

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

James Pearson Duffy Department of Art and Art History

Elaine L. Jacob Gallery

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exhibitions: **Foodture: PlantBot Genetics**
(featured on the lower level of the gallery)
UMWELT: Ryuta Nakajima
(featured on the upper level of the gallery)

Dates: January 31 through April 11, 2014

Opening Reception: Friday, January 31, 5-8PM

Gallery Hours: Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10AM to 6PM; and Fridays, 10AM to 7PM

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Foodture: PlantBot Genetics

UMWELT: Ryuta Nakajima

The James Pearson Duffy Department of Art and Art History's Elaine L. Jacob Gallery is pleased to present **Foodture** by PlantBot Genetics and **UMWELT** by Ryuta Nakajima, January 31 through April 11, 2014.

PlantBot Genetics and the Monsantra Series

The PlantBot Genetics Corporation parodies and satirically comments on the aggressive and potentially misleading practices of biotech companies. We can only guess what will happen to the world's food supply after subsequent generations of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and other transgenic modifications are inserted into food crops. In answer to this state of affairs, *PlantBot Genetics Inc.* grafts plants onto animatronic and remote controlled bases to create organisms with no clear heritage and no clear future. Our bizarre creations emphasize the ridiculousness of actual biotech products through corporate graphics, product descriptions, and marketing techniques. Our company's chief-selling brand "Monsantra" is named, after Monsanto, the world's largest supplier and producer of genetically modified seed. Like a B-movie Godzilla, Monsantra and other engineered PlantBots become a hybrid of imagination, possibility, and reality, asking the question, "What will it all become?"

PlantBot Genetics can visit you!

The artist team of Wendy DesChene (Canada) and Jeff Schmuki (USA) couple interdisciplinary art practices with current scientific knowledge on the environmental and social costs of bioengineered crops. PlantBots are created from recycled, battery powered, animatronic toys that are repurposed and unleashed onto unsuspecting audiences as a means to create conversations about sustainable alternatives and grassroots action. In gallery settings, PlantBots are displayed as if in a real laboratory setting complete with field notes and videos of their unique genetic history. The lab setting makes use of dioramas and self-contained incubators, where at the push of a button, PlantBots sing, dance, and move about the gallery to interact. Such robo-plant exhibitions and street interventions motivate communities to question industrial food production, where food comes from and where it may be going. PlantBot Genetics provokes investigations into current agricultural practices and inspires individuals to think more critically about their connection to what they eat and the natural world.

-Wendy DesChene + Jeff Schmuki, Co-founders of PlantBot Genetics

Ryuta Nakajima

When considering contemporary visual culture in all of its myriad complexity, cross-cultural influences, and styles drawn from disparate periods, one may be moved to ask such existential questions as why do we make images, where do they come from and what is their primary function? In order to answer these rather difficult questions, the exhibition *UMWELT* focuses on the adaptive coloration of Pharaoh cuttlefish (*Sepia Pharaonis*) as an empirical and biological model, a model that codes and re-maps visual information such as avant-garde paintings, photographs, and video.

More specifically, the adaptive coloration of the cuttlefish, which is triggered by both lateral and longitudinal visual stimuli sensing natural elements (sand, mud, seaweed, coral reef, etc.), is modeled with various types of digital images replacing the natural elements. The collected data from these experiments is then used to create a series of photographs and video installations. This process may not only uncover certain key information needed to understand the origin of visual communication, but also function as a catalyst that will redirect our culture away from the ever simulated hyper-reality. In turn, this exploration may create a truly valuable interdisciplinary platform to discuss the current trends in both art and science.

-Ryuta Nakajima

The James Pearson Duffy Department of Art and Art History is a division of Wayne State’s College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts, educating the next generation of visual artists, designers and art historians. Wayne State University, located in the heart of Detroit’s midtown cultural center, is a premier urban research university offering more than 350 academic programs through 13 schools and colleges to more than 31,000 students.



Image by PlantBot Genetics



Image by Ryuta Nakajima

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