

ENTROPIC IMAGINARIUM

I put questions to the earth and record what comes back. What returns was not made by me: it comes from the living, present world — soil, moisture, microorganisms, time — co-authoring images that could not be recombined from anything already made. Unrepeatable, indifferent, and real.

Built as a counter-myth to the technocratic “progress” narrative — using a deliberately ungovernable, almost grotesque visual register rather than the clean futurism that sustains it — my work refuses the surfaces it stands against. Through entropy, myth, and the strange meeting of biology and technology, it builds a platform for ritual and imagination: a trigger, a way of standing still long enough for people to question what they know, how they know it, and why it matters. But the work is not only refusal — it is also a bridge, inviting viewers to remember and reimagine a different world. Humanity and the biosphere deserve a better story than the one currently unfolding.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Earth process — The biological system that produced life in its present form, after 3.8 billion years of unfolding evolution.

Geometric observer — The human (*Homo sapiens*) as an entity that observes and imposes structures upon nature using Euclidean geometry — a kind of machine thinking and seeing.

Hyperasinocene — Hyper- + *asinus* (beast of burden, but also “asinine”) + -cene (geological epoch, after Anthropocene): the epoch in which humanity becomes a geological force while carrying, uncomprehending, a load assigned by something else — beast of burden and fool at once. Names the substitution of a narrow, machine form of interpretation for the earth’s own older one — a worse interpreter put in the place of a better.

Earth process imaging — Photography-based biological process where the earth acts as the agent of exposure and development, yielding images dictated by biological decay and growth rather than optical input alone.

Entropic Imaginarium — A studio practice using earth process imaging as a conversation and a hybrid laboratory-garden to grow new information. It makes images and sculptures as counter-myth-building devices, offering alternatives to the geometric observer by handing co-authorship back to an older interpreter: life, growth, and decay.

THE HYPERASINOCENE

The word animal is a category, and categories are instructions. Everything not human, not plant, compressed into a single biological other — available, flattenable, unworthy of mourning. Nature does the same work at a larger scale: an out-there, a backdrop. These are not neutral descriptions; they tell us what can be used, what can be lost, and what does not require mourning. The dodo was an animal. Its extinction was the consequence of a worldview that the word encodes.

Most of the world's languages never built these categories. In Ojibwe, animals take the same grammatical form as persons... This extension of kinship echoes the Lakota Mitákuye Oyás'íŋ, while the Buddhist concept of sattva places every suffering being inside a single moral circle. Even the Daoist zìrán avoids naming a separate domain altogether, describing instead a quality of spontaneous unfolding. My own inheritance carries this same substrate. Finnish and Karelian cosmology is animist at its root: haltija are the guardian persons of a place, and väki is the agency inherent in the elements themselves — a lake is not water but veden väki, the forest not timber but metsän väki. Forest and water are agents, not backdrop. These traditions arrived at the same understanding through different paths: the boundary between human and other-than-human life is not a fact. It is a choice, made in language, with consequences that are now visible at a geological scale.

That choice now operates at planetary scale, and it needs a name. I call this epoch the Hyperasinocene — the age in which humanity becomes a geological force

while carrying, uncomprehending, a load assigned by something else: beast of burden and fool at once. What is at stake is not the mere fact of human impact, but a substitution: a narrow, metric-bound, machine form of interpretation laid over the earth's own interpretive fractal process, taking over the function. Interpretation does not end; it is captured by a worse interpreter — one that registers only what resolves to a number. What cannot be registered is not decided against. It is erased, quietly, by non-registration — quieter and harder to contest than any decision.

The Entropic Imaginarium is a twenty-plus-year investigation into undoing that choice — not through argument, which arrives too late, but through encounter, which arrives before the categories have time to organize.

THE METHOD: EARTH PROCESS IMAGING

The practice began by accident. In 2007, during a residency at the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, a strip of color negative film was discarded into a compost pile in the garden. Microbes consumed the emulsion entirely, leaving only clear celluloid. That discovery — that biological agents could process photographic film by their own logic of decay, oxidation, and time — became the foundation of my studio: a laboratory-garden that grows new information, handing co-authorship back to an older interpreter, in a practice I call Earth process imaging.

The resulting objects are not photographs in the conventional sense. They are time-encoded surfaces, retrieved rather than taken, grown rather than made — co-productions between human intention, optical image, and non-human process, proof in material form that the boundary between artifact and nature is a fiction. The earth does not answer; it acts. To make the work is to attend to that indifference closely enough that what it does can change what I do next. The surface is the residue of that meeting. Standing before it is standing in relation to something that does not need you, and never did. That relation is the work.

