

Dense Mesh:

Lisha Bai, Ryan Lauderdale, Hannah Levy, Michael Jones McKean, Wyatt Niehaus, Kate Steciw, and Chris Wiley

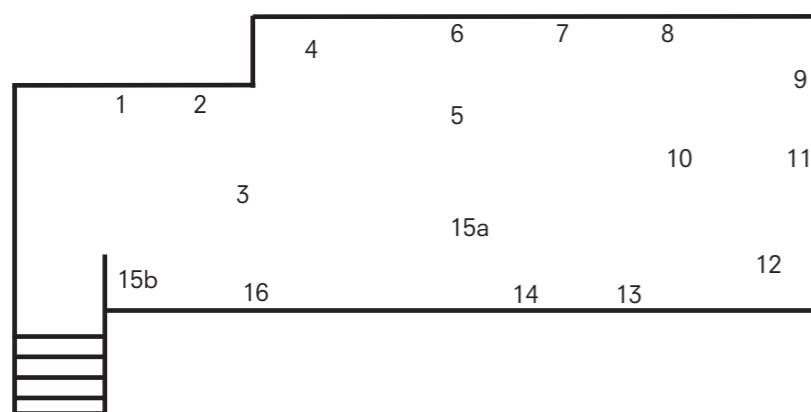
Curated by Joshua Citarella

GALLERY 2 - Downstairs

"We are the first generation to command the power to envision in the strict sense of the word, and all vision, imagination, and fictions of the past must pale in comparison to our images. We are about to reach a level of consciousness in which the search for deep coherence, explanation, enumeration, narration, and calculation, in short, and historical, scientific, and textually linear thinking is being surpassed by a new, visionary, superficial mode of thinking."
- Vilem Flusser, Into the Universe of Technical Images

It seems as if Flusser's concept of the global totalitarian apparatus, hypothesised in 1985, has today come to fruition in the form of climate change, the intelligent war machine, the surveillance state, factory automation and the seemingly unavoidable, locked in place, systemic flows which forecast an inevitable and catastrophic end to the Anthropocene.

Can communications technology serve as a vehicle for social change? How does one negotiate the envisioning power of technical images, which unlocks an unprecedented degree of creative agency for humanity, against what appears to be the immanent downwards trajectory of human value through technological progression? Is there a possibility within the dialogical fabric of networked culture to enact a meaningful social restructuring and so push back against the totalitarianism of the apparatus?



1-2. Wyatt Niehaus, *Lights Out - Italy 0012*, 2014; *Lights Out - UK 0018*, 2014, Framed C-prints

3. Hannah Levy, *Untitled*, 2015, Steel, styrofoam, sand, epoxy, fiberglass

4. Ryan Lauderdale, *flora extrusion/funerary*, 2016, Formica, wood, fluorescent light, glass, standoffs, extruded aluminum, hardware, vertical power strip, candle, long-stem rose

5. Michael Jones McKean, *three carbon tons*, 2016, insulation foam, epoxy resin, paint, nylon fibres, 200 grams silver

6-8. Chris Wiley, *Dingbat (28)*, 2015, Archival inkjet print mounted on aluminium in artist frame with stucco and sprayed acrylic; *Dingbat (14)*, 2014, Archival inkjet print mounted on aluminium in artist frame with faux alligator skin; *Dingbat (15)*, 2014, Archival inkjet print mounted on aluminium in artist frame with custom corrugated steel

9. Lisha Bai, *Bricks (67.5 units)*, 2016, Sand and resin

10. Hannah Levy, *Untitled*, 2015, Handmade vinyl water wings, steel

11. Wyatt Niehaus, *Body Assembly*, 2013, HD video with sound, 1:04 min

12. Kate Steciw, *Construction 002*, 2015, Dye-sub on aluminium mounted to sintra

13. Ryan Lauderdale, *Jog Lamp*, 2014, Formica, wood, fluorescent lights, spray paint on glass, hardware

14. Michael Jones McKean, *five hundred seconds*, 2015, Solar panel, perforated UV coated window vinyl, SeaMarker rescue dye, acrylic medium



15. Bios Urn, available to buy at www.urnabios.com

16. Wyatt Niehaus, *K Composition (Factory - Open Floor Plan)*, 2015, Air release graphic film on aluminium

A curator's essay, along with further information about the artists, is available at the front desk.

Joshua Citarella will have his first solo show in the UK at Carroll / Fletcher, 10 June - 27 August 2016.

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Thomson & Craighead: *Party Booby Trap*

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14 April - 25 May 2016

Thomson & Craighead: *Party Booby Trap*

GALLERY 1 - Ground Floor

Party Booby Trap, Thomson & Craighead's second solo show at Carroll / Fletcher, presents a series of major new works inspired by sources ranging from nuclear waste to self-help literature and genetics.

Balloons bearing the names of military operations from "Desert Storm" to "Urgent Fury" crowd the floor of the first gallery (1). These innocuous presences function as gentle reminders of the pervasive nature of warfare. On a TV screen, some women dutifully pop the balloons after a corporate party, as if trying to contain a reality that could overwhelm them.

