

FUTURE

PACIFIC

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Acknowledgements

When Bakehouse artist Lauren Shapiro approached us about hosting her *Future Pacific* project, we immediately embraced the concept. It not only provided Lauren with the opportunity to work at a much larger scale than she previously had, but it also aligned with our organization's desire to serve as a platform for local artmaking and community engagement. We are so grateful to Lauren for giving us this opportunity.

Future Pacific reflects Bakehouse's belief that artists are powerful agents of change and have the capacity to shape, reflect, and transform our lives. The existential threat of climate change and its impact on fragile ecosystems is of critical concern to our artist community and region at-large.

I want to thank Curatorial and Public Programs Associate Laura Novoa, who successfully collaborated with the artist to help realize her vision for this ambitious undertaking. Lauren and Laura were undaunted and determined, despite the very challenging obstacles resulting from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a locally mandated two-month lockdown, and the ensuing necessity to implement public health protocols that would ensure the safety of our artists and participating members of the community.

I am grateful to the other members of our nimble and talented team, including Aramis Celedon, Patrick Oleson, and Ricardo Mor, who support the practices of over one hundred artists through their daily commitment to our organization. I commend our visitor services interns, Nailah Allen and Surayyah Muhammad, who graciously welcomed and oriented the public for in-person visitations.

Future Pacific would not have been possible without the incredible generosity of Thea, Jordyn, Jayde, Alexander, and Jonathan Mitzman, who supported the project in honor of Robert Mitzman's birthday and to celebrate his spirit of curiosity and imagination and the family's interest in environmental protection advocacy.

The exhibition was also supported by a National Science Foundation grant (#1924281) to Dr. Silbiger, CSUN, Silbiger Labs, with additional sponsorship from Mason Colorworks and Highwater Clay.

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Finally, I want to acknowledge the members of our Board of Directors, including Jason Korman, President, Edouard Duval-Carrié, Jose Felix Diaz, Brenda Freeman, Wesley J. Hevia, Christine M. King, Lawrence Kline, Adam Koffler, Adriene McCoy, Claudio Riedi, and Lia Yaffar-Pena. They have demonstrated extraordinary leadership in helping us navigate these challenging times and guiding us during a pivotal moment in our institutional development.

Cathy Leff
Director, Bakehouse Art Complex

Future Pacific

Lauren Shapiro

November 21, 2020 - May 30, 2021

Organized by Bakehouse Art Complex

Audrey Love Gallery

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BAKEHOUSE ART COMPLEX



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QUANTITATIVE ECOLOGY





Future Pacific

Text by Laura Novoa

Curatorial + Public Programs Associate,
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The diversity of South Florida's landscape has inspired many to create art influenced by or in response to its environs. South Florida's geography, a convergence point for a variety of historical, environmental and socio-economic factors, is both its biggest strength and greatest weakness. Now that Florida has been designated with the disparaging title of ground zero for climate change,^[1] a cavalry of visual artists, including Lauren Shapiro - whose site-specific installation, *Future Pacific* at Bakehouse Art Complex, addresses the slow death of coral reefs—are creating work that both addresses climate change and envisions solutions to reverse its course.

South Florida has a rich history of environmental interventions; perhaps most famously, is Christo and Jeanne Claude's 1983 installation, *Surrounded Islands*, in which 603,870 square meters of floating pink polypropylene fabric hugged the contours of eleven islands in Biscayne Bay between Miami mainland and Miami Beach.^[2]

Surrounded Islands was a work of art that underlined the various elements and ways in which the people of Miami live between land and water. It was realized with the assistance of attorneys, marine biologists, engineers, and marine and land crews made up of hundreds of volunteers, whose tasks ranged from collecting debris found around the islands to slowly unfurling the floating fabric as it was secured with anchors.^[3] Installations of this scope and scale necessitate collective participation, not only to satisfy the labor-intensive requirements for their production and execution, but also to engage more directly and meaningfully with audiences.

