

Ryan Dewey: An attempt to understand a glacier without ever having seen one
Collection CAE2217

Introduction/Abstract

Operating across disciplines, artist Ryan Dewey finds ways to bridge deep time to connect ice ages of the past with ice ages of the future to produce work that expands our ability to contemplate our role in planetary change during our present interglacial period.

Biographical Note: Ryan Dewey

Ryan Dewey graduated from Case Western Reserve University in 2012 with a Masters in cognitive linguistics. He works in sculpture, installation, performance, research, and land art, uncovering and creating connections between people, places, and land use to produce, as his website states, a kind of ecological dreaming.” Eminent eco-critic and theorist Donna Haraway has praised his work as one of her favorite examples of art about the Anthropocene in her book *Staying With The Trouble*. He has been a resident at ACRE (Chicago), the Alps Art Academy (Switzerland), and the Montello Foundation (Nevada), as well as serving two appointments from 2012-2015 as visiting researcher in cognitive science at Case Western Reserve University where he wrote the open-access book *Hack the Experience: New Tools for Artists from Cognitive Science* (Punctum Books, 2018).

Scope and Content

Dewey’s online artist statement, which is relevant to his archive, reads as follows: “I work to understand glaciers in their absence, through the traces they have left in the Great Lakes region where I live. I don’t have much of a choice but to imagine them. There is a reverence of the unseen and I try to understand it in ways that end up feeling like ritual. Replicating glacial behaviors, mimicking glacial processes, mapping the glacial movement of stones and clay, recreating glacial functions at human scale, playing with the possibilities at a landscape scale, and bridging across time to connect ice ages from the deep past with ice ages of the deep future. The work I produce and the tools I build prime actual landscapes for collaborative activation in the deep future when my objects will yield to the geologic force of the next glacier in the next ice age.”

Ryan Dewey’s project consists of two parts. *Field Office* visits Great Lakes landscapes to observe, analyze, and respond to the geophysical, ecological, and social traces of glaciers in that landscape to compare it to other landscapes in the same region. Back in his studio he builds hand tools that replicate glacial functions on the human scale. Now he is undertaking *This Stone Wants To Go Home, an Expedition* to return a 38-pound glacial erratic boulder of Canadian granite that he discovered in Ohio to the last remnant of the Laurentide Ice Sheet on Baffin Island, the continental glacier that originally moved this stone ~20,000 years ago. This action resets the glacial field so that the boulder might once again be picked up during the next ice age sometime in the future 100,000 years or so.

Materials in this archive include a book mock-up, performance and sculpture photo documentation, grant applications, exhibition ephemera, video, and documents.

This archive is currently in process.