



ABOVE:
KINETIC FLORA, LASER-CUT POLYESTER DRAWING
PAPER, WIRE, & MECHANICAL ELEMENTS

PARABLE OF GRAVITY

CASEY CURRAN

**JANUARY 5 - APRIL 17
2021**

**MADART SUPPORTS ARTISTS IN OUR
COMMUNITY, BRINGS ART INTO OUR LIVES IN
UNEXPECTED WAYS, AND CREATES
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
IN THE ARTS.**



FOREWARD

Parable of Gravity, an exhibition by Seattle-based artist Casey Curran, envelops visitors in an otherworldly kinetic landscape that appears to emerge from a series of crumbling scaffolds. As viewers enter the installation they become fully immersed in an expanse of blossoming flora and a symphony of sound that playfully bounces around the room. The chirping mechanical elements taken together deliver the viewer into the soundscape of a rainforest, never seen but still inhabited with its varied insects, croaking frogs, shifting vines, and flowing waters. Through *Parable of Gravity*, Curran provides us with an alternative “natural” world. What you encounter is an environment in transition, simultaneously undergoing a cycle of growth and collapse. This fabricated ecosystem alludes to the fine balance of our world’s natural systems and our impact as humans on their well-being.

As you enter the studio, wooden support structures rise to eight feet tall. Moving inward, they congruently descend to rest under a monumental aluminum centerpiece modeled after 951 Gaspra, the first asteroid ever photographically captured in detail. Each deteriorating form hosts its own kinetic garden that is hand-built and assembled from laser-cut polyester drawing paper. The buoyancy of the material creates a life-like shudder in the mechanized sculptures that resembles stop-motion photography of a botanical bloom. This fastidiously constructed world is minimal in form and color, which further showcases its intricate brilliance. The aluminum asteroid—titled *Anchor of Janus* after the Roman god of passageways, transitions, beginnings, and endings—incorporates a rose window motif inspired by





PREVIOUS & ABOVE:
ANCHOR OF JANUS, INSTALLATION VIEW AND ROSE WINDOW MOTIF

Gothic cathedrals and churches. This mythological, architectural, and astronomical convergence considers not only the scientific and spiritual aspects of our connection to the natural world, but also our cultural legacy and the ways in which past technological advancements continue to impact our lives and experiences today. Further, the reference to Janus recognizes the dual nature of human progress, with all of the positive and negative implications it carries.

It is prophetic that conversations for this exhibition began well before the COVID-19 pandemic and the sociopolitical upheaval and environmental catastrophes of the last year. Amidst these mounting events, the conceptual explorations of *Parable of Gravity* feel more relevant now than ever. Curran uses his installation to present us with an opportunity to evaluate, or rather reevaluate, our current and future relationship to one another and the world around us. At this moment, we have a chance to save what we haven't lost and leave our legacy for the generations that follow.

EMILY KELLY
DIRECTOR + CURATOR



CURRENT & NEXT:
WE SPOKE LIKE THIS TO REMEMBER.
INSTALLATION VIEW

IN CONVERSATION WITH CASEY CURRAN

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EXHIBITION'S TITLE, *PARABLE OF GRAVITY*?

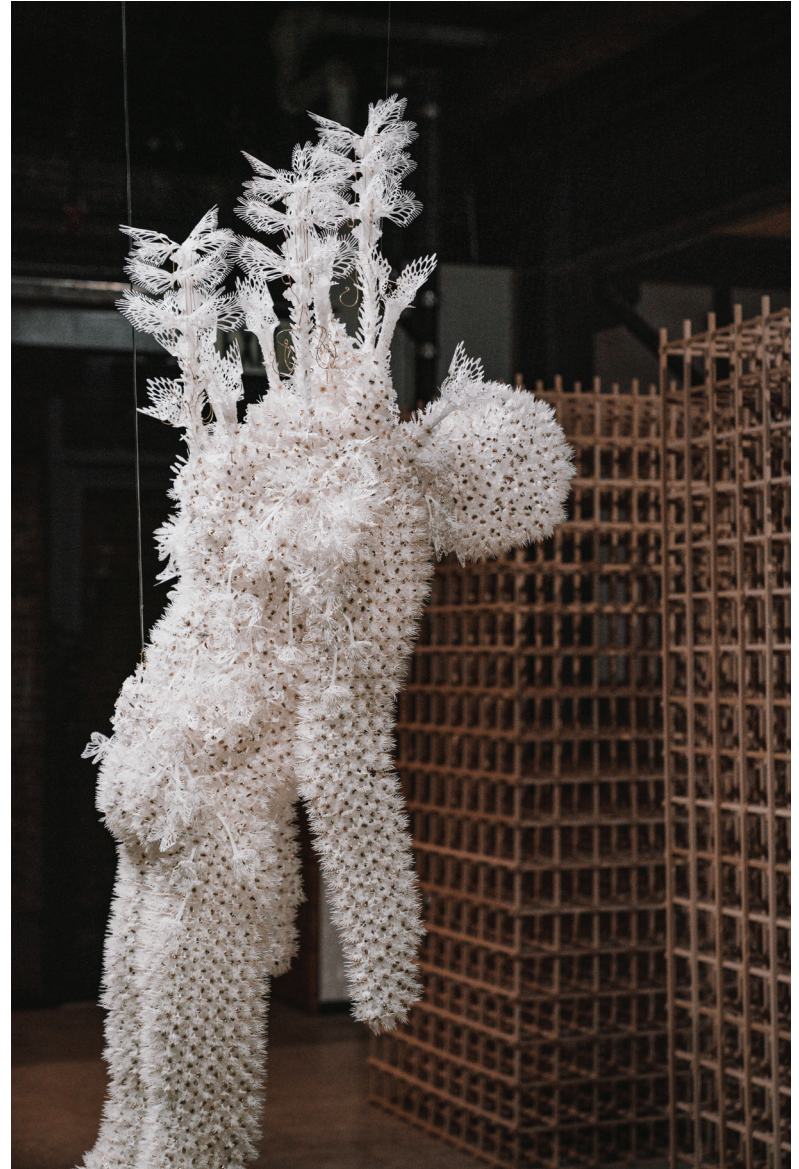
Parable of Gravity is a cautionary tale that asks the audience to accept both catastrophe and hope for a better future, even if they're no longer in it. I wanted this exhibition to encompass the hubris of human achievement, specifically in the context of deep time and the numerous boom bust cycles that have occurred over the millennia. The title highlights a need to look into the past and tease out those lessons that can be learned from history, and asks us to recognize the generational effort needed to redirect our current unsustainable systems.

