FUTURE-STORIC SHOCK

AS ONE ENTERS SUZANNE ANKER’S OFFICE ON THE 5TH FLOOR, there before you is a window as large as Bergdorf Goodman’s with a view of New York as eye-poppingly cramped and crazy as the Paris rooftops celebrated in the Dada and surrealist films of René Clair of the 1920s. Part industrial poem (the water tower), part Blade Runner implosion (old and new are pressed in sordid pastiche), the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries climb and collapse unevenly in an array of eras and architectures. Half-built co-ops bend like dyspeptic businessman within proximity to the High Line and some three hundred contemporary art galleries below. Within this milieu the students of the SVA Fine Arts program make their art, complicated by the fact that both Ground Zero and Wall Street are also just a few blocks away. What kind of art emerges from the studios of young artists who are so privileged and so pressured— so gifted and so burdened— by so much art and historical incident?

For one, art that is aware of its roots in Chelsea and its own confounding historical moment, a moment when the very sense of futurity is itself at issue. In other words, one senses how attuned these students are to the view and city streets about them where history is alive, but with a sense of “ends” (9/11, the Wall Street crash). Behold the new generation, where you will see the likes of Gober, Hesse, Smithson, Lewitt or Duchamp enfolded into the work, perhaps even cracking a smile. For instance, in Jihyun Hong’s Dream we meet a series of kids in miniskirts and sweatshirts who’ve “lost their heads” inside the walls of art and the institution, bottoms raised high, aimed directly at the viewer. They are not hiding but saying a lot. They get the essence of precedent but know this is not enough. The comic as commentary and critique is after all, key to their generation’s serious critical thinking (Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, Bill Maher). Similarly, Choi Yoon Jung’s canny send-up of the way we contain and “package the life” out of our most ordinary products and rituals, like those in the refrigerator, is “transparently” funny, not dour and scolding (In and Out).

But when it comes to actuality, they are unafraid to speak out and confront the crimes of the present, as in James Grimes’ potent painting of a hooded and hog-tied torture victim, bleeding rectally on hay in one of those empty moving containers we’re always made to fear are filled with bombs. Grimes raises the affect one more notch by casting the hues of the paint in the aura of a religious painting. Or George Heintz’s emotionally direct Death Dispute, consisting of an upright “mattress” stripped of all corporeality. It is no longer a bed but a torture rack of rusted coil, absent soft cushioning. The projected flame that flickers through the skeletal rust is the figure, the body in flames, whose amputated hands and feet are left affixed, as if nailed or charred, on the slats. It is pure anguish. Pure torture.

Within this context, where humor and terror exist in the same room, the chill of Jihyun Hong’s sterile yet childlike blue cast Styrofoam room Hide & Seek, which is peopled solely by a simple, somewhat stunned cartoon figure sitting squat in the corner next to an outlet and plug, may in one context be cute and funny, in another just tragic and brutally sad.

This is not a generation afraid of the death and the existential dead ends in which they have been born. As if to mock the Star Trek motto “Boldly go where no one has gone before,” they intimate playgrounds of infinite space in miniature in Seirin Nagano’s rapid prototype sculpture with beautiful mirrored backgrounds and odd, duck-like creatures. It is an elsewhere that is both here (in the physical
present) and not (mirrored into infinity). Or Kate Wignall’s profoundly fabricated immaculate yet impossible structures that are not to be walked into, i.e., for the viewers’ body to dwell or “be” in, but better to serve as sites of physical potential space. She is not making art about phenomenological experience but its corollary. One structure has elfin windows that are torn like pieces of paper. When one looks in through the tear, the Duchampian twist is not of erotic desire as in Étant donnés (1946-66) but pure impossible space, a kind of upshot to the digital lives we inhabit where our eyes lead us to the cyberspace experiences we still find difficult to account for. Do we live here? Maybe. Or maybe in Ji Youn Hong’s on-site eco-installation Cave, made up of intricately networked branches, leaves, moss and wood, as impossible a natural space or habitat to live in as the nature we constantly chuck away with each passing day.

