



**BRADY MARKS | MARK TIMMINGS | STEPHEN MORRIS**

# **WETLAND PROJECT**

A sound immersion into the biodiversity of Saturna Island

Curator: Catherine Bédard

APRIL 22ND - MAY 20TH, 2023



**Canadian  
Cultural  
Centre**  
Paris

The *Wetland Project* respectfully acknowledges that its work takes place on the unceded, ancestral lands and waters of the W̱SÁNEĆ First Nations and within the extended territories of the Hul'qumínum - and hə́hə́mihə́m-speaking peoples.

## A VIBRANT CALL FOR THE PRESERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY

CAITLIN WORKMAN

## DIRECTOR OF THE CANADIAN CULTURAL CENTRE

Since 1970, April 22 has been celebrated around the world as Earth Day: an international day dedicated to raising awareness of environmental protection issues, and to mobilizing citizens and governments to reduce the impact of human activities on the planet.

This year for Earth Day, the Canadian Cultural Centre is particularly proud to open its new exhibition - *Wetland Project* - which immerses us in the sounds of the ȪƎƧƎƧƎƧEN marsh in unceded WSÁNEĆ territory (on Saturna Island, British Columbia) and reveals its incredible biodiversity.

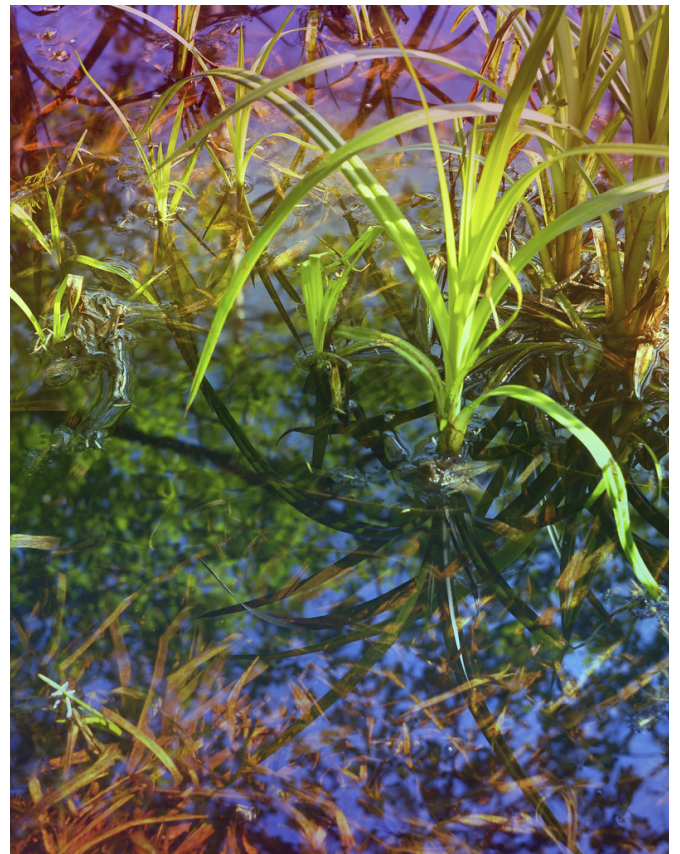
As we face the sixth period of mass extinction due to climate change, the United Nations now estimates that 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity is located in the territories where Indigenous communities live. At the COP15 held in December 2022 in Montreal, a new agreement was adopted that provides for the protection of 30% of the planet by 2030: an ambitious goal for biodiversity, which cannot be achieved in Canada without a strong commitment to Indigenous communities who "have been guardians of the land, waters, and ice of this continent for millennia" (The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change).

By offering a unique immersive experience into the heart of the biodiversity of the TEKŦEKSĖN marsh, the Canadian Cultural Centre raises the issue of preserving threatened ecosystems and

invites our visitors to rethink their relationship  
with the environment, by listening to our world.

I would like to thank artists Brady Marks, Mark Timmings and Stephen Morris, who have been the driving force behind the *Wetland Project* for nearly ten years. I would also like to thank our curator Catherine Bédard, who conceived this exhibition for our gallery, and the entire team at the Canadian Cultural Centre.

