

Terra Nova :

looking at the present and the future

From April 20th to July 2nd, 2022 during the Venice Biennale

presented by Art Mûr gallery



GAD
GIUDECCA ART DISTRICT

In collaboration with Giudecca Art District



Terra Nova : looking at the present and the future

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Curators : Rhéal Olivier Lanthier & François St-Jacques

Legno e Legno Art Space, Giudecca 211, Venice, Italy

During the 2022 Venice Biennale, Art Mûr gallery will occupy the former 2019 Estonia Pavilion to present its group exhibition *Terra Nova : looking at the present and the future*. In partnership with the Giudecca Art District, the exhibition will run from April 20th to July 2nd, 2022 on the island of Giudecca in Venice at the Legno e Legno Art Space.

Humans have always been in search of new frontiers, new territories. But it seems time has come to be content with the planet we occupy, and to build a better world. Where are we and where are we going? These questions are indispensable premises for us to begin the necessary changes. The selection of works at the heart of this exhibition will allow us to look at different aspects of our lives and our future. The exhibition focuses on the notion of territory, its physical and metaphysical evolution, and the social circumstances and responsibilities for the future of our planet. *Terra Nova : looking at the present and the future* aims to provide an environment for dialogue and reflection about tomorrow. How can we think about spaces to grasp something of what's coming? In order to connect social and territory questions, each artist offers a discovery of their own vision of the world.

Participating artists

Robbie Cornelissen, Jannick Deslauriers, Eddy Firmin, Karine Giboulo, Jessica Houston, Guillaume Lachapelle and Nadia Myre.

Official opening on April 20th, 2022

The exhibition *Terra Nova: looking at the present and the future* will open its doors on April 20th, 2022 for the Biennale's professional days.

Acknowledgements

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EDDY FIRMIN : *Punching Bags*, 2021

Like the branches of a tree, *Punching Bags* traces the genealogical origins of the systemic violence that artist Eddy Firmin and his daughter have inherited throughout history and across continents. This interactive installation presents a tree of ceramic punching bags formed of swollen faces that turn away as the visitor approaches - using motion sensors whose mechanics are apparent - to reveal sides adorned with flowers. If this turn of the face affirms the artist's will to break a cycle of secular violence, it also reminds us that his body and that of his daughter remain predisposed to receive a significant amount of violence. Not attempting to turn the other cheek in the face of the blows, this movement rather asserts itself as a willingness to break the cycles of pain that black bodies suffer – focusing on an emotional connection rather than a moralizing discourse, a necessary break to weave better bonds. A poignant imagery of perpetual racism, *Punching Bags* is positioned as a teaching and an opening to dialogue. Eddy Firmin considers that the word “love” best sums up this work, since it proposes an absolute resistance, which expects nothing from the viewers except to offer them a human, sensitive and unconditional connection.

Eddy Firmin was born in 1971 in Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, in the French West Indies. An artist-researcher, lecturer and curator based in Montreal, Canada, he is interested in the transcultural logics of his identity and the power relations at play, as well as in the politics of knowledge sharing and the epistemic conflicts generated in the colonized artist. In his artistic practice, Firmin seeks to update the codes of Afro-Caribbean practices designed to resist colonial violence, and to transfer these ancestral practices (dance, song, storytelling, music) to recent visual media. Through his work, Firmin brings these ancestral codes into the present and works to decolonize the imaginary in the art world.

