



# HARA MUSEUM ARC

## Special Exhibit: Janet Cardiff – The Forty Part Motet (A reworking of “Spem in Alium” by Thomas Tallis 1573)

Saturday, March 15 – Sunday, May 11, 2025

Gallery A at Hara Museum ARC



[1] Johanniterkirche, Feldkirch, Austria, 2005 Photo by Markus Tretter  
Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York / Gallery Koyanagi

Gallery A at Hara Museum ARC, designed by Arata Isozaki, is a space illuminated by natural light pouring in through a 12-meter-high skylight supported by four cedar pillars, the intensity modulated by the passing clouds. Although the gallery embodies the characteristics of a white cube for contemporary art works, the feel of nature is visceral within a space that was designed as an expression of “ma,” the spatial and temporal concepts that form the essence of Japanese aesthetics. In this space, we present Janet Cardiff's sound installation *The Forty Part Motet*.

Created by Cardiff early in her career, this polyphonic work is based on *Spem in Alium* by Thomas Tallis, the 16th century English composer and organist for the Chapel Royal. Since its inception in 2001, it has moved the hearts of people throughout the world wherever it has been shown, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and in Japan at the Ginza Maison Hermes Forum (2009) and other venues.

In the gallery, all one sees and hears are 40 speakers arranged in an oval and 40 voices, one per speaker, first heard individually but then coming together in the here and now to transform the venue into an immersive space. In terms of lyrics, there are only a few lines, but the experience of a space sculpturally constructed by sound is an overwhelming one and a visceral reminder of art's transcendent nature.

Since the days of its predecessor, the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art (Shinagawa, Tokyo), the focus of Hara Museum ARC has been to provide



Skylight in Gallery A at Hara Museum ARC

viewers with unique spatial and temporal experiences that emerge from the confluence of the museum's architecture, environment and art. Just as Olafur Eliasson's *Your light shadow*, Elizabeth Peyton's solo exhibition *Still life* and Lee Kit's *We used to be more sensitive* resonated beautifully with the Hara Museum, so surely will *The Forty Part Motet* resonate with Gallery A to become a once-in-a-lifetime spectacle in the here and now.

After Hara Museum ARC, the work will travel to three other museums in Japan (details to be announced after March 2025). As unique spaces created by different architects, each venue is sure to be a visual and aural experience unique to each space.

Please scan the QR code on the right for videos of *The Forty Part Motet* from past exhibitions.



[2] Musée d'Art Contemporain, Montreal 2002  
Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine,  
New York / Gallery Koyanagi



[3] Fondation d'entreprise Hermès, Tokyo, 2009  
Photo by Atsushi Nakamichi / Nacasa & Partners  
Inc.  
Courtesy of the Fondation d'entreprise Hermès,  
2009



[4] Recording Session, Salisbury Cathedral  
New York. Choir 2000  
Photo by Hugo Glendinning  
Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine,  
New York

### Artist Profile

Janet Cardiff (1957-) is a Canadian artist based in British Columbia, a province of Canada rich in nature. In 1999, she exhibited at the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh, and in 2001, won the Special Award at the 49<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale together with her collaborator George Bures Miller as the Canadian representatives. In Japan, they participated in the Yokohama Triennale (2005) and Aichi Triennale (2013) and held solo exhibitions at Maison Hermes Forum in Ginza and the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa. Their installation *Storm House* enjoyed great popularity at Benesse Art Site Naoshima (2010-2021).

<https://cardiffmiller.com>



[5] Kunstmuseum des Kantons Thurgau, Switzerland with  
Artist 2002 Photo by Stephan Rohner  
Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York /  
Gallery Koyanagi

### About *The Forty Part Motet*

*The Forty Part Motet* is a reworking of *Spem in Alium* (1573) by Thomas Tallis. Forty separately recorded voices are played back through forty speakers placed in an oval in the space. The speakers are configured in eight separate choirs each consisting of five voices (soprano, alto, tenor, baritone and bass).

Thomas Tallis was the most influential English composer of his generation and is one of the most popular renaissance composers of today. He served as an organist to four English monarchs - Henry VIII, Edward VI, Queens Mary and Elizabeth - as a gentleman of the Chapel Royal. One of his greatest works was this composition for forty parts – eight choirs of five voices. There is some debate as to whether the composition was authored in 1573 in honor of Queen Elizabeth I's 40th birthday or in 1556 in honor of Queen Mary's 40th birthday.

