

See Yourself E(x)ist

Curated by Madeline
Schwartzman, author
of *See Yourself
Sensing: Redefining
Human Perception* and
*See Yourself X: Human
Futures Expanded*

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Nature does not speak human. Turbulence, decay, entropy, and gravity do not recognize human attempts at adaptation, or human existence at all. We are, after all, always plummeting toward our own end, our existence just one timed component in the intricate and complex web of nature. We are always on the edge of chaos. Control is just a filter. We build constructions, networks, cultural systems, and emotional beliefs to hang on to our own agency, all the while being thwarted by nature's soulless forces. *See Yourself E(x)ist* looks at the future of humans and nature—at our poetic and futile attempts at agency, and our absurd productive efforts to control. Nature doesn't abhor a vacuum, or anything at all. We do.

The eighteen artists of *See Yourself E(x)ist* address our human future in nature and, implicit in that journey, our transformation, evolution, and decay. To be human is a messy thing. To e(x)ist is to be enmeshed, tangled, and knotted up in larger systems like our solar orbit, Earth's weather patterns, and planetary gravitational attraction. The artists in *See Yourself E(x)ist* make messes too—sometimes organized messes—using the body, the face, plant matter, and our fellow animals.

Most of us can't look a disaster like Chernobyl in the eye. We have limits to how much news media we can absorb about the extinction of animals and plants, and as a consequence, the planet. We get queasy about the enormous quantity of plastic in the ocean, the demise of the rainforest, and the proliferation of climate change. Overwhelmed by more images of our demise than we have ever experienced before, we fall for clickbait on sites that offer advice and interventions that we hope will prolong us: surgeries, panic rooms, coastal surge protection walls, bomb shelters, pills with sensors, digital diagnosis, rainforest-procured medicines, self-help, and advice columns galore. We read, reluctantly, about experiments in human transformation—about our post-human future. We fret over real and fake cyborgs, functional and fictional augmented organs and appendages, successful and failed lab-grown bodies, moral and immoral biotechnological genetic advances, upcoming and impossible nanotechnological body-repairing robots, helpful and ghastly head transplants, and phantasmagoric and practical discussions about the loss of our body altogether. It can be overwhelming. It can feel counterproductive. We look the other way.

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See Yourself E(x)ist focuses on human ingenuity in the midst of such disturbing awareness. The art acknowledges the elegance of futility, the strangeness of attempts at permanence, the absurdity of technological advances. The eighteen artists in this exhibition sift poetry out of political nightmares, show respect and awe for nature in the face of human destruction, and devise uncanny and perverse innovations to understand human frailty. No matter the inevitability, this work finds hope in our self-reconstruction, in our hybridization with other life forms, in our harnessing of nature through digital systems and robotics. The attempt to outsmart nature is what it means to be human. In *See Yourself E(x)ist*, each glimpse of humankind, each incidence of humans coexisting with animals and flora, yields an extraordinary artifact, an engineered form of hope, or an object of power. The artists generate an experience of awe. The poets superimpose, zoom out, and examine narrative in relation to nature; the collectors transform, morph, and distort humans and objects; the inventors analyze, reconstruct, or resurrect human/nature interactions, looking toward or projecting into the future; and the critics subtly and beautifully disseminate what it means to be human, by exploring transformations in cultural icons, artifacts, and objects.

For filmmaker and installation artist Alan Berliner, the tree is the source of three intertwined components: pulp, newsprint, and narrative. His video, *Disappearing Ink*, tells the story of humans across time, through an exhaustive selection of news culled from four decades of images clipped from printed editions of *The New York Times*. Video projection and newsprint highlight the ephemeral qualities of human endeavors, through daily slivers of recorded photographic history. Human activity is as temporal as a dream at daybreak, while trees linger on long after we are gone. Berliner, through his family documentaries and forensic-delving into his own existence, finds ways of universalizing human experience through personal or particular events. His life has become a laboratory in which he explores a series of fragile cinematic investigations—of his relationship to family, memory, history, identity, and obsession—and provides his audience with poignant and poetic evocations of the human condition. In his current journey through the language of the printed newspaper, trees appear as both formidable and fragile beings—tall proud communities that for centuries have been cut down, chopped up,

liquefied, congealed, sliced, slivered, and then printed upon, serving as the unsung medium for our daily chronicles of unfolding human drama. But the wheels of time are now shaping a new chapter; digital technology is slowly releasing the tree from its historical burden. *Disappearing Ink* pays homage to the ephemeral quality of the newspaper image—an antique artifact of a changing landscape, as beautiful as it is inevitable.

