

Stream: Chapter 2 (Helpless)

**August 1st and 2nd, 2015
South Windham, Vermont**

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If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk around well wadded with stupidity. George Eliot

(G)eological time is out of scale with our own weathering. Adrian Stokes

For the last one. On Kawara

Stream: Chapter 2 (helpless) addresses our increasingly uneasy relationship with nature. The stream will most likely continue to exist in a future without humans. This exhibition is haunted by a sense of mourning for the loss of us; and it is also a modest gesture that uses art “to insert ourselves into a future “without us” in order to be able to visualize it.”ⁱ

David Nash has described *Wooden Boulder* (1978) as a “going sculpture”ⁱⁱ and “like a ball in a ball game.”ⁱⁱⁱ Hewn from a 200 year-old fallen oak tree in 1978 in Ffestinoig Valley in North Wales, *Wooden Boulder* defined its own trajectory for over 30 years initially resisting the original intention of the artist to use a local stream to transport it to studio and gallery; instead the work surrendered to the natural pathways of stream, river and ocean combined with seasonal shifts and weather events such as storms and floods. The film *Wooden Boulder 1978-2003* documenting its path during those years required keeping track of it through chance sightings or planned expeditions. Like catching a glimpse of a friend or lover on a crowded street only to be disappointed Nash describes these phantom sightings in the following way: “its shape was so potently in me I only had to get a glimpse of a similar shape to momentarily see it.”^{iv} But often the search was grim: “Like looking for a body.”^v

The decision by the landowner to cut down this oak on his property was the event that led to Nash’s intervention into the tree’s history. The history of the oak is a critical aspect of the work, as Nash explains:

“The oak had started life in the latter part of the 18th century growing on a hill about 150 meters above the river valley. For two centuries this oak grew on the hill, every year leading to its mass. It is an important part of the *Wooden Boulder* story that its material formed on the hill from the elements and minerals of that particular place. The boulder’s origins go back to the tree as a sapling 200 years ago.”^{vi}

This oak was a sapling at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution: a silent witness to the beginning of what we now call the Anthropocene, the term proposed for the first geologic/chronological period during which humans have become geological agents. From sapling to 1978 as “humankind itself became a natural force”^{vii} the oak grew to maturity through industrial expansion, urbanization, species extinction, and global warming.

Tony Do’s Mohican *Floating Signifiers* (2015) is a context-specific work that “traces the absence of the Mohican language through a site-specific gesture of linguistic reinscription: the five “floating signifiers” are reactivated as they literally float within the very space in which they once circulated.”^{viii} Do researched and selected words from the Mohican language that fit the semiotic category of “floating signifier” described by linguistic theorist Claude Lévi-Strauss as having an “undetermined quantity of signification in itself void of meaning and thus apt to receive any meaning.”^{ix} Do explains that Lévi-Strauss used, as an example, “the Maori term “mana” that refers to the substance from which magic is formed.”^x The Mohican people, their name deriving from “Muh-he-ka-neew” or “people of the continually flowing waters,” were one of several indigenous peoples of Southern Vermont devastated and driven out by British and Dutch colonial expansion in the 16th century.

The return of artists Ingela Ihrman, E.E. Ikeler, and Rachel Stevens offers a chance of re- thinking performance/time-based work as a semi-permanent entity that can belong in some way to a specific site through a yearly or periodic repetition. Each year **Stream** will offer “overlaps” like these; in the case of Ihrman, it might be a yearly occasion mimicking the cycles of nature; in other cases the “overlap” may only recur once.

Ingela Ihrman’s performance *Giant Otter Giving Birth* (2012) prompts the viewer to think about the repetitive cycles of nature where species other than humans may (or may not) prevail. Ihrman performs “nature drag” through the use of elaborate and outsized handmade costumes to mimic the intimate spectatorial relationship of wildlife documentaries. In addition to a giant otter giving birth, Ihrman has performed as a blooming water lily, a toad, and a cave goat. Her assortment of “characters” is carefully selected to remind us of our conflicted relationship to nature throughout history and our relentless pursuit of dominion. Through humor and parody, Ihrman demonstrates just how woefully out of step humans are with nature’s fauna and flora. *Giant Otter Giving Birth* can also be seen as building upon a tradition of feminist performance art exemplified by Carolee Schneemann’s *Interior Scroll* of 1975. In Ihrman’s work, however, the otter costume problematizes our relationship to the female body.

