CURATORIAL STATEMENT, GRAPHIC COROLLARY SET NO. 1

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Suppose we walk, upright, into an epoch called *anthropocene.* We might discover a layer of oils, and agricultural scars and industrial toxins, and family homes warmed by natural gas pipelines, and biotic homogeneity, and old models of Cadillac or Pontiac convertibles and of many versions of telephones in mobile and rotary varieties, and erratic whorls of changing migration patterns, and billions of pieces of paperwork from classroom handouts to bank statements to unsent letters to political campaign flyers; we might eventually discover a layer of discarded iPads and Ikea furniture and the come-and-go seasons of mason jars and notebooks and alabaster music boxes, and unfortunate sweeps of mass extinction, and sordid remnants of nuclear technology.

This ‘cene is considered one because of certain profound interactions we have had with geology during our species’ foray, and holds the assumption that this will remain evident in the resulting rock strata. Depending on the length and pragmatism of the geological scope, this assumption could be spot-on or ill defined. Pipelines dug thousands of feet deep for hydraulic fracturing may yield long-term evidence. Claw-footed bathtubs and bitcoins may not.

Largely, it will depend on your sample zone. Geo-logic might not provide the freedom of parameters to totally understand *anthropocene* for what it completely encapsulates. Aside from a dry indexical landmark in the rockbed, the *anthropocene* is a high-intensity, radiant fissure in the cross-section of time, existing *within* the Holocene. Absorbed into it are details of CO2 spikes and the Internet age and synthetic remnants of polyeurethane that is at odds with the carbon-based contents of other zones. In another 60 million years it may be hardly visible and mostly disintegrated, but it will have occurred regardless.

If we walk out of this epoch, and it is still called *anthropocene,* we could perhaps recount a unique stratigraphy of cultural condensation in addition to the

strictly geological. This epoch signals the self-awareness of a single species, which seems both naively narcissistic in terms of geologic time and a vastly difficult phenomenon to grasp as an individual human specimen.[1] What cannot be understated about the *anthropocene* is that its definition, as well as its physical denotation, is severely angled to accommodate deep-seeded and outdated notions of human species-superiority.

Graphic Corollary Set No. 1 is an attempt to devise an understanding towards common conceptions of ecological aesthetics, and align with emerging attempts to redefine aesthetic standards according to contemporary shifts in social and ecological climates. We began in the Umpqua Dunes area of Oregon – the area that Frank Herbert visited while conceiving his fiction novel *Dune,* and regionally adjacent to Robert T. Paine's species interaction studies.[2]

This area, though admittedly fortunate in terms of aesthetic appeal, is also an area both uniquely profound and geographically analogous. Not unlike an attractive advertisement, we found the necessity to address audience engagement with aesthetics unavoidable. So visually breathtaking was this awe-inspiring landscape, and at the same time so fragile, so desolate, changeable, foreboding, that with some tragic irony it seemed our fait accompli.

The artists in the exhibition were asked to contemplate human interactions with the geography; implicit in the prompt was the foreknowledge of the specific site we had chosen as our area of discourse and documentation. The following statements detail a curatorial reflection on each of the individual works using information provided by the artists, interpreted correspondingly.

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[1] Other philosophical issues arising from the definition of *anthropocene* involve 'Judeo-Christian belief[s] that the earth and all of its creatures were created to serve humans in some way,' as discussed in *Who Cares About Biodiversity,* 2012.

[2] Robert T Paine, "Trophic control of production in a rocky intertidal community", 2002.

