



Boundary|Time|Surface: Art and Geology Meet in Gros Morne National Park, NL, Canada

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Environmental Art works range in scope from major permanent interventions in the landscape to less intrusive, more ephemeral site-specific installations constructed of materials from the local environment. Despite this range of intervention, however, these works all share in a tradition of art making that situates the artwork in direct response to the surrounding landscape. Andy Goldsworthy and Richard Long, for example, both favour methods that combine elements of both sculpture and performance in the creation of non-permanent interventions in the landscape, and both rely upon photographic, text-based, or video documentation as the only lasting indication of the works' existence.

Similarly, Earth Scientists are responsible for interventions in the landscape, both physical and conceptual. For example, in Earth science, the periods of the geologic timescale - Cambrian, Ordovician, Silurian, etc. - were established by 19th century pioneers of geology at a time when they were believed to represent natural chapters in Earth history. Since the mid-20th century, stratigraphers have attempted to resolve ambiguities in the original definitions by defining stratotypes: sections of continuously deposited strata where a single horizon is chosen as a boundary. One such international stratotype, marking the Cambrian-Ordovician boundary, is defined at Green Point in Gros Morne National Park, Newfoundland.

Boundary|Time|Surface was an ephemeral sculptural installation work constructed in June 2014. The main installation work was a fence of 52 vertical driftwood poles, 2-3 m tall, positioned precisely along the boundary stratotype horizon at Green Point in Newfoundland. The fence extended across a 150 m wave-cut platform from sea cliffs to the low-water mark, separating Ordovician from Cambrian strata. The installation was constructed by hand (with volunteer assistance) on June 22, as the wave-cut platform was exposed by the falling tide. During the remainder of the tidal cycle, and the following days, we allowed the fence to be dismantled by wave action and the incoming flood tide. The cycle of construction and destruction was documented in video and with time-lapse still photography.

This project provided an opportunity for viewers to contemplate the brevity of human experience relative to the enormity of time, and the fragile and arbitrary nature of human-defined boundaries of all types. Future exhibitions of the documentation of this work are envisaged, which will provide opportunities for the public to interact with still and video images of the work directly, both as aesthetic objects and as sources of information regarding the geological and socio-political history of the site.