

EXHIBITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Hilliard University Art Museum

University of Louisiana at Lafayette
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Lafayette, LA 70503

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Marina Zurkow *Mesocosm (Wink, TX)*

Exhibition Dates: May 19 – Aug 15, 2018

Reception: Fri, June 15, 6:00-8:00 PM

The Hilliard University Art Museum is pleased to announce the first solo exhibition in Louisiana of award-winning new media artist Marina Zurkow. As part of a continuing series of exhibitions focused on historically significant film and video artists, the museum will feature Zurkow's 2012 generative animation *Mesocosm (Wink, TX)*. This work comes to Lafayette from Russia, where it was recently featured in the 2017 Moscow Biennial exhibition.



Marina Zurkow. Production still from *Mesocosm (Wink, TX)*, 2012. Hand-drawn animation (color, silent). Custom software, computer. Photo courtesy: bitforms gallery, New York

Located on the museum's second floor, Zurkow's display is the third in a series of single-channel video projections for a black box environment. The animation *Mesocosm (Wink, TX)* is the first algorithmically-driven piece exhibited, and runs live using Flash animation software. In her art, the playback choreographies are dynamic; on-screen actions are dictated by programmed constraints run by a computer in real-time. Her character's behaviors are not predetermined and linear, or canned, as one might find with traditional video formats.

Marina Zurkow is based in New York, and her work is conceptually focused on near-impossible nature and culture intersections. *Mesocosm (Wink, Texas)* is an animated landscape that develops and changes over time in response to software-driven data inputs. To create this piece, Zurkow's character elements were first drawn by hand on a digital tablet, frame-by-frame, using rotoscoping techniques to trace figures found in YouTube videos and other sources. The title *Mesocosm* refers to the field of environmental science, and pertains to experimental, simulated ecosystems that allow for manipulation of the physical environment. Mesocosms are typically used for biological, community and ecological research.

In 2011 Zurkow visited Texas for an artist residency that was supported by DiverseWorks in Houston. She ventured to the high southern plains of the Llano Estacado in West Texas, where Zurkow met with geologists, naturalists, ranchers, activists and oilmen. The Permian Basin lies beneath these plains, between Marfa and Midland. In the Permian Period 250 million years ago, the geological riches of the area were formed, as marine microorganisms accumulated in sediments on the floor of a vast saline sea. Over millions of years, the seas dried out and these creatures transmuted into hydrocarbons. Between 1926 and 1964, the prolific oil and gas extraction in this region peaked, and the first sinkhole appeared in 1980.

During the process of her exploratory field work, Zurkow located the "Wink Sink 2" on private oil company property in the small town of Wink. The site of this catastrophe appears in *Mesocosm (Wink, Texas)* as a natural geological event; it is completed, provocatively, with picnic rest stop furnishings. Meanwhile in Texas, the sinkhole has been widening steadily since it emerged in 2002. Researchers at Southern Methodist University estimated the sinkhole's size at 670 to 900 feet across in 2016.

In the animation's foreground, a large sinkhole boils, gushes and flows. In a ghostly choreography, this vortex whirls and expels objects including plastic bags, oil and dark clouds. In the background, oil refineries burn off gases in plumes, as an occasional train cuts the horizon. Like actors called to a stage, the animals, weather and things that constitute this "mesocosm" are triggered statistically in a cycle of 146 hours, with each minute representing one hour of clock time in a calendar. By day, the landscape is inhabited by a diversity of bird life, prairie dogs, insects, pronghorn antelope, HazMat workers and—depending on the season—by migrating

monarch butterflies, snakes and sandhill cranes. The landscape operates as a Pandora's box, whose innards disgorge enchanted detritus: the new gems of an industrial sublime.

Biography

Marina Zurkow (b. 1962, New York, NY) is a new media artist focused on near-impossible nature and culture intersections. In her art, she engages the life sciences, biomaterials, animation, food and software technologies to foster intimate connections between people and non-human agents. Zurkow's work spans gallery installations and unconventional public participatory projects. Over the last year, her work has been the subject of multiple solo presentations in the US, including *Making the Best of It: Dandelion*, a participatory project supported by Northern Spark in Minneapolis that explores climate change through eating; and two workshops at the Haverford College and University of Rochester focused on *Investing in Futures*, a product of More&More Unlimited (an Illogistics Company™). She researches so-called "wicked problems" such as invasive species, superfund sites, and petroleum interdependence. Currently, Zurkow is working on connecting toxic urban waterways to oceans, and researching what she describes as "the tensions between maritime ecology and the ocean's primary human use as a capitalist Pangea".

As a visual artist, her work has been recognized by a 2011 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, as well as grants from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Creative Capital. Recent solo exhibitions of her work have been featured at the Chronus Art Center, Shanghai; the Montclair Museum of Art, New Jersey; Diverseworks, Houston; and bitforms gallery, New York. Featured in the 2017 Moscow Biennial, her art has also been displayed at SF MoMA, San Francisco; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Wave Hill, New York; the National Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington D.C.; FACT, Liverpool, UK; Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe; The Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; and the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah.

Zurkow is a full time faculty member at ITP / Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. She is a frequent collaborator of Social Science and Humanities scholars at Rice University, New York University, and the University of Minnesota.

For more information on Marina Zurkow's work, please visit:

o-matic.com
bitforms.com
vimeo.com

Upon request, press and media kits are available that include high resolution images and selected literature on the artist.

Museum Hours, Admission & General Information

The Hilliard University Art Museum is located at 710 East Saint Mary Boulevard, on the campus of University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Museum Hours are: Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm; Wednesday, 9:00 am to 8:00 pm; Saturday, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm; closed Sunday and Monday. General Admission: \$5 Adults, \$4 Seniors (62+), \$3 Students (5-17). FREE for Members, UL Students/Staff/Faculty with identification, and visitors under 5. Guided tours of the galleries are available Friday & Saturday at 2 PM, complimentary with admission. For general information, please visit hilliardmuseum.org or call (337) 482-2278.

About the Hilliard Museum

The Hilliard University Art Museum operates on the campus of University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and was originally founded in 1964 as the Art Center for Southwestern Louisiana. Featuring a state-of-the-art modern facility that was erected in 2004, the museum houses more than 2,200 objects in its permanent collection, and is the largest art exhibition space between New Orleans and Houston. The Hilliard serves a wide range of educational and cultural needs by fostering cross-disciplinary intellectual discourse on campus and throughout the region. At the core of the Hilliard's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit the art of our time while celebrating the great diversity of Louisiana's heritage.

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