

ANOJNI: MIRACLE NOW

NIKOLAJ
KUNSTHAL

EN INTRODUKTION TIL UDS STILLINGEN
/ AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION

MAY 24 – AUGUST 5 2018

MIRACLE NOW

“Does nature evolve, or does She just change? So much information can now be stored in a tiny space. Scientists have said recently that ancestral trauma changes our genome in detectable ways. I imagine that in the future we shall put a drop of water into a machine and it will reveal to us every moment that its atoms have ever experienced, and every living and inanimate body that it has ever been a part of. When I first staged the play *Miracle Now* in 1995, my dream was that Nature would remember every one of Her vanished faces, and that this knowledge would somehow inform Her next iteration. This was a hopeful idea to me, in the face of impending eco-collapse.” – ANOHNI

“Nothing goes unrecorded. Every word of leaf and snowflake and particle of dew, as well as earthquake and avalanche, is written down in Nature’s book.” – *John Muir, 1872*

ANOHNI: “Where do we go when we die?”
Nola Taylor: “**Back to country.**”
– *Conversation with Nola Taylor, Martu elder, Western Australian desert, 2015.*



Video Stills: *Miracle Now*, 1996/2018, ANOHNI/James Elaine

MIRAKLERNES TID

ANOHNI I NIKOLAJ KUNSTHAL

Det er en stor ære at vise den første store soloudstilling med ANOHNI i Norden i Nikolaj Kunsthal. ANOHNI er bedst kendt som musiker, men udtrykker en dybt engageret tilgang til verden gennem sin visuelle kunst. Hendes baggrund i New Yorks undergrundsmiljø i 90'erne er præget af systemsammenbrud og en erfaringsbåret erkendelse, som bl.a. aids-epidemien medførte. Den dystre tematik i ANOHNIs praksis indeholder dog håb og taler for mere cirkulære og feminine værdier fremfor en hierarkisk tilgang, som man finder det i mange indfødtes natur- og livssyn.

ANOHNI har bl.a. ladet sig inspirere af kunstnere som fotografen Peter Hujar, maleren Jack Smith og Butoh-danseren Kazuo Ohno. Udstillingen *Miracle Now* trækker på en dokumentation af et teaterstykke, som kunstneren opførte for første gang i 1995. ANOHNIs arbejde udspringer af performance, men har også tydelige referencer til automatisme med fremhævelsen af det underbevidste og surreale. Ved at følge sin intuition og sanseverden udtrykker ANOHNI presserende og til tider også kontroversielle reaktioner og kommentarer til den postindustrielle æra, vi lever i. Billedkunsten er for hende et frirum, hvor hun kan udtrykke sig på en anden måde end i sin musik. Vi får med udstillingen indblik i et hudløst ærligt, men også meget generøst og personligt univers, et mikrokosmos, der afspejler en del af det makrokosmos, som vi alle er en del af.

Med udstillingen i Nikolaj Kunsthal håber vi at åbne op for spørgsmål og diskussioner omkring frigørelse, filosofi og miljø i en bredere forstand – og ikke mindst håber vi, at miraklernes tid ikke er forbi endnu.

*Udstillingskoordinator i Nikolaj Kunsthal,
Helene Nyborg Bay.*

THE AGE OF MIRACLES

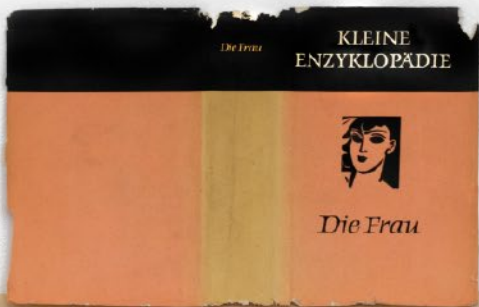
ANOHNI AT NIKOLAJ KUNSTHAL

It is a great honour to present the first solo exhibition by ANOHNI in the Nordic countries at Nikolaj Kunsthal. Known as a musician, ANOHNI also has a highly committed visual approach to the world around us. Her background in the New York underground scene of the early 90s comes with a systems collapse, experience-based awareness, shaped, among other factors, by the AIDS epidemic. The sombre themes in ANOHNI's artistic practice has a nature of hope and advocates values still upheld by many indigenous communities, nurturing a more circular and feminine, rather than hierarchical, approach.

