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OCTOBER 7, 2016 – JANUARY 8, 2017
WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART
Cast out of heaven for being sinful or defiant, “fallen angels” plummet to earth. Dulce Chacón invokes this religious context and uses the term for the title of her exhibition, referring to those adventurous humans compelled to conquer the elements and explore regions beyond the gravitational pull of this planet, despite life-threatening risks. The artist proposes that pursuits into air and space essentially amount to escapism, a desire to look past the complex problems of this deeply troubled world. The quest of these enterprising searchers is based in a faith and trust that somewhere out there exists a utopian world and a new religion.1

Chacón has long been intrigued by the “great beyond”—the realm of engineers, scientists, inventors, pilots, astronauts, and daredevils—and how various spectacles of human flight and exploration respond to them. The specific subject of her new show, “Zenith,” responds to them by organizing images culled from history into her own displayed sequence. Baumgartner’s freefall (1937), International Space Station, and materiality and color choices, allows. In this manner, the artist is creating multiple sound-enhancement...
of human flight are documented by the news media and filtered by memory. She responds to them with meticulous fluid drawings produced in series. Beginning with a specific subject or event, she conducts research, building a cache of print and digital images culled from publications and the internet. Chacón then translates selected images into her signature ink wash drawings, developing a visual narrative to be displayed sequentially, in groupings or linear order across gallery walls. She often focuses on incidents that have saturated the mass media and shaped the collective memory of a generation. For her MATRIX project, she presents four series of drawings based on acoustic location devices (1910s to 1940s), the Hindenburg airship disaster (1937), International Space Station expeditions (2012-15), and daredevil Felix Baumgartner’s free fall from space (2012). With each series, Chacón “uses the materiality and capacity to understand and create a form of ‘present’ which drawing allows. In this manner, the work assembles lived experience with found information, creating multiple and indeterminate versions of reality.”

“Sound Locators” is a series of thirteen drawings based on photographs of different sound-enhancement technology used in World War I and World War II before the development of new methods. The sounds of airships, ground-based Dutch, French, British, and American ear prosthetics. The Hindenburg, a single ship that somewhere in the skyward. A single image of a small observatory of torture devices on a transatlantic crossing. However, once the news is seen as the present, the story of paper like vignettes.

Also approaching the end of the 20th century is renowned. Whether it is transatlantic crossing or your own BELONGING!
memory. She begins with a print and digital source selected to be collective. She often uses the collective imagery of drawings such as airship disaster sketchbook Felix Méndez which drawing information, and a range of different development of radar. The curious and clunky contraptions were invented to locate the sounds of approaching enemy aircraft. For thirty years, the German, Czech, Dutch, French, British, and American military designed and built a wide variety of absurd-looking apparatuses. Personal sound locators assumed the form of giant ear prosthetics. Mobile, trailer-mounted versions featured multiple cones projecting skyward. A single monumental horn attached to a rotational device attained the scale of a small observatory. The “Sound Locators” conjure comparisons with medieval torture devices or objects from a dystopian future, the world of Mad Max films. However, once the height of technology, the now laughable inventions could easily be seen as the product of Chacón’s wild imagination. The drawings float on the sheets of paper like vignettes, lending a surreal quality to the quirky group.

Also approaching the unreal, the 1937 newsreel of the Hindenburg zeppelin disaster is renowned. While attempting to make a landing in Lakehurst, New Jersey, after a transatlantic crossing, the German passenger airship abruptly caught fire and burned completely in thirty-four short seconds. Of the ninety-six passengers and crew members on board, thirty-four perished. The dramatic incineration was captured on film by William D. Wadell with the eyewitness exclamation, “Oh my God, it’s on fire!” The broadcasts in the newsreel became a thing of legend. Chacón is an alchemist of violent flames, a dreamer. The exhibition title is primarily on astronauts who extended stays as astronauts as gods of her life in the name of the International Space Station exists out of the work on the ISS.
Dulce Chacón, Untitled from "Fallen Angels," 2015
Ink on paper; 31 1/2 x 47 in.
Courtesys of the artist

Dulce Chacón, Untitled from "Fallen Angels," 2015
Ink on paper; 47 x 35 1/2 in.
Courtesys of the artist

Films projected by giant screens on the side of large buildings have remained the scale of medieval maxims, projecting窗外的风景 at the slightest exclamation. Dulce Chacón is an alchemist who magically recreates the inferno—the weightless dirigible, violent flames, and dense smoke—with simply water and ink on paper.

