

Olafur Eliasson – Artist Statement

Great Salt Lake is a dynamic living system. Its rhythms shape the region, and its future is inseparable from our own. When we engage with Great Salt Lake – look at it and listen to it – can we experience, or even feel, the immense scale of what is disappearing? In working with *Wake the Great Salt Lake*, I contemplated how I could truly honour the magnificence of the lake and acknowledge the systems of interdependence that surround it: the microorganisms, insects, amphibians, birds, reptiles, and other animals that live in and off it; the water, air, and soil that compose it; and even the weather patterns that it affects.

I believe that art can add something emotional and tangible to the larger campaign to save the lake, in ways that scientific data, news reports, and policy discussions cannot. Together with the Welsh music producer Koreless, I have transformed over 150 field recordings of animals that depend on the lake and natural phenomena into what I call an “orchestral parliament.” In audio layers that overlap and interrupt one another, the parliament brings together a swarm of brine flies, migratory bird calls, the bellowing of grazing bison, and the sounds of over a hundred other animal species. Their non-human voices are amplified and translated into rhythmic patterns accessible to human ears, so that the lake can be perceived by residents and visitors in a new light – perhaps even for the first time.

The symphony is carefully orchestrated to harmonize with visuals of light and colour that ripple across the surface of a large, elevated sphere in Memory Grove. Inspired by nature, the forms appear at times to be organically structured and crystalline while at other times they flow into abstract washes of colour.

After sundown, visitors can meet up in the park to witness this inspiring symphony as though they were attending a concert performed by nature itself, a moment of celebration that is larger than ourselves, that speaks up for Great Salt Lake.