



Ewing Gallery of Art & Architecture

Art

2020

Unsustainable: A Planet in Crisis

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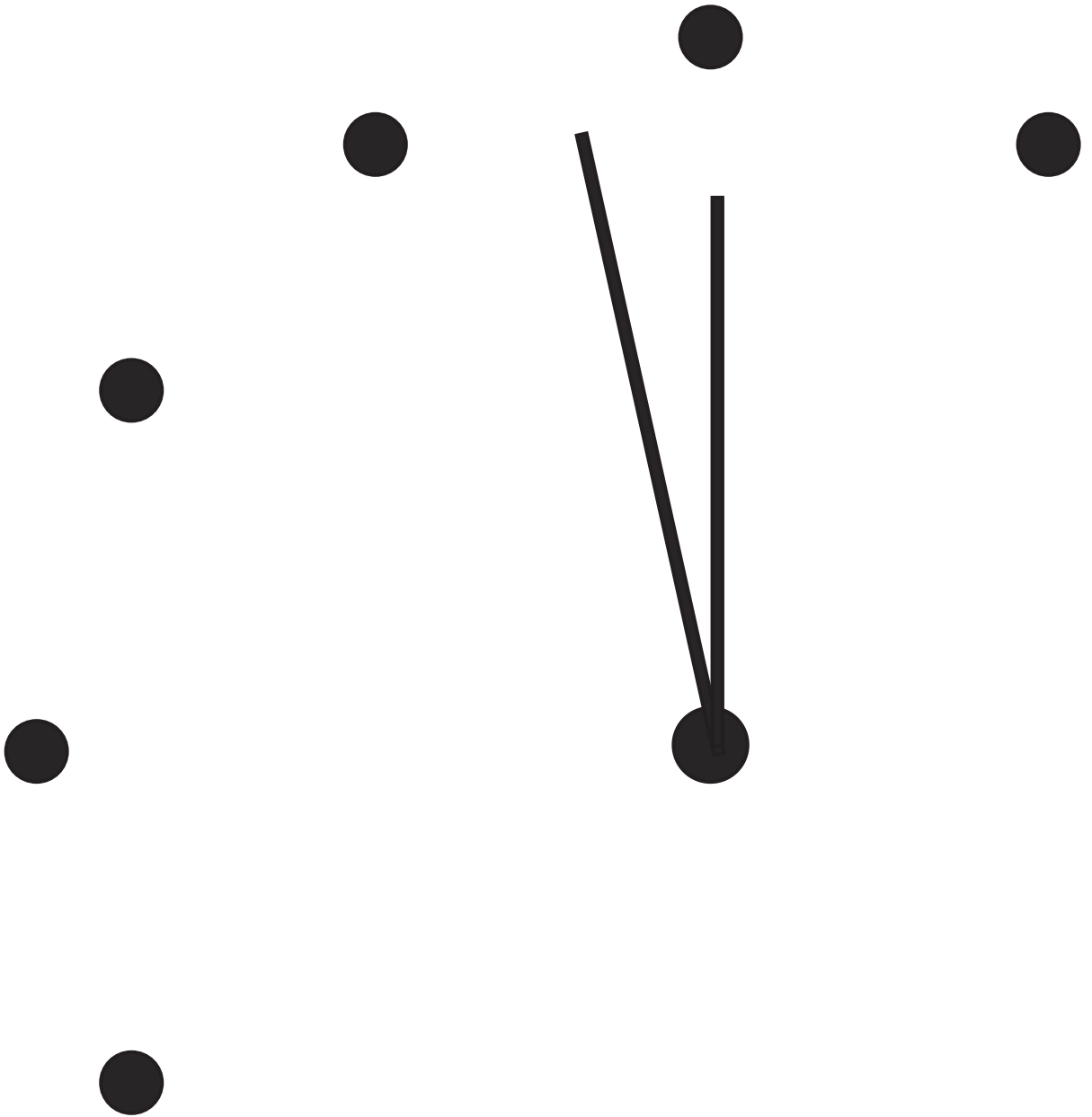
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UNSUSTAINABLE

a planet in crisis



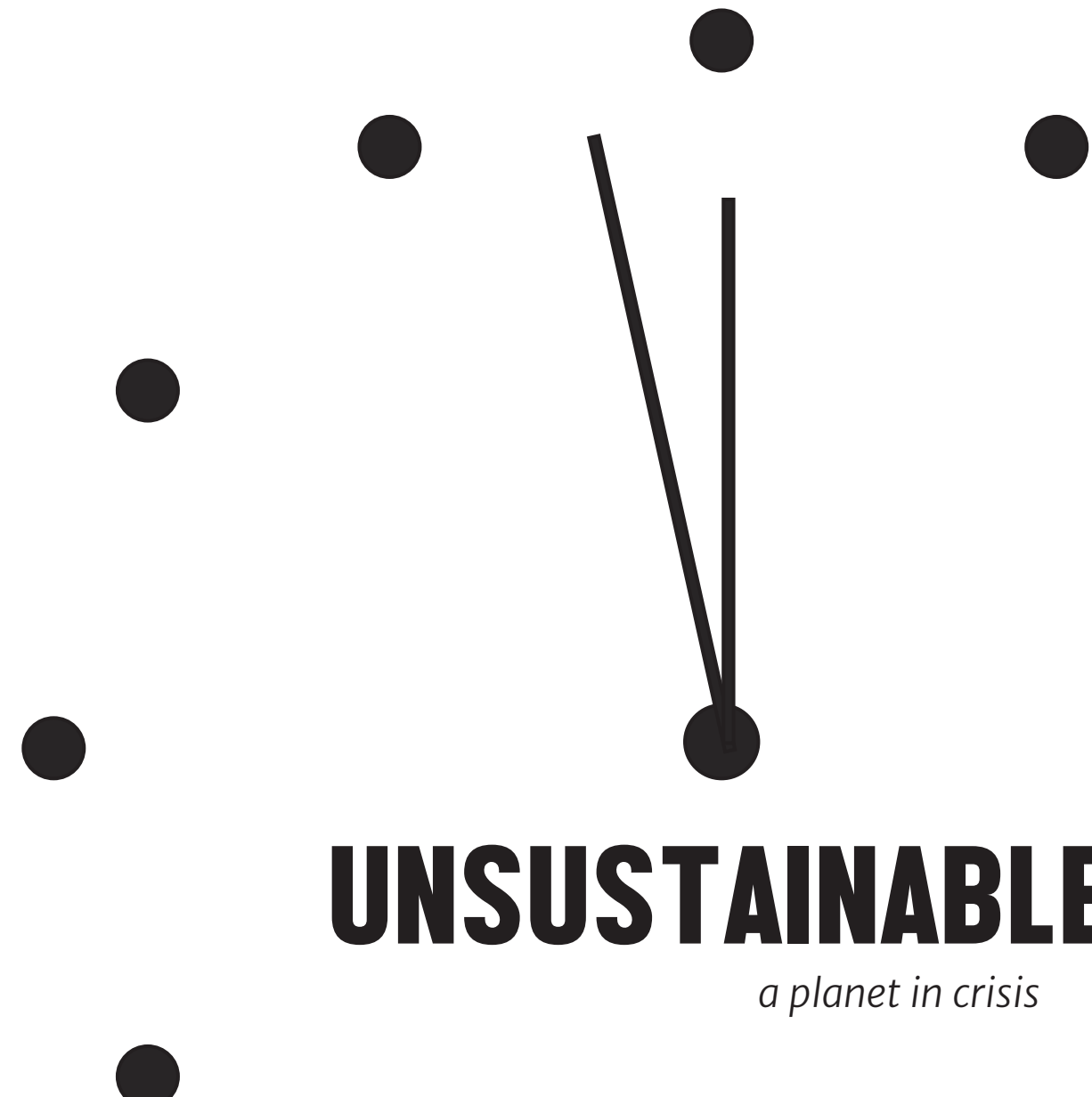
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Ewing Gallery of Art + Architecture
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Cover image of the Earth from Space: NASA's Earth Observatory, 2002

