

***Earthy Visions: Inside the Climate Crisis***  
**September 8 – December 16, 2023**  
**Gallery 400, University of Illinois at Chicago**

**Extended Exhibition Checklist**

**Ursula Biemann**

***Forest Law*, 2013**

Video, 38:08 min.

Courtesy the artist

“Science has never been more important than now, but it’s not enough to explain the data science produces. The images and narratives have to reach a collective imaginary; it has to go deeper than the rational mind. This is what is at stake, basically, the ability to mutate and imagine ourselves anew.”

—Ursula Biemann

Forest Law documents a series of landmark legal cases that highlight the need to protect forest lands amidst large-scale extraction activities by the government and multinational corporations. The project draws from research carried out by the artist and Brazilian architect Paulo Tavares in the Ecuadorian Amazon, a key site of large-scale natural resource extraction. In this film, a series of interviews with the Indigenous people of Sarayuku demonstrate not only their struggle to save the forest land but the vitality of the forest and their relationship to the land.

**Jeremy Bolen**

***Because The Sky Will Be Filled With Sulfur #1*, 2022**

***Because The Sky Will Be Filled With Sulfur #2*, 2022**

UV print on acrylic, fire barrier foam and sulphur cast passenger pigeon, asphalt

96 x 48 x 2 in.

***Coral Shielding #4*, 2022**

Sulphur and Hydrocal cast coral, window tinting, tinted plexiglass, air conditioner vents, volcanic ash

20 x 20 x 24 in.

***Coral Shielding #5*, 2022**

Sulphur and Hydrocal cast coral, window tinting, tinted plexiglass, air conditioner vents, volcanic ash, aircraft personal service unit  
20 x 20 x 24 in.

All courtesy the artist and Andrew Rafacz Gallery

“I am wondering what actions will have to be taken for our planet to remain habitable, and what unintended consequences these interventions will cause.”

—Jeremy Bolen

***Because the Sky Will Be Filled With Sulfur*** stems from Bolen’s deep exploration of large-scale technological interventions meant to offer solutions that mitigate the impact of human activity on the climate and ecosystems. The artist presents a speculative image of how the sky might appear if the atmosphere were injected with sulfur particles to create a cooling effect. Because atmospheric sulfur has cooled the planet after volcano eruptions, it has been contemplated as a climate solution.

Bolen references other techniques including methods to engineer the return of the extinct passenger pigeons, once the most populous bird on the planet. Scientists are now working to revive it using complex DNA extraction and cross-breeding with other pigeon species. The Coral Shielding sculptures humorously incorporate objects and elements affected by, part of the cause of, and speculative solutions to the climate crisis.

**Theo Cuthand**

***Extractions***, 2019

Video, 15:17 min.

***Reclamation***, 2018

Video, 13:11 min.

Both courtesy the artist and Fit of Pique Productions ©

“With the current global crisis in climate change, being Indigenous, we’ve already survived some pretty heavy shit. Survival is obviously pretty revolutionary. The fact that you are still here on this Earth, that’s an important thing.”

—Theo Cuthand

**Extractions** highlights the multifaceted and violent nature of extraction—of both natural resources and human life—to further capitalism and white supremacy. **Extractions** parallels the Canadian government’s destruction of land and the forced placement of Indigenous children in foster care in the interest of profit and wealth for a majority-white country. In this film, Cuthand, who is of Plains Cree and Scots descent and a member of Little Pine First Nation, contemplates parenting children on land that is steadily being destroyed alongside their possible disconnection from heritage.

As speculative fiction, **Reclamation** imagines a future in which Indigenous people author their lives and culture independent of narratives forced on them by colonizers. The video explores a future in which the Earth has been deemed uninhabitable, prompting all white people to relocate to Mars. In this new world, Indigenous people redefine freedom as their ability to enjoy life on their own terms, returning to gardening, cultivation, and care techniques heavily practiced by their ancestors.

### **Nnenna Okore**

***Pellicles of Delight 1-4***, 2021

***Matters of Time 1-6***, 2022

Bioplastic

Dimensions variable

Courtesy the artist

“Learning from plants and nature, we need to stop making waste to lament on, but instead make waste that we can delight in.”

—Nnenna Okore

Okore’s Bioplastics series repurposes food waste materials to create installations that produce minimal environmental impact and provide a visual representation of the usefulness of waste. Bioplastics are derived from plant-based food scraps and waste. Relative to other art making materials, they pose little harm to the environment. Deeply engaged in a dialogue regarding waste and materiality in artwork, as well as African animist theories, Okore believes that artists can consider a multitude of materials that produce less by-products so as to reduce their contribution to the climate crisis.

### **Terry Evans**

***Spring Bur Oak***, 2019

***Bur Oak***, Late Summer 2020

***Bur Oak, No immunity***, September 2020

***Bur Oak***, August 9, 2023

***Bur Oak***, Winter 2019

***Bur Oak***, Summer 2019

***Bur Oak***, Fall 2019

20 x 30 in. each

***Bur Oak***, December 11, 2018

20 x 31 in.

