

Telofossils —

*FROM
A CONTEMPORARY
MOMENT
TO A FUTURE AFTER
THE END
OF THE WORLD:
AN ARTIST'S
THINKING*

— J. J. SHIH

Telofossils is a major cross-year exhibition of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei (MOCA) that opened at the beginning of 2013. For the French artist, Grégory Chatonsky as well as the staff of MOCA, this exhibition is a brand new experience of interaction and challenge. In addition to the two curators, one from Canada and one from Taiwan, Grégory also invited two of his artist friends to come to Taipei to create their collaborative, on-site artworks, Dominique Sirois, a Canadian sculptor, and Christophe Charles, a French sound artist who has lived in Japan for a long time. Both Dominique and Grégory took up quarters at MOCA for over two months to create the necessary items and programs needed for the exhibition and the artworks—both tangible and intangible. As a matter of fact, the artists were not alone, for the MOCA staff, part-timers, and volunteers were all involved in the epic preparation of the exhibition from the very beginning. Two enormous tents were set up at the MOCA plaza. MOCA staff accompanied the artists to gather the requisite material for the artworks from nearby neighborhoods. Even participants of the workshops, who were inspired by the project's unique nature, contributed to its realization. For two months, the plaza in front of the museum was like a massive, full-scale "art construction site," and the entire process at times confronted the participants with "uncertainties" as in a work of performance art.

Grégory Chatonsky is not only specialized in multimedia art, he is also a concept-oriented artist. Through the utilization of new media art and technologies, he conveys his thinking about "the philosophy of life." In the wake of the 2012 planetary obsession with a looming "end of the world" scenario, he challenges the prevailing opinions and points out that what might eventually end would be "the human race," and not "the world." Although everything would still carry on its existence after the disappearance of civilization, what the artist intends to explore here is human beings' "conditioned behavior." In this exhibition, Grégory explores the unpredictability inherent in political and economic systems as well as in people's everyday life, from a vantage point guided by the notions of "incident, memory, and dislocation." Through an embedded interplay of these notions the artist opens up a singular reading avenue.

Though the content of the exhibition may at times appear incoherent, fragmented and incomprehensible, it actually comprises some known events or familiar everyday language. Through a kind of "intuitive" appreciation and imaginative association, the artist's philosophical creations and exhibition, which have their origin in his observation of objects, express concern for humanity's living environment and pass judgment on humans' fathomless desire.

On the one hand, the exhibition simulates "a distant future" through the art of technological media; while on the other, it fortifies the "present moment" by way of visual forms. The exhibition is divided into three sections, identified as a trilogy of "destruction." In following the sequence order as it unfolds in the exhibition space, the sections are: "the End of the World Crisis," "At the End of the World," and "Imagination of the End of the World." Through a similar exhibition space ambiance, the sections at once present texts and issues ranging from contemporary situations, to everyday life, and to the survival of the future human race. From the beginning to the end of the exhibition, viewers successively come across three parts of a neon poem that states, "You miss me. Missing. I miss you." It is like a revelation and a puzzle at the same time, written in simple words yet intriguing. Just like the word "miss," which could refer to both "fail to capture" and "think longingly of someone," Grégory attempts to express a similar point—instead of paying attention to "the end of the world," we should care more about the different aspects and meanings of "the extinction of the human being"; instead of discussing the "destruction" brought about by human civilizations, we should explore the positive side of the fact that human civilizations have always come from the act of "searching." Based on this logic, the implicit psychological state "behind" the incident and the chain reaction it has caused is obviously what the artist is really addressing. Therefore, the designs of several interactive installations in the exhibition not only record and create all kinds of possibilities for the "artworks of the future," they can also be taken as an elaborate trick the artist has devised to blend the ideas of globalization and localization.

While the success of this exhibition owes much to the endeavors of the curators, Shuling Cheng and Sylvie Parent, to the efforts and diligence of the artists as well as the dedication of the entire MOCA staff, much gratitude also goes to the Ministry of Culture of Taiwan, Institut Français, Bureau Français de Taipei, the Canadian Trade Office in Taipei, Canada Council for the Arts, Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Fonds de recherche du Québec—Société et culture and the private corporations that have supported MOCA for a long time. This artistic interaction and dialogue that transcend disciplines, national boundaries, and cultures have transformed the friendly emotional bonds that temporarily joined different groups of people into fossils of eternal memories.

J. J. Shih
Director, MOCA Taipei

Biography

Born in 1954 in Nanto, Taiwan, J.J. Shih holds a Bachelor's Degree of Fine Arts from National Normal University and a Master's Degree from the Graduate School of Art History, Temple University (USA). Prior to taking up the directorship of Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, J.J. Shih was Chief Curator, Exhibitions and Deputy Researcher at Taipei Fine Arts Museum. He also serves as a Trustee of the Dimension Endowment of Art and the Contemporary Art Foundation. He is a committee member of the Public Art Program and Taipei Council of Cultural Affairs, a consultant of National Culture and Arts Foundation, and Artistic Director of Taishin Bank Foundation for Arts and Culture.

Since 1992, J.J. Shih has published more than two hundred art reviews. His reviews could be seen in art magazines such as *The Lion Art Monthly*, *Artist Magazine*, *Dragon Art Magazine*, *Mountain Art*, *Art China*, *Art Touch Magazine*, and *Asia Art Pacific*, which is based in Australia, and won the 1997 DEOA Art Criticism Award.

In 2008, he became the director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, and has committed to promoting both the international and local relations for the museum. In addition to bringing European, American, Japanese, Australian, and other countries' contemporary art to Taiwan, he also promotes Taiwanese contemporary art and introduces them to Shanghai, Beijing, Venice, and other exhibition sites. After four years of dedicated efforts, he has successfully emerged art with the neighboring communities, parks, and the MRT underground streets through the consistent exhibitions and educational activities.

Telofossils —

*TO THE BACK
PRESENT:
FROM
DESTRUCTION
TO THE
END OF
THE WORLD*

— SHULING CHENG & SYLVIE PARENT

*“HUMAN REALITY
RESIDES IN MACHINES
AS HUMAN ACTIONS FIXED
AND CRISTALIZED IN
FUNCTIONING STRUCTURES.”*

— GILBERT SIMONDON,
Du mode d'existence des objets techniques

*“THIS EARTH
CAN DIE IN THOUSANDS
OF WAYS; ALL IT NEEDS
IS A LITTLE PUSH.”*

— LUCIAN BOIA,
La fin du monde. Une histoire sans fin

Known for his work in the field of digital art, Grégory Chatonsky has created a sizeable body of artistic projects over the years. Attentive to the technology of our times, his work is characterized by its diverse material forms and artistic extensions. Whether working with digital media or on-line, these works shift from one discipline to the next, generating, manipulating, taking up, distorting and resuscitating their data in other media, encountering other related or unrelated data. The selection of works for this major solo exhibition at the MOCA Taipei demonstrates the breadth of this work at the same time as it focuses on a number of pieces that are particularly sensitive to some of the concerns of our day. This exhibition also presented an opportunity to carry out an ambitious project conceived especially for the MOCA, one with a direct connection to the body of work on display.

