

VESSELS

Anti-clockwise from door: 1. synthetic + down parka, USB stick, Velcro, telemark ski boot box, nylon webbing, plastic buckle, photo (Bogart) 2. O carabiner, hard drive box, glasses case, electrolyte wrapper, photo (Robson) 3. approach shoes, DVD, photo (Finger) 4. climbing skins, elastic clip, GoPro Hero 3, photo (Stanley Mitchell) 5. ice axe, hard drive box, iPhone cable, mini carabiner, insect repellent, photo (Eisenhower) 6. nylon webbing, carabiner, VHS, photo (Robson) 7. orienteering compass and case, power bank, photo (Wapta) 8. ice screws, carabiner, insulated water bottle holster, water bottle, GoPro tube mount, photo (Pres / Vice Pres) 9. bike helmet box, photo paper, silk sleeping bag liner, nylon sling, photo (Wapta) 10. nut set, nut cleaning tool, cordelette, wire gate carabiner, O carabiner, GoPro packaging, photo (Stanley Mitchell) 11. VHS, running socks, photo (Athabasca) 12. 3.5 Camalot, GoPro display case, Arc'teryx packaging, photo (Stanley Mitchell) 13. Icebreaker box, merino running sock, GoPro Gooseneck package, Zipka headlight, photo (Columbia Icefield) 14. Nikwax Tech Wash bottle, nylon webbing, HDMI to VGA adapter, photo (Johnston's Canyon) 15. Zipka headlight, 12 nut, Canon battery charger, photo (Forbes) 16. Nalgene with webbing and duct tape harness, locking carabiner, belay device, pulley, iPhone and cord, photo (Pres / Vice Pres) 17. softshell jacket, hard drive box, photo (Joffre) 18. approach shoe box, climbing shoes, nylon strap, USB-C to SD card reader box, photo (Yam) 19. ice axe leash, GoPro Power Pack box, ice screw, photo (Aster / Sarrail) 20. soft shell jacket, photo paper, cordelette, photo (Kan) 21. slick tire, USB cables, laptop, locking carabiner, belay device, nylon sling, mini thermometer, photo (Andromeda) 22. underwear box, GoPro packaging, fleece glasses pouch, GPS device, photo (Columbia Icefield) 23. VCR, Gore-Tex + Kevlar bib pants, photo (Collie) 24. Windstopper gloves, duct tape, energy bar packaging, hard drive box, photo (Wapta). 25. CD, water bottle, 2 Camalot, photo (Andromeda) 26. inner tube box, camera, Abalakov / V-thread hook, running sock, photo (Stanley Mitchell). Continued on back.

ODE TO FOSSILISED WASHCLOTHS

Yasmin Nurming-Por

On the third day, everything in the tent is covered in sand and the Vaseline I smeared on my face the night before has the texture of a granular exfoliant. Moving my body, I can feel blood slowly pulsing through my veins and an insatiable hunger—an adrenaline crash that cannot be appeased by any combination of carb, protein or sugar. A carry over from the previous day spent in a failed attempt to reach an alpine hut. Winds over 100 km/hr, a tumble into a glacial pond, a series of vertical scrambles, a two-way zip line and dwindling light forced us to call it. Elated, exhausted and filthy we abandoned our aspirational destination.

Seeking this type of adventure, one that is questionably enjoyable in the moment but undeniably in retrospect, was recently described to me as Type 2 fun. It attracts a specific kind of person, someone who enjoys discomfort. I find an uncanny pleasure in the choice to disassociate from the world around me. There's an addictive desire to test my capabilities to the point where confidence teeters on consequence. As a result of these various experiences my small apartment now houses an embarrassment of riches: multiple sleeping bags, tents, backpacks, stoves etc. that reflect a compulsion to acquire things under the illusion of soothing temporary ailments. Truthfully, there's a point where no matter what kind of gear you have, tent poles still snap and Gore-Tex eventually wets out.

Scratched, torn, duct-taped, well used items are reliquaries of sweat, dirt and dust. Likewise, the unmarked status of new gear can be embarrassing. Alongside the accrual of objects and experiences, there's a physical overlap with memories—like skin gradually weathered by exposure. In preparation for a day out in the Cairngorms Scott and I go over what needs to be packed, avoiding doubling or unnecessary weight. There's a friendly competition in the interpersonal load in: who has better gear, or is more confident in their ability to use it? There's a duality of trust and judgement in sharing these treasured objects.

