



FORT MASON CENTER
FOR ARTS & CULTURE

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**Joan Jonas' Major Multimedia Installation *They Come to Us without a Word*
Originally Commissioned for U.S. Pavilion at 2015 Venice Biennale
Makes U.S. Premiere at Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture This January**

Jonas to give live performances of multi-layered work *Moving Off the Land*
in conjunction with installation's opening weekend



Joan Jonas, *They Come to Us without a Word*, 2015, production still. © 2018
Joan Jonas / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

San Francisco, CA – Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture (FMCAC) announces the U.S. Premiere of *They Come to Us without a Word*, a major multi-media installation by American artist Joan Jonas. Originally commissioned for the U.S. Pavilion at the 2015 Venice Biennale, and awarded a prestigious “Special Mention” by the International Jury of the Biennale, the installation incorporates Jonas’ iconic blend of performance, video art, drawing and sculpture to create an immersive, multipart journey that addresses the fragility of the natural world. *They Come to Us without a Word* will be on view at Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture from January 17, 2019, through March 10, 2019, free and open to the public. Loan of the work and support for its presentation is generously provided by the Kramlich Collection.

For five decades, Jonas has been at the vanguard of interdisciplinary art forms. Her pioneering integration of video, sculpture, and performance creates expansive environments shifting traditional models of image making and story-telling. Considered among the most influential video and performance artists emerging from the late 1960s, Jonas continues to create new

bodies of work that consider subjects like the figure in the landscape, the ritual use of object and gesture, and the fragility of the natural environment in the age of the Anthropocene. Her work was recently the subject of a major retrospective at the Tate Modern, and she is a recipient of the 2018 Kyoto Prize, which acknowledges global achievement and contributions to humanity.

“As an arts center located in a waterfront national park, Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture is a natural setting for Jonas’s work,” says Rich Hillis, Executive Director of FMCAC. “Her work reminds us not only of the magic of nature but what we stand to lose.”

Added Frank Smigiel, Director of Arts Programming & Partnerships at FMCAC, “Joan has influenced countless artists throughout her career as she opens up what art works can be and do. She’s a trailblazer whose work we both teach and watch out for – and we at Fort Mason are honored to be showcasing this iconic installation in the U.S. for the first time.”

Inspired by Jonas’s earlier examination of Halldór Laxness’s fantastical novel *Under the Glacier*, her summers in Nova Scotia and the wonder of nature, *They Come to Us without a Word* integrates video, drawings, sound, objects and performance to construct five immersive galleries, each organized around a central image (Bees, Fish, Mirror, Wind and Homeroom). Fragments of ghost stories sourced by oral traditions from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, form a nonlinear narrative that links each gallery with the next. Through the interplay of disparate mediums, *They Come to Us without a Word* mirrors human interference with nature’s ecosystems, creating an experience where the impact of each artistic element reverberates throughout the room. Taken together, these elements form a highly complex work depicting a fractured yet interdependent chain of life.

“Although the idea of my work involves the question of how the world is so rapidly and radically changing, I do not address the subject directly or didactically,” says Jonas. “Rather, the ideas are implied poetically through sound, lighting, and the juxtaposition of images of children, animals and landscape.”

In conjunction with the exhibition, Jonas will present two live performances of *Moving Off the Land*, a mesmerizing tribute and poetic response to the power of the ocean. Commissioned by TBA21–Academy and recently presented in Tate Modern’s Turbine Hall as part of a major survey exhibition dedicated to her work, the multi-layered performance brings together readings, dance, live drawing and projections to portray the ocean’s biodiverse inhabitants and endangered marine cultures. *Moving Off the Land* will be presented on Saturday, January 19, and Sunday, January 20, 2019. Time and ticketing information to follow.

Exhibition Information

The exhibition will be on view January 17, 2019, through March 10, 2019. Wednesday-Saturday, noon-8 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m.- 5 p.m. Closed Monday-Tuesday.

Exhibition Tickets

Tickets are complimentary and can be reserved at fortmason.org/jonas beginning on Monday November 26, 2018. Due to anticipated demand, visitors are encouraged to reserve tickets in advance. A limited number of same-day tickets will be available to visitors throughout the exhibition.

Organization and Credits

Joan Jonas: *They Come to Us without a Word* is presented by Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture. Loan support generously provided by the Kramlich Collection. Originally commissioned by MIT List Visual Arts Center for the representation of the United States by Joan Jonas at La Biennale di Venezia 56th International Art Exhibition in 2015, this exhibition is the first presentation of the artwork in the USA.

Moving Off the Land. Oceans – Sketches and Notes was commissioned by TBA21–Academy, London. The performance, which recently was presented in conjunction with the artist’s retrospective at Tate Modern, builds upon work that was first presented as part of TBA21–Academy’s Convening in Kochi, India (2016).

For more information, please visit www.fortmason.org/jonas.

About Joan Jonas

Emerging from the vibrant New York art world in the late 1960s, Joan Jonas (b. 1936, New York, NY, USA) creates innovative forms across video, performance, drawing, sound, and installation. An early adopter of video technology and performance in visual art, her work continues to encourage experiments in gallery, projected image, and theater-based practices. Since pieces like *Wind* (1968), *Mirror Check* (1970), and *Organic Honey’s Vertical Roll* (1972), Jonas has explored the figure in the landscape, the ritual use of gesture and objects, time as an experience, and the poetics of masks. In recent work like *Reanimation* (2010/2012/2013) and the performance *Moving Off the Land* (2018), she combines these threads to highlight the rich ecosystems increasingly at risk in the Anthropocene.

Jonas was awarded the 2018 Kyoto Prize for Art from the Inamori Foundation in Japan, and a retrospective of her career was organized by Tate Modern in Spring 2018. Jonas has taught at MIT since 1998, and currently serves as Professor Emerita in the MIT Program in Art, Culture, and Technology. She received a B.A. in Art History from Mount Holyoke College in 1958, studied sculpture at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and received an M.F.A. in

Sculpture from Columbia University in 1965. A native New Yorker, Jonas continues to live and work in New York City.

About Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture (FMCAC)

A decommissioned military installation converted into a nonprofit cultural center in 1977, FMCAC has long been host to a lively mix of arts, educational, and cultural programming. Each year FMCAC provides more than \$2 million in support to local arts organizations, enabling groups to produce diverse and innovative artworks at the historic waterfront campus. With a nearly four-decade history as an arts and culture destination, FMCAC is now focused on reinvigorating its programming and amenities to better engage the evolving and dynamic Bay Area creative community. Central to this new vision is the commissioning and presentation of adventurous and unconventional artworks best realized in nontraditional or historic settings.

Visit fortmason.org for more information.

About the Kramlich Collection

The Kramlich Collection is recognized internationally as one of the most significant collections of media art, comprising over 150 works spanning from the 1960s to the present day. Since 1987, Pamela and Richard Kramlich have provided pioneering support for the collection, presentation and preservation of film, video, and media installation works and continue to collaborate with public institutions on loans and research projects today. In 1997, the Kramlichs founded the New Art Trust, a consortium between The Museum of Modern Art, New York, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), and Tate, UK, which has advanced presentation, conservation, and public education of media art.

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