This monumental piece, carried out in collaboration with two other artists, Dominique Sirois and Christophe Charles, is the final work the viewer encounters in the exhibition, offering a radical conclusion to the ideas put forward. Entitled *Telofossils*, this environment, being seen here for the first time, has lent its name to the exhibition as a whole.

The works chosen for the exhibition address the idea of destruction, a theme taken up from several angles in Chatonsky's recent work. While it is true that destruction is an age-old phenomenon, we must recognize its heightened presence in today's world through its valorization in cultural products and the information media. At a time when society is troubled by numerous crises (economic, ecological, political, etc.), contemporary disasters, and even those of the past and future,

occupy the media sphere. The different forms that destruction can take in our culture and their impact on our collective imagination provide countless sources for Chatonsky's artistic explorations.

At the heart of these explorations lie destruction's temporal dimension and its great image potential—its unfolding and spectacular occurrence, and what remains afterwards: traces, ruins, desolation, remembering. *Telofossils'* narrative is a dramatic progression based on these moments of destruction. By focusing on the temporal aspect of the phenomenon and by playing on multiple or overlapping temporalities—destruction as it is carried out, the destruction of the recent past and a fiction in a very distant future—our experience of destruction is amplified. In the temporal continuum, destruction brings about a rupture with the state of things, it displaces and deconstructs: what was once there, intact, no longer is. Even when supposedly complete, destruction always leaves something behind it in another form. This is why the phenomenon of destruction is accompanied by that of memory. This question has a preponderant place in Chatonsky's work, one connected to the tools of our age we have charged with preserving memory. What if these tools themselves were to be carried off by disaster, reduced to the materials they are made of? What would become of the memory we have entrusted to digital technology? These are some of the questions raised by the works in the present exhibition.

The first pieces the viewer sees in the exhibition are artistic projects inspired by the disaster of September 11, 2001, a recent event that gave a gripping and unexpected face to destruction. The images of this calamity, broadcast live to every corner of the earth, are engraved in the memory of each of us. This high-impact event, by virtue of both its spectacular nature and its great improbability, was the cause of a veritable trauma in Western culture. In *America & America*, Chatonsky digitally manipulates the American flag and recreates it in fabric, altering its famous motifs, before quartering and separating it to arrive in the end at an emblem that no longer holds together. His intervention on the symbol of America represents this

blow to the most powerful nation on the planet and suggests how vulnerable it is. In *Paume II*, the artist's hand, shorn of its intermediate phalanges, is also not fully whole. After digital transformation, it reappears in sculptural form as a solely sensorial organ incapable of grasping, an allusion to the passive role of the viewer watching such disasters. In *911*, Chatonsky uses digital technology and the Internet to recreate every text message sent at the moment of the disaster over a five-minute period. The result of this exercise takes the form of a series of messages that follow on one after the other for several hours, thereby extending the event's duration to intensify its drama. Another project, entitled *Echelon*, shows a series of keywords used by the intelligence operation of the same name in the fight against terrorism. Here the words are deployed in space, covering a large surface, to bring out the extent of the measures put in place by the surveillance services in a world now in the grip of an exacerbated paranoia. These forms of digital manipulation enable Chatonsky to shift content from one medium to another, one idiom to another and one material to another in order to radically alter our spatial and temporal experience of it. The visible becomes audible, the read becomes seen and the heard becomes text. In undergoing such transformations of their original material identity the data are distorted, but also forcefully revealed in a new guise.

For its part, *Dance with US* more specifically connects the entertainment world with the economy, the stock market fluctuations recorded in real time having a corresponding effect on a film sequence showing Fred Astaire dancing. This twinning technique brings out a certain aspect of a state of crisis, in this case economic: when a system crumbles, another responds to mask, moderate or deflect, in a manner reminiscent of some of the strategies put in place at times of great upheaval. In *Our Memory*, an object is connected to the Internet: a broken hard drive belonging to the artist, now devoid of all its content, tries to come back to life by extension on the Internet. It emits clicking noises whose sound level is conveyed by a number which is used to obtain images on a file-sharing site. Through this strategy, the lost information is replaced by an image devoid of connections and meaning, taken from the

flux of collective memory. Once expressed on the Internet, the feelings, emotions and memories which make up our affective universe, assimilated into a great reservoir accessible to all and subjected to various procedures, meet with fates that slip from our grasp. Synthetic voices verbalizing private stories on the Internet and awkwardly translated by a software program in *Their Voices*; in *Transcription*, video commentary by distressed young women gathered at random by a search engine and derived from emotional stories become the material of other content and experiences, removed from their original authors and meaning. Destruction is not complete and memory is not entirely eliminated, but the technologies of the Internet act as motors of deconstruction and transformation which disperse individual stories in the collective memory.

In other projects, Chatonsky has examined the phenomenon of the dulling and manipulation of our feelings in the face of images of destruction. In showing chairs coming to pieces very slowly, the video triptych *Dislocation II* transforms destruction into an aesthetic experience; the temporal extension deconstructs their shattering and their destruction becomes a form of spectacle. Because the work adopts a smaller scale and locates the action in familiar space, this destruction takes on a more individual quality, but one no less tied to our experience of the major catastrophes disseminated on same media. In the same vein, viewers witness destruction in a group of architectural drawings entitled *Dislocation IV*, which shows buildings in a state of demolition right from their conception, a reference to the rapid planned obsolescence of our technological objects. These two projects invite us to observe the dislocation of our world with a neutral gaze, one object at a time, creating an experience devoid of pathos.

Projects such as *Desert III* and *Intruders* lead viewers to contemplate the disappearance and absence of the self. Inspired by Cormac McCarthy's post-apocalyptic novel *The Road*, *Desert III* is a fictional video showing uninhabited spaces and objects which, one by one, shatter into pieces and vanish without giving way to any linear narrative. In *Intruders*, the visitor sees the faces of previous viewers disappear to the rhythm of the beating

of his or her own heart, they recorded by luminous surfaces. Then, when they withdraw their hands from the device, they watch as the image of their own face is gradually erased. The work records their presence and relates it to that of others in a collective memory, but gradually makes these fleeting manifestations disappear. This experience of disappearance and absence is also at play in a series of three works in neon which read *I miss you, missing* and *you miss me*. Installed in the building's stairwells, they create three areas of transition and pause in the exhibition.

These projects explore the theme of destruction from different perspectives and constitute, in a sense, a prologue to the *Telofossils* environment created specifically for the MOCA in its large gallery. They form a sequence of powerful moments which prepare the visitor for the final stage of the exhibition, a project which invites them to experience a speculative fiction set in a distant future, to imagine the end of human life and to contemplate the remains of our civilization.

