

NEWSLETTER OF THE EPOCH WARS ARTIST-RUN GEOLOGICAL CONGRESS

Development Stage 2

October 2019

Chronus Art Centre, Shanghai, China

Bldg 18 NO.50 Moganshan Rd Shanghai



PONY
EXPRESS

WELCOME

Greetings to sponsors, delegates, stakeholders, and epoch warriors,

In this year's annual report, I am updating you on the progress of the Epoch Wars Artist-Run Geological Congress abroad. From October 20th to 29th, 2019, Pony Express undertook an artist residency at Chronus Art Centre funded by The Australia China Exchange, administrated by Performing Lines and Ping Pong productions. The following notes track our activities there, towards exploring the question of epoch-naming in a different cultural context and experimenting further towards developing an Artist-Run Geological Congress. I hope to address all of your interdisciplinary, international, interspecies, and interdimensional feedback towards the progression of our agenda in due time.

Yours faithfully,
Loren Kronemyer
Research Director, Epoch Wars

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KEY PERSONNEL

Loren Kronemyer: Research Director, Co-Showrunner, Performer
Ian Sinclair: Co-Showrunner, Performer
Tiyana Baker: Creative associate / Epoch Warrior
Julian Frichot: Photographer
UNA X: Graphic Designer
Bi Xin: Curator

1. ROUND TABLE

At Chronus Art Centre on Thursday, October 24th 2019, Pony Express hosted an Invitational, in-house, round-table for artists and thinkers with relevant research practices to encounter one other by invitation of Chronus Art Centre

Invitation:

What is the name of Earth's current age? Artists Pony Express (Australia) are creating the project Epoch Wars in an attempt to disrupt the adoption of the contested name "Anthropocene" into the planet's geological record. At this round-table, attendees will work together to navigate the urgent problem of naming time, sharing ways of thinking and practice related to the role of artists in geological nomenclature. We will share provocations designed to help participants pick a side in the heated debate around what and how to name Earth's present geological era. Are you ready to become an epoch warrior, or will you embrace dying in the so-called "Anthropocene"?

Minutes:

- The meeting opened with a traditional welcome acknowledging and paying respect to the elders past, present, and emerging, of the land on which we assembled and from which we came.
- Pony Express introduced Epoch Wars and asked how this debate exists in China. Translation of various possible epoch names in English and Mandarin was discussed, including Gynecene as "Dark Passage Epoch"
- An artist present spoke of the concept of an oscillating universe in Buddhist philosophy.
- Pony Express asked participants to line up by age in a human timeline.
- Pony Express asked participants to write one past and one future event on a timeline. Participants proceeded to fill in the timeline with more events they felt were significant, drawing from personal and collective history.

Image: Collective timeline creation.



EPOCH WARS

英文(中文现场翻译)
EN (with *EN* translation)

PONY EXPRESS

FREE
ADMISSION

2:00-4:00 (PM)
2019.10.27 (SUN)

<CAC-PRESENT⁴>

2. ARTIST INTERROGATION

On October 27th, Pony Express were scheduled for an artist talk at Chronus Art Centre. To experiment with an alternative panel format, they framed the program as an “Artist Interrogation”, testing several performative scores in the process. Live translation was provided by Sophie Zhu Miyi.

Pony Express describe this as “the deep play panel”. First Kronemyer gave a brief introduction. Other artists Ian Sinclair and Tiyan Baker were seated at a panelist table before the audience. Sinclair was seated perfectly still, wearing a disposable face mask.

Kronemyer introduced the first panelist, herself from the past. A short video introduction of herself giving an introductory lecture in Melbourne in May 2019 (see previous newsletter) played, superimposing her face onto Sinclair’s face, with the mask asking as a screen over his mouth. Once Kronemyer’s introductory video was complete, the lights were raised. Kronemyer announced that the floor was open to the artist interrogation.

Baker and Kronemyer strapped Sinclair into the polygraph and pulled the mask over his eyes.. Sinclair answered yes or no questions from the audience as the polygraph results were projected for all to see.

Questions included: “Do you believe humans are responsible for the current Earth circumstances?” “Have you ever taken a drug?” “Do you believe artists can save the world?”



After questioning, Baker reviewed the results of the polygraph, identifying where Sinclair had been registered as truthful and deceptive. She asked if he would like to explain any of his answers. A short, chaotic collage of videos of various talking heads and nonhuman entities implicated in the debate played over Sinclair’s face.

