

**Main Gallery**

# **NextNew: Green**

**July 7 - September 20, 2009**

An exhibition featuring the work of emerging artists. *Green* presents fresh perspectives on climate change and related environmental and conservation issues.

Michelle Blade  
Collette Campbell-Jones  
Misako Inaoka  
Vanessa Marsh  
Carson Murdach  
Sandra Ono  
Ryan Pierce  
Rebecca Rothfus  
Michael J. Ryan

**Opening reception:** Friday, August 7, 6pm-8pm

**Conversation with the Artists:** September 10, 7pm-9pm

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## ***NextNew: Green***

*You cannot solve a problem with the same kind of thinking that caused the problem.*  
— Albert Einstein

You don't have to search very far to read, hear, or learn about rising sea levels, sweltering temperatures, deeper droughts and heavier downpours. Mankind's impact on nature and the serious effects of global warming are topics of discussion around the world. So why does a contemporary art gallery feel the need to mount an exhibition that focuses on these daunting issues? How might this exhibition contribute to the conversation and not add to the noise? What can artists tell us about these complex and multi-faceted issues that we don't already know from media reports, TV documentaries and Al Gore?

One salient image can speak louder than volumes of scientific data and has the potential to engage the public's imagination in an immediate way. Art has the ability to communicate the urgency of a problem on a human scale, encourage conversations and actions that move beyond the scientific debate to address large problems on a personal and perhaps more meaningful level.

Michelle Blade, Vanessa Marsh, Carson Murdach, and Ryan Pierce create vivid apocalyptic narratives that immediately articulate our fears about what will become of the earth's landscape if we continue to abuse it. Sandra Ono's installations straddle that elusive line between beautiful and grotesque. Working with everyday materials, Ono creates forms that suggest abnormal growths that might begin to grow, sprout or ooze into our environs as a result of the earth's increasing toxicity. Michael J. Ryan's "breathing" sculpture insinuates that our earth is already on life-support. Utilizing plastic bags and other throwaway conveniences of a consumer culture, Ryan proposes that it might be too late to work on solutions to the growing debris in our society. Colette Campbell-Jones creates fictions based on scientific research. Her digitally reconstructed prints combine the veracity of photography with her own imaginary predictions about the future of the planet. Misako Inaoka envisions the infinite mutations that might occur in nature as plants and animals adapt and adjust to a changing environment. And, Rebecca Rothfus' delicate landscapes illustrate the fragile beauty of the land, endlessly scarred by the blight of industry and technology.

This is an exhibition that presents many points of view that add to a repository of questions and insights that brings the subject of climate change and man's imprint on nature into focus on a personal scale. While the work presents some of the harsh realities we may face, including a post-industrial melt-down, toxic contamination, and nature's fragile state, the aim is to provoke and evoke a response from you that leads to a broader dialogue about how each of us might think, react and act on this global crisis that goes beyond the walls of this gallery.

## **Exhibiting Artists**

### **Michelle Blade**

Michelle Blade's landscape paintings depict transcendent moments in nature where humans are faced with the awe and intensity of natural phenomena. Images of the expansive sea, piercing light, and cosmic explosions present occurrences of incredible possibility. In comparison to the vast and ominous forces of nature, humans appear small and fragmented. Oscillating between utopic and dystopic visions, Blade's paintings ask us to consider the outcome of these fleeting scenarios. Are these moments of profound collective action or the devastation of social break down?

Blade's landscapes confront us with these questions in order to consider our relationship to nature and with each other. Blade suggests that how we define our relationship with nature will impact our collective responsibilities and possibilities. She writes, "In the face of our somewhat failed connection to nature, I feel an aesthetic revival is a vital tool to help us reconsider our roles and possibilities."

Michelle Blade received her MFA at California College of the Arts in 2008. She lives and works in San Francisco.