E.E. Ikeler’s *Atmospheres (After Judy)* (2014) is “an unofficial restaging and homage to Judy Chicago’s series by the same name.”^{xi} If Judy Chicago sought to “feminize” the landscape, Ikeler takes it a step further with the intent to “queer” the landscape. For Ikeler, this work “was as much about the drifting rainbow smoke as it was about inhabiting the space with our bodies and being together with the purpose of doing “queer” work.”^{xii} Here she references the re-invention of Allan Kaprow’s *Echo-logy* in **Stream** 2014 that assembled a multi-generational group of participants who identify as queer, thereby effectively “queering” Kaprow’s work. In the context of this year’s exhibition, Ikeler’s work momentarily fills the landscape—becoming the emphasis in the natural scene her activity frames; the rainbow smoke moving upward beyond the trees and following the contours of the stream is both breathtakingly beautiful and eerily dystopian.

In Caleb Nussear’s work *Soft Skin* (2015), the use of mirror “is fundamentally concerned with the gaze and reflecting the human image, (as) the aperiodic tiling shatters one’s reflection in a non-repeating and infinite expansion.”^{xiii} Left in the wooded environs, not unlike man-made refuse often deposited in nature, the empty mirror reflects the woods back onto itself: “the eye of nature is trapped and immobilized by reflection; it is blinded to a certain extent by the consequences of its own energy, light, which is turned into a means of domination over it.”^{xiv} The conflict between materials—rigid mirror on top of soft lead—causes *Soft Skin* to wilt when abandoned in the environment—an empty mirror without the human image it was intended to contain.

Rachel Steven’s **Survivalist Cinema** (2014), situated in a rustic lean-to, plays on the ubiquity of screens in our environment. Steven’s installation focuses on the materiality of image production and consumption that Hito Steyerl claims demands our attention:

“How about acknowledging that this image is not some ideological misconception, but a thing simultaneously couched in affect and availability, a fetish made of crystals and electricity, animated by our wishes and fears—a perfect embodiment of its own conditions of existence.”^{xv}

While **Stream** 2014’s screened content featured survivalist and dystopian films from the 1970s, in 2015 Stevens repurposed the lean-to and shifted her role from artist to curator to present a selection of moving image works, entitled *Anthroposcenic*, that engaged and expanded upon ideas connected to the physical works in the exhibition.

With *Information Post* (2015), George Wichelns mourns the human by imagining “a world where humans are studied as an extinct species by a future intelligence.”^{xvi} The stream for Wichelns is a point of interest for visitors after earth has become a “giant educational park.”^{xvii} Far from a dystopian view of the end of humanity, the “future intelligence” Wichelns envisions in *Information Post* views “humans’ time on Earth with tenderness.”^{xviii} Operating on a different register than human centered historical knowledge, Wichelns’ “future intelligence” highlights human events from their point of view and recasts “the age of humans as one of innocence.”:

“the posthuman predicament enforces the necessity to think again and to think harder about the status of the human, the importance of recasting subjectivity accordingly, and the need to invent forms of ethical relations, norms and values worthy of the complexity of our times.”^{xix}

A continuous reading of H.P. Lovecraft’s 1931 horror story *The Whisperer in Darkness* took place during Stream: **Chapter 2 (helpless)**. Lovecraft’s story is set in a mountain landscape beyond Newfane and north of Townshend, VT that the author describes as both menacing and beautiful:

“The dense, unvisited woods on those inaccessible slopes seemed to harbor alien and incredible things, and I felt that the very outline of the hills themselves held some strange and aeon-forgotten meaning, as if they were vast hieroglyphs left by a rumored titan race whose glories live only in rare, deep dreams.”