PROJECTS

Infinity Clock, Sky Edition (2026–)

Shape of Infinity (2024–)

A Grammar of Unknowing (2025–2026)

Biomorphic Alphabet (2024–)

World of Disappearing (2020–)

D(L)iminal Man (2014–, video 2026)

Non-Geometric Observer (2014–)

The Dodo and Mauritius Island (2001–2004)

A Question of Butterflynness (1999–2007, 2026 sculpture)

Infinity Clock, Sky Edition (2026–) — the Fibonacci sequence as mask and clock

This work uses the Fibonacci sequence — where each number is the sum of the two before it, a pattern found throughout natural growth — as both mask and clock. Each zone of the image corresponds to a term in the sequence; each term determines how long that zone spent buried in earth, processed by soil, moisture, and microorganisms rather than by any darkroom chemistry. The center — zero, one — is closest to the viewer and closest to the original image. Move outward and the terms grow, the numerals crowd, the color deepens and degrades. The work is physically deeper where time has acted longer.

The base image is open sky — the oldest human symbol for the infinite — and the Fibonacci sequence becomes the instrument that lets soil, time, and microorganisms act on it directly. The result investigates the threshold between biology and symbolic human language: an image and an object that enacts infinity rather than just depicting it.

Seen head-on, it is a flat image. Seen from the side, it is a topographic landscape of time. The sequence did not bury itself — it organized the soil's action on the negative. That is the difference between discovery and use, and it may be smaller than we think. The work functions as a meditation device: a way of standing still inside forever now.

Shape of Infinity (2024–) extends the same logic into relief sculpture. The piece begins with an 8×10 color negative of open sky — the same base image, the same appeal to an infinite that mathematics claims to describe and photography can only frame. The Fibonacci sequence organizes what happens next: soil, moisture, and microorganisms act on the emulsion for durations the sequence dictates, and the negative comes back altered in ways no darkroom could produce.

Then the soil stays. The same earth that consumed the image becomes the medium of the final relief — no longer the agent of decay but the substance of the object, holding the sequence in physical depth. What began as an abstract ratio ends as material you could hold in your hand. The sequence describes a shape found in shells, seed heads, and spiral galaxies. Here it is not illustrated but executed — carried out by the ground itself, on an image of the sky.

A Grammar of Unknowing: Nightmare Before Tuesday (2025–)

The source photograph is an adult skeleton from the American Museum of Natural History collection — the modern-human reference specimen. It reads morphologically as female. Earth process imaging is applied after the skeleton has been aged backward and reconfigured into child proportions, then buried for 48 to 120 hours. The child is carved out of an origin-mother: the same bones, differently proportioned. The violence done to the child's body is therefore intergenerational — continuous with the body it came from, not an event that happens to a body already separate.

The series was inspired by a Finnish forensic pathology textbook I encountered at age twelve, since replaced by observing a general deteriorating human condition, source of endless nightmares. Its subject is not a single injury but the condition that book put me in: knowledge arriving before there is anything in place to receive it — a child's mind meeting extreme material with no friction between them, and no way to put it back. The negative records a form. The soil records what happens to it — damage that accumulates rather than strikes, that works from within, that leaves the form recognizable while something underneath has already gone.

Biomorphic Alphabet: 108 Zeros and 108 Ones (2024–)

Two hundred and sixteen biomorphic symbols comprise a binary alphabet. Each carries the outline of a 0 or a 1 in organic texture — cellular, reef-like, soil-derived. Arranged in sequence, these individual specimens compose into readable ASCII text, forming an actual grammar. Yet this grammar possesses a spectrum of resistance: its legibility splits unevenly along the human/machine divide. The organic fill interferes just enough to make automated reading inconsistent where human reading stays intact — not a wall against the machine, but a spectrum of resistance, calibrated by hand rather than promised in the abstract.

This is a biological CAPTCHA for an epoch in which the boundary between perception and processing has become the most contested territory in image-making. If the problem begins in language — if the categories nature, animal, human, and machine are doing damage at the level of grammar — then the most radical response is to propose a new grammar: one that is biological in form, relational in logic, and legible on entirely different terms depending on who, or what, is reading it.

World of Disappearing: The Collective Memory of Wild Things (2020–)

This series begins in the particular silence of natural history museum dioramas — rooms where mounted skins and fur are held in permanent mid-gesture, perpetually alive in the moment before disappearing. Natural history collections were built on a specific belief: that holding the appearance of a thing is the same as holding the thing itself. But what gets preserved in a diorama is not only the animal. It is the cultural moment of its making — the aesthetic choices, the narrative framing, the story a society tells about what it is losing, and the category system that made the losing possible.

By photographing these scenes and then subjecting the negatives to biological processing with earth, I introduce the logic of transformation into the act of preservation. The resulting image-objects of memory carry both the museum's impulse to immortalize and the material world's insistence on change. They do not document a species. They document the mythology of its disappearance — and make that mythology visible as physical fact.

D(L)iminal Man, Photography Based Biological Imaging Portraits (2014–, video 2026)

D(L)iminal Man submits the self to the same biological logic the practice applies to everything else. Color negatives — self-portraits — are selectively masked and buried in soil for extended periods. The microbes, the mineral deposits, the chemical reactions of oxidation and decay process the image according to their own logic, without instruction and without the possibility of correction. What is retrieved is not what was buried. The figure that emerges — coral and crimson where chemistry occurred, creamy mineral deposits, black voids where emulsion was entirely consumed, horn-like formations and spinal extensions that grew in darkness — is the result of a collaboration the artist cannot control and cannot predict.

