

GALLERY GUIDE

RIDDLE OF THE BURIAL GROUNDS

Lara Almarcegui (ES/NL), Stéphane Béna Hanly (IE),
Rossella Biscotti (IT/NL), Simon Boudvin (FR),
Matthew Buckingham (US), Mariana Castillo
Deball (DE/MX), Dorothy Cross (IE), Regina de
Miguel (ES), Harun Farocki (DE), Peter Galison &
Robb Moss (US), Tracy Hanna (IE), Mikhail
Karikis (GK/UK) & Uriel Orlow (CH/UK), Nicholas
Mangan (AU), Tejal Shah (IN)

Curator: Tessa Giblin

**GALLERY, CUBE AND SPACE UPSTAIRS
PROJECT ARTS CENTRE
11 JUNE – 1 AUGUST 2015**

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Containment, 2015
A film in progress

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Rotterdam. Commissioned
by Manifesta 9
Supported by Mondriaan
Fund

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Supported by the French
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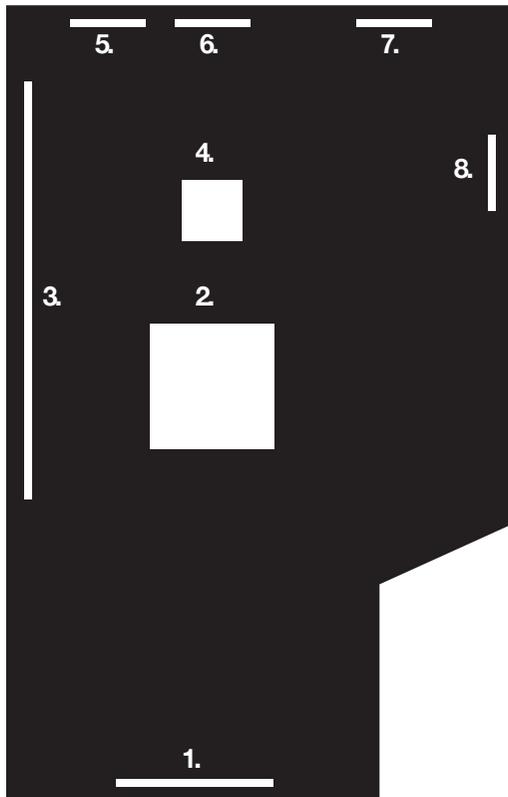
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DigiBeta, col., 43 min
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Supported by Mondriaan
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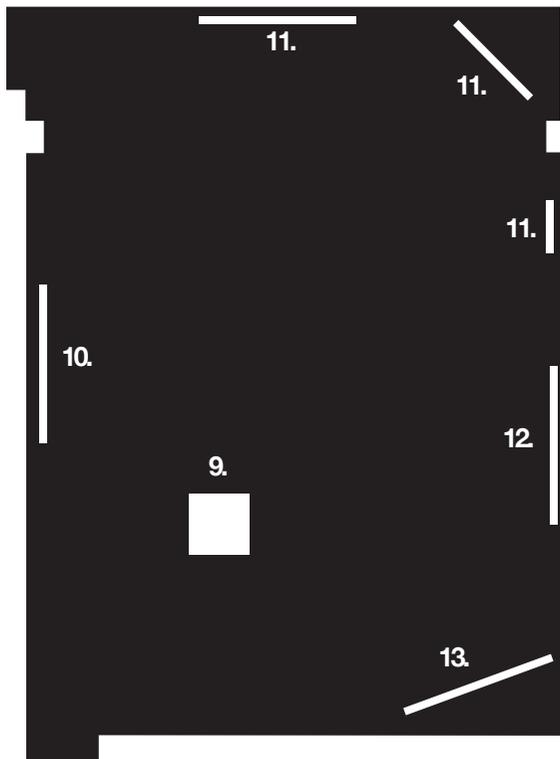
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Commissioned by
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Supported by the Goethe-
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18.

