



Artbergs

3-D Metaphors for the Anthropocene



Aaron Johanson

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Most of these works were first shown at Blackfish Gallery, Portland, in February 2020.

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We have entered the Anthropocene, a new epoch that is characterized by significant human impact on the environment.

I perceive icebergs as symbols of frailty and affliction and at the forefront of those affected by the inexorable rise in global temperature. Icebergs are nomadic. They never get asylum. They melt away gradually and their future existence is in question.

The works in this booklet I call "artbergs," 3-D metaphors for icebergs which have undergone radical change in response to the change in climate.

Although icebergs lie outside the forces of evolution, I shaped these artbergs as a way of imagining how icebergs might adapt if they had at their disposal a change of wardrobe and the option of a new occupation.

I have created the works out of sandstone, paint, shards of glass from vandalized cars, along with various other materials found and fashioned. The few non-berg associate art works — the ones without an iceberg reference in the title — address other contemporary issues.

These artbergs provide a whimsical and playful response to the open-ended question "what does our future hold?"

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Icebergs come in two types: tabular and non-tabular. Classification for non-tabular icebergs (which inspired my artbergs) is by height of ice protruding above sea level.

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Growler | <1 meter |
| Bergy bits | 1 to 4 meters |
| Small iceberg | 5 to 15 meters |
| Medium iceberg | 16 to 45 meters |
| Large iceberg | 46 to 75 meters |
| Extra large iceberg | >75 meters |

All the artbergs presented here protrude between 10 to 18 inches above table level.

This body of work includes a few non-iceberg companion pieces and where there is no explanatory text, my hope is that the title gives sufficient insight into the nature of the work.



Acrobat-o-berg





Anony Bergy Bit



Asian Takeout-berger



Apocal-berg

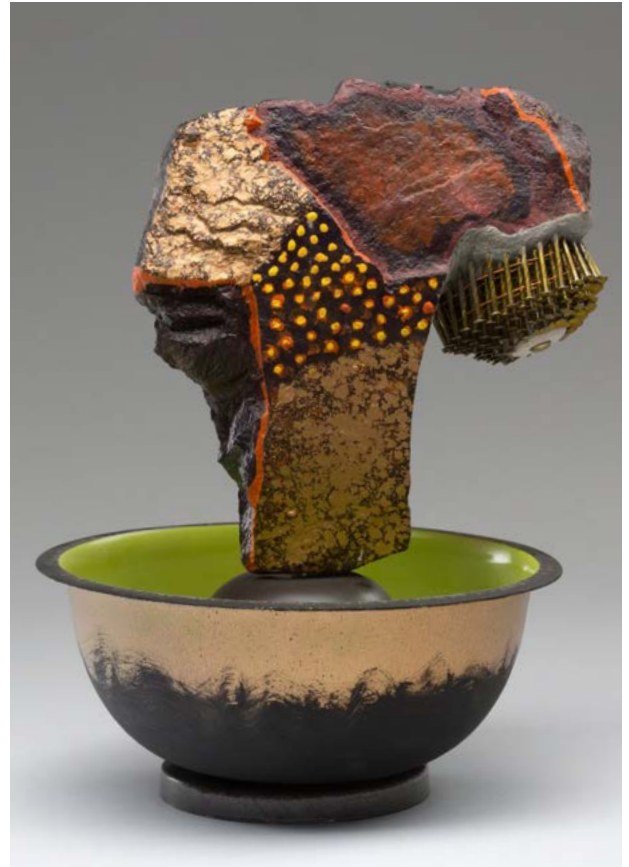
Apocal-berg references a dystopian seascape in which oil pipelines belching pollution run from beneath melting ice up into various stages of melting icebergs. It is a sort of Pandora's box too. As you continue to open the door a light eventually comes on, illuminating the sea ice as a symbol of the warming of our oceans.





