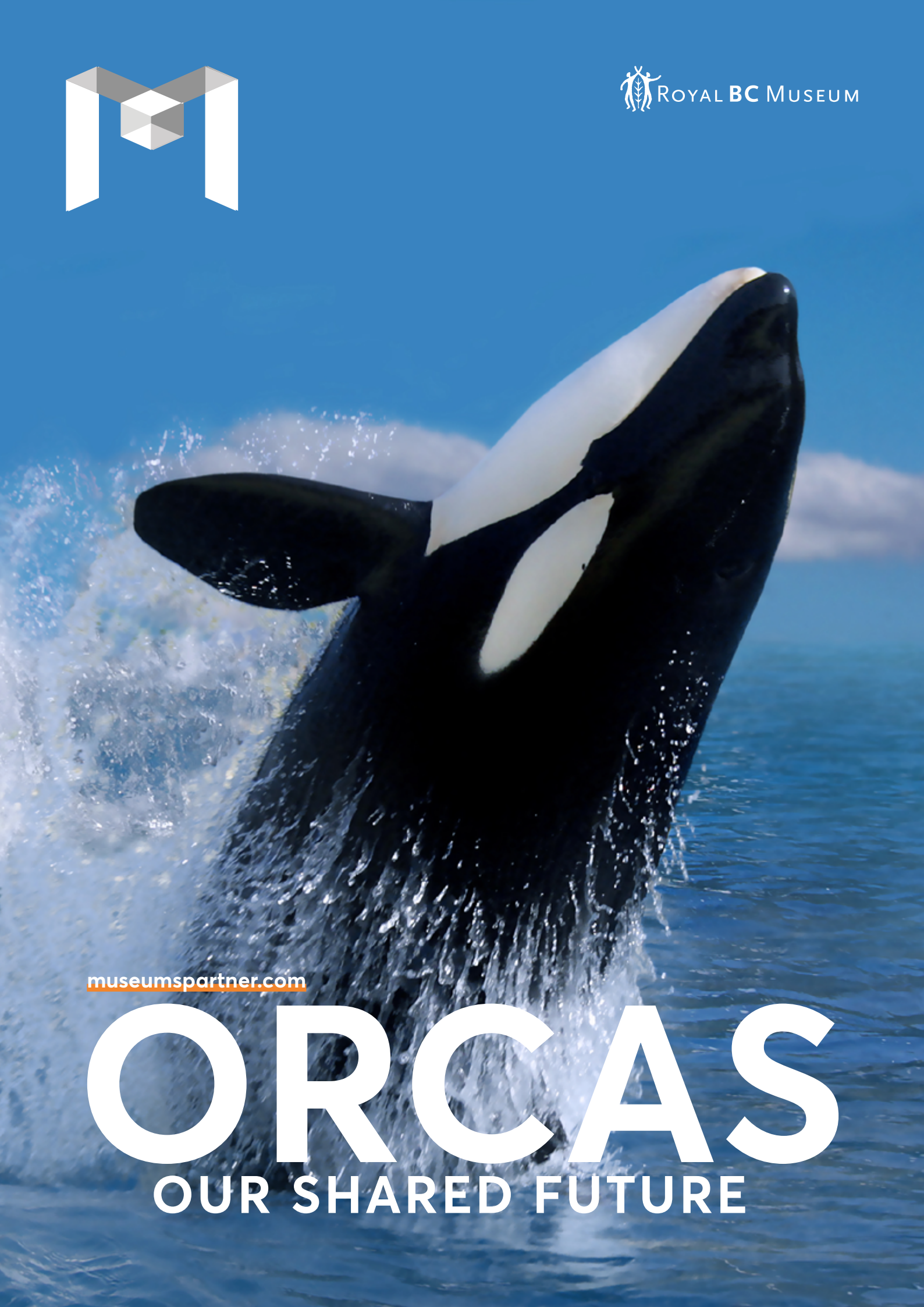

ROYAL BC MUSEUM
museumspartner.com
ORCAS
OUR SHARED FUTURE

IMAGES

The Royal BC Museum
Unsplash

CONTENTS

04 Overview
06 Key Takeaways
08 Contributors
10 Exhibition Details
12 Floor Plan
14 Video Walkthrough
16 Introduction: Welcome to the World of Orcas
20 Orca Culture and Society
22 Understanding Orcas: The Scientific Method
26 Understanding Orcas: The Indigenous Killer Whale
30 Understanding Orcas : The Age of Captivity
34 Our Shared Future
38 About the Team

ORCAS: **OUR SHARED FUTURE**

Dive deep into the stories and science that surround the magnificent orca, apex predator of all oceans. Follow the currents of ecological activism, popular culture and Indigenous beliefs to gain a new appreciation of these sophisticated animals, long feared in Western cultures as “Killer Whales.” Discover the complex social structure of orca society and reflect on the surprising consequences of captivity.