One senses these artists live in what we might call Future-storic shock, taking the lead from Katie Hopkins’ marvelous collection of finely made metal spines. These gorgeous full-metal skeletal fossils could be from the ’80s future dystopia Terminator films, which like Blade Runner represented our future that is now our prehistoric past. In that world, the fear was that the machines would take over the world, yet here, in the very future that is our present (now post-2001: A Space Odyssey), they have. For the Future-storic generation, Arnold Schwarzenegger is the governor of California and the future has not only “already happened” [William Gibson’s famous depiction in the ’80s], but is already —alarmingly and possibly—an historic ruin if the effects of climate change and Al Gore’s “inconvenient truths” are not dealt with right now. One wonders if this is not what Thang N. Tran is painting in his striking images of faceless (gas-masked) humans running hand in hand along a shimmering, if melancholy landscape, all blurred in a, perhaps, toxic atmosphere—airless yet full of life and bits of brilliant color. These are lovely paintings plaintive and odd; joyful and creepy.

What is most striking in this work is the sense of fight in the face of unbelievable odds one feels, and the piles of precedent with which these young artists are surrounded. Gone is the cynicism and simple homage of a few years ago. There is a depth here, no longer just surface calibrations. These are students who can take in the view and move beyond it, even when the world they’ve been born into may not have even given them the very future needed to do so.

THYRZA NICHOLS GOODEVE
HEATHER APPLEBY

Genetically Modified Food Will Feed the World, 2010, graphite, plastic corn, ceramic plate, table, framed computer printouts, 6 x 9’

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry O. Sanchez)
Genetically Modified Food Will Feed the World (detail),
2010, framed computer printouts, pencil, 11 x 14” and 6 x 9”
(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
BILLY BURBANK

(L) Visionary Indian Angels, 2010, pen and ink on notebook paper, 7 x 9 3/4"
(R) Pilate’s Got Magick, 2010, pen and ink on paper, 9 3/4 x 7 1/2"

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)

(OPPOSITE PAGE) Jewels and Binoculars, 2010, pen and ink on paper, 9 3/4 x 7 1/2"

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
(L) (R) Still from “We Are The Wizards of the Fifth Dimension,” 2010, stop motion clay animation, duration: 3 min. 27 sec.
D A R Y A  G O L U B I N A

(ii) Brett, 2009, oil on canvas, 30 x 40”

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
(1) Papa, 2010, oil on canvas, 30 x 40”
(2) Head first, 2010, oil on canvas, 30 x 40”

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
JAMES GRIMES
(L) Untitled, 2010, oil on canvas  (R) Untitled, 2010, oil on canvas
(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
Death Dispute, 2010, video projection, wood, metal, plaster, paint, twine, wire, 4 1/2 x 6 1/4’

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
(L) You Got Too Many Miles M.P, 2010, wood, metal, hemp, wire, 4 x 3 x 4’

(R) Penance Pit Thunderbox, 2010, wood, paint, metal, textiles, 3 x 3 x 8’

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
(1) HIDE & SEEK (installation), 2010, styrofoam, adhesive installation, 100 x 90”
(2) HIDE & SEEK (detail), 2010, styrofoam, adhesive, 25 x 11”

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
Dream, 2010, casted body with rigid wrap, spray styrofoam, clothes, 50 x 40”

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
Cave, 2010, bark, mushrooms, wood, staples, moss, dimensions variable

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
Cave, 2010, bark, mushrooms, wood, staples, moss, dimensions variable

(Photography credit: Henry G. Sanchez)
(L) *Vanitas Skulls*, 2010, steel, ribbon, installation 13’ floor to ceiling, skulls life-size

(R) *Vanitas Hand (Danse Macabre)*, 2010, steel bees wax, charcoal, 48 x 24”

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
(L) Vanitas Spine, Vanitas Beyond the Body and Human Comprehension, 2010, steel, 108 x 4”
(R) Spine Negative (the process), 2010, steel, 48 x 48”

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
(L) *Bubble Sphere*, 2009, white pipe cleaners, dimensions variable

(R) *Topographic Plaster*, 2009, masking tape, wire, nails, mylar, 95 x 97 x 1 1/4”

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
Crystal Study #2, Topographic Staples, Topographic Plaster, Bubble Sphere, 2009, mixed media, dimensions variable (detail)

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
Crystal Study #2, 2009, mason string, white masking tape, 95 x 97 x 2".

