

CHECKLIST

KAROLINA SOBECKA

A memory, an ideal, a proposition, 2017
mixed media: aerosols, water, vacuum pump, book, bell jars, table, C-prints, video
variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist

KAROLINA SOBECKA and JAMIE ALLEN

Public Carbon Capture Request for Qualifications and Expressions of Interest (RFQ) (a proposal including artist statement, drawing of the public art sculpture and diagram of CO2 procurement), 2018
variable dimensions
Courtesy of the artist

BOSCO SODI

Muro, 2017-2019
clay timbers
71 x 236-1/4 x 19-3/4 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York, NY

BOSCO SODI

Muro (documentation), 2017-2019
clay timber
19-1/2 x 4 x 4 in.
certificate of authenticity
11 x 8-1/2 in.
photograph of installation in Washington Square Park, NYC, September 7, 2017
print on cotton paper
37-7/8 x 52-3/4 in.
timelapse of *Muro* installation
34 sec loop
Courtesy of the artist and Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York, NY

TAVARES STRACHAN

130,000 Years, 2018
Courtesy of the artist
installation with the following components:

Taxonomies, entomologies, and evolutions, 2018

2 min. video loop
cast calcium monitors and LED screens, neon, glass, calcium carbonate sheets,
acrylic boxes and tanks
dimensions variable

The Whale (Study for Venice), 2013

collage, pigment, graphite, on moab paper backed with sintra, encased in acrylic
3 panels, overall dimensions: 100-1/2 x 72 x 2-1/2 in.

The Reindeer (Study for Venice), 2013

collage, pigment, graphite, on moab paper backed with sintra, encased in acrylic
3 panels, overall dimensions: 100-1/2 x 72 x 2-1/2 in.

The Bear (Study for Venice), 2013

collage, pigment, graphite, on moab paper backed with sintra, encased in acrylic
3 panels, overall dimensions: 100-1/2 x 72 x 2-1/2 in.

JORGE TACLA

Señal de abandono 34 / Sign of Abandonment 34 (Homs), 2018
oil and cold wax on canvas
80 x 320 in.
Courtesy of the artist and Cristin Tierney Gallery, New York, NY



INTRODUCTION + ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Art provides us with a means of broadening our perceptions to provoke an understanding of the world anew. Through an ambitious program of temporary exhibitions, the USF Contemporary Art Museum (CAM) offers students and the community an opportunity to encounter and enjoy the work of innovative artists who are making a global impact.

The Visible Turn: Contemporary Artists Confront Political Invisibility is the second exhibition curated for CAM by Christian Viveros-Fauné, Curator-at-Large. The exhibition brings together four international artists: Karolina Sobocka, Bosco Sodi, Tavares Strachan, and Jorge Tacla, each working in diverse media to address various forms of cultural concealment present in today's culture. Christian invited artists committed through their practice to disrupt invisibility and inspire empowerment as they reveal people and ideas that are not fully evident in today's political and cultural environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The remarkable staff of CAM, led by Deputy Director Noel Smith, function as a team to ensure that all aspects of this exhibition and related programming meet the highest professional standards for presenting contemporary art. Shannon Annis, Curator of the Collection/Exhibitions Manager, worked closely with the artists and curator to assist in the production of the commissioned works as well as coordinated loans and shipping. Vincent Kral, Chief Preparator, coordinated the team effort to install the exhibition as well as to produce the custom-built vitrines for the *130,000 Years* installation by Tavares Strachan. Robert Aiosa, Sculpture Fabricator at Graphicstudio, led the fabrication team and was assisted by Nestor Caparros and Gary Schmitt. Tony Palms, Exhibition Designer, designed the installation of the exhibition in collaboration with the curator. Leslie Elsasser, Curator of Education, developed the related educational programs. Sarah Howard, Curator of Public Art and Social Practice, coordinated Bosco Sodi's *Muro* installation and performance. Don Fuller, Curator of New Media, provided oversight for printed and digital materials associated with the exhibition, assisted by intern Marty de la Cruz. Many others on the staff of the Institute for Research in Art

organized a myriad of details to make the exhibition and related events successful including Amy Allison, Jessica Barber, Alyssa Cordero, Mark Fredricks, Ian Foe, Eric Jonas, Will Lytch, David Waterman, Randall West, as well as students Adam Bakst, Avery Dyen, Annalieth Garzon, Alejandro Gómez Hernández, Ashley Jablonski, Zoe McIlwain, and Angel Poulos.

I wish to thank the artists and those who work on their behalf in their studios and galleries for their diligence in securing the works in the exhibition, including Karolina Sobocka; Jorge Tacla; William Petroni, Managing Director of Cristin Tierney Gallery; Bosco Sodi; John Rohrer, Studio Manager for Studio Bosco Sodi; Katharine Jaensch at Kasmin Gallery; Tavares Strachan; and Mariko Tanaka, Luke Kooper, Christophe Thompson and Carl Everett at Isolated Labs, Tavares Strachan's studio.