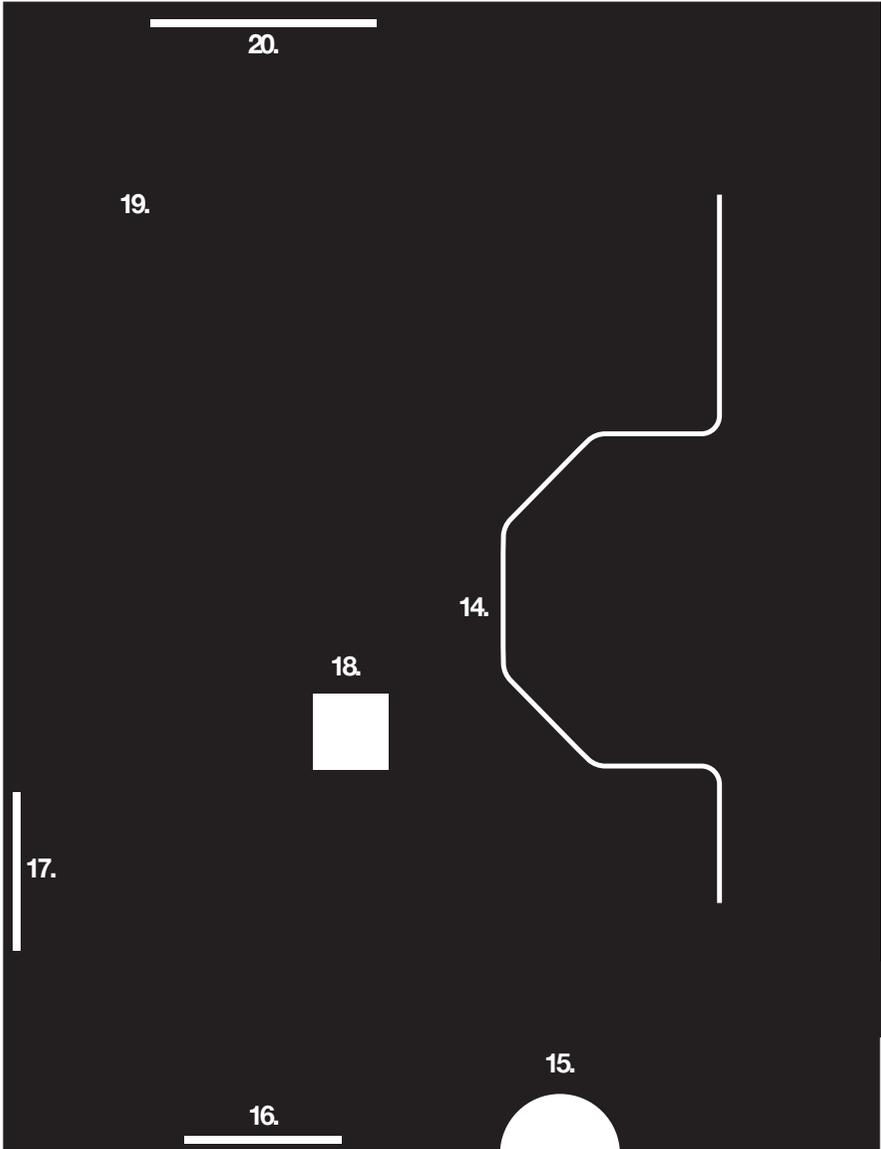
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Asphalt, extracted from the
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Supported by the French
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Dorothy Cross
Stalactite, 2010
Single channel HD video
with sound, 5 min 22 sec
Courtesy the Artist and
Kerlin Gallery, Dublin



“Do not destroy these markers. These standing stones mark an area once used to bury radioactive wastes. These wastes give off invisible energy that can destroy plants, animals and people. The rock and water in this area may not look, feel or smell unusual but may be poisoned. These markers were designed to last 10,000 years. Do not drill here. Do not dig here.” (*Containment*, a film by Peter Galison & Robb Moss [in progress])

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We are drawn to objects, to markers, to ruins. We excavate, restore, categorise, explore, conceive and create them. These signs from the past are evidence of a will to communicate. They are enduring windows into belief systems, social behaviour and technical proficiency. And those things that are made and erected today are revealing of the present context – of our knowledge, our fascinations, and the extent to which we are able or willing to consider our place within the Anthropocene.

Over two theatres and a gallery, *Riddle of the Burial Grounds* brings together artworks which measure themselves against geological and human time. They are artworks that give speculative forms and images to periods, epochs and eras: vast, unknowable expanses of time that help us to look outside of ourselves and the worlds we inhabit and, in so doing, attempt to stretch the possibilities of human imagination. Artists have situated works in or around various unique subjects: man-made ruins and extraordinary natural phenomena; excavated sites and empty-bellied mines; language and its limits; burial, ritual, forecasting, futures and radioactivity; interspecies hybridity; climate change, wastelands and wildernesses.

There is a mysterious, romantic element about wondering about the past, however critically one goes about it. The ancient sites and images are talismans, aids to memory, outlets for the imagination that can't be regulated, owned, or manipulated like so much contemporary art. (Lucy Lippard, *Overlay*, 1983)

Carved or inscribed warning stones such as Japan's 'tsunami stones' have become tragic monuments to that which has been forgotten. Standing stones and megalithic sites around the world are still studied and excavated, and as a 'core sample' of cultural history, they have become porous receptacles of meaning: projected onto, worshipped, monumentalised; made religious, sacrificial, supernatural, functional, and mythological. Representing so many different things to the changing tides of inhabitants who discover and co-opt them, they seem to know more about us than we could ever hope to know about them. "Perhaps what the prehistoric stone monuments still communicate is simply people's need to communicate." (Lucy Lippard).

But these markers don't just represent examples of intentional communication: furious unearthing, excavation, mining and building create other forms in the land they inhabit. These are the giant alterations of industry, monuments of production, mineral graves which are scattered above and below ground, with emptied wombs of earth and scabbled faces of rock. The question of ownership of this 'underneath' brings up all sorts of contradictions concerning land rights, mineral rights, and the surface of earth as a separate juridical entity to that which lies beneath. Quarries, mines, bulldozed hills and flooded valleys – all have altered the face of the earth, in the legacy of industrial growth and development.

As difficult as it seems to be for humanity to take responsibility for the future, we are living in a time where that very necessity has become the resounding imperative of our age. We live in the era in which humans have become the dominant force of change on this planet. When Paul Crutzen declared this epoch the Anthropocene in an apparently off-the-cuff comment in a conference in Mexico in 2000, he 'effectively remapped the various timescales in which our existence is recorded – from the nanoseconds of stock exchanges to the four-year rhythm of politics – to much longer geological timescales. In doing so, he enabled human history to become the subject of geological examination. Human history became a part of deep earth history, an area that had previously been almost exclusively the realm of biologists and scientists' (Christian Schwägerl, *The Anthropocene*, 2014).

