



The Future We Remember

The Future We Remember

February 2 - June 5, 2016

Introduction

Cora Fisher, SECCA Curator of Contemporary Art
& Sarah Higgins, Curator, Zuckerman Museum of Art

When we began thinking of an exhibition about the future, we found ourselves reflecting first on the present: the broad changes wrought by technology on our daily lives and the many signals of profound ecological change to earth as we know it. We wanted to consider, like so many scientists, humanists, and artists working today, what artifacts from our time might be left to the future. We began with the notion of art, at its core, as an offering to a time beyond ourselves. That thought led us to consider the relationship between current versions of history and present-day visions of the future. Contemporary art is inherently concerned with or represents a vision of the now, but how might we continually examine what creates the concept of "now?" Anxieties about the future can lead to powerful feelings of paralysis or surrender: but the urgency of the present calls for alternatives, experiments, and imagination. We wanted to delve into artistic practices with an eye to the future and creating spaces of possibility.

We had seen incontrovertible evidence, but questions remained. How will we render culture visible to the future? Who has the authority to imagine it? How will our futuristic visions appear once they have become natural history? Who will look back and onto what remains? What follies, fantasies, and visionary utopias will have been revealed? Will we have been dreamers or cynics?

We found our path forward in recent articles published about a new kind of stone, formed when heat fuses natural materials with oceanic waste plastic. These hybrid stones are now turning up on the shores of Hawaii. Artist Kelly Jazvac, working with Oceanographer Charles J. Moore and Geologist Patricia Corcoran, shared their findings of this contemporary artifact, naming it Plastiglomerate. Scientists now view these stones as evidence of the increasingly visible human impact on the geological record. For us, their hybrid nature and terrible beauty captured a profound truth about the present. These stones became a fundamental inspiration.

Enter the artists of *The Future We Remember*, who provide a range of responses to the pressing ecological shifts and to technologies that define our current moment. Some artworks consider whether imagination is limited by the forms of knowledge we have inherited, and if so, seek to press beyond those limitations. Some salvage a sense of humor about humankind's place on earth and beyond, and by doing so, disarm our hubris. Some resuscitate a sense of wonder, making connections between human life and the far-flung dimensions of space and time. Many use the material reserves and records available, from detritus to clay, fossils to found objects, seeds to sounds, landscapes to dreamscapes. The artists infuse those materials with significance, mystery, and the power to connect us simultaneously to our varied pasts and our possible futures.

As we developed the exhibition, we were fortunate to have many inspiring conversations with the artists. We want to thank each of them for their contribution to a collective sense of inquiry. We would also like to thank the scientists and humanists participating in the *Time Capsule Talks*, described further on. They will extend conversations that began for us with the artists to our audiences.

Projections of the future are always speculative, yet they also reflect the present state of culture and our collective outlook on civilization and change. The future provokes us to explore a hypothetical realm of possibility and find there what will be memorable, beautiful, and liberating.

Sterling Allen (Texas, U.S.)

Vija Celmins (Lithuania)

Ragnheidur Gestsdóttir (Iceland)

Kelly Jazvac & Patricia L. Corcoran (Canada)

Lina López & François Bucher (Germany; New York, U.S.)

Emil Lukas (Pennsylvania, U.S.)

Michael Jones McKean (New York, U.S.)

Iman Person (Georgia, U.S.)

Dario Robleto (Texas, U.S.)

Tejal Shah (India)

Works in the Exhibition

For this brochure, we have organized the artworks into three interpretive categories, though virtually any work could belong to more than one of these groups. The categories are: *Art & Artifact*; *Natural History & the Anthropocene*; and *The Universe & the Scale of Time*. The categories themselves share extensive kinship. For example, *Art & Artifact* and *Natural History & the Anthropocene* draw on related scientific and academic disciplines such as anthropology, geology, and archeology. Despite their indebtedness to these fields of knowledge, many of the artworks throughout the exhibition point to the inadequacy of current structures of knowledge. They ask if the known disciplines are sufficient or if it is necessary for them to be reinvented.

Art & Artifact



Dario Robleto, *Setlists for a Setting Sun (The Crystal Palace)*, 2014

Artifacts are closely aligned with science and natural history – the fossil, the clay pot of another civilization, the first technologies of writing, the hieroglyph. The word “artifact” already contains “art” within it: “Art” plus “factum,” or knowledge, combine with an implication of the handmade, manufactured, or artificial to give us “artifact.” The artworks in this category call into question notions of permanence and ephemerality. By the same stroke, many ask who carries meaning into the historical record, and what fictions may be carried along with them.

