

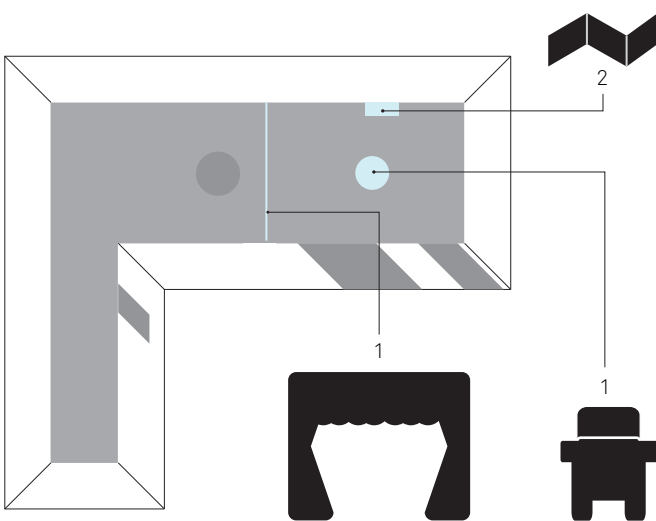
# Jeanine Oleson

## HEAR, HERE

April 23–July 6, 2014

The New Museum hosts the first museum presentation of work by Jeanine Oleson. Taking the form of a multiplatform project, Oleson's "Hear, Here" asks: How can we attune ourselves to each other? Where is the agency in language? What does it really mean to listen? This exhibition brings together a series of *shaped* documents and other props from previous presentations by the artist as well as new objects for the making of an experimental opera. Many of these objects are not exactly sculptures—they have been built for future use as catalysts to sharpen and call attention to the act of looking and listening. The show also serves to provide an interactive space during the Gallery Sessions. In early June, many of these items will move downstairs, where they will be employed in a live event that knits together existential strife, physical metamorphosis, and the aesthetic-political potential of the human voice with some extant humor.

Checklist elaborations below are written by Jeanine Oleson.



### 1. **Stage, 2014**

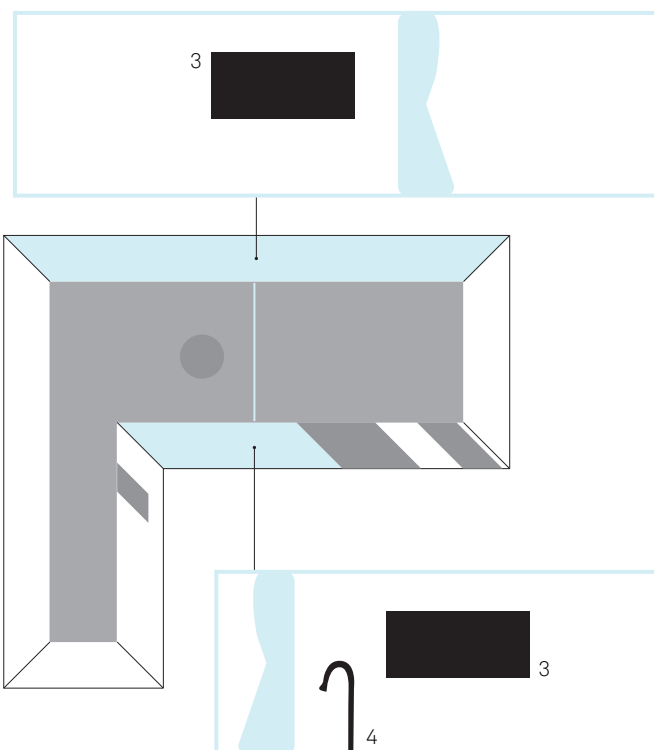
Theater chair, velvet curtains  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy the artist

This façade of a theater is meant to bring an immediate sense of questioning—what is this presentation? What is a theater? How can a viewer enter onto and through a staging? These questions and expectations are what I hope to center on in the presentation of objects that are beyond this curtain.

### 2. **Untitled, 2014**

Photo intaglio print  
36 x 7 1/4 in (91.4 x 18.4 cm)  
Courtesy the artist  
Printed by Marina Ancona, 10 Grand Press, Brooklyn

The dimensionality of this accordion print suggests an expanding and collapsing architecture of image and landscape, as well as a way of thinking about interiority and exteriority topologically. It shows images of physical interaction, vocal cords, and looking out of a cave. I think of it as a concept map and conflation of voice, body, and landscape.