“Sodoma and Leonardo conceived such expanses, but only in the distance, and through the vaultings of Renaissance arcades. We were now burrowing bodily through the midst of the picture, and I seemed to find in its necromancy a thing I had innately known or inherited, and for which I had always been vainly searching.”^{xx}

Lovecraft’s story takes place in the wake of a devastating flood, reminiscent of the destruction caused by Hurricane Irene in 2011. His portrayal of rural Vermont as a remote and threatening landscape teeming with potential evil evokes a profound sense of alienation and isolation more in step with his own xenophobia and hatred of the other, creating a fictional sense of place devoid of the community spirit that engages the inhabitants of South Windham VT.

ANTHROPOSCENIC

A program of moving image work to be screened in the Survivalist Cinema, a solar-powered micro-cinema housed in a wilderness lean-to. These experimental shorts reimagine the ‘figure in the landscape’ trope, calling upon consumer objects with mystical properties, “machinema,” low-tech sci-fi performance, post-production, and decomposition to augment or devolve bodies and personhood in relationship to the landscape.

Peggy Ahwesh, *She Puppet* (2001, video, 15 min.)
In *She Puppet* Ahwesh edited hours of playing the game *Tomb Raider* to redirect the narrative of the character Lara Croft from a goal-oriented tour through obstacle-laden adventure-scapes to one more dark and speculative.

Torsten Zenas Burns and Darrin Martin, *ARK3: THE WATERWAY SCENARIOS* (2015, video, 13 min.)
This newly edited piece furthers Burns’ and Martin’s research into “diverse speculative fictions including re-imagined educational practices, crypto-utopian musicals, appropriated horror genres, paranormal phenomenon, re-animation choreographies, cos- play, and trans-human love stories.”

Shana Moulton, *Mindplace Thoughtstream* (2014)
Moulton’s pained alter ego Cynthia interacts with household objects that operate as channels to surreal experiences or transcendent New Age epiphanies.

Jennifer Reeves, *Landfill 16* (2011, 16mm film transferred to video, 9 min.) Reeves temporarily buried outtakes from her 16mm double projection *When It Was Blue* to “let enzymes and fungi in the soil begin to decompose the image. [She] then hand- painted the film to give it new life.”

Brian Zegeer and Rachel Frank, *Far Rockaway* (2012, mixed-media animation, digital video, 4:53 min.)
This music video was filmed at Dead Horse Bay, a Far Rockaway landfill that has since erupted onto the beach surface. Made in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, the film imagines a vengeful nature at odds with human endeavors.

i D Chakrabarty, ‘The Climate of History’ in *Critical Inquiry*, Winter 2009, p. 197.
ii D Nash, *Wooden Boulder: 1978-2003*. Designed by David Nash and John Schmid. Wabern: Benteli, 2008. iii *ibid*.
iv *ibid*.
v *ibid*.
vi *ibid*.
vii B M, Scherer, *Textures of the Anthropocene-Grain Vapor Ray-Manual*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 2014, p. 3. viii T Do, 2015.
ix C Lévi-Strauss, “Introduction à l’oeuvre de Marcel Mauss” in Mauss, *Sociologie et Anthropologie*, Paris, 1950. x T Do, 2015.
xi E E Ikeler, 2014.
xii E E Ikeler, 2014.
xiii C Nussear, 2015.
xiv J Wall, ‘Dan Graham’s *Kammerspiel II*’ (1985) in G Williams (ed.), *The Gothic*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 2007, p. 212.
xv H Steyerl, ‘A Thing Like You and Me’ (2012) in A Hudek (ed.), *The Object*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 2014, p. 47.
xvi G Wichelns, 2015.
xvii G Wichelns, 2015.
xviii G Wichelns, 2015.
xix R Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, Polity, Malden, MA, 2013, p. 186.
xx H P Lovecraft, <http://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/fiction/wid.aspx>



Stream: Chapter 2 (helpless)

