



An apexart Franchise Program winning exhibition.

Trans-
Prefix (Latin):

1. across, beyond, crossing, on the other side: transoceanic, trans-Siberian, transatlantic
2. so as to change in form or position
3. changing thoroughly: transliterate
4. transcending: to rise above or go beyond; to extend notably beyond ordinary limits
5. transversely: to transect, cut across

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At the turn of the 20th century, Detroit was the heart of the modernization and industrialization of America. As the birthplace of Ford, the assembly line, and the automobile, the 'Motor City' changed American life and industry forever. American Historian Thomas J. Sugrue writes, "no technology has had a greater impact on American everyday life than the automobile. Where we live, how we work, how we travel, how our landscape looks like, our environment have all been profoundly shaped by the car," and that, "no place better demonstrates the social, economic, geographic, and political changes wrought by the automobile industry than Detroit, the Motor City."¹ Fordism, however, not only changed the future of America, but became the symbol of a global future. Social theorist Franco 'Bifo' Berardi writes, "On February 20th 1909 Filippo Tommaso Marinetti published the first *Futurist Manifesto* [in Italy]; in the same year Henry Ford put into operation the first assembly line in his automobile factory in Detroit... The assembly line is the technological system that best defines the age of industrial massification. Thanks to [it] ... the mobilization of social energies is submitted to the goal of the acceleration of labor's productivity."² Fordism was the global model for progress, the symbol of industrialization, and Detroit was its birthplace and center.

Industrial massification. That was progress. A new way of life. The beginning of the 20th century. Industrial massification was the technology that changed agricultural life into industrial urban life, the growth of the metropolis. A progress that changed not only daily life, but the structure of global markets, global societies, where "previously subsistence agricultural land became privatized and dominated by a few large farm producers," and forced those without land to move from their rural homes to seek work in urban environments.³ The factory replaced the farm as the assembly line replaced the field and plow. Detroit was a major pivot, a catapult, of the social turn from farm life to city life. The industrial city, the era of the machine, and the end of working the soil: such was the 20th century.

That was progress, the future, spurred by Henry Ford in Detroit – progress, *then*.

In his recent book, *After the Future*, Berardi reminds us that "the vertiginous zero zero decade has changed our views and our landscape in an astounding way . . . the recent history of the world has been marked by shocking events and surprising reversals."⁴ One of those surprising reversals is the return of the farm to the city: the Urban Farm. In the contemporary era of post-Fordism, in which we are fully saturated in technocommunications, in our modes of immaterial labor, looping gifs, the dark internet, sleep-texting, and twitterharassing, the return of the farm to

Kim Beck
Hannah Chalew
The Future Weird
Leslie Garcia
Scott Hocking
Tiff Massey
Jasmine Murrell
Phil Ross
Steve Rowell
Cary Baker
Scenocosme
Katie St. Claire

Exhibition Hours

MUFI Farm: Saturdays 12-4 pm
7432 Brush St.
Detroit, MI 48202

Russell Industrial: Saturdays & Sundays 12-5 pm
and Fridays by appointment
1600 Clay Ave.
Detroit, MI 4821

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the city is indeed a surprising phenomenon of contemporary social life. And it is happening globally. From the underground 'office farms' in Tokyo, to rooftop farms in London and New York, to aquaponic neighborhoods in Lagos, to urban gardens across post-industrial middle-America, such as in Pittsburgh, PA, and Buffalo, NY. And to Detroit – where the steadily growing urban farming movement is transforming its famous postindustrial landscape into an increasingly green one, and where the world's largest urban farm recently began production in the spring of 2014. Detroit is once again a city towards which global eyes are focused. As a city that once incubated a new social structure for the 20th century, Detroit has become a stage for possible models of an urban green future for the 21st century.

What, then, of our notion of the future, of urban 'progress' – *now*?

The answer to this is neither easy nor agreed upon. While some view the return of the farm to the city as a grassroots community effort and a political step towards sharing the commons, others view it as an opportunity for big business and as a new form of public relations for 'greening' the image of industrial production. Moreover, while some view urban agriculture as a method to boost the economy or to reinvigorate city land, others view it as a method for creating new sustainable and locally-run modes of urban living – to reinvigorate not only the land, but the city social life. The polarity does not stop there. While some see the urban farm as a return to the pre-industrial culture of land cultivation, others view it as a method of bringing back established modes of production, a re-invigoration of commercial agriculture within city borders. And though some are interested in the idea of the urban farm as a model for future progress, they are wary of its effectiveness, calling it a return to 'folkpolitics,' while others call it the opposite: an attempt to create another assembly line, a new industrialization to come after the commercial land-grabs.