He delivered the following improvised rant to justify his answers:

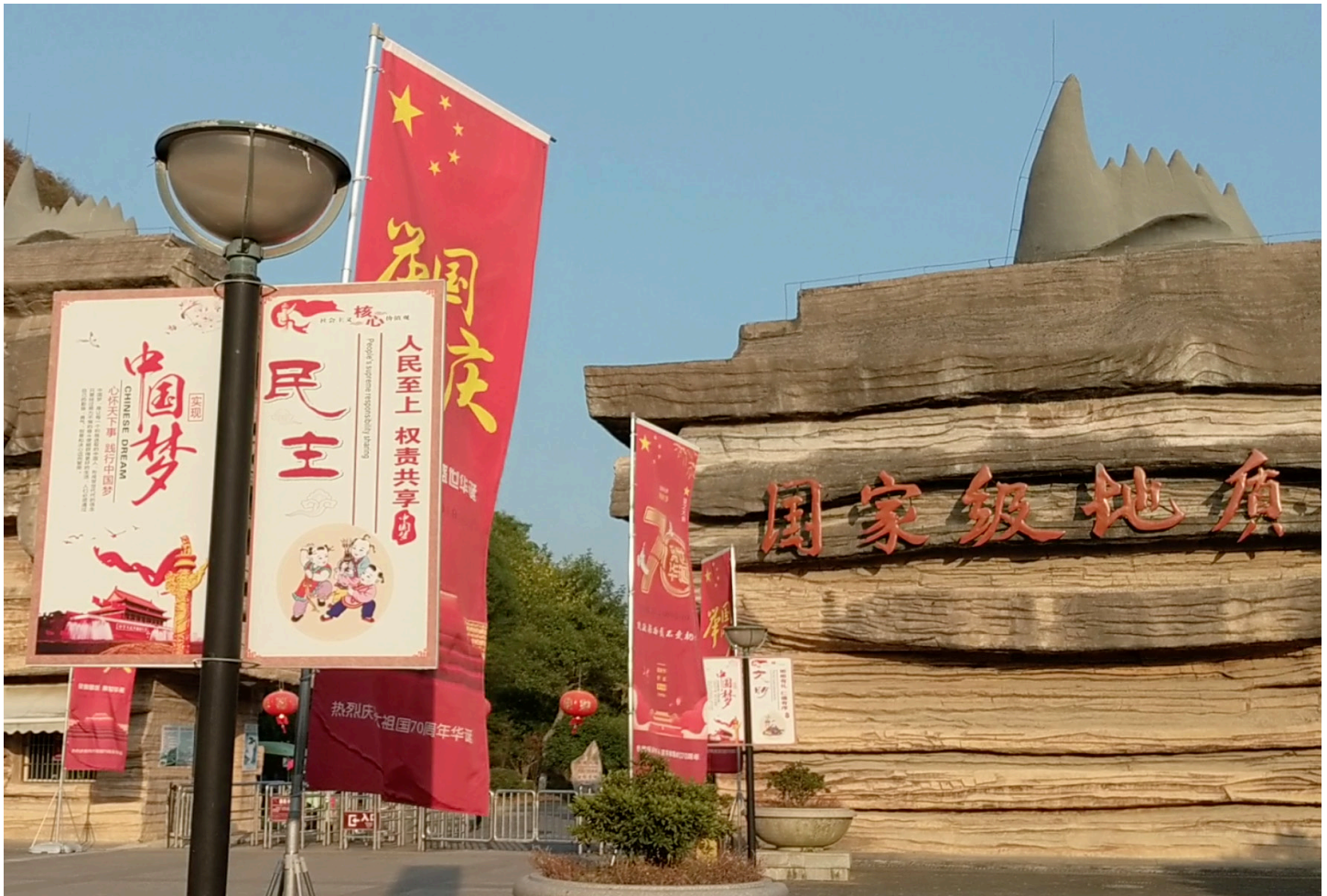
I DON'T WANT TO DIE IN THE "ANTHROPOCENE"
EVEN THOUGH I PROBABLY DESERVE TO
I WANT THE FREE WILL TO CHOOSE WHAT ERA I DIE IN
I WANT MY OWN TIMESCALE
I WANT DEEP TIME
I DON'T WANT HUMAN TOUCH
I WANT NONHUMAN
NONHUMANS
I WANT THE TENTACLES
I WANT THE WORMS
I WANT THE WORMS TO DECIDE
I WANT THE WORMS TO DECIDE WITH ME
A CONGRESS OF ALL BEINGS
A CONGRESS OF ALL BEINGS
I DON'T BELIEVE IN VIOLENCE
BUT I WANT TO KILL THE "ANTHROPOCENE."
KILL THE "ANTHROPOCENE" THROUGH LANGUAGE
THROUGH TALKING
THROUGH KILLING
THROUGH NOW
I WANT TO GO TO A PLACE
WHERE WORDS MEAN MORE THAN THEY MEAN
I WANT FREE WILL
I WANT FREE WILL FOR ALL THINGS
LET ME LIE
LET ME LIE IN THE STRATA
LET ME LIE IN BETWEEN THE ROCKS
LET US DECIDE OUR OWN FATE
LET US DECIDE OUR OWN FATE TOGETHER
NOT THEM US
NOT THEM US
NOT THEM US.



