

David Patton Los Angeles

Time Writers From The Mirror Horizon

Curated by Gabie Strong

July 7 - August 4th, 2007

Andy Alexander
Kent Familton
Wendy Heldmann
Kathleen Johnson
Alice Könitz
Tracy Nakayama
Gina Osterloh
Sean Sullivan
Kristine Thompson
Jeremy Yoder

With sound performances by

Sharon Cheslow and Steven Kim
yek koo (Helga Fassonaki)
Tom Watson with Kent Familton

Star Date 07/07/07: Speculative fictions in real time

Gabie Strong

When David Patton asked me to curate an exhibition in his gallery for July of 2007, I immediately wanted to create a show in which I could combine visual art and sound performance together. In working through different themes, it became clear that the shared element between the artists of interest was the element of Time and the construction of it through image and aural transmission.

My own art practice embodies a time-based theme, in which I use a non-linear historical timeline as a fluid structure for creating a speculative image of Southern California. I have also long been involved in making music and collaborating with other musicians on an improvisational level. A strong influence on my overall practice has been both the stories written by science fiction and near future writers, as well as the histories and legends of many of the writers themselves.

I asked these artists to participate in this exhibition with the premise that I am positioning the works in the exhibition as examples of time travel, using the gallery as a starship for explorations of time and space. The gallery acts as a machine for synchronization between historical time and speculative fiction, in which the artists become writers; creating narratives of the past, present and future.

Within the gallery, the artists and musicians have invented myths of the near future, depicted the collapse of human time within the force of geologic time, and resurrected histories past. Through sound and image, we are giving the viewer and listener the chance to step outside her current state and experience something else in the realm of the here and now.

Artist **Andy Alexander** creates "weird fiction" with a critical eye. His *Point A* sculpture makes physical the classic idea of time travel in science fiction, in which the protagonist meets himself after traveling back in time while attempting to make revision to the "present." In Andy's sculpture, the letter *A* is pushed through time, rolling over and folding back upon itself to reach its mirrored twin.

Sound artists **Sharon Cheslow** (Coterie Exchange) and **Steven Kim** (Silver Daggers) collaborate to form mirrored percussive actions on the bass and guitar through repetition, microtonal distortion, and delay. By processing one instrument through the actions of the other— by way of a contact mic placed against the pick plate of Steven's prepared bass and through the effect pedals of Sharon's table-top Silvertone guitar— the articulation of musical notation is disrupted. The bass, affixed with strategic placements of piano string along the fret board, is played in a sequence of repetitive motions which is then mirrored in Sharon's vocal work. This duality of instrumentation creates a minimalist landscape of sound through call and response.

Kent Familton describes his work as an ongoing investigation of color, line and space that conflates simple and somewhat ambiguous forms. These compositional vocabularies of both abstraction and minimalism are made into a semblance of order, architecture, language and time. In the works presented, the artist has abstracted and opened the rules of Cartesian order through the lyrical movements of ink and paint on paper.

The Los Angeles noise artist **Helga Fassonaki** plays solo under the name "yek koo," a Farsi term meaning "one mountain." Fassonaki tells us that her performance name means "anything that can transform one thing into something else entirely." For her performance at the closing of the "Time Writers" show, Helga will manipulate her cardboard record players through a process of disruption, deterioration, and distraction to create a system of noise that is continually altered by 'a one.' Helga also plays in the duo Metal Rouge with New Zealander Andrew Scott.

The vivid paintings of **Wendy Heldmann** reveal the fallen architectures and ruined infrastructures resulting from the 1964 Alaskan earthquake. Her paintings depict an entropic arctic landscape, suggesting the failure of human time within the larger construct of geologic time. Heldmann states that "a building that has survived an earthquake exists as an abstraction of its former self – a destructive scrambling of form, materials and belongings."