### **Quote from Janet Cardiff**

"While listening to a concert you are normally seated in front of the choir, in traditional audience position. With this piece I want the audience to be able to experience a piece of music from the viewpoint of the singers. Every performer hears a unique mix of the piece of music. Enabling the audience to move throughout the space allows them to be intimately connected with the voices. It also reveals the piece of music as a changing construct. As well I am interested in how sound may physically construct a space in a sculptural way and how a viewer may choose a path through this physical yet virtual space.

I placed the speakers around the room in an oval so that the listener would be able to really feel the sculptural construction of the piece by Tallis. You can hear the sound move from one choir to another, jumping back and forth, echoing each other and then experience the overwhelming feeling as the sound waves hit you when all of the singers are singing."

### **The Background to the Recording of *The Forty Part Motet***

In 1998, Janet Cardiff was given a CD of Thomas Tallis's great forty-part motet *Spem in Alium*. She was enthralled listening to it on a simple stereo system but was also frustrated at not being able to hear each part of the forty-part harmony separately. At the time, Cardiff envisioned creating a sound installation of *Spem in Alium* using forty loudspeakers; the listeners would play an active part in the mixing and blending of voices according to where they chose to stand, to listen, and to navigate the space. When Theresa Bergne (Field Art Projects) invited her to participate in the Salisbury Festival in 2000, Cardiff suggested the idea of the piece as a sound sculpture in a large venue. After a year of research and organization, they were able to create the work, recording *Spem in Alium* as part of the festival with singers from the Salisbury Cathedral Choir and elsewhere in England.

The sound installation involved a complex recording process. Written for forty parts—or distinct musical lines—the motet is divided into eight choirs of five parts each (soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, and bass). Since Cardiff preferred the versions of the piece that use children's, rather than women's, voices for the soprano parts, twenty-seven boys and girls joined the thirty-two adult male choristers to provide the soprano voices. The recording took place in a hall on the grounds of the cathedral that was lined with blankets and curtains to create an acoustically "dead" sounding environment. During the recording session, the adult singers stood about five feet apart from one another in order to keep their voices separate, but the children were grouped together to sing the soprano parts of the composition. Each of the fifty-nine singers wore an individual high-quality lavalier microphone with a special mount to ensure that the microphone was right in front of him or her. All fifty-nine cables were run from the singers to a mobile truck outside—in effect, the recording studio—where fifty-nine tracks were laid and then (mixing the sopranos together) reduced to forty. When the singers took a break during the three-hour session, Cardiff and the editor, George Bures Miller, had decided to keep recording; the singers talking and other sounds can be heard as a three-minute interlude in the final mix, creating an intimate, direct connection between the singers and the listeners. It was necessary to edit out each singer's track when they were not singing so that the "cross talk" of the other singers would not interfere with the spatial quality of the final presentation.

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*The Forty Part Motet* by Janet Cardiff was originally produced by Field Art Projects with the Arts Council of England, Canada House, the Salisbury Festival and Salisbury Cathedral Choir, BALTIC Gateshead, The New Art Gallery Walsall, and the NOW Festival Nottingham.

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## Special Exhibit Outline

**Artist:** Janet Cardiff

**Title:** *Janet Cardiff - The Forty Part Motet (A reworking of "Spem in Alium" by Thomas Tallis 1573)*

**Medium:** Sound installation

**Year of creation:** 2001

**Dates:** Saturday, March 15 – Sunday, May 11, 2025

**Organizer:** Hara Museum ARC

**Special sponsorship:** HERMÈS JAPON CO., LTD

**Venue:** Gallery A at Hara Museum ARC

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**Hours:** 9:30 am - 4:30 pm (last entry at 4:00 pm)

**Closed:** Thursdays (except on March 20 and May 1)

**Admission:** General 1,800 yen, Students 1,000 yen [high school and university] or 800 yen [elementary and junior high]

\*Free for elementary and junior high school students in Gunma prefecture on Saturdays from 3/15 to 5/11 and for Hara Museum ARC members.

\*For advance online tickets (date-specific), go to [https://e-tix.jp/haramuseum\\_arc/](https://e-tix.jp/haramuseum_arc/)

## Images for Publication

[1] Johanniterkirche, Feldkirch, Austria, 2005 Photo by Markus Tretter Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York / Gallery Koyanagi

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[5] Kunstmuseum des Kantons Thurgau, Switzerland with Artist 2002 Photo by Stephan Rohner Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York / Gallery Koyanagi

## Press Enquiries

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