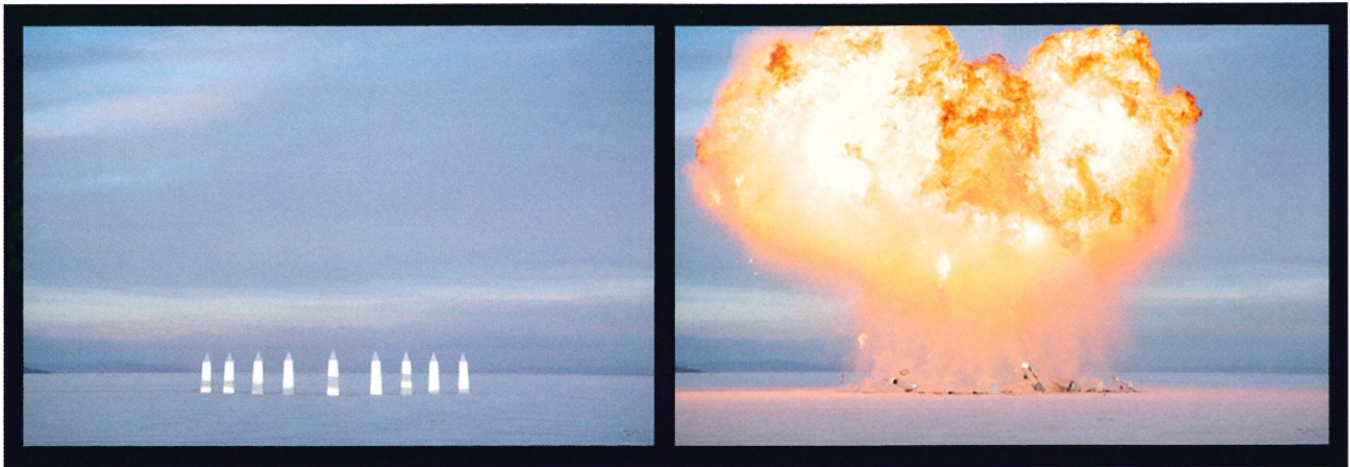


# ANDRÉA STANISLAV: CONVERGENCE INFINITÉ







Stills from *Blow Away*, 2008 (video stills from two-channel version)

For *Currents 112: Convergence Infinité*, Andréa Stanislav has created a new body of poetic work that explores St. Louis's complex natural and social histories. Stanislav's fascination with the city is long-standing; she grew up in Chicago and made frequent visits to St. Louis as a child. Stanislav specifically interrogates the ways in which St. Louis connects to what the artist calls the "architecture of empire." Throughout her work, Stanislav seeks to question mythologies surrounding ancient, medieval, or modern civilizations. She writes, "I am interested in how the past bleeds through to the present. How ghosts of empires call out to our own, with otherworldly voices." Stanislav's hybrid practice incorporates sculpture, installation, video, and public art. In *Convergence Infinité*, Stanislav has created a complex immersive space that brings together mirrored sculpture, a four-screen multichannel video, digital printing on mirrors, and taxidermied animals.

Stanislav has focused on two constructions that she associates particularly with St. Louis and the idea of empire: Cahokia Mounds and the Gateway Arch. Medieval Cahokia was the largest prehistoric civilization north of Mexico, larger than London during its time period. Correspondingly, the Gateway Arch embodies American capitalism and its Manifest Destiny principles that emerged from nineteenth-century America. Two large-scale mirrored sculptures, *Apogee 1200* and *Apogee 1969* echo and abstract the forms of Cahokia Mounds and the Arch, respectively. Each is a half-completed structure, suggesting the underlying and transient fragility beneath the construct of empire.

Stanislav also examines these ideas in the four-screen video, *Converger*, which maps the complex geography of the city. Here, the video camera mimics the flight of a bird, swooping high and low, along four routes from north, south, east, and west. Along the way, local sites of social and environmental importance are captured. Some of these are former or current sites of Native American mounds,

such as Cahokia Mounds and Sugarloaf Mound in South St. Louis. Other sites reference the complex and problematic narrative of the American empire. The Old Des Peres Presbyterian Church, for example, represents the history of slavery. Formerly known as the Old Stone Meeting House, the church was built in 1833 and was a stop on the Underground Railroad.

Stanislav's four films converge on Art Hill in Forest Park around the sculpture *Apotheosis of St. Louis*. An equestrian statue of St. Louis's namesake, the *Apotheosis* is itself a symbol of imperial aspirations. In the video, the head of St. Louis's horse appears to be invisible, or, in the artist's words "disappears into infinity." This intervention elevates the horse into a generalized, otherworldly realm. This symbolic beheading can also be seen as a further allusion, as the artist notes, to the final failures of dominant structures.