Gravity is a universal constant. It permeates everything forward and backwards through time. It's that slow unchanging force that causes nebulae to become stars and stars to become solar systems. It's a story of collapsing ecosystems falling to time over and over again, but in each of their deaths it is the upwelling of something new, something

strange birthed from their extinction. *Parable of Gravity* is both the collapse and the change that follows it.

THIS INSTALLATION IS LIMINAL BOTH IN CONCEPT AND FORM; CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THIS?

In orbital dynamics there is a point in an object's parabolic arc called its apogee. We can see this point when tossing a ball straight up into the air, and at the height of its path it seems to slow before falling back to earth. It's the most efficient point for a satellite or spacecraft to change trajectory in its orbit. There is a quality about this point that lends itself to the concepts I'm pointing to in this installation. Collectively humanity has been running toward a cliff, and it hasn't been until the last several decades that the drop has become more and more apparent. *Parable of Gravity* straddles this moment of recognition, presenting to the audience a circular path that consumes and births itself. At the same



"I'm interested in those ambiguous moments that can loom over a subject, moments that allude to a potentially catastrophic change of state." - Curran

time it asks, *"Where are we on this road, and do we have the collective determination to get off of it?"* The installation occupies both sides of this question, and the answers to it, for better or for worse, will resolve our final trajectory.

MANY PEOPLE REFER TO YOUR WORKS' OMINOUS BEAUTY. WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE TO THIS DESCRIPTION?

I think it's an apt description of my art and this installation as a whole. There's nothing interesting about saccharin beauty or a perfect sunset beyond its immediate perfection. I'm interested in those ambiguous moments that can loom over a subject, moments that allude to a potentially catastrophic change of state. I like to think my work holds this ominous quality, and I relish in the idea that a small piece of it evokes the same feeling as a dark horizon on a sunny day.

YOUR WORK IS CHARACTERIZED BY THEIR KINETIC SCULPTURAL ELEMENTS AND FASTIDIOUS CONSTRUCTIONS. WHERE DO THESE ASPECTS OF YOUR PRACTICE ORIGINATE?

I'm drawn to the similarities between the macro and micro structures that make up our universe. I love that the nerve cells in our brains look like galaxy clusters, and an electron orbits its

