"Close parallel" implies two things that are strongly related, but not the same; a pair of lines, forms, or ideas that travel side by side but arrive at distinctly different destinations. Future Retrieval (est. 2008), the studio collaboration of former University of Cincinnati faculty members Katie Parker (b. 1980) and Guy Michael Davis (b. 1978), specializes in using historical artworks as a springboard to conceptualize and create fresh,
original works that reference or are close parallels to past artistic achievements while simultaneously vaulting them into a modern-day context. Through Future Retrieval’s work, both object- and installation-based, historical designs gain a contemporary relevance and accessibility that entices viewers to dive into forgotten sources and forward-thinking explorations.

For this exhibition, the Cincinnati Art Museum invited Future Retrieval to mine its decorative
arts and design collection and identify objects to serve as catalysts for the anachronistic exploration at the heart of the artists' approach. Parker and Davis’s practice is rooted in ceramic art, but it also incorporates a diverse mix of media and techniques that combine age-old methods with new technologies. By showing their work in combination with objects from the permanent collection, the artists explore ideas about how museums traditionally present their collections and how shifting
these constructs can bring new meaning; about the value of making copies; and about the dual nature of matter, form, time, and space.

For additional works that inspire and resonate with the artists, see the special feature For Now or Future Retrieval in Gallery 150.
Negotiating Space
2020
wood, porcelain, aluminum, hand cut paper

with Vase
circa 1830

Marc Schoelcher Manufactory
(1794–1834) France (Paris)
porcelain
Bequest of Reuben R. Springer
1884.428
As your eye moves in and around this installation piece, note the play with exterior and interior space and negative and positive space. An early-nineteenth-century French porcelain vase decorated with pastoral landscapes appears in dialogue with Future Retrieval’s contemporary porcelain vases adorned with floral landscapes
and the artists' aluminum plant silhouettes. All these works draw their design inspiration from the natural world, but find form in objects meant to enhance a domestic space. They sit atop a geometric, open-concept shelf inspired by the modernist Paul Frankl, whose Occasional Table and Mirror are also part of this exhibition. The adjacent screen hearkens back to an Art Deco design by Frankl’s contemporary, Donald Deskey. Covered with an allover pattern of cut paper flowers, it, too,
brings a sense of the out-of-doors inside.
Depictions of nature abound in these porcelain tiles that mimic traditional bookplates. The plant imagery was drawn by Future Retrieval during the artists' residency at Cincinnati's Lloyd Library and Museum, which collects materials related to
botany and science. Time spent working in a Chinese tile factory inspired Parker and Davis to use underglaze transfers to apply the floral imagery to the ceramic body.
High Rise Farrago
2020
aluminum, porcelain, wool, wood

with Console Table
circa 1715–20

after designs by Bernard Turreau (1672–1731) France
gilt wood and griotte marble
This farrago, or confused mixture, reads as futuristic or even ritualistic. Considering each element, we see how the artists have borrowed historical artworks in different ways to create a new installation with its own feel. The hand-knotted rug depicts a ceramic collection that they viewed in a Stockholm museum (Medelhavsmuseet). The chairs are inspired by the
designs of modernist Paul Frankl, whose Skyscraper Bookcases are on view in Gallery 211. The gilt eighteenth-century table holds an equally decadent and richly textured porcelain tureen.

This tureen is Future Retrieval’s interpretation of a historical Meissen tureen, on view in Gallery 150. The artists captured the Meissen tureen’s form on the fly using photogrammetry and a hand-held camera during a visit
to the museum’s storage area. The inherent imperfections of the low-tech scan were embraced and incorporated into the three-dimensional model used to form the multipart mold required to cast the work in porcelain. The model was purposely scaled larger than the Meissen tureen and altered by the addition of goat-skull handles—a nod to the skulls punctuating the frieze of a nineteenth-century tripod featured in the adjacent gallery.
Garden Vignettes
2020
hand cut paper, plexiglass, wood and porcelain
Reproduction Quality
2020
hand cut paper