### **Colette Campbell-Jones**

In her digitally constructed series of prints, Colette Campbell-Jones collapses time and space to illustrate an acceleration of climate change. The rapid disappearance of non-polar glaciers, their cascading effects over vast geographies, and the implications for agriculture and human habitation over time are some of the personal anxieties that Campbell-Jones articulates in this ongoing series of photographic murals.

Campbell-Jones is frustrated by the use of scientific evidence to create binaries, rather than using science as an instrument of discovery. In referring to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, she reminds us that scientific proofs lead to subjective interpretation and that the more we learn, the more questions we raise. As the public debate continues, we may never obtain absolute and comprehensive proof of the effects of climate change in our lifetime. However, Campbell-Jones' graphic renderings of the possible consequences

cut through the limits of scientific exploration to illustrate one horrific scenario.

Colette Campbell-Jones received her BA in Psychology from San Francisco State University in 1990 and her MFA in Photography from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2008. She lives and works in San Francisco.

### **Misako Inaoka**

Painted with shiny metallic paint, Misako Inaoka's *Survival Game* series looks like it's made of cast metal. However, the strange creatures in the series are in fact recombinations of everyday prefabricated children's toys. Part animal and part machine, Inaoka's hybrids are creatures of her own invention, where animal and machine have joined together to survive the harsh conditions of the urban environment. Motion sensors are embedded in some of these hybrids, and surprisingly bring life and voice to these mutated animals.

In all of her work, Inaoka investigates the boundary between the natural and artificial. She is particularly interested in how nature adapts, adjusts and mutates in even the harshest environments. While *Survival Games* exaggerates nature's changes, it speaks to the anxiety of the unknown evolutionary alterations we face.

Misako Inaoka received her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2001 and her MFA from Mills College, Oakland in 2006. She currently lives and works in San Francisco.

### **Vanessa Marsh**

Trained as a photographer, Vanessa Marsh is an expert in finding beauty in the detritus of our contemporary culture. This body of work is based on the artist's memories of where she grew up in Washington State. As a young photographer she explored abandoned and overgrown landscapes with her camera, looking for the perfect scene of debris to capture on film. She writes, "These buildings were all on the edges of fields that within a few years would become strip malls or a sea of cookie cutter houses, not yet torn down, but no longer functioning as they were originally intended. No longer in use and on the brink of being destroyed, these models represent a tear-down and wasteful culture." Expanding

on these earlier images, Marsh now makes sculptures out of discarded and recycled materials she finds near her home in San Francisco.

Vanessa Marsh received her BFA at Western Washington University in 2001 and her MFA from California College of the Arts in 2005. She lives and works in San Francisco.

### **Carson Murdach**

In his paintings, Carson Murdach investigates the cyclical nature of history so that we can prevent the repetition of past mistakes. Drawing from the traditions of folk and historic landscape painting, he disrupts an otherwise picturesque scene by inserting naively rendered homes and architecture into the frame. This visual incongruity sheds light on the tension between the built environment and nature. Populated with ships, homogenous homes and signs of industry, the large-scale works from *The Course of Empire* series narrate a cautionary tale of human's pattern of civilization. The paintings dramatically shift from green pastoral beginnings to the thick gray smog that hangs over the careless development of urban sprawl.

Carson Murdach received his BFA in Sculpture at Washington State University in 2000 and his MFA from California College of the Arts in 2006. He currently lives and works in San Francisco.

### **Sandra Ono**

Sandra Ono uses inorganic and utilitarian products that are intended to be in close contact with the body - materials like balloons, acrylic fingernails and band-aids – to make sculptures that straddle the line between beautiful and grotesque. Constructing her sculptures by using the same materials over and over, Ono makes organic forms that suggest mutation and cancerous growths, instances where nature has gone awry and propagates out-of-control.

Ono is interested in materializing something otherwise not visible to the eye, to give physical weight to the anxiety of living in an environment of increasing toxicity. From the micro-particles in the air we breathe to the genetically altered food we digest, the work manifests the unknown consequences of what our bodies come into contact with every day.