While the debate around the politics of land use and urban farming are multi-layered and divergent, the oscillation between the notion of 'returning to the land' and the notion of 're-vitalizing' the post-industrial land seem to, nonetheless, always appear, always *re-do*.

A third option is also emerging: not the idea of 're-vitalizing', not *returning*, not 're-farming', but creating an admixture, a '*trans-farm*,' where the technorati can meet with the neoagrarian. A 'cyber-agrarian,' as the blog 'Farmpunk' puts it – "indicating a back-to-the-land perspective that stands apart from past movements because it is heavily informed by conceptual integration in a post-industrial information society...achieved through the combined arts of cybermancy and geomancy."⁵ In other words: the old ways of bushcraft and agriculture can be newly combined with modern life in contemporary, decentralized, and creative ways. Thus it is a looking forward to the land, not a looking back to it, that is currently emergent among contemporary urban farm thinkers.

Detroit, as a culturally influential point on the urban-farm map, and as a symbol of incubation for the future, is therefore a fitting place to begin the exploration, or the digging, of ways of imagining the contemporary urban farm as a different type of progress – not a way of using or merely living upon the land, but a way of creating with it, a way of looking forward.

Trans-Farm is an exploratory exhibit for the work of art in an age of surprising urban reversals, a way to imagine and explore a 'looking forward to the land.' By showing art that looks forward and across, that trans-cuts, and imagines with the land, with the farm, with technology, and with urban nature, Detroit will be the place for taking the old farm and old city forward to meet with the future. But it is not for the city itself alone. *Trans-Farm* takes Detroit as its stage, as a crossroads of the urban farm imaginary, and displays works from local, national, and international artists who do not 'return to,' but transverse the natural and the urban – physically, materially, and conceptually. By not only working with artists who create with, who imagine with and amid elements of the land, but also work in collaboration with local urban farms in Detroit, *Trans-Farm* operates as a two-fold exhibit. It traverses the indoor urban space and the outdoor farm, mixing the materials of each in both settings. Instead of looking back to former ways, instead of 're-farming' or 're-vitalizing' the urban, *Trans-Farm* will attempt, as the pre-fix implies, 1) to go across, beyond, to the other side; be transoceanic, trans-Siberian, transatlantic, 2) to change in form or position, 3) to change thoroughly: transliterate, 4) to transcend, rise above, 5) to transverse, transect, cut across.

Here, in the Motor City, the agrarians will meet the cyberpunks, the mushroom artists will meet the plant hackers, the painter will meet the weed-whacker, and the art gallery will meet the farm, in an effort to creatively cultivate a different, a new, organic urbanism.

Yvette Granata © 2014
Franchise Program Winner 2014-15

1. Thomas Sugrue, "Automobile in American Life and Society From Motor City to Motor Metropolis: How the Automobile Industry Reshaped Urban America," http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/R_Overview.htm.
2. Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *After the Future*, ed. Gary Genosko and Nicholas Thoburn, Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2011, p. 21.
3. Teresa Almeida, "Neoliberal Policy and the Growth of Slums," *Prospect Journal of International Affairs*, May 2012, <http://prospectjournal.org/2012/05/21/neoliberal-policy-and-the-growth-of-slums>.
4. Berardi, p. 12.
5. Green Hermeneutics Blog, posts by 'the Faun,' aka 'Hermeneut of Green Things,' <http://farmpunk.blogspot.com>.

Yvette Granata is a multi-media artist, film designer, and media scholar. She received her Master of Arts from the University of Amsterdam, where she focused her research on media environments and urban aesthetics in the age of crisis. Currently, she is an artistic research PhD candidate in experimental media arts at SUNY Buffalo. Her work takes an interdisciplinary approach to media research that merges practice and theory, integrating film, video, and installation to employ and experiment materially with theoretical concepts, with a focus on contemporary urbanity and socio-political habits. Her film design work has been featured on screens around the world, including Sundance, Tribeca, Rotterdam, Berlinale, SXSW, and CPH:PIX. Her videos and installations have been exhibited internationally.

