

## THE LIKENESSES OF LIGHT: MARY TSIONGAS

RICHARD LEVY GALLERY  
214 CENTRAL AVENUE SW, ALBUQUERQUE

*It is the function of the philosopher, the care and passion of the philosopher to protect to the utmost the possible....  
The multiplicity of the possible is here, it is now. It is intermediary between the phenomena; it rustles in the midst of  
the forms that emerge from it.*

—Michel Serres, *Genesis*

### EVERY ARTIST IS A PHILOSOPHER OF SOME SORT,

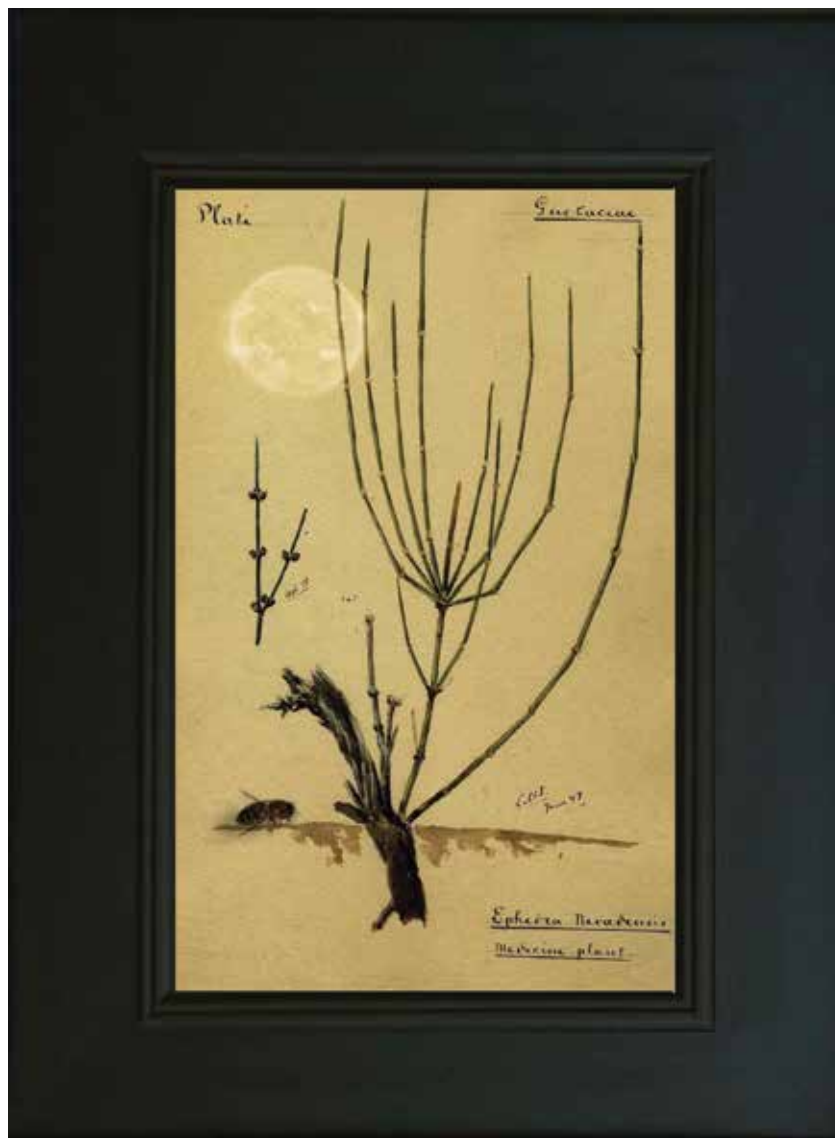
and Postmodernism in particular has partly been driven by the semantics of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Lacan, to name a few, and they helped to rotate our relationship to images. Some of the influence from these semantic renegades comes from their ability to unhitch our wagon from the rational order of Cartesian thinking and lead us by the nose into their often convoluted, yet oddly lyrical meditations on the twentieth century's preoccupation with chaos, violence, and all aspects of the perverse. Michel Serres, perhaps not as well known as some of the other Postmodern thinkers, is becoming increasingly influential for his dazzling verbal intersections between nature and ecology, technology and culture, science and myth—all of which speak to his aesthetics of multiplicity.

Perhaps Mary Tsiongas' household deity is the Greek god Proteus, god of the sea, but also the restless spirit at the root of hypothetical choices. "He's the possible, he's chaos, he's cloud, he's background noise. He hides his answers under the endlessness of information," wrote Serres. As simple as Tsiongas' digital transformations seem in this new body of work—five videos based on still images that weren't hers to begin with—their very genesis is clouded in mystery. Borrowing historical artworks from the collection of the University of New Mexico (where the artist is an Associate Professor of Electronic Media), Tsiongas has taken an image of, for example, a botanical illustration of flowers, digitized it and brought it into an editing program, and then subtly added layers of non-related imagery that transformed the initial picture. In the work *The Ladies and Four O'Clock*, a woman with a ladder, bucket, and sponge seems to walk up to the illustration as if it's billboard size and begins to wash away the flower in the upper right corner. Subsequently, the woman is beset by a group of butterflies—each one bigger than her head—that appear to search for the vanished flower, and they drive the woman away.

*The Ladies and Four O'Clock* is emblematic of the sleights of hand Tsiongas traffics in with these curious

pieces. Yet, as her looped videos are of such short duration, they're over just when we start to think there is a simple rationale for their causes and effects. In the end, though, we're left in a philosophical limbo as we ponder each seamless intervention that the artist has wrought. The why of Tsiongas' manipulations is anything but clear.

