

About the Artist

Born in 1979 in Nassau, The Bahamas, Tavares Strachan is based in New York, NY. Strachan holds a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and an MFA from Yale University. He has had solo exhibitions at Grand Arts, Kansas City, MO; The Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, PA; and the Mattress Factory, Pittsburg, PA (2009); the Daniel Weinberg Gallery in Los Angeles, CA (2008); The Luggage Store in San Francisco, CA; Ronald Feldman Fine Arts in New York, NY; and Pierogi 2000 in Leipzig, Germany (2006). Strachan's work has also been included in the 2008 and 2010 Armory Shows in New York, NY, and at group exhibitions at the Queens Museum of Art in Queens, NY; Pierogi in Brooklyn, NY; and the Jack Tilton Gallery in New York, NY, as well as the Art Dealers Association of America 2008 Art Show in New York, NY. Strachan's work has been written about in *The Brooklyn Rail*, *New York Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *Artforum*, *Art Papers*, *Flash Art*, and *Art in America*.

Support for this exhibition has been provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal agency; The Nimoy Foundation; Grand Arts; the Council for the Arts at MIT; and the Massachusetts Cultural Council. We also thank Susan and Drew Leff and the Phoenix Media/Communications Group of Boston for their contributions.



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MIT List Visual Arts Center
E15, 20 Ames Street
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<http://listart.mit.edu>

Public Programs

Thursday, May 6, 6-8PM

Exhibition Opening Reception

Pre-reception panel discussions with artist Tavares Strachan and MIT residency partners. 5:30PM Bartos Theatre

Lunchtime Gallery Talks:

Wednesday, May 19, 12:30PM

Gallery talk with LVAC curator João Ribas

Wednesday, May 26, 12:30PM

Gallery talk with LVAC director Jane Farver

Wednesday, June 9, 12:30PM

Gallery talk with LVAC educator Mark Linga

Gallery Talks:

Saturday, May 22, 2PM

Gallery talk with LVAC educator Mark Linga

Thursday, May 27, 6PM

Gallery talk with Mark Linga and MIT Professor George Barbasthesis

Thursday, June 3, 6PM

Gallery talk with artist Tavares Strachan

Saturday, June 12, 2PM

Gallery talk with LVAC educator Mark Linga

Thursday, June 17, 6PM

Gallery talk with LVAC curator João Ribas

Thursday, June 24, 6PM

Gallery Talk with LVAC Educator Mark Linga and MIT Sea Grant Program Educator Sarah Hammond

Public Art Tour:

Saturday, May 15, 11AM

Tour of MIT's Public Art Collection

LVAC Film Night: *Perfumed Nightmare*

(Philippines/1978/91 min.) Dir. Kidlat Tahimik

Thursday, May 20, 2010, 7PM, Bartos Theatre

LVAC Film Night: *Interkosmos*

(US/2006/71 min.) Dir. Jim Finn

Thursday, May 20, 2010, 7PM, Bartos Theatre

Tavares Strachan

Orthostatic Tolerance:

It Might Not Be Such a Bad Idea if I Never Went Home

May 7 - July 11, 2010

MIT LIST VISUAL ARTS CENTER

Tavares Strachan

Orthostatic Tolerance: It Might Not Be Such a Bad Idea if I Never Went Home

Orthostatic Tolerance: It Might Not Be Such a Bad Idea if I Never Went Home is part of a series of investigative works and exhibitions Tavares Strachan calls *Orthostatic Tolerance* (orthostatic: to stand upright; tolerance: the ability to withstand pressure). Combined, the phrase refers to the extreme physiological stress astronauts and deep-sea explorers endure. The series incorporates topics that Strachan probes almost obsessively: explosion or failure; invisibility; observation; duplication or the phenomena of simultaneously existing in more than one place; and his desire to establish the Bahamas Aerospace Sea Exploration Center (BASEC) a dreamed-of educational center in his homeland. Strachan's passion and vision have also led him to train as a deep-sea diver in the Caribbean and as an astronaut at the Yuri Gagarin Russian State Science Research Cosmonaut Training Centre in Star City outside Moscow, which is documented in six training videos in this exhibition. He states:

I am preoccupied with the notion of the impossible, and I am convinced that the desire to explore allows us to achieve the unachievable and expand the responsibilities of art. Coming from a tiny island in one of the smallest and youngest countries in the world, the groundwork of constructing an exploration agency cements an optimistic present, and a future of achievement. With a collapsing educational system and the distraction of tourism, a focus on developing an agency that allows its citizens to expand beyond its waters seems appropriate. This project, though difficult for me to summarize, comes down to the belief in the possibilities of what art can do and where it may take us.¹