With the series of posters *Common Era* (2016) (2), Thomson & Craighead gather a collection of predictions for the end of the world: from Nostradamus - who famously declared that all would be over in 1999 - to Canadian philosopher John A. Leslie, who more optimistically estimated it would be by the year 11120. The soft palette and hand-made feel of these text pieces stands in stark contrast with their sensationalist content. They recall the mindfulness colouring books that topped the best-selling charts in 2015. While broadcasting collective anxiety about the destruction of humanity and "the world as we know it," they bring viewers towards something much more intimate, to do with personal angst and the quest for happiness. Alongside, the generative video work *The First Person* (2014) (3) randomly cuts between a found video of a burning house and first person statements drawn from American self-help websites. As the fire rages but never seems to burn down, the stream of personal anxieties and affirmations never ceases, keeping the work in a perpetual cinematic plateau-state - a symbolic address that the viewer always seems to join midway.

Created in collaboration with perfumer Euan McCall, the fragrance *Apocalypse* (2016) (4) combines the scents of olfactory elements described in The Book of Revelation, including burnt flesh, incense and blood. Presented in a velvet-lined box, it turns a central tenet of the Western imaginary, and a canonical representation of End Times, into a luxury, limited edition item. At once highly desirable and sickening, the piece is the product of a time in which both consumerism and politics feed on fear, mysticism and fallacies of all stripes.

The print *the war on terror* (2016) (5) plays with the phrase in a series of Oulipo-esque anagrams: "the rot narrower", "tarot hewn error", "rare tower thorn." In October 2002, then-President George W. Bush declared that Iraq was in possession of chemical and biological weapons which "threatened America and the world" - an allegation which is now widely acknowledged as one of the main triggers for the Second Gulf War (2003-11). "Confronting the threat posed by Iraq," he said, "is crucial to winning the war on terror." Made with a type-writer on a white sheet of paper like a piece of experimental poetry, this work hints at the absurdity of

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the chain of events that led to the death of hundreds of thousands of civilians in less than a decade. On the opposite wall, the artists have added to JG Ballard's 1967-71 series of 'advertiser's announcements' with their own *Another advertiser's announcement (proposal for a billboard)* (2016) **(6)**, pairing a quote from Ballard with an inverted view of the Scottish Highlands.

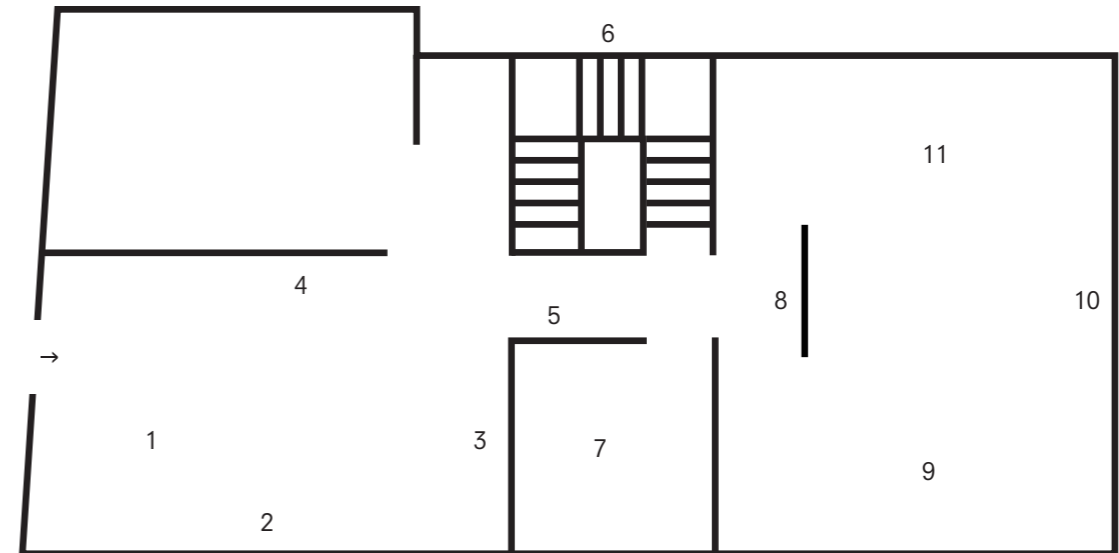
In the middle gallery, *Six Years of Mondays* (2013) **(7)** is a documentary artwork showing a series of recordings of the weather sourced online. The footage was recorded and uploaded by a man called Graham Smith living in the Scottish kingdom of Fife, who has been making time-lapse recordings of the view from his bedroom window everyday from 6am to 6pm since 2006. The short video work takes us through a visualisation of six years of Mondays, often thought of as the most dreaded day of the week, as attested to by being the weekday with the highest rate of suicide. The years are shown in sequence with the footage for every Monday tiled consecutively across the screen from left to right, top to bottom. Each year is sound-tracked differently, offering a range of frameworks for locating and interpreting this specific contemplative landscape. For instance, 2008 is set against the sounds of Jupiter, locating Fife within an inter-planetary context, while the Indonesian gamelan music of 2010 connects it to the culture of the opposite point on the globe.

