

RE- FEST



Exhibition Guide

With Visual Descriptions

CULTUREHUB

Re-Fest 2023 NYC

Exhibition Guide

This guide is a compilation of descriptive text and visual descriptions for the artworks included in CultureHub's Re-Fest 2023 Gallery Exhibition at La MaMa Galleria.

On view April 20 - 29, 2023.

The guide also exists as an audio playlist available at soundcloud.com/culturehubnyc and via the QR code below.



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The Ant Box by Yihe Huang

Ancient Futures

Nicole Yi Messier and Victoria Manganiello (Craftwork Collective)

Textiles and technology installation

2022

Inspired by the textiles that have held humanity's secrets across time and space, this triple-woven installation is made with soft electronics to collect, store and cumulatively visualize solicited secrets from viewers using sentiment analysis and long term data-textile storage.

Visual description of the work:

Ancient Futures is located in the front corner of the gallery just beyond the Great Jones Street entrance. This sculptural installation is situated between two groups of objects mounted upon or above white cubes, each connected to the other by black power cords. The first set of objects includes a series of maroon, purple, red, and gold textiles with frayed ends threaded by loops of glowing plastic lights and suspended from the ceiling. These light-threaded textiles hang in a circular arrangement above a low white pedestal upon which a gold-plated Arduino Nano electronic computer board rests. The second group of objects includes a screen monitor and recording microphone resting atop a tall white pedestal about four feet above the ground. The microphone is used to record secrets shared by visitors which transmit from the monitor and microphone through the cords and computer board into the lights as modulations of color determined by the verbal data collected and processed through the microphone.

CAD

Joe Diebes

Algorithmic HD Video, color with sound

Duration: Indeterminate

2021-present

This drawing performance is a riff on the notation systems used for business management and software design. Although those are generally used to represent closed systems, in this work the lines and patterns are improvised by the artist and unpredictably recombined in real-time, resulting in an infinitely expanding diagram.

Visual description of the work:

CAD, located along the slanted left-hand-side wall just beyond the gallery's entrance, is a color video with sound projected onto the white wall. The projection plays about three feet from the ground and is about eight feet wide by four feet tall. Sound emanates from the speakers above the projection. The video shows an overhead view of a hand drawing in chalk on a blackboard background. The hand draws dotted lines, squares, shapes, and arrows in various formations before wiping the figures with cloth and beginning a different drawing.

Impetus: Arrancado

Juan M. Villanueva

44" x 30" x 122"

'materials list intentionally withheld'

2022

The piece speaks to the paradigm shift I experienced during the pandemic; by examining memories of my grandmother using traditional 'Curanderismo' practices to treat and heal our family. It questions this loss of knowledge, which has been ripped from our culture, partially due to how we label people, practices, & things.

Visual description of the work:

Impetus: Arrancado is installed along the right hand side of the gallery beyond the entrance in front of a blank wall upon which the sculpture's shadow is cast from above. This just-over ten foot tall sculpture is suspended from the ceiling by steel chains which connect to a beige rope from which the rest of the sculpture—a collection of objects and materials—hangs. The suspended sculpture includes materials that, only speculatively, look like or could be branches, rocks, plant matter, antlers, metal amulets, ornamented talismans, and beaded strings. The base of the suspended sculpture tapers into thin, gnarled ends and hangs over an arrangement of objects like a small bottle of clear liquid, a smudging bundle, leaves, and an egg centered around a black circle of what might be small pebbles that, together, make up an altar which rests atop a square swatch of white fabric.

Biota

Suzanne Anker

Porcelain

2013

Biota is a porcelain sculptural installation employing the morphology of the sea sponge as a matrix. Arranged on low-standing Plexiglas platforms, the sculptures appear as if they were dead coral. In the sea, such exoskeleton frameworks signal the degradation of coral reefs throughout the world and their support for diverse species' habitats. These sculptures act as fossils commemorating the time reefs were living entities. The details of the porcelain sculptures speak to the intricate cooperation of cells working together. Sea sponges are primal forms of life, arising hundreds of millions of years ago as one of the first multi-cellular animals. While ceramics is an ancient technology, the attached figurines are rapid prototyped sculptures that are coated in silver leaf. The figurines represent humankind's foray into figurative sculpture such as the Venus of Willendorf.