There is no doubt that we exist in a peak period of the earth's

reaction to us, when our collective actions, policies, carbon emission reductions and many other contributing activities will decide the degree of the planet's climate warming. Yet, even in the face of conclusive scientific evidence, broad-reaching consensus and increasingly detailed historical knowledge of the past, key political representatives continue to tussle through environmental debates where individual gains – be it for a nation-state, treaty or economic alliance – are traded off against environmental targets and strategies. Paris 2015 will be the most important summit since Kyoto 2009, a platform for a defining global commitment to lowering carbon emissions and supplanting the consumption of non-renewable resources with environmentally sustainable solutions. And so we also find ourselves at the dawn of a new era, hoping our governments will act in the best interests of our children, creating a policy to protect the planet and biosphere, to shirk short-term benefit for the sake of long-term sustainability.

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But what exactly is long term? How far can we really peer into the future? What is human time when set against geological time, or cosmic time? What is it to think into a future so far beyond our lifetimes that the very idea of an inhabiting population of this planet is but speculation; where language would bear no resemblance to anything spoken today, and where concrete remains of this epoch would be ruinous imprints at best? What difference would there be between earth alterations resulting from industry, and earthworks created by artists?

Can we imagine the present as a series of signs and signifiers from the deep past: omens, warnings and messages to benefit the future inhabitants of the planet? An artist's gesture from 40,000 years ago may speak to us from the walls of caves. But what is it to multiply this temporal connection, to ask humanity to not just conceive of the future, but to act responsibly for the inhabitants of this planet 240,000 years from now?

For this is the lifespan of radioactive waste produced today, "The half-life of plutonium is 24,000 years. We consider something gone after 10 half-lives, so, 240,000 years," (Allison MacFarlane, Chair of the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission, 2012-14, *Containment*, 2015). This is the toxic legacy of the bunkers, waste-pits and pools that are currently and inadequately housing the radioactive waste

of this century and the last. Since the furious production of nuclear warheads during the Cold War, to the development of nuclear energy and power plants across the world, radioactive waste has been accumulating without a workable salvage plan. This is waste that waits in limbo for a solution, moved from short-term storage to less short-term, but with no resolution for the chillingly serious situation that this poisonous and hazardous material presents for the planet. Getting rid of it has effectively been left for a more advanced and capable population, one which can secure and isolate it from life on earth. But as the years tick by it becomes increasingly apparent that this waste material has no neutralisation potential, no fool-proof storage solution, no reversible chemistry that can make our problems go away.

And so we bury it. In a salt mine, in a cavernous reinforced bunker deep inside the earth, hoping its concrete containment will hold, hoping the qualities of the environment that created the salt deposits in the first place will continue to prevent water from entering its poisoned chamber.

When the development of the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (a containment site for nuclear waste) was launched in New Mexico, so too was a search for the markers, symbols, signs or monuments that could communicate the peril of the site to this deep future, to a population of the planet beyond the reach of our knowledge, a span of time “beyond societal imagination”. (Allison MacFarlane). Artists, engineers, astro-physicists and science-fiction writers and others were asked to conceive of the future and a marking system needed to communicate it. To imagine this future is to imagine the ruin of the present, and as Brian Dillon writes, “The ruins are still standing – but what do they stand for?... We ask a great deal of ruins, and divine a lot of sense from their silence.” (*Ruin Lust*, 2014).

In contrast to the technical, engineering and symbolic proposed by these warning landscapes, sit our present-day riddles: standing stones, Neolithic menhirs, megalithic structures as well as more humble, less celebrated manifestations of time, meaning and natural phenomena. These are stones that describe time through their sheer stoniness, through the manner they are formed, and the repeated cycle of compression, fraction, and erosion:

“They provide moreover, taken on the spot and at a certain instant of its development, an irreversible cut made into the fabric of the universe. Like fossil imprints, this mark, this trace, is not only an effigy, but the thing itself stabilized by a miracle, which attests to itself and to the hidden laws of our shared formation where the whole of nature was borne along.”

(Roger Caillois, *Pierres* (1966))

The meaning that many including Roger Callois have read and will continue to read into stones is both scientific and speculative – much like art and our relationship to it. Significant form, ritual, mythologizing, burial, excavation, the immutability of objects, things seen as though from the future, things made as though from the past. Searching for meaning through objects and artefacts around us, searching for meaning through gesture and art. These are the preoccupations of *Riddle of the Burial Grounds*. These are the stones that wash up on the shore of our dreams.

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Tessa Giblin

Lara Almarcegui (Cube 10.)

Buried House, Dallas, 2013

Single channel HD video with sound, 7 min

Mineral Rights, Ireland, 2015

Unrealised proposal

Supported by Mondriaan Fund

Lara Almarcegui has two artworks in the exhibition – one represented, one not. *Buried House, Dallas* is a project that the artist negotiated in Texas, in which she buries a house in its entirety in the earth. After digging a large hole in the ground, heavy machinery then begins to roughly dismantle an abandoned house, smashing through walls and ferrying the chunks of material into the cavity. Strewn through the wreckage, and transferred into the hole, is evidence of lives and belongings, the personal things that suggest the difference between a residence and a home. In negotiating the permission to bury an entire house in the ground, Lara Almarcegui inevitably reveals complexities and irregularities about cultural, societal and legislative relationships to the land.

