

# The Mystery of **Z**

RYDER JONES

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Student identification: 1109588

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THANK YOU OPHELIA  
THANK YOU PAUL  
THANK YOU MON  
THANK YOU BETH  
THANK YOU PETER  
THANK YOU MOM  
THANK YOU DAD

*I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.*

RYDER JONES  
8/10/15

## ***Abstract***

**Z** is a name created by the project to collect and follow what it perceives as indelible, a situation with resounding atmosphere:

- The snap of an unripe nectarine, its dulled sweetness.
- The posture of a praying mantis, its scissor blade arms.
- The smell of air conditioning.
- A dark tone of green.

**Z** is the moment where one swoons, drawn into the grips of a presence, as familiar as it is unexplained.

The project analyses spaces, objects, and situations where **Z** threatens to exist. The project searches for **Z** in the way one may follow a sound, not knowing what it is, searching for its source.

The project uses alleged recordings of **Z** as the conceptual basis of a sculptural practice involving the making of objects and spaces.

## Gripping the Phantasm

Z

... An atmosphere of mystery rising like intoxicating smoke, spilling out from an unlikely

host: *the smell of a sunlit room, a fork of lightning, a sentence in a novel, or a green light bleeding its venomous haze.* These experiences are subjective, linked by the presence of **Z**, a tenuous thread, like a trail of a snail, iridescent in one light, invisible in another.

**Z** is the slipping illumination of an idle moment, a gripping unidentified presence. This presence acts upon a body. The project attempts to grip **Z** before it slips from perception, to record its essence. The project chases **Z** as if it were a shadow.

Intended definitions of **Z**:

*Z is an open space for what is not yet articulated.*

*Z denotes to a third unknown or unspecified person or thing.*

*Z is a particular blend of atmosphere that rises out of things.*

So I'm walking along. And I see some dead leaves on the sidewalk. And I see some tar dripping into the gutter of the curb. Across the way, a lemon tree droops under its own weight. And I keep walking. And then, I am walking along and I see this cracked window – And I stop – Staring at this splintered plane of liquid blue, its fissures spreading out like a web – and I think – this cracked window is the best thing I've ever seen.

This is what I've been waiting for. This feeling – This cracked window.

And so I can't believe it. I can't believe this electric current zapping me; this atmosphere permeating some wet unreliable part of my brain. This is **Z**, this situation, this sensation. The project investigates the mystery of **Z**.

Plato's *Theory of Forms* suggests that the world in which we live is a shadow of an ideal. I imagine this ideal as a gleaming ball cast in the beam of some mysterious light, the shadow of the ball splays out as a distorted version of itself—this shadow (according to Plato) is where we live. Everything in this world is a distorted version of its ideal, singed into our brains before we are born and forgotten once we arrive. The ideal haunts us like a sensation of déjà vu, a light is glimpsed, and then replaced by shadow. I'd like to imagine a moment occurring when the mysterious ideal is glimpsed, the fabric of a shadow is torn, and a ray of light filters in, radiating like a mistake.

Drawing from Plato's *Theory of Forms*, I assemble my own conspiracy of light, a theory of sensing something: *The shadow of a glass of water, the sound of paper tearing.* This is usually how things work: I see a lemon and keep walking, I see a tree root lifting up the sidewalk and I step over and keep walking, but sometimes there is exception to what is usual, on occasion I stop and everything changes: A radiant translucency occurs, for a moment **X** can sense something beyond **Y**, an essence, a dull radiance lurking behind. This glimpse is of the third letter: **Z**.

The theory of **Z** suggests a presence that lurks beyond the surface of material things; ultimately this presence is a subjective experience, becoming a quasi-mystical figment. Like a dream told at the dinner table, everyone tunes out and nobody cares. This writing attempts to form a basis for **Z** in and beyond a subjective experience, by amassing a catalog of references, images and parallel writing.

The philosophy of this project is to situate itself in a teetering state, a mystery stretched perpetually taut. **Z**, tauntingly charming resists grasp. These writings form an essay, essay used as a verb: *to attempt or to try.*

Part of the allure of **Z** is that I don't know what it is. **Z** resists knowing, and inconsistently reveals itself. **Z** is the alluring unknown, the terrifying darkness, hysterical and bright. This particular blend of atmosphere that the project is infatuated with can only be called **Z**.

These writings fold into a sculptural practice. At the center is the idea that artwork has a way of accessing something immaterial. As **Z** slips from perception there is an impulse to grip, to take

hold of something that has already departed (or could never be gripped). The project situates sculpture as a way to grip the atmosphere of **Z**, a way that negates language. The sculpture of the project exists in a realm parallel to the writings. Both methods, material and cerebral, head toward the same destination, only by different means.

*The project devotes itself to something unknown. The project is drawn into the grips of Z.*

## ***PRELUDE***

Welcome to the collected occurrences. These episodes attempt to recall the presence of Z.

I don't read Raymond Chandler for his snaking criminal designs. I read Raymond Chandler for the empty hotel rooms, the distant cry of seagulls, the thunderous surf, the jagged cliffs, the smashed green glass—all these fragments, sharp in their detail, form the atmosphere of mystery, preceding the conception of Z. There is a longing inside these books, some withheld information, the image of California, the winding roads above the ocean, a mirage of hedonistic fantasy.

Over the summer I read too many Raymond Chandler novels, my life stretches out before me now as if it were a mystery punctuated by the presence of Z. Artwork, in its making and research, is the only way to pierce the slippery essence of Z.

As the project makes its way into the territory of Z, it is led by a continuous unfolding of coincidences.







## ***I D L E N E S S***

I was at this little cove, close to where I live; nobody is ever there. The cliff is steep and dusty, rocks are always breaking off, falling into the water. So, there are all these soft oval rocks lying on the beach when the tide recedes. The beach used to be a military training camp, rusty pipes stick out from the sand. I was swimming around here before it got cold, and found one of the oval rocks, smoothed by the waves. I decided to carve something into it with a piece of broken glass. I carved two eyes. The rock is scary, like those red cartoon eyes glowing in darkness. I left it in the sun to dry out.

While I was carving the eyes, a song came burning into my head, this swooning echo; I didn't know its name. The song was twisting around in my skull like the smoke of a blown out candle. I left the beach and forgot about it.

A couple of days later while driving home I heard the song again, *Eyes Without a Face*; the carved stone was sitting in the back of my car.

I went home and watched the music video, Billy Idol's floating head glows in darkness. I read the Wikipedia page for the song. Then I read the Wikipedia page for Billy Idol.

The song is named after the French horror film *Eyes Without a Face*; it's about a plastic surgeon's daughter whose face was mutilated in an accident. I read this about the music video (on Wikipedia):

It was shot over an exhausting three-day period on a set with fog machines, lighting, and fire sources. Immediately after the shoot, Idol flew to perform in Arizona, where he discovered that his contact lenses had fused to his eyeballs, attributing this to the harsh video shoot and dry plane air. He was taken to a hospital where the lenses were removed, his eyes bandaged for three days, and his scraped corneas grew back.

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eyes\\_Without\\_a\\_Face\\_\(song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eyes_Without_a_Face_(song))).

Billy Idol is not his real name, and it wasn't his first choice for a fake name either. In school in William Broad was noted to have *idle* tendency, then came the name *Billy Idle*.

But there was already a famous Idle, Eric Idle of the popular TV show Monty Python. So William Broad went from Billy Idle to Billy Idol.

Every time I go to the beach I carve eyes into the soft stones I find, *Idles of Z?*



*Carving eyes into stones at the Beach*





*IDLES?*



## Tao

My parents were going to call me Tao. Imagine that, Tao Jones.

I'm sure there is some mastery involved in fabricating and seeking a mystical phenomenon such as **Z**, mastery I have not yet obtained.

I've been sitting in my chair reading parts of the Te–Tao–Ching, the ancient Chinese Book of Wisdom written by the anonymous Lao-Tzu (The Master). The Te–Tao–Ching is full of potent contradictions of counter-intuitive intelligence. I think the texture of **Z** is resonant with the evasiveness of Tao.

**Z** arrives when I am not seeking it.

The project forms one of its central methods with reference to the Taoist idea, *to act without acting*.

