

# GALLERY 400

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UIC SCHOOL OF ART & ART HISTORY

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Tues–Fri 10–6, Sat 12–6

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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### ***Ghost Nature: Beyond and Between Transhuman Spaces***

January 17–March 1, 2014



Xaviera Simmons, *Index One, Composition One*, 2011, Color photograph, 50 x 40 in.

Artists: **Sebastian Alvarez, Art Orienté objet (Marion Laval-Jeantet and Benoît Mangin), Jeremy Bolen, Irina Botea, Agnes Meyer-Brandis, Robert Burnier, Marcus Coates, Assaf Evron, Carrie Gundersdorf, Institute of Critical Zoologists, Jenny Kendler, Devin King, Stephen Laphisophon, Milan Metthey, Rebecca Mir, Heidi Norton, Akosua Adoma Owusu, Tessa Siddle, and Xaviera Simmons.**

November 21, 2013—Chicago, IL— Curated by **Caroline Picard**, *Ghost Nature* is a group exhibition based around the strangeness of the natural world. As Timothy Morton posits in *The Ecological Thought* (Harvard University Press, 2010), “nature qua nature” no longer exists as an “over there” place. Humankind is wholly integrated within its “mesh” and, as such, the Romantic desire to commune with a landscape beyond the scope of humanity is impossible. Nevertheless, there remains an inherited desire to so. It is a glitch. The tickle of a phantom

limb. A desire forever unfulfilled but nonetheless maddening. Working in sculpture, photography, drawing, and video, artists in *Ghost Nature* investigate the borders and bounds between human and nonhuman experience.

**Jeremy Bolen** documents multiple facets of the landscape, juxtaposing subterranean traces of radioactivity with images of scenery above ground; a material layer of dirt is scattered on the surface of the prints. **Heidi Norton** embeds living plants in her work, creating new and abstract frames with glass and wax. **Irina Botea** frames landscape in another way, filming a tour guide on his quixotic search for the perfect, “picturesque” view. Works in the show periodically bump into limited capacities: for instance **Carrie Gundersdorf**’s translations of planetary bodies into the motifs of abstract, colorist painting, or **Assaf Evron**’s wooden interpretation of an algorithmic color model, the form of which is determined by the systemic limitations of the computer from which it originated. **Milan Metthey** courts ducks and **Art Orienté object** exhibits documentation of a horse-to-human blood transfusion. Attempting to connect with non-human beings, Metthey and AOo vie to transcend anthropocentric life. Inherently fraught and prone to failure, these efforts test deep-seated assumptions about what is, and what is not, natural. **Rebecca Mir** writes love letters to the ocean. **Marcus Coates** installs a white cube, calling it the “Platonic Spirit” of a wolf, its wildness stripped blank, not unlike a tombstone. **Robert Burnier** folds aluminum into crumpled abstraction, and the **Institute of Critical Zoologists** installs a bee trap using blue paint as bait—a minimalist gesture that may or may not work. **Xaviera Simmons**’ photographs question the fixity of personal identity by way of material assemblages. There are fanciful movements too, as with **Agnes Meyer-Brandis**’ moon goose colony, or **Akosua Adoma Owusu**’s fabled man-spider, *Kwaku Ananse*. The show, which features nineteen artists, creates an eclectic aesthetic ecology within Gallery 400.

In 2007, the Northwest Passage opened up in the Arctic. Scientists continue to predict dramatically rising seas. Bee populations have fallen rapidly, raising questions about food production. Mice grow human ears on their backs in laboratories and rabbits glow in the dark. In this new age of ecological awareness, “Nature”—what was once an ideological retreat for Thoreau and Emerson—is but a dithering spirit. Rather than succumb to the pang of this loss, *Ghost Nature* exposes the limits of human perspective in the emergent landscape that remains: a slippery network of sometimes monstrous creatures, plants, and technological advancements. Perhaps that Romantic site never existed in the first place—and yet without it, how are we to reframe our concept of the natural world? How do we incorporate and integrate human participation?

### **Related Programs:**

**Opening Reception**, Friday, January 17, 5-8pm

Other programs to be announced

### **Tours:**

Gallery 400 offers guided tours for groups of all ages. Tours are free of charge but require reservation. Please complete our online form (accessible at [gallery400.uic.edu/visit/tours](http://gallery400.uic.edu/visit/tours)) to schedule a tour of *Ghost Nature*. For more information, or to discuss the specific needs and interests of your group, please contact us at 312 996 6114 or [gallery400@uic.edu](mailto:gallery400@uic.edu).

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Founded in 1983, Gallery 400 is one of the nation's most vibrant university galleries, showcasing work at the leading edge of contemporary art, architecture, and design. The Gallery's program of exhibitions, lectures, film and video screenings, and performances features interdisciplinary and experimental practices. Operating within the School of Art and Art History in the College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Gallery 400 endeavors to make the arts and its practitioners accessible to a broad spectrum of the public and to cultivate a variety of cultural and intellectual perspectives. Gallery 400 is recognized for its support of the creation of new work, the diversity of its programs and participants, and the development of experimental models for multidisciplinary exhibition.