

SPONSORS

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If you would like to contribute to SPACES, please call: 216.621.2314



The R&D (Research & Development) program invites artists, curators, and other cultural producers to articulate their investigation of ideas through a supported project that may take the form of solo, group, or collaborative endeavors.

WAITING FOR A BREAK

Julia Christensen (Oberlin, OH)

On view: January 26 - March 23, 2018



WAITING FOR A BREAK

Waiting for a Break is an interdisciplinary art project by Julia Christensen that tracks Lake Erie's winter ice as it forms, shifts, and breaks—in real time—during the winter of 2017-2018. Christensen installed seven networked cameras on South Bass Island, Gibraltar Island, and in the Maumee Bay, all on the western end of the lake, to capture continuous footage of the water's surface. She installed an outdoor video kiosk, at Public Square in downtown Cleveland, that displays live feeds from these cameras in real time from December 2017 - May 2018 (thanks to a LANDFORM commission from LAND studio). At SPACES, the gallery context inspired Christensen to examine the changes that occur over time on the lake. While the live feeds connect us to what is happening in this very moment on Lake Erie, the exhibition here affords us an extended view, using time-lapse videos and digital prints of screenshots taken from the cameras. The exhibition also contains research materials related to the project; the live feeds are on view in the gallery and storefront at SPACES as well.

In Northeast Ohio, most people turn away from the lake in the winter, save for the few ice fishers and lake-dwellers who brave the cold. *Waiting for a Break* brings winter images of the lake into the public sphere from points not easily accessed by humans, so that we can better understand how it changes in these dark months. The project raises questions about the relationship between ice coverage on the lake and climate change patterns. Shifting the focus to the freezing body of water in our own backyard during the winter gives us an understanding of year-round concerns: lake water levels, harmful algae blooms, recreation, water temperature, and safety efforts. Ice coverage on the lake is a crucial part of the ecosystem's healthy year-round cycle, and it has become increasingly erratic. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in 2017 ice coverage topped out at 20%, while in 2012 the ice only covered 13% of the lake, and in 2014 it covered 93%. As of this writing in January 2018, ice cover on Lake Erie is at 80%. Now more than ever, it is important to understand the winter months on our lakes, and how these conditions indicate larger systemic patterns.

ARTIST BIO

Julia Christensen is an artist and writer whose work explores systems of technology, consumerism, landscape, and memory. Her work has been exhibited at the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, MN), Ronald Feldman Fine Arts Gallery (NYC, NY), Eyebeam (NYC, NY), Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland (Cleveland, OH), and the Carnegie Museum of Art (Pittsburgh, PA), and internationally in France, Greece, Finland, and beyond.

Christensen is a 2017-2018 fellow at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) Art + Tech Lab. She is a recent recipient of a Creative Capital Fellowship, a MacDowell Fellowship, the Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award, and the SPACES R + D Award. Her public art works have been commissioned by LAND studio (Cleveland, OH) and Artisphere (Arlington, VA). She has been awarded artist residencies at the MacDowell Colony, Wexner Center for the Arts, and the Experimental Television Center. Christensen is the author of *Big Box Reuse* (MIT Press, 2008), which won the Association of American University Presses' "Book of the Year" award in the trade non-fiction category, and was named one of Amazon.com's Top Ten Art Books of 2008. Her writing has appeared in *Cabinet*, *Orion*, and *Print* magazines, and online at *Hyperallergic* and *Slate*. Christensen's writing and artwork have been reviewed in publications such as *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, *Bookforum*, *The New York Review of Books*, *Village Voice*, *Art in America*, and *The Washington Post*.

Christensen received her BA in Integrated Art at Bard College, MFA in Electronic Music and Recording Media at Mills College, and MFA in Integrated Electronic Arts at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She is Associate Professor of Integrated Media in the Studio Art Department at Oberlin College.