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UNSUSTAINABLE

a planet in crisis

Unsustainable A Planet in Crisis

Unsustainable: A Planet in Crisis is organized in support of the University of Tennessee College of Arts and Sciences' Apocalypse Semester and coincides with the McClung Museum of Natural History and Culture's exhibition, *Visions of the End*. Medieval and Renaissance artists on view at the McClung Museum, inspired by The Book of Revelations which was written by John of Patmos circa 100AD, utilize subject matter such as terrifying beasts, plagues, and natural disasters to capture the attention of their audience and to warn of an apocalyptic future. Likewise, *Unsustainable: A Planet in Crisis* warns of an auspicious future by surveying global crises highlighted by artists living today – almost two millennia after John of Patmos.

As a new year and a new decade begin, 2020 – numbers synonymous with perfect vision – this exhibition brings into focus some of the catastrophes facing our planet. Included is the work of eleven artists and scientists who examine a range of crises affecting the future and health of the Earth and its inhabitants. In the time of John of Patmos, it is estimated the world population was around 200-300 million and increased to 400-550 million by the Medieval Period. The estimate for the world population today is in excess of 7.5 billion. Increased population has created more demand for Earth's resources and agricultural production. As a result, there is more waste and pollution, a wider spread of disease



with increased resistance to vaccines, species endangerment due to encroachment of habitat and over hunting, war and human conflict, and climate change. Although some may argue that the Earth's high population is not the sole cause of these planetary crises, it is evident that increased population has at least exacerbated them.

Artists Michele Banks and Karen Shaw examine climate change through the lenses of pollution and increasing global temperature. Through *Arctic Bride* and *Micro / Macro*, Banks imagines a future where the polar ice caps and glaciers continue to melt – white is intermingled with greens, blues, and black-browns as water turns to ice and reveals soil and plant life growing beneath. Karen Shaw uses humor to address the serious issue of carbon emissions and their effects on air quality. If cars could speak, what would they say? A bumper-to-bumper traffic jam creates a cacophony of carbon monoxide swirling in a giant speech bubble. Carbon emissions belch impolitely from exhaust pipes into our atmosphere.

While artists Yeon Jin Kim and Pam Longobardi both utilize found plastics to make their work, their sourcing and material selection bring attention to vastly different issues. In *Anchor (our albatross)* Longobardi highlights not only the incredible volume of discarded plastic floating in the ocean, but also refugees seeking asylum from war. The golden life preservers tethered to the

anchor are created from thermal blankets and life preserver straps discarded by refugees arriving on the shores of Greece. In contrast, Kim collects urban trash from her two hometowns of Seoul, South Korea and New York City. These plastic bags are cut and reassembled using a traditional Korean sewing method to create abstract fields of color. One *Jogakbo* is crafted entirely of small multi-colored zip-lock drug bags discarded on the streets in her neighborhood, a strong reminder of the millions of opiates that exchange hands daily across the United States.

Dan Mills and Brandon Donahue address human conflict at the micro and macro scales. Mills alters found maps and atlases by visualizing data about major wars and conflicts, and the refugees and displaced populations that are a result. Donahue focuses on violence in a much more personal way. With *Rest in Peace*, he has memorialized and airbrushed the names of 96 of his fellow Nashvillians who were homicide victims in 2018 and early 2019. 85% of these individuals were victims of gun violence.

Lorrie Fredette uses beeswax, muslin, and wire to create abstract, three-dimensional lozenges to suggest the proliferation and morphing of bacteria and disease. Harvard researchers, Dr. Scott Chimileski and Dr. Roberto Kolter cultivate and meticulously document the growth of bacteria and mold – drawing attention to the increase in antibiotic-resistant diseases through beautiful, time-lapse videos.

Painter John Sabraw collaborates with environmental engineer and Ohio University Professor Guy Riefler to create pigment from iron oxide extracted from Ohio's polluted streams. They take the toxic acid mine drainage (AMD) from abandoned coal mine seepage, neutralize the acidity, extract the iron oxide and return clean water to the streams. They plan to sell the pigment on a commercial scale, with revenue going toward continued remediation of the streams. Sabraw used the pigment to create paintings that express the sublimity of nature and the fragility of our relationship with it.

Biologist and artist Dr. Brandon Ballengée alters historic prints and book pages to draw attention to species loss. He precisely cuts out the image of each extinct animal represented in the print, cremates this image, and places it in an urn displayed alongside the original print. Hung en masse on a red background, the red voids emphasize the variety and number of animals that have been lost. Sadly, this project continues to expand as more animals become extinct.

As the Medieval and Renaissance artists on view in the McClung Museum's exhibition *Visions of the End* offered hope for their viewers, so do these contemporary artists exhibiting in *Unsustainable: A Planet in Crisis*. By sharing their concerns, observations and awareness of current crises, a sustainable future for our planet is possible if we acknowledge these crises and begin to take appropriate action.

In an exhibition project of this scope, there are many people to thank for its success. First, I would like to recognize all of the exhibiting artists and scientists for the loan of their works and their enthusiasm for this exhibition. I acknowledge the Ewing Gallery staff Sarah McFalls and Eric Cagley for their curatorial suggestions, their assistance with the exhibition's design and layout, and their contributions to publicity and documentation of the exhibition. With the assistance of other School of Art staff members Mike Berry, Erin Tucker, Jake Ingram, and Christopher Spurgin, they were able to achieve a remarkable exhibition of work that was demanding in its installation.

