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Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Presents

Futurefarmers: Out of Place, in Place



Futurefarmers, *This Is Not a Trojan Horse*, 2010. Courtesy Futurefarmers

**A survey exhibition featuring the artworks of San Francisco–based Futurefarmers
collective**

**Including the new “speculative fog-harvesting machine,” a site-specific
installation to unfold in real time in YBCA’s galleries**

Exhibition on view: April 20–August 12, 2018

Opening night party: Friday, April 20, 7–10 pm

SAN FRANCISCO - (February 20, 2018) Futurefarmers is best known for their collective, playful, inquiry-based approach to art making that spans multiple disciplines and ways of inhabiting the world, from sailing and farming to environmental design and DIY scientific experimentation. Working in the tradition of social sculpture and participatory art, the internationally renowned collective of artists, farmers, scientists, and designers has called San Francisco home since 1995. **Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA)** is pleased to present ***Futurefarmers: Out of Place, in Place***, a survey of the group’s practice to date featuring ten past and existing works plus a “speculative fog-harvesting machine,” a new commission to be constructed and activated on-site over the course of the exhibition.

Futurefarmers: Out of Place, in Place is organized by YBCA and curated by **Lucía Sanromán**, director of visual arts. **The exhibition will have a press preview April 19, 2018, and is on view April 20 through August 12, 2018, in YBCA’s first-floor galleries.**

Sanromán explains: “Futurefarmers responds to and reflects the impacts of technology, from the way tech has reshaped landscapes and ecologies, to how the internet has completely transformed the communications and social relations that stitch us together. Against this backdrop Futurefarmers projects create opportunities to slow down and reconnect with each other and with our environment in real time and place through the collective making of objects, the remapping of local ecologies, and the reassembly of place-based histories.”

Futurefarmers: Out of Place, in Place presents ten Futurefarmers projects that are central to understanding the art collective’s practice, core concepts, and methodologies. An overarching

theme that unites all of Futurefarmers projects is the concept of assembly. This is exemplified through the coming together of the disparate artists, scientists, and tinkerers who make the projects; the participants who engage with the creation and execution of the socially engaged artworks; and the assembly of the physical objects involved in each process. In other words, the works bring people together to put things together. Futurefarmers' open-ended research and creative structures are characterized by improvisation and exchange, and by the reversal or interruption of larger monolithic systems.

In the tradition of Marcel Duchamp's "readymade" and its opposite, the "reverse readymade," Futurefarmers contends that practical things, processes, and ideas can be artworks—and that artworks should also have practical uses and applications in the world. These concepts are demonstrated in *The Reverse Ark (2010)*, where they transformed a museum into a temporary school, visually turning it into an ark or vessel carrying knowledge, materials, and processes to a new physical place. Taking a cue from this work, Futurefarmers will transform YBCA's galleries into another vessel that metaphorically carries the memory and members of the collective itself, creating a portrait of the practitioners through selected artworks. To this end, the exhibition also features *Erratum (2010)* and *For Want of a Nail (2014)*, both of which further manifest a reversal of the impact of technology on the world.

The collective is known for multiyear public artworks that engage the civic infrastructure of a city or community. Some of Futurefarmers' best-loved projects and public performances have social service functions that aim to solve environmental or community needs. This might imply an efficient or systematic process, but Futurefarmers nearly always develops their work through improvisation rather than following a set path. They have taken improvisational stances in such works as *Free Soil Bus Tour (2008)*, *This Is Not a Trojan Horse (2010)*, *Shoemaker's Dialogues (2011)*, and *A Variation on Rossum's Universal Robots (2013)*, all featured at YBCA. Time-based works function as interruptions or disruptions of a given system's modus operandi. *Soil Kitchen (2010)*, *Flatbread Society (2012–ongoing)*, and *Seed Journey (2016–17)* exemplify how as a group Futurefarmers intervenes in the normal processes of overarching, global production systems—such as the agricultural industry or the tech industry—revealing its parts and creating an opportunity to take over its processes. Their work takes a results-oriented approach to urgent environmental and social issues, catalyzed by dialogue, to reflect on specific places and the communities who inhabit them.

A core principle of Futurefarmers' practice is the investigation of social issues through participatory art projects. ***Futurefarmers: Out of Place, in Place*** will feature a "speculative fog-harvesting machine," a new commission to be designed and built in YBCA's galleries over the course of the exhibition that will imagine with visitors potential technologies for fog collecting. Water is a contentious and precious resource in California, and the fog harvesting machine will prototype potential sail collectors to capture tiny water droplets in the air. The project investigates how fog harvesting might lend itself to a slow, intimate, and informal approach to art making while reflecting on the Bay Area and its natural and artificial resources, in particular its long, storied history with fog and its myths.

Throughout the exhibition, artifacts of Futurefarmers' process, including tools, archival print materials, and artworks, will offer opportunities for engagement with their particular form of socially engaged performance. Created by Futurefarmers as an integral part of the fabrication of the speculative fog-harvesting machine, YBCA will offer several **free** exhibition-related public programs, including "**Electromagnetic Fog**," the in-gallery hands-on workshops "**Sewing Machine Disassembly**" and "**Speculative Machine**," and more.

The full schedule of programming offered in conjunction with ***Futurefarmers: Out of Place, in Place*** will be announced at a later date.

Futurefarmers: Out of Place, in Place is one of five exhibitions YBCA is featuring between 2017 and 2019 as part of its **Changing the Ratio** initiative. In 2014, it was estimated that less than 15 percent of US museum and gallery exhibitions were dedicated to women artists. YBCA aspires to change this narrative by devoting its main galleries to retrospective exhibitions of some of the most important women artists of our time. Through 2019, more than 70 percent of YBCA's planned exhibitions are solo shows featuring female artists.

