



## Review

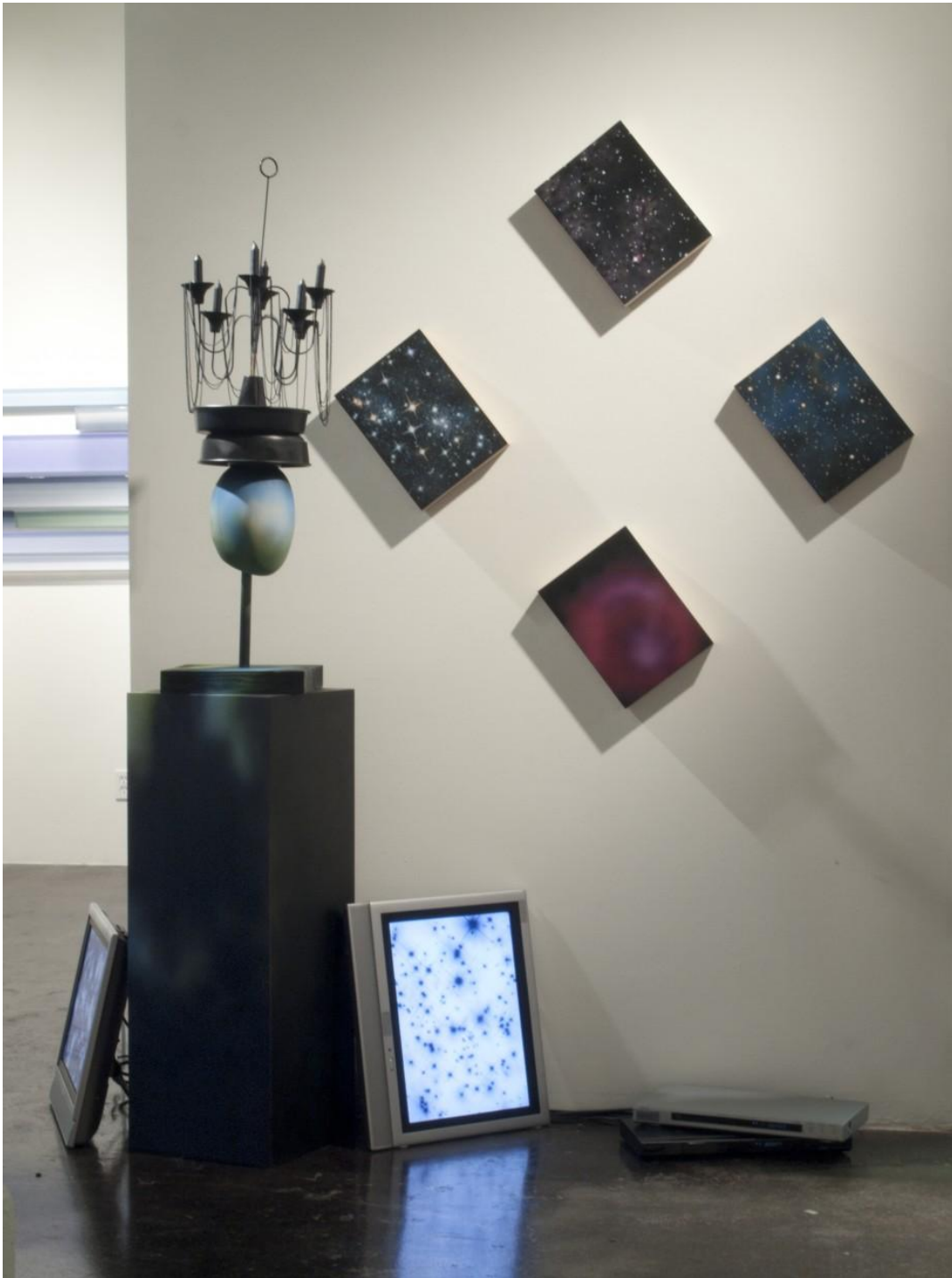
# Seeing Time – Time Traveler

By Scott Norton March 19, 2015

### **Kala Art Institute and Gallery**

January 15 - March 21, 2015 *Group Show* *Lecture*

In *Seeing Time – Time Traveler*, Berkeley's Kala Art Institute brings its 40th anniversary celebrations to a close with a special exhibition featuring Kala Fellowship alumni. As a commemorative exhibition, *Seeing Time – Time Traveler* attempts to present a unified overview of the output and talent that has emerged from Kala Art Institute by selecting works that reflect change through time. Although this framework creates a nice symmetry—each artist arguably began his or her career at Kala, with this exhibition marking a return—it is underdeveloped as a curatorial strategy, even as the artists' individual takes on themes such as the occult, natural phenomena, and the relationship of space and time are nonetheless compelling on their own.



