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Tavares Strachan 2018 Frontier Art Prize Recipient

It is with great pleasure that I write to announce that **Tavares Strachan** has been selected as the 2018 Frontier Art Prize recipient. Strachan was nominated by David Edwards and unanimously voted to receive the prize by this year's jury comprised of Edwards (founder, World Frontiers Forum), Hans Ulrich Obrist (Serpentine Gallery), Evelyn Hankins (Hirshhorn Museum), Laurent Le Bon (Picasso Museum), Jennifer Flay (FIAC Art Fair), JD Talasek (National Academies of Sciences) and myself. **Doug Aitken**, the 2018 recipient, was awarded the prize last October at a dinner in his honor during the FIAC Art Fair. Aitken is using the prize monies to further his partnership with the non-profit Parley for the Oceans to install his Underwater Pavilions at locations around the world to bring awareness and engagement surrounding the health of our oceans.

In selecting Strachan for the Frontier Art Prize, the jury noted his demonstrated embodiment of the goals of the prize to honor an artist who exhibits a pioneering spirit, whose work challenges the current

and future condition of human knowledge/experience, and who celebrates individual and collective experimentation.

Strachan is a conceptual artist whose multi-media installation and performative practice investigates a wide range of themes including history, science, technology, mythology, climatology and exploration. As evidenced by his planned project for this year's Carnegie International, an ongoing area of concern is to question authority within and displacement by the creation of canonized histories, and to call for their reimagining to be more fluid and culturally inclusive. Other themes explored in his work are matters of human aspiration, exploration and experimentation. Strachan explores pushing the boundaries of what we now believe and know about ourselves, our bodies, our communities, and the world. In a project conceived while completing his MFA degree at Yale in 2006, Strachan prevailed upon FedEx to sponsor a project whereby he flew to Alaska, cut out a four-and-a-half-ton block of ice from a frozen river, transported it back to the Bahamas and installed it in a solar-powered refrigeration unit in the courtyard of his elementary school. The work was entitled *The Distance Between What We Have and What We Want*. A few years later he followed this with months of grueling training as a cosmonaut at the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Star, Russia which resulted in his founding the Bahamian Aerospace and Sea Exploration Center (BASEC) which routinely launches rockets he and young Bahamian students have engineered using only locally available materials of beach sand glass and sugar cane fuel.

In 2013 Strachan retraced the steps of Matthew Henson and Robert Peary's 1909 expedition to the North Pole where the African American Henson is believed by many to have led the incapacitated Peary to the top. Entitled *Polar Eclipse*, the resultant work was exhibited as part of his solo presentation representing the Bahamas at the first-ever Bahamian pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale. In a recent Instagram post Strachan wrote, "The thing is, most people believe the North Pole is a fixed point, but it is extremely difficult to put a marker on a conceptual area. It is covered by an ice shelf that is constantly shifting and often moving several miles within minutes."

More recently, having been awarded a 2013 LACMA Art + Technology grant, Strachan continues to work on a project with SpaceX which rumor has it includes participation in an upcoming fall launch. In 2018 he was named as the inaugural Artist-in-Residence at Seattle's (Paul) Allen Institute where Strachan continues to have access to some of the world's top bio scientists.

Evolution of the World Frontiers Forum and The Convergence Project

Two significant developments to come out of the inaugural convening of the WFF last year are the inclusion of the **United Nations** as a grounding, contextual element and the emergence of **The Convergence Project** as a concrete, action-oriented outcome.

The goal of the WFF is to unite leaders in industry, culture, and government with pioneering creators across frontiers of tomorrow for the betterment of mankind. Led by the Mexican Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Juan Jose Ignacia Gomez-Camacho, the following countries are sending their top UN official to this year's WFF: Saudi Arabia, Denmark, Finland, Turkey, Guatemala, and the European Union, all of whom are part of an inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the UN Sustainable Development Goals as passed by resolution in 2015. Along with participants from science, business, academia, culture, design and medicine, these leaders will meet in October to advance a Convergence Project that aims at durably improving the lives of millions by enabling unique and catalytic engagement of the arts and sciences.

The Convergence Project has emerged as the principal action of the World Frontiers Forum. Each year the founders of WFF will assemble a working group of young pioneers across disciplines and from around the world to create a scalable product aimed at mass-scale intervention concerning one or more sustainable development challenges. This year's CP specifically explores how to use the catalyst

of newfound sight to improve access to food, healthcare, creative learning, and economic mobility for millions of young people in the developing world. The 2018 Convergence Project is built around the work of UK-based **Peek Vision** whose mission is to help eliminate avoidable vision loss globally. Experts estimate that approximately 2.5 billion people have uncorrected vision and 36 million people are blind, the majority in low and middle-income countries, largely because they cannot access corrective services and products. Peek Vision identifies unnecessary blindness and facilitates the distribution of services and glasses to those in need in developing countries. Over the summer this year's young pioneers **Ardy Arianpour** (Founder Seqster, USA), **Andrew Bastawrous** (Founder Peek, UK/Africa), **Oscar Ekponimo** (Founder, Chowberry, Nigeria), **Emilia Javorsky** (Founder, Sundots, USA), **Reese Fernandez-Ruiz** (Founder, R2R, Philippines), and 2018 Frontier Art Prize winner **Tavares Strachan** (USA, Bahamas) have developed an outline of the impact initiative that involves technology-enabled tools and processes for eye health services specifically designed for remote and low resource settings including smartphone-based vision screening, real time data reporting and eye health service analytics. Once the Convergence Project is ready for dissemination, the WFF will organize presentations to some of the world's largest foundations and world funders in hopes that a large-scale program can be initiated. This year's group has been working closely with Maurizio Vecchione, EVP of Global Good (funded by Bill Gates) whose stated mission is to work on "the world's toughest problems solved through invention".

Over the past year Strachan has worked with the rest of the team to develop a specific art project embedded within the CP which involves a first encounter with a child who has suddenly received sight via access to glasses in an act of visual action and freedom, i.e.: artmaking. The team has accepted an invitation from the government of Sierra Leone to beta-test the art project asking children to create post cards in a national competition that will then be printed and widely distributed. The project further envisions an educational scholarship award program funded by a local corporate funder. Strachan's ideas for the project are auto-biographical as it was the winning of an art prize for the design of a national Bahamian tourist bureau patch at age thirteen along with a \$750 college scholarship that first "opened his eyes" to the possibility of receiving a higher education. Strachan has teamed up with Citicorp in his native Bahamas to fund college scholarships in the form of savings plans for incoming first graders in an effort to introduce expectations for higher education at an early age.

In September Strachan will travel to Freetown, Sierra Leone where he will be working with young children — with and without newfound sight — around the catalysis of art making for learning. Tavares' work will be supported over the next year by the Sierra Leone government and the Frontier Art Prize award monies.