Visual description of the work:

Biota is installed in the front center of the gallery space beyond the entrance just as the rest of the room opens up into its largest width. Resting atop a four foot by four foot transparent plexiglass table that rises a foot or so above the ground, *Biota* is a collection of about forty variously sized porcelain objects shaped and textured like sea sponges, all an off-white light gray and spaced three to five inches apart from each other in a generally square formation. Some of the porcelain sponges are round and small while others are flat and wide and some are amorously formed between various tubular shapes and porous, perforated textures.

The Blue Dot

Juan Pablo Pacheco

HD video / single channel / 16:9 aspect ratio / 19:09 mins

2020

“The blue dot” is a video essay that speculates on the ecological and epistemological networks woven around the internet. The blue dot represents a real time sign of users’ interaction with digital servers, but it also becomes a visual and material metaphor for planet Earth, the world’s oceans, and the internet as a watery technology. Using original and appropriated material, this video-essay weaves a non-linear story between the Internet Archive, the ocean, Silicon Valley, the library of Alexandria, and astrological imagery in order to address the poetic and material entanglement between technology, water cycles, and the production of knowledge as planetary networks.

Special thanks to Michelle Krasowski, former librarian of the Internet Archive, for her collaboration with the narration of this film; to Rodrigo Pacheco for creating the original music; and to Carlos Gómez for the sound mix.

Visual description of the work:

The Blue Dot is located on the left-hand side or east wall of the gallery just beyond and around a slight bend from the CAD projection. The Blue Dot is a video presented on a television monitor screen sized roughly three foot by two foot hanging on the white wall about four feet above the ground. The video is cut into three vertical parallel sections and forms a triptych within the frame of the monitor screen, each of the three rectangular sections most often showing different yet correspondent visuals while sometimes aligning to form a contiguous image divided by the black lines which separated each of the three sections. The sections variously cycle between moving images of maps, weather simulations, grids of space and light, architectural features like arches and vaulted ceilings, and blank or minimally filled space. Throughout the videos ghostly blue dots appear in sometimes flickering and other times solid sequences, sometimes aligned with the flow of the videos and sometimes inserted and overlaid atop the video. The dots tend to stay central to each section, but sometimes flash in different parts of the screen and sometimes display in various flickering colors like yellow, green, orange, and red.

Living Taxidermy

Nicholas DelCastillo

SCOBY, mycelium, glass eyes

2021

Taxidermy and death go hand in hand, but through the use of biomaterials a piece of taxidermy can be grown from scratch. Mycelium forms mimic the commercial polyurethane animal bodies used for the practice and serve as an environmentally friendly, biodegradable alternative. Dried SCOBY mimics the damp animal leather as it is stretched and arranged over the form. From form assembly to the arranging of the skin to be pinned into place, it feels almost identical to the traditional taxidermy process.

Visual description of the work:

Living Taxidermy is installed atop a three foot tall rectangular white pedestal. The installed sculpture resembles a lithe and elongated large cat in motion, its front paws resting atop a layered object that resembles a flat, round rock. The feline is made from a patchwork of brown layers of several shades, its hind legs extended and low as it rises slightly as if mounting the rock before it, a layered structure of gray stratum. The entire structure is composed of organic materials except for the yellow-brown glass eyes which bulge from its face as it turns its head toward its right, toward the front-facing viewer, as if caught by an unseen camera and suddenly turning its attention outward.

Archive of Digital Portraits Cast in Concrete

Blair Simmons

Water, cement, rocks, dirt, glass, cardboard, used electronics, data, python, time, labor
2022

Each sculpture is composed of a piece of discarded technology (sourced from people in my life) cast in concrete, then uncovered through hammering and chiseling. These sculptures are portraits of the person that owned and used the piece of technology.

Process: Archive of Digital Portraits Cast in Concrete has emerged out of my current pedagogy and research-driven practice where I have been exploring themes of technology, queerness, anxiety, pain and labor. This show is both informed and bound by my severe anxiety disorder, chronic pain and migraines. While working, I often need to move both quickly and carefully, in a race against time before my body shuts down. My research process is often overly laborious: collecting soft and hard data; reading and researching; teaching and discussing; making and endless iterating. The physical process of making these works mimics the daily pain of working and labor: warping, distorting, grinding and wearing down. This series of pieces is both critical of, and dependent on technology, mirroring the ways technology can be a solution to my chronic pain, and the source of the pain itself.

