
Exhibition: Fragments From Our Beautiful Future

**A.S. Bruckstein Çoruh, Opening Words for *Fragments From Our Beautiful Future*.
Rebecca Raue & Steve Sabella. Contemporary Interventions in The Bumiller
Collection #3. May 19 - August 13, 2017**

Published 22.05.2017

Zum Artikel im Blog: <http://taswir.org/2017/05/fragments-from-our-beautiful-future/>



Image: Anna Clementi, Itinerant Interlude #68, Exhibition Opening *Fragments From Our Beautiful Future*, Studio X-Berg, May 18, 2017. Video Still: © Manu Bruckstein



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**Thursday, May 18, 2017 at The Bumiller
Collection Studio X-Berg**

Dear friends and guests,

This is the third Contemporary Intervention in The Bumiller Collection. I am grateful for your trust, dear Jill Bumiller, to have ask me again to be involved in the series and to curate this show.

The series *Contemporary Intervention in The Bumiller Collection* offers an amazing format. Studio X-Berg has opened The Bumiller Collection for interventions by contemporary artists in a way that no public museum would dare to. You indeed empty out the entire museum, and then give contemporary artists and in this case me as the curator a carte blanche, a unique chance to engage this precious collection in any way imaginable, with no restraints. In this exhibition, for the first time, two and not one contemporary artists took on our invitation to work with us, Rebecca Raue and Steve Sabella. With contemporary interventions in a classical collection one produces a series of ever changing constellations, contemporary ancient, because, in principle, every object in the collection can be read in a myriad of

ways, as the ancient masters say: “turn it and turn it, everything is in it!”¹

The title “Fragments From Our Beautiful Future” is inspired by the surrealist writer Claude Cahun. In dark times, 1930, she wrote a letter which she addressed to her own future. She calls it a letter to “my beautiful future”. In times of despair, we all take detours via some sort of beautiful future - we do that in dreams, in the visual imagination, in poetry, love, and all sorts of other visions that carry us forward. In the 10th century - that is about the time of some of the ancient chess figures and dice we see in this exhibition – in the 10th century there was an Arab school of thought in which famous thinkers developed a mesmerizing theory of time. They claimed that time must not be thought of as a line which goes from beginning to end. On the contrary, they took this idea of a time line to be a mere illusion. Instead they rather claimed the freedom of every single moment, in order to protect all our bits of time from the constraints of cause and effect. Like in our dreams, in poetry, or love, and in the artistic imagination, for sure,

¹ Rabbinic source, *Pirke Avot* 5:25.

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we do mix, collage and mingle the moments-time then seems suspended, the imagination set free. "All existence is nothing but the imagination within the imagination" – this poetic sentence by the mystic and thinker Ibn Al-Arabi, who lived in the 13th century in Spain and Syria, claims exactly that – that all reality begins within the imagination.

Taking this position seriously not only psychologically, but as a kind of *architectural device*, we began to set up the entire exhibition itself like a dream text. The ancient protagonists - floating in space - chess figures, queens, kings, pawns, and dice - assume the role of playful guardians, digits of timeless time. Some of them are about 500 to 800 years old, and when you feel the zillion traces of touch left on them over the years, time itself seems to become fluent.

Alongside these ancient objects, two outstanding artists are showing their work, Rebecca Raue and Steve Sabella. Thank you, dear Steve, liebe Rebecca, for your overflowing energy, and your high spirits that carried everything on and that made this exhibition thinkable in the first place.

Looking at Rebecca Raue's overpaintings of an 18th century *Kalila waDimna* series, and

Steve Sabella's splintered fragments "38 *Days of Re-Collection*", we experience a sense of disorientation: we are no longer sure where the things are from, and what they are in the first place.

Rebecca Raue presents ten brand new works, which were made especially for this exhibition, bold and fantastic overpaintings of an illustrated 18th century Arabic manuscript from the New York Metropolitan museum. If you study Rebecca Raue's works in detail, you'll discover deep dream worlds of fantasy, stories that fly, abundant with narrative detail. Steve Sabella's fragile, ancient looking fragments, have been shown in prestigious international venues. In a stunning material illusion, we see interiors of houses, household items, and other everyday things on seemingly archeological findings. Black and white digital images that were taken in a Palestinian house occupied by Israelis since the year 1948. The artist applied them on wall splinters taken from the withering walls of Jerusalem's Old City houses in which he grew up as a child. Free-floating pieces, with delicate secrets and shadows.

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Dear Jill, yesterday you have said something really beautiful when we were putting it all up: you mentioned the mirrors which we placed as separators inside the Ibn Arabi quote, and you said that, of course, mirrors in the 13th and 15th and 16th century did not render very sharp images neither of oneself nor of anything else. In contrast to all the sharp images that cameras produce everywhere today, the image rendered by these mirrors were surely blurred.

I take this to be another important aspect of *Fragments From our Beautiful Future*: a political aspect: A blurred vision means not to divide the world sharply. It means to see things connected and intermingled, rather than set apart. A bit dream-like, free-floating. With the imagination set free.

Thank you, composer Laurie Schwartz and performer Anna Clementi for the magnificent *Itinerant Interludes #68* - an artistic surprise and pop-up performance staged as commentary between the works - including fragments from John Cage's Songbooks that were freely associated by Anna Clementi herself, a 16th century song by Carlo Gesualdo and a work by Laurie Schwartz especially composed for this occasion!

With many thanks.

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