Berg of Damocles





Bouncer-berg

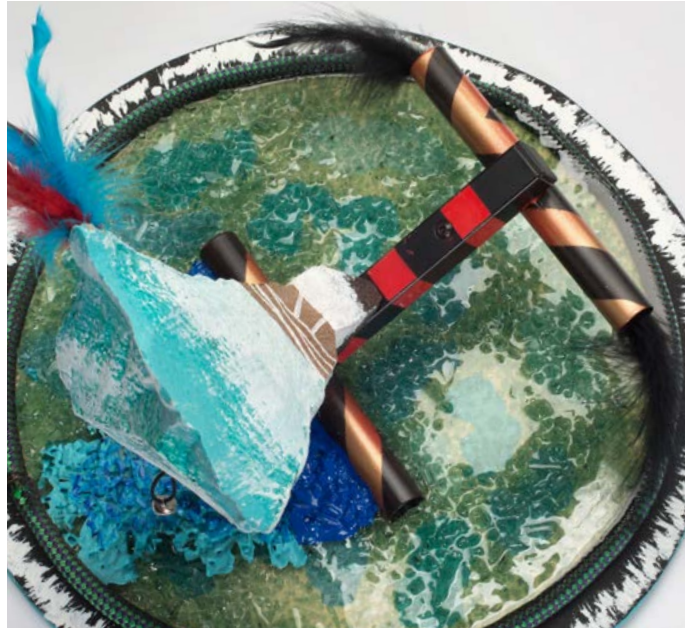
Remember the iceberg that sank the Titanic? Mean, wasn't it? This work provides at least one answer to the question, what might an iceberg look like if it worked as a bouncer?



Circ-berg

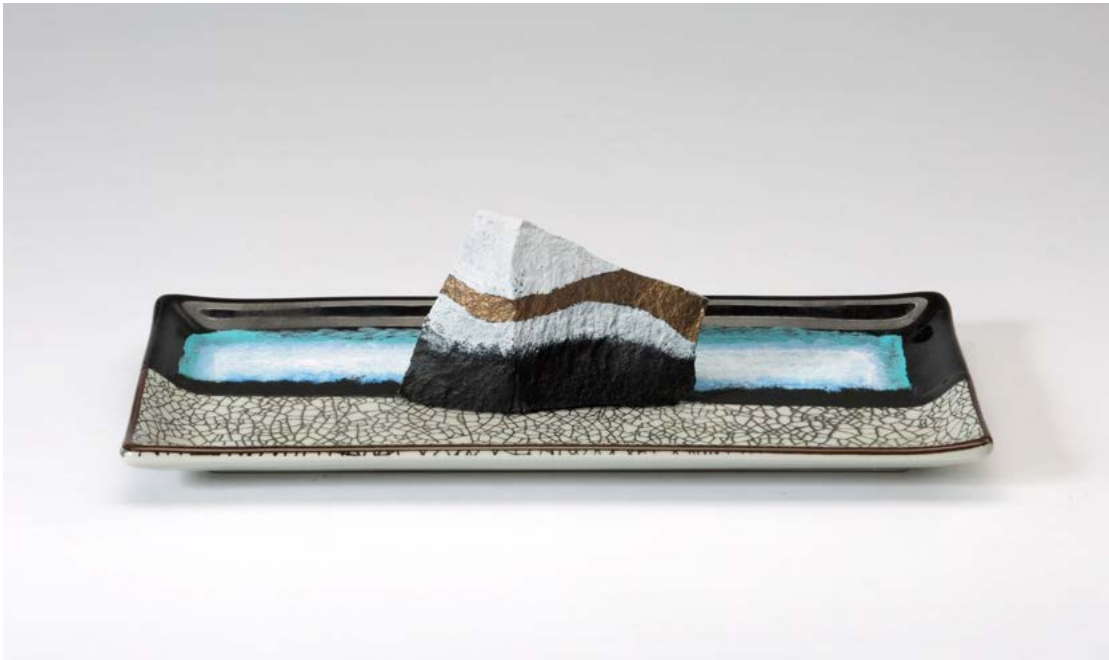
This iceberg has run away from its pack, put on a golden apron, and pierced its body. It is now performing in the circus but the ring of melting ice suggests it cannot escape its destiny.

The melting ice is composed of automobile windows that have been broken out by vandals. I picked up the shards from around Portland over the summer and fused them together with epoxy.





Crazing Camo Bergy Bit





Dreamy-berg





Eclipse-Moon-Sun



This work references extreme weather, a more frequent phenomenon brought to us by climate change. I have re-arranged the elements; everything is now upside down. The eclipse figures too prominently, a full moon glows too brightly and the sun is caged in a subterranean cage over a secondary eclipse.

Strange weather for a strange time.





Felucca-berg





Flat Earth-berg





This work was conceived after a long period of hearing incessant references to Forty Five. Omnipotence over the airwaves.

As for the excessively overt metaphors in this piece: an oil pipeline snakes downward from a golf tee holding a lot of loose screws. It enters a mass of rock with a slight patina of fake gold, the side of which sports a disintegrating confederate insignia. It all rests on a worker's glove and a bed of feathers, which is what remains recognizable after it must have come down hard enough to squash everything.