At the heart of this environment is Dominique Sirois' *Telofossils*, a monumental installation reminiscent of an archaeological dig. This sculptural ensemble is made up of levels, strata, reliefs and hollows in which appear artificially fossilized technological objects and the impressions of supposedly excavated debris. This very ambitious work, by virtue of its dimensions and material and sensory qualities, as well as its critical contribution, is the result of an artistic practice which examines the act of exhibition, the consumer society and archaeology. In this sense it is a practice which shares many affinities with Chatonsky's own. At first sight, the architectural quality of this project recalls the numerous images of ruins in art history, which have incited admiration and nostalgia. At the same time, our experience of *Telofossils* is quite different, because here visitors discover objects from their own time, thus seeing the present as history in a future that doesn't include their existence or that of humanity as a whole. Like alien observers, we are invited to examine with detachment the fragments of technological objects, parts of vehicles, computer components and other waste deprived of their original utility: to think about the

human reality of these technological objects which no longer function.

The panoramic video *Landfill* accompanying this large sculpture shows desert-like land with a bare and porous surface, adding an enveloping and mysterious effect to the overall work while at the same time creating an association with the sculpture. Other elements in this environment show isolated objects, arranged like specimens and mounted in stands resembling tombs (*Archives of a Disappearance*) or enclosed in moulds imbedded by thermoforming (*Laocoon*), artefacts which could have been extracted from the ground of *Landfill* or *Telofossils*. A sound atmosphere by Christophe Charles produces an immersive quality which enables the visitor to make connections between the various elements throughout the space, with the effect of unifying the experience. Finally, the last station of this grouping is a robotic work controlled by cerebral activity (*Dislocation VII: Suspension of Attention*), which slams a door against a wall through *thought*, at the risk of damaging it. By means of this fascinating yet troubling interactivity, visitors experience their own destructive power and individual responsibility.

In this environment created by Chatonsky, Sirois and Charles for the MOCA, visitors become archaeologists of the future and, like archaeologists, study material remains as a way to grasp time. This experience, in which temporalities overlap—our present in the future, a present made historical—encourages a critical distance. As in futuristic tales which look back on our present, it makes it possible to examine our own world, our own era, loaded down with technological objects in a society of overconsumption soon replaced by the next, higher-performance version in order to meet the desires manipulated by our fears around crises and at grips with a colossal and growing collective memory entrusted to media which will not outlast us.

Shuling Cheng and Sylvie Parent
Curators

Biographies

Shuling

CHENG

Shuling Cheng is a Ph.D candidate of Sciences of Art and Cultural Studies in University Paris I Pantheon Sorbonne since 2009. She has first graduated from Sociology in Taiwan (NTU), and went to Paris in 2004 for studying Art History (Paris I), Sociology of Art (Paris III), Cultural Studies (Paris I) and Translation (ESIT). She is interested in the intersection of art, science and technology, especially digital art. Her research inquires into the rise of this new art world with transdisciplinary approaches such as aesthetics, sociology, cultural studies and cultural policy. This research is granted by Taiwanese government. She has also translated the book *The Stars* of the French philosopher and sociologist Edgar Morin. She has curated the *Photon+ International Techno Art Exhibition* for New Taipei City 2011.

Sylvie

PARENT

Sylvie Parent has been involved in the international art scene as independent curator and writer for the past twenty years. She is also acting as artistic director of Moliar, an organization specialized in the production of new media exhibitions and projects. Among her curatorial projects, the group exhibition *Inside* was presented in the 3rd Beijing International New Media Art Exhibition (2006) and at Paço das Artes in São Paulo (2008). She co-curated *Location/Dislocation* for the New Museum in New York (2001) and was responsible for the Web art component of the Biennale de Montréal 2000. Sylvie Parent has worked as an editor for *HorizonZero*, an online magazine published by the Banff New Media Institute (2002-2005, 2010) and *CLAC's Electronic Magazine* (1997-2001), among others. She has written extensively on art for many printed and electronic publications.

Telofossils —

— JUSSI PARIKKA

*MEDIA
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
FOSSILS*

“... OUR IMAGINATIONS
ARE HOSTAGES TO OUR OWN
MODE OF PRODUCTION...”

— FREDRIC JAMESON,
Archaeologies of the Future

Fossils are monuments, but not so much in the sense of market squares, memorials or big architecture projects that we are familiar with. They are monuments in the biological, temporal as well as archaeological sense. They are time-machines: not just indexes pointing towards pasts where the now stratified and solidified remembrance of life is frozen. They are *direct* links to the past, in a very archaeological sense: the specific understanding of archaeology that Michel Foucault introduced us to, and which media archaeology continues to apply.

Let me explain. For Foucault, monuments are not signs of the past or traces, but themselves carry with them a *monumental* relation to the past. They are literally of the past in the sense that a cultural archaeologist does not need to look at what is behind him, but rather at what those monuments themselves are. They import the past, physically.

The same thing applies to media archaeology. It is especially Wolfgang Ernst who has insisted that we need to stick to Foucault's explanation: our machines are themselves mediating the past, a shortcut to past times. For instance the monochord, that Ancient Greek instrument, is not only a historical object but itself carries the same mathematical-musical principles from Ancient times. It *is* the past.

And neither are fossils necessarily anything natural. Walter Benjamin was already writing about the fossils of the capitalist consumer culture and how they formed their own weird historical layer. Imagine this from the point of view of a robot historian in the future—a philosophical fiction that Manuel de Landa hinted at in another context. What would that robot historian see? Over a 150 years our civilization has witnessed the phenomenal growth enabled by fossil fuels, a capitalist phase of expansion and resource depletion that does not only endanger humanity itself but all life on this planet.

Now turn this idea upside down: what if the fossils we imagine today brought us a monument from the future?

Grégory Chatonsky has an insight regarding this rather grim but also comforting thought: we are not needed. Echoing some of the points by the pioneering thinker of symbiotic evolution and Gaia theory, Lynn Margulis, Chatonsky reminds us that the world existed before us and will continue after us. It has a different temporal order from that of humans, even if these different timescales always fold into each other.

In a recent interview Chatonsky stated:

“*Telofossils* is a speculative fiction about this Earth without us. If another species arrives on Earth in thousands of years, what will it find? It will uncover from the ground billions of unknown fossilized objects with no apparent use. It will certainly wonder why there are so many of them. A plastic bag can last hundreds of years when I only have 2,500 weeks left to live. This disproportion between human life expectancy and the one of our technical artifacts gives a new dimension to our time. It will be a material trace for our memory. Making this absence and this disappearance visible is the goal of *Telofossils* —an impossible project.”¹

Imagine that layer of telofossil rubbish as something that a future alien civilization will use like we use fossil fuels. Our culture of self-destructive petropolitics (to use Reza Negarestani's term) feeds into a future fossil layer that will perhaps itself enable an alien civilization to find its own means for growth and self-destruction. A rather grim idea of recursion and repetition. Is our garbage and waste the source of production and capitalism for a future civilization?

Telofossils is a project about time, and in this sense it pertains to

media archaeology. Media archaeology is a research and artistic field that thinks new media cultures through cyclical, recurring topoi (Erkki Huhtamo), through deep times and anachronological findings of earlier exchanges between art-science and technology (Zielinski) and, for instance, the specific temporalities related to technical media (Ernst). The media theory pioneer Friedrich Kittler argued in the 1980s that we need to update Michel Foucault's cultural archaeology to something more mediatic: that the conditions of existence of culture are always dependent on its media technologies and how we store, process and transmit information. Media archaeology has been especially good in introducing other temporal frames to media research than just the historical one. What if we excavate *media* time from the point of view of non-human objects and processes?