Three of the original pieces that the artist animated are hand-colored botanical drawings and two are black-



and-white etchings of landscape views—all of them contextualized in aspects of the natural world. And with the exception of *Tea for the Impossible Path*, there is an individual who enters into the space of the image and causes things to either appear or disappear: a donkey, a deer, a cactus flower, a worrisome dog. While there is a distinct level of humor in these short vignettes,

the question of what they mean is like the fourth wall in theater that the creator doesn't break in order to help us out of our existential dilemma. Is what we see only what we get—a series of very clever pastiches, technologically based, and ultimately bound to the cut-and-dried process of video editing?

The one video without a human agent in its animated scene is *Tea for the Impossible Path*. The original work is a watercolor of *Ephedra nevadensis*, a species related to, but not as potent as, the Ephedra plant known for its stimulant properties. *Ephedra nevadensis*, besides being a forage plant for desert ruminants, was used as a medicinal tea, first by the indigenous people in the Southwest, and then by Anglo settlers. Layered

against the original illustration Tsiongas introduced two things: a solitary bee that slowly traverses, from left to right, a rudimentary ground line, casting its shadow on the space of the botanical drawing as it moves; the second element is a luminous, moon-like sphere that also passes across the image, as if in a distant sky, but rapidly, far outpacing the laborious trek of the bee. What is the "path of the impossible" alluded to in the title of this piece? Is it the path of the impossibility of a healthy future for bee populations, now in the throes of a drastic decline? This work gives us a view of the natural cycling of some heavenly body rising above the dire conditions on Earth, but gives no hint of a possible solution to the predicament of the bee.

Perhaps the protean imagination of Tsiongas had altogether different philosophical issues in mind as she appropriated works from a different era and gave to each a unique animating presence. The artist has clearly mastered particular techniques for digital manipulation and, as fascinating as these pieces are as visual phenomena, I trust that Tsiongas' playing in the fields of the digitally possible has some new mythic twist as part of her intention,

some new slivers of narrative that act as a lighthouse signaling to us on the wine-dark sea.

—DIANE ARMITAGE

Mary Tsiongas, *Tea for the Impossible Path*, HD video, media player, monitor, wooden frame, 33" x 24" x 4", 2013. Courtesy of the University of New Mexico Art Museum.



505



Mary Tsiongas "Vanish" 2007-2009

RICHARD LEVY GALLERY  
514 CENTRAL AVENUE SW, ALBUQUERQUE

**The locals are loco.** Holding down the 505 at Richard Levy Gallery are five artists with long-term connections to what up until recently was Northern New Mexico's only area code. This handful of ruffians doesn't actually have much in common thematically, but they share a level of finish, craft, and intelligence of design that makes them hang well on the wall together in this group exhibition.

James Westwater, who spent years in Santa Fe but recently relocated to New York, pop-ironizes Gainsborough's *Blue Boy* in his art-about-art-type-art about how much he loves art. And he does, and it shows in his superb color sense and compositional strategies. Westwater

has long worked with elements of formal elimination through his recurring lozenge technique, a kind of branding and simultaneous establishment of denial of entry. This Duchampian anti-brand, this blockage of access is further complicated in this new work by flattened, illustrative, paint-by-number type representations of small rectangular fragments of the Rococo Master's best picture. Westwater nicely straddles the line between formal logo design and the claustrophobic intensity of Magritte. These are smart paintings about what it takes to make smart paintings, and in the end, irony compounds irony and you're left realizing just how much the artist truly loves the icon and the era his images deconstruct.

Mary Tsiongas also reworks the painterly past in *Vanish*, her video version of Albert Bierstadt's *The Sierra Nevada, California*. Using green-screen effects, the artist is able to plant a naturalist philosopher-type guy in a straw hat in the nineteenth-century wilderness landscape who appears to be able to manipulate it in various ways at will. Her time traveler appears on the scene like an apparition, and at the end of his actions he vanishes. On a physical level the merging of video realism with Bierstadt's naturalism produces the effect of enlivening the painting's extant intensity such that certain elements of the picture are given a brief illusion of movement by association. Tsiongas flips the switch in the mind's eye calibrated to the visual language of moving imagery and superimposes it upon the older visual language of painting. Subjecting the still image to this filter makes possible the isolation and comparison of two dramatically different, but equally accepted, forms of visual realism.

