THE FUTURE IS PRESENT:
ART AND GLOBAL CHANGE

Daniel Canogar / Hannah Chalew / Jake Chapman / Pete Froslie / Jenny Kendler
and Brian Kirkbride / Van McElwee / Elias Sime / Calum Stirling and Daniel Fishkin
Marina Zurkow

FEBRUARY 6 – MAY 9, 2021
What We Know Now

The Future is Present: Art and Global Change examines the intersections between art and some of the most pressing issues to humankind: climate change, environmental crisis, and related global repercussions. The artists assembled in the exhibition bring unique perspectives to these issues, using video, sound, virtual/ augmented reality and upcycled materials mixed with humor, curiosity and old-fashioned ingenuity to address these far-reaching topics. The exhibition explores the innovation of artists and their commitment to the understanding of the “Anthropocene,” defined as human’s material impact on nature, and technology’s role in understanding this global emergency and asserting that art can operate between the recognition of the Anthropocene and prediction of the “Novacene”, the coming age of hyper-intelligence. Their art is consciously positioned between these two ideas. Many of these artists embrace technology as a dual reference to its contributions to pollution and its possible role in forging innovative improvement. Continuing Laumeier’s initiative focusing on Art and Global Change begun in 2020, the exhibition aims to emphasize the urgency of topics ranging from astronomical phenomena to tech waste.

The exhibition’s title is inspired by a quote from Bertrand Piccard, a co-pilot of the first solar powered balloon to attempt to circle the world non-stop. Describing his experience, Piccard explained: “when landing, it was like going back to the past” realizing his ability to push the boundary of existing knowledge in his field of study.

In the early American Colonial era, humans harvested energy from a simple, organic source: seasonal solar light. Food and fuel were grown via photosynthesis, harvested, then eaten or burned. In 1712, British inventor Thomas Newcomen invented the atmospheric steam engine. The new steam engine could be used to pump water out of deep mines. This made it possible to access coal deposits containing solar energy absorbed by plants over millions of years. These were soon adopted in America and continental Europe. Energy became something to generate rather than receive, and the Anthropocene was launched, surpassing the limits of forestry that restricted the scale of economic progress. For the following three hundred years, extraction of natural resources to be converted into fuel and the destruction of natural lands to make room for development increased exponentially. The Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, mass participation Democracy, limitless GDP growth and globalization led us to our present world, consciously designed and formed by market forces.

In the wake of Covid-19 however, our high-speed travel lifestyle crashed, trade was disrupted and much of our personal communication went strictly virtual. A virus has revealed the contradictions of the “Era of Man”. The limit of our ability to alter the geology and ecosystems of the entire planet have been exposed by a strand of RNA.

Over several decades, artists have become preoccupied with the broader philosophical implications of the Anthropocene and in the question of what will come next. NASA scientist James Lovelock, who coined the term Novacene, states, “Whether humans continue living with or befall technology, the implication is that humans have played a part akin to photosynthetic plants, setting the scene for a new evolution in the production of sustainable intelligence.”

As these artists experiment with familiar gadgets, monitoring ice flows and the capillary action of tree bark, it is intriguing to think of the chemical tricks which could lead to hybrid cybernetic wonders similar to Lovelock’s description. One imagines if graphite or industrial diamonds might lead to such marvels as a tree that creates an electrical current or fungal spores that can be used as batteries. The artists assembled embrace this kind of innovation, experimentation and exploration of the unknown, invisible or unheard, by using technology to document life, change and to find ways to adapt.

Artist Pete Frosley is fascinated with the relationship between global political and economic structures, Leviathan: Elegy for Ice, 2019, a two-channel video installation, documents the artist’s two month-long expeditions to the Arctic Circle to film and collect underwater data and sound recordings of melting ice in the Svalbard fjords in Norway.

Jenny Kendler and Brian Kirkbride’s The Playhead of Dawn, 2018, reworks a massive dataset of geo-tagged birdsong recorded by citizen-scientists for the Xeno-canto project, a website dedicated to sharing bird sounds from all over the world. Using LED screens, Kendler and Kirkbride identify the location of migrating birds, and adds their distinct chorus that erupts in concert with the sunrise, on a longitudinal arc, reminding visitors of the interconnected nature of our vast ecosphere.

Elia Sime’s large wall mounted sculptural assemblage TIGHTROPE: (31) While Observing... 2018, repurposes salvaged electronic components such as wires, motherboards, electrical circuits and keyboards, to create a composition resembling an aerial view of a landscape. His use of e-waste explores the balance between the possibilities presented by technological progress and its harmful impact on the environment.