Because of recent changes in grant funding at both the local and state level, the Contemporary Art Museum would not have been able to present this important exhibition without the generous contribution of our leading sponsor, Stanton Storer and his Embrace The Arts Foundation.

We are also deeply grateful to the Gobiuff Foundation, USF World, and Dr. Allen Root for their invaluable support.

Many others from across campus and in the community have collaborated with various aspects of this exhibition. For their interest and support, I thank the CAM Club, Patel College of Sustainability, SYCOM School of Music faculty and students, and James Moy, Dean of the College of The Arts.

The concept and quality of an exhibition relies on the talents of the curator and participating artists. I am most appreciative of the innovative ideas and work of curator Christian Viveros-Fauné and the participating artists: Karolina Sobocka, Bosco Sodi, Tavares Strachan, and Jorge Tacla.

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MARGARET MILLER
Director, USF Institute for Research in Art



Karolina Sobocka, *A memory, an ideal, a proposition*, 2017. COVER: Detail

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The Visible Turn: Contemporary Artists Confront Political Invisibility is curated by Christian Viveros-Fauné, and organized by the USF Contemporary Art Museum. The Stanton Storer Embrace the Arts Foundation is the major supporter of *The Visible Turn: Contemporary Artists Confront Invisibility*. Bosco Sodi, *Muro* is sponsored by The Gobiuff Foundation and USF World. The opening night artist conversation is made possible by the generous support of Dr. Allen Root in honor of his late wife Janet G. Root. Film on the Lawn presented by CAM Club. The USF Contemporary Art Museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.



THE VISIBLE TURN: Contemporary Artists Confront Political Invisibility

JANUARY 11 – MARCH 2, 2019
USF Contemporary Art Museum



THE VISIBLE TURN: CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS CONFRONT POLITICAL INVISIBILITY

INTRODUCTION

In Plato's *The Republic*, the character Glaucon tells the tale of Gyge's Ring: the mythical band rendered the wearer invisible, enabling him or her to perform any act without fear of being known or discovered. Today, anyone with an Internet connection can become invisible. While the behavior of Russian hackers and Internet trolls supports Glaucon's assessment that the desire for invisibility is in part a longing for unaccountability, there is, historically speaking, another far more common way to become invisible. That disappearing act is the result of economic powerlessness, social disenfranchisement and political expediency.

The four artists in *The Visible Turn: Contemporary Artists Confront Political Invisibility* speak to the disenfranchisement of people and ideas that have crucially been omitted from today's social, political, economic and cultural life through four major artworks. These are Jorge Tacla's monumental twenty-six foot "portrait" of the Syrian city of Homs in ruins; Karolina Sobeca's exploration of the dark reality of climate change through the reconstruction of a trio of historical clouds; the raising of Bosco Sodi's *Muro*, a wall constructed of clay bricks made by Mexican migrants that is dismantled by museum visitors; and Tavares Strachan's *130,000 Years*, an installation consisting of an 18-channel video work and wall-mounted, collaged entries, each of which reference his *Encyclopedia of Invisibility*, a massive, 2000-page encyclopedia of invisible persons, places, groups, and things.

Anonymity, concealment, encryption, opaqueness, unintelligibility, social and political change enacted undercover or hidden in plain sight. These are all enemies of what cultural theorists have termed "regimes of visibility." Art by its very nature is and must remain visible. This inherent commitment to visibility can, at certain historical junctures, also act as a bulwark against the use of clandestine or arbitrary power. In the hands of the artists in *The Visible Turn*, contemporary art proposes that concrete cultural, social and political relations should be rendered starkly visible, while encouraging transparency, consciousness raising and a collective and enduring fight for recognition.

If the rise of identity politics in the 1970s and 80s championed certain marginalized identities and concepts

proposition, documents an attempt to reassemble three clouds that changed the world.

As Sobeca notes, clouds fundamentally acquire characteristics of the ground below them: "Particles at the center of cloud droplets are traces of natural and human activity. A cloud is therefore more than a sum of gases, matter and meteorological forces." In the words of environmental historian David Gissen, each cloud "contains within it the tragedies and successes of the social transformation of nature that exist wherever human experience appears."

In *A memory, an ideal, a proposition*, Sobeca reassembles three clouds that have or will change the world. The material composition of the original clouds is reconstituted and the conditions necessary for the cloud formation are made manifest. The clouds the artist recreates for this project are:

- I. "A memory": a giant supercloud that was formed in 1815 after the eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia. The largest volcanic eruption in recorded history, the event cooled the globe by 0.7-1.3 °F, created a worldwide agricultural disaster, and helped inspire

Mary Shelley to write the novel *Frankenstein*.

- II. "An ideal": a cloud that was formed in 1946 in a "cold box" laboratory at the General Electric Research Lab in Schenectady, New York. This mass of condensed water was created in the vain hope that natural resources could be fully controlled through technological means.
- III. "A proposition": this cloud is scheduled to be produced in 2019 some 8 miles above the ground in Tucson, Arizona, as part of a first ever field test in Solar Radiation Management. While the effects of geo-engineering to counteract global warming are difficult to predict, its potential future should be cause for explicit debate and concern.