In two commissioned untitled artworks, Sterling Allen considers the order of things and the status of images. For one, Allen converted digital photographs to a 35mm slide show. The images, captured throughout his daily routine, are everyday scenes made significant by the artist’s eye. The slide projector references the obsolete technology once used in classrooms by art historians. In a site-specific photomural, Allen presents a digitally manipulated illusion of objects on shelves, prompting questions about the status of these objects in time and culture.

Three major works by Dario Robleto push the ability for materials to contain meaning to the edge of believability, renewing our sense of wonder. *American Seabed* (2014), *Setlists for a Setting Sun (The Crystal Palace)* (2014), and *The Pulse Armed With a Pen (An Unknown History of the Human Heartbeat)* (2014) revisit and adapt the 16th Century *Wunderkammer*. These "cabinets of curiosities" were encyclopedic collections of objects and artifacts from across the globe, microcosms of the world in its splendid variety. Robleto preserves and combines such delicate materials as the first recorded sound of the human heartbeat, early recordings of music, minerals, shells, fossils of extinct animals emerging from glacial thaw, vintage photographs, and butterflies. Based in deep and extensive research, his are intricate arrangements that connect inner and outer space, mystery and matter across time.

Checklist

Dario Robleto

Setlists for a Setting Sun (The Crystal Palace), 2014

Cyanotypes, prints, watercolor paper, butterflies, butterfly antennae made from stretched audiotape of the earliest live recording of music (The Crystal Palace Recordings of Handel's "Israel in Egypt," 1888), various cave minerals and crystals, homemade crystals, black swan vertebrate, lapis lazuli, coral, sea urchin shells, sea urchin teeth, various seashells, ocean water, pigments, cut paper, mica flakes, glitter, feathers, colored mirrors, plastic and glass domes, audio recording, digital player, headphones, wood, polyurethane

60 x 45-1/2 x 45-1/2 inches

Courtesy Inman Gallery, Houston, TX and the artist

Dario Robleto

American Seabed, 2014

Fossilized prehistoric whale ear bones salvaged from the sea (1 to 10 million years), various butterflies, butterfly antennae made from stretched and pulled audiotape recordings of Bob Dylan's "Desolation Row," concrete, ocean water, pigments, coral, brass, steel, Plexiglas

37 x 68 x 55 inches

Courtesy Inman Gallery, Houston, TX and the artist

Dario Robleto

The Pulse Armed With a Pen (An Unknown History of the Human Heartbeat)

Live Presentation, 1 hour, McChesney Scott Dunn Auditorium,
February 2nd, 2016



Dario Robleto, *The Pulse Armed With a Pen (An Unknown History of the Human Heartbeat) mini box set version*, 2014

Dario Robleto

The Pulse Armed With a Pen (An Unknown History of the Human Heartbeat) mini box set version, 2014

7 custom cut 5-inch vinyl records, clothbound box, digital prints (record sleeves, liner notes, labels), heliogravure.

Courtesy Inman Gallery and the artist

Sterling Allen

Untitled, 2016

Site-specific photomural

Phototext on wall

12 x 16 feet

Commissioned by SECCA

Sterling Allen

Untitled, 2016

35mm slide projection

100 35 mm slides, dimensions variable

Commissioned by SECCA

Natural History & The Anthropocene



Tejal Shah, *Some Kind of Nature*, 2013 - 2014

Artists Iman Person and Emil Lukas present ceramic works and material amalgamations that speak to geology, time, and the earth's strata. Person's pottery shards and unfired clay sculptures, *Lineal Descents*, consider what binds our bodies to the earth, and the sustenance that is found from our relationship to the landscape and matrilineal traditions. Lukas' *Time Line Under a Pear Tree* consists of discs of compressed organic materials arrayed on the ground, like geological strata or a timeline.

The Anthropocene is a new geological epoch based on certain scientific markers of changes to the Earth's surface, atmosphere, plant and animal life. Unlike other changes in geological time caused by tectonic shifts, earthquakes, glacier cycles and meteors, the Anthropocene epoch is defined by the impact humans have had on geological history.

As we witness the natural landscape, we see the marks of ecological distress. From these marks, however, emerge new signs of life and forms of art. This is where artist Tejal Shah's films, *Between the Waves (Landfill Dance)* and *Some Kind of Nature*, offer us a new understanding of the intertwining of human nature and ecology. These films suggest a dismantling of humankind's attitude that supposes we are superior to the natural world rather than part of it. In *Landfill Dance*, a row of figures dressed as insects skitter and dance in the midst of raw landfill, suggesting a toppling of the order that places insects below humans.

