

DUST, DIALOGUE AND UNCERTAINTY: Slow Knowledge in Design Thinking and Practice

December 5, 2014 – February 7, 2015

Opening reception:
Thursday, December 4, 6 – 8 PM

Pratt

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Pratt Manhattan Gallery
144 West 14th Street, Second Floor
New York, NY 10011
212.647.7778
exhibits@pratt.edu

Gallery hours:
Monday–Saturday 11 AM – 6 PM
Thursday until 8 PM

Please note that the gallery will be closed
December 24 – January 1 and January 19.

www.pratt.edu/exhibitions

Artists and Designers:

Amy Franceschini

Fallen Fruit (David Burns, Matias Viegener, and Austin Young)

Henriëtte Waal

Jellie Dekker

Jorge Otero–Pailos

Julia Mandle

Lucie Libotte

Maria Blaisse

Mayke Nas

Monika Hoinkis

Additional Participants:

Alessandra Pomarico

Caroline Nevejan

Fernando Garcia–Dory

Jeanne van Heeswijk

Judith van den Boom

Lanka Horstink

Ljiljana Rodic–Wiersma

Pratt Student Projects:

Graduate Communications Design

Graduate Interior Design/
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Curated by:

Ana Paula Pais

Carolyn Strauss

The exhibition's six research topics offer a useful framework for understanding how Slow knowledge can operate within and across multiple spheres of life.

The topic SLOW IDENTITY expands understandings of self, context, and connections to others. It explores the interstices of personal and shared spheres of cognition, evoking a fuller resonance between people's inner and outer dimensions. The image on the front of this foldout is **Monika Hoinkis'** *Metronome* (2005), a project that transforms a traditional timepiece into a purveyor of Slow awareness. Rather than dictating a pace to be followed, *Metronome* keeps time to the rhythm of the person who shares a room with it, amplifying the individual's sense of presence and accountability to his or her surroundings.

Two complementary works explore Slow notions of identity through the unexpected medium of dust. For **Lucie Libotte**, dust is "a record of our passage," an oft-neglected product of daily life that can teach us something valuable about ourselves and the places we inhabit. In her project *Dust Matter(s)* (2014), a series of ceramic vessels have been glazed with dust collected from several London homes, the varied surfaces revealing unique expressions of those diverse personal spaces. **Jorge Otero–Pailos'** installation *Ethics of Dust: Carthago Nova* (2012) extends this concept to the shared temporal dimension of our built environments. The simple hanging panel of dust salvaged from a Roman ruin materializes a civilization's worth of industrial activity into a single, translucent strip of latex, inviting people to contemplate what he calls a "microscopic layer of history" within the larger fabric of living.

Awareness gives way to action in SLOW AGENCY, a concept that stirs individuals and groups to move decisively in the interest of personal and collective well-being. The dynamic pulse of agency is on view in *I Delayed People's Flights By Walking Slowly In Narrow Hallways* (2009), a film by director **Jellie Dekker** and composer **Mayke Nas** that captures the textures and variations of self-expression, in turns measured, erratic, poetic, cathartic.

Another approach to agency is **Julia Mandle's** *Dirty Cookies* (2014), which probes people's attitudes toward the dirt under their feet and shows how it can be an ally and resource to advocate for change. The exhibit is a trace of a live art event to which participants brought soil samples collected from empty lots, backyards, playgrounds, and school grounds in their diverse New York City neighborhoods. The samples were analyzed through a range of testing methods and then shaped into cookies, prompting the consideration: "Is the dirt in my area good enough to eat? And, if not, what does that say about where I live?" Mandle's work in the gallery invites a similar critical stance, challenging people to (literally) take things into their own hands.

Such individual and collective acts of self-determination are essential building blocks for the autonomous, local or inter-local cooperative engagements of SLOW GOVERNANCE. **Amy Franceschini's** *Radio Instabilis, Transmissions* (2014) is part of her contribution to "Consortium Instabilis," a network of agrarian protagonists in Abruzzo, Italy that is reimagining the relationship between people and the land. Based on the kite that Guglielmo Marconi used to help transmit the first transatlantic radio signal in 1901, Franceschini's wood-frame construction carries the insignia of the consortium and a collection of stories about resilience and seed sovereignty. Afloat in the sky above Abruzzo, the kite will serve a pirate radio station that broadcasts a growing archive of content related to rural regeneration, while dispersing seeds into the wind.

Another Slow approach to governance is manifest in the work of the art collective **Fallen Fruit**. (Fallen Fruit was originally conceived by David Burns, Matias Viegener and Austin Young. Since 2013, Burns and Young have continued the collaborative work.) A stack of simply designed, open-source *Public Fruit Maps* (2004–2013) mark locations of fruit trees growing in a range of cities, probing the frontiers of public and private ownership of urban space. On the flip-side of these sheets is *Neighborhood Score* (2014), a performance script composed in three voices—the historical, the experiential, and the public—that encourage people to explore and freely enjoy the common goods of their localities.