Taoist term wu-wei (“non-action,” literally “without action”) in one sense stands for spontaneity and genuineness: it does not mean literally to do nothing, but rather “to act without acting”...

(Lao-Tzu & Henricks, 1989, p. xxxii).

**Z** catches me in idle moments.

It bears down upon me, a charged atmosphere pulsating in front of my face. It arrives and departs without cause. I get up from my chair and run to get a piece of paper, to write down some fragment of urgent information revealed by the presence of **Z**. And I stand there, pencil hovering over the page and forget what I had to write. I realize, its vague afterglow is all that remains.

In the eyes of the project, **Z** is something like a mirage. One will never reach a mirage by walking forward. The project must seek nuanced methods, forgetting about **Z**, moving obliquely, turning its back, waiting for it to arrive. These lateral moves are intuitive, idiosyncratic and unlikely.

The philosophy of Tao suggests the true nature of the world cannot be known; it is indifferent to our thought, existing autonomously as waves continue to break while I sleep.

I was reading a guide to Taoism and I found this:

The Tao is the source of life of all things. It is nameless, invisible, and ungraspable by normal modes of perception. It is boundless and cannot be exhausted... all things depend on it for existence.

(Wong, 1997, p.23).

The project takes cues from its surroundings, in one turn **Z** threatens to exist; in another it becomes an empty apparatus for abstract thought. The philosophy of Tao suggests a method of never looking, but sometimes finding. A deleting of exasperated searching.

The project cannot simply pay witness to this fleeting phenomenon, it longs to draw nearer to it, to grip that bright pulsating atmosphere, writhing invisibly just outside of a body. So, the project takes sideward steps into darkness. Acknowledging the simple fact that **Z** is indifferent to my ~~searching~~.

The bright Way appears to be dark;  
The Way that goes forward appears to retreat...

(Lao-Tzu & Henricks, 1989, p.10).

## **BLACK MAMBA / A RAY OF DARKNESS**

I've been thinking about snakes lately, I don't know why.

I've been making this recliner, the kind of cinematic object that coaxes the vulnerability and intimate conversation of its sitter, you've seen them in movies, these chairs, I'm sure.

So I've been working on this chair, and when I'm not, I'm thinking about snakes, I don't know why. I needed to get the right colour-combination for this chair; I was obsessing over it.

Driving one evening thinking about it, I figured the chair needed to be like night, wet and full of silky darkness, there would be something sinister about it. So I decided on black and green. I ordered some black leather cushions. And then I went to the powder coaters to decide on what blend of deep acid green I would choose. The guy at the powder coaters didn't believe that my name was my real name.

I laughed and said it was, picked my colour and got out of there.

I went to sleep that night feeling uneasy about the colour I chose, I got up and walked around, drank a glass of water. Eventually I found myself in front of the computer, face illuminated in its glow. I found the colours I'd chosen on the company website, I said them aloud: *BLACK- MAMBA*, (my voice fading off into the empty room).

I found a picture on the Internet, it's a picture of a painting\* and the painting is black and green. After I stared at this picture for a while I decided that it was the best combination of black and green I'd ever seen. I did some research. The painting is titled *la boule blanche (the white ball)* and was made by the Russian suprematist Ivan Puni who sometimes called himself Jean Pougny.

I was at the beach while the Black Mamba chair was getting sprayed green, and I was reading this book *Inner Experience* by Georges Bataille. So I was reading this book at the beach and I found this phrase: *A Ray of Darkness*. I kept repeating it to myself like a song stuck in my head, *A Ray of Darkness?* I decided this *Ray of Darkness* was the antithesis of Ivan Puni's *La Boule Blanche*, a ray of light replaced by a column of dark.

Back at my studio all these things were swarming around in my head. The *BLACK MAMBA* was finished by then, sitting empty by the window. And I saw this black bowling ball lying near the chair, *a ray of darkness?* So I lifted the bowling ball onto the seat, and printed on the ball was the letter Z.



\**LaBoule Blanche*, Jean Pougny, 1915



*BLACK MAMBA*



*BLACK MAMBA / A RAY OF DARKNESS*

## ***THE REOCCURING LETTER***

Slipping deeper into this widening illusion, a threatening exists. I look through it now, the tinted glass of Z. I'll walk, keeping it distant, and like a phantom it lurks in the construction of barn doors, apparitions of car license plates, the inscription under a mug or the shape of clouds.

Z gathers momentum collecting light.



*Occasional Sightings # 1*





*Occasional Sightings #2*

### *The 3<sup>rd</sup> Table*

In his text *The 3<sup>rd</sup> Table* Graham Harman suggests that the true nature of reality is withheld, existing – almost permanently – out of reach. *The 3<sup>rd</sup> Table* alludes to a material realm that can be accessed only through indirect means, like the success of a joke, magic tricks, poems or sexual innuendo, the pathways to this realm are nuanced, and often deteriorate when explained.

Harman suggests artwork is a channel for contemplating and admiring the elusive *3<sup>rd</sup> Table*. Artworks can allude to a reality that can only be insinuated, encircled and caught in glances. An appreciation of an artwork can be an insatiable thirst, beauty never fully revealed. It can provide a space for contented longing (never extended into the satisfaction of conclusion).

Harman's writing of *The 3<sup>rd</sup> Table* suggests a confidence in mystery. From the writing we cannot decipher a clear idea of *The 3<sup>rd</sup> Table*, it is not reduced to a concise and momentarily satisfying definition; the mystery is constant, a familiar reality, closer to the experience of **Z**.

The term *philosophia*, possibly coined by Pythagoras, famously means not "wisdom" but "**love** of wisdom". The real is something that cannot be known, only loved. This does not mean that access to the table is impossible, only that it must be *indirect*.

(Harman, 2013, p.12).

The positioning of the project is not to *know Z*, but to continue to define and redefine something that has the consistency of a cloud of smoke. The project does not intend to know, but situate itself in a pool of radiance. Harman's object orientated philosophy suggests another way of thinking about something that cannot be known only loved.



## A DARKENED SILHOUETTE

I was in my room, listening to Screamin Jay Hawkins.

There is a hysterical writhing song of his called *I Put a Spell on You*. I was listening to that when, somewhere in my idleness surfaced an image of a trident. And I started to imagine this thing levitating, A black silhouette on a dark blue background. This image signaled some importance, I don't know why.

I couldn't stop thinking about this trident.

And so I whipped out my phone and Wikipedia-ed *Trident*. I landed on the Artemision Bronze Wikipedia page, about a sculpture also known as *The God of the Sea*. This bronze sculpture, I read, was found in the ocean off the cape of a Greek island, and stands at around 209 centimeters tall.

The sculpture depicts a man, arms outstretched. His body is positioned as if he was about to throw something, but his hand is empty, encircling a phantom weapon. If he were Zeus his hand would encircle a thunderbolt, if he were Poseidon his hand would be clutching a trident. He was in the water a long time. The sculpture is missing its nipples, eyes, lips and brows along with whatever it may have been holding or about to toss. These missing parts are suspected to have eroded into the sea, disintegrated by its corrosive moving water.

So I was in my room, thinking about these missing nipples and eyeballs and the mystery of the empty hand. Was it a trident or lighting bolt?

I made a list of what is suspected to be missing from the sculpture. Trying to figure out who it might be.

A week or so later, I was on a boat thinking about the list I'd made, I figured the whole situation to be some mystical solution to idleness, nothing really to pay attention to. I was sitting on the top deck as we passed a cruise ship, its side came into view, painted on it was a Trident. After that I figured I better work on this, investigate it further. My list of missing objects stretched out in front of me as if it were something that required action.

So I started to fabricate the missing nipples, lips, eyebrows and eyes along with a trident and thunderbolt.

I see these things everywhere now— the shadow of a plant becomes a silhouette of lighting.

These things I see to allude to *Z. Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon?*  
The project edges closer to its phantasm.



Trident and Lightning in my studio



Lips, Nipples, Eyebrows

## *Mysticism*

I got a book from the library with a chapter titled The Rise of Mystical Taoism. In this chapter, some defining aspects of mystical experience are listed as if they were an elaborate grocery list. Mystical experience has certain connections to **Z**. Here is a fragment taken from the text that introduces this.

