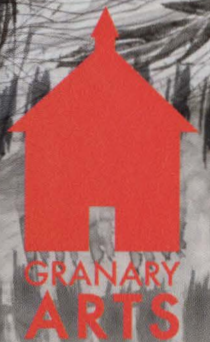


THE CENTER CAN NOT HOLD

ANNE
MOONEY

JOHN
SPARANO

HANNAH
VAUGHN



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CURATED BY
HIKMET SIDNEY LOE

TEXT BY
AURORA TANG



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ANNE MOONEY + JOHN SPARANO
carto·graphic, DETAIL
2022 mixed media

the center can not hold considers ideas of place conceptualized through the processes of architecture, revealing the temporal nature of the center. Positioning the geographical center of Utah and the town of Ephraim as the practical center for creative work, regional architects Anne Mooney and John Sparano (principals at Sparano + Mooney Architecture) and Hannah Vaughn (principal at VY Architecture) respond to this idea through forms, words, and questions.

Their collective and collaborative result is not architecture to be built, but contemporary art that acts as a catalyst to mine conceptual layers of engagement with the past, the present, and the future. The ephemerality of the present moment—who occupies place, what traces remain of their existence—leads to questions of past occupation, how place is mapped, and concepts of erasure, remembrance, and memory. The residue of stories from people who have come before us and who will follow us, in our own situation of place and center, is reflected through the materiality of maps (realized and imagined), the layers of time and earth, and casts of accumulation. These works ask: who has the privilege to see the center? How can we broaden our views to “see” the accumulation of time and embrace our connection to place through a center that is continually shifting? Is there, indeed, a center (geographic, historical) that holds us together? The absence of one center opens infinite views and possibilities.

reorientations

The effort of naming and locating a center affirms a periphery. Because there are many ways to define both the center and periphery—geographic, social, cultural, political, and economic, to name a few—and the gap that always remains between an idealized representation and the physical facts on the ground, defining a precise center is an improbable task.

The Center Can Not Hold at Granary Arts, organized by Hikmet Sidney Loe, probes this conceit of a single fixed center. The exhibition's featured architects, Anne Mooney and John Sparano of Sparano + Mooney Architecture, and Hannah Vaughn of VY Architecture, consider the ways in which our individual and collective understanding of ourselves in relation to the social, political, and physical environments around us is continually shifting. Taking Granary Arts' central Utah setting as a point of departure, *The Center Can Not Hold* considers the implications, and possibilities, that can come from viewing the landscape through multiple lenses and from different observation points.

Installed in the middle of the gallery is Mooney and Sparano's *carto·graphic*. The conical structure calls to mind the viewing devices one might find at a scenic overlook, or instruments historically used to survey the land. *carto·graphic* is situated between a set of vertical and cross beams, which read as a nod to the Public Land Survey System, the rectilinear grid that covers more than two-thirds of the land in the United States, including present-day Utah, as mandated by the Continental Congress of 1785.

Mooney and Sparano's rounded sculptural form is studded with a constellation of square and rectangular viewfinders, positioned at varying heights, suggesting they are intended to be used by a range of bodies, and perhaps even a variety of species. Peering into each of the portals, the viewer is presented with a distinct section of a map of the Sanpete Valley, the region in which Granary Arts is located. A map typically serves as an index or key to the physical landscape, zoomed out, flattened, and rendered at a scale comprehensible for humans to oversee. The ability to take in the wide view and see our place within it from a "God's eye" perspective can be grounding. However, when segmented and isolated from the larger grid, the map loses its wayfinding function. Removed from its original context, and framed by the viewfinder, the map's graphic qualities become emphasized. Serving as a central node from which a network of dislocated points on the map emanate, *carto·graphic* stands as a sort of land observatory. It is a subversion of traditional western land surveying and viewing tools, offering an instrument for disorientation, and ultimately reorientation.

