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## Weekend Arts II

The New York Times

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RUTH FREMSON/THE NEW YORK TIMES  
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## Casting a Wary Eye on the Future

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**HOLLAND  
COTTER**  
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REVIEW

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**Surround Audience** A moment in an ever-changing installation by Eva Kotatkova at the New Museum Triennial.

tention to digital art and the Internet for years. Mr. Trecartin's laptop-generated pop-epic videos on YouTube, with their whiplash editing, head-spinning script and queer (i.e., nonnormal) spirit, add

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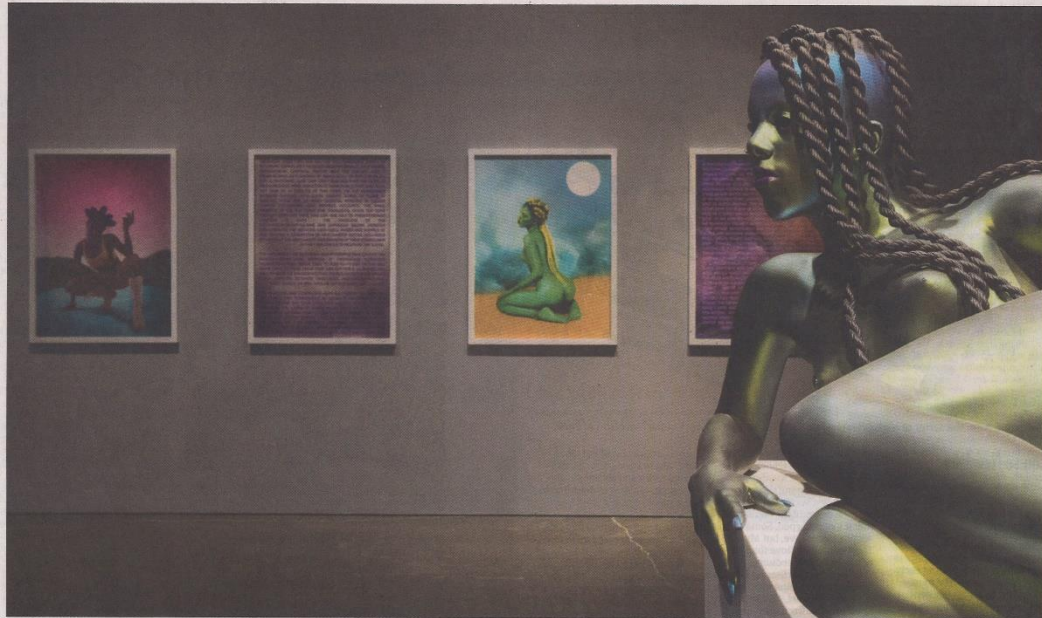
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which are also pretty hermetic. What can I say? Do the work. Read. See if it helps. I found it did.

Also, if you're expecting a "digital" show, you won't get one, or not one that advertises itself as such. For most of the participants, the majority born in the 1980s, digital is nothing special, no big deal. It's a given. It's reality. In art, it's

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY KELLY FRANKLIN/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Foreground above, Frank Benson's sculpture of the artist Juliana Huxtable, whose work is on the wall behind. Below, pieces from Shreyas Karle's "Museum Shop of Fetish Objects."

## At a Triennial, Casting a Wary Eye on the Future

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just another tool, though one that happens to be particularly useful for creating and capturing the effect of flux (material, social, whatever). To me, that's what the show's basically about: change — invention, mutation, transformation, but without utopian overlays. The opposite, even. There's a mood of weary suspicion and melancholy that seems odd in artists so young.

Evidence of transformation is right off the second-floor elevator in Frank Benson's sculpture of a life-size nude reclining on a pedestal and initially seen from behind. The voluptuous curves suggest that this is a figure of a woman in a classical odalisque pose, though there are unusual features. Her skin is the pearlescent green of weathered copper. And when you come around to face her, you see that she has female breasts and male genitals.

Computer-plotted, produced on a 3-D printer and then hand-painted, the sculpture is a portrait of another artist, Juliana Huxtable, whose photographic self-portraits hang nearby. Ms. Huxtable is herself a sculptural and cultural creation in progress. African-American, living as a trans woman, she took her last name from the black family in the 1980s "The Cosby Show" and has developed a variety of personal and theatrical identities, from Afrofuturistic cyborg to Nubian princess, which she shares on social media sites like Instagram and Tumblr.

The idea of the body as an unstable, ductile entity is also the subject of a short video animation called "Happy Birthday!" by the British artist Ed Atkins, projected on a gallery wall. It begins with two men tenderly embracing, but any narrative quickly slides away as one of the figures begins to dematerialize and then re-form, each time with a different date on his forehead, as if he were skipping around history. In Mr. Atkins's fog-gray nowhere, the body is at once deathless and lifeless, caught in a digital limbo.

Figures are fluid in paintings: *Lovers* blend together in handsome collage-based pictures by Njideka Akunyili Crosby; faces dissolve into Op Art patterns in work by Sascha Braunig. Mutation crosses species. In a transfixing video by Oliver Laric, composed of clips

"Surround Audience" continues through May 24 at the New Museum, 235 Bowery, at Prince Street, Lower East Side; 212-219-1222, [newmuseum.org](http://newmuseum.org).



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And for a performance piece designed by the Argentine artist Eduardo Navarro, a dancer will wear a light-weight sculptural version of a giant tortoise shell, which is on view in a gallery. The piece was inspired by Lonesome George, the last surviving Pinta Island tortoise, who died in 2012 at close to 100, and whose long, slow life in the Galápagos Mr. Navarro describes in the catalog as a form of self-aware meditation, an existence that was in every way "the opposite of the Internet."

A good amount of work in the show has, as Mr. Navarro's does, an ethical undertow, which in some cases turns straight-out political. An installation by Onejone Che documents colossal Socialist Realism-style sculptures made by a North Korean design corporation for cities in Africa, art projects that lay the groundwork for parasitical economic

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In general, consolidation isn't the prevailing dynamic here. Disintegration is. In sculptures by Olga Balema, iron bars are rusting away inside transparent, water-filled plastic bags. Nadim Abbas's cubicle-size bedrooms that are also sealed-off isolation tanks speak of the fear of disease. Quasi-anthropological ensembles by Nicholas Mangan and Asli Cavusoglu mourn cultures and populations. And an installation of small, domestic-looking objects by Eva Kotatkova refuses to cohere; performers shift things around. And in a beautiful little film called "The Dent," by Basim Mag-

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These items are souvenirs of an art project he embarked on a few years ago by signing on for a low-level, barely paying, 12-hour-shifts job at an Apple factory called Foxconn in China. The factory was notorious for the high rate of suicide among its workers, many of them from poor rural communities. Mr. Li finally quit after grueling weeks when he'd saved up enough to buy what he'd been helping to make: an iPad.

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Left, Niv Acosta performing "Disotroptic." Right, Josh Kline's installation "Freedom." More images from the New Museum's 2015 Triennial are at [nytimes.com/design](http://nytimes.com/design).

# Review: New Museum Triennial Casts a Wary Eye on the Future

By **HOLLAND COTTER**

FEB. 26, 2015

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