





Janet Bellotto
Relation-Ships (Existence Doubtful)

curated by Koan Jeff Baysa

The dramas of rapidly vanishing landmasses on the globe point to multiple etiologies that include climate changes compounded by trade wind cycles causing sea levels to rise. These have brought the seminal issues of islands to the fore, specifically the balance between population and resources, and the attendant sustainability topics of potable water, agriculture, waste, pollution, invasive alien and native species of plants and animals in addition to governance. The island that Canadian-Italian artist Janet Bellotto has chosen to address has veritably one hardy mammalian land species, the Sable Island horse that survives by grazing on a tough grass called marram, and by additionally digging wells in sand for fresh water. Humans have not fared as well. Seal hunters, shipwreck survivors and salvage personnel have intermittently occupied the island. A colonization venture by the French using convicts failed at the end of the 1500s. On charts, it was once designated ED, Existence Doubtful, a term used principally to indicate that its actual existence had not yet been established.

Bellotto's exhibition *Relation-Ships (Existence Doubtful)* brings Sable Island to MOCA London. The island, a protected National Park Reserve of Canada, is a 13 square miles sliver of an isolated sandbar 109 miles southeast of Nova Scotia in the Atlantic Ocean. Totally exposed in vast waters, Sable Island is especially vulnerable to rising sea levels. The intensity and frequency of storms are factors of real concern in its continued viability, with some predicting that it will disappear by the end of this century. In one of many attempts to transform this island, eight hundred trees were planted to keep it from disappearing. However, the island may have other ideas. Through LiDAR technology, comparative topographical studies of the island between 2002 and 2009 shows that the island is drifting eastward. As the mass of the west side of the island is gradually decreasing, the landmass on the east side is growing.

With more than 350 shipwrecks recorded there since 1583, Sable Island, hidden by fog and storms, has been deemed the "Graveyard of the Atlantic." It is a place where only two mammals survive: seals and horses, occupying a place that seems untouched by time. With a population presently hovering between 500 and 600, horses were introduced to the island circa 1755 along with cows, sheep, goats, and hogs, but only the horses

survived the long term. The concept was that they would thrive on their own, reproduce, and periodically be "harvested" for profit. With the very thought of these horses being turned into dog food, Canadian children, through a massive letter-writing campaign, were felt largely responsible for bringing the Canadian Prime Minister to declare the Sable Island horses officially protected in 1960.

Water flows through Bellotto's work: oceans and waves, submersion and reflections, in-between states that are fluid and aqueous. Islands around the world have long offered promises of dreamland paradises and the realities of ship graveyards. There are ephemeral and transient qualities of such landmasses, surrounded by water, that become the bases for fantasies. With the famed sand-built artificial islands in the United Arab Emirates where she teaches, Bellotto observed firsthand the Palm Jumeirah where sand dredged from the gulf is laid down onto rocks. No concrete or steel was used in its construction. There have been dire environmental consequences regarding pollution, erosion, and loss of marine life.

Showing the history of geographically distant Sable Island provides the imagining of new possibilities for settlers and seafarers, with potentials of symbolizing future progress, particularly in the field of cultural tourism, and prospects in the development of habitation and historical narratives of its existing environment. However, "The Graveyard of the Atlantic," as portrayed in the exhibition *Relation-Ships (Existence Doubtful)*, reveals that which is presumably fated to disappear.

Viewed from the street at night, footage of the horses and seals, intercut with shifting images within fog will be projected from the inside onto the front frosted glass walls of the gallery. A panoramic landscape of Sable Island is installed at the external base of these walls. In the interior of the space, bifurcated by a gently billowing cloth sail, the visitor sees a dramatic display of the names and dates of the shipwrecks on one side, and on the other, images on a monitor showing scenes of daily life on a nearly forgotten fragment of sand uniquely and virtually bereft of human presence and influence.

Koan Jeff Baysa

1846 ARNO

1846 DETROIT

1846 MILO

1848 FULTON

1849 GROWLER

1849 BROTHERS

1849 BLONDE

1850 HOPE

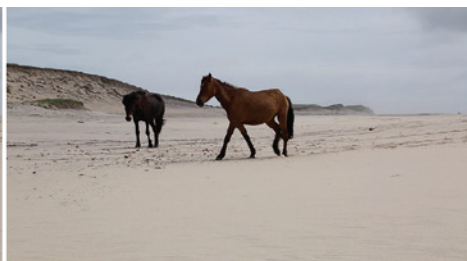
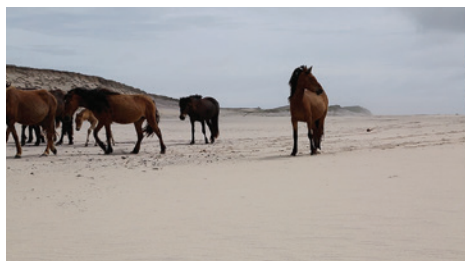
1846 ARNO
1846 DETROIT
1846 MILO
1848 FULTON
1849 GROWLER
1849 BROTHERS
1849 BLONDE
1850 HOPE