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In *Mineral Rights, Ireland* (ongoing 2015), Almarcegui plunges into the deep recesses of the earth, attempting to acquire the rights as an individual to the iron deposits beneath Ireland. It doesn't sound like the most unreasonable proposition at first but, like many of the other artworks in this exhibition, its revealing process shunts you out of a familiar way of thinking about land and ownership into something much more abstract. It is a process she has attempted in many countries, and has found success with thus far only in Norway. The process we are continuing to follow at the time of writing, reveals that ownership is based on an assumption that one wishes to work the materials, and the exclusive rights to do so rests with the Minister of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. The very concept that an individual, as distinct from a mining and exploration company, might seek to identify and own a mineral deposit is highly unusual and a challenge for those supporting us in our investigation to find a pathway through. Most of the minerals in Ireland's 'underneath', as Almarcegui calls it, are owned by the state, with the largest mine run by a Swedish organisation.

Lara Almarcegui's artworks are a little like x-rays: they create an image of something we wouldn't be able to envisage otherwise, whether this is through data collection, landscape photography, an action or through enormous accumulations of materials. *Mineral Rights, Ireland* (ongoing 2015) will continue to be pursued by the artist in collaboration with the team at Project Arts Centre until it is either achieved, or comes to a stand-still.

Stéphane Béna Hanly (Gallery 4. Cube 9. Space Upstairs 18.)

Length of a Legacy (Thomas Midgley), 2015

Length of a Legacy (Robert Oppenheimer), 2015

Length of a Legacy (Alexander Parkes), 2015

Unfired clay, water tank, water

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The figure of Thomas Midgley, represented in Stéphane Béna Hanly's slowly disintegrating bust, is not going to be recognised by anyone. His name is not remembered and his facial features are unremarkable. Yet the work of Thomas Midgley has touched all of our lives. In his heyday his influence was clear in his own scientific field, and as the pioneering refrigeration scientist and unwitting inventor of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), Midgley has "had more impact on the atmosphere than any other single organism in Earth's history" (J. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*, 2001). Years after Midgley's death, Nobel prize-winning chemist Paul Crutzen discovered the devastating effect that CFCs were having on the ozone layer – one of the most vital systems for permitting life on earth, an entity that had taken millions of years to develop, and that which had made it possible for humanity to exist in the first place.

Stéphane Béna Hanly works in clay and creates sculptures using a classical approach to figuration, seeking to allude to monumental human achievement and endeavour. For this project he submerges his clay figures in water, another vital life-permitting substance, submitting them to a state of bubbling, eroding and sliding dispersal from the moment they come in contact with the water.

Riddle of the Burial Grounds contains three works by Stéphane Béna Hanly: the figure of Midgley is accompanied by those of Robert Oppenheimer, the theoretical physicist and Director of the Manhattan Project which built the world's first atomic bomb; and the inventor of plastic, Alexander Parkes.

Some versions of the monuments decompose more quickly than others, depending on the age of the figure, and how long it has been drying. This is a process that Béna Hanly sees in monuments all around us – decaying things created to immortalise an idea or a person, and beginning their process of destruction from that moment forth, be it by air, water, natural destruction or human activity. One of the most frustrating arguments put forward by climate change sceptics is posited around humility: that humans are arrogant to believe that their actions could have an impact on something as enormous as nature, or as enormous as God. Stéphane Béna Hanly's monuments show us particular people who have had such an impact, anti-heroes from our recent past. The impact that the

disastrous CFCs were having on the ozone layer may well have gone unnoticed if it weren't for the actual hero, Paul Crutzen. Hero or anti-hero, intentional or not, Thomas Midgley's CFCs are but one example of the enormous change human-kind continues to extol upon the planet. The gradually eroding monument becomes an allegory of scientific endeavour, entropic decay and a reflection on the cultural desire for memorialisation. As the clay breaks down and the murky water finally settles, we will be left with a changed landscape inside these tanks, not designed, not planned, but the unpredicted by-product of what was originally intended.

Rossella Biscotti (Gallery 2.)

Title One: The Tasks of the Community, 2012

Installation, lead from Ignalina nuclear power plant (LT)

16 slabs 75 x 92 x 1.5 cm each

Courtesy Wilfried Lentz Rotterdam. Commissioned by Manifesta 9

Supported by Mondriaan Fund

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Comprised of sixteen slabs of lead, Rossella Biscotti's sculpture is unmistakable in its heaviness. The mottled surface of the metal lacks the perfection of industrially made sheet, and its rough edges imply the casting that is true to its origin. *Title One: The Tasks of the Community* is an artwork that is pregnant with association. It is made from lead that the artist purchased at public auction during the decommissioning of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant in Lithuania. Previously employed as a radiation shield, the lead is imagined as a material which, through its very proximity to the idea of radiation and function to restrict its transit, infects or haunts. Radiation is in many ways an unimaginable thing – we can see evidence of its effect on living things, and we can count levels of it with a Geiger counter. Yet the very actuality of ionising radiation, where radiation carries enough energy to liberate electrons from atoms or molecules, contains a strong degree of structural abstraction to most non-scientists. As a repurposed material melted down and cast into slabs by the artist, the lead here holds an ability to evoke 'radiation' as an idea – and perhaps even more viscerally than a diagram of atomic structure.

Rossella Biscotti's artwork has borrowed the name of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) founded by the Euratom Treaty of 1957 (at the same time as the European Economic Area). Euratom exists to develop a specialist market for nuclear energy distribution within the member states of the EU, in order to replace dependence on finite coal and oil resources. The Euratom Treaty is one of the documents that serves as the basis for economic cooperation within the European Union, and carries with it the further association with industry, and the powerful economics behind nuclear infrastructure. Against this backdrop, there is an absurdity of scale in the financial win to be made in selling off the 'unnecessary material' as the lead was called, following the decommissioning of the Ignalina nuclear plant. Part of Lithuania's agreement around accession to the EU, the decommissioning of Ignalina was due to its Soviet-era similarity to the reactor of the catastrophic Chernobyl plant.