When is a vessel not a vessel? These two-dimensional vases are made with cut paper. They reference porcelain vases depicted in historical paper catalogues of eighteenth-century French porcelain made at the
royal factory of Sèvres. In the 1700s, porcelain wares were an expensive and rare commodity. Frequently referred to as “white gold,” porcelain was owned only by the powerful and the rich. Here, the use of common colored paper democratizes the forms. Future Retrieval has added further access and current relevance to the vessels by updating them with their own decoration: a depiction of landscape at Joshua Tree National Park in California adorns the central vase.
Consolarium
2020
porcelain, hand cut paper, plexiglass

with Console Table
circa 1740
France
gilded wood and griotte marble
Gift of Mrs. Gilbert McCurdy in
honor of Mr. and Mrs. Paul E.
Geier, and John J. Emery
Endowment 1981.406
A bevy of mushrooms “grow”
inside a closed vivarium-like
environment atop the museum’s
ornate table. In the eighteenth
century, when this table was
made, it was fashionable for
wealthy French homeowners to
show off items from their
personal collections, such as
small sculptures, on console
tables like this one. Note how Future Retrieval’s assorted mushrooms in ceramic and cut paper play off the form, textures, and warm tones of this highly carved and gilt table.
Image of Order
2014
wood, Formica®, hand cut paper, porcelain, LEDs, plexiglass

Inspired by museum period rooms—particularly the English Neoclassical rooms at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York—the artists sought to
create a period room without a period. This large black box, wrapped in reflective black Formica®, is a reference to the transportive monoliths from the film 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968). The box opens to reveal an interior at once familiar and alien. French scenic landscape wallpaper is reimagined in hand-cut paper that features temples, volcanoes, wild vegetation, and two moons. The sculptures atop minimalist demilune tables are porcelains based on Michelangelo’s David (1501–
1504). Curved walls and lighting envelope the “room” in an otherworldly aura.
Finch’s Parrot Shag
2020
Wool
Us
2020
maple, aluminum leaf and neon

with Mirror

circa 1927

Paul Frankl (1886–1958)
United States (New York)
wood, aluminum leaf and mirrored glass
Gift of the Estate of Mrs. James M. Hutton II 1969.411

This haloed rhesus monkey, created from a digital scan that the artists captured while working with the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History’s taxidermy collection, peers into the museum’s Egyptian-inspired Mirror designed in the 1920s by Paul Frankl. Both are covered in
aluminum leaf, an aspect that lends a futuristic air to each. As an ensemble, Us is enigmatic. Is this the first time that the monkey has seen himself? In this moment, has he confirmed his existence? Is he contemplating his human likeness? What does it mean for us, as humans, to witness this moment? Future Retrieval often uses ovals and circles to represent portals for time travel and transcendence.
Rhesus Monkey Shag
2020
wool
Elkington Crunch
2020
Porcelain

with Tripod

circa 1883

Elkington & Company (1829–1963)
England (Birmingham)

electroformed copper, gilt, marble
Museum Purchase
1883.801

The natural elements combined in Future Retrieval’s sculpture—an African dik-dik, a hare, and clusters of mushrooms—are as disparate as the Greco-Roman motifs that punctuate the tripod below it—ox skulls, sphinxes, and bird legs. The tripod is a
nineteenth-century copy of an eighteenth-century copy of a Classical tripod discovered in the Temple of Isis at Pompeii. The original Roman tripod and the temple were buried under volcanic ash during the devastating eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE. Similarly, the grim “crunch” of heads, legs, and fungi in Future Retrieval’s sculpture suggests that something has gone terribly awry.
Old World Convenience
2020
Porcelain

with Occasional Table
1927–1930

Paul Frankl (1886–1958)
United States (New York)
lacquered wood
Gift of the Estate of Mrs. James M. Hutton II 1969.407