Choreography for an Unfamiliar Here

Lauren Howie
Annette Isham
Christopher Lin
Gabrielle Mertz
Cherrie Yu

Curated by Alex Paik and SiSi Chen

On View: March 6 2021 - April 10, 2021

Trestle Gallery is pleased to present *Choreography for an Unfamiliar Here*, featuring Lauren Howie, Annette Isham, Christopher Lin, Gabrielle Mertz, and Cherrie Yu. The exhibition is curated by Alex Paik and SiSi Chen from an Open Call in January.

Though engaged with disparate processes and impetuses, the five artists in the exhibition break down, recombine, and re-contextualize their material, both digital and physical, until the certainty of what is "here" and what is "elsewhere" is blurred. Invisible boundaries are crossed, spaces collapsed and expanded, historical narratives questioned, allowing for new possibilities to seep through.

Christopher Lin transplants organic and inorganic samples from nature, combining them to form artificial chimeras in closed microecosystems. In *Zuru Zuru (Drifting)*, a multitude of mosses, lichens, springtails, and dwarf isopods inhabit glass tubes filled with soil, rocks, and activated carbon. The beakers float in an aquarium, often clustered together as they bobble half submerged, each an isolated pod brimming with life and growth, though never able to extend into its neighboring habitat. As the water level slowly changes, the tiny cylindrical islands shift in a gradual, barely perceptible dance.

Annette Isham explores the dynamics of gender, race, and geography through creating animated landscapes, layering moments of fantasy, failure, obstacle, and disruption. In the *Venus of White River National Forest* series, a multitude of layers oscillate against each other at different speeds, creating a composition that feels at once familiar and jarring. Clouds speed past a superimposed glare. Fluttering silhouettes suggest shadows cast by leaves. Layers of images and digitally drawn marks create an impossible yet strangely cohesive landscape. In both works, a cascade of repeating figures meld into each other, multiplying and dividing in a multi-dimensional inhabitation.

Cherrie Yu’s short videos are ontological inquiries into archive, translation, and the study of movement. Each video comprises a re-performance of a documented sequence of movements, whether spectacular or quotidian. In *Wrestling Study*, 15 seconds of a wrestling match are reenacted in the middle of traffic in downtown Chicago; In *Four Little Swans Study* a routine from the ballet *Swan Lake* transcribed onto four pairs of corndogs.
Lauren Howie’s characters are purveyors of goods and services in a fantasy world built around themes of Islam, Arabization, community, Blackness, and unreachable homelands. Through depicting these little workers cultivating land, maintaining homes, communicating with trade partners and extracting resources from their environments she asks viewers to question the structure of that world. When and how does land there become "owned" and when and how does one become native? In Valley, a singular character is entirely immersed in their fantastical environment, performing an endless loop of labor.

Gabrielle Mertz translates visual data from a variety of media sources into different structures and forms that distill and reconstruct the process of viewing. The three looped gifs are sourced from breaking news stories, with its respective digital data pulled through a process that strains and translates the information into its essential color, light, and form. The process of distilling the aggregated data is performed by hijacking a series of file application systems to guide and force the data files to reconstitute, resulting in a final concentrated visual of the original data and of the news story itself.
About the Artists:

Lauren Howie is an artist working in digital painting, animation and game design. She is based between Baltimore, Maryland and Fès-Meknès, Morocco. She obtained her BFA from The Cooper Union in 2018. Her work focuses on questions of home, nation-building, and ancestry.

Annette Isham is an artist and professor currently living in Denver, Colorado. Isham received her M.F.A. from The American University in Washington, DC and teaches 4D and Animation at Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design. Isham has exhibited nationally, most recently showing the series Among The Multitudes at CURRENTS International Media Festival in Santa Fe, and her film Sweet Slow: Indirection as part of Unbounded Unleashed Unforgiving: Reconsidering Cyberfmeinism in 2021, a virtual exhibition made in collaboration with New Art City, the College Art Association and the New Media Caucus. Isham has recently completed a residency at the Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Snowmass, CO.

Christopher Lin is a Brooklyn based artist and educator with a background in research science. Fueled by a lifelong obsession with fossils, his experimental installations, sculptures, and performances question the world we inhabit and envision the one we will leave behind. After receiving a BA from Yale University and an MFA from Hunter College, Lin was awarded the C12 Emerging Artist Fellowship in 2016. In 2018, he constructed an immersive installation playing with relative color and gravity titled What do you call the world? at Hunter College. He has shown work and performed for SVA Curatorial Practice and ABC No Rio in New York City, NY; Recess Art in Brooklyn, NY; and Flux Factory, in Long Island City, NY and is a member of the research-based artist collective, Sprechgesang Institute. He currently teaches undergraduates at Hunter College and is a fellow in the Bronx Museum AIM Fellowship.

Gabrielle Mertz is an artist and cultural policy strategist. Her practice explores data and media structures through the use of technology, light, sound, photography, and other forms. Drawing on her formal training as a dancer and choreographer, Mertz creates images, installations, and other works that expose and reimagine digital, architectural, and performance spaces. Previously the Founder/Artistic Director of Ondine and Company, she has created exhibitions, performances, and site-specific installations on stages, on tour, and on film. Her work has been exhibited in the United States and Europe at the Cultural Center of Krakow, New Museum Ideas City, High Museum, Artists Alliance, Susquehanna Museum of Art, International Dance Festival, Rialto Center for the Performing Arts, American Dance Festival, 7Stages, King Plow Arts Center, and The Performance Space, among others. She is the recipient of commissions/awards from the Cultural Olympiad, Rauschenberg Foundation, City of Atlanta, Bureau of Cultural Affairs, Georgia Council for the Arts, Center for Puppetry Arts, and Netherland-America Foundation, among others.

Cherrie Yu is a 25 year old artist born in Xi’an, China. She currently lives and works from Chicago, IL. She holds a bachelor degree in English Literature at the College of William and Mary, and MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has shown work at Chicago Cultural Center, the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Links Hall and Mana Contemporary Chicago. She has been an artist in residence at ACRE, Contemporary Calgary Museum, and a visiting artist at Emory University. Her films have been screened at Satellite Art Show, Helena Anrather Gallery, Heaven Gallery and Virginia Commonwealth University. She is the awardee of the 2020 Kala Art Institute Media Award Fellowship, and will be an artist-in-residence at Yaddo Foundation in 2021.