Tony Do

Ingela Ihrman

E.E. Ikeler

H. P. Lovecraft

David Nash

Caleb Nussear

Rachel Stevens

George Wichelns

Peggy Ahwesh

Torsten Zenas Burns and Darrin Martin

Shana Moulton

Jennifer Reeves

Brian Zegeer and Rachel Frank

Tony Do
Mohican Floating Signifiers (2015)





Ingela Ihrman
Giant Otter Giving Birth (2012)







E.E. Ikeler
Atmospheres (After Judy) (2014)

















H.P. Lovecraft
***The Whisperer in Darkness* (1931)**







David Nash
Wooden Boulder (1978)









Caleb Nussear
Soft Skin (2015)







Rachel Stevens
Survivalist Cinema (2014)







George Wichelns
Information Post (2015)



Location. Stream crossing.
Ancient human settlement in Windham Vermont.
The diary of Maurice Lapluckney,
catalogue 7, 4, 1.

Maurice described meeting Bill Spear when they
were children, close to where this road still
crosses the stream. They first met in the spring
when the stream was flowing strongest.

They pretended to be fish by lying
in the stream on their bellies,
flapping their hands at their sides
in the water as though they had fins,
swimming against the
current. They submerged their
faces for as long as possible.

Bill showed Maurice how he could skip large
stones by throwing them hard at the bottom of
the stream. Maurice objected. That's not skipping
a stone, that's bouncing it. Bill said it didn't make
a difference.

In his journals, Maurice referenced going back
to the stream many other times. He said he
often pretended he was a fish, and that it
made him feel clean.





ANTHROPOSCENIC

Peggy Ahwesh
She Puppet (2001)



