

## **What I know now**

A Terminal Project report by Meril Wallace.

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Trying to say what I think while on a walk on the  
coast:



## Paragraphs on physically involved art

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- I. Presence: thing. Understood through the senses sight, sound, touch, taste, smell
- II. Absence: nothing (No-Thing)
- III. Removal: to take from original place. What does it mean to remove something from its environment or local surroundings? This act, interrupting what has previously been set in place, will in turn come to effect two things: the object itself being removed, and the place from which it was taken from. There is an interruption of all senses to anyone who might be considered an observer, sight, physical touch, smell, sound. Removing an object from any place does not affect just that singular object.
- IV. Replacement: remove one thing, substitute with another different thing. When something is removed, what replaces that object? If the object is physical, than something else of substance must take its place. A rock that is moved is replaced by air and earth. Can physical be replaced by something non-physical? Image replace object, text replace image, thought replace action?
- V. Replacement (ii): remove one thing, place the same thing back in original spot after a non-specified period of time (Re-

Placed). If something is moved from its original place for some extended period of time and then moved back into its original location, what has changed? Some things may be placed back with such precision that no noticeable changes are present.

- VI. Work: a force applied to an object over a respective distance. In order for an object to be removed from a location, work must be applied, either by a naturally occurring force, or by one that is introduced. Is work observable outside of its immediate presentation of the act? There must also be a notable difference between work and labor. Labor can be broken into three categories, labor of body, labor of mind, and unknowing involvement. All acts produce a result, but the act itself is not tangible outside of the person doing.
- VII. Belonging: What does it mean to belong? Indefinitely undefinable.
- VIII. Repetition: do something. Do it again. Show something. Show it again.

## Some things people said about what I'm thinking about

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*Great pains are taken for those we love: Brother. Wilderness. Fox and hare.  
To take pains suggests a sustained carefulness, an effort to see that nothing is  
overlooked but that every small detail receives attention, as to 'take pains with fine  
embroidery.'*

*Before the Great Mountain this sentence comes to mind: 'Weave grasses together  
for no reason and you will find God.'*

*In wilderness, there is no reason, and so I weave grasses.*

— Terry Tempest Williams, *The Hour of Land*

*Because I'm in love. With salmon, with trees outside my window, with baby  
lampreys living in sandy streambottoms, with slender salamanders crawling  
through the duff. And if you love, you act to defend your beloved. Of course results  
matter to you, but they don't determine whether or not you make the effort. You  
don't simply hope your beloved survives and thrives. You do what it takes. If my  
love doesn't cause me to protect those I love, it's not love.*

— Derrick Jensen

## Where I learned to love

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I grew up in western Colorado. Grew up loving the red desert that I was raised in. The canyons that were formed from the persistence of water and wind. Black vesicular basalt strewn throughout the landscape from the day when the Grand Mesa “blew its top off.” These stones seemingly out of place, but able to find themselves at rest among the sandstone. The same sun warms both surfaces. The grit of the sand still cool beneath my hand. The black basalt, searing hot. The same place. Different reactions. Different encounters. I am the sandstone. Worn by the sun, by the heavy desert squalls, by the ice wedging between cracks toes and fingers. I find comfort in the touch of sage and the clatter of bighorn sheep hooves. Here is where I first learned to love. To love the place that I am from. To love the harshness of the landscape, the hot afternoon wind that rushes between canyon walls, the discovery of that perfect pebble that finds a new home in my pocket. Where did this love come from? From time. Time spent lying in the shade of hardened juniper trees. Time spent floating the Colorado river listening to the cicada noise on the shore. Time spent tracing topographical maps with my fingers hoping to follow the same paths with my feet.

## Just a kid picking up rocks

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Why do kids pick up rocks? A small grey stone is most likely of no monetary importance to a seven year old. But there is an emotional connection between the finder and stone. Children have pet rocks. They become living characters playing individual roles in their lives. As I write I am holding one of my favorite rocks, one that I found on the Oregon coast that was wedged in a slowly eroding fissure of wet basalt. I know where it came from. I know the moment of its finding although it is not something that was being sought. It is the perfect size to fit in the palm of my hand. I can hold it tightly without feeling uncomfortable. It has indentations, as if it was molded by my own fingers. It is one of the few stones that I will keep.

