

SEPTEMBER 8 - OCTOBER 30, 2020

**THIRD COAST DISRUPTED:  
ARTISTS + SCIENTISTS  
ON CLIMATE**

**ANDREW S. YANG**

**DEPS ARTIST PROFILE**

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Glass Curtain Gallery - Columbia College Chicago  
1104 S Wabash Ave, 1st Floor, Chicago, IL 60605  
Gallery Hours: Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
*Capacity of gallery is 10 visitors and masks are required.*

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# THIRD COAST DISRUPTED:

## Artists + Scientists on Climate

*Third Coast Disrupted: Artists + Scientists on Climate* is an exhibition of newly commissioned artworks culminating a yearlong conversation between artists and scientists centered on climate change impacts and solutions in the Chicago region.

Through science-inspired sculpture, painting, collage and more, the artworks examine local impacts -- happening here and now -- ranging from extreme heat to flooding to habitat loss, and beyond. They also shine light on local solutions underway, like "cool roofs," nature-based approaches to slowing stormwater, and backyard habitat restoration. Some imagine future possibilities.

*Third Coast Disrupted* is based on the notion that art can connect and engage with people on an emotional level. It can pique curiosity, be unexpected, tactile, interactive, evocative, and memorable. It can slow people down, inspire them to reflect, move them to talk to each other -- and spur them to act.

**Curatorial Team:** Project Director & Lead Curator, Christine Esposito; Science Curator, Liam Heneghan; Art Curator, Lisa Roberts; Senior Consultant, Meg Duguid

**Participating artists:** Jeremy Bolen, Barbara Cooper, Hector Duarte, Rosemary Holliday Hall, N. Masani Landfair, Meredith Leich, Andrew S. Yang

**Participating scientists:** Elena Grossman, MPH; Daniel Horton, Ph.D.; Abigail Derby Lewis, Ph.D.; Aaron Packman, Ph.D.; Katherine Moore Powell, Ph.D.; Desi Robertson-Thompson, Ph.D.; Philip Willink, Ph.D.

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# ANDREW S. YANG

**Andrew S. Yang** works across the visual arts, the sciences, and natural history to explore the cosmological flux. Through sculpture, images, and writing, he explores connections between the theories, things, and creatures that teem throughout the ecology of experience.

**Andrew S. Yang** has exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally at venues including the 14th Istanbul Biennial, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the Spencer Museum of Art, and the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History. His writing and research appear in journals including *Art Journal*, *Leonardo*, *Biological Theory*, and *Antennae*. He is an Associate Professor in the Liberal Arts Department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, inaugural Artist-in-Residence at Yale-NUS College in Singapore, and a research associate at the Field Museum.

<https://www.andrewyang.net/projects>



*A Beach (for Carl Sagan)*, 2016, seven tons of sand (each grain representing one star in the Milky Way galaxy), video projection, five FM radios

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*Deep Time Library*, 2019, 454,000 book pages reclaimed from books discarded from the University of Kansas and Lawrence Public library systems (each page representing 10,000 years of Earth's history)

