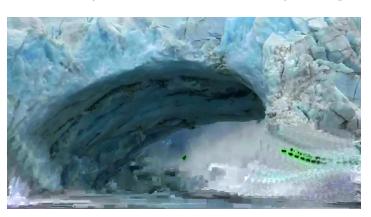# Christina Battle
the future is a distorted landscape

July 13 to August 11, 2018 | Deluge Contemporary Art | Victoria BC Canada | deluge.ca

Why GIFS? Why now? Do you see them as an extension or derivation from your past film and video work? How does their grouping as an installation differ from other iterations?

A lot of my work experiments formally with animation strategies, so, when I started working more regularly with animated GIFs a number of years ago the form made a lot of sense. I'm not so hung up on the form of the GIF itself as much as how the techniques used to make them fit well with my overall process of making. I like the quick means of process afforded by GIFs, as well as the layering and sense of flatness that working with them allows for. Essentially, most of my work is made up of or exists as a series of loops and so the animated GIF is a natural way of working for me. I find I use them more as a procedural tool—moving back and forth between GIF and video, saving and re-saving and importing and exporting the format into whatever makes the most sense for the thing I'm trying to make. In the end, the works technically exist as videos but the aesthetic qualities afforded by the format remain.

I'm also really drawn to GIFs conceptually, and their ability to transmit big ideas within a small container. Their virility has entirely reshaped the ways in which we communicate and I'm interested in how they contribute to and influence culture overall.

the future is a distorted landscape was originally commissioned by Nuit Blanche Toronto in a program curated by Clara Halpern. The work was made to be presented across a number of screens across the city of Toronto—from billboards to subway platforms to a large scale projection on the side of a building downtown. It was created as a site specific work meant to spread out, to adapt and exist across a number of possibilities. Since then, I've been trying to maintain that sensibility as I show the work in new locations and contexts. I try to find an installation strategy that makes sense for the space and then recreate the overall projections based on that new layout. Since the work is essentially made up of a large number of smaller loops collectively making a longer collaged loop across time, I like the idea of coming up with new combinations for each iteration. I think of the loops as shaping a sort of narrative that can be altered and adjusted for new contexts and spaces.

Is the source material primarily found images or a combination of found and shot imagery? Do you view the process as a digital progression from found footage filmmaking?

All of the footage is appropriated and then cutout and/or manipulated before animating. I tend to move back and forth between using appropriated and original footage in my work, depending on the project and the ideas I'm trying to relay. With *the future is a distorted landscape,* I was thinking about how images are "pushed" at us all the time within specific contexts (advertising, news, movies, popular culture) and was interested in using them to instead shape a different sort of narrative. I was reading and thinking about chronesthesia—the brain's ability to remember the past while imagining the future—and imagining it as a sort of time travel. I liked thinking about the source material as imagery that we have already all seen, that we recognize from the past, but existing within this new context as a way to imagine the future.

Some of your early work was in hand-processed and manipulated film. Do you see a relationship between digital glitch (hard-edged future) and analogue artifacts (nostalgic past)?

There's nothing nostalgic about it for me; I'm interested in the colours, textures and new combinations that manipulation (whether organic or digital) can create. The way that I work with manipulating imagery requires endless amount of working and reworking and results in unexpected combinations. I like working with loops and repetition and the process of manipulation allows me to extend this interest into the process of making itself.

Your formal interest in and detournement of science fiction themes has been clear (to us) for many years. Does this come from a long-standing interest in the genre or is it more recent? How does this tie into your concerns about the environment and abuse of power?

Yeah, I'm a huge sci-fi fan! I value the genre's ability to help us collectively visualize potentials for the future—other ways of thinking about culture, the social, publics, etc. There are often massive warnings presented within sci-fi stories but also great insights into potentials. Either way I'm taken by sci-fi's ability to help us consider the world from new perspectives.

Speculative fiction often explores dystopian or utopian scenarios. Could you please elaborate on how the work in this exhibition is reactive to the current political climate?

It totally is. I think a lot about science fiction as a tool to reflect ourselves and our societies back to us in ways that can provide both strategies and warnings. I'm taken by speculative fiction's ability to present alternatives to the realities we exist within (which, let's face it, are entirely fucked up whether we choose to see it or not).

The boundary between dystopian and utopian scenarios/futures/potentials is a fairly thin one—I mean, one can't exist without the other and if you think about it long enough they're essentially the same thing. I don't think utopia (as we often discuss it) actually exists—and if you imagine it through to its end it always ends up just being another dystopia. Think about the standard plot of a sci-fi narrative—the world seems entirely perfect, having shed the pettiness we currently struggle with in our own world, but as the story progresses we start to see glimpses of what's been given up in order to achieve said utopia. Quickly we start to see things unravel and that which seemed idyllic is actually entirely frightening…it is actually a dystopia.

With *the future is a distorted landscape,* I was thinking about visualization (something athletes do all the time—to repeatedly "see" the goal they want to make or the move they want their body to enact), I was thinking about the benefits of repetition—of trying to will a shift into reality through repeated visualization. And I was reading about chronesthesia—the brain's ability to remember the past while imagining the future and how this might be utilized to help us usher in a future that we actually want to see manifest. In

essence, what we see and experience now will influence the future that we create. My practice is interested in thinking about how to shape particular experiences that might help us usher in a future that is more just, more caring and less exploitative than the world we live in now.

Time travel! If you had the option, would you go back in time to fix things or forward to a possible (but unknown) new world?

Ha! My friend Serena Lee and I work on a collaborative project called SHATTERED MOON ALLIANCE [https://shatteredmoonalliance.hotglue.me/] and in one of our participatory projects last year—called *On Time Travel*—we spent a good part of our introductory conversation talking about how we aren't at all interested in going back to the past—to a past that, as women of colour, we would never have been accepted or welcomed in—especially here in Canada where we now consider home.

I'm much more interested in the idea of using time travel as a tool to help shape the future, which inevitably means visualizing for or from the future as a way to make changes in the world now that will in turn lead to changes in said future.

That concept of repetition of images/ideas is a common thread in science fiction (not to mention current mass media), but usually in the service of control or creating consent. How can we get potentially positive messages in front of more people without it being seen as brainwashing?

There is definitely a thin line between the two. I guess I like to think about how these images are used to sell us stuff—all the time—and that maybe, by using the imagery to evoke our imaginations in a different way, something positive might be created out of that. It is true that what these images could be capable of manifesting in this new context ultimately would be determined by individual imaginations, and it's risky to assume that such manifestations would be more just or caring or equitable. I don't have a tonne of faith in the idea that such a world is what humanity would ultimately strive for if given such an opportunity; but, I figure, any alternative to where we've been and where we're headed still holds the potential to be better—the path we're currently on most certainly won't be. I think what we need are more visualizations of futures that carry with them the potential to be better. •