There are several beliefs that form the core of mysticism. First, Mystics believe there is an underlying unity behind all things. This is commonly called the One and it is the true reality. Second, this One, or the underlying reality, cannot be perceived and known by ordinary experience...

(Wong, 1997, p.45).

I have underlined a part of the text: *the underlying, reality cannot be perceived and known by ordinary experience*. The sentence suggests the existence of something beyond *ordinary experience*, like **Z** lurking in the atmosphere of green light.

The sentence above mentions a *unity behind all things...* this word *unity* seems to separate the thinking of mysticism from the thinking of the project.

One of the core ideas of **Z** is: '*to arrive at Z one must not seek it, as soon as you think you know you do not know*'.

As Georges Bataille forms his idea of *Inner Experience* he writes:

He who already knows cannot go beyond a known horizon.

(Bataille, 1988, p.3).

The project has confidence in the mystery of not knowing, this is different from not believing, it is about acknowledging something beyond immediate comprehension. It is about leaving an open space for what struggles to become words. In the eyes of the project, this open space is **Z**. The underlying reality of Mysticism, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Table and **Z** could be the same reality, but the ways of imagining it are different.

Another connection **Z** has to this elaborate definition of mystical experience is this:

A heightened awareness of the surroundings and of auditory and visual images is experienced when the underlying reality of the One is directly perceived without the intrusion of rational thinking.

(Wong, 1997, p.45).

Something I noticed when attempting to describe **Z** in a straight logical way is that 'it doesn't work'. With the use of lateral metaphors and adjectives the project attempts to give an idea of **Z**. But with the absence of this irrational inventiveness some essence is lost. I was reading William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* late one night. In some of James' lectures he talked about mysticism. One particular lecture titled *The Reality of the Unseen* James quotes long personal accounts of a presence. In these quotations – (both ominous and pleasant) – the experience of the presence is always *hard to explain*.

I cannot tell you what this revelation was. I have not yet studied it enough. But I shall perfect it one day, and then you shall hear it and acknowledge its grandeur.

(James, 1960, p.80).

That day, I believe, never came. I say this not because I don't have confidence in this revelation, but because I believe the essence of revelation cannot be perfected into something clearly delivered. It seems that the essential part of mystical experience cannot be communicated in a direct straightforward way, but this never seems to stop one from trying endlessly to share what is of value to them, even if its core is a departed ethereal presence.

In a way, one could be betraying the nature of mystical experience or **Z** by explaining it away, like something dense and complete in itself, when it is unraveled it seems as if nothing's there.

**Z** is a fascination of atmosphere; something becomes electrified by a vague mysterious current.

To call **Z** a mystical encounter would be... not quite right. **Z** could be *the smell of night, and its wet grass upon your feet, the feeling of knees bending*. All these things in a way are felt in a body and can never be retrieved from their initial wholeness.

Georges Bataille writes of this negotiation of words:

It is not beyond expression- one does not betray it if one speaks of it- but steals from the mind the answers it still had to the questions of knowledge.

(Bataille, 1988, p.3-4).

The impression of **Z** can be related to descriptions of both mysticism and shamanism. But **Z** exists outside of both these areas. One of the differences the project makes is the connectedness of **Z** to the practice of making artwork. An important thing the project recognizes is the reaction provoked by **Z**, in its afterglow an urgency rises, we recognize **Z** only as it is slipping from our fingers. And when it is gone there is an intense and curious longing for it to arrive again. The process of making artwork is a wordless conversation with the presence of **Z**.

### ***The Discipline***

At first, I thought **Z** had no discipline to hold it, that the project had no means of arriving at it. In a way this is true, I don't know how to get there like I know how to walk to the fridge. But there is a discipline that defines and activates **Z**, this discipline is the continuous practice of making art.

Without this, **Z** would drift past a consciousness, and fade into the muddy tie-die of experience and memory.

At first I thought that **Z** was arrived at haphazardly, and often it is, but one can sharpen the ability to tap the source, like sharpening the knife that bleeds the sap from a tree.

The practice of making art forms relationship to a routine, a sharpening occurs. I continue to do it and think it, day after day. With this sharpening comes an attunement with **Z**, the ability to recognize its territory and consistency.

## APPARITIONS OF A PHANTOM WEAPON

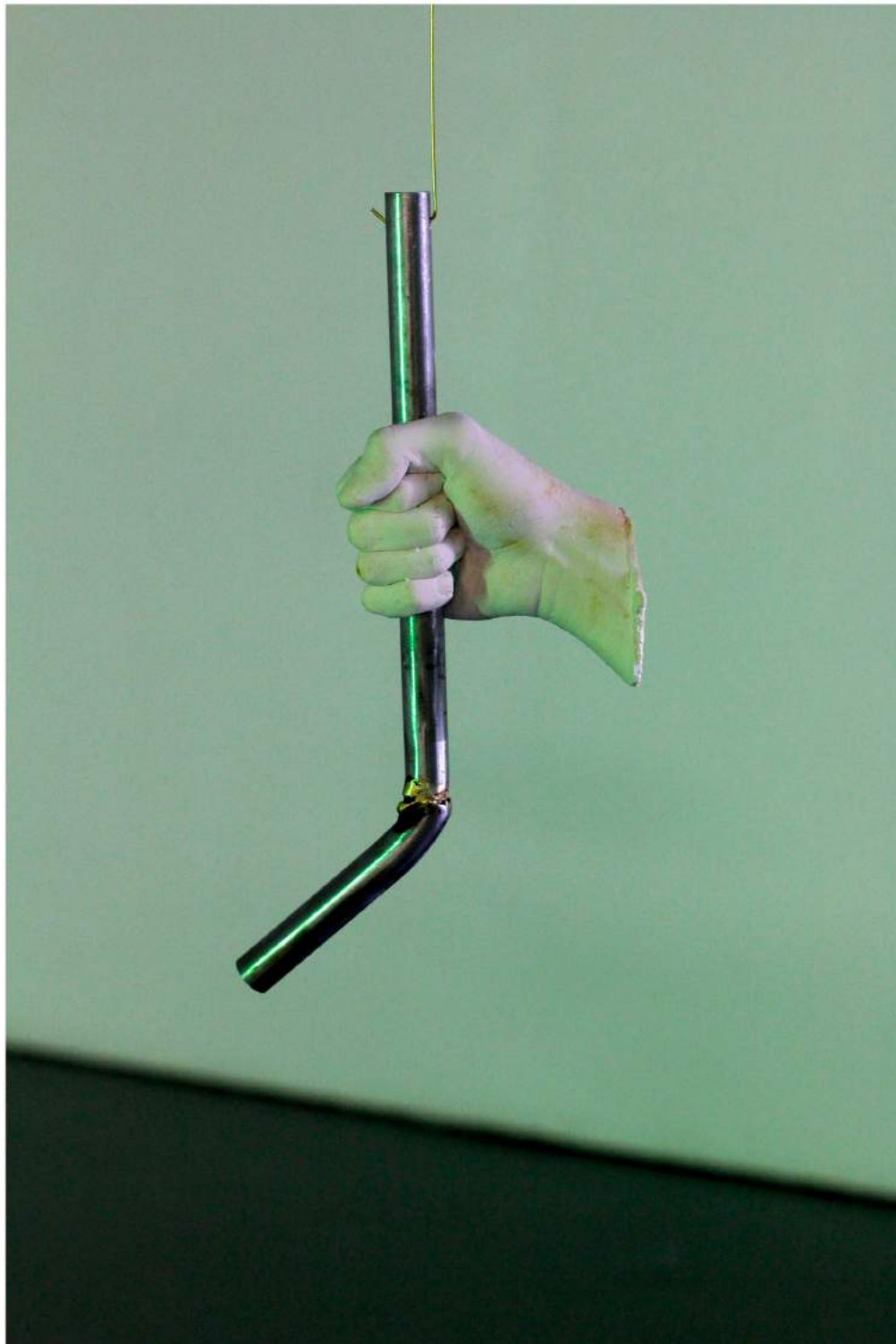
I was walking across the street. Sand swept the parking lot. And there was this guy walking ahead of me, opening and closing his hand.