I am grateful for the assistance of Jaik Faulk of the Acadian Art Center, Lafayette, LA for assistance with the shipping of Bandon Ballengée's work.

Lastly, I again thank Sarah McFalls who also designed this catalogue and Eric Cagley who also coordinated the shipping of the works included in *Unsustainable: A Planet in Crisis*.

Image Credit: The Four Horsemen, from The Apocalypse, 1498 by Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471-1528), Woodcut on laid paper, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Patrons' Permanent Fund and Print Purchase Fund (Horace Gallatin and Lessing J. Rosenwald), 2008.109.5.

BRANDON BALLENGÉE, PHD



Above: *RIP Eastern Cougar: After Randy Fehr, 1993/2015*
 Artist cut and burnt chromolithographic magazine cover, period inspired frame, ashes, and etched funerary urn
 18 x 15 7/8 inches
 Photo: Casey Dorobek
 Courtesy of the artist and Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York

Opposite: *Frameworks of Absence*
 2006 – ongoing
 altered prints with etched glass urns and ashes.
 Ewing Gallery installation
 dimensions variable

We are in the middle of a biodiversity crisis, often referred to as the Holocene or Sixth great extinction, Species are disappearing at upwards of a thousand times the natural rate. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of animals have disappeared from the Americas in recent centuries. Such extinctions started when the Europeans first colonized these new lands and have continued until today with recent losses like the Eastern cougar (2013), the Pinta Island Tortoise (2012), The Florida Fairy shrimp (2011) and many others.

*Responding to this cataclysm, I physically cut images of missing animals from historic prints and publications printed at the time in history when the depicted species became extinct. For example, in *RIP Pied or Labrador Duck: After John James Audubon (1856/2007)*, the image of the birds was removed from an original 1856 Royal Octavo (hand-colored by one of Audubon's sons) printed at the same point in history as the actual species disappeared. The resulting image minus the subject is what I refer to as a *Framework of Absence*.*

Acquired over several years, these prints, dating from 1640 to 2014, reflect the long-term and continued decline of biodiversity. The cut animal images are burned and cremation remains are gathered. Participants are then asked to scatter these ashes in memory to species gone. This action is intended as a transformative event for individuals: at once imprinting species loss at a personal level and also importantly an invocation towards a conservation mindset to counter future extinctions.



MICHELE BANKS



Above: *Macro/Micro 1-4, 2014*
Ink on Mylar
24 x 36 inches

Opposite: *The Arctic Bride, 2017*
mixed media
Ewing Gallery installation
dimensions variable

My work explores the world through the interplay of art and science. I create art exploring themes from science and medicine, including images such as viruses, bacteria, and plant and animal cells. I've looked at how these organisms affect humans, and in turn how we affect them, through climate change, antibiotic use and other impacts on the earth.

*In climate change, artists confront the greatest threat to life on earth as we know it. With this piece, *The Arctic Bride*, I try to connect a familiar and traditional symbol – the white wedding dress – to the ravages of a warming climate. When I began researching climate change in the Arctic several years ago, the photographs of glistening white, wind-driven drifts of ice and snow reminded me of the pristine folds of white satin in a wedding dress. I then imagined what would happen to the dress as climate change continued its current course.*

*My *Macro/Micro* series of ink paintings is an abstracted look at the melting of glaciers. Along with the ice, this melting takes with it the contours of coastlines, the history trapped in the air bubbles of the ice, and a whole way of life for the Arctic.*



SCOTT CHIMILESKI, PHD + ROBERTO KOLTER, PHD



Above: *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*
Colony Biofilms
still from video

The pathogenic bacterium *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* grows within a Petri dish and develops over time into a wrinkled colony biofilm. This is a multicellular-like form of the bacteria, in which the millions of cells inside are connected to one another by a complex extracellular matrix.

Opposite: *Hand Prints*
still from video

When a human hand is pressed against a growth medium inside of a large dish, invisible bacteria and fungi on the hand are left behind in the dish. Then, after that dish is incubated for several days, colonies of various shapes, colors and sizes grow and become visible, representing some of the diverse microbes that live on our skin.

BRANDON DONAHUE



Above: detail of *Rest in Peace*, 2019
airbrushed acrylic on panel
96 x 144 inches

Opposite: detail of *Rest in Peace*, 2019
airbrushed acrylic on panel
96 x 144 inches

Brandon Donahue has created this memorial wall, similar in concept to Maya Lin's Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, to commemorate local victims of homicide. Using information gathered by Tennessean reporter Natalie Neysa Alund, he has carefully airbrushed the names of 96 murdered Nashvillians: 85 in 2018 and 11 in early 2019. Over 85% died from gunshot wounds. The deceased include five-and-eight-year-old sisters Samil and Sammarree Daniel, who were killed in their front yard in the Cumberland Gardens neighborhood; Jamie Sarrantonio and Bartley Teal, who were robbed and shot at a bar in East Nashville; Daniel Hambrick, who was killed by a police officer in North Nashville; and Akilah Dasilva, DeEbony Groves, Joe R. Perez, and Taurean Sanderlin, massacred at the Waffle House on Murfreesboro Pike. Some of these deaths were reported on extensively in the media, while others received very little attention.

Donahue, a graduate of and former assistant professor at Tennessee State University, worked in a T-shirt shop and wrote graffiti as a youth in Nashville. Honoring each victim through very individualized airbrushing brings a sense of gravitas to imagery that one might associate with tourist souvenirs without knowing the context. This elevation of everyday items and popular culture into a gallery context is also part of Donahue's studio practice.



LORRIE FREDETTE



Above: *Nowhere Else Exists*, 2019
Beeswax, tree resin, muslin,
brass, nylon line
dimensions variable

Opposite: *Nowhere Else Exists*, 2019
Beeswax, tree resin, muslin,
brass, nylon line
dimensions variable

Images from *The World Unseen:*
Intersections of Art and Science, 2019, the
David J. Sencer CDC Museum, Atlanta,
GA.

Nowhere Else Exists is an installation of pod-like clusters suspended from the ceiling of the Ewing Gallery of Art + Architecture. It considers the full range of intersections of nature with human health and illness at the micro level. I meticulously record the minuscule shifts of cellular biology coaxing these images into dimensional shapes, gathering them into unsystematic clusters that form new organisms whose consequences for human health, like so much in nature, remains to be discovered. The installation implies several infectious diseases including influenza, vector-borne diseases like Malaria, dengue, West Nile, as well as water related illnesses of Cholera and E. coli.

