

# Future Retrieval: Close Parallel

"Close parallel" implies two things that are strongly related, but not the same; a pair of lines, forms, or ideas that travel side by side but arrive at distinctly different destinations. Future Retrieval (est. 2008), the studio collaboration of former University of Cincinnati faculty members Katie Parker (b. 1980) and Guy Michael Davis (b. 1978), specializes in using historical artworks as a springboard to conceptualize and create fresh,

original works that reference or are close parallels to past artistic achievements while simultaneously vaulting them into a modern-day context.

Through Future Retrieval's work, both object- and installation-based, historical designs gain a contemporary relevance and accessibility that entices viewers to dive into forgotten sources and forward-thinking explorations.

For this exhibition, the Cincinnati Art Museum invited Future Retrieval to mine its decorative

arts and design collection and identify objects to serve as catalysts for the anachronistic exploration at the heart of the artists' approach. Parker and Davis's practice is rooted in ceramic art, but it also incorporates a diverse mix of media and techniques that combine age-old methods with new technologies. By showing their work in combination with objects from the permanent collection, the artists explore ideas about how museums traditionally present their collections and how shifting

these constructs can bring new meaning; about the value of making copies; and about the dual nature of matter, form, time, and space.

For additional works that inspire and resonate with the artists, see the special feature For Now or Future Retrieval in Gallery 150.



# Negotiating Space

2020

wood, porcelain, aluminum,  
hand cut paper

with **Vase**

circa 1830

**Marc Schoelcher Manufactory**  
(1794–1834) France (Paris)

porcelain

Bequest of Reuben R. Springer

1884.428

As your eye moves in and around this installation piece, note the play with exterior and interior space and negative and positive space. An early-nineteenth-century French porcelain vase decorated with pastoral landscapes appears in dialogue with Future Retrieval's contemporary porcelain vases adorned with floral landscapes

and the artists' aluminum plant silhouettes. All these works draw their design inspiration from the natural world, but find form in objects meant to enhance a domestic space. They sit atop a geometric, open-concept shelf inspired by the modernist Paul Frankl, whose Occasional Table and Mirror are also part of this exhibition. The adjacent screen harkens back to an Art Deco design by Frankl's contemporary, Donald Deskey. Covered with an all-over pattern of cut paper flowers, it, too,

brings a sense of the out-of-doors inside.





## **Plates I-VI**

2019

porcelain

Depictions of nature abound in these porcelain tiles that mimic traditional bookplates. The plant imagery was drawn by Future Retrieval during the artists' residency at Cincinnati's Lloyd Library and Museum, which collects materials related to

botany and science. Time spent working in a Chinese tile factory inspired Parker and Davis to use underglaze transfers to apply the floral imagery to the ceramic body.



## High Rise Farrago

2020

aluminum, porcelain, wool, wood

with **Console Table**

circa 1715–20

after designs by **Bernard  
Turreau** (1672–1731) France

gilt wood and griotte marble

# John J. Emery Fund

1976.24

This farrago, or confused mixture, reads as futuristic or even ritualistic. Considering each element, we see how the artists have borrowed historical artworks in different ways to create a new installation with its own feel. The hand-knotted rug depicts a ceramic collection that they viewed in a Stockholm museum (Medelhavsmuseet). The chairs are inspired by the

designs of modernist Paul Frankl, whose Skyscraper Bookcases are on view in Gallery 211. The gilt eighteenth-century table holds an equally decadent and richly textured porcelain tureen.

This tureen is Future Retrieval's interpretation of a historical Meissen tureen, on view in Gallery 150. The artists captured the Meissen tureen's form on the fly using photogrammetry and a hand-held camera during a visit

to the museum's storage area. The inherent imperfections of the low-tech scan were embraced and incorporated into the three-dimensional model used to form the multipart mold required to cast the work in porcelain. The model was purposely scaled larger than the Meissen tureen and altered by the addition of goat-skull handles—a nod to the skulls punctuating the frieze of a nineteenth-century tripod featured in the adjacent gallery.