It was as if he were trying to get a better grip on something, like the way a tennis player grips re- grips a racket. Except there was nothing there, and his hand was empty.

So he walked in front of me, doing *this thing*. Then he moved into the shadow of a tree. I continued straight, looking out at the water thinking about his hand.

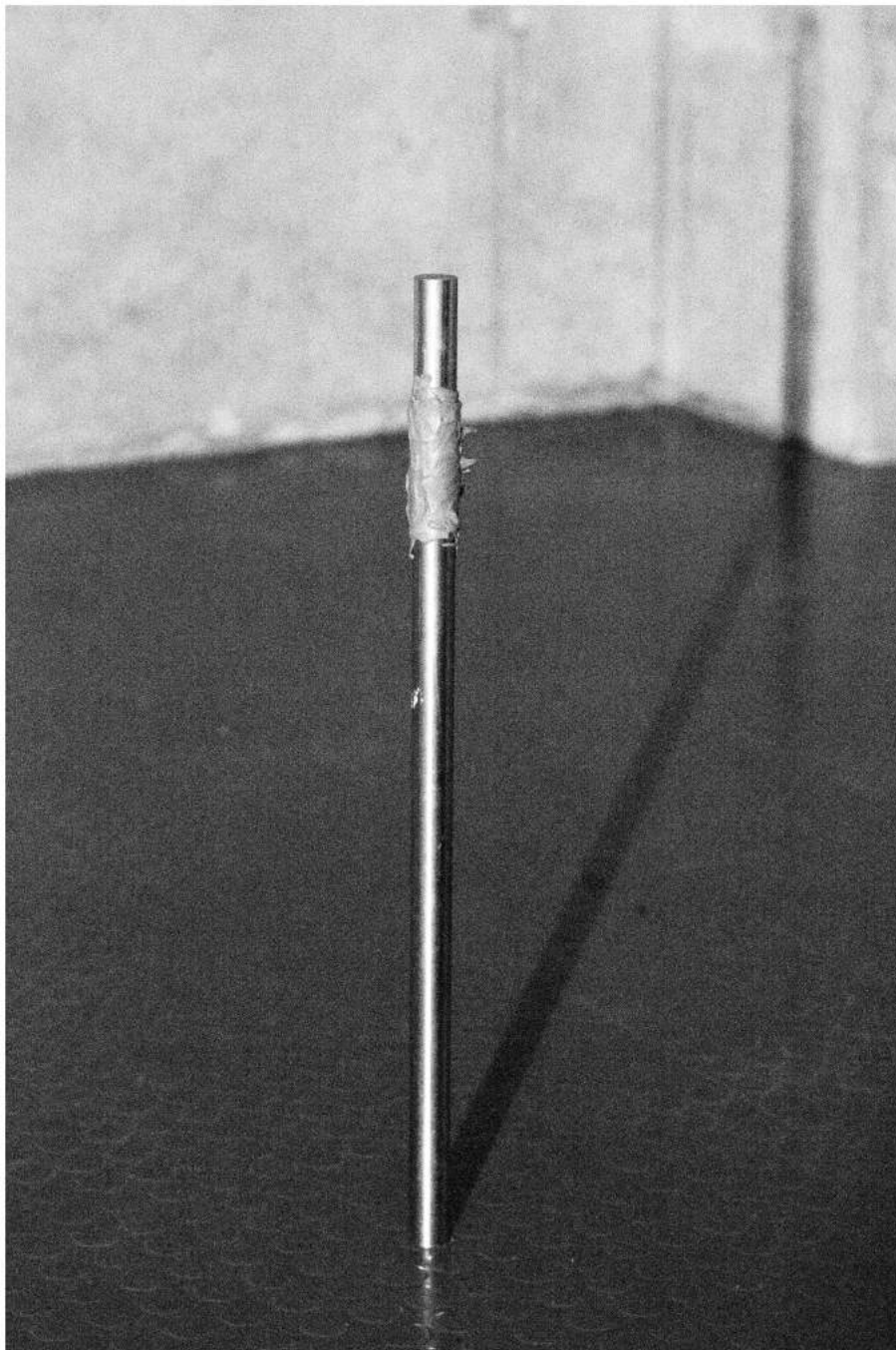
I found a rock to sit on and started to read *The Island of the Blue Dolphins*. Then I stepped in a tide pool and got my shoe wet, forgetting about that guy, and his hand.

I walked back to the car. There was a huge pile of wood in a driveway near to where I parked. The house was under construction; floors ripped out, and wrapped up in this flapping white plastic. The plastic had a picture repeated on its surface: a blue drawing of Poseidon clutching a trident.



Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon





*Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon, Details*

## AMMON, DIONYSUS & SCREAMIN JAY HAWKINS

My friend Ammon told me something about a Screamin Jay Hawkins song. He said Hawkins couldn't remember the song *I Put a Spell on You* after he recorded it. After Ammon told me this, I returned to the unreliable source of Wikipedia and read the page for *I Put a Spell on You*. I found this:

Hawkins had originally intended to record "I Put a Spell on You" as "a refined love song, a blues ballad." However, the producer "brought in ribs and chicken and got everybody drunk, and we came out with this weird version ... I don't even remember making the record. Before, I was just a normal blues singer. I was just Jay Hawkins. It all sort of just fell in place. I found out I could do more destroying a song and screaming it to death."

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I\\_Put\\_a\\_Spell\\_on\\_You](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Put_a_Spell_on_You)).

I kept reading about this song, and discovered that there are many covers of the Hawkins original. I scrolled past the ones I knew and I found a cover by a band named *Dionysus*. Dionysus is Zeus's son, the Greek god of drunken ecstasy. Dionysus carries a thyrsus, a stick made of fennel.

I was out driving—driving with Dionysus lurking in the peripherals of my mind. I was on a road that cuts through these big empty fields when I saw some fennel growing on the side of the road. I pulled over and cut down some big stalks as other cars burned past me. I stuck the long dried sticks in the back of my car, the space filled with its smell. I kept driving for another half hour. I passed fields of dead grass and sporadic phoenix palms. Then I saw some more fennel and pulled over. There was more this time, growing out of the gravel. There were smashed bottles shining in the middle-of-the-day sun; no one else was around, cars continued to zoom past. I got out and walked around. Everything was wet, the smashed bottles washed clean, glistening, and there was a dead goat. My shadow spilled out in front of me, warped on the pale gravel. I figured this to be some kind of place Dionysus would hang out.

Then I decided to leave. Walking to my car I found another bush of fennel, its dead stalks zigzagged, changing direction. After snapping them from their bush I looked at the shadow of my hand as it traveled across the empty lot, it looked like Zeus' handful of thunder. The stalks of fennel were shaped like lightning.

Two days later I drove back past the same spot. I'd pushed Dionysus and Zeus out of my thoughts, as I feared myself slipping into a magnetic delusion. It was nighttime when I was drove, no moon. My headlights lit up the rain, cutting a yellow blade into the darkness. I drove into a storm—there was lightning. I almost crashed as I drifted across a deep puddle.

