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Prime, Perform, Recover

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Virginia Commonwealth University, smithps@vcu.edu

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Fine Arts
at Virginia Commonwealth University.

By

Patrick Harkin

BFA, University of Florida, 2015

MFA, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2017

Directors:

Justin James Reed
Assistant Professor, Photography and Film and Art Foundations

Brittany Nelson
Visiting Professor, Department of Photography and Film

Jon-Phillip Sheridan
Assistant Professor, Department of Photography and Film

Virginia Commonwealth University Richmond, Virginia
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Acknowledgements

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Abstract

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Major Director: Justin James Reed, Assistant Professor, Photography and Film and Art

Foundations

    This thesis examines the formal and conceptual framework of my artistic practice as it

culminated in the installation of my thesis exhibition, *Prime, Perform, Recover*. My exhibition

seeks to operate as an analysis and critique of the separation inherent in media presentation

and rhetoric surrounding natural disasters.

    I utilize the aesthetics and vocabulary of disaster capitalism and prepping culture in order to

pose direct questions about ecological and social change. I examine the role of images within

mass media image production as an all encompassing Now-Time. In this paper I describe

frameworks that my practice proposes as potential solutions to these problems, and I position

my research in the context of artists and artworks that have influenced me and operate within

similar channels as my own.

Introduction

Having grown up in suburban Florida, I am well acquainted with the seasonal need of

hurricane proofing everything in my native state. Cycles of building, destruction, and rebuilding

related to the natural elements, especially water and wind, are spotlighted in my work.

Many of the materials I work with are collected in the preparation and aftermath of hurricanes

I have lived through, as well as in the wake of my own consumer habits. Use of consumer

detritus, building materials, and allusions to natural disasters serve as powerful metaphors and

entry points that open the work to the complex systems I strive to address.

My work also addresses the ties between images, materiality, and consumerism in order to

examine the human condition under image mediated culture. I explore the ways in which

images and objects can be read as material, spatial, and ideological models of the world. The

presentation of my work involves a symbiotic grouping of sculpture, sound, architecture, video

and photographs that aims to extend the contemplation of disaster, not repress it. Since the

shock of disaster marks the only time the real can pierce through the spectacle, the disaster

deserves our attention.

It's easy to imagine a number of disaster scenarios that can be discussed in my work, but

the hurricane in particular is used here as a harrowing blueprint for the complex disaster that is

our current political and ecological climate. I present a metaphorical and psychological space

that suggests new ontological perspectives that oppose human exceptionalism.

My goal for the work is to develop a new visual language, utilizing the aesthetics and

rhetoric of disaster capitalism and prepping culture in order to pose direct questions about

ecological and social change. Disaster capitalism assumes that these catastrophic occurrences

are natural and independent of human activity, and rely on the laissez-faire economic policies of

neoliberalism, which supports a privatized and free-market approach to dealing with the aftermath of catastrophe and disaster relief.

   My working method involves creating objects and scenarios specifically to be photographed, as well as sculptural and video work to be presented in dialogue with traditional photographs. The various elements of my work are intended to echo the topics I'm exploring and the questions I'm raising.

   I situate my practice within the dialogue of post-internet and post-conceptual work. Villem Flusser, Claire Bishop, and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen are authors who have helped guide my practice. Exhibitions such as Unmonumental, Alternative Unknowns and artists Claire Fontaine, Robert Smithson, Cildo Meireles, Gabriel Orozco, Dan Graham, Lucy Orta, Oliver Laric, Jon Rafman, Antoine Catala whose work I will discuss in this paper, operate in similar channels as my own.

   The structure of this paper begins firstly with a description of the terminology and the general ideas behind my work and thus my thesis exhibition as a whole. I move into describing specific events in the world which have shaped my work and are present within the work both implicitly and explicitly. Next, I describe individual pieces within the exhibition, going through specific materials and processes, and relate them back to the initial ideas described back in the first few pages.

   Throughout this paper I refer to the disaster both literally and metaphorically, as a literal hurricane, for example, or as a stand in for what I see as a large systemic problem such as climate change or even as capitalism itself.

Image Trash

> The top-down cultural hegemony exercised by advertisement and corporate media is supplemented by a down-down regime of mutual self control and visual self-disciplining. Hegemony is increasingly internalized, along with the pressure to conform and perform, as is the pressure to represent and be represented.[1]

There are striking similarities which can be drawn between images and trash in terms of how they are produced, circulated, consumed and I highlight the conflation of those boundaries within my work. For example, a sleek and flawless advertisement for a new flavor of Gatorade to the actual empty Gatorade bottle found floating in the ocean. The spam image for me is materialized as a Gatorade bottle.

The relationship I draw between trash and images is complicated and has the internal logic of being caught in a seemingly endless feedback loop. Prior to a catastrophe images become trash, post-disaster the fallout and detritus from the disaster become images via mass media representation.