ANOHNI is inspired by, among others, artists such as photographer Peter Hujar, painter Jack Smith and Butoh dancer Kazuo Ohno. The exhibition *Miracle Now* draws from documentation of a theatre piece first staged by ANOHNI in 1995. ANOHNI's oeuvre is rooted in performance while also displaying obvious references to automatism with an emphasis on the subconscious and the surreal. By following her intuition and the world of her senses, ANOHNI formulates a pressing response and sometimes controversial reactions and comments to the post-industrial era in which we are living. To her, visual art is a space in which she can express herself in another way than as a singer. This exhibition provides an insight into a raw and naked but also highly generous and personal universe, a microcosm reflecting a part of the macrocosm of which we are all a part.

With this presentation at Nikolaj Kunsthal we hope to open up to questions and discussions related to liberation, philosophy and the environment in a broader sense – and, not least, we hope that the age of miracles is not past yet.

*Exhibition co-ordinator at Nikolaj Kunsthal,
Helene Nyborg Bay.*



ANOJNI: EN FLÆNGE I HIMLEN

AF JULIANA ENGBERG

Den antropocæne tragedie er over os. Selvom skeptikere benægter det, bekræfter videnskaben, at menneskeheden har grebet ind i planetens geologi og økosystemer i en sådan grad, at vi er trådt ind i det, der af mange betegnes som den sjette masseudryddelses tidsalder. Den menneskeskabte overbefolkning og det tilhørende forbrug, katastrofale vejr-fænomener forårsaget af klimaforandringer, ødelæggelsen af rammerne for dyreliv og rovdriften på naturressourcerne har alle medvirket til, at vi har mistet dyre-, plante-, hav-, insekt- og mikrobiologiske livsformer i et hidtil ukendt og accelererende tempo.

I bogen *The Future of Life* forudså biologen og miljøfilosoffen Edward Osborne Wilson, at hvis det nuværende tempo for den menneskelige indgriben i biosfæren fortsætter, vil halvdelen af jordens højere livsformer være uddøde i år 2100.

Den seneste masseudryddelse – på grænsen mellem Kridt og Tertiær, også kendt som K/T-grænsen - indtraf for 65 millioner år siden. Videnskabsfolk mener, at den var forårsaget af klimaforandringer, samtidig med at havoverfladen sank til et kritisk niveau, og efter en tid opstod der en katastrofal proces, da en gigantisk asteroide eller komet ramte jorden på den mexicanske halvø Yucatán. Dette menes at have udviklet sig langsomt over mange årtusinder. I modsætning hertil har den sjette masseudryddelse bevæget sig fremad i et stadig hurtigere tempo. Ifølge videnskabelige vurderinger har op mod 50% af den udryddelse, der har ramt dyrearter og deres habitat, fundet sted fra 1970 til i dag.

Jagten på det ”moderne” – maskiner drevet af fossile brændstoffer, industrialisering, mega-urbanisering, som alle gælder for at være fremskridt – har faktisk ført os forfærdende tæt på undergangen. Den antropocæne tidsalder er et økologisk selvmord, som foregår med en ubegribelig hast og spredning.

Disse forudsigelser om en katastrofe, hvor menneskeheden og jorden under ét raser mod udslettelse, har fået mange til at se med nye øjne på den gamle visdom og åndelighed, man finder hos indfødte folk, hvor trossystemer og eksistens er grundlæggende knyttet til forestillingen om land – en *geosofisk* (jord-centreret) snarere end en *teosofisk* (guds-centreret) bevidsthed.