The series is the practice turned inward. The dodo was submitted to the question of what remains when a presence is gone. The museum specimen was submitted to the question of what preservation actually preserves. Here the artist submits himself — his own image, his own surface — to the same entropic process, and retrieves whatever the earth decides to return.

The same submission is extended into duration in D(L)iminal (Continuous): Self, Dissolving, a twenty-four-panel animated grid built from these portraits, each panel run at a different speed — six frames per second at one corner, one hundred ninety-two at the other. Arranged this way, dissolution is no longer a single outcome retrieved once from the soil; it becomes a rate, visible only in relation to itself.

The threshold the practice has always investigated — between animal and human, between presence and absence, between the made and the grown — runs directly through these portraits. The D(L)iminal Man is neither the person who was photographed nor the biological object that emerged from the soil. He is the evidence of the passage between.

Non-Geometric Observer (2014–)

Central to my inquiry is the idea of the geometric observer: the human tendency to perceive and reconstruct the natural world through the lens of Euclidean geometry — a kind of machine thinking and seeing. This cognitive bias toward clarity, symmetry, and structure — toward simplifying reality into straight lines, planes, and formal logic — shapes both how we see and what we preserve.

My projects suggest that our current fragmented moment requires new languages, new ways of seeing rooted in fractal geometry, and new methods of preservation. These methods must account for both loss and transformation, embracing chaos, complexity, and emergence as the natural world's deeper logic. The Non-Geometric Observer consists of two overlapping parts: disassembled biomorphic architecture and a lab studying life-form morphology. This two-part structure operates through both deconstruction and reconstruction, breaking down imposed geometric systems while simultaneously studying the organic forms they attempt to contain or represent.

The Dodo and Mauritius Island: Imaginary Encounters (2001–2004)

This project returned life-sized, anatomically researched reconstructions of the extinct dodo to the actual landscapes the species had inhabited, photographing them on location. The work established the questions my practice continues to ask: what does it mean to encounter what is no longer present, and what role does the artist play in making that encounter possible? The dodo was not a category. It was a specific other-than-human person with its own form, its own presence, and its own claim on the world. The work insists on that specificity. Its absence calls for a pause to acknowledge irreversible loss — the world is now less — not the mild regret reserved for a lost specimen. The result sits somewhere between natural history and a wonder tale: a creature returned to its island and made real again, standing quietly by the water. It is an invitation to look closely, to stay curious, and to believe — at least for a moment — in something marvelous.

A Question of Butterflynness (1999–2007 portraits, 2026 sculpture)

Here, the inquiry moves into participatory installation at human scale. Two mating swallowtail sculptures (12×14×14 ft, polymer clay over aluminum, with actual butterfly specimens permanently enclosed in their heads and compound eyes constructed from macroscopic photographs of real butterfly eyes) are paired with wearable butterfly flight suits. In these suits, the viewer inhabits the biological form and looks through compound eyes toward a partner. Two versions of the suit — one 90% biological / 10% mechanical, one 20% biological / 80% mechanical — frame the threshold at which something stops being an animal and becomes a machine.

The knowledge this produces cannot be argued into existence. It arrives through the body, which is where the old categories also live. The person inside the suit, looking through a butterfly's eyes at another person inside another suit, is not being told that the boundary between human and other-than-human life is permeable. They are permeable.

A parallel series of portraits extends the same question into photography. Using the aesthetic language of human portraiture — studio lighting, close composition, the conventions built for photographing faces — I photograph individual butterflies and moths at extreme magnification. Scale reveals what natural history documentation was built to overlook: the particularity of a face, the specificity of a gesture, the sense that something looks back. Fur-like scales, the architecture of a compound eye, the mechanics of an antenna — enlarged past the point of specimen and into the register of portrait. The specimens across this project carry two different histories. Those enclosed in the swallowtail sculptures' heads were found on the side of a road in Bethany, Connecticut, during a 2007 residency at the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation. Those in the portraits mostly descend from a collection I assembled as a teenager, in a science club at my local natural history museum — boxes of mounted butterflies and moths that sat preserved and largely forgotten for decades. Returning to them years later, with different questions about what preservation actually preserves, I found in those dusty cases not specimens but the raw material for this project's central claim: that categorization and portraiture are opposed acts, and that the boundary between them is where the work lives.

Across all of these bodies of work, my practice maintains a single sustained argument: that the threshold between animal, machine, and human is the most urgent territory available to contemporary art. Categorization and portraiture are opposed acts, and the boundary between them is where the work lives. The image — when allowed to participate in its own becoming — can place the viewer in a condition where new knowledge appears before the old categories arrive to prevent it. Meaning did not arrive with Homo sapiens; it has been running for roughly 3.8 billion years, and human language and culture are small, temporary expressions operating inside a much older, living, conscious process.

— Harri Kallio, Brooklyn, August 2026 · studio@harrikallio.com · harrikallio.com