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1. I would like to make it clear that John Knight's piece is fundamental to the exhibition. That is not to suggest that the enterprise wouldn't have been somehow mobilized without it, but that the information carried in its documentation provides a core allegory to our overall objective. Paris-based collective artist Claire Fontaine has created a modus operandi of providing necessary skepticism to existing formulae, which echoes a curatorial priority for Amur. Too often, the 'self-reproducing fabric of the "art world"' in which Claire Fontaine witnesses a 'massive generation of uniformity' persists partly due to a lack of accountability. Exhibitions are endlessly released as a slight variation of the same principles of cohesion, which allows us to make giddy formal and spatial associations but stops short of full accountability. By this, I mean that formal exhibitions rarely include in the final display, embedded methods of labour, perception of waste, etc., often because often it is not contextually necessary. In an exhibition that aims to reveal complexities and misconceptions in ecological aesthetics, however, it is unacceptable to remain silent in these regards. It became clear that this exhibition needed to be its own whistleblower.

What this amounts to is a brand of parody that parallels Giorgio Agamben's description of it. Knight's piece directly confronts the 'notoriously impracticable terrain, in which the traveler constantly knocks against limits and aporias that he cannot avoid but he also cannot escape,'[3] consciously avoiding the complacency of providing a direct derivative of the original curatorial prompt. He instead hashas instead, provided athe 'being-beside-itself'[4] of for our special conundrum. By laying bare our blatant hypocrisy or at best our unavoidable perversity, he reaches a crux in our ultimate motivation, which is to expose the

[3] Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations,* 2007, p.50.
[4] Ibid, 49.

acute intricacy of environmental entanglement while dissolving problematic perceptual binaries that oversimplify them.

This was furthered by the exclusion of John's name in the exhibition trailer. His exception was a bizarre double-standard. It both alienated and exemplified him as an artist and more importantly, created a revelatory lapse in formal recognition. Because Knight's piece was at starkly odds with the formal similarities of the other works, it was not possible to classify its presence as part of the visual exhibition in *that particular video*. John has stated previously that 'by interrogating the field in which I participate, my goal is to generate resistance through various parasitical operations.'[5] In the defiance of his work, it acted in much the same manner as the term *anthropocene,* being a defiant sentiment but an arguably necessary one. It calls attention to itself by way of its non-acknowledgement.

To further understand John's piece, I returned to Paul Virilio's *The Aesthetics of Disappearance.* The voyeur-voyager – complicated a role as it is, might be complicated even further as occupied by the curator – while going nowhere in his automobile will feel more natural than having stopped, even to reach a destination.[6] John emphasized in his interview with us that he felt no particular relation to the site that we had chosen, and thus had arrived at his piece. His exposition of his own physical, emotional, and geographical distance from the site placed genuine inquiry on the arbitrariness of our curatorial specificity. Just as the curators faced the decision to make the effort and the gesture, at some paltry attempt to reify emerging ecological institutions at the expense *of the environment,* Knight had to decide between contributing to the venture, or, critiquing it. He cleverly achieved both.

John's justification for taking part in the exhibition involved a shifting of roles and a conclusively transparent – or, if possible, more intimately focused – financial gesture. The correspondences, the abstracted transactions that funded

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[5] John Knight, *The Ridiculized Pigs,* 2013, p. 4.
[6] Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance,* 1991, p. 63.

our mobilization, actuate the voyage and actively deny an objective outside of its own system.

2. To that, I extend a sympathetic view to the miles of shoreline covered by concrete dolosse, contemplated here by Jacob Schaeperkoetter-Cochran. These monuments of industry indicate a systemic paradox that is rampant in a surplus production paradigm. The function of these abundant behemoths is twofold unto itself – one, the protection of human-made coastal structures and two, the protection of economic activity in fabrication institutions. One kilometer of coast requires approximately 10,000 dolosse to operate effectively.

