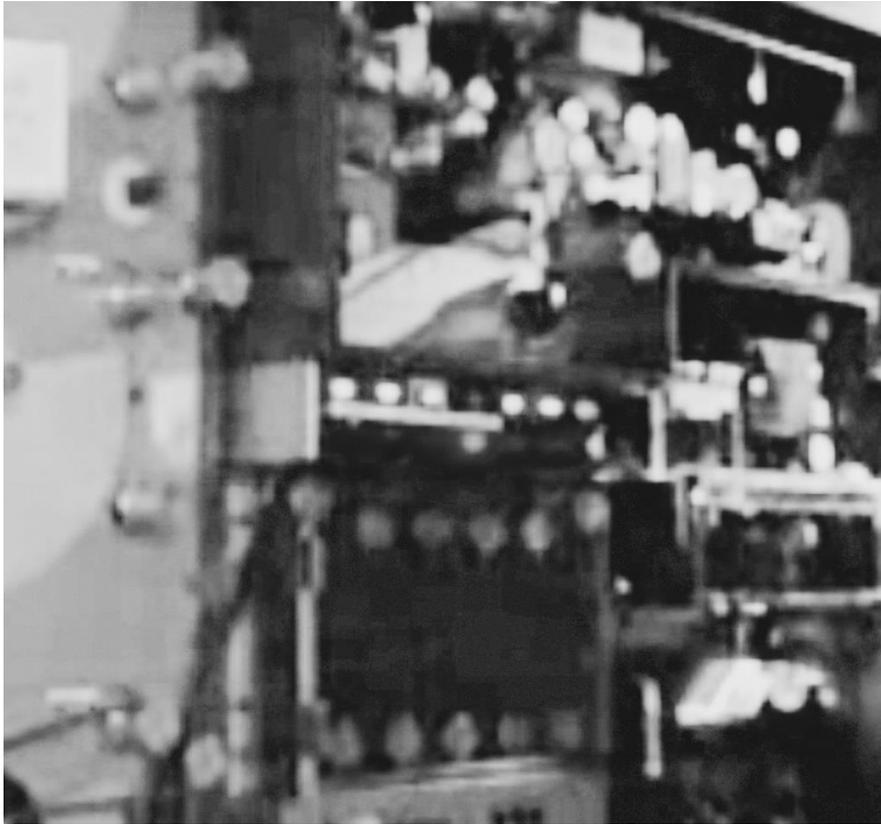


AN EXCAVATION

1. THE SARCOPHAGUS



13A.S [after the schism]

It was September, and the city had already begun to tire of itself. It was one year and four months since the Third Receptacle of Linear Time had been elected. So far they had failed to put an end to the temporal inquisition, instead focusing on what they described as "fleeing from nostalgia and all of its trappings."

The opposition, The New Institute of Kairos, had hidden all confidential material in the Future Devonian Archive, creating secret pockets within each row of shelves to house all temporal material considered dangerous...

Each year, the Third Receptacle would plunder the ocean of its spoils. Spiralled fossils of giant molluscs, clay smooth as butter; holding traces of buildings long decayed, bones worn smooth and sharp by heaving currents.

7.23564L degrees by 678693 R

The Crevasse had somehow gone unnoticed. An unofficial shelter from the unrelenting rigidity of imposed chronological time.

2019 A.S



And so they sat, embedded in the cloying sand for hundreds of years:
letters, pictographs, figures fusing together to make strange new narratives.