Dive in, learn which orca populations are thriving and which are at risk, and resurface with a new understanding of how orcas and humans are inextricably connected: we are all a part of nature, not apart from nature.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Oceans and humans are inextricably connected (we have a shared ecology).

2. The exhibition weaves together three ways of understanding the world that are often thought of as separate—science, popular culture and Indigenous thought.

3. Orcas are animals with unique cultures, languages.

4. For Indigenous peoples of the Eastern North Pacific, the border between the human, natural and supernatural worlds is porous. People are related to the beings of land and sea.

5. The Royal British Columbia Museum is uniquely positioned to address both natural history and cultural connections to the orca story.

6. The exhibition includes 140 original artifacts and specimens, including an articulated adult female orca skeleton, and a life-size family of three replica orcas.

CONTRIBUTORS

Orcas: Our Shared Future incorporates diverse perspectives and teachings. Content experts include artists, historians, curators, scientists and community members. The exhibition development team respectfully honours all contributors for their creative, cultural and intellectual enrichment of the exhibition.

INDIGENOUS ARTISTS

Mungo Martin (K̲wikwa̲sutinux̲/Kwagu'ł) and Henry Hunt (Kwagu'ł)
Willie Seaweed ('Nak'waxda'x̲w)
Dick Hawkins (Dzawada̲'enux̲w)
Elizabeth Kasalas Hunt (Kwagu'ł)
Doug Cranmer ('Namgis)
Richard Hunt (Kwagu'ł)
Namg̲is (Kwagu'ł)
Tom Hans (Skidegate, Haida)
Freda Diesing (Haida)
Bill Reid (T'anuu, Haida)
Robert Davidson (Hydaburg/Haida Gwaii, Haida)
Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas (Haida)
Don Yeomans (Masset, Haida)
Corey Bulpitt (Haida)
Walter Harris (Anspay'axw, Gitxsan)
Earl Muldoe (Anspay'axw, Gitxsan)
Tim Paul (Hesquiaht, Nuu-chah-nulth)
Art Thompson (Ditidaht, Nuu-chah-nulth)
Norman Tait (Ging̲olx, Nisga'a)
A̲nisa̲laga̲ Mary Ebbets (Taant'a K̲wáan, Tlingit)

ADDITIONAL ARTISTS

Colton Hash, Victoria, BC

SCIENTISTS AND HISTORIANS

Dr. Paul Spong, OrcaLab, British Columbia
Helena Symonds, OrcaLab, British Columbia
Dr. Lance Barrett-Lennard, Vancouver Aquarium, British Columbia
Dr. Ingrid Visser, Orca Research Trust, New Zealand
Dr. Lori Marino, Whale Sanctuary Project
Dr. Sheila Thornton, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Dr. Jason Colby, University of Victoria, British Columbia

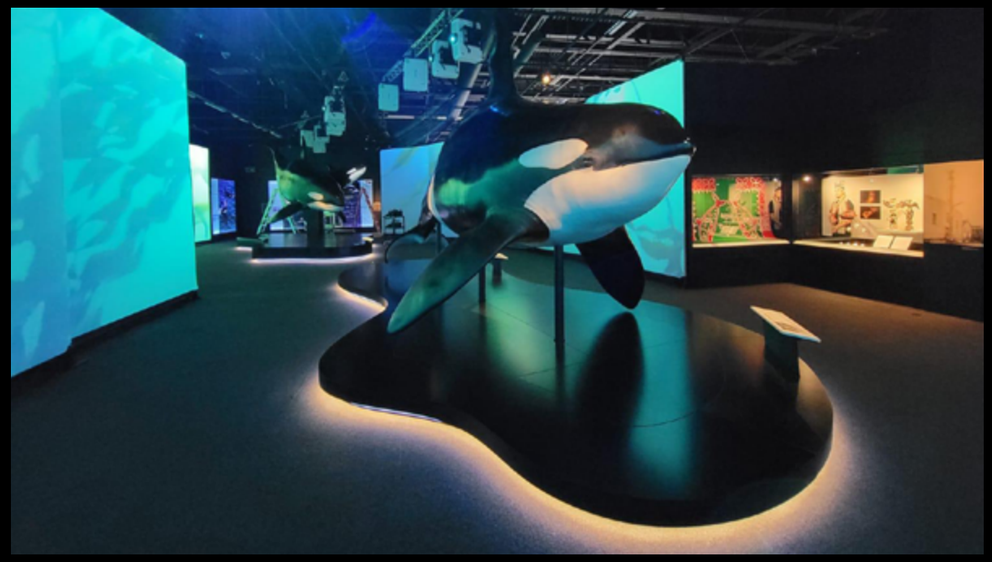
COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Exhibition design jam participants
Victoria Home Learners' Network
Florence Dick (Songhees)

