

A Love Letter to Decorator Crabs

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Introduction

The ocean is a planetary force consisting of both surface and depth. The imaginary of the ocean is an interconnecting and interconnected force. The ocean, with its hypnotic lack of form, reminds us that who we are does not end at the skin. We bleed into our environments, and our environments bleed into us. The sea is both conceptually and materially entangled with us: we are on a transcorporeal continuum with the ocean. In this love letter, we turn toward the ocean as an ontological space of transformation and extend a dedication to our strange kin: decorator crabs. Decorator crabs are slow nocturnal scavengers. In an attempt to look “less-crab” or “more-than-crab”, they select materials, debris, and other living beings from their environment to adorn their shells, placing them over a velcro-like surface on their carapace: these crustaceans entangle themselves with their environment. In our viewing and interactions with them, we as human researchers similarly entangled ourselves amongst the crabs, all within the potent transformative fluid of the aquarium tank. We present our epistolary dedication to these critters as we conceptualise the aquarium as an alchemist’s pot of entanglements - a metonym for the ocean - to learn and become with the resident crustaceans. The letter is presented in video form here – [A love letter to decorator crabs](#).

Trigger warning: Please be advised that this piece contains descriptions of humans confining and eating other animals.



Dear *Oregonia* *Gracilis*,

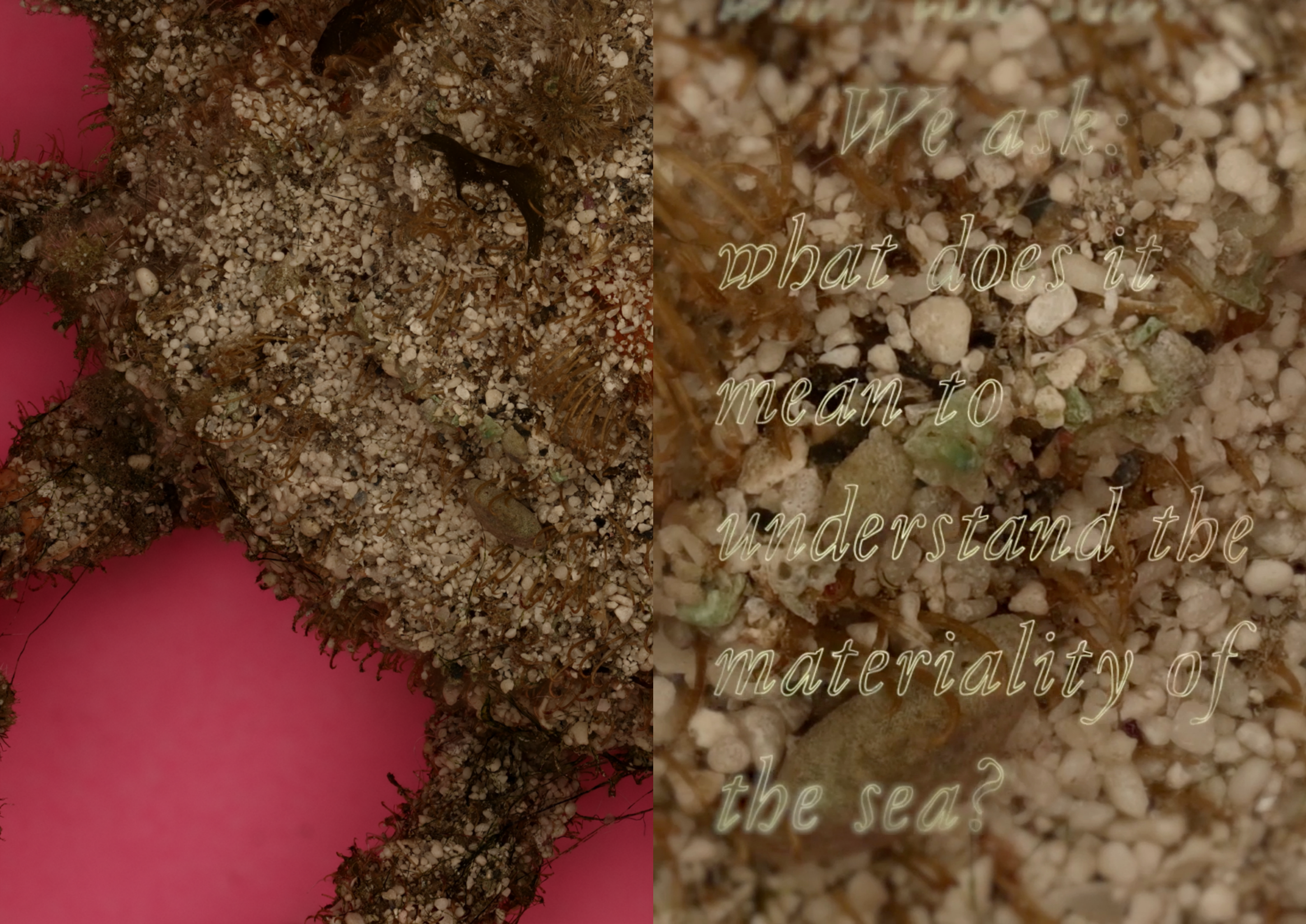
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In this love letter-cum, we turn toward the ocean as an ontological space of transformation and pen a dedication to our strange kin: decorator crabs.

Decorator crabs are slow nocturnal scavengers. In an attempt to look “less-crab” or “more-than-crab”, they select materials, debris, and other living beings from their environment to adorn their shells, placing them over a velcro-like surface on their carapace: these crustaceans entangle themselves with their environment. In our viewing and interactions with them, we as human researchers similarly entangled ourselves amongst the crabs, all within the potent transformative fluid of the aquarium tank. We present our epistolary dedication to these critters as we conceptualise the aquarium as an alchemist’s pot of entanglements –a metonym for the ocean– to learn and become with the resident crustaceans.

as you
fastened the
debris of the
aquarium
tank to your
backs - sponge,
algae and the





*We ask:
what does it
mean to
understand the
materiality of
the sea?*

Decorator
Crabs, we
match as you
weave your
multispecies
craft





BENTHIC CORPOREALITY

[video lecture link](#)