



# QUEENS MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Queens Museum Presents *Mundos Alternos: Art and Science Fiction in the Americas***

*Traveling from UCR ARTS at the University of California, Riverside, the East Coast debut features new and reimagined work by 30 Latinx contemporary artists and collectives from across the Americas, as well as satellite installations and programs at The Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, Museum of the Moving Image, Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling, and the New York Hall of Science.*

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**Queens Museum**  
New York City Building  
Flushing Meadows Corona Park  
Queens, NY 11368

**T** 718 592 9700 **F** 718 592 5778  
**E** [info@queensmuseum.org](mailto:info@queensmuseum.org)  
[queensmuseum.org](http://queensmuseum.org)

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**Exhibition dates: April 7 – August 18, 2019**

Public opening: April 7, 1 – 5 PM



Image: Chico MacMurtrie/Amorphic Robot Works. *Organic Arches (Time Traveler)*, 2014/2017. High tensile fabric, electric valves, Arduino, Raspberry Pi, Computer. Photo by Nikolay Maslov, courtesy UCR ARTS.

**Queens, NY (April 7, 2019) – *Mundos Alternos: Art and Science Fiction in the Americas*** brings together the work of international artists from across Latin America and the Caribbean with Latinx artists from the United States. In the more than 50 works featured in the exhibition, most created in the last two decades, artists employ the imagery of science fiction to explore the colonial enterprise that shaped the Americas, different iterations of history, and “alienating” ways of being.

New technologies, communities, creatures, and world orders come together in the fictive future worlds of science fiction, in which they could exist. This exhibition's travel to the Queens Museum continues a transnational conversation about speculative aesthetics at a time when immigrant futures are facing uncertainty. As a former site of two New York World's Fairs that brought technologically-driven, futuristic ideas to a world stage, the Museum is the most relevant venue to host a show of this kind. Located in the borough of Queens, a region transformed by waves of Caribbean, South American, and Mexican migration, *Mundos Alternos* and its public programs address contemporary issues of nationhood, citizenship, and borders, and invite East Coast audiences to imagine an alternate world where many worlds may cohabitate.

*Mundos Alternos* is curated by Robb Hernández, Assistant Professor of English at UCR; Tyler Stallings, Director of the Frank M. Doyle Arts Pavilion at Orange Coast College, and former Artistic Director of the Barbara and Art Culver Center of the Arts at UCR ARTS; and Joanna Szupinska-Myers, Senior Curator at the California Museum of Photography at UCR ARTS. The traveling iteration is organized by Hitomi Iwasaki, Director of Exhibitions and Curator at the Queens Museum, and Joanna Szupinska-Myers.

"Both technology and art are effective agents that continue to reshape our understandings of the world we live in," said Hitomi Iwasaki. It is the framework of science fiction that further catalyzes the imagination to reconstruct the difficulties that exist in this world and provides alternative possibilities. The resilience of humanity can abound in the crossroads of art and science fiction."

"*Mundos Alternos* brings together works by artists who use science fiction to explore alternative perspectives on history and the future," reflected Joanna Szupinska-Myers. "Through classic tropes like time travel, alternate futures, and even extraterrestrials, they powerfully, and at times, playfully unpack complex issues of identity, citizenship, and borders."

The exhibition is organized into thematic "constellations" including *Reimagining the Americas*, *Cornerstones*, *Alternate Americas*, *Time Travel*, *Indigenous Futurisms*, and *Alien Skins*, and offers a groundbreaking account of the intersections among science fiction, techno-culture, and the visual arts.

**Reimagining the Americas** includes references to space travel, technoculture, ancient spiritual traditions, and mythology, as the artists contend with terrestrial realities that have resulted from colonial politics, immigration control, and the spread of American consumerist culture. A notable highlight, featured in the center of the Museum, is:

- *Organic Arches (Time Traveler)*, 2014/2017 by Chico MacMurtrie and Amorphic Robot Works (ARW). Interested in robotics, the bodily form, and movement, Chico MacMurtrie and his Brooklyn-based collective ARW constructed this large, soft, kinetic sculpture from high-tensile, Tedlar fabric tubes, and pressurized air. Giving the appearance of life, when it is turned on its armlike tendrils continuously fill up and reach out. As they deflate and curl up, the collapsed arches retreat into the abstract sign language of a computer-controlled organism. Defying expectations of a fixed object or form, the work becomes a vessel for considering travel—across time, borders, and physical states.