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Cary Baker, *Understories II-Monotropa*, 2009, Urethane, aluminum rod, epoxy, dimensions variable

Cary Baker (New York) is a New York-based mixed media artist and designer. Cary received a B.A. from Bard College, and studied art and design independently at SACI-Studio Art Center in Florence Italy and the School of Visual Arts (SVA) in Manhattan. *Rotation-Part 2* is the next iteration in a series of evolving land art installations, collectively titled *Understories*. *Rotation* explores cycles of progression and retrogression, decay, and regeneration and was first conceived of for a pond site in Cornwall, NY. Part 2 will address the same subject matter through the lens of the urban farming movement. Plant propagation and morphology, puppetry, choreography, and living architecture and design are some of the many influences that have shaped this body of work which suggests a parallel universe where our ability to traverse and understand the natural world is amplified. For *Trans-Farm*, the sculptures will be arranged on the MUF1 farm in collaboration with the MUF1 farm volunteers. The farm volunteers will both interpret Cary's work and consider farm needs when placing sculptures on the farm.



Kim Beck, *Herbicide Tendencies #3*, 2008, Ink on plexiglass, 48 x 60 in

Kim Beck (Pittsburgh) uses images of architecture and landscape to make drawings, paintings, prints, photographs, books, cutout sculptures, and installations that survey peripheral and suburban spaces. Electrical transformers, cell towers, and billboards grow like invasive species. And invasive species, such as dandelions, pop up in photographs of lawns and installations using vinyl decals, stuck directly to walls and windows. These create mutated landscapes, alien-but-familiar spaces in a continuous state of flux. *LOT* is made with vinyl from commercial sign shops. Both cheerful and weird, these oversized weeds range from poison ivy to the dandelion. The adhesive decals are layered and combined with sign images, which are painted directly on the wall.



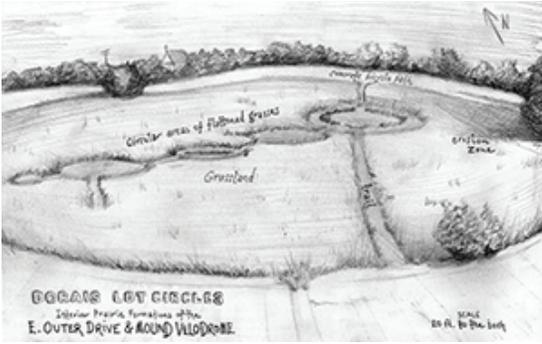
Hannah Chalew, *North Robertson Continuum*, 2014, Pen and ink, painted paper, wood, wire, grow-light, soil, live plants, 42 x 64 x 15 in

Hannah Chalew (New Orleans/Detroit) is an artist from New Orleans, who now lives in Detroit. She works from direct observation to study the tension between nature and culture in the built environment, examining the cycles that landscapes experience as civilizations ebb and flow over time. She is particularly interested in abandoned human spaces that get recolonized as new ecosystems; these are interstitial spaces that exist in a peculiar collaboration between human and natural creation. In *North Robertson Continuum*, Chalew has engineered this intermediate moment, capturing a fragile equilibrium between persistence and decay. It is a reminder both of what came before and what is possible in the future, as well as of the inevitability inherent in the cycle of life, of which this moment is a microcosm, and that governs all that we do.



Leslie Garcia, *Pulsu(m)*, 2011-present, Plants and electronic equipment, dimensions variable

Leslie Garcia (Mexico) works with electronic art, digital media, and plants. Her work explores the fusion process between art and technology, using techniques such as the production of virtual tools, development of electronic prototypes, audio production, net art design and visual generative codes. *Plusu(m) Plantae* is a project that empirically analyzes the mechanisms that plants use to communicate and how their own biological processes are a manifestation of communication, seemingly intangible to our senses. The project involves the design of a sound prostheses, based on the principle of biofeedback technique that focuses on obtaining data on various physiological functions of an organic body, using instruments to obtain information on the operation of these cycles and living systems. The prosthesis transduce biofeedback readings obtained in a process of sound synthesis, thereby producing an abstract voice for plants.



Scott Hocking, *Dorais Lot Circles*, 2008, Drawing of proposed site-specific installation in Detroit

Scott Hocking (Detroit) creates site-specific sculptural installations and photography projects, often using found materials and abandoned locations. Inspired by anything from ancient mythologies to current events, his installations focus on transformation, ephemerality, chance, and discovering beauty through the cycles of nature. For *Trans-Farm*, Scott created an off-site installation of urban crop circles in hidden locations throughout Detroit's vacant lots, nestled between buildings, behind former factories, or in forgotten spaces of abandoned neighborhoods. The crop circles connect the historical mythologies of agriculture to the contemporary urban prairies of Detroit and the imaginary future of what may come to the urban farms of tomorrow.