The exhibition title “Fallen Angels” is also the name of a series of six drawings focused primarily on astronauts and cosmonauts who have just returned to Earth after extended stays at the International Space Station (ISS). Chacón is interested in the astronaut as a god and a hero, a rare human being who is selfless, willing to risk his or her life in the name of science. In addition, the community of the International Space Station exists outside the strained relationships of world politics. Sixteen countries work on the ISS. In 2014, a Russian, an Italian, and an American astronaut launched from Russia for a mission on the strange machine of outer space. The astronauts engaged in spacewalks and separated and sent cell phones. It is a page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece. The Christ figure is bared across the linear page, engrossed in a masterpiece.
DULCE CHACÓN, UNTITLED FROM "FALLEN ANGELS," 2016
INK ON PAPER; 47 X 35 1/2 IN.
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

The dramatic turns of the most famous air travel quickly overlaid the spontaneity of the film and overdubbed the drama of Hindenburg. Chacón’s drawings focused on the strangeness of the astronauts immediately following their return to Earth. The ordinary, rural landing sites contrast sharply with fantastical visions of outer space. The otherworldly capsules seem out of place in scrubby fields, and the astronauts engage in curious interactions. Her recreation of a group photo of the three astronauts and their teams draws out the oddness of the image. The astronauts are separated and seated in portable lawn chairs, while being assessed. Some are on cell phones. It is staged like a frieze with the individuals lined up frontally across the page, engrossed in sub-narratives. Chacón likens the scene to Leonardo da Vinci’s masterpiece The Last Supper (1495-1498) in content and arrangement. The central Christ figure is being attended by the Apostles, as they also interact in smaller groups across the linear plane.

A single, large drawing included in the series “Fallen Angels” reproduces a photograph of a suicide victim that was so powerful it made “Picture of the Week” in LIFE magazine. Twenty-three-year-old Evelyn McHale jumped to her death from the Empire State Building in 1947. Having landed on her back, her angelic face and supine body
appear largely undisturbed. She seems to be sleeping soundly, although embedded in the twisted metal roof of the black limousine she struck. She is both a sacrificial lamb and a mortal sinner. Chacón’s ink drawing technique offers beautiful watery passages of abstraction and fully reconciled areas of linear detail, capturing the dualities of the magnificent and disturbing floating portrait of death. The power of the composition is timeless and has endured. Looking back in time, Pre-Raphaelite Sir John Everett Millais’s *Ophelia* (c. 1851) similarly depicts the still-lovely drowned heroine of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Later, Pop artist Andy Warhol repeated the media image of McHale sixteen times in *Suicide (Fallen Body)* (1962) from his “Death and Disaster” series.

In a different kind of jump, Austrian daredevil Felix Baumgartner attempted to break the world record for the longest free fall from near-space in 2012. A highly publicized media event (sponsored by Red Bull, Zenith Swiss Watch Company, and GoPro action cameras), his stunt was broadcast live on YouTube from which Chacón sourced forty-four video stills that became the drawings in “Zenith.” Arranged in groupings that cluster, climb, and drop along the gallery wall, the narrative series chronologically traces the extreme skydiver’s journey: his launch, rise, jump, free fall, and landing.

