

For immediate release
February 1, 2019

Inman Gallery is pleased to present

Dario Robleto
Small Crafts on Sisyphian Seas

The Art Show 2019
Booth D12

Park Avenue Armory
Park Avenue and 67th Street, New York

February 28 – March 3, 2019



Dario Robleto, *Small Crafts on Sisyphian Seas* (detail),
2017-2018

Cut and polished nautilus shells, various cut and polished seashells, various urchin spines and teeth, mushroom coral, green and white tusks, squilla claws, butterfly wings, colored pigments and beads, colored crushed glass and glitter, dyed mica flakes, pearlescent paint, cut paper, acrylic domes, brass rods, colored mirrored Plexiglas, glue, maple

75 x 71 1/2 x 43 in (190.5 x 181.6 x 109.2 cm)

For the 2019 Art Show, Inman Gallery is pleased to present a solo booth of work by Houston-based artist **Dario Robleto** (b. 1972). Sponsored by the Art Dealers Association of America (ADAA), The Art Show is presented at the Park Avenue Armory, February 28 – March 3, 2019, with a Gala preview on Wednesday, February 27, benefiting The Henry Street Settlement.

Robleto's newest body of work includes collages and sculptures which take his ongoing conversations with biologists, engineers, and astronomers and considers the role of empathy in interstellar communication. In the last three years, Robleto has been extensively engaged in research with the scientists who work at SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence Institute), and in 2015, Robleto joined a team of scientists as the artistic consultant to Breakthrough Initiatives, a multi-year private consortium whose goal is to search for extraterrestrial intelligent life. This is the first body of work to be developed from these collaborations and is motivated by two central questions: How does one communicate with something they can't imagine and is empathy a universal behavior?

Embedded in Robleto's work is a melancholic recognition tied to the human desire to search for life in the universe. In 1974, Frank Drake (the co-founder of SETI) began imagining ways of communicating human experience to other intelligent life and beamed the first interstellar radio message into space. And since 1983, SETI has been attentively listening into the Cosmos for a similar message beamed to us. While the vastness of the universe suggests the great likelihood of intelligent life beyond our world, the expanse of time needed to cross such distances—even at the speed of light—means that if our best efforts at contact reach their destination, and a reply is sent back, the exchange will far exceed the lifespans of the scientists dedicated to the effort. The search for contact, then, is weighted with an existential melancholy, as it is pursued by scientists who are keenly aware of the boundaries of their own mortality.

In his collage *Sisyphus' Archivists* (2018), Robleto pays homage to the people and ideas that founded SETI. Using archival images that represent Democritus, Frank Drake, Ann Druyan, Carl Sagan, and Johannes Kepler, the artist circles them with words and decorative pearls. "More to Search Than Time Allows," reads the frame around Drake, the first to begin SETI's search and now the longest to wait for a reply. Druyan, Creative Director of NASA's Golden Record (whose brainwaves and heartbeat experiencing love were included on that record), is described as "A Theorist of Love's Memory." Around them, intricate arrangements of cut paper, cut and polished seashells, green and white tusks, squilla claws, and crushed glass and glitter float in flower-like configurations.

Robleto is particularly interested in the disjunction between human and astronomical time scales. Historically, SETI scientists have assumed that communication with other life forms should be done through light waves—

the maximum speed limit of the universe. But light waves—and the message content held in them—can be susceptible to a loss of decipherability as the beam widens over time, making it harder to distinguish from the background “noise” of the universe. Despite the human impulse for speed, if we can accept a much slower pace, and use *objects* rather than light waves, we may have a better chance at the message being found and deciphered. It is this shift in thinking from light waves to objects that Robleto feels offers a way for artists to become vital thinkers and makers in contributing to this profound quest of communication.

If we were to send an object, Robleto asks, could a *thing* perform both archival and emotional communication from one species to another? In particular, and, a point of great importance to Robleto, is to ask if empathy is a universal behavior of intelligent life and in what forms could it be shared? As Robleto is quick to point out, we cannot assume that there is a shared sensory experience, and the object’s context and embedded information will most likely be entirely foreign to its recipient. What, then, might communicate even a fraction of the complexity of human life? In his three studies—*Study for Moon Flowers* (2016), *Study for the Waiting* (2016), and *Study for Seams in Monoliths* (2016)—Robleto imagines prototypes for what this first object might be. Indeed, *Moon Flowers* takes an astronaut’s gesture toward communicating with future space travelers as its departure point: in 1972, Charlie Duke left a photograph of his family on the surface of the moon. Believed to still be there, the photograph includes Duke’s hand-written note on the back: “This is the family of astronaut Charlie Duke from planet Earth who landed on the moon on April 20, 1972.” Duke would later describe his gesture as the “human side of space exploration.”

