

EARTH BOUND



“Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.”
Albert Einstein



THE AMERICAN CENTER FOR PHYSICS
One Physics Ellipse
College Park, Maryland 20740

DIRECTIONS

To reach ACP from the Capital Beltway: Take Exit #23-MD 201 southbound (Kenilworth Ave.); follow MD 201 for about 3 miles; turn right onto River Road at light; follow signs on River Road to ACP and Physics Ellipse; will see building on left.

To reach ACP from D.C.: Follow Rhode Island Avenue northbound; turn right onto MD 410 (East-West Highway); turn left onto MD 201 (Kenilworth Ave.); turn left onto River Road at 2nd light; follow signs on River Road to ACP and Physics Ellipse; will see building on left.

Metro: College Park - U. of Md stop on the Green Line.

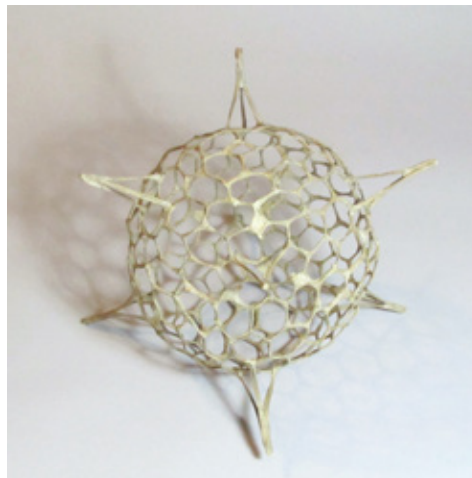


EARTH BOUND

JESSICA BEELS
MICHAEL COLLIER
ANDREA HUPPERT

Sarah Tanguy, Guest Curator
25 April–20 October 2017
Reception 25 April 2017
5:30 - 7:30 pm
Gallery Talk 6:15 pm

The American Center for Physics
One Physics Ellipse
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For viewing information,
call 301.209.3000



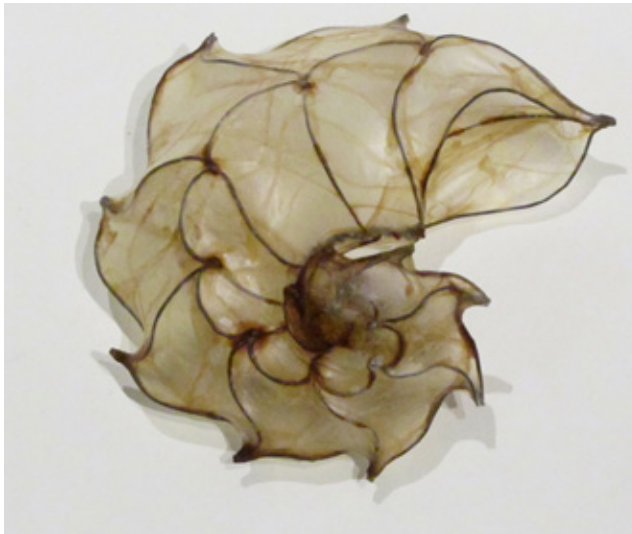
Above top: Andrea Huppert, *Afloat*, 2015, encaustic; 18 x 18"; courtesy of the artist.

Above: Jessica Beels, *Radiolarian*, 2014, overbeaten flax paper shrunk over steel, 13 x 13 x 13"; courtesy of the artist.

Cover: Michael Collier, *Arizona Snowbowl*, 1-28-13, color photograph with a Nikon D800, 17-3/4 x 11-3/4"; courtesy of the artist.

EARTH BOUND takes a focused look at planet Earth and our ecological relationship with it. Informed by the cross-disciplinary approach of Earth Science, mixed media sculptures by Jessica Beels, color photographs by Michael Collier, and encaustic paintings by Andrea Huppert bring alive the mysteries that nature holds within itself. Grounded in personal engagement and direct observation, the artists each offer a different perspective to our complex interconnectivity ranging from the biological to the industrial.

Ever since she was a child, Jessica Beels has been drawn to natural organisms. After exploring various textile practices such as costuming, embroidery, knitting, and bead weaving, she took a class in 1998 in sculptural paper techniques and now incorporates handmade paper from overbeaten flax and mulberry fiber or animal gut into her work. To produce a taut, translucent skin, she drapes paper or gut, while still wet, over reed or wire armatures. Many of her forms draw on the Golden Mean and the Fibonacci sequence, with the spiral appearing as a frequent trope: “I am intrigued by the combination of geometry and randomness in natural forms, how patterns dissolve into and echo each other.”



Jessica Beels, *Baroque Chrysalis*, 2015, gut over steel, 6 x 6 x 2-1/2"; courtesy of the artist.