While *carto·graphic* occupies the gallery's interior, Vaughn's intimate works populate the periphery, elegantly lining its walls. Vaughn combines

ink and organic materials, including grass, bone, cotton and linen pulp, flax, and tree husk, often locally sourced by Vaughn. Vaughn's textured accumulations are studies in materiality and entropy, a point further emphasized by the use of titles such as *Phases of a Moon*, *The Return*, and *Phantasmagoria*. While Mooney and Sparano explore the horizontal plane—cartography and geography—Vaughn's focus is on the vertical—geology and time. Vaughn's works, all dated 2022, possess a certain timefulness—an acute consciousness that the world is made by and of time. The physical presence of time is palpable in Vaughn's layered works, though it is unclear whether they formed through "natural" or "manmade" processes—which is perhaps the point, that humans are not separate from the natural world, but are intrinsically a part of it.

In contrast to Mooney and Sparano's macro views of the surrounding valley, Vaughn offers micro views into the region, calling to mind the organisms that have persisted in this place, past and present. Works such as *Encasement Study*, *Imprint Study*, and *Body of Fate* evoke ancient specimens and artifacts, which one imagines might look at home in the halls of a natural history museum. Serial studies *The Return* and *Phases of the Moon*, material abstractions contained within uniform squares, neatly lined up in a row, are reminiscent of microscope slides.

Loe sets up a dynamic conversation between Mooney and Sparano, Vaughn, and the Sanpete Valley, pointing to the varied ways of reframing and reading the landscape. Landscape is a process, in a state of constant transformation. It is at once witness, agent, and collaborator. Like map, like microscope, Mooney and Sparano and Vaughn's works offer expansive and focused views of the landscape and our position within it. *The Center Can Not Hold* presents a journey across and through horizontal and vertical vistas of central Utah, and beyond. Traveling along the spiraling strata of human and non-human history, at times we find ourselves at the center, and at times the periphery. Though the center and periphery may be difficult to pinpoint, and may even be considered one and the same, depending on your vantage point, they are always shifting, calling for perpetual reorientation.

aurora tang

12.22

carto·graphic

Our understanding of the term “center” embraces alternative ways of experiencing a landscape and the invisible presence of suppressed voices. In our consideration, the idea of a center is dynamic, evolutionary, and transitory, and embodies an ethos of multiplicity rather than the implied singularity of the word. This interactive construct invites the visitor to explore the piece from a variety of perspectives – some direct, others requiring effort to access and assess the view.

Within a white conic shell, maps of central Utah are visible. On one side is a U.S. Geological Survey map of the Sanpete Valley, organized within the logic of the Jeffersonian grid.⁽¹⁾ This map serves as the background for a critique of what this and other charts portray and omit. The standardized graphics, colors and symbols act as a singular, commonly-accepted, means of reading the landscape and suggest a comprehensive documentation of place. However, this system of information prompts a questioning of what might be missing, ignored or erased.

An overlay of another set of patterns, color fields and line work helps us to consider the possibility of the presence of unrecorded and invisible human settlement in this landscape – the presence of the “other”. These overlaid graphics challenge the USGS’ conventions of representation, but also the



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notion that the map is a full depiction of this geographical area. The resulting juxtaposition challenges the viewer to contemplate what – and who – else might have inhabited and experienced these spaces and landscapes.

On the opposite side of the conic apparatus, an aerial photograph of this regional center is visible. The layered logic of this work suggests the presence of others – those not visible (or excluded from) within the gridded settlements and in the agricultural fields. Natural materials reference the Native American legend of the Three Sisters and the synergistic wisdom of planting squash, corn and beans together for their mutual benefit: a metaphor for community, this inclusion of diverse elements serves to strengthen both the individual and the collective.⁽²⁾ Other local plant materials help impress alternate patterns upon the landforms, providing a counterpoint to both the landscape and the visible traces of its development seen in the image.

The surrounding conic enclosure creates an abstract physical and visual barrier between the viewer and the maps. Two separate and distinct spaces are created, as the ideas of connection and separation are explored. The space in which the aerial image exists, and the space in which the viewer exists, are distinct and controlled experiences.

A series of apertures of different shapes and sizes is the observer's means of visual interaction with the map. The views of the map provide a variety of fragmented "ways of seeing" and highlight the understanding that both a photograph and a USGS map offer singular (and limited) knowledge of a place, as well as its inhabitants. Each aperture is one of a collection of perspectives, offering fragmentary points of view. Each viewer leaves this presentation with a unique sense of the concept of "center" based on their individual interaction and engagement with the work.

