

SLOW TIME: PATRICK COUTU AT MAGASIN GÉNÉRAL

by Anna Kovler

At the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, near the small community of Rivière-la-Madeleine on the Gaspé Peninsula, Patrick Coutu is working on a series of direct casts of mountains. This is no easy task, as he balances on steep cliffs surrounding a waterfall to adhere the casting material – paper pulp – to the surface. His choice of material evokes the location's industrial past, once part of the booming network of pulp and paper mills, foundries, textile factories, and aluminum smelters that operated along the St. Lawrence in countless numbers. The Great Eastern Paper Company is long gone from this location, but the rocks of the Appalachian Mountains are still here, fixtures that change at a slower pace than industry and its fickle cycles.

Coutu cast those parts of the rock face where fault lines run like veins through the vast mountain formations, signaling the sudden shifts or long-term erosion, which change the surface of the earth. Like a scar that unmistakably suggests something has occurred, points of cleavage mark a moment of change and reveal the rock's interior structure. The series of casts connects the mountains with the trees that surround them, and thus geological changes with industrial ones.

Indeed changes in land formations mirror the changes in towns and industries, only at a different time scale. It was 134 years from the time when the first Canadian wood pulp mill was established in Québec in 1866 until the year 2000 when the paper industry entered its sharp decline. The Appalachian Mountains formed about 480 million years ago.

The building where Coutu's series of casts is on view speaks to yet another shifting landscape. His project is part of a residency at Magasin Général, an international residency program and exhibition space occupying a 19th century building, originally the village's general store. With the paper mill gone and the town no longer a "boom town," new kinds of economies emerge, and an outdated business like a general store transforms into an international residency. Retaining the building's original name is a bit like looking for fault lines in the mountain; we are drawn to know the history of a town and a landscape, and to wear our scars proudly.

Patrick Coutu's new series and the exhibition "Natural Loci" was produced as part of the residency at Magasin Général Studio International en création multidisciplinaire in Rivière-la-Madeleine, Québec, and is on view until August 12, 2018.

Upcoming exhibitions for Coutu will take place at at Choi and Lager in Cologne, Germany in December, 2019, and at *Musée d'art de Joliette* in fall of 2019.



Patrick Coutu, *Flux III, Fosse*, 2018. Enamel and acrylic on paper.



Patrick Coutu, *Flux I, Grand Sault*, 2018. Enamel and acrylic on paper.



Patrick Coutu adhering paper pulp to the mountain in Rivière-la-Madeleine on the Gaspé Peninsula, 2018.



Patrick Coutu adhering paper pulp to the mountain in Rivière-la-Madeleine on the Gaspé Peninsula, 2018.



Magasin Général Studio International en creation multidisciplinaire in Rivière-la-Madeleine, Québec.



Archival image of the machine room at the Canada Paper Company in 1894.