Enjoy your visit!



Wetland Project: detail © Nancy Angermeyer





*Wetland Project* - Media installation view - VIVO Media Arts Centre, Vancouver, April 21 to May 18, 2018 - Credits: Ash Tanaslychuk, VANDOCUMENT





# THE TEKTEKSEN MARSH

## A SOUND IMMERSION INTO THE BIODIVERSITY OF SATURNA ISLAND

BRADY MARKS, MARK TIMMINGS, CATHERINE BÉDARD

The *Wetland Project* is a multidisciplinary exploration of an environmental soundscape. Based on an initial twenty-four hour field recording, its inspiration comes from the sounds of the TEKTEKSEN marsh in unceded WSÁNEĆ territory (Saturna Island, British Columbia).

For ten years, this “more-than-human” soundscape featuring birds, frogs, insects and airplanes has been investigated by artists Brady Marks, Mark Timmings and musicologist Stephen Morris, and shared with audiences around the world in a variety of forms: slow radio broadcasts, multimedia installations, musical interpretations, an illuminated score and an artists' book.

The exhibition at the Canadian Cultural Centre brings together all these forms for the first time. It pays tribute, in France, to the French artists who are among the influences and sources of inspiration of the *Wetland Project* (from Claude Monet and his *Water Lilies* to composer and sound theorist Pierre Schaeffer and his *Groupe de recherches musicales*, via composer and ornithologist Olivier Messiaen). The exhibition deploys in the field of contemporary creation the discipline of acoustic ecology founded in the late 1960s by Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer with his World Soundscape Project.

The *Wetland Project* perpetuates this heritage by seeking to cede authorship to the beings of the wetlands, letting the sound material speak for itself.



Wetland Project - Media installation view - VIVO Media Arts Centre, Vancouver, April 21 to May 18, 2018 - Credits: Ash Tanasychuk, VANDOCUMENT

## ALGORITHM, SYNAESTHESIA AND ARTISTIC INFLUENCES

At the Canadian Cultural Centre, the *Wetland Project* takes the form of an immersive installation, where sound is combined with the interplay of coloured light on five large screens arranged in a pentagon.

Working with programmer Gabrielle Odowichuk, Mark Timmings, Brady Marks and Stephen Morris have developed an algorithm that transforms the sound waves of TEKTEKSEN's marsh into a stream of pure colour, based on the principle of synaesthesia.

Through this use of colour, the *Wetland Project* is part of a tradition of art history and painting: the artists thus evoke Claude Monet's *Water Lilies* (1897-1926) as a true source of inspiration for their project. Considering the painter's declining eyesight in his last years, his changing perception and his desire to translate the atmosphere of places in his work, it is indeed tempting to think that Giverny and its vibrant soundscape of frogs and birds might have influenced his impressionist painting.

The multimedia installation is also reminiscent of Mark Rothko's (1903 - 1970) serial monochromes and his fourteen monumental paintings in the *Rothko Chapel* in Houston, Texas, which inspired, among other things, American composer Morton Feldman's 1971 work *Rothko Chapel*: a fascinating phenomenon in which the music emanates directly from what is being viewed.

The screens used for the diffusion of colours finally echo the coloured panels of the abstract painter Ellsworth Kelly (1923 - 2015) in his works *Three Panels: Red Yellow Blue II* (1965) or *Spectrum V* (1969).

This unique sensory project reproduces the multidimensional experience of the TEKTEKSEN marsh, immersing us in the sounds of an ecosystem thousands of miles away. By entering this space, the audience is invited to amplify its perceptions and re-enchant its relationship with the living world.





*Wetland Project, detail © Nancy Angermeyer*

## THE ORIGINS: AN ACOUSTIC ECOLOGY

In the twentieth century, musical and listening practices were profoundly transformed by French composer and sound theorist Pierre Schaeffer. In the 1940s, Schaeffer explored the use of sounds recorded in natural environments as real materials for musical composition. The development of "concrete" music opened the field to new sound experiments, including the World Soundscape Project (WSP) founded in 1969 by Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer.