Such an approach reminds us of the materiality of media. The hype of immateriality, instantaneous communication, mobility and cloud computing are merely surface effects of the wider contexts in which media technology unfolds. Media technology requires energy: data server farms are one of the biggest growing energy consumption industries, computing is packed in highly toxic devices that are harmful to human health and dangerous for nature in general. All this needs to be understood on a time scale different from the human one. Chatonsky's example of a plastic bag is key here. That ugly coloured plastic bag from the supermarket will outlive me, and the future layer of fossils will be formed through its plasticity.

The same applies to media technologies: all that is left behind after these technologies are discarded is tons of copper, rare earth minerals and chemicals. What if we need to account for that sort of materiality too—the non-mediatic materiality of media? In terms of energy, it becomes clear when we start to unpack the link between digital technologies and ecology. Take for instance cloud computing and energy, which is a sort of a new way of thinking the classical four elements of Greek Antiquity.

In short, data server farms depend on water (for cooling and emergencies such as fire) as well as on high performance air conditioning for the data factories. In a great phrase—cited in Andrew Blum's book *Tubes*—the Facebook data centre manager Ken Pratchett sums up the situation: "This has nothing to do with clouds. It has everything to do with being cold." Cool, cold data is not just a linguistic or visual metaphor, despite the elegant modernism that still lives inside the architectures of

data places: Mondrian as data. Instead, it has to do with climate control, ecology, air. Coolness is not a media theory attitude in this context but a media management issue that ties the earth to the escape velocity of data. There is something very archaic about data farms: imagine what the future alien archaeologist will think of them, when they will be excavated from the rubble some 20,000 years in the future.

Data consists of the natural elements, for instance air. Data needs air. "Cool outside air is let into the building through adjustable louvers near the roof; deionized water is sprayed into it; and fans push the conditioned air down onto the data center floor," explains Blum. Fans surround the terabytes of data. Pratchett continues about the building: "The air hits this concrete floor and roils left and right. This whole building is like the Mississippi River. There's a huge amount of air coming in, but moving really slowly."

It's important to notice the persistence of ecological issues, ranging from air to the soil. Perhaps there is actually something natural too about these sorts of future fossils.

Chatonsky introduces various catastrophe-related senses and affects. A world without humans is one that is not merely about science fiction, but rather a likely consequence of global warming. Chatonsky talks of a distant future, but actually, how distant it is? Statistics are in fact more apocalyptic than a lot of fiction. Besides the catastrophe looming in the future, there is also the sense of a cross wiring between the present mediascape and that distant future in which the monuments of humanity take the form of abandoned, old media devices. Our memory-installation pitches the other side of the Digital Humanities: broken storage, non-revolving hard drives, the operability of media reduced to a dumb, still object.

Media technologies are storage. Similarly, even surveillance media such as in the ECHELON system, are about storage. Worse than being watched over is perhaps the realization that nobody cares and no one is wiretapping your calls, internet traffic or even interested in data mining your online moves. This sense of paranoia haunting the digital sphere goes both ways: they are watching your every move, gigantic records of your actions and the likes—and then nobody anywhere knows anything about you anyway. A Google search of yourself that returns nothing. Of course, social media are such databanks for future actions: intelligence agencies are institutions of memory and data mining. That is what they have always been, since the

early Cabinet Noir-interception “service” in early modern France to contemporary algorithmic intelligence gathering.

Future memory and archaeology have a double function in Chatonsky’s installations. On the one hand, it reminds of the ways in which memory is always a remediated material event: memory is always a monument and inscription, whether it happens according to the random-access principles of magnetic storage media like hard drives or in the still experimental modes of storage in biological material, like bacteria. The future memories might be the ancient ones, the cell, the bacterial. And on the other hand, Chatonsky’s interest in memories has to do with the future and what we can imagine. It is about archaeologies of the future, partly in the way that Fredric Jameson talks about the link between imaginaries and modes of social production. Also imagination, and the imagination of futures, is completely tied to the current economic and political contexts, which are also grimly part of the impossibility to invent alternative futures. Jameson writes in *Archaeologies of the Future* lamenting this impossibility to think outside capitalism “What is crippling is not the presence of an enemy but rather the universal belief, not only that this tendency is irreversible, but that the historic alternatives to capitalism have been proven unviable and impossible, and that no other socioeconomic system is conceivable, let alone practically available.”³¹

This is the crucial link, implicitly present in any kind of an apocalyptic future. Why are we now imagining such futures—and non-futures—in which extinction has happened, ones that are mediated and in-medias-res, literally? Media discussions relate interestingly to geological durations, as is evidenced by the humanities’ recent interest in the notion of the Anthropocene.

In short, the idea of the Anthropocene argues that, after approximately 11,700 years in the Holocene era, we have recently entered a new phase characterized by anthropogenically induced waste and environmental damage. The mark that this is leaving on the Earth has led some specialists to point to an Anthropocene that would have begun with industrialization. Whether that is geologically strong enough of a claim is one thing—but we can without doubt say that

the discourse of fossils is what is increasingly starting to replace historical discourses. If history has been the discourse concerning narratives of men and their lives, then fossils present a different challenge: a world without humans, and narrativizing a future-present in which media and residues of waste might be the only monuments we left behind.

Jussi Parikka

Biography

Jussi Parikka is a writer and Reader in Media & Design at Winchester School of Art, UK. He is the author of various books on digital culture, media archaeology, accidents and rather odd sides of media. These include *Insect Media* (2010), *Digital Contagions* (2007) and most recently *What is Media Archaeology?* (2012) He blogs at <http://jussiparikka.net>

1— <http://www.amusement.net/2013/02/15/interview-gregory-chatonsky-art-as-an-archeology-of-the-future/>
Paris : Max Milo Editions, 2007, p. xii.

2— Fredric Jameson, *Archéologies du Futur T1 Le Désir Nommé Utopie*,

Telofossils —

— DYLAN TRIGG

The recent high-resolution photos captured by NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter reveal a terrain, which, far from the complex tracks and trails of the Apollo missions, is a landscape marked by a series of various space expedition photos reveal that several missions to the moon remain passing of time on Earth.

As the camera zooms in, getting more detailed photos of the terrain, the viewer can see things which at the time was designed to be a landscape of basalt that compose the material of the first time, and search for other end, the viewer will find

*WHICH HAS
NEVER BEEN PRESENT:
ANONYMOUS
MATERIALITY*

“A LIVING BODY SEEN
FROM TOO CLOSE, AND
LACKING ANY BACKGROUND
AGAINST WHICH IT COULD
STAND OUT, IS NO LONGER
A LIVING BODY, BUT
RATHER A MATERIAL MASS
AS STRANGE AS THE LUNAR
LANDSCAPE.”

— MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY,
The Phenomenology of Perception

“TYPICALLY THE ISLAND INVERTED THE GEOLOGIST’S
MAXIM, ‘THE KEY TO THE PAST LIES IN THE PRESENT.’
HERE, THE KEY TO THE PRESENT LAY IN THE FUTURE.
THIS ISLAND WAS A FOSSIL OF TIME FUTURE, ITS BUNKERS
AND BLOCKHOUSES ILLUSTRATING THE PRINCIPLE THAT
THE FOSSIL RECORD OF LIFE WAS ONE OF ARMOUR AND
THE EXOSKELETON.”

