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SOUTHERN ALBERTA ART GALLERY
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Southern Alberta Art Gallery Maansiksikaitsiitapiitsinikssin
601 3 Avenue S, Lethbridge AB, T1J 0H4

MEDIA KIT

ARTIST: Ryland Fortie
EXHIBITION TITLE: *Epoch Gnaw*
EXHIBITION DATES: July 8 to September 30, 2023
EXHIBITION OPENING: July 8, 7pm

EXHIBITION DESCRIPTION:

Ryland Fortie's paintings, sculptures, and installation works exist in a new biomechanical mythology. Referencing science fiction, Fortie's objects seem distantly abstracted from any original purpose, as if they were part of an archeology of a future dark age. His first major solo exhibition, Fortie's *Epoch Gnaw* looks to natural systems like the rock formations of Tafoni to think about a hybridized mythology of science, technology, and natural forces.

Considering the inter-relationship of empiricism and mythology, Fortie uses the geological phenomenon of Tafoni as a metaphor. Tafoni looks like a decomposing rock, appearing to reveal a skeletal structure beneath its surface. Sometimes referred to as honeycomb weathering, Tafoni appears as networks of cavities that develop in certain rocks as a result of physical and chemical erosion. The gaps and pillars of Tafoni are a way to think through the relationship between mythology and science as both negative and positive spaces must coexist for the network of formations to hold.

Tafoni is a useful metaphor for considering the biological and synthetic hybrids that Fortie has created for *Epoch Gnaw*. His material combinations of foam, concrete, plastic, and plexiglass in the creation of natural forms, embodies the duality of Tafoni. Both the natural and the synthetic are held together in a single object, articulating a permanent merger of the natural and the human-made in the wider world. Visually, the porous networks of Tafoni holes permeate the exhibition. They are cut into a plastic rain barrel, etched into plexiglass, and carved into wooden sculptures. Whether as visual pattern or metaphor, Tafoni holds Fortie's references to dinosaurs, machine parts, bones, and smoke as elements in a bio-technic mythology.

The dissolving forces of erosion, etymologically, are rooted in the act of gnawing. Conjuring uneasy images of anthropomorphized natural forces biting and scraping away at the stone

feels perfectly in line with Fortie's emergent biomechanical creations. Afterall, maybe a gnawing wind is how Tafoni is truly formed.

Ryland Fortie was the Southern Alberta Art Gallery Maansiksikaitapiitsinikssin's Gushul Studio Artist in Residence for 2023. The Gushul Residency is a long-standing program that invites artists from around the world to visit the mountain town of Blairmore, Alberta in preparation for an exhibition at the Gallery.

Curated by Adam Whitford, Interim Curator

Ryland Fortie works in painting and sculpture utilizing combinations of natural forms with tactics commonly found in science fiction and fantasy. In doing so, he seeks new perspectives of the human experience through our relationship with culture and the environment. Fortie grew up in the badland landscapes of Kamloops, BC, before spending the last several years in Edmonton. Fortie is currently an MFA candidate at the University of Victoria.

We acknowledge the support of the City of Lethbridge, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.