Represented with three artworks in the exhibition, Hannah Chalew’s work explores the relationship between nature and culture as we move into an age of collective uncertainty within a world experiencing extraordinary change. Her piece Becoming with: A Rhizomatic Solar Cart, 2019, is a nomadic hybrid ecosystem. The solar cart is welded to a sculptural dystopian garden. Each element of the sculpture traces a
history of extraction and exploitation of nature and its bounty. The solar powered cart imagines a future in which our waste products become food for plants, a mobile and nomadic structure is a fitting critique on the human impact on the environment.

Daniel Canogar uses art as a platform to address the fragility and sustainability of our planet. His work Rafagas, 2019, excerpts the texts of the four environmental documents and distorts them in real time according to the winds occurring in the cities where they were signed. Connected to the internet, Rafagas (“wind” in Spanish) splits these texts into four screens using words from each of the four recent international environmental accords: the Paris Agreement, the Kyoto Protocol, the Montreal Protocol, and the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit. The work functions as a political metaphor that explores how the weight of the words and the laws that sustain them are fundamental for the protection of the human species and the planet.

Jake Chapman’s Free Willy, 2012, presents an encased miniature apocalyptic world with a voyeuristic lens, where fast food embodies many of the evils that are wrecking the planet. The horrific scenario is both shocking and a tongue in cheek critique of contemporary morality. Devised with great craft and detail, each figure and symbol give a sense of scale to human life. Each square inch of the piece reveals a multifarious world collapsing under the weight of technological progress, overconsumption, and agonizing guilt about the state of the world and our fragile environment.

In Mesocosm (Wink, TX), 2012, artist Marina Zurkow has created an animation mimicking Mesocosms, simulated ecosystems and manipulated environments created for research purposes. The piece is inspired by an artist residency in Llano Estacado in West Texas, where she visited the Wink Sink 2, the site of a giant sinkhole on private oil company property. Zurkow’s Mesocosm includes floating trash, plastic, gushing industrial waste, foreboding polluted skies and actors in Hazmat suits com- ingling with the flora and fauna reduced to a world devoid of vibrancy and dimen-

sion, perhaps a representation of the chilling futuristic environment. The piece cycles through day and night and through four seasons, the passage of Zurkow’s version of time. Developed with a software designer, an xml data file made up of thousands of lines of code presents each object and figure as actors in a spoiled landscape.

Van McElwee’s Time Fork is an Augmented Reality environment offering visitors an alternative experience of Laumeier’s landscape. Created from a topographical drone mapping of the Park, imagined structures have been placed virtually within the physical landscape. McElwee’s interactive app allows visitors to use a phone or tablet to navigate the physical space of the Park while simultaneously exploring a virtual world.

Time Fork is a portal for both contemplating our current conditions and pondering our choices related to the environment, our communities, time, and reality itself.

Calum Stirling has a way of making the invisible miracles of nature, visible through sound. Stirling’s work, Sitka Spruce versus Larch Pole Pine, 1999, is a recording from a performance held in Grizedale Forest, United Kingdom. Using galvanic bio-acoustic measuring equipment, Stirling monitored and recorded real-time change in the ionic currents of active plant cells in a group of trees. The micro-voltage was passed through oscillators which output a signal to a mixing desk to trigger complimentary sound files heard in the work.

In their sound installation Players, 2021, Stirling and composer and instrument designer Daniel Fishkin have developed an interactive artwork combining their specialisms and interest in music to generate a series of sun-powered instruments nestled in the landscape. Players is elegantly simple in its origin, the self-playing instruments are built using solar panels, bespoke circuit boards and speakers to produce sound solely and directly from solar energy. Honing in on what they describe as an “electronic minimalism”, Stirling and Fishkin have created an acoustic micro-environment reliant on the kinetic movement of the Park’s trees. Presented as an evolving soundtrack, their work captures the fleeting condition of nature with an off-grid ingenuity.

Artists have a unique ability to devise narratives that analyze the relationship between human accomplishment and ecology. The ones gathered here employ different strategies of observation, interaction between the digital and biological, data analysis and storytelling. In the gallery, each work is complemented by accompanying educational information to convey a sense of urgency, inspire action and enact change.

In the spirit of Piccard’s desire for exploration, the exhibition examines the insights of artists, highlighting how the visual culture sector is not only reflecting our world back to us, but doing so through the lens of current technologies, taking charge on environmental conversations, and reminding us that our future is present.