In the Pacific Northwest specifically, dolosse are being used to prevent erosion in salmon-inhabited rivers. The rapid transit of its design and application from South Africa to, less than fifty years later, a location nearly halfway around the globe, is reminiscent of an introduced invasive species. The restoration attempt of native salmon follows a continuously tangled existence between the hydraulic industry of the Pacific Northwest and the livelihood of both salmon populations and human populations who still depend on them as a direct food source. Like so many similar instances of additive damage-control, the use of dolosse in rivers may successfully restore a dynamic habitat temporarily, but leave long-winded traces. The objects are placed for immediate benefit, with disregard to the longevity of the materials they introduce. Restoration of wildlife habitat often comes in dire conditions, and especially when the threat points back to human activity. Salmon are the canaries of the water, and their bodies, range of habitat, and reproductive levels in ways reflect our own. When they suffer, the logical leap is to assume that our concern is genuinely compassionate and restoration is humane. It is under the problematic view that as a species we are at once integrated and completely separate from what we've othered 'nature,' or 'the environment,' that has given us rites to claim the *anthropocene.* This view has to be consistently attended to – both to rejuvenate the container that keeps

separate the anthro- from the eco- but also to ensure that the plastic, industrial value of the globe does not fall beyond repair – as it proceeds with its impact.

Jacob has turned this program on its head by rendering a dolos into a fetish one-off. Here the more literal etymology of dolos has been extrapolated as a coy reductive gesture – the piece is around the size of an ox knuckle and appears to be cartilaginous. As he mentions in his statement, everything that makes the full-sized dolosse functional is missing from *My Dolos,* which happens to be the more etymologically accurate manifestation.

When one ruminates on the sheer multiplicity of these objects, one likely will be transported to a Benjaminian landscape of rampant reproduction. Rosalind Krauss, in her essay *Originality of the Avant Garde,* speaks to the reproduction of Rodin's final sculptures as industrial reproductions. Not unlike Rodin's plaster multiples,[7] dolosse are reproduced by magnitudes of thousands without pause because not one was deemed an *original,* nor was it ever critical to determine an individual as having such esteemed value. Furthermore, the original designers of dolos, Eric Merrifield and Aubrey Kreuger, themselves did not succeed in claiming protection on their design, it seems, because it wasn't a great priority.

The original design, then, was expounded upon and torqued into some variations with a nod to diversification.

[7] Rosalind Krauss, *Originality of the Avante Garde and Other Modernist Myths,* 1986, p. 3.

3. Unto those faced with the challenge of evolution, a set of fluctuating guidelines is enforced. Suppose, for instance, you are one individual in an emerging phenotype and you are wildly suited for your environment. Perhaps you have government funding, you can fly, you are developing symbiotically with your surroundings and you are not overly competitive; you are not rupturing any pre-existing ecological currents and if anything, you are welcomed and flourishing. However, a generation or two along the lineage, just as exemplary genetic traits are burgeoning, the climate turns and the habitat is increasingly fragmented. The constituents of your diet are taking leave or taking shelter and their own resource cache begins either plunging or metastasizing. Swamps, maybe, or an inhospitable cement, replace undergrowth and suddenly you're ill-equipped; perhaps you are slightly too heavy to efficiently move through sludge or the long legs with which you are outfitted impede your ability to, yourself, burrow. Perhaps a government cannot fund you anymore.

Whatever the case, your species begins to level out in population and then dwindle. Your cause, as praised as it was initially, has crossed into functional existence at an unfavorable time. Jonah Porter's piece is a specimen petrified in limbo; due to maximize its potential, but as it were, unfulfilled as such. It is perhaps a 'measured fragment of chaos'[8] to commemorate a thriving evolutionary thread that lost its bearings and became a petrification.

Gilbert Simondon describes the ability for technical elements to detach from particular ensembles and locate themselves within others. In contrast with biology, wherein a causal development is genetically and temporally restricted, functional technological components are transmutable objects that lend application to familiar operations, whatever the variation of ensemble or the mechanical objective. Simondon suggests that it is only in technological time that we can witness what he calls the Law of Relaxation. According to this,

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[8] Elizabeth Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth,* 2008.

technological evolution develops spatially as well as temporally in a way that biology does not; since elements have the ability to be reconfigured into various individuals and ensembles, the shape of technological evolution is actually serrated.[9] The piezoelectric disk was originally tailored as an industrial transmitter, and since has been applied to a breadth of domestic and industrial capacities.[10] The disks, which are pressure sensors, send electrical impulses when pressure is exerted along a lateral axis. They are sensitive, and somewhere between flexible and rigid.

