**Third Floor**

***Time No Longer***, 2021

*Time No Longer* depicts a weathered turntable floating in a space station. It is tethered only by its electric cord, which allows it to keep playing a vinyl record. There appears to be no human presence to listen to it, and an uneasy quiescence around it suggests it may be spinning in the aftermath of a catastrophe – a custodian of that absent humanity. With ist own acrobatic intelligence, the tonearm moves from place to place on the record, the needle’s touch and rise resuming and ceasing its music. In a manner that seems not entirely at the mercies of gravity or chance, it continuously conducts itself. From its position in space, it observes 16 earthly sunrises and sunsets each day.

The turntable plays a new arrangement of French composer Olivier Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time* that draws on the unique history of the quartet’s composition. During the Second World War, Messiaen (1908–1992) was captured at Verdun and incarcerated at a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany. Whilst imprisoned he wrote *Quartet for the End of Time,* premiering it in 1941 – with three fellow musician prisoners – to an audience of captives and guards. Scored only for instruments they could each play and find, this extraordinary piece of chamber music remains the most searingly haunting and memorable work composed through incarceration. Sala recognized in Messiaen’s elegiac piece not only a sense of overwhelming loneliness at a time when the world’s crises seemed insurmountable, but also the need to bring something – however fragile and soft-spoken – into that numbness. For *Time No Longer*, Sala was particularly drawn to the only solo movement of the quartet, ‘The Abyss of the Birds’, which was written for clarinet and played by Messiaen’s fellow prisoner of war, Algerian musician Henri Akoka. As Messiaen put it, “The abyss is Time with ist sadness, its weariness. The birds [clarinet] are the opposite to Time; they are our desire for light…”

Sala found a natural complement to this isolated clarinet in another remarkable musical event, the story of Ronald McNair’s saxophone. In 1986 McNair, an astronaut and physicist, who was also a professional saxophone player, had been intending to play and record a saxophone solo on board the Space Shuttle Challenger. This would have been the first original piece of music recorded in space had not that journey been suddenly and tragically curtailed; the spacecraft disintegrated seconds after take-off, killing everyone on board. Sala felt that composing a saxophone part for ‘The Abyss of the Birds’ would subtly re-envisage a piece that was never played where it was intended, and also form a duet between two instrumental voices – empathethic and interdependent through what they have endured. The saxophone is introduced in *Time No Longer* only when the needle leaves the vinyl, granting McNair a ghostly presence, refracted into space via Akoka’s clarinet.

The sound arrangement for *Time No Longer* is made in partnership with two of Sala’s longterm collaborators, Hungarian-American musician André Vida, and French sound designer Olivier Goinard. The saxophone is performed by Vida himself, whilst the clarinet is performed by French clarinetist Raphaël Sévère.