

Visual Succession:
Manifestations of Causality in Art

A Thesis

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Authorization to Submit Thesis

This thesis of Monika Lemmon, submitted for the degree of Master of Fine Arts with a Major in Art and titled “Visual Succession: Manifestations of Causality in Art,” has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates below, is now granted to submit final copies to the College of Graduate Studies for approval.

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Abstract

My artwork aims to characterize the succession of time as an inescapable series of causes and effects. Through mixed-media expression, pieces discussed in this thesis showcase my understanding of causal relationships between humans and the natural world. This principle of causation extends to the concept of determinism, and because our existence as physical beings binds us to the laws of nature it has the power to influence our understanding of lived experiences. In order to convey the deeper implications of our environmental relationships, I incorporate visual information from anatomical and geologic sources to communicate the deterministic nature of our collective experiences. In this paper I reveal specific implications of this philosophy and emphasize the psychological impact of this approach to understanding the world in my work.

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INTRODUCTION: Interpreting Connections

“[T]he laws and rules of Nature, according to which all things happen, and change from one form to another, are always and everywhere the same. So the way of understanding the nature of anything, must also be the same, namely, through universal laws and the rules of Nature.”(153)

- Benedict Spinoza,
The Ethics

Investigation of evidence found below the earth’s surface and within our own physical bodies allows us to understand the processes of the natural world. Through our attempts to better recognize our position in the world, we reveal our connective past and better understand the present and the future. We are confronted with the notion that ultimately everything is somehow connected when examining current natural phenomena and records of earlier times together. Basic scientific laws, or laws of nature, recognize that events do not happen spontaneously but instead are caused by preceding occurrences. This principle of causation extends to the concept of determinism, which is “the idea that from any point in time the whole future is fixed – that is, that all events can only unfold in exactly one way” (Griffith, 5). My artwork aims to characterize the succession of this unfolding of time as an inescapable series of cause and effects.

While illustrating my perspective of these collisions, I work to gain insight into the nature of our own existence while sharing my process of discovery. Through the use of layered mixed-media images and objects, I share expansive views of human impacts entwined with their environmental history. The works themselves may not suggest specific characters impacting our collective timeline or detailed moments of impact, but the broad characters implied in my imagery do point to specific implications of a determinist philosophy. Through complex compositions suggestive of time and space, I emphasize the psychological impact of this approach to understanding the world. I use visual information from anatomical and geologic sources in my work to communicate the deterministic nature of our experiences.

CHAPTER 1: Signifying through Landscape

Layers and Landscape

Much of my work is inspired by geologic formations; layered imagery of abstract sediment exposes the connection between our current surroundings and the earth's past. Our contemporary environment is the product of powerful geologic forces that have determined its expansive landscape. Evidence of catastrophic geological episodes, such as volcanic eruptions to gradual processes of erosion, lay cemented below the earth's surface and serve as a chronologic record through which we can gain insight into the past. In the same way, the layers of applied media in my work capture my own recording of a sense of time, place, and human interaction with the landscape. My use of strata becomes a symbol for the casual continuum of nature. The layering in my work tells a story about the passage of time; horizontal bands of color and texture create a visual effect that suggests a landscape's hidden history.

Within landscape compositions such as *Minerals* and *Landscape in Layers*, I present my imagined interpretation of what lies below the land's surface. The use of materials such as metal foils, iron oxide, and graphite in addition to paint, has allowed me to capture more naturalistic depictions of sediment, mineral deposits, and rock formation on the paintings' surface, while at the same time allowing me to create a visual complexity that requires further investigation from the viewer. In these paintings muted colors shift abruptly, creating striations across the composition to emulate natural forms. Each layer leaves a presence that affects the one proceeding, influencing the characteristics of the next. It is in this progression of history recorded in layers below that ask the viewer to seek a fuller understanding of any landscape, and I make this history the main subject of my compositions.