Visual description of the work:

Archive of Digital Portraits Cast in Concrete is located along the gallery's east wall between *Living Taxidermy* and *Tiempos de Ruido / Times of Noise*. Archive of Digital Portraits Cast in Concrete is a collection of electronics of various sizes, all with display screens. The display screens—laptop, tablet, smartphone, flip phone—are embedded within concrete as if they were fossils emerging from long-set volcanic rock or waste caught in mixing concrete which consumed the technologies and partially obfuscated their dark screens.

Tiempos de Ruido / Times of Noise

Jorge Barco

Técnica: Ensamblaje: madera, metal, pirita, imanes, componentes electrónicos, amplificador, impresión digital

2018

A strong and mysterious sound from an unknown object shook the Santafé village in Bogotá the night of March 9th 1687. Throughout history there have been different hypotheses about the causes of this fact. From the first apocalyptic perspectives “as a demonic manifestation from the end of times” to the scientific explanations surrounding volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and telluric movements. Nowadays the most documented version dates its origin to a meteorite entering the terrestrial atmosphere with its subsequent sound wave crash.

“Tiempos de Ruido” is a project that explores the materiality of sound and fictionalises sound imaginaries of this event, from the construction of sound objects that combine collision and friction between meteorite fragments with soles of pirita, electromagnetic processes, amplification and analogue synthesis. It encourages to reflect upon the human interaction with machines, mineral thought, spatial imaginaries and the connection between spiritual and physical universes through sound.

Visual description of the work:

Tiempos de Ruido / Times of Noise is located along the gallery’s east wall to the right of *Archive of Digital Portraits Cast in Concrete*. *Tiempos de Ruido / Times of Noise* is composed of a sparkling metallic geode contained within a black latch-top box laid on its wide side with wires attached from external sources found under and beyond the three foot tall white pedestal atop which the installation sits. Coils and cords trail within the black box whose open lid contains a scratched and somewhat illegible inscription of silver calligraphic text in a serif font. A small single LED light in a black tube extends from the open box’s top silver latch just over the geode and flashes different colors—blue, teal, red, orange, green—at variously paced frequencies.

Las Memorias Del Sol (The Sun's Memories)

Álvaro Rodríguez Badel

Photogrammetry, 3D animation, and diffusion models (AI)

2022

Looking at the sun through the treetops, I think about how light connects the multiple natural systems that give us life. Then, I close my eyes and begin to levitate through the forest, recognizing the universes that inhabit it, how many things have happened for us to be here. No matter how far we've come, we always end up back in the same place, looking at the same sun.

Visual description of the work:

Las Memorias Del Sol (The Sun's Memories) is a color projection on the white interior free-standing wall in the gallery's back center just beyond the long table. *Las Memorias Del Sol (The Sun's Memories)* is about ten feet wide by six feet tall, cast onto the wall about five and a half feet above the floor, a projection looming over the long table at the gallery's center. The projection depicts slowly shifting, dreamily moving images of natural ecologies and systems—forest floors, interconnected waterways, networks of lights and electricity, treetop canopies, and animations and models of the structural energies and particles that compose these systems in large and miniscule scales. The projections of these systems glow, grow, pulsate, turn, dilate, and morph into one from the other in elongated and disorienting sequences that diffuse the more legible forms and components into blurs of color, light, and shadow.

Conversations with My Deepfake Dad

Sarah Sweeney

2022

My father died when he was forty-four and I was seventeen. When I turned forty-four I wanted to talk to him again. I contacted Resemble AI, a company that creates clones of voices using machine learning, and we worked together to create an AI model of my father's voice. This project is a series of six conversations created through my interactions with the audio deepfake of my father.

Credits:

Sarah Sweeney – Lead Artist

Resemble Ai / Saqib Muhammad – Deepfake Software

Kate Sweeney – Script Editor

Kate Sweeney, Ann Sweeney, Debbie Sweeney Wick – Interviewees

Michael Strickland-Scanningforest1.jpg

Paul Davis - Carpentry

3DSelfies - 3D Modeling

Evan Halstead, Jeff Briton, Omar Gomez, Zoe Bilodeau, David O'Connell - Electronics

Andrea Casey - Printing

DeAndra Anthony – Technical Director/Projections

May You – Sound Editing

Billy Clark – Vocal Recordings for Deepfake Dad

Mattie Barber-Bockelman – Creative Producing

Visual description of the work:

Conversations with My Deepfake Dad is located in the southeast corner of the gallery beyond the interior false wall and set back slightly into a recess in the gallery's architecture before a large window whose white shade is pulled down. *Conversations with My Deepfake Dad* is a large dark gray telephone booth with an accordion sliding door of wood and glass. The booth's interior is wall-papered with geometric gradients of gray, yellow, and white rectangles that bleed into one another while the base of the interior is wallpapered with serialized images of snow-capped mountain ranges. A small wooden seat juts from the booth's interior left hand side wall about two feet from the ground for visitors to sit upon. Just outside the booth on the window's ledge rests a plastic container with cards meant to be taken and read. One side of the card mimics the wallpapered designs from the booth's interior while the other side, in black text over a white background, reads: "Conversations with My Deepfake Dad. Sarah Elizabeth Sweeney. If you were not able to listen to the conversation or would like to hear previous conversations you can listen online. www.mydeepfakedad.com."

Dance Permit (Denied)

Claudix Vanesix

VR (Virtual Reality)

Dance Permit (Denied) is an immersive film that uses Artificial Intelligence and performance art to challenge gender norms in traditional religious dances in indigenous Peru. It's an autobiographical documentary about the traditional dance of Claudix's family "Los Negrasos de Sipsa", that explores a centennial view on the themes of gender, memory and reinvention of the ancestral.

Visual description of the work:

Dance Permit (Denied) is located behind the free-standing false wall at the center of the gallery. Dance Permit (Denied) is an immersive film streamed to a roughly three foot by two foot television monitor and through a black VR headset located near the monitor. The video depicts numerous moving and layered sequences of the artist dancing and wearing various ensembles including a suit, a dress, and nothing but ribbons and sashes with a straw hat. The superimposed ghostly figure of the artist dances in various locations including among groups of people in town squares, an empty room of peeling plaster with dirt floors, a small church sanctuary or chapel, and a mountainous lakeside wilderness. The VR headset, which enables viewers to move their vision and engage the scenes from a fully immersive three dimensional, three hundred and sixty degree vantage, also includes sequences from which the viewer is placed into the vantage of a statue, looking down upon open forums of people in town squares wearing face masks and taking photos on cameras and phones, talking amongst themselves. The video moves between these scenes in glitching sequences and dissolving transitions.

Global Mode / Horsewoman Appearing Normal

Eva Davidova

2016-2021

Holo-fan animation (color, silent)

Global Mode / Horsewoman Appearing Normal takes the aesthetic of advertising, and of NFTs as objects of desire and speculation to make an image of the ecological and social disaster that we are already in—in which we have set ourselves for extinction, and keep programming ourselves for suicide.

Visual description of the work:

Global Mode / Horsewoman Appearing Normal is located in the back west corner of the gallery just before a window closed by a long white shade. *Global Mode / Horsewoman Appearing Normal* is made from a rotary fan moving at a fast clip, the arms of the fan a translucent white made from many small LED lights. As the fan spins the lights shift and move to form animated figures of bright colors and dynamic, sometimes disjointed movements. The figures include horses, dogs, and swine in various proportions and positions. The figures come into closer and farther views, the display zooming into their details to completely obscure the figures' forms and zooming out to show the figure over blank or bright backgrounds.

Bio Facts and Bio Fictions

Tarah Rhoda (SVA Bio Art Lab)

A collection of specimens in jars that have been stained and cleared, dehydrated specimens preserved with resin, an assortment of biomaterials such as leather grown from bacteria, sculptures grown from mycelium, bio plastics, liquids casted using spherification and an assortment of artifacts from various Bio Art projects at SVA.

Visual description of the work:

Bio Facts and Bio Fictions is located along the west wall toward the back of the gallery. *Bio Facts and Bio Fictions* is a collection of glass jars, plastic petri dishes, and objects scattered and clustered atop a white table, all the contents illuminated from below as the table is inset with bright white LED lights. The glass jars each contain a transparent fluid and hold free-floating specimens that resemble the skeletons of animals and insects. The plastic petri dishes similarly each contain organic-looking objects like insects, fossils, organic plant matter, and animal skins. Littered between the containers are many insects, animal parts, and otherwise biological materials of various shapes, sizes, textures, and colors.

On Vegetal Politics

Juan Cortés/Atractor Studio

2022

On Vegetal Politics focuses on the case of soy monoculture and its accelerated expansion in South American territories. The political struggles waged in Latin America around the issues of food sovereignty, deforestation, and the preservation of biodiversity have the multidimensional problem of monocultures as one of their focal points of dispute.