-Dana Turkovic, Curator

ENDNOTES
1. Hard Talk: Explorer and aviator Bertrand Piccard, 2019, BBC, viewed March 11, 2019, bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cswh9q
Left:

JENNY KENDLER

*New Kinds of Words II*, 2013-2019
Vintage book, archivally-preserved lichen, bookbinding glue
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist, Chicago

Above:

CALUM STIRLING

*Sitka Spruce versus Larch Pole Pine*, 1999
Galvanic feedback units, audio to midi interface,
Max/msp patch, FX units, audio mixer amplifier speakers
Courtesy of the artist, Glasgow
ELIAS SIME

Left:
*TIGHTROPE: (31) While Observing...*, 2018
Reclaimed electrical wires and components on panel

Above:
*TIGHTROPE: (31) While Observing... (detail)*, 2018
Reclaimed electrical wires and components on panel

Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York

Previous page:

DANIEL CANOGAR

*Ráfagas*, 2019
Screen, frame, computer and generative animation, monitors

Courtesy of the artist, Los Angeles/Madrid
HANNAH CHALEW

Left:
*Embodied Emissions*, 2020
Iron oak gall ink, ink made from shells on paper made from sugarcane combined with shredded disposable plastic waste

Above:
*Root Shock II*, 2018
Pen and iron oak gall ink on paper made from trash and abaca
Courtesy of the artist, New Orleans
JAKE CHAPMAN

(Free Willy) "When the world ends, there'll be no more air. That's why it's important to pollute the air now. Before it's too late. After the end of the world, also, all the technological advances which have been made in this century, which could at this very moment allow a leisure society for all but a few technicians, and a few women with wombs – so that there will, I mean there could, be no more social class – after the end of this world when humans are no more, the machines for human", 2012
Fiberglass plastic and mixed media sculpture
From the collection of an anonymous charitable foundation

Previous page:

MARINA ZURKOW

Mesocosm (Wink, TX), 2012
Real-time generative software animation, monitor
Loan from the Carl & Marilynn Thoma Art Foundation, Chicago
Daniel Canogar

Daniel Canogar received his MA from NYU at the International Center of photography in 1990. He has created permanent public art installations at The Sobrato Organization, Mountain View, CA; Zachry Engineering Education Complex, Texas A&M University; College Station, TX; Tampa International Airport and BBVA Bank Headquarters, Madrid. He has also created public monumental artworks at Museo Nacional del Prado; MiNo Park, Madrid and Arcos de Lapa, Rio de Janeiro; the Puerta de Alcalá, Madrid; the church of San Pietro Montorio, Rome and Times Square, New York. His solo shows include: Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum, Lafayette, LA; bitforms gallery, New York and Max Estrella Gallery, Madrid; Museum Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona, Spain; Espacio Fundación Telefonica, Lima; Fundación Canal Isabel II, Madrid; and the American Museum of Natural History, New York. He has exhibited at Reina Sofia Contemporary Art Museum, Madrid; Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio; Offenes Kulturhaus Center for Contemporary Art, Linz; Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen, Düsseldorf; Hamburger Bahnhof Museum, Berlin; Borusan Contemporary Museum, Istanbul; American Museum of Natural History, New York; Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh; Mattress Factory Museum, Pittsburgh and the Palacio Velázquez, Madrid. Canogar lives and works in Los Angeles and Madrid.

Hannah Chalew

Hannah Chalew received her BA from Brandeis University in 2009 and her MFA from the Cranbrook Academy of Art in 2016. Her selected exhibitions include: Poppo Packing, Hamtramck, MI; Fayetteville Underground, Fayetteville, AK; Jonathan Ferrara Gallery, New Orleans; Longue Vue House and Gardens, New Orleans; Newcomb Museum of Art, New Orleans; Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans; Kniznick Gallery, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA; Kirschman Gallery, NOCCA, New Orleans; Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans; Antenna Gallery, New Orleans; Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans; Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI; Ann Arbor Art Center; Detroit Art Museum, Beaumont, MT; Bedford Gallery, Walnut Creek, CA; Schneider Museum of Art, Ashland, OR; Asheville Museum of Art, Asheville, NC; Louisiana Contemporary; Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans. Her work is held in the collections of the City of New Orleans and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art. Chalew lives and works in New Orleans.