CURATORS

Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, Canada
Dr. Gavin Hanke
Dr. Martha Black
Dr. India Young
Lou-ann Neel
Dr. Lorne Hammond

EXHIBITION DETAILS



ARCHITECTURE & CONTENT

- **Size** Approximately 700 to 1,300 m² (7,500 to 14,000 sq. ft.)
- **Number of objects** 140 original objects and specimens, including an articulated female orca skeleton, a carved wooden screen by renowned Haida artist Bill a life-size family of three replica orcas. Approved facility report required.
- **Exhibition furniture** All exhibition furniture including display cases, decks, projection screens and most seating included. Most display cases have internal lighting and capacity for silica gel.
- **Display cases** Approximately 45 cases come with the exhibition and have their own lighting. Normal museum gallery environmental conditions required at venue.
- **Graphics** Photos and graphic panels include all texts, which can be adapted for two languages.
- **Interactives** Seven digital and physical interactives exploring orca sounds, orca anatomy, whale/human brain comparisons, an ocean health game, digital art, a listening station and an electronic poll. All hardware and control systems included.
- **Films** Eleven different film productions featuring orca research, Indigenous art, captivity and orca rights. All projectors, monitors, speaker systems, media players and control systems included.
- **All audio/visual material** Available in two languages.
- **Catalogue/Book and Educator Guide** Included.

LOGISTICS

Included in the turnkey exhibition fee

- **Insurance and shipping**.
- **Installation and dismantling crew** from *Museums*Partner plus couriers from the lending museum, including travel and accommodation.

TOUR

- The exhibition is available for tour in North America starting March 2022.

PUBLICATION

- A **catalogue** is available on consignment.

MARKETING MATERIAL

- **High-resolution images** of the key images, objects and the exhibition are available to the venue at no cost. All final graphic representations by the venue are to be approved by our lending museums and *Museums*Partner to ensure adherence to proper citing of partners and lenders.

ADDITIONAL COSTS FOR HOST VENUE

- Marketing and promotion
- Merchandise
- Maintenance during display period
- Gallery lighting
- Walls, wall painting
- Operational costs—ticketing, security, programming, etc.

FLOOR PLAN

Orcas: Our Shared Future is produced by the Royal BC Museum in partnership with *Museums*Partner, and curated by Drs. Gavin Hanke, Lorne Hammond, Martha Black, India Young and Victoria Arbour.

01 Introduction: Welcome to the World of Orcas

02 Orca Culture and Society

03 Understanding Orcas: The Scientific Method

04 Understanding Orcas: The Indigenous Killer Whale

05 Understanding Orcas: The Age of Captivity

06 Our Shared Future

VIDEO WALKTHROUGH

Take a walk through *Orcas: Our Shared Future* and re-live the experience.

START TOUR ▶▶

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF ORCAS

MAIN MESSAGES

- Orcas exist in all the world's oceans.
- The exhibition focus is the Eastern North Pacific. Research on orcas; capturing and exhibiting orcas; ecological activism to save the orcas—it all began here.
- What we have learned here is relevant globally.

AV & INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

- Video of traditional Lekwungen welcome from Florence Dick, Songhees Nation

KEY OBJECTS

- **Kwakwa̱ka̱’wakw Feast Dish in the form of a Killer Whale** Huge feast dishes like this one in the shape of a Killer Whale were used to serve food in lavish feasts that demonstrated the wealth and generosity of a chief. Since Killer Whales are associated with the wealthy Chief of the Undersea World, who can bring wealth to those who encounter him, the dish in the form of a Killer Whale has symbolic resonance. The dish was made by Kwakwa̱ka̱’wakw master carver Mungo Martin and a member of his family, Henry Hunt.

- **Nisga’a Mask** Representing simultaneously a human and a Killer Whale, this mask made by Nisga’a Tait in 1974 expresses the interconnectedness between humans and orcas that is embedded in Northwest Coast culture.

SECTION 2 ORCA CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Leaving the first gallery, the visitor is immersed into the underwater world of the orcas. The gallery features three full-size replica models from J pod—a male named Ruffles (J1), a female named Slick (J16) and Slick's daughter Scarlet (J50). Through them, the visitor will learn how orca culture is organized by pods and clans, how we humans identify individual whales, and what similarities exist between orca society and human society.