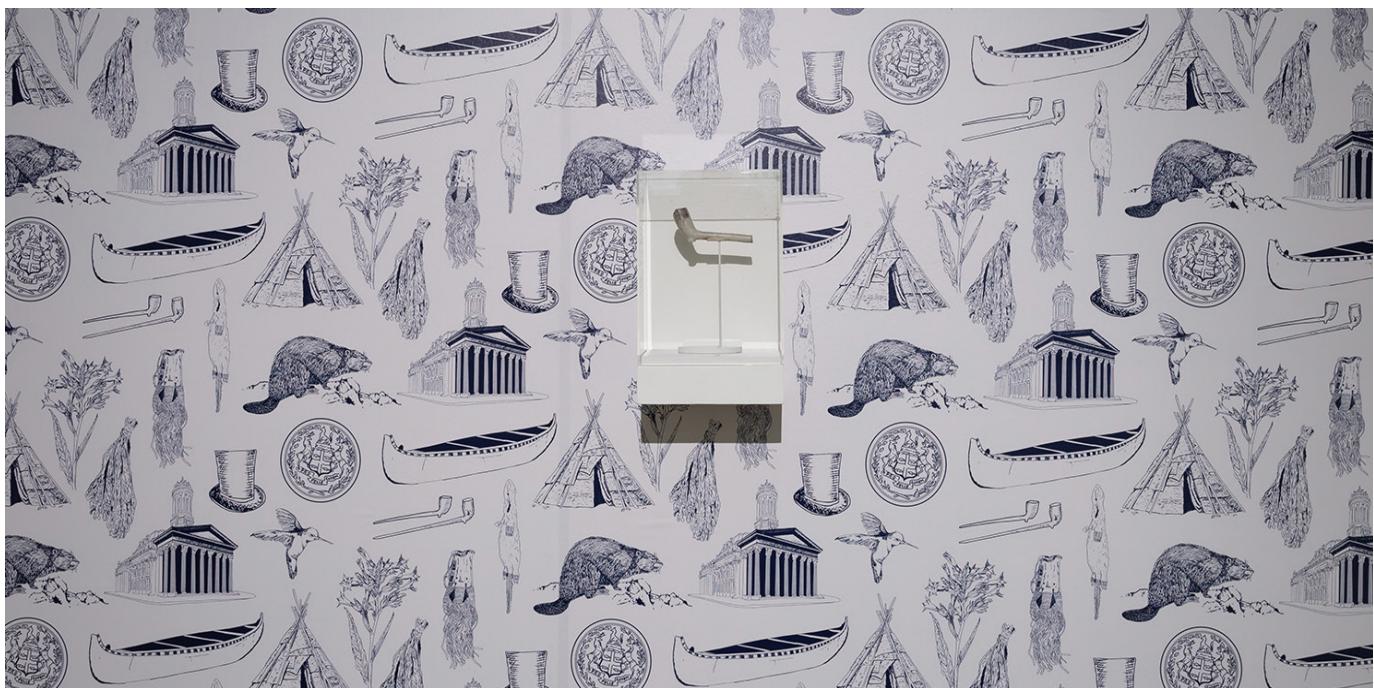


NADIA MYRE : Code Switching, 2017

Code Switching and Other Work was originally presented as a solo exhibition by Nadia Myre in Glasgow, UK. With this project, Myre sets out to unravel the entanglements of the colonial history of the British Empire, Canada and the Indigenous peoples, while offering a commentary on the history of clay pipe production in the UK. As a direct result of bartering with the so-called “New World”, pre-cut, ready-to-use tobacco pipes were one of the first disposable products to appear on the European market. It was on the banks of the Thames in London that the artist collected these small white tubes from the mud. Polished by the friction of the water, these pipe remnants could be mistaken for small bones, but they are actually manufactured objects that bear witness to the colonization of the Americas. The title is borrowed from linguistics and refers to the way children learn when raised in a plural context, alternating from one language to another or from one culture to another. Myre’s work explores the processes of imprinting, documenting, weaving and excavating related to this trade and continues the discussion around colonial legacies.



Born in Montreal, Canada in 1974, Nadia Myre is a French-Canadian and Algonquin artist, member of the Kitigan Zibi First Nation. A multidisciplinary artist, Myre has explored the themes of community belonging and split identity throughout her career. In several projects, she has used audience participation as a strategy to initiate a dialogue about identity, resilience and the politics of belonging. Using mediums as varied as beading, embroidery, photography, video and installation, her work revolves around recurring themes of language, desire and loss.