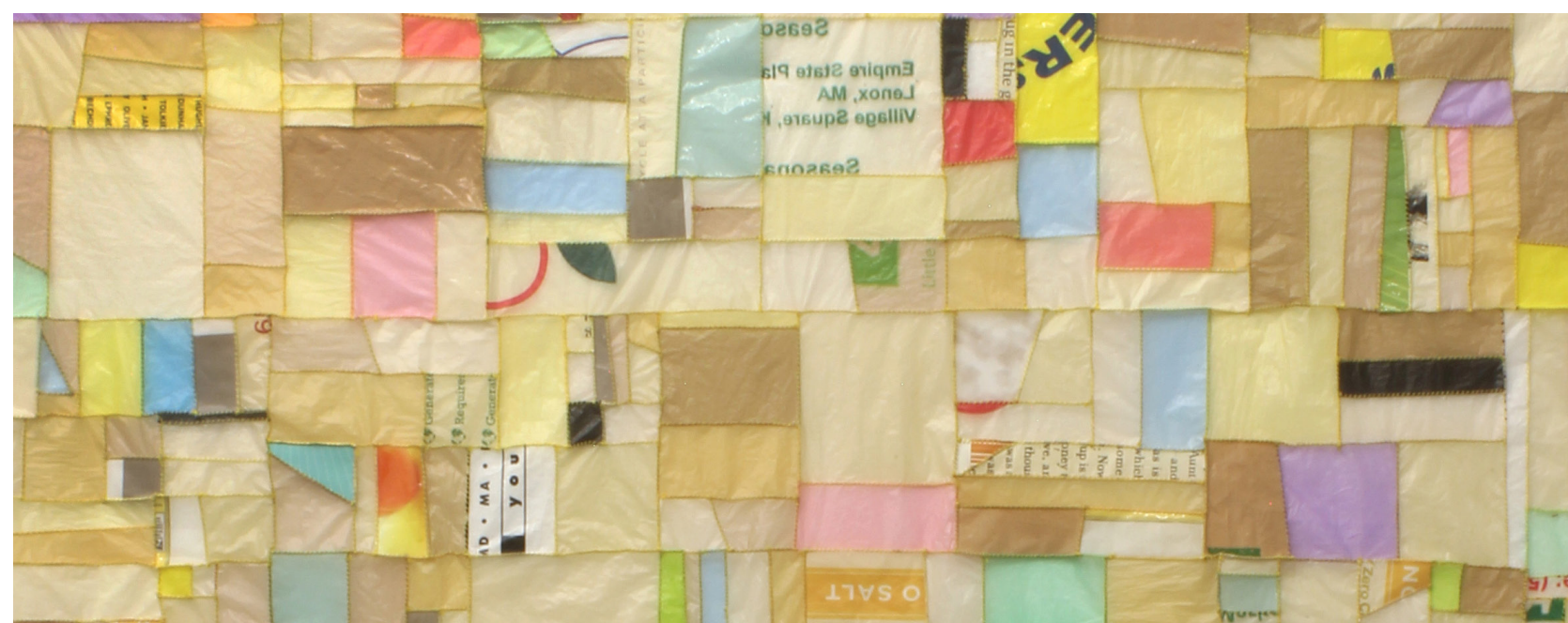
The spread of infectious diseases is being affected by climate change. How could it not be?

Rising temperatures, more extreme weather, rising sea levels, increased CO2 levels – bring about extreme heat, severe weather, air pollution, changes in vector ecology, increasing allergens, water quality impacts, water and food supply impacts and environmental degradation. Diseases, injuries, fatalities, and mental health impacts are the outcomes. Heat-related illness, death and cardiovascular failure. Asthma, cardiovascular disease. Malaria, dengue, encephalitis, hantavirus, Rift Valley fever, Lyme disease, chikungunya and West Nile virus. Respiratory allergies, asthma. Cholera, cryptosporidiosis, campylobacter, leptospirosis, harmful algal blooms. Malnutrition, diarrheal disease. Forced migration, civil conflict, and mental health impacts.

We are here. It is now.



YEON JIN KIM



Above: *Jogakbo 4*, 2019
hand-sewn plastic bags
56 x 40 inches

Opposite: detail of *Jogakbo 1*, 2018
hand-sewn plastic bags
96 x 96 inches

detail of *Jogakbo 3*, 2019
hand-sewn drug bags
60 x 70 inches

detail of *Jogakbo 2*, 2019
hand-sewn plastic bags
36 x 48 inches

This is a new body of work derived from Jogakbo stitching: a traditional, vernacular Korean folk art.

As a child, I was introduced to Jogakbo by my aunt who owned a Hanbok (Korean traditional garment) shop. Jogakbo developed as a way for lower class people to wrap gifts for weddings and other celebratory events in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Scrap pieces of fabric were stitched together, much like quilts, to create attractive wrappings. My aunt was particularly talented at this, and her Jogakbo were lovely and visually sophisticated. Examples were gifted to family members, and my mother passed hers down to me.

In updating this traditional Korean art form, I am stitching together pieces of commercial plastic bags from New York City and Seoul and also drug baggies that I find on the streets of my neighborhood. As in traditional Jogakbo, the scrap elements have all been used, and are sewn together to create compositions influenced by the lived reality of neighborhood folk.

PAM LONGOBARDI



Above: *Bounty Pilfered*, 2014
Ocean plastic from Alaska, Greece, Hawaii, Costa Rica on the Gulf of Mexico; steel armature and driftnet floats from the Pacific North Gyre
136 × 84 × 54 inches

