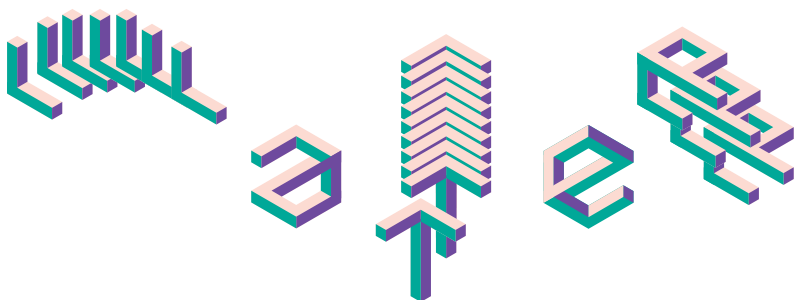


OR



SOONER OR LATER:

Non-Euclidean visions of the
future as a place to be

JANUARY 13 – FEBRUARY 25, 2017

ARTISTS:

**Bonanza, Sofia Córdova,
Jader, Grace Rosario Perkins,
and Richard-Jonathan Nelson**

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Curated by Torreya Cummings

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WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Bonanza

Future 4ever Beta, 2017
Digital video with seating

Sofia Córdova

¡Auxilio! ¡Socorro!

Echoes of a Tumbling Throne (Odas al fin de los tiempos) #8:
COOERPOH A COOERPOH, 2016
Digital video and original sound composition

The Kingdom is Me, 2016
Acrylic and gouache on found photographs and magazine pages

Jader

Feedback Loop (4 x 7 Years Bad Luck), 2016
Archival Pigment Print

Glow Worm, 2016
Cinemagraph

Richard-Jonathan Nelson

We crossover but time still owns us, 2016
Photo collage and digital print on fabric

Cycles of flight from this soil, 2016
Photo collage and digital print on fabric

Grace Rosario Perkins

Bibbijum (To Make Lines for Us), 2016
Mixed media installation

Note: Bibbijum is a reflexive verb in the O'odham language that means "to make wavy lines on oneself." Works throughout this installation were made in collaboration with the artist's father, Olen Perkins (Blackwater, AZ) in the winter of 2016 on the Gila River Indian Reservation.

THE FORECAST
BY TORREYA CUMMINGS

*All that you touch
You Change.*

*All that you Change
Changes you.*

*The only lasting truth
Is Change.*

*God
Is Change.*

– Octavia Butler
Parable of the Sower

Our imagined future is forged from the raw material of our present, which is in turn constructed on an unstable foundation of past events. Past › present › future is not simply a linear progression. We loop around to different outcomes, conflicting signs, backtrack and jump ahead. There are long arcs, uncoverings, outmodings, revisitings, changes in perspective, both on an individual level and collectively. Thinking about the future is a way of turning a lens on the present, but it is also a spell we cast to influence what might happen.

If we do not imagine the future, someone else will do it for us.

What does a future look like with you in it? What if it's a lot like the 80s? What if it's underwater and all that's left

of this world are endless archipelagos? If the present is a place where your very existence is resistance, what if the future is a place where you can flourish? Some of us are waiting for the post-apocalypse. Others of us are already living in it, and have been for 500 years, give or take.

Imagination is resistance, but too easily what we resist sets the terms of engagement. If we can get around that – if we can project ourselves past someone else’s perfect world into a space where we can set the terms, where we can thrive, or we can look at our struggles with different eyes and different tools – maybe we can change the conversation.

If we pretend hard enough, it might come true.

After all, that’s what a spell is, too: a vision made substance through ritual with the aim of changing reality.

Sooner or Later features work by artists and writers working in a speculative vein from a variety of perspectives. The work featured here is by turns hopeful and dismal, acutely funny and emphatically human, even when dealing with dark possibilities. This is not “utopia” or “post-apocalypse” – rather than a totalized world, we are looking at diverse and complex visions of what could be. We present multiple timelines, multiple woven paths. I’m calling this approach “non-Euclidean,” with futures that are not located in a theoretical flat world based on the primacy of western civilization, but rather spinning off from our own wrinkled, rhizomatic, problematic, hypermediated wonderland.