De indfødte folks åndelighed bekender sig til, at alle elementer på jorden og i universet er forbundet på kryds og tværs – det levende og det ikke-levende – og at planter og dyr, landskaber og himmellegemer er beslægtet med hinanden. Disse kulturer afviser den dualisme, der ligger i opdelingen mellem krop og sind, og som sætter intellekt over intuition, og som er grundlaget for den analytiske modernisme, til fordel for et trossystem, som i sit inderste væsen er orienteret mod at beskytte Moder Jord, hvorfra alt liv udspringer.

Fra et økologisk synspunkt har denne adskillelse mellem krop og sind betydet, at der er opstået en forestilling om, at naturen blot er materie, hvis formål er at levere brændstof til et modernistisk, maskinbaseret liv – hvor der graves efter

minerale, bores efter olie, hvor havene gennemtrawles for lækkerier, hvor der i stedet for land er opfyldning og urbanitet. I den for kunst har denne dualisme ført til en analytisk modernisme, som har skabt en æstetik baseret på rene, rationelle former – platoniske former – udtrykt i orden, geometri, mønstre informeret af en intellektuelt appliceret og systemisk tilgang, som har stræbt efter at rense, destillere og gøre det aktive kosmos inaktivt. En modernisme som har "renset" naturen ud fra en taktik om at gøre den abstrakt og syntetisk.

Men i kunst som i de indfødte kulturer er intuitionen altid kommet til udtryk i parallelle æstetikker – hellenisme, gotik, barok, rokoko, symbolisme og surrealisme har alle trukket på gamle geosofiske, stammerelaterede og hedenske overleveringer. I nyere tid har forskellige retninger interesseret sig for dematerialiseringen af kunst, dens potentiale for forandring, installations- og andre inddragende kunstmiljøer, transcendent minimalisme og det ynkkelige i materialismen og har på ny betonet kraften i det intuitive og opereret med en endnu tættere forbindelse til det kollektivt ubevidste i de nedarvede ældgamle og indfødte indsigter.

ANOHNIs billedkunst og performative udtryk lever med disse ånder og fremmeser en sandhed, som leveres med stor kraft gennem dens tilknytning til en eklektisk animisme, som forbinder hendes geosofi med både gamle indsigter og disse parallelle modernistiske kunstneriske praksisser. Hendes værker trækker på den æstetik, man kan finde i automatis-

men, collagen og den japanske Butoh-praksis, og med dem kan hun reflektere over, undersøge, hylde og gå i et med et univers, hvor meta og materie er indbyrdes forbundet.

Over nu flere årtier har der været en særlig aktiv, besjælet kraft på spil i ANOHNIs kunstværker, som omfatter malerier og tegninger på papir (atrofierede, man bliver bange for, om de holder), collage-totempæle (sammenstabilede billed-digte og kommentarer om miljø, aids, geopolitik), diverse objekter reddet fra undergang (beroliget, forvandlet, genfødt som levedygtige, hybride, surrealistiske hermafroditiske former) og skulpturelle værker (med overflader og huller, hvor fejl og asymmetri er i orden, ja velkomne). Modernismens glatte, antiseptiske, anæmiske, iltfattige og uberørte overflader åbnes op af ANOHNIs formaning om at trække vejret, at være en krop løftet ud af graven – en fornedret, plaget, nedbrudt krop, som gennemgår en katartisk forvandling for derefter at blive sat fri og forenet igen som indbyrdes forbundet materie.

ANOHNIs måde at afsætte mærker på – små tankestreger, cirkler, ophobede, men udviskede streger, og streger som helt bevidst skærer sig ned i en overflade – skaber en energi, som lever i kraft af det intuitive. Denne markerings-gestik forbinder på en måde ANOHNIs kunst med automatismen. Men i modsætning til surrealisterne - André Masson og André Breton – hvis brug af automatismen i den sidste ende samlede disse streger i former, som de derefter manipulerede og tvang til at