I dissect the landscape in my paintings, dividing it and presenting it in successive levels so that the viewer can see its complex history and consider past events responsible for its creation. I transform landscapes into cross-sections, cutting them open for the eye to contemplate. In *Unearthed Diptych*, my imagined record fills the entire composition, positioning the viewer within the depicted levels of strata. Emphasis is no longer placed on the surface of the landscape, but now on the record of history that shaped its characteristics. I imagine this history, allowing it to evolve on the substrate, gradually and slowly translating it into stages by reacting to the layers below. The construction of the image

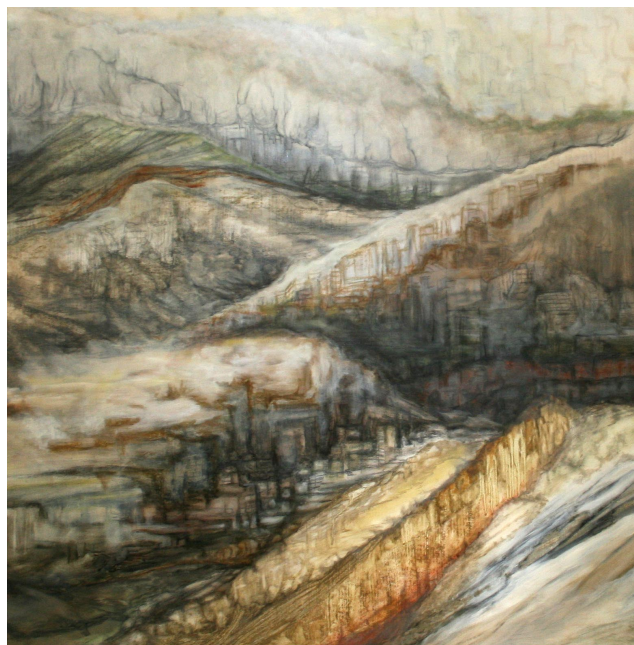
becomes similar to the process of contemplating a landscape's history; it begins at the surface and works its way to the levels below through picturing the causes of the superficial features.

I not only want the viewer to explore the chronology of geologic events and how they are transcribed in layers of rock, but also to consider how the entire composition of the earth can be understood through its recorded past, as a result of billions of years of geologic processes which include biological intervention. In pieces such as *Collision*, which depict a landscape divided and cut open like a stratigraphic map, the segmented earth is infused with abstract human structures to show our interaction with our environment as a geologic process. My imagined visual representation of both the past and future geologic record encourages one to consider human existence as part of the earth's natural formation, where relics of past life forms are recorded in fossils and their memory is preserved in incomplete mineral narratives. Through the discovery and examination of these histories we understand how biological organisms worked in tandem with other lifeless processes to cause the state of our current environment.

I imagine how human population has and will continue to transform the earth, acting as another natural force, cementing its existence within sequential layers of strata. Thousands of years of human intervention will be recorded in not only the artifacts and structures that survive but also in the dramatic alteration of the landscape itself (or the earth in its entirety, its water, its dust). *Collision* contains my vision of this occurrence in sprawling geometric patterns that I bury within heavy levels of earth. Rendered in distinctly different marks, cities emerge from within the landscape, positioned on a surface, but eerily submerged under layers of rock. Dark, complex, and radiating outwards from concentrated masses, the matrix of buried structures suggests traces of a living presence within the covered deposits. This illustration of human activity resides on the surface, for a brief duration in this invented geologic record, but penetrates and extracts resources from the layers below. It spreads in all directions, becoming a focal point, a sort of crucial injury that works its way across the inert layers of the earth's crust. The cities contrast with the surrounding terrain becoming scars in the landscape: a visualization of fleeting biological process.



