



## in the ever-changing world in which we live...

Dates of Exhibition: August 4 – September 12, 2020

### PRESS RELEASE

The Storefront is pleased to present its inaugural exhibition organized by consultant/curator Maureen Mahony addressing the issue of climate change. Sixteen artists are represented with works that exemplify a focus on the changing environment itself, an examination of the myths of exploration and collecting, or activism as a means of environmental political protest. Artistic and scientific inquiry combine in the effort to respond, educate, and activate.

Global locations explored by artists in the exhibition are as far reaching as The Arctic where **Ellie Ga** lived aboard a research vessel lodged in the ice and The Antarctic, where **Julian Charrière** became inspired to turn a lens on polar landscapes in the dead of night. Ga's poetic polaroid prints and Charrière's *Sovetskaya* remind of 19<sup>th</sup> century expeditions while highlighting the current ecological fragility and fraught geopolitical conditions of the polar regions.

**David Brooks'** 42-foot long scroll depicts x-rays he made at The Smithsonian of all the fish one scientist collected in 1982 in the protected habitat of Cerro Duida in the Venezuelan Amazon. Intimating a river, the scroll not only depicts the immense biodiversity capable of thriving in such a place but also the impossibility of ever totalizing an area's entire species. The hubris of collecting has led to much negative impact upon the natural world.

Another Smithsonian resident, **Camille Henrot** created her wonderful 2013 film *Grosse Fatigue* where critique of the museum, technology and the human condition collapse. Her anthropological approach combined with her fluid, comical renditions of human frailty in relation to the animal world prove that cunning humor can be a crafty weapon.

The natural history museum satirist **Mark Dion** also cuts a luminous swath aligning humankind with the collecting squirrel. The drive to ceaselessly acquire material possessions ultimately amounts to nothing more than a bucketload of stuff in which one expires. Appropriating archeological methods of collecting, cataloguing and exhibiting objects, Dion's work questions the authority of institutions to inform environmental policy.

Painter **Alexis Rockman** creates scenes of apocalyptic disaster rendered uncanny due to their wondrous facility. Rockman depicts various species of animal under duress, ravaged from their natural habitat by the strong arm of capitalism and the legacy of colonialism. International

shipping, human trafficking and the continual loss of biodiversity have led to many levels of destruction including the crossing-over of lethal diseases from animal to man.

Activism via performance or the written word is a powerful and poignant tool for the eco-artist. **Peter Fend**, whose blunt universal pleas act as the exhibition's sandwich boards, is also a longtime proponent of algae fuel – it is renewable (rapid growth), sustainable (doesn't waste land or water resources) and being a plant, breathes in carbon dioxide and out oxygen – a triple threat to climate change. Among many other actions, the eco-feminist **Andrea Bowers** has performed a "tree-sit" to save a grove, created a film featuring Tokata Iron Eyes of the Lokata tribe, and compiled many "me-too" articles large-scale to read at Art Basel. Bowers' *Ecotage Blanket* covered with Earth First! patches orients the planet's essential needs with ours while advocating "ecotage" – sabotage carried out for ecological reasons.

*Monument to Beach Pollution* documents an important action by political and ecological activist artist **Hans Haacke**. Parodying the integrity of Arte Povera's "poor materials" by collecting detritus that washed up on a stretch of Spanish beach, Haacke called attention in one stroke to market economies that smokescreen the obscenity of pollution. Dating from 1970, this work reminds of early warning cries to problems that still haunt us today.

Many of the pioneering environmental artists were female. **Agnes Denes** realized the seemingly impossible in 1982 when she planted and harvested a 2-acre wheat field on the Battery Park landfill. This project remains a powerful referent to the mismanagement of land, waste, world hunger and ecological concerns. An outstanding drawing dating from 1971 compares the physical likeness of the breast with the planet, poignantly reminding of our inextricable connection to Earth. **Helène Aylon** who died in April of this year, is remembered with images documenting her cross-country drive "rescuing" the Earth near twelve missile sites across the US. The pillowcases filled with earth were carried in a mass rally in 1982 to the UN during a special session on disarmament. Nuclear war remains a furtive cause of global anxiety. Two brochures framed together show all four sides of **Mierle Laderman Ukeles'** 1979 invitation to the "SANMEN" of NYC. She visited all the borough's 59 sanitation districts to shake the hands of 8,500 workers, bringing honor to their overlooked labors as "balancing agents" for the city.

Photographic and performative processes connect several artists in the exhibition. **Andrea Chung**'s beautiful sugar encrusted cyanotypes of ocean species reflect upon the monumental loss of ocean habitats along colonialist trade routes. Her deft use of raw material and a turn-of-the-century photographic process underscore the legacy of slavery. **Sam Falls** created work immediately following the California wildfires – within the burned forest itself. Using the photographic factors of time, representation and exposure, Falls' particular plein-air painting technique renders images of in-situ flora and fauna by exposing a canvas treated with natural pigment to the sun and elements. **Jitish Kallat** documents his "B.C." – breath cycle while creating drawings with raindrops during India's monsoon season aligning himself, the drawing and the environment. Kallat's practice is deeply connected to weather and the seasons, using the opposing phenomena of rain and fire as tools. **Scott Lyall**'s picture of the Cosmos is created using a process in which sub-visible particles of wafer-thin, cloned aluminum shatter reflected light into billions of chromatic signals, meaning that what we see in this micro rendering of the macro universe is an ever-active performance of light.

Finally, photographer and filmmaker **Edward Burtynsky** is here represented by his 2008 image of *Spiral Jetty* created by earthwork artist Robert Smithson in 1970. The image allows us to see the spiral during a drought. Burtynsky's three films (*Manufactured Landscapes* 2006, *Watermark* 2013 and *The Human Epoch* 2018) constitute part of *The Anthropocene Project* which documents the geologic and scientific argument that humans have become the single most defining force on the planet, affecting the Earth and its processes more than all other natural forces combined.

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