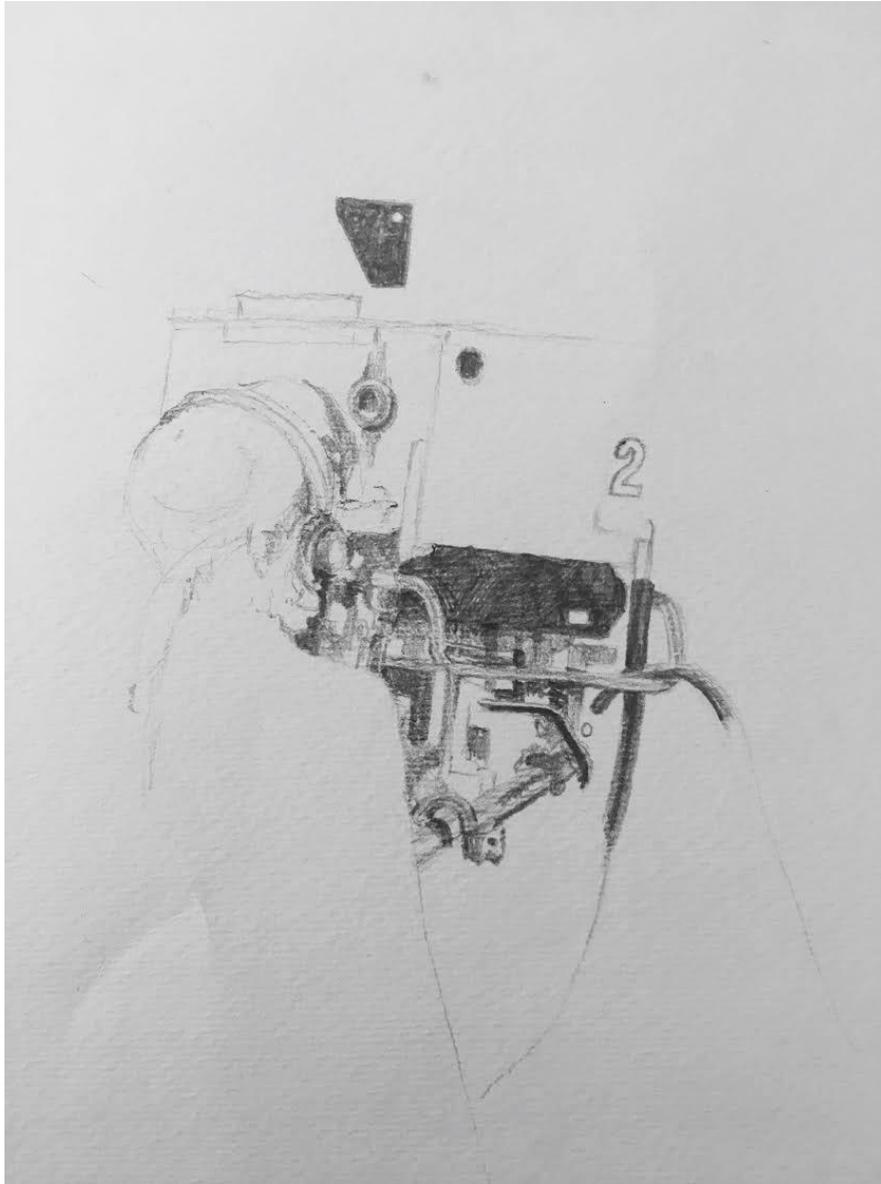
Secluded in this realm of rock and sand, the relics were safe from human intervention, until the day of The Excavation, when all secrets were dredged to the surface. Hundreds had gathered at The Excavation Site, waiting for the first officials to appear. The child stood waiting with his father, his nosed pressed to the gate- feverish with thoughts of what might lay below the many thousands of layers of rock...

They stood pressed together, so cramped the iron bars of the gate pressed deep into her back. The man in front of her was so close she could smell the spiced, saccharine scent of his body, see the glints of auburn in his beard- the last remnants of youth

The new Deputy Conservator IV was in charge of decreeing the temporal suspension of all historical sites. Sadly, due to The Chronological Rift of 1963, many sites sitting outside of the Archival Censorship act were hidden and gradually lost to the Future Devonian Archive.

Spidery pools of ink creep over pages of an illuminated manuscript.

Years pass



It seemed as if the whole world was holding its breath. Boxes upon boxes of lightbulbs were piled at the door.

That night the world was no longer a soft ochre but a harsh neon.

Things that might have gone unnoticed in the flickering dark were now painfully visible.

Cavernous pores
Feathered skin of bitten lips
Sandy lashes
Pulsing veins in fleshy jowles.

The air would never be silent again, throbbing ominously- the buzzing of hundreds of unseen wasps...

2. A TEMPORAL COUP D'ETAT

i.

The computer whirs,

a cascade of letters

-----dashes-----

and numbers flicker on the screen. Glowing green heiroglyphs that emerge from the darkness.