Jake Chapman

Jake Chapman received his BA at North East London Polytechnic in 1988 and his MA at the Royal College of Art in 1990. As a collaborative, Jake & Dinos Chapman have exhibited internationally at the most prestigious art institutions. Selected solo exhibitions include BlainSouthern, London; Arter, Istanbul; UTA Artist Space, Los Angeles; Magasin III, Stockholm; LD50 Gallery, London; Madrid, and the American Museum of Natural History, New York. His work has been included in group exhibitions at Babcock Gallery:, Pinchuk Art Center, Kiev; The Hermitage, St. Petersburg; Museo Pino Pascali, Polignano a Mare, Italy; Hastings Museum, UK; Kestner Gesellschaft Hannover; Tate Britain, London; Tate Liverpool; Kunsthaus Bregenz. Selected group exhibitions include Musée Cantini, Marseille; Milan Triennale Food Expo, Milan; Louvre-Lens Museum; ICA, London; MUDAM, Luxembourg; Groninger Museum, Groningen; 17th Biennale of Sydney; Meadows Museum, Texas; Tate Britain (Turner Prize), London; Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn, Harengr Saur: Ensor and Contemporary Art, S.M.A.K, Ghent, National Center of Contemporary Art, Moscow; Kunstverein Hamburg; British Museum, London and Palais des Beaux Arts de Lille. Chapman lives and works in London.

Daniel Fishkin

Daniel Fishkin received his MA in Music Composition from Wesleyan University, has taught analog synthesis at Bard College. He is currently a PhD Fellow in Composition and Computer Music at the University of Virginia. Fishkin has performed as a soloist on modular synthesizer with the American Symphony Orchestra, developed sound installations in abandoned concert halls, and played innumerable basement shows. Fishkin has been awarded the title of “Tinnitus ambassador” by the Deutsche Tinnitus-Stiftung. His recent activities include Composing the Tinnitus Suites, Philadelphia supported by a Project Grant from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. Fishkin lives and works in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Pete Frostie

Pete Frostie holds a BFA from the University of Nevada, Reno and an MFA from Massachusetts College of Art. His selected exhibitions include: Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, Norman, Oklahoma; Southern Utah Museum of Art, Cedar City, Utah; NEON Festival, Dundee, Scotland; Hardesty Art Center, Tulsa, Nevada Museum of Art, Reno; TCC Center for Creativity, Tulsa; San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco; Future Collects Gallery, New York; Donna Beam Fine Art Gallery, UNLV, Las Vegas; Frappant Gallery (in der Viktoria-Kaserne), Hamburg; Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, Portland; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York and the American Museum of Natural History, New York; Nature Morte Gallery, Venice; Palais des Beaux Arts de Lille. Chapman lives and works in London.

Jenny Kendler

Jenny Kendler received her MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2006 and her BFA from The Maryland Institute College of Art in 2002. Her work has been exhibited at museums and biennials including Storm King Art Center, New Windsor, NY; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; The MSU Broad Museum, Michigan; the Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis; the California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco; iMOCA, Indianapolis; the DePaul Art Museum, Chicago; the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India; the Yeosu International Art Festival biennial, Korea; the inaugural Chicago Biennial, and the 3rd Terrain Biennial, Arizona. Her work has also been included in gallery exhibitions at La Boîte à Fleurs, Rennes, France; Les Écoles Nationale Supérieures d’Art, France; Claremorris Gallery, Ireland; Kristi Engle, Los Angeles; Public Pool, Detroit and Columbus College, Chicago among others. Her public art projects include Chicago’s Millennium Park for the Art Institute of Chicago; The Lincoln Park Conservatory; The Arts Club of Chicago and Louisville Riverwalk. She is currently the first Artist-in-Residence with Natural Resources Defense Council. Kendler lives and works in Chicago.

Brian Kirbride’s several large-scale sound art and data driven installations have been exhibited at venues including the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, The Arts Club of Chicago, EXPO Chicago, the Lincoln Park Conservatory for Experimental Sound Studio and at Millennium Park for the Art Institute of Chicago. His work has been shown at the Natural History Museum Gallery (London); the Ann Arbor Film Festival, Alchemy Film Festival (Scotland); Montréal Underground Film Festival; Onion City Film Festival (Chicago); Video Art Miden (Kalamata, Greece); Simultan Festival (Timisoara, Romania); and Fovea (Nice, France). Kirbride lives and works in Chicago.