My relationship to photography is contentious. The struggle I find myself in as a result of making work from these theoretical positions is how to use images to be critical about images in a place where they are so ubiquitous, where everyone is consuming and producing images at all times. I am disenfranchised by the image as a hegemonic tool for alienation and capital gain. Further frustrating still is living in a culture which the primary form of information is transmitted via images, where the majority of the population is visually illiterate. There is, as I see it, a robbing of general intellect by the continuous betrayal of images on our social body. It seems as

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[1] Hito Steyerl, "The Spam of the Earth: Withdrawal from Representation." The Spam of the Earth: Withdrawal from Representation - Journal #32 February 2012 - e-flux. Accessed April 14, 2017. http://www.e-flux.com/journal/the-spam-of-the-earth/.

though Magritte's work is never finished.[2] A concept reified by the most recent photographs of Thomas Demand, titled *Dailies* for their relationship to consumable and immediately ubiquitous photographs and their self awareness of image-ness as digital veneers.

His photographs depict commonplace scenes, anonymous, everyday moments, like a cup placed in a chain-link fence, or a plant seen behind a frosted glass window (fig. 1). I empathize with Demand's *Dailies* because I am able to project some of my own image theories onto them, primarily within their critique of hyperreality and therefore having a referent that is twice removed from reality. This hyperreality happens when the difference between reality and representation collapses and we are no longer able to see an image as reflecting anything other than a symbolic trade of signifiers in culture, not the real world. Today we live in hyperreality 24/7 and in my opinion there is no going back because it has been hyper-normalised.[3]

I reconcile this problem for myself within the presentation of my work by creating physical environments for the photographs to be contextualized within. Demand does this in front of the camera within the pictorial image, whereas I am working to communicate these ideas both in front of the lens in addition to the physical space of the exhibition. The installation of the exhibition as a whole is created with the photograph at the forefront of my mind, connecting the materials represented within the image to the concrete objects presented to the viewer in physical space. The impetus for this strategy stems from my struggle in making visible the invisible, materializing the immaterial, because global warming in its innumerable complexities is impossible to photograph. My work attempts to make visible our own complicity in a world obscured by depictions of it.

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[2] René Magritte, *The Treachery of Images*, oil on canvas, 63.5 cm × 93.98 cm 1929
[3] *Hypernormalisation*. Directed by Adam Curtis. British Broadcasting. October 16, 2016. Accessed March 5, 2017. http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04b183c. In the film, Curtis argues that since the 1970s, governments, financiers, and techno-optimists have given up on the complex "real world" and built a simple "fake world" that is run by corporations and kept stable by politicians.

The internet has a major problem: information overload. This problem extends to the

society of the spectacle in general: there's simply too much information to process, so we

become numb to avoid insanity. It's the problem people have with the news: it's murder after

plane crash after deadly virus after infinitum. It never ends and, as a result, we have

compassion fatigue – the failure of citizens to be affected by or at least moved to action in

response to the daily rehearsal of worldwide misery [that is] only the latest annotation of the

alienation that informs the human condition of modernity.[4] The only time we really stop, think,

and evaluate our lives is when a disaster occurs. And even then, our immediate desire is

repression in order to move on with our lives.

The Renzo Martens film *Enjoy Poverty* has been hugely influential on my thinking. It is an

incredibly complex and problematic film that ultimately leaves you with the question of who

exactly owns poverty in a complex system of competing non-profit organizations in a global

economy. He is proposing that poverty itself is constructed and that there are direct

beneficiaries to this problem, implicating mass media representation of poverty as the primary

malefactor. Congolese photographers are encouraged to move on from development-hindering

activities, such as photographing weddings and parties, and to start taking images of war and

disaster. I then ask the question about my work as to who owns, thereby benefits from, this

natural disaster? Who owns this hurricane? Is it Hurricane Matthew or is it Hurricane Matthew

brought to you by Exxon Mobil? Or is it just Hurricane Anheuser Busch? It seems like we're not

so far away from branding a hurricane with corporate sponsorship in the same way that massive

sports arenas are laid claim to. Either way, I think it is important to accept that the reason

weather systems and "natural" disasters are getting worse and more frequent is because they

are no longer natural by any means. Natural disasters like hurricanes and like poverty for that

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[4] Ulmer, Gregory L. *Electronic monuments*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

matter, are actually byproducts of human activities. The market for preparing for such events

has never been so profitable. Even so, if such an event were to hit directly, no amount of

plywood will save you.

The Infinite Now

The concept of the perpetual experience of now-time is of primary concern within my work, and

is the primary effect on human consciousness that image mediated culture has produced:

> It is now the immobility of all possible journeys or paths. The time-light
> barrier then blocks off–along with the horizon of appearances–the horizon
> of action, the very reality of a space where all succession dissolves, where
> it is as though hours and days had ceased to flow; surfaces ceased to
> extend; what cropped up yesterday, here or there, now happens
> everywhere at once. The accident to end all accidents spreads in a flash
> and the center of time–the endless present–leaves behind the center of
> fixed space for good. There is no longer any "here," everything is "now" [5]

Many media theorists do acknowledge the ability of an image to change, replicate, and be

everywhere all at once online but still frame that discussion through an individual image.