MAIN MESSAGES

- Orcas are apex predators.
- Orcas are social animals.
- Orcas are cultural animals, passing their language, knowledge and ways of life from generation to generation.
- Shaped by the ocean, they live in a world of sound.
- Orca society is matriarchal—matriarchs are the knowledge holders and teachers within each pod.

AV & INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

- Multiscreen immersive video (underwater footage of the Salish sea)
- Underwater soundscapes and orca vocalizations
- Computer interactive orca sounds game

KEY OBJECTS

- Three full-size replica models of orca male, female and calf

The gallery explores the results of scientific research on orcas both in the wild and in labs and museums, from observing orca behaviour to examining orca bodies, bones and tissues and the secrets revealed through DNA. Objects and specimens are displayed in a lab-like environment and the visitor experience includes a number of hands-on interactives and infographics on orca anatomy, biology and unique orca behaviours from around the world.

THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

MAIN MESSAGES

- Science done on the west coast of North America has spread new knowledge about orcas.
- Orcas are mammals, as humans are. Orca anatomy and life cycle reveals similarities to ours.
- Whales began their evolution on land, as discovered in the fossil record.
- Orcas are diverse in appearance and have unique behaviours in different regions around the world.
- Orcas use sound to communicate, navigate and hunt. Language is passed down from generation to generation.

AV & INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

- Three short films—video monitor—visitor-activated with multiple perspectives on the topic of orca research
- Multi-touch screen exploring orca anatomy, respiratory systems, reproduction and musculature
- Touchable models of an orca and a human brain for side-by-side comparison

KEY OBJECTS

- Articulated orca skeleton (Rhapsody, J32) with fetus
- Cast of fossil whale skull and vertebrae
- Replica models of inner ear bones
- Large-scale infographics

The exhibition environment changes at this point to reflect Canada's west coast. In this area visitors encounter an Indigenous way of thinking about, and relating to, orcas. This is illustrated by both historical and contemporary works and by oral histories that are still told today.

THE INDIGENOUS KILLER WHALE

MAIN MESSAGES

- What Indigenous peoples know about orcas is increasingly important to humans' understanding and stewardship of the world's oceans and their inhabitants.
- For Indigenous societies of the Eastern North Pacific, boundaries between the human, natural and supernatural worlds are not fixed.
- Killer Whales are powerful beings in both the natural and supernatural realms and function as links between the two interconnected worlds.
- Orcas may function as supernatural messengers, be depicted in ceremonies, symbolize ancestors or represent wealth and power.
- In Indigenous cultures there is respect for Killer Whales and gratitude for what they teach and how they live in the world.

AV & INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

- Video monitor—visitor activated—Indigenous art interpretation by artist Richard Hunt
- Animated short film *The Mountain of SGaana*

KEY OBJECTS

- Haida manga painting by artist Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas. The painting presents orcas and their ocean habitat in a way that combines areas often seen as separate: science, pop culture, Indigenous knowledge and ecological activism.
- Killerwhale Crest robe by Anisalaga Mary Ebbets (Taant'a Kwáan, Tlingit). Created during a time when it was illegal in Canada to make and wear such robes, this weaving was still made to celebrate Indigenous relationships to orcas.
- Gold Box with Killer Whale lid by Bill Reid.
- Articulated Killer Whale Mask by Richard Hunt.
- Double-finned Killer Whale carving, nineteenth century.

The exhibition architecture and environment change dramatically at this point. The theme of captivity inspires the dramatic design of this gallery—visitors will experience what confinement feels like to an orca through netting motifs and muted underwater aquarium lighting.