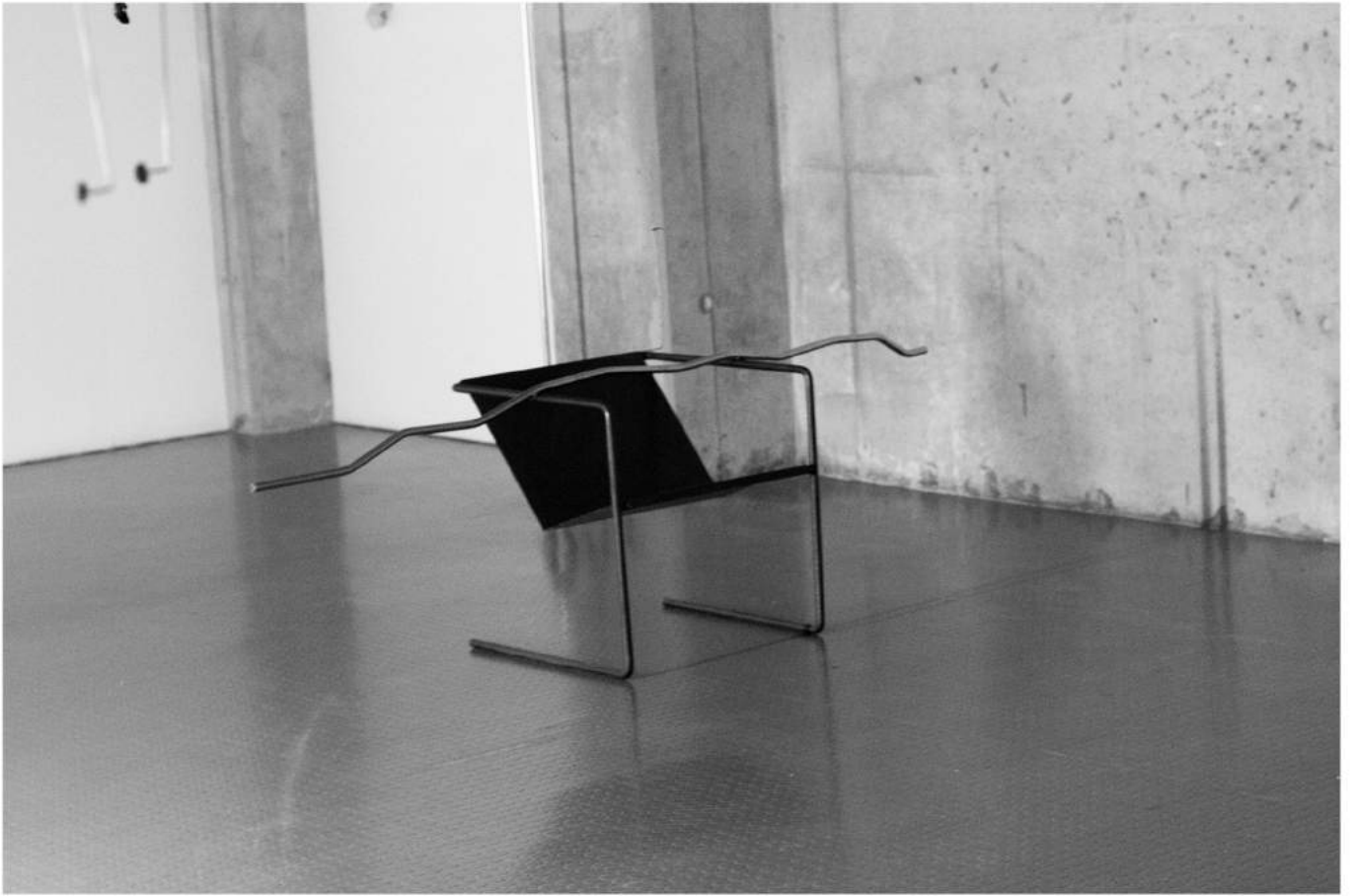
The word *Ammon* is a Greek form of *Amun*. After flipping through the dictionary I went back to the Internet and found this:

The name *Amun* meant something like "the hidden one" or "invisible".  
Amun, worshipped by the Greeks as *Ammon*... identified by these Greeks as a form of Zeus.

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amun>).







*Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon, Lightning Chair*



*Fennel Like Lightning*

## *The Interior*

*The project seeks Z within the interior... Attempting to swallow its essence within artwork, to record itself within a radiant haze. A heightened sense of gravity seems to emerge from these quiet spaces, as if they were exuding potency, invisible and thick.*

A couple months ago, I received a large envelope in the mail. In the envelope was a magazine called *The World of Interiors*. I began to consider this word *interior*— as if it were alluding to something beyond the insides of houses.

The word signals two spaces intertwined. The first is the architectural interior and the second is the subjective realm, the interior of a skull.

The objects within our space reflect the atmosphere of our *inner-space*. This chapter investigates the *interior*, as a place with inherent potential, a ground rich in possibility for **Z** to silently occur—lying dormant in the tepid environments to then arise without cause.

The project imagines a room where **Z** resides in thick potency, twisting invisibly around chairs, curtains and windows. Every artwork of the project is an attempt at making this room. Interior design becomes a cryptic mode of reckoning with **Z**. Arrangements arrive as premonitions that guide the act of making.

Mark Manders is an artist with a singular project: *Self Portrait as a Building*. Each artwork he makes forms a room or aspect of the *Building*. I have a Mark Manders book out from the library. I've found I can only read this book at night. The book reveals fragments of an interior world. Within Manders' artwork, furniture assumes a new function, instead of supporting the weight of a human body. Furniture becomes a receptacle for ideas, in this case the ideas are sculptures resting upon their surfaces. The duality of the word *interior* is present here, a chair becomes a container for a sensation, and thoughts are rendered in rigid material existing as *set apart* from the artist himself.

Manders' building is an evolving space through which he investigates the process of thinking. His subject is the intersection of the tangible and the intangible, the seen and the vanished, the known and presumed.

(Jacobson, 2010, p.118).

Furniture offers idleness, the potential to slip into a deeper interior. The project's interest in furniture is in its potential to *hold*. This *holding* may be the sinking weight of a body as it drifts into the grips of **Z**, or a chair itself without a sitter emanating a delicate ray, borne through its culmination of colour and form. A chair literally suggests a way of being. One chair says to eat dinner, another says to read a book in a pool of sunlight and another chair says to sit and don't think of anything. The devices of the interior have a direct relationship with the interior of our skulls, the purple wrinkled tissue of cartoons, the place where our sensation is received and processed into the experience of **Z**.

There is an essay I read titled *A Dash for What Is Yet Unnamed*. In the writing, Manders is quoted saying:

The fragments of the building for which no words exist are indicated by a dash.

(Raymond, 2010, p.100).

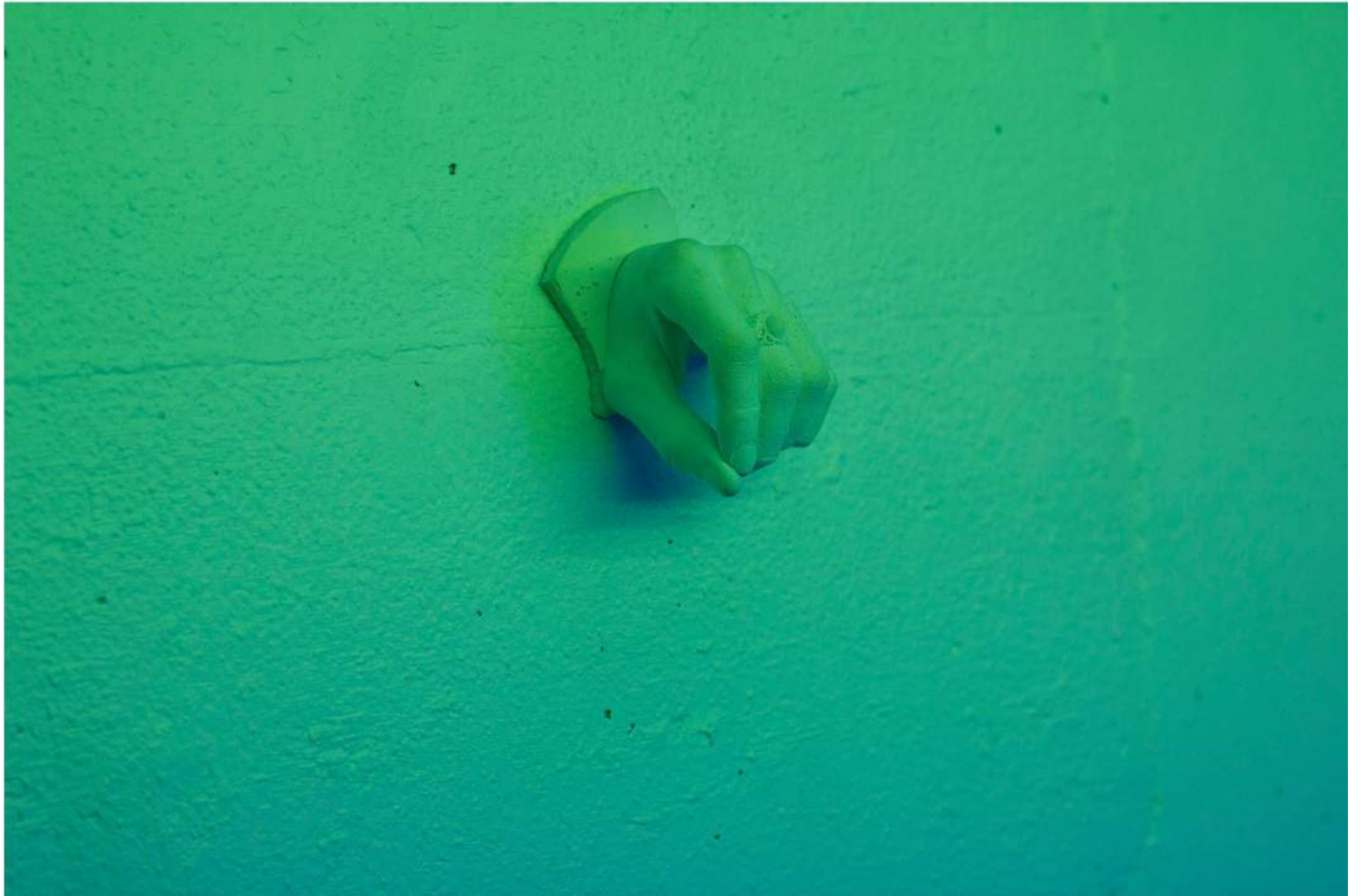
In a way, Manders' *Dash* operates similar to this project's **Z**. A space for what is not yet articulated – situated in that teetering state of attempting to say something that may not be said. The project constructs its *interior* instead of speaking it.