Photography through technology has become increasingly destabilized medium as there is no

agreed upon method by which to critique it. For example, a large photograph in a gallery is first

and foremost a large printed object, and the image becomes secondary. Photographs for me

point first and foremost to the digital file online which live a life entirely separate and unchanged

on a hard drive or in the cloud. My practice therefore involves creating sites for the

re-contextualization and thus the re-stabilization of photography through installation based

strategies: creating a "here" in order to help contemplate the "now."

The human condition under image mediated experience is that of being caught and held

within now-time. The mood of this condition is claustrophobic, a sense of being trapped. The

paradox of this confinement is that, augmented by the technologies of telepresence, the

experience of now is separated from place, even from being-there. All trajectory disappears,

eliminating the journey with its departure and passages, leaving us only with pure arrival.

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[5] Virilio, Paul. *Open sky*. London: Verso, 2008.pgs 140-143.

I am reminded here of a project by David Horvitz called *Mood Disorder*, which was exhibited

in the new photography exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art *Ocean of Images: New*

Photography 2015. Horvitz produced a "stock image" of himself to look like a typical stock

image of depression (using research from his Sad, Depressed, People book and project)(fig 2.).

It was then put onto Wikipedia's page under 'Mood Disorder', after which it became

copyright-free and began to be used as a free stock image for depression on cheap websites all

over the Web. Horvitz tracked the circulation of this image and compiled a book of screenshots

taken from newspapers, drug companies or Facebook that reused this "stock" image for stories

or posts on suicide and depression. This project hinges on an understanding today's

understanding of internet in 2017. The internet, like photography, is at the moment a fluid and

destabilized location and therefore is an almost impossible foundation on which to critique it.

Franco Berardi notes on human condition resulting from the conflation of time produced by the

internet and technological advancements in the 21st century:

> Semiocapital puts neuro-psychic energies to work, submitting them to
> mechanistic speed, compelling cognitive activity to follow the rhythm of
> networked productivity. As a result, the emotional sphere linked with cognition
> is stressed to its limit. Cyberspace overloads cybertime, because cyberspace
> is an unbounded sphere whose speed can accelerate without limits, while
> cybertime (the organic time of attention, memory, imagination) cannot be sped
> up beyond a certain point—or it cracks. And it actually is cracking, collapsing
> under the stress of hyper-productivity. An epidemic of panic and depression is
> now spreading throughout the circuits of the social brain. Today it is the social
> brain that is assaulted by an overwhelming supply of attention-demanding
> goods. The social factory has become the factory of unhappiness: the
> assembly line of networked production is directly exploiting the emotional
> energy of the cognitive class.[6]

The notion of now-time and the example of David Horvitz's project are reasons why I think

empathy is so important to mediated existence today. *Mood Disorder* feigns empathy but in

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[6] Franco Berardi Bifo, *Cognitarian Subjectivation*. *Are you working too much?: post-Fordism, precarity,
and the labor of art*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011.

reality the stock image he uses could be just about anything, and the project overall is actually

relatively passive and apathetic towards the human condition within image mediated culture.

I think empathy is of the utmost importance when talking about social change within the

media. Guy Debord recognized this early on when he stated that the spectacle is not a

collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images.

I often use the term buoyancy in my work to describe exactly what I mean when talking

about empathy. Reserve buoyancy, a shipbuilding term, is the enclosed, watertight volume of

the vessel above the waterline. Reserve buoyancy is important to a vessel's stability, it is the

portion of the vessel which effectively contributes to a vessel's righting arm when heeled. As we

further become enmeshed within higher personalized channels of information, the further the

depletion of reserve buoyancy. As capital finds more nuanced and deliberately prescriptive

ways of controlling the 24/7 flow and channeling of information that is presented at an individual

level, individuals must equip themselves with the means of creating agency and resistance to

such oppression and subjugation. Franco Berardi describes the processes by which language

and technology are co-opted as tools for subjugation and I think about how the role of irony as a

means to subvert language within my work as a form of resistance to this.

> Digital Technology is canceling the singular enunciative composition
> of polysemy, gesture, and voice, and tends to produce a language
> that is subjugated to the linguistic machinery.[7]

I see my work as an attempt in finding buoyancy between those at the very top and those at

the very bottom, an effective form of ecocriticism as a means of creating empathy between local

and global, left and right. To compose (write, paint, envision, act) ecologically is to build in

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[7] Berardi, Franco. *The uprising: on poetry and finance*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2012.
pgs. 150-153. 18 April 2017.

openness, and therefore vulnerability.[8] Even my mom has a doomsday bunker (Fig.3), so with

that in mind I propose how different world views can collide and develop into new more

productive perspectives in the face of the disaster that affects us all.