The slabs of lead in this minimalist sculpture also remind us of the power of form. What communicates? What is significant form? What shape, construction or manifestation can tell us about meaning? These are questions which abound in an age in which we peer deeper and deeper into the future we are now responsible for. In *Title One: The tasks of the Community* we feel the haunted potential of forms, the idea that an associative context can invest just as much communicative power as the sum of the components of the thing itself.

Simon Boudvin (Gallery 5. 6. Space Upstairs 19.)

5 PILIERS (Ribecourt), 2005

Photograph of a collapsed hill, vestige of an underground quarry

Supported by the French Embassy in Ireland

Concave 04 (Gagny), 2007

Multi exposure photograph, view of an underground quarry

Supported by the French Embassy in Ireland

ASPHALTE 01 (Les Arques), 2010

Asphalt, extracted from the end of a road, cast into a hexagonal form.

Supported by the French Embassy in Ireland

“To build a space somewhere, you need to create another one, from where you extract the material. Each building has a hidden sister. One space is wanted, designed, capitalised. The other one is waste, neither natural nor artificial.”

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Materials and architecture are parentheses for Simon Boudvin’s practice. Included in the exhibition are two bodies of work that focus in one case on a specific history of asphalt, and in the other on a quarry. They are underpinned by a probing look at the innovations and ruins of modernity. In the two photographs shown in this exhibition, *Concave 04 (Gagny)*, and *5 PILIERS (Ribecourt)*, Simon Boudvin has visited abandoned quarries. *Concave 04 (Gagny)*, at first glance shows us a quarry we might assume has been converted for public access, its ceiling lined with fluorescent tubes. Boudvin has in truth visited this space on his own, in the dark, armed only with a string of lights that he has shifted around the floor, exposing the photograph section by section as they were installed and reinstalled, then flipped the image upside down. His intention is therefore both meticulous and suggestive – he is capturing an image of an otherwise impenetrable space in full light, and at the same time suggesting the space to be something other than what it is.

The second photographic image is strongly related in its duality: *5 PILIERS (Ribecourt)*, has the feeling of an ancient, man-made tableau. Closely framed, the photograph has lost the evidence of its surroundings: the crest of a hill coming to rest in the crater belly of an imploded mine. “This object can be considered as a monument to the work of miners and constructors, a monument born as an accident: half natural, half cultural.” The image recalls the cairns, standing stones, and megalithic structures

which foreshadow our architectural histories, a glimpse of what our contemporary structures – both intentionally built and the unintended results of mining, digging and climate change – might appear like to the researchers who try to make sense of the objectives and decisions of those whose time was the Anthropocene.

Simon Boudvin also presents a sculpture from his series *ASPHALTES (Les Arques)* 2010. Once a naturally occurring substance, today the enormous amount of asphalt or bitumen used in the roads, paving and roofing industries, is the by-product of the petroleum industry. “It means that the more oil we burn by driving a car, the more bitumen we produce. The image that cars unroll roads under their tires is no metaphor.” When the industrialist and chocolatier Philippe Suchard opened an asphalt factory in Seyssel, Switzerland, he used the same hexagonal form used to manufacture his chocolates to shape, ship and trade his discs of asphalt. Boudvin’s asphalt was hacked out of the end of a country road near Les Arques in rural France, and pressed by the artist back into these hexagonal shapes modelled on Seyssel’s original system. “After one hour, the road was half a meter shorter – a small step back for the print of civilisation.” In Ireland, their immediate resemblance to the Giant’s Causeway lends them a further dimension. The naturally occurring basalt rocks that rise out of the shorelines are also a carrier of Ireland’s mythological historical folklore. Boudvin speaks of being an architecture student who sought to understand the history of architecture through its material consequences. Here he envelops these concerns to create suggestive images, speculating on what might be, or what might be assumed to be.

Matthew Buckingham (Gallery 3.)

The Six Grandfathers, Paha Sapa, in the Year 502,002 C.E., 2002,
Black and white digital c-print, wall text, dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist and Murray Guy, New York

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Mount Rushmore. Slaughter House Peak. Cougar Mountain. Six Grandfathers. The various names, descriptions, evolution of ownership, stewardship, appropriation and demarcation these particular hills have undergone are presented by Matthew Buckingham as a timeline of events. Beginning with geological formation in the deep past, and ending with geological erosion deep into the future, the detailed events in between are curtailed to recent history, and echo the many global histories where cultural and tribal land values have been over-written by western, colonial civilisations. The events that Matthew Buckingham lists on the walls of the gallery pull together the forces of nature, culture, nation, tribe and individual human endeavours. Its history is layered with the turmoil of oppression, theft, injustices, betrayal, ego, patronage and the monumental image-making that we know today. The idea portrayed in the work *The Six Grandfathers, Paha Sapa, in the Year 502,002 C.E.*, that the four carved presidential images will be an outcrop of worn away lumps 500,000 years into our future, is a remarkable thing to give an image to, and it dwarfs the detailed and circuitous history that has been outlined – important, and revealing though that history is. By presenting us with these leaps in scale, he is also calling to attention the folly of the ego of man in the face of the age of the planet. Time, in the Anthropocene, is taking on a new character. Gone is the belief that human activity couldn't affect the long term stability of the planet, and gone is the expectation that some other generation in the future will find a solution to our problems for us. Buckingham here pits our small memories, short histories and compressed visions of land and territory against planetary age and geological movement. As Brian Dillon writes in 'Ruin Lust', "The ruin is at one level an object, at another a motif: it stands in relation to its surroundings... But ruination is also a process or an action, not only an image or a graphic device. The ruin has a dialectical relationship with landscape, and further with nature itself, with an idea of nature and its decaying or burgeoning reality."