3. GOLDEN SPIKE PARK

At the end of the trip to China, the touring party visited A geological sciences park in ChangXing county called The Golden Spike Ancient World Park. This park is the location of two GSSPs, colloquially known as “Golden Spikes”; the geological marker for the boundary between epochs. The park is located in the oldest coal mine in China. When dug, this mine revealed both the Permian-Triassic epoch boundary, (famous for marking Earth’s heretofore largest extinction event The Great Dying), and the Wuchiaopingian-Changhsingian boundary.





Since 2006, the site had been absorbed into the complex of the Geopark, a theme park that combines tourism, nationalism, and science communication into an elaborate and deeply weird pageant of chronostratigraphy. Superimposed onto the former coal mine, the park is a vast, ticketed playground celebrating the GSSP discovery through physical monuments, a 4-d cinema, multiple interactive galleries, and extensive grounds which include an island of animatronic dinosaurs, a healing reiki footpath, and a plant maze. At the time of my visit, the park was minimally staffed, with most exhibits weathered, overgrown, and partially functioning from neglect. Photos in the visitor's centre depicted the park in its heyday, with workers and politicians, including future president Xi Jinping, strolling among verdant and manicured topiaries.



To visit the spikes themselves, we entered through a sculpture of a dinosaur's gaping mouth to ascend 95 steps up the mine's face. At the summit, the path opened to a marble and granite square dotted with monuments, including a white and gold obelisk, a giant stone book engraved with the names of the stratigraphic team, and a long reflective black wall engraved with florid depictions of the phases of life on earth.

The golden spikes themselves were viewed by climbing up a set of ornately carved granite stairs that resembled an altarpiece, with steps having been cracked and dislocated by boulders that had fallen from the cliff face in recent time. Atop the altar, I came face to face with the spike for the first time and noticed immediately that it was not a spike at all: it was an engraved brass plaque that had been hastily adhered onto the rock face.

This raises the question, why call it a golden spike in the first place? Why not a golden plaque, or golden point, or golden circle? Is the penetrative symbolism of the imagery of a "spike" so potent, that it overrides the objective fact that the object itself is not a spike?

4. GRAPHIC DESIGN

After seeing her designs for their Artist Talk / Artist Interrogation poster, Pony Express commissioned Chronus Art Centre's graphic designer UNA X to create a project brand identity for Epoch Wars. Below is a sample from the brief UNA X was provided.

BRIEF SENT TO UNA X ON OCTOBER 25TH 2019

THE WORD 'Anthropocene', the human-recent era, is understood to mean the age of Earth's history defined by humankind as a geological force. The so-called 'Anthropocene' as a proposed new name for our present epoch, or geological era, is both a scientific proposal and a cultural meme.

In 2020, the word 'Anthropocene' will be submitted for approval at the 36th International Geological Congress. This submission is being advanced by the 34 voting members of the Anthropocene Working Group, the mostly male, mostly European cohort of scientists behind the name. Regardless of scientific validation, 'Anthropocene' has gained popularity across the arts, academia, and journalism as a way to articulate the anxieties and horrors of our present day.

This spread of this word has triggered a vigorous backlash by scholars who believe that the word 'Anthropocene' disrespects the stakes of setting our future into stone. They argue that 'Anthropocene' misplaces the blame for our decline on all humans, rather than on dominant forces like capitalism, patriarchy, or white supremacy. A flood of alternative names, each with their own values and biases, have been drafted by a global cohort of thinkers: are we living in the Chthulucene, the Capitalocene, the Symbiocene, or the Pyrocene? Who does the word 'Anthropocene' serve? How will the name of this era impact future generation's ability to imagine and survive? And why is there such the rush to name something that will far outlive us all?

Epoch Wars is a queered geological congress in which diverse beings gather to battle for the name of Earth's new age.

As each presenter articulates their vision for our geological era's name, Pony Express and contributors invite the audience to radicalize behind their chosen epoch, dramatically derailing the form of the symposium through interactive and performed interventions that shift the scope and raise the stakes of the experience. The negotiation becomes an expansive, unpredictable, and urgent theatre of conflict that breaks the binary between science and storytelling. What results is an attempt at geological consensus, towards an activism that can equip us for an incomprehensible future.