(1) Shortly after the American Revolution, Thomas Jefferson proposed the idea of using a grid system to quantify the newly-independent and rapidly-expanding republic. Once implemented, Jefferson's system was rational and predictable, but most importantly, it was scalable. In the American West, the Jeffersonian grid was inseparable from the concept of settlement. It was the casting of a net over the landscape to capture, tame and ultimately commodify it. It was a means of organizing and quantifying the vast American wilderness and gave European settlers the ability to locate themselves within it. However, the imposition of the grid on the American landscape made instant foreigners of Native Americans: because their settlements were not a result of the new order, the implication was that they were outsiders in their ancestral homelands.

(2) The legend of the Three Sisters has many variations in Native American culture. One way of understanding this narrative is through the farming method of planting corn, squash and beans together for mutual benefit: the structure of the corn provides a trellis of support for the beans while they grow; in turn, the beans help feed the other plants through enriching their shared soil; while squash vines dispersed along the ground form a strong base controlling weeds, retaining moisture, and offering protection from predators. The three plants thrive as they grow together and provide nutrition within a balanced diet. The legend is also culturally significant, with aspects of mythology and spirituality often infused into the tale and as well as into the importance of the plants.

anne g. mooney, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP, was born in Butte, Montana and was educated at the University of Utah, Columbia University in New York, the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) in Los Angeles and Ticino, Switzerland. She is a founding partner of Sparano + Mooney Architecture and her award-winning designs have been featured in over 35 national and international publications and exhibitions in the United States, England, Italy, Germany, and Japan. She has served on the AIA Utah Board of Directors and was named one of the Top Women in Architecture by *Mountain Living* magazine. Anne is recognized as a committed educator and mentor for students, and emerging architects and design professionals. She holds an appointment as Professor of Architecture at the University of Utah School of Architecture where she teaches advanced design studios. In 2021 Anne was awarded the Silver Medal by the AIA Western Mountain Region, the top honor given to an architect in the region.

john p. sparano, FAIA, is a founding partner of Sparano + Mooney Architecture. John was educated at the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. and the Architectural Association in London, England. Drawing insight from place, program and client vision, Sparano creates compelling spaces that connect people with their communities and landscape. He is adept at seamlessly integrating new buildings into a variety of high-altitude contexts with heightened cultural and historic significance. His analytical approach to design, coupled with expertise in new and innovative application and detailing of materials, has set him apart as a leading architect in the American West. Sparano was recognized with the 2019 Silver Medal from the AIA Western Mountain Region, the highest award given to an architect in this region of the United States. Under his leadership, Sparano + Mooney Architecture's design process accentuates collaboration, research and experimentation, and has resulted in a diverse, award-winning portfolio of work. Sparano has lectured and exhibited widely.





Hikmet Sidney Loe, Austen Diamond Photography

hikmet sidney loe

Born and raised on the east coast, Hikmet Sidney Loe developed an affinity for Great Basin deserts and the environs of Great Salt Lake. In response to these landscapes, her work advanced to examine the changeable nature of the earth and address our perceptual and cultural constructs of the land. Her curatorial projects mine ideas of place – *This Earth: Notes and Observations by Montello Foundation Artists*, Southern Utah Museum of Art; geologic material – *A Measure of Salt*, Granary Arts; and artists' responses to their environments – upcoming *Modern Desert Markings: An Homage to Las Vegas Area Land Art*, Marjorie Barrick Museum of Art.

She authored *The Spiral Jetty Encyclo: Exploring Robert Smithson's Earthwork through Time and Place* in 2017; it won the 15 Bytes Book Award for Art Book in 2018 and was a finalist for the Utah State Historical Society Best Book Award. The next book in this series focused on singular works of Land art is scheduled for publication in 2026 as *The Sun Tunnels Encyclo: Exploring Nancy Holt's Earthwork through Perception and Site*. Loe additionally writes for *Southwest Contemporary*, *Hyperallergic*, and *15 Bytes*. She is a seasoned educator, currently teaching art history as a part-time instructor at University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where she holds Graduate College status. Her passion for experiential teaching and learning has afforded her teaching opportunities for the Honors College, University of Utah in their Ecology & Legacy Integrated Minors Program and for the Honors College, Westminster College. She has also taught at Weber State University and for both Clemente and Venture Programs through Utah Humanities.



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