

Transcription Jen Valender - *The Ocean Wants You Back*,

GERTRUDE STREET PROJECTION FESTIVAL

Hello, I'm Jen Valender.

The idea for *The Ocean Wants You Back* came when I witnessed high rise window cleaners abseiling in situ in the CBD. They seemed so relaxed as they worked—they were even whistling along to a song on the radio.

It almost seemed as if they had forgotten how high they were. As if they were accustomed to the precarious conditions. I thought, wow. What a common predicament. It's so easy to forget our fragility, our vulnerability. This is why the window cleaners are pertinent to me when thinking of the future.

Three figures are lowered from the top of the projection, all dressed in white, hospital-like, hazmat suits. Each figure is similar in size and weight; their faces and skin are concealed. As the figures descend, they erase the surface of a building, cleaning each section away with squeegees to reveal a volatile sea.

I find the power of natural forces both captivating and terrifying. In particular, I was thinking about other artists who have been inspired by the command of the ocean when making this work — Hokusai's, *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* and Turner's *Stormy Skies*.

This version of the future has been created using footage from the past, when an ocean in Hawaii was on fire after a volcano erupted. In the projection embers float amongst the waves, as a storm travels vertically, pulsing upward, across the right side of the building. On the left, billows of gold and blood orange smoke roll across the surface. At any moment a cleaner could fall away.

Slowing down the speed of the ocean in this work was important to me to highlight the time required for our minds to catch up with sensory experiences. I've heard skydivers say this also. That the freefall passes over the senses, yet it's once the parachute opens, and the mind has time to process the depth of the height below, that the panic sets in.

The Ocean Wants You Back is concerned with attentiveness, yet also appreciating the overwhelming magnificence of natural forces.

Song intro and outro credit:

Clara Smith, *Deep Blue Sea Blues*

Written by Clara Smith (1894 - 1935)

Performed by Clara Smith. Saxophone and piano accompaniment. Recording date: n/a

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