**Cornerstones** presents foundational works of Latinx science fiction in film and literature. Highlights include:

- *Sleep Dealer* by Alex Riviera, 2008, a film that comments on real-life political and economic circumstances impacting labor in the globalized and automated economy of Western capitalism. It features a fictionalized story of a young Mexican man who, after losing his father in a military drone attack, is forced to work in a futuristic factory that enables workers to perform physical labor in the U.S. remotely. It also highlights the ongoing conflict over immigration at the U.S.-Mexican border.

- The Eaton Collection of Science Fiction & Fantasy at the University of California, Riverside is one of the biggest and most comprehensive collections of science fiction, fantasy, horror, and utopian literature, ephemera, and film. This selection of ten books contains some of the Eaton's most popular works produced by Latin American authors.

**Alternate Americas** includes artists who address the bias of historical record, which often favors those in power and omits the perspectives of marginalized groups. Their work creates opportunities for visitors to reconstruct places and events that have been cemented as a singular narrative into our experience.

Highlights include:

- *ADÁL, Coconauts in Space*, 1994-2016, prints on metal that present a reimagined account of the first moon landing, in which Puerto Rican astronauts, the "Coconauts," landed on the moon in 1963. The artist uses this claim of ownership as a metaphor for the U.S.'s colonial expansion into Puerto Rico, where he is from.
- *Emptiness: Queens Museum*, newly commissioned, site-specific wall drawings by Glexis Novoa are dispersed throughout the Museum and consider the relationships between architecture and political power. This fantastical and futuristic cityscape is inspired by the architecture of the Queens Museum itself, and other pavilions populated as a part of the 1939-40 and 1964-65 World's Fairs, and the Museum's own Panorama of the City of New York, a 9,000 square foot model of the City dating from 1964.

**Time Travel** presents installations that explore manipulations of time, memory, or translation that question what we know about imperialism, industry, and knowledge itself—a reminder of how the past and future are part of a cosmic continuum always alive in our present time. Highlights include:

- A new work by Clarissa Tossin, *Future Fossil*, 2018, a sculptural work that explores the post-apocalyptic conditions of the Earth's ecological collapse. A ruin of a world yet to come, she molded her own plastic waste to speak to the enduring footprint left by humans on the Earth, contrasting them with materials related to Amazonian indigenous aesthetic traditions which harmonize with the environment.
- Beatriz Cortez, *The Cosmos (Spaceship)*, 2015. Cortez took inspiration from the World's Fairs of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in which futuristic visions of Modernity and Western imperial exploits were often manifest in the aesthetics of pavilion architecture. Cortez complicates the dominant narratives presented at these events, turning her "pavilion" into a decolonial time-capsule with a 1911 audio recording of Ishi, an indigenous Yahi man who survived the California genocide.

**Indigenous Futurisms** explores the relationship between Indigenous communities and technology, highlighting links between ancient ideas, tools, and beliefs, and present-day realities. In doing so, the artists focus on a reevaluation of ancient wisdom and sovereignty and demonstrate that inherited knowledge is integral to the gradual evolutions in language, social relations, spirituality, and creativity that have created the world we live in. Highlights include:

- Rigo 23's *Autonomous InterGalactic Space Program*, 2009-ongoing, created in collaboration with indigenous Zapatista artists and artisans from Chiapas, Mexico. In workshops, Rigo 23 asked Zapatistas to imagine a future with complete autonomy from the Mexican government and global forces. This artwork emerged from these sessions as a technoculture, futuristic environment filled with Zapatista and Mayan cosmic references.
- Guillermo Bert, *Mapuche Stories: The Birdman*, 2011-12, and *Mapuche Stories: The Filmmaker*, part of "Encoded Textiles," 2011-12. Each of Guillermo Bert's "Encoded Textiles" is paired with a documentary video on a member of the Mapuche tribe, the largest indigenous population in Chile, and the only group not conquered by Spanish colonists in the sixteenth century.