ADDITIONAL READING

Articles summarizing the debate on our epoch's name:

[Written in Stone by James Westcott](#)

[Have We Entered A New Phase of Planetary History? by Nicola Davison](#)

[Petition Against the Official Anthropocene by CJ Cuomo.](#)

[An example of one of the many artists affirming the name "Anthropocene": Edward Burtynsky](#)

[An example of one of the many artists using their own alter-epoch name: Tomas Saraceno](#)

[Glenn Albrecht on Exiting the Anthropocene and Entering the Symbiocene](#)

[Donna Haraway's lecture \(at my alma mater ;\) \) Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene](#)

[The GSSP or Golden Spike; these are markers used to declare the boundary of a geological epoch by the chronostratigraphic community](#)

[The Anthropocene Working Group; the committee of 34 members advancing the name as a scientific truth](#)

[Why must the Anthropocene be a Manthropocene by Kate Raworth](#)

[Epoch Wars by Pony Express Preview](#)

BRIEF

The vibe of this project is global superpowers (human and non) coming together, millennial geology, queer ecology, dark ecology, council of all beings, corporate meets mythological, corporate meets geological, parallel universe propaganda. Assets are bilingual with mandarin and english (we can have translation help from other sources)

We would love to see:

- A quote for your full fee for all of the assets below (or whichever you are able to tackle with the skills you have)
- A separate quote for just a project visual identity

We would pay you in full by the end of this year and request the final products by January 2020. You would be contracted by Performing Lines, which is our producing company, who will pay you via invoice.

Assets we need:

- Project logo and branding identity
- Signage: adaptable directional signage, templates for vinyl floor decals
- Program: 1 page folded program for the event including a map.
- Web banners and assets for social media and landing page

Physical deliverables we want for the event:

- Teardrop banners
- Lanyards
- Tote bags
- Floor decals

Extra assets we want:

- Custom Typeface
- Assets we can Integrate with Wechat
- Ultimately we would like to have a nicely customized web page for the project with some integrated video, text, and interactive fields depending on where the project goes

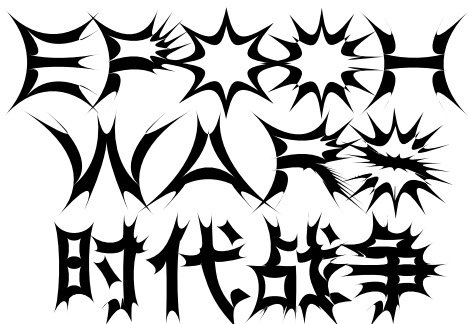
Newsletter of the Epoch Wars Artist-Run Geological Congress
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Una X provided Pony Express with these draft design samples. These assets will be evolved in future discussion as this project progresses.

COLOR SYSTEM II



LOGO I

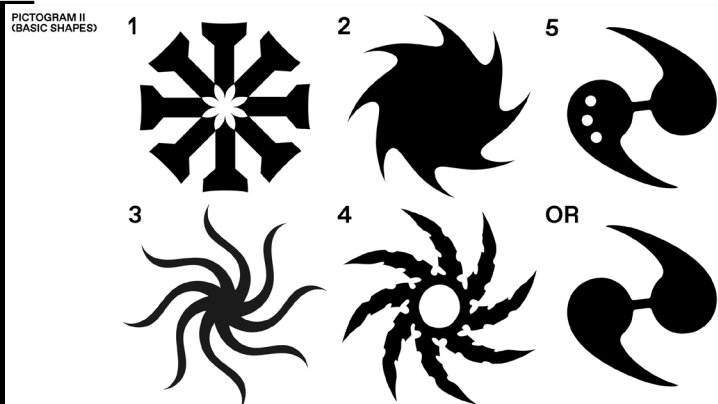


LOGO II
COMBINATION II

EPOCH
WARS
时代战争

EPOCH
WARS
时代战争

~~ANTHROPOCENE~~
人类纪
CAPITALOCENE
资本主义纪
CHTHULUCENE
克苏鲁神纪
SYMBIOCENE
共生纪
GYNECENE
阴道纪
TERRAMETACENE
地球重纪
PYROCENE
火纪
VERMICENE
蠕虫纪
EPOCH WARS 时代战争



Roobert

Roobert is a mono-linear geometrical sans-serif with an interesting feature of the "8" and "oo", giving a feeling of infinity, crumple and nature.

(MAIN)

Chapter

Chapter is an aggressive serif typeface with extended sharp serifs and distinct contrasts.

(SUPPORTING)