



CLIMATE CHANGE: THE TICKING TIME BOMB

Online Viewing Room:

August 19 - October 17, 2021

Curatorial Reflections

Climate Change: The Ticking Time Bomb exhibition opens at a very critical time with climate crisis grabbing daily headlines and a highly anticipated publication of [United Nations' report Climate Change 2021](#).

Climate crisis has become the defining issue of our time punctuated by massive droughts, wildfires, flooding, and extreme heat. The scientific evidence is clear and compelling. The year 2020 was the hottest year on record and the last seven years have been the warmest since record-keeping begun in 1800. Earth's atmosphere and oceans are warming, the magnitude and frequency of extreme climate and weather events are increasing, and sea level is rising along our coasts. The 2021 UN Climate Change report unequivocally states that atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide had not been this high in at least 2 million years and the past decade is likely the hottest the planet has been in 125,000 years. A series of scientific assessments warned that a failure to keep the average global temperature from rising past 1.5 °C could usher in catastrophic results, from the inundation of coastal cities to crop failures in various parts of the world. One of the most severe long-term climate impacts will be rising sea levels due to melting polar ice caps that will affect coastal cities with an estimated 800 million people in more than 570 coastal cities by 2050.

Scientists warn us that the repercussions are no longer a distant threat. No matter what we think about the causes, we have no choice but to accept the data and all work towards avoiding further damage.

Climate Change: The Ticking Time Bomb sends a strong message about the looming hazards of climate crisis and examines the endangerment to the natural world from the perspective of a diverse group of artists. Each artist tackles an issue that is consequential to the well-being of our planet, such as water crisis, wildlife extinction, melting glaciers, erosion, consumerism, and overconsumption.

Alisa Singer digs deep into the causes and the scope of climate crisis through combining art and science. Through Environmental Graphiti project, Singer presents an encyclopedic and thorough approach to the issues, including the polarizing and crucial debate of "Man Made or Nature".

In this exhibition, Singer's works tackle five basic questions: WHY is our climate changing, HOW is climate change affecting our world, WHO is at risk, WHAT can we do to address climate change and WHEN can we hope to bring climate change under control?

Singer's visual language and use of primary and secondary color palette capture our eye. The art in this series is based on the compelling scientific data that describes various factors that have contributed to the climate crisis over the last two hundred years. The vibrant digital paintings supported by charts, graphs and maps provide us with effective teaching tools that are accessible, credible, and compelling.

Stephan Crawford and the **ClimateMusic Project** takes data-driven information and converts it into musical composition that have the power to stir our emotions. Finding expression in sound, they communicate the warning that scientists have been raising for years. When viewing Alisa Singer's approach to transforming data to visual compositions and that of Stephan Crawford and the ClimateMusic Project, we realize how the two approaches complement each other.

The ClimateMusic Project has awakened people's conscience with music derived from science reports supplemented by graphs, charts, and research spanning from the early 1900s up to the year 2250. As global warming progresses, the images become increasingly tumultuous and the music intensifies. By coordinating the data, visual compositions and sound, the expressions of the future are vividly depicted. This interdisciplinary music work succeeds to stir the emotion in the audience as they watch streaming images of powerful forces of nature play out.

Kara Maria as an artist activist who spent over a decade tracking endangered species globally, creating paintings and giving voice to the most endangered wildlife. By design, her animals appear diminutive on canvases filled with bright electric colors mixed with planted explosive firecrackers that amplify the dangerous reality affecting wildlife on all continents. A newly published UN report on climate change puts the blame of irresponsible and reckless behaviors on humans. The animals then find themselves helpless victims in a war they did not initiate.

A 2019 study published Nature Climate Change journal that evaluated all 459 U.S. animals listed as 'endangered' under the ESA, found that although 99.8% of endangered animals are sensitive to climate change threats. At the same time, federal agencies considered climate change a threat to only 64% of those species, while planned management actions addressed climate change for only 18% of species.

Michael Kerbow's apocalyptic views reference capitalism, consumerism & consumption as major contributing factors to climate change. The premonition of calamitous future that runs through these paintings is reinforced by surrealistic depictions of landscapes that convey fear, doom and a sense of urgency.

It's no secret that our consumer habits are actively driving climate change. A 2015 study found that the production and use of household goods and services was responsible for 60% of global greenhouse gas emissions. A new U.N. report found that the richest one percent of the global population emit more than twice the amount than the poorest 50%; moreover, the wealthier people become, the more energy they use. A typical American's yearly carbon emissions are five times that of the world's average person. The message is a stark warning -

it is only possible to keep global warming below 1.5 °C if massive and immediate cuts in greenhouse gas emissions are made, requiring the world to repeat the 7% annual decline in emissions seen in 2020 every year until 2050.

David Ruth fashioned molds inspired by actual ice breakage in Antarctica are the basis of his glass sculpture. These sculptures are early markers of the changing landscape in Antarctica and indicators of rising of temperature. It's important for us to pay attention to Antarctica because it is a predictor of patterns of change that the rest of the world may see in the future. The Antarctic Ice Sheet is an integral part of Earth's climate system. The impact of the Antarctic Ice Sheet response to climate change will have global consequences for millions living near the coast.

In *Water Reclamation*, **Beth Fein** highlights the most pressing issues of water crisis locally and globally, which is exacerbated by climate change. It manifests itself in severe droughts, floods, rising sea levels and intense rains. Some 1.1 billion people worldwide lack access to water, and a total of 2.7 billion find water scarce for at least one month of the year. Inadequate sanitation is also a problem for 2.4 billion people—they are exposed to diseases, such as cholera and typhoid fever, and other water-borne illnesses.

This selection of prints covers Philadelphia, Sacramento Delta, Sonoma, Hudson River and Cuba. Each of the locales is substantiated by graphic scientific data that demonstrate some of the current analysis for water reuse in the power industry.

Tanya Knoop weaves a narrative in five chapters about climate crisis that stretches over thousands of years and ends with the possible scenario of Sixth Extinction. Her medium of choice is photography. The images are framed in the 17th century vanitas employing symbols and light as a tool to interject moods to affect the storyline and the viewers' responses. The symbols represent expressions of devastation, death and doom as warning messengers of calamity to come and the assembled imagery of pictures within a picture demonstrate with clarity that point the fact that climate change is real.

Despite the urgency of the ticking clock at "seventh minute to mid-night" Knoop sees a narrow window still open to turn things around if only we could heed the scientific data and embrace the work of environmental activists and scientists who work frantically to slow the course of global warming.

Art is a powerful tool to communicate the science and story of climate change and in a way that can resonate, educate, and motivate broad and diverse audiences. Through combining science-guided visual compositions, conceptual work, and music, *Climate Change: The Ticking Time Bomb* exhibition aims to use the universal power of art to provoke emotions and inspire action each of us to engage and help secure the wellbeing of our planet and a more sustainable future.

Hanna Regev, Curator