In her 1982 lecture *A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be* (from which this exhibition borrows its title), Ursula K. Le Guin writes about the problems, paradoxes and necessities of utopian thinking. She proposes looking for ways to think about utopia that “would not be euclidean, European, or masculinist”^[1] and wouldn’t ignore the here and now or erase the past:

I don't think we're ever going to get to utopia again by going forward, but only roundabout or sideways; because we're in a rational dilemma, an either/or situation as perceived by the binary computer mentality, and neither the either nor the or is a place where people can live. Increasingly often in these increasingly hard times I am asked by people I respect and admire, 'Are you going to write books about the terrible injustice and misery of our world, or are you going to write escapist and consolatory fantasies?' I am urged by some to do one – by some to do the other. I am offered the Grand Inquisitor's choice. Will you choose freedom without happiness, or happiness without freedom? The only answer one can make, I think is: No.^[2]

In this show we're looking at what habitable futures might be like. Utopian philosophy is only one of the tools we can use to imagine possibilities. Science fiction is another – looking at the events of the present and spinning them out to distant conclusions.

We can look back at the science fiction of the past for predictions that were entertainingly wrong or almost right about the now. Arguably the first science fiction film, *Le Voyage dans la Lune* by Georges Méliès (1902), features exploration of the lunar surface and was in turn inspired by the work of Jules Verne, among others.^[3]

The “communicator” of Star Trek has become the cell phone in your pocket and the holodeck is becoming what you see in Virtual Reality goggles.^[4]

Whether travel to the moon or personal communication devices or augmented reality are predicted by fiction or inspired by fiction doesn't matter so much. We build things that satisfy certain conditions and desires.^[5] **Fiction can help pave a path forward. It can prepare the mind. It can plant an idea and make space for it to grow into the possible.**

And if this world was brought into being in the service

of old narratives, what other conditions do we need to address? Climate change, capitalism, ennui, inequity, inevitability, invisibility, gender binaries, fixed identities, to name a few.

For this project, I am working with artists who use various methods (video, installation, elaborately constructed photographs, painting, quilting, ritual) to think about what happens next, about what can happen when we subvert, circle back, leap forward, blend, build new worlds out of the old ones, open portals, conjure. Their work is more fiction than science, more about stories and visions than technology and data, although the tech is certainly part of the conversation, and definitely part of their work's construction and forms.^[6]

Where are we?

Where we are going?

Who is the “we” in this sentence?

- 1 Ursula K. Le Guin. 1989. *A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be*, from *Dancing at the Edge of the World*. London: Gollancz
- 2 *ibid.*
- 3 Verne's themes of adventure and exploration come in large part, I would argue, from the cultural climate of late 1800s Europe. It is hard to separate exploration from colonization in this context, and this hangover has haunted sci-fi as a genre for a long time.
- 4 Alas, it turns out that Martin Cooper, inventor of the handheld wireless mobile phone, says that he was more inspired by Dick Tracy's wrist radio than by Star Trek's communicator in an interview with *Scene World C64 Magazine* in 2015. While Dick Tracy is probably not sci-fi, it is nonetheless fiction and still, I believe, supports this argument.
- 5 And of course have an infinite array of unintended side effects.
- 6 I mean, I'm composing this on a computer, and the photography is digital, and the videos are too. But the work in this show also mixes in the handmade and the glitched-out and the low tech. Because try as Appleogoogletopia might to convince us otherwise, we don't want a future that is seamless.



