



Jeremy Coleman Smith, *Corner*,
2014, Digital C-print.

Throughout the ages, artists have sought to deceive viewers' eyes by rendering three-dimensional space onto two-dimensional surfaces. The establishment of linear and aerial perspective systems during the Italian Renaissance period elevated this art of illusionistic space to a science, and artists have honed these techniques until photography took over the mimetic role of painting in the late nineteenth century. A century later, the invention of Photoshop and other photo-editing software allowed artists to manipulate images seamlessly. Recent developments in 3D computer graphic technology dramatically improved the spaces depicted in video games and movies while virtual reality itself is becoming more ubiquitous as cost reduction have made them commercially viable, affecting the way people view their everyday reality. Now with the advent of "augmented reality" how can we discern what is real anymore or what "real" even means?

The four contemporary artists gathered in this exhibition – Curt Ikens, Kim Keever, Martin Kruck, and Jeremy Coleman Smith – have constructed cinematic vistas and alluring objects which blur the boundary between real and artifice. By refining their art through laborious methods and techniques, they seek to deceive viewers' initial perceptions while simultaneously revealing the fact that their art is a "construct," made up of unexpected materials and sources. This ironic attitude has partially grown out of the poststructuralist mindset of questioning any given notion such as gender identity.



Curt Ikens, *Figments of Forefathers*,
2015, bamboo, plywood, dye, stain, varnish, wax, sweat, and dirt

Audience rearranging the pieces during the reception.



Martin Kruck, *Harbitorium 2: Cell*,
2015, photography, digital print, 36 x 24 inches

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CONSTRUCTED S|P|A|C|E



Featured Artists: Curt Ikens, Kim Keever,
Martin Kruck, and Jeremy Coleman Smith

Curated by Midori Yoshimoto



Kim Keever, *Blue Delta*,
2002, Cibachrome face-mounted on Plexiglass, 40 x 60 inches

Reminiscent of the Hudson River School and the German Romantic paintings, **Kim Keever's** landscapes are awe inducing through their sheer beauty. What they may not realize by just looking is that these are photographs of miniature landscapes built by the artist inside a large water tank. The tempestuous atmosphere in each landscape is rendered through injecting liquid paint into the water and catching its movement and interaction with lights by a camera. *Blue Delta* (2002), for example, is a photograph of the mini mountains which Keever made from plaster powder in the bottom of a one-hundred-gallon tank. He used a stick to brush plaster and create appearance of a flowing river. Mylar underneath the plaster is reflective and completes the illusion. He left the algae growing inside the glass of the tank intentionally to add a layer of passing time - incorporating the fourth dimension of time as well. *A World Before* (2003) was created with similar methods, but a silhouetted screen depicting vines was added from another photograph. Because no human is present, Keever's landscapes have a timeless quality - as though the moment were frozen eternally with the viewer being the only witness to this world.



Kim Keever, *A World Before*,
2003, Cibachrome face-mounted on Plexiglass, 27 x 40 inches

Martin Kruck's mysterious interiors, rendered by photographic means, similarly lack human presence and make viewers speculate where these vistas belong. These spaces do not exist in reality, however. They are composites of several different photographs which the artist took in various locations, such as hotels, zoos, museums, and historic houses. In *Savoy*, a classical statue from the Hermitage Museum in Russia is placed in a medical ex-

amination room for great apes. The bench in the center of the photograph is actually a table where an ape was operated on. The cold, uninviting atmosphere of the room, combined with the starkness of the statue, creates a completely alien space, similar to a cell taken from a science fiction movie. Kruck is interested in diverse forms of habitats which are designed for humans or animals to live in comfortably. Those habitats often contain some elements of tamed or faux nature, such as potted plants and plastic flowers. The series title, *Harbitorium* is a made-up word which combines the concepts of "habitat," and "terrarium," while the titles of his individual works are borrowed from the names of hotels. According to the artist, "More enclosures than landscapes, the works tend to reveal how extremely studied life is." By constantly blurring the border between nature and artifice, his photographs make us realize the spaces we inhabit may not be so different from those for test subjects, yet, one can find, in such artificial environments, an ineffable beauty – not so different from the earlier Romantic notion of the sublime.

Jeremy Coleman Smith is equally interested in domestic spaces as reflections of human desire. He sees home and its interior as an "arena for adornment, refection, or as a personal museum," and considers the way people display their possessions as a "depiction of self-narrative." By creating a replica of a domestic interior with objects from disposable materials such as cardboard and paper, Smith questions the values attached to these "trophies" by their owners. His work questions "what we cherish more, the image of the object, the idea of the experience, or the object itself"? His new installation, *Cross Section: Bottom Shelf*, consists of a kitchen sink with a window above, looking out above a beautiful vista enfolding. The counter is equipped with a bottle, a soap dispenser, and a glove, all of which are made of paper. Gently lit from behind, this work exudes a quiet majesty, encased within the mundane scene of an everyday kitchen. What does this scene tell us about its owner? The photograph, *Corner*, is similarly suggestive by featuring an arm chair and a reading light. What viewers might not discern at first glance is that the chair and wallpaper are made of cardboard and they are part of a room-size environment built by the artist from scratch. Smith's skillful rendition of each object and its environment not only deceives viewers, but also induces them to look more carefully.

Another artist whose craftsmanship is clearly demonstrated through his sculptures is **Curt Ikens**. Having been raised in a family running a hardwood flooring business, Ikens had an early experience in installing hardwood floors. Although he left the business early, he returned to the medium and re-purposed it as fine art. He laboriously mimics the appearance of European parquet floors through dying and staining Asian bamboo floor planks which are considered more environmentally sustainable, replacing traditional flooring materials today. He artificially creates scratch marks and discolorations on these floor-like objects to give them a patina of use over years. Furthermore, through the use of incongruous patterns and misaligned edges, he realizes and disrupts the order of the grids normally found in traditional parquet floors, and introduces an element of drama in each work. In a subtle way, Ikens' work questions conformity and the rigid structures of tradition.

While the four artists are from different generations, they are all informed by postmodernism and have lived in this ever increasingly digital-image-saturated era. They deconstruct the illusion of space and reconstruct a unique, imaginary space, all while inviting the audience to explore their own varied emotional responses within these interior and exterior spaces.

Note: All quotes are from respective artists' websites.

Midori Yoshimoto, Ph.D.
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Jeremy Coleman Smith, *Cross Section: Bottom Shelf*,
2017, Ink on paper, paper, foam core, and ceramic



Martin Kruck, *Harbitorium 2: Savoy*,
2015, photography, digital print, 40 x 24 inches



Curt Ikens, *Elucidated Future from an Elucidated Past*,
2014, bamboo, plywood, dye, stain, vanish, wax, sweat,