



## CITY OF SYRACUSE PUBLIC ART APPLICATION

All applications for the installation of public art will be evaluated based on the seven (7) criteria enumerated below. It is understood that some criteria will have more relevance than others depending on the proposed artwork. This will be taken into account and the criteria weighted accordingly.

- Artistic merit and quality, as substantiated by an artist's past history of exhibitions or sales, awards or other recognition, or an outstanding first work, as well as the inherent quality in terms of timelessness of vision, design, aesthetics and excellence;
- Intentionality of the artist, concerning the meaning and proposed or desired effect of the work as Public Art upon the viewing public, as rationalized and elaborated upon in the project description;
- Local significance, creating a sense of excitement in public spaces and presenting fresh ways of seeing the community and city reflected;
- Representation of styles and tastes within the public art collection, acknowledging existing works in the public art collection and striving for diversity of style, scale and media;
- Safety and durability, including the ability of the artwork to withstand weather conditions, as well as structural and surface integrity;
- Unrestricted public viewing, primarily the opportunity for public access, but also suitability for public participation, social and political attitudes, and functional considerations; and
- Installation and maintenance of the work, from practicality of fabrication and transport, to installation and long-term care.

**PROJECT NAME:** *Between Species*, Multiple Artists

- **Maria Whiteman**, *Touching* (2:27) and *Untitled (Compassion)* (2:37)
- **Robert Todd**, *Undergrowth* (12:16)
- **Leslie Thornton**, selection from *Binocular Menagerie* series (2:50)
- **Sam Easterson**, *Burrow Cams* (3:00)

**PROJECT TYPE:** Temporary installation, February 4-March 26, 2016

**LOCATION:** Urban Video Project, Everson Museum of Art (permissions have been granted)

**ARTWORK TYPE:**

Looping video projection, TRT: 23 minutes

**ARTWORK DESCRIPTION:**

"Between Species" is a group show and indoor curated screening with panel talk exploring the idea of "the animal" and attempts to imagine non-human animals through technology.

**Maria Whiteman**

Visitors to our national parks arrived burdened with a desire that is unnerving despite (or perhaps, because of) how common it has become. This desire is to encounter the bodies of wild animals. For most, it is enough to catch a glimpse of an animal moving through the forest or escaping into the underbrush. For others, the pull of animal bodies is so powerful that they want contact, closer, closer still, moving forward in hope, fear, anticipation, expectation. All that is missing in the sometimes deadening conveniences of modern life are condensed into the possibility of touch between two living, unlike species.

And what if such a touch became possible? These images offer evidence of contact between an animal body and human one. They are possible only because the animal bodies have become domesticated in one of many ways we have developed to fix them in place and open them up to our knowledge systems. The images are of my hand slowly caressing mammals in the storage room of a natural history museum. In such places, even when the bodies of animals are no longer alive, the fact that they are placed in dioramas behind glass and shielded from our hands, makes us want to touch them. "Touching" explores our desire for contact, investigating the intimacy of animal bodies. It does so in a way that mourns their death; it mourns, too, that gap in our present sense of ourselves that creates a need for a touch of the wild that is fast disappearing.

--from the artist's statement for *Touching*

**Robert Todd**

"A blind predator dreams through its prey's eyes". The obvious predator is a Barred owl, but the film uses this as a vehicle to consider the active role of the camera in image "capture". The prey is undefined, but suggested as a compendium of natural figures that the camera "captures". The film establishes visual (textural) similes between the environment and the predator, and a kinetic dialogue between the camera and its objects/subjects: gliding through the underbelly of the world, tunneling under the natural flora of a semi-urban setting, the camera establishes a presence within the Ground of Nature, counterpoint to an examination of the Figure of the Owl, whose head turns in slow drifting arcs that mimic the dance of the nature-seeing/seeking camera.

The owl's blindness is revealed in extreme close-ups of the creature's cataract-encrusted eyes. Its blind state creates a stumbling block to an easy decoding of the nature-seeking footage as a representation of its own outer-directed sight, calling into question the nature of this perspective, and consequently the nature of that which is "capturing" the owl.

--from the artist's statement

**Leslie Thornton**

In *Binocular Menagerie*, Thornton plays with vision, perception and transformation. A series of images of animals—a virtual menagerie of birds, reptiles and mammals—is framed within a format of two circular windows. Each animal's movements on the left are remapped into an elegant abstraction on the right, transforming the "real" into a digital kaleidoscope. In this unexpectedly profound meditation on the minutiae of perception, the smallest shift in the animal's movement ripples into resonant motion, multiplied, recast, and folded back upon itself. Thornton's manipulations intensify the viewer's focus, offering revelatory ways of seeing and perceiving the ordinary that are both strange and beautiful.

*Binocular Menagerie* premiered as part of the 2014 Midnight Moment Series, a project of Times Square Arts and Times Square Alliance, in which an artist's work takes over the giant LED

billboards in the heart of New York's Times Square every night for a month, just before midnight.

States Thornton, "In *Binocular Menagerie*, I wanted to create an exotic environment of 'almost-nature' for Times Square, in which there is co-habitation of animal, machine, architecture and man. I thought of multiple King Kongs, both horrible and sublime at the same time, and I thought of taking over this whole visual field with small revelations."