We need a fundamental reconfiguring of how these concepts are being framed and digested

within society via the media, a sustained reflection on how disaster is represented and dealt with

visa-vis image culture, and a way to combat the destructive effect of now-time. What is being

presented to us instead are more and more methods of harm reduction[9] that appeal mostly at

the grassroots level. What I mean by harm reduction in this case are the band aids that offer

only short term solutions and do not address systemic problems. I present many products of the

harm reduction mentality and approach to climate change within my exhibition space, which I

will expand on shortly.

There are a number of relatively new philosophical viewpoints that give me hope. What is

known as Object Oriented Ontology, often referred to as OOO, is perhaps the only theoretical

solution conceived of in the recent past that provides viable framework that counters the

techno-human condition of the Infinite Now. OOO is a school of thought that rejects the privileging

of human existence over the existence of nonhuman objects.[10] OOO is to me the ultimate form of

empathy and perhaps the most responsible approach to climate change one could adopt. Many

of the artists whom I would contextualize are aware of these viewpoints and apply them within

their artistic practices.

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[8] Prismatic Ecology : Ecotheory beyond Green. Minneapolis, US: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2013.
ProQuest ebrary. Web. 1 May 2017.

[9] Harm reduction refers to policies, programmes and practices that aim to reduce the harms
associated with the use of psychoactive drugs in people unable or unwilling to stop.
[10] Harman, Graham. *Tool-being Heidegger and the metaphysics of objects*. Chicago, IL: Open Court,
 2002.

The Allegory of The HMS Bounty

The original idea for this installation comes from a story of a tall ship called the HMS Bounty, which is embodied in my installation literally in the video piece titled "The Bounty", and in the rest of the space which echoes various nautical signifiers. The HMS Bounty was built in 1784 and was used by the British Royal Navy for various expeditions until the crew mutinied and scuttled the ship in 1789. The remains of the HMS Bounty were re-discovered in 1957 and various parts of it have been salvaged to rebuild the ship for the 1962 film *Mutiny on the Bounty*, funded by the American media company MGM studios. The vessel has since been used in a number of Hollywood productions and in its downtime sailed around the world as a tourist attraction and instructional vessel. The vessel's long time home port and my home town, St. Petersburg Florida, was where I first became acquainted with the ship and I was scheduled to work on the ship as a deckhand at the conclusion of my undergraduate studies. Sadly, I never had the opportunity because the ship tragically sank in 2012 when the vessel was sailed directly into Hurricane Sandy. Fourteen members of the crew survived, including a friend of mine who was working on the ship at that time, thanks to a rescue mission conducted by the US Coastguard. Two individuals were killed in the tragic accident, including the captain. I remember watching the live news coverage of the event in my living room in disbelief and I feel like this piece has been in progress for several years now.

The top image (fig. 4) is a screen capture from the popular Hollywood blockbuster *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (2006) of the HMS Bounty (known as the *Edinburgh Trader* in the film) sinking after being attacked by the terrible sea monster known as the Kraken. The image below (fig. 4), released six years later is an infrared image of the HMS Bounty taken by the US Coastguard off the coast of North Carolina as it sinks during Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

The title of my piece "The Bounty" in the exhibition refers to both the ship and its history but also the idea of material and virtual consumerism and excess. There is a conflation and obfuscation of how to locate this ship within space and time because of its many versions and lifespans, some of them even happening simultaneously. It occupies multiple dimensions all at once and it is to me an embodiment of the post-structural condition in the most poetic and personal of ways. I think about the ship's virtual sinking in hollywood as an omen to it's future real sinking in 2012, but also how the Kraken is analogous to the hurricane, and by the transitive property everything that the hurricane represents within the rhetoric of disaster capitalism.

The HMS Bounty has an uncanny relation to the Ship of Theseus Paradox. The Ship of Theseus, also known as Theseus's paradox, is a thought experiment that raises the question of whether an object that has had all of its components replaced remains fundamentally the same object.[11] The HMS Bounty is almost literally a Ship of Theseus, which I think embodies many of the concerns I am raising about photography and the way images function in relation to the disaster.

My video piece in the exhibition titled "The Bounty" utilizes the original archival US Coastguard rescue footage during Hurricane Sandy in 2012, combined with a video that I created in my studio using a large fish tank and a variety of plastic trash, cans, and bottles (fig. 5).

The two videos were composited using green screen techniques. I created green screen props out of the garbage by painting it all chroma green. The image of the rescue plays only where garbage/image prop is present in the foreground. The trash here literally become images through this process. I think about green screen technology as a means to use the mechanisms

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[11] Plato(1925). Parmenides. Translated by N. Fowler, Harold. London: Harvard University Press. p. 139.

and signifiers of hollywood film industry to simultaneously critique reductive and simplistic

environmentalism, commodity fetishism, and mass media image entertainment culture.