[Press any key to begin]

The keys are sticky to touch.

Look down.

A gluey orange residue that smells faintly of onions.

Computer-beige, causing the whole office to appear as if it has been drained of colour, an eternal plastic universe.

A bottle-green filing cabinet.

B-C. Bovril - Chester Chesterfield couches.

The suede membrane of brand new manila folders.

Expectations of lilac bouquets of bruises on skin; a man lying face-down to the ground, viscous fluid, shreds of flesh- blood pooling at the entrance to once throbbing veins. The face in its entirety fuses with twigs and peppercorns of ashphalt.

ii.

How is it, that the alarming variety existing in Newton's colour spectrums is reduced to such a small segment of monotone variations?

A pile of photographs as thick as Ballard's *Crash*, the 1973 edition.

Photographs of intersections. S-bends. T-Crossings.

The camera's eye possesses a cool facticity that far outstrips even the most jaded detective.

Ashphalt, cobbled corners built in the 1840s, new roads for a new industrial world.

A dirty woman's blouse, crusted with blood and bodily fluid. You cannot tell now, but it was once a sherbet pink.

52 intersections, 52 reports, 52 negatives. Or is it 52 David Noonans?



iii.

Incident Report: b3103078

Someone once said, that no matter how exacting you are, it is impossible for any two analogue clocks to show the exact same time: they are separated by infinitesimal fractions of a second.

Eastern Standard Time.

Longitudinal lattice like a colossal Mondrian blanketing the globe.

Cuckoo Clock Time.

Grandfather Clock Time.

Stop-watch Time.

The store seemed a magnificent, impossible place. For what could be more paranormal, more improbable than a store that sells 48 perfect, autonomous realms of time?

Indeed, afterwards, this chronology had been left intact, for all that the thief took were two cufflinks in the shape of judicial scales, a Victorian mourning brooch and cygnet ring, and a silver-plated cigar case that was once owned by a corpulent antique dealer.

3. MISE EN SCENE

Scene One:

Fingers have become so wrinkled from the soapy water, the tips are almost completely numb. Hands move sluggishly to rinse the faux tropical scent from each carefully stacked dish.

Slipping.

Shards of glass litter the speckled linoleum floor- for a split second- glittering with amber and amethyst like some vast Byzantine mosaic.

Outside, the yard is tranquil. A bird coos and at the top of a clock tower ticking hands are illuminated in neon green.

ɪ READ	ɪ SIT	ʊ BOOK	uɪ TOO	ɪə HERE	eɪ DAY		
e MEN	ə AMERICA	ɜː WORD	ɔː SORT	ʊə TOUR	ɔɪ BOY	əʊ GO	
æ CAT	ʌ BUT	ɑː PART	ɒ NOT	eə WEAR	aɪ MY	aʊ HOW	
p FIG	b BED	t TIME	d DO	tʃ CHURCH	dʒ JUDGE	k KILO	g GO
f FIVE	v VERY	θ THINK	ð THE	s SIX	z ZOO	ʃ SHORT	ʒ CASUAL
m MILK	n NO	ŋ SING	h HELLO	l LIVE	r READ	w WINDOW	j YES

Scene Two:

Eyes alight, stepping forward.

Queen of Mars. with the minging gestures of Clara Bow

Reveal the stage.

A man hoists his sleeves,
as he proceeds to paint a torrent of contours.

The apparition of a woman sheathed in pleats

The faintest sheen from a frilled tape edge is all that gives it away.

This universe of cardboard inhabits the chasm between two states. Pushing,
pulling at the seams and edges, it peaks through just enough to announce itself.

Scene Three: [778.53 A late evening in the future]

The sleeping Vladimir Propp is peaceful and completely unaware of what is about to take place.

White paint sweeps over a five o'clock shadow. Spots of black penetrate a vast creamy plane.



Scene Four:

Pixels shimmer and mingle, the murky image of an interior. The corner next to a window, it is night: the room is only illuminated by lamps, creating an atmosphere like that of film noir. The camera pans, but aside from a few tiny passing fragments, we are stuck only to inhabit this universe of lace curtains, a vase. Two oranges.

