

:: For Immediate Release::

MEDIA CONTACT:

Emily Dittman

Collection and Exhibition Manager

(315)443-4097

[ekdittma@syr.edu](mailto:ekdittma@syr.edu)

*SUART GALLERIES PRESENTS "LET'S BE DRAGONS: WILD SEEDS;" ANNUAL MASTER OF FINE ARTS  
EXHIBITION; OPENS APRIL 6*



left: Rachel Fein-Smolinski, detail of the installation *The Infinite Internal*, 2017. right: Owen Drysdale, *TidalWave.WAV*, 2016

Syracuse, NY---The Syracuse University Art Galleries is pleased to announce *Let's Be Dragons: Wild Seeds*, the annual exhibition of the Master of Fine Arts [M.F.A.] thesis candidates from the College of Visual and Performing Arts. *Wild Seeds* features the artwork of nine emerging artists Loren Bartnicke, Gang Chen, Owen Drysdale, Rachel Fein-Smolinski, Peter Smith, Shiwen Su, Chunlin Yang, Munjal Yagnik, and Chris Zacher. Organized by DJ Hellerman, curator of art and programs at the Everson Museum of Art, this spring marks the first ever campus and Syracuse city-wide celebration of the arts learned and practiced at Syracuse University.

The exhibition will run Thursday, April 6 through Sunday, May 14, 2017 in the Shaffer Art Building. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Sunday, 11 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.; and Thursdays 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. The gallery will be closed Easter weekend and on University holidays. The SUArt Galleries will host an

opening reception from 5– 7 p.m. on Thurs, April 13. Patrons are welcome to view the exhibition until the gallery closes at 8p.m. The reception is free and open to the public.



Loren Bartnicke, detail of *Windows of Desire*, 2017

Referencing Octavia E. Butler's 1980 science-fiction novel *These Wild Seeds*, the exhibition brings together a selection of artists interested in undermining or tinkering with superstructures designed to engineer social order and temper radical individuality. Altogether, the artists in *Wild Seeds* point and nudge our focus toward institutions with power and control. The works present questions about who has the agency to manipulate our subjectivity and they attempt to craft histories that open the possibility of forging against the currents of dominant culture.

Decidedly, these artworks and art practices are acts of resistance and revision, often rejected or dismissed, that help us envision a future that is unlike our past. *Let's Be Dragons* organizer DJ Hellerman states, "It has been a privilege to work with such a committed group of artists. As they leave the M.F.A. program, I have high expectations for their contributions to the world. We all need engaged artists making challenging work, especially now."

This year, the M.F.A. exhibition is divided among four Syracuse University exhibition spaces, and features twenty-nine artists. *Let's Be Dragons* is the overarching exhibition title and each venue acts as an individual chapter, unifying the work shown at each location. The participating venues include SUart Galleries (*Wild Seeds*), Point of Contact Gallery (*Serpents Inside*), Community Folk Art Center (*Strangers in a Strange Land*), and 914 Works (*Hardwired to Connect*).

Select programming associated with the exhibition includes a Lunchtime Lecture with DJ Hellerman, organizer of the exhibition, on Wed, April 12, beginning at 12:15 p.m. The exhibition and programs are free and open to the public. Complete information and related programming is available by visiting the official exhibition website at <http://suart.syr.edu/>. Press material, including exhibition press release, exhibition publications, checklist, and press ready images are available for download directly from our website at <http://suart.syr.edu/media-2/press-materials/>

## ABOUT THE CURATOR

DJ Hellerman is curator of art and programs at the Everson Museum of Art. A native of Ohio, DJ began curating and educating people about art while helping Progressive Insurance build a collection of contemporary art designed to encourage innovation and change. He received his M.A. in Art History

from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, OH and his B.A. in English and Philosophy from Lake Erie College in Painesville, OH. He loves live music and literature as much as he enjoys visual art.

A few of Hellerman's recent curatorial productions include solo exhibitions: *T.R. Ericsson: Crackle & Drag*, Björn Schülke: *Traveling Spy*, Mildred Beltré: *DreamWork*. A few recent theme based group exhibitions include: *Of Land & Local* an annual place-based exhibition about art and the environment, and *Taking Pictures* an exhibition exploring how artists associated with the Pictures Generation anticipated and recently turned their critical attention to digital networks used in the dissemination and consumption of images.

## ABOUT THE SUART GALLERIES

The SUArt Galleries strives to provide the best possible environment for art appreciation and scholarly development. No photography will be allowed in exhibition spaces. For approved, press-ready images, visit the exhibition website.

The SUArt Galleries, accessible through the Shaffer Art Building on the SU campus, enhances the cultural environment of SU and the Syracuse area through meaningful educational experiences and encounters with the University's permanent collection and traveling exhibitions. It is the main campus venue for the visual arts and home of the University's extensive permanent collection. The facility hosts a variety of temporary and permanent exhibitions throughout the year. The SUArt Galleries is a member of SU's [Coalition of Museum and Art Centers \(CMAC\)](#).