Tiff Massey (Detroit) is a metalsmith and mixed-media artist. She



Tiff Massey, *Facet (Steel)*, Steel

began her educational exploration in science and biology, followed by her MFA in metalsmithing. Massey focuses on the creation of both large scale and wearable sculptures and objects. Her work metamorphoses into different pieces, by nature of their function, or the environment in which they are placed. They may be used in fashion or in atmospheric settings and can be interpreted based on the context of their usage. For *Trans-Farm*, Massey was commissioned to create a sculpture specifically designed for the MUFI farm plot. Her piece, a large-scale diamond ring made from steel acts as both environmental art and functional farm object, as a sculptural-jewelry piece made for contemporary urban plant-life to grow upon/within.

Jasmine Murrell (New York/Detroit) is a Brooklyn-based visual artist, originally from Detroit. Jasmine's work demonstrates annihilation and the sublime, the unstable and shifting nature of humanity, and the inherent ability of all living things to age and transform. Her work is also about miracles, miracles that happen in the worst of times and in the most invisible places. She is interested in the sublime spirit that evolves out of oppressive conditions and uses a wide range of media including installation, sculpture, land art, and film to invoke a transformative experience around historical erasures. Jasmine's *Dirt Diaries* are made from soil from around the world. Her videos *Milk Man's Redemption* and *Creation Story*, inspired by historical and scientific evidence, merge ideas of reality and mythology. The exhibit showcases Jasmine's work across elements that she mixes: dirt and concrete, myth and science, displayed across paper and digital screens.



Phil Ross, *Mycotecture Brick Corner*, 2012, Ganoderma lucidum fungus grown on wood sawdust, approximately 72 x 72 x 60 in

Phil Ross (San Francisco) is an artist, researcher, and mycologist. He is interested in the experimental possibilities of fungal design and building materials, or mycotecture ("myco" from the Greek for fungus). His projects stem from an interest in the relationships between human beings, technology, and the greater living environment. His diverse experiences—as a chef, in hospice work, in plant husbandry—are all incorporated in a design methodology centered upon research and experimentation. For *Mycotecture* he grew building blocks from the fungus *Ganoderma lucidum* (also known as Reishi), a mushroom traditionally valued in Asia for its purported health benefits. Bags of sawdust are steam cooked for several hours in airtight bags, after which mushroom tissue is introduced into the bag, feeding on, digesting, and transforming the wood. The bricks are composed of the mushroom's below-ground root-like network (mycelia), which makes them stronger, pound-for-pound, than concrete. The bricks Ross constructed are ultimately intended to be part of a larger ongoing project that will result in an entire building grown out of fungal material.



Steve Rowell, Production still from *In the Best of All Possible Worlds*, 2011, Video with stereo sound, 5:52 min

Steve Rowell (Chicago) is an artist, curator, and researcher. Currently based in greater Los Angeles, he has lived in Berlin, Chicago, Washington DC, and Austin over the past 20 years. His transdisciplinary practice focuses on overlapping aspects of technology, perception, and culture as related to the landscape. Rowell contextualizes natural, postnatural, and built environments, appropriating the methods and tools of the geographer. *The Cold Coast Archive* is a collaboration with Signe Lidén and Annesofie Norn that begins with the Svalbard Global Seed Vault (SGSV)—a starting point for investigations into, and extrapolations from, the broader meaning of a remote landscape of survival, contingency, and preparedness. Buried in a frozen mountainside on the arctic island of Spitsbergen and hardened to survive a nuclear assault, the SGSV (nicknamed the "Doomsday Vault") is the most robust seed vault in the world. It is designed to protect its contents from all imaginable worst-case scenarios, including climate change, asteroid impact, and nuclear war. Deep time, Disaster planning, geopolitical speculation, and climate prediction are recurring themes for both the place and the project. *Trans-Farm* will exhibit a portion of *The Cold Coast Archive*, a short video project titled *The Best of all Possible Worlds*, and the *Survival Map*, a map created for a speculated future, intended to guide unknown survivors of any number of potential disaster scenarios in which food is scarce.