1.1 Monika Lemmon, *Minerals*, 2013, oil and mixed media on canvas, [36" x 24"]



1.2 Monika Lemmon, *Landscape in Layers*, 2015, oil and mixed media on wood panel [30" x 30"]



1.3 Monika Lemmon, *Unearthed Diptych* (work in progress), 2016, oil and mixed media on linen [42" x 216" approx.]



1.4 Monika Lemmon, *Collision*, 2016, oil, mixed media on wood panel, [30" x 18"]

Interactions with Time

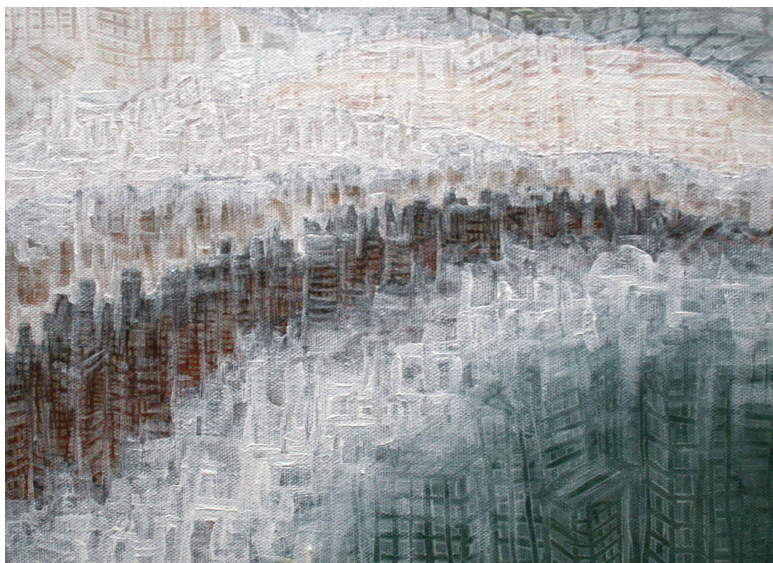
By rendering the depictions of landscapes from various visual perspectives, I explore ways to illustrate my understanding of determined qualities in natural and unnatural forms. For example, in *Landscape in Layers*, I depict the landscape in cross section and in perspective simultaneously. This approach is an attempt to show past, present and future in a single image. Multiple surfaces of earth are confined within the divided segments of strata. The atmosphere surrounding the scenery is subtly stone-like, suggestive of a future deposit of material. The separate records of time combined into a one arrangement are a means to communicate the deterministic reality of geologic processes, the implication being the inevitability of all of the layers.

In *Echos*, I explore how repeating patterns can signal the pre-determined quality of human intervention. A distinctive band moves across the canvas suggestive of an expansive metaphorical landscape. Surrounding this band are repetitive white linear marks that reverberate outward, representing the inevitability of built structures we confront. The presence of permeating bands of color throughout the image signifies a passage of time. I obscure the landscape below the central band to convey the profound implication of humanity's predetermination. The complexity of these network layers suggests the cities' fixed existence, positioned in the causal progression.

I see human activity as a culmination of events, as a caused incident built like other environmental features, but subject to the same decay with time. In *Above*, I render this idea in an aerial perspective scene, providing a description of a terrain similar a topographical map. Placed at the summits, the networks of manmade structures become peaks in the topography, similar to those caused by other of geologic processes. The city-like grid protrudes from the landscape, but the subtle texture and light color suggest a fragile impermanence, foretelling their inevitable erosion and submersion into levels of strata.

In my other works, human artifacts and alterations are likened to biological processes so that the viewer can understand them as a result of organic life to highlight their natural existence. In *Experimental Building*, I apply media in new ways to transform illustrations of man-made structures into more organic forms. Although human constructions lack a visual organic quality, they are a product of nature because biological organisms produce them. Like other geologic processes, the construction of man made forms is an unavoidable consequence of natural phenomena. I convey this idea by likening human structures to recognizable biological substances through visual abstraction. By layering semi-translucent layers of wax media in thick vein-like lines, I create a grid pattern that

resembles manmade forms but loses its hard geometric edges. The colors are subtle, ranging between earthy tones found in strata and the more saturated colors associated with living organisms. The grid pattern builds up from the surface; the lowest points contain a blood-like hue, transforming the grid into a living tissue. It is through this fusion of “unnatural” and biological forms that I show my contemplation on our constructions as natural and as causally determined by the laws of nature.



