

THE SCHOOL OF NATURE AND PRINCIPLE

Curated by Emiliano Valdés

The School of Nature and Principle takes its title from a branch of Neo-Confucianism popular in Korea in the 4th Century CE, drawing an analogy between that particular era and the way metaphysical thought affects social, political, productive, and cultural aspects of the world today. The philosophy invoked in this exhibition relies on intuition and observation as essential tools to relate to the world, commenting on art as a channel for philosophical thought. *The School of Nature and Principle* further explores the relationship between the self and its surrounding context. Additionally, the exhibition looks to contemporary society’s move from the rationalism of the Enlightenment era toward greater acceptance of the irrational and spiritual, thus more readily recognizing non-rational thinking as legitimate forms of knowledge. Through a variety of media, the works in this exhibition discuss what it means to be alive today in a time of individuality, change, confusion, and possibility.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

1 Javier Barrios

The illusion of consumption clarifies the position of the invention of the image #1, 2014
Title from a random word generator. Cut out on Mylar mounted on metallic foil. 40 x 30 cm.

The illusion of consumption clarifies the position of the invention of the image #7, 2014
Title from a random word generator. Cut out on Mylar mounted on metallic foil. 40 x 30 cm.

Javier Barrios’ work sits in a landscape between utopian speculation and fact. Barrios draws from science fiction, science, technology, architecture and space exploration to address some of the great philosophical questions surrounding the origin and evolution of human kind. *The illusion of consumption clarifies the position of the invention of the image* is a series of collages that speak about the world’s increasing population—a scenario where our natural resources are being depleted and rapid technological progress is laying a new platform for modern life.

2 Tyler Coburn

Waste Management, 2013/2014
Found artworks. Dimensions variable.

Scholar Stones
CRT monitor glass, epoxy, glass fiber powder from printed circuit boards. Dimensions variable.

Adventures of a Genre
“It-narrative” written from the perspective of the “it-narrative.”

Waste Management addresses the global problem of electronic waste by focusing on the efforts of a particular recycling company in Taiwan. Present products of recycled waste include architectural bricks, gold potassium cyanide, precious metals and even art objects. *Waste Management* thus takes form as an installation of “found” artwork: two cast stones made of CRT monitor glass and glass fiber powder from printed circuit boards titled *Scholar Stones*. Accompanying these objects is a text, *Adventures of a Genre*, written in the style of “it-narrative”—a sub-genre of 18th Century literature in which currencies and commodities narrated their circulation within a then-emerging global economy. *Waste Management* falls within a reflection of the consequences of progress and our thirst for economic growth.

3 Regina Jose Galindo in collaboration w/ Paulo Alvarado

Choir, 2015
Vocal performance and video documentation of performance. Dimensions variable.

Choir is a new commission for *The School of Nature and Principle* in which The Grace Chorale of Brooklyn sings the phrase “I’m Alive” in different keys and intonations for periods of 20 minutes making the words themselves sound awkward and even meaningless as when one repeats a word too many times. The artist adopted the phrase after a woman from the Ixil people of Guatemala recently declared, “I’m alive and I am witness to the truth,” while another commented, “I’m alive to tell what happened,” in regards to the annulment of the verdict of the trial of former Guatemalan dictator Efraín Rios Montt. Despite the pain caused by the assassination of their husbands, and children, and sexual violence inflicted by the soldiers, no one can silence the Ixil women. Despite misfortune, every individual must carry on. “I’m alive” arises from a local issue, but relates to the universal feelings of hope and the awareness of being alive.

4 Rodrigo Hernández

Is that so?, 2013
Oil on canvas mounted on wood. 29.5 x 25 cm.

The work of Rodrigo Hernández addresses human existence from an intimate and subjective position. He relates to the material and metaphysical worlds from the perspective of his own experiences and creates narratives that both describe and question these worlds. *Is that so?* takes its title from a Zen story or *kōan* in the book *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* and is part of a larger project (*A Sense of Possibility*) based on the reflection of his own image on a set of glass sliding doors. As Hernández approaches the image, the doors open and the figure disappears, suggesting the impossibility of grasping or achieving close contact with himself.

5 Federico Herrero*

Landscape, 2015
Site-specific intervention. Dimensions variable.

Painter Federico Herrero was invited to create the environment in which the exhibition takes place. More than exhibition design or a simple intervention of the gallery walls, Herrero’s piece suggests that the exhibition is set in a landscape, or parallel reality, where the laws of this world may or may not apply.

