

LAHONTAN GROUP

John Roloff

LAHONTAN GROUP

John Roloff

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Fractal Terror Press
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Devonian Shale: Aquifer I

Organic Logic/New Observations
(with Mark Bartlett)

The Sea Within the Land/Laramide

51 Million BTU's

The Rising Sea: Images and Constructions from South Florida
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LAHONTAN GROUP (I-III)

The interwoven environmental art works of *Lahontan Group (I-III)*, were initiated in 1985 by an invitation to create a temporary, site-specific kiln project on the University of Nevada, Reno campus by Walter McNamara, UNR Art Museum Director. The Land Kiln: *Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan) / Lahontan Group I*, was completed in that year resulting in the fired earthwork, *Black Coral Starfish*. *Talking Tree/Glacial Epoch / Lahontan Group II*, was commissioned in 1987, again by Walter McNamara, as a permanent sited work on the UNR campus to extend and enhance the themes and research of Nevada's natural history begun with *Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan)*. *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan) / Lahontan Group III*, was commissioned by the UC Berkeley Art Museum in 1987 for their MATRIX exhibition series, initiated by Constance Lewallan, then MATRIX curator. *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)*, extended the site-base concerns and imagery of *Lahontan Group I & II* to a new context and environment.

As an interwoven narrative of three related environmental projects, *Lahontan Group (I-III)* represents an important threshold in the investigation of site, a furthering of the concepts of expanded ceramics and global metabolism. Based upon extensive research of Reno, Nevada's paleo-geographic and geologic history, the revelation of ancient Lake Lahontan became *Lahontan Group's* primary inspiration and as an elegy for the pristine Ice Ages of Pleistocene North America.

Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan) / Lahontan Group I, 1985, was the seventh in a series of experimental environmental, Land Kilns, (1979-1992). The firing of these projects as an expanded idea of ceramics, were generally in remote sites to work with earth materials in-situ, referencing the geologic and geographic nature of the site and local materials. They were alchemical in nature, both in the transformation of materials resulting in a potential "conjuring," of essence between the image, process and site.

Talking Tree (Glacial Epoch) / Lahontan Group II, 1987, a rebuilt version of the "fish head" component of *Ancient Shoreline...*, a symbolic conversation between the Pleistocene (ice age) represented by the artificial snow encrusted armature, and the transition to the contemporary Anthropocene/Holocene climate represented by white alder trees planted within, entangling and elevating the metal structure as it grows. The use of the fish-head image of the original kiln as a topiary device, further expands the role of the kiln and ceramic practice, begun in earlier Land Kilns, into organic, metabolic and climatic conversations.

Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan) / Lahontan Group III, contains misting water and sediment from Pyramid Lake, in a sealed greenhouse, test tube-like environment, installed under the skylight of the MATRIX exhibition space in Berkeley and a large window at the Renwick Gallery in Washington DC, facilitating potential photosynthetic processes and encouraging chemical and biological interactions within. The greenhouse enclosing site-specific materials and climate effect of the glass, echo's the expanded ceramic and metabolic conversations of *Lahontan Group I & II*. The *Lahontan Group III* ship, in addition to being exhibited at the Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, 1989, was permanently installed in a new context at the Djerassi Foundation, Woodside, CA, that same year, as *Vanishing Ship (Third State)*.

As noted in the last section of this document, *Lahontan Group / Selected Antecedents and Propagations*, a series of Land Kilns such as: *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, Craven, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1980, were an inspiration for *Black Coral Starfish Element (Lahontan Group I)*. Other environmental projects included in this section: *Metafossil (Pinus: ponderosa, radiata, balfouriana)*, 1993, *Deep Gradient/Suspect Terrain...*, 1993, *Devonian Shale (Aquifer I)*, 2000 and *The Sea Within the Land/Laramide*, Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO 2011. These are examples of environmental projects whose research and implementation extended many of the themes of the *Lahontan Group*.