1.5 Monika Lemmon, *Echos*, 2013,
oil on canvas, [9” x 12”]



1.6 Monika Lemmon, *Above*, 2013, oil and mixed media on
wood panel, [30” x 48”]



1.7 Monika Lemmon, *Experimental Building*, 2013,
oil and wax media on canvas, [9” x 12”]

CHAPTER 2: Signifying through the Body

The Body as a Collection

I reference human anatomy to emphasize our physicality and in doing so show how I understand our burden to the past as partly due to our physical bodies. Taking a deterministic view of natural phenomena led me to deeply consider my own existence as a conscious physical being. We are material creatures, living in a physical world that appears to be causally determined, and although our conscious thoughts seem to allow us a more than physical existence, “[t]he first thing that constitutes the essence of our mind is the idea of an actual existing body” (Spinoza, 160). We are, at least in part, undeniably physical and this concept of physicalism positions us within the causal continuum of nature. Our existence as physical entities requires that we are burdened by the same principles of cause and effect that govern the natural world, and through the use of imagery that evokes contemplation on our physical body I remind the viewer of their materiality so that they can question their position within a causally determined world.

Just as I referenced rock strata to show an imagined record of the past and a progression through time, I imagine and reinterpret our biology translating it to visual compositions that communicate our materiality and causal development. Our physical form, the result of millions of years of evolution, governed by the same laws of cause and effect that explain other geologic events, is our window into the past and what binds us to it. The body is a collection of history, like rock strata, serving as a script to understand the chronological history of an organism. The body and its constituent parts serve as records of the past, encoded in DNA, and in the development of complex organs and tissues through time. Having a physical body is a familiar experience; it is our common connection to the past, our undeniable inclusion in a causally determined world.

By breaking down the figure into abstracted anatomical imagery, I transform its relationship to the viewer making it anonymous and more universal. Rather than portraying the human figure as a complete portrait, I rid the figure of its exterior characteristics and in doing so rid it of an identity. In *Figure Study*, the human form is constructed with imagined anatomy that is suggestive of fundamental body parts. This breakdown of the figure has potential to be viewed as a more universal form rather than a specific character or individual, and in that way I make the image more accessible, relying on the shared experiences of having a physical body rather than the narrow experience of having a specific

exterior features. As the figure depicted no longer references one specific person but rather portrays the anatomy-like components that make up all people, it becomes a sort of mirror through which the viewer finds not only themselves but also all others. The figures in these works become open portraits, a reminder that ultimately it is common biological traits that create our experience of the world and connect us to it.

I open the figure up, much like I open up the landscape, and show its construction as piled events leading to corresponding consequences. These consequences lead to others and congeal, retire their previous states, and seem to transcend to some higher form. In works such as *Generating Form* and *Flesh Icon*, the painted forms emit brightness from specific regions, near the summit or center of the piled figure. These luminous areas suggest a conscious awareness, a fragile radiating light denoting a transformation from simpler beginnings. By positioning abstract anatomy within ethereal surroundings, I want to capture the idea that we are ultimately physical to some degree although we experience conscious thought that is hard to define in physical terms, in the sense that it is intangible. However, this materiality is irrefutable, and I prepare the viewer to consider how all thoughts, actions, and decisions come from this physical source. In order to do this, I intensely dissect the figure while balancing out the morose quality with wispy layers of applied media. The paintings still hint at a dark underpinning, but are at first disguised under their visual lightness. I believe the subtle gloominess in the degenerated figure is reflective of disillusionment in reaction to this idea of physicalism, or the definitive belief that lived experiences can be described in physical terms. Our bodies hold us captive in a physical world, bind us to deterministic laws, and keep us from transcending to what we feel we are, a freely acting agent. They are our vehicle to consciousness and mental experience but also what keeps us bound to the past.