When Allan Wexler walks into the woods “armed with a tape measure and an axe,” he is both a performer and a reverse engineer involved in a theoretical architectural loop.¹ He acts out the making of the original prototype of architecture—the rough-hewn hut—from the future, and in doing so, he embodies the many architectural treatises on the same subject. *Reframing Nature* is one of the results. In a gesture that combines hubris with irony, he dissects a branch and uses wedges to straighten it. It is a simple and poetic way to represent how humans go about imposing order on nature, and yet it is pure Wexler innovation: a finely crafted object that asserts its strong presence, even as it winks at the absurdity of human ingenuity. No matter that wedges are a prehistoric form, and that architectonic interventions have persisted for thousands of years. Straight lines are temporal and will not last. They are tied to human endeavor. When we go, they go too. Nature cannot be reined in. She will dry, shift, crack, erode, and undermine by sending in creatures to tunnel and burrow. Bioturbation will transform all organic matter in the end. It’s wondrous and daunting.

Wexler tinkers with the space between a tree’s branches in *Adam’s House in Paradise*, fashioning interstitial planes reminiscent of the mediating surfaces between groin-vaulted cathedrals. Working his way backward through the history of architecture, inspired by Joseph Rykwert’s 1972 book *Adam’s House in Paradise*, Wexler becomes a hybrid: he is the curious contemporary bricoleur and he is Adam, the first man and the world’s first architect. Wexler performs what it means to be human: to work with the hands and use tools. It is a bittersweet act. Let’s hope, touch wood, that we continue to be able to act out our explorations in the original forest.

“Paradise,” in John Jerard’s *Paradise Lost #1* and *#2*, does not refer to the biblical one. It is the planet as we found it. Nature “knows no source.” Jerard writes, “Nature is the source of all that exists, and, as the last to awake in its perfect balance we found, we were given, paradise.” His paintings are a kaleidoscopic flattened version

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Alan Berliner, *Disappearing Ink*, 2017, video, 7 minutes, still from video



Allan Wexler, *Reframing Nature* (detail), 2014-2015, tree branches, photography, wood, 96 x 108 x 6 inches

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John Jerard, *Paradise Lost*
#2, 2016, acrylic on panel,
10.5 x 16 inches

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of Eames' *Powers of Ten*—at once zoomed in and out on the planet—mixing the microscopic and the areal view from multiple vantage points. Microbial cities intertwine with bacteria-like urbanity, and weave with blends of plankton and bombs. For Jerard, humankind has been retrograde where nature is concerned: "As we claw, pound, cut, and burn the planet, we are just as obsessively, compulsively digging at ourselves as sure as the Earth's crust is our skin. What we are left with, what we are leaving, is the terrible beauty of paradise lost."

Ann Hamilton's *near-away* is an apt title for *See Yourself E(x)ist*. When we cast ourselves into the future, we are always near and away. The mind can wander. The body cannot—not just yet. Even if the past, present, and future are happening simultaneously and distance in time is an illusion, it is the burden of human perception that we cannot experience the overlap. Hamilton's objects engage the viewer in this Sisyphean dialogue. Near is evoked by the potential energy of the grasping gesture visible in the hollow papier-mâché hand. At the same time the hand is presented as a relic of embodiment. It feels remote, especially next to its partner, a weight formed out of the pages of several books that have been dissected, restrung, and hung vertically. Caught in that mass are the weightless stories of faraway places and times, usually passed into the brain through an experience of mass in the hands. Printed words are affected by gravity. Digital words have no weight. The artifacts are relics of human activity—of our diminished passion for reading and working with our hands. They are also relics of Hamilton's previous installations, objects culled from *stylus* (2010) and *human carriage* (2009). They are icons of what it means to be human, or what it used to mean.

Dorry Hsu once made a list of her fears for forty consecutive days. Insects with many legs stood out. So began an immersion into insect morphology, and an exposure therapy design project that turned the human face into a kind of terribly beautiful insect/human hybrid. Her face jewelry serves as a totem, passing her fear onto another. When you wear this insect-like jewelry, you cannot perceive your own bugishness, the same way that you cannot see yourself seeing.

Do bugs find us as scary as we find them? Might they like us more if we wore one of Hsu's prosthetics? The *Aesthetics of Fear* series are three-dimensional bilaterally symmetrical exoskeletal mash-ups—bulbous chitin-like baroque ensembles inspired by your worst nightmare. Wait!