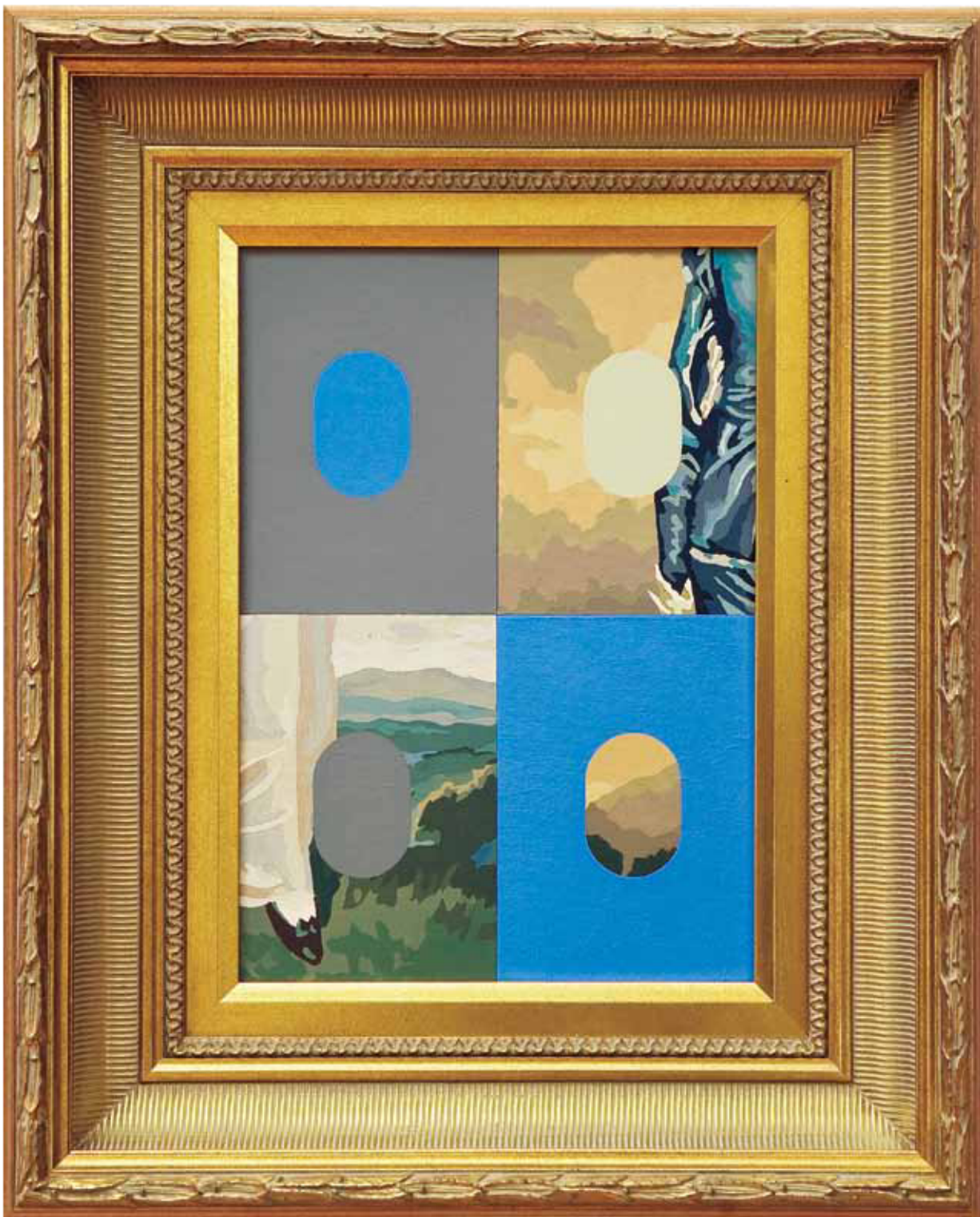
Time, movement, and change then become the subject, as the abstract nature of all visual languages is exposed. When Bierstadt painted this image in 1873 much of the continent was still lush wilderness, though the European landscape tradition this painting emerges from was devised precisely to document the beginning of the end of wilderness at the dawn of the Age of Industry. Bierstadt's cult of nature Romanticism is here extended through new media by Tsiongas to include humankind's imminent demise, if we don't reverse our destructive ways. The landscape, altered however irredeemably, will still be there, the planet will spin, but minus you, me, or Prospero in a straw hat—not exiled, but extinct.

As if to balance these vanishing worlds, the rest of the show is rounded out by more solid objects. Linking the first two artists to the last two is the work of "anonymous artist 21c." These now classic trompe l'oeil paintings by Albuquerque's most mysterious art phantom help bridge the gap between the illusory and the empirical. In this case it is the artist who commits the vanishing act while the perfectly painted objects have an air of de Chirico's metaphysical paintings, and Magritte once again.

Color-wise and in size besides, these still lifes connect to the abstract forms of Tom Waldron's new enamel-on-pine reliefs. Bubbling intermittently across the white ground of the wall, like Hans Arp's elements set free of rectangles and frames and pushed more convincingly into three dimensions, they employ Waldron's signature explorations of fluid form and curved planes.

Finally, we land our flight through the Land of Enchantment amid the skillfully crafted and succinct ceramic volumes of Anna Hepler. Like Platonic Solids from an asymmetric planet, these odd facets and angles are carefully calibrated, producing forms that seem both eccentric and essential somehow, with vague echoes of Noguchi in the balance between the geometry and the more organic tactile surfaces of the pieces. Hepler's work brings us safely back down to earth in this beautiful place we call home.

—JON CARVER

James Westwater, *Together Again*, acrylic on found painting, 22" x 18", 2008



Saturday, April 13, 2013

## Clay Center opens new exhibit -- and it's about time

Julie Robinson



CHIP ELLIS

Arif Khan, curator of art at the Clay Center, demonstrates how a touch on a screen adds images to "Dendrochronologist's Dilemma," by Mary Tsiongas.

◀ 1 of 3 ▶

humans' impact on nature.

Khan had the idea for the exhibit about 1 1/2 years ago after Wight gave a presentation at the Clay Center. Patrons, enthused about the talk, requested an exhibit featuring her work. Much of Wight's work includes an element of time, so Khan sought another artist whose art emphasized time.

He found one in Tsiongas, who features images such as tree rings to show the passing of time, often with an interactive element that brings in a contemporary concept.

In "Dendrochronologist's Dilemma," an oversize image of a tree ring projected on a wall stands behind a touchpad that shows the same image. When a viewer touches the screen, a shadowy image appears on the projected tree rings. Images of families, seasons and animals appear, depending on where the viewer touches the screen.

"Tsiongas uses the theme of the tree rings representing dates and a life circle and intersperses personal memories," said Khan. Her works often contrast nature's perception of time with how the viewer remembers it.

The exhibit also points out the ways in which science has influenced contemporary art.

