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Timelines for the Future Christine Howard Sandoval

We already know where we exist in the land, how we have remained for thousand
sands of years in the place of our ancestors. We are rising from the ground
and literally toppling colonial structures and their monuments to genocide.
The seeds of our future have always been alive and present, and are growing
into visible manifestations of what we know to be the truth.

Christine Howard Sandoval

CHRISTINE HOWARD SANDOVAL'S PRACTICE revolves around the embodied act
of walking on sites of precarious and contested land. Negotiating the material contours
of urban and rural landscapes, their inherent layers of human memory, and their political
and ecological stakes in the present, she seeks to unlearn things as they are. Through
sustained artistic research, and working with video, drawing, and sculpture, she forges
future imaginaries of place that emerge from competing records of human inhabitation.
This encompasses neglected Native and Hispanic agrarian histories, and with them
questions about current riparian rights and land uses.

Working with community members, anthropologists, and scientists, and doing research
into historical documents, Howard Sandoval often creates scripted narratives that serve
as voice-overs in video works that trace her laborious walking paths. Using film in
experimental ways, she provides disorienting bodily perspectives that destabilize the
norms of viewing, moving away from the photographic gaze and its extraction of images
from place. Walking thus becomes an active form of knowledge creation. Her
architectonic drawings in turn counteract the distanced aesthetics of cartography,
creating forms of abstraction that incorporate human inhabitation and bodily agency.

Timelines for the Future presents a series of interrelated projects, made over a five-year
period, with the aim of foregrounding the embodied-material-conceptual thinking
unfolding in Howard Sandoval's practice, and doing justice to her long-term artistic
research. Rather than treating each artwork as a discrete object, the curatorial concept
was to activate the architecture of Oregon Contemporary with large-scale video
projections to create a landscape-like environment in which the viewer walks from place
to place, conscious of how their body moving in space echoes that of the artist walking
through the landscape. The exhibition thus speaks to viewers at an embodied level.

The exhibition's trajectory passes through a series of four architectural spaces, starting
with a corridor inhabited by *CHANNEL- A Cartography of Thirst II* (2019-21), an
architectonic adobe sculpture that recalls the form and materials of ancient waterways.

This new iteration of the work is overlaid with a mapping of the artist's research, branching into divergent meanings of the word channel: as a physical waterway, a transmitter of light and sound, and a means of using the body as a medium. As viewers pass through it, the projected words fall onto their bodies, heightening awareness of their own presence.

This sculpture leads to *CHANNEL* (2017), an immersive three-channel video that envelops the viewer in a visual and sonic meditation on the relationship between water, language, and the survival of peoples. It thinks across the disappearance of ancient cultures like Babylon, and the stakes of threatened places and peoples in the present, finding common realities.

A further performance-based video work, *Live Stream* (2018), reinscribes disappeared migratory paths and waterways in and around the site of the Acequia Madre in Taos, New Mexico; it draws on the artist's research into ancient (and still-existing) water democracies (acequias). (See transcript excerpt op 33) Filmed with a body cam, the video work sets out to deflect the surveillance-oriented nature of this technology to create an embodied portrait that foregrounds invisible and contested narratives of human inhabitation.

The nearby adobe-encrusted works on paper offer viewers a haptic sense of touching the land. The forms in these drawings correspond to passing moments in the video, recalling for example a handle on a man-made sluice being physically turned by the artist's hands. In doing so, they forge an abstraction that makes space for place-making and for people. They become a placeholder for suppressed Native and Hispanic agrarian knowledge and its ecological stakes in the present, and invoke histories of presence and questions about contemporary rights to land and waterways.

The final room is one of the first public presentations of *A wall is a shadow on the land* (2020-), a new project that deconstructs the story of Spanish missionization through the forms of its architecture: modularized constructions built on top of Indigenous sacred sites and architectures throughout the Pacific Coast, from South America to Alta California. A new set of large-scale drawings contemplates the relationship between colonial architecture and its apparatuses of control. In these drawings traditional Spanish arches return to form the inner contours of the corra, a wooden hobble chained around the legs of Native workers who defied the authority of the missionaries.

The surrounding archival installation, created especially for *Timelines for the Future*, speaks across the gaps between received colonial accounts and lived Native experience known to the artist through her ancestors' experiences of the Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa and Mission Nuestra Señora de la Soledad.

Pages from the artist's school history project on the missions, undertaken when she was a ten-year-old child being raised in California, are juxtaposed with notes by ethnologist

and linguist J.P. Harrington (1884-1961), found colonial images, and Howard Sandoval' sketches and photographs of architectural typologies and reconstituted colonial imagery. Walking us through the silences implicit in these neglected and suppressed histories, Howard Sandoval's practice demands contemporary accountability, so that a timeline for a better future can be gleaned from the ecological and political realities of the present.

Lucy Cotter / 2022