Soy is, among other things, essential for livestock and the meat industry. For some time now, and as if it were one of the phenomena that testify to the growing sensitivity of the earth as a kind of super-organism, soy monocultures have been threatened by the amaranth plant.

The work draws attention to the fact that amaranth, before falling into the status of a parasite, was a plant that occupied a valuable place in the ways of life of the indigenous peoples (such as Chibchas in Colombia) as its nutritional value is enormous. Amaranth is an essential grain that circulates outside the predominant agro-industrial matrix. The corporate solution to combat amaranth has been a transgenic war in which an immunological mutation is operated on soy plants in order to diminish the virulent contagion of the indigenous grain.

Visual description of the work:

On Vegetal Politics is a video work located on a television monitor on the gallery's west wall to the right of Bio Facts and Bio Fictions and directly to the left of its counterpart video, *Botánica Transgénica*. *On Vegetal Politics* depicts the time-lapsed growth of a soy plant and an amaranth plant alongside each other in soil and surrounded by an otherwise darkened space. The leaves grow into fullness as the plants grow taller. The top right hand border of the monitor screen shows two lines of sans serif text, one in bright blue and one in bright orange, each showing the quantity and value of each plant at a given moment in bushels, meters, and US dollars.

Botánica Transgénica

Juan Cortés/Atractor Studio (Alejandro Villegas, Juan José Lopez, Juan Cortés and Juan Quiñonez)

Botánica Transgénica shows the sequencing of the soybean and cocoa plant respectively, in comparison to the genetic modifications that companies like Syngenta have made for proprietary use. The work presents an algorithm that searches for the patents of the modified genetic codes of these plants and privately registers them as an NFT, an act that draws attention to the ownership of genetic codes and rights over the modification of plant life, especially in the midst of struggles for food sovereignty in Latin America.

Visual description of the work:

Botánica Transgénica is a video work located on a television monitor on the gallery's west wall directly to the right of *On Vegetal Politics*. *Botánica Transgénica* depicts the time-lapsed growth via an animated 3D model of a soybean and a cocoa plant, one at a time. It filters through images of the plants on 3D animations of credit cards and scrolling text which outlines the genetic codes of each plant in columns of serif text that show query and subject lines, serial numbers, and value data.

Food From Upper Bogota River

María Buenaventura

Mixed technique installation

2022-2023

The piece brings together some documents from the process of searching for the Captain Fish, which the artist has undertaken since 2008. This Bogotá fish, the main food of this place until the 19th century, was completely forgotten by the current inhabitants of the city and its surroundings. The contamination of the waters made his life in the city impossible and relegated him to the few still-living lagoons of the highlands. This legendary fish - a character, a mythical being for the artist - is a symbol of other relationships with water, of the life of this particular ecosystem today in crisis: a large wetland at an altitude of 2,600 meters and of a fishing village in cold lands, which was silenced by the Spanish invasion, and even more difficult, by the same Creole elite.

Visual description of the work:

Food From Upper Bogota River is located along the west wall of the gallery between *Botánica Transgénica* on its left and *The Ant Box* on its right. *Food From Upper Bogota River* is a collection of 24 images of various sizes arranged on the white wall alongside a television monitor sized at about two and a half feet wide by one and a half feet tall mounted about four feet above the ground. The images include photographs, maps, and posters related to the food systems and organic ecologies near and around the upper Bogota river in Colombia. The video, titled "Raising The First Ridge," shows numerous clips of agricultural workers cultivating land, turning soil and earth near greenery with an expansive blue-gray sky beyond their activity.

The Ant Box

Yihe Huang

Ants are highly social insects that originated during the early Cretaceous period and thrived with the emergence of flowering plants. Researchers have long known that ants utilize pheromones as a means of communicating with one another. In my artwork, titled “The Ant Box” I have electronically connected ants to a sound system in order to create an auditory representation of their movements. As the ants move, they trigger the playing of simple piano chords, resulting in a unique “song” that reflects the life of these fascinating creatures.

Visual description of the work:

The Ant Box is located along the west wall of the gallery to the right of *Food From Upper Bogota River* near a closed door recessed into the corner of the space. *The Ant Box*, which rests atop a nearly four foot tall white pedestal, is a transparent lucite box covered in copper geometric designs and containing a small colony of live ants moving atop networked sensors which connect to an electronic nano board. Cords extend from the back of the box and loop around the back of the pedestal into a stationary speaker which emits tones generated by the ants in the box.