While Duke’s gesture was an intimate one, many of the scientists Robleto works with imagine a different starting point for communication with extraterrestrial life: mathematics. Since there is significant evidence that the laws of physics are a universal feature of the universe, and math is our system to convey this knowledge, it seems reasonable for this to be the starting point. Robleto’s provocative question to the scientists, though, has been to ask if we were to send math, would they let artists choose which equation to send? And what objects might best convey our logical capabilities as well as our sense of aesthetic and emotional meaning?



Dario Robleto, *Small Crafts on Sisyphian Seas* (detail), 2017-2018

Robleto’s proposal is a seashell, which simultaneously exists as a remnant of biological life, form and math. The shell is a physical embodiment of a unique equation (the golden ratio) and a beautiful, symmetrical object that humans have used for currency, gift exchange, ritual adornment, mourning customs and emotional symbolism for millennia. Further, these functions of the seashell were often utilized in historical “first contacts” and relationship building between foreign civilizations on our own planet. Building on these usages, Robleto has focused on the nautilus shell and its status as a “living fossil,”—a creature that has almost completely bypassed evolutionary pressures over time. Every time we encounter a living nautilus, we are witnesses to a life-form as it was millions of years ago. In this sense, Robleto argues, the nautilus provides an unexpected, Earth-based answer to SETI’s central question: How does life make itself known over vast reaches of time and space? In the sculpture, *Small Crafts on Sisyphian Seas* (2017–2018), Robleto constructs a floating shell world—a colony of creatures organizing themselves into logical form and aesthetic splendor for the hope of communication and exchange. Nautilus shells are held aloft over transparent domes that convey worlds inside worlds, filled with configurations of seashells, urchin spines, mushroom coral, green tusks, squilla claws, butterfly wings, various beads, pigments, and glitter.

Dario Robleto was born in San Antonio, TX and lives and works in Houston, TX. The artist has had numerous solo exhibitions since 1997, most recently at the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX (2018), and the Menil Collection, Houston, TX (2014). In 2008 a 10-year survey exhibition, *Alloy of Love*, was organized by the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York. Recent notable group shows include *Prospect.4: The Lotus In Spite of the Swamp*, New Orleans, LA (2017); and *Explode Every Day: An Inquiry into the Phenomena of Wonder*, MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2016). Robleto is currently an artist in residence at the University of Houston’s Cullen College of Engineering and at Northwestern University’s McCormick School of Engineering and the Block Museum of Art.

For more information please contact the gallery at 713-526-7800 or info@inmangallery.com