2.1 Monika Lemmon, *Figure Study*, 2013, oil, charcoal, and canvas on wood panel, [48" x 31"]



2.2 Monika Lemmon, *Generating Form*, 2014, oil and mixed media on wood panel, [48" x 36"]



2.3 Monika Lemmon, *Flesh Icon*, 2014, oil and mixed media on wood panel, [48" x 36"]

Separation and Connection

By understanding and accepting the idea that all events are determined by preceding events, we can begin see how our actions as physical beings are also causally determined. Conscious experience feels more than physical or not fully describable in physical terms, however, our materiality is required in order to have conscious experience. We need to consider the deeper implications of this idea to discover our own position in the natural world. Through drawn and painted images, I show the struggle to reconcile our own existence within the confines of nature. Much like the work that presents human interaction with the landscape as a natural process recorded in rock strata, I conduct a similar inquiry into the products of human endeavors. In work that combines man-made structures directly with the human figure, I present a symbiosis of what would commonly be identified as artificial with our natural physical form, the body, to show a resolution and an acceptance of the connection between the two categories.

Although we are part of the continuum of nature, we label our own creations as artificial or unnatural, which suggests that we view ourselves as separate from the natural world. I intend to narrow this distinction between artificial and natural in compositions where the manmade formations collide with imagery of the human body. The dichotomy of natural and unnatural is an important semantic separation because it places human constructions outside of nature and therefore outside natural physical law. By reminding the viewer of their inherent connection to nature through the use of anatomical imagery, I lead them to question the division of unnatural and natural when I combine this imagery with abstract human structures. If I can encourage the viewer to consider the all-encompassing scientific laws as a suitable foundation for understanding the world and our existence in it, then the connection of humankind to nature would be viewed as unbreakable, and their concept of nature would extend to everything created, destroyed, or changed by humankind.

Although human creations can be understood as a product of nature, there is some reluctance to view them as such. In *The Body is Connected to Everything it Creates (and Destroys)*, the presence of the figure, a biological form, is both solidified and dissolved by its constructed habitats and technologies; it is found among the jumbled chaos of human invention and networks of marks that tear through the composition, destroying the body's natural form and animalistic qualities. Although the man-made structures have a caustic effect on the figure, its organs and tissues are somehow enclosed within them and completed by them. They exist together as one inseparable form in an uncomfortable union that embodies their interdependence.

In *Corporeal Collection of Objects and Thoughts*, I build a figure through glazing translucent white over a graphite drawing. The drawing is an abstract assemblage of natural and unnatural forms that I rapidly executed, allowing images to emerge and evolve freely. In this composition the figure is illuminated through applied wisps of semitransparent paint over the drawing's surface. This process of revealing the figure is similar to discovering our own connection to the objects that surround us because it requires a selective investigation of an immense amount of imagery. It is suggestive of the struggle to consider these objects as unavoidable natural outcomes, because the human presence must be projected onto the objects in order to be discovered within them.



2.4 Monika Lemmon, *The Body is Connected to Everything it Creates (and Destroys)*, 2015, oil and mixed media on wood panel, [56" x 32"]



2.5 Monika Lemmon, *Corporeal Collection of Objects and Thoughts*, 2015, graphite and oil on wood panel, [48" x 36"]

CHAPTER 3: Linked Progressions

The Hand Contained

As human beings, we have evolved to a species whose anatomical structures combined with cognitive abilities allow a great capacity to transform our physical environment. This might give us the impression that we hold dominion over nature but when considering deterministic law, we can see how we are merely part of nature and acting through it, obeying its rules of causation. We begin to understand how we exist within the natural continuum due to our physical body and consider what this means in regards to our feelings of control, agency, power, and free will. Our physical form performs our actions; our hands serving as the parts of us that contain the fine dexterity to execute intricate tasks. In that way the hand symbolizes our capability, or more accurately our feeling of power and our sense of free will. When our hands are lost or constrained, we lose our power or ability to act. To explore this idea, I have incorporated the image and form of the hand in various works, using it as a symbol to represent our power in a deterministic world.

I show a reconciliation of our creative power within the natural continuum by creating work that places the hand within a cyclical composition. In a sense I want to show our experience as limited, by imprisoning a symbol of our power within artificial and natural forms. In *Create, Contain and Destroy*, I combine the hand with primal biological and advanced architectural forms to create a dialogue between the dissimilar elements. The hand is severed and detached from the other forms in this arrangement and initially appears disconnected from the other components, however, this central figure contains remnants and residues from these surrounding objects, indicating some relationship to them. The ruptured blood vessel spills out a trail of blood cells that gather on the backside of the severed hand, suggestive of both a creative and destructive event. Similarly, the building like objects crumble towards the hand, leaving a soot-like residue on the tips of the fingers. The hand in this piece becomes the object of creation, the creator, and the destroyer. It is a character acting out its destiny in the narrative of natural causation.