## A note to the humble collector

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I have an admiration for people who have small rock collections. Each stone carries with it a story. But the stories seem to change as collections grow. I don't mean to be making any kind of generalization, but those with hundreds of specimens don't always remember where each one came from. They can't recall the time of day, or the sounds, smells, or if anyone was with them when they found each stone. At some point, they begin to lose some importance. But some collectors only have a small row of rocks lined up on part of a bookshelf. Each one has its place, and each one carries with it a long winded story of how it came to be there. These are the rocks that matter. They are the ones that have meaning. They are usually worthless, like a chunk of granite or sliver of chert, but there is a sense of connectedness with the weight of it in the hand. So here's to you, humble collector.

Tell me your stories.



## Walking without a destination

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Point a to point b. A start and an end. What determines the beginning of an action and when does that action end? The English alphabet is composed of twenty six letters arranged in a specific sequence. We are taught as children as a function of an ordered society that these letters must always be addressed in that order. L comes before M, X after W. But to construct meaning from this series of symbols, the symbols must be arranged in different orders to form words, and then those words into sentences, then sentences into stories. We know where the alphabet ends, but we don't know upon opening a book how the story will conclude.

As it is with walking.

Finding myself in a place is like understanding the opening lines to a novel. Each step into the unknown becomes a single letter to add to this walking lexicon. I travel further from my origin, creating words to write my own story of this place. I am not the only one writing. Everything I encounter is also creating a story. The sand beneath my feet pushes back as I push against it. The air around me finds against my eardrums and my lungs billow the wind back out to where it came from. I am a thing, writing a story who changes the stories of other things.

## Things change things.

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*The hewn becomes the inhuman. It is the thing after the cutting; wood after tree; statue after stone; jewel after gem. It lurches its way from one state of being to another: first the violent heaving gesture, then the care and refinement, the shaping into human ritual and pleasure. All this is preceded by the time-before-human-perception of the hewn when it was whole. Its temporality chronicles a not-quite-absolute transformation. The ambiguity of the hewn's linguistic permutations will not let us settle into just one meaning: as much as we hew statue from stone, the statue hews unto its stoniness. We value it for doing so; we want the original element to assert itself through the form we've imposed upon it. The wonder of the hewn is in its blended ontology: its ability to be both wood and tree, while being separate things. The temporality of the hewn is intimately intertwined in its ontology: the before and after of multiple gestures (cutting, shaping, reorienting) bespeak multiple states of being. There is a spectrum here: from work of art to detritus --- things hewn and strewn.*

– Anne Harris, *Hewn*. (from *Inhuman Nature*, 19-20)

## **A return to the familiar unknown**



I go back to places that I have been. I go back to places that I have not. Familiar places can be unknown. Unknown places can be familiar. Existing simultaneously, one informing the other.

## The four senses

Understanding of our surroundings is formed through our senses. Sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. For most of us, sight is how we begin to develop a relationship with the world. We trust vision because of its immediacy in understanding. But this can also be its downfall. Sight is the least intimate experience that we have. The other four senses require a more immersive interaction bringing our bodies closer in proximity to that which we want to know. The breeze peeling off of the ocean cannot be seen to be understood. We can see the water, but we must touch it to know if it is cold.

## Necessary actions



Going to, removing this  
sitting in, listening to  
looking at, walking in  
collecting that, returning to  
sorting out, shaking out  
moving in, holding this  
seeking this, finding that  
kicking at, poking at  
prying against, lifting up  
throwing out, brushing against  
stacking up, touching of  
running along, climbing upon  
scouring beneath, dragging along  
marking of, rolling over  
returning to, piling up  
sorting through, digging in  
taking out, talking to  
smelling this, sifting through  
becoming of, understanding of  
finding myself in  
Place.