Green screen is the primary means by which hollywood fabricates its special effects within

its high end movies. There are of course many other much more modern and expensive

techniques being used in high end film productions today, but I like green screen as a colloquial

signifier for fakeness within moving images, much like the term "photoshopped" refers to

contriving still photographs. I am interested in green screen as a signifier for Hollywood image

production in general, and the connection being made with the HMS Bounty's long history in

various high budget productions.

One of my influences around this idea is the artist Oliver Laric, specifically his long term

project entitled *Versions* (2009-2012), which reflects the conditions of our digital world: how

original and copy, thing and thought, event and document, are collapsed in a flattened

information space where everything is a click away from everything else (fig. 6). I think Laric's

Versions is a good illustration of my argument about the effects of imagery on Now-Time and I

think my work around the HMS Bounty thus far echoes many of these concerns.

The Exhibition Space

Somewhere between a total installation and a cacophonous exhibition of discrete works of art, the space of the exhibition amalgamates photography, sculpture, sound, video, painting and architecture.

A feeling of impending doom and careful optimism is pervasive within the spaces I create. Each piece alludes to its own potential future functionality (or lack thereof), a do-it-yourself aesthetic, and the potential for harmony to arise out of dissonance. The space is representative of a disaster because we're living in a disaster. Both metaphorically and allegorically my work responds to the current condition of living under disaster capitalism: the complex relationship between political, ecological, mass media, and social climates. The installation of my work in the space is an attempt to present and represent both material and immaterial conditions of living in such a climate.

Immediately confronting are the largest pieces, titled *Sails/ Big Band-Aid*, which I refer to as just "sails". The "sails" are the three garage door sized pieces of what appear to be raw canvas, which are in fact military grade hurricane shutters made from resin-coated ballistic nylon.

The "sails" are installed in such way to invite and insist on multiple encounters with the individual pieces throughout the gallery. All of the sculptural works within the space, the "sails" especially, operate as visual and physical barriers that disrupt any prescriptive or hierarchical ways to experience the space. This fracturing of the space is also how I attempt to confront the notion of now-time within the space of the installation.

Rather than a purely optical experience, the division of the space in such a manner activates the viewer and encourages a fragmented relationship with each individual piece, supporting that there is no correct way to move through or experience the space. A transitive relationship

therefore comes to be implied between 'activated viewership' within the exhibition space and active engagement in the social-political arena.[12]

I use a number of packaging tools to enhance the cohesiveness of the individual works within the exhibition space. A packaging tool is a strategy or gesture that creates ties within the space and creates a dialogue between the individual works. Perhaps the most effective packaging tool in the space is the sound element. The sound within the space is amplified through a speaker embedded in one of the suspended concrete Gatorade lamps, located in the center of the space. The speaker and the TV are connected wirelessly via bluetooth. The sound itself, the audio from the video, is ominous and foreboding: radio communications between the rescue team fires back and forth as altitude warnings from the helicopter's alert system rings out. The sound floods the entire space and elevates the overall tension and uneasiness of the room.

Throughout the space are materials and objects which reference what I described earlier as harm reduction; material band-aids which pose questions about the legitimacy of these materials as long term solutions to systemic problems. A degree of failure, futility and irony is built into the work. For example, the solar panels barely work and hint at self sustainability, and over the course of the exhibition the concrete cast gatorade lamps burn out from overheating. The light bulbs cannot be changed since they are physically embedded within the concrete, resulting in the space being much darker in the evening hours towards the end of the exhibition. The pieces are self-aware, they recognize their futility of the downward spiral that stems from their lack of long term functional sustainability.

I think about my work in terms of being a trojan horse at times, it's difficult to grasp what my work is really about at the surface level, but I think that upon further contemplation after actually

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[12] Bishop, Claire. *Installation art a critical history*. London: Tate Publ., 2014.

entering the space it allows for the deeper concepts in my work to come through, and for the

discursive mechanisms of irony to become apparent.

Sails/ Big Band-Aid

As I stated above, these three large pieces of hurricane fabric, almost monumental in scale at 12 feet high, serve as both aesthetic and utilitarian objects. They create a sense of flow in the space both visually and physically. The fabric has a strong relationship to the body in its skin-like appearance and stretch marks created during the manufacturing process.

The "sails" are attached directly into the ceiling and hang a few inches from the ground, weighed down by a cool blue concrete block that spans the width of the fabric (fig. 7). Attached to all of the fabric in the space are the custom angular clips, which are manufactured alongside the material and are imprinted with the hurricane logo of the company that manufactures them.