In *Inkwell*, I experiment with communicating our restricted capacity to act by making a device that mediates the act of creating. The device is a wearable ceramic form that transitions from a bone like surface near the top or forearm, to a complicated pattern towards the palm of the hand. It is worn like a glove but contains hollow cavities that serve as channels for ink to flow onto the fingertips. The

hand's fingers become the brush to spread material as demonstrated in the documentation of the device being used to create patterns on a two dimensional surface. Although the piece is a tool for controlling the ink, ultimately its use results in the same outcome and as if there were no tool at all, or if the hand was used bare. In this piece, the viewer discovers the nuances that suggest the link between human endeavors, biology and natural processes.

The limited capacity to act outside of natural law is embodied again in *Surrender in Structure*, which shows a literal transformation of the solid hand into a hollow cavity. As the hand reaches down into the base layers of sediment and strata, an imprint replaces its volume and its power dissolves. This piece illustrates our loss of power when we consider our inclusion in an expansive natural landscape. The submerging of the hand is symbolic of the consideration of the natural law of causation, as represented by the sequence of strata, and its decay becomes indicative of our surrender to these laws and the acceptance of our inability to act outside of them.



3.1 Monika Lemmon, *Create Contain and Destroy*, 2014, ceramic, flocking, and charcoal, [6" x 12" x 8"]



3.2 Monika Lemmon, *Inkwell* (documentation of use), 2014, ceramic, ink and hand, [8" x 5" x 3"]



3.3 Monika Lemmon, *Surrender in Structure*, 2016, ceramic and mixed media, [14" x 6" x 6"]

Chained to the Past

In order to describe our experience as both facilitated and enslaved by casual determinism, I use chain as a metaphor for human existence, allowing it to both create and contain the human form in both three-dimensional and two-dimensional compositions. In these works, I show my understanding of our burden in a deterministic world to confront the viewer with their lack of individual control. Causal determinism not only dictates our environment and physical form but also controls our actions, because ultimately these too are caused. We are an amalgam of biology, past experiences, and our current situation, all of which have resulted from a long series of causes and effects that were set into motion long before our own existence. I want to communicate that through the contemplation of the laws of nature, we can discover that our existence is part of an inescapable sequence of events that continues indefinitely, regulating all of our thoughts and subsequent behaviors. I push the viewer to realize how we can perceive all of our actions as being determined by the natural mechanism of cause and effect. My work conveys the overwhelming implication of this idea and shows it as a constricting and unavoidable reality.

Chain not only works to illustrate the idea of a “chain of events” or series of causes and resulting effects, but it also carries an oppressive connotation because it imprisons its subjects. I explore working with chain in two dimensions both in landscape and in fusion with the human form. In *Immersion*, I render a scene where chain is used to describe an entire landscape. The perspective is from the ground, submersing the viewer, positioning them to the perspective of one of the links. The expanse of chain engulfs them and becomes indicative of the psychological weight that the inescapable certainty of determinism can bring. In other work such *Link Tapestry I and II*, I allow the imagery of chain to evolve on the substrate organically, rendering it in a way that animates it to give it some quality of a living thing. This likening to a living entity is brought further in *Summoned*, where I give the chain an anthropomorphic shape to fuse it with the human form. Here the chain gradually loses its manufactured regularity and as it rises gains human qualities that suggest a living presence to the viewer.

In *Body as a Chain I*, I present a ceramic sculpture that transforms into a figure through its installation. This piece is composed of fragile ceramic chain that is sculpted to resemble human anatomy. The scale and position to the viewer’s body allow the chain to resemble remnants of a living form. The chain gradually diminishes in size towards its ends and transitions to a noose-like shape as it circles around the neck of the figure, binding its subject. One end of the chain trails off to complete the

figure, simplifying its contours to a linear bone-like anatomy that continues to the floor. This figure is made entirely of chain but it is also constrained by it, just as we are made through causal events but also subject to them.