## Painting isn't real

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You don't paint pictures of your wife so that she knows you love her.  
You love your damn wife so she knows you love her. Don't paint  
about the thing. Make the fucking thing.

## Drinking in airports

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I love to travel. I hate being in airports. That's why I choose to drink in them. They are places which are neither here, nor there, a sort of strange in-between zone of where you have come from and where you are going to. People are miserable. Middle aged men trying to keep their four year olds from losing their minds in the McDonalds fast food line all while he attempts to do the same. Hopeless teenagers desperately looking for outlets to plug in their dying i-phones so that they can disappear to a digital somewhere else. Maybe they're the ones who have this whole airport thing figured out. But they don't care where they are as long as they have Facebook and Instagram. Home in their beds or on a terminal bench. It doesn't matter. It's all the same screen. All these people trying to get somewhere with nowhere to go. If I leave I'll miss my flight home, so I don't. I sit at the bar with people I don't know and will never see again, waiting for the clock to hit 9:53 AM so that I can move on from this place. Still have thirty minutes. Another eleven dollar well whiskey? Sure.

## Nature is

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Nature is a human construct, but nature is. It is a word used to describe what is supposedly existing outside of ourselves. Something beyond humanity. It has long been a term which has been understood as insufficient for that which it is attempting to describe. How can such simple a word be used to explain everything? Nature is everything. Nature is the trees in the forest, the waters of the ocean, the city of New York and the people that choose to live there. Nature is. There is no separation between us and nature and it is foolish to attempt to delineate the two.

Humans are compelled to define. We feel that if we can define something, then we can understand it, and then we can claim it. We shouldn't be asking what Nature is, but rather, what is our relationship to it? Humanity itself is a construct of humanity. We are a self-defining system caught in the cycle of internal satisfaction. Humans attempting to define nature to benefit humanity. It is masturbatory to believe that we are here for us, and that nature is defined by us. We find satisfaction in constructing models to try to present our understanding. There is a formula for gravity, there are words such as tree and rock that we use to model some physical object, but in fact, there are no numbers visible on the leaves of an oak to tell us that it is in fact an oak. It simply is.



## I remember waking up to birds

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Asleep on a boat in the river. About a quarter of each year this is where you would find me. Lying under a sheet because anything more and I would find myself in a pool of sweat. The heat of a summer night in Utah can be difficult. But this is why the birds are awake well before the sun, when just enough light has come to hide the first star. Deep blue above velvet black canyon walls. This is when I would hear the canyon wren start its day. No need for a clock on the river. The birds wake me up. I would lay on my boat and watch the light cloak the sky from east to west feeling the light breeze it was pushing across the desert. Boat rocking from the water rippling beneath. Each disappearing star, another birdsong. I sit up to look around. No one else was awake so I folded my sheet and stuffed it into my dry-bag with my pillow. The first one up would make the coffee: River water and Folgers grounds into the pot. Lit the stove with the lighter in my pocket, waited for it to boil and turned it off. My cup was full of sand. Wipe it clean with the leg of my shorts. Good enough for cowboy coffee. We had a fire the night before, so I moved the fire-pan, grabbed a chair and buried my feet in the sand where it was. Sipping coffee. Just me and the canyon wrens.

## Take it or leave it

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I go into the outdoors seeking something. Something to bring back home with me. But what is it that is brought back? The unknown is a fickle thing. It is something that drives but often deters. What if I find that perfect place to sit and watch the waves crest and fall against the sands? What if there are no waves that day? Is there a stone which I am attracted to enough to justify taking it from its place in the world to put it in my pocket and add it to my small collection? I'm sure that there is, but there is a chance that I won't see it. Chance? Probability statistic.



1-3. *What I know now*, 2017. Directional audio, stone, harness, backpack, sound-activated lights.



4-5. *What I know now*, 2017. Directional audio, stone, harness, backpack, sound-activated lights.







6. (Left) *Re-suspend*, 2016. Go-Pro video still. 23 minutes.