The "sails" form an almost elliptical shape within the space, strategically placed in front of the air conditioning vents so as to sway gently in the breeze. The changing light throughout the day creates different effects on the space as the light filters through the fabric as a sort of diffusion material. When I was making these I was thinking a lot about Dan Graham's Pavilions and how he describes movement and flow within the architectural spaces he creates within them. (fig. 8)

Rafts/ Cut of your Jib

What I refer to as "rafts" are the two large wall panels within the space (fig. 9). Approximately seven feet tall and four feet wide, they too have references to the body. The

"rafts" are modular and each present materials in different ways. Both are meant to reference DIY survivalist rafts and suggest a use-value beyond the gallery space. These pieces recognize that there is a clear distinction of who will be affected by rising water and flooding first due to climate change (fig.10).

Recovery Cans

    I had a number of aluminum cans commercially printed for the exhibition (fig. 11). There are approximately 50 aluminum cans within the gallery which are arranged in various piles and individually. There are three designs I created to be printed on the cans, all representative of a disaster in some way.

    The first can is a take on the WWI design known as Dazzle Camouflage, which was used to paint large naval vessels with the goal of confusing the enemy's depth perception (fig. 12). This theoretically made it difficult to locate and fire upon a ship on the horizon. I think about Dazzle camo as a stand in for climate change and how impossible it's turning out to locate how far or near it may be on the horizon.

    The second can is simply the design of the SOS flag, a solid orange rectangle with one black square and one black circle. Every large vessel at sea has one of these flags on board to use as a distress signal.

    On the third can I printed the Florida building code approval for the hurricane fabric seen throughout the space (fig. 13). These cans also reference Anheuser Busch's canned disaster relief water, which they have been producing since the 1970's (fig. 14). This is a sample of one of Anheuser-Busch's press releases taken from their website:

> The emergency deliveries are scheduled to arrive in St. Louis, Cape Girardeau and Swansea on Wednesday May 3. Once they arrive, Anheuser-Busch's wholesaler partners, Lohr Distributing, River Eagle Distributing Co and Grey

Eagle Distributing will work together with the local American Red Cross chapter to distribute the water to those in need.

"As the home of Anheuser-Busch and Budweiser, the St. Louis community means so much to all of us at Anheuser-Busch," said Jim Bicklein, General Manager of the Anheuser-Busch St. Louis Brewery. "Putting our production and logistics strengths to work by providing clean, safe drinking water is the best way for us to help our neighbors right now."

"Throughout the year we periodically pause production at our brewery to can drinking water so we are ready to help communities in times of disaster," said Sarah Schilling, Sr. Brewmaster of Anheuser-Busch's Cartersville brewery.

Providing water and supplies to those affected by natural disasters nationwide is a long-standing tradition of Anheuser-Busch, dating back to the 19th century. In 2016, A-B donated over 2 million cans of drinking water across the US, including during the Louisiana Floods, California wildfires and Hurricane Matthew.[13]

The Anheuser-Busch InBev corporation is essentially making money two fold in the money they make as a tax write off and in the incalculable benefits received from their self congratulatory press releases after the fact.[14] Not to mention that the production of the relief water costs the company next to nothing because purified water is built into the production of beer in their brewing process. The absolute minimal if any monetary investment by Anheuser-Busch InBev during the various crises they have supplied canned water for is paid back tenfold in the incalculable value of their public image. What is absolutely crucial for the company is the omnipresent visibility of their branding within the turmoil of the disaster. This further complicates and distracts from the actual issues that require our attention and normalises the disaster within our perception of everyday life, supporting a status quo approach to responding to these scenarios. It is disheartening to imagine the privatization and control over water in future disasters, but perhaps even more dangerous is the speculation of water as

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[13]   http://www.anheuser-busch.com/betterworld/community/disaster-relief.html. Accessed 20 April, 2017.

[14]

http://www.anheuser-busch.com/newsroom/2016/10/anheuser-busch-sending-9-truckloads-of-emergency-drinking-water-hurricane-matthew.html. Accessed 20 April, 2017.

a publicly traded commodity in general. For me, the cans represent clearly the parallels between the economics of disaster capitalism and the psychology of western consumption and aid.

The artwork that inspired my *Recovery Cans* cans was Cildo Meireles's *Insertions into Ideological Circuits* (1970) because it so directly represents the ability for images to possess power, currency, and the ability to circulate and operate within models that reflect contemporary global politics (fig. 15). Another reason this piece is so important to me is that it actually operates in the world, it does not depend on the structures of museums or galleries to legitimize it as a work of art.

Gatorade Lamps

Suspended from the ceiling and throughout the space are 12 concrete cast Gatorade lamps, which illuminate the exhibition space and are placed near or just above the individual pieces in the space (fig. 16).