I try to visually represent the relinquishment of control when viewing conscious experience from a deterministic perspective. In *Body as a Chain II*, feelings of containment and loss are communicated through a long series of interconnected links that extend out from the gallery wall to encircle the viewer. The chain, transitions much like *Body as a Chain I*, becoming more anatomical in the central area but then disintegrates into uniform links through arm like extensions that transition from the wall to the floor. The perceived human form in this piece is literally bound by its construction, connecting as one continuous loop of chain.



3.4 Monika Lemmon, *Immersion*, 2015, charcoal and mixed media on wood panel, [48" x 36"]



3.5 Monika Lemmon, *Link Tapestry I and II*, 2015, mixed media on muslin, [72" x 24"] and [30" x 130"]



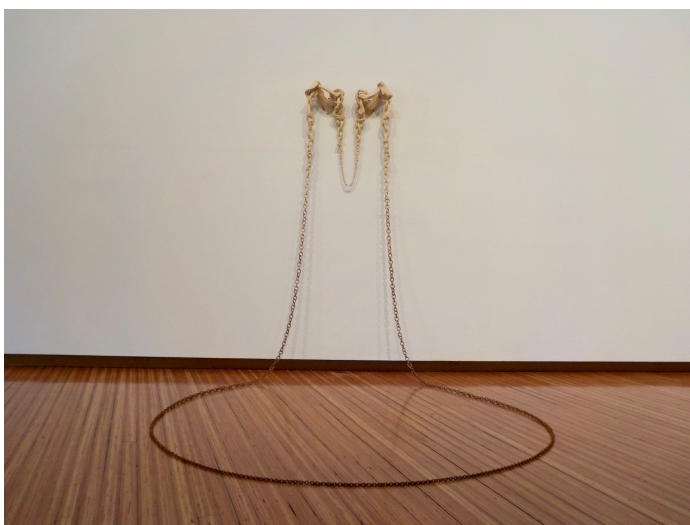
3.6 Monika Lemmon, *Summoned*, 2015, mixed media on panel, [24" x 48"]



3.7 Monika Lemmon, *Body as a Chain I*
(side view), 2014,
ceramic, mixed media, and steel,
[60" x 15" x 5"]



3.8 Monika Lemmon, *Body as a Chain I* (front view), 2014,
ceramic, mixed media, and steel,
[60" x 15" x 5"]



3.9 Monika Lemmon, *Body as a Chain II*, 2016, ceramic and mixed
media, [144" x 30" x 8"]



3.10 Monika Lemmon, *Body as a Chain II* (detail), 2016, ceramic and mixed
media, [144" x 30" x 8"]

Expansion and Release

Through the investigation and application of the principle of causality, we can discover that our actions and experiences are in fact based in an intricate series of causes responsible for every event including human behavior. It follows that some doubt in our capacity to act freely, or our capacity for free will, would induce some psychological disillusionment, but it is also possible that it could initiate some deeper understanding and acceptance of life circumstances.

Just as materiality and physicality are highlighted in the *Body as a Chain I and II*, in *Draped Form*, my intent is to demonstrate the complexity of an all encompassing concept of causality, while at the same time revealing the enlightening experience of accepting this worldview, as it can provide some relief through the shift in perception of life's circumstances. *Draped Form* uses chain in a way that is conceptually similar to previous works but has a lighter visual presence because it is composed of a translucent material. The translucency of the chain softens the threatening quality of the form and allows it to take on a benign appearance. The fine sequences of links are suspended individually, the links thickening towards a central area, causing a human form to emerge. The figure is entirely immersed in and composed by chain but appears less unhindered. Although it is contained within the confines of its composition, it is uplifted and maintains some buoyancy in its confinement.