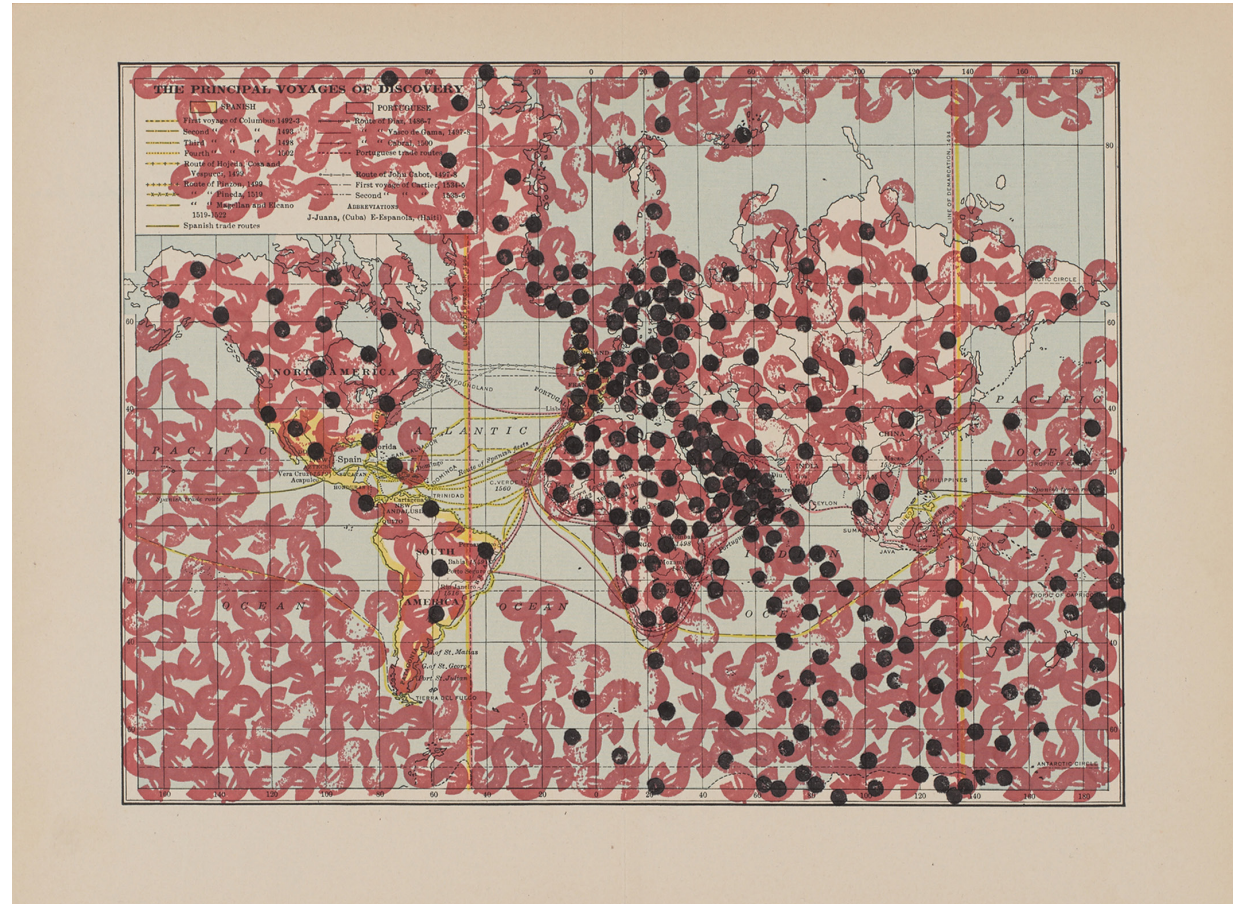
Opposite: *Anchor (our albatross)*, 2017
ocean and urban plastic from Hawaii, Costa Rica, Greece, California, Gulf of Mexico and Atlanta; survival rescue blankets and life vest straps recovered from Lesvos.
168 × 144 × 28 inches

I created Bounty Pilfered for the GYRE project of the Anchorage Museum, primarily of material collected during GYRE expedition in remote Alaska. This work reflects on my experience seeing the bounty of the earth pilfered by corporate greed, and personally witnessing the destruction wrought by the Deep Water Horizon Disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

In creating Anchor (our albatross) I was thinking about sinking and floating, escape and rescue; primarily from experiences working with the refugee crises in Lesvos, Greece.