We are trapped in the same way the statue traps Pygmalion, doomed to inhabit a realm of monochromatic expressionism.

A mouse clicks.

Zoom Out.

Zoom Out once more.

Now we can see the image that had been taken from us. A dead man lies sprawled on a carpet. Victorian does Oriental.

Scene Five:

She lay across his lap and looked up at the painting on the wall, The Banquet of Cleopatra. Amber velvet dramatically lit. A false Caravaggio. Her thumb is smeared with the faintest trace of black. Perhaps it is she who, whirling about, created this ferociously painted universe. Layers of paint cloak unknown secrets. The air is perfumed with Basil and the washing machine beeps urgently.

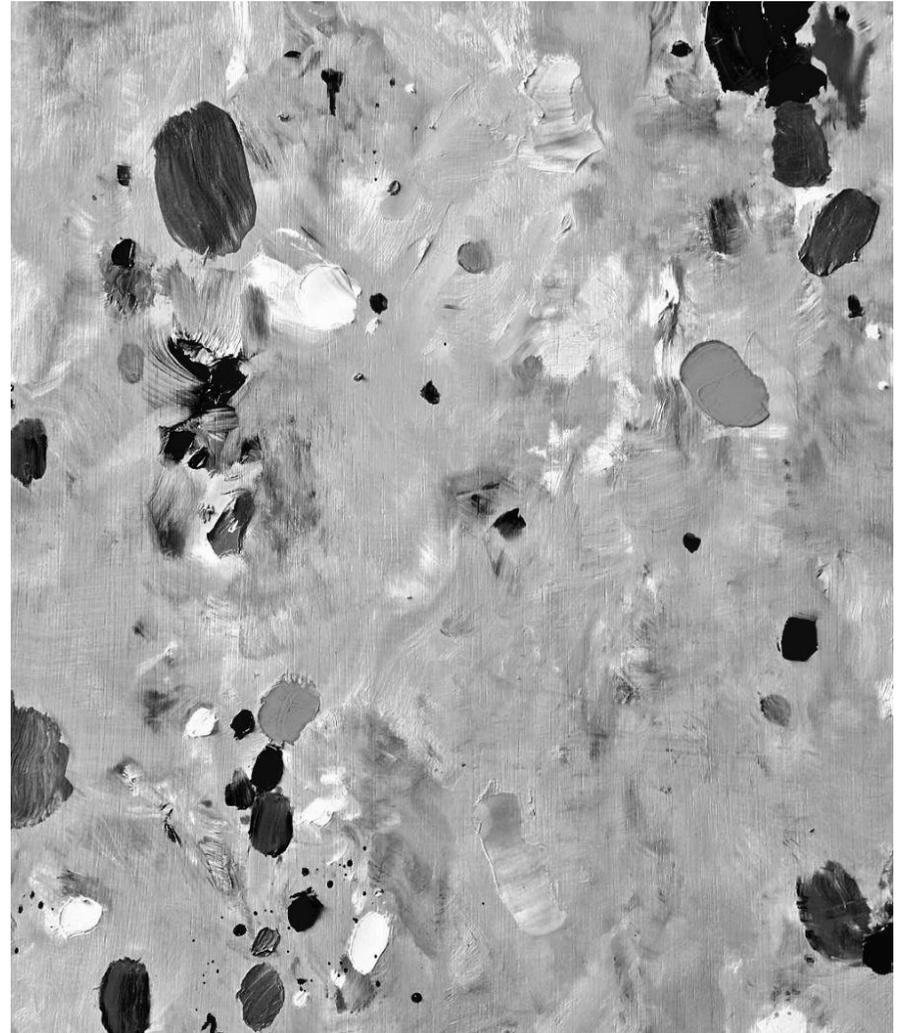
4. AN APPARITION

The slick leather had been sliced open; the car's foam entrails pouring out from each wound. The foam no longer sprang back at the touch, instead it broke away in brittle carbon-black pieces, like chunks of earth that had baked under the hostile sun. The acrid, bitter tang of charred debris fills my nose, clouding every sense, making my eyes swim.

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A thin glaze of varnish, silhouettes deftly mapped out in paint. A cat leaps back, rigid with fear, most certainly having spied some errant specter. The Archivist? The Specter of History?