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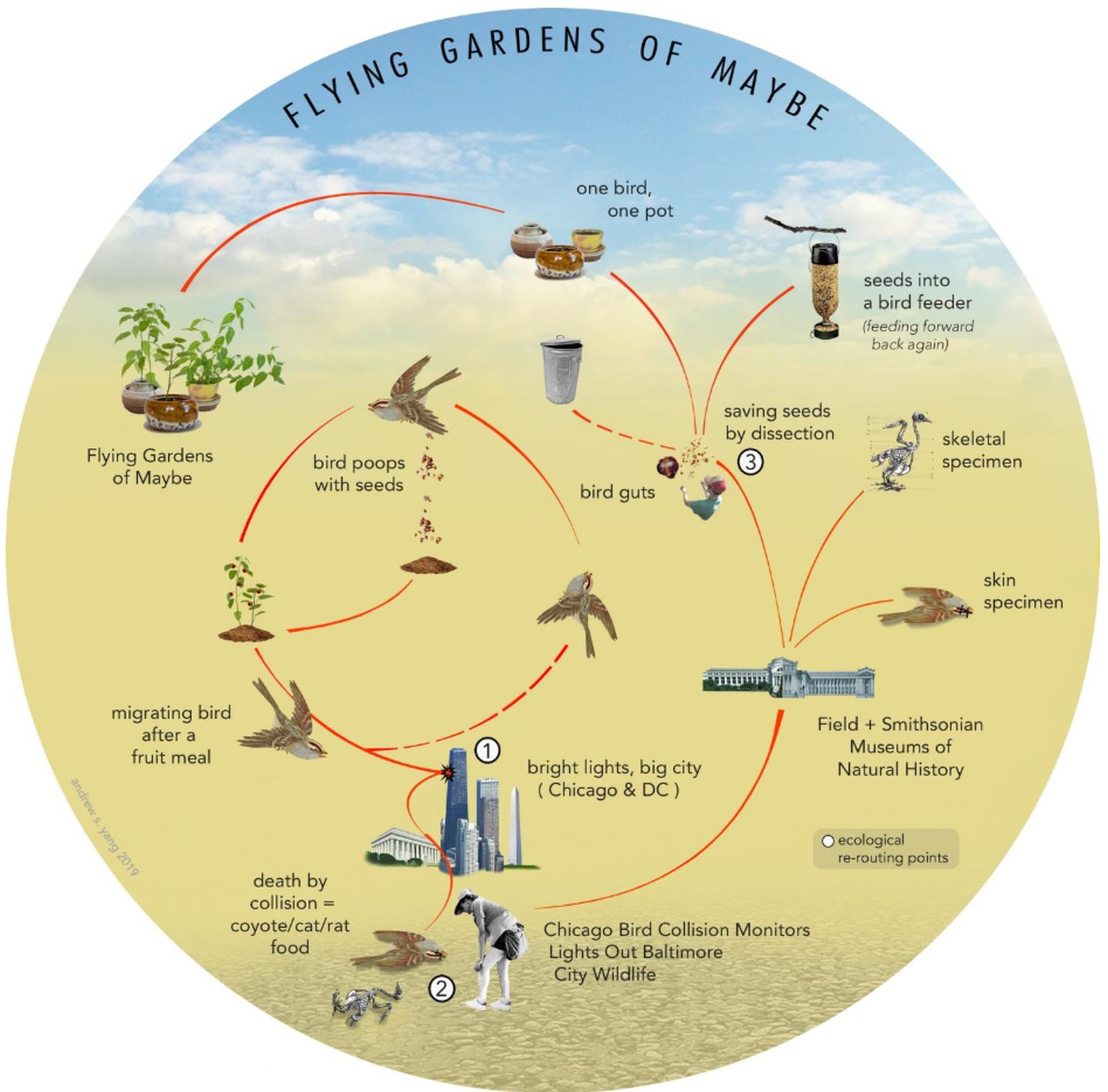
*Reading the Landscape (Ancient Ocean Testaments, Kansas) + Ghost of the Everchanging (after John Charlton), 2019, reclaimed from books discarded from the University of Kansas and Lawrence Public library in the shape of Castle Rock in Kansas, digital double exposures of Cobra Rock and Castle Rock before and after erosion*

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*Stella's Stoichiometry (Seven years, all things renewed, 40 lbs.), 2019, tap water, MAP fertilizer, LEGO® plastic, bituminous coal, chalk, ethyl alcohol, and ammonium nitrate*

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*Flying Gardens of Maybe, 2012 – present, digital diagram overview of Flying Gardens of Maybe*



*Flying Gardens of Maybe (Two Vehicles)*, 2012 – present, digital inkjet print of a found Swainson's Thrush diagram + what sprouted from the seeds found in its stomach

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*Reshaping the Shape* (installation view), 2019, silk-screened Asian Carp kites (paper and linen), wall drawing, taxidermized Asian Carp

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*Parts-per-million (planetary aspirations)*, 2020; one million dots represent one million air molecules with 415 red dots in the lab book on the pedestal representing the current, dangerously high level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (415 parts-per-million). Paper, silk-screen printing, air.

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*Parts-per-million (planetary aspirations), 2020*– air molecules as silk-screened dots floating over tracing paper and graph paper for recording daily patterns of temperature (detail from the installation). Paper, silk- screen printing, air.