Help Yourself **(8)** and *A temporary index* **(9)** (both 2016), articulate this push-and-pull between concern for the common good and individual fulfilment. *Help Yourself* combines found digital video material, originally designed to prevent the on-screen accumulation of dead pixels, and a series of self-improvement tapes. Viewers can navigate them – going from, say, "how to attract money" to "weight loss" or, "sales motivation" by plugging headphones into different sockets. Meanwhile, on a large free-standing screen, *A temporary index* gives, in seconds, the estimated time it will take for sites storing entombed radioactive waste to be safe again for humans. These range from a few decades to a million years. The numbers are presented vertically and doubled up, standing like totems. Thus abstracted, they are almost as incomprehensible as the durations they represent. On the rear wall, a series of lenticular light boxes titled *Corruption* (2014) **(10)** each display twelve frames taken from a corrupt video file found online. This file, intended to put a virus onto the downloader's computer, is here shown as a readymade aesthetic proposition: pixelated, painterly and abstract.

Thomson & Craighead's *Stutterer* (2014) **(11)**, a video installation the artists describe as a "poetry machine", is inspired by one of the most significant scientific advances to date, with the first mapping of a human genome (an individual's complete DNA set) by the international Human Genome Project. It took thirteen years and twenty universities to reference over three billion base pairs of nucleotides (DNA molecules) that compose one single genome.

There are four types of DNA: adenine, cytosine, guanine, and thymine, commonly referred to as A, C, G, and T. The artists seized the creative opportunity afforded by the combination of a sequence of letters and a crucial tranche of recent history. The time it took to complete the Human Genome Project spanned the liberation of Nelson Mandela in 1990 and the fall of Baghdad to the allied military coalition in 2003. Supported by the Wellcome Trust, *Stutterer* (2014) pairs each letter of the first human genome with a word beginning with the same letter, spoken in television footage from the period. The result is a televisual portrait of an era which encompassed not only the First and the Second Gulf Wars, but also the collapse of the Soviet Union, the deaths of Yitzhak Rabin and Princess Diana, the first cloned sheep Dolly, the launch of Viagra and the shootings at Columbine High School.

Party Booby Trap (the title is a palindrome, like most of Thomson & Craighead's exhibition titles) cuts across temporalities: the deep time of nuclear decay and apocalyptic visions is put side by side with the dizzying brevity of the human lifespan (or a political career). The exhibition harks back to a seminal religious text, and links it to belief systems of all kinds, arguably including democracy, science and art itself.



Front room

1. Thomson & Craighead, *Untitled (Balloon work)*, 2016, Video (3:19 min), printed balloons
2. Thomson & Craighead, *Common Era I-XVI*, 2016 (l-r from top), Digital prints on paper
3. Thomson & Craighead, *The First Person*, 2014, Generative video
4. Thomson & Craighead, *Apocalypse*, 2016, Perfume, boxed

Corridor

5. Thomson & Craighead, *the war on terror*, 2016, Ink on paper
6. Thomson & Craighead, *Another advertiser's announcement (proposal for a billboard)*, 2016, Digital pigment print

Middle room

7. Thomson & Craighead, *Six Years of Mondays*, 2013, Single-channel video, 11:09 mins

Rear room

8. Thomson & Craighead, *Help Yourself*, 2016, 32 audio sources, video, patch bay, headphones
9. Thomson & Craighead, *A temporary index*, 2016, Projection, booklet, desk, chair, lamp
10. Thomson & Craighead, *Corruption III-VII*, 2014 (l-r), Photographic lightboxes
11. Thomson & Craighead, *Stutterer*, 2014, Two-channel moving images, generative software

Price lists available upon request.

Thomson & Craighead have shown extensively at galleries, film festivals and for site-specific commissions in the UK and internationally. Solo shows include *Maps DNA and Spam*, Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee, UK (2014); *Not Even the Sky*, MEWO Kunsthalle, Memmingen, Germany; and *Never Odd or Even*, Carroll / Fletcher, London, UK (both 2013). Recent group exhibitions include *Electronic Superhighway*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK (2016); *Big Bang Data*, Somerset House, London, UK; *Right Here, Right Now*, The Lowry, Manchester, UK; *Art In The Age Of...Asymmetrical Warfare*, Witte de With, Rotterdam, Netherlands; *How to Construct a Time Machine*, MK Gallery, Milton Keynes, UK (all 2015) and the *Nam June Paik Award*, Haus Lange, Krefeld, Germany (2014). They live and work between London and the Scottish Highlands.

Credits:

Special thanks to the Wellcome Trust for support of *Stutterer*; Ele Carpenter at the Arts Catalyst for support of *Temporary Index*; Pochpac for support of *Apocalypse*; The Lowry for support of *Corruption*; and The Slade School of Fine Art.