— J. G. BALLARD, *The Terminal Beach*

The recent high-resolution photos of the Earth’s moon captured by NASA’s Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter show us a terrain, which, far from devoid of life, is shaped by the complex tracks and traces of human history. In a grey landscape marked by a series of ancient craters, the traces of various space expeditions can be found. Strikingly, these photos reveal that several landing sites from the Apollo missions to the moon remain comparatively untouched by the passing of time on Earth.

As the camera zooms in, greater details can be discerned. In one especially detailed photo from the Apollo 15 visit to the moon, the viewer can see the lunar roving vehicle at one end, which at the time was designated with the task to “sample the basalts that compose the mare deposit, explore a lunar rille for the first time, and search for ancient crustal rocks.”³ At the other end, the viewer will find the imprint of the Apollo Lunar

Surface Experiments Package, a vital unit containing scientific equipment. In-between these two markers, the bootprints of Commander David R. Scott and his NASA crew are dotted in the uneven ground. Alongside these finer details, all but one of the American flags—that of Apollo 11—carried to the moon to be inserted into the territory remain standing, a testament to the embryonic terraformation industry.

These recent photos given to us by NASA confirm that the geological history of the moon as a mass of interstellar materiality is now coupled with a history belonging to the Earth. This transformation of a lunar landscape into a human artefact confuses the boundaries between what we can term archaeology with what we can term xenoarchaeology. In effect, this rediscovery of our own history on the surface of a celestial body other than our own renders human beings aliens to their own material past.

In the work of Grégory Chatonsky together with the accompanying sculptures of Dominique Sirois, this dissolution of the human and the non-human realm is played out before our own senses in terms of asking us to imagine a future archaeology. Chatonsky's work, *Telofossils*, marks an ongoing exploration of this archaeology. In it, the artist speculates on a future, in which humanity has joined countless ranks of extinct species, now reduced to a trace, with their fossilized remains scattered over the surface of the planet. How will human artefacts—hard disks, calculators, and decommissioned medical equipment—be deciphered by future life forms? *Telofossils* compresses this question, pushing the future into the present, and thus establishing a conceptual space that allows us to contend with the radical finitude of our species.

The question finds its place not only in the same context as both Walter Benjamin's concern with what is excluded from the official history and also Pierre Nora's fixation on the *lieux de mémoire* as a counterfeit replication of the past. More than this, the question finds itself at home in the work of astrobiologists, palaeontologists, and speculative philosophers, each of whom seek to trace the origin of an inhuman materiality.

As such, Chatonsky's work is not a facile plea to "seize the day" less even a moralistic lens to reflect our human—all too human—failings. Rather, his vision is one of a neutral inquiry, devoid of a hyperbolic sentimentality, as he states unambiguously: "The end of humanity is not a negative way to look at the future, it will happen eventually ... Earth precedes us and will also survive us."⁴

The vision of a planet that is anterior to human subjectivity is manifest in the work itself, whereupon human artefacts become the stage upon which the human becomes the alien and the alien becomes the human. Thus, Chatonsky's video projection, *Landfill* (2013), presents the viewer with the surface of an indistinct planet, apparently devoid of life yet bearing the marks of a geological depth dating either millions of years into the past or otherwise toward the future. At no point is the viewer aware of the precise temporal orientation. Nor for that matter can the viewer be sure of the location of this landscape. The lunar landscape folds back upon a speculative Earth, an Earth that if interwoven without memories and dreams also renders those memories and dreams anonymous.

Here, Chatonsky shows us an anonymous materiality. Beneath the patina of human experience, with its pathos and

melancholy, this anonymous world dwells. Things of the alien Earth resist us, at all times remaining entirely indifferent to our existence. If Chatonsky is able to invoke this anonymous materiality in apocalyptic terms, then this is only because the alien Earth is already with us now. The reality of the world, as Merleau-Ponty has it, is not reducible to our experience of it. Dislodged from their everyday context, the "non-human element which lies hidden" in things comes to the surface.⁵ There, it reveals itself as being a "resolutely silent Other" belonging, as the philosopher says of Cézanne's paintings, to "a pre-world in which as yet no men existed."⁶

In turn, this rupture of time and place, which Chatonsky plays with, is as much concerned with the concept of a future *after* humans as it is a past *before* humans. In each case, the philosophical puzzle remains the same: how can we think of the non-human world without already calling upon a set of thinking organs that anchors us in time in the first instance?

The question, which is central to Chatonsky, has also assumed an especially potent form in the recent work of Quentin Meillassoux in what he terms "arche fossils."⁷ Meillassoux's term indicates not simply the existence of a past, but a material reality "anterior to terrestrial life."⁸ For Meillassoux, the ancestral realm where arche fossils belong is inconceivable for a mode of thinking that denies the realism of matter and instead privileges the world as it is given *for us*. The world as it is given for us as a correlate of subjectivity is a world in which the terms "matter" and "experience" cannot be considered apart from one another. In this framework, the "space of exteriority is merely the space of what faces us, of what exists only as a correlate of our own existence."⁹ Such an ontology locks us into a relational bind between "being" and "world," at all times masking the "great outdoors" with narcissism of experience.

And yet just as there was a world prior to the advent of human existence, so too will there be the anonymous survival of the world long after humanity has perished. To fold back upon the problem: both the end of the world and the beginning of the world confront us with the same problem—how to think of a world without beings without transforming that mute existence into a human fantasy? If Meillassoux finds the answer to this question in the abstraction of mathematics, then Chatonsky remains true to a speculative materialism in his privileging of the fossil.

In *Telofossils*, Chatonsky leaves us in the dark as to what kind of event could have extinguished human existence from the surface of the planet. All that remains—and all that matters—are the fossils that tie us to two divergent timescales concurrently: one timescale located in the stillness of the present—in the spatiality of the gallery—and the other transported to another time altogether. In this teleportation, Chatonsky's work asks that, in a precise bit of idiom, *we take leave of our senses*, both spatially and temporally.

In remaining after the end, these fossilized remnants assume more than an aesthetic presence in perception. Instead, their very presence marks the symptom for how the world without beings can be conceptualized in the first place. The term “symptom” is vital. If conceiving the world without beings is structurally impossible so long as we remain *of* the world, then an indirect approach to this anti-human world will be necessary. Chatonsky's *Telofossils* present one such symptom, a symptom that renders the unthinkable thinkable.

A computer keyboard integrated in the sculpture by Dominique Sirois is excavated from the site of an anonymous landscape. Its previous existence as a hardened mass of plastic used to input data has now undergone a radical transformation. The erosion is less that of organic decay and more a technological evolution, in which the human artefact is slowly departing from its previous usage and assuming a life of its own. The disease, to invoke the spirit of David Cronenberg, *seems to have a purpose*.¹⁰ Only now, this diseased fossil is adopting a life that we ourselves as the former users can no longer understand. The keyboard's betrayal is not only that of resisting the body that was once its interlocutor, it is also a betrayal of matter itself as the object loses its bond to the Earth and instead recedes into an anonymous zone of re-materialization.

