology, conservation, biodiversity and evolution, as she investigates the human impulse to 'better' the world.

**Demelza Kooij** (Netherlands/UK) is a Liverpool based artist/filmmaker and university lecturer. Her work is presented worldwide at museums, film festivals, art exhibitions, and conferences. Her art and research interests relate to depicting other worlds: un(der)explored territories nearby and far away; the human and non-human, blurring boundaries, sci-fi, Other animals, ecologies of the sea, land, sky and exchanges in-between.

**Keiken** is a collective and organisation made up of artists and musicians based in London, Berlin and Falmouth. Through interactivity and immersivity they dissolve the boundaries between audience and environment through live RPG, merging new technologies, music and contemporary art.

**Jack Tan** (UK) uses law, social norms and customs as a way of making art. He creates performances, performatives, sculpture, video and participatory projects that highlight the rules that guide human behaviour. Jack trained as a lawyer and worked in civil rights NGOs before becoming an artist.

**Carolyn Liebl** and **Nikolas Schmid-Pfähler** (Germany) have been selected as FACT's EMAP/EMARE artists-in-residence for 2020. The **European Media Art Platform (EMAP) / European Media Artists in Residence Exchange (EMARE)** offers residencies for media artists in the fields of digital media.



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