Baumgartner ascended in a helium balloon, with the drawings, Chacón’s ink drawing technique that read like a mind-boggling, surreal adventure in arrested time. By carefully selecting the source images of the blue wall, evoking the void, a mind-boggling and suggestive, from which Chacón sourced the drawings, Chacón transformed the events — into drawing and painting. She is both a sacrificial lamb and a mortal sinner. Chacón’s ink drawing technique offers beautiful watery passages of abstraction and fully reconciled areas of linear detail, capturing the dualities of the magnificent and disturbing floating portrait of death. The power of the composition is timeless and has endured. Looking back in time, Pre-Raphaelite Sir John Everett Millais’s *Ophelia* (c. 1851) similarly depicts the still-lovely drowned heroine of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Later, Pop artist Andy Warhol repeated the media image of McHale sixteen times in *Suicide (Fallen Body)* (1962) from his “Death and Disaster” series.

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Dulce Chacón translates photographic images—often well-known media images and events—into drawing, bringing the claim of photography as truth immediately into question. By changing mediums and building provocative displays, she causes the representation of the events to become entangled with her own eccentricities. “Hypnotized by building them into a watery drawings program and provoking romanticizes death, the drawings have profoundly transformed the experience of a first-hand adventure of “Zenith.” Oh, the humanity!

Emily Hall Tremaine Center

PATRICIA HICKS

Dulce Chacón ascended to twenty-four miles above Earth in a capsule raised by a helium balloon, while maintaining audiovisual contact with mission control. Along with the drawings, Chacón includes texts, actual statements made by Baumgartner and his team that read like canned lines, including “Sometimes you have to go up real high to see how small you are” and “Keep your head down, and our Guardian Angel will take care of you.” But the text-bubble drawings go silent with Baumgartner’s jump into the void, a mind-boggling free fall of four minutes and twenty-two seconds before he pulled the ripcord and descended safely onto terra firma. Chacón captures the adventure in arresting images that range in style from highly realistic to loosely suggestive, from sharp focus to distant blurs, adjusted as needed to best approximate the source image. In particular, the “Zenith” drawings hover on sheets of paper with irregular perimeters, heightening the dreamlike effect as they float across the dark blue wall, evoking the heavens.

Baumgartner’s ascent was a deeply symbolic act, analogous to the sacrifice of the innocent. The saecular passages embedded in the drawings of the dualities of the composition is Everett Millais’s Shakespeare’s Hale sixteen years.

Dulce Chacón includes texts, actual statements made by Baumgartner and his team that read like canned lines, including “Sometimes you have to go up real high to see how small you are” and “Keep your head down, and our Guardian Angel will take care of you.” But the text-bubble drawings go silent with Baumgartner’s jump into the void, a mind-boggling free fall of four minutes and twenty-two seconds before he pulled the ripcord and descended safely onto terra firma. Chacón captures the adventure in arresting images that range in style from highly realistic to loosely suggestive, from sharp focus to distant blurs, adjusted as needed to best approximate the source image. In particular, the “Zenith” drawings hover on sheets of paper with irregular perimeters, heightening the dreamlike effect as they float across the dark blue wall, evoking the heavens.

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PATRICIA HICKS

Recipient of the Emily Hall Tremaine Center for the Arts

Dulce Chacón, Untitled from “Zenith,” 2015, Ink on paper; 8 x 12 1/2 in. Courtesy of the artist.
The Mad Max franchise of the American West

As of September 19, 2016, the photograph was taken by a controller. Along with his partner and his jump real high to angel will take up before he jumps into the atmosphere the closest approximate representation of reality to become unstable, and she further complicates perception by building thematic and narrative series that are framed to highlight humankind’s eccentricities. “Hindenburg” presents a surreal reenactment of a fiery tragedy in six watery drawings. “Fallen Angels” proposes a religious context within the space program and probes a famous media image of a beautiful suicide victim that romanticizes death. “Sound Locators” illustrates how technological advancements have profoundly changed our military capabilities. And finally, in the epic, true adventure of “Zenith,” Dulce Chacón creates a fantastic and lingering visual experience of a free fall from space, far removed from the live action of YouTube. Oh, the humanity.