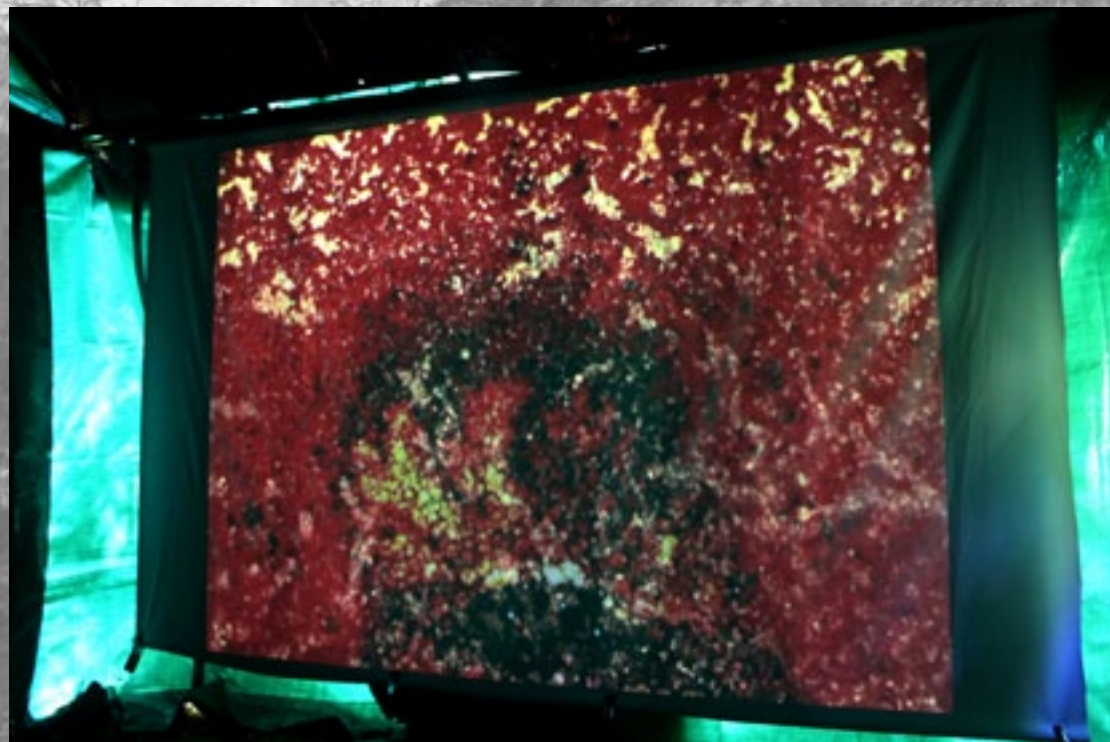
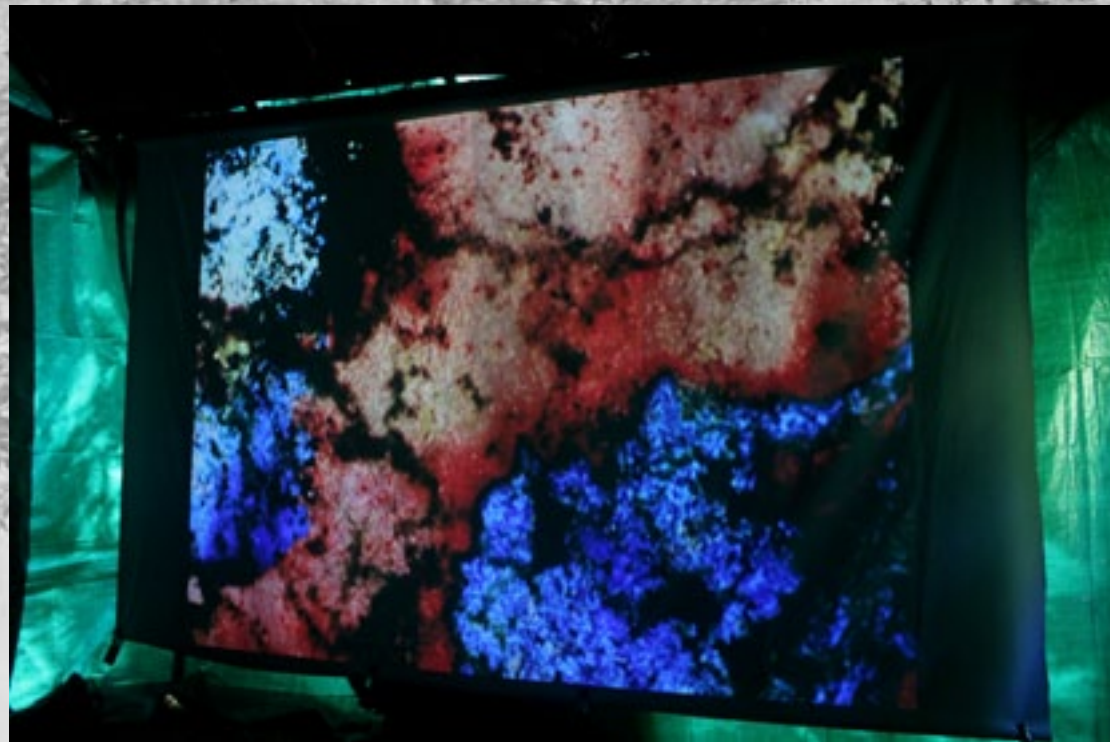
Torsten Zenas Burns and Darrin Martin
ARK3: THE WATERWAY SCENARIOS (2015)



Shana Moulton
Whispering Pines 3 (2004)



Jennifer Reeves
Landfill 16 (2011)



Brian Zegeer and Rachel Frank
Far Rockaway (2012)



Artist’s Biographies

Peggy Ahwesh is a New York based media artist whose work since the 70’s, has traversed a variety of technologies and styles in an inquiry into feminism, cultural identity and genre. Ahwesh’s practice insists on political and social topicality handled with theoretical rigor, while at the same time using humor and the absurd in an open embrace of the inexplicable. Ahwesh studied with Tony Conrad at Antioch College. Recent exhibitions include: Two Serious Ladies (2015) Murray Guy, NYC; Plagiarist of My Unconscious Mind! (2015) Château Shatto, LA and Kissing Point (2014) Microscope, Brooklyn. Find her on the web at Senses of Cinema <http://sensesofcinema.com/2003/great-directors/ahwesh/>; This Long Century <http://www.thislongcentury.com/?p=7187> and Electronic Arts Intermix <http://www.eai.org/artistTitles.htm?id=5768>.