I N M A N G A L L E R Y

Dario Robleto ADAA 2019 checklist, 2019

for prices and availability

contact

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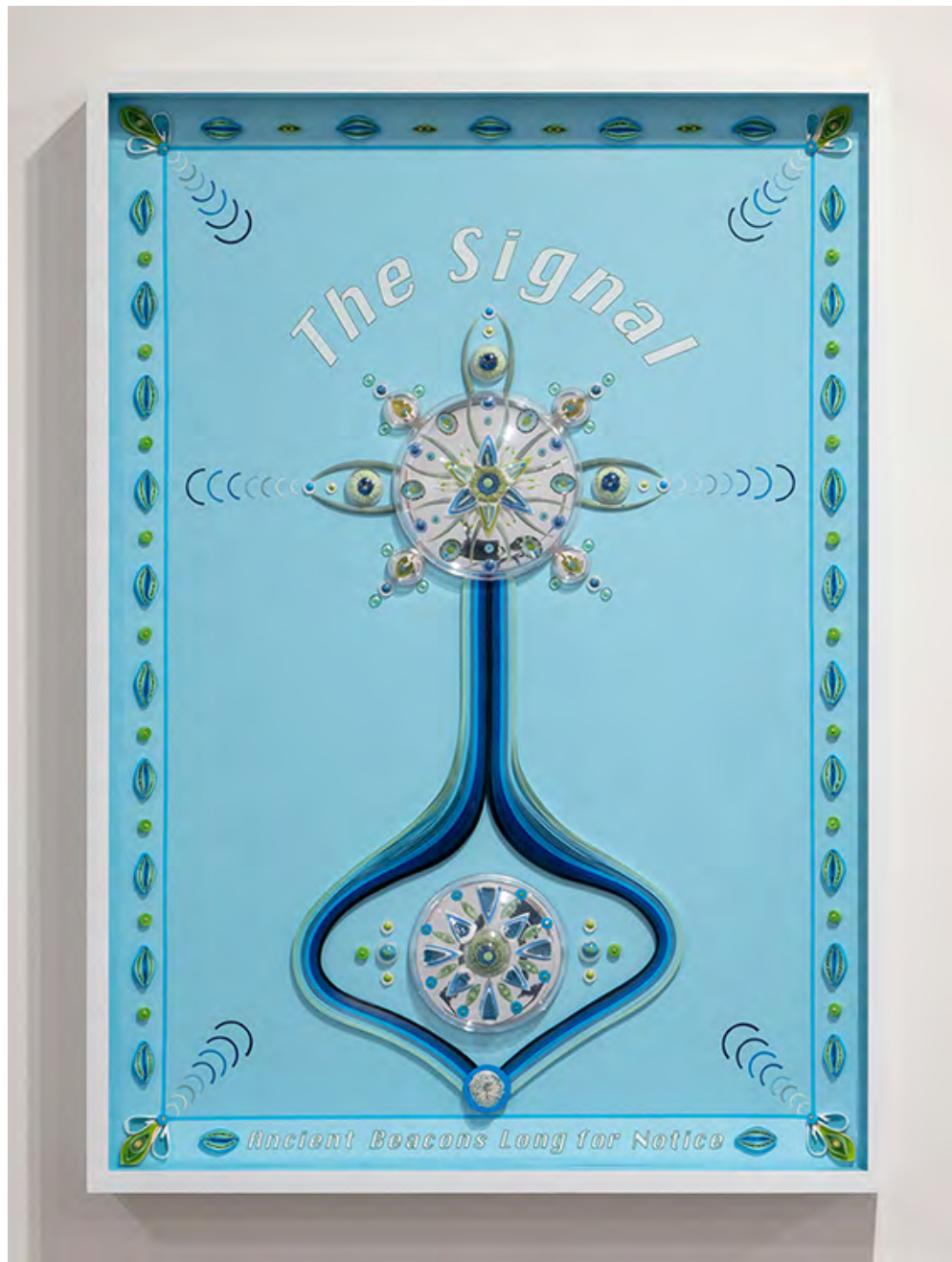
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INMAN GALLERY