"være" noget, giver ANOHNI stregen lov til at leve sit eget liv. Som hun har sagt: "Jeg prøver på at lytte til stregen, næsten som hvis jeg sov. Betragter jeg hende, eller er jeg blevet hende? Nogle gange opstår en streg inde fra sig selv, som en sprængt åre. Jeg prøver bare på at blive ved med at høre efter. En streg er energi, en flænge i himlen, et hul hvorigennem noget kan manifestere sig".¹

I ANOHNIs værk *Cut Away the Bad* har hun for eks. korrigeret billedet af en dræbt isbjørn ved at fjerne jægeren fra scenen. Hun har derefter tilført linjer af energi for at give det nedlagte dyr en ny åndelig eksistens. Linjerne kom til ANOHNIs, da hun fulgte de solstråler, som faldt ind af vinduet i hendes atelier og dansede på den trykte side. Denne naturlige vitalitet overføres til isbjørnen i en handling, som tilbagefører en slags liv til den.

Der er mange ringe og huller i ANOHNIs værker – cirkler – i de tegnede streger, i hårets spiraler, i de skulpterede cirkler fra bogbind, huller fra kugler der er gået igennem papir, huller inde i huller, koncentriske og sammenhængende – huller der er gnedet i papir, så lyset kan få lov til at skinne igennem. ANOHNIs huller og cirkler rummer en forbigående tilstedeværelse, fuld af mystik og glemsel – og optimisme.

"Nogle gange synger jeg bare for genfærdene i loftet", sagde ANOHNI en gang i et interview. For hende er genfærd en slags huller af lys på den enorme mørke himmel – bittesmå portaler af positivt negativt rum gennem hvilke hun forbinder

alle sine forfædre og skaber en kosmologi, som forener hendes jordiske krop med det himmelske univers. Genfærd optræder i hendes sangtekster og kunst som fysiske "sjæle"-manifestationer, der hænger ned fra loftet – æg-lignende former af lyst træ, kokoner som afventer en eventuel katarsis.

Butoh-tilgangen og –æstetikken lader sig ikke fastholde, og i lighed med indfødt åndelighed inddrager den også forestillingen om alle things indbyrdes forbundethed. ANOHNI modsætter sig også fastholdelse. Hun stræber efter at udvikle sig, gøre sig erfaringer og fremføre de vækstcyklusser, som opstår, når man mediterer over alt det, der binder sammen. Hun søger at gøre opmærksom på miljøets sørgelige forfatning, at finde et sprog, både visuelt og performativt, så hun kan skabe et rum for forvandling og forståelse. I hendes musik kommer disse idéer til udtryk som ord. Hendes billedkunst rummer mening med en egen kraft, som åbner sig og stiller sig til rådighed – for åndedraget.

Juliana Engberg er kurator og forfatter. Programdirektør for Aarhus 2017: European Capital of Culture.

1. Interview med ANOHNI, 'The Earth Owns My Body', 2016, i *Anohni: My Truth*, James Elaine, Peter Hujar, Kazuo Ohno, ed. Friedrich Meschede, Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Koenig Books, London.

ANOONI: CUT IN THE SKY

BY JULIANA ENGBERG

The tragedy of the anthropocene is upon us. Science confirms, even though the skeptics deny, that humans have intervened in the balance of the geology and eco systems of our planet to such a degree that we have entered into what many refer to as the sixth mass extinction era. Human led overpopulation and consumption, cataclysmic weather events caused by climate change, destruction of animal habitats, and the depletion of natural resources are triggering the loss of animal, plant, marine, insect and micro-biological life at an unprecedented and accelerating rate.

In his book, *The Future of Life*, biologist and environmental philosopher, Edward Osborne Wilson has predicted that, if the current rate of human disruption of the biosphere continues, one-half of Earth's higher life forms will be extinct by 2100.

The last mass extinction – the Cretaceous-Tertiary mass extinction (also known as the K/T extinction) - occurred 65 million years ago. Scientists have suggested it was caused by climate alterations and a catastrophic drop in sea levels, which eventually became cataclysmic when a massive asteroid or comet collided with earth around the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico. This is thought to have been a slow progression over many millennia. By contrast, the predicted sixth mass extinction has been proceeding at an accelerated pace. Scientists estimate up to 50% of animal and habitat annihilation has occurred between 1970 and now.

