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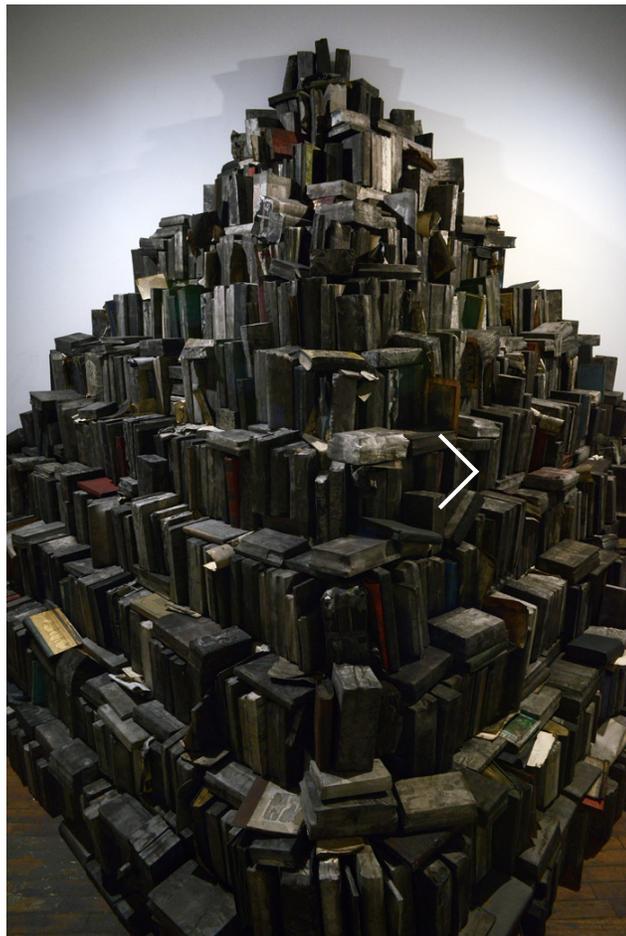
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Marie Bannerot McInerney at PLUG Projects

BLAIR SCHULMAN on October 28, 2015 at 9:31 AM

Marie Bannerot McInerney's orgy of books in her current exhibition at PLUG Projects, *...or the stories we tell ourselves*, is less an installation than a declarative statement on our culture's steady migration away from movable type into the digital realm. McInerney's think piece engages how we source knowledge, study and retain it, and the narrative that leads us there. Approximately 2,000 books are wrapped in a fibrous skin that give a post-apocalyptic impression. Consisting of "historical accounts, religious texts, literary treasures, romance novels and everyday cooking guides," these books are steeped and engineered in a formation liken to the mountains of Machu Picchu or Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland (aka, the steppes depicted on Led Zeppelin's seminal album, *Houses of the Holy*). Attempts to decipher the titles on the spines trigger an episode of Stendhal Syndrome. The work fills most of PLUG Projects' gallery space, but the impression is that it takes up all the space without concern for the movement of the audience – a silent Yosemite of books.

The anticipation of experience for the reader/viewer lies the joy in book ownership. The size, shape, binding, cover and paper are all part of a sensory alert. There is a ceremony in handling a book, especially one found or purchased second-hand – discovering the signature of who owned it before, looking for notations throughout. Even the stains on a page give one pause. *What was the previous reader doing while they read the very same passage you're reading right now?* The book promises us more than a story. It offers a solitude no screen (with its capacity to lure you away to another site in a constant state of sensory arousal) can truly offer – that of being lulled into a dream state of the printed word.

What McInerney does here is something closer to Fahrenheit 451 than Alicia Martin or Buzz Spector. These artists are among many who celebrate the book as an object and invite us to consume its beauty. To see McInerney's work blanketed beneath its sooty elegance tells us that whatever is pressed between these pages is too late to rescue. Every idea, notion and perception in life could conceivably be found within those pages, but they are illegible and useless as text/objects. A foundation of knowledge once strong and filled with potential, is now brittle and its demise seems inevitable. On the one hand, we are presented with a post-intellectual stance where one is unprotected from "the terrible tyranny of the majority," on the other a view of knowledge as ample weaponry when exposed to the elements of anti-intellectualism. It asks us to ask ourselves: In the digital age, have we succumbed to groupthink by passing along

information where the greatest number of believers divines it as fact?

From a philosophical standpoint *...or the stories we tell ourselves* proffers the burden of reality. That is to say, it requires more than dexterous screen swiping to garner knowledge and wisdom – it demands the patience of time to avail oneself of the world’s mysteries. An imagination fortified by desire and wonder must travel across page after page to someday uncover these mysteries. McInerney has managed to create a feeling of wistfulness and longing for curiosity in the package of a behemoth. Remember that the next time you Google something.

...or the stories we tell ourselves was on view at PLUG Projects in Kansas City, MO from September 18 – October 24, 2015.

Images courtesy of PLUG Projects.

CATEGORIES KANSAS CITY REVIEWS

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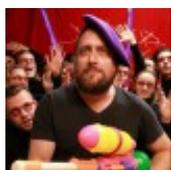
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BLAIR SCHULMAN

Blair Schulman is a Kansas City-based art writer/critic. He is a regular contributor to *Ceramics: Art & Perception*, *Huffington Post Arts & Culture*, *Hyperallergic* and is also a Staff Editor at *Informality* blog.

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