On our walks Scott continually picks up garbage, remnants of things meant to nourish bodies that now become a burden of disposal on the natural environment. These gestures creep into his artworks, perhaps in a continual questioning of how to be in relation to the natural environment and knowing that each encounter

has an impact—a foot print, an abandoned eggshell or a relocated rock. There’s a way in which Scott’s assemblages inhabit the various hypocrisies in outdoor recreation. In *Vic* these impositions are neatly tucked inside a fleece helmet liner. A photograph of an undisclosed mountain akin to a stock footage vista nestles against these foil residents—together acting as indexes for an event that is imagined but not pictured. Atop a box for an external hard drive, the impossibility of compressing dimensional experience becomes apparent: no quantity of terrabytes can replace the feeling of laughter in the face of an “oh fuck” moment.

For me, Scott’s works address many of the hierarchies in outdoor recreation by creatively misusing materials. What was once a \$500 jacket is now a piece of fabric in an assemblage held together with rope like a deck of cards. In many ways, these works point to systems of value: how we live in continued relation to the objects we have and especially the ones that shield us from internal and external landscapes of inclement weather and feelings. Despite the depletion of materials, skin and endurance that come from continual exposure there remains a possibility for softening through the sharing of experience. In doing so Scott offers an alternative to the concept of authoritative knowledge, suggesting that there are many ways to be within oneself alongside others outside. What at one moment resembles escapism can become a kind of attunement where the rhythmic pulsing of blood mimics the melody of a brook, and the sound of someone bellowing “rock” is both an expression of pending danger and the utmost care.





SUFFER MACHINE

Rose Higham-Stainton

I have been thinking about how pain—hot, physical suffering—is a perceptible act of devotion. This idea is embodied in Christ—we get to witness his pain infinitely in the runnels of blood that run down his legs and from his wrists in every Catholic church from here to Sierra Madre Occidental. His suffering and his endurance, and thus his heroics, makes a story that shall never be forgotten. An emblem of suffering, he is a SUFFER MACHINE.

Now imagine the mountaintop; it's not an enormous mountain but it's sizeable; some dudes are up there chipping away into the rock and ice, preparing to climb a sheer vertical axis. One of them assumes the nickname SUFFER MACHINE for refusing to have limits. Limitless, SUFFER MACHINE begins his ascent; it's cold and bright and he is ascending, if not towards God, then towards some notion of god or glory or conquest or perhaps, in the case of this particular SUFFER MACHINE, simple and self-annihilation.

In the mountainous region of Piedmont in northern Italy, in the city of Torino, is a life-size replica of the Holy Shroud—a long stretch of cotton that Christ was said to be wrapped in after he died on—or fell from—that cross (because SUFFER MACHINE will always fall). An entire museum is devoted to this imitation shroud, while the original is shielded from view in a chapel, adjacent to the City's cathedral. The original shroud was given to the Savoia family in 1453. In 1532 the shroud was damaged in a fire and Clarisse nuns spent long hours repairing it with patches. The shroud is washed with the brownish hue of blood and time and marked by the faint but perceptible impression of a body lying horizontal; he is impressed into the cloth not just once but twice over because bound in the cloth, both Christ's front and back profile are discernible. The cloth darkens along the two seams that run the length of it (441 cm precisely)—burn marks from when it was damaged in the fire and carefully stitched back together. Between these seams is Christ himself, or his residue, or an impression of his residue. The cloth darkens again, at the points where the body meets the fabric with the most force or pressure and weight—those features that have touched the cloth for centuries—elbows, pubis, back of the head, the length of Christ's nose and the width of his forehead, but also at the points where the blood runs out—wrists, shoulders and most

notably around the skull, in the crown of thorns. Darker still are the single droplets of blood that run from the crown of thorns down his brow, caught in mid-action and now in perpetuity. This is SUFFER MACHINE's material reality—or an impression of it; it will outlive him.

Over the years SUFFER MACHINE learns the ropes of ascent—crampons, carabiners, harnesses and thermoregulation for Hard Climbing. The SUFFER MACHINE after Christ, and before this SUFFER MACHINE, was the OG Ward Robinson—a hard alpinist known for winter climbing with bare hands so that they would freeze to the rock for better grip. All SUFFER MACHINES do so in his image. This one accumulates the stuff he needs for ascent but also suffering and the stuff to use to document it. He doesn't know it yet, but this stuff becomes totemic—imprinted with memory, with this or that near fatal encounter. Sometimes SUFFER MACHINE succeeds in his ascent and sometimes he fails. The stuff he uses succeeds and fails him, but is also testament to failures—new and old—the obsolete photographic and printing technology set in plastic fallible casing smells sweetly of nostalgia—*Kodak, Olympia, point-and-shoot*. SUFFER MACHINE lays it all out and inventories it: protein sachets, thermal hat, VHS tape, used Ultimex running socks, LaCie hard drive box, Outdoor Research liner, energy bar wrappers, Sierra Design Windstopper face mask, titanium pot, broken iPhone and cable, cable, Petzl pulley, locking carabiner, belay device, modified Nalgene bottle, photograph, damaged DVD, HP scanner, Arc'teryx shopping bag, Ortovox Safety Plate, used cordelette. The stuff of Tech Bros and Go Pros and Go Bros.