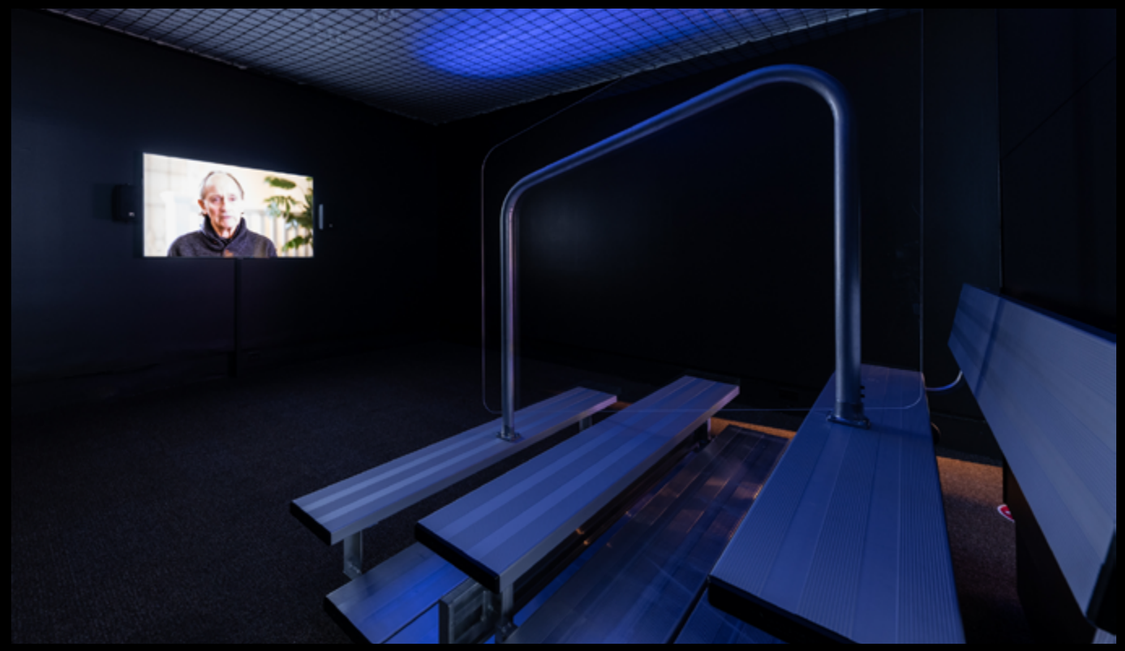
THE AGE OF CAPTIVITY

MAIN MESSAGES

- In 1964, the capture of an orca called Moby Doll changed our fear of orcas into love almost overnight.
- In captivity orcas became a global phenomenon in aquariums around the world, stars of Hollywood films and ultimately commodities such as souvenirs and children's toys.
- Tragic capture events like the Penn Cove, the uplifting film *Free Willy*, and documentaries like *Blackfish* (about the traumatic deaths of trainers) combined to produce a global call to end captivity.
- The west coast of the Eastern North Pacific is the origin of . . .
  - … Orcas in marine aquariums.
  - … Orcas for films and documentaries.
  - … A generation of young ocean activists, including Greenpeace.

AV & INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

- Video theatre showing history of orca captivity.



KEY OBJECTS

- Large selection of orca merchandise from movie posters to aquarium souvenirs.

SECTION 6 OUR SHARED FUTURE

The final exhibition section features an environment of high interactivity. Here the visitor learns about the current state of affairs and begins to understand how individuals can each play a part in shifting behaviours and creating change.

MAIN MESSAGES

- An end to captivity is not the end of the story.
- Wild orcas face challenges beyond the aquarium industry.
- Some orca populations are increasing; some appear stable; some are declining.
- There are threats to orcas and efforts to save them and their ecosystems worldwide.
- Court cases about orcas are shaping the legal debate about law and rights for wild animals.
- We are a part of nature, not apart from nature.

AV & INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

- Ocean Health—digital multi-user game
- Video theatre—short film on the future of orca rights
- Video monitor—visitor-activated—Luna's story, the story of a young killer whale believed to be the reincarnation of an Indigenous leader
- Touchscreen survey (with results)
- Touchable replica orca skull
- Listening station with multiple perspectives on orcas

KEY OBJECTS

- Large wooden screen by Haida master carver Bill Reid
- Whale-watching gear
- Ocean plastics
- Protest posters

ABOUT THE TEAM

ROYAL BC MUSEUM The Royal British Columbia Museum is one of Canada's leading museums and research centres, a showcase of 550 million years of natural history and 9,000 years of human history in British Columbia. They produce original research grounded in their extensive collection of over 7,000,000 specimens, artifacts and cultural objects from across their province. The Royal BC Museum is located on the traditional territories of the Lekwungen (Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations). The museum extends its appreciation for the opportunity to live and learn on this territory.

In cooperation with international museums, *Museums*Partner has conceived a range of travelling exhibitions that are informative and engaging for a multitude of audiences and easy to adapt to different spaces. We offer these exhibitions under a turnkey contract which ensures that our clients are guaranteed a secure investment customized for their own institution without any surprises. Drawing on our extensive experience in fine art transport, we provide full services to our partners and offer project management, logistics and financial management.

CONTACT

Peter Elsaesser
elsaesser@museumspartner.com
+43.664.2100673

Marie Eckert
eckert@museumspartner.com
+43.699.19292255