

Brave New Worlds: Explorations of Space
June 1 - December 15, 2019
Palm Springs Art Museum, Claves III Wing

Brave New Worlds invites you to enter the creative universes of five contemporary artists through sculpturally immersive installations. Motivated by the legacies of Southern California as a place of artistic experimentation, a site for self-fulfillment, and a geographic zone of light and natural resources, these artists use their distinctive spatial languages to construct worlds that both challenge convention and ignite our senses. Projects include those by Kelly Akashi, Gisela Colon, Victoria Fu, Karen Lofgren, and Adee Roberson, with works that represent each artist's understanding of our bodily connection to the world that surrounds us.

The museum's grand galleries are divided into discrete installations, each with a constellation of tactile textures, vivid colors, and soundscapes comprising a creative cosmology. Akashi composes installations from glass, metal, and wood with surprising contrasts that emphasize the visual magic of natural forms. Colon has developed a vocabulary of organic minimalism, breathing life-like and light-filled qualities into reductive forms. Fu uses film and video to create colorfully textured installations that expand the narrowness of contemporary vision into physical space. Lofgren's sculptures represent human relationships between cultural systems, medicine and wellness, and nature. Roberson weaves archival images, sonic elements, and the aesthetics of Afro-Caribbean diaspora into her sculptural paintings and performances.

Each artist approaches three-dimensional space with a bold anti-monumentality that presses against the modernist and predominantly masculine art histories that have established our understanding of 20th and 21st century abstraction. Rooted in a commitment to exploring contemporary ritual and spirit, these five artists embrace a resolutely phenomenological approach to the making of sculptural objects today.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue, to be released fall 2019.

Gisela Colon

Gisela Colon's minimalism embodies a distinctive sculptural language that is inherently dialogic. Dualities abound, from the soft-focus glow of hard plastic materials, to surfaces that appear solid with interiors which seem liquid. Her monolithic forms are both primitive and futuristic, phallic and masculine, yet also feminine in their synergy and responsiveness to the surrounding environment. Imbuing her static objects with dynamic movement, Colon's practice represents a philosophy of being: a metaphysical connection between material and immaterial, physical and spiritual.

The legendary, sun-soaked qualities of Southern California, coupled with its centrality in experiments for the aerospace industry gave way to the emergence of the Light and Space Movement in the 1960s and 1970s. This network of artists was interested in reduced forms - similar to their Minimalist counterparts on the East Coast - but was more sensually invested in the phenomenal effects and perceptual interplay between artwork and viewer, as is Colon.

Karen Lofgren

Karen Lofgren seeks projects that require extreme dedication and offer chances for research and deep understanding. Her interests in medicinal healing, mythology, and contemporary ritual build her spiritual creative practice. Cast Amazonian leaves and flooding gold assert a divine presence, but shape the gallery on a human scale while you walk through the space. Follow her sculptures as they extend like limbs from floor to ceiling, and trace your own movements alongside these cosmic and natural bodies.

The artist spent time in Peru's Amazon and in London's libraries exploring histories of medicine, from jungle plants to ancient surgical tools. Lofgren is fascinated by modes of knowledge - cosmic, mythological, rational, physical - as they are used to heal the body across cultures and time. Her sculptures represent a universal, embedded knowledge within the body, beyond what we think we know. Lofgren seeks to reconnect with the inherent magic of the natural world, in spite of our propensity to push the wild away, or control it.

Kelly Akashi

Kelly Akashi uses both ephemeral and enduring media to distill moments of tension and harmony. Incorporating degradable materials such as hair, rope, and vegetables alongside refined metal and glass forms, Akashi's sculptural compositions are uncanny yet familiar, bizarre in their distortions, but always elegant. By putting opposing forms together, she challenges our expectations of her chosen materials, and emphasizes vision's connection to the tactile world.

As you walk by metal branches and oak shelves, consider how these delicate structures play with light, balance shells and ropes with hanging orbs, and encourage close looking. Akashi's aesthetic language shifts amid these transient unions, inviting us to think about time, nature, and touch. Inserting her own cast hand in this space, Akashi's art is also deeply personal, underscoring her notion of *being as a thing*, and her ongoing inquiry into the science and imperfection of nature itself.

Adee Roberson

Adee Roberson's neon paintings and archival images visually and emotionally fill space through pattern, scale, and movement. Movement is a central theme in Roberson's work. She has lived many places, practices bodywork, and channels the African Diaspora - communities descended from the mass dispersion of peoples during the slave trade. The paintings and videos are markings of past and present events, expanded into space. Sit and find a place here to reflect, and feel the vibrations of color and ambient sounds.

Fabric as an art form has a long legacy, and canvas has been a rich site for experimentation - from 19th century pictorial quilts by Harriet Powers, to abstract expressionists soaking unprimed material to find new depths of color in the 1950s. Sam Gilliam's draped canvases of the 1960s abandoned the frame altogether. With a pliable, three-dimensional approach to the picture plane, artists can enlarge a painting's presence, and underscore their physical role in the creative process.

Victoria Fu

Victoria Fu's installations explore the expanded nature of vision in a world where human experience is increasingly digitized. Moments of touch between skin and screen are more central in everyday life, shifting us from passive viewers to active users of media. Fu emphasizes this tactile relationship between screens and bodies by collaging together lyrical images from the detritus of digital experience and fragments of 16mm film. The edges of computer program windows beget graphic abstractions. Magnified pixels and cinematic grain create floating textures, while keyboard and mice clicks are sonic punctuations in the gallery space. Commercial stock images and silhouettes of the artist's hands become crucial compositional elements, denoting human presence. Note how the hanging curtain animates the video, or how offset projections move in unexpected ways off screen and upon the wall. As you move through the space, consider the ways you interact with light, whether through your cell phone, with your shadow, or in the moments when projected images reach out and touch you.