***Bur Oak, Against Anxiety***, September 2020

20 x 28 in.

Archival digital prints

All courtesy the artist

“Most on my mind right now about climate change is, selfishly, how it will affect my three grandchildren, ages six and eight. How will their lives be different in fifteen or twenty years? Because they are all three kind and intelligent, I trust that they will each be involved in some way with care for life on earth.”

—Terry Evans

These photographs document Jackson Park’s 300-year-old bur oak tree on its Wooded Island. Jackson Park once was home to thousands of trees that eliminated approximately 350 pounds of Chicago air pollution annually and absorbed 200 tons of carbon. The photographs of the bur oak are part of Evan’s series Ancient Prairies initiated in 1978 in appreciation of our region’s prairie landscape and the human hands that preserve it. Evans, who has photographed the midwestern prairie—from the lost to the recovered, from the inhabited to the ancient—for decades, notes that the bur oak conveys resilience, fortitude, and strength and is a “real inspiration in the midst of otherwise grief and anger around climate change.”

**Lorraine Gilbert**

***Luc in the Caramanah***, 1989-93

Five ink jet prints

16 x 20 in. each

***Josée and Pam Snags***, 1989-93

Three photographs

22 x 17 in. each

***Bagging Up*, 1989-93**

Five ink jet prints

20 x 16 in. each

All courtesy the artist

“What disturbs me the most is to remember my awakening in reading Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) in the 1970s, and today, to realize my/our utter insignificance in the face of [environmental degradation]. Individualism, greed, power, and ignorance has turned our beautiful and infinitely complex paradise into a vision of hell. At the moment, while the three world superpowers are operating at such a high level of insanity and human cruelty, all there is to do is to help and be charitable towards all the victims. ...What is on my mind is, what can I do now? How can I help?”

—Lorraine Gilbert

***Shaping the New Forest*** (1988-1994), the series from which this work comes, documents Gilbert’s journey as a seasonal tree planter in British Columbia, Canada where she planted almost 750,000 trees in the span of 15 years. Drawing on the photographers, Gilbert’s restoration images were shot on a large-format camera while living months at a time in backcountry tree planting camps.

Currently, global deforestation contributes to 12-20% of greenhouse gas emissions because in cutting the trees, much of their stored carbon is released. While Gilbert’s work spotlights the cycles of the “new forest,” it also highlights the tree planters toil to regenerate the degraded landscape.

**Cydney M. Lewis**

***Shedding My Armor*, 2022**

Hand-cut paper, polyethylene terephthalate (PET), fabric, metal, wood, rhinestones  
42 x 27 in.

***Delicately Held*, 2022**

Hand-cut paper, plastic, fabric, embroidery thread, wire, packaging paper on polyethylene terephthalate (PET)  
24 x 13 in.

***New Growth on New Soil*, 2022**

Hand cut paper, sequins, fabric, rhinestones, wood on polyethylene terephthalate (PET),

48 x 36 in.

All courtesy the artist

“I prefer to focus optimistically on the climate’s transformation. Many cultures have had to adapt and evolve around challenging climate conditions long before it was part of a global conversation. By encouraging biodiversity to help regenerate land, we as humans may regenerate ourselves in the process by understanding we are one with this universe.”

—Cydne Lewis

Leveraging materials found on walks throughout her Bronzeville neighborhood, Lewis reimagines landscapes and abandoned spaces. Part of a larger series titled *Terrain Vague*, these collages incorporate recycled materials to imagine new possibilities in disinvested urban locales and beyond the destruction of climate change.

### **Tomás Saraceno**

***We do not all breathe the same air – Minnesota, 2022***

***We do not all breathe the same air – Massachusetts, 2022***

***We do not all breathe the same air – Montana, 2022***

***We do not all breathe the same air – North Carolina, 2022***

All black carbon, soot, PM2.5, PM10, paper

39 1/2 x 91 x 2 3/8 in. each

Courtesy the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York / Los Angeles

“My concern in this moment is about moving into a connected way of thinking and being together. Thinking about how we can rearticulate the level of engagement in the epoch we live in... We inhabit a world where breathing is not implicitly granted but is becoming an asset. It is crucial to think of new practices among the disciplines that help to re-imagine the air, beyond the privileged breathing of the few...”

—Tomás Saraceno

The *We do not all breathe the same air* works visualize the inequitable distribution of air quality and particle pollution. Saraceno uses standard air quality monitoring technology in which particle matter is captured when a controlled amount of air is pulled through filter tape every hour. The darker shaded circles reflect poor air quality and high amounts of pollution while the lightly shaded ones reflect lower air pollution. The series evidences how exposure to poor air quality disproportionately affects people of color and low-income communities.