### 3. **The Rocky Horror Opera Show, 2014**

Two-channel video installation on monitors  
49:13 min  
Courtesy the artist

This two-channel video is a document of an event, "The Rocky Horror Opera Show" (RHOS) at the New Museum, which occurred on March 7. A collaboration with Cori Ellison, an opera dramaturg and this season's music curator, RHOS grew out of my inquiry into opera audiences and my sense that they are highly engaged and yet necessarily bound by convention. I wanted to create a situation in which the contract of theater and the fourth wall were temporarily suspended, and viewers were understood to also be performers and encouraged to have fun and play with the temporary freedom. The audience was provided with costumes, loosely based on the specific well-loved arias being performed.

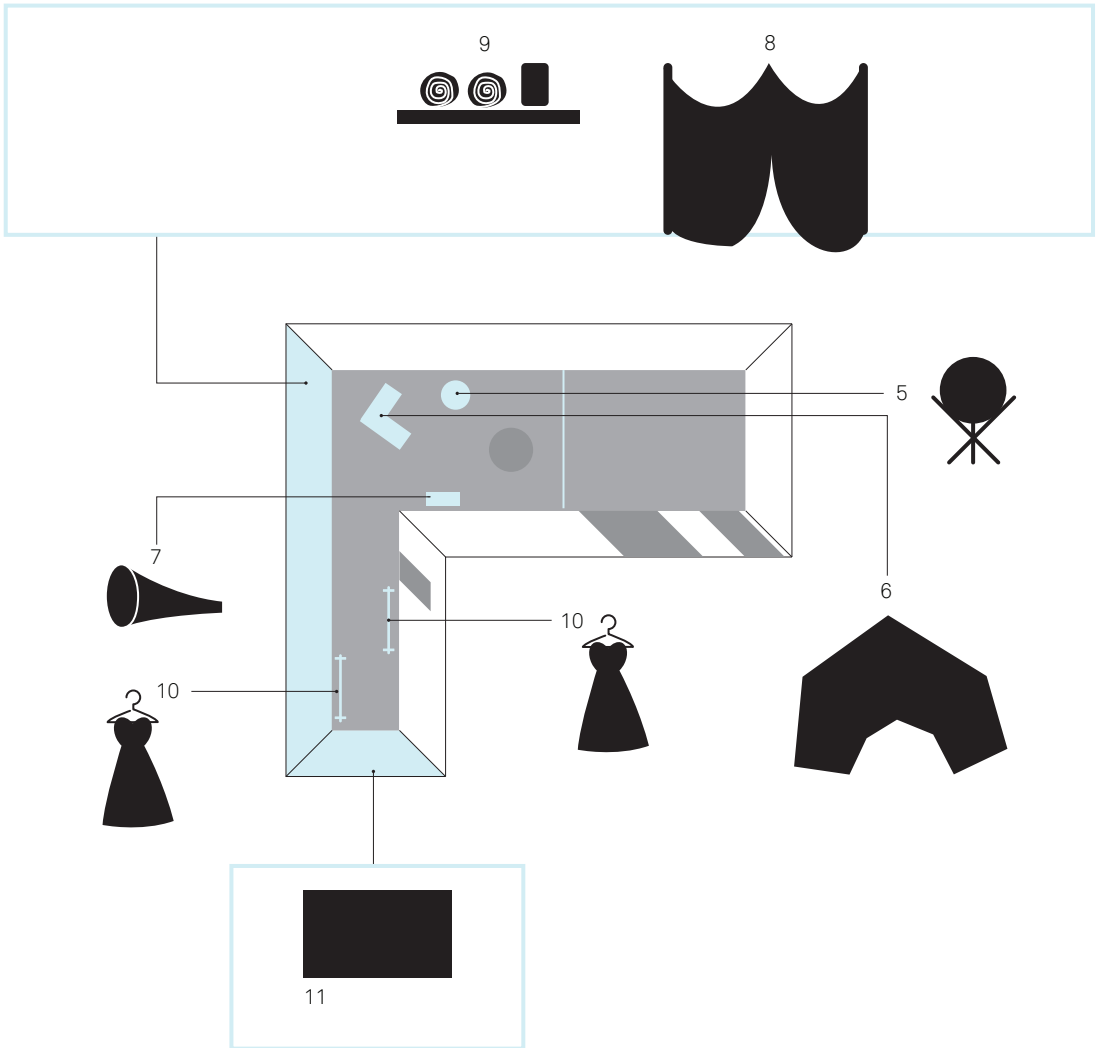
Performers: Amelia Watkins (soprano), Sarah Heltzel (mezzo-soprano), Cameron Schutzka (tenor), Robert Balonek (baritone), Eric Malson (pianist)  
Costume design: Kim Charles Kay; Director of Photography: Paul Yee; Camera: Maricruz Alarcón, Alex Gallitano, Mina Pekovic; Editor: Anita Chao; Audio recording/mixing: Rainy Orteca

