



Geo-Ontological: Artists Contemplating Deep Time CERRITOS COLLEGE ART GALLERY August 28 – October 5, 2018

Opening Reception: August 28, 2018 @ 6-9PM

Panel Discussion: September 24, 2018 @ 6-9PM

**Mary Beierle | Caroline Clerc | Mariah Armstrong Conner | Chris Hanke | Kyla Hansen
Randi Hokett | Beatriz Jaramillo | Virginia Katz | Melissa Manfull | Pam Posey**

Thinking is neither a line drawn between subject and object, nor a revolving of one around the other. Rather, thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth.¹

- Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*

The mind seemed to grow giddy by looking so far back into the abyss of time.²

- John Playfair, *Illustrations of the Huttonian Theory of the Earth*

The upcoming exhibition at the Cerritos College Art Gallery, “Geo-Ontological: Artists Contemplating Deep Time,” explores the anthropological entanglements that exist within, and between, geophysical life worlds. Deep time, as first described by the Scottish geologist James Hutton in 1788 and as literally written in the segmented and stratified layers of the ground beneath our feet, “represents a certain displacement of the human and the divine from the story of creation.”³ And yet, geologists now read this rocky text from the vantage point of the Anthropocene, living in the wake of the last century’s Great Acceleration - that dramatic growth in population, jump in consumption, and increase in the output of carbon pollution, plastic production, and radioactive waste. Landscapes have since become evermore altered by massive geo-engineering projects, exploitative strip-mining, and hydraulic fracking techniques, such that human beings are now insinuated, ironically, as “that sublime force, the agents of a fearful something that is greater than ourselves.”⁴

The work of the ten contemporary artists in “Geo-ontological” move effortlessly both backwards and forwards throughout this expansive temporal-spatiality, mapping events of terrestrial stratification and upheaval, as well as imagining the possible future(s) of a post-human ecosystem. Some of the artists replicate the roughly-hewn surfaces of earthen textures; Mary Beierle, a ceramicist, does this by manipulating the materiality of the earth itself, while Caroline Clerc stitches together multiple photographic renderings of rugged mountain terrains. Others, like Pam Posey and Melissa Manfull, create delicate and detailed drawings that reference the intimate engagement and inquisitive eye of the keen scientific observer, producing unusual abstracted patterns that are, in fact, pulled directly from the surfaces of select rocky specimens. Virginia Katz, on the other hand, alludes, through aerial views of traumatized topographies, to the mediated vision of space-age machines; asking, in the process, how artists can avoid making overly-anthropocentric landscapes in a time of satellite-enabled remote sensing networks.

Of course, the correlations between human and geologic upheaval are evident in the mass displacements increasingly caused by climate change and a number of the artists, including Katz, do tease out these connections in their work. Playing with the literal and metaphorical links between emotional scars and earthly upheavals, both Randi Hokett and Beatriz Jaramillo present broken, and yet strangely beautiful, renditions of the disruptions caused by shifting plate tectonics. Hokett, along with Mariah Armstrong Conner, also explores the molecular entropies that occur in the micro-temporalities of chemical interactions, growing crystalline layers on top of other material substrates. In the case of Armstrong, this substrata is clearly made from the remnants of human-made products, which is also true of Kyla Hansen’s geode-like objects, presenting the fanciful possibility that these are futuristic artifacts of the Anthropocene inexplicably accessible in the present. Chris Hanke further unpacks the way that cultural layers exist as a sediment enmeshed in the geophysical (and vice-versa) in his exploration of the real and fictitious histories centered around a giant rock and a vibrational vortex in the California desert, building upon a popular new age discourse that understands the earth itself to be a living entity with specific gravitational - and, by extension, emotive - frequencies.

Whether they are merely scratching the stony surface or spelunking far into the inscrutable terrestrial strata, the artists in “Geo-Ontological” conceptually delve deep into the interconnectedness of time and space. In the process, they also develop a shared investment in the relationship between art, science, and theory: a visual ecosophy, a strato-analysis, a geo-aesthetics.

¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burcell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 85.

² John Playfair, *Illustrations of the Huttonian Theory of the Earth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 217.

³ David Farrier, “How the Concept of Deep Time Is Changing,” *The Atlantic*, Created: Oct 31, 2016, Accessed: Aug 6, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/10/aeon-deep-time/505922/>

⁴ *Ibid.*