--from the EAI website entry

**Sam Easterson**

*Burrow-Cams* features footage from cameras that have been placed inside underground animal habitats (dens, burrows, etc.). Animals showcased include: burrowing owl, black-footed ferret, porcupine, badger, prairie vole, swift fox, deer mouse, and black tailed prairie dog.

--from the VDB website entry

**LINK TO VIEW WORK:**

Maria Whiteman, *Touching* and *Untitled (Compassion)*:

<https://vimeo.com/107060209>

<https://vimeo.com/32981324>

Robert Todd, *Undergrowth*:

<https://vimeo.com/27861991>

Leslie Thornton, selections from *Binocular Menagerie* series:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RAx00RjmdgA> Note: Final works from the series to appear in UVP show have not been confirmed; this documentation of selections from the same series as part of the Times Square "Midnight Moments" program will give a good idea of the nature of the work.

Sam Easterson, *Burrow Cams*:

<http://www.vdb.org/titles/burrow-cams>

**ASSOCIATED EVENTS:**

Event Date: Thursday, March 10, 2016

The event will be a curated screening of additional works on the theme followed by a panel featuring prominent theorist, Cary Wolfe, artist Maria Whiteman, and additional artists featured in the indoor curated screening.

**ARTISTS' BIOS:**

**Maria Whiteman:** Maria Whiteman was an Assistant Professor at McMaster University 2003-2008 in Multimedia, School of the Arts and Drawing and Intermedia in Fine Arts at the University of Alberta 2009 - 2014. She taught graduate courses in contemporary art theory and studio courses in mixed media, photography, video, drawing and installation art. Her current art

practice explores themes such as art and science, relationships between industry, community and nature, and the place of animals in our cultural and social imaginary. In addition to her studio work, she conducts research in contemporary art theory and visual culture. Maria has published critical texts in *Public: Art/Culture/Ideas*, *Minnesota Review* and *Antennae* and an essay on Visual Culture in the *John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*. In 2011, Whiteman was the recipient of an Interdisciplinary Course Seminar Grant from the Kule Institute for Advanced Studies was a scholar in the Canadian Institute for Research Computing in the Arts. In 2011, she had a solo exhibition at Latitude 53. Exhibited in the Alberta Biennial at the Art Gallery of Alberta 2013. Whiteman was a co-director of the 2012 (BRIC) Banff Research in Culture/ documenta 13 research residency and participated in the Geoffrey Famer Residency at the Banff Centre in 2012. She has been presenting conference papers and exhibiting artworks at the SLSA 2012-2015. Whiteman's "*Mountain Pine Beetle and Roadside Kestrel*" most recent video/photography work will be premiered at the Houston Cinema Arts Festival and Rice Media Centre, Houston, TX, Nov 2014. Whiteman will be attending the Caetani Culture Artist in Residence *FRESH AIR!* Okanagan, Vernon, BC, Alberta May-June 2015. In November, 2015 Co-organizing "After BioPolitics" The SLSA Society for Literature, Science and the Arts, Keynotes (Mark Dion and Vinciane Despret) Houston, Texas. She has also been selected as a recipient of the Visiting Scholar Lynette S. Autrey Fellowship 2015-2016.

**Robert Todd:** A lyrical filmmaker as well as a sound and visual artist, Robert Todd continually produces short works that resist categorization. In the past twenty years he has produced a large body of short-to-medium format films that have been exhibited internationally at a wide variety of venues and festivals including the Media City Festival, San Francisco International Film Festival, Rotterdam International Film Festival, New York Film Festival, Le Rencontres Internationales, Black Maria Film Festival, Nouveau Cinema in Montreal, Cinematheque Ontario, the Harvard Film Archive, Pacific Film Archive, the Paris Biennial, Slamdance Film Festival, and others. His films have won numerous festival prizes, grants, and artist's awards. He teaches film production at Emerson College in Boston.

**Leslie Thornton:** Refracted through archival material, texts, found footage and dense soundtracks, Leslie Thornton's rigorously experimental film and video work is an investigation into the production of meaning through media. Her epic project *Peggy and Fred in Hell* is an ongoing cycle of interrelated films, videos and installation environments. Exploring the aesthetics of narrative form as well as the politics of the image, Thornton forges a unique and strangely beautiful syntax, one that poses its critique at the same time that it mesmerizes and confounds.

**Sam Easterson:** Sam Easterson is an award winning video artist with over a decade of experience collecting wildlife imagery for museum, web and television venues. Past venues include the Whitney Museum of American Art (Biennial), the Exploratorium, DOCUMENTA (13), Discovery Channel, the International Center of Photography, The Learning Channel, the New Museum of Contemporary Art, the Late Show With David Letterman (CBS), MASS MoCA, MTV, the Walker Art Center and Animal Planet, among others. Select press: *Newsweek*, NPR, *The New York Times*, CNN, *The LA Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *Harper's*, *Audubon Magazine* and *The New Yorker*, among others. Select speaking: Yale, UCLA, KSU, Auburn, USC and UVA, among others. Select grants/awards: Louis Comfort Tiffany prize, Creative Capital grant, Margaret Hall Silva Foundation grant, Durfee grant and Yellow Fox Foundation grant, among others.

Easterson is a graduate of The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York City.

**APPLICANT:**

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