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Lucy McRae  
*Future Sensitive*  
Explorations Relating to a Post-Apocalyptic World  
Honor Fraser  
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by Jody Zellen



Lucy McRae describes herself as a science fiction artist, filmmaker, inventor and body architect. While the terms inventor and filmmaker do not need clarification, what does it mean to be a body architect and science fiction artist? McRae combines technology with industrial and clothing design to create sculptures and wearables: essentially machines that are welcoming. These cushioned and sometimes womb-like objects are meant to provide comfort and support, while simultaneously investigating the impact technology might have on human evolution.

McRae's work is collaborative as she often works in partnership with others like a design or architecture studio. Her studio's output "considers how human biology might be augmented by a mixture of physical design, modification of genes and emotions — technology transforming the body and ethics." McRae has given TED talks, exhibited at the Venice Architecture Biennale, Ars Electronica and created projects for NASA. She is currently a visiting professor at SciArc.

In her evocative exhibition, *Future Sensitive* (coming just a few months after *Futurekin* and including pieces from this recent installation created for SciArc), McRae fills the gallery with photographs, films and sculptures, fabricated in a variety of materials, that imagine a future world. Her references to the body, interests in sci-fi and the physicality of her installations brings to mind works by Matthew Barney, Andrea Zittel and Lita Albuquerque, artists who also engage with film and sculpture and explore the relationship of the body to a futuristic landscape.

Like Barney, Zittel and Albuquerque, McRae often appears in her own pieces — or designs them for the proportions of her own body. In sculptural works like *Post Apocalyptic Sherpa* (2019) McRae is depicted in photographs wearing a brown, tan and orange hiking outfit and like a sherpa, carries this load— a futuristic survival kit— on her back. The "kit" is an elaborate, multi-part object equipped with a modified black-out mask, cushions and mats that can be spread out on the floor, or in the natural environment to provide shelter and comfort. A similar work designed to support a single person, *Solitary Survival Raft* (2019) is a rust and orange hued, full-size fabric raft that imagines what might be necessary to survive when lost at sea.

*Heavy Duty Love* (2021) is a cushioned weightlifting/workout station installed in what appears to be a modified basketball court within the gallery. In this complex contraption, a would-be user pushes their body into the machine and is cradled by soft fabrics that surround them. The work was “designed as an aid to compensate for lack of human touch early in life” and while alluding to betterment, it reads more like a fantasy. McRae constructs detailed narratives for each of her works, creating backstories and scenarios that are prescriptions for life improvements. While at first glance, the outfits and machines in the installation seem confining and even intimidating, akin to stepping into a straight-jacket, McRae asserts that they are devices and places that offer a replacement for human connection.

While technology plays a role in McRae’s work, it is often implied and not present. The pieces, while futuristic, are neither mechanical nor infused with sensors or other high-tech devices. Many of the works are soft-sculptures, rather than hard-edged machines. Also featured within the exhibition are three short films including *Institute of Isolation*, 2016, *Delicate Spells of Mind*, 2022 and *Futurekin*, 2022 where McRae’s invented worlds come alive. To see the costumes and machines in use by McRae and other actors in the films gives them context and allows for a better imagining of the range of her explorations in relation to the post apocalyptic world that she envisions.

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