The pursuit of the 'modern' – fossil fueled machines, industrialization, mega urbanization, all thought to be progressions – have, in fact, led us to a terrible brink of destruction. The anthropocene era is ecocide at a phenomenal speed and distribution.

These catastrophic predictions of humanity and earth conjoined in a hurtling towards death have led many to consider anew the more ancient knowledge and spiritualism of indigenous peoples whose beliefs and existence are intrinsically linked to notions of land – a geosophysical (earth centered) rather than theosophical (God centered) awareness.

Indigenous spirituality believes in the interconnectedness of all elements of the earth and universe - animate and inanimate - where plants and animals, landforms and celestial bodies are interrelated. For indigenous cultures the dualism suggested by the mind body split that privileges intellect over intuition, and which forms the basis of analytical modernism, is rejected in favor of a belief system that intrinsically seeks to protect the mother earth from which all life evolves.

For the ecology, this mind body dichotomy has given rise to an approach that sees nature as mere matter to fuel a modernist, machine life – digging for minerals, drilling for oil, trawling the seas for delicacies, displacing the land with infill and urbanism. In art this dualism has led to an analytical modernism, which has created an aesthetic of pure, rational forms - Platonic

forms – that create order, geometries, patterns informed by an intellectually applied and systemic approach that has sought to cleanse, distill, and make inert the active cosmos. A modernism that has ‘purified’ nature by abstraction and synthetic tactics.

But in art as in indigenous cultures, intuition has always asserted itself in parallel aesthetics – the Hellenistic, Gothic, Baroque, Rococo, Symbolist and Surrealist movements were produced from an underbelly of ancient geosophical, tribalist and pagan residuals. And more recently, movements exploring the dematerialization of art, flux, installation and immersive environments, transcendent minimalism and abject materialism have reasserted the power of the intuitive, operating an even closer link to the collective unconsciousness of inherited ancient and indigenous knowledge.

ANOHNI’s art – both visual and performative – lives with the spirits and incants a truth that is brought powerfully to delivery through its attachment to an eclectic animism that links her geosophy to both indigenous wisdoms and those parallel modernist artistic practices. Her work draws upon the aesthetics that can be found in automatism, collage, the Japanese practice of Butoh, and these allow her to contemplate, explore, celebrate and be at one with the interconnected universe of meta and matter.

Over decades, ANOHNI’s visual art work, which includes paintings and drawings on paper (atrophied, worried to collapse), to-