About Futurefarmers

Futurefarmers is an international collective of artists, activists, researchers, farmers, and architects who work together to propose alternatives to the social, political, and environmental organization of space. Founded in 1995, it serves as a platform to support art projects, an artist

in residence program, and the various research interests of its members. Futurefarmers uses various media to deconstruct systems, visualize and understand their intrinsic logics, and offer more sustainable alternatives. Such systems may involve food, public transportation, or education, and past productions have included temporary schools, books, bus tours, and a bake house. Their work has been exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; MAXXI—Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Rome; the New York Hall of Science; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Middelheim Museum, Antwerp, Belgium; the Sharjah Biennial 13; Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; and Artes Mundi 7, Cardiff, Wales, among others.

Amy Franceschini is an artist and designer whose work facilitates encounter, exchange, and tactile forms of inquiry by calling into question the “certainties” of a given time or place. An overarching theme is the perceived conflict between “humans” and “nature.” Her projects reveal the history and currents of contradictions related to this divide by challenging systems of exchange and the tools we use to “hunt” and “gather.” She has a BFA in photography from San Francisco State University and an MFA from Stanford University. She has taught in the visual arts graduate programs at California College of the Arts and Stanford University. She is a 2009 Guggenheim fellow, and has received grants from the Cultural Innovation Fund, the Creative Work Fund, and the Graham Foundation. She founded Futurefarmers in 1995.

Michael Swaine is an inventor and designer working in many media. He is the “analog anchor” of the studio and has collaborated with Futurefarmers since 1997. Swaine is dedicated to working in the community; for instance his *Reap What You Sew Generosity Project* involved him pushing an old-fashioned ice cream cart with a treadle-operated sewing machine on it through the streets of San Francisco. Swaine holds a BFA in ceramics from Alfred University and an MA in design from the University of California, Berkeley. Currently he is teaching at the University of Washington.

Marthe Van Dessel is an artist, activist, and performer based in Antwerp, Belgium, who creates interfaces, devices, and protocols to investigate our urban and institutional hardware. She engages in the administrative, cultural, and political dimension of personal and collective

identities. She holds a degree in political and social science from the University of Antwerp and another in graphic design from St-Lukas. She was a researcher at the Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht in 2005 and a UNIDEE resident in 2007, and has been a guest lecturer at St-Lukas in Antwerp, the Royal Academy of Ghent, and the Higher Institute of Fine Art. She joined Futurefarmers in 2005.

Martin Lundberg hails from the region of the sun, Skåne, in Sweden. He is an anti-disciplinarian maker and creator of Oslo Fjord Sauna in 2013, a floating sauna made entirely from found materials in the Oslo Fjord. Today this sauna is a provocation to the city of Oslo to activate and maintain the fjord and coastline as a lively, accessible common. He joined Futurefarmers in 2005.

Stijn Schiffeleers reveals the subtleties of life via film, video, interactive installations, and other media. His work embodies a sense of play and sensitivity that encourages us to take a closer look at our surroundings. He has recently been seen soaring above the streets of San Francisco in a canoe mounted to the top of the Futurefarmers Volvo. He lives in Oakland and joined Futurefarmers in 2005.

Lode Vranken has been practicing architecture internationally since 1993. He holds a master's degree in a UN course on human settlements and architectural philosophy from the KU Leuven, Belgium. He has been teaching since 2005 as a Ned delegate at the Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia, Barcelona, and was a faculty member in 1993–94 at the Asian Institute for Technology in Bangkok, Thailand. Lode cofounded the research coalition De Bouwerij in Belgium, which focuses on social living structures for passive houses, Cradle 2 Cradle buildings, and zero-energy construction. His research focuses on new concepts for small, self-sufficient living units, folding buildings, kinetic structures, and rolling shelters, all with zero carbon dioxide emissions. He lives in Ghent, Belgium, and joined Futurefarmers in 2005.

Ticket information

Gallery admission: \$10; seniors, teachers, and students: \$9; YBCA members: free
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, 701 Mission Street, San Francisco CA 94103,
415.978.2787

Credits

Futurefarmers: Out of Place, in Place is organized by Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and curated by Lucía Sanromán, director of visual arts. YBCA is grateful to the City of San Francisco for its ongoing support. YBCA programs are made possible in part by: The James Irvine Foundation. Additional funding for YBCA programs: National Endowment for the Arts, Abundance Foundation, Grosvenor, and members of Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. YBCA exhibitions are made possible in part by: The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Panta Rhea Foundation, American Council of Learned Societies Public Fellows Program, and Meridee Moore and Kevin King.

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About the Curator

Lucía Sanromán joined YBCA as director of visual arts in October 2015. Over the course of her career, she has curated groundbreaking exhibitions throughout the United States, Mexico, and Latin America. Recent projects at YBCA include, among others, *Tania Bruguera: Talking to Power / Hablándole al Poder* (2017) (co-curated with Susie Kantor, curatorial associate at YBCA), and the upcoming *Futurefarmers: Out of Place, in Place*, opening April 20, 2018.

About Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) is one of the nation's most innovative contemporary arts centers. Founded in 1993, YBCA's mission is to generate culture that moves people. Through powerful art experiences, thoughtful and provocative content, and deep opportunities for participation, YBCA is committed to creating an inclusive culture that awakens personal and societal transformation. YBCA presents a wide variety of programming year-round, including performing arts, visual arts, film/video, and civic engagement. For tickets and information, call 415.978.ARTS (2787). For more information, visit ybca.org.

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