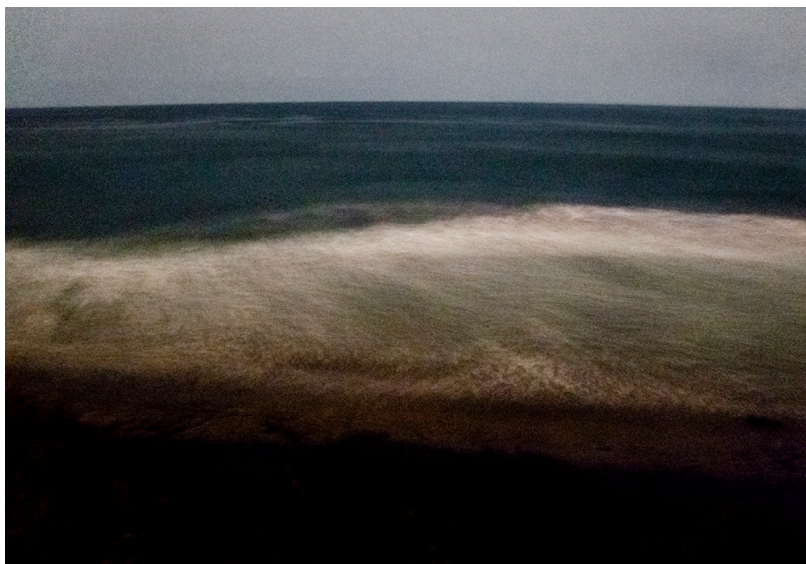


DRAWING BLACKWATER
Matthew Walker

September 4 - October 18, 2014

Opening Reception and Artist Talk: Saturday, September 6, 2:00 - 4:00 pm



Matthew Walker, *Night Waves*, 2014. Photograph.



HAMILTON ARTISTS INC.

Proximity and Time

Three times in the earth's history 'extinction events' have occurred in which up to 96% of all species disappeared. These entropic cycles of extinction and renewal occur over tens of thousands of years. Each of these extinction events seem to have been associated with significant sea level changes – perhaps reminding us of current foreboding headlines and highlighting the physical and ethical implications of our current actions. It seems that each time such an event occurs, lichens (which build soils to sustain new organisms) can be given a good deal of credit for life eventually returning in its rich diversity. Rarely, in our everyday conception of the natural world, do we give lichens, for example, the credit they deserve. There are so many things we underestimate or ignore.

Imperial ideas transform time into space. Nomadic ideas, on the other hand, tend to understand time as a multiplicity of times. These times—tribes of monads—are autonomous from each other, each one obeying its own laws.[...] (The notion of a single spatialized time is linked to the historical appearance of the State.) The Rarámuri, for example, developed a model based on the existence of more than one internal time, sustaining the existence of various "souls" that simultaneously co-existed within the human body. While the Huichol believe that when a pair of nomad groups meet two different times collide. This understanding of time not only functions to plumb the profound nature of the human animal but also to impede the formation of a unitary political order, a system of centralized control.
- Heriberto Yépez, *Empire of Neomemory*

It is extremely difficult for me to grasp what 'tens of thousands of years' might be or mean. I have no experiences that allow me to conceptualize time in such a manner. We are living through a period in which thoughts of our own extinction, or other dystopian scenarios, are difficult to avoid. Water, air, rock, lichen and various microorganisms will outlast us, at least in some form. Yet the anticipated consequences of our continued push towards societal progress, the ways in which we manipulate the world around us as a means to an end, undermine this conception of the natural world as something that will still be here after all traces of our current culture have completely vanished. What does the natural world have to teach us that might alter our ongoing behaviour, inform us of the true consequences of our actions, offer up healthier modes or structures for existence? What does rushing water sound like if we think of it as something that will continue to rush so far into the future our minds have difficulty even approaching that scale of time?

This hypothetical dynamic between the sound of rushing water and how time might be experienced if we were to place water at the centre of our conception



Matthew Walker, *Extinction Event (In situ/during retrieval)*, 2014.

of time is resonant in many of the works on display. Through varying degrees of mediation and abstraction in the gallery, Matthew Walker has manipulated the idea of nature. Its undulating rhythms; the secret language it evokes; our relation to; and distance from it. Seascapes through the digital blur of long-exposure photographs, a boulder with its surface sandblasted clean (all of the lichen blasted away), models of the world disembodied and repositioned. Is this how – at the tail end of modernity – we often experience or conceive of our natural surroundings? And if not, then how? Is it still possible to drown without noticing something slightly cinematic in the experience?

If all insects on Earth disappeared, within fifty years all life on Earth would end. If all human beings disappeared from the Earth, within fifty years all forms of life would flourish.

- Jonas Salk, Biologist

Heraclitus famously stated that: "No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man." The sophist Cratylus then added that perhaps you cannot even step into the same river once: the river is changing and gone even as a single event of stepping occurs. All of this comes down to us from antiquity, ideas that are now frequently repeated in settings that have little to do with their original meaning or context (as I am also doing here.) I now wonder if all of human civilization might be seen as a sort of river we can only step in once. As the earth, tens of thousands of years down the line, recovers step-by-step from its current, human-made extinction event, it will once again become something else; something we can never know. There have been previous extinctions but never like this, never made by us and perhaps never so brutal.

Of course, my even thinking in this way requires a certain mental separation from the natural world that surrounds me. But this separation is neither real nor insurmountable. Matthew Walkers' work speaks to various kinds of proximity to our environments and technology, the way these realities conflict and intertwine. It gives us yet another chance to reflect on how we come close and grow distant from conceptions of, and encounters with, the natural world. Our conception of technology is often so much more limited than we realize, we can see the physical results of our actions but not the almost infinite assumptions that underpin them. And wouldn't it be beautiful if our conception of the natural world, of our ethical responsibility to the future, was still only at its very beginning?

Jacob Wren

Matthew Walker lives and works in Hamilton, Ontario. He graduated from McMaster University and completed his MFA at the University of Calgary. His work reflects his interest in landscape and models of mapping and understanding place along with the exploration of materials and performative action through the interaction of objects and space.

Jacob Wren makes literature, performances and exhibitions. His books include: *Families Are Formed Through Copulation*, *Revenge Fantasies of the Politically Dispossessed* and *Polyamorous Love Song*. As co-artistic director of Montreal-based interdisciplinary group PME-ART he has co-created the performances: *Individualism Was A Mistake*, *The DJ Who Gave Too Much Information* and *Every Song I've Ever Written*.

HAMILTON ARTISTS INC

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