## SATELLITE INSTALLATIONS IN NEW YORK CITY

### The Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art

Exhibition dates: April 25 – May 26, 2019

Alien Skins: "Hybrid Alternos" Performance and Curator's Welcome: May 7, 6.30 – 8.30 PM

**Alien Skins** presents costumes from performances and everyday life that reorient Latinx existence across global and planetary borders and intersectional perspectives. The section presents work by eight artists, which include:

- Queer feminist artist Carmelita Tropicana's costumes that she donned for film-performance-lectures that she made with her sister, filmmaker Ela Troyano, *Schwanze-Beast*, 2014, and *Post Plastica*, 2012. Tropicana employs irreverent humor and elaborate sci-fi narratives to reimagine the future of the environment and animal-human relationships, while also touching on issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality.
- Photographs by Ricardo Valverde, an important fixture in the East Los Angeles arts scene in the 1970s and 80s. These photographs of Valverde's artist friends were taken at a Blade Runner-themed Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) party in 1983. The event and the artists' cyberpunk, self-fashioned costumes reflect science fiction tropes like "alienness" that permeated the Chicano avant-garde at the time.
- Hector Hernandez, *Bulca*, 2015, and *Sound of Winter*, 2014, photographs that feature otherworldly figures that he calls "hyperbeasts," colorful blobs of swirling fabric with legs. Out of place in their common and unimaginative environments, they represent the increasing alienating gentrification of Austin, where the artist lives.

### The New York Hall of Science (NYSCI)

April 7 – August 18, 2019

On view at NYSCI is artist Rubén Ortiz Torres's *Alien Toy (La Ranfla Cósmica)*, 1997. The video features a kinetic sculpture inspired by the customized aesthetics of Chicano Lowriders. *Alien Toy* is a lo-fi pastiche of popular science fiction imagery, like Star Wars and UFO sightings, as they come together with a white Nissan pickup truck, a model commonly used by U.S. Border Patrol. Weekend family activities will also take place on the occasion of *Mundos Alternos* in the NYSCI Design Lab.

### PUBLIC PROGRAMS AT THE QUEENS MUSEUM

A series of performances, talks, readings, and workshops will be presented at the Queens Museum and partner venues to examine the far-reaching influence of science and speculative fiction in the Americas and beyond. The opening reception on April 7 will include a lecture on Latin American science fiction cinema by Mexico City-based guest scholar Itala Schmelz; a curator-led tour; and a performance by The Lesbian & Gay Big Apple Corps Symphonic Band, playing selections from *There and Back Again: A Sci-fi and Fantasy Voyage*.

Spring and summer programming will center on contributions from artists, writers, poets, scholars, and musicians that engage "futurisms" from a wide range of perspectives. Topics cover geopolitical, social, environmental, and personal themes, and will include screenings of works by Alex Rivera and Coco Fusco; performances by Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Guadalupe Maravilla, and Carmelita Tropicana; readings with writers such as N.K. Jemisin; as well as talks and panels with scholars including Catherine Sue Ramírez.

Running through the course of the exhibition is the Cities of Tomorrow Art Lab, a new interactive space at

the Queens Museum that allows kids and adults to engage with exhibition topics at the Museum and contribute their own creativity and perspective. The theme, *Cities of Tomorrow*, runs throughout the Museum's permanent and current temporary exhibitions. Taken together, our exhibitions celebrate New York City and its history, reimagine landscapes, examine dominant narratives, and propose other-worldly possibilities for cities and peoples. Visitors to the Art Lab go beyond looking and talking about art, as they write, draw, make, and playfully explore a variety of activities. Art Lab activities are available in Braille, English, Spanish, Bengali, and Mandarin.

## **SATELLITE PROGRAMS**

*Mundos Alternos* also features a dynamically expanded interface with satellite programs at partner institutions throughout the City. The Museum of the Moving Image will present *Uchronias and Dystopian Futures: Latin American Science Fiction Cinema of the 21st Century*, an eight film screening series organized by Itala Schmelz through July, with a lecture by Schmelz on April 14 kicking off the first screening; a one day indoor and outdoor festival of science fiction programs in collaboration with Queens Library Corona taking place at the library and Corona Plaza; weekly family activities at the NYSCI Design Lab; and a series of special programming for family audiences organized by Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling, Harlem.