These specific clouds have transformed how we think about climate, technology and humanity's control of nature. By examining their material composition and the conditions in which they were formed, Sobeca reconsiders the geological and social transformations they wrought and the changes they will help bring about in the future.

Bosco Sodi (b. 1970, Mexico City) is an artist well known for his richly textured, vividly colored large-scale paintings and

sculptures that he has exhibited in museums and galleries throughout the world. The New York-based Mexican artist has made a career of plumbing the emotive power and crudeness of his materials, while arriving at a contemporary aesthetic that connects intimately both to traditions of minimalism and *art informel*.

More recently, the artist has turned to installation and performance to express what amount to concrete collective social and political concerns. Bosco Sodi's first public installation, *Muro*, is a 6 foot high by 20 foot long wall constructed with 1080 unique clay bricks that were made by hand with the help of local craftsmen in the artist's studio in Oaxaca, Mexico. *Muro* was first erected in New York's Washington Square Park on the morning of September 7, 2017, for a single day. At the end of that day, visitors were invited to take the wall apart collectively by removing single bricks to take home with them. Less than a year later, *Muro* was rebuilt and taken apart following the same procedures on July 7, 2018, in front of the National Theater on London's South Bank.

On the morning of January 24 *Muro* will be reconstructed and taken apart once again in the plaza in front of USFCAM

with the help of volunteers. A powerful metaphor for barriers built and dismantled throughout history, Sodi's installation also expands upon the artist's ongoing interest in organic processes beyond his own control. The impermanent nature of the installation—as well as the documentation of previous installations that is available inside the museum—additionally underscores the sentiment that all obstacles, no matter how great, have the potential to be pulled down through the force of collective action.

Tavares Strachan (b. 1979, Nassau, Bahamas) is a New York and Nassau-based conceptual artist whose multi-media installations investigate science, technology, mythology, history, and exploration. One of his more recent works, *The Encyclopedia of Invisibility*, is a 2400-page encyclopedia featuring information on invisible persons, places, groups, and things the artist has amassed over a decade. It includes, among other figures, Rosalind Franklin, the historically overlooked scientist who laid the groundwork for Francis Crick to James Watson's discovery of DNA's double-helix structure, and Matthew Henson, the African-American explorer only sometimes acknowledged as the co-discoverer of the North Pole with Robert Edwin Peary in 1909.

Removed by distance from direct access to the masterpieces of Western art as a child, Strachan gained much of his knowledge of the outside world, including art, through several highly edited, now anachronistic printed encyclopedias—such as the *World Book Encyclopedia* and the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

His installation at USFCAM, *130,000 Years* (2018), is centered around a newly produced 18-channel video work titled *Taxonomies, Entomologies, and Evolutions* that dramatizes various largely unseen changes in the Arctic environment. Separately and together, each television monitor highlights the invisibility and fragility of arctic wilderness and its species through found and studio-filmed footage. Held inside handmade vitrines, these monitors—which are made from calcium carbonate, or classroom chalk—are also accompanied by additional items, which include neon objects, drawings, photographic artifacts, and invisible glass sculptures. Additionally, Strachan's latest work directly references his own journey to the North Pole in 2013, itself a reimagining of Matthew Henson's 1909 expedition.

Jorge Tacla (b. 1958, Santiago, Chile) is a New York-based painter whose monumental, four-panel painting presented at USFCAM continues the artist's decades-long exploration of



Bosco Sodi, *Muro*. Installation view in Washington Square Park, New York. September 2017. By Diego Flores and Chris Stach

the invisible structures and systems at work in society. In keeping with his mission to present a sublime yet damaged view of the world, his latest canvases feature heavily impastoed, expressionistic surfaces wrought in oil and cold wax, and limited palettes of grey, blue, and red. Constructed from unstable, ghost-like marks, they blur the formalistic boundaries between abstraction and representation. They also revisit one of the artist's favorite subjects: injured landscapes and buildings, distilled from Tacla's memory as well as his vast archives of images from photo albums, books, magazines, and the Internet.

In the 1980s and '90s, Tacla moved from depictions of abject bodies and desert landscapes to a career devoted to painting sublime views of the world's worst nightmares.

Among his subjects are the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City and various unending conflicts in the Middle East. Throughout, Tacla has always focused on the damage, never on the violence itself.

The ruined architecture featured in the multipanel painting Tacla has made especially for USFCAM, which he has titled *Sign of Abandonment 34 (Homs)* (2018), represents the destroyed Syrian city of Homs as assembled from a composite of images available from various print and web media.

—CHRISTIAN VIVEROS-FAUNÉ
Curator-at-Large, USF Contemporary Art Museum



Jorge Tacla, *Sign of Abandonment 34 (Homs)*, 2018