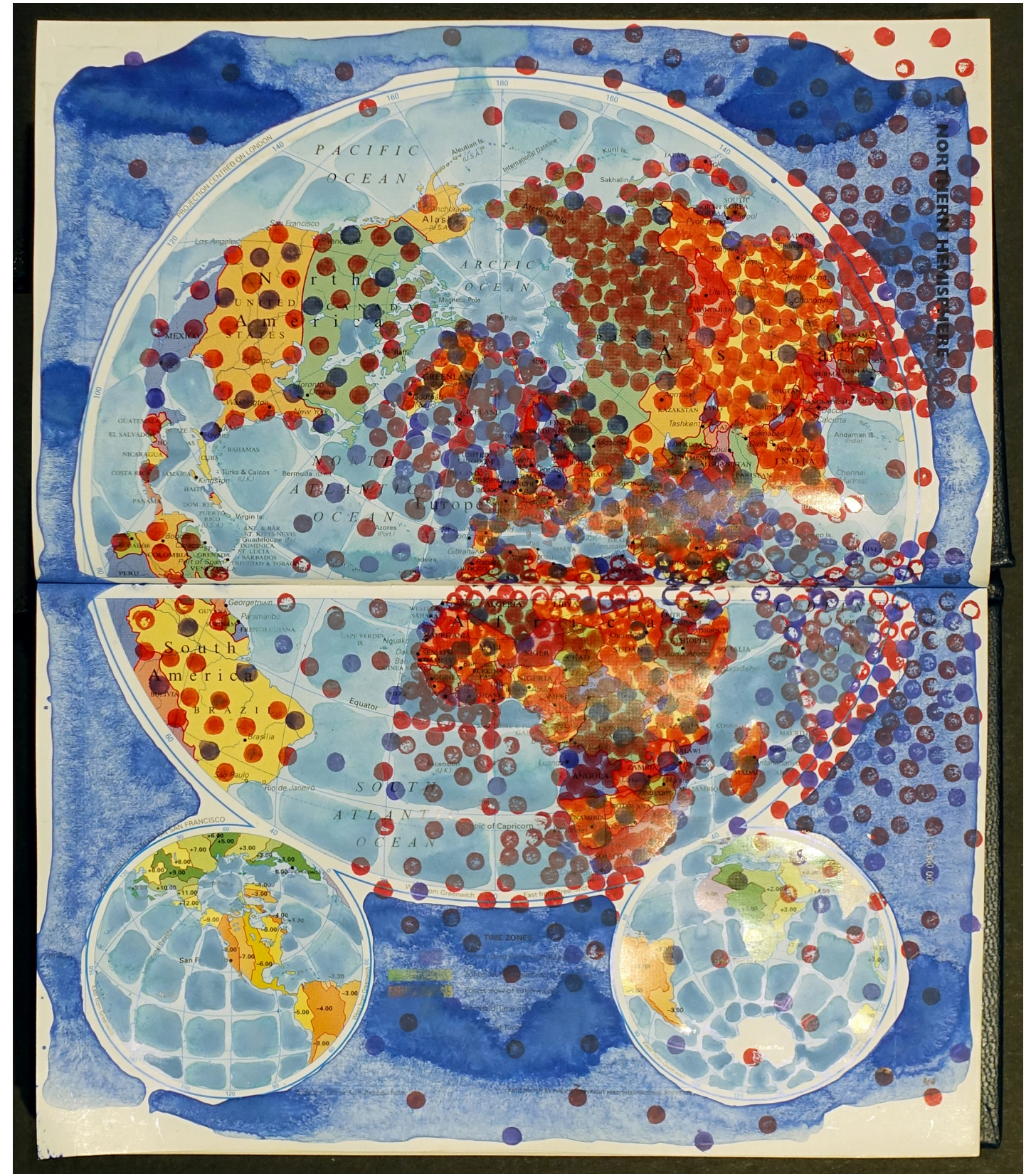
DAN MILLS



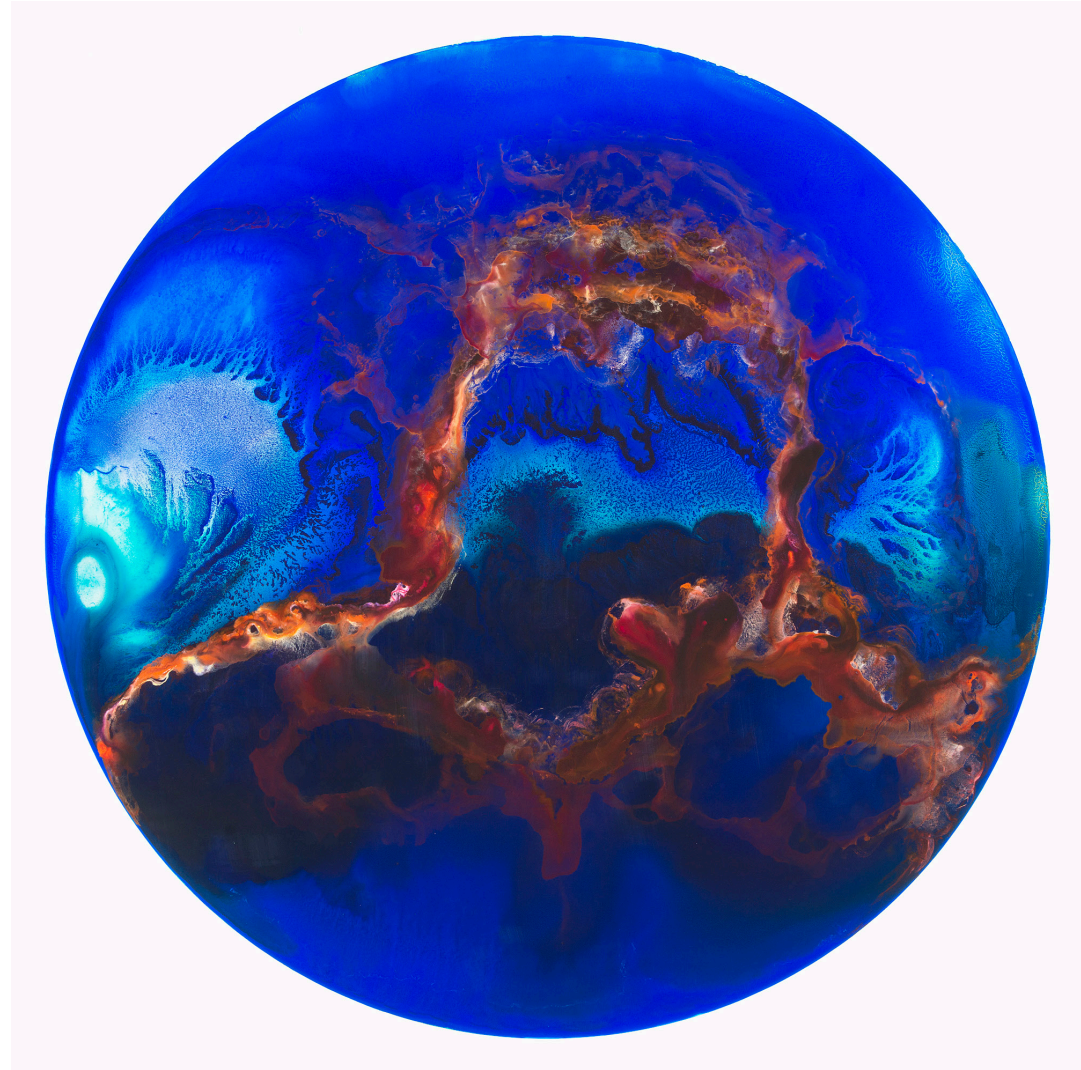
Above: *Current War\$ and Conflict\$, Belligerent\$ and Supporter\$, 2016*
ink on printed map on paper,
11 3/4 x 15 inches

Opposite: *Current Wars and Conflicts by Continent, Belligerents and Supporters Book 05, 2017*
ink and watercolor on atlas
9 x 7.25 x 1 inches

Dan Mills is known for paintings and works on paper that are full of observations about historic and current events. His artistic practice includes conducting extensive research on topics such as current wars and conflicts, colonialism, and life expectancy by state, and creating work that visualizes data/information on the subjects. Mills frequently uses maps as the space to explore these ideas. He began incorporating maps into his work in the early 1990s while researching the quincentennial of what is euphemistically referred to as *The First Encounter*. Since then, topics he has explored current wars and conflicts, data about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the contested histories of colonization, international claims on Antarctica, and the paradox of relative invisibility of Native Americans to most other Americans versus the ubiquity of geographic features named after Native Americans or with their words.