In the museum, among the display boards of the Holy Shroud, and images of SUFFER MACHINE dissected and remodelled, is the life-size imitation of SUFFER MACHINE pushing up from beneath a white cloth on a plinth, which is lit from underneath; with his bare bones illuminated like this, it is hard to tell if he is in rapture or pain. Visitors, mainly women—religious women—survey his material quietly and salaciously. The white cloth—shroud-like—reveals his anatomy, which the devout and dispossessed devour from a distance. Beset, more often than not, by the assumptions made around a woman's physiology—kind of static, kind of grounded—they seek ascension in other and holier ways; it is through chastity that they transcend, but also suffer—and they do it for him.

Defunct now or expired, SUFFER MACHINE stores the mountain stuff away; but when he moves, it moves with him across entire continents. Late one night, SUFFER MACHINE returns to the stuff and thinks about phenomenology — what's *in* the stuff he says. SUFFER MACHINE begins to shuffle the stuff around tentatively and then manically — the synthetic colours and fibres compose and recompose, doing some kind of dance around each other in various configurations; the rainbow hued cords are returned to their purpose of binding and holding things taut. The stuff amounts to suffering but also salvation and of fetish as pleasure but also pain. SUFFER MACHINE makes these little relics of synthetic, molecular substance at the intersection of personal archive and material culture.

The Holy Shroud marks SUFFER MACHINE as a body in absentia; and then this absence is made twofold — it holds a residue of him rather than actual flesh and bone, while the residue itself is also a replica of the original shroud. But then, who is to say where realness lies? In the material body or that which surrounds it? Perhaps that's what is really meant by total annihilation of the self? Constantly losing oneself among the material that we use to hold it in — the body and the stuff of the body.

Among SUFFER MACHINE's totemic assemblages are photographs; we're looking at the Rockies in the late nineties but the figures or faces on skis or in harnesses are layered and obscured by the light or the snow or time or the presence of the stuff that surrounds them and it becomes a touchstone back to the time, or a time, of the picture, or a picture; the somatic feeling of this stuff — it's physiology — elicits some emotional in-road to the flat image and archived memory. SUFFER MACHINE reconfigures this stuff into packages that are, in their fallen-ness and their broken-ness, testament to human achievement and failure; he co-opts these ideas not just from Alpinism, but its bedmates of faith and capitalism. At first they feel sticky, these ideas, like a residue or some bad smell; but what he takes from them is the trying and failing and trying again as a kind of devotional practice. Then he charges them — the stuff and the ideas which have begun to merge — with something like electricity; only it is more feeling than that. The stuff operates on a different kind of register, holding memories and emotion within it, and becomes more and less material because of it.

EVERY DAY CATASTROPHES

Sam Forsythe

If you're reading this then it's too late. There was likely once a time when you were happy with just the few objects you carried with you in your pockets. Your wallet, your keys, your phone. Maybe there were some special things you didn't really need but still carried with you every day, just in case. But you never put too much thought into it. Life was simple. Surprises were seldom and rarely unpleasant. Then, one day, you felt compelled to adopt a posture of constant vigilance, ever alert for signs of threat and advantage.

Or maybe you were just caught empty-handed in a moment when you needed a piece of gear, a special tool, a useful instrument. You experienced the discomfort of finding yourself totally unprepared for the problems life was asking you to solve. From your efforts to remedy your lack of preparedness you may have drifted into an obsession with tools, gadgets, gear and equipment. Over time you may have grown dissatisfied with merely consuming survivalist commodities and taken it upon yourself to learn some practical skills.

You might have learned how to travel light, how to navigate, how to survive a surprise encounter with dangerously inclement weather. And once you dealt with your own set of quotidian contingencies, you may have begun to think about other dangers, dwelling long on the unsettling consequences of more hypothetical surprises. Maybe you started dreaming of disasters and catastrophes, imagining what you'd do, how you'd react, what you'd need to make the best of more-than-unfavourable circumstances. You may have stocked your home with enough provisions to last the duration of a hurricane, or maybe a supply chain collapse. You may have pondered the possibility of violent encounters, those contingencies that force us to consider which material forms work best to unmake all the others. You may have wondered how to make of yourself an instrument equal to every possible emergency.