Checklist

Tejal Shah

Some Kind of Nature, 2013 - 2014

Dual Channel Video Installation, Photograph

HD, Black & White, Sound

Channel I, 6:30 min; Channel II, 1:37 min,

Courtesy of the artist, Barbara Gross Galerie, Munich, and Project 88, Mumbai

Tejal Shah

Between the Waves, Channel 2- Landfill Dance, 2012

Dual Channel Video Installation, Photograph

HD, Black & White, Sound

Video Installation, HD Color, 5 min

Courtesy of the artist, Barbara Gross Galerie, Munich, and Project 88, Mumbai



Iman person, *Earth Medicine*, 2014

Iman Person

Earth Medicine, 2014

Video, 6 min.

Courtesy of the artist

Iman Person

Untitled, 2016

Mixed media, unfired clay

Variable dimensions

Courtesy of the artist

Iman Person

Kindred, 2014

Mixed media, unfired clay

53 x 8 x 4 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Iman Person

Betwixt and Between, 2014

Mixed media, unfired clay

31 x 6 x 1.5 inches

Courtesy of the artist

Emil Lukas

Time Line Under Pear Tree, 1994 - 1996

Concrete, shells, stones, leaves, wood, seeds, pigment, earth, insects and oil paint in cast plaster

40 sections, 42 feet when laid end to end (variable), each section 12 1/2 inches in diameter

Vija Celmins

Untitled, 1995

Wood Engraving, 39/47

16 x 14 inches

Courtesy Wake Forest University

The Universe & the Scale of Time



Lina Lopez & Francois Boucher, *Wormhole*, 2015

If history can be seen as a bracketing system, arbitrary in its beginning and end, then the sliding scale of time reveals our systems of measurement are relative, from a lifetime to historical time, geological to cosmological time.

Michael Jones McKean and Ragnheidur Gestsdóttir collide the futuristic with the archaic, playing on the conventions of Natural History museum displays while drawing on the popular imagination of space travel. In her audio-visual installation, *Pale Blue Dot* (2014), Gestsdóttir references the iconic photograph of Earth as seen from NASA's Voyager 1 space probe, taken from a distance of approximately 3.7 billion miles. In the original photo, Earth appears no larger than the size of a pixel. Gestsdóttir's pale blue dot bounces on the wall with the parodic humor of a computer screensaver, its pixelated appearance exaggerated, while accompanied by the sound of crashing rocks. Humorously disorienting, *Pale Blue Dot* accepts our insignificance in the cosmos.

Meanwhile, Michael Jones McKean's *The Ceremony* (2013) portrays our ancient human ancestors with gentle humor while asking whether they are really so distant after all. In *Diviner* (2012), two deeply evocative objects – a meteor and a conch shell – are presented ritualistically atop handmade blankets. This juxtaposition is simultaneously factual and evasive, quotidian and magical. When confronted with the vast expanses of cosmological space and time, both of these artists find poignancy and humor in the fleeting frailty of human history.

An image by Lina Lopez and Francois Boucher from the multi-media work *Wormhole* (2015) juxtaposes two spaces of preservation: an ancient Egyptian tomb called the 'Book of the Earth' and a contemporary seed vault in the frigid archipelago of Svalbard, Norway, which currently holds the largest collection of seeds for the biodiversity of the future. This 'wormhole' through time is accompanied by, *Le Temps Qui Reste* (*The Time That Remains*), a kinetic sculpture which suspends a spinning seed within a glass dome.

Checklist



Lina Lopez & Francois Boucher, *Le Temps qui Reste, The Time that Remains*, 2014

Lina Lopez & Francois Boucher

Le Temps qui Reste,

The Time that Remains, 2014

Glass bell, fan, LED light, fishing line, flying seed

63 5/8 x 9 1/4 x 9 1/4 inches

Courtesy Cristin Tierney Gallery, New York, NY
and the artists

Lina Lopez & Francois Boucher

Wormhole, 2015

3D printed model, vinyl

48 3/4 x 62 1/2 x 70 3/4 inches

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

Courtesy Cristin Tierney Gallery, New York, NY
and the artists

Lina Lopez & Francois Boucher

Wormhole, 2015

Inkjet photograph mounted on aluminum

11 3/4 x 29 3/4 x 1 inches

Edition of 3 + 2 AP

Courtesy Cristin Tierney Gallery, New York, NY and the artists

Ragnheidur Gestsdóttir

Pale Blue Dot, 2014

Video Projection

Dimensions Variable

Courtesy of the artist

Ragnheidur Gestsdóttir

The Order of Things, 2012

Dual Channel Video Installation

Color, Sound

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist



Michael Jones McKean, *The Comedy*, 2014

Michael Jones McKean

The Comedy, 2014

Wood, human hair, wig, resin, plastic, paint, lights, stainless steel

37.5 x 82 x 9 inches

Courtesy of Inman Gallery, Houston, TX and the artist

Michael Jones McKean

The Ceremony, 2013

Prosthetic silicone, makeup, hair, fabric, clay, dirt, plaster, stainless steel, resin, polymer clay, paint, wood, paint

70 x 74 x 9 inches

Courtesy of Inman Gallery, Houston, TX and the artist

Michael Jones McKean

Diviner, 2012

Shell from Micronesia, Campo del Cielo meteorite, American quilt circa 1880, blanket from India circa 1960, Kuba blanket from Zaire circa 1900, blanket from Mexico circa 1950

10 x 24 x 24 inches

Courtesy of Inman Gallery, Houston, TX and the artist

Time Capsule: Our Message to the Future

Time capsules are snapshots of the present, portraits of how people of a particular time imagine the future. They preserve what is believed will be significant, meaningful, or scarce in times to come.