JOHN SABRAW



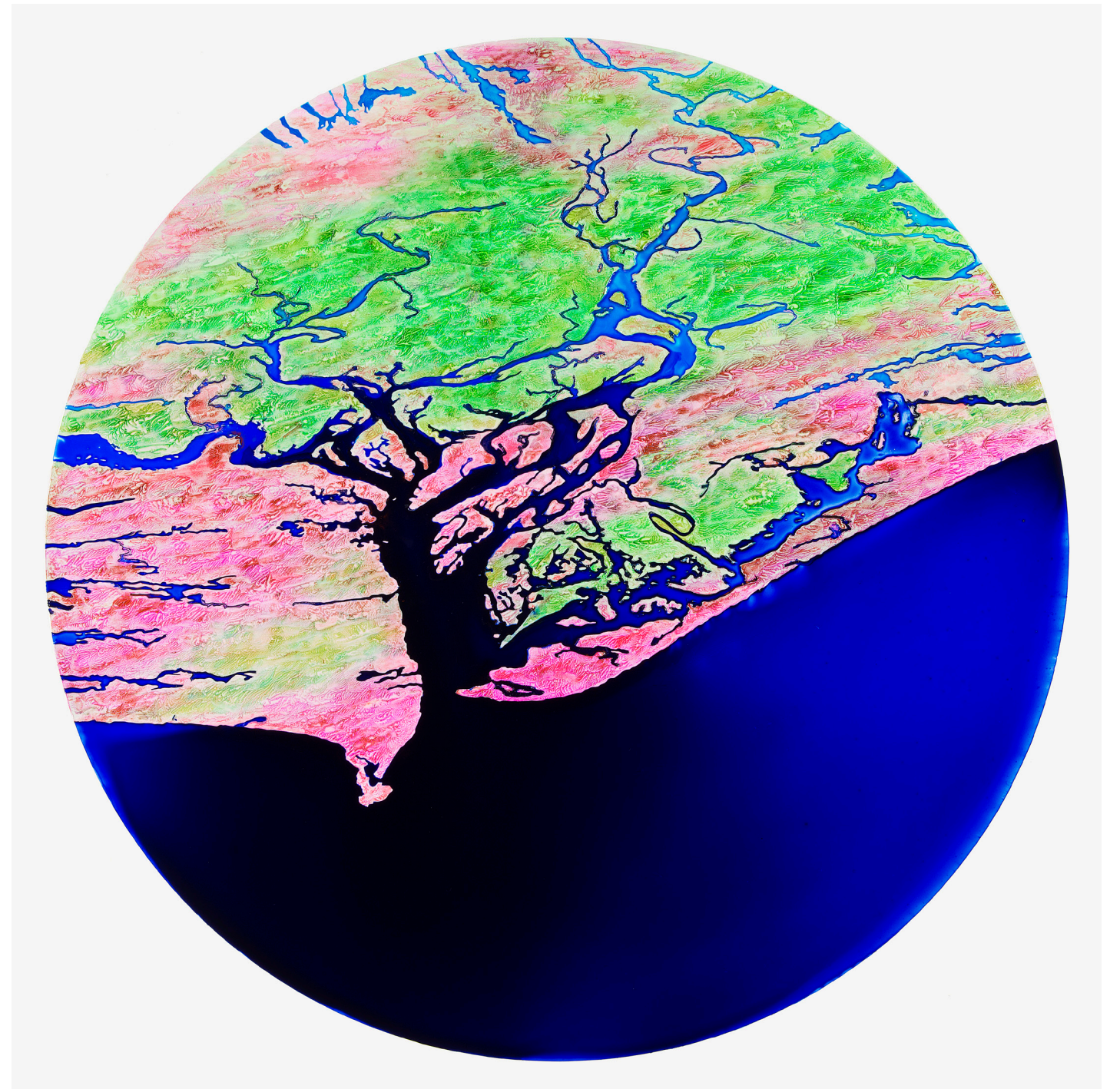
Above: *Chroma S4 Dragon*, 2017
mixed media and acid mine
drainage pigments on
aluminum composite panel
48 x 48 inches

Opposite: *Chroma S4 Tribute*, 2017
mixed media and acid mine
drainage pigments on
aluminum composite panel
48 x 48 inches

These abstract explorations focus on natural phenomena, the earth's ecosystem as a whole, and our role within that. These investigations have led me to incorporate ever more sustainable practices in my studio, in my life, and when possible actively engaging the public on the matter.

In this body of work, painstaking painting methods are coaxed into interacting and amalgamating over durations of up to several months. The result is complex, luminous, mysterious paintings that strike a beautiful balance between controlled and organic processes.

These works primarily use water-based paints, dry pigments, and acrylic media. Pigment manufacturers and types are chosen with permanency and sustainability in mind. This goal is more attainable now since I have been partnering with Ohio University engineer Dr. Guy Riefler to develop paints with pigments derived from toxic runoff from abandoned coal mines – acid mine drainage or AMD for short.



KAREN SHAW

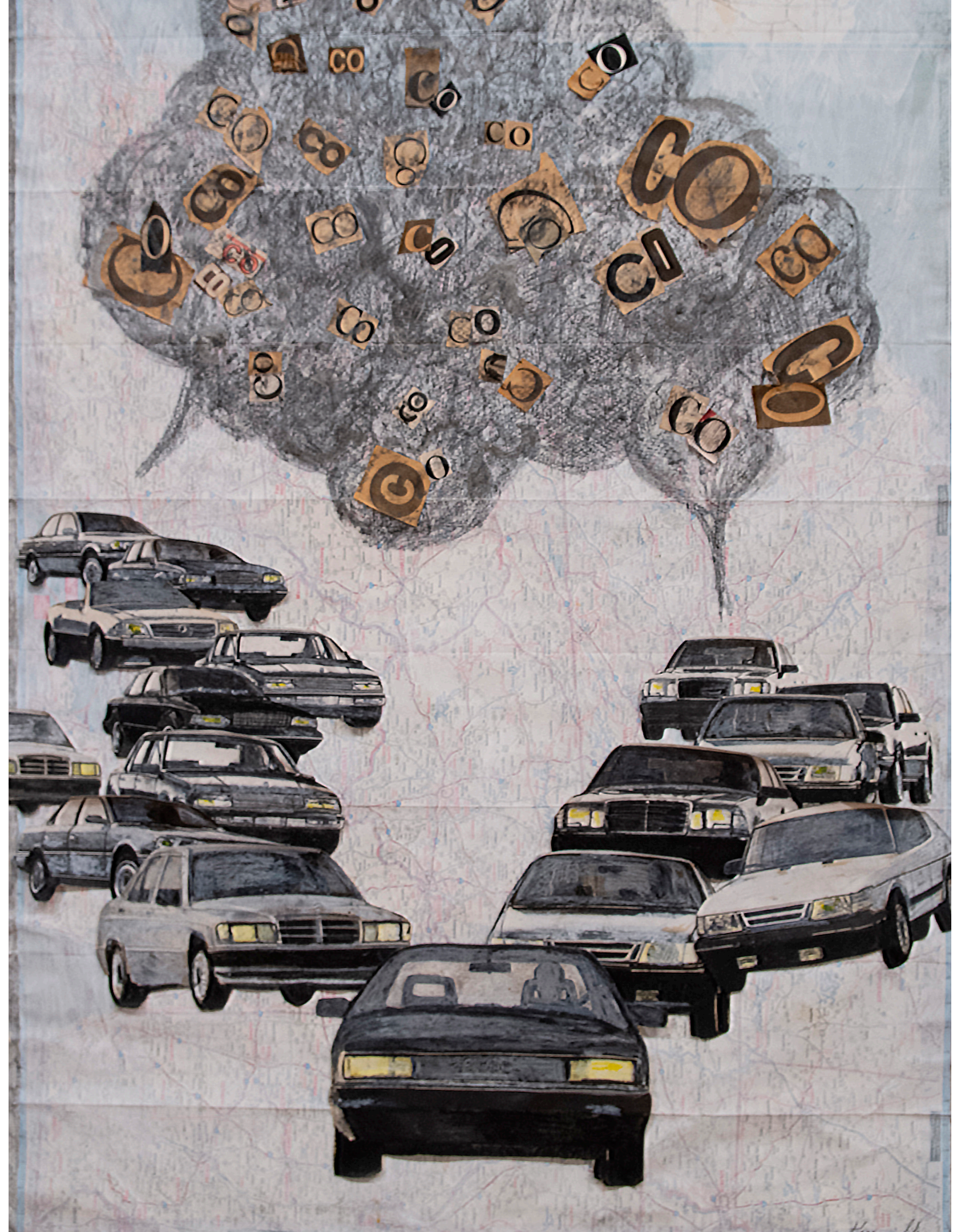


Above: *Global Warning*, 1990
Free standing painted
electrified globe with
flashing light

Opposite: *Car Talk*, 1991
collage, pencil and tape on
paper
37.5 x 26 inches

I read The End of Nature by the environmentalist Bill McKibben 30 years ago. His writing on climate change was vivid and alarming. I couldn't stop thinking about how our air and water were being corrupted. To keep my anxieties in check I began to make drawings and installations about global warming.