Dario Robleto

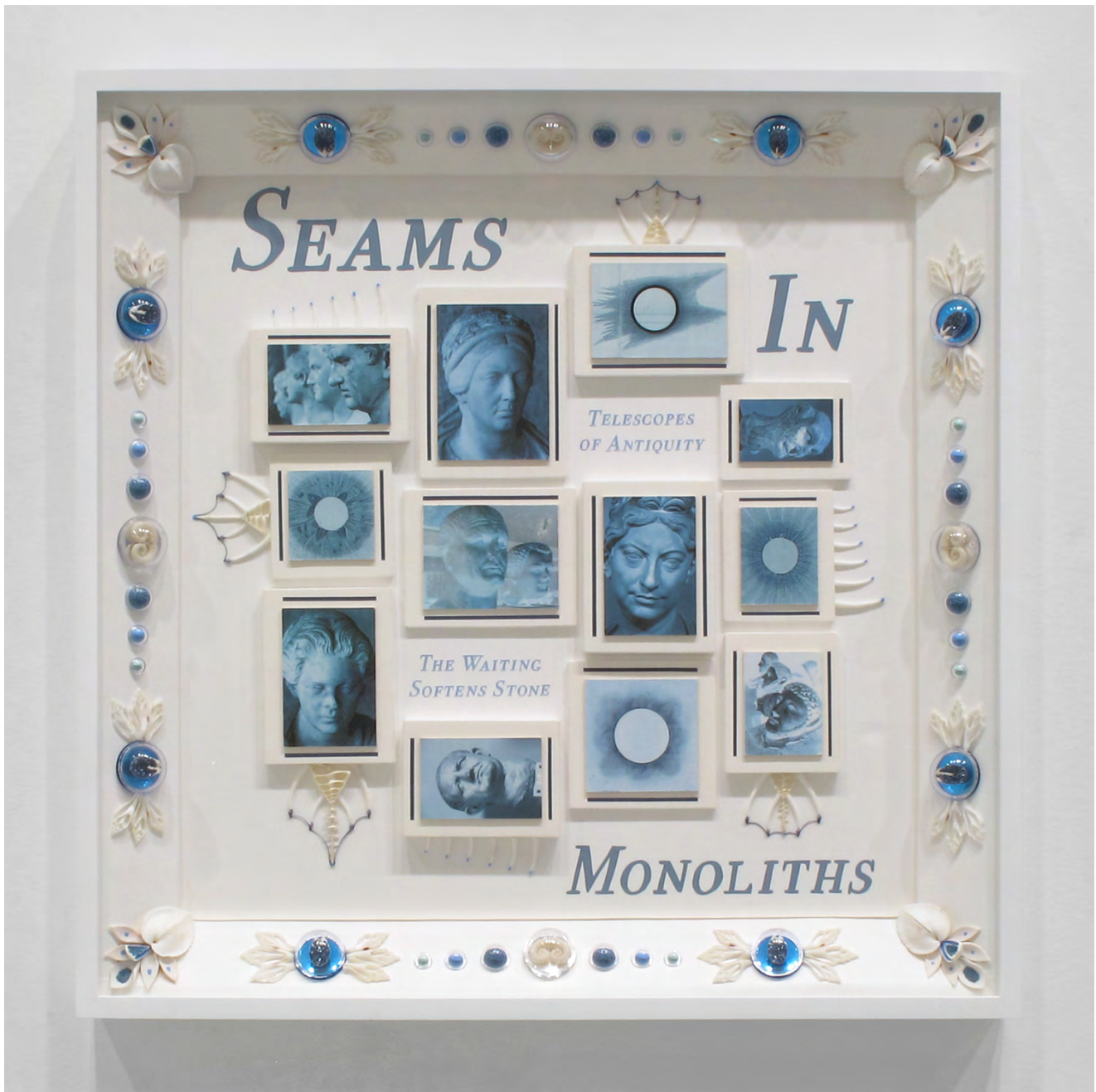
The Signal, 2018

Cut paper, various cut and polished seashells, green and white tusks, squilla claws, mushroom coral, colored powder pigments and beads, plastic domes, mirrored Plexiglas, foam core, glue, frame

34 ³/₄ x 24 ³/₄ x 3 ¹/₂ in (88.3 x 62.9 x 8.9 cm)

DR 337

INMAN GALLERY



Dario Robleto

Seams in Monoliths, 2018

Cut paper, various cut and polished seashells, urchin spines, white tusks, spirula shells, colored powder pigments and beads, plastic domes, prints on paper, colored and mirrored Plexiglas, foam core, glue, frame

26 ³/₄ x 26 ³/₄ x 3 ¹/₂ in (67.9 x 67.9 x 8.9 cm)

DR 348



Dario Robleto

Sisyphus' Archivists, 2018

Cut paper, various cut and polished seashells, green and white tusks, squilla claws, spirula shell, colored powder pigments, colored crushed glass and glitter, plastic domes, prints on paper, basswood, foam core, glue, frame

31 ¹/₄ x 25 ⁵/₈ x 3 in (79.4 x 65.1 x 7.6 cm)

DR 349



Dario Robleto

The Naturalists' Lament, 2018

Cut paper, various cut and polished seashells, urchin spines, green tusks, squilla claws, mushroom coral, colored powder pigments and beads, colored crushed glass and wire, plastic domes, prints on paper, colored and mirrored Plexiglas, foam core, glue, frame

51 ⁷/₁₆ x 39 ¹/₄ x 3 ¹/₂ in (130.7 x 99.7 x 8.9 cm)

DR 350



Dario Robleto

The Curious Confront Eternity, 2018

Cut paper, various cut and polished seashells, urchin spines, squilla claws, butterflies, colored powder pigments, plastic domes, prints on wood and paper, foam core, glue, frame

36 1/2 x 36 1/2 x 4 in (92.7 x 92.7 x 10.2 cm)

DR 351

INMAN GALLERY



Dario Robleto

Small Crafts on Sisyphian Seas, 2017-2018

Cut and polished nautilus shells, various cut and polished seashells, various urchin spines and teeth, mushroom coral, green and white tusks, squilla claws, butterfly wings, colored pigments and beads, colored crushed glass and glitter, dyed mica flakes, pearlescent paint, cut paper, acrylic domes, brass rods, colored mirrored Plexiglas, glue, maple

75 x 71 1/2 x 43 in (190.5 x 181.6 x 109.2 cm)

DR 354



Dario Robleto

Study for Moon Flowers, 2016

Various cut and polished seashells, urchin spines, green tusks, squilla claws, butterfly wings, feathers, cut paper, colored powder pigments, colored plastic beads and glitter, pearlescent paint, plastic domes, print on paper, brass rod, mirrored Plexiglas, glue, painted wood

23 ¹/₂ x 12 x 12 in (59.7 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm) overall with base and vitrine

DR 324