Andrew S. Yang

## Gorilla Tactics of Knowing/ Unknowing

They say that seeing is believing, but from what I see, that is hard to believe. We see effects of global warming; for example, the warming that you and I contribute to in every incremental moment. But no amount of data will ever be enough to convince those without the will to see.

Have you ever watched that video demonstrating “inattentional blindness,” where you are asked to count the passes between basketball players while a person in a gorilla costume walks through the scene? The players and the ball look like molecules in Brownian motion<sup>1</sup>, and only half of the people who watch the video see the gorilla, even though it is in the middle of everything. The other half are too focused on counting (basketball passes, money, sheep) to see what is right in front of them. Global warming is the 800-pound gorilla in the room, which turns out to be a human in disguise.

Free market fundamentalism wants you to ignore the gorilla and watch a basketball game instead. Many don't have access to the game, but if you are reading this, you do. We need to remind one another, in kindness and in solidarity: It is not a game and we are not simply spectators. The fact that carbon dioxide and the other gases that heat up the planet are invisible and exist in only parts-per-million makes ignorance easy. To see the invisible, you have to care about its possibility and the wonderful and terrible things that entangles.

I was reading a story last night. One character says to another, indignantly and rhetorically, “What planet do you live on?” I want to ask you that same question, pointedly and literally, just as I ask myself every morning: “What planet do I live on?”

I live on a small pebble in an incomprehensibly vast and desolate vacuum, like every creature known to have ever existed. Knowing is a matter of exercising awareness, of feeling exercised, of seeing that this is not just an exercise. It is feeling hot because the day is late and you are walking around in a gorilla suit; a dangerously influential ape on an all-too-quickly warming planet.

**opposite:** Andrew S. Yang, *Deep Time Library & Archive* (detail), 2019.

*Gorilla Tactics of Knowing / Unknowing*, from the Spencer Museum of Art publication *Inquiries*, 2019

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# ARTIST INTERVIEW

Conducted by Kaylee Fowler

**Kaylee Fowler:** Where does your interest in the overlap between science and art begin?

**Andrew S. Yang:** My interest started before I knew there was some idea of “an overlap.” To me, art and science continue to be more of a shared field of inquiry, rather than separate ones. Hopefully that comes through in my artwork, which tries to explore how we model, represent, and understand the world in a holistic way.

**KF:** In some of your works, such as *Flying Gardens of Maybe* and *Reshaping the Shape*, you examine the dynamic and evolving relationship between people and nature. What is your interest in this relationship, and what are you hoping to bring to light for viewers?

**AY:** Some scientists claim that we have entered a new geologic period – there was the Jurassic, the Pleistocene, but the idea is that with global warming, rapid biodiversity loss, and all the other impacts we’ve had on the planet, that maybe we are now in something called “the Anthropocene,” which means “the age of humans.” For most of

history, humans have considered nature a vast and inexhaustible backdrop for civilization, with people and nature as distinct. Hopefully *Flying Gardens of Maybe* and *Reshaping the Shape* shed some light on how untrue, and even dangerous, that traditional view has been. Both projects show the complex ways the humans and non-humans are enmeshed in a shared, planetary ecology that we need to take more care of and show more responsibility towards. To the extent that culture is an aspect of nature, nature is also a manifestation of culture.

**KF:** Another work, *Reading the Landscape*, presents a sculpture of books alongside images of Earth formations, with each page of the books in the sculpture representing 10,000 years of the Earth’s history, which reflects the natural layering of Earth over time in the images. Why did you choose to show both the manmade and natural representations of the Earth’s aging side by side?

**AY:** I show the natural and the manmade side by side precisely because I don’t see them as fundamentally distinct. Mixing those

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# ARTIST INTERVIEW

## Continued

representations together is about visual play, drawing links between the way the layered pages of the books look something like the strata of rock, while also expanding on the metaphor that early geologists used – describing the Earth as “the book of nature” that could be read and interpreted. At the same time, the particular books in that sculpture were actually headed to the landfill, and so set to become part of our planet’s geology in a very real and material sense. Maybe the sculpture can be a kind of catalyst for the viewer to question our deeply held assumptions about culture and nature as so disconnected, ones that I think have led us to this Anthropocene moment of climate and biodiversity crisis.