Stanislav's interest in culture, and the construct of empire, is counterbalanced by a fascination with nature. Birds and horses, in particular, and the mythologies associated with these animals, are a recurrent feature in her work. The geometric form of *Apogee 1969* is offset by a taxidermied juvenile bald eagle (the exhibition's only hopeful symbol) perched atop the partial arch. From the center of the ceiling in Gallery 250 hangs a chrome-dipped horse skull, *Tropaion*. The latter is reflected and inverted below in a contained basin of water from the Mississippi River. The artist compares this water-filled case to a geode, a hollow rock through which water passes, depositing minerals that form into crystals. Beneath the sullied river water is a mirror, literally reflecting the problematic environmental conditions that complicate the river's more poetic associations.

Stanislav is fascinated by the ancient geological and natural history of St. Louis, and especially its river history. The four videos entitled *Converger* capture the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi



rivers. Along the walls in Gallery 250 are also four *River Portraits*, diamond-shaped Mississippi River scenes imprinted onto mirrored surfaces, hung in pairs. In each grouping, one of the river scenes is an inversion of its partner. These comparisons suggest the earthquakes of 1811 and 1812 during which the Mississippi River ran backwards, a primal disordering of the natural world. The painterly and synthetic colors and reflective quality of these *River Portraits* complement the sculptural and film elements of the installation.

Earlier in her career, Stanislav worked for a number of years for the prominent artist Matthew Barney. She assisted Barney with his *Cremaster Cycle* films, and her use of a broad range of media is informed by that artist's work. Her ambitious output perhaps looks most insistently to Land Art pioneer Robert Smithson. Stanislav shares Smithson's interest in complex natural and man-made environments, and also in using mirrored surfaces to reflect, multiply, and fragment space. Stanislav writes that her "reflective installations erode the boundary between subject and object. Participants enter an interactive environment saturated with reflections, sounds, memories, and images, an experience made profoundly physical through the perceptual tricks played by light, reflections, and immersive sounds." This immersive experience is enhanced by

an installation soundtrack that references the artist's fascination with birds. It includes remixed samples from Olivier Messiaen's *Réveil des oiseaux*, a symphonic work of transcribed birdsong, as well as birdcalls recorded by the artist on the *Mississippi Flyway*, and trumpet solos from jazz musician, Miles Davis.

This exhibition is complemented by Stanislav's earlier film, *Blow Away*, 2008, on view in Gallery 301, which highlights her sustained work in mirrored sculpture. This film shows a dramatic explosion of mirrored obelisks—symbols of empire—on the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah in an homage to the iconic final sequence of Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Zabriskie Point*. Featuring recurring images of a horned owl, as well as jeweled horse heads, *Blow Away* also provides valuable context for the artist's long-standing engagement with natural history.

Andréa Stanislav's *Convergence Infinité* represents an important continuation and, in some ways, culmination of the artist's dissection of the idea of empire. While conceptually complex, the exhibition draws on the history of St. Louis, resulting in an installation of seductive color and formal richness. As the artist says, her work is one of critique and yet, at the same time, "a gesture toward the sublime, invoking a terrifying beauty."



*Currents II2: Andréa Stanislav: Convergence Infinité* is curated by Simon Kelly, curator of modern and contemporary art, with Molly Moog, research assistant. Andréa Stanislav, Simon Kelly, and Molly Moog would like to thank the following for their support and assistance with this project: Fredrick Keith Barker, Brent Benjamin, John Blair, Ann Burroughs, Jason Busch, Kristin Cassidy, Carmon Colangelo, Heather Corcoran, Zlatko Ćosić, Jon Cournoyer, Jennifer Doyle, Jeanette Fausz, Ana Paula Ferreira, Lynn Giardina, Rachel Heaton and Pam Lippert at Tree House Wildlife Center, Dan Karban, Reid Kruger, Dean Lozow, Jacopo Mazzoni, Courtney McCarty, Patricia Olynik, and Kari Varner.

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*Apogee* 1969, 2016.

Possession and display of the eagle specimen by the Saint Louis Art Museum and the artist is by permission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.





*Tropaion*, 2016.

**ANDRÉA STANISLAV**  
American, born 1968

Lives and works in Minneapolis, MN and New York, NY  
MFA, Alfred University, NY, 1997  
BFA, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL, 1990

Currents 112: Andréa Stanislav: *Convergence Infinité* is part of a series of exhibitions featuring the work of contemporary artists. Andréa Stanislav is the 2015–2016 Henry L. and Natalie E. Freund Fellow. Support for Currents is generously provided by the Henry L. and Natalie E. Freund Endowment Fund, established to support the exhibition and acquisition of contemporary art at the Saint Louis Art Museum and the teaching principles of contemporary art at the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis.