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5

METROPOLARITY

PROPAGANDA OF THE COLONY

BY M EIGHTEEN TÉLLEZ

6

i feel like mine and metropolarity's ongoing rejections from #diverse mainstream sci-fi publications stems from these gatekeepers being really invested in the propaganda of the colony and myth of empire

so much so that they have compound misinterpretations of the context our of stories, the plots, characters, settings, and linguistic techniques.

not #all, but it's a hell of a lot of effort spent discerning useful critical commentary from say, 'we were actually looking for something to sell to the app devs' book club'

rallying to imagine The Future but you still got your head in a box thinking Western Cartesian Logic is 'The True Nature' of The Known Universe

meanwhile never stopping to ask yourself where we all might be if you stopped insisting that:
humans are unique lifeforms in a hierarchy above all others;
there's definitive male and female sexual organs;
producing children is the only way to reproduce;
a college degree is a meaningful measure of success and intelligence;
the European canon of art, culture, and knowledge is the only one worth seeking out, believing in, and adhering to;
progress is natural;
advancing Civilization is noble;
convenience is better than dignity;
poor people don't work hard enough;
Black people just don't know how to act right;
ill people just didn't make the right choices;
we need police and patrols and prisons for our own safety;
violence is not the answer

downtown there was a flier wheatpasted to a newstand this summer that said

IF YOU DON'T HATE PRISONS YOU HATE TRANS PEOPLE

you're in the matrix, fool. you wanna take the red pill or what?

sci-fi print houses and platforms are blowing the pacifying horns—special Queers issue, special POC issue, We're Committed to Diversity Edition, This Writing Workshop Is Committed to Diversity Announcement...

meanwhile owning class tech start-ups and engineers and developers think it's A Great Idea to build the exact dystopian thing from this or that sci-fi tale

and city planners and police departments and whole governments sit back and welcome private contractors and medical/academic institutions and corporations to plow right on in, constructing known nightmare landscapes direct from dystopia/utopia popular films

isn't it wacky that the popular sci-fi wave is still on
cyberpunk dystopia as contemporary reality
international sci-fi is future (ignores poor ppl sci-fi stateside)

surveillance panopticon is great
colonize space again; humans (code: white people) are still super special snowflakes

DISTRACT DENY DISMISS

the calendar years pass. we have been writing for ages now. we write in a post-industrial East Coast rust belt city of the
'Midatlantic' region.

THAT'S WHAT WE CALL IT FOR NOW, ANYWAY.

on this land, in these bodies we must inhabit in the present spacetime, we write what is known and experienced and imagined
by us.

every word set down is a moment's observation in time. but Rasheedah got me asking, whose time? landowner's time.
destroyed time. lost time. not our time. and not our tongue.

WE'RE SCI-FI.

so what exactly do you mean by sci-fi

... these context differentials are no good

HOW DO WE GET THROUGH TO YOU

WHEN THE PROPAGANDA OF THE COLONY ONLY WANTS TO WRAP YOU IN A BLANKET AND GIVE YOU A PACIFIER

and you'll get what you don't ask for
and you don't look for what's not there

REPETITION REDUCES VIGILANCE
REPETITION REDUCES VIGILANCE
REPETITION REDUCES VIGILANCE

REPETITION REDUCES VIGILANCE
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DISTRACT DENY DISMISS

where are you right now?



the worm tells you all you gotta do is dance how we need you to

twist yourself inside out so you can eat regularly and nutritiously

put yourself in precarious and dangerous
situations to obtain the right credentials

make yourself a target but act like you're just happy to be here

the worm is always hungry but it tells you you're safe and the
worm expects your gratitude and your smile and your subservience

the worm's is a story of eternal abundance and progress

but the worm is blind and confident that its needs will
always be met, its desires always justified and satisfied

yours is a story of life under the belly of a worm

suffocation. invention,
breathing somehow anyway

**FUTURE PLACE(S):
STRANGING DOMINANT SPACE(S)
BY DOROTHY R. SANTOS**

*Caminante, no hay puentes, se hace puentes al andar
(Voyager, there are no bridges, one makes them as one walks)*

– Gloria Anzaldúa

The first time I watched Luc Besson's sci-fi film *The Fifth Element*, one question came to mind: why does the fate of the earth rely on a cisgender white human man and a white humanoid woman? As the 20th anniversary of the film approaches, Hollywood's visions of the future haven't much changed. Films such as *Ex Machina* prioritize a normative body type under the guise of accessibility and profit; primarily white bodies are employed to rectify the ills of humanity and save the world. For the majority of commercial filmmakers creating within the genre of contemporary science fiction or speculative film, the marketable body is one that does not represent many viewers.