Mariana Castillo Deball (Space Upstairs 14.)

Mschatta-Fassade, 2014

Textile paint on cotton fabric, metal track, 5.5×22m, sound

Produced by Hamburger Bahnhof, courtesy the artist and Galerie Wien Lukatsch, Berlin

Supported by the Goethe-Institut Dublin

Today, the façade of Qasr al-Mshatta is on permanent display in Berlin's Pergamon Museum. A ruin dating from 744, it was dismantled from its home of origin in 1903, travelling across the Jordanian desert over land, sea and river, until finally reaching the museum island in Berlin, where it was presented as a gift from the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II to the German Kaiser Wilhelm II. Mariana Castillo Deball's interpretation of the historical context of the façade is played out in a series of audio recordings – re-enactments of written articles, new interviews, and a musical score through spoken word. In it she touches upon issues of cultural imperialism, vandalism, the machinations of the art market, conservation, the appropriation of cultural artifacts, destructive archaeology, among a prism of other issues. The artist's approach to historical narrative is both rigorously substantiated and speculative – she weaves together historical evidence and verifiable information with interpretative ideas or artistic rendering, creating in her words "biographies of things". One of the sound recordings presents a spoken-word choir, performing a score that is made from the names of the shapes encountered on the façade. The architectural ruin that is the subject of this project has been represented in an enormous curtain, filling the void of the Space Upstairs. Translucent, and lightly painted with an image of the façade's patterning, the curtain follows the outline of the original. Everything about the curtain's materiality is contradictory to the object it represents – the curtain is translucent where the façade is dense, it is delicate where the façade is solid, it is moveable where the façade is not. Together with the audio recordings swelling around you in the theatre, it feels like a window through time. As opposed to representing the façade, it instead evokes the multiplicity of associations and meanings of such a complex and contested artefact.

Dorothy Cross (Space Upstairs 20.)

Stalactite, 2010

Single channel HD video with sound, 5 min 22 sec

Courtesy the Artist and Kerlin Gallery, Dublin

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Pol an Ionain is situated near Doolin in County Clare in the West of Ireland. It is a natural cave, undiscovered until 1952, and home to one of the world's largest stalactites. The great limestone ribbon, formed over the ages by the accumulative dripping of water and sedimentation of calcium is attached to the cave by a mere 0.3m², making it all the more impressive and vulnerable in its appearance. Dorothy Cross has made a film deliberately intended for a large, vertical projection. Beneath the 'Great Stalactite' as it is known, stands a young boy. The chorister is from Ennis, County Clare, and at the artist's request, he uses his voice and the control he has over it to perform non-linguistic sounds. Dorothy Cross describes the boy's performance as like 'a baby bird finding its voice', ringing out in the cave, accompanied only by the gradual dripping of liquid on limestone. The stalactite is estimated to be 7m in length, and approximately 500,000 years old, while the cavernous chamber is thought to be 2 million years old. The young boy, whose delicate vocal chords fill the cave with sound, is on the brink of physical change. He is evolving into manhood, a stark reminder of youth and the inevitable ageing that marks humanity's grapple to come to terms with itself, yet paling into insignificance beneath the awesome and beautiful evidence of time that is the Great Stalactite. When thinking about deep time, we understand that language in the future will not bear any resemblance to those languages spoken today. There may not even be spoken language that resembles the forms and consonants, rhythmic structures and logic that is used in many various forms all around us. The chorister's soundings prefigure this age, bringing ideas of language, human time and geological time into an awesome and humbling dialogue.

Harun Farocki (Gallery 7. 8.)

Transmission (Übertragung), 2007

Single channel installation, DigiBeta, col., 43 min

Supported by the Goethe-Institut Dublin

Inextinguishable Fire (Nicht löschbares Feuer), 1969

16 mm, b/w, 25 min

Supported by the Goethe-Institut Dublin

Harun Farocki's *Transmission* from 2007 takes us to the heart of our relationship with monuments. Each chapter in this short film is devoted to a visit to a different world monument, and Harun Farocki shows us these statues and structures as things that people appropriate, make pilgrimage to, touch. From the US memorial to the American War on Vietnam, to a Munich church and the footstep of the Devil, to a monument in the Buchenwald concentration camp, Farocki focuses on the intense interaction between people and monuments, witnessing the transmission that might occur when flesh is pressed against stone. The title of the work points to the transfer of meaning from one vessel to another, and the variety of forms he shows are unique in their representative characteristics: there are hard-edged minimal structures; worn away symbols; figurative representations; functional objects; monuments evolving out of myth.

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Farocki's second piece in the exhibition, *Inextinguishable Fire* is a rare work of speculative fiction and theatrical re-enactment in his oeuvre. Made in the shadow of the American War on Vietnam, it is just as relevant today in our world of media obscurity and political compartmentalisation. Set within a napalm-lab and munitions factory, the film portrays both the leaders of a corporation and its followers, with the followers (the workers) deluded as to the true nature of their work. The film narrates, "(1) A major corporation is like a construction set. It can be used to put together the whole world. (2) Because of the growing division of labour, many people no longer recognize the role they play in producing mass destruction. (3) That which is manufactured in the end is the product of the workers, students, and engineers." In a year when humanity needs to act in the interests of the future global population in relation to the Climate Change summit in Paris, *Inextinguishable Fire* is a stark reminder of the manipulation that can be wrought upon a population from whom the truth is obscured. "If we show you pictures of napalm burns, you'll close your eyes. First you'll close your eyes to the pictures. Then you'll close your eyes to the memory. Then you'll close your eyes to the facts. Then you'll close your eyes to the entire context" (from *Inextinguishable Fire*).