With the WSP, Schafer coined the term 'soundscape' to describe our acoustic environment and the range of sounds in which we live. A soundscape is composed of different layers of natural sounds (animal noises, waves, rain, wind, etc.) or artificial sounds linked to human activities. A new discipline appears: acoustic ecology or "eco-acoustics", which studies the relationships between humans and their living environments, through active listening to document and inventory the richness of sound environments.

Today, birds, insects and frogs are in decline around the world, while human activities are constantly increasing. Some natural sounds are threatened by our post-industrial societies, and the environmental crisis is transforming and impoverishing our soundscapes. By listening to the world with eco-acoustics, we can assess the state of ecosystems, which are becoming less complex and in some places completely silent.

If sight has progressively supplanted hearing in our ways of perceiving the world, acoustic ecology tends to give a place of choice to attentive listening, in an era saturated with images. The *Wetland Project* perpetuates Schafer's and the WSP's legacy by letting the living beings of the TEKTEKSEN marshes express themselves fully: they are the raw material of this sound work, but they are also its 'true authors'.



## PROTECTING THE WETLANDS

The *Wetland Project* is part of a reflection on the preservation of threatened wetland "areas" or "environments" throughout the world. Present on the whole planet, wetlands are territories covered with water: swamps, ponds, dead arms of rivers, salt meadows, mangroves, peat bogs, etc.

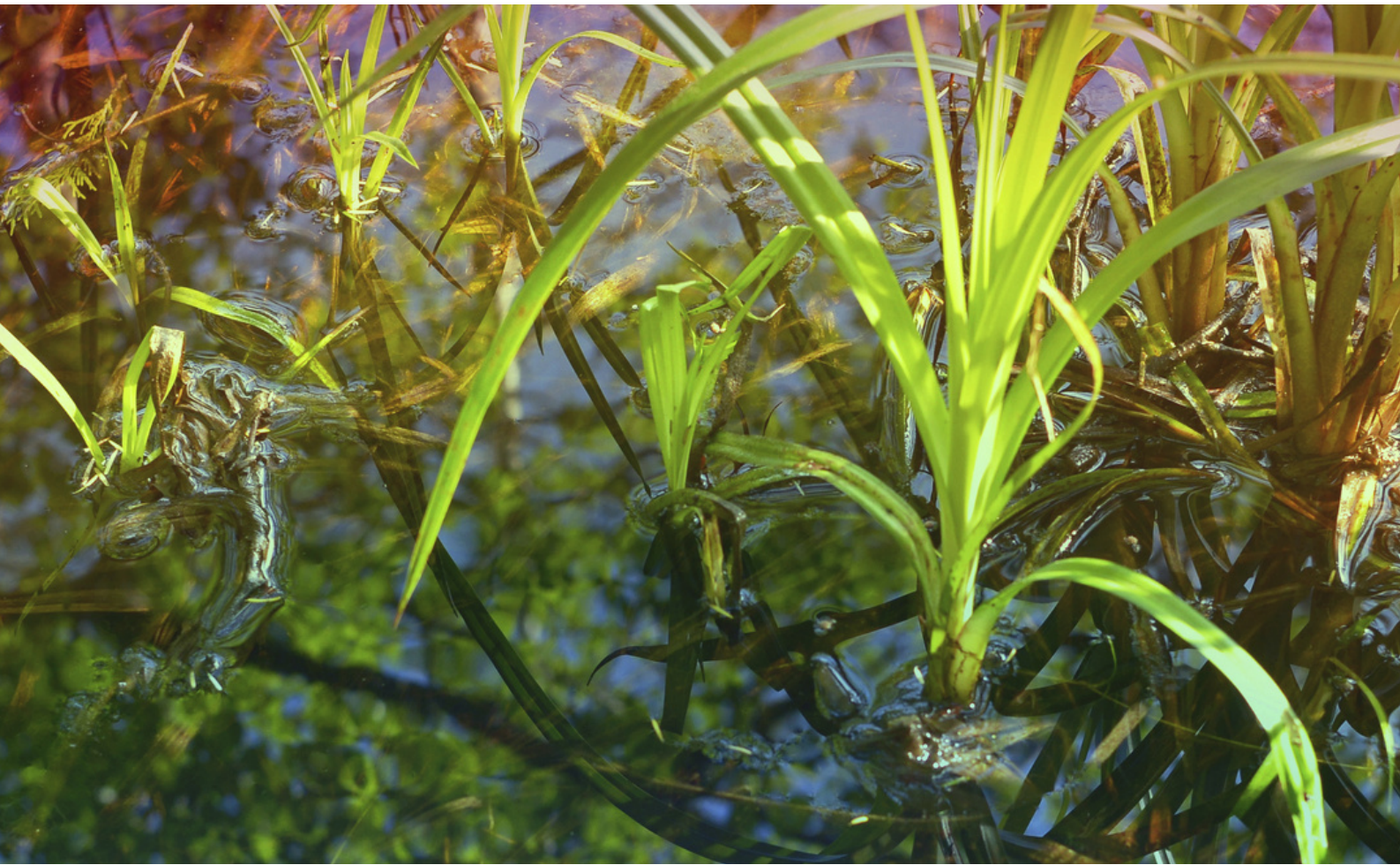
Wetlands participate in the water cycle by collecting water from precipitation, tributary streams or underground springs. They are buffer zones, which can temporarily store water before releasing it, slowing down or absorbing large quantities, thus reducing the risk of flooding. Wetlands also contribute to carbon sequestration, and regulate greenhouse gas emissions. Located between land and water, these environments are exceptional reservoirs of biodiversity, sheltering 12% of the planet's animal species (1).