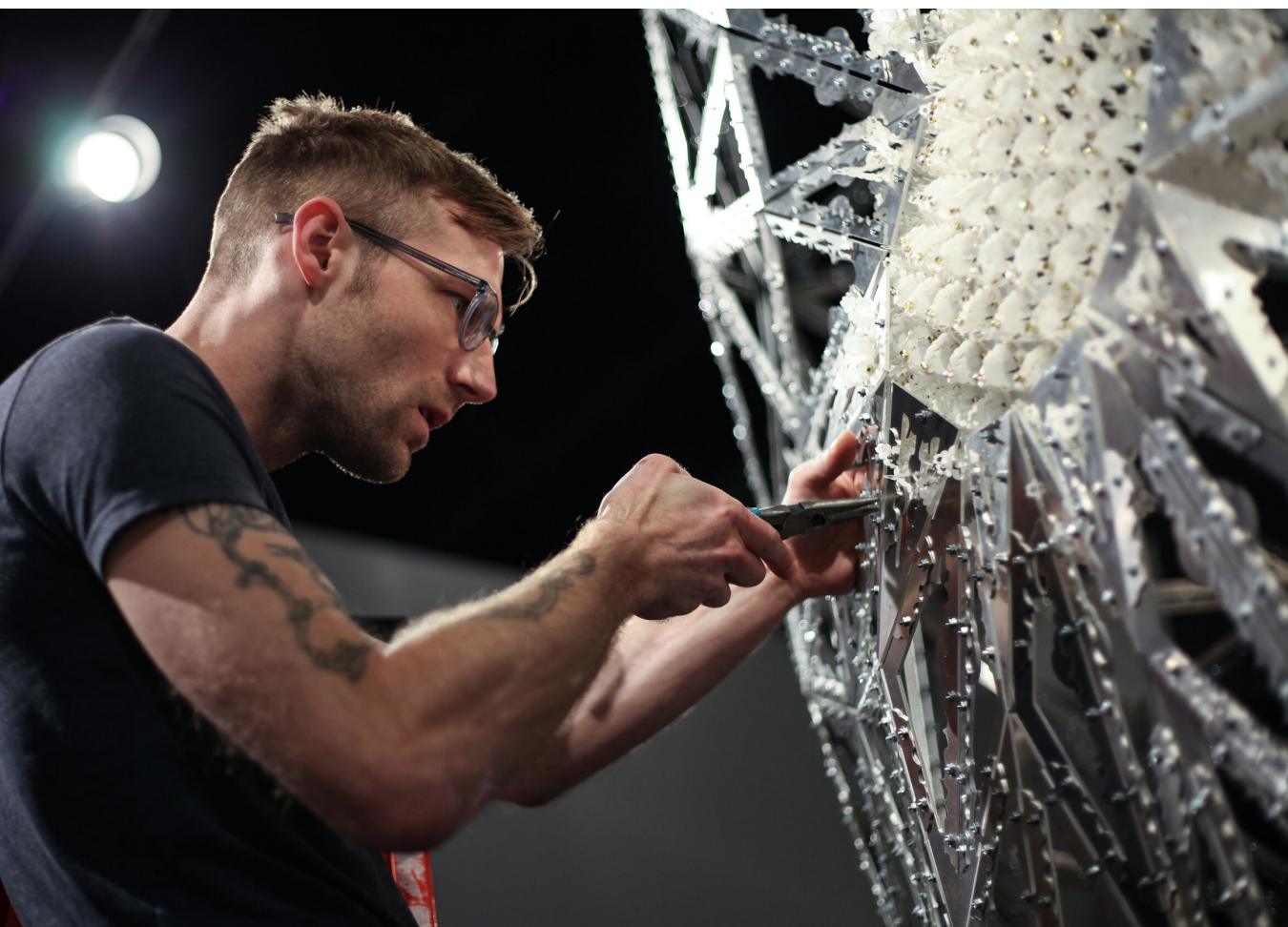
nucleus like the Earth orbits Sol. If my body is made of millions and of millions of cells, why not attempt to make a work of art just as complex? Take DNA for example, I find it incredibly compelling that just 4 amino acids, arranged in different patterns, create EVERYTHING that is alive. Amongst the details of my work, you'll find I often use the same base shape—over and over—to produce a myriad of different forms, just like DNA. It's a lesson I take from our bodies and the various phenomena found in nature. Often, the detail and complexity I'm trying to create is an impossible task but one I strive for, just the same.

FOR THIS EXHIBITION, YOUR WORK EXPANDS INTO INSTALLATION THAT FULLY IMMERSES YOUR AUDIENCE. HOW HAS YOUR EARLIER WORK INFORMED THE WAY YOU CONSIDER THE VIEWER EXPERIENCE THROUGH THIS SHOW?

This exhibition would look entirely different without the time I spent working with the performance art group, Saint Genet. When working with the group I always thought there was something compelling about the stage, and the actors drawing your attention to it. I wanted *Parable of Gravity* to signal to the audience that there is a larger story unfolding and they are actors within it.



ABOVE:
CRANK AND LEVER SYSTEM, KINETIC ELEMENTS OF THE WORK



ABOUT THE ARTIST

CASEY CURRAN received his BFA in painting and sculpture from Cornish College of the arts in 2006. He has completed several large-scale public works in partnership with Skanska Architects, MadArt, Facebook, Oculus Rift, and Security Properties. In 2010 and 2013, Curran was awarded the NY Sculpture Space residency twice, and has received multiple awards in artistic merit since. In 2008, Curran became a key collaborator in the internationally recognized performance art group Saint Genet developing large-scale interactive sets, which have been exhibited at The Guggenheim Museum in NY, The Kunsthalle Museum in Krems, Austria, Luminato Festival in Toronto, Canada, and Frye Art Museum in Seattle, WA. Curran is currently developing a series of works which explore our psychological relationship with nature.

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