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"Lenin: Icebreaker Revisited"

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Is an art of climate change as beyond our reach as a politics of climate change, too large and too comprehensive for the brains of our little ecocidal species? Not for the Bay Area artist Amy Balkin—one of the nine artists in this exhibition curated by Olga Kopenkina—whom visitors to the last Documenta will recall for her effort to list the earth's atmosphere as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and who has spent the last three years collecting ephemera from sites worldwide where environmental disaster is already dreadfully fathomable. The array of objects that constitute her essential *A People's Archive of Sinking and Melting*, 2012—, shows climate change as a part of daily life: a plastic fork and knife found in New Orleans's Upper Ninth Ward. Postage stamps from Tuvalu, the island nation set to drown in our lifetimes. An empty can of tuna fish from Cape Verde. A whale vertebra carved by an Alaskan in a



Amy Balkin, A People's Archive of Sinking and Melting, 2012—, mixed media, dimensions variable.

dissolving landscape. It's an archaeology of the present for a planet with no future.

Belkin's archive is the strongest work in this broad show, which partially restages a 2012 exhibition mounted on a nuclear-powered Soviet vessel now docked in arctic Murmansk and serving as, what else, a museum. Now that the century of utopian dreaming is past, the artists here interrogate what the point of it all was: Isa Rosenberger's video *The Captain (Vladimir's Voyage)*, 2013, represents Nixon and Khrushchev's 1959 "kitchen debate" as a perpetual kibitz session in the afterlife, intercut with a sensitive reminiscence by a Soviet naval captain living in Brighton Beach, New York. To arrest the climatic changes that even the IPCC recently described as "irreversible" would take a utopian effort on a magnitude even Khrushchev could not imagine. Art, at least, has the luxury of hopelessness: a little motorized sculpture by Judith Fegerl elicits a tinny repetitive birdsong, a final, mechanical lamentation.

— Jason Farago

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