

anthro[physis]

Essay by Exhibition Curator Maryam Parsi

For underwater sculptor, photographer, and conservationist Jason deCaires Taylor it is the threat of coral reef extinction that fuels the driving force that is his art. Rising ocean temperatures and the acidification of ocean waters through greenhouse gases injure and prevent the growth of these "rainforests of the ocean". Taylor's captivating installations, otherwise known as underwater museums, implement the cognizance of the endangered species and draw human activity to their specific locales, whilst facilitating the growth of the oceanic landscape through the regenerative quality of time.

Comparably, the work of photo and hyper-realist Robert Standish explores the multifaceted effects of deforestation and the loss of an ancient and significant life force. The loss of habitat for millions of species, increasing greenhouse gases, and temperature changes threatening the ecology of the forests are reflective in the consciousness of his aesthetic.

Aharon Gluska and Néle Azevedo aim to highlight the disinterested behavioral tendencies many institute when relating to the environment in which they live. Gluska's paintings and manipulated works on paper invite viewers to re-think the beauty that lies in the natural phenomena that have shaped the natural landscape of the place we call home. His images exist in a space bounded by nature and abstraction that sow the concept of re-collective memory to conjure a familiar environment of a virginal and youthful earth that speaks of man's perseverance throughout time. In a similar light, Nele Azevedo's "Minimum Monument" project address man's disconnect with the natural world and subsequent consumption with the urban developments fashioned by his own hand. Her Army of Melting Men emphasize a psychological and emotional isolation of the self remote from the flora and fauna, stressing the missing yoke that unites humanity with distant places and times-gone-by that are so frequently forgotten.

For artist Vaughn Bell it has become all too apparent that increasing populations demand greater urbanization, a notion that undeniably extends the gap between man and nature. In this respect and in lieu of the all-too-common passive attitude that consumes the average person, Bell uses her art to facilitate the necessary interaction between man and the natural world by bringing nature into the realm of the art gallery. The artist's biospheres and terrariums house miniature and site-specific ecological systems that not only propose real-time experience with the audience, but require the synergy between individual and object to properly function as a whole. The direction

that Bell has taken with her art is comparable to the revolutionary progression in urban development with the birth of public parks that aspired to preserve nature in a metropolitan setting. Robert Cannon utilizes aeronautic technology for his terraform sculptures that emit a nostalgic air, while establishing a conscious and direct experience with nature. Cannon's sculptures allude to stylistically archaic traditions that echo archetypes of a greater collective society based on the consciousness of the natural world. The artist's "earth shaping" sculptures, made from both artificial and natural materials, are a direct manifestation of his belief in the use and aid of science to advance man's awareness of the ramifications of his decisions and the perpetual collapse of the natural world, and by extension, the downfall of humanity.

One can say that it is undoubtedly evident that Claire Morgan's sculptural installations are deeply founded in her fascination with nature, its sweeping fragility, cyclical disposition and binding ephemeral character, effortlessly blurring the lines between science and craft in a visually stimulating composition where natural and artificial elements intersect. Suggestive of a moment frozen in time, Morgan's installations, which are among other materials comprised of fruits, insects, and animals that have undergone taxidermy by the artist herself, evoke the unpredictable, chaotic and regenerative qualities of nature, infused with rhythmic precision, technological control and geometric harmony. The fluid, yet static genetic composition of her sculptures dramatically display her ongoing investigation centered on man's unrelenting struggle to nurture the bond with the very source of his existence.

The malleable condition that is characteristic of Yuriko Yamaguchi's sculptures symbolize the principle of transformation and constant state of flux that is an inescapable and fundamental facet of human life and the natural world. Her work tasks the viewer to establish the hidden connections that is the nexus between man and nature -- the interlacing configuration of the delicate sculptures correlate to the interrelatedness and mutual dependence that is the life blood of all living things.

The work of artist Levi van Veluw is unmistakably expressive of a horror vacui that is eloquently in the guise of an obsessive materiality. The repetition of natural materials that surround, encase, and clothe the artist in his tantalizing images construct the paradigm that gives true meaning to the proverbial phrase, "Art imitates Nature." Van Veluw's reinterpretation of canonical landscape painting extracts nature from the traditional two-dimensional model to supplant it with a three-dimensional union of nature with the self.