I chose to use Gatorade for a number things that it signifies and for its connection to Gainesville, Florida where I am from. Gatorade's lightning bolt logo and the language used in its branding are already self-branded within the rhetoric of climate change. Their flavors like "Glacial Freeze", "Summit Storm," "Arctic Blitz," "High Tide," and "Cascade Crash", amongst others allude to global warming and the potential disaster therein. Gatorade's slogan "Prime, Perform, Recover" which is also the title of the exhibition, suggests an infinite loop of endurance, sustainability, and happiness.

Barricade/ Coral Anchors

This sculpture consists of five solid cast concrete water jugs, fastened together with camouflage patterned ratchet straps. This piece is referencing the air-conditioned rooms in which most climate change legislation is conducted from. Like many of the pieces in the space it contains a poetics of multiple meanings. It is at once a barricade, a barrier, a time capsule, and a future anchor on which to grow coral (fig. 17). I plan to drive these concrete jugs to the Florida Keys this summer and anchor them a coral reef just off the coast. A coral anchor is a manmade object used as a means in attempting to regrow various species of corals in areas where coral reefs have been destroyed by humans in some way. Coral anchors can be almost anything introduced artificially into the ocean. Tires, cars, tanks and ships are commonly used, but most often these artificial reefs are created with intentionally designed objects made of concrete (fig. 18).

Closing

The timely and pressing importance of this work has never been greater, especially in light of the regressive political ideologies and action that support further exploitation of the planet. In order to continue to examine and understand what is at stake in the current environmental climate, artists must help the public see the situation from different angles. By bringing into focus the aesthetic of disaster capitalism, ecocriticism, and prepping culture, I pose direct questions about ecological and social change within the visual language of these aesthetics. Can communications technology serve as a vehicle for social change? Is radical systemic change possible within the disaster that is our current political and ecological paradigm? Who stands to gain the most from remaining inertly complacent to the urgency of responsible action? Further, misusing these materials and removing them from their intended context I can examine our mediated understanding of climate change through consumerism and technology.

As the need for these conversations intensifies, my work can evolve and grow to respond and pose questions to the complex systems that I am interested in and will continue to pose questions about the human condition under image mediated culture.

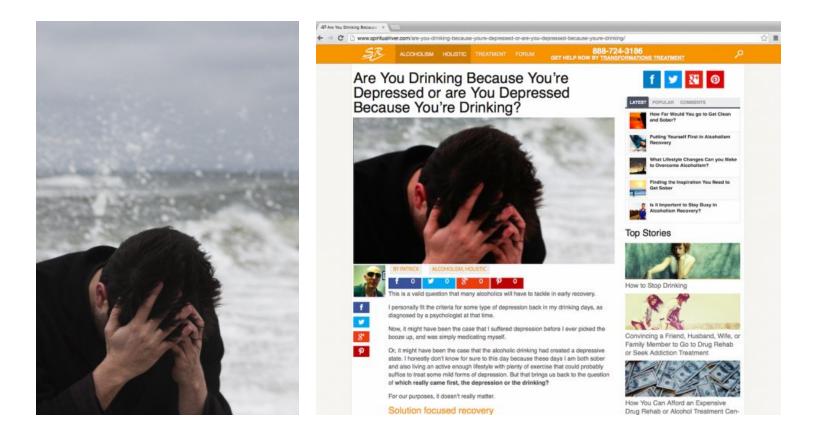Figure 1 Thomas Demand, *Daily # 15*, 2014

Figure 2 Screen captures from websites featuring the project *Mood Disorder* by David Horvitz, 2017.

Fig. 3. Image of my mom's doomsday bunker in Tampa, Florida, 2017.
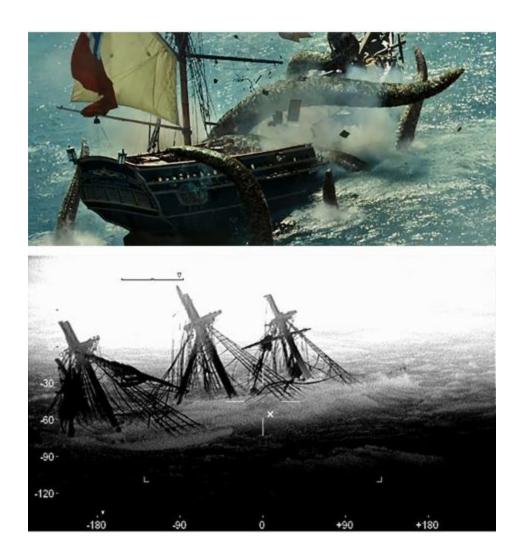Photo credit: Justin Smith.

Fig. 4. (top) Screen capture of the HMS Bounty from the movie Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest (2006). (bottom) Image of the HMS Bounty taken from a Coast Guard C-130 during the rescue mission during Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

Fig. 5. Patrick Harkin, screen capture from *The Bounty,* 2017.