And it is within this tension between the mystery of translation and the desire to translate the "dashes" that Manders' work operates, drawing attention to what is yet unnamed...

(Raymond, 2010, p.101).

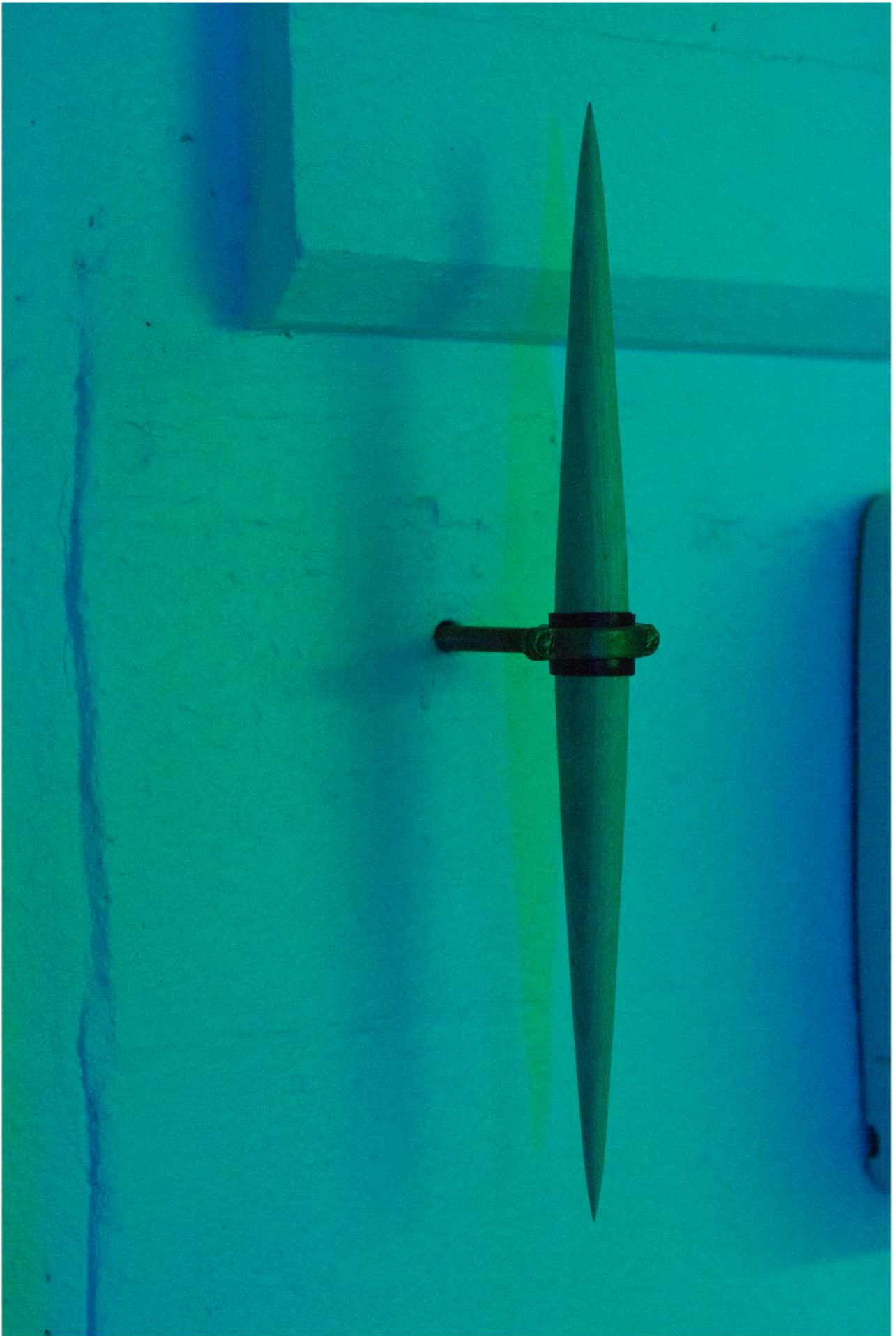
## ***G R I P P I N G   L I G H T***

I've started to research lightning in its representation as a solid object. This idea became interesting to the project: to grip something that resists grasp, a blade of a jagged light. I started researching sculptures and paintings of Zeus, focusing on the formation of his thunderbolt. In some images, the bolt appears like a bundle of sticks on fire and then in others, it becomes a refined spike.



*Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon*





*Fairly Irate #2*

## Z & P

Most archeologists and scholars figure The Artemision Bronze to be a depiction of Zeus, suggesting the empty hand would have gripped a thunderbolt. At first I had an opposing opinion, I saw the image of a trident on the side of a cruise ship, haunted by its black silhouette. The sculpture is even called *God of the Sea*, because it was dragged up from under the ocean.

Then I was driving and almost got hit by lightning. I'd see thunderbolts on textiles, in the lyrics of music, on the side of electrical boxes. Drops of water would collect into the shape of Z.

So then, I imagined the sculpture to be Zeus. I am situated in this theory now, one of popular opinion, but I access it through lateral means; The Artemision Bronze is Zeus rendered powerless. His attributes are gone, copper nipples, silver lips, brows and his ivory eyeballs all eroded into the sea, and his weapon is missing, confiscated by Poseidon's abrasive current.

I agree this sculpture may have been Zeus, but here my theory strays. The sculpture shows Zeus stripped bare. What sits in the Athens Museum of Archeology is Zeus as tarnished bronze, carried up from the depths of Poseidon's kingdom. Poseidon stripped Zeus of his weapon and situated him as a featureless ornament of the sea. The sign of a weapon is all that remains like a forefinger and thumb outstretched.

The sculpture is known as the *God of the Sea*, this title doesn't allude to Zeus but to Poseidon. I was reading and found this:

After Cronos was deposed, the three sons threw dice for his empire. Zeus the youngest won and chose the sky. Poseidon smiled to himself because the sky was empty...

( Evslin, 1966, p.15).

The ocean is coloured by the sky.



Z? Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon: Trident



*Z?, Green Room, Fairly Irrate #1*



## AFTER

I was walking on the wharf; there was a secondhand bookstore. I saw a book called *Mysteries of the World* and I bought it. There is a chapter about Atlantis. On the corner of the page is a picture of The Artemision Bronze, Poseidon's head is creeping up from the bottom of the page.

*Poseidon left Olympus and came to his kingdom. He immediately set about building a huge underwater palace with a great pearl and coral throne.*

(Evslin, 1966, p.16).