Such a future archaeology is thus the work of mutation, which reveals to us, in Merleau-Ponty's formulation, an “original past, a past which has never been present.”¹¹ Precisely through speculating on an Earth without us does the originary status of our relation to the material world come to the foreground. The betrayal of matter and its ensuing retreat into anonymity are revealed here, not as a collapse in the world, but as the very

foundation of the Earth—an Earth that belongs neither to the body of the human nor to the fossils that mark our departure from this planet—but to the anonymous matter that renders both flesh and fossil possible in the first place.

Dylan Trigg

Biography

Dylan Trigg is a postdoctoral research fellow at the School of Philosophy, University College Dublin. He is also a visiting researcher at Les Archives Husserl, École Normale Supérieure, Paris. He is the author of *The Aesthetics of Decay: Nothingness, Nostalgia, and the Absence of Reason*, Peter Lang, 2006; *The Memory of Place: a Phenomenology of the Uncanny*, Ohio University Press, 2012; and the forthcoming *The Thing: Xenophenomenology and the Origins of Life*, Zero Books, 2014.

3— <http://lunarscience.nasa.gov/articles/lro-sees-apollo-15-rover-tracks/> 4— <http://www.amusement.net/2013/02/15/interview-gregory-chatonsky-art-as-an-archeology-of-the-future/> 5— Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith. London : Routledge, 2006, p. 375. 6— *Idem*, p. 376. 7— Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude : An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. Trans. Ray Brassier. London : Continuum Press, 2008. 8— *Idem*, p.10. 9— *Idem*, p. 7. 10— <http://dreamflesh.com/essays/psychoplasms/> 11— Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *op.cit.*, p. 282.

Telofossils —

INTERVIEW

WITH

GRÉGORY CHATONSKY,

CONDUCTED

BY

JIAN-HONG

HUANG

IN A

WING OF THE

MUSEUM

OF

CONTEMPORARY

ART,

TAIPEI

JHH JIAN-HONG HUANG
GC GRÉGORIE CHATONSKY

JHH *The themes of destruction and memory are quite present in this exhibition. Our experience here in Taiwan differs considerably from that of Europeans, however. When Taiwanese look at Europe, they think that you preserve a lot of things. In France you preserve and in Taiwan, most of the time, we razé.*

GC Historically, the construction¹² of nations is often carried out through the scrutiny of traces of past destruction: battlegrounds, buildings in ruins,¹³ monuments. Remembering these traces is paradoxical, because national identity is built out of what should logically call it into question. In the case of Europe, it seems clear to me that its construction suffers from this tension between destruction and identity, which was not reflected upon during the two World Wars.

We undoubtedly need to distinguish between two kinds of destruction. The first consists in erasing both the material traces of human life and human memory. The Holocaust was the most radical expression of this: destroy death itself by killing the witnesses. The second is remembering the places that bear the traces of destruction: monuments. These, however, continue to age; the weather, the environment and the actions of human beings act on them. Monuments do not emerge unscathed from the test of time. When we look at them, we don't see a trace of the past; we see the difference between this past and our present.

This difference is connected to one of the questions of the exhibition: for there to be destruction, there has to be at least one witness who sees the before and after of the destruction and who can then express this divergence. And memory is undoubtedly always the memory of ashes. Does an unobserved destruction exist? Doesn't there always have to be human imagination for it to be visible? This is the question posed by Jean-François Lyotard in *L'inhumain* [*The Inhuman*, 1988] when he spoke about the death of the sun: this disappearance will not be reflected upon, because the conditions of reflection are local and precarious.

JHH *Destruction is something like an interval. Thus in Taiwan, when they razé something, they replace it with something else. But when you speak of destruction, the term implies a transformation that links the past and the future.*

GC It would be mistaken to see destruction simply as a negative phenomenon. The West is constantly constituting itself out of the narrative of its decadence and its disappearance: the Athenian City, the Roman Empire, the aristocracy legitimated by divine right, etc. Art is undoubtedly the best term for this paradox: as Georges Didi-Huberman points out in *L'image survivante* [2002], Vasari, one of the first art historians, believed that art is a lost trace of the past. True works of art are ancient and are a

form of lost knowledge. One could quite easily discuss the preservation strategies of museums as partaking of this destruction at work since a terribly distant past.

From the Egyptians, who are undoubtedly at the origin of the West and our greatest mystery, to Hubert Robert's paintings that show contemporary buildings in the form of ruins to carry out a critique,¹⁴ artistic production has assuredly consisted in part in remembering lost civilizations as a way of anticipating our own disappearance. The precariousness is complete, because our survival is contingent. When we look at the calcified bodies in Pompeii, we see ourselves. But who sees this past in our future?¹⁵ Who is the observer, given that we disappear in this very gaze? Artistic imagination takes form out of this paradox of absence: something is without us, and this something is "us," precisely.¹⁶

When we show images of our own destruction, we're showing them to ourselves, meaning to those who are still here and will certainly disappear. We also show them to what does not yet exist, to what will be human or non-human, organic or non-organic, mechanical or non-mechanical, to something that is completely undetermined—because we don't know what will come after us or even whether this afterwards will have meaning—and which for this very reason must be welcomed unconditionally. Destruction places an interval between

the present observer and the observer not yet present: the monstrosity of the future. Depending on the temporality one adopts, what exists will be no longer, what will be does not yet exist, and so on. Every present and every future is a disappearance. Destruction is not what is, it's what is possible, what is completely contingent. And we know that this contingency is the sole necessity: we will disappear in turn, like everything that came before us.¹⁷

JHH *Art is undoubtedly obsessed with disappearance because it makes it possible to return to the past and at the same time to make a prediction about the disappearance to come.*

GC There is a temporal interval between past and future destruction. Past destruction can be the disappearance of an ancient ideal, of animal nature; it's something that is connected to the very beginning, the primary, the primordial, and naturally we can challenge these ideas. Destruction is thus the terribly old and it is also the dreadfully future, which makes the value of our signs tremble and thus also shakes up our very ability to anticipate it. Everything, according to entropy, is headed for ruin. We will disappear, we are mortal,¹⁸ the world will subsist without us. With respect to that reality, which is not even an artistic reality but rather an ontological one, the present is caught between two palpitations, the inhalation of vitality, breathing, and the exhalation of mortality.

Anselm Kiefer¹⁹ works on destruction but in a way that remains anthropocentric, because there is all the pathos of watching disappear what had been familiar. He projects himself into a future which leads the present to destruction, and that is why he is nostalgic. This is also why he depicts primarily human forms, anthropological remains. When, ten years ago, I saw the first images of the destruction of September 11 seen around the world—because everyone can say “this is what I was doing on September 11”—I noticed that the main character of this event was not human. The humans were accessories, the “falling man.” The main characters were the very buildings, and when we see these images, we feel something terrible and fascinating at the same time, because they have a true formal quality. The question is knowing whether we are able to make a destructive image whose main characters are objects. Because what remains of past civilizations are material objects. Remove the pathos of destruction and focus on the objects, on the platitude of the world . . . Can objects exist independently of us, because destruction will make human beings disappear? These questions are not unlike those Gustav Metzger raises in his manifestos on auto-destructive art. A broken object is still an object; it can no longer be used, but that doesn't mean it becomes immaterial. Technology emerges from the earth. For example, plastic is a fossil substance that has been transformed over millions of years and is used by us for a brief period of time and then returns to the earth, where it is buried and forgotten.²⁰ The question of destruction

is also the question of technology, of the incident,²¹ of breaking down, of being out of order.