KARINE GIBOULO : *Kutupalong*, 2020

The artwork *Kutupalong* was initially presented in a former prison cell that is now part of Quebec's National Museum of Fine Arts as part of the exhibition *Wandering: A Rohingya story*, produced by a collective of artists, documentary filmmakers and Rohingya refugees. The *Kutupalong* diorama is the result of daily video call exchanges between artist Karine Giboulo and poet Kala Miya, a resident of Kutupalong camp since 2018. Located in southeastern Bangladesh and home to more than 700,000 people, this refugee camp is the most populated in the world. Established in 1991 to house Rohingya exiles, a Muslim minority within the Buddhist-majority neighboring Myanmar (formerly Burma), its population density of 46,000 people per square kilometer is 10 times that of Montreal Island.

After decades of tension between the Rohingya people and the Burmese nation, 2017 saw an unprecedented escalation of violence. Village burnings, large-scale massacres, torture, and sexual assaults have forced the Rohingya into mass exile. In a few weeks, several hundred thousand people fled their country to find refuge in Bangladesh. Victims of a genocide denounced by the United Nations, the Rohingyas also live without legal nationality, as no state considers them as its nationals. Confined to makeshift camps, deprived of their freedom and victims of nameless horrors, they lead a hopeless life, suffering the daily hardships of a major humanitarian crisis that has received little media coverage.

Karine Giboulo was born in Sainte-Émeline de l'Énergie, Canada in 1980. Her practice is mainly oriented towards sculpture and the creation of miniature dioramas representing contemporary environments. Deeply influenced by her international travels and residencies, Karine Giboulo offers interpretations of reality, visions that have much more to do with questioning than with affirmation. Far from sinking into defeatism, Giboulo's work invites the viewer to question themselves, to refuse absolutes and preconceived ideas about issues that are far too complex to claim to have answers. Thus, paradox, tragedy, playfulness and derision rub shoulders in meticulously sculpted scenes, offering a commentary on the human condition, globalization, overconsumption and the environment.



JESSICA HOUSTON :

Letters to the Future – Antarctica (3019), 2020

The large-scale *Letters to the Future* project is an estimated 1,000-year collaboration between Jessica Houston, poets, Indigenous leaders, artists, scientists, environmental activists and Antarctic glaciers. For this work, contemporary thinkers wrote letters to the future that were placed in a time capsule and deposited in a glacier in Dronning Maud Land, Antarctica. It is predicted that the capsule will emerge from the ice in about 1,000 years, after being transported by the ice to the sea. Except for the authors themselves, no one has yet read the contents of these letters. *Letters to the Future* seeks to provoke a reflection on our present and the possibilities of our future, a proposal to activate a right consciousness of life. The simultaneous attraction between the present and the future is the basis of the project: what we think and do now has everything to do with what we are becoming. Seen from the future, this work is a retroactive and restorative act of possibility.

Born in 1970 in Chicago, USA, Jessica Houston has traveled from pole to pole using photography, painting, oral histories and objects to create works that evoke the entanglements between nature and culture. Favoring multiple mediums, her projects often include an aspect of orality and site-specific actions that amplify the memory of a place and evoke the land as a living process. With approaches that constantly connect to the land and the environment, Houston has worked on projects involving communities and their relationship to their environment in the Canadian Arctic, Antarctica, Greenland, Iceland and Italy.



GUILLAUME LACHAPELLE :

Polygon Factory, 2019 and *Vitesse d'échappement, 2019*

In the works *Polygon Factory* and *Vitesse d'échappement*, Guillaume Lachapelle revisits the invention of the zoetrope, an optical toy conceived in 1834 that resembles a carousel, whose revolutions give the illusion of movement of a drawn character. These visual and psychological illusions are the basis for the invention of cinema. Lachapelle draws from this creation the conception of these two circular mobiles, which he animates with a strobe light and motors. They suggest small plastic robots performing repeated actions; running endlessly on a dead-end platform or perpetually reproducing the same object. The playfulness of these zany stagings is gradually juxtaposed with unease, as the tragedy of these robots' fate begins to appear. The hyperrealism and mechanical aspect of the two installations create a tormented atmosphere that provokes great anguish in the spectator. The more one observes the artwork, the more this dystopian world reveals itself to be similar to our human condition. With *Polygon Factory* and *Vitesse d'échappement*, Lachapelle offers an interpretation of the present-future where the capitalist system of overproduction leads to a robotization of the world of work, as well as of human relations.