But bugs are beautiful. Yes, but we can't really take the time to care. Epigenetic fears, and the preemptive stress of bites, crawls, and toxins, create anxiety. Hsu's bug-based jewels shift our perception through an extraordinary color palette, sophisticated formal undulations, and a geometric fantasia. They remain alien in quality—kin of wondrous fungi or gorgeous formations of bacteria when viewed under a microscope. Hsu turns humans into futuristic warrior ants, Rorschach-patterned flies with compound eyes, and mandibular-heavy beetles, restructuring the contours of the face, and supplying us with protuberances that we left behind long ago or never had. The translucency and gradation of the series suggest mutability. Hsu hints that these protuberances might be used to convey human emotion, like a mood ring or an electronic diagnostic tool.

Lanzavecchia + Wai's *Metamorfosi Vegetali* is a technological return to nature—a set of finger implements that intimately connects us to earth and sky, and reintegrates us into Earth's natural systems. Five peripheral prosthetics per hand—one per finger—let us delve into the photosynthetic loop. One hand wears penetrating roots that allow us to feed off the ground, probe the soil, and sense the earth's inhabitants and depth. The other hand wears individual leaf canopies, enabling us to soak up the sun, produces oxygen, and sense—through kinaesthetics and sensors—the weather and changes in light. Between them is the body. In mediating from hand-to-hand between the ground and atmosphere, the body regains what it lost due to technology: our symbiotic relationship with nature.

In his monograph *Mécanisme de la Physionomie Humaine, 1862*, Duchenne de Boulogne aimed to decode the relationship between prototypical human internal emotional states—the soul, he believed. He analyzed facial expression by charting the neural pathways that triggered the muscles. He did so by using electrical stimulation—shock, in other words. That was the beginning of a long line of chicken and egg-like experiments that all aimed to reveal which comes first: feeling or expression? Now we know. The proliferation of Botox in recent years has verified, inadvertently, the relationship between muscle memory and emotion. Facial expressions are part of a circuit that affects mood. If you lessen the ability to frown, you inhibit negative emotions. The muscle that sends messages to the brain behaves more slowly and less reactively.



Dorry Hsu, *Aesthetic of Fears*, 2013, hand-dyed 3D printing clear resin,
7.9 x 6 x 2 inches.
Photo by the artist

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Nobumichi Asai, *Connected Colors* (detail), 2016, video, 1:50 minutes, still from video

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Conversely, immobilizing the smile muscles to achieve a wrinkle-free cheek can increase depression.

Nobumichi Asai and his team liberate the face from the connection between expression and emotion. The face becomes a blank slate for interaction with moving images. Using Real-Time Face Tracking, under a certain light condition, and with a high-speed dynamic projection system, Asai can visually morph the appearance of the face. Human expression becomes combinatory. Skin no longer conveys health or emotion. We can visually alter our surface and how people perceive us as rapidly as a blink.

The human imagination has always had a tendency towards pareidolia. We are especially adept at seeing random patterns in celestial bodies like the moon. As a result, we have created a whole library of stories about embodied moons, suns, stars, and planets—all of them with faces. The reverse happens much less often. We don't tend to see celestial patterns, the wind, or the rotation of the stars on the human face, at least not until Nobumichi Asai came on the scene. Asai's *Connected Colors* projects an astonishing array of patterns of nature onto the face, choreographing fields of colors to match facial movement, breath, and the proportion of the head. The human behind the projection is imbued with the power of the imagery. If and when this technology is widely available (right now it is extremely expensive and equipment heavy), we will become chameleons. Emotional communication will be relegated to sound, words, or sensor-based brain-to-brain communication. Projection will become mask and camouflage.

When individuals form groups with moving parts—swarms, droves, herds, packs—they become fearsome and dangerous to outsiders. Ants, bees, soldiers, and swarm robots can go from benign to terrorizing by acting as a collective and moving across a surface in a semi-organized pattern. Even the relics of such swarms can be overwhelming. One tooth can be cute. A mouthful may be menacing. An army of teeth is nightmarish. There's a chatter of death—the ever-present shadow behind the skeleton contained within us. Hence the appeal and horror of Fantich & Young's series of accoutred clothing and objects of the *Apex Predator* alpha collection, a part of the Darwinian Voodoo brand.