Like *Surrounded Islands*, *Future Pacific* was at all stages - from inception to installation - driven by collaboration. Shapiro was approached by marine ecologist Dr. Nyssa Silbiger, who asked Shapiro to assist her with finding ways to communicate her scientific research in a more visually - impactful way. Shapiro, whose practice has steadily segued from object-based ceramics to temporary interventions over the last several years, explores how the clay medium serves as a conduit to inform, educate, and engage audiences about the terrestrial and marine ecosystems native to the Florida landscape. Silbiger's proposition - while focused on her research in the Pacific Ocean (hence the title *Future Pacific*) was an opportunity for Shapiro to continue expanding her practice, while providing a platform for scientists working to protect the same environments she is inspired by and references in her work.

For *Future Pacific*, Shapiro cast silicone molds of preexisting coral specimens and skeletons loaned to her by scientists in universities and other research institutions. She sourced, repurposed, and processed approximately 15,000 pounds of clay which, with the help of over 300 volunteers were used to cover seven life-sized structures in the gallery space. *Future Pacific* is a tactile translation, a physical rendering of scientific data and evidence transmuted and transformed into a tangible thing. It is in the process of translation in the tearing of a piece of clay from its rectangular block, in the playful rolling of said piece into a smooth ball, in the pressing of the ball with our palms into a rubbery and slippery purple mold, in the delicate and deliberate kneading of the clay with our fingers into the smallest of crevices on the mold, and in the final squishy release of an intricately patterned relief that the participant begins to comprehend what they are confronted with. It's an act of repetitive creation in function of an emotional and intellectual awakening, of truly understanding our role in the destruction of these marine environments.



In this way, *Future Pacific* is the merging of scientific data and evidence with art-making. The exhibition straddles the line between social practice and land art. The latter, which is broadly defined as art that directly intervenes in the landscape or that sources materials from the landscape to create installations in exhibition spaces,[4] does not exactly capture the essence or intent of *Future Pacific*. If anything, the exhibition is a reversal of sorts, reminiscent of the scale of land art installations, but removed from the institutional desire to accumulate and collect objects. *Future Pacific* educates not through the display of specimens, but rather through the tactile relationship that espouses its creation.

Future Pacific is an exercise in envisioning a not too distant future; a future where Florida and other coastal ecosystems become underwater graves for miles of sickly, dying coral reefs. But, the reference to futurity, both in the title and intent of the exhibition, is as much a pessimistic diagnosis as it is a call to action. Whether or not this future Pacific is apocalyptic fiction or calamitous reality is wholly dependent on the steps that are taken to minimize the effects of climate change. Pollution and other human-driven stressors that propel climate change are invariably and aggressively changing the composition of the world's coral reefs. *Future Pacific* asks: What are we going to do about it?





Future Pacific:

Behind the Exhibition

Text by Lauren Shapiro



The more vivid memories of my South Floridian childhood occurred in nature: the stark beauty of the shore-lined mangroves, pine rockland, salt marshes and coral reefs stand out profoundly in my mind. Over time, however, the landscape began to change: The wild gave way to flat grassy parks and strip malls, ocean seashells were found more sparsely, and wildlife, once teeming, became harder to spot. Under constant threat by wetland draining and urban development, Florida's ecosystems are endangered. With a unique mix of fresh water, terrestrial, and coastal ecosystems that coexist and depend on one another to thrive and survive, its biodiversity relies on balance—an imbalance in one system can have severe consequences on another.

Drawn to this precarious fate, I explore the systems, patterns, and tipping points observed in nature, and render these findings in ceramic sculptures and clay installations. My work exists at the intersection of observation and preservation; I study data from native ecological systems and use a casting process to generate and integrate geometry with environmental textures set from plaster and silicone molds. I build sculptures using different elements accumulated into modular forms, preserving nature's intelligent design.

I began working with scientists to better understand and narrate nature. *Future Pacific* is a collaborative project between myself and Dr. Nyssa Silbiger, an accomplished marine ecologist and a long-time friend. She needed a broader outreach component to communicate her research to the public and spread awareness about the dire threats facing coral reefs. Together, we conceived a three-year project that would facilitate a series of public activations, to take place in Florida, French Polynesia and California.