JHH *Digital technology, in my view, can help us discover intervals as much as destruction.*

GC The fact that digital materials can be decomposed and recomposed, assembled, disassembled, etc., makes it possible for there to be destructions which, unlike material destructions, are temporary and fluid, like an experimental laboratory. I call this dislocation,²² because it is a shift [*déplacement*] from one place to another—an *esplacement* [splacing], to use Jean-Luc Nancy's fine expression. At the same time, the ideal of digital fluidity is undoubtedly a mirage. Companies claim infallible memory, but the reality is different: today CD-Roms, which are barely ten years old, and on which we have inscribed our existential memory,²³ are unreadable. Digital destruction is just as definitive as analogue destruction, and faster. Is the binary nature of digital elements—the zeroes and ones—a kind of destruction? My feeling rather is that it is a permanent deconstruction and reconstruction, a translation with no meaning.²⁴

In Foucault there is no destruction, only deconstruction. Meaning that when you deconstruct, you can reconstruct. You look for bricks, you de-sediment, you dig, you're an archaeologist, in a manner that can be likened to Walter Benjamin's archival ragpicking. But in destruction you're taking on the hylomorphic relation

between matter and form. You destroy the structure itself. There is a very strong distinction, and even a historical one in my view, between post-structuralism, which questioned the structure but in the end remained in the realm of language, and destruction, which is material, ontological and almost objective. Meaning that it is no longer a play on language: these are objects whose very structure is broken, destroyed.

Foucault's way of looking at how human society in the West was conceived, how this idea got into the head of the West, reveals his pleasure in breaking things down and putting them back together, in playing with an object; to see it, to use a good Nietzschean expression, from several perspectives, to make it gleam like a diamond. But something much different happens with destruction, something that happens without us, that is cold, neutral and dark. Perspectivism was still anthropocentric. I speak of an absence that is not pathetic, that is thus not absent for anyone and whose possibility was suggested by Jean-François Lyotard. We're confronted with an absence of ourselves, with no one, and what interests me are the ways of thinking speculatively and experimenting artistically with an absence that excludes us, meaning everything that exists at a time when the Internet is making possible an almost infinite creation of anonymities.²⁵ Placing myself before an object before which I am absent,—even though, paradoxically—I am there, facing it, enables me to think about things differently. Isn't it possible,

moreover, to think about ourselves without ourselves? Isn't it this untimely quality of identity that produces thought as much as perceptive emotion?

In the field of science, we are confronted with dimensions of time and space that are new and that we have difficulty understanding. Astrophysics places us before distances of millions of light years and constructs a new image of the world. If we project ourselves into such boundlessness, it's not just that we are terribly alone, but also that there are millions of light years without us. Space is empty,²⁶ only silence spills from the cosmos. Is perception without us thinkable beyond psychoanalytic and phenomenological absence? What would a non-anthropological aesthetic mean? Destruction is changing before our eyes; it is not only just our own disappearance, it is becoming something without us. On the scientific, ecological and political levels, we are obliged to imagine something that is completely solitary, meaning a loss without us, the cosmos without us, atomic dimensions without us, and so on.

JHH *This means that we created a universe, or we have the knowledge to create a universe without us. That, for me, is truly a very great challenge.*

GC It's a radical change of perspective that also makes it possible to slightly change one's political perspective. One of our fundamental problems is political ecology. When we stay within an anthropocentric perspective, we think that

the only thing that could bring about the destruction of the planet is human activity, and we take on a disproportionate degree of responsibility.²⁷ We have difficulty imagining destruction independent of our presence, such as a meteorite or a series of volcanic eruptions. We see everything, including our own end point, our own disappearance, as an effect for which we are the cause. If we begin to look at things from an a-human perspective, the centre of gravity shifts, because even if we disappear, even if the temperature of the planet goes up five or six degrees, bringing about the disappearance of most living species, if we manage to speculatively grasp this situation which is close at hand, it becomes much less dramatic: the Earth is not human, it never was, our end is not the end of everything. And in a sense, just like every human being must accept his or her own death,²⁸ perhaps we have to adopt this strange idea, which is not nihilistic: accept the disappearance of the human species as something that is not complete disappearance. This question, which is posed by speculative realism and in particular by Quentin Meillassoux, looks to the future but also to the past, because we have fossils which predate life on Earth.

In this exhibition, I have attempted to create a speculative fiction: in a few thousand years, human beings will no longer exist, most living species will have disappeared. This is when my story begins, a story with no one to tell it.

JHH *Deleuze, speaking about the bifurcating nature of time, questioned the presence of the present. The present is always caught between a past and a future, it is the untimely differential between them. Isn't this exhibition also a reflection on the nature of our time, which is submerged by an unimaginable quantity of information, making historical periodization difficult?*

GC Quite so. You raise an important point: the near infinite amount of digital information, called Big Data. There is so much of it that no one is capable any longer of surveying it all. The present seems to be surpassing itself, always on the verge of an explosion or an implosion. This is a phenomenon that concerned me for years in my Net Art work, because this constant flow spilling beyond us from all sides is the world we perceive. The Internet is an imperceptible world because it is too large;²⁹ it is disproportionate, saturated. Before, it was the natural world that was too large, the Greek *physis*, which we can never survey entirely. But ours is a world of artefacts and technology. It's a world produced by human beings, or by robots or machines, and which is no longer commensurate with our perception or our finitude. We find the same solitude in our destruction and in our technological output.³⁰ And this is undoubtedly the reason why we should also abandon the anthropocentric illusion that forces us to see technology as an instrument subjected to our will. These artefacts also produce.

This absence is now at the heart of technology. It affects not just very large-scale

cosmological phenomena alone. It is very close to us, on our skin when we talk on a cell phone. Except that—and this is the great difficulty—our ideology with respect to technology is an ideology of instrumental mastery. We think that we do what we want with technology and that it's enough assign it a good purpose. But we're in the process of seeing computer technology bring a parallel universe into existence, one with its own logic, its own speed, its own perception and its own temporality, which is at a very high frequency. Computers speculating on the stock market are a troubling sign of this.