"Ground Plane," by Wight, is a series of 12 large prints of patterns created through digital images of fossilized and newer bones that were available to her through the science departments at Stanford.

"There were drawers and drawers of bones, and she wondered what she could do with them," Khan said. None of the bone images are repeated in any of the 12 prints. They range from modern bones to those that are 10,000 years old.

Two other motion-picture pieces by Wight document surprisingly beautiful slime molds and lichens as they grow. The time-lapse photography of each piece contrasts the fast-growing slime with the lichen's more glacially paced growth.

Although some of the screens resemble iPads, they were built in 2001 and don't have the same technological capabilities. Khan said children, who are accustomed to today's technology, touch and swipe the pads without result.

In other works, Tsiongas shows landscape paintings from the 19th century on framed flat-screen televisions. In a seaside scene, an image of herself walking on the beach or a whale surfacing occasionally appears, catching viewers by surprise.

"She connects nature and how it was portrayed through history. As an artist, she wanted to literally enter into it," he said.

He asked both artists about updating the technology used in their art.

"They were both intrigued by what new technology could offer those pieces. but then if they did that, they felt that the piece would change and become something else. They liked that the tech used dated the piece to the time of its creation," Khan said in an email.

It's all about time.

Two free programs in May and June offer additional insight on the exhibit's subject. Kahn and Ryan Hill, director of digital learning programs at the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C., will discuss the impact of digital technology on museum education at 6 p.m. May 23.

Tsiongas will discuss her works at 6 p.m. June 6.

### Want to go?

**WHAT:** "All the Time in the World" is sponsored by the Collectors Club, an organization that supports Clay Center art programs and collection.

**WHERE:** Clay Center

**WHEN:** Through Aug. 4

**ADMISSION:** Adults \$7.50, children \$6; free for museum members

**CONTACT:** For more information on these and other Clay Center exhibits and programs, visit [www.theclaycenter.org](http://www.theclaycenter.org) or call 304-561-3570.

Reach Julie Robinson at [julier@wvgazette.com](mailto:julier@wvgazette.com) or 304-348-1230.





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///UNC TV FEATURES THE CENTER 04.25.2013

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Inspired by the pages of Our State magazine, UNC-TV's half-hour monthly series, Our State, recently visited McColl Center for Visual Art to film a 6-minute segment that features commentary from Suzanne Fetscher, President/CEO and artists Mel Chin, Mary Tsiongas, and Carolyn Braaksma.

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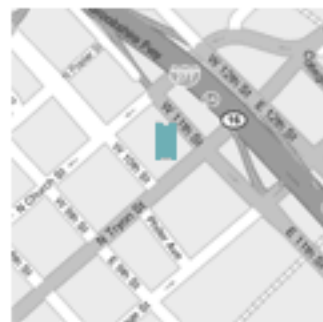
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# Time is on their side

Mark down this dazzling show at the McColl Center in appointment book

By Grace Cote

Time: clocks ticking in perfect rhythm, continually, for eternity. Time: concrete and predictable. These are the easy definitions of the word.

The more challenging school of thought is on display at the McColl Center in **All the Time in the World**, an exhibit featuring art by Gail Wight and Mary Tsiongas. The show funnels the idea of time through both a subjective and scientific viewfinder.

In a statement at the start of the exhibition, curator Arif Kahn parallels the vocations of scientists and artists: "Like artists, scientists transform and experiment. Like scientists, artists ... adopt a sense of neutrality and detachment." He makes a point that feels obvious, though many of us doubtless hadn't thought of it before. This parallel sets a scene for what a visitor will experience from the artists: not so much an internal interpretation as a visual observation.

The artists are both academics. Wight is an associate professor of art and art history at Stanford, concerned with scientific notions of time like genealogy and evolution. Tsiongas is an associate professor of electronic media at the University of New Mexico, interested in exploring our changing relationship with the natural world.

A majority of the work, with its backstories and layered meanings, feels very clever and modern, and almost every piece is digitized or technological in some way. The show feels very present in *our* time, despite its adamant effort to measure the passing of *biological* time.

At the start of the show, Wight's printed silk butterflies in individual plastic boxes are poked with 100 pins apiece. Their plastic bodies pulse with light, out of sync with each other, like ailing, elderly fireflies. A visitor might feel sympathy for these specimens, trapped by man's quest for biological understanding. The fitting title, "J'ai des Papillons Noirs Tous les Jours" (2006), is a French colloquial expression for having gloomy thoughts. This piece is the highlight of the show.

Directly across is Wight's "Hydraphilia" (2009), a grid of digital screens showing a Technicolor time lapse of a slime mold's growth. The scientific name for slime mold is *physarum polycephalum*; *polycephalum* means many-headed, like the nine-headed Hydra (count the screens) for which the piece is named. Wight questions if a thing of beauty can be loved if it's also grotesque.

Tsiongas' "The Vanish Series" (2007) shows a figure superimposed inside of paintings by artist Albert Bierstadt. Here, Tsiongas attempts to confront the divide between technology and paintings. The result finds a roaming, lonely person distracting us from what we love about Bierstadt and his contemporaries. These are beautiful, romanticized and escapist paintings; one piece even shows flames engulfing a corner of canvas.

Wight's eye-catching "Ground Plane" series (2007-2008) features snowflake-like compositions appearing throughout the show in pairs. From afar, they look like delicate brown dots floating in kaleidoscope patterns, but up close, one realizes the dots are actually animal skulls and bones. No image of the bones, which range in age between one and 10,000 years, is duplicated in any piece. The specimens, from Stanford University, are rough and imperfect. As the "bones" of an art piece, placed in complete symmetry, they become eerie.