7. (right) *Re-suspend*, 2016. Found tree, paint, hardware, rope. 24 feet





8-10. *Where this tree fell*, 2016. Letterpress book, handmade paper from a tree felled by axe. 3x3x3 inches.





11-12. *Traversal*, 2015. Letterpress book. 5x5x1 inches.





13-14. *cracking fiber*, 2016. Letterpress book. 2.5x2.5 inches.





15. (left) *Stack*, 2015. Black walnut, paint. 48x30x48 inches.

16. (right) *Log-book*, 2016. Pine stumps, newsprint, conte. 16x28x12 inches.



17. *To hang a tree from a tree*, 2016. Tree dimbing harness and gear. 40x24 inches

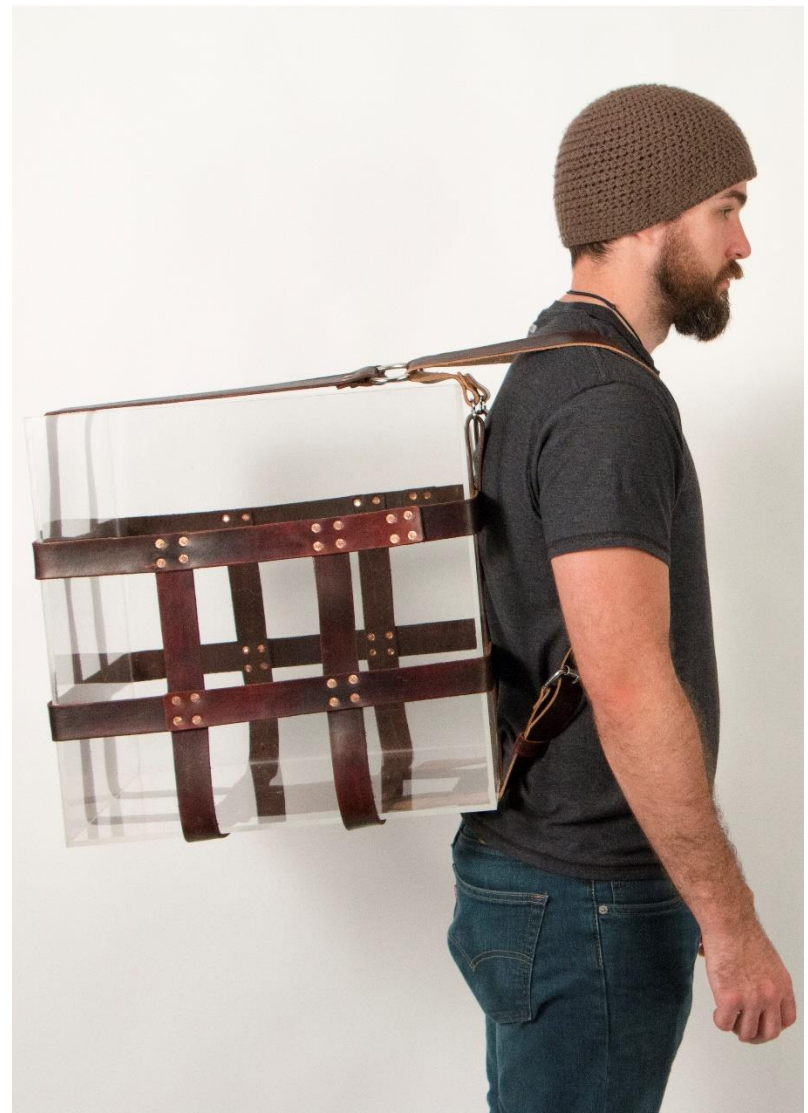


18. *You can't take it all, but you can damn sure try*, 2017. Backpack, stones, steel. 72x18x18 inches





19. *Hear over There*, 2017. Directional panel speaker, actuator motor, tree stumps. 60x18x18 inches.



20. *Tool for collection*, 2016. Acrylic, leather, copper. 18x18x18 inches.