

Event Scores for Hominin Time

Heather Warren-Crow

Note

Event Scores for Hominin Time is a series of instructions for the making of artworks that invite Anatomically Modern Humans to imagine the scale and rhythms of Big (human and nonhuman) History. The piece is inspired by recent scientific advancements that complicate our understandings of human evolution—especially, increasing DNA evidence of interbreeding between *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals and, for some researchers, a reevaluation of the artistic and linguistic abilities of the latter. New paleoanthropological discoveries are encouraging us to envision a world in which multiple human species co-existed and interacted for a considerable amount of time. For example, a recent analysis of archaeological evidence in Europe determined that Neanderthals and Anatomically Modern Humans lived side by side for 2,600–5,400 years. As the authors of the study summarize, “Rather than a rapid model of replacement of autochthonous European Neanderthals by incoming AMHs, our results support a more complex picture, one characterized by a biological and cultural mosaic that lasted for several thousand years” (Higham et al. 2014).

Event Scores for Hominin Time is built on the premise that challenges to anthropocentrism require an affective appreciation of the capacity for culture amongst diverse archaic humans, the complexity of the social lives of many nonhuman creatures, and the scale of evolution. At the same time, the piece playfully acknowledges the absurdity of truly confronting the Big Past and Big Future in our puny present.

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Event Scores for Hominin Time

I. Make a small book illustrating at least 15 reproductive positions for a particular hominin species of the future. Watercolors are not a possibility.

The book should have rounded corners for longevity.

II. Imagine an industry of the future that lasts as long as Acheulian stone tool manufacturing (about one and a half million years). Perform an oral narrative of your industry using a line graph as a visual aid. Circulate the line graph on the Internet and amongst your extended family.

III. Decide for yourself whether speciation and subspeciation are analog or digital phenomena. Exhaustively notate your thought process and affective responses. Use this notation as the score of a musical performance for percussion instruments. Entitle your piece “Differential Longings.”

IV. Determine a linguistic metaphor for the scale of geologic history. Translate your metaphor into a three dimensional object with moving parts.

V. Sit cross-legged with a small child and swap stories about stories about stories. Replace yourself and the child with two nonhuman primates. Position yourself at the periphery. Binoculars and microphones may be necessary.

Call this performance “Architectural Construct #V.”

VI. Walk bipedally across a bridge and call it Art. Acknowledge the network of objects that participate in the making of your work. Identify each one with an off-brand Post-It note.

Call this performance “Architectural Construct #VI.”

VII. Determine a linguistic metaphor for the scale of geologic history. Translate your metaphor into a repeatable set of gestures. Entrain your gestural performance to a preexisting environmental oscillation.

Create a system of notation to score this work. Notate not your own gestures, but the rhythmic relationship between endogenous and exogenous events.

VIII. Calculate the shearing forces that may distort your skull during a burial for 4 million years. Use speculative data from the exact latitudinal and longitudinal site of your favorite memorial statue. Consult a geologist.

Make a sculpture of the forces and not the thing. This time, now, it’s the forces and not the thing.

Bury it.

IX. Digitally create the sound of water rushing. Use your music to move a colony of beavers threatened by human extermination (beavers are attracted to the sound, to that sound). Without seeming cruel, tell your friends that this is a question of aesthetics.

Donate your audio file, a set of underwater speakers, a set of waterproof speakers, and a waterproof MP3 player to three national parks in the United States. Document the new beaver dams photographically on archival paper.

X. Walk quadripedally across a bridge and call it art. Acknowledge the network of objects that participate in the making of your work. Identify each one with a standard-size off-brand Post-It note cut into strips.

XI. Write a play that stages the relationship between the earth and the sun as a romantic comedy. Hire a director to mount the same play as classic horror. Afterwards, make sure that nothing remains of the production except the scenic elements, which should be left outside to deteriorate, and the script, which should be commemorated through a yearly parade in a small American town.

XII. Bribe your friends into playing a game of evolution using modified Monopoly pieces. Afterwards, arrange these tiny sculptures in a pile in the center of a long-forgotten room. Chewing gum can be involved, if only to compensate for your lack of aesthetic grace. Question your judgment.

XIII. Speculate on the sound of Neanderthal laughs in response to various plausible situations. Create audio files for at least 3 different laughs. Label the files *Homoneanderthalensis1*, *Homoneanderthalensis2*, *Homoneanderthalensis3*, and so on.

Redo the event after familiarizing yourself with models of the Neanderthal vocal tract.

XIV. Design a site-specific performance that responds to geographic features no longer extant in your environment. Use gestures and not words to train your actors to visualize the site. Stage the performance on a Sunday.

Using the aforementioned gestures, remount the performance as a silent conversation between two friends.

Using the aforementioned gestures, remount the performance as a silent conversation between two ravens.

XV. Calculate the compression forces that may distort your pelvis during a burial for 4 million years. Use speculative data from the exact latitudinal and longitudinal site of your favorite memorial hospital. Consult a geologist.

Make a sculpture of the forces and not the thing. Bury it. Deep.

XVI. Speculate on the sound of Australopithecine laughs in response to various plausible situations. Create audio files for at least 3 different laughs. Label the files *Australopithecusaferensis*, *Zinjanthropusboisei*, *Paranthropusrobustus*, and so on.

Redo the event after familiarizing yourself with models of Australopithecine vocal tracts.

Redo the event after familiarizing yourself with cultural differences between hominins.

Redo the event.

Redo the event.

Redo the event.

XVII. Imagine two communities of separate but co-existing hominin species. On two long bones emptied of marrow, sucked clean or otherwise evacuated, make a series of vertical marks to index the pattern of each community's daily activities. Confirm, at least for your own comfort and intellectual well-being, that you have developed a system.

Place each bone side by side to study the similarities and differences. Describe the relationship between the two objects using a form of rhythmic notation appropriate for a long, multi-part vocal performance.

You may not sing. You may not speak. You must hold the objects awkwardly in front of an audience during the course of the piece.



References

Higham, Tom, Katerina Douka, Rachel Wood et al. (2014) “The Timing and Spatiotemporal Patterning of Neanderthal Disappearance,” *Nature* 512: 306-309.



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