Works performed: Habanera, from *Carmen* by Georges Bizet; Toreador Song, from *Carmen* by Georges Bizet; "La donna è mobile," from *Rigoletto* by Giuseppe Verdi; Musetta's Waltz, from *La Bohème* by Giacomo Puccini; Valentin's Aria, from *Faust* by Charles Gounod; "Voi lo sapete," from *Cavalleria rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni; Mad Scene, from *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Gaetano Donizetti; "Vesti la giubba," from *Pagliacci* by Ruggero Leoncavallo; "Bella figlia dell'amore," from *Rigoletto* by Giuseppe Verdi

### 4. **Shepherd's Crook, 2014**

Wormwood, Myrtle wood  
66 x 5 x 2 in (167.8 x 12.7 x 5 cm)  
Courtesy the artist

This is a handmade shepherd's crook used to handle sheep, but is also well known as an old Vaudeville trope: a tool for removing a bad performer from stage. "By hook or by crook," meaning "by any means necessary," points back to the beginnings of policing the commons in British society. In the case of the performance, it is an efficient, yet hilarious, means of abruptly ending a scene or situation.



**5.**  
***Ocu-light, 2014***

Acrylic, lens, LED bulb, metal stand  
22 x 22 x 60 in (55.9 x 55.9 x 152.4 cm)  
Courtesy the artist

This, too, is a reversal of a typical physical operation—an eye, normally the source of gathering light, becomes a concentrated projection of light outward. This piece is meant to “illuminate” situations in both exhibition and performance settings. Fabricated with Chuck McAlexander, the Brass Lab, Brooklyn.

**6.**  
***Mountain/Cave, 2014***

Wood, paint, handmade wool felt  
11 x 8 2/3 x 8 1/2 ft (335.28 x 264.2 x 269.2 cm)  
Courtesy the artist

This is a major set piece in the opera, as the entire two-act structure forms around its paradoxical nature both physically and mythologically. A mountain is the metaphoric material of conquering, religion, and capitalism, while the cave is a key philosophical signifier of knowledge and representation as well as the unknown. The combined mountain/cave form offers a physical representation of interiority and exteriority similar to the terms assigned to the human mind/body, while also complicating such binaries. The physical proportions of this piece also produce a sharp, angular exteriority and a dense, absorbent interior of handmade felt. I chose felt as a material because it represents a complex surface that both absorbs sound and acts as a natural wall completely different in feel yet visually similar to a rock wall. The felt is made in collaboration with Kim Charles Kay.

**7.**  
***Auri-horn, 2014***

Polished brass with five 3-D printed plastic inserts  
40 x 12 x 9 in (101.6 x 30.5 x 22.9 cm)  
Courtesy the artist

This is a brass instrument designed as a representation of the inner, middle, and outer human ear. There are also inserts based on the shape of human vocal tracts as they make the sounds of different vowels. Brass instruments are often associatively played in relation to human voice, so in this case the function of the ear—listening—is inverted, and instead becomes an unlikely source of utterance. Fabricated by Chuck McAlexander, the Brass Lab, Brooklyn.

**8.**  
***Momentary Curtain, 2014***

Bleached fabric, poles  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy the artist

This portable curtain functions as a second curtain that defines a conventional stage for the experimental opera. It will be held up to create a momentary theater. The stenciled designs are based on an eclipse or a heightened sense of two states crossing, or another form of paradox.

**9.**  
***“Scores,” 2014***

Fired and glazed clay  
14 x 12 in (35.6 x 30.5 cm) each  
Courtesy the artist

This is a series of clay scores that are to be used by singers who intuitively “feel out” notations with their fingers rather than read them on a page. I wanted to think about a section of the performance that asked someone to physically navigate their way through sound and, in so doing, heighten and prioritize the act of interpretation. These tablets look back to early histories of language notation, but also conjure landscapes both actual and fantastical. This case will be added to over the course of the exhibition as new scores are made.

**10.**  
***Costumes for The Rocky Horror Opera Show, 2014***

Found, sewn, and glued fabric  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy the artist  
Designed by Kim Charles Kay

These were the costumes for the audience of “The Rocky Horror Opera Show.” They loosely represent the different types of characters present in the arias performed, but because they were worn by everyone except the opera singers themselves, connote outside the frameworks they are usually meant to enforce. You’ll see costumes for Carmens, bloody Lucias, sad clowns, hunchbacks, bohemians, as well as the eternal cast of rich and poor people represented in operas.

**11.**  
***Untitled, 2014***

Archival inkjet print  
42 x 34 in (107 x 86 cm)  
Courtesy the artist

This image depicts a landscape that looks like a throat. In actuality, it is a sinkhole in the earth, which is also the beginning of a cave. This image simply, formally, begs the question: What is the exterior, and where does the interior begin?