Peter Galison & Robb Moss (Gallery 1.)

Containment, 2015

A film in progress

Peter Galison & Robb Moss's *Containment*, 2015 is a film in progress, and has been a significant point of inspiration for *Riddle of the Burial Grounds*. In this film and others, Galison & Moss unite an investigative and challenging approach to research and observation, with equal consideration for the philosophical and conceptual implications of their findings.

“Can we contain some of the deadliest, most long-lasting substances ever produced? Left over from the Cold War are a hundred million gallons of radioactive sludge, covering vast radioactive lands.

Governments around the world, desperate to protect future generations, have begun imagining society 10,000 years from now in order to create monuments that will speak across the millennia. Part observational essay filmed in weapons plants, Fukushima and deep underground – and part graphic novel – *Containment* weaves between an uneasy present and an imaginative, troubled far future, exploring the idea that over millennia, nothing stays put.”

Tracy Hanna (Space Upstairs 15.)

Holes, 2015

Latex, dirt, dimensions variable

Tracy Hanna made these rubber pieces by digging holes in the earth, filling these holes with plaster and letting them harden and form in the hole. She pulled them out and stood them upright, keeping the dirt on them. She poured latex over the hardened plaster and let it set. Then she gently pulled off the latex sheath, pulling with it the dirt that had remained on the plaster's surface. And then she threw these expended objects onto the gallery floor.

Tracy Hanna thinks of her motivation around making the work as an antagonistic act towards representation. It is as though in struggling with the compulsion to represent something, she returned to a material and a ground she felt she had more of a right to – the ground beneath us.

There is a repetitive, compulsive act in these works in that she commits, like many artists before her, to a form of thinking through doing. The earth becomes her ritualistic mould and her material. The limp forms lying on the gallery floor resemble discarded, overly-large condoms. They could seem like the murky evidence of trysts or encounters, abandoned as trash to eke out their decomposing last lives, and a glaring reminder of the private and primal acts they were a part of. They are both restrictors of life and protectors of life, and like other contaminants of the land, they are destined to outlast their need. Tracy Hanna's *Holes* tussle with these positions of permanence, obsolescence, with the void and the object.

The thing you can see, the latex pieces, can't escape the other thing that was excavated in order to make them. Her flaccid, pockmarked sculptures, the thin membrane between a form and a cavity, describe as much the things they resemble, as they do the excavations made in order to create them.

Mikhail Karikis & Uriel Orlow (Cube 13.)

Sounds from Beneath, 2010-11

Single channel HD video with sound, 6 min 41 sec

Commissioned by Manifesta 9

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The ex-coalminers' choir in Mikhail Karikis and Uriel Orlow's *Sounds from Beneath* perform above a disused colliery near Dover. The singers are part of Snowdown Colliery Choir which formed in a mine that closed in 1987, but continues to this day as a choir for the aging miners and their memories. The ex-miners recall the sounds of life and work deep within the earth, and sing a score based on vocal percussion, sound-effect and spoken word: subterranean blasts, whirring engines, mechanical clangs and shovels scratching the earth are interspersed with 'fire!', 'drip, shovel, hammer'. The miners take stances and positions reminiscent of picket lines and protests. They perform in a weird, alien land that is the aftermath of mining, made more surreal by the arrival of a bizarre visitor toward the end of the film. As a tuneful melody overtakes the percussive voicing, 'The Miner's Lament' underscores the increasing cacophony of sound, and reminds us of the conditions and context that gave rise to the songs and melodies of the coal mining era. The context of Karikis & Orlow's project is historical and political, as well as a celebration of the unique type of labour undergone in these mines, and the unique type of person it took to be a miner. Mikhail Karikis writes, "Defeated by the state, the coal miners did not receive official praise, nor were they nationally ceremonially mourned as they fell into combat with the state's interests... Despite the striking muteness of the empty pits, what is still audible, through the spoken memories of older ex-miners, is the generational passage of song and story in the vivid language of the miners, which has kept account of their history and tradition, giving voice where official narratives and histories have denied it."

Nicholas Mangan (Space Upstairs 16.)

A World Undone, 2012

HD colour, silent, 12 min loop

A World Undone by Nicholas Mangan shows particles whirling in slow motion through space. These particles come from Zircon, a 4.4 billion year-old mineral unearthed in Western Australia's remote Jack Hills. Zircon is one of the oldest minerals on the planet. It was formed in earth's earliest crust, an ancient skin that developed during a period of intense meteorite bombardment. Filming at 2500 frames per second, Mangan has captured the mineral in a flight of disintegration. *A World Undone* takes a tiny piece of the most ancient matter of this world and destroys it, and in doing so creates a fantastical image of the very universe from which it was born.

