Track/Trace

Track/Trace, a triangular pyramid of fifteen monitors, presents live and delayed video feed using three cameras that record and transmit video to the complex of monitors. One camera transmits live video to the top monitor, displaying real time footage of the gallery. Each succeeding row displays the same footage with an added three second delay, resulting in a total twelve second delay between the top and the bottom row. Each camera records the gallery space from a different location, and footage from the three cameras cycles across the monitors at regular intervals.

Track/Trace confronts the audience with images of the self and implicates its audience as both spectator and participant in the spectacle. By transmitting footage of visitors from various locations in the gallery, both in real time and delayed time, the pyramid of monitors ultimately displays a crescendo of footage that layers the past and the present into a cohesive experience.

Riverrun

A self-described “radical traditionalist,” Gillette uses technology to explore new possibilities for traditional genres of art. In Riverrun Gillette juxtaposes age-old artistic themes, human-made symbolism, and images of the natural world in a three-channel projection. On the leftmost channel, individual objects such as flowers, leaves, and shells represent the history of still life painting. The rightmost channel provides uninterrupted, idyllic scenes of nature, intentionally representing the genre of landscape painting. The center projection introduces an “artifact,” or a human made object, in the form of the mirror. For Gillette, the mirror symbolizes the relationship with the fabricated world; the manufactured product is both placed in nature and reflects the surrounding ecosystem. Additionally, Gillette confronts taboo by shattering the mirrors in natural environments. Such symbolism directly addresses the delicate quality of the natural world and the destruction inflicted upon it by human production.

Each channel plays at different time intervals, ensuring a unique correlation between the images at every given moment. Gillette arranged and performed the accompanying soundtrack, which maintains the individuality of each moment while also unifying the chance interferences between the videos into a singular experience.
Inspired by terrariums, cabinets of curiosities, and the International Space Station (ISS), *Astroculture* explores the possibilities of future food growth. Each aluminum dominium crate includes LED lights, which illuminate seed-filled plant dishes below. Anker’s construction is directly reminiscent of the ISS Vegetable Production System (named Veggie by NASA), which develops methods for growing food in space. Both Astroculture and Veggie utilize red and blue LED lights to stimulate photosynthesis, the process in which plants transform light energy into chemical energy. The red and blue lights paint the plants in a vibrant fuchsia color, dispelling the expectation that plant growth is exclusively green. Despite their color, the plants grow steadily and healthily as intended, suggesting the revolutionary possibilities available for farming and agriculture.

**PALLETTE**

Much of Anker’s work explores the intersections between biology, technology, and conventional methods of art making. In *Palette*, Anker experiments with time-lapse photography and figure-ground relationship, a well-known artistic principle for distinguishing between positive and negative space. Here, the time-lapse video captures the subtle movement of a piece of coral that Anker photographed in Woods Hole, Massachusetts. The same video is projected onto seven blocks of color, each representing a hue in the rainbow, altering the figure-ground perception despite the underlying uniformity.
BIOTA

To make the sculptures in this installation, Anker dipped dead sea sponges into a mixture of kaolin clay, feldspar, and quartz. Using heat, she transformed the mixture into porcelain and consequently burned away the organic material of the sponge, leaving a perfect replica, or the “ghost of sponge,” as Anker calls it. The figurines that sit among the sculptures are rapid prototypes, or 3D prints, covered in silver-leaf.

Anker considers the sea sponge as a metaphor for the human brain, itself a sponge for information. Beyond their visual likeness, sea sponges and human brains share seventy percent of their genetic makeup. This similarity has enabled the sponge to aid in research on neurodegenerative diseases, like Alzheimer’s, that specifically affect the human brain. Similarly, the silver figurines crawling among the brain-like sponges signal the persistent desire of the human brain to discover itself. Reminiscent of prehistoric “Venus” statuettes, the figurines are similar in appearance to the earliest known artifacts of figurative art and embody the human desire to know and reproduce the self.

VANITAS (IN A PETRI DISH)

In these photographs, Anker presents a modern and biologically-minded rendition of the vanitas, an art historical convention originating in the sixteenth century. Historically, vanitas was a type of still life painting of symbolic objects to signify the brevity and delicacy of human life. Here, Anker’s photographs primarily include organic objects but selectively incorporate items made by the human hand. Similar to historical vanitas paintings, Anker chose each item intentionally for either its scientific attributes or symbolic value. Dead insects, fresh fruit, and bones all suggest the dual existence of growth and decay that occur on Earth. In combination with inorganic objects, Anker’s vanitas selections reference the growing world of synthetic biology, where new forms of life are brought into existence through the fusion of diverse materials.