Z?





## *A Pulse of Deep Emerald*

The Green Ray is a phenomenon of the setting sun; its burning rind passes beneath the razor edge of horizon, as it melts into the sea. On a clear evening just as the last blurred yellow of sun disappears beneath the ocean's surface The Green Ray breaks, like a tiny emission of sound after long silence. The Green Ray exists as a possibility, a visible and metaphorical illumination.

In Jules Verne's novel *Le Rayon Vert*, The Ray is considered a chance to see clearly into one's own heart, yet throughout the book The Ray is withheld. The story encircles its main characters Helena and her two uncles, Sebastian and Sam. Helena wants to see The Green Ray, so they travel, looking for it, staring at the sinking sun, waiting for it to arrive. In the story, The Green Ray is a lurking potential that never quite arrives, at least for Helena. The book revolves around this exercise of staring and waiting for something to happen. The book chronicles the evasion of The Ray.

There is a film of the same title *Le Rayon Vert* (1986), directed by Eric Rohmer. It is a kind of contemporary inversion of Verne's novel. I read that Rohmer sent a guy to the Canary Islands to film The Ray, he was there for months and never recorded it. I watched the film; the ray is forged through manipulation. The Green Ray threatens to be more of an idea than a phenomenon, meandering the thin line between perceptibility and lighthearted myth.

In 2001, artist Tacita Dean travelled to a remote coastal village in Madagascar, a place evidently known for its setting sun. In Madagascar, on the western coast, she recorded the sunset every evening. A delicate hunt. One evening she was sure she saw it, The Green Ray, other watchers said they didn't, using their camcorder recordings as evidence. As Dean was flying home, the sun began to rise, a deep emerald pulsed for a moment; everyone else on the plane was sleeping.

When she returned home she had the film developed. The isolated sun sinks into a horizon impeded by nothing. Dean's voice is overlaid, as she reads the text from her exhibition:

*For years I've sought out The Green Ray, peering at horizons for the last fractional second of greenness, not knowing or daring to imagine how extravagant a green splash it might be. But never have I seen it, and then in the summer of last year as I set off to a small near inaccessible village on the west coast of Madagascar I had to quest to try to see if not film something that I could not imagine, the point about my film of The Green Ray is that it did so nearly allude me to...*

*I believed but was never sure I saw it...*

*When my film fragment was later produced in England there unmistakably, defying solid representation in a singular frame of celluloid but existent in the fleeting movement of film frames was The Green Ray. The film became about the act of looking itself ...about faith and belief in what you see.*

(<https://vimeo.com/38026163>).

Dean's film becomes less about a phenomenon of the setting sun and more about seeking something that looms beyond logic and perceptibility. The Green Ray signals hope, a potential and waiting, a belief in the existence of something that may or may not exist.

I watch Tacita Dean's video *The Green Ray* often. I even have an image from the film as my desktop background. Every time I watch this video I stare at the screen waiting for a tiny pulse of emerald. I've never seen it.

I think my attraction may reside in the evasion of subject matter. One evening I was watching *Dawson's Creek* and found this:

Joey: So what is the best ending in all of literature? Don't say Ulysses. Everyone says Ulysses.

Professor David Wilder: That's easy. Sentimental education by Flaubert.

Joey: And what happens?

Professor David Wilder: Nothing, really. Just two old friends sitting around remembering the best thing that never happened to them.

Joey: How do you remember something that never happened?

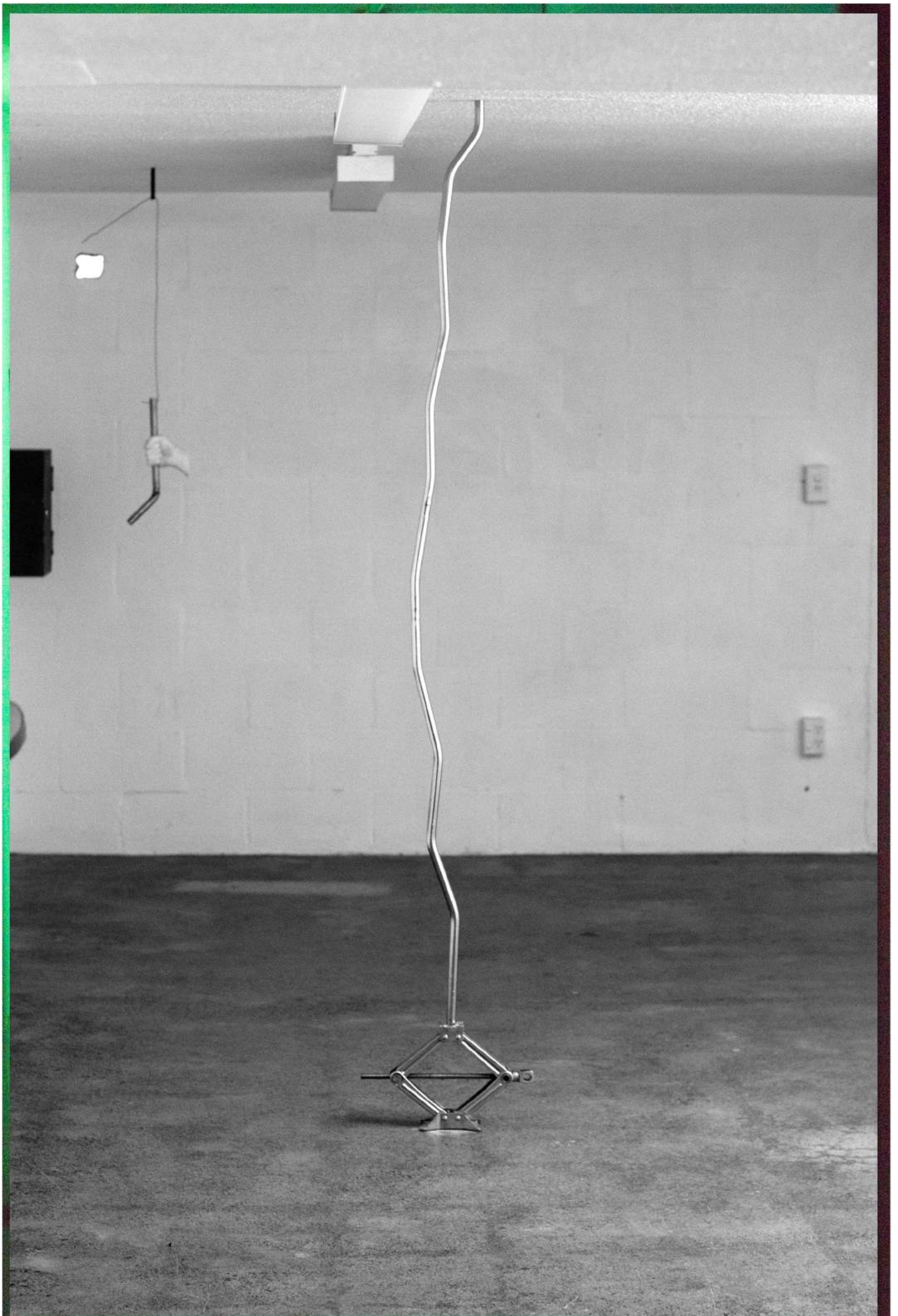
Professor David Wilder: Fondly. You see, Flaubert believed that anticipation was the purest form of pleasure... and the most reliable. And that while the things that actually happen to you would invariable disappoint, the things that never happened to you would never dim. Never fade. They would always be engraved in your heart with a sort of sweet sadness.

(<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0555133/quotes>).

The word *Tacita* means silence, Georges Bataille writes:

*The word silence is still a sound...*among all words it is the most perverse, or most poetic: it is a token for its own death.

(Bataille, 1988, p.3).



*Z?, Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon: Lightning*

### ***POSEIDON'S LIVING ROOM EPISODE #11***

I was talking on the phone walking to the trashcan. My hand pressed against its shiny blue lid. I hung up the phone and looked down at my hand, next to it was the word *TRIDENT* printed in capitals.

This happens to me all the time.

