

Ken Johnson, The New York Times, Art, April 16, 2004

'Five Billion Years'
Swiss Institute
495 Broadway, near Spring Street
SoHo
Through May 1

"Five Billion Years," the title of this unusually cohesive and affecting group show, alludes to the amount of time supposed to have elapsed since the Big Bang. Organized by Marc-Olivier Wahler, it reads as a rueful meditation on human isolation.

Placed in semi-darkness at the far end of the main exhibition space, Tony Matelli's "Sleepwalker" is a life-size realistic sculpture of a man naked but for his underwear, wandering in oblivion. Ceal Floyer presents a slide projector throwing white light onto a wall; its automatic focus causes shadows of dust on the lens to rhythmically blur and sharpen as though the machine itself were breathing. Philippe Decrauzat's "Melancholia," a black polyhedron with a skull imprinted on one facet, calls to mind Dürer's great print of the same title, while his "Light Space Modulator," a simple stainless steel pipe structure with two lights blinking in coded patterns, suggests a desperate effort to communicate.

A wall text by Jonathan Monk designates a distant time and place to meet the artist: the Davis Planetarium in Baltimore on July 31, 2007. Hiroshi Sugimoto's three photographic seascapes — images of oceanic loneliness — lead to François Curlet's enameled white cube with a built-in radio antenna that periodically rises and retreats. Titled "American Dino," it's like a device left after the demise of humankind, hopelessly searching for signs of intelligent life in the universe.



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