Of particular interest is the perceptual ambiguity between mineral, plant and animal, and what happens when common cues are disrupted. *Baroque Chrysalis*, for example, also recalls the curled-up shape of a nautilus shell, a fiddlehead fern, or a human fetus. Rather than weld wire sections, she makes the hand-bound joints protrude as spikes, which complement the venous texture of the animal gut. The focus turns microscopic in the intricate *Radiolarian* series inspired by 19th-century scientist and artist Ernst Haeckel and the thousands of ancient maritime creatures he discovered during Atlantic and Mediterranean sea voyages. In one sculpture, eight needle-like arms protrude from a central capsule, itself composed of interlinked hexagons, to suggest its namesake's mineral skeleton. Here as elsewhere in her work, the dynamic between open and closed forms creates dramatic plays of light and shadows.

Michael Collier, a trained geologist, physician, pilot, and aerial photographer, asks us to look at industrial landscapes in the American Southwest, care-



Michael Collier, *Cane Creek Potash Mine*, 1996, color photograph with a Pentax 645, 17-5/8 x 12-3/4"; courtesy of the artist.

fully weighing their value as pristine versus productive locations. In the series *Dispassionate Landscapes: America's Industrial Footprint*, fourteen vistas and descriptive captions juxtapose the beauty of the land with the benefits of technological development and environmental preservation. His goals are to seek balance and encourage new thought: “From above, the earth becomes a mosaic of ridges, valleys, and plains. I see that rivers flow from the mountains down to the sea. I fly for any number of reasons—to get from one place to another, to explore geologic features, to photograph. I fly for the view, but mostly I fly for the vision.”

Ranging from copper mines and oil refineries to power plants and wind farms, the series triggers a bittersweet tension between a scene's imagined original state and its actual condition marked by societal need and human toil. In *Arizona Snowbowl*, downhill runs zigzag through a forested and snow-covered slope, bathed in roseate light, to address the economic aspiration of a ski resort on the San Francisco Peaks, which relies on artificial snow made from reclaimed water. By contrast, *Cane Creek Potash Mine* counters the synthetic blues, purples, and greens of potash evaporation basins (which oddly recall Salvador Dali's melting clocks in *The Persistence of Memory*) with the fiery oranges of the surrounding rocky terrain. In this case, the need for fertilizer drives human intervention to both feed a rising, global population and furnish local jobs.

From the striking topicality of Collier's photographs, we plunge into the immersive impressions of Andrea Huppert's highly tactile, mixed media paintings. Guided by intuition, she improvises with a variety of materials to fulfill her inner vision, while embracing the unexpected. Her repertoire has included oil, water-

colors and acrylic, and more more recently, encaustic, which she loves for its luminosity, in tandem with actual and invented, collaged elements. An underlying constant has been the tensions and harmonies between abstraction and realism: “By using symbolic natural images among an opus of shapes, lines and colors I try not to simply reproduce these objects and their environment but to respond to the inner reaction they evoke.”

Inspired by walks along the rolling hills, woods and waterways around her home or trips to foreign lands, her artistic response is equally attuned to shifts in weather, as well as diurnal and seasonal changes. In *Grounded*, a spectral bird, together with wire strands pegged to twigs, alludes to our interference with wildlife and our need for reconciliation. The palette suggests the transition between late winter and spring, with muted colors playing off vivid purples and greens, while dashes of radiant red, a color she associates with the heart, act as punctuation. The mood turns brighter in *Afloat*, which channels the intense vitality of a clear autumn day. As sky meets water in a shallow space, hints of lustrous leaves, stones and moss navigate a turquoise expanse and evoke the winding course of an unfolding journey.

Acts of discovery and revelation, the works in EARTH BOUND boldly stir the imagination and awaken the senses. While inviting us to appreciate the marvels of our planet in a new light, their artistic interpretations encourage reflection of our relationship with the natural world and with each other. As astronaut Piers J. Sellers wrote soon after his fatal diagnosis of stage 4 cancer: “...I'm very



Andrea Huppert, *Grounded*, 2016, Encaustic, twigs and wire on panel, 30 x 24"; courtesy of the artist.

grateful for the experiences I've had on this planet. As an astronaut I spacewalked 220 miles above the Earth. Floating alongside the International Space Station, I watched hurricanes cartwheel across oceans, the Amazon snake its way to the sea through a brilliant green carpet of forest, and gigantic nighttime thunderstorms flash and flare for hundreds of miles along the Equator. From this God's-eye-view, I saw how fragile and infinitely precious the Earth is. I'm hopeful for its future. And so, I'm going to work tomorrow.”