1850 ADONIS
1850 TRANSIT
1850 MARGARET WALKER
1851 GUSTAVE J
1851 HARGREAVE
1851 MARGARET DEWAR
1851 SCIENCE
1851 STAR OF HOPE
1851 VAMPIRE
1852 MARIE ANNE
1852 OTTOMAN
1852 NOYARA
1852 RANGER
1853 AMAZON
1853 GUIDE
1854 EAST BOSTON
1854 TANTUNG
1854 ARCADIA
1854 ESTRELLA
1854 MASKONOMET
1855 ALBATROSS
1855 MISSISSIPPI
1855 NISBIS
1855 PRIMROSE
1856 ALMA P.
1856 COMMERCE
1856 ELIZA
1858 LARK
1858 MAURY
1860 ARGO
1862 JANE LOVITT
1862 ZONE
1863 GEORGIA
1863 GORDON
1864 DASH
1864 LANGDON GILMORE
1864 W.M. BENNETT
1864 WEATHERGAGE
1865 MALAKOFF
1865 TRIUMPH
1866 STRANGER

1866 EPHESUS
1866 BESSIE CAMPBELL
1866 ADA YORK
1866 STELLA MARIA
1867 RHEA SYLVIA
1868 MALTA
1868 S.H. CAMERON
1870 ELECTO
1870 E. ROBBINS
1870 ACTON
1871 BLACK DUCK
1871 GLASGOW
1872 ROYS
1873 HUMBLETON
1873 STELLA MARIS
1873 WYOMING
1873 ZEPHYR
1874 GLADSTONE
1874 HIGHLANDER
1874 NASHWAUK
1874 TYRIAN
1875 FARTO
1876 ALPHA
1876 IRONSIDES
1876 NEPTUNE
1876 NORMA
1876 REEVES
1878 EMMA
1879 ORIENTAL
1879 STATE OF VIRGINIA
1880 BRIDE
1880 GONDOLIER
1881 LORD BURY
1882 BALGLEY
1882 WILLIAMS
1882 YORKSHIRE
1882 BOLGEG
1883 BRITANNIA
1884 A.S.H.
1884 AMSTERDAM
1885 CORA MAY

1886 CHINDA
1887 SCULPTOR
1889 FAERDER
1890 GERDA
1891 CONQUEST
1891 VOOD
1892 BRIDGE LANE
1892 HENRY
1892 KAUHA
1893 INGLEWOOD
1893 VALKYRIE
1894 SS NEBITO
1894 NICOSIA
1894 ROBERT J. EDWARDS
1895 HENRI REUTH
1896 RAFFAELE D.
1897 CHARLES H. TAYLOR
1898 CROFTON HALL
1898 CROMARTYSHIRE
1898 MARINER
1899 H.C. WORCESTER
1899 MORAVIA
1901 STELLA MARIS
1903 C.U. MADER
1903 OLYMPIA
1903 TOPAZE
1904 LIZZIE M. STAMWOOD
1905 SKIDBY
1906 BASIL M. GELDERT
1910 HEIMDAL
1912 ERIE
1915 IOTA
1915 SILVER WINGS
1918 AFGHANISTAN
1918 M.P. CONNOLLY
1919 PLATEA
1921 ESPERANTO
1922 MARSHALL FOCH
1922 PURITAN
1923 HELEN M. CORKUM
1923 FALMOUTH
1925 LABRADOR
1926 SYLVIA MOSHER
1926 SS HAROLD CASPER
1926 SADIE A. KNICKLE
1927 IDA A. CORKUM
1927 CLAYTON W. WALTERS
1927 COLUMBIA