Porter's piezoelectric, apparently a special affix, is exhibiting processual decay. The piezo has broken and therefore lacks its primary specified capability: translating energy from kinetic to electric, from potential to actualized states. As an intermediary material, it cannot transfer from a state of potential. As an affix to an egg, it has been frozen in fetal infancy.

Simondon is deliberate to inform and remind us that 'neither the human nor the geographic worlds are capable of producing oscillations of successive bursting and spouting forth of new structures' quite like the technic world.[11] Time means something different here.

We may imagine a world in which our airplanes are bendy, and piezoelectrics cause wing flex and the rigid objects we have grown accustomed to have been replaced by graceful, efficient, feather-light specimens and we no longer have to fear for a dying world. But at present, we are confronted by a political state that has not, until recently, had to so fervently write 'Nature' into its set of priorities. The international economic infrastructure is out of tempo with insurgent demands for rapid structural streamlining, thus prolonging activity in the direction of sustainable species proliferation. These models are still fantastic and

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[9] Gilbert Simondon, *On The Mode of Existence of Technological Objects,* 1958, p. 77

[10] Touch pads, aeronautics, audio amplification, combustion monitoring, etc.

[11] Simondon 77

remain dimensionally stunted inside of popular science magazines and hype-generating publications.

4. For a long time, insects have been studied as 'a means of calibrating models of human sociology.'[12] It has long been presumed that humans, like social insects, behaved cooperatively as superorganisms. The chasm in this supposition is that it cannot account for interactions between individuals, and the social complexities therein. It forwardly assumes that despite the continual turnover of novel circumstance, a matrixed ordinance surely signals a high level of evolutionary advancement.

As supplemental material, Zachary Davis chose to include a digitally-rendered video of virtually evolved creatures who exhibit behavior and form dictated by user-controlled physics settings. 3D Virtual Creature Evolution, or 3DVCE, provides tools to develop virtual species that, in time, evolve according to the conditions of its virtual environment.[13] The results are a very simple series of articulations and 'movements [which] almost certainly have nothing to do with the 'muscles' (servo motors) at the creature's joints, and have more to do with forces being generated by the physics engine itself to compensate for the extreme gravity (objects intersecting and repelling and such).'[14] This is an interesting evaluation. It relinquishes the virtual specimen from voluntary movement and places it instead on the compensation of forces. In a creature view that shows many of the specimens interacting with one another, we can see what look like vague social patterns emerging as a series of very simple interactions. If we are to examine these virtual interactions through the lens of sociology, the resulting shade is vibrant and curious. Bruno Latour asserts that the nature of sociology requires constant maintenance, in which 'actors have to

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[12] Bruno Latour, *Interobjectivity*, p. 229.

[13] Evolutionary simulation software developed by Lee Graham in 1994. The original website is no longer web-available, but a copy of the program can still be downloaded <here>
http://www.mediafire.com/download/s71k1ri6xo28qri/3D_Creature_Evolution.zip

[14] Developer's description.

constantly construct and tend to the collective structures that emerge from their interactions.'[15]

Does this also relinquish the biological creature from autonomous action, at least in the realm of sociology? Tiqqun echoes the idea of community that does not exist 'except in singular relations.'[16] Surely, at some level, neurology and psychology step in to assess the minutiae of these interactions. But at base, it is conclusive that each encounter between two bodies will incite an interaction, each of which is an isolated trial that can be remembered but is ultimately discarded. The nature of community, according to Tiqqun, resembles a sort of non-newtonian substance:

> "The moment community tries to incarnate itself in an isolatable subject, in a distinct, separate reality, the moment it tries to materialize the separation between what is inside it and what is outside, it confronts its own impossibility. This point of impossibility is communion. In communion, the complete self-presence of the community coincides with the dissipation of all community within singular relations, and therefore coincides with its tangible absence."[17]