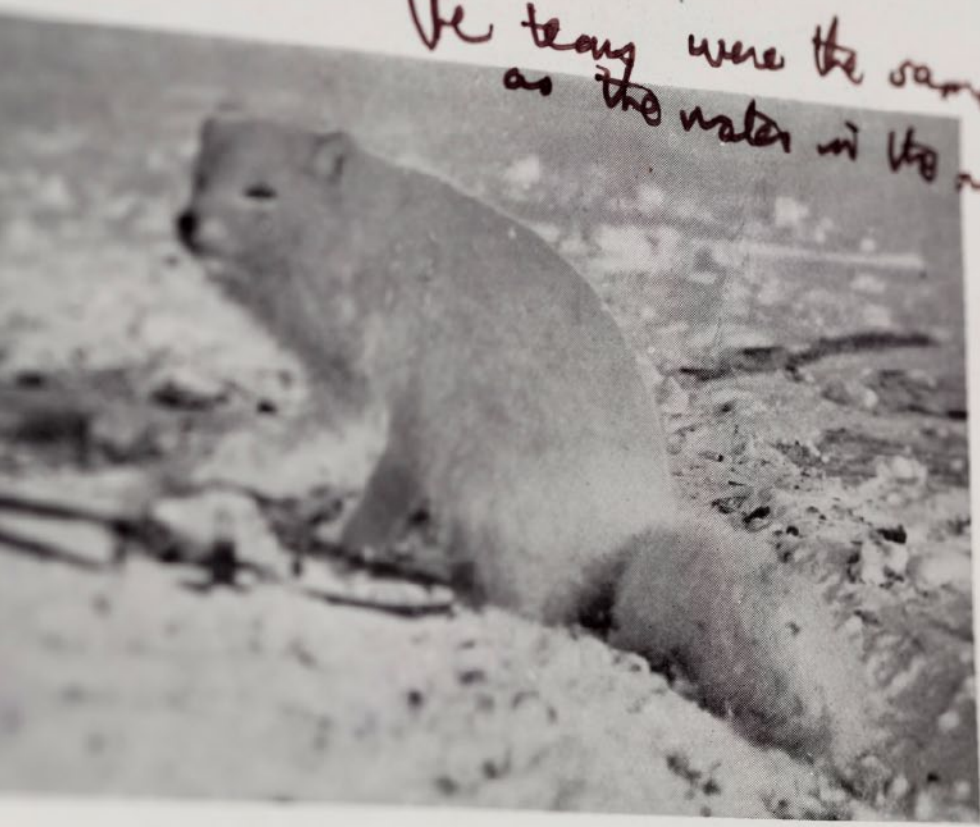
B.E. (detail), 2016

tems of collage (stacked visual poems and commentaries on the environment, AIDS, geo-politics), rescued objects (soothed, transformed, reborn as viable hybrid surreal hermaphrodite forms) and sculptural works (with surfaces and holes that accept and welcome flaws and asymmetry) there is an activated, animate agency set in play. Modernism’s smooth, antiseptic, anemic, asphyxiated and pristine surfaces are opened up by ANOHNI’s agitations to breath, to be a de-entombed body – abject, tormented, eroded, moving through a cathartic transformation to then be released and rejoined as interconnected matter.

ANOHNI’s mark making – small dashes, circle lines, massed line obliterations and

...the West, and
...are a harmless people nowadays
...abundance of iron and other articles valuable to possess.
...the desire of the expedition, notwithstanding the home-
...men, to remain in the field still another year because of their
...nities for work.

*The teays were the same
as the water in the ponds*



... photograph taken at a distance of six feet. A white fox skin is
... million to the Arctic and seventy-five skins, the equivalent of four hundred
... a large number to be taken in one year. The present shortage on the
... will cause rapid destruction of the species in Arctic America

deliberate lines that incise a surface - create an energy that is released through intuition. These marking gestures link ANOHNI's art to a kind of automatism. But unlike the surrealists – André Masson and André Breton – whose use of automatism eventually corralled lines to forms that they then manipulated and forced to 'be' something, ANOHNI allows the line to have its own life. As she has said: 'I try to listen to a line like I'm almost asleep. Am I watching her, or have I become her? Sometimes a line emerges from within itself, like a ruptured vein. I just try to keep listening. A line is energy, a cut in the sky, a hole through which manifestation pours.'¹

In her work *Cut Away the Bad*, for instance, ANOHNI has rectified the image of a murdered polar bear by eliminating the hunter from the scene. She has then introduced lines of energy to give the slaughtered bear a new spiritual existence. The lines have been delivered by following the sunlight that came through ANOHNI's studio window as it danced upon the printed page. This natural vitality is transferred to the polar bear in an act of restoration.

There are many rounds and holes in ANOHNI's works – circles – in drawn lines, coiled hair, sculpted circles from book bindings, holes made from bullets passing through paper, holes within holes, concentric and continuous – holes rubbed through paper to let the light in and pass through. ANOHNI's holes and circles offer a transitory presence, full of mystery and oblivion – and optimism.

'Sometimes I just sing for the Ghosts in the ceiling', ANOHNI once said when she was interviewed. Ghosts for her are like light holes in the immensity of the dark sky – tiny portals of positive negative space through which she connects all her ancestors and assembles a cosmology that unites the earthly body with the celestial universe. Ghosts appear in her lyrics and in her art as physical 'soul' manifestations hung from ceilings – ovoid shapes of pale wood shaped like cocoons awaiting an eventual catharsis.