In 1991, I was offered a large section of the Ewing Gallery for the installation titled To the Greenhouse. It was a multimedia installation comprised of video, drawings and objects, a few of which are included in the current exhibition. Some of the works on paper have deteriorated and echo the deterioration of our environment. It is sad to think that in 30 years we are still debating carbon emissions. Although the car models are different today the images are still, (alas) relevant.





The following pages contain Ewing Gallery of Art + Architecture installation photographs.





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WORKS ON EXHIBITION

BRANDON BALLENGÉE, PHD

Frameworks of Absence 2006 – present
artist-cut prints, etched glass urns, and ashes
dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York

MICHELE BANKS

Macro/Micro 1-4, 2014
Ink on Mylar
24 x 36 inches

The Arctic Bride, 2017
Mixed Media

SCOTT CHIMILESKI, PHD + ROBERTO KOLTER, PHD

Actinobacteria Colony
video

Bacillus subtilis and Bacillus atrophaeus Mixed Colony biofilm [8550x real-time]
video

Bacillus subtilis Pellicle Formation
video

Bacteriophage Plaques on Lawn of Samonella Bacteria
video

Hand Print
video

Pseudomonas aeruginosa Colony Biofilm
video

BRANDON DONAHUE

Rest In Peace, 2019
airbrushed acrylic on panel
96 x 144 inches

LORRIE FREDETTE

Nowhere Else Exists, 2019
beeswax, tree resin, muslin, brass, nylon line
dimensions variable

YEON JIN KIM

Jogakbo 4, 2019
hand-sewn plastic bags
56 x 40 inches

Jogakbo 3, 2019
hand-sewn drug bags
60 x 70 inches

Jogakbo 2, 2019
hand-sewn plastic bags
36 x 48 inches

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PAM LONGOBARDI

Bounty Pilfered, 2014
ocean plastic from Alaska, Greece, Hawaii, Costa Rica on the Gulf of Mexico; steel armature and driftnet floats from the Pacific North Gyre
136 x 84 x 54 inches

Anchor (our albatross), 2017
ocean and urban plastic from Hawaii, Costa Rica, Greece, California, Gulf of Mexico and Atlanta; survival rescue blankets and life vest straps recovered from Lesvos.
168 x 144 x 28 inches

DAN MILLS

Piling Up (Current Wars and Conflicts, Belligerents and Supporters by Continent), 2016
ink on book page on paper
15 x 11 3/4 inches

Piling Up II (Current Wars and Conflicts, Belligerents and Supporters), 2016
ink on book page on paper
15 x 11 3/4 inches

A.I.R.S. with Oceans (Asylum Seekers, IDP, Refugees, Stateless), 2016
watercolor and ink on printed map on paper
15 x 22 1/2 inches

Current Wars and Conflicts, Belligerents and Supporters, 2016
ink on printed map on paper,
11 3/4 x 15 inches

Current Wars and Conflicts Killed by Continent, Book 02, 2017
ink, watercolor, and gouache on atlas
15 1/4 x 22 1/2 x 2 inches

A.I.R.S. by Continent (Asylum Seekers, IDP, Refugees, Stateless) Book 15, 2017
ink, watercolor, and gouache on atlas,
8 1/4 x 10 1/2 x 1 1/2 inches

A.I.R.S. by Continent (Asylum Seekers, IDP, Refugees, Stateless) Book 10, 2017
ink, watercolor, and gouache on atlas,
8 x 11 x 1 3/4 inches

Current Wars and Conflicts Killed by Continent, Book 04, 2017
ink, watercolor, and gouache on atlas,
11 3/4 x 19 x 2 1/4 inches

Current Wars and Conflicts by Continent, Belligerents and Supporters Book 03, 2017
ink and watercolor on atlas,
6 1/4 x 8 1/2 x 1 inches

A.I.R.S. by Continent (Asylum Seekers, IDP, Refugees, Stateless) Book 12, 2017
ink, watercolor, gouache, and lacquer on atlas
19 x 12 1/2 x 2 1/4 inches

Current Wars and Conflicts by Continent, Belligerents and Supporters Book 06, 2017
ink, watercolor, and gouache on atlas,
10 1/2 x 15 1/2 x 1 inches

A.I.R.S. by Continent (Asylum, IDP, Refugees, Stateless) Book 05, 2017
ink, watercolor, lacquer, and collage on atlas
12 x 8 1/8 x 1 inches

A.I.R.S. by Continent (Asylum Seekers, IDP, Refugees, Stateless) Book 07, 2017,
ink, watercolor, and lacquer on atlas
10 1/8 x 7 1/2 x 1 inches

Current Wars and Conflicts by Continent, Belligerents and Supporters Book 05, 2017
ink and watercolor on atlas,
9 x 7 1/4 x 1 inches

A.I.R.S. by Continent (Asylum Seekers, IDP, Refugees, Stateless) Book 09, 2017
ink, watercolor, gouache on atlas,
8 x 11 x 1 3/4 inches

JOHN SABRAW

Chroma S4 Dragon, 2017
mixed media and acid mine drainage pigments on aluminum composite panel
48 x 48 inches

Chroma S4 Tribute, 2017
mixed media and acid mine drainage pigments on aluminum composite panel
48 x 48 inches

KAREN SHAW

Chemistry: Triads, 1989
oil stick, graphite on paper
28.5 x 30.25 inches

Big Science, 1998
watercolor, graphite on paper
25 x 32.5 inches

Car Talk, 1991
collage, pencil and tape on paper
37.5 x 26 inches

LA-96, 1994
ink on newspaper advertisement
20 x 16 inches

Here to There, 1990
collage, paint, tape, metal
37 x 25.25 inches

Global Warning, 1990
free-standing painted electrified globe with flashing light