# Garden Vignettes

2020

hand cut paper, plexiglass, wood  
and porcelain



## Reproduction Quality

2020

hand cut paper

When is a vessel not a vessel?  
These two-dimensional vases  
are made with cut paper. They  
reference porcelain vases  
depicted in historical paper cata-  
logues of eighteenth-century  
French porcelain made at the



royal factory of Sèvres. In the 1700s, porcelain wares were an expensive and rare commodity. Frequently referred to as “white gold,” porcelain was owned only by the powerful and the rich. Here, the use of common colored paper democratizes the forms. Future Retrieval has added further access and current relevance to the vessels by updating them with their own decoration: a depiction of landscape at Joshua Tree National Park in California adorns the central vase.



# Consolarium

2020

porcelain, hand cut paper,  
plexiglass

with **Console Table**

circa 1740

France

gilded wood and griotte marble  
Gift of Mrs. Gilbert McCurdy in  
honor of Mr. and Mrs. Paul E.  
Geier, and John J. Emery  
Endowment 1981.406

A bevy of mushrooms “grow”  
inside a closed vivarium-like  
environment atop the museum’s  
ornate table. In the eighteenth  
century, when this table was  
made, it was fashionable for  
wealthy French homeowners to  
show off items from their  
personal collections, such as  
small sculptures, on console

tables like this one. Note how Future Retrieval's assorted mushrooms in ceramic and cut paper play off the form, textures, and warm tones of this highly carved and gilt table.



## **Image of Order**

2014

wood, Formica®, hand cut  
paper, porcelain, LEDs,  
plexiglass

Inspired by museum period  
rooms—particularly the English  
Neoclassical rooms at the  
Metropolitan Museum of Art in  
New York—the artists sought to

create a period room without a period. This large black box, wrapped in reflective black Formica®, is a reference to the transportive monoliths from the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). The box opens to reveal an interior at once familiar and alien. French scenic landscape wallpaper is reimaged in hand-cut paper that features temples, volcanoes, wild vegetation, and two moons. The sculptures atop minimalist demilune tables are porcelains based on Michelangelo's *David* (1501–

1504). Curved walls and lighting envelope the “room” in an otherworldly aura.



# **Finch's Parrot Shag**

2020

Wool





**Us**

2020

maple, aluminum leaf and neon

with **Mirror**

circa 1927

**Paul Frankl (1886–1958)**

United States (New York)

wood, aluminum leaf and  
mirrored glass

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. James  
M. Hutton II 1969.411

This haloed rhesus monkey,  
created from a digital scan that  
the artists captured while  
working with the Smithsonian  
National Museum of Natural  
History's taxidermy collection,  
peers into the museum's  
Egyptian-inspired Mirror  
designed in the 1920s by Paul  
Frankl. Both are covered in

aluminum leaf, an aspect that lends a futuristic air to each. As an ensemble, Us is enigmatic. Is this the first time that the monkey has seen himself? In this moment, has he confirmed his existence? Is he contemplating his human likeness? What does it mean for us, as humans, to witness this moment? Future Retrieval often uses ovals and circles to represent portals for time travel and transcendence.



# Rhesus Monkey Shag

2020

wool



# **Elkington Crunch**

2020

Porcelain

with **Tripod**

circa 1883

**Elkington & Company (1829–  
1963)**

England (Birmingham)

electroformed copper, gilt,  
marble

Museum Purchase

1883.801

The natural elements combined in Future Retrieval's sculpture—an African dik-dik, a hare, and clusters of mushrooms—are as disparate as the Greco-Roman motifs that punctuate the tripod below it—ox skulls, sphinxes, and bird legs. The tripod is a

nineteenth-century copy of an eighteenth-century copy of a Classical tripod discovered in the Temple of Isis at Pompeii. The original Roman tripod and the temple were buried under volcanic ash during the devastating eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE. Similarly, the grim “crunch” of heads, legs, and fungi in Future Retrieval’s sculpture suggests that something has gone terribly awry.



# **Old World Convenience**

2020

Porcelain

with **Occasional Table**

1927–1930

**Paul Frankl (1886–1958)**

United States (New York)



lacquered wood

Gift of the Estate of Mrs. James  
M. Hutton II 1969.407