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
And talk, 2010, canvas, tape and ready-made, dimensions variable
Unsex me, 2010, mixed media, dimensions variable
WARREN ALLEN LEWIS

(L) *Untitled*  (R) *Untitled*

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
(L) Untitled  (R) Untitled

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
Kelly Macario

(1) *The Box*, 2010, electric box, Elastak, wax, copper wire, 20 x 5 x 8”
(2) *An Unfinished Exercise/ A Memory Strip*, 2010, crocheted yarn, wax, Elastak, 30 x 5”

(Photography Credit: Henry G. Sánchez)
(L) The Breath of Memory, 2010, crocheted yarn, house paint, Elastak, wood, 37 x 12”

(R) The Reconstruction [installation view], 2010, mixed media, 20 x 10 x 15’

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
SEIRIN NAGANO

*Untitled*, 2010, plexiglass, drywall, mirrors, metal studs, light bulb, 5 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 5 1/2', with cubes 2 x 2 x 2” and 4 x 4 x 4”

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
**Untitled**, 2010, mirrors, plastic objects curved by a prototype machine, string, 2-way mirror, LED light, (PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
Watertanks, 2010, mixed media, dimensions variable

PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez
Watertanks, 2010, mixed media, dimensions variable

(Photography credit: Henry G. Sanchez)
S T E P H A N I E Q U I R O L A

(1) Untitled (bouquet), 2009, still from Le Mundo der Chickens
(2) Untitled Installation, 2009, mixed media, dimensions variable

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
Freckles are a concentration of melanin in the skin that are triggered by UV light waves from the sun, our biggest star. This phenomena is similar to how stars are formed by gravitational instability in high density areas of the the universe, often triggered by shock waves.

To unite these two natural forces please kneel and turn the disc.
cosmic sympathies (detail shots), 2010, wood, plexiglass, latex, ultraviolet light, ball bearing system, leather, padding, platform 6 x 6'

(Photography credit: Henry G. Sanchez)
(1) *as above, so below*, 2009, digital metallic print, 20 x 30”
(2) *life slice #5, life slice #8, life slice #9*, 2010, digital print, 60 x 90”
Safari Pavilion (Trophy Collection, Mask # 1, Mask # 5), 2009, paper, 13 x 6 x 5”

Safari Pavilion (Tent), 2009, canvas, wood, steel, video projection, 84 x 120”

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
Terra Nullius, 2009, clay, paper, wood, dimensions variable

(Photography Credit: Henry G. Sanchez)
THANG TRAN
(L) In Watermelon Sugar, 2010, oil and glitter on canvas, 14 x 14”

(ABOVE) Pasture (after Winslow Homer), 2010, oil on canvas, 12 x 15”
Snap the Whip (after Winslow Homer), oil on canvas, 24 x 34”

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
Untitled (How BAD Do You Want to be GOOD!), studio installation, 2010, mixed media, dimensions variable

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
JESSICA UNDERWOOD

(L) Cockloobster, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48”
(R) Might, 2010, acrylic on wood panel, 24 x 24”
(OPPOSITE PAGE) Always Floss, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48”
(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
Wood’ve, 2010, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48”
Pixel Me Timbers, 2010, acrylic on wood, 28 x 28”

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
KATIE WIGNALL

(W) WALL (Retractable Entrance), 2009, wood, dimensions variable
(R) WALL and STAIRS, (installation view), 2009, 2010, mixed media, dimensions variable

(PHOTOGRAPHY CREDIT: Henry G. Sanchez)
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