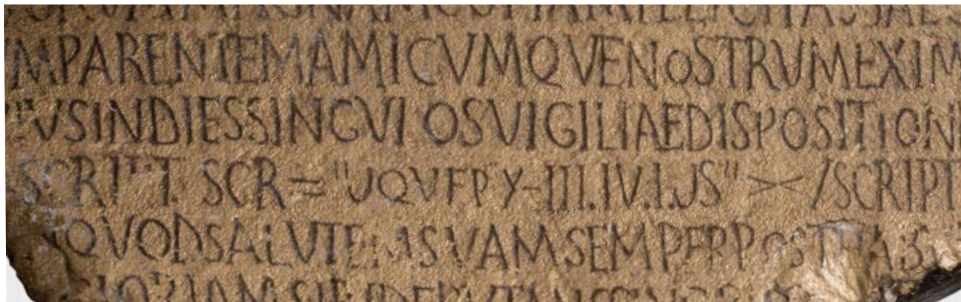
Forty Five



Growler Nouveau



Green Power



Green Power is an allusion to the way nuclear power has been cast in a new light and now hailed by many as a solution to our climate crisis. On the top of the cooling tower lies a rock covered in ancient Latin text. I am making reference to the timelessness of the idea that what is new is old and then becomes new again.

I applied Latin text to the rock's surface photographically. I am not sure of the overall meaning but it provided a way for me to embed some jQuery computer code to bring the text up to date.



Gastropod-o-berg



This is what results by combining the DNA from an iceberg, a saw, bird and slug.



In the real world icebergs have a lifespan of several years which they spend floating silently though the oceans and gradually melting away. This iceberg has tried to escape its destiny by elevating itself above the sea water. Notice that part of the support structure is trompe l'oeil which speaks to the futility of trying to escape the inevitable.

Lofty-berg





Migration



A zebra on one side and an egg on the other. Migration is so old, so much a part of the story of all living things, I ask which came first, migration or...