Tony Do’s work is grounded upon a belief in a materiality of language that is coincident with the materiality of the phenomenal world. From a philosophical perspective, this synthesis results in the blurred boundaries between nature, culture, and the supernatural (which is not only real, but is the Real, and as such, can only be approximated in the Symbolic via the Imaginary). The recuperation of magical reason by means of such a theoretical move has no instrumental value. Outside of its inherent elegance, it can perhaps only provide a temporary respite for those impoverished imaginations that have been depleted by late capitalism. Tony Do received his MFA from Mickey Mouse University (aka CalArts) and his MA in Anthropology from (Christopher) Columbia University.

Born and raised in Kentucky, **Rachel Frank** received her BFA from The Kansas City Art Institute and her MFA from The University of Pennsylvania. Her work uses sculpture, theater, and performance to explore the tensions between the natural world and the manmade, the animal and the political, and the past and the present. Her first exposure to the tableau vivant type of sculptural performance she uses in her art was through the Christmas nativity put on in the Lutheran church she attended as a child. The congregation was so small only four children were available to fill the roles. Every year, she would perform the parts for all the animals in the nativity, playing a donkey, a camel, and a sheep.

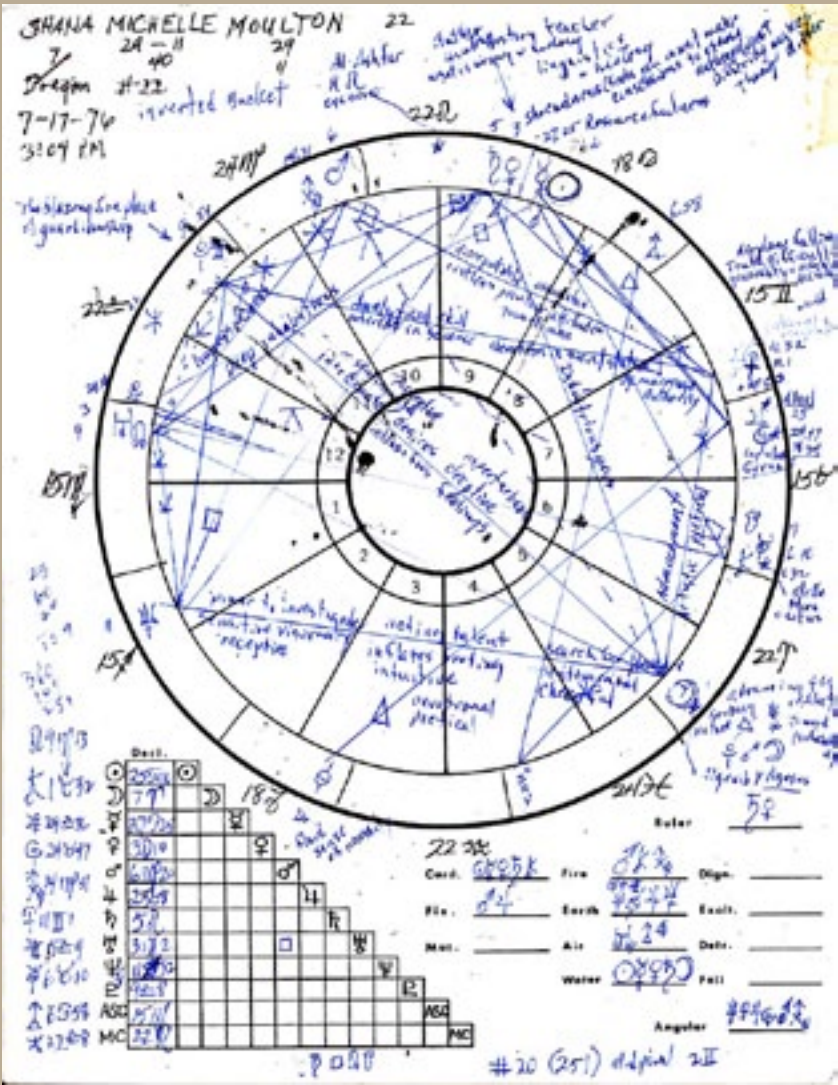
Rachel Frank is the recipient of numerous awards, including grants from The Pollock-Krasner Foundation, The Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation, The Puffin Foundation, and The Franklin Furnace Archive. She has attended residencies at Yaddo, The Marie Walsh Sharpe Foundation, Sculpture Space, The Women’s Studio Workshop, and The Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. She recently became a co-partner and curator at Field Projects. Currently, she lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Caleb Nussear is an American artist living in New York. He received a B.A. in Philosophy and Religion from Bard College at Simon’s Rock and an M.A. in Social Sciences from the University of Chicago. Mr. Nussear’s work is based on the overlap between complex formal geometries, physical and mathematical concepts of higher dimensionality, the natural landscape as it is found, and finally, the sensual, tensile quality of line drawing. He is comfortable working in drawing, sculpture, photography, and installation.

