



Soft Turns

relatively gentle ways of touching

30 April ————— 11 June, 2016
Opening Reception | 30 April at 7 pm

Image: documentation of the set for
epicycle, stop-motion animation, 2015

Essay by Alana Traficante

Soft Turns is the artistic collaboration of Sarah Jane Gorlitz and Wojciech Olejnik, who together through their practice research, reimagine and reconstruct sites

of historical, incomplete or falsified truths. The artists stage the gallery as a site of aesthetic inquiry through the confluence of video, sculptural objects and spatial constructions. By seeking to decelerate and make present the act of viewing, Soft Turns offers artworks as provocations—sites of investigation through which the application of time, sight, sound, movement and touch come to reveal new processes of embodied knowledge formation. Through explorations of interiority and containment, and by destabilizing the boundary between imagination and truth, Soft Turns brings the object of study closer to its beholder. This gesture not only

foregrounds the precarity of knowledge, but also the spaces of free play and experimentation therein.

With both *eastward looking west / westward looking east* and *epicycle*, Soft Turns contemplates the false enclosure of knowledge through views looking into and out of the traditional museum display case—a musing on states of containment and escape. *eastward looking west / westward looking east* (2013) brings tropes of the natural history museum as a pedagogic tool into question. Screened amongst shelves of recreated sample objects are stop-motion animations that present slow, peering views into museological displays. A series of botanical objects are depicted onscreen, manufactured by the 19th Century botanist and businessman R. Brendel. Flooding natural light casts reflections on the case's glass walls, obscuring views of objects contained within.

Coming up at MODERN FUEL:

PURVIEW

Purview artists' talks were initiated in order to give members an opportunity to present and share their work. It is a chance to learn about other practicing artists and cultural producers in our region—their influences, concerns and questions—and an occasion for artists to gain valuable insight and feedback from their peers.

Tuesday May 24, 7 pm

Aida Sulcs and Jocelyn Purdie

Aida Sulcs uses art as a tool to ask questions, articulate ideas and to understand. Jocelyn Purdie has been an active member of Kingston's arts community since the mid 80s, and an independent curator since the early 90s. Her art practice includes work in sculpture, installation, and digital media.

MANO/RAMO NEW MEDIA ROUNDTABLE

Friday May 13, 7 pm

Presented by the Media Arts Network of Ontario / Réseau des arts médiatiques de l'Ontario (MANO/RAMO) in collaboration with Modern Fuel and Reelout Arts Project Inc., this free informal roundtable discussion for cultural workers and artists engaged with media arts will address challenges and opportunities in our public granting system, community collaborations between organizations and equity and inclusion in the arts.

For more information or to RSVP, please contact Adriana at
membership@mano-ramo.ca

Visual truths are distorted and distanced on account of the boundary between object and lens...

Visual truths are distorted and distanced on account of the boundary between object and lens, a distortion that is then doubled and redoubled in translation to the screen and the subsequent beholder.

The result is a four-part displacement between the object and its subject; yet simultaneously, this same distance is effectively reversed by the material presence of artist-crafted objects within the installation's dimensional space. These objects are each models of models—seeds, florets, small clusters of flowers—which Soft Turns makes present by taking up the methods of representation and re-creation of the naturalist, much like the objects depicted onscreen. By re-enacting and troubling this system of knowledge preservation and distribution, Soft Turns lures the viewer toward a place of uncertainty where truth remains fluid and forever unfixated.

With the video *epicycle* (2015), the act of inward observation is turned on its head. In response to the ancient Greek Ptolemaic system, through which planetary movement was charted on false knowledge of a geo-centric universe, the animation traces the course of an epicycling meteorite as it navigates the interior of a glass case. The camera's view assumes a position parallel to that of the object, facing outward from within the confines of display. However, the outward gaze is restricted by reflective surfaces that return only imagery of the spaces therein. Accompanied by a hollow, tracing soundscape, the moving image hints at the hypnotic and perpetual interiority of the object's worldview.

Then suddenly, the dizzying epicycle is broken as the meteorite fractures the surface of the museum case. Perhaps the object has awakened to knowledge of its own agency, compelled to radically disrupt the conditions of its pre-authored existence. Or otherwise, perhaps its path is simply predestined as such. Either way, the abrupt cessation of movement across Ptolemy's graphical plane connotes something other than a fixed truth—a rupture in the mythos, a point of breaking through.



Image: *portolan map* (still image), 2016



Image: *eastward looking west* (still image), 2013

This interplay between the presence and absence of truth also surfaces with the video, *portolan map* (2016). Situated by the icon of the Google maps pin—the ubiquitous, inverted tear-drop-shaped graphic, a common social identifier of place—the animation seeks to interrogate the mystery of a phantom island. The artists begin with a thin, graphite copy of a printed Google map and apply water atop the image to destabilize its ground. The result is a mutable, shifting surface, which reads as dark water or liquid metal that fills the viewing plane, solidifies and then begins to break apart. As the surface lifts upward, the map becomes more materially present and the eye becomes implicated in a practice of tactile visibility—a reading of texture in the image, of feeling its depth. The pinned location, however, remains visible and anchored in position just below this new, restless surface. Here, the artists enact a questioning of the phantom island (one that was once charted, but now no longer 'exists') and trouble the systems of knowledge that possess power to eradicate the presence of place. While current geographical evidence may function to disprove existence, Soft Turns signals toward what lies just beneath the surface, and makes present what remains unanswered in states of presumed absence.

Together these works evoke a process of coming to question the solidity of truth, the systems that codify knowledge, and one's ability to access and comprehend them. By experimenting with tactics of distance and proximity, re-creation, representation, concealment, containment and escape, Soft Turns requests a mindful presence of the subject to consider the implications of their knowledge-seeking gaze. States of inquisition are prompted through the body—by looking, feeling and hearing—and in the imaginative conditions of aesthetic free play. In suspending the pursuit of fixed knowledge, a productive embodiment of uncertainty may occur. In this space, there is value in the disproven, falsified, incomplete, inaccessible and unknowable truths. These knowledges become more than just byproducts of the inquisitive mind, but rather material evidence of the pursuit to evoke, produce, preserve and mobilize states of conscious knowing.

Alana Traficante

Soft Turns is the collaborative effort of Sarah Jane Gorlitz and Wojciech Olejnik. They consider the encounter with something 'other', as an ever-changing space between the foreign and the familiar, the accessible and inaccessible; and interaction with such spaces - these brief moments that weave the background of everyday existence—forms the basis of their practice. Their collaborations employ found objects, readily available materials, D.I.Y. methods, and experimentation to create videos, stop-motion animations and mixed media installations. Currently based in Toronto, Canada, they were featured in the Fall 2011 edition of *Canadian Art* and *Syphon 3.1* in 2015. They have received support from the Swedish Edstrand Foundation, the Toronto, Ontario, and Canada Councils for the Arts; the latter awarding them the 2008 Joseph Stauffer Prize and a 2013 Paris Residency. Recent exhibitions include: Centre Clark (Montréal), Southern Exposure (San Francisco), Foundation 3.14 (Bergen), Greusslich Contemporary (Berlin), University of Waterloo Art Gallery (Waterloo), 18th Videobrasil (São Paulo), Skånes konstförening (Malmö), Oakville Galleries (Oakville), O'Born Contemporary (Toronto), and Trinity Square Video (Toronto).