The Butoh approach and aesthetic resists fixity, and like indigenous spiritualism it also embraces the philosophy of interconnectedness between all things. ANOHNI also resists fixity. Her pursuit is to evolve, experience and perform the cycles of growth that emerge from meditating on all that connects. Her quest is to bring attention to the plight of the environment, to find a language, both visual and performed, to make a space for transformation and understanding. In her music these ideas are given words. In her visual art meaning is allowed to take on its own force to be opened out and left available - to breath.

Juliana Engberg is a curator and writer. Programme director of Aarhus 2017: European Capital of Culture.

1. Interview with Anohni, 'The Earth Owns My Body', 2016, in *Anohni: My Truth*, James Elaine, Peter Hujar, Kazuo Ohno, ed. Friedrich Meschede, Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Koenig Books, London.

BIOGRAPHY



Photo by Colin Whitaker

Born in 1971 in West Sussex, Great Britain, ANOHNI lived in Sussex, Amsterdam and the San Francisco bay area as a child before moving to NYC in 1990.

In 1992, she co-founded the late night collective *Blacklips Performance Cult*. The ensemble consisted of 13 core performers who presented anarchic, original plays.

In 1995, ANOHNI founded a new collective, *The Johnsons*, named in remembrance of Marsha P. Johnson, the transgender street activist.

In 1997, she recorded her first full album and began performing as *Antony and the Johnsons* with a group of musicians at venues in NYC.

In 2004, ANOHNI staged a concert/performance piece *TURNING* in collaboration with Charles Atlas for the Whitney Biennale.

In 2005, Antony and the Johnsons' album *I Am A Bird Now* won the UK Mercury Music Prize. Further albums followed: *The Crying Light* (2008), *Swanlights* (2010), *TURNING* (2011), and *Cut The World* (2012). *Cut the World* included a 12-minute spoken piece entitled "Future Feminism", in which ANOHNI began to define her animist, eco-feminist perspective more vividly.

In 2009, ANOHNI presented her first exhibitions of drawings and collages at Isis Gallery in London and at Agnes B. Gallery in Paris.

In 2011, she scored and performed in Robert Wilson's production *The Life and Death of Marina Abramović*.

In 2012, ANOHNI had a solo exhibition of drawings at the Hammer Museum in LA.

In 2012, MoMA presented Antony and the Johnsons' symphonic concert/performance *Swanlights* at Radio City Music Hall in NYC.

In 2013, ANOHNI collaborated with filmmaker Lynette Wallworth and a group of senior Martu artists from the Western Australian desert. She went on to support the Martu in their fight to halt the development of a uranium mine on ancestral land.

In 2014, ANOHNI collaborated with Kembra Pfahler, Bianca Hunter, Sierra Casady and Johanna Constantine to present *13 Tenets of Future Feminism* at The Hole in NYC.

To coincide with the 2015 Paris Climate Conference, ANOHNI released "4 Degrees", a song addressing complacency in the face of global warming.

In 2016, her album *HOPELESSNESS* was released to critical acclaim, including another nomination for the Mercury Music Prize and a Brit Award. Dr. Friedrich Meschede curated *My Truth*, ANOHNI's first major art exhibition in Europe, at Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Germany.

In 2017, ANOHNI was artist-in-residence in Aarhus, European Capital of Culture. She restaged *13 Tenets of Future Feminism*, presenting an exhibition, lecture series and workshops in collaboration with Kembra Pfahler and Johanna Constantine. ANOHNI presented a 5-channel video installation *Silent Hopelessness*, on the façade of Musikhuset Aarhus. She performed a concert with the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra and Concert Clemens Choir.

MIRACLE NOW

After Rapture
After Darkfall
After embryo rain
Then will the time be born?
Then is it a moment?

In one moment, a flash of light
The history of the world
Then the dark before the Birth of Time Again

ANOHNI, 1995