Desiree Holman. *Psionics 18*, 2014; mixed media sculpture: wood, acrylic paint, steel, glass, electronics; 75 x 13 x 13 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Kala Art Institute, Berkeley.  
Photo: Mayumi Hamanaka.

A multitude of ideas, approaches, and arguments volley back and forth from the four corners of Kala's gallery (one artist per corner), with only some work relating to the theme of time. Freddy Chandra's *Drift Continuum* (2015), a site-specific installation comprising several inches-thick strips of acrylic and UV-stabilized resin on cast acrylic, stretches out like a multi-layered timeline across the walls of Kala. Here, Chandra uses the resin's varying degrees of transparency to "record" the diffusion of light through space in shades of greens, blues, and grays. The piece, unlike many of his earlier works, is more aggressively sculptural, enveloping the entire corner of the Kala gallery while continuing from one wall to another, dematerializing into a series of irregular patterns at both ends. As Chandra asserted in a recent talk, the piece is like architecture itself, a "series of encounters within a space over time."

In stark contrast to the singularity of *Drift Continuum* is the work of Desirée Holman. Here, Holman—who has been developing her art practice around the creative analysis of the convergence of anthropology, the occult, science fiction, and technology—presents a chaotic tangle of sculptures, paintings, and video installations filled with imagery composited from symbols that resonate across different systems of belief. Thus, painted images of galaxies and video installations of nebulas taken from NASA photographs become the means to explore the overlaps between astrology, alien mythologies, and other "fringe" beliefs, as well as recent technology and the larger contemporary faith in science. For example, the sculptural assemblage *Psionics 18* resembles a piece of wearable hardware, a fanciful tool to travel through time and channel spirits. *Psionics 18* is a humorous nod to the field of augmented reality and inventions like Google Glass, with technology (both real and imagined) seen as a means to tap into a previously unseeable spectrum of information.



Freddy Chandra. *Drift Continuum*, 2015; acrylic and UV-stabilized resin on cast acrylic; 30 x 289 in.  
Courtesy of Brian Gross Fine Art, San Francisco. Photo: Mayumi Hamanaka.

Pieces by Ranu Mukherjee and Yasuaki Onishi take up the other half of Kala's gallery space. Onishi's works, which are better known for their large scale and expansive nature, are reined in by Kala. *Vertical Expanse KL* (2015), a construction of suspended tree branches, glue, and crystallized urea (an organic compound often used in commercial fertilizers), evokes his larger installations as it pushes against the three walls that surround it. The cascades of branches, the filaments of hardened glue, and the crystallized urea all effectively encapsulate the feeling of time-based processes and accumulation, but also seem to emphasize the randomness and chance operations that are part of Onishi's working method. For him, it is what arises from this act of creation and assembly that matters; the materialization of the urea crystals and the dripping of glue are akin to the forces of nature and, as such, have the ability to create a new world.

Ranu Mukherjee's printed silk panel *Desert Bloom – Models, Protesters, Service Dogs* (2013) and the adjoining *Xeno-Real 1* (2013) reflect another departure from the *Seeing Time – Time Traveler* theme, instead organizing themselves around themes of a new world shaped by nomadic tendencies and hybridization of cultures. Her work uses a sophisticated layering of images found via internet searches. The results are theatrical visualizations, both static and active, in which icons from 19th-century Hindu votive lithographs, images pulled from international *Vogue* magazines, and modern representations of protesters—all of which Mukherjee paints and reimagines—become the actors on a constructed stage.



Ranu Mukherjee. *Desert Bloom—models, protesters, service dogs*, 2013; ink on silk; 90 x 132 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Gallery Wendi Norris, San Francisco. Photo: Mayumi Hamanaka.

In *Desert Bloom*, these “actors” become representative of the violence of modernity and the dislocation of images and information from their point of origin. This is typified by the central image of Kali, the Hindu goddess of destruction (an image originally pulled off of a lithograph from the late 1800s), and the surrounding “collected” images of modern political dissidents, fashion models, and other faces found from Google images searches, each re-rendered as a portrait painting and draped and dragged as now-severed heads. Likewise, in the video *Xeno-Real 1*, the found images in *Desert Bloom* are left to bleed across a flat-screen television, expanding and taking over the visual plane, akin to how all aspects of today’s society have expanded past their original geographic and cultural boundaries.

Even if the work in *Seeing Time – Time Traveler* resists the conceptual framework around which the exhibition is organized, it nonetheless showcases how each participating artist has developed their own voice over the years, resulting in a complex constellation of narratives, themes, and visual tropes.

*Seeing Time – Time Traveller* is on view at [Kala Art Institute and Gallery](#), in Berkeley, through March 21, 2015.

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