

About the quotes in *THE OYSTER*

Quotations appearing on the installation are excerpted from the quotations reproduced below.

**The oyster stands preeminent...
as the food of the people.**

— Walt Whitman

**The water became polluted... So they
stopped oystering in these waters.**

“It was first farming and then it switched to oystering. But in the early 1900’s they built factories along the water and the water became polluted. Someone died from eating a tainted oyster and the government said, No more...pollution? No, no more oystering! So they stopped oystering in these waters, and the oystermen then had to move on.”

— Sylvia Moody D’Alessandro, Sandy Ground Historical Society

**The wampum shell...has become really
brittle, really hard to make into beads.**

“Traditionally, culturally, our nation is known as producing a type of bead called wampum. The wampum shell, unfortunately, due to ocean acidification, in recent years has become really brittle, really hard to make into beads. Kelp is an amazing type of seaweed that has the ability to sequester carbon and return the health of the shellfish.”

— Tela Troge, Shinnecock Kelp Farmers

**An oyster has a two-chambered heart,
one for itself and one for the world.**

— Rebecca Solnit

**It tasted of seawater...and
somehow...of the future.**

“It tasted of seawater...of brine and flesh...and somehow...of the future.”

— Anthony Bourdain

**At almost every other step...oyster-shells
were heaped up before the doors.**

“At almost every other step, there was a restaurant, where oyster-shells were heaped up before the doors.”

— Herman Melville

**I started up the first oyster cart in the
city since 1927.**

“I started up the first oyster cart in the city since 1927, when harvesting oysters from the harbor became illegal, so selling oysters on a cart became illegal as well. So what I’m basically doing is something that used to be commonplace in the city.”

— Ben “Moody” Harney, The Real Mother Shuckers

**There’s no more natural nature.
Now it’s a matter of design.**

“We have to hit the reset button if we want nature to come back. There’s no more natural nature.

Now it’s a matter of design.”

—Kate Orff, SCAPE

**I’ve seen pods of dolphins feeding in
Jamaica Bay.**

“I’ve seen pods of dolphins feeding in Jamaica Bay... dozens of great blue herons returning to their rookery on the Harlem River... giant sturgeon breaking the surface of the Hudson...ospreys returning to the East River ... seals ... and, of course, gannets.”

—Pete Malinowski, Billion Oyster Project

**Ka mau te wehi! Oysters - the ultimate
water filtration system! We get to harness
their superpowers.**

“Ka mau te wehi! Oysters are incredible, ingenious—the ultimate water filtration system! We get to harness their superpowers. Once they’re in place, sit back and let nature do its thing. It’s pretty amazing”

— Te Aonehe Nuku (Harbor School, Ocean Engineering – Class of 2025)

The Oyster, by Alan Michelson,
Mohawk (Six Nations of the Grand River)
Governors Island, July 30 – November 30, 2026

For more info, visit moreart.org/the-oyster