

Dustsreinigung

dustsceawung

(n.) contemplation of dust; reflection on former civilizations and peoples, and on the knowledge that all things will turn to dust (Old English)

STORY KEEPERS

We are the Story Keepers.

In our collections
we tell of the times before
and the times since.
Of what they want to know
and what they'd rather not.

Spines crack and fray
from floor to ceiling
through each and every vault.
And we spend the years
fixing and fidgeting
and playing games of sneak and snatch.

And once in a great while,
when the light is waning
and boredom beats about us,
we choose someone
from the shelves
and open our ears.

Dustscaevung features artworks by Stephen Hendee, Boyang Hou, Harold Mendez, Erin Washington, Adam Bach, Ellery Royston and poems by Sara Krueger. The exhibition investigates cultural collapse and our society's inevitable ruin. The works reference specific histories in order to show evidence of the larger cycle of life and death on our planet.

How are ruins created? How are they revealed? What effects do they have on the societies that surround them? How will they be formed and reformed in the future? Each question has any number of answers, but their one enduring constant is that the existence of ruins is guaranteed.

In *God Emperor of Dune*, Frank Herbert writes about the inevitability of collapse:

In all of my universe I have seen no law of nature, unchanging and inexorable. This universe presents only changing relationships which are sometimes seen as laws by short-lived awareness. These fleshy sensoria which we call self are ephemera withering in the blaze of infinity, fleetingly aware of temporary conditions which confine our activities and change as our activities change. If you must label the absolute, use its proper name: Temporary.

Melanie Challenger takes up this theme of collapse in her discussion of nostalgia. In *On Extinction: How We Became Estranged from Nature*, Challenger argues that nostalgia gave prehistoric humans an evolutionary advantage. This inherent segmental longing for times past compelled early humans to examine the visible histories of earlier civilizations each time they entered foreign territories. By doing so, they were able to use the failures, collapses, and remnants of the past to learn the best ways to survive in new environments and, in turn, to build better futures. Challenger asserts that the absence of any one lasting civilization supports the idea that this process is not a linear progression, but rather a concurrent and continuous cycle of rise and fall. Examples of this cycle continue to exist today and can be found throughout our world.

The creation of ruins is exemplified in the pieces by Harold Mendez and Erin Washington. Mendez's work references modern architectural remains through his use of bricks as a type of monument, while *Ruin and Cosmic Dust* by Washington presents the viewer with a representation of a bust of Aphrodite that was defaced by the Byzantines after the fall of the Roman Empire.

Not only are ruins created from direct human intervention, they are also revealed through an indirect cause—climate change. As glaciers, permafrost, and snow melt, signs of the past are unearthed: mummified bodies of World War I soldiers have been found in the Italian Alps, sacrificed Inca children from the 1500's were discovered at the foot of a volcano in Argentina, and a 30,000-year-old virus set free in Siberia reanimated and began infecting amoeba. The complete human history of ruins is revealed and abstracted in the experiential audio installation *Lacuna* by Adam Bach and Ellery Royston. The audio here represents the amount of land controlled by nation-states for the last 4,000 years.

Finally, Stephen Hendee, Sara Krueger, and Boyang Hou's works tell stories of possible futures. Hendee's flag and banners, excerpted from his larger project *The Ice Next Time: Textiles and Artifacts of Dark Age North America (2026-2280)*, predict what a North American dystopia might look like. Krueger's poems tell of a future where humans are surviving under the weight of a horrible past. Boyang Hou's sand-cast aluminum pieces also predict a bleak future by signifying objects of nobility and power that are seen as potential relics.

The ruins presented here are but a small sampling of from where we have risen and to what we will inevitably return.

COMPANY MAN

Another wretched night comes,
with the cleaners trudging
line after line
towards my station.

We are a broken business —
a failed population
better suited to the halls of extinction.

We knew this.

Yet, we refused,
in all our limbic wisdom,
to let go gracefully.

Instead,
we burrowed,
borrowed
and bargained.
And our sweet, sweet blue
kept on its way to becoming Venus.

Some of us cowered.
Others became lost.
Or we bent to the task,
driven by the hypnotic droning of the machines.
We even shucked our skins entirely
and slipped beneath the waters.

But somehow we remained in the aftermath,
like scattered husks
found after a hard harvest.

I arrange my tools
and get to it,
hating how many of my friends I see
in these faces I fix.

Dustsceaung

Stephen Hendee
Boyang Hou
Sara Krueger
Harold Mendez
Erin Washington
Adam Bach and Ellery Royston

curated by Adam Farcus

May 6 - June 4, 2016

DEMO Project
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Melanie Challenger. *On Extinction: How We Became Estranged from Nature*. Counterpoint, 2013.

Frank Herbert. *God Emperor of Dune*. Mass Market, 1987.

Sara Krueger. *somehow we remain in the aftermath*. Finishing Line, 2016.



Boyang Hou - *Power (crown)* (solid cast aluminum) 2013



Boyang Hou - *Power (laurels)* (aluminum) 2013



Boyang Hou - *Power (obelisk)* (solid cast aluminum) 2013



Erin Washington - *Search for Meaning* (chalk and acrylic on panel) 2015



Erin Washington - *Ruin and cosmic dust* (chalk, acrylic and gouache on panel) 2015



Stephen Hendee - *North American Flag* (2058) (fabric) 2008 - 2010



Ellery Royston & Adam Bach - *Lacuna* (5-channel sound, blanket, and speakers) 2014
* with participant



Harold Mendez - *Untitled (Empire)* (reclaimed bricks, soot, carnations, graphite, charcoal, black silicone carbide) 2015

Boyang Hou - *Power (laurels)* (aluminum) 2013



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