For more information about the artist, visit: www.juliachristensen.com.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Waiting for a Break was made possible by SPACES and LAND studio, who have supported the project since its inception. At SPACES, thanks go to Christina Vassallo, Karl Anderson, and Bruce Edwards for their wisdom and flexibility. Thanks to the SPACES R&D program for the resources to continue research for this major undertaking. LAND studio facilitated the development of the public art piece with the initial LANDFORM commission; special thanks to Erin Guido, Vince Reddy, and Nora Romanoff at LAND studio, Joshua Cornett and Bara Abu Jries at ForeFront Technology, and Dustin Wadsworth at Cleveland Public Square. Thanks also to the Char and Chuck Fowler Foundation.

Stone Lab, the Lake Erie island-based laboratory of the Ohio Sea Grant (operated by The Ohio State University), has provided substantial in-kind support for this project. A huge thanks goes to Matt Thomas, Lab Manager at Stone Lab, who helped with every aspect of the installation and oversight of the cameras installed on South Bass and Gibraltar Island, while also providing a wealth of context and inspiration about the Sandusky Bay islands and the Lab. Thanks to George Oommen for technical support on the islands, Eddie Herdendorf, Professor Emeritus of OSU/Stone Lab for the generous introductions to the Lab in the first place, and to Chris Winslow, Director of the Ohio Sea Grant, for his tremendous enthusiasm.

At the Lake Erie Center, the aquatic research center at the University of Toledo, thanks go to Pam Struffolino, Research Operations Manager of the LEC, and Jason Bolbach, UNIX/Software Specialist and Information Technology Staff at the University of Toledo. Both were instrumental in installing the camera on the Maumee Bay.

At Oberlin College, thanks to Caspian Alavi-Flint, Helen He, Zaid Milefchik, the talented young artists/computer scientists who assisted on the project. These three students committed valuable time to the project, from Ohio to California. Thanks to Kyle Hartzell, Digital Media Technologist, Ryan Miller, Network Administrator, and to the Dean's Office for additional support.

Waiting for a Break is dedicated to the scientists and science educators who work to help us understand and protect our planet, using reality-based, peer-reviewed, time-tested scientific methods. And to my family: Kristian, who inspires me with his tireless support, and our children, Max and Luca, who we hope will experience ice, snow, and all four seasons as adults.

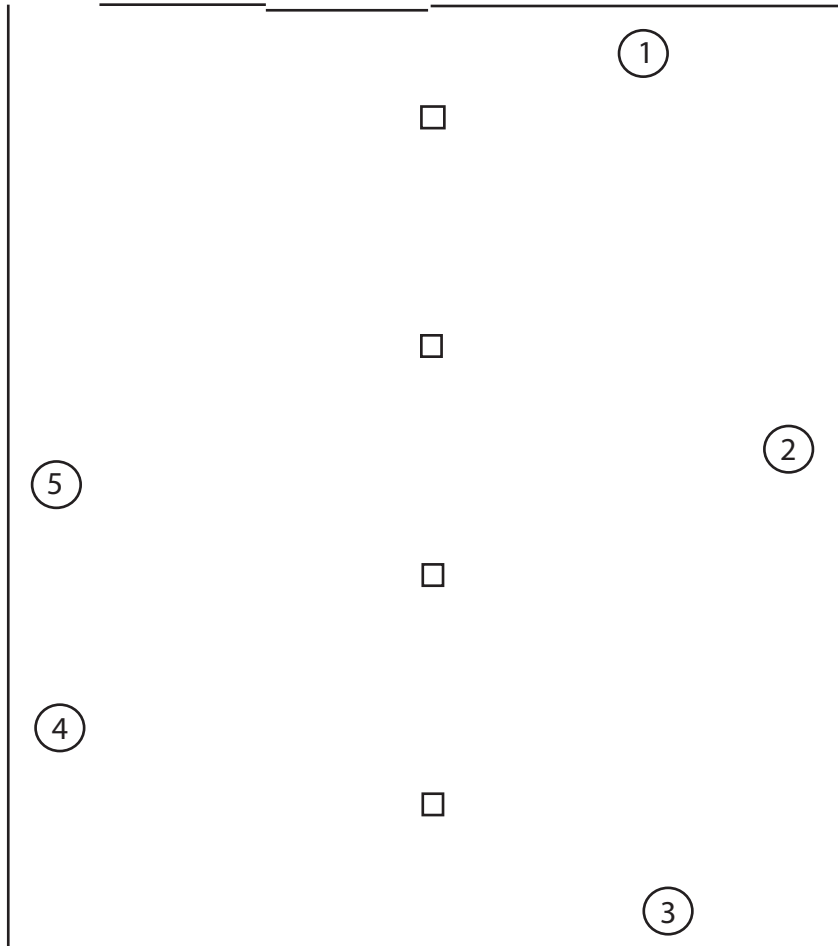
The Great Lakes are bordered by eight states, at least ten federally recognized tribes, and two countries, so a disparate conglomeration of local, state, and federal governments collaboratively maintain this massive natural resource. With so many local municipalities directly involved in the Great Lakes' environment and industries, policy decisions often favor the economic interests of specific communities over the health of the entire lake system. The Great Lakes are a perfect example of why we need collective, public oversight of our environmental treasures. Decisions made to protect these lakes benefit all of us in the long run—it has been said that the wars of this century are being fought over oil, and the wars of the next century will be fought over water. Only 2.5% of the water on Earth is fresh, and 20% of that freshwater is contained in the Great Lakes system, the largest land surface reservoir of freshwater on the planet.

