

Future Selves are Stone

Erica Vital-Lazare

Monuments are rituals. Sacrificial blood on stone, the headwind of our gaze spiraling to the top of serrated rock, the third eye on legal tender. They are gravesites, tombstones burying unimagined dead and history. They carry our unquenchable thirst for wonder and wondering: Khufu, Colosseum, Great Wall, Chichen Itza, Machu Pichu, Taj Mahal, Hanging Gardens of Babylon. We see and see until the cornea burns and the sight becomes a thorn we arch our backs into—the itch that will not break.

The first monuments traced circles. Nabta Playa turned do-si-do in the sands of the Nubian Desert a full two millennia before Stone Henge. Andesite, basalt and schist concentrated, concentric, tightly aligned in sublime order. Each rock told the story of a time when versions of ourselves created versions of ourselves to mount against the sky. Obelisk, sundial, stelae piercing high and deep. We talked to Orion through silica, sending our signal up and under the skirt of The Three Sisters—our stars hitched to Sirius.

Monuments are rocket ships. Decrypt the code and climb into the throat of George's phallus, all of us erect on the Washington Mall, strapped in, bound for take-off. White colonnade and steeple, bronze cap and bayonet, antebellum horse and rider combust into Pegasus. We ride the marble side-saddle. Those who escaped come back to guide us, a celestial train of aeronautic nephilim in gingham dress and kerchief. Mammy as master of divine mathematics. Tom hamboning quantum equation into real navigation. We use our veins to map the granite back.

See us push our carts from Mario's Market on MLK. Catch a glimpse of our carbon, phosphorus, pre-solar dust spilling out of Victory Baptist, striding the bones of the Moulin Rouge, burning through Nevada Statute, funicular southern talk elevating City Hall chambers. Crevasse, rock and cairn we ease toward the splendor. Walking, crooning, cycloning remnants. Lost pyramids—we reconfigure broken stone into fuselage and thruster. We breathe and we build altars.

Monuments are portals, ushering us beyond the grave into cosmic returning. Past, present, future. We are monuments splintered and holy.



Living Black Pillar - III
Chase R. McCurdy, 2020

Conversations with Spirit, Chase R. McCurdy and Erica Vital-Lazare

Conversations between spirits, a relationship between artists. Erica and I have developed a relationship of love and trust, one in which anything may be discussed without fear of judgment or negative reaction. A space to be open in thought, concern, feeling and consideration. A space where to be challenged is to be loved, respected and engaged with. Organic interactions that lead to natural outgrowths of enhanced perspective.

Chase R. McCurdy is an interdisciplinary artist in Las Vegas, Nevada. Chase's art practice has evolved from a focus in photography and film to encompass painting and writing among others. With a focus on art history and theory, education, and societal relationships, Chase's studies have brought him back to his hometown of Las Vegas, NV after practicing and studying in Los Angeles, CA and Paris, France. chasermccurdy.com

Erica Vital-Lazare is a professor of creative writing and Marginalized Voices in Dystopian Literature at the College of Southern Nevada and has received grants and awards from the Zora Neale Hurston/Richard Wright Foundation, and Virginia Commonwealth University's Hilliard Endowment. Her work has been featured in *Catalyst*, *Sojourner*, *Thrice* and *Callaloo II*. She is co-producer of the photo-narrative installation *Obsidian & Neon: Building Black Life and Identity in Las Vegas* and is the editor of the forthcoming ***Of the Diaspora***, a series of revisiting classic Black works in literature with *McSweeney's Press*.