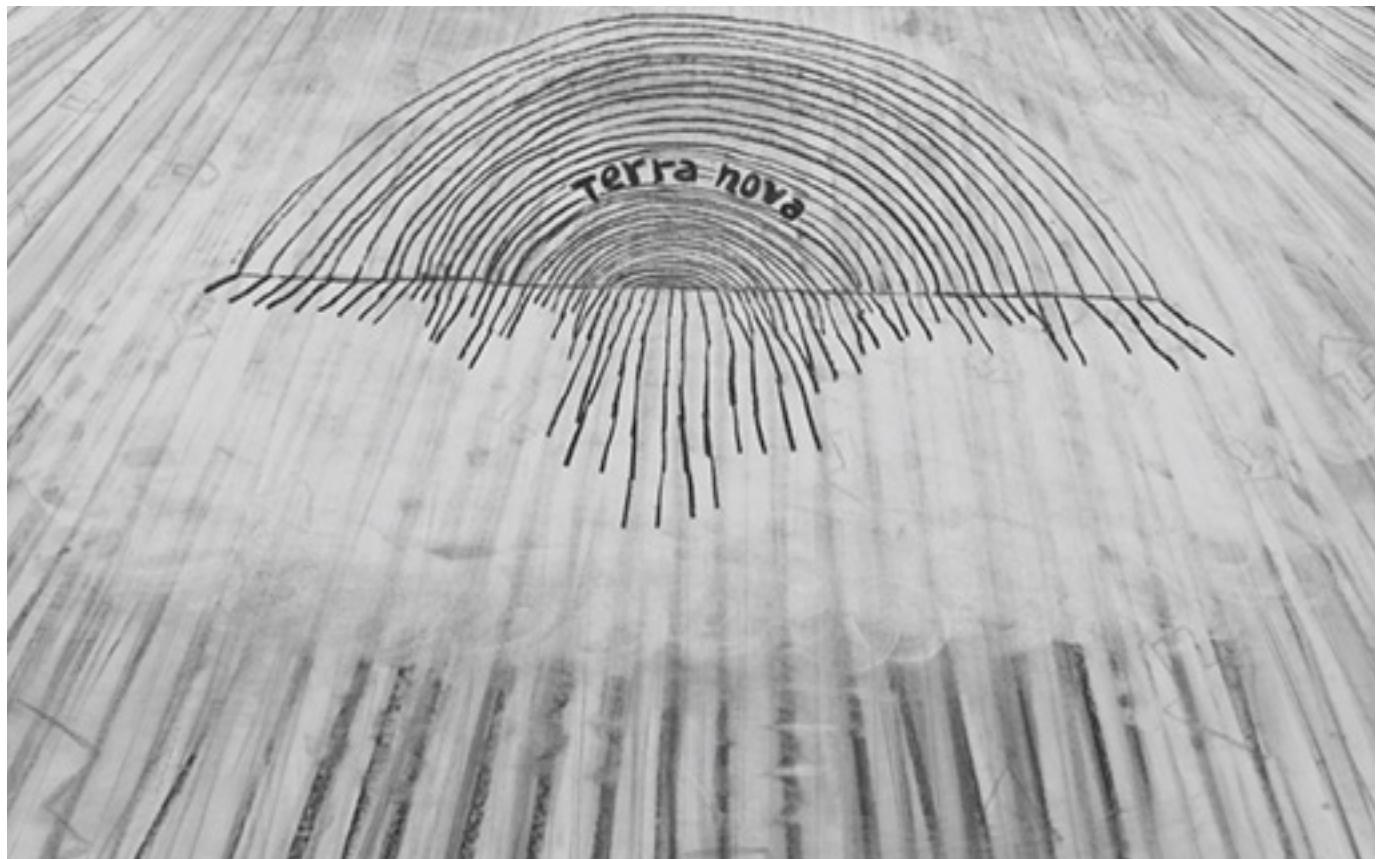
Born in Stoke, Canada, in 1974, Guillaume Lachapelle has developed a practice primarily in sculpture, whether in the form of large-scale installations or highly detailed miniature models, with 3D printing as his medium of choice. Lachapelle proposes stagings that refer to dehumanization, to the bankruptcy of social relations, to the absence of human relationships as well as to the loss of meaning in work and life. Revisiting science and technology through an artistic production worthy of the artists of the Renaissance, whose achievements preceded the scientific advances of their time, Lachapelle builds a discourse on work, overproduction and its absurdity.