Apex Predators are recognizable artifacts that have been carefully clad with teeth. Fantich & Young devised the *Apex Predator* series as a

satirical response to the 2008 financial crisis and the untouchable predatory banks at the top of the chain. Part biologically evolved, part socially engineered, the *Apex* knows no predator. Like despots, bullies, carnivores, and acquiring brands, they eat their way to the top. They also evoke the supernatural: secret organizations, rituals, and tooth fairies hard at work or gone AWOL. They may even be accidental monstrosities, like rare teratomas—tumors that contain hair, teeth, and sometimes tiny hands and undersized heads. They're gruesome, but a part of nature. They remind the viewer that quasi-biological products that are alive and functional may soon be the next fashion statement. Be careful: your shoes may grind their way into your nightmare.

Lee Griggs doesn't reveal too much about his startling computer-generated humanoid portraits, but in an interview with *The Creators Project*, he did reveal his conceptual ignition: "I've always seen faces in objects and textures since I was a child."² Pareidolia, as mentioned previously, is the brain's tendency to find unintended patterns. "Humans are 'prewired' to detect faces from birth," says Dr. Nouchine Hadjikhani of Harvard University.³ "We've evolved brains that think in these quick, dirty ways that are usually right, but at times can lead us to systematically be biased," explains Christopher French of the British Psychological Society.⁴ These are some of the explanations of why we see faces in clouds, toast, land forms, and just about anything. Conversely, how much can we distort, warp, and transform the face and still see a humanoid in it?

Some of Griggs' faces have the appropriate human features, but appear to be made out of spaghetti-like material, porous ceramic surfaces, snips of paper, and any number of mysterious materials. Others are humanoid in proportion only. The human brain presumes the eyes, nose, and mouth to be buried within. We rationalize the strange tendrils that might be hair or brain matter. It is a narrative we feed ourselves. It is why we might not recognize an alien when we see one. Griggs' material and morphological studies are reminders of our mutability. They are eerily convincing and alarmingly plausible. The artist remains silent about the impetus for the particular transformation. No matter, we supply it ourselves.

Jaime Pitarch's *Chernobyl* is a pithy, devious, subtle, and jarring hybridization of an artifact of cultural production and an artifact of cultural disaster. It is not a marriage. It is appropriation. A portent. It is the toy before the storm. His



Fantich & Young, *Apex Predator | Darwinian Voodoo Series, Alpha Tote*, 2014, thorax and pelvis anatomical bones, human hair, teeth dentures, 15.7 x 13.8 x 15.7 inches

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Lee Griggs, *Abstract Portrait*, digital image rendered with Arnold for Maya. Image credit: www.leeegriggs.com



Jaime Pitarch, *Cyclops*,
2002, modified eye glasses,
3.5 x 2.75 x 6 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and
Spencer Brownstone Gallery

multiheaded matryoshka is a monster—a familiar one. Pitarch’s Frankensteinian dissection and reconstruction substitute agitprop for propaganda. It is harder than it looks.

Since the 1890’s the morphology of the matryoshka, an import from the Far East, has remained relatively intact. For more than one hundred years the concentric, vaguely body-like container has changed only in size, proportion, or caricature. The discovery of the nested dolls is a jolly undertaking that refers to family, community, play, and growth—or it did until Pitarch turned the matryoshka on its head with his critical formula for making.

My work takes as its starting point the contradiction between our mistrust of social structures and our desire to fit into them. I address this contradiction by looking at the order that underpins any form of production, trying to find the common aspects between the design, for example, of a chair, and the design of a political or economic strategy.

I do so because I believe the motivations behind all these forms of production are not so distant. Men and women live in a perpetual state of social adaptation. However, the pace of change is not determined by individuals but by the inertia of the group. This social adaptation is often unsuccessful, generating a sense of inadequacy or dissatisfaction. I express the tragicomic condition of this unsuccessful adaptation, and the absurdity of the signs offered to us for social guidance (political mottos, emblems, nationalistic imagery, etc.) by deconstructing familiar objects and reassembling them into new kinds of resonance. The disparity between the first state and the last speaks of our eternal condition of displacement.⁵

Pitarch throws *Chernobyl* in your face, instead of sweeping it under the rug (or under the giant new roof—the so-called New Safe Confinement recently constructed over the reactor). We can turn our eyes away from some things—the news, social media, books, and the environment—but we cannot look away from this matryoshka. *Chernobyl* provides a necessary jolt. It is joyful and horrific.

