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The Hidden Passengers at apexart

Before the Enlightenment elevated empiricism and introduced the notion of “pseudoscience” as its foil, religion, magic, and science coexisted on a relatively level plane. Today, art remains one of few arenas that have been able to sidestep Enlightenment mandates; here, the exploration of ideas is not confined to the reproducibility of empirical data, allowing for a more unconstrained examination of the nature of things. The seven artists included in *The Hidden Passengers*, now at [apexart](#), take a paradoxical approach that applies the visual and linguistic vocabularies of scientific research to the unverifiable worlds of their imaginations.



Tomer Sapir. *Research for the Full Crypto-Taxidermical Index*, 2010-14; cement, salt, wax, fibers of *Ceitis insignis*, latex, plastic, pigment, vitrine; dimensions variable (detail). Courtesy of apexart.

Curator Avi Lubin presents *The Hidden Passengers* much like an exhibition of scientific artifacts, albeit with something a little off. The more time a viewer spends with the works, the more evident their strange incongruities become. In Tomer Sapir's *Research for the Full Crypto-Taxidermical Index* (2010–2014), a glowing surface illuminates what appear to be pods, bits of fungal fluff, parts of creatures, and other bio-matter, all of which on closer inspection reveal themselves to be made of materials such as wax, salt, latex, cement, and plant fibers. Sapir's untitled piece (2012), a more menacing sculpture hanging on the back wall, resembles either a giant pair of blackened lungs—the sort seen in an anti-smoking ad—or something from the movie *Alien*, while [Roxy Paine's](#) *Cloud Specimen (Cloud/Fungus)* (2009), a globular, gray object of epoxy, thermoset polymer, oil, and lacquer suspended in a bell jar, offers a more whimsical take on collecting.

The show complicates the inclination to trust information presented with scientific authority, allowing for a fantastical sense of possibility. [Guido van der Werve's](#) film, *Nummer Zeven (The Clouds Are More Beautiful from Above)* (2006), however, documents the thwarted expectations of children whose daydreams raise the work of explorers of earth and space to unrealistic heights. The film opens with a shot of the night sky as the narrator recounts a story about a wish he made on stars as a child, one made over and over but that never came true. We then see the narrator place a small meteorite into

the nose of a human-sized rocket and haul the rocket to a field, where he prepares it for launch—presumably to manufacture a new opportunity to make his wish. The drawn-out scenes build a sense of excitement for the anticipated rocket launch, but the film ends in an explosion of disappointment.



Guido van der Werve. *Nummer Zeven (The Clouds Are More Beautiful from Above)*, 2006; video projection still; 8:48. Courtesy of apexart.

Requiring varying levels of suspended disbelief, many works in *The Hidden Passengers* treat the conventionally “unscientific” areas of the world as capable of yielding significant factual data. For example, Mark Dion’s *Sampling Unseen London* (2006), a series of sketches commissioned by the Natural History Museum in London, systematically charts spaces that would typically be considered irrelevant in biological studies, such as the director of the museum’s house and a “grassy median at Heathrow airport.” Through acts such as this, these artists raise the question of what warrants objective analysis, and what happens when we treat the infinite creativity of our imaginations and the measurable world as equally valid.

The Hidden Passengers is on view at apexart through July 26, 2014.

<http://dailyserving.com/2014/07/the-hidden-passengers-at-apexart/>