



MARCH

This morning as I dragged my feet down into the subway station, a concerned citizen in plainclothes pulled out a magical key that unlocked the forbidden door to let a family slide through for no fare, and I slipped in behind them. Everyday, I see concerned citizens helping one another in this way.

I rock back and forth on the A train between Brooklyn and Manhattan. We are under water. The train car shakes and heaves. A man looks out the window into the tunnel blackness and laughs. Children scuttle away from him. I wonder if this is how the earthquake felt yesterday—I can't remember how it felt to stand on top of a crashing geology because I thought it was just another day in a city built with little consideration for the rocks and rivers below.

We have become accustomed to the clanging: the trucks that thrash through streets with enough severity to crack the foundations of buildings; the construction of new foundations with jackhammers, hoists, equipment to block the sun and cut through the hillsides that once waved across this island. I couldn't tell that the planet had shuddered, tectonic plates gnashing against each other, rumbling through multiple states

MAY

The ancient concrete of Roman aqueducts has become its own geological entity after aging through a chemical process. It has become its own rock. Ancient Rome was home to another strata that feels solidified and immutable after all these years, that of class structure, or the

inextricable link between industry on a massive scale and the social order of democracy. The oldest cement building in America, located in Brooklyn, has neoclassical columns to position itself within this long art historical lineage of ideals and form. Maybe that building too will become its own stone in a couple thousand years, if it hasn't already been demolished for a high rise.

Google recommended the aqueduct article to me while I was sitting in my car. Traffic braided into the Holland Tunnel, a continuous archway of pulverized stone allowing cars to pass beneath the Hudson River, like Atlas shouldering entropy for the flow of commerce to pass through. The screen brightness on my map automatically corrected once I crossed the threshold into the space under invisible water.

DECEMBER

There are arrow trees, also called trail trees, in the Wisconsin woods where I grew up. The trees direct to an overlook—possible evidence of the Sauk and Meskwaki (Fox) people who had tended the bluffs since the 1600s, after they were pushed west out of what is now New York by Anishinabe and Huron people. They were then forcibly removed from this valley via illegitimate treaties penned by white newcomers to Wisconsin (settlers who had also moved west from New York) who named Sauk County after the twice displaced people who had invaded Mashkotēwineniwa (Plains) territory. Or maybe a Ho-Chunk or Ojibwe person trained the tree trunks. It feels inauthentic to reconstruct a history that I have no claim to, and my own research on who specifically

bent these branches has only led so far. Yet, the idea that someone's ropes over time shaped these massive savannah oaks to point toward a 20-mile viewpoint ensnared my imagination the moment my mother told me about them 35 years ago.

When we were children, my middle sister and I brought offerings of our favorite cookies to plant beneath a big hollow tree in the woods. The cookies were from Classen's, a special spring treat from our parents, all the colors of Easter, only one box a year.

My sister and I choreographed a ritual. It responded to the clearing, the way the trees lined a deer path like a French allée, then opened up to a circle of flat ground with tall trunks towering on each side denoting the other three cardinal directions. My sister and I had reverence for our favorite places in the woods but had never learned customs to pay them respect, so we made up our own. We dug a hole with our hands, buried the brightly colored mint cookies in front of the big broken tree, half alive-half dead, which we named "Mother Earth". We covered the cookies with dirt, touched our foreheads to the ground, said words under our breath, reversed out of the circle, never turning our backs, bowing three times as our heels stepped up the slope.

AUGUST

I carved my first rock this week. I walked into the woods in New York and found the ghost of a house, only the stacked stone foundation remaining. It was composed of uneven and heavy chunks of bluestone, probably quarried closer to the time of the Mohawk's initial colonization, the birth of the Hudson Valley. I found the flattest slab I could carry, and hobbled back to class.

The only rock I had previously worked with had already been crushed and powdered from another nearby quarry. I found a bag of partially solidified Quik-Crete™ in the trash. Patrick Modiano describes concrete as "the color of amnesia," what I interpret to be a loss of place-memory. The material is to me a melancholy geologic transubstantiation. I poured the stuff onto the softest thing I could find to form a bodiless Pieta in my studio, my own body held in the hardened arms of chopped earth.

I chiseled into the bluestone from the woods that once held up a house and now felt an inverse desire to turn this hard thing soft. Without much consideration I began chipping the slab into a shroud, perhaps a subconscious nod to the Hungarian funerary statues I love so much, or maybe that was what the rock had already become in my mind. I wonder if my family members had those melancholy stones when they were buried in the old country. When I told the elders in my family that I wanted to return to Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine they scoffed, "Why? We left. We live here now."

I dropped acid and made love to an underwater boulder in California's Cosumnes River today. I wore goggles, just as I prefer the lights on. Love making is a consensual exploration of every perfection, fold, sensation and response... How does one gain consent from stone? We communed. I slid my fingers in caverns unafraid and slithered under its darkness. I wriggled along its long green locks, soft and gooey, held in its hard place. I cried the moment I realized this ancient love had been hiding in plain sight all along, beneath the calm waters of such an arid valley. The pink swimming goggle plastic fogged up.

JUNE

I remind myself that it is easier to ignore the faults of humanity by seeking escape in the time-scale of rock-making. We become unimportant—a humility that, while crucial to investigate, ultimately frees us from the accountability of destroying this gorgeous Earth. On our planet, elements are held like treasure chests inside gray vaults of time, pinatas opened by pick axes and explosives.

Concrete is the metaphor of our ills, of America, the materiality of whiteness, the solidity of colonial violence. How easy it would be to seek refuge under a rock. Instead we must contend with our cement present, our cement legacy.

Jonathan Watts writes, "If the cement industry were a country, it would be the third largest carbon dioxide emitter in the world with up to 2.8bn tonnes, surpassed only by China and the US...Its chief quality is to harden and then degrade, extremely slowly."

I saved this article to the cloud. The servers that hold my articles are so hot they'd combust anywhere on this continent, so they sit on icebergs in Antarctica, deep in the cold sea not far from Silicon Valley. How much does this one article heat the ocean, now saved in a vault of wires down on the seafloor?

Stone is both forever and not. Continents break and drift, meet new plants, erode, settle into streams and are carried to new waterways. I thought I needed to know the geologic names of the rocks but I don't. I wasn't there to witness their becoming, how dare I apply a narrative speculated from violent core samples? To categorize it is to deny its agency as a changing thing, to mark it in time outside of life is to make it antithetical to itself. Let us becloud its story and return the lith to myth. ■

☞ ZIBBY JAHNS is technically an artist. More than making, Zibby likes to teach. They mostly teach how and why to make art. This year they taught at Amherst College and the Rhode Island School of Design. They write more than they make or teach but don't know what to do with all the writing because they are not a writer.

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