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“Ann Lislegaard”
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By Sarah Lookofsky



Ann Lislegaard, *TimeMachine*, 2011
mirrored box with video projection, sound, dimensions
variable.

What is the ontology of science fiction? This seems to be at least one of the questions posed in Ann Lislegaard's latest body of work. In one room, a computer-animated foxlike being with rolling eyeballs and a floppy tongue chatters in a stuttering and repetitive fashion: This cartoonish figment of human imagination has been created with a speech impediment. “And the mystery is not whether I have been in the future, but to believe what I actually found there,” it stammers, as part of a disjunctive account of time travel partially drawn from H.G. Wells's 1895 *Time Machine*, often considered the inaugural work of sci-fi. The creature is projected onto the mirrored inside of a box that is partially unfolded onto the floor. One interpretation might be that all futuristic projections necessarily involve some mirroring of the present, and moreover that contemporaneity contains an admonition of what the future holds—although such warnings are often denied (signaled here by the impending closure of the box and thereby, also, the sealing of the testimony within it).

The other room-size installation comprises large black panels partially obscuring the words SCIENCE FICTION in white neon letters that shed the only light in the room. On the floor are large speakers emitting compressed and extended sound bites from five sci-fi films (from Jean-Luc Godard's 1955 *Alphaville* to Luc Besson's 1997 *The Fifth Element*). Instead of visually representing a coming world, Lislegaard's meditation on the science-fiction convention of time travel exhibits a sonically refracted future, via the faint murmur of past cinematic visions and the bizarre tale of a digitally generated vulpine being that speaks from a position beyond history. By reducing sci-fi to its constitutive elements, Lislegaard's work reminds us of the genre's relation to utopian imaginings that, as Frederic Jameson wrote, come to us “as barely audible messages from a future that may never come into being.”