Sandra Ono received her BA at the University of California Davis in 2003 and her MFA at Mills College in Oakland in 2008. She lives and works in Berkeley.

### **Ryan Pierce**

Ryan Pierce's paintings depict a post-industrial world. Though painted with bright and graphic colors one would ordinarily associate with playfulness and vitality, upon closer inspection, the details of his images are devastatingly harsh. Portraying depleted landscapes with few signs of life in vivid color, the work presents a scenario that is both optimistic and ominous. On the one hand, the paintings describe a world of great potential. If human-kind faced the drastic conditions of an apocalypse, humans may decide to cautiously move forward to preserve the land and prevent further ecological disaster. However, this idea is tempered by another view that human greed and conflict are unavoidable, especially in a vulnerable state. The tension between these opposing forces speaks to the mystery and struggle of humans' relationship to the natural world.

Pierce also is interested in the energy between the light and dark of this post-industrial world. It is a place where survivors face hardships but the resiliency of nature is relentless. Though we have not yet faced the bleakness that Pierce has rendered, we are still confronted with the same challenges: will we continue to be driven by greed and consumption or will we create real opportunities to make a more sustainable world?

Ryan Pierce received his BFA in Drawing at Oregon College of Art and Craft in 2003 and his MFA in Drawing and Painting from California College of the Arts in San Francisco in 2007. He lives and works in Portland, Oregon.

### **Rebecca Rothfus**

Rebecca Rothfus' *Tower Series* examines the conflicts and contrasts between the increasing abundance of media towers and the surrounding landscape in which they are placed. Rothfus' exquisitely precise renderings of the towers lend an abstract beauty to these intrusive blights on nature that would otherwise elicit displeasure. The series of paintings refers to the symbolic nature of the towers, representing rapid growth and overdevelopment that is occurring

across the world. The simplicity of the surrounding landscape, both in line and color, draws even more attention to the complex geometric lines of the towers. The implication is that the land becomes inconsequential in light of technological progress.

Rebecca Rothfus lives and works in Austin, Texas. She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1999 and her MAT from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts/Tufts University, Boston in 2005.

### **Michael J. Ryan**

Michael J. Ryan uses cast-off materials from our consumer-based culture as the media for his conceptual sculpture *Dead Space*. Plastic bags, fishing line, vinyl tubing, electronic timers and credit cards combine to create this virtual life support machine or crude circulatory system that seems to have a life of its own. As the machine breathes in and out, the rhythm serves as a reminder of the fragility of life. With all of its wires, contraptions and scale, the purpose of *Dead Space* remains ambiguous – is it contributing to the air circulation in the space or is it a dire prediction of the state of the environment as we continue to consume and destroy our natural resources?

Michael J. Ryan received his BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University in 1994 and his MFA from San Francisco State University in 2007. He lives and works in San Francisco.

## ***Night Moves:***

After-dark programming in the ICA's front windows.

## **Gail Wight: *National Agenda***

*National Agenda* is part political activism and part Theater of the Absurd. Wight expresses dissatisfaction with our government's response to global climate change with an intentionally preposterous and violent spectacle. Is this how our political leaders understand (or fail to understand) the changes occurring on our planet—as simply a blunt matter of “things getting hotter?” Coming into harsh contrast with the slick, effects-heavy computer renderings of Earth's ecological future used in television reports on climate change, *National Agenda's* humorous foregrounding of artifice asks us to question the depth of our own understanding of and commitment to the issue. What is the national agenda for climate change?

Gail Wight received her BFA from the Massachusetts College of Art and her MFA from San Francisco Art Institute. She has exhibited her work extensively both nationally and internationally for over 20 years. Currently she holds the position of Associate Professor at Stanford University.

### **Hours**

Tues - Fri 10 - 5

Sat 12 - 5

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