At the back of the gallery is an interactive pad on a stand; this dictates movement on the screen in front of it, which is covered in tree rings. Tsiongas' "Dendrochronologist's Dilemma" (2012) anthropomorphizes the tree, looking at memories it might have if it were human. Touching the screen in different places will yield different projections on the screen, like a child on a swing, leaves falling, corn growing or birds flying. This anthropomorphization and intense use of technology is appropriate because time is a very human-centered concept. It's what we devised to measure science and our own history.

To someone merely browsing through the show, the pieces, each with their own stories and deserving much attention, will begin to shout over each other. To appreciate this show fully, you just might need all the time in *your* world.

(The exhibit All the Time in the World runs through March 23 at the McColl Center for Visual Art, 721 N. Tryon St. Details: 704-332-5535 or [www.mccollcenter.org](http://www.mccollcenter.org).)



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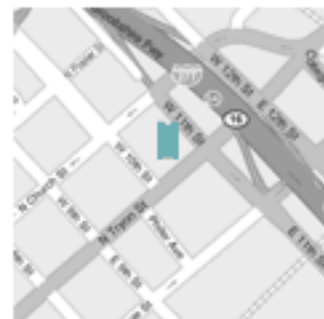
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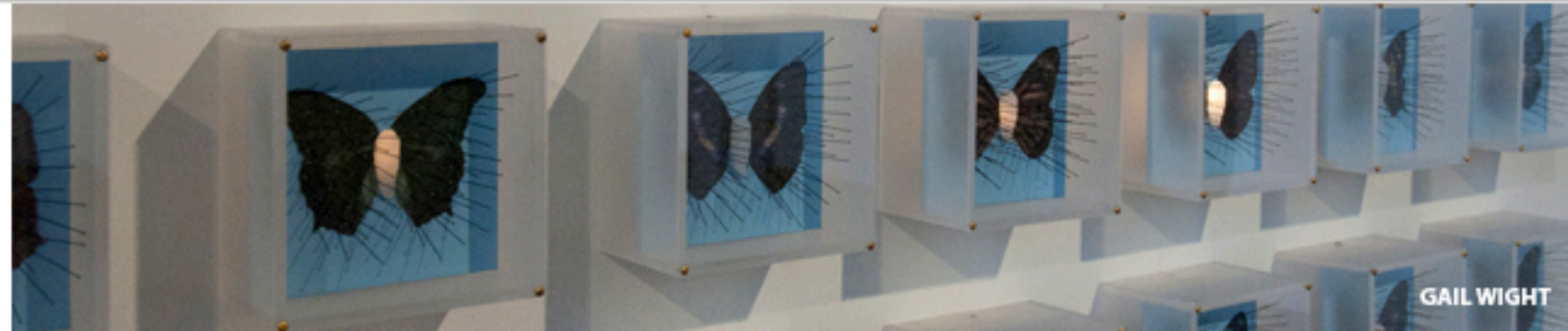
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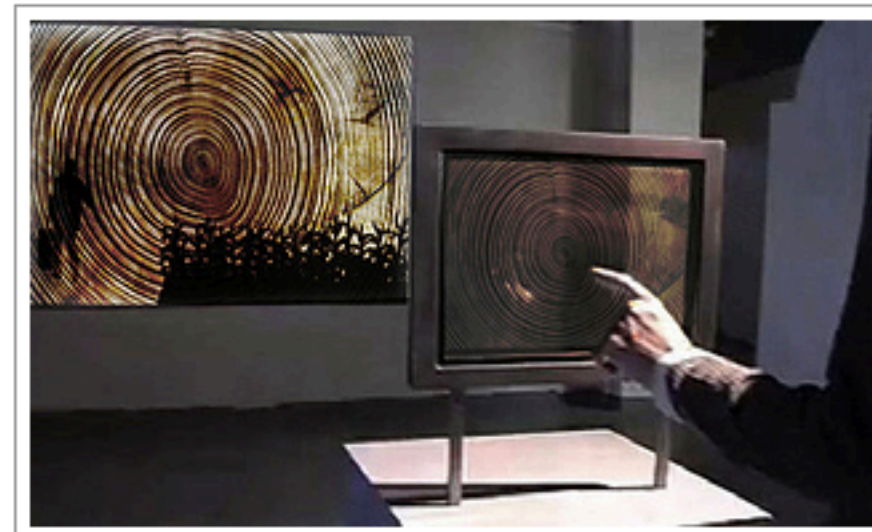
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**ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD** presented by Wells Fargo  
January 25 to March 23, 2013  
Featuring works by Gail Wight and Mary Tsiongas  
Curated by Arif Khan

"Have the time of your life," "losing track of time," "on the company's time," and "ahead of their time," are all common phrases that note various notions of time and how one perceives it. All The Time in the World documents and explores creative ways of expressing or marking time from the specific to the poetic. Featuring artwork by Gail Wight (Associate Professor Art & Art History, Stanford University) and Mary Tsiongas (Associate Professor Electronic Media, University of New Mexico), the exhibit presents many ways we, in fact, measure and perceive time, and in so doing enriches our understanding of them both. Through video, installation, and mixed media the two artists explore the subjective nature of time and show how an understanding of science can influence the practice of contemporary art.



Join us for the Opening Reception on Friday, January 25 from 6 to 9 PM. The Center is pleased to partner with CTI and host their Exploding Cannon Series at 6:30 PM which presents an interdisciplinary conversation with three panelist; Jae Emerling (Art History, UNC Charlotte), Beth Lasure (Art Teacher and CTI Fellow), and Mario Beloni (Physics, Davidson College) along with comments from exhibiting artists Gail Wight and Mary Tsiongas, and curator Arif Khan. Space is limited, advance registration is required. Additional details forthcoming.

