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Abstract

Salvor

Based on an imagined museum collection from a lost island civilization destroyed by climate catastrophe, the work reconstructs traces of their existence through artefacts, drawings, domestic objects, and tools. Many of the objects, carved in wood, reveal a culture both creative and pragmatic—one sustained by, and devoted to, the sea.

The narrative voice belongs to an ethnographer who believes herself descended from the islanders. Taking on the role of *Salvor*, she gathers the scattered remnants of this vanished world to bear witness to their way of life and communicate it to the present.

The presentation unfolds through the language of maritime law and the rules of salvage—*flotsam*, *jetsam*, *lagan*, and *derelict*. Each term evokes a different state of loss or recovery, framing the possibility—or impossibility—of retrieving what has been claimed by the sea.

Keywords

Re-creative practice; otherworlding; reclaiming slowness; mourning and loss

Disciplinary field

Multi Media Sculpture

Format

A Performance Lecture

Biography

Mary O'Neill is an artist, author, and educator whose practice engages with profound cultural issues that often leave us mute, such as isolation and loss. Through her works, she explores the search for meaning in the face of life experiences that can render the world chaotic and incomprehensible.

O'Neill works with museums to re-create or re-imagine objects in their collection. These works highlight the potential of museums as repositories of knowledge; knowledge of how and why objects were made and the stories of those who made them. Recent work includes a short documentary remembering the now closed Museum of Leathercraft.