Zack's piece *Prime Walker* illustrates a mobility contradiction that elicits the same evasive nature of the forces that ultimately bind social groups, or those that Vance used to thwart Mazarian. The lightweight, multi-joint appendage is severely restricted by the two inconceivably heavy blocks that it is adhered between. It becomes, then, a mere set of mechanical articulations that act somewhat diagrammatically – exhibiting all possibilities in range of movement when fixed between two uncompromising points. One could just as easily imagine this object clumsily trying to move about as a first-generation species in 3DVCE as they could imagine it as a techno-futuristic robotic skeleton, or a macro-view of a bizarre extremophile, or even as a rudimentary scientific education model. Such is the slip of science fiction, and of biomechanics.

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[15] Latour, 230
[16] Tiqqun, *Introduction to Civil War*, 40.
[17] Tiqqun, 41

5. Adaptogen is a widely-encompassing term that has a unifying pertinence to biology. Holistic in its insinuation of affecting the internal regulators of an organism to adapt and flow with external stresses, the adaptogen is an aid to biological empowerment. Typically, adaptogens are drawn from an herbal medicinal application. To assume that shards of compressed sediments and pigments are covered by this term is rich. The insistence of clay as an adaptogen is a subtle orientation towards revaluating an organism's relationship to stress and substance.

Graphically speaking, Lia Griesser's *Adaptogenic Shards* are quite flush between process and representation. For her, engaging with her materials helps locate her in her biological self, and the wetness of clay is the area of activation and commune. In her play with the role of a biological body as simply another actor, in addition to water and perhaps magic, the narrative of sediment and specimen becomes seductively muddy. The adaptogenic quality of these shards surely is not limited to the mere chemical composition of the clay since, according to Lia, there is much more of a *something* to the objects at hand. Her ethos thrives on this extended definition of material physicality. In her own words:

> "When we interact with material objects meaning can reveal itself when we sense not just the reflection of surface, but through, illuminating the core. There, we can appreciate dynamic relationships between elements and respond to the balanced tensions in form, but we never perceive the limit of this information. In a practice of this ritual, we become aware that we can never see down through all depths."[18]

In regards to objects, Griesser is provoked by the idea that objects could be self-aware and clairvoyant. The shade of her *Adaptogenic Shards* suggests, and then transcends, artifact; it is as though the shards have gained and reflect a

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[18] Lia Griesser, *Welcome to the Swamp Meet: Towards an Ethics of Degeneration*, p.22.

perspective. Their 'wavy stratigraphy'[19] indicates depth and process, and temporal recollection. The process of transgression in which a geological compounding occurs is parallel in synthesis to layering of experience in the psyche, and also to data collection on the internet. Far from a non-sequitur, the digital insistence of imagery on all things physical, especially imagery that populates the internet, aggravates the tension that draws Lia to working with moistened, three-dimensional clay. In her statement, the flattening of clay by removal of 'juicy affinities of composite form inevitably lead to fissure' is homologous to a digital flattening and transfer of imagery and, in conflation with her flattened shards, a new kind of image-based stratigraphy. The lack, in this case, is the inability of an image on a website to self-consciously expose its limitation of being what it depicts.

What do these shards depict, especially as an image on a website? As another ode to accountability, Lia's pieces pose an anarchical question about our use of a website as our final, fairly permanent, and primary exhibition space. What is gained or lost by promoting digital documentation images over a more absolute materiality? Griesser's shards begin to read as archaeological objects, maybe recently discovered and classified, removed from the original discovered location and laid out for cold analyzation. The flavor of the resulting image seems like a dichotomous occasion for objects that do not demand a specific configuration and rather *want* to contact entropy. So the inquiry remains: to necessarily create an acquiescent image, what is required of objects such as these? If indeed they *are* archaeological, does their placement in a gridded system make them most analytically available? Does it make them less prone to nothingness?[20]

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[19] Ibid, 22.
[20] Krauss, 23.

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