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PATH - LOSS

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PATH - LOSS

By

Gregory Scott Cook

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Major: Art

Under the Supervision of Francisco Souto

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PATH - LOSS

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University of Nebraska, 2013

Advisor: Francisco Souto

The term “path loss” could be considered somewhat idiomatic – it refers at once to a very specific technical definition and an easily relatable conceptualization, but perhaps its most immediate read is one of defeat, literally “a path, lost.” I find this beautifully problematic. In its original end as a term in radio-engineering, it’s used to describe the attenuation of a signal through physical space on its way to a receiver – that is, “path loss” describes some kind of thin-ness of intensity, the parts of something snagged along the way; Parts caught in bedrock, lost in soil, or tangled in trees - bearing evidence of travel - but still *received*. I champion this use, this concept – path-loss isn’t defeatist, it’s indicative of persistence in the face of inevitable change.

Using field-recorded, locationally-specific sound, consciously collected/archived objects/ephemera and personally significant or memorable materials as media, my work explores a personal history of movement, loss/change, inventory, and continuation – but also embraces these terms as descriptive of a method of making art. It’s my intention that a somewhat palindromic way of working is present throughout this– dirty, mishandled documents are tightly remade/reconstructed as artist prints from specific materials, while real-world objects are translated through digital space and back to become broken, rough, opportunistically formed sculpture.

I approach making artwork as a sort of problem-solving, digging out connections between bodies of information past and present, personal and public to weave narrative or at least pseudo-logical forms from the ordinary. In re-using or re-incorporating documentative items, I'd like to think I'm securing for these ephemera - no matter how mundane they may appear to be – a life, or at least displaying in them some mechanisms of living: connection, location, communication, memory, experience.

The narrative in this work is meant to be extremely quiet and sprawling – it's invested with a consideration of the final days of a man born one hundred years and ten days before I was, who died alone, in the earth - a cost of his explorative nature – while the world *listened*. It's a conversation with a two-decades younger version of myself, proctored by my mother. It's about distance, transmission, loss, change, acceptance. It's referencing outward as a means to explore inward - an effort at digging in while casting out.

It's about being small; It's about feeling small.