That said, Hollywood has in recent years begun to acknowledge extraordinary, imaginative spaces set apart from the white imagination. The work of science-fiction

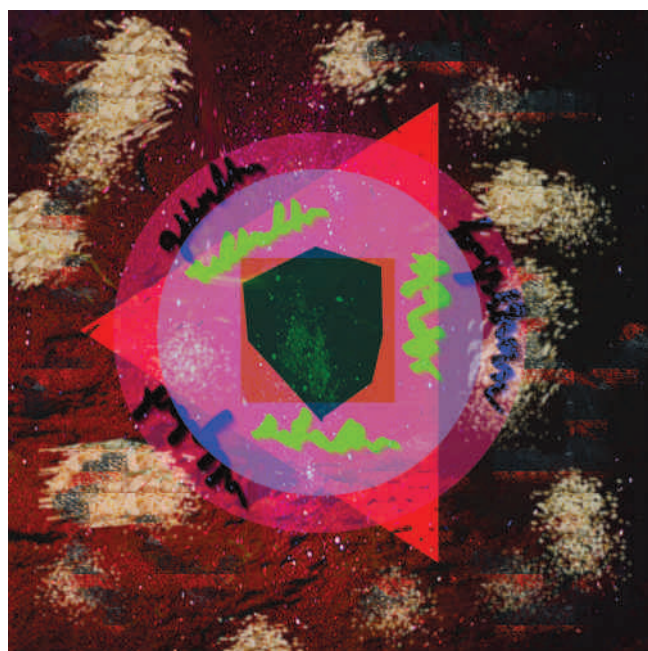
author Octavia Butler is currently being adapted for television, and in 2015 writer Ta-Nehisi Coates was asked to re-envision the comic *Black Panther*, set in the mythological African nation of Wakanda where women are rulers and protectors. These writers work within a completely different citizen-subject structure that is not focused on the white body as a dominant entity.

Similarly, the artists in *Sooner or Later: Non-Euclidean visions of the future as a place to be* upturn conventional depictions of bodies in fantastical ways through installation, drawing, sound, video, and photography. Their works foreground gender non-conforming, queer, and trans bodies as prophets of distant futures. They are shapeshifters. They are ubiquitous. They are the souls that wend their way through the circuitous and vertiginous systems of hate and oppression in order to give viewers tools to act.

In contrast to many futuristic speculations, the “visions” of these artists are not limited to sight but rather embedded and manifest in multiple senses. The primacy of visual landscape is destabilized: our skins feel the vibrations of sound and we can imagine what our bodies might be able to feel in the future. Are we prepared to take on the responsibility of imagining this future before it is imagined for us?



8





10



11



IMAGE CREDITS

Jader

- 1 *Invisible Island*, 2016
Archival Pigment Print

Sofia Córdova

- 2 *Stills from Echoes of a Tumbling Throne (Odas al fin de los tiempos) #8: COOERPOH A COOERPOH*, 2016

Grace Rosario Perkins

- 3 *Talking on the Hill*, 2016
Xerox lithograph and pencil
- 4 *Three Sisters, King and Queen (Detail)*, 2016
Acrylic on paper
- 5 *VISION*, 2014
Acrylic, paper mache, and armature

Photos by CA Greenlee

M Eighteen Téllez

- 6 *Propaganda of the Colony*
Courtesy of Metropolarity.

Ras Mashramani

- 7 *Propaganda of the Colony: when the story is a worm*
Courtesy of Metropolarity.

Richard-Jonathan Nelson

- 8 *We crossover but time still owns us*, 2016
Photo collage and digital print on fabric
- 9 *Cycles of flight from this soil*, 2016
Photo collage and digital print on fabric

Bonanza

- 10 *Still from Future 4ever Beta*, 2017
- 11 *Production still from The Drought*, 2016
Production still by Nina Veaco

Jader

- 12 *Ambassadors of the Council on Interspecies Relations*, 2015
Archival Pigment Print

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