Long considered to be restrictive and impossible to cultivate, these environments have been subject to numerous drainage works: it is estimated that wetlands have lost 35% of their surface area worldwide since 1970 (2). Threatened by human activities (agricultural and aquacultural intensification, urbanization, etc.), they are now the subject of studies to preserve this natural heritage from climatic disruption and to protect these exceptional lands.

By revealing through sound the life that proliferates in the İKTEKSEN marsh, Brady Marks, Mark Timmings and Stephen Morris refocus our attention on these wetlands and their ecosystems that must be defended.

(1) and (2) "Des marais aux mangroves: les zones humides porteuses de solutions d'avenir", Aline Meidinger, *Le Monde - Blog Océan pour le Climat*, March 8, 2019

*Wetland Project, detail* © Nancy Angermeyer







Wetland Project, detail © Nancy Angermeyer

#### AMERICAN ROBIN (morning song)



#### RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (song)



#### PACIFIC CHORUS FROG (croaking)



Wetland Project - Detail of the musical score *Wetland Senario*



Wetland Project, detail © Nancy Angermeyer

## FROM WETLANDS TO RADIO WAVES

In 2017, the *Wetland Project* recording was broadcast for the first time on radio in Canada, in collaboration with *Vancouver Co-Op Radio*. In contrast to the radio and television programs that artificially punctuate our days, the broadcast of *Wetland Project* profoundly transforms our perception of time. In their cars, at home or at work, listeners immerse themselves in a natural soundscape and connect with life.

This year for Earth Day, *Aligre-FM* and *Radio Vassivière* are participating by broadcasting excerpts from the sound recording on their airwaves on April 22, 2023: an artistic and media intervention, which raises listeners' awareness of their surroundings.

## WETLAND SENARIO

At the Canadian Cultural Centre, an illuminated musical score is displayed on the wall: *Wetland Senario* is a musical transcription of the soundscapes recorded in the TEKTEKSEN marsh.

This composition is divided into three eight-hour movements, i.e. a twenty-four hour cycle in the marsh environment. Each movement is named according to the hours of the offices of ecclesiastical life (Matins, Vespers, Compline...), as if the beings who populate the marsh live in a monastic community, organizing their lives around rituals that give rhythm to the passage of time.

The integration of nature's sounds into a composition is part of a rich history of music: the French composer Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) was also an ornithologist. His passion for birds led him to transcribe into notes the songs he loved, and to integrate them into his musical compositions. Gifted with synaesthesia, he sometimes added colour notations to his scores. The multi-sensory influence of Messiaen's work is thus strongly reflected in the illuminated and exposed musical transcription of *Wetland Senario*.