Ingela Ihrman (b. 1985) is a visual artist based in Malmö. She graduated with an MFA from Konstfack University of Arts, Craft and Design, Stockholm in 2012. Her work departs from an interest in desire, identification and temporality as well as the relation between man and other lifeforms often referred to as ‘nature’. Recent exhibitions include presentations at Tensta Museum: Continues, Tensta konsthall/Stockholms Läns Museum (2016); Survial K(n)it, Latvian Center for Contemporary Art (2015); Becoming by Recalling, Linköpings Konsthall (2015); Tropikerna i Gnesta, Art Lab Gnesta (2013). For further info please visit www.ingelaihrman.com

E.E. Ikeler was born in 1986 in Arizona and currently lives in New Haven, Connecticut. She holds a BFA from Cooper Union and is currently an MFA candidate at Yale University, where she studies painting. In addition to her studio work, Ikeler is also the co-organizer of the feminist exhibition series Garden Party/Arts.

Shana Moulton



David Nash (born 1945 in Esher, Surrey) has built up an international reputation as a sculptor in a career now spanning over forty years. His first one-man exhibition took place in 1973 in York, since then there have been numerous large-scale solo exhibitions of his sculptures and drawings all over the world, many with site-specific projects. His work is featured in many group exhibitions and held in public art galleries and private collections worldwide.

Nash works predominantly in wood. His early works used standard milled planks, but he moved on to making sculptures out of whole tree trunks and limbs, working with the behaviour of the unseasoned wood as it dries out, cracking and warping. Using wood made available naturally by storms, lightening or disease Nash excavates the tree by means of a 'wood quarry', employing the basic processes of sawing, carving and charring to find meaningful forms. He has also initiated long-term 'growing' sculptures, coaxing groups of living trees to form 'spaces' as in the iconic 'Ash Dome' planted in 1977, and from 1978 onwards in 'Wooden Boulder' created a work that encompasses a journey and change. Throughout his career he has maintained a studio in the town of Blaenau Ffestiniog in North Wales, working with the seasons and elements.

Brooklyn-based Jennifer Reeves has made 20+ films since 1990. Her personal films push the boundaries of film through direct-on-film techniques, first-person cinematography, intricate sound and image montage and optical-printing. Her experimental-narrative films, direct-on-film works, and multiple-projection performances, have screened extensively from the Berlin, Toronto, Sundance, and Hong Kong Film Festivals, to universities, micro-cinemas and museums. Full retrospectives of her films have been held at venues including Era New Horizons Film Festival in Poland, Berlin's Kino Arsenal, Anthology Film Archives, and San Francisco Cinematheque. In 2012 Reeves was named one of the "Best 50 Filmmakers Under 50" in Cinema Scope.

