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Peter Happel Christian explores time and wilderness in new Ditch Projects exhibit

For an entire Minnesota winter, Peter Happel Christian left a thick stack of black and white photo paper, tied up with twine, on a cedar pallet in his snowy backyard. Over the season, the paper turned black, the corners curled and the waterlogged sheets began sticking together. By the time the snow was melting, the stack had transformed into a rigid, solid mass the color of darkness. “I went in as an experiment not knowing exactly what the result was going to be,” award-winning visual artist Happel Christian says of his piece “Long Nights.” “Unlike other predictable photography, to go into it blind, from my standpoint, is exciting.”

“Long Nights,” along with “Long Days” (a similar process repeated in the summer), are the artistic experiments that lend their names to Happel Christian’s exhibition *Long Nights, Long Days* now showing at Ditch Projects in Springfield. Happel Christian, an Iowa native, came to Eugene to get his MFA in photography at the UO in the early aughts before taking an arts teaching position at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. But before he left the Pacific Northwest, the region managed to seep into each crevasse of his consciousness. “The sense of manifest



digital chromogenic print of a geode (Iowa’s state rock — bought on eBay) placed on a swatch of celestial fabric, drawing its title from the “complete description of the geode as listed by the seller on eBay”: #147# *Real nice crystal filled brilliant gem small size cracked Iowa Geode. This is a beauty. Full of beautiful shining quarts. Add this gem to your collection or a great spruce up in the garden or yard. Awesome. Cracked nicely. Length: 4 3/4". Widht 3 3/4. Height: 3 1/3". A great Show Piece~!!!* Happel Christian is interested in the passage of time on a geological scale — his work includes thundereggs (Oregon’s state rock), conch shells and ancient trees. “It’s a contemplative experience,” he says, “It’s time implied. Geodes are created over time.” He also looks

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destiny and how mythologies about the American West were created,” he says. “There were a lot of people already living in the West before it was ‘discovered.’ It really reshaped how I think about representation because I learned first hand that the representations I had learned of the West while growing up ... I realized they were absolutely false.”

In addition to representation, two themes that can be found throughout Happel Christian’s work, inspired partly by his time in Oregon, are the ideas of time and wilderness. One of the exhibit’s most visually arresting pieces is a

to find wilderness in un-wild places like his backyard, at an intersection or on eBay.


Ditch Projects member and UO art professor Donald Morgan says this exhibition is one of the more conceptual shows that the gallery has hosted. “Many of his photographs come out of an idea,” says Morgan. “He [has] a way with being enchanted with the minutiae in the world around him. He would notice things that other people wouldn’t.” ■

Long Nights, Long Days ongoing until Saturday, Dec. 1, at Ditch Projects, 303 S. 5th Ave., Springfield. Gallery hours noon to 4 pm Saturdays or by appointment, www.ditchprojects.com.

<h2>Winter Craft Sale</h2> <p>Tuesday, Nov 27 10:00 am - 5:00 pm at the Craft Center Erb Memorial Union</p>	<p>woodworking photography ceramics painting drawing fibers glass</p>	<h2>Winter 2013 workshop registration</h2> <p>Starts November 29 craftcenter.uoregon.edu register online or in person</p>	<p>the craft center</p> <p>541-346-4361</p> <p>UNIVERSITY OF OREGON</p>
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