To create Vanitas (in a Petri dish), Anker begins by collecting and arranging found objects into micro-environments. Each collection is placed inside a Petri dish, which is a small glass or plastic container used for multiplying, or culturing, microbial cells. Next, Anker photographs the dishes from above, mimicking how one would see the contents of a Petri dish through a microscope. Here, the Petri dish dually frames the micro-environments in the photographs and symbolically provides the site for culturing objects both organic and human-made.

Vanitas (in a Petri dish) is Anker’s starting point for her Remote Sensing sculptures, also on view in this exhibition.
REMOTE SENSING

A culmination of Anker’s interest in the intersections of art and science and nature and technology, Remote Sensing explores the interpretive potential of translating the organic to the digital. To make the sculptures, Anker begins with a photograph from Vanitas (in a Petri dish). Using Photoshop, she converts the color arrays in the photograph, or the digital arrangements of color, into 3-dimensional renderings called 3D extrusions. The digital file is then used to print a rapid prototype, which is a 3D model of the digital image, in plaster, glue, and colored pigment. Each level of the prototype is printed individually, creating distinct layers similar to that of a sedimentary rock. The sculptures are the ultimate product of various dimensional translations: a collection of found objects in a Petri dish, transformed into two-dimensional photographs, and then returned to 3D micro-landscapes.

The phrase “remote sensing” refers to the process by which satellites are used to explore and gather data about geographical territories deemed impossible to physically visit. Similarly, Anker’s process demonstrates the inherent displacement between object and data and the multitude of meanings that emerge through this incongruity. From Petri dish to photograph and then data to sculpture, numerous variables unpredictably and inexplicably alter the color, height, and forms of the original object. In translating a physical object into code and then returning it back to the physical, the machine performs a process of interpretation, one that Anker believes is not so different from the process of interpreting art.

CARBON COLLISION OF THE DIAMOND MIND

Each object in Carbon Collision of the Diamond Mind begins as a tube sponge. Anker covers the sponge in clay and fires it in a kiln. Through this process, the original organic structure of the sponge burns away and is replaced by a porcelain replica. Each porcelain sculpture is then covered in a metallic glaze, transforming the object into a pseudo-meteorite. Together, the many pseudo-meteorites in the installation form a miniature debris field, similar to those created by the particles from outer space that occasionally collide with the Earth. Such collisions, both real and artistically manufactured, are signals of how little is truly known about outer space and reminders of the chance encounters that bring the Earth and the unknown together.
POST-APOCALYPSE

Post-Apocalypse, a series of digital images, provides a chaotic and puzzling glimpse at a world deeply in the midst of ecocide. Gillette’s compositions warn that such a destruction of the natural environment is perhaps not so far in the future. Created with the aid of digital technologies, each work is composed of layers of various photographic images. Each layer displays varying translucency, some blending easily into the composition while others stand out harshly against their surroundings. The space and narrative of each compilation is intentionally indeterminate, making the distinction between organic and inorganic imagery unclear. Intended to be digested slowly and through attentive looking, each image references the ways in which the human world has blended with the natural world, often to its destruction.

CHTHONIC CHIMERA

Gillette is interested in exploring and conveying visual ambiguity. In Chthonic Chimera, Gillette composes and photographs objects to display a specific type of visual ambiguity, which he calls chimerical. Originating in Greek mythology, a chimera was a monster with a lion’s head, goat’s torso, and tail of a dragon. In Medieval texts, the chimera often appeared with any number of variations, but it consistently identified a beast in which radically distinct parts were joined together as a unified form. Similarly, chimerical visual ambiguities occur when any disparate parts, whether bodily, symbolic, or iconographical, are joined together. Often, such obscurities produce new and surprising meanings or interpretations. According to the work’s title, the distinct parts emerge from an implied chthonic, or subterranean, underworld. When photographed, the separate objects, organic and inorganic, are unified into a single composition. As amalgamations, the symbolic functions of the individual objects are transformed and the meanings produced by their combination are ultimately ambiguous.