

## **Toward a Totality of Effect**

A group exhibition of the 2021 Open AIR Residency participants

June 17 - July 16, 2022 – Foreground Gallery, Phoenix Arts Alliance, Butte, Montana

August 5 - 31, 2022 – Gallery 709, Missoula, Montana

Curated by John Knight, the 2021 Open AIR Curator-in-Residence

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### Exhibition Statement:

During the late spring and through the early autumn of 2021, I had the benefit of meeting with the 22 artists who participated in the 2021 Open AIR Residency program. Invited to be a part of the residency program as a curator-in-residence, I visited with each artist in residence to learn about their work. With the goal of organizing an exhibition of works by all the artists of the 2021 residency program, I visited with the residents at their residency sites, on Zoom, over coffee on my porch in downtown Missoula, and through a series of expanded dialogues over the phone and through email. During my visits, I was privileged to get to know the practices of all the artists, while having the opportunity to build community and develop friendships. Thanks to technology and the internet, I have stayed in contact with each resident in the past year. The result is an exhibition that celebrates the achievements and work of the 2021 Open AIR residents.

The title of the 2021 Open AIR group exhibition, *Toward A Totality of Effect*, is taken from Steven Parrino's essay: "Toward Expanding the Post-Modern (After Robert Smithson)," found in his book *THE NO TEXTS* (2003). *Toward A Totality of Effect* celebrates the idea of *potential* within the Arts. In Parrino's essay-turned-manifesto, he frames the practice of being as an artist a radical gesture. As such he proposes that the arts move towards various open-ended points in the post-modern world:

*Toward an allegory of the chaotic. Toward an anti-systemic. Toward the Process Church of Final Judgment. Toward a collapse of history. Toward an abstraction of apocalyptic vision. Toward a responsible anarchy. Toward a structure of dissolve. Toward a Stealth Satanic. Toward a post-punk existential. Toward a suppression. Toward a psychedelic meltdown. Toward a hall of mirrors. Toward a totality of effect. Toward a resistant resonance.*

Strikingly, Parrino considered the end of modernism and the beginning of postmodernism in the Arts as a situation of rebirth. This essay-as-list, while perhaps complete in Parrino's mind, certainly does not define the ever-expanding directions of the arts by the 2021 Open AIR Resident Artists. The ideal of potential may, however, serve as inspiration for artists to consider to this day; when the residents entered into the residency program in a new community and landscape. Many of the participating artists would wonder what they might make and how they might engage with both the local arts ecology, and history of the state of Montana.

Further, spending five weeks in a residency in western Montana in 2021 was no small feat for the 2021 residents. With the rise of inflation and the cost of housing, the stagnation of wages, the Covid-19 pandemic, and extreme/erratic wildfire behavior, these artists dealt with many obstacles to their success. Yet, during the late spring through the early autumn of 2021, these twenty-two artists gathered together in three separate cohorts and at various residency sites across western Montana to make, write, contemplate, collaborate, and be in community together with their work and practices. *Toward a Totality of Effect* celebrates the 2021 Open AIR Residency artists, whose works exemplify the best of their practices and caliber of their study during their residencies.

Included in this exhibition are twenty of the twenty-two 2021 Open AIR residents: Christopher Baldwin, Bare Bait Dance Collective (Joy French and Rachel Oliver Young), Taylor Clough, Aaron Cobbett, Quinton Decker, Claire Emery, Rachel Frank, Stephen Glueckert, Tracy Hall, Gillian Harper, Miya Hannan, Nico Larson, Madison Mayfield, Michelle Potsma, Emily Schubert, Eric Siegel, Emily Stark, Cristina Victor, Maria Ylvisaker. These artists, writers, makers, and cultural producers all rose to the challenge of their residency appointments, continuing to produce exciting pieces that define their careers. I am thrilled to present: *Toward a Totality of Effect* for western Montana and art enthusiasts around the region.

-John Knight

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**John Knight** (b. 1986, Cincinnati, OH, USA) is a Montana-based conceptual artist and independent curator. His work is often site-specific and concerned with the intersection of architecture, design, and class. As a curator, he has initiated various artist-run spaces and curatorial projects which include: Williamson and Knight Gallery, Cherry and Lucic, and H. Klum Fine Art in Portland; THE PINK HOUSE (Jan. 19 1995) at Bad Reputation in Los Angeles, California; and FreeSpace Projects in Cincinnati; and is a co-conspirator with the online curatorial platform Final Hot Desert. He will present solo exhibitions of his own work at the Northcutt Steele Gallery at Montana State University-Billings, and the Montana Artist Refuge in Basin, Montana, in the autumn of 2022. [www.knightjohn.com](http://www.knightjohn.com)

**Poem by 2021 Open Air resident Eric Siegel:**

*WHEN PARADISE DOESN'T WORK OUT*

I'm reminded that I chase aftertastes:

elusive partners with remote emotional harbors

vast natural landscapes whose ecologies are some backcountry escape

--those exclusive reaches where one is always an obscure guest with isolated access

a trespass whose mental challenge I navigate as a mis-take,  
a proxy for virility.

Yes:

The federally-designated Wilderness, whose "self-willed" expanses free me from my distractions—

Yes:

Those feral-minded outdoorsmen, whose know-how in out-of-bound ranges baits me—

Yes:

I'm chasing down my inadequacies

failing at it adequately –

and returning.

*Written on the traditional homelands of The Bitterroot Salish  
(Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, Paradise Guard Station, Idaho), July 2021*