**KF:** What can we learn about our Earth and ourselves now by visualizing its past?

**AY:** By visualizing the past, we can grasp the present more clearly. Otherwise, we are easily kept trapped with a short-sighted and narrowly focused vision– measuring the world in the short timelines of human history and human life. Global warming and biodiversity loss are both excellent

examples. Without having a clear record of global temperature and carbon dioxide levels or mass extinctions over millions of years, it would be harder for us to understand just what a profound impact we are having on the planet and all life on it right now. That history of deep, geological time is crucial context, because it highlights how rapidly and how drastically we’ve altered the Earth and its livability. It wasn’t always like this, and it isn’t fated to be like this; our role and our collective responsibilities become much more vivid, while the misdirection and lies of those like climate change deniers become more evident.

**KF:** Your project for *Third Coast Disrupted* entails silk-screening dots onto the wall to represent air molecules and the relative amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. For someone who does not know the effects of carbon dioxide in the air, or what the significance of the amount means, what kind of questions do you hope will arise in response to the visualization of this?

**AY:** The project for *Third Coast Disrupted, Parts-per-million (planetary*

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# ARTIST INTERVIEW

## Continued

*aspirations*) hopefully will raise questions for the viewer about global warming – it won't explain how it works, but perhaps it can make people who don't know more curious to find out for themselves. Like the current coronavirus pandemic, the public understanding of global warming suffers from a major impediment – its invisibility. What's more, its effects are distributed, varied, and can lack the direct and immediate sense of cause-and-effect danger we are so used to. By creating a large wall piece representing the air molecules – and highlighting the remarkably small fraction of change in those of carbon dioxide that drive global warming – I hope to invite viewers to think about the air all around them that is an intimate part of the global warming story, as well the way small changes can have profound effects.

I also wonder whether in this moment of powerful, disruptive, and necessary cultural change, the image of hundreds-of-thousands of individuals gathered together can also be read socially, not just chemically – as a mass of people rather than just a mass of molecules. The word “aspiration” in the title refers to both the hopes we have for the

future of our life on Earth, as well as the simple and life-giving act of breathing that connects us to the atmosphere, and each other, directly. We cannot take either notion of aspiration for granted; in our world of systemic racism, pollution, and violence against the under-privileged, many people are fighting just for the chance to breathe freely.

**KF:** This project also will, by nature of being silk-screened onto the walls, have an interaction with the other pieces in the exhibition that will make their presentation different than if they were presented in the typical “white cube” setting. By changing the presentation of all the pieces in the exhibition, what do you hope to accomplish, and how do you envision this interaction of these pieces together? Do you think it will change the way these works are viewed in ways you did not anticipate?

**AY:** I am certain that the presence of the atmospheric installation in the gallery will affect other pieces, although I can't say exactly how. I imagine that it might have the potential to connect the artworks visually, and so hopefully also invite

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# ARTIST INTERVIEW

## Continued

those connections conceptually. We are enmeshed and surrounded by the global warming story, whether we recognize it or not. Likewise, global warming affects and impacts so many other disruptions that other works might be exploring – in this way maybe it can help viewers see new linkages.



*IO-OX: A Dialogue Between Two World Systems, 2015 (installation detail). 300 locally made, playable cymbals in the form of a wave. Photography by Ugur Eren.*

# DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

The DEPS Artist Profile Series, presented by Columbia College Chicago's Department of Exhibitions, Performance, and Student Spaces (DEPS), is a virtual publication on select artists involved with the DEPS Galleries and the Columbia College Chicago community. Our goal with this series is to connect artist and viewer on a deeper level, and to highlight the amazing works and thoughts of our featured artists through interviews, artist biographies, and catalogs of work. Art has always been a way to connect with others, no matter where one may physically be. We hope by presenting the creativity and insights of the people involved in the DEPS Artist Profile Series that viewers may have one more way to stay in touch with and support the arts community.

The DEPS Artist Profile Series is managed by Fine Arts major and DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Kaylee Fowler. Design, animation and illustration by Graphic Design major and DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Gianella Goan.

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Learn more at <https://students/colum.edu/deps> and [www.ThirdCoastDisrupted.org](http://www.ThirdCoastDisrupted.org).

Contact Information: Mark Porter, [mporter@colum.edu](mailto:mporter@colum.edu) / 312.369.6643

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