

*An Island Recalls the Tangled Details of Its Past Life as a Poem of Solitude and Unrecorded Events, 2016*

7 chromogenic development prints from chemically altered slides on Fujiflex Metallic material  
Commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

For many years, Basim Magdy has photographed islands around the world to explore and demystify the perception that islands are places of mystery, beauty, exoticism, and escape. This new series of works, commissioned for the MCA, documents several islands in the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean, with photographs of minerals and other objects that the artist collected during his travels. The photographed objects, chosen for their strange and exotic qualities, raise these questions: Are these ancient relics that enable an access to the past. If so, how do we see and relate to these objects? Do they function like mythological keys to unlocking our future?

*The Future of Your Head, 2008/16*

Two-way mirror, willow wood, Christmas lights, and electric wiring  
Courtesy of artSümer, Istanbul; Gypsum Gallery, Cairo; and hunt kastner, Prague

*An Apology to a Love Story that Crashed into a Whale, 2016*

64 chromogenic development prints on Fujiflex Metallic paper  
Commissioned by Deutsche Bank Art  
Courtesy of artSümer, Istanbul; Gypsum Gallery, Cairo; and hunt kastner, Prague

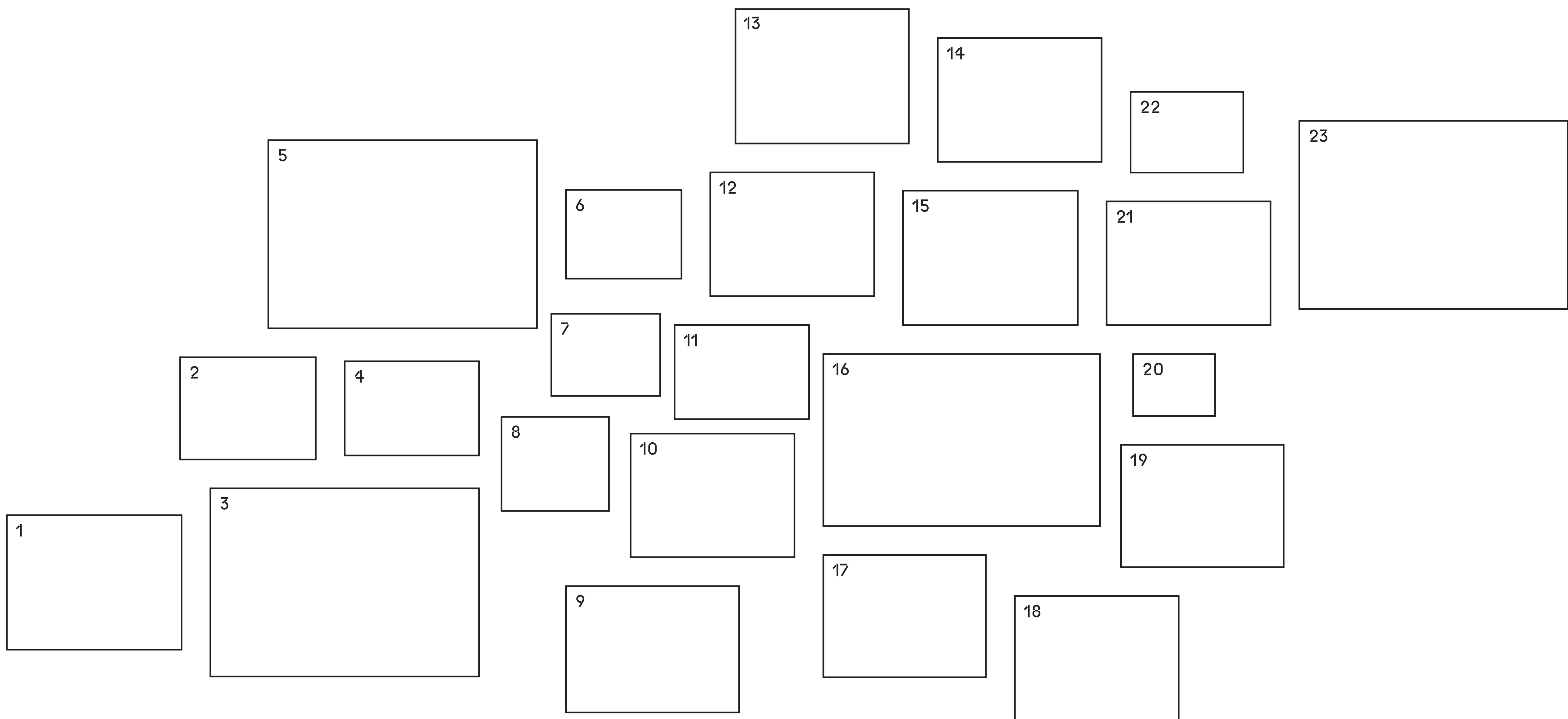
As the title suggests, this photograph- and text-based work tells a love story that is at the same time romantic and somber. To create the variations of color, Basim Magdy used his signature “pickling” technique, submerging the photographs in a variety of acidic household chemicals. Magdy’s poetic text and distorted images combine to create the dark yet humorous mood, which pervades his body of work.