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## “All the Time in the World” at the McColl Center

Published on February 4, 2013 by [Katherine Balcerek](#) in [Charlotte](#)



Time. It is a concept with which we are all familiar. We count it. We waste it. We watch it go by. There is a right time and a wrong time. You can even be behind it or ahead of it. But do we really understand it? Do we all even have the same understanding?

Two artists, Gail Wight and Mary Tsiongas, examine these perceptions and understandings in an insightful exhibition at the [McColl Center for Visual Art \(a Knight Arts grantee\)](#) titled, “All the Time in the World.” Running from January 25 to March 23, “All the Time in the World” broaches this concept from an artistic and scientific point of view using video, installation and mixed media.

This exhibition presents a variety of perspectives on time. While there seems to be a central theme in Tsiongas’ pieces and Wight’s pieces, they are varied either through medium or subject in such a way to communicate different ideas and expressions of time. Wight who is an Associate Professor of art and art history at Stanford University conveys understandings of time using scientific knowledge and classification systems. Tsiongas’ work is more concerned with the relationship between time and change, particularly as it relates to the relationship between humans and the natural world.

Wight’s work “Living on Air” uses a flat screen television to show an HD video looping through a series of shots of lichen. The lichen appears to be on a rock face and very subtly, very slowly it changes. The action is so gradual it leaves the viewer wondering if they really just witnessed any change, but as you continue to watch, it becomes evident: change is happening.

The “Vanish series I-III” by Mary Tsiongas who is an Associate Professor of electronic media at the University of New Mexico presents a different approach to time. These works are presented on LCD monitors in elaborate frames with a video image playing. In the image a contemporary person preforms a variety of activities sometimes just standing and staring against a painted backdrop. The backdrops, however, are loaded with meaning, since at least two of them are paintings from the Hudson River School.



“Vanish I” Mary Tsiongas 2007.

The landscapes of the Hudson River School only capture a moment in time. The combination of the titles and the burning away of the “canvas” in “Vanish II” hint at the ever changing quality of nature like Wight’s earlier piece, while the inclusion of a contemporary person in these scenes presents an incongruity. These people seem displaced — alien to the world around them. They are in the wrong time or perhaps ahead of the times. Either way the “Vanish series” suggests an interesting relationship between humans, nature, and time.

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## CHARLOTTE'S CROWN JEWEL: THE CITY'S ART VENUES

### The McColl Center for Visual Arts



The McColl Center for Visual Arts was an opportunity to both look at work, and artists at work in their studio space. The first *Vanish III*, by Mary Tsiongas. This work is an LCD screen that is showing an older piece of art with a smaller animation that has been placed inside the painting. The screen was surrounded by a gold frame to preserve the idolized and significant essence of the original work. The painting is a forest scene painted in dark and neutral colors. It has this transcendental, romanticized feeling to it. It is dark and somewhat allegorical. This size and scale dominates over the person. The animation changes the painting and I think brings a new interpretation and message to it. At first the painting is dark and only the light of a flashlight shows parts of the painting. This to me represented human discovery, and exploration, something the rest of the exhibit seems to embody. It shows the curious side of our human nature. Then the person builds a fire, the act of settlement. He chops wood, leaving a footprint on the environment around him. The fire quickly gets out of hand and burns the forest and the painting. This destruction can be viewed as our negative impact on the environment. The cycle starts over again, representing a lifecycle from birth to death. It shows the passing of time, fitting in with the title of the exhibit, "All the Time in the World."

The artists' work that I was fascinated by was that of Brian Knepp and Natalie Andrew. Their work isn't what you conventionally think of as art, however it is very intriguing. I think that they have done a great job in turning art into something that is meant to be interactive. Brian Knepp described that he was interested in how people react with his art, not only the people who are directly involved but those watching. His works are projections that change based on people walking across it or in front. He takes his inspiration from scientific and organic forms, modeled through equations. His wife, Natalie Andrew also was experimenting with small images of cells and giving them significance and importance through adding paint and glitter. She was investigating our reaction to creating art as a process of idolization. It gives something that very few people would understand or find meaning in, importance. Also her living sculptures of moss always have something changing. She negotiates the small scale by adding figures that inhabit the art, much like we occupy the space around Brian Knepp's art. There were many artists with interesting and important goals and messages that they were trying to convey through their work, but I feel I was intrigued by these artists because of the way we as an audience are meant to interact with the pieces of art.

### Visual Response



My visual response for the McColl Center is based from Mary Tsiongas's work *Vanish III*. I focused on the large tree in the background painting, using it as the main idea for my response. Trees represent a life cycle within nature, each spring they burst with life only to lose all their leaves and appear dead in the winter. Then they turn green again the following spring. I think that this life cycle, of birth to death, and resurrection can be seen in *Vanish III* as the fire destroys the painting and then it comes back again. I chose to realize this in my response by drawing a large tree in all of its stages.