Paradoxically, the closer we get to ourselves, the more we find phenomena that we saw in very large dimensions related to the destruction of planets, stars and galaxies. This means that we can also approach the question of technology from the perspective of destruction. What feeling takes hold of us when our computer breaks down? A mixture of despair, frustration . . . It's like the end of the world with a lot of emotions mixed in, a very intense experience through which the world as world reappears. What do we do with broken-down machines? We produce millions of objects that are caught up in a deliberate cycle of obsolescence and innovation, obliging people to throw out and buy at a faster and faster pace. You absolutely had to have the iPhone 4, but six months later the iPhone 5 becomes indispensable and the 4 falls into disuse because our libido founders. What I wanted I no longer want. We throw away these objects which

were the source of our desire: our desire is structured from one end to the other by the acquisition of objects.³¹ Naturally, these objects do not disappear. They are out of sight and out of reach. What are they in the process of becoming? They return beneath the earth, they are buried, they become minerals, fossils; they thus become our trace, the future of our absence. By throwing them out, we disappear. Our difficulty in conceiving the future is tied to the fact that we don't want to see it. Objects are there, but we don't want to see them. This is how contemporary capitalism organizes production and desire, to make us always desire novelty.

JHH *The Earth becomes a very material question.*

GC When we are no longer here, imagine a consciousness that arrives on Earth and unearths all these fossils. What image will it be able to come up with of the civilization we were? Having no idea of the function of these objects, it will wonder why we produced so many identical objects. One very interesting way of thinking about us, of seeing our present and the sense of our politics, is to think about us without us, to put ourselves in the place of an extraterrestrial intelligence that arrives on Earth thousands of years from now and deduces from our fossils what we were.

These things that extraterrestrials will not understand are our mystery. They're what we are. They're the mystery of

production, of technology and desire, of innovation and obsolescence, the cycle of the present we are building and whereby we construct ourselves, and which makes us disappear, which exhausts us, exhausts our living conditions. This is our mystery, a flow and a halt. This fiction is speculative: we have to become extra-terrestrials to begin to feel and to think about that world.

Biography

Holder of a doctoral degree in aesthetics from the Institute of Philosophy at Université Paris 8, Jian-Hong Huang is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Fine Arts at the Taipei National University of the Arts. Huang has also held the positions of cinema magazine columnist and curator of the exhibition *POST.O—The Reverse of TOPOS*. His fields of research include the philosophy of image, aesthetics, and the film theory of Gilles Deleuze. He is the author of *An Independent Variety of Discourse* and the editor of books including *COQ*. Huang received the top prize for aesthetic critics at the first Taipei Digital Art Criticism Awards in 2007, and has translated numerous titles including Deleuze's *Cinéma I: L'image-mouvement* and *Cinéma II: L'image-temps*, Jean Baudrillard's *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, Baudrillard and Jean Nouvel's *The Singular Objects of Architecture*, and Jacques Rancière's *The Future of Images*.

12—Est-il possible (9 September 2011) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/est-il-possible> 13—Incidents, ruines et fossilisation (6 August 2012) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/fossilisation>
14—Un désert, solitaire et vaste (25 November 2011) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/diderot> 15—Futur antérieur (25 May 2011) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/futur-anterieur>
16—Un souvenir sans mémoire (1 January 2013) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/un-souvenir-sans-memoire> 17—L'inexistence présente (10 August 2012) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/inexistence> 18—Ne pas être né (7 September 2012) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/ne-pas-etre-ne> 19—La destruction et la chose (4 November 2012) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/destruction> 20—La fossilisation technique (12 February 2013) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/la-fossilisation-technique> 21—« Tu me manques » (17 August 2011) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/tu-me-manques> 22—Qu'est-ce que la dislocation? (2 July 2006) : <http://chatonsky.net/fragments/quest-que-la-dislocation>
23—Te (se) perdre (13 August 2007) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/te-se-perdre> 24—Quentin Meillassoux, « Répétition, itération, réitération. Une analyse spéculative du signe dépourvu de sens. » : <http://www.diffusion.ens.fr/index.php?res=conf&idconf=3053> 25—Mémoire des oubliés (11 September 2012) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/memoire> 26—Une place laissée vide (5 September 2012) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/place> 27—La désertion (9 January 2013) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/la-desertion> 28—Une variété de la mort (12 August 2012) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/mort> 29—Le plan sombre (17 November 2011) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/lac> 30—La quadruple causalité et la solitude technologique (24 December 2012) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/quadruple> 31—Le désir des objets (26 September 2012) : <http://chatonsky.net/flux/desir-objets>

Telofossils —

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Grégory
CHATONSKY

Gregory Chatonsky was born in Paris in 1971. He studied art at college, philosophy at the Sorbonne and digital art in ENSBA Paris. He founded in 1994 Incident.net, a collective of artists on the Internet. He teaches digital art at universities and art schools such as Paris IV, The Fresnoy or UQAM. His work focuses on fiction, flows and destruction. He works with a variety of analog and digital media by questioning the relationship we have with technology. He lives in Montreal and Paris.

His work has been shown in France (Maison européenne de la photographie, Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, Centre Pompidou, Villette Numérique, Nuit blanche 2003-2004-2005), in Canada (Biennale de Montréal, SAT, Oboro, La Chapelle), in the USA (Art Institute SF, New York), Spain (Caixa, Barcelona), Portugal (Numero, Lisbon), Germany, Switzerland (Basel), Korea, Mexico (Mediarte, Monterrey), Brazil (File, São Paulo), etc.

He is represented by Xpo Gallery, Paris (<http://www.xpogallery.com>).

Dominique
SIROIS

Based in Montreal, Dominique Sirois works in installation with a multidisciplinary approach including sound, performance, video and public intervention. Her reflexive approach revolves around work, consumption, art and fashion. For several years, her artistic practice has questioned merchandize and art objects in their means of production and display.

Sirois presented her work in Canada and abroad. She also showed some exhibitions, performances and collaborative projects in Germany (Wunder der prairie, Mannheim), France (Gâté Lyrique, Paris) and China (Bazar Compatible Program) during a residency. Winner of the Paris residency of the Darling Foundry in 2010, she was in Glasgow in 2013 for an artist residency and presented her project *Alarm Songs* at Studio 41. This project included an installation and film shooting involving siren alarms.

Christophe
CHARLES

Christophe Charles works with found sounds, and makes compositions using computer programs, insisting on the autonomy of each sound and the absence of hierarchical structure.

Graduated from Tsukuba University (Ph.D, 1996) and Paris INALCO (Ph.D, 1997). Currently Professor (kyouju) at Musashino Art University (Tokyo). He has released music on the German label Mille Plateaux/Ritornell ("undirected" series), and on several compilations (Mille Plateaux, Ritornell, Subrosa, Code, Cirque, Cross, X-tract, CCI, ICC, etc). Group exhibitions: ICC *Sound Art* (Tokyo, 2000), V&A *Radical Fashion* (London, 2001), etc. Permanent sound installations at Osaka Sumai Jouhou center (1999), Narita International Airport Central Atrium (2000).

Collaborations with musicians (Henning Christiansen, Shiomi Mieko, Chino Shuichi, Markus Popp, Hanno Yoshihiro/hoon, Kako Yuzo, Shibuya Keiichiro, et al.), visual artists (Yamaguchi Katsuhiko, Yamamoto Keigo, Visual Brains, Osaka Takuro, Kai Syng Tan et al.), and performers (Ishii Mitsutaka, Kazakura Sho, Osanai Mari, Ishikawa Fukurow, Salvanilla, et al.).