By this point your *EDC*—the collection of vital instruments that comprise your *every day carry*—has likely been honed down to the bare bones of what you like to imagine is the perfect utility kit, while your larger collection has ballooned into an encyclopaedic system cataloguing every possible contingency of nature, accident and adversary. On any given day your pockets probably carry at least

half the things you'd need to get a start on rebuilding everything after a civilisational collapse. On days when your suspicions compel you to imagine even more threatening hypotheses, your secret compartments bulge with lock picks and escape tools designed to extract you from even the most inexorable fate.

You've got *go-bags* stashed near emergency exits and *bugout bags* stuffed with apocalypse equipment. But it's not enough. You've compared the virtues of a thousand knives and at this moment have at least 5 of them strapped to your body, the blades increasing in keenness as their hiding spots become more intimate.

But none of them are sharp enough, strong enough or durable enough to endure what you know is coming. What everyone knows is coming. You've run the shooter drills, practiced the sniper skills, learned bushcraft, fieldcraft, tradecraft, and even tried to understand the rudiments of statecraft (for when you reconstruct your new world in the ashes of the old). But you're still not ready. You know it. Everyone knows it. You know that they know you're not ready, and they know that you know they know it, and so they won't ever let you see them coming. When they come. Not if.

You've prepped. You've trained. You're primed for every emergency, ready to meet the challenges of flood, fire, and foe. But still, it's not enough. You know it's not enough. The more you secure your weak points the more you recognise your vulnerabilities; the function of every tool becomes an index of everything you cannot do with it. Every imagined strategy becomes a reminder of the opportunities you might have missed. You see signs and portents of fresh terrors awaiting us all, hiding just out of sight.

Probably you've thought to yourself, what good is it if I have all the right tools, but no strength to wield them? So you've pumped, you've pushed, you've lifted and heaved until there was nothing nearby that you could not carry with you on a forced march through the dark; and anything you can't carry isn't worth worrying about, right? You've honed your body to be as sharp as your bones and sinews will allow, stripped back what can be stripped and tried to make your peace with the ballast you find yourself unable to jettison into the sea of unnecessary possessions.

And if you've made it this far into the wilderness of speculative emergencies, then odds are that you have, at some point, tried to train not only your body, but also your mind. You've meditated,

you've visualised, you've memorised stoic maxims and learned leadership secrets of soldiers, SEALs and strategic sages. And yet, you still can't find peace in the chronic uncertainty that now shapes your life. You know there's something you're missing, something essential, something fundamentally important for weathering what you're certain is inevitable. This suspicion eats at you, gnaws at your composure, makes a mockery of everything you've learned and possess regarding the arts and artefacts of adversarial adaptation.

The paranoid logic of survival leads you to wonder: *what one thing would you bring with you if you had to get up right now and walk out into the unknown?*

The answer, of course, is that you would bring with you the one thing that allows you to bring anything at all. The ultimate survival item is not a multitool, or a knife, it is a bag. Before flight, before fight, before hiding in shadows or sneaking through the night, before shelter, before signs, there is a more basic, more fundamental task to take care of. You must live. Above all else you must live and continue to live. In the end, when all else is lost, the only thing left is to hold on to what matters most and to never let go.

Before weapons, tools, instruments or shelters, before provisions, utensils or implements, there is the simple need to gather, to hold, to carry with you as you go. The persistent retention of what is most necessary to us is what lets us do more than simply survive. It is what lets us explore, experiment, create, commune and convene. If there is a single piece of gear, a single system, a single principle that might ease the paranoid suspicions of the pathologically prepared, something that truly embodies the principle of every day carry, it is not a tool of force or projection. It is something much more humble, something easily overlooked by those who have experienced the world as a pitiless wilderness, or who have been irretrievably seized by the dark hypothesis that life is one great labyrinth of mirrors and traps.

For those of us who feel compelled to adopt the posture of permanent vigilance, we would do well to focus our attention not on transforming ourselves into human weapons or universal instruments, but embodying the principle of the carrier bag:

If it is a human thing to do to put something you want, because it's useful, edible, or beautiful, into a bag, or a basket, or a bit of rolled bark or leaf, or a net woven of your own hair, or what have you, and then take it home with you, home being another, larger kind of pouch or bag, a container for people, and then later on you take it out and eat it or share it or store it up for winter in a solider container or put it in the medicine bundle or the shrine or the museum, the holy place, the area that contains what is sacred, and then next day you probably do much the same again—if to do that is human, if that's what it takes, then I am a human being after all. Fully, freely, gladly, for the first time.

