



*Shoring Up* by Jonathan Green

## ***Make or Break* / Jonathan Green**

March 1 - April 12, 2019

Opening Reception: March 1, 7:00PM - 9:00PM



**Main Space Gallery**

## Deep Time Laid Bare

by Matthew R. Hills

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I write this text from the west coast of Newfoundland, properly known as Ktaqmkuk, traditional unceded Mi'kmaw territory. Jon Green is from and of Newfoundland. He is a treasured son of this glorious island, departed to the main with the oft-murmured hope that he will one day be compelled to return.

Western Newfoundland, Gros Morne in particular, is a designated UNESCO World Heritage site. The Long Range Mountains on the west coast of Newfoundland offer rare examples of the process of continental drift, where deep ocean crust and the rock strata of the earth's mantle both lie exposed on the surface. Deep time laid bare.

Being in the presence of this geologic phenomenon underscores that the earth is ancient. Almost unfathomably so. 18th-century geologist James Hutton developed the concept of "deep time" to counter the commonly held notion that the Earth was 6,000 years old and not the approximately 4.5 billion years, that he estimated. Through this geologic lens, human's time on earth seems momentary. In spite of being a relative blip, we have entered the epoch of the Anthropocene, registering human's catastrophic affect on global ecosystems. A bleak reality dawning with consequences for all.

Mountains are constants in the series of mixed-media prints featured in *Make or Break*. Green combines personal documentation of "wilderness" with appropriated and recovered images from historical travelogues and wilderness survival guides. These natural monoliths are interweaved with provisional man-made structures or supports. Dovetail cabins, lean-to shelters, hoarding, and half-constructed walls are fleetingly insubstantial containers and supports for the jagged peaks carved over many millennia.

With the sketchy incomplete rendering of these structures, Green imbues the prints with a generative ambiguity. Are these man-made incursions into mountain environments failed projects? Ambitious beginnings? Are they meant to support and preserve? Or are they fool-hardy attempts to contain and conquer? Their provisional and insubstantial nature in the face of the overriding enduring mountainscape is the only clarity we receive.

In sourcing image from historical exploration documents and 18th-century wilderness survival guides, Green actively effaces colonial narratives of conquering and possessing nature. Camping is central to Green's larger practice, and here, through these provisional structures, serves as urging that our efforts to live on this planet need to be light and are inherently temporary.

In opposition to Green's source material, humans are not directly depicted in these prints, a shift that effectively privileges the natural over a man-centered understanding of our world. Beyond providing speculative platforms for divining a new relationship to the natural world, Green's prints carve out a future possible path in which the environment is understood as primary and existence within it is conditionally responsive. A sketchy blueprint that doesn't ignore history, the failings, and misapprehensions that have propagated so much destruction, but instead reclaims and recasts what is of use in the past towards greater potential and a better understanding of our relative place in deep time. We may yet find our way.

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## Writer Biography

Matthew Hills is Director/Curator of the Grenfell Art Gallery in Corner Brook, Newfoundland. He is a settler and Newfoundlander by choice. He previously held curatorial positions at the University of Alberta Art and the Vancouver Art Gallery. He has curated projects at The Rooms, the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Modern Fuel, and Belkin Satellite. He is the past Program Chair for Nuit Blanche Edmonton. His writing has been published in Border Crossings, Muse, BlackFlash, Galleries West, and Syphon.

## Artist Biography

Jonathan S. Green is of Mi'kmaq and Inuit, and Settler heritage from Labrador City, Newfoundland and Labrador. Green earned an MFA in Printmaking from the University of Alberta, and a BFA from Memorial University of Newfoundland. He has been a recipient of grants from the Canada Council, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and the Edmonton Arts Council. Green has been an artist in residence at the University of Alaska Anchorage, SNAP Printshop (Edmonton, Alberta), and St. Michael's Printshop (St. John's, Newfoundland). He currently resides in Anchorage, Alaska.

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