Strachan does not ignore the dangers of exploration, as evidenced in his exploded space traveler sculptures, *Astronaut Floating Explorer* (2010) and *Finding My Way Home 1 and 2*, (2009-10). And, even in his most expansive ambitions concerning outer space as a place from which he may never wish to return, the artist always seems to keep one eye on the small Caribbean nation where he was born. He has created a number of works that use materials from the islands (sand, chalk, bauxite) or that were made in or about The Bahamas, including:

Color of the Sun (2003), which simulated the heat and light of Nassau in his Providence, RI, bedroom; *Crashed Rocket Sculpture* (2008-09), sugarcane-fueled glass rockets that he exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia; and *The Distance between What We Have and What We Want* (2004-06), a 4.5-ton block of ice he excavated from the Arctic to exhibit as a solar-cooled educational tool for students at the Albury Sayle Primary School, which he attended as a child.

Strachan's *This is the Way It Was Designed, Mirrored Crash* (2008-2009), two identically damaged Piaggio Apes (a three-wheeled light commercial vehicle first produced in Italy in 1948, which Strachan has chosen to be his BASEC transport vehicle), echoes earlier work that focused on the concept of duplication. In 2006, he created *The Problem of One Thing Existing Simultaneously* by exactly duplicating a found broken beer bottle, piece-by-piece and exhibiting its broken bits beside those of the original.

Strachan studied glass blowing at the Rhode Island School of Design and has returned to the medium throughout his career. He is fascinated with the indiscernible. *What Will Be Remembered in the Face of All That Is Forgotten* (2009-10), presented here, features a life-size blown-glass diver submerged in a tank filled with mineral oil. The index of refraction of mineral oil causes the immersed glass to become nearly invisible. This and a number of Strachan's other works pay homage to unrecognized (and invisible) individuals who have contributed to the exploration of outer space and the seas. Master Chief Petty Officer Mary J. Bonnin, to whom this work is dedicated, retired from the Navy in 1996, as the only woman in the Navy to qualify as a master diver. *Robbie Installation Sculpture* (2008), is a sentient, robotic rover that Strachan created working with scientists at Carnegie Mellon and Yale Universities. Named after Robert L. Lawrence, the first African American astronaut (who was killed during training and never made it into space), the rover lives a lonely life on the simulated surface of the North Star Polaris.

For the past year, Strachan has been an artist in residence here at MIT. We are grateful to the many individuals at MIT who have so generously agreed to work with him and we are excited to present the results of their collaborations in this exhibition. The first department to respond to Strachan's request for collaboration was MIT's Manned Vehicle Laboratory in the Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics. Professors Laurence Young and Dava Newman warmly welcomed

Strachan to their labs and a lively exchange of ideas. Together with graduate students Justin Kaderka and Brad Holsuch, they made it possible for him to film his work, *We Train to Get Better at Things We May Know Already* (2009-10), on a gravity-augmenting centrifuge. Strachan's infrared cameras recorded the force of gravity as he spun on the device, taking a thermal reading of this vertiginous activity.

Strachan also sought technical assistance from the Autonomous Underwater Vehicle Laboratory in MIT's Sea Grant College Program, directed by Chryssostomos Chryssostomidis, Professor of Ocean Science and Engineering and Mechanical and Ocean Engineering. Sea Grant Research Engineer Michael Soroka and Strachan have collaborated to develop a working underwater rover fashioned entirely—motor and propellers included—from clear glass. Nearly invisible, *Purplish Blue Light* (2010) hovers in a mineral oil-filled tank, creating a mirage of light. The vehicle communicates wirelessly with an isolated anchored buoy located in the Atlantic Ocean at The Bahamas Dive Center. Like a puppet master, the buoy speaks to the rover and in turn the rover shadows the buoy's every move. We also thank Nancy Adams, Sarah Hammond, and Seth Newburg for their help with this project.

MIT's 3D Optical Systems Group, directed by George Barbastathis, Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering, also worked with Strachan to create a new work for this exhibition. Barbastathis, Professor Carol Livermore, Martin Deterre, Chevalley Duhart, Hyun Jin In, Nick Loomis, Tony Nichol, Se Baek Oh, Nader Shaar, and Yang Se Young helped bring into being Strachan's *My Mother's House from the Moon* (2010), a microscopic three-dimensional landscape that features the pink of his mother's Bahamian home and the green of its surrounding vegetation as it might appear if viewed from space.

We also wish to thank Professor Karl K. Berggren from the Quantum Nanostructures and Nanofabrications Group, Patrick Bolsvert and Shiahn Chen from the Center for Material Sciences and Engineering/ Electron Microscopy Facility, and Alan F. Schwartzman, Research Scientist from the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, who were all generous with their time and advice.

¹ Correspondence with the artist, summer 2009.

Jane Farver
Director, MIT List Visual Arts Center