

For immediate release

Building Worlds
July 21–September 15, 2018

Reston, VA: Greater Reston Arts Center (GRACE) is please to present *Building Worlds*, a thematic exhibition of work by five artists—Michael Booker, Rachel Guardiola, Timothy Harper, Laura Beth Konopinski, and Katherine Tzu-Lan Mann—taking place July 21–September 15, 2018, at the gallery located at Reston Town Center.

The five artists featured in *Building Worlds* share an interest in the role of science fiction, scientific fact, and fantasy in the changing nature of our fears, ideals, and questions about being human. Recognizing that our retelling of the past changes constantly and that opening ourselves to new possibilities can help identify the biases of our accepted histories, the artists in this exhibition create their own worlds, including cultural references and artifacts, to question the assumptions of history-making and truth-telling.

The selection of works brings together concepts of scientific inquiry and fantasy to reflect on issues of social injustice, environmental disasters, and emotional turmoil, while examining the possibility of changing these dystopian elements to create an alternative outcome. Each artist is an exacting connoisseur of their preferred media and all are focused on indulging their imagination to create visual narratives of layered meaning and connections.

With methodical and precise hatch marks and prismatic colors, Michael Booker creates a hypnotic series of drawings and paintings of a utopic environment called OMNI, addressing themes of memory, tradition, and social and political issues, while referencing ancient African culture, African-American history, art history, and more.

Rachel Guardiola’s performances, installation work, and photography are based on the artist’s questioning of what the wilderness might look like without human presence. Her response is presented through the fantastic narrative of a Cyborg space-pirate named Madame VEGA—a character inspired by the Bene Gesserit, a powerful sisterhood in Frank Herbert’s *Dune* series, focused on advancing humanity and saving it from extinction.

With an affinity for foraging in salvage yards, alleyways, and city gutters, Timothy Harper’s sculptures are whimsical interactive objects comprised of obsolete machines, dismantled toys, and decaying plant matter. The revamped objects are given a new purpose—to contain or support their new discrete environments—unrelated to their original functions, evoking memories of child-like experiences with music boxes and automated toys, and apocalyptic imagery of discarded materials tossed into the trash heap.

Laura Beth Konopinski sculpts glass, both in liquid and its solid state using grinding, carving, engraving, polishing, and sandblasting techniques to create biodomes and sculptures in which to explore emotional riddles. The pieces are reliquaries for moments of collision between reason and intuition, and influenced by human behavior, animal husbandry, daily meditation practice, and collections of biological specimens.

Katherine Tzu-Lan Mann plays with tropes of landscape, using detailed drawings of leafy ferns, flowering blooms, and climbing vines combined with wildly fluid paint pours, explosive patterning, and thick ink lines to create a dense tropical thicket. Her site-specific painting on vinyl installed on the gallery windows, depicts a fantastical environment of overabundance.

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Building Worlds is a celebration in the diversity of life, artistic curiosity, and optimism. These artists illustrate the importance of employing artistic rigor in combination with a scholarly perspective of observation, questioning, and research. Each artist in this exhibition is pushing the boundaries of their practice, immersing themselves in a demanding creative process to provide us with new mysteries to explore.

For more information please visit restonarts.org

The Greater Reston Arts Center is dedicated to enriching community life by promoting involvement and excellence in the contemporary visual arts. Its gallery showcases exceptional emerging and established artists from the mid-Atlantic region and beyond; its GRACE Art program delivers art enrichment experiences in over 40 schools regionally, impacting over 20,000 students; and its annual Northern Virginia Fine Arts Festival is among the top such events in the country. The Greater Reston Arts Center is always free and open to the public.

The Greater Reston Arts Center gratefully acknowledges the leadership of its Board of Directors and the support of its sponsors, members, and patrons. GRACE is supported in part by ARTSFAIRFAX, Reston Community Center, Virginia Commission for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