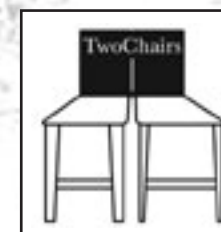
Rachel Stevens is an interdisciplinary artist and writer. Her work (sculpture, photography, video, internet archives, spatial practices) has addressed her interests in social, material and media ecologies, critical geographies and infrastructural space, and new conditions of image production and circulation. She recently completed a year-long residency with iLAND (Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Art, Nature and Dance) and a public project commissioned for Paths to Pier 42 on the East River Waterfront in Lower Manhattan. Stevens has exhibited and presented at conferences and festivals internationally and her writing on art and visual culture has been published in Afterimage, Flash Art, Millennium Film Journal and other publications.

George Wichelns lives in Brooklyn where he met and married Katy Rogers, an art historian. Together they have a new daughter, Sylvia, who has just learned how to roll over and is working on sitting up. George was born in Bennington, Vermont. He grew up in a small town in northern New York State. He attended Brandeis University, followed by Calarts for graduate school in art. While at Calarts he developed an appreciation for feminist theory and narrative art forms. He also studied art in Berlin at the Universitat der Kunste. After graduating from Calarts, George showed his work at the Centre Pompidou in Paris and at MoMA in New York. George's current projects include a short film, and button-actuated sound boxes that can be strapped to light posts in Brooklyn. Both of these projects are narrative. They develop fictional biographies. Maurice, a character based obliquely off a person George met and whom George first developed for the Stream show in 2015, figures prominently in his current work.

Torsten Zenas Burns and **Darrin Martin** began their collaborations in the video and sculpture programs at the School of Art and Design at Alfred University, where they both received their BFAs. Burns was born in 1968 and received his MFA in video and performance from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1993. Martin was born in 1969 and received an MFA in media and sculpture from The University of California, San Diego in 2000. Together, they have based their single-channel videotapes, installations, workshop performances and curations on their research into diverse speculative fictions including re-imagined educational practices, crypto-utopian musicals, appropriated horror genres, paranormal phenomenon, re-animation choreographies, cos-play, and trans-human love stories. Selected videotapes are distributed by VTape, Canada and Video Data Bank, USA. They have jointly participated in residencies at Eyebeam, The Experimental Television Center and Signal Culture. Their videos have screened at venues including The Museum of Art and Design (NY), Pacific Film Archive (CA), Aurora Picture Show (TX), Migrating Forms, (NY), Video_Dumbo (NY), Chicago Underground Film Festival, (IL), Madrid Museum of Contemporary Art (Spain), Stuttgarter Filmwinter Festival for Expanded Media (Germany), Art Space Bandee (South Korea), and Oberhausen Short Film and Video Festival (Germany), European Media Arts Festival (Germany), Krowwork Gallery (CA), The Taber Art Gallery @ Holyoke Community College (MA) and The Dumbo Art Center in Brooklyn (NY). They most recently showed their new installation ARK3: THE WORKSHOP SCENARIOS @ The Fosdick-Nelson gallery at Alfred University.

Brian Zegeer (b. 1977, Lexington, KY) is based in Long Island City. He has exhibited at Brooklyn-based venues Tompkins Projects, Vaudeville Park, and Saint Cecilia's Convent. Other exhibitions include the Jersey City Museum; Maryland Art Place, Baltimore; and Vox Populi, Philadelphia, among others. Currently, he curates VIDEOVAUDEVILLE, a weekly video art program for Manhattan Neighborhood Network. He holds an M.F.A. from the University of Pennsylvania, and attended Skowhegan in 2010.





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Mike McGrath

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Duncan Robinson

Lisa Robinson

Katy Rogers

Pete Telfer

Jay Warren

A person wearing a white protective suit, mask, and gloves is working in a field of tall, dry grass. The person is bent over, possibly collecting samples or examining the ground. The background is a dense field of dry grass and some small plants.

Peggy Ahwesh

Tony Do

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