*Last Good Deed, 2009*

Double-sided poster  
Courtesy of Gypsum Gallery, Cairo

*The Newly Discovered Gene Carried Racist Connotations, 2012*

Acrylic and spray paint on canvas  
Courtesy of the artist



Basim Magdy's works on paper capture attention with their fluorescent colors and rich textures. A closer look reveals science fiction-like scenes populated by futuristic structures and machines and fantastical creatures. Humans also play a role in many of the artworks, as sinister, disembodied heads and skulls or blissful figures posing in doomsday landscapes. These works exemplify how Magdy balances the fine line between optimism and pessimism, comedy and tragedy, and despair and hope for the future.

1 *Reenacting Lost Civilizations to Prevent an Impending Apocalypse*, 2012  
Spray paint and acrylic on paper  
Collection of Asli Sümer

2 *Luck Takes An Unidentifiable Form At Sunrise*, 2011  
Gouache, spray paint, and collage on paper  
Deutsche Bank Collection

3 *A Poetic Exchange of Courtesies*, 2010  
Spray paint, gouache, acrylic, and collage on paper  
Courtesy of the artist

4 *We are Here Tonight to Celebrate Our Unknown Ancestors*, 2009  
Spray paint, gouache, and collage on paper  
Courtesy of the artist

5 *An Abstract Reality Leaves You Lonely in the Spotlight*, 2010  
Spray paint, acrylic gouache, and collage on paper  
Deutsche Bank Collection

6 *Bringing the Sun Back to Earth on a Blue Day*, 2011  
Spray paint and acrylic on paper  
Courtesy of the artist

7 *Miniature Existence*, 2009  
Gouache, spray paint, and collage on paper  
Private collection of Tasneem Gallery, Barcelona

8 *They Come In Threes Like Fireworks*, 2011  
Watercolor, spray paint, and collage on paper  
Courtesy of the artist

9 *Our Spies Saw an Early Pollination Season on the Horizon*, 2013  
Spray paint, gouache, acrylic, colored pencil, and collage on paper  
Deutsche Bank Collection

10 *The Bitterness of What Could Have Happened and What Ended Up Happening*, 2011  
Spray paint, acrylic, and gouache on paper  
Nezih Barut Collection, Istanbul

11 *The Last Day of Written History*, 2011  
Acrylic and spray paint on paper  
Ole Faarup Collection, Copenhagen

12 *Our Hope Reflected Jewels in the Sky*, 2012  
Spray paint and acrylic on paper  
Collection of Isabella and Mehmet Icoz, Istanbul

13 *What Goes Up Must come Down*, 2009  
Gouache, spray paint, acrylic, ink, colored pencil, and collage on paper  
Deutsche Bank Collection

14 *They Descended from the Hills to Untangle Our Dreams*, 2012  
Spray paint and acrylic on paper  
Nezih Barut Collection, Istanbul

15 *A Recollection of Past Errors Manifested as a Crustacean*, 2013  
Spray paint and acrylic on paper  
Private collection

16 *An Eavesdropper Lurks in the Shadows of Your Every Thought*, 2010  
Spray paint, acrylic, and gouache on paper  
Courtesy of the artist

