

Amorelle Jacox & Jessi Li

*Gravity was an entity*

02.23—03.31.2024

Management is pleased to present *Gravity was an entity*, a duo exhibition of new work by New York-based artists Amorelle Jacox and Jessi Li. Jacox's painting practice expands from the self to the cosmic, observing the traces of her being in the all-permeating celestial void that is as present in the beyond as it is at the edges of consciousness. Li's sculpture practice of casting glass and modeling clay is rooted in the investigation of the natural order in its relationship to humans, equalizing the mythical and the mundane in the service of philosophical inquiry into the cycle of life and matter in their transmutational infinitude. A short story by Meleah Moore accompanies the exhibition.

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*Return the speechless air* by Meleah Moore

49,

Strangely, I don't want to write you, even after so many years. You would think it would be a habit now, but this is more like birth; tedious, beautiful, must-be-done. Yesterday I climbed the hill I mentioned to you, the beautiful elevation north of the water, among all the other hills with varying names and heights that predate history.

(If the hills predate history, do they also predate love? Somehow I long to say no. The myths, the oldest stories about cementitious sentience and gods of cedar forests... these are still a part of history, I mean human history, and I'm trying for something older. I'm thinking about rock compressed by glaciers, pressed into the earth's mantle with soft consistency, like constant gravity on skin, but multiplied by millions of years and exponential currents of weight. I'm thinking of rock that became revealed as the ice melted, fifty miles a century, some fraction of a step each minute. And when each stratum was first exposed to air—was that something like love?)

But the hill, and the walk. This is what I came to write to you about.

The day started early. It was cold and incredibly clear. I drove myself north and parked on the shoulder. I looked up at the hill, at the round concave belly of slope sliced by sunlight, half in shade. From below, everything was a sheen of that particular *green*. I know this was a condition of light; the sun at a great angle. No one else in sight. I took a deep breath and started walking.

The first section was rocky and sparse, zig-zagged by forceful water. I reached a crossing: a high stream with a current drawing circles like smoke in the air. A well-worn purple rope hung taut between either shore. I charted my course, lunging to a large angled stone in the middle. My breath caught.

Blood-close-to-skin! Shaking. My body lost its sockets. My hands became round rocks at the end of my

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arms. It seemed as if all water was pushing down and gravity was an entity instead of a force. You think a hill is solid, but it's all water. And it's all falling.

I continued into the forest. Entering the trees felt like sucking air in through your mouth. Inside of the deciduous limbs and piles of crispy pine needles I became dark and pensive. Moss grew to the same level on each trunk as if the darkness held a marker and bryophytes could only color in the lines. Every tree reached one body-length branch out to the next, north-south-east-west. The trees sighed at their eerie and perpetual spacing. I sighed too. I imagined all the trunks stripped, naked, with their creamy inside bark revealed, piled like bodies on the back of a truck. I imagined melons grown in cubes because they are easier to stack. I became sad within this hideout of sponge soil and pink sea-creature lichen.

I made figure-eights around the pines until I got to the top of their line. Up ahead of me was the slice of sun. Still there, quietly dividing the hill. A moving target, an unwinnable race.

Then it became open and steep. Wind bent grass onto its side. I crunched every step. I broke every blade. At this elevation, liquid was on the edge of solid. Moving slowly because it was *in-between*. I stopped to catch my breath and a raven lunged down and sat nearby, focusing with beady eyes. I imagined his beak taking my eyes, leaving only sockets-nose-mouth among the sedges. We stared at each other until we were used to it. He took off with a whoosh.

Higher and higher towards the slice of sun. All around me quartzite granite sandstone mica schist. The landscape created slabs for me to climb, like haloed stairs to a monument before history. Step in front of step, until suddenly, I was coated in gold light.

*shhhhhhhhhh* and then the wind stopped. The sun was on my face. No slices or shadows. And what had been up and down was suddenly too many ways to name—too many directions to look. I looked out for miles at water that boiled silver. Rivers like molten slag with giant diamonds. I was standing on the mass of rock. Nothing as solid as we know. My weight insignificant, my form useless.

I sat with my eyes closed, hands folded, feet crossed. When I blinked the raven was watching me, but something was different. *Are you a new observer or the same protector?* I asked out loud.

The slope below me curved like a hip bone. I started down a different way than I had come.

I've been writing for a while now. I checked the time a moment ago, all the clocks of this world switched from 49 to 50 at the same moment. And I find myself calculating our distance by how many arms I reach out, how many stomachs I empty for your fill. If I were to put the pieces on a table and see every angle of them, stretched out, would there be a bright surprising line? Like sun humming at the horizon. Would we feel the middle swooping around us? In between nothing and something. But, as with watching the minute pass, as with these calculations of everything I've stretched, the steps I've climbed, the distance we've covered, I notice not what stuck briefly but what departed forever.

In the space, I'll be missing you.

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Amorelle Jacox (b. 1994 in Tulsa, Oklahoma) is a New York-based artist whose work is born of metaphysical inquiry, conjectures of body, object, and deep space being inseparable. Jacox holds an MFA from Hunter College (2022). Recent solo exhibitions include *An Infinite Sunder* at Lauren Powell Projects, Los Angeles, CA (2023), and *Two projections of time*, Baseltor Kiosk, Solothurn, Switzerland (2022). She recently completed a residency with Wolf Hill Arts, Chappaqua, NY (2023). Jacox was a recipient of the Marjorie Strider Foundation Grant (2022). Her works and writing have been published in Art Maze (2023) and Yale School of Divinity's LETTERS journal (2019).

Jessi Li (b. 1987) is a Brooklyn-based artist whose work investigates the relationship between human intervention and the natural world. Li works primarily in ceramic and glass sculpture. They are 2024 NYSCA Support for Artist Grant recipient and will complete a large-scale outdoor work this summer at Stone Quarry Art Park. They hold a MFA in sculpture from Hunter College (2019), a BA in ceramics from Bard College at Simon's Rock (2009), and a post-baccalaureate in Glass at VCU School of Art (2014). Li has exhibited nationally in group and solo exhibitions. Recent shows include *Form and Formless: Constellations of Knowledge* at Urban Glass (2024, Brooklyn, NY), *Nowhere Fast* at Olympia (2023, New York, NY), *Heavy Show* at Spring/Break (2022, New York, NY), *100 Sculptures* at Anonymous Gallery (2021, New York, NY). Li was an artist in residence at Chautauqua School of Art and Pottery Northwest. Li teaches sculpture, ceramics, and glass casting at the Fashion Institute of Technology, Greenwich House Pottery, and privately.