ROBBIE CORNELISSEN : *Terra Nova*, 2021

In the video work *Terra Nova*, artist Robbie Cornelissen invites the viewer to dive into an animated film composed of thousands of lead pencil drawings. Initially, we find ourselves in a geometric landscape that could be a bird's eye view of agricultural fields, or a large quilt that extends into infinity. This elusive and barren land finally slips away from our gaze as a dense fog covers it. Various scenes follow; between a rain cloud, a tidal island and a spaceship, a sense of doubt persists. While it is possible to establish landmarks or personal impressions of the images presented, their true intent never seems to fully reveal itself. Cornelissen juggles familiar elements of terrestrial nature with patterns of science fiction in introducing us to a world on the border of dream and reality. This work questions the viability of our world as we know it. Will it be destroyed by pollution? Will we have to migrate to a new planet to ensure our survival? *Terra Nova* seems to raise more questions than it solves, leaving a certain impression of powerlessness and apprehension for an indefinite future. The artwork *Terra Nova* is also part of a 2022 publication of the same title, presenting some 250 drawings taken from the video work.

Born in Utrecht, Netherlands in 1954, Robbie Cornelissen produces lead pencil drawings and videos illustrating curious and complex worlds where the familiar and the strange intermingle. Portraying highly detailed architectural structures that impress with their vastness, Cornelissen presents dizzying perspectives that stun with their complexity. With exceptional narrative power, his large-format drawings often have a futuristic aura and typically depict libraries, waiting rooms, factories, or other oversized, deserted spaces. These spaces exude an eerie emptiness that the occasional addition of a faceless figure does little to warm, but makes it all the more compelling. Cornelissen is recognized as one of the most important Dutch artists of his generation.



JANNICK DESLAURIERS: Rose, 2020

With *Rose*, Jannick Deslauriers revisits the painting *Henry Ford Hospital* (1932) by Mexican painter Frida Kahlo. This reinterpretation, updated in the context of a pandemic, makes us relive the suffering associated with loss. Indeed, if Frida evoked a miscarriage in her work, Jannick Deslauriers questions the state of the universe in which her child will evolve. In this case, it's not the child who is dead, but the environment in which he will be born. A testimony of concerns about the future of the planet, the work *Rose* is also very personal; the elements that compose it are reproductions of various objects belonging to the artist. Made of gift wrap, iridescent vinyl, bubble wrap, faux fur and silicone, this portable sculpture is a plastic envelope that isolates the body from the outside world. "Popularized" during the pandemic with the massive increase in package deliveries, these synthetic materials are now part of our daily lives and can be found in both clothing and protective architectural elements. Conceived as a sculpture that can be worn, Deslauriers' futuristic pink garment has been thought of as a plastic envelope that can seal the body, protecting it from the outside world.

Jannick Deslauriers was born in 1983 in Joliette, Canada. Having mostly a sculptural practice, she uses textiles as preferred materials for their evocation of fragility and ephemerality, and for their transparency properties that evokes a ghost-like appearance. Jannick Deslauriers' woven sculptures invite us to consider the precariousness of the world through the use of delicate materials, capricious forms and their ethereal, suspended presence. Deslauriers' practice is characterized by a strong coherence between craftsmanship, material use and a particular aesthetic. Her sculptures are generally composed of thin, translucent materials – lace and organza – meticulously stitched into three-dimensional forms, whose lines sag singularly, yearning to succumb to the onslaught of gravity.



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