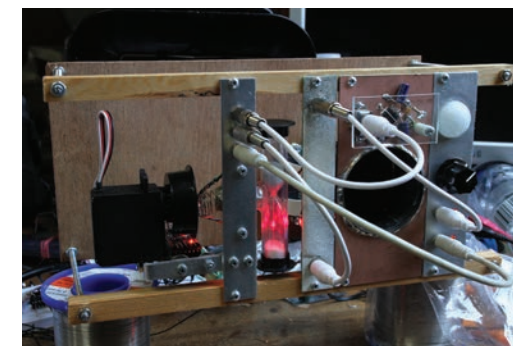
Pitarch *Cyclops* is an equally pithy, future-thinking sculpture—a familiar body apparatus with a twist. The finely crafted single eyeglass clashes with our two-eyed apparatus we observe

it with, and triggers a feedback loop of self-reflexive questions and evolutionary “what ifs” (and a guffaw too). Though at one time we perceived the astounding qualities of extending our senses out into media via technology, we have reached a lazy acceptance of what Marshall McLuhan called the “indefinable limits of our own body.”⁶ Pitarch wakes us up with agility and humor. What if we had only one eye? What would happen to the nose, and more importantly the brain? *Cyclops* shakes up our sensory complacency. On a day-to-day basis, our senses are neglected automatons. They function unless we are aging, ailing, or altered by psychotropic drugs. We see, touch/feel, hear, taste, and smell without effort, unconsciously and ungratefully.⁷

Gijs Gieskes’ electronic devices contain multitudes. They are at once wonky musical instruments, little audio-visual narratives and strange living systems. Made from electronic detritus, precision tools, rubber bands, scrap wood, screws, wire, LEDs, and various dials and sticks, they feature an iconic product or archetypal technological device, taken out of context and technologically and symbolically repurposed. *adempercloep*, devoid of any overt reference to the body, is nonetheless embodied. It’s a primitive lung, kept working by a hodgepodge of electronics that *plink* and *bang* pleasant sounds. Chaotic electronic geometry and a snaking wire form the pulse of this post-human plastic relic. Is it a primitive electronic device, or a futuristic one? *adempercloep* can read as just raw material, or it can read as ironic. It may be a nostalgic simulacrum of a friend, hacked together by the last human, or it may be an ode to the baggie. That ambiguity is its strength. It creates conflicting sensorial and cultural feedback loops, and in doing so becomes an object of curiosity.

The hourglass is a charged object of human ingenuity. It tells time through the movement of units of sand. It makes gravity visible in a closed system, with two materials that relate to its own production. It is two-sided, like the world. To function well, it needs the exact volume of sand, the right slope and shape of glass vessel, good granulation, and meet other parameters to remain stable and dry. It is likely that the Greeks and Romans used them, but it is certain that in Europe it appeared around the year 800 and was in regular use through the fourteenth century.

Gieskes seizes the hourglass flow for the sake of sound. “*permapatch*” *laserloper* works laterally, capturing the interference of sand on a beam of light made by a laser. The pattern



Gijs Gieskes, *laserloper*, 2016,
electronic detritus, mixed
media, 5.5 x 11 x 9.5 inches



Michael Candy, *Actias Luna* (detail), 2010, titanium, wood, brass, resin and paper, 19.5 x 55 x 3.25 inches

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of disruption is captured on a Light Dependent Resistor (photoresistor). The variable light intensity then produces, through a circuit, a random noise signal. Like many hourglasses, “permapatch” *laserloper* pivots. It does so until it finds sound. It only moves when it detects motion, so the viewer has a role in the process. Hourglasses are dramatic devices. Unlike clocks, they run out. As such, they are associated with the end of things, even the grand end: death. By capturing the random grain displacement, Gieskes provides the hourglass an absurd new role, and thereby, a new lease on life.

Michael Candy immortalizes the luna moth with *Actias Luna*, his elegant series of robots depicting the life cycle of the luna moth. The five full-scale replicas are both scientific and magical. Nature’s speed of transformation is a form of alchemy that humans intuit through passed down knowledge. We know about the chrysalis and the caterpillar’s transformation into a winged creature the way we know about water turning into ice. But a simultaneous viewing of the stages of pupation is elucidating. Nature does the impossible. Caterpillars, exoskeletons, silk, wings, and cellular division are the stuff of dreams. Candy loops nature’s own loop. In doing so *Actias Luna* visualizes possibility.

