

Jay Pahre – Artist Statement

Practice Overview

Sliding between drawing, sculpture, and writing, Jay Pahre's work examines transness and queerness where they rub up against the nonhuman. Recently, this has been navigated with a focus on the myriad ecologies present on the island of Minong or Isle Royale, an island located in northeastern Lake Superior. Pulling from personal lived experience of walking the island, shifting geographies, and queer/trans ecologies, he pieces apart the moments when these different trajectories begin to fold in on themselves and open other ways of being, knowing, and moving. The uses of metal, electricity, and heat has been instrumental in his work to think through conductive and transforming ecologies. Leaning on these moments of conductivity and transformation, his work seeks to ferret out alternative formations and futures of what queer and trans ecologies of being might look like while slipping through moments of temporal, embodied, and environmental precarity.

Project Description

Jay Pahre's current body of work, *Flipping the Island*, centers around transness and queerness as they relate to the nonhuman, navigated specifically through the myriad ecologies present on the island of Minong, also known as Isle Royale. Drawing from the way the ecologies on this island flip over on themselves, Pahre speculates through art making what kinds of transformations might be possible when taking the ability to move, shift, or change radically, as a given for navigating precarity, rather than a distant possibility.

In *Guard Hairs*, one of the pieces from this body of work, these ecologies are touched on through the interrelatedness of settler copper mining and ongoing reintroduction of wolves to the island. This process of reintroduction reached a tipping point when, after decades of inbreeding and warming temperatures isolating the island from surrounding wolf populations, the last three wolves who could sustain a population on the island drowned in a copper mine. Approaching this through guard hairs, the part of the animal's fur which protects the animal from weather and UV rays, as well as signals affective shifts, Pahre queries these confluences of ecological crisis, tipping over, and transformation. *Guard Hairs* was made by cutting, folding and hooking pieces of steel-coated copper wire through gauze over and over. The repetitive, process-based approach, done with material which signals wounding and extraction as well as being precarious in and of itself, speaks to piecing out speculations that hinge on trans and queer formations of un-and-re-becoming, intra/action, and erotics.

Nestled aside his studio work, his research and art practice is often guided by walking. Walking is fundamental to his practice as a way of navigating lived experience and generating long-term place and encounter driven exploration alongside a committed studio practice. His studio practice is responsive and often process-oriented, with engagements of speculation, uncertainty, and precarity informing how he moves through making.