



[Allora & Calzadilla: Intervals](#)

Allora & Calzadilla
Philadelphia Museum of Art
2600 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia 19130
December 12, 2014 - April 5, 2015

Here, Listen: *Allora & Calzadilla: Intervals*
by S V Km

“*Intervals* revels in the unknowable as essential to human experience. The exhibition bears witness to incomplete presences and resonant remainders. It finds in music a measure and a reckoning with these elusive forces and the abyss that lies between.”

—Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla

Gesamtkunstwerk, as German-defined, is a work that sums all arts—aural, visual, and performative—to total a perfect affective state. No other word seems capable of describing the mission of Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla in *Intervals*. Echoing their artistic partnership, the massive exhibition, which opened to the public on Friday, is produced by the coupling of two revered Philadelphia institutions, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Fabric Workshop, and is split between the two locations. With both old projects and new works created especially for the show, it follows that Allora and Calzadilla seek to fill the space in and between the buildings with meaning if not quantity.

Indeed, almost all of the works achieve exceeding profundity for a sumptuously Wagnerian, almost spiritual experience. Uniting performance, music, film, and sculpture, the works do justice to the efforts of multiple collaborators such as the local choir The Crossing, the chamber ensemble Relâche, and composers David Lang and Christopher Rountree. The communal participation is not surprising: while Allora is a Philadelphia native and the two work in Calzadilla’s birth country (state) Puerto Rico, the pieces aspire to an atavistic universality predating and beyond colonial histories, beyond post-colonial theories, and beyond the twisted biases of human language. As such, the subjects in the works often communicate through transforming ancient, even animal artifacts like a Venus figurine in *3* (2013), a billions year old stone in *Lifespan* (2014), or a flute carved from a griffin vulture in *Raptor’s Rapture* (2012) into instruments. On the other hand are the glorious classical harmonies in *In the Midst of Things* (2014) that simultaneously evoke flocking behavior and narrate the psychological vicissitudes of creation. The reaffirmation of the human into the natural cycle by the reanimation of things in some part destroyed by modern society is a romantic even trendy notion. However, hearing Hayden’s rearranged *The Creation* resounding through the PMA in reverse was an eerily up-lifting, even transcendent experience. A return is also a journey to somewhere, it seemed to say, a sentiment that runs throughout *Intervals*.

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Allora & Calzadilla, *The Great Silence*, 2014

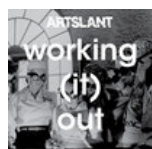
While the exhibition is undeniably moving in swathes, the cosmic proportions left me with a slightly uncomfortable aftertaste at times. The extreme emotional register forced the human to abstract into The Human and even as Allora and Calzadilla profess to explore of communication, I felt cut off, like an atheist watching a church service or a TV watcher of the moon landing—or worse, a little tricked by the drama. That said, I found *The Great Silence* (2014) to be the most interesting of the works. In a 3-channel video installation, a parrot laments how while humans obsess over finding life in space—a modern day search for God—it ignores the profuse bio-societies that inhabit earth, leading to the preset day near extinction of its kind. Not to be flippant, but in the rarified world of *Intervals*, I wonder: who is the parrot?

—[S V Kim](#)

(Image at top: Allora & Calzadilla, *Raptor's Rapture*, 2012, Single channel video projection with sound, 23:30 min; © the artists)

Posted by [S V Kim](#) on 12/12/14 | tags: [video-art performance](#)

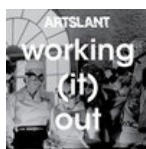
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