

*Exploratory Works: Drawings from the Department of  
Tropical Research Field Expeditions*  
April 14 – July 16, 2017

Main Gallery, Drawing Room  
Opening Reception: Thursday, April 13, 6–8pm

For further information and images, please contact

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Updated March 21, 2017

New York – The Drawing Center presents *Exploratory Works: Drawings from the Department of Tropical Research Field Expeditions*, an exhibition examining the images produced by the Department of Tropical Research (DTR) during their pioneering ecological expeditions to South America and the Caribbean in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sixty historical drawings produced by a variety of artists in collaboration with the DTR's scientists will be exhibited for the first time, alongside two new major installations by artist Mark Dion, which will recreate with great detail the DTR's field labs for both their jungle and aquatic missions. Co-organized by Dion; historian and anthropologist Katherine McLeod; and Madeleine Thompson, institutional archivist at the Wildlife Conservation Society in New York, *Exploratory Works* highlights a seminal moment when art advanced our understanding of science, and in turn science trusted the intuition of the artist to show us something as-of-yet unimaginable.

The Ground-Breaking Work of the Department of Tropical Research  
Led by biologist Charles William Beebe (1877–1962) of the New York Zoological Society (now the Wildlife Conservation Society), the DTR focused their studies around what today would be described as tropical rainforest and marine ecology. Throughout their expeditions, Beebe and his team of scientists worked side by side with artists to illustrate the ecosystems



*Saber-toothed Viper fish  
(Chauliodus sloanei) Chasing  
Ocean Sunfish (Mola mola)  
larva*, Else Bostelmann,  
Bermuda 1934, 18 1/2 x 24  
1/2 inches, Watercolor on  
paper. Courtesy of Wildlife  
Conservation Society. Photo  
by Martin Parsekian.

they researched. At a time when photographic technologies were limited, the artists of the DTR used their pens and brushes to construct visualizations of natural environments that were difficult or impossible to access. The DTR's innovative use of drawings, sketches, paintings, cartoons, animations, and films helped make the idea of an interconnected ecosystem part of popular and scientific thought.

Under Beebe's guidance, the DTR also instituted the revolutionary practice of hiring women as lead scientists and field artists. Through this professional platform, the DTR enabled the careers of, among others, scientists Jocelyn Crane and Gloria Hollister, and artists Else Bostelmann, Helen Tee-Van, and Isabel Cooper.

### Recreating the Labs of the DTR

As part of *Exploratory Works*, co-organizer and artist Mark Dion will construct two installations that will bring to life the interiors of the DTR's field stations. While one of the installations will develop the space of the jungle laboratories, the other will look to the oceanographic workshops. Using numerous archival images that depict the interior conditions of these labs, Dion's installations will capture the material culture of science at the time and emphasize the extraordinary situation of artists and scientists working together. Dion will also produce a display cabinet with glass-covered pull out drawers, shelving, and vitrines to exhibit the rich archival material of the DTR. These reconstructions build on the foundation of installation art Dion has practiced in museums, galleries, and public institutions worldwide, as well as his keen knowledge of the history of field biology for the period and its related material culture.

## ABOUT THE CURATORS

### MARK DION

Born in 1961 in New Bedford, Massachusetts, artist Mark Dion examines the ways in which dominant ideologies and public institutions shape our understanding of history, knowledge, and the natural world. Appropriating archaeological, field ecology, and other scientific methods of collecting, ordering, and exhibiting objects, Dion creates works that question the distinctions between "objective" ("rational") scientific methods and "subjective" ("irrational") influences. Dion has received numerous awards including the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award (2007) and the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Lucida Art Award (2008), and

has had major exhibitions at the British Museum of Natural History in London (2007), the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2004) and the Tate Gallery, London (1999), among others.

#### KATHERINE MCLEOD

Katherine McLeod is an environmental historian and anthropologist. Her research focuses on the workings of land, labor, and capital in relation to U.S. scientific practices in South America and the Caribbean during the 20th and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

#### MADELEINE THOMPSON

Madeleine Thompson is the Institutional Archivist for the Wildlife Conservation Society. In this role, she works to preserve and share the rich history of WCS, which began in 1895 as the New York Zoological Society. Among her interests are theories of collecting and the histories of wildlife conservation and popular science.