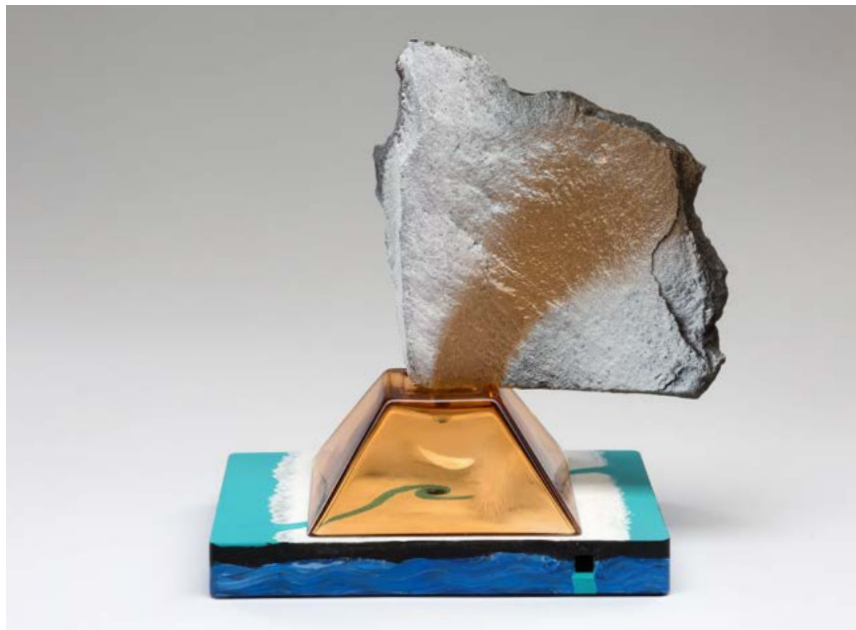


Organ Grinder Growler



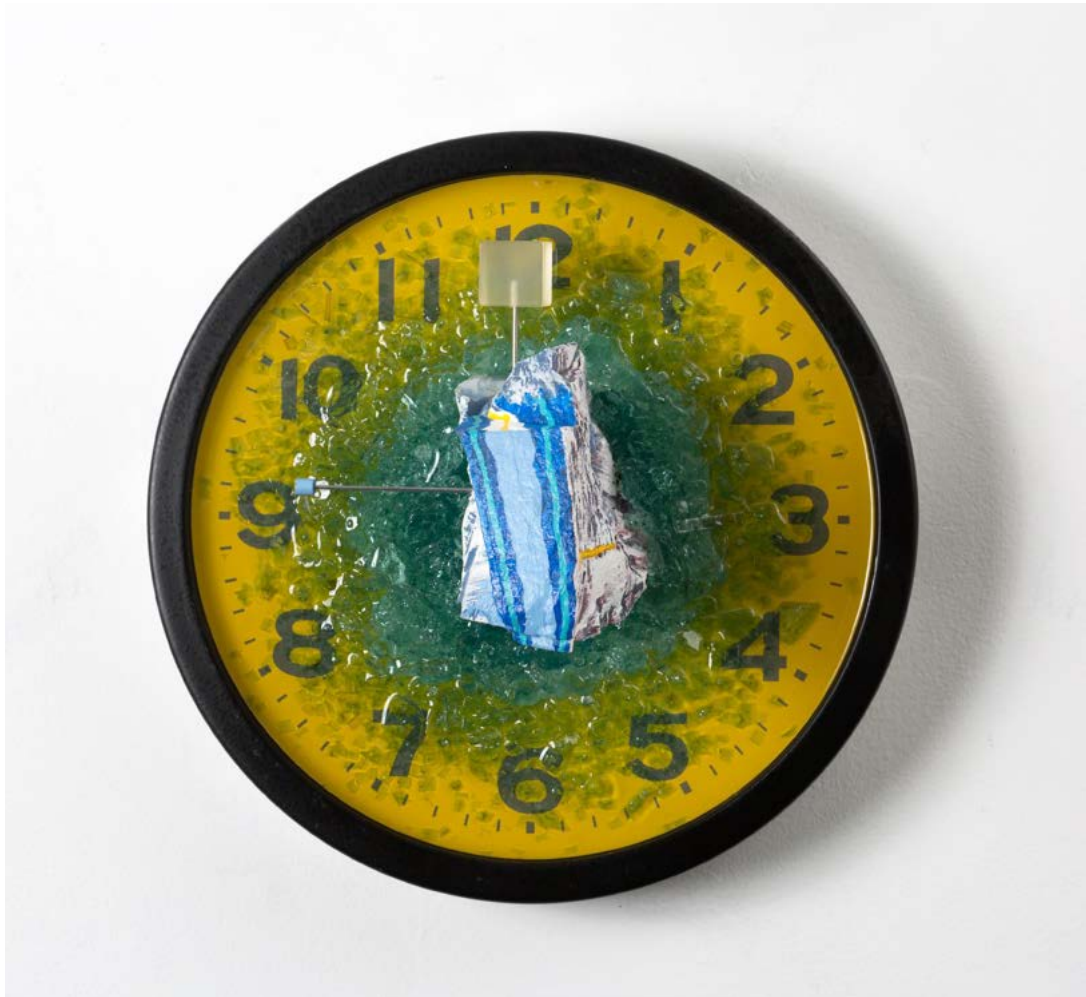


Pharaoh-berg





Prize-winner



Sundial

Sundial alludes to the diminishing time left to address the needs of our warming planet as the hands of the clock move toward a symbolic midnight.



Radio-berg





Time to Move

Like its companion clock to above, this work is about melting. It is also about altered borders. It vaguely references the shape of Oregon but with an unrecognizable outline due to sea level rise. I have employed artistic license here and acknowledge that the actual borders would become distorted in a very different way in real life.



Vanity-berg





Rooster-berg





Thun-berg





Trans-berg is about being different. I designed it after hearing comments that people who differ from the majority, whether in dress or ethnicity, "should go back to where they came from," implying they don't belong in this country. To address that idea, I created a circular well-worn path, implying constant motion without a destination.

Telling someone to go back to where they belong is just code for rejecting them and their ideas outright.



Trans-berg



The Wall

The wall is about America's new wall on the southern border. I wished to address the feeling of being near or around such a wall rather than about its efficacy or morality. By intention, this is an incredibly heavy piece for its size.





Tundra Burning Bergy Bits

I made this work in the summer of 2019 after hearing radio reports of tundra burning and smoldering over great swaths of the arctic across northern Canada and Alaska. The rusted metal band is to my mind a denatured rainbow, dragged to earth by the gravity of the situation and sort of binding the two icebergs together.





Tycoon-bergs

What would it look like if a couple of icebergs got together to strike it rich?

The small silhouette of a person surrounded by flames came to me after seeing video of the huge wild fires ravaging California and Australia in 2019. For this piece I sourced a 1970s urban planning book and placed within it a mechanical musical player. The theme music is Fur Elise, which Beethoven wrote after he had lost his hearing. The theme of this piece is deafness to our environmental crisis.





Trendy Bergy Bit