PATRICIA HICKSON
Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art

2 The Mad Max franchise of the American West
4 As of September 19, 2016, the photograph was taken by a controller.
States perception humankind’s tragedy in six space advancements that tragic, true visual of YouTube.

1 Dulce Chacón in conversation with the author, 20 July 2016.
3 The Mad Max franchise of four films (1979, 1981, 1985, and 2015) is a series of Australian post-apocalyptic, dystopian action movies based on the genre of the American Western, but set in the future.
4 Dulce Chacón in conversation with the author, 20 July 2016.
5 The photograph was taken by student photographer Robert C. Wiles who was on site and heard the impact. He took the photograph within four minutes of the tragedy. It was published eleven days later in LIFE as “Picture of the Week” on May 12, 1947. It was the only photograph Wiles ever had published.
6 As of September 19, 2016, Felix Baumgartner’s Red Bull Stratos project can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjfrQxGL5H8.
DULCE CHACÓN

EDUCATION

1994–98  
B.A., Visual Arts, Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas, U.N.A.M., Mexico City

2001  
Interdisciplinary art course at Académie Minerva Faculteit der Kunsten, Groningen, Netherlands

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2016  
Dulce Chacón/MATRIX 175/Fallen Angels, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT

2014  
The Great Artist (Necessary evil), collaboration with Enrique Minjares Padilla, TACO (Talleres de Arte Contemporáneo), Mexico City

2008  
Confección de uno mismo, Border Cultural Center, Mexico City; Sueño en ASCII, Border Cultural Center, Mexico City

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2016  
Reclaimed by nature, Blue Star Contemporary Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas

2015  
¿Por qué no lo llamas entropía?, Galería Tiro al Blanco, Guadalajara, Jalisco, México

2014  
La voluntad de la Piedra, Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City

2013  
Materia Sensible, Gabinete Gráfico, Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City

WORKS IN THE E

All works are ink on paper. Courtesy of the artist.

“Hindenburg” series.
“Fallen Angels” series.
“Zenith” series.
“Sound Locators” series.

GALLERY TALK

Dulce Chacón and Pat Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art will talk Friday, October 7, 12 pm Free with museum admission.

SECOND SATURDAY

Space Adventure  
Saturday, October 8, 1–4 pm  
Museum admission free.

ARTIST’S CHOICE

The Great Beyond  
Sunday, November 6, 2016  
Sunday, November 13, 2016  
Earth (1976) Stood Still (1951)  
Free; museum admission.

ARTIST RESIDENCY

2012  
Temenggong Artist in Residence, Singapore

2010  
Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, Ironbridge, Shropshire, United Kingdom
Born in Mexico City, 1976
Lives and works in Mexico City

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION
All works are ink on paper, variable dimensions, and courtesy of the artist.
“Hindenburg” series, 2014 (6 works)
“Fallen Angels” series, 2015-16 (6 works)
“Zenith” series, 2015-16 (44 works)
“Sound Locators” series, 2016 (13 works)

GALLERY TALK
Dulce Chacón and Patricia Hickson, Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art
Friday, October 7
12 pm
Free with museum admission

SECOND SATURDAYS FOR FAMILIES
Space Adventure
Saturday, October 8
1-4 pm
Museum admission free all day

ARTIST’S CHOICE FILM SERIES
The Great Beyond
Sunday, November 6, 2 pm | Dr. Strangelove (1964)
Sunday, November 13, 2 pm | The Man Who Fell to Earth (1976)
Sunday, November 20, 2 pm | The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951)
Free; museum admission separate

Major support for MATRIX 175 has been provided by the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation with the Consulate General of Mexico in New York and the Mexican Cultural Institute of New York.
The MATRIX program is generously supported in part by Jeffrey G. Marsted and Marcia Reid Marsted, Carol LeWitt in honor of Andrea Miller-Keller, as well as the current and founding members of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art’s Contemporary Coalition.

Support for the Wadsworth Atheneum is provided in part by the Greater Hartford Arts Council’s United Arts Campaign.