

Founded in 2002 by Anjalika Sagar and Kodwo Eshun, **The Otolith Group** is an award-winning artist collective based in London. The Otolith Group produces films, installations, and exhibitions that emerge from archival research into such topics as the global nuclear regime, speculative futures, tricontinentalism, and cybernetics. Recent exhibitions have been presented at museums including MAXXI, Rome; MIT List Visual Arts Center, Boston; MACBA, Barcelona; Bétonsalon, Paris; and The Showroom, London. Their work has been included in such international exhibitions as dOCUMENTA 13, Kassel, Germany; the 29th São Paulo Biennial, São Paulo, Brazil; and Manifesta 8, Murcia, Spain. In 2010, The Otolith Group was nominated for the Turner Prize.

REDCAT

CalArts' downtown center for innovative visual, performing and media arts

631 West 2nd Street
Los Angeles, California USA 90012

www.redcat.org
+1 213 237 2800

Gallery hours:
noon-6pm or intermission, closed Mondays
Always free

The Otolith Group: Medium Earth
is funded in part with generous support from the British Council and the Pasadena Art Alliance.



The Otolith Group

Medium Earth

April 21–June 16, 2013

Even Stones Worry

Aram Moshayedi

Exhibition Checklist

The Otolith Group
Medium Earth, 2013
HD video with sound
41 min.
Courtesy the artists
Commissioned by REDCAT

What do faults promise,

What assurances do they give when they seek the line of least resistance?

The pressures of geological time weigh down upon *Medium Earth* (2013), a 41-minute essay film by London-based artists The Otolith Group. Burdened by heaviness and weight, it overflows with the stillness of sedentary life and the slowness of cinematic time. It is an accumulation of moving pictures and sonic resonances that convey the means through which the hidden becomes visible and through which an invisible system of fault lines and tectonic forces leaves its traces on the surface of the Earth.

The landscape inhabiting the images of *Medium Earth* discloses the depths of an internal structure, a dense network of strata enveloped by infrastructure, an artificial stratum of poured concrete, asphalt, and the makings of the developed land. Sitting atop bands of buried densities, the world of roads and buildings bears the markers of that which it conceals. Deep down below the outermost surface of the Earth, the sub-dwellers of geological time slowly impress themselves upon the underside of our visible world, they make their presences known through traces — hairline cracks and fissures that are just underfoot — and other ruptures of brute seismic force.

Whether or not tectonic events can succumb to the logics and folklores of prediction remains debatable within seismology. Faults hardly keep their promises, having managed to withhold their secrets throughout time. Save for the few clues that scientists, pseudo scientists, and sensitives struggle to uncover, there is little legibility and even less of

a solid ground from which earthquake predictions can be made. Stresses and slippages along fault lines are as seemingly irrational as the whims and caprice of the ancient gods, though the knowledge acquired by scientific research in the past century has become more refined and magical thinking has become more pervasive.

Feats of architecture and the materials used to articulate space in our built environment are now the conduits through which the Earth speaks, through which some sensitive body or scientific mind might be able to decipher the language of otherwise invisible forces. An expansion crack in the poured concrete slabs that are nine levels below the planet's surface — in a cavernous parking garage where sections of *Medium Earth* take place — mediate the writing of stones and translate the slowness of geology into a temporal speed of the present. Within these shallow depths, *Medium Earth* lingers and congregates within the utilitarian spaces that writer Rebecca Solnit describes as being part of a world “made more and more of stuff we're not supposed to look at.”

The banal architecture of Los Angeles' parking garages can be understood as a medium for the Earth, just as the body of the biological earthquake predictor Charlotte King endures bouts of nausea, stomach pains, earaches, and headaches on behalf of a planet that speaks through her. In an email dated April 19, 2013, King describes her symptoms and their terrestrial analogs:

Earaches mostly L side which is China, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India including the Nicobar and Andaman Islands.

There has been more R leg pains again. This includes the R ankle, knee and hip...

and is Peru/Brazil and or Columbia.

My lower back still is painful... this is part of the Wasatch/New Madrid.... That would be more for Oklahoma, Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas and or Georgia as well as New York, Maine and Illinois.

This includes Idaho, Utah, Wyoming and Montana and West Yellowstone. Includes stomach pains as well as low back pains, Seismic Flu® and nausea.

The body of Charlotte King is full of cracks and fissures, fault-line capillaries and tectonic muscle spasms. For King and other sensitives attuned to the geopoetics of premonition, feeling for the Earth overwhelms the body. These sensations must be similar to those that rocks and stones and boulders feel at the nearly imperceptible pace of geological processes. If only rocks could talk. They might describe their dread that each second might be their last, that the forces pressing down upon them might disrupt their precarious balance. Even the stones worry. Their fate is imminent; they are always on the verge of eroding or crumbling at a given moment in the next hundred years or more.

Medium Earth turns the desert landscape's otherwise mute inhabitants into characters whose gravitas unfolds within the frame of cinematic time. The boulder outcrops, scarred mountainsides, and ominous caves are actors in a geological drama that is positioned within a framework of the drab concrete and fluorescent glow of the city's deepest parking garages. The performances in this drama are, however, restrained and teeming with the stillness that moving images struggle to attain.