6 Akira Ikezoe

Milky Way II, 2015
Acrylic paint on paper. 109 x 84 cm.

Akira Ikezoe’s work reflects on the self and its surrounding circumstances, in particular the social, cultural, and political contexts we belong to. *Milky Way II* explores the prosthetic relation between objects and the body through a collection of shapes and symbols that recall human limbs or functions. This collection is divided into six categories: Bowel, Four legs, Joints, Tube, Stick, and Circle. A product of a thorough observation of his surroundings, and an awareness of material production and the passage of time, Ikezoe speaks of a changing world from multiple perspectives.

7 Chosil Kil*

Sunday, 2015
Latex balloons, Hi-Float, helium, elastic cord, copper sheets, coins. Dimensions variable.

Sunday is an installation of floating balloon sculptures occupying the entire gallery space, becoming the inhabitants of a dimension created by painter Federico Herrero for the exhibition. Kil’s work explores the nature of life and things through subtle forms, gestures, and sounds. *Sunday* proposes sculptures as living organisms in which matter can be infused with life. These “beings” relate to exhibition visitors by following them and reacting to their movement in the gallery space, thus making them aware of their own “aliveness.” The sculptures also reflect on the economic cycles inasmuch as their uprightness depends on the weight of the coins that hold them down.

8 Catalina León

Capybara, You Only Appear When I’m Alone, 2012-2014
Acrylic, pencil and stitching on cotton fabric. Dimensions variable.

Argentinian artist Catalina León understands art as an extension of her daily existence—a Zen practice of sorts—and practice as a form of theory. Her paintings, installations, and more recent textile works are a documentation, or record, of her daily experience rather than an intentional production of images for aesthetic purposes. They usually refer to personal and subjective, seemingly inconsequential experiences. *Capybara, You Only Appear When I’m Alone* recounts the recurrent visit of a rodent while the artist was living in Bolivia. This rodent only appeared to the artist when she was alone, as if a dream or an epiphany.

9 Gabriel Lester

All Wrong, 2005
DV-PAL 22min 19sec.

All Right, 2006
DV-PAL 13min 48sec.

All Wrong is a narrative entirely made with images found on the web between 2003 and 2005. It is a story full of twists, extreme opposites and, in general, ‘all that life and the Internet have to offer.’ The voice-over narrates the life of a chameleon-like, psychopathic, young man who has no real ambition, but is extremely good at adapting to any situation or social surrounding. The character is a representation of a generic individual: everyone and yet, no one in particular. *All Right* is a re-make, re-visit and re-appropriation of *All Wrong* set in Korea in 2006. Together they propose a dialectical understating of life that is easily challenged by the multiplicity of images and themes, and their uncertain standing on the moral sides of right and wrong.

10 Yu-Hsien Su

Hua-Shan-Qiang, 2013
Video, 21min 8sec.

Yu-Hsien Su’s work focuses on the space between the subject and the object, or the individual and its context. It is based on an acute observation of his surrounding reality. *Hua-Shan-Qiang* tells a story that takes place under the colorful and ornate gables of a Taiwanese house in Minnan style. Using a symmetric narrative structure where the opening and ending scenes mirror each other, Su has constructed a wondrous travelogue of folk customs mixing fact and fiction. When a pillar bearer accidentally falls asleep, it causes intense concern in the rest of the group, all of whom remain standing dutifully at their posts. The film is a reflection of our duties in society, a most pressing concern in all branches of Confucianism, including The School of Nature and Principle.

11 Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa*

Calls of Extinct Birds Previously Unknown by Science but Recovered by Spiritism 1 & 2, 2013–2015
Single channel audio, 4min 8sec.

Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa’s work addresses issues of loss, humor, and non-rational forms of knowing through a variety of media. *Calls of Extinct Birds Previously Unknown by Science but Recovered by Spiritism 1 & 2* departs from the documentation of a séance that Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa held in 2013 to contact birds of extinct species to know their calls. In this audio piece, conceived for *The School of Nature and Principle*, the artist reproduces the calls transmitted to him through this spiritual session.

- *5—Federico Herrero
Site-specific painting installation throughout the gallery.
- *7—Chosil Kil
Balloon, copper, and coin installation throughout the gallery.
- *11—Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa
Audio installation.

