

For Immediate Release

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GRASSROOTS INITIATIVE WILL TERRAFORM CITIES TO QUASH THE ANTHROPOCENE

Pioneers Of The Greater Holocene Will Launch In San Francisco On September 5th – Modernism Gallery Will Host Debut Event – Global Expansion Will Be Coordinated By New University Institute

August 12, 2019 – As the International Union of Geological Sciences assesses human impact on the planet, determining whether our species has triggered a new geological epoch, a grassroots organization has begun a global effort to give back Earth's crust to all forms of life. The Pioneers of the Greater Holocene will survey spaces shared by humans and other organisms, documenting symbiotic living arrangements as inspiration for future ecosystems, while simultaneously collaborating with non-human species to renegotiate the realms that *Homo sapiens* dominates today. "The International Union of Geological Sciences is expected soon to proclaim a new epoch dubbed the *Anthropocene*," says experimental philosopher Jonathon Keats, founding president of the Pioneers. "While their work is laudable, we need to take it as a challenge. We should do all we can to protect and promote the Holocene, the geological epoch we inherited."

With the launch of a San Francisco chapter on September 5th, the Pioneers will systematically catalogue places in the Bay Area where attributes of the Holocene still endure, from Muir Woods to the weeds growing out of Mission District sidewalk cracks. These will not only serve as models for Holocenic revival elsewhere in the world, but also may provide scientific grounds for remaining within the current epoch as we contend with Anthropocenic excess.

"Geologists have a fixed procedure for deciding when a new epoch begins," Mr. Keats explains. They must identify a material change in Earth's strata – such as the global impact of an asteroid strike – and then stake out geological evidence of the transition with a golden spike.

"Until the spike is struck, we have an opportunity to preserve the Holocene by curtailing use of Anthropocenic substances such as industrial fertilizers, fly ash and plastics, and changing the socioeconomic systems that bring environmental ruin. We have the potential to bound the human stratum, and perhaps even to remediate it, putting the Anthropocene behind us as an unfortunate geological interlude."

To offset the Anthropocene, and to foster ecosystems where all life can thrive, the Pioneers will collaborate with plants, fungi and bacteria to rewild the planet. In San Francisco, a city undergoing rapid development, the organization will distribute seed packets containing native grasses that will take root wherever people spread them, from empty lots to busy streets. Over time, these grasses will provide the groundwork for forests to flourish within the urban matrix, not as decorative features for humans but as habitats where all species meet as equals. The organization will also provide a special nutrient mix for lichens, symbiotic organisms capable of transforming concrete into soil while also purifying the atmosphere. "We can't direct how this formula may be washed over skyscrapers, any more than we can officially sanction appropriation of jackhammers to plow through highway asphalt and plant the interstates with grass," says Mr. Keats. "The Bay Area has a reputation for disruption. Preventing a new epoch by re-terraforming the planet is the ultimate disruptive act."

Eventually comprising a global network of concerned humans and other organisms from all phyla, the Pioneers are expected to become a force of nature. Members will also actively support environmental scientists through their documentation of Holocenic ecosystems they find and create, contributing photographic records to the archive of a new Institute for the Greater Holocene. Opening in the fall of 2020, and hosting a major exhibition on life after the Anthropocenic interlude, the Institute will be situated at a major state university, the name of which will soon be released.

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"The Holocene began with the end of the last ice age 11,700 years ago," observes Mr. Keats. "Since interglacial periods typically last 40,000 years, we should be able to enjoy our epoch for another twenty-five to thirty millennia. This layer of crust we live on is really quite pleasant. We can probably sustain it, and be sustained by it, if we don't give in to Anthropocenic fatalism."

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The Pioneers of the Greater Holocene will hold a special launch event on Thursday, September 5th from 5:30 to 8:00 at Modernism Gallery, 724 Ellis St., San Francisco, CA. Visits can be arranged by appointment through September. For more information, call 415/541-0461, email info@modernisminc.com, or visit www.modernisminc.com/artists/Jonathon_KEATS/

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Acclaimed as a "poet of ideas" by The New Yorker and a "multimedia philosopher-prophet" by The Atlantic, Jonathon Keats is an artist, writer and experimental philosopher. His conceptually-driven interdisciplinary projects explore all aspects of society through science and technology. In recent years, he has installed a camera with a thousand-year-long exposure time – documenting the long-term effects of climate change – at the Arizona State University Art Museum; launched a reciprocal biomimicry initiative – allowing non-human species to benefit from human technologies – at Bucknell University; opened a photosynthetic restaurant serving gourmet sunlight to plants at the Crocker Art Museum; and installed a cosmic welcome mat – greeting beings from throughout the universe – at the International Astronautical Congress. Exhibited internationally, Keats's projects have been documented by PBS, Reuters, and the BBC World Service, garnering favorable attention in periodicals ranging from Science to Flash Art to Slate to The Economist. He is the recipient of multiple Yaddo and MacDowell Fellowships, and has lectured at institutions including Stanford University, the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), which awarded him a 2015-16 Art + Technology Lab Grant. His latest book, You Belong to the Universe: Buckminster Fuller and the Future has recently been published by Oxford University Press, which also published his previous book, Forged: Why Fakes Are the Great Art of Our Age. He was recently the Black Mountain College Legacy Fellow at the University of North Carolina - Asheville, and is currently a Research Fellow at the Nevada Museum of Art's Center for Art + Environment, a Polar Lab Artist at the Anchorage Museum, and an Artist-in-Residence at both the Fraunhofer Institutes in Germany and UC Berkeley's Sagehen Creek Field Station in California. A monograph about his art is forthcoming from the Anchorage Museum and Hirmer Verlag. He is represented by Modernism Gallery in San Francisco.

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