1583	HMS DELIGHT	1849	GROWLER	1880	BRIDE
1634	MARY AND JANE	1850	ADONIS	1880	GONDOLIER
1714	SAINT JEROME	1850	HOPE	1881	LORD BURY
1725	JOHN AND MARY	1850	MARGARET WALKER	1882	BALGOLEY
1737	CATHERINE	1850	TRANSIT	1882	BOLGELEG
1747	LEGERE	1851	GUSTAVE I	1882	YORKSHIRE
1757	BUCHANEN	1851	HARGREAVE	1882	WILLIAMS
1766	MINEHEAD	1851	MARGARET DEWAR	1883	BRITANNIA
1771	SWANSEY	1851	SCIENCE	1884	A.S.H.
1773	SOPHIA	1851	STAR OF HOPE	1884	AMSTERDAM
1777	AURORA	1851	VAMPIRE	1885	CORA MAY
1779	FAME MURPHY	1852	MARIE ANNE	1886	OLINDA
1780	JANE	1852	NOVARA	1887	SOUVENIR
1781	POTOWMACK	1852	OTTOMAN	1889	FAERDER
1786	TELEMACHUS	1852	RANGER	1890	GERDA
1792	LA FELIZ	1853	AMAZON	1891	CONQUEST
1792	RAMBLER	1853	GUIDE	1891	VIVID
1792	UNKNOWN	1854	ARCADIA	1892	BRIDGET ANN
1795	ORB	1854	EAST BOSTON	1892	HENRY
1800	FRANCIS	1854	ESTRELLA	1892	KALUNA
1802	PRINCESS AMELIA	1854	MASKONOMET	1893	INGLEWOOD
1802	UNION	1855	ALBATROSS	1893	VALKYRIE
1803	HARRIOT	1855	MISSIOUS	1894	SS NERITO
1804	STARK ODDER	1855	NISBIS	1894	NICOSIA
1805	DOLPHIN	1855	PRIMROSE	1894	ROBERT J. EDWARDS
1807	SPRING	1856	ALMA P.	1895	HENRI REUTH
1811	FORTUNE	1856	COMMERCE	1896	RAFFAELE D.
1811	HARD TIMES	1856	ELIZA	1897	CHARLES H. TAYLOR
1812	HMS BARBADOES	1858	LARK	1898	CROFTON HALL
1812	HMS EMULOUS	1858	MAURY	1898	CROMARTYSHIRE
1815	TRAVELLER	1860	ARGO	1898	MARINER
1815	DEMASCOTA	1862	JANE LOVITT	1899	H. C. WORCESTER
1816	LADY ECHO	1862	ZONE	1899	MORAVIA
1816	TRAFALGAR	1863	GEORGIA	1901	STELLA MARIS
1819	ASIA	1863	GORDON	1903	C. U. MADER
1820	JUNO	1864	DASH	1903	OLYMPIA
1822	AMERICAINE	1864	LANGDON GILMORE	1903	TOPAZE
1822	AFRICAINE	1864	W. M. BENNET	1904	LIZZIE M. STAMWOOD
1823	HOPE	1864	WEATHERGAGE	1905	SKIDBY
1824	JAMES	1865	MALAKOFF	1906	BASIL M. GELDERT
1826	ELIZABETH	1865	TRIUMPH	1910	HEIMDAL
1826	NASSAU	1866	ADA YORK	1912	ERIE
1827	AGAMEMNON	1866	BESSIE CAMPBELL	1915	LOTA
1827	FOUR SONS	1866	EPHESUS	1915	SILVER WINGS
1828	ADELPHA	1866	STELLA MARIA	1918	AFGHANISTAN
1829	HANNAH	1866	STRANGER	1918	M. P. CONNOLLY
1830	COURSER	1867	RHEA SYLVIA	1919	PLATEA
1830	PEGASUS	1868	MALTA	1921	ESPERANTO
1831	MARY PORTER	1868	S. H. CAMERON	1922	MARSHALL FOCH
1831	ORPHEUS	1870	ACTON	1922	PURITAN
1832	FLOYD	1870	E. ROBBINS	1923	HELEN M. CORKUM
1832	RUBY	1870	ELECTO	1925	FALMOUTH
1833	VALKYTE	1871	BLACK DUCK	1925	LABRADOR
1833	MARGARITA	1871	GLASGOW	1926	SS HARALD CASPER
1835	EAGLE	1872	BOYS	1926	HAROLD CASPER
1835	LANCASTER	1873	HUMBLETON	1926	SADIE A. KNICKLE
1835	LABAN	1873	STELLA MARIS	1926	SYLVIA MOSHER
1838	GRANVILLE	1873	WYOMING	1927	CLAYTON W. WALTERS
1839	MARIA	1873	ZEPHYR	1927	COLUMBIA
1840	AUSTRALIA	1874	GLADSTONE	1927	IDA A. CORKUM
1840	HETTIE C. WARCHESTER	1874	HIGHLANDER	1927	JOYCE M. SMITH
1840	BARBARA	1874	NASHWAUK	1927	MAHALA
1840	ELIZA	1874	TYRIAN	1927	UDA R. CORKUM
1840	MYRTLE	1875	FARTO	1929	GEORGE A. WOOD
1840	SENATOR	1876	ALPHA	1930	NILS
1841	ISABELLA	1876	IRONSIDES	1942	INDEPENDENCE HALL
1841	MARMORA	1876	NEPTUNE	1943	ANNA MAZARAKI
1841	UNDAUNTED	1876	NORMA	1945	GALE
1846	ARNO	1876	REEVES	1946	ALFIOS
1846	DETROIT	1878	EMMA	1947	MANHASSET
1848	FULTON	1879	ORIENTAL	1949	BLONDE
1849	BLONDE	1879	PEASLEY	1976	IRONSIDES
1849	BROTHERS	1879	STATE OF VIRGINIA	1984	SS LALEHAM
				1999	MERRIMAC

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