Evolution has engineered the luna moth to have a most elegant final flight. The moth is provided with spectacular wings that include bat-eluding tendrils that distract predators away from the more precious part of its body. The massive, winged, adult moth does not eat. It lives for around a week, and only to mate. It has a vestigial, nonfunctioning mouth. When humans gain sensors for communication, and suits for photosynthesizing (like Michael Burton and Michiko Nitta’s *Algaculture* suit), might we too have a vestigial mouth? Candy’s perpetual machines are messages to the future. In them are tiny recipes for human-robot interaction and messages about life’s fleeting beauty.

Andrew Quitmeyer and Madeline Schwartzman’s *Replantment* incarnates the play between technological preservation and replacement. From opposite ends of the earth, the duo explored and compared common international flora. They devised nondestructive collection methods for rapidly copying the natural forms of leaves with silicone molds, even casting them in the field. The molds became the basis for several small “leaf factories” that turned out hundreds upon hundreds of plastic clones. They then arranged the memories of leaves from around the globe on dual conveyor

systems, creating a mobile curtain of the world’s evolutionary algorithm for capturing sunlight in various contexts. By making visible radical shifts in morphology and startling networks of energy distribution, they stimulate the intangible awe humans have for plants. They present a form of future architecture: mobile photosynthetic units that provide a soothing illusion of nature and serve as a source of energy. Easily prefabricated and buildable on demand, they may become as quotidian as the dry-cleaning conveyors they currently inhabit.

Quitmeyer and Schwartzman’s explorations of nature-as-material brought them into forests in Singapore, New York, Slovenia, California, Thailand, Massachusetts, and Alaska. It also allowed them to conceive of, and act out, the inherently contradictory role of a future naturalist: that of the protector whose efforts at preservation become a primary vector of specimen destruction. In embodying such a persona, they followed a common pattern of technological development, from naturalistic exploration to scientific analysis and preservation to amplification and industrialization, and finally to the obliteration of the original creature. To become Dr. Frankenstein and recreate life, whether conjoining or editing humans, or making any hybridization of humans, animals, plants, and machines, is a slippery slope between ingenuity and destruction.

Instead of denying the negative outcomes of human-forward motion, Quitmeyer and Schwartzman’s piece is proactive. Engaging in the process from exploration to manufacturing is progress, no matter the futility of staving off nature’s swan song. This making-as-exploring spurs “eco-revelatory syndrome.” When you look this hard at nature, you develop “plant eyes.” You see previously unnoticed forms and gain a visceral awareness of the paths of nutrients—the dimensional lines and grids of the vascular system that affect the intake of the sun, and ultimately the leaf cast. Our future leaf bricoleur is a biologist, technologist, and solar prospector. The machines carrying around the ghostly clones of the leaves are not dismal. Instead they enchant visitors with highlights of bygone forms, and incarnations of new ones. The leaf machines provide synthetic nature and energy. They even dazzle.

Kathryn Fleming’s *Ursa-Hibernation Station* examines the home as a technologized space that alienates us from what we see as the “natural world.” Unlike the contemporary back-to-nature approach, this project looks at the potential of biotechnology to overcome that barrier, not by

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Andrew Quitmeyer, Madeline Schwartzman, *Replantment* (detail), 2017, installation. Photo by Anne Kornfeld

stripping away or hiding the technological side of our home but by layering a new technology on top of existing ones. *Ursa-Hibernation Station* is a life-sized model of a new future form of home furnishing that could be as ubiquitous as kitchen cabinets and fireplaces. It is an integrated piece of prefabricated furniture that will allow a wild bear—a future breed of miniature bioengineered domestic bear—to share the domestic landscape. It also acts as an interface to monitor the hibernating bear and allows humans to experience the natural phases of its hibernation firsthand and to promote the livelihood of bears.

For Fleming, the bear is an animal whose cultural representation exhibits two different approaches to nature: one that depicts bears as cute and cuddly, and the other that portrays them as lethal killers or dangerous pests. By placing the bear into the close and familiar space of the home, she challenges the validity of both an overly idealized or alienated and feared conception of nature. The design of the hibernation station allows the viewer to carefully consider the challenges and advantages of integrating a “wild” creature into our everyday lives. It has to accommodate the needs of the bear while being able to become a part of the domestic environment. In doing so, it lets us reflect on the similarities and differences between these two worlds, and their possible synthesis. Technology is reframed as initiator and mediator alike.