Cultivating local value is also central to SLOW ECONOMY, which moves beyond financial markets to embrace more balanced, inclusive markers of prosperity. **Henriëtte Waal's** *Edible Landscape—Red Hook Ale* (2014) is part of her ongoing initiative that reconnects people to their environment through co-creation of site-specific "landscape beers." In October 2014, Waal collaborated with New York artist Thomas Beale in sourcing "ingredients" from Red Hook, Brooklyn (plants, rainwater, local characters, and their know-how) for the creation of a new beer recipe. In the gallery, Waal has created an installation of materials harvested during this process, offering physical evidence of how Slow approaches can strengthen human ties while bypassing the consumer marketplace.

The topic SLOW ECOLOGY finds compelling form in the creative practice of multidisciplinary artist **Maria Blaisse**, whose material explorations (including the kinetic potentials they unleash), demonstrate how design can be inspired by the ever-evolving coherence and ingenuity of natural systems. The two woven bamboo *Moving Meshes* (2008) that stand in the Pratt Manhattan Gallery suggest a blurring of boundaries between bodies and context, an intriguing proposition that's brought to life by Jellie Dekker's film of the same title. Meanwhile, a third bamboo structure, located across the city in Queens, invites us to imagine additional layers of interdependence, within and beyond the greater urban environment.

Shared by all of the works on display are open and collaborative forms of knowledge creation that are the foundation of SLOW PEDAGOGY. Two exhibits are results of slowLab's fall 2014 research residency at Pratt Institute. *Slow Readings* (2014), by students of Graduate Interior Design, experiments with ways of recording the presence of gallery visitors, while *Slow Observatory* (2014) is an interface for discovering physical and digital artifacts created by students of Graduate Communications Design, inviting visitor-participants to join in the learning process and co-imagine new directions forward.

DUST, DIALOGUE AND UNCERTAINTY: Slow Knowledge in Design Thinking and Practice

Dust, Dialogue and Uncertainty gives form to a decade of inquiry by the Netherlands-based research platform slowLab, combining diverse facets of its ongoing investigations into the potentials of Slow knowledge in design thinking and practice.

Organized around six core research topics—SLOW IDENTITY : SLOW AGENCY : SLOW GOVERNANCE : SLOW ECONOMY : SLOW ECOLOGY : SLOW PEDAGOGY—the exhibition presents a dynamic range of philosophical and creative positions that challenge the paths through which contemporary design fields operate, suggesting new values and more holistic and critical perspectives for addressing the complexity of an ever-accelerating world.

Participants in the exhibition are a compelling array of thinkers and practitioners from within and beyond design fields who have been selected not only for the specific relevance of their ideas and methodologies to the Slow research topics, but also for the breadth of knowledge that their combined discourses generate.

As the title suggests, the exhibition emphasizes both material and immaterial aspects of Slow knowledge, including unexpected variables of encounter and discovery through which new trajectories can be revealed. The videos, artifacts, and installations on display are sources of inspiration for moving beyond the dominant systems and structures of today, deepening awareness, firing up the senses, and casting new configurations of resources and relationships to support more sustainable and resilient forms of living.

The physical layout of the exhibition is punctuated by formal and spatial mechanisms designed to induce experiences of "slow reading": meaningful moments of analysis and introspection in which viewer-participants are able to pause, reflect, and engage more openly and intuitively, bringing fuller attention to the artifacts and information at hand as they establish their own unique rhythms of participation.

Collectively, the different layers of experience offered by the exhibition enable understandings of Slow knowledge as an evolving ground of thinking-sensing-acting-relating from which to more fully experience the now, and more consciously consider the future.

About slowLab

slowLab is a nonprofit research platform for Slow design thinking, learning, and practice. Founded in New York, now based in the Netherlands, slowLab supports an international network of thinkers and creative actors (designers, artists, architects, technologists, environmentalists, social theorists, economists, educators, and activists) who participate in its residencies, workshops, presentations, publications, academic projects, and evolving dialogues.

+ info: www.slowlab.net

About the curators

Ana Paula Pais is the director of programming at slowLab. She is a communication designer, curator, and art director whose work—based on critical thinking, rhizomatic research processes, and self-propelled inquiry—catalyzes reflection dialogue across disciplinary and geographic boundaries. She has collaborated with museums, galleries, libraries, grassroots initiatives, book fairs, and design and architecture biennials.

Carolyn F. Strauss is the founder and director of slowLab. She is a curator, educator, creative facilitator, and public speaker whose interests traverse and combine the fields of architecture, design, art, technology, spatial politics, ecology awareness, and social activism. Her work includes collaborations with prominent museums and cultural organizations around the globe, and with dozens of educational institutions in the United States and Europe.

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PRATT MANHATTAN GALLERY

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Image: Monika Hoinkis, from the series "Living With Things," 2005

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