

Catherine Clover
Artist's Statement

Wallcreeper (2024)
27 rue Venel, Chapelle Venel, Aix-en-Provence, France

Enigmatic cliff-dwelling songbirds, Wallcreepers live in mountainous regions in summer and spend their winters at lower altitudes, including on the vertical walls of cities, such as those of tall buildings, bridges, churches. Old and crumbling walls are particularly popular with the birds as they provide perches. Chapelle Venel has been loved and unloved, respected and disrespected over the years, and these poorly maintained walls would be appealing. Some birds may have come down from the limestone ridges of Mont Venture to spend winter in the chapel. This is the name of Montaigne St Victoire in the ancient poetic language of this area, Provençal (in English, Mountain of the Wind).

The lettering is a phonetic score that depicts the song of several Wallcreepers as they nimbly navigate the walls of the chapel. All Wallcreepers sing, and they sing all year round. To the human ear the Wallcreepers' songs are melodic and tuneful with the harmonious repetition of a rising glissando whistle.

The score is the basis of an informal and playful participatory voicing where visitors are encouraged to sing with the Wallcreepers. Phonetic words approximate the birds' songs using local pronunciations. When human voices activate the score, they propose a cross-species connection between themselves and the Wallcreepers through singing, voicing, languaging, suggesting a way to multiply worlds through a musicality that is magnified and heightened by the acoustics of the chapel. They may even draw a sonic correlation with the most famous of Provençal poets, the troubadours of the Middle Ages. Perhaps the Wallcreepers will pause to listen before their journeys north to Mont Venture, delaying their seasonal return for the duration of the Biennale d'Aix to consider our offer of assembling an interspecies chorus.