3.11 Monika Lemmon, *Draped Form*, 2016,
polymer clay, steel, paint, and patina,
[112" x 36" x 30"]

CONCLUSION: In Symmetry

I embody more than what could be first assumed as only a fatalistic perspective in my work. By creating pieces that I feel capture the many facets of a deterministic outlook, I compel the viewer to discover how this perspective can enlighten their understanding and expand their worldview. We feel somehow separate from nature and as though we have some agency that grants us freedom from natural deterministic laws. For example, when confronted with choices our decisions do not seem to be mere reactions to past experiences or involuntary consequences but rather feel as though they are the coming directly from us, as an ultimate source. Consideration of the natural law of causality can produce a shift in our perspective, but the application of this idea in our daily lives is rather difficult to achieve. Its influence is something we confront everyday due to its inevitability, yet we often miss its relevance to our collective being due to the pace of our contemporary lives. The Exhibition at the Prichard Gallery provides the opportunity to showcase my work in a way that asks viewers to slow down and confront themselves. Work is displayed and orientated based on expectations of viewer interactions; *Unearthed Diptych*, *Surrender in Structure*, and *Body as a Chain II*, are placed in approximate symmetry to intrigue viewers and then capture them in thought, while *Draped Form* is separated to suggest it as a concluding work.

I activate shifting colors, loose mark-making, natural materials, and compositional staging to make the work speak in less confrontational manor. Yes, murky landscapes or the burdens of the body are quickly perceived, but these signifiers are offered in a more open interpretation of these elements and are informed by my own acknowledgment of the strange beauty of a thorough acceptance of causality. Welcoming a deterministic view can alleviate discontentment in our current circumstance. If we can reflect on a deterministic worldview, we may discover feelings, such as regret, fear, disgust, and anxiety, are actually avoidable, although the events that cause these feelings are not. This can shift our notions of placed blame and the burden of fault.

Although the pieces in this exhibition work on their own to communicate specific aspects of an investigation of causality, when presented together they offer a more complete vision of my application of this principle. There is a hierarchy in the arrangement of these pieces that works to convey the supereminence of natural law. *Unearthed Diptych* buries the viewer in strata, suggesting their inclusion in the natural continuum and chronological sequence of the landscape. *Surrender in Structure* illustrates the loss of power that the viewer must consider when contemplating the impact of

this principle to their worldview. *Body as a Chain II* reminds the viewer of their existence as a physical being in the anatomical links that create the human form and imply their ultimate burden to a causal chain of events, as the links transition to dense connections that are pulled to the floor; this gravity is reinforced by the long sprawling drawings that flank both sides. Once the viewer moves through this arrangement they are confronted with *Draped Form*, which shows an alternative interpretation of this burden and encourages the viewer to consider it as relieving rather than fatalistic. The collection of the first three works in *Visual Succession Arrangement*, in addition to the slightly separated placement of *Draped Form*, allows the pieces to initiate a dialogue with the viewer. This exhibit provides a comprehensive overview of my ideas and conveys both the despondency and beauty of causality.

The work immerses the viewer in symmetry to communicate the inescapable concept of determinism, but the soothing repetition and subtle colors of the forms give them a reverent quality. This reverence allows the forms to more fully convey my notion of causality and subsequent consideration of determinism. The arrangement in the gallery is intended to both overwhelm the viewer through the contrast in size relations, while at the same time suggest an openness and completeness in the repetition and muted color. The pieces create a visual collision to invoke the multiplicity of feelings and thoughts that I experienced when considering the deterministic nature of my own existence in hopes that others will be able to experience them as well. The body, the landscape, the chain, and the hand culminate in space to create an atmosphere where this deeper understanding of causality can be reached.

I am building a framework with these pieces so that I can expand on the initial consideration of causality in future endeavors. By following this chain of thought to more specific inquiries, I will create work that raises questions regarding free will and moral responsibility. Ultimately, I will lead viewers to question what they perceive as reality through my work and show the impact that a thorough consideration of the basic scientific principle of causality can have on their daily lives.



4.1 Monika Lemmon, *Visual Succession Arrangement*, 2016, collection of mixed media works
[18' x 18' x 5' approx.]

References

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