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Queenston Quarry

Jordan Loepky-Kolesnik

October 22- December 9, 2013

Jordan Loepky-Kolesnik investigates human nature and the material output of cultures using digital mediums, creating artifacts that mutate and alter our own perception of the world from which they came. In the video series, *Queenston Quarry*, Kolesnik takes us through an imagined and hyper-digital landscape of proposed tourism developments to a real-world Ontario quarry of the same name. The work oscillates between ideals of the natural and industrial, past and future, the imagined and the real.

As the title suggests, the series is geographically centric to the actual Queenston Quarry, which until recently has been abandoned. It has now been purchased in order to be redeveloped into a resort, tourist destination and residential areas. Each video within Kolesnik's series zooms in and focuses closer on recreated elements of the quarry and its surroundings. Produced using the free, consumer-grade 3D modeling software Google SketchUp, the aesthetic of the entire series reads as very artificial. SketchUp is primarily used by architects and amateurs to create mock-ups, visualizing and pitching ideas before they come to fruition. Well aware of this, Kolesnik's choice of medium is playful. He shows not only the natural landscape and how it can be modified, but his own take on proposed buildings and structures. The videos appropriate a corporate presentation style, mimicking the types of videos that may be used in the actual proposals for the forthcoming changes to this space. These simple 3D landscapes are rudimentary and are produced in a numbed, platonic ideal of each specific location. Kolesnik having never personally been to the actual quarry himself, can only recreate these spaces through what he has researched and seen online, filling in the gaps with what has come directly from his mind.

Kolesnik (seemingly) takes no direct stance for or against the proposed developments of the quarry. Rather, the series highlights the absurdity of human progress and the multiple transformations of the space. Condos and wine cellars are seen here as new structures incorporated into the surrounding geography, appropriating the natural landscape around them. However this landscape is anything but natural; once a forested area it was then carved and reshaped by the active and expanding quarry. After operations had ceased there, nature reclaimed the area once again. Even so, the mark of human activity was forever embedded in the landscape. Now we see the site transforming once again. The proposed developments seem to take advantage of the land's features as if they were natural, but are not; The wine cellar to be built inside the man-made cave. All is centered around a quarry, a place which once was used for mining raw materials from the earth to be used in production of any multitude of products and structures, such as these very

expansions; Kolesnik shows us this oscillating and confounded nature of the site's past and future.

Each video in the series is unified by an abstract form, which intervenes in almost every video. The semi-transparent shapes are other-worldly and surreal; they rotate and hover, defying gravity as they slowly move in and out of a scene. They produce low, ominous hums and tones that recall a choir as we get closer to them. They represent something spiritual, a hidden force or aura of the landscape itself, from which they seem to come from and be a part of. Their presence is somehow both foreboding and calming, they haunt each scene like some ancient power that has lived here and survived across the Quarry's multiple generations.

-Connor Crawford