

Callicoon Fine Arts is pleased to present *A Vaudeville on Mankind in Time and Space*, an exhibition of photography and installation by Fia Backström.

The exhibition takes Harry Martinson's space epic, *Aniara, A Vaudeville on Mankind in Time and Space* (1956) as its point of departure. *Aniara* is a spacecraft carrying refugees from a toxic and radioactive Earth to Mars. The ship has lost navigation power from a meteor collision and is on a course towards deep space. On board is Mima, a female proto-artificial intelligence with sensory faculties. Mima transmits fragmented images from Earth for the refugees' diversion until accumulated imagery of terrestrial suffering overwhelms her hyper-sensitivity, causing her to self-destruct. Working with complex analogue and digital photographic techniques, Backström channels Mima's operations, producing images that vibrate and swell in and out of focus.

Backström pulls apart the negative and positive of an image and then recombines them in a displaced arrangement, giving the effect of a relief. She varies this technique, known as paraglyph printing, by mirroring layers and sometimes excising one layer altogether. The works include photographs taken by the artist at a Staten Island nature reserve, microscopic imaging of fluid samples from the artist's bodily orifices, and images sourced from the internet. The exhibition sequences and morphs these photographs of heterogeneous sites, at once global and intimate.

Wallpapered on the gallery partition is a close-up image of a finger nail with a cracked cuticle. Wax paper works on top of the wallpaper have been imprinted through burning. Skin, like photo paper, is a permeable membrane sensitive to the outside world. It retains memories of past touches: caresses, cuts, burns. The cuticle is a protective filter between flesh and nail; enlarged, it recalls a landscape divided into territories. The boundaries between external and internal, macro and micro, open here to material transformation.

In a performance, Backström will join choreographer and dancer Mariana Valencia to interpret the rituals developed on *Aniara* after Mima's self-destruction. Taken together, the textural, textual, and performed layers of the exhibition stage a possible polyphonic collectivity that feels at once fragmented and all-encompassing, flooding the senses towards another space, a point past absorption.

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