Van McElwee

Van McElwee received his MFA in Multimedia 1987 from Washington University School of Art and his BFA in Printmaking in 1973 from the Memphis College of Art. Selected exhibitions include: Anthropology Film Archives, New York; The Shanghai Duolun Museum of Art, China; Berkeley Museum of Art Pacific Film Archive, California. The Marsh Gallery at the University of Richmond, Virginia; Medienwerkstatt in Vienna and Ohio University Gallery of Art. Selected group shows and festivals include: The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Paula Cooper Gallery New York; The Long Beach Museum of Art; Ars Electronica, ZKM, Siggraph; Camden Arts Centre, London; Wexner Center for the Arts; Milwaukee Art Museum; Japan Media Arts Festival, Tokyo; ASIFA Austria, Museum Quarter, Vienna; Worldwide Video Festival at the Stedelijk Museum; The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago and Art in General, New York. His grants and awards include: A John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, St. Louis Regional Arts Commission Artist Fellowship, The American Film Institute Independent Filmmaker Award and the National Endowment for the Arts Independent Production Fund. McElwee’s work is represented by Bruno David Gallery, St. Louis, Inter Media Art Institute in Germany and Galerie Trabant, Austria. He is Professor Emeritus of Electronic and Photographic Media at Webster University, St. Louis.
Elias Sime earned his Graphic Art degree from Addis Ababa University School of Fine Art and Design in 1990. He has exhibited extensively around the world. His work has been shown at the Dak’Art Biennale of Contemporary African Art in Dakar, Senegal; the New Crowned Hope Festival in Vienna, Austria; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Studio Museum in Harlem; Santa Monica Museum of Art; North Dakota Museum of Art; The Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College; Akron Art Museum; the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City; Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and the Saint Louis Art Museum. In 2019, Sime received an African Art Award from the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art and was shortlisted for the Hugo Boss Prize 2020. Sime’s work is included in the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Newark Museum; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; Israel Museum, Jerusalem; North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh; Norval Foundation, Cape Town; Toledo Museum of Art; Perez Museum, Miami; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; Detroit Institute of Arts; Pizzuti Collection at the Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus; Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, Gainesville; Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, NH; and the Cari and Marilyn Thoma Foundation, Chicago. Sime lives and works in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Calum Stirling received his BA in sculpture in 1987 from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, Dundee. His solo exhibitions include: The Biggill Project Spaces, WASPS Glasgow, Atelier Am Eck, Dusseldorf; Spring Fling Commission, Craigieburn Gardens; Glasgow International, Mitchell Library; Gallery TPW, Images Festival Toronto and the Collective Gallery, Edinburgh among others. His selected group shows and Projects include: Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow; Grizedale Arts, Coniston, Cumbria, UK; Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London; Die Achse des Guten, Signgate Shows, Dusseldorf; CCA, Glasgow; Art Basel Hong Kong; Glasgow School of Art, Royal Scottish Academy; Edinburgh College of Art; The Contemporary Art Center Villa Arson, Nice; Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne; The Art Gallery of Ottawa; Bolzano Film Festival, Italy; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; La Casa Encendida, Madrid; Museo Fotograa Contemporanea, Milan; The Contemporary Culture Centre, Barcelona; Kunsthäuser Bremen, Germany; Kunstraum Kruezberg Bethanien, Berlin; General Foundation, Vienna; Liverpool School of Art & Design; Saatchi Underwood Gallery, London; The Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Geneva; Red House Centre, Sofia, Bulgaria; Catalyst Arts, Northern Ireland; Transmission Gallery, Glasgow; National Gallery Of Contemporary Art, Sunderland; World Tune, Helsinki, Finland and the Design Museum, London. Stirling currently lives and works in Glasgow.

Marina Zurkow received her BFA with honors in 1985 from the School of Visual Arts, New York. She works as a founding member of several ongoing collaborative projects, including Dear Climate, More&More Unlimited, Climoji, and Floating Studio for Dark Ecologies. Recent solo exhibitions include: bitforms gallery, New York and Borusan Contemporary, Istanbul. Her work has been featured at Storm King Art Center, New York; 21C Museum, Louisville; the 7th Moscow Biennale; FACT, Liverpool; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; National Museum for Women in the Arts, Washington D.C.; OSIJ Biennial, San Jose; Sundance Film Festival, Utah; and the Seoul Media City Biennial, Korea, among others. Her public art engagements have been supported by Creative Time, New York; LACE, Los Angeles; Montclair Art Museum, New Jersey, The New Museum’s Ideas City, New York; Northern Lights.nn, Minneapolis, The Artist’s Institute, New York; OSIJ Biennial, San Jose, California; Rice University, Houston; Boston University; University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; and Baruch College, New York. Zurkow is a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellow. She has also been granted awards from the New York Foundation for the Arts, New York State Council for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Creative Capital. She is a teaching fellow in the Masters in Public Action Program at Bennington College, a fellow at NYU’s Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP) in Tisch School of the Arts, NYU. She lives and works in Vermont and Brooklyn.

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Elias Sime
Leviathan: Elegy for Ice

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