As we've seen so far this winter, ice formation is not a straight line, it is nuanced and constantly changing. *Waiting for a Break* presents live feeds through the spring so that we can track the activity and witness the break we've all been waiting for—the ice vanishing on Lake Erie. But while we anticipate warmer temperatures, this project emphasizes the critical need to prioritize public discussion about the health of the Great Lakes, because the Great Lakes have been waiting for a break for a long, long time.

FOLLOW

Learn more about *Waiting for a Break* on Facebook at facebook.com/waitingforabreak, on Instagram at [@waitingforabreak](https://instagram.com/@waitingforabreak), and on Twitter at [@waiting4abreak](https://twitter.com/@waiting4abreak). The project website and live feeds can be found at www.waitingforabreak.org.

ARTWORKS



1. *Cold Snap* (Peach Point, South Bass Island, 1/2/18-1/10/18)
Single channel video installation, 16:9, color, silent, variable dimensions, 01:20:00

24-hour video footage captured for nine days on two cameras on Peach Point, South Bass Island, Lake Erie, between January 2 and January 11, 2018.

2. *Three Weeks* (Stone Lab Dock, South Bass Island, 12/13/17-1/3/18)
3-channel video installation, 16:9, color, silent, variable dimensions, 01:13:00

24-hour video footage captured for three weeks on a camera on the Stone Lab Dock, South Bass Island, Lake Erie. The first video displays footage from December 13-19, 2017; the second spans December 20-27, 2017; the third is from December 28, 2017-January 3, 2018.

3. *New Year* (Gibraltar Island, South Bass Island, 1/1/18-1/7/18)
Single channel video installation, 16:9, color, silent, variable dimensions, 01:2:00

24-hour video footage captured for seven days on a camera on Gibraltar Island between January 1 and January 7, 2018.

4. *Screen Shots Around 5PM* (Gibraltar Island, 12/27/17-1/14/18)
Digital prints, dimensions variable

Eight screen shots selected from a camera feed on Gibraltar Island at 5PM between December 28, 2017 and January 14, 2018.

5. *Waiting for a Break: The Live Feeds*

Website, 6 networked surveillance cameras

Peach Point, South Bass Island, Lake Erie, Ohio

Stone Lab Dock (1), South Bass Island, Lake Erie, Ohio

Stone Lab Dock (2), South Bass Island, Lake Erie, Ohio

Stone Lab Dining Hall, Gibraltar Island, Lake Erie, Ohio

Barney Cottage, Gibraltar Island, Lake Erie, Ohio

Lake Erie Center, University of Toledo, Lake Erie, Oregon, Ohio