Le Chateau Hante, filmed in 1897, is one of the first ghost films. In the hand-coloured film Satan, in the form of a ghost, plays a series of pranks on two men.



Hidden deep in the bowels of the museum, the painter takes out what is hidden, taking away all that is deceptive and seductive: excavating kernels of truth.

Stone walls run rings around our city, spiraling like the shell of some colossal mollusk. Seated lions sprawl outside our doors. We look outside, gazing at the light refracted from the Bridge of Sighs, eyes stinging. I lie imprisoned in a cage of stitches. Speckled light beneath my eyelids- or is it the latent image of Tintoretto's *Paradise*?

Buttery, foaming liquid spins in a mesmerising, endless orbit. Glints of lurid pink, sickly lime, violet. The colors meld and change before me- the seductive, ominous sludge of crude oil? I imagine it leaking over my cheeks, slick- pooling into my nostrils, bubbling, slipping into my eyes.

A labyrinth of tidal marks etched into bedrock. Each mark a year or decade. The rings of wood tell us stories of Titania and her donkey, of sprites and trees slick with moss, of stolen embraces in dilapidated follies. Moon and sun court one another in silvery revolutions. Fax machines and secretary shoes. Every near collision is terrifying.

Perhaps the riddle of the sphinx was really a painting.



5. THE VIGIL OF VENUS

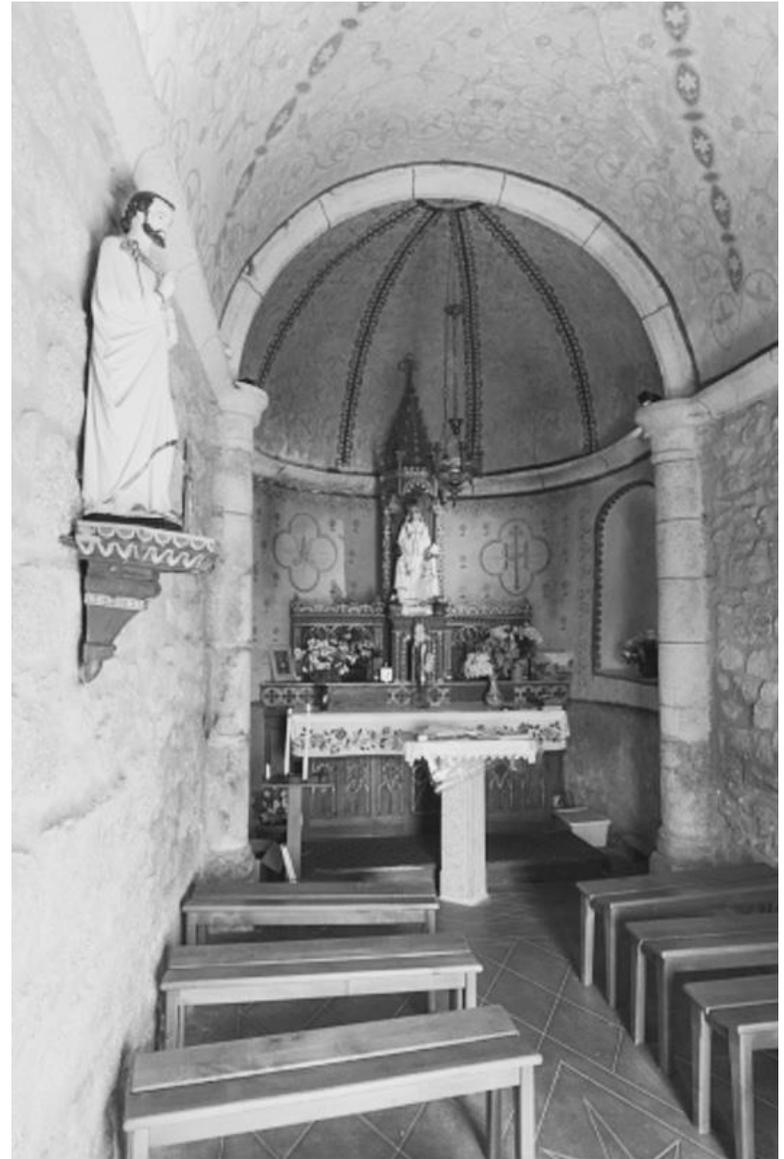
A grid reveals a perfectly formed phallic structure, littered with blue and white cryptograms, the scrawl of Medea.

