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GOVERNORS ISLAND ARTS AND NRDC PRESENT JENNY KENDLER: OTHER OF PEARL

Immersive Art Exhibition Explores Human Relationships with the Natural World and Possibilities for Ecological Restoration

Project Opens June 14 at Governors Island’s Historic Fort Jay

(NEW YORK) April 30, 2024 – Governors Island Arts and NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council) today announced a partnership to present Other of Pearl, a site-specific public art exhibition by Jenny Kendler telling the story of our planet’s changing climate.

Located in the historic Fort Jay on Governors Island, Other of Pearl considers the oyster and whale as central players in the ecological and economic entanglement between human and nonhuman beings. The artist confronts contemporary environmental issues—ocean noise, chemical pollution, climate change and sea level rise—while pointing to the extractive histories that form the origin stories of our climate crisis.

Other of Pearl opens to the public on Friday, June 14, and will be open Wednesday to Sunday through the end of October at historic Fort Jay, part of the Governors Island National Monument. The exhibit marks the first public art exhibition opening on Governors Island following the March 2024 announcement of the Trust for Governors Island’s new Head Curator and Vice President for Arts and Culture, Lauren Haynes, who joined in March 2024.

“I am thrilled that Other of Pearl is the centerpiece of our 2024 Governors Island Arts programming,” said Lauren Haynes, Head Curator and Vice President for Arts and Culture at the Trust for Governors Island. “Working with Jenny, NRDC, and the Governors Island team on a project that touches on many of the pillars of our programming has been a delight and we look forward to welcoming visitors to the Island this summer to experience it.”

Kendler’s first solo exhibition in New York City, Other of Pearl features a series of seven intimate, delicate works—all displayed in the cavernous, subterranean magazine of historic Fort Jay, a star-shaped fortification built on Governors Island between 1775 and 1776. In darkened rooms that echo with whale song, visitors will encounter pearl sculptures grown inside oysters, bells rung by fossilized whale ear bones, a crystalline whale eye cast of sea salt and human tears, glass vials filled with oil from long dead whales, and a human nervous system meticulously strung from thousands of tiny pearls. In the adjoining galleries, two large handblown glass instruments evoke the organs humpback and sperm whales use to communicate, inviting visitors’ sonic activation. David Gruber of Project CETI has provided the whale recordings that
become part of these sound works. After the conclusion of the exhibition, pearl sculptures from the show will be auctioned to raise funds to help create a new oyster reef alongside project partner Billion Oyster Project, redistributing resources in a gesture of ecological restoration. A full description of individual works featured as part of the exhibition can be found at govisland.org.

“While climate change can be overwhelming, confusing and polarizing—art has a unique ability to reach people and help us process the challenge,” said Kristin Wilson-Palmer, Chief Communications Officer for NRDC. “This beautiful and powerful new exhibit from Jenny Kendler brings people together for reflection and conversation on the most significant environmental challenge of our time—and, hopefully, will inspire them to act.”

An interdisciplinary ecological artist, environmental activist, naturalist and wild forager whose work has been exhibited nationally and internationally at museums, biennials, public spaces and natural areas, Jenny Kendler’s work focuses on climate change and biodiversity loss. Her practice seeks to decenter human and re-enchant our relationship to the more-than-human-world. Since 2014, she has been the first Artist-in-Residence with NRDC, a co-presenter of Other of Pearl. Recent exhibitions of Kendler’s work include Dear Earth at Hayward Gallery in London, UK, Water After All at the MCA Chicago, Music for Elephants at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, and Indicators: Artists on Climate Change at Storm King Art Center.

Governors Island Arts presents its program with the visionary support of the Ford Foundation, as well the Mellon Foundation, the Charina Endowment Fund, Donald R. Mullen Family Foundation, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, The Gottesman Fund, Donald A. Pels Charitable Trust, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature. Additional support for Other of Pearl is provided by the Ripple Foundation as well as Roseate Jewelry.

Additional programs will be announced in the coming months. For visitor hours and more information, visit govisland.org.

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About Governors Island Arts

Governors Island Arts, the public arts and cultural program presented by the Trust for Governors Island, creates transformative encounters with art for all New Yorkers, inviting artists and researchers to engage with the issues of our time in the context of the Island’s layered histories, environments, and architecture. Governors Island Arts achieves this mission through temporary and long-term public art commissions, an annual Organization in Residence program in the Island’s historic houses, and free public programs and events in partnership with a wide range of cross-disciplinary NYC cultural organizations. Recent artworks commissioned by
Governors Island Arts includes projects by Charles Gaines, Sam Van Aken, Duke Riley, Shantell Martin, and Mark Dion. For more information visit govisland.org.

About NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council)

NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council) is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 3 million members and online activists. Established in 1970, NRDC uses science, policy, law and people power to confront the climate crisis, protect public health and safeguard nature. NRDC has offices in New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Bozeman, MT, Beijing and Delhi (an office of NRDC India Pvt. Ltd).