

immediate release

Platos's Cave at EIDIA House  
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# PLATON'S CAVE

**EIDIA House presents**

**Ellen K. Levy** *Colonizing Plato's Cave: Remembering the Future*



*Animation still from "The Perspective of Lichen"*

December 7 – December 28, 2013, Opening reception Saturday, December 7, 2013 5-7pm

Hours 1-6pm, Wednesday – Saturday (or by appointment)

EIDIA House announces its continuing exhibition initiative, PLATO'S CAVE, with the 18th artist in the series:

**Ellen K. Levy** *Colonizing Plato's Cave: Remembering the Future* installation

Hurricane Sandy cast attention not only on the fragility of our circumstances but also on microbial life forms that flourished in its aftermath, including molds, pathogens, and pollutants. Such organisms generally hide in plain sight until made visible; we become most aware of them when we are faced with rot, infection, allergies, and respiratory distress.

Facing a situation akin to “remembering the future,” we (our brains) can expect to see more of these organisms in the future and adapt.<sup>1</sup>

Ellen K. Levy’s hybrid forms cast Plato’s Cave as a site for recombinatory transformation, showing glimpses of how the built environment and some of the smallest forms of nature might jarringly intersect. Scripted from the perspective of lichen, an animation manipulates our own perception of the still images within the Cave’s vault and project space. These images are capable of varied interpretations; all center on our world, one that is increasingly out of ecological balance.

Mindful of the work of Janine Benyus and other innovators of biomimetic research, Levy emphasizes function and beneficial mutualism. Scale shifts alone, of course, will not suffice to create a sustainable resource. The portrait developed by Levy is that of human adaptation to environmental change, which is one productive way to “remember” the future. The growing field of biomimetics is one proof of what neuroscientist Daniel Schacter has called humankind’s “prospective brain.” Schacter et al. point out that a critical part of adaptation involves imagining the future.<sup>2</sup> In such pre-viewing, “details from past events are recombined into novel scenarios.” A related process is at work in this exhibition as Levy integrates details from nature’s microorganisms with bits of information from the Internet and other human-made systems. She investigates the convergence of biology and information systems and the boundaries between the animate and inanimate, envisioning hybrid solutions as we increasingly cope with environmental disruption.

Levy explores what might be reaped from some life forms at the small side of the scale. Creating dramatic changes of scale, she visualizes some of the mundane objects of urban life (e.g., ventilator ducts, subway stops) interleaved with the blown-up structures of organisms. Human innovation is juxtaposed with biological adaptation; fungal and mold colonies are shown merged with our human systems of transport, ventilation, garbage, and health management.

Ellen K. Levy is an interdisciplinary artist specializing in the interface between art and science. She is Past President of the CAA and Special IDSVA Advisor on the Arts and Sciences. She will lead a seminar on art and neuroscience at the New School in 2014. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including at the New York Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Sciences, as part of NASA’s art collection at the Kennedy Space Center, and at many galleries and museums ([www.complexityart.com](http://www.complexityart.com)). Her current installation was in part inspired by past work as a microbiology technologist while making art.

For PLATO’S CAVE, EIDIA House founders Paul Lamarre and Melissa P. Wolf (aka EIDIA) curate invited fellow artists who create installations along with accompanying editions for the underground space; PLATO’S CAVE. EIDIA House Studio boldly states that it does not function as an art gallery, but collaborates with the artist to create provocation in art forms, keeping within an ongoing discipline of aesthetic research.

[Plato’s Cave will be open by appointment December 23 – 28, due to the holidays]

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<sup>1</sup> Alink, A et al., “Stimulus Predictability Reduces Responses in Primary Visual Cortex,” in *The Journal of Neuroscience*, Feb 24, 2010, 30(8):2960-2966.

<sup>2</sup> Schacter, DL et al, “Remembering the past to imagine the future: the prospective brain,” in *Nat Rev Neurosci*, Sep, 2007, 8(9):657-61.

Directions: EIDIA House Plato's Cave 14 Dunham Place, Williamsburg Brooklyn, NY 11249

14 Dunham Place—one block long—is located at the base of the Williamsburg Bridge, 1/2 block off Kent Ave between Broadway and South 6th Street. (4 blocks west from Peter Luger restaurant on Broadway.) Trains: the L train, first stop from Manhattan in Brooklyn at Bedford stop, walk (about 15 minutes) toward Williamsburg Bridge. The J & M trains: first stop from Manhattan over Williamsburg Bridge, Marcy stop, walk west down Broadway toward the East River. Bus: B62 drops you at Driggs Ave & Broadway walk to river & Q59 drops you at Wythe Ave and Williamsburg Bridge, See: [www.mta.info/nyct/maps/busbkln.pdf](http://www.mta.info/nyct/maps/busbkln.pdf) Plato's Cave Wed-Sat 1-6pm or by appointment.

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