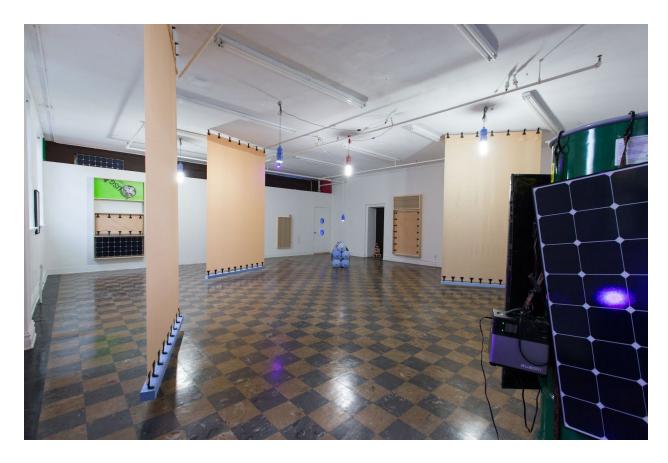Fig. 6. Screen capture from Oliver Laric's *Versions, 2009-2012.*

Fig. 7. Patrick Harkin. Installation documentation of *Prime, Perform, Recover*. Richmond, VA. 4/28/2017.

Fig. 8. Dan Graham, Pavilion, 2-Way Mirror Cylinder Bisected By Perforated Stainless Steel, 2011-12. Stainless steel, perforated steel and 2-way mirror.
Height 230, diameter 520 cm

http://www.lissongallery.com/exhibitions/dan-graham-pavilions/gallery/4645
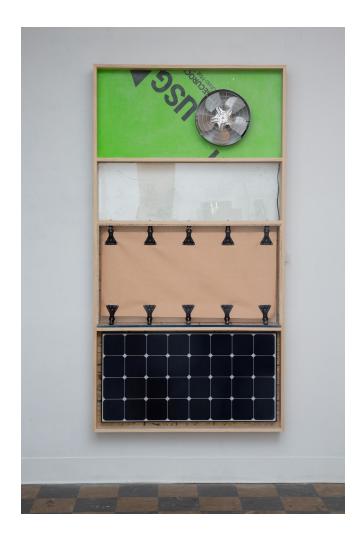Accessed 1 March, 2017

Fig. 9. Patrick Harkin. Installation documentation of *Prime, Perform, Recover*. Richmond, VA. 4/28/2017.

Fig. 10. (left) Installation documentation of *Raft*, in the exhibition *Prime, Perform, Recover*.

Richmond, VA. 4/28/2017. (Right) Screen capture of provisional rafts made from plastic bottles.

Fig. 11. Patrick Harkin. Installation documentation of *Prime, Perform, Recover*. Richmond, VA.
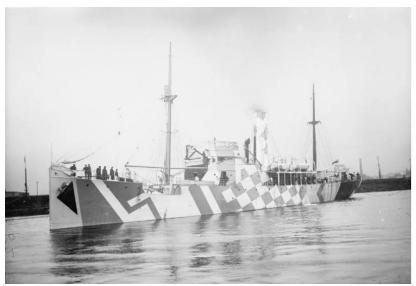4/28/2017

Fig. 12. (left) Found image capture of WWI era ship painted with Dazzle Camouflage. (Right) Patrick Harkin, Recovery Can, 2017.

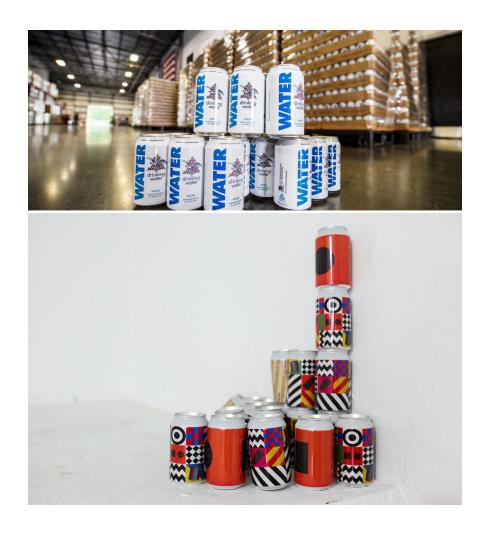Fig. 13. Patrick Harkin. Installation documentation of *Prime, Perform, Recover*. Richmond, VA. 4/28/2017.

Fig. 14. (top and left) Images of Anheuser Busch's disaster relief water cans. (Bottom and right) Patrick Harkin, *Recovery Cans*, 2017.

Fig. 15. (left) Cildo Meireles *Insertions into Ideological Circuits,* 1970. (right) Patrick Harkin, *Recovery Cans*, 2017.

Fig 16. Patrick Harkin. Installation documentation of Prime, Perform, Recover. Richmond, VA. 4/28/2017

Fig. 17. Patrick Harkin. Installation documentation of *Prime, Perform, Recover*. Richmond, VA. 4/28/2017.

Fig. 18. Stock image. Coral anchor made of concrete on a coral reef, Florida, USA.

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