The term “time capsule” describes the deliberate creation of a collection of objects or documents to be hidden from access until a designated time as a direct communication with the future. The term has been applied retroactively to accidental or unintentional discoveries of preserved collections. They often include lists or narrative projections about the time in which the capsule is scheduled to be opened.

Exhibiting artists in *The Future We Remember* were invited to contribute contemporary artifacts to a time capsule. We now invite you, along with leaders in the sciences and humanities, to respond to these objects and become their interpreters.

The *Time Capsule Talks* are interactive conversations that bring an anthropologist, astronomer, archaeologist, biologist, and poet to explore the meaning of the time capsule’s contents as well as the future of their field. Written interpretations of the artifacts produced during these conversations are displayed in the Overlook Gallery and the stories shared become part of the finished time capsule.

We would like to thank the participants who will continue to expand our mental horizons during the *Time Capsule Talks*. Special thanks to the North Carolina Humanities Council who made this series of talks possible.

Time Capsule Object Descriptions

Sterling Allen

1. Small sculpture
2. Drawing on note card
3. Found piece of wood

Michael Jones McKean

4. Fragment from a Bristlecone pine tree
5. Sony Mini Disc Player
6. Campo del Cielo meteorite

Dario Robleto

7. Medical glass slides: a drawing of the earliest human pulse wave, and one of the earliest visual tracings of a flatline
8. Fossils of an extinct whale's ear

Kelly Jazvac

9. Support structures/cast-offs from 3D printing processes

Iman Person

10. Clear glass bottle containing river water
11. Honey bee specimen
12. Size 6 gold ring

Ragnheidur Gestsdóttir

13. Two glasses, fused at the base, demonstrating a new theory of the beginning of the universe
14. Broken porcelain representing the Big Bang

Tejal Shah

15. Poem recited by the artist. Hsin Ming: On Trust in the Heart
Attributed to Seng-ts'an, the third Patriarch of the Dhyana Sect
Source: *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages*, Edward Conze (ed.). New York: Philosophical Library, 1954, pp. 296-298. (No image available)

Time Capsule Objects



1



2



5



6



10



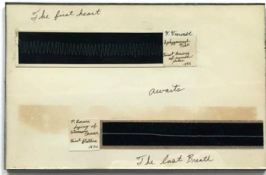
11



3



4



7 & 8



9



13



12



14

Time Capsule Talks @ SECCA

Imagine the future and contribute to a time capsule with leading scholars and innovators during the *Time Capsule Talks*. Followed by a gallery tour.

Investigate Cultural Artifacts

Anthropologist Dr. Andrew Gurstelle
2.25.2016 / 6 - 8 PM

Traverse Expanding Universes

Astronomer Dr. Sheila Kannappan
3.03.2016 / 6 - 8 PM

Discover Unearthed Treasures

Archaeologist John Mintz
4.21.2016 / 6 - 8 PM

Explore the Future of the Human Body

Biologist Dr. Anthony Atala, M.D.
5.12.2016 / 6 - 8 PM

Send Messages to the Future

Poet Shirlette Ammons
6.2.2016 / 6 - 8 PM

Things to Come: Sci-Fi Film Series

Things to Come: Sci-Fi Film Series presents three groundbreaking science fiction classics that explore possible futures of humanity.

H.G. Wells' *Things to Come* (1936)

2.18.2016 / 8 PM / \$7

Planet of the Apes (1968)

2.25.2016 / 8 PM / \$7

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)

3.03.2016 / 8 PM / \$7

Film @ SECCA

Dreams Rewired (2015)

4.21.2016 / 8 PM / \$7

DREAMS REWIRED traces the desires and anxieties of today's hyper-connected world back more than a hundred years, when telephone, film and television were new. As revolutionary then as contemporary social media is today, early electric media sparked a fervent utopianism in the public imagination – promising total communication, the annihilation of distance, an end to war. But then, too, there were fears over the erosion of privacy, security, morality. Using rare (and often unseen) archival material from nearly 200 films to articulate the present, DREAMS REWIRED reveals a history of hopes to share and betrayals to avoid.



Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art / 336.725.1904 / SECCA.ORG

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