To document Dr. Silbiger's findings, I developed a community-driven installation where participants would work with recycled, unfired clay to cast coral textures sourced from local oceans in silicone molds. Working within the gallery space at the Bakehouse Art Complex, participants would fasten the molded clay onto full-scale forms resembling architectural ruins. Upon the exhibition's completion, the work is dismantled and the clay salvaged for future use, concluding a fleeting period of construction and demolition that inspires action around ocean conservation.





Conceptually, the material's impermanence and exhibition's collaborative process cultivates environmental awareness and stewardship. Clay, an ancient medium, is easily manipulated and handled in its rawest form; it eventually dries, cracks, and tears apart, mimicking the degradation of these fragile environments. As participants press, shape, and build the structures, they become aware of their own responsibility to protect and preserve these ecosystems. By lending a hand in creating an installation destined for destruction, participants are reminded of our natural world and the role they play in its demise.

Future Pacific was the first activation taking place in Miami, and through the enormous effort of the community we completed my largest and most ambitious project to date. Though the local impact would be substantial, I realized it was finite and somewhat limited. To carry the message of the work further, I commissioned filmmaker and scientist Dr. Shireen Rahimi to document the process from start to finish. Dr. Rahimi will join Dr. Silbiger and I on our journey to the research site in Mo'orea, French Polynesia, where we will work together to produce a short feature film about this artistic project and the research that informs it. The film will capture my process of collecting textures related to Dr. Silbiger's research and documenting our conversations with the local community. Ultimately, the film will debut at a public screening in Los Angeles.

Art has the ability to effect a group of people in a powerful way. It reaches beyond data to connect with viewers viscerally and creates a powerful emotional relationship with the subject matter at hand. *Future Pacific* experiments with art's possibility to effect change and potentially save our environment.

Scientific Findings on Coral Reefs

Text by Dr. Nyssa Silbiger



I became a scientist to help uncover the mysteries of the ocean. My research is broadly focused on how humans effect our coastal ecosystems on a local and global scale. From pollution to climate change, I ask questions, collect data, and share my interpretation of those data with the broader community. Unfortunately, as scientists, we have been trained to talk to people that speak our own language. However, to get the public to understand and care about our work, we need to find more creative ways to connect with our communities.

I met Lauren Shapiro at an early age, when we were girl scouts being introduced to nature and science. Like many childhood friends, we lost touch over the years, but I would often encounter her ceramic installations online. I was moved by how she created an aesthetic portrayal of the fragility of ecosystems around the world. It occurred to me that partnering with an artist like Lauren could help change the public's perception of science and communicate the importance of protecting the natural world.

Our collaboration, *Future Pacific*, is based on research that aims to better understand how submarine groundwater discharge—freshwater that flows right under our feet and makes its way to the ocean through small cracks in the ocean floor—affects coral reefs. This groundwater, while natural, is often a conduit for human pollution that can determine how fast corals grow and influence their interactions with neighboring organisms on the reef. My research in Mo'orea, French Polynesia will uncover how groundwater ultimately affects the way coral reef ecosystems function.

Communicating research to the public is just as important as undertaking the research itself. People can't care about what they don't understand; now, more than ever, we need people to care about what is happening in our oceans. Using art to communicate science allows the audience to connect with the issues in a more powerful way than attending a lecture or reading a paper. Understanding why we should protect and preserve these precious ecosystems is the inherent power in a project like *Future Pacific*.









Lauren Shapiro

Lauren Shapiro is a visual artist living and working in Miami, Florida. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Florida Atlantic University and a Master of Fine Arts in Ceramics from the University of Miami. Shapiro's work utilizes a multi-step clay casting process to create modular sculptures and installations. Her work draws inspiration from environmental research and data, and combines ceramic arts with social practice to join people and the environment through art-making processes. Lauren has been a resident artist at the Sanbao Ceramic Art Institute at Jingdezhen, China, and has participated in biodiversity-focused residencies like Labverde in Brazil's Amazon Rainforest. Recently, Lauren was a resident at the Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Aspen, Colorado, and is the current artist in residence for a National Science Foundation grant awarded to researchers at California State University, Northridge and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Knight Foundation, and Oolite Arts. In 2018, Lauren presented *Fragile Terrains*, a solo exhibition at Bianca Boekel Galeria in Sao Paulo, Brazil. She has also exhibited her work with the New Dealer's Alliance (NADA), Projektraum M54 in Basel, Switzerland, at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden and the Bakehouse Art Complex in Miami, where she has been a resident since 2017.

