

Prize 2023

BARBARA H. WEIL

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STUDIO  
WEIL

*What if, If only, If this goes on*

ART FOR CHANGE

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Exhibition curated by Aina Pomar Cloquell

07/09 - 22/10/2023

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**Erola Arcalis, Mar Guerrero, Xim Llompart, Trevor Lloyd-Morgan, Florence de L'Olivier, Jazmin Luna, Magdalena Puigserver**

How does one construct a science fiction story?

From popular culture, we would probably turn to outer space, galaxies and planets, and interplanetary (and perhaps temporal) travel to begin to answer this question. On a more literary and historical side, the imaginary of science fiction tends to orbit around a more or less distant future, sometimes utopian, sometimes dystopian, but often post-apocalyptic.

Octavia E. Butler mentioned on several occasions that her novels could be cautionary tales, narratives about what might happen in the future if we continue to inhabit the world as we do now. She and authors such as Isaac Asimov and Robert A. Heinlein have been credited with categorising science fiction stories into three possible themes: "What if, If only, If this goes on."

Although this perspective places the genre with an eye to the future, it is from the present that the context is observed and measured in order to react through fictions. In an interview for the BBC, J.G. Ballard responded to the question about what a science fiction writer is, identifying him as: "somebody who responds to a particular set of changes around them and I think that these are the sort of changes I am talking about, not all of which are fearful ones. Science has brought a huge cornucopia of possibilities, excitements, interests, and at the same time it has brought potential hazards. My job is to respond to the world in which I live, and

*I see science and technology as the transforming factors.*<sup>1</sup>

Whether with spaceships, alien invasions, new interplanetary gender perspectives, devastating floods or cybernetic ethics, it seems that science fiction finds its frame of existence in temporality and our relationship to our immediate environment. After all, virtually all authors in this genre conduct an analysis of how we humans relate to the world and the tools we have to mediate it, whether through technology, ethics, science, or politics. Tools acquired in the past, used in the present and with the potential to affect the future.

Diverse temporalities and working with the great elements that make up life on Earth as we know it come together in Studio Weil. The artists shortlisted for the 'Barbara H Weil Prize 2023. Art for Change' propose different temporal relationships with light, water, earth, air, vegetation, animal life, offering multiple possibilities to develop a science fiction story.

Trevor Lloyd-Morgan focuses on his immediate space, on the elements that are in his environment at the present moment. The olive trees that surround his studio in the Serra de Tramuntana are centuries-old observers of life in this archipelago. Looking up towards the mountains and down towards the sea, they encapsulate time.

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1 Excerpt from Mavis Nicholson's interview with J.G. Ballard, Good Afternoon [07/04/77] (1977), Thames Television.

There is a certain link to what Florence de l'Olivier describes as ancestral longing in identifying an intention to accompany her *Boden* project. The unlikely relationship between fashion design, Eladio Carrión & Bad Bunny, bio-plastic fabrication and the materiality of the soil are found in this dance between body and found objects that form an ode to rootedness with the land (Earth).

A way of being present and at the same time connecting with the past is how Jazmin Luna makes us participate. The artist's final intention is to pause the viewer's gaze and time, to invite them to stop before the paintings and observe them sensorially. The water that fills the almost monumental work *La Platja dels Morts* seems to intentionally overflow the limits of the format.

In the work of these three artists, we find a link with elements rooted in the past, which in some way transcends us. In a fictionalised narrative, they would follow in the footsteps of authors with an anthropological side such as Ursula K. Leguin, Michael Bishop or Chad Oliver, with a certain connection to ancestral elements and a deepening of intergenerational relations.

The dialogue between past and present generations is manifested directly and indirectly in the exhibition through various works, leaving the door open to potential conversations about how future generations will deal with the consequences of climate change. Jazmin Luna also presents the triptych *Figueres 3*, which reconnects with the earth, a tribute to the artist's grandparents through fine lines on silk.

In parallel, Erola Arcalis revisits her great-grandfather's allotment in the work *Sa Tanca*, curiously examining the vegetation that coexists with the objects collected decades ago. What can the poetic archaeology of this space frozen in time reveal to us? The film points to a reflection on how we can interpret the past from the present, and in this line leads us to ask ourselves what vestiges of our present will transcend our future: what will be the ruins of another time?

A multiplicity of times and spaces coexist in the works of Mar Guerrero, Xim Llompart and Magdalena Puigserver. The latter artist proposes a narrative of the disaster from an aesthetic detached precisely from the

catastrophe. In a literary simile, we could say that the work is located in the genre of climate fiction (cli-fi), highlighting in a candid and accelerated way the problem of global warming. The ephemeral nature of the candle shapes the polar bear as a visible victim of the melting of the poles.

Xim Llompart's work *Las Nubes de Venus* imagines the changes in light that the Earth could undergo as a result of atmospheric changes caused by climate change. According to some scientists, the light we experience today is not the same as that in which future generations will live, as it may progressively resemble that seen on Venus today.

To conclude the planetary journey, Mar Guerrero presents the film *Desde Marte*, which explores the past, present and future of water through a multi-temporal narrative with the Atacama Desert as the main setting. The film's combination of documentary and fiction, influenced by the early science fiction novel *Desde Jupiter* by Francisco Miralles, is also palpable in *Un viaje eterno*. The sculptural work relates genetic manipulation to the natural evolution of the dog, providing a reflection on the obsolescence of resources and their recycling, influenced by the reading of Donna Haraway and JG Ballard's *The Voices of Time*.

The exhibition, therefore, proposes several routes that intertwine with each other. The viewer, as an agent of change, brings their own reading and subjectivities to what we interpret as 'Art for Change'. On the other hand, there is the cross reading of different temporalities, a play of time and perspectives that look to the future. Perhaps the most stimulating option is to enter the exhibition with the intention of creating one's own science fiction story. And as a backdrop, there is always the option to dialogue with the works, asking oneself: *What if, If only, If this goes on.*