On the mezzanine, the audio recording of the vocal ensemble *musica intima* offers an interpretation of this score. On Saturday, April 22, 2023 at the Canadian Cultural Centre, *Les Cris de Paris* also gave a performance, celebrating Earth Day and the opening of the exhibition *Wetland Project*.







# AGENDA

## EXHIBITION

From April, Monday 24 to May, Saturday 20, 2023  
Monday to Friday, from 10 am to 6 pm  
May, Saturday 20 from noon to 7 pm

## OPENING

For Earth Day, **April, Saturday 22 from noon to 8pm**  
At **4 pm, 5 pm** and **6 pm** : live performances of *Wetland Senario* by **Les Cris de Paris**

## ON THE RADIO

7th annual Earth Day broadcast of the *Wetland Project* by *slow radio*, **April, Saturday 22**:

- **Aligre FM** - Paris 93.1 FM
- **Radio Vassivière** - Royère-de-Vassivière 88.6 FM / Aubusson 88.0 FM / Ussel 92.3 FM / Meymac 103.1 FM

## EVENT

The European Night of Museums  
**May 13 from 6 pm to 11 pm**



# INFORMATION

## Production crew for the Canadian Cultural Centre:

Director: Caitlin Workman

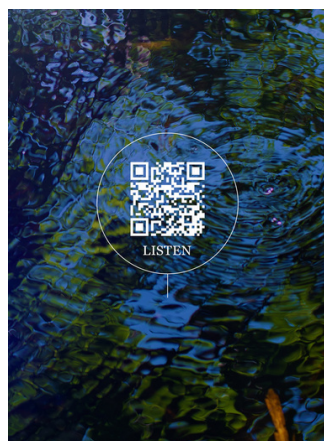
Deputy-Director and Curator of the Exhibition programme: Catherine Bédard

Technical Coordinator: Christophe Lebrun

Installers: Judith Marin, Olivier Dunsasi, Matthieu Fays, Fred Guillon, Pascal Maestri

Press and cultural promotion: Marie Cousin, Lisa Eymet, Emilie Tremblay

Administration and reception: Jean-Richard Gauthier, Julien Glaumaud, Vololona Savy, Christèle Albert



This booklet was conceived and written by Lisa Eymet, based on her research, the texts of Catherine Bédard, Brady Marks, Mark Timmings and Stephen Morris and, more widely, those published in the book *Wetland Project. Explorations in Sound, Ecology and Post-Geographical Art*.

*Wetland Project. Explorations in Sound, Ecology and Post-Geographical Art* by Brady Marks and Mark Timmings, is available in bookshops. Featuring numerous texts by the artists as well as other authors, the 288-page, beautifully designed book is published by Figure.1 (Vancouver).

# CANADIAN CULTURAL CENTRE

At the heart of Canada's cultural diplomacy in France, the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris is dedicated to promoting the most innovative contemporary Canadian creation in all artistic sectors.

With a 160m2 art gallery under a glass roof and a performance hall, the Canadian Cultural Centre welcomes Canadian artists and performers throughout the year, through contemporary art exhibitions, concerts, film screenings, literary conversations, conferences and workshops for children.

The Canadian Cultural Centre also supports Canadian cultural programming throughout France, accompanying Canadian and French institutions in their exchange and cooperation projects.

The Canadian Cultural Centre is also an active member of the Forum des instituts culturels étrangers à Paris (FICEP) supported by the Ministry of Culture since its creation in 2002.

## CONTACT

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*Cultural Promotion Officer*

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## WHERE

*Canadian Cultural Centre*

130, rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré – 75008 Paris

01 44 43 21 90

[www.canada-culture.org](http://www.canada-culture.org)

## ACCESS

The Canadian Cultural Centre is accessible to people with limited mobility.

Metro: M9 (Saint Philippe-du-Roule ou Miromesnil) – M13 (Miromesnil)

Bus: 28 – 32 – 80 – 83 – 93

## OPENING HOURS

Free access from Monday to Friday, from 10 am to 6 pm.

Last entrance at 5.40 pm.