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Kate St. Claire, collage

Kate St. Claire (Ann Arbor) is a Michigan-based artist who creates intricately layered visualizations of the natural world. Engaged with profoundly simple concepts of serious consequence in the continuum among life, degeneration, transitions, time/instant moment, death, renewal. Her collages weave layers of paint into fragmented photo collages of highly detailed images of nature. She gathers these images from her natural surroundings and, most recently, from roadside locations that challenge assumptions about where nature is most vibrantly manifested. She explains, "Drainage ditches, land between gas stations and street medians as places that breed uncertainty. They are largely ignored boundary lands, gathering the detritus of our culture into a tentative wildness. Unless we have a reason to be in these places, they are glanced over, forgotten, lost, or just never found. Children see the possibility of these places; in adulthood it takes open eyes, imagination and a willingness to explore that is rare. Every day I expand my awareness of this territory. I want to know the underbelly of the land and my psyche, to live with it, in it, and still see the beauty."



Scenocosme, *Pulsations*, 2013, Tree, speaker, mp3 player, audio amplifier, dimensions variable

Scenocosme (France) – Gregory Lasserre and Anais met den Ancx are two French artists working together under the name Scenocosme. They develop interactive artworks by using multiple kinds of expression, technology, architecture, and sounds. They mix art and digital technology in order to find substances of dreams, poetries, sensitivities and delicacies – specifically exploring invisible relationships with our environment and energetic variations of living beings. Their piece *Pulsations* is an audio-installation that collaborates with a tree. A sound-box is installed in a tree and in its branches. Once in contact with the trunk, viewers can hear and feel the sounds and vibrations of heartbeats. The tree is the symbol of a body, through its bark and its flesh. The viewer hears and feels the sonorous vibrations when he puts his ear or body against the trunk. The entire tree is in resonance with a human heartbeat. This sound generates sensory relationships between the tree and the body.

Derica Shields of the **Future Weird** (Brooklyn) will program an evening of short films for a Video-Farm evening, projected outdoors on the big screen at MUFI. Derica Shields is one of the founders of the Brooklyn based collective the Future Weird, whose programming is dedicated to sci-fi/experimental/weird film by black, African, and Third World directors. For *Trans-Farm*, Derica will create a program of retro-futurist short films that specifically relate to agricultural settings and sci-fi farm life. Derica will give an introduction and lead a discussion of the films before and after the screening. **Sept 14: 8-10pm @MUFI**



The main focus of **The Michigan Urban Farming Initiative** (MUFI) is currently on the development of 7432 Brush Street and its surrounding area. Located in the North End of Detroit, these are grass roots, urban renewal projects designed to engage the Detroit community in sustainable agriculture. 7432 Brush Street is a distressed property in Detroit that was purchased by MUFI in October 2011. It was built in 1915 and used continuously until circa 2009. The property is a three story, six unit apartment complex, which has since become uninhabitable. The goal is to restore the structure to a community resource center that will help foster sustainability and urban renewal. The MUFI Brush St. Production Farm will focus on producing a large volume of sustainably grown produce on the full acre of vacant land west of the 7432 Brush St. Property. The area has been designed in such a way that it maximizes the amount of land available for cultivation. It will include a large gravel path to accommodate equipment to access the area and smaller scale paths to accommodate individual access while ensuring that arable space is not wasted. In addition, sheds, compost pens, and other structures will be placed on top of rocky, clay, or otherwise suboptimal soil rather than on fertile, arable land. Individuals who are interested in acquiring the necessary skills to create and maintain urban farmland through to production will have the opportunity to work with members of MUFI through a training program. Through this program, individuals will experience the full cycle of urban farming while working with MUFI staff. Those participating in the training program will keep all crops produced and will have the option to sell to a local grocer, sell at market, or eat. This means that those participating will not only benefit from gaining the experience necessary to create their own urban farms elsewhere in the future, but also provide them with actual food and the potential for income.



Ryan Herberholz, *Grow Detroit* (mural on MUFI building), Acrylic latex on masonry, summer 2014.

Ryan Herberholz is a Detroit based artist focused primarily on painting. Ryan is interested in ways in which visual works can interact with and elucidate social and political issues, he received his B.F.A. from the University of Michigan in 2012 and is currently working on a M.A. at Wayne State University. Door to Door Organics sponsored the mural in an effort to publicize the growing urban farming movement in Detroit and the role of food and gardening in the revitalization of Detroit neighborhoods. The building will eventually house (MUFI) The Michigan Urban Farming Initiative's headquarters, plans for renovation include offices and a multi-purpose community activity center.