The making of *Ursa-Hibernation Station* was cause for reflection and pause. To create the little bear, Fleming ordered a real bearskin and used methods from taxidermy and scientific model-making to produce the work. There is frisson between the display and the proposal, between the death and life of a species. It’s enough to make the viewer lean toward Fleming’s proposal for the good of our future with hibernating mammals.

In the future imagined by Lorenzo Oggiano, words like body, human, animal, and nature are no longer pertinent. There are no bodies, no autonomous beings, no us. We are taken out of the central role in this critique of the “classical anthropocentric/humanistic conceptions of life.”⁸ Oggiano explains the *Quasi-Objects* series as “informed by a systemic, holistic approach to life sciences, and therefore strongly driven by a multidisciplinary, nonhierarchical, nonlinear vision of living systems...”⁹ Oggiano throws his hat into the ring of the bio-political post-natural ecosystem debate. Life forms and systems are denatured and restructured. In the end, only



Lorenzo Oggiano,
*Quasi-Objects, Cinematic
Environment #2*, 2013, HDV,
color, stereo, 3:41 minutes,
still from video

math is in charge. Oggiano used the synthetic and combinatorial genesis of computer-generated imagery (CGI) as an operative advantage, replacing optically centered procedures with abstract morphogenic ones. Biology lives on. We are left to wonder about the end of I, we, and you. We are left feeling outmoded, but lucky.

Having a body is wondrous. Take yours through this exhibition and get a whiff of the future. Then go home and check the bear.

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7. Madeline Schwartzman. *See Yourself Sensing: Redefining Human Perception*. Black Dog, 2011.
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9. Lorenzo Oggiano, Interview, 2014.

Madeline Schwartzman (www.madelineschwartzman.com, @seeyourselfsensing) is a New York City writer, filmmaker, and architect whose work explores human narratives and the human sensorium through social art, book writing, curating, and experimental video making. Her book, *See Yourself Sensing: Redefining Human Perception* (Black Dog Publishing, London, 2011), is a collection of futuristic proposals for the body and the senses. Her forthcoming book, titled *See Yourself X: Human Futures Expanded* (Black Dog Publishing, London), looks at the future of the human head and its extension into space via technology, fashion, culture, and art. Schwartzman is a long time faculty member at Barnard College and at Parsons: the New School for Design.



Nobumichi Asai, *Connected Colors*, 2016, video, 1:50 min, still from video



Alan Berliner, *Disappearing Ink* 2017, video, 7 minutes, still from video

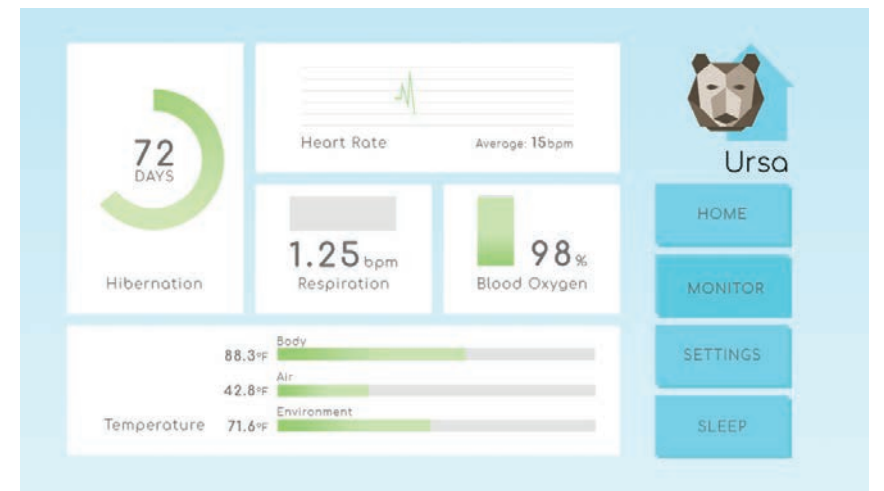


Michael Candy, *Actias Luna*, 2010, titanium, wood, brass, resin, and paper, 19.5 x 55 x 3.25 inches