—Ursula K. Le Guin, 1986, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Scott Rogers

During recent years, it has become customary for Canadian cultural institutions to address First Nations peoples and their territories in the public aspects of their promotion and programming. A land acknowledgement for this show might look something like this:

The photos and equipment that make up *Vessels* are related to activities that occurred on the traditional territory of Treaty 6 and Treaty 7 people and on land stewarded by the Blackfoot Confederacy (inclusive of The Kainai, Piikani [Peigan], and Siksika Nations), Tsuut'ina First Nation, the Iyarhe/Stoney Nakoda people (inclusive of the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations), the Secwepemc people, As'in'i'wa'chi Niy'yaw Askiy (Rocky Mountain Cree), and Nehiyaw-Askiy (Plains Cree). This land is also home to the Mountain Métis, and the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III and IV.

I can't go into enough detail to fully contextualise this statement. What I can say is that at best land acknowledgements are undertaken with specificity, consultation and care, and engage in a spirit of reconciliation that is bound by mutual recognition rather than box-ticking. Regardless, they are the bare minimum. Words, not deeds.

As a settler I didn't learn much about the people that first cared for the land between the Rockies and the prairies. Treaty 7 was something I read about in school—part of Canada's quiet role in building apartheid. I lived next to Tsuut'ina Nation, yet I never set foot there. Besides museum displays I had very little relationship to indigenous people. One of my few face-to-face contacts was through hitchhiking. Coming back from skiing I would pick up people from Mînî Thnî (Morley) and drive them to Mohkinstsis (Calgary). Their stories were harrowing—travelling in the dead of winter to see a relative or attend a funeral. One night while on a mountain my shoes were stolen from my car, despite thousands worth of climbing gear in the back—surely an RCMP starlight tour. Somehow this was simply “how things were” in Alberta.

However, one thing mountain people know is that the hills have ancient names, and a time before names. Today, one place to start is by stripping that Scottish fur trader from *Yexyexésen*, along with Victoria, Clemenceau, and Columbia. Deeds done with words.



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27. ski pack, nylon daisy chain, locking carabiner, photo paper, photo (Columbia Icefield) 28. shoe box, nylon sling, snow picket, USB cable, mobile phone, photo (Forbes). 29. Petzl / Charlet Moser catalogue, crampon snow guards, SD cards, photo (Edith Cavell) 30. ice screw, telescopic snow shovel handle, bike lights, nylon cord, GoPro user manual, electrolyte packaging, photo (Bell) 31. bike bottle, bike bottle mount, chest strap, mini DV tape, photo (Wapta) 32. Camalots, O carabiner, camera, wire gate carabiners, gear rack, photo (Lefroy) 33. scanner, Ortovox Safety Plate, cordelette, Arc'Teryx shopping bag, blister bandages, photos (Andromeda, Black Prince) 34. DVDs, glasses case, ice axe leash, Power Gel, photo (Sheep River) 35. water bottle, Mini DVD, photo (Forbes) 36. dry bag, Nikon CoolPix user manual, photo (Diadem) 37. hard drive box, thermal liner, energy bar packaging, photo (Vic) 38. laptop, head light strap, First Aid kit packaging, carabiner, Nature2X label, photo album page, photos (Stanley Mitchell) 39. charging cable box, approach shoes, nylon daisy chain, water bottle, D carabiner, photo (Burstall) 40. trail running shoe box, mini DV tape, running hat, photo (St. Nick) 41. VHS tapes, chock, carabiner, wire gate carabiner, shock load sling, photo (Storm) 42. titanium pot, Windstopper face mask, iPhone cable, photo (Temple) 43. softshell pants, hard drive case, energy bar wrapper, skin trimming tool, photo (Snowbird / Patterson) 44. water bottle, Nikwax Tech Wash bottle, ice axe leash, SD card, photo (Wilcox / Athabasca) 45. mesh bag, ZIP drive, energy bar wrappers, photo (Temple) 46. trail runners, duct tape, super 8 cartridge, nylon sling, wire gate carabiner, photo (Robson / Resplendent) 47. camera box, Zipka headlight package, running sock, photo (Yam) 48. water bottle, digital camera screen, photo album pages, photos (Stanley Mitchell) 49. glasses leash, crampon snow guard, iPhone and cable, photo (Robson / Resplendent) 50. inner tube box, photo paper, wool sock, 3 Camalot, wire gate carabiner, photo (Robson / Resplendent) 51. GoPro tube mount box, telemark ski boots, butane fuel canister, iPhone cable, photo (Redoubt)