

UNCC exhibit asks: Do we know what we're doing?

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HIGHLIGHTS

Provocative duo question the future at UNCC art exhibition

NYC artists Jennifer and Kevin McCoy have been exhibited at MOMA

In "Priests of the Temple," now on view at UNC Charlotte's Rowe Art Gallery through Oct. 30, multi-media artists Jennifer and Kevin McCoy offer a cautionary perspective on Silicon Valley's promise to improve our lives.

The New York City based husband and wife duo have exhibited at P.S.1, The Museum of Modern Art, the New Museum, and in galleries across the United States. So much has their work struck a chord that their creative efforts have been reviewed in the The New York Times, Newsweek, the Washington Post, Artforum, and Wired magazines. They have exhibited in Charlotte only once before, at The Light Factory in 1997.

The artists' exquisitely hand-fabricated mixed media sculptural tableaus combine video components with industrial detritus and urban and natural illustration in scenic dioramas. These 3-dimensional vignettes invite the us to suspend our sense of the present and to reflect on an unchecked capitalist society of tomorrow.

The McCoy's are a provocative team. They hand-make elaborate scenes infused with techno-crafted information streams to jumble our sense of the truth. In "Behind the Hillside," for example, the artists show us not the front, reclaimed view of a landfill but its bowels beneath and we are asked to imagine it's past as wild grasslands shown streaming across a small video monitor.

In the multimedia installation "Chrysalis," a prog rock soundtrack fills the gallery space with a fugue-like composition. An otherworldly hand-sculpted blue cocoon sits atop a table with two digital cameras adjacent to and trained on the form; they provide a continuous digital feed to a Silicon Valley-manufactured computer.

The fidelity of the feed is altered by computer code and then projected onto the gallery wall. The result is a dense, multilayered image matrix. By altering our perceived reality, we might feel confused as we attempt to reconcile the projected experience with the sculptured reality before us. The artists propose a truth in which our shared existence isn't what it seems. It's as if we're caught in an



"Chrysalis," 2012, mixed media sculpture, video projection, electronics and sound. The artists propose a truth in which our shared existence isn't what it seems. It's as if we're caught in an echo chamber unsure which truth is the whole truth — the historical past, our present or a probable future. Courtesy the artists



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Perhaps to remind us of the times we live in, in the 2011 video “Mussafah” located in the Rowe’s upstairs gallery, the artists used a camera to film an industrial zone in Abu Dhabi. Portrayed through the camera’s lens is a seemingly endless depiction of the gritty urbanscape scenery which is far removed from the dreamy and elusive existence capitalism promises.

This outwardly banal portrayal doesn’t offer Photoshop-altered scenes of towering, glittering skyscrapers, luxury resorts and ocean panoramas. Instead, this 49-minute film presents the authentic, seemingly eternal reality of self-indulgence conspiring with obsolescence to transform our manufactured world of convenience into derelict future landscapes of decay.

Jennifer and Kevin McCoy reveal the true nature of our interdependence with a world advancing faster than our ability to understand it or to adequately provide for its stewardship.

“These art works are about our unwillingness to look at all the effects of capitalism; beautiful postcards of resorts and pleasing vistas make you feel that it’s working,” state the artists. The McCoy’s bring into high relief the gaps in our current societal narrative.



“Between the Resorts,” 2012, mixed media sculpture, video screens and electronics. These 3-dimensional vignettes invite the us to suspend our imagined sense of the present and to reflect today on an unchecked capitalist society of tomorrow. Courtesy the artists