It is a confounding vessel, buried in the sand.

A vessel to carry us past, into Andromeda.

The Chorus milled around the edge of the amphitheatre in a skewed semi-circle.

Ruins spun and raced around the hill, feathery silver grass chocking the ancient stones.



The first clearing.

A battered sign,
that did little to assist with navigation.
The only text visible was contradictory and convoluted, as if Conchis' maverick
stories had been etched into the rusted steel.

Further,
Higher, we climbed

At the edge of the hill, we came to a chapel. The parched afternoon sun poured
into windows without glass. Illuminated dust particles summersaulting and
plunging through the air. Clouds of chalky dust rose with every step we took
inside. Itching and scraping the soft palate. While certainly at least thirty years old
and long abandoned, it was evident that someone was concerned with the chapel's
upkeep.

As we sat, feet throbbing, our limbs sinking into the rigid pews,

We realized something was wrong.

Running the pads of our fingertips along each knot and groove of the pews, there
was no trace of waxy varnish, no supple bend unique to panels of wood.

Perplexed [bent closer] we found it.



A corner of the seat before us had been worn away. Or rather, had been chipped.

A bright, bluish white exposed.

The delicate linear contour of each grain of wood was, on closer inspection, painted.

Dry, sandy to touch, the pew was in fact, porcelain.

The Mary Magdalene who gazed beatifically down at us, the ornamental nativity, the shriveled oranges from an offering long past: everything we could see was in fact an immaculately painted model.

A Marquette.

In a quaint town:

[A deli]

Sweat pours down the grocer's bulbous nose. Hastily removing an expanse of salami that now emits an astringent smell after baking in the afternoon sun.

Wrapped in cloak of plastic. A layer of images to be peeled away. Epirus. An arm holding a bow outstretched.

6. THE BELT OF ORIEN



1.

On the tenth day, images begin to ooze, like confessions.

Filmy translucent paper is laid over stone, like lace tablecloth at formal dinners.
Watch the pigment bite into the page with every stroke.

The membrane becomes littered with small holes.

The Archeologist puts every page into a neat pile. She has made her name
studying Prehistory.

Thick buttery expanses of black paint slice through peppered half tone dots:
borders constantly shifting, changing.

We once found a website that foretold where sea levels would rise, by the year
2030.

The compass stutters, not a half revolution.

How can we find our way back?

The arms of a macrophage stretch out, tenuous at first. Quick. A single instant and
it has consumed all surrounding cells. Or is it a binary star system? Merging. One
colossal burst of light.

Around the fiftieth day, they meet in a museum filled with timeless animals.

2.

The body is strapped down on a bed, the snap of plastic clips. Industrial straps, like those on the seat of a car. It is a bed only in the broadest sense, impossibly narrow-the edges dig squarely into the shoulder blades.

Mechanical Whirring.

Nothing but porous plastic exists now, except for a stripe of pale blue.

A colossal thumping noise. Erratic at first, it soon creates its own rhythm. So loud, as if to drown out the percussion of the body- forcing the body to accommodate, to assimilate. I think of the dark steel- paneled halls of a factory at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, plumes of smoke choking hunched workers. Spores pass ragged throats and embed themselves into the spongy cavern of the lung.

The pain of foresight.
If only someone had seen it coming.

The pink faced radiologist stands separate: shielded from all electro-magnetic waves. He deciphers each monochromatic De Kooning- this bodily code- with the relish of a devoted Agatha Christie fan, devouring a set of clues.



3.

A quadratic eye.

Blinking, the frame whirs in and out of focus, creating a plaid pattern of blinding light on my eyelids. As radiation probes my bones, I try not to move, thinking of the stagnant pose and stoic faces of early daguerreotype portraits.

AN EXCAVATION

Adrian Stojkovich

Angus Baird

Georgina Cue

Katie Paine

Rohan Schwartz

Simon Attwooll

Exhibition curated by Katie Paine

Catalogue Text and Design by Katie Paine

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c3 contemporary art space