Kathleen Johnson has a history of engaging with science fiction to render fantastic landscapes out of everyday life. The Maker drawings are part of a larger project, *Brainchild*, based on a fictional character of the same name and an environment depicted in one of Johnson's photographic series. The drawing presented shows the ruined remains of a round ice dwelling, an architectural form and construction technique that figures prominently in the story. As with previous projects, *Brainchild* explores landscape and built form, both real and imagined, as well as the speculative properties of narrative structure and the veracity of narrative voice.

The work of **Alice Könitz** is a contemporary response to the conflation of ideas represented through three historical periods in architecture and art history. She merges the propositions of Bruno Taut's architectural utopian paradise with Robert Smithson's gestural morphologies, while simultaneously referencing late mid-century interior design. The relationship to time that Alice's collage work and hanging mobile present is the double bind of the *ancient* (the crystal) to the *new* (the modern synthetic), realized through materials that simulate gold, pearls, and steel. Combined together, these three pieces diagram a journey in transmutation between the eye, the crystal, and the optical apparatus.

Tracy Nakayama is known for her water color drawings of young women and men frolicking in landscapes of an idealized moment in history that could not be sustained. Her determination to

render a seemingly liberated time, when people were pushing the limits of sexual pleasure, is way to presence hegemonic demand for assimilation and the larger undermining of utopian visions. Her drawings prompt the viewer to consider a time when youth practiced a lifestyle that became their undoing, establishing a meter to judge the failure of all future youth movements. These drawings ask if our future holds the possibilities of a free society, filled with tenderness and love. How can we make this ever posited utopian dream a success? (*Perhaps the secret lies within the crystal world...*)

Gina Osterloh's photograph is the creation of a psychological and visceral landscape, realized through the insertion of the human body in a large-scale paper environment. In *Press and Erase (#1)*, the monochromatic, contoured surface of the red paper environment functions as an analogy for the time/space continuum. Disrupted by cuts to the membrane surface and the intervention of the human body—appearing to resist even Earth's gravitational pull—the structure of order as we know it is suspended.

The painting entitled *FUBAR* by **Sean Sullivan** is filled with architectural details characteristic of a Western military town. He has manipulated architectural renderings of three military housing sites from southern California and Arizona creating virtual settlements through the depiction of various morphological topologies. Using high key color swatches from interior house paints, Sullivan pushes the old military/medical acronym "fucked up beyond all recognition" to paint a futuristic landscape of the desert.

Kristine Thompson is a photographer who investigates the mythic personas of deceased yet influential artists, through staged interventions vis-à-vis the index of film. In her piece, "*In Search of the Impossible* (Re-siting the late Bas Jan Ader and his former home at 4 possible locations...)," Thompson summons the spirit of the late artist Bas Jan Ader by searching for his last known address in Southern California. Thomson finds that the site, like the artist, exists in a state outside of our own.

The articulated collage of **Jeremy Yoder** is grounded in the realm of the psychedelic and surreal, suggestive of dream-like, speculative landscapes. Jeremy believes that the tradition of picture making has long been a vehicle for humans to overcome a collective yet limited perception of reality. By making pictures, the artist is participating in this simple tradition which enables the viewer to express the unseen and/or incomprehensible. A self described "hunter and gatherer" whose process involves editing, isolating, combining and reconfiguring pre-existing images, Jeremy applies the sharp blade of an E-xacto knife against the known world to create images of a collective subconscious.

Tom Watson is straight up Los Angeles' best guitar player. Over the course of a twenty minute set, Tom will stretch his guitar and vocal techniques from psychedelic guitar fuzz and classic new wave licks to finger picking and free-form noodling in a single gesture, then explode in a crescendo of full-on freak-out. His recording career is extensive, writing songs in his own bands including Overpass, Slovenly, and his solo work under Tom Watson. He has also consistently collaborated in groups such as the Red Krayola, Mike Watt and the Missingmen, and the New Energy Encounter Group. The dynamic range and timing of his playing is something not to be missed. Tom will perform with artist Kent Familton at the closing party.