laurenshapiroart.com

Instagram: [@loshap](https://www.instagram.com/loshap)

Nyssa Silbiger

Dr. Nyssa Silbiger is a marine ecologist living in Los Angeles, California. She earned her PhD from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and is currently an Assistant Professor at California State University, Northridge. Her research is focused on the interactive effects of local and global human-driven stressors on coastal marine ecosystems. Dr. Silbiger was recently awarded a National Science Foundation grant to further our understanding of the impact of groundwater on coral reefs. This grant will allow scientists to better predict how both natural and human-induced changes will affect coastal ecosystem functioning in the future.

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Bakehouse Art Complex

Bakehouse Art Complex envisions a world that supports and values artists and recognizes their ability to shape, reflect, and transform our world. Its mission is to address the need for affordable live, live-work, and work spaces for artists in Miami's urban core.

Founded in 1985 by artists and for artists in a former industrial Art Deco-era bakery, Bakehouse provides studio residencies, infrastructure, and community to enable the highest level of artistic creativity, development, and collaboration for the most promising talent.

Bakehouse is comprised of approximately 100 resident and associate artists, deriving from a rich diversity of backgrounds. Their work represents a broad range of media and practices, from painting to performance, from traditional to experimental.

Bakehouse is one of the oldest artist-serving organizations in Miami, with studios of varying sizes, two galleries, a classroom, print room, photography lab, ceramics facilities, and woodworking and welding areas. These spaces, unavailable outside of university campuses, has and continues to enable artists to work, make, discover, learn, and share their practices and work with each other and the broader community.

Bakehouse now is positioned for its next stage of development, seeking to play a more critical role in the collective efforts to build a strong and sustainable ecosystem in Miami in which artists and the arts can thrive. A master plan is currently underway to determine the highest and best use of its impressive 2.3 acre campus to better serve the needs of Miami's cultural community.

Community Workshop Participants:

Design and Architecture Senior High School
Miami, Fl

New World School of the Arts
Miami, Fl

Art Society Conflict via
Florida International University Honors College

PACE Center for Girls

John William Bailly
Heike Dempster
Yeniffert Mejia
Brittany Cooke
Cecilia Novoa
Miguel Villavicencio
Celine De paz
Ernesto Cordero
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Alejandra Novoa
Stefania Bitica
Ashley Suarez-Burgos
Loriana Novoa
Pati Monclus
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Pilar Tarrau
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Miguel Acosta
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Angelica Sanchez
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Viktoryia Biheza-Ferretti
Nicole Martinez
Logan Fazio
Christina Pettersson
Diana Espin
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Paula Kelley
Pedro Wazzan
Philip Lique
Troy Simmons
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William Osorio
Laura Novoa
Cathy Leff
Erick Pardi
Aaron Shapirio
Shane Shapiro

Laura Gabrysiak
Diane Shapiro
Dianne Silbiger
Miryam Greene
Branka Joldas
Maggie Hernandez
Oxana Bykanova
Dan Vila
Jill Namoff
Daedrian McNaughton
Leshia Haynie
Sam Mancini
Adler Guerrier
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Amanda Braga
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Lory Charles
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Maria Theresa Barbist
Mateo Serna Zapata
Maritza Caneca
Najja Moon
Ashley Struble
Amanda Linares
Morgan Wagner
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Lory Charles
Melissa Gabriel
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Maddie Christensen
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Alicia Becena
Shireen Rahimi
Sean Garcia
Anna Bakker
Luisa Santa-Maria
Louisa Stickel
Alan Hueck
Nissa Silbiger
Marie Moreno
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Kiera O'Rourke
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Brett Olivieri
+ and more