## SAINT LOUIS ART MUSEUM

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### Works in Exhibition

#### Gallery 250 (East Building)

*Converger*, 2016  
four-channel high-definition video projection,  
duration: 13:00 minutes, looped

*Apogee 1969*, 2016  
mirror-polished stainless steel and eagle taxidermy mount,  
120 x 34 x 144 inches

*Apogee 1200*, 2016  
mirror-polished stainless steel and dichroic film,  
78 x 118 ¾ x 84 inches

*Tropaion*, 2016  
chrome-coated horse skull, dichroic film, steel rope,  
Mississippi River water, acrylic, and mirrored glass,  
84 x 30 x 30 inches

*River Portrait I (Running North)*, 2016  
archival inkjet pigment on mirror-polished stainless steel,  
67 ¾ x 67 ¾ inches

*River Portrait II (Running South)*, 2016  
archival inkjet pigment on mirror-polished stainless steel,  
67 ¾ x 67 ¾ inches

*River Portrait III (Running North)*, 2016  
archival inkjet pigment on mirror-polished stainless steel,  
67 ¾ x 67 ¾ inches

*River Portrait IV (Running South)*, 2016  
archival inkjet pigment on mirror-polished stainless steel,  
67 ¾ x 67 ¾ inches

#### Gallery 301 (Main Building)

*Blow Away*, 2008  
single-channel high-definition video projection  
duration: 4:32 minutes, looped

#### Selected Solo Exhibitions

2015  
*Andréa Stanislav: Lake Ladoga - Video Sketches and Collage*, 2.4 Gallery, Art-Centre Pushkinskaya-10, St. Petersburg, Russia

2014  
*In the Courtyard: Andréa Stanislav – Wonderwall*, Pelham Art Center, Pelham, NY

2013  
*Andréa Stanislav: Nothing is True, Everything is Permitted*, Redux Contemporary Art Center, Charleston, SC

2011  
*Andréa Stanislav - Vanishings Points and Ghost Portraits*, 1 Museum Plaza Gallery, 21c Museum, Louisville, KY

2009  
*Fogtlogarburn*, thisisnotashop Gallery, Dublin, Ireland

2008  
*River to Infinity - The Vanishing Points*, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, MN

*Andréa Stanislav - Land of the Lost*, GAGA Arts Center Garnerville, NY

2001  
*Andréa Stanislav - The UFRO Project*, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Omaha, NE

### Selected Group Exhibitions

2015  
*Transpositions*, Museum of Non-Conformist Art, Art-Centre Pushkinskaya-10, St. Petersburg, Russia

*Big Bridges*, Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, MN

2014  
*2014 Minnesota Biennial*, Minnesota Museum of American Art, St. Paul, MN; Lanesboro Art Center, MN

*Second Life*, Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft, Louisville, KY

2013  
*Tetractys*, CultZavod MosChaos, The Fifth Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, Russia

2012–13  
*Young Country*, Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts, Wilmington, DE

2011  
2010/11 McKnight Visual Artists Fellowship Exhibition, Minneapolis College of Art and Design Gallery, MN

2010–2011  
*Iraqimemorial.org*, Sheppard Fine Arts Gallery, University of Nevada, Reno; The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts - Project Space, New York, NY; Works/San José, CA

2010  
*Transparency & Trans-formations in Contemporary American Art*, U.S. Residence, Stockholm, Sweden

2004  
*Perspective 2004*, Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast, Northern Ireland

### Selected Residencies and Awards

Target Studio for Creative Collaboration Artist in Residence Award, Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, MN, 2015

Swing Space Artist Residency, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, New York, NY, 2012

McKnight Artists Fellowship for Visual Arts, McKnight Foundation, Minneapolis, MN, 2010–11

Emerging Artist Fellowship, Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, NY, 2009

### Selected Public Art Commissions and Projects

2015  
*Crystal Wave*, University of Minnesota Ambulatory Care Center, Minneapolis, MN [permanent commission]

2014  
*Nightmare on the Neva*, Manifesta 10 Biennial Parallel Projects/Art Center Pushkinskaya-10, Neva and Fontanka rivers, St. Petersburg, Russia

2011  
*Nightmare*, A Nuit Blanche, Northern Spark, Mississippi River from Minneapolis to St. Paul, MN

*Earth Mirrors*, Morningside College, Sioux City, IA [permanent commission]

2009  
*Ghost Siege*, Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, NY, 2009

2007  
*Garden of Iron Mirrors*, Weisman Art, Minneapolis, MN 2007 [permanent commission]

All works in this exhibition: courtesy of the artist

Front Cover: stills from *Converger*, 2016