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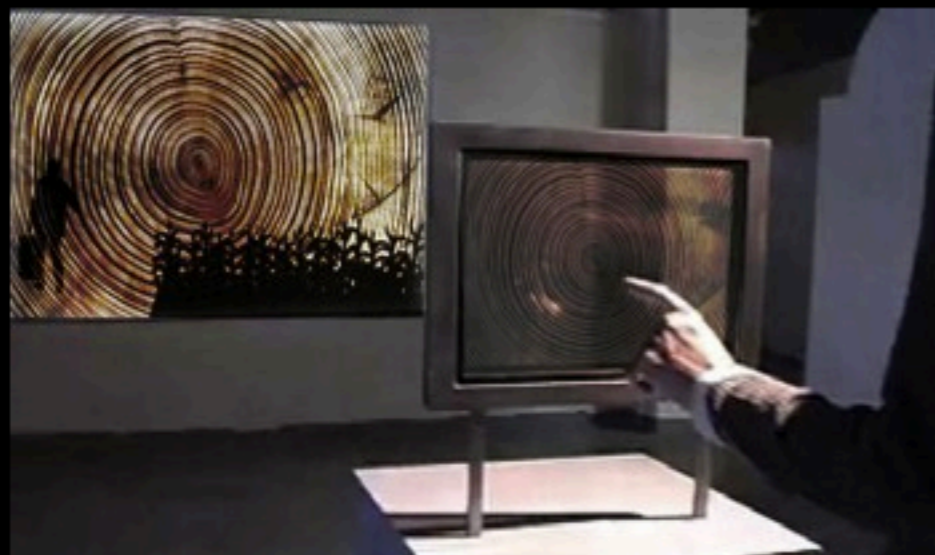
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## MARY TSIONGAS

### DENDROCHRONOLOGIST'S DILEMMA

Posted on: August 6, 2012



#### OVERVIEW

Imagine a darkened room, a clear screen with an image of tree rings hovering holographically on the surface of the screen. It's transparent except for the tree rings. Beyond the screen is a large wall of projections triggered off by the viewer touching the tree rings. When the viewer continues 'touching' a tree ring, s/he will be able to view one of hundreds of video vignettes programmed to the rings on the screens. The work uses touch screen technology, and the programming language of MaxMSP to create a more lyrical read of

dendrochronology. Think of the classic image of a mammoth slice of tree trunk with hundreds of rings dwarfing the human form and our concept of time, often labeled with significant historical events on the rings of the tree. My tree rings will invoke shadowy moving images of scenarios the tree may have recorded such as rainstorms (rainfall creates a larger ring), fire raging (causes scarring in the rings), or solar activity, (from research I will do at the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research at the University of Arizona). Some will be illusory such as animal activity, a car burning, a train passing, and banal or mysterious human activities.

#### IMPLEMENTATION

I will: hire an assistant to help me program the interactivity component of the touch screen activated video; purchase equipment- a mac mini to run the program, & a high resolution projector; Purchase a custom made hologram of a tree slice; rent a studio to test out interactivity & lighting of piece; and travel to Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research – University of Arizona for research.

#### DETAILS

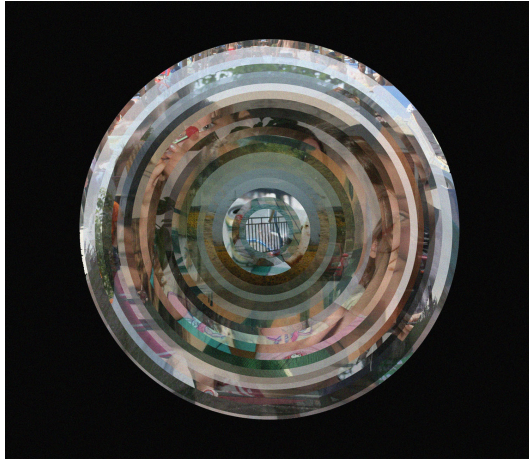
September 2012–Develop Prototype ( 20 different video vignettes); December 2012 – Travel to Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research – University of Arizona for research; January 2013–Design Tree Ring hologram based on



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## SANTA FE NEW MEXICAN *Pasatiempo*



Tsiongas "Calliope's Rings 2013"

### **Niche market: "Alcove 12.9" closes out a year of mini museum shows** Michael Abatamarco | Posted: Friday, March 8, 2013 5:03 am

After a yearlong series of alcove shows in the first-floor galleries of the New Mexico Museum of Art, the experiment in quick changeovers — with each exhibit running just five weeks — comes to an end with the ninth installation. The shows were numbered sequentially beginning with *Alcove 12.1*, which opened in March 2012 and featured work by five contemporary artists. Five has been the magic number for all subsequent shows, including *Alcove 12.9* which opened earlier this month. The number of artists matches the number of available alcoves, which are essentially large niches. Each artist is given his or her own alcove to exhibit a selection of work. Alcove 12.9 includes art by Joanne Lefrak, Jeff Deemie, Mary Tsiongas, James Marshall, and Teri Greeves. Like the previous shows, it features an eclectic mix of mediums and themes.

Tsiongas uses new media to explore the relationships of people to the natural world. Her work in Alcove 12.9 includes lithographs, photographic prints, and two videos. "I did a project a few years ago with the Tamarind Institute," Tsiongas told *Pasatiempo*. "The series is called *No Time for Trees*. It was inspired by my work with tree rings and dendrochronology." In the lithographs, which hang together as a diptych, Tsiongas includes the silhouettes of several figures — a child on a swing, birds, soldiers, and others — over the image of concentric tree rings. "I often come to the information I find in a poetic way. When I was doing research about time and tree rings, I was finding out that they record certain information, but we all live with trees in our backyard and trees all around us. What about the human moments that are lost and not really recorded? The thought, initially, was interspersing these moments that the tree may have witnessed and not recorded. The images seemed to tell a story that was pretty open-ended, perhaps a life lived in the past."

