

# Inside Art

By Joseph and Barrie Ann George

## “Future Places” Envisioned at SAM

Visions of the future used to promise us advances like jetpacks, flying cars, and other elements of a technologically innovative civilization to create an industrialized utopia. Yet around us, the world has undergone environmental degradation, human conflict, political discord, and social media run amok. But perhaps, there is a way to envision a world in a different, more optimistic, and humane manner. The Susquehanna Art Museum (SAM) answered that call with its most recent juried exhibition, “Future Places.”

SAM challenged artists to render their vision of a promising future for their 7th Annual Juried Exhibition. The museum believes that artists and artwork addressing this theme can bring the viewer one step closer to imagining a better world.

The art of “Future Places,” selected by juror Dr. Julie Wosk, is predominately hopeful and full of invention. Common themes found in the exhibition include the importance of preserving the environment, the development of new inclusive technologies, and the desire for a more equitable society. The wide variety of media used by the twenty-three featured artists incorporates sculpture, video, quilting, painting, and interactive design in surprising combinations and with a forward-thinking vision.

The exhibition opens with a stunning piece by Eli Kessler, a mixed media creation entitled “Anthropocene Hex Sign.” This large stand-

alone structure is a geometric hexagonal sculpture composed of a network of hexagons, LED lights, as well as real moth and butterfly specimens. The piece highlights humanity's dependence on electricity and how human consumption has negatively impacted the ecosystem. The piece's title references early 20th century Pennsylvania Dutch hex sign barn paintings composed of geometric and biological forms that functioned as omens to promote bountiful agricultural harvest and protect livestock. Using referential material and forms, “Anthropocene Hex Sign” exists as a contemporary ecological omen that critiques industrialized consumption and promotes a sustainable future.

“Daydream” by Seth Steven Bechtold is an archival pigment print on luster paper from a series in which he transforms blankets, a source of physical and psychological comfort, into a new metaphorical landscape of hope. The resulting image of a desert dune was created from those blankets, beneath a brilliant blue sky with fluffy white clouds. This work shows a snapshot of this speculative world, a universal common ground, alluding to a future where all people can feel safe and comforted.

Sheryl Renee Dobson's “Hokolesqua” is a detailed abstract mixed media collage that reflects the dialogues between several contradictory concepts including: humanity and the divine, creator and created, ancestors and progeny, reductionism and



Mel Dugosh's “Planet Most Purple” is on display in the lobby gallery of the Susquehanna Art Museum through Oct. 16.

holism, singularity and interconnectedness, and the current, the future, and the past. The future she envisions in this symmetrical collage of images is a place of peace, unity in diversity, oneness with the ecosystem, and universal acknowledgment of an inextricable connection to the creator. This bold vision is matched with an equally bold composition that is reminiscent of early 20th Century Modernism.

In another, yet quite different use of collage, Brandin Barón's “Concept Drawing for the Relocation of Miami Beach” draws on Claes Oldenburg's Pop Art influence for exaggerated everyday objects juxtaposed into real-world scenarios. Barón's work references the accelerating rate of sea level rise that has more than doubled per year throughout most of the twentieth century. By humorously imagining the Art Deco jewel of Miami's skyline adrift on an inflatable platform, Barón points out the absurd failures of current climate policy and their potentially detrimental impact on the populace of the city.

Mel Dugosh found inspiration for the future in her young grandsons for “Planet Most Purple” a fiber, turn under hand appliqué quilted wall hanging. Building upon their excitement about space travel after watching new missions that use recyclable rockets, the youngest spoke of the most purple planet. She shared that their “vision and enthusiasm for the future inspires me.”

Probably the most unique entry into the exhibit comes as a game entitled “Solarpunk Futures” by Solarpunk Surf Club. Solarpunk Futures is an artist's game that encourages collaboration and imagination. It is based on tabletop role-

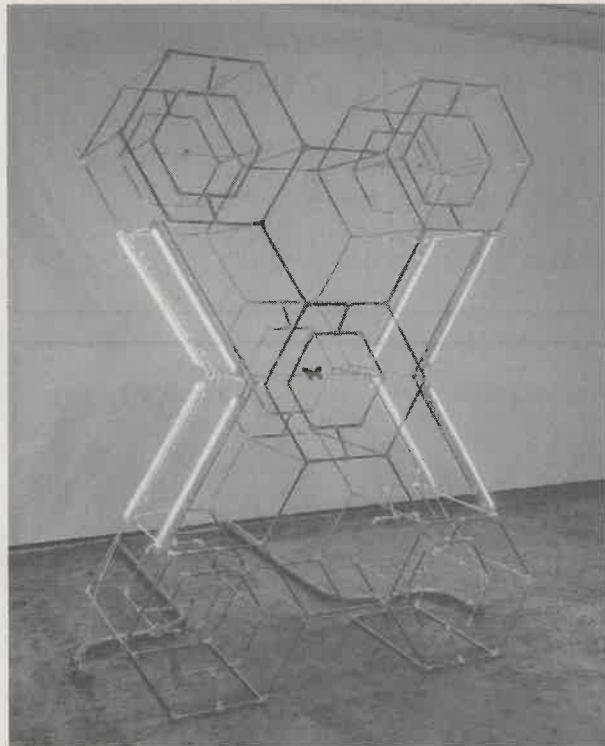
playing games in which players use a deck of illustrated cards to envision and build a more desirable world. Through the collaborative performance, narratives of a free and ecological society emerge. The creativity of the creation of such a game as well as the beautifully designed cards and accompanying booklets make this an inspiring as well as intellectual work of art.

The artists in “Future Places” are unafraid to show the spirit of hope and optimism for our future. When we use advanced technology and progressive ideas positively, the future can indeed be bright. Perhaps if we take seriously the visions of the artists of our society, we can employ the idea that if we can dream it, we can be it, and move forward to a better future for ourselves and generations to come.

“Future Places” is on view in the Lobby Gallery through October 16, 2022. The Susquehanna Art Museum is open to the public Wednesday 10 am - 7 pm, Thursday - Saturday 10 am - 5 pm, and Sunday 12 - 5 pm. Susquehanna Art Museum is located at 1401 N. 3rd Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102. Free parking is available to museum visitors in the lot behind the Museum at Calder and James Streets.

For more information on visiting the museum visit: [susquehannaartmuseum.org](http://susquehannaartmuseum.org).

*Joseph George holds a degree in history and art history from Dickinson College. He and his wife, Barrie Ann have spent over 30 years together traveling and visiting art galleries locally and throughout the world. They have been writing about the local art scene for nine years. Their tastes range from fine art to street art.*



Eli Kessler's mixed media creation entitled “Anthropocene Hex Sign” is included in “Future Places” at the Susquehanna Art Museum