



About to Happen Cecilia Vicuña



About to Happen

Cecilia Vicuña



My art was born in Con cón, an ancient ritual site facing the tallest mountain of the Western Hemisphere: the Aconcagua.

The Aconcagua River meets the Pacific Ocean in Con cón, a place boundless energy is unleashed: the inversion of separation, the birth of union.

Today they say: at the meeting point of fresh and salty water, a potential electric power for the world emerges.

The first peoples of Chile called it *Con cón* (*Qon qon /Kon kon*): “water, water.”

Con is the female life force, the name of the sea, the “Great mother” transforming herself.

The Ocean,
Inner space
The West
Meditation
& Chaos.





see

sign

say

I began weaving a non weaving

for the sea to see

Weaving with

the sea

Weaving with

the waves.









End Notes

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Julia Bryan-Wilson: Because we are having this conversation on the occasion of your exhibition in New Orleans, I want to focus on questions about land and site and the ocean, all of which are significant elements in your new work that appear consistently across your entire oeuvre. Can you begin by narrating some of your performances from the mid- and late 1960s that took place on the shore in Chile? I'm especially interested in how you were theorizing transience and change in some of your very earliest pieces on the lip of the sea.

Cecilia Vicuña: I like that expression, “on the lip of the sea.” You know that the sea for the ancient people of Concón is “la mar,” which is a feminine incarnation. So the sea is perceived as the life force—the life force of this earth. I learned that recently, in the last fifteen years. But as a kid, I had the sense that I was conceived in front of the ocean, in the meeting point between Viña del Mar and Valparaíso, which is a large cliff overseeing the ocean. I was going to the sea even when I was in my mother's tummy, and there are pictures of me playing in Concón at the age of maybe a year old, two years old. So the passion for the sea, being touched by the sea, was a constant in my life. There are home movies from when I was still a baby, and I'm already dancing with the ocean, even though I can hardly walk. It's a deeply felt, visceral relationship.

My art began on a given day in the year 1966, in January, when I felt that the ocean was alive and had as much awareness as I do now. I felt in complete awe and my life changed in that very moment, because I had this awareness—an awareness of its awareness. I felt that I needed to respond, to make a sign to indicate to the ocean that I understood. So, I picked up a little stick that was just lying about. It was this beach that has a lot of debris. I stood it up, and once I stood it up, making it vertical, I knew that in that change—between horizontal and vertical—I had woven my place in the world. Even by telling you this, I am overcome by emotion from thinking that something so simple could have such an effect on the ocean, the sea, and myself—at the meeting point of sea and human being.

From that moment forward, I continued doing that. After I put the first stick, I began making sort of a spiral design, and planting more sticks, and ordering the debris. That year, I had just finished high school. I was still a teenager. I was intending to enter architecture school.

Floating Between Past and Future: The Indigenization of Environmental Politics

Lucy Lippard

Cecilia Vicuña: About to Happen

Curated by Andrea Andersson, The Helis Foundation Chief Curator of Visual Arts
at the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans

This artist's book is the second in a collaborative series between Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans and Siglio in which artists are invited to intervene in the history and space of the book.

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