

High Water

An installation by Kate Hampel

Curated by Kate Pollasch

Exhibition Dates: February 5 - March 12, 2017

Opening Reception: Sunday, February 5,
2017, from 2 - 5 pm

Terrain Exhibitions, 704 Highland Avenue, Oak
Park, IL



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ate Hampel, *High Water*, 2017. sandbags
sewn with polyester cloth digitally printed
with image of artist's skin; sand; salt;
styrofoam.

Terrain Exhibitions and the **Chicago Artists Coalition** are pleased to present *High Water*, an installation by artist **Kate Hampel**. *High Water* is the inaugural exhibition of the Terrain-HATCH Public Art Residency and is curated by **Kate Pollasch**.

Kate Hampel's interdisciplinary work confronts social topics, which may be viewed as difficult or taboo, with a compelling visual intimacy and conceptual openness. Her practice engages with the aesthetics of power and violence and unravels embedded social constructs and seemingly invisible narratives.

High Water is the second in a series of ad-hoc architectural installations created as gestures of resistance. In this iteration, Hampel captures intimate photographs of different parts of her skin and expands those images into digitally printed fabric that is cut, sewn, and stuffed into sandbags. In a conventional context, sandbags are employed as a line of defense and support, a brace for impending trauma, damage, and instability from natural disaster or war and violence. In *High Water*, Hampel constructs a corporeal wall of resistance that imbues the domestic outdoor space with a sense of preparation, a call to arms, and contemplation of the fragility of political opposition.

Curatorial Statement

Curating in a public setting, in the front outdoor space of a domestic home, with a rich legacy of community engagement offers a distinct set of curatorial considerations for this project. Standing in the Terrain space, the macro layers of community building is felt on a micro level; across the yard is Sabina Ott's intimate home, across the street is a grade-school, other family homes line the road, public transit passes nearby and is also a reminder of the stark differences of infrastructure between Oak Park and other Chicago neighborhoods. Engaging with all of these contexts in a public space is undeniably intimate and also powerfully communal, and I

strove to reside in that duality as I considered this curatorial project. This exhibition also unfolded as the election season came to a head and we all faced a new presidential and national landscape. Kate Hampel's direct embrace of the topics that many of us can be so quick to tuck away, out of site, or to speak about only in whispers was the gesture that felt imperative for a public art exhibition. Just as Sabina Ott offers her personal home for public engagement, Hampel's practice mirrors the intimacy and vulnerability of Terrain as she offers her skin, her corporeal layer of protection, to be transformed into an installation for community and public engagement. *High Water* also speaks to the power of collective unity when standing up to opposition. We are all fragile beings whose voices can become exhausted from advocating, whose legs tire from marching and whose souls weaken from oppression, but together we echo across the streets, our marching spans the nation, and our souls find empathy and enrichment. I was recently told that as artists and arts workers our lives are about building sandcastles on the edge of high tide and that our greatest duty as the waves pull our castle to sea is to build again. Build again. Build again. *High Water* does not speak in absolutes, it is not a sign that "together we can fix anything," but it is a personal, public, and direct reminder of the power and sacrifice in building, creating, reinforcing, and talking. In this, it is an artistic installation needed for public consumption now more than ever.

--Kate Pollasch

About the Artist

[Kate Hampel](#) holds an MFA in Fiber and Material Studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a BFA from Concordia University in Montreal. Based in Chicago, she has participated in residencies across the United States, including the Vermont Studio Center, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, and the Ragdale Foundation, and was the recipient of the Fountainhead Fellowship in Craft/Material Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. Her work has been featured in the New York Times and has been shown nationally and internationally at galleries and museums including AIR Gallery in Brooklyn, NY; the Daegu Culture and Arts Center in South Korea; the Michigan Institute for Contemporary Art; and the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art.

About the Curator

As a curator, art historian, and writer, **Kate Pollasch's** practice interrogates pre-existing notions of history and normativity through queer tactics, network theory, archival studies, and considerations of affect and digital pedagogy. In 2012, she curated the exhibition "Roger Brown: This Boy's Own Story" of Chicago Imagist artist Roger Brown, which unearthed previously censored artworks and archival materials from Brown's career and resulted in Brown's induction into the Visual AIDS Artist Registry. Pollasch holds a MA in Modern art History and Theory and an MA in Arts Administration and Cultural Policy from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has held positions with The American Visionary Art Museum, The Art Institute of Chicago, the Roger Brown House Museum, Sullivan Galleries, and most recently Rhona Hoffman Gallery. She has lectured at The Chicago History Museum, The Art Institute of Chicago, and The University of Chicago and is a contributing writer for New City, The Seen, and Elite Daily. Kate

Pollasch was a 2015-2016 HATCH Projects Curatorial Resident with the Chicago Artists Coalition.

About Terrain-HATCH Public Art Residency

The Terrain-HATCH Public Art Residency is a joint partnership between [Terrain Exhibitions](#) and the [Chicago Artists Coalition's HATCH Projects](#). Formed by their shared dedication to showing inventive work and fostering experimentation and creativity, this public art residency allows HATCH Projects graduates the opportunity to curate four exhibitions at Terrain. Shows run for a period of 5 weeks, between February and July, 2017, and are accessible and visible 24 hours a day. **All exhibitions take place in the front yard of Terrain Exhibitions, located at 704 Highland Avenue in Oak**