KEVIN SUDEITH
MODERN PETROGLYPHS

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY:

Art creates a multidimensional network of meaningful relationships within which we identify ourselves. Through an exploration of time, durability, and mortality, Kevin Sudeith's modern petroglyphs facilitate a glance into this expansive network; between individuals, between an artist and his work, between an audience and an artist, and between the varying facets of an individual piece. Through documenting the work in various media, Sudeith lays the groundwork for an intricate temporal map of relationships spanning from coast to coast.
The work exists within layers of relationships and simultaneously within layers of temporal significance:
the length of a human life, the durability of paper, the seemingly infinite lifespan of an immovable stone.

With an art practice that includes a social process, Sudeith begins each work by engaging the community in a dialogue about identity representation: who the individuals are as people and with what they identify. These conversations are then recreated through physical manifestations of recognizable environmental and cultural representations within the artwork.

Baudrillard's writing, specifically in *Simulacra and Simulation*, describes our world as one in the third order of simulacra. Late capitalism, the media, urbanization, and language have created a hyperreal simulation, as representations layer one on top of another the initial thing—the signified—is lost in layers of abstraction. Sudeith's work peels back these layers of abstraction, beckoning to mind the pre-modern. Sudeith's work is a representation, but one tied closely to the signified. Whereas much of modern art abstracts, Sudeith moves closer and closer to reality: each work capturing a moment in time and space. The prints from the petroglyph then function as an archivable documentation of this original work.

This archive, the multidimensional network, is the overarching form of the artwork. Through permanence—the petroglyph's lifetime is seemingly infinite—and documentation—in video, photographs, and prints—the works engage an audience in their own sense of time and relationships. While some are fleeting and other more long term, what Sudeith does is capture the various levels of these relationships and reflect them back to the audience. The work is a meditation on archival durability as much as it is the capturing of a community in a specific time frame.

These concepts go hand-in-hand. In using an ancient art form to capture a modern era Sudeith's work answers the question: what permanent documentation do we have of our lives here? Beyond the Internet, beyond the digital, beyond the commodifiable; Sudeith's petroglyphs capture our fleeting human lives while the prints act as a kind of middling agent between these two frames of time: geological and the span of a human life. His body of work develops with the addition of each new rock carving, becoming a more complete portrait of our world and time. As Sudeith adds new rocks and documentation to the database, he create a more intricate piece spanning diverse local communities over greater distances.

SURVIVING //
FINDING //
CARVING //

SETTING UP CAMP:

How I camp depends on the location. Originally, I camped in a tent with Persian rugs scattered around and cooked over an open fire. I quickly learned that lifestyle takes a lot of time—roughly three hours per day—so the “housework” was cutting into the real work too much. Now I enjoy a more Spartan lifestyle.

Whenever possible, I pitch a tent. It’s nice to get out of the van; I love the sounds of the outdoors and it can be very “exciting” for an electrical storm to pass while I’m in a two-person tent. Sometimes, necessity keeps me camping in the van. And I like that too. It’s cozy, but the van shakes in a strong wind.

HIKING TO THE ROCK // MOVING THE ROCK:

While the van takes me all across the country, it can only take me so far into my art practice. Often, I will hike to more remote rocks in order to carve them. On the other hand, more well-trodden routes have often been cleared of rocks so I have to bring them to the correct locations.

DRAWING IN CHALK:

Before carving, I plan out the drawings in chalk on the face of the rock I have chosen to work on. This allows for me to visually plan my work before making any permanent marks.

PETROGLYPHS //

PRINTS //
VIDEO //
COMMUNITY //

MAKING PRINTS:

After I carve the rock, I paint it, and press wet paper onto the rock. The color conveys the image and the pressing captures the sculpture as an embossing. Printmaking serves to present the work to a broader audience than might see the petroglyphs first hand. The prints create a conceptual form where the spatial relationship between the rock and the paper create the broader sculpture. All the carvings and impressions are indexed in a relational database that serves as an index for the work. I like to capture the texture of the surfaces and depth of the rock in minute detail, and the handmade cotton paper does that excellently.I make small sheets, and then assemble them on the rock to make bigger pieces.

VIDEOS:

The concept of time is integral to my work, and the videos are an instrumental tool in that exploration. While the videos document the performance of the carving and printmaking, they also capture the time when my mortal body is present at the rock. The rock carvings and prints continue to exist as time passes, but my presence at the rock and—my body itself—is ephemeral. The videos mark the moment an impression is born and they serve as a practical tool for archivists. Future viewers can track the origins of a piece. By being able to slow down and speed up time, focusing on the action; I am able to further explore this concept while producing the videos. I also explore light. Sometimes it is just about the pleasure of watching the light fall on the clouds or landscape. However, the light also marks time like a sundial.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

My art is founded on community engagement. It begins by researching the community before I even arrive, and continues by then meeting local residents to learn what's important to them, and what makes the place unique and particular in their eyes. The engagement continues through on-site production of the work through conversations with passersby wandering near the site.

The engagement continues after the carving is complete, in the form of educational and printmaking workshops involving the rock. When the work is complete, some images are left unpainted, and I can train teachers to continue the interactive workshops into the future. The public engagement and educational programs build a strong bond between the community and the artwork. The most satisfying effect of my work is that local people identify with it. They see their own lives etched in stone, understand the durability of the work, and know their own experience is captured for history.

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