#### PUBLICATION

The Drawing Center will produce a 200-page volume in the *Drawing Papers* series that will include an introduction by the exhibition organizers; a preface by field biologist George Schaller about Beebe's influence; texts by Beebe contemporaries and DTR team members Isabel Cooper, Else Bostelmann, Gloria Hollister, and George Swanson; articles written by William Beebe expounding on the connection between image making and scientific research; an interview between Katherine McLeod and post-colonial scholar Richard Drayton; photographs of Department of Tropical Research field stations and artists at work; and maps and reproductions of DTR illustrations made in the field.

#### CREDITS

*Exploratory Works: Drawings from the Department of Tropical Research Field Expeditions* is made possible by the support of Fiona and Eric Rudin, Jean-Christophe Castelli and Lisa Silver, Judith Levinson Oppenheimer and John Oppenheimer, Anthony and Judy Evnin, Jerome L. and Ellen Stern, and the Martin and Rebecca Eisenberg Foundation.

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## ABOUT THE DRAWING CENTER

The Drawing Center, a museum in Manhattan's SoHo district, explores the medium of drawing as primary, dynamic, and relevant to contemporary culture, the future of art, and creative thought. Its activities, which are both multidisciplinary and broadly historical, include exhibitions; Open Sessions, a curated artist program encouraging community and collaboration; the Drawing Papers publication series; and education and public programs.

## LOCATION, HOURS & ACCESSIBILITY

35 Wooster Street between Broome and Grand Streets in SoHo, New York.

Gallery hours are Wednesday-Sunday 12pm–6pm, Thursday, 12pm–8pm.

Tickets: \$5 Adults, \$3 Students and seniors, Children under 12 are free, and free admission Thursdays 6-8pm.

The Drawing Center is wheelchair accessible.

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## AT THE DRAWING CENTER

<i>Mateo López: Undo List</i>	Through March 19, 2017
<i>Jackson Mac Low: Lines-Letters-Words</i>	Through March 19, 2017
<i>Amy Sillman: After Metamorphoses</i>	Through March 19, 2017
<i>Exploratory Works</i>	April 14–June 25, 2017
<i>Open Sessions 10</i>	April 14–June 4, 2017
<i>Installations</i>	
<i>Gary Simmons: Ghost Reels</i>	Through October 2017
<i>Jackie Ferrara: Lines</i>	Through March 2017

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## Images Available for Reproduction

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*Bathysphaera intacta* Circling the Bathysphere, Else Bostelmann, Bermuda 1934. Watercolor on paper, 18 1/2 x 24 1/2 inches. Courtesy of Wildlife Conservation Society. Photo by Martin Parsekian.



*Saber-toothed Viper fish (Chauliodus sloanei)* Chasing Ocean Sunfish (*Mola mola*) larva, Else Bostelmann, Bermuda 1934. Watercolor on paper, 18 1/2 x 24 1/2 inches. Courtesy of Wildlife Conservation Society. Photo by Martin Parsekian.



*Bug Family on Acalypha Leaf*, George Swanson Caripito, Venezuela, 1942. Watercolor on paper, 11 x 14 inches. Courtesy of Wildlife Conservation Society. Photo by Martin Parsekian.



*Long-spined Giant Squid*, Helen Damrosch Tee-Van, Bermuda June 4, 1929. Watercolor on paper, 11 x 14 inches. Courtesy of Wildlife Conservation Society. Photo by Martin Parsekian.



*Margay tigrina vigens* Head, Isabel Cooper, Kartabo, Guyana, March 19, 1922. Watercolor on paper, 11 x 14 inches. Courtesy of Wildlife Conservation Society. Photo by Martin Parsekian.



*Tinamou*, Helen Damrosch Tee-Van, 1923 or earlier, Guyana. Watercolor on paper, 11 x 14 inches. Courtesy of Wildlife Conservation Society. Photo by Martin Parsekian.