17 *A Monument For Our Short-Sighted Heroes*, 2011  
Watercolor and spray paint on paper  
Courtesy of the artist

18 *When We Looked at Them We Saw Nothing*, 2013  
Acrylic, spray paint, and collage on paper  
Courtesy of artSümer, Istanbul

19 *They Endorsed Collective Failure as the Dawn of a New Renaissance*, 2013  
Spray paint and watercolor on paper  
Deutsche Bank Collection

20 *The Moment You Realize Eternity is a One-Way Track*, 2010  
Spray paint, gouache, and collage on paper  
Private collection, Munich

21 *They Shot a Movie with Frozen Butterflies and Cautious Optimism*, 2012  
Spray paint and acrylic on paper  
Courtesy of artSümer, Istanbul

22 *Royalties Come to our Festivals With Their Pet Spiders*, 2007  
Spray paint and gouache on paper  
Courtesy of the artist

23 *The Only Memory I Have of my Past Life is the Uniformity of the Circumstances*, 2010  
Spray paint and acrylic on paper  
Courtesy of the artist

*Time Laughs Back at You Like a Sunken Ship*, 2012  
Single-channel, Super 8 mm film transferred to  
HD video  
9 minutes, 31 seconds  
Courtesy of Gypsum Gallery, Cairo

This film, as described by Basim Magdy, is about “time and how we construct memory.” In it, a man hidden behind a strange contraption that covers his entire body wanders as though in a dream through deserted gardens, landscapes, and the ruins of modern and ancient cities. But, there are no signs of a particular time or place; it almost seems as if the man is walking through his own memories. This sense of walking in and out of time prompts the question: How do we use our memories as tools to help us enter into the future?

*Expanding the Universe*, 2008  
Acrylic, spray paint, and gouache on paper  
Courtesy of hunt kastner, Prague

*Every Decade Memory Poses as a  
Container Heavier than its Carrier*, 2013  
Spray paint and acrylic on paper  
Deutsche Bank Collection

*A 240 Second Analysis of Failure and Hopefulness  
(With Coke, Vinegar and Other Tear Gas  
Remedies)*, 2012  
160 color slides and 2 synchronized Kodak  
slide carousel projectors  
Courtesy of artSümer, Istanbul

This work loops color slides that present a construction site with structures being demolished and rebuilt over and over again as the slide projectors hum in the background. In a process Basim Magdy calls “pickling,” he submerged the slides in household chemicals, such as vinegar and cola; the chemicals distorted the colors and created blobs and flares, giving the images a ghostly quality. These mundane photographs offer a focal point for existential meditations on the passage of time.

*White Revolution*, 2007  
Spray paint on canvas  
Courtesy of the artist

*The Dent*, 2014

Single-channel, Super 16 mm film

transferred to HD video

19 minutes, 2 seconds

Commissioned by the Abraaj Group

Art Prize 2014

Courtesy of the Abraaj Art Prize

Collection, Dubai

*The Dent* tells the fictitious story of an anonymous small town whose residents dream of hosting the Olympics. The nondescript location hardly seems suitable for this type of significant event, and over the course of the film, the town's inhabitants start to speak with a sense of hopefulness but also of their inability to achieve their lofty ambition. One of Basim Magdy's most ambitious projects, the film was shot in numerous locations around the world to obscure any sense of place or time—a signature technique of the artist. A hypnotic soundtrack adds an additional layer that is meant to enrapture the viewer.

*13 Essential Rules for Understanding the World*, 2011

Single-channel, Super 8 mm film

transferred to HD video

5 minutes, 16 seconds

Courtesy of artSümer, Istanbul

"Never try to change anything," says a tulip with a face drawn on its petals. *13 Essential Rules* is Basim Magdy's parody of how educational films traditionally relay knowledge to the viewer through instructions. In this short film, tulips dish out harsh truths about everyday realities. Their oft-cynical remarks are laced with a quiet tongue-in-cheek humor.

*Clowns*, 2014/16

Text, acrylic, and fluorescent paint

Commissioned by Art in General, New York,

and HOME, Manchester

Courtesy of Gypsum Gallery, Cairo