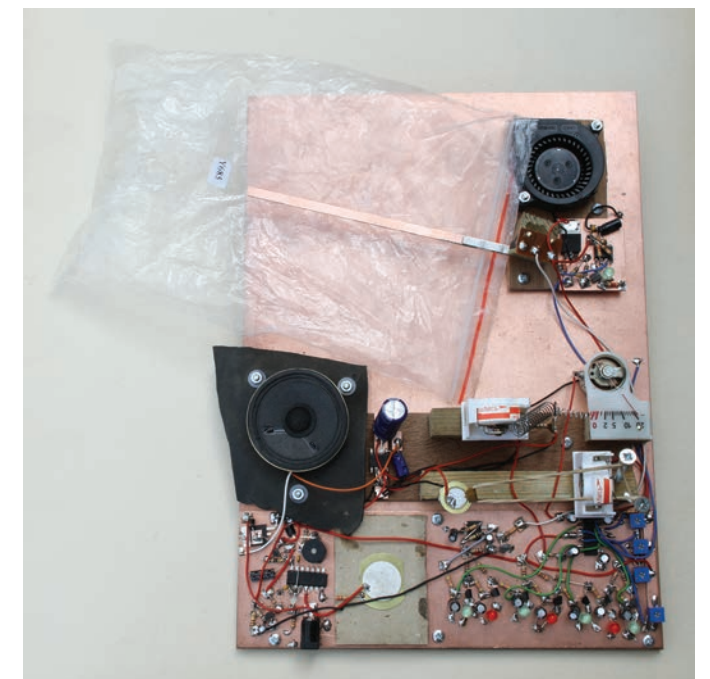
Fantich & Young, *Apex Predator | Darwinian Voodoo Series, Alpha Mary Jane*, 2014, toddler-size red patent leather Mary Jane girl shoes, teeth dentures, 4 x 6.5 x 8 inches

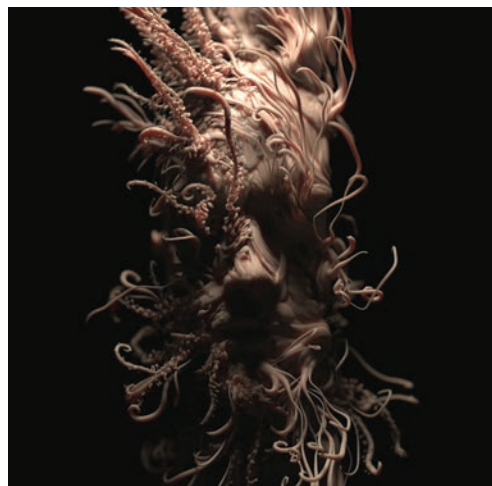


Kathryn Fleming, *Ursa-Hibernation Station*, 2017, taxidermy bear, electronics, wood, acrylic, LCD screen, 60 x 27 x 38 inches



Gijs Gieskes, *adempercloep*, 2016, electronic detritus, precision tools, rubber bands, scrap wood, screws, wire, LEDs, 11.4 x 8.7 x 2.8 inches





Lee Griggs, *Abstract Portrait*, digital image rendered with Arnold for Maya. Image credit: www.leegriggs.com

John Jerard, *Paradise Lost #1*, 2016, acrylic on panel, 10.5 x 16 inches



Ann Hamilton, *near-away*, 2013-present, paper, book fragments re-bound, dimensions vary



Lanzavecchia + Wai, *Metamorfosi Vegetali*, 2014, photo of 3-D printed finger, prosthesis, 5 x 2.4 x 2 inches (approx. each). Photo by Davide Farbegoli



Dorry Hsu, *Aesthetic of Fears*, 2014, hand-dyed 3D printing clear resin, (Mask) 7.9 x 6 x 5.1 inches, (Dummy) 4 x 3.2 x 3.2 inches. Photo by the artist



Lorenzo Oggiano, *Quasi-Objects, Cinematic Environment #2*, 2013, HDV, color, stereo, 3:41 minutes, still from video





Jaime Pitarch, *Chernobyl*, 2009, deconstructed and reassembled matryoshka doll, 19.7 x 9.4 x 9.4 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Spenser Brownstone Gallery



Andrew Quitmeyer, Madeline Schwartzman, *Replantment* (detail), 2017, installation. Photo by Anne Kornfeld



Allan Wexler, *Adam's House in Paradise*, 2014, tree, museum board, plywood, 59 x 84 x 36 inches. Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Gallery, NYC

Acknowledgments

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Nick Battis
Director of Exhibitions

Nobumichi Asai
Alan Berliner
Michael Candy
Fantich & Young
Kathryn Fleming
Gijs Gieskes
Lee Griggs
Ann Hamilton
Dorry Hsu
John Jerard
Lanzavecchia + Wai
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Jamie Pitarch
Andrew Quitmeyer
Madeline Schwartzman
Allan Wexler