## **CATALOG**

*Mundos Alternos: Art and Science Fiction in the Americas*, a 160-page publication with 125 color illustrations published by UCR ARTS, accompanies the exhibition. The book features a foreword by Sheila Bergman, introduction by curators Robb Hernández and Tyler Stallings, as well as text by Kency Cornejo, Itala Schmelz, Alfredo Suppia, Sherryl Vint, and curators Robb Hernández, Tyler Stallings, and Joanna Szupinska-Myers. In addition to focusing on specific regions in North, Central, and South America, the book's essays cross time and space, illuminating Soviet influence in Cuba, the impact of American pop culture in Mexico, and the cross-pollination of European avant-garde aesthetics in Brazil.

### **Full list of artists:**

- ADÁL (B. 1949 Utuado, Puerto Rico)
- AZTLÁN Dance Company (Est. 1974 Austin, Texas)
- Guillermo Bert (B. 1959 Santiago, Chile)
- Erica Bohm (B. 1976 Buenos Aires, Argentina)
- Tania Candiani (B. 1974 Mexico City, Mexico)
- Beatriz Cortez (B. 1970 San Salvador, El Salvador)
- Claudio Dicochea (B. 1971 San Luis Río, Colorado)
- Faivovich & Goldberg (Faivovich, B. 1977 Buenos Aires, Argentina & Goldberg, B. 1978 Paris, France)
- Sofía Gallisá Muriente (B. 1986. San Juan, Puerto Rico)
- Guillermo Gómez-Peña (B. 1959, Santiago, Chile)
- Hector Hernandez (B. 1974, Laredo, Texas)
- Gyula Kosice (B. 1924 Košice, Czechoslovakia, D. 2016 Buenos Aires, Argentina)
- La Gravedad de los Asuntos (founded 2015 by Nahum and Ale de la Puente). With selected participants Tania Candiani, Juan José Díaz Infante, Nahum, and Ale de la Puente.
- L.A. VATOCOSMICO c-s (B. 1953, San Antonio, Texas), previously known as LA David
- Robert "Cyclona" Legorreta (B. 1952, El Paso, Texas)
- Chico MacMurtrie / Amorphic Robot Works (B. 1961 Deming, New Mexico)
- Guadalupe Maravilla (B. 1976 San Salvador, El Salvador)
- Marion Martinez (B. 1954, Española, New Mexico)
- MASA—MeChicano Alliance of Space Artists (Est. 2004, San Antonio, Texas by Luis Valderas and

Paul Karam). With selected participants Sergio Hernández, Debora Kuetzpal Vasquez, Miguel Luciano, Laura Molina, Tony Ortega, and Raúl Servín)

- Jillian Mayer (B. 1984 Miami, Florida)
- Mundo Meza (B. 1955, Tijuana, Mexico, D. 1985 Los Angeles, California)
- Glexis Novoa (B. 1964 Holguin, Cuba)
- Rubén Ortiz Torres (B. 1964 Mexico City, Mexico)
- Rigo 23 (B. 1966 Madeira Island, Portugal)
- Alex Rivera (B. 1973 New York, New York)
- Clarissa Tossin (B. 1973 Porto Alegre, Brazil)
- Carmelita Tropicana (B. 1982 WOW Café Theater; a.k.a. Alina Troyano, B. 1951 Cuba)
- Luis Valderas (B. 1966 McAllen, Texas)
- Ricardo Valverde (B. 1946 Phoenix, Arizona, D. 1998 Los Angeles, California)
- José Luis Vargas (B. 1965 San Juan, Puerto Rico)

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### **Media Contacts**

Vyoma Venkataraman  
vyoma@queensmuseum.org  
718.592.9700 x227

Ayanna Long  
along@queensmuseum.org  
718.592.9700 x243

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### **About the Queens Museum**

*The Queens Museum in Flushing Meadows Corona Park features contemporary art, events of hyperlocal and international impact, and educational programs reflecting the diversity of Queens and New York City. Changing exhibitions present the work of emerging and established artists, both local and global, that often explore contemporary social issues, as well as the rich history of its site. In November 2013, the Museum reopened with an expanded footprint of 105,000 square feet, a soaring skylit atrium, a suite of daylight galleries, nine artist studios, and flexible event space. The Museum works outside its walls through engagement initiatives ranging from multilingual outreach and educational opportunities for adult immigrants, to a plethora of community led art and activism projects. The Museum's educational programming connects with school children, teens, families, seniors as well as those individuals with physical and mental disabilities. The Queens Museum is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. Visit [www.queensmuseum.org](http://www.queensmuseum.org). Follow us at @queensmuseum.*