

Galerie Eli Kerr

The Birth of Art

LODE

May 23 - June 27 2026

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Greetings from the underbelly of one civilisation. Step by step into the subterranea of image-making, through the backroom of the exhibition space, two voices discuss the birth of an artwork. They are spectators and midwives, dissecting footage in length—each edit an incision, the directors’ cuts. *Too much? Uh-uh, I think we overkilled this image.* Though never displayed, a picture starts to form, its contour delineated through speech acts: segmented descriptions, comments broken into fits of laughter. There is mention of a postcard, a fallen horse, a scene of violence. We understand the two voices went on a trip, down into a cave towards “*le premier signe sensible qui nous soit parvenu de l’homme et de l’art.*”¹ They smuggled a camera with them. Fast forwarding through the illicit recording, they watch themselves wander through a bathetic decorum: a life-size “facsimile” advertised on www.lascaux.fr, located just a few meters away from the original site. A “prehistoric Sistine Chapel”² turned 3D environment, it is grandiose and synthetic, an anachronistic prowess—the proof of progress towards higher stages of simulation. We enter a tale of tech and tourism, guided through the apse, the axial gallery, and the diverticules of *Lascaux II* by a docent’s distant voice. It speaks of the merging of abstract and figurative, the logic of new moons and that of menstruation cycles.

The recording of a recording, *The Site of our Birthplace* (2026) doubles the subtraction of the foundational image; for we’re also image-deprived, the way our two voices are left to witness a replica. Instead, we catch a few glimpses of the tour, at times dramatised by a bombastic soundtrack, later a series of unanswered taxi calls for a lift back from Montignac. Counterintuitive and alluring, a video (*Big Toe* [2026]) substitutes itself as the object of commentary; an exquisite corpse juxtaposing voices and footwear, unfolding one shoe per jpeg. “*Do you like this or no?*” says one of the voices, and what was meant for the footage now speaks to this compilation of boots, sneakers and heels, each pair captured and sent out for approval—a long-distance love sustained through a sartorial, epistolary impulse. What shoes shall one wear for an excursion to the cradle of art?

From the second to the last day of May 2026, somewhere between Oxford and Berlin, a book hung in a street and its front cover read “I LOVE LODE.” Brushing against a brick wall, it compiled transcriptions of forecasts, reports of prescience and magic—a *field of potential timelines*³: floods and viruses, UFOs and egregores. 120 pages of Galactic intelligence, quantum healers, intuition coaches, their knowledge downloaded from YouTube, translated and gathered under the auspices of an unknown name, one letter away from a magnified feeling—that *crazy little thing called lode*. What is this LODE we are told we love? An Airbnb in Lascaux, an abandoned reader awaiting an audience. It is an axis tying the underworld to the supraterrrestrial—parietal art and UAPs (unidentified aerial phenomena), latent thoughts and speculations. LODE has a taste for the transcendent: that which anticipates experience or negates it, refusing fact-checking in favour of the impalpable. This is perhaps what the subtraction of the first-ever image echoes: sightless or enhanced visions, lucidity reached at the non-ocular plane. Yet LODE is also resolute, the answer to a recurring phenomenon: two brains digging from the same informational pool and spontaneously producing twin images. It is a magnetic stream between friends in interference. Regardless of time or distance, something alchemizes. LODE shapes contamination as a working method, investigating the potentials of anonymity “in the imaginary realm of art, [where] *paternité*—which in French means both fatherhood *and* authorship—often recurs when it comes to talking about the work’s signatory [...]”⁴ as if art was part of “a gender-free reproduction.” Wasn’t the “*birth of art*” described as the labor of *mankind*?

LODE works instead towards developing taste in tandem, the joys of overlap—also formally celebrated by Bataille in his description of “The Hall of the Bulls”: “Thus the men who succeeded one another at the task of painting them [...] spontaneously composed [their] elements, [...] as at the time there was no reason for not doing so, they often crowded upon already painted areas [...] contributing to the Hall’s magnificence.”⁵ LODE goes undercover and underground, an inquiry into the *mise en scène* of the “origins” and the fiction of the “original.” It may claim everything is a quote, if not a simulacra. LODE is a citation device, processing external speech, mining and webbing words, binding them into books. Homophony would imply accumulation. “Mother load” has a collecting problem. She is a monomaniac: a wide array of predictions, too many pairs of shoes. Silver, copper or gold threading through rock, a lode is, in common language, a vein in the mineral body, shining within the ground as a promise of fortune. LODE capitalises hope—four letters expanded to enlarge the hidden geological resource. A call to seek and drill through, it opens onto extractive potential.

Beyond the frequencies it may summon, LODE is also a materialist, grounded in the physicality of office supplies and consumer goods. It turns the gallery space inside out, emptying its storage into the front

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room, re-orchestrating its logic in arrangements that bind form and economy. There's something Brechtian in the act of displaying the machinery, of pushing the site of labor into exposure—both enhancing and unsettling the system's overarching opacity. We enter a room of laptops, dematerialised interactions, *frequencies being accessed*;⁶ of concealed artworks, their images once again withdrawn from view, replaced by the cardboard armature of packaging—“[...] a subliminal force in the construction of space; [...] the point of contact where the physical becomes data [...] simultaneously material and immaterial, object and system [...],”⁷. LODE works through things half-revealed and subtracted, the aura of pseudonyms. It relishes the mechanisms of myth and market-making, borrowing the syntax of merch, the language of adoration, the titles of great texts too. It inquires into the enmeshment of belief systems and circulation of value—not only the birth but the entire life of art, how it is powered, engineered, and maintained; the double-binds and dependencies it may feed on or fall into. Did you know that Bataille's *Lascaux, ou la naissance de l'art* was a commissioned work?

– Salomé Burstein

- *The Birth of Art*, 2026
Objects from Eli Kerr Gallery, Site specific
Dimensions variable
- *Big Toe*, 2026
2-channel slideshow (looped)
- *The Site of our Birthplace*, 2026
3-channel audio
100 min.

¹ “Our earliest *tangible* trace, our first sign of art and also of man,” translated by Austryn Wainhouse. Bataille, Georges. *Lascaux ou la naissance de l'art*. Genève: Skira, 1955.

² Georges Bataille, *Lascaux: or, The Birth of Art*. Translated by Austryn Wainhouse. Geneva: Skira, 1980. p. 53

³ *I LOVE LODE*, 2026, p.20

⁴ Élisabeth Lebovici, *The Name of Philippe Thomas = Philippe Thomas' Name*, ed. Valérie Knoll, Hannes Loichinger, Kunsthalle Bern / Sternberg Press, 2018, p.17.

⁵ Georges Bataille, *op. cit.* In the original text: “Ainsi les hommes qui, l'un après l'autre, ordonnèrent ces figures [...] les disposèrent d'instinct [...] et comme rien en ce temps ne s'y opposait, ils empiétèrent souvent sur les parties peintes auparavant [...] contribuant à la magnificence de la salle.”

⁶ *I LOVE LODE*, *op. cit.*

⁷ Xavi L. Aguirre, ‘Boxed In: The Aesthetics of Material Circulation,’ *e-flux journal*, 2019.