Last night I was driving home late, like 12:30. My headlights spit their yellow beam across the asphalt. I rolled to a stop, no one was coming. The headlights lit up the front end of a Maserati, its insignia glistened: a *TRIDENT*.

3 nights ago I bought this new Travis Scott album. In the first song there is a lyric: *I might need to move to Atlantis – because my mind is too outlandish.*

Then I found this picture of Poseidon's living room, it was in a David Hockney book I got for my birthday – the painting is called *Three Chairs With a Section of a Picasso Mural*. (1970).

It all stretches out from that one moment when the image of a trident came burning into my head, its indelible black silhouette, a continuous echo.

It continues to persist.







Poseidon's Living Room Episode # 11 , installation details .



Poseidon's Living Room Episode # 11 , installation detail .



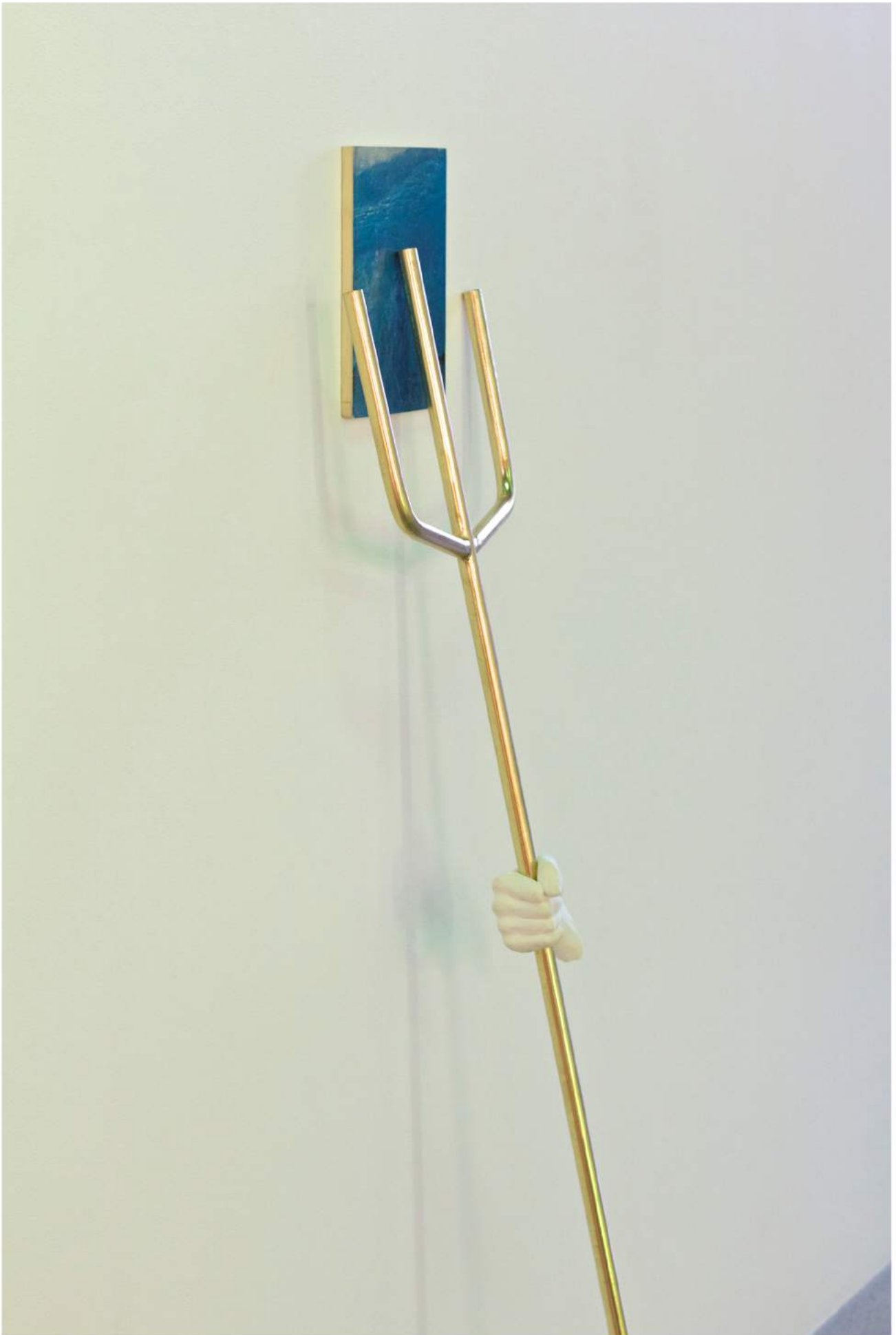
Poseidon's Living Room Episode # 11 , installation details .







Poseidon's Living Room Episode # 11 , installation detail



Poseidon's Living Room Episode # 11 , installation detail .



**Poseidon's Living Room Episode # 11 , instalation detail .**



**Poseidon's Living Room Episode # 11 , installation detail**



Poseidon's Living Room Episode # 11 , installation detail





**Poseidon's Living Room Episode # 11 , installation detail**



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## **Image Credits**

In order of appearance (right to left).

All images are property of Ryder Jones unless otherwise stated.

1 - This is a picture of a California wave

2 - This is a picture of my studio in the afternoon

3 - A Screenshot from the *Eyes Without a Face* music video / Image retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90FpfTd0EIs>

4 - This is me carving the *IDLE?* stones with broken glass at the beach

5 - 6 - These two pictures document the *IDLES?* series / Jones, R. (2015) *IDLES?, (Mudstone)*.

7 - Jean, P. (1915) *La Boule Blanche* (Painting) / Image Retrieved from: <https://www.centrepompidou.fr/cpv/resource/c4b5aqa/rLrAg55>

- 8 - 9 - These are pictures of the Black Mamba Lounge with Z Bowling ball / Jones, R. (2015) ***Black Mamba / A Ray of Darkness, ( Powder coated steel, Foam, Leather, bowling ball)***.
- 10 - A Letter Z as a collection of water / Jones, R. (2015) ***Collected Occurrences #1 ( iPhone jpeg)***.
- 11 - A Letter Z under a mug / Jones, R. (2015) ***Collected Occurrences #2 ( i Phone jpeg)***.
- 12 - A picture of the lightning Bolt and Trident I made in the afternoon
- 13 - Missing objects on the countertop / Jones, R. ( 2015 ) ***Nipples, Lips and Eyebrows***, (bronze, white bronze, brass).
- 14 - This picture is a detail of an installation ***Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon/*** Jones, R. (2015) ***Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon*** detail (plaster, bronze, steel).
- 15- 16 – These are pictures of details of the installation ***Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon/*** Jones, R. (2015) ***Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon*** detail and ***Eyebrow*** (bronze / wax, steel).
- 17- This is Screaming Jay Hawkins hanging out with a skull/ Image retrieved from: <http://ccriderblues.com/screamin-jay-hawkins/>
- 18- Another picture from the Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon Installation/ Jones, R. (2015) ***Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon*** detail: ***Lightning Chair***. (chromed Steel , painted steel).
- 19- This is a picture of the lightning-shaped fennel I found on the side of the road/ Jones, R. (2015) ***Fennel like Lightning*** (fennel, copper, steel).
- 20- This picture is from the exhibition: ***Z?*** at Glovebox in September/ Jones, R. (2015) ***Z? Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon*** detail (plaster).
- 21- Detail from ***Z?***/ Jones, R. (2015) ***Z?, Fairly Irate #2*** (Australian Oak , leather, brass).
- 22- Detail from ***Z?:/*** Jones, R. (2015) ***Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon : Trident*** (electroplated, steel).
- 23- Detail from ***Z?: /*** Jones, R. (2015) ***Green Room, Fairly Irate # 1*** (Yellow Cedar, Plywood, powder coated steel, leather, Brass, Monterey Cypress ).
- 24- Detail from ***Z?: /*** Jones, R. (2015) ***Trident on a Blue Chair*** (, powder coated steel, steel, bronze).
- 25- My shadow in the parking lot
- 26- Detail from ***Z?: /*** Jones, R. (2015) ***Apparitions of a Phantom Weapon : Lightning*** (Chromed Steel, Honda Civic car Jack).