To introduce this project, Mangan uses the words of founding Geologist James Hutton, the so-called discoverer of deep-time: "No vestige of a beginning – no prospect of an end." Hutton is amongst the 'terrestrial timekeepers' or 'stratigraphers' – wardens of time who name the geological eras, dividing time into logical intervals: the Cenozoic era with its Quaternary and Tertiary periods; the epochs of Paleocene, Eocene, Oligocene, Miocene, Pleistocene, Holocene and now Anthropocene; the Mesozoic Era, with the Cretaceous, Jurassic and Triassic periods; the Paleozoic era, with the Permian, Carboniferous, Devonian, Silurian, Ordovician and Cambrian periods. Together all of these words represent 542 million years in the past – but only a smidgen of time when compared to our dust cloud of disintegrating Zircon, glistening like stars.

Regina de Miguel (Cube 12. Space Upstairs 17.)

The last term that touches the sight (ANXIETY), 2010

Digital drawing

Courtesy the Artist and Maisterra Valbuena, Madrid

The last term that touches the sight (ISOLATION), 2010

Digital drawing

Courtesy the Artist and Maisterra Valbuena, Madrid

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The last term that touches the sight lies in wait in the darkness of Project Arts Centre's two theatres. The two images, one titled *ANXIETY*, the other *ISOLATION*, are hybrid digital collages. One layer of the image is clearly analogue (two different pictures of icebergs), while the other is clearly digital (forms that resemble a graph or 2D rendering program), while both resemble isolated, mountainous landscapes. Regina de Miguel has an artistic practice that not only references, but works with methodologies of various scientific fields. Her larger installations and research projects are meticulously researched and annotated. *ANXIETY* and *ISOLATION* are two discreet works plucked from a larger project entitled *The last term that touches the sight*. In these two works, Regina de Miguel is fusing archetypal imagery of feelings that are associated with despair, depression, isolation or suicide. According to de Miguel, the iceberg is a very common image to be evoked by people when asked to describe travel to distant lands, the sublime, secrecy, or fear. Conversely, the flat, graph-like shapes are drawn from statistical data taken from Eurostat (the Institute for European Statistics), corresponding to rates of suicide and depression. Without their corresponding contexts and values, the images would in a way be made impotent but for the simple, foreboding line of text. *ANXIETY*. *ISOLATION*. Each word across the base of the image behaves as a title, and as a symptom. Beyond the knowledge of the data and research that is behind the image construction, at its most immediate level it speaks to us about the language of forms: the iceberg as an archetype of the unknown, of isolation and unease, and the jagged geometric forms as carriers of the same meaning. A form as an emotion. The visible iceberg as metaphor for unseen peril beneath. The artist writes, "there are no confines left to be explored, and determined symptoms – those that in great part are the principle of our singularity – don't find a specific place in our imagery. Facing this 'end of geography' we see that even more bottomless regions, human latitudes extend to be mapped". As Christian Schwagerl writes in *The Anthropocene* (2014), "In the Holocene, there was always a "big world out there", the "great outdoors", an infinite natural world that seemed inexhaustible... But, in the Anthropocene there is only "the great inside", jointly shaped by each one of us in everyday life... We are not separate from our environment."

Tejal Shah (Cube 11.)

Some Kind of Nature, 2013-14

Dual channel video installation, HD, black & white, sound, and photograph

Channel I: 6 min 30 sec

Channel II: 1 min 37 sec

Courtesy the Artist, Barbara Gross Galerie, Munich and Project 88, Mumbai

Tejal Shah's video installation, *Some Kind of Nature* (2013-14) is an allegory for humankind's relationship to nature. The artist shows us a world where natural resources appear to be living, where earthly matter is made to feel bodily, and the where marks made in the land are seen through new eyes, foreign eyes. With a soundscape that appears biometrically-based, or insect-sounding, *Some Kind of Nature* is an absorbing and atmospheric encounter with a world that seems familiar, yet of an entirely foreign physicality. "The new model of the biosphere moves us away from an outdated view of the world as 'natural ecosystems with humans disturbing them' and towards a vision of 'human systems with natural ecosystems embedded within them'" (Erle Ellis, geographer). A lack of distinction between a cultivated and a wild environment places Shah's practice in an unclear temporal zone; suggestions of futuristic, post-apocalyptic, or prehistoric periods resist precise determination, as do the actions and costumes of the sparse characters that populate her films. We encounter her proboscidean creature, the 'humanimal' with a mammalian truck, a still figure exposed in the landscape and holding aloft a reflective disc. There comes a sense of communication – not through spoken language, but through another, more advanced, perhaps digital, even neural manner. Through the eyes of this creature, we also visit the the heritage site of the Usgalimal Petroglyphs that are approximately 20,000 – 30,000 years old, approaching them with a stick that appears to be divining, or reading the markings. The disconcertion in relation to where we are, who we are and what time we're in is propelled by an outcrop of disguised, breathing rocks. They place the work in the realm of hybrid fantasy, or as the artist writes, an "interspecies anxiety we are experiencing in the Anthropocene", where the land, mud, rivers and rocks have taken on the life that once etched, scabbled and formed them.

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Peter Galison & Robb Moss in conversation

Monday, 20 July 2015 6.00pm

VENUE: Paccar Theatre, Science Gallery Dublin

We are delighted to partner with Science Gallery Dublin to present this public lecture by American historian of science Peter Galison. This will be followed by a conversation with film-maker Robb Moss about their recent collaboration to research and produce their documentary film *Containment*.

This event is free but ticketed. Book to avoid disappointment.

www.projectartscentre.ie

Book a curator's tour of *Riddle of the Burial Grounds* for yourself or a group on Friday 12 June at 11am, Thursday 18 at 11am, Friday 19 at 11am, or please contact gallery@projectartscentre.ie to speak about arranging a separate tour for your group.