One of the two videos, *Calliope's Rings*, was compiled from moments in the life of Tsiongas' daughter (whose middle name is Calliope). The video presents only incomplete views of these moments, arranged, as with the tree rings, in concentric circles. Each ring is a separate component of video. "You don't really see the full picture," Tsiongas said. "Video as a medium changes form all the time and also deteriorates, and so we lose information. Unless you've transferred them to a more stable medium, they kind of fall apart. The piece is also about the medium I've worked with for over 20 years and how it's changed over time and how it's always a struggle to keep it archivally intact. So the work is also referencing the ephemeral quality of video." Her other video work in the show is *Vanish III*, which depicts the small human figure embedded in Thomas Cole's 1835 painting *A Tornado in the Wilderness*. Except for the figure moving within it, the landscape is still. Tsiongas includes a wooden frame to heighten the effect of looking at a painting.

Deemie's photographs document the impact of the oil industry on the culture and environment in West Texas and New Mexico. Oil pumps mar the terrain at a highway rest stop; pipelines snake through sand dunes and scrub like an invasive species. In Deemie's photographs, evidence of the deleterious effects of industry is everywhere in what would otherwise be a series of starkly beautiful landscapes.

Native artist Greeves includes a series of beaded silk portraits that merge Kiowa tradition with contemporary concerns. The figure in Greeves' *War Mother* dons a battle dress unique to the Kiowa, but



her lance is “decorated with the colors of Iraq war service,” she says in a statement. A diptych called *Sunboy’s Women* fits together to form the complete image of a large hand. Within the outline of the hand are two figures: one is Sunboy’s mother, killed by his father, the sun, who abandoned Sunboy as a child. The other figure is Spider Woman, who became Sunboy’s grandmother. *Sunboy’s Women* references a reality of many contemporary families, in which children grow up fatherless or motherless and are often cared for by their grandparents. Another textile work, *She Loved Her People*, is inspired by a story told to Greeves by her mother about a young Cheyenne woman who fought at Little Bighorn after surviving atrocities committed by Custer and his soldiers. The textile depicts the young woman with sword in hand. All the faces in Greeves’ works in the show are featureless, under scoring the pieces’ nonspecificity, conflating historical events and mythic narratives with the present.

Marshall’s ceramic sculptures are bold monolithic pieces, minimalist in their inception and given a slightly textured glazed surface. The glaze drips and runs over each sculpture, not messily but uniformly. Small ocular holes and slits in the pieces lend them an almost anthropomorphic quality. Each sculpture commands the space around it, and though they stand less than 3 feet in height, they seem larger.

The work of Lefrak is based on a maritime ghost story about the 18th-century pirate Blackbeard (Edward Teach), who allegedly abandoned one of his many wives in the Isles of Shoals off the coast of Maine and New Hampshire. Lefrak works with light and shadow. She etches imagery onto Plexiglas, which is mounted an inch or so from the surface of the wall. Shadows created by light passing through the Plexiglas add definition and detail to the etched imagery, making it pop. Lefrak has three pieces in the exhibit. The largest, *He Will Come Again*, depicting a small ghostly figure on the coastline, is 8 feet long. “It’s the largest Plexiglas piece that I’ve shown in New Mexico,” Lefrak said. “There’s something visceral about the experience of the shadow, but then to make it a larger scale really places you in the environment. I wanted to make it really feel like the viewer is in the landscape.”

The story goes that Blackbeard left that wife with the intention of returning. “It ends up being a tragic story because he dies off the coast of the Carolinas after that,” Lefrak said. “The ghost story is that if you walk along the shoreline, you can hear someone saying, ‘He will come back’ or ‘He’ll come again’ — that sort of thing. People have said they can see the figure of a woman on the shoreline, waiting. My challenge, rather than to depict the residue of something tragic, was to depict hope or longing.” Lefrak includes an audio component recorded on location in the shoals. “There are multiple tracks that have been put together to compose a piece. The layers are the foghorn, bell buoys, seagulls, and the sound of the ocean. There’s even a little bit of the ghost in there.”

Lefrak began visiting the shoals as part of an educational program during grade school. “It’s part of my own childhood memories. I think fictional stories, or mythological stories, can inform our human experience of a place as much as the actual things that happened there. With this piece, in a way, I had to be more inventive. I wasn’t just copying a landscape; I was creating something more interpretive than that.” ◀

## details

- ▼ *Alcove 12.9*
- ▼ Through April 7
- ▼ New Mexico Museum of Art, 107 W. Palace Ave., 476-5072
- ▼ By museum admission
- ▼ Free gallery talk with the artists 5:30 p.m. March 22



# 34 remarkable works by contemporary artists at the Albuquerque Museum

Posted by Editor in Dance, Film, Music, Performing Arts, Theater, Visual Arts on June 10, 2013

## *“Changing Perceptions of the Western Landscape”*

**Every once in a while, the captains** of Albuquerque's art scene will conceptualize and present an astounding exhibit of works that updates our dusty notions of What Is.

This entire summer, we are presented with such a transformative view of what is “landscape” and what is “The West.” This remarkable exhibit is “Changing Perceptions of the Western Landscape” – the experience will include a multitude of art, music and theater events, so buckle up.

For starters, we're looking at 34 works by 24 outstanding contemporary artists: Amelia Bauer, Erika Osborne, Ed Ruscha, Mary Tsiongas, Vincent Valdez, B.C. Nowlin, Charlie Burk, Gus Foster, Woody Gwyn, Joanne Lefrak, Patrick Nagatani, Alan Paine Radebaugh, Jack Loeffler and Donald Woodman. Among others.

Their works include paintings, videos, photography, printmaking, works on paper, digital art, works on etched Plexiglas and one sculpture. To expand on the experience, exhibit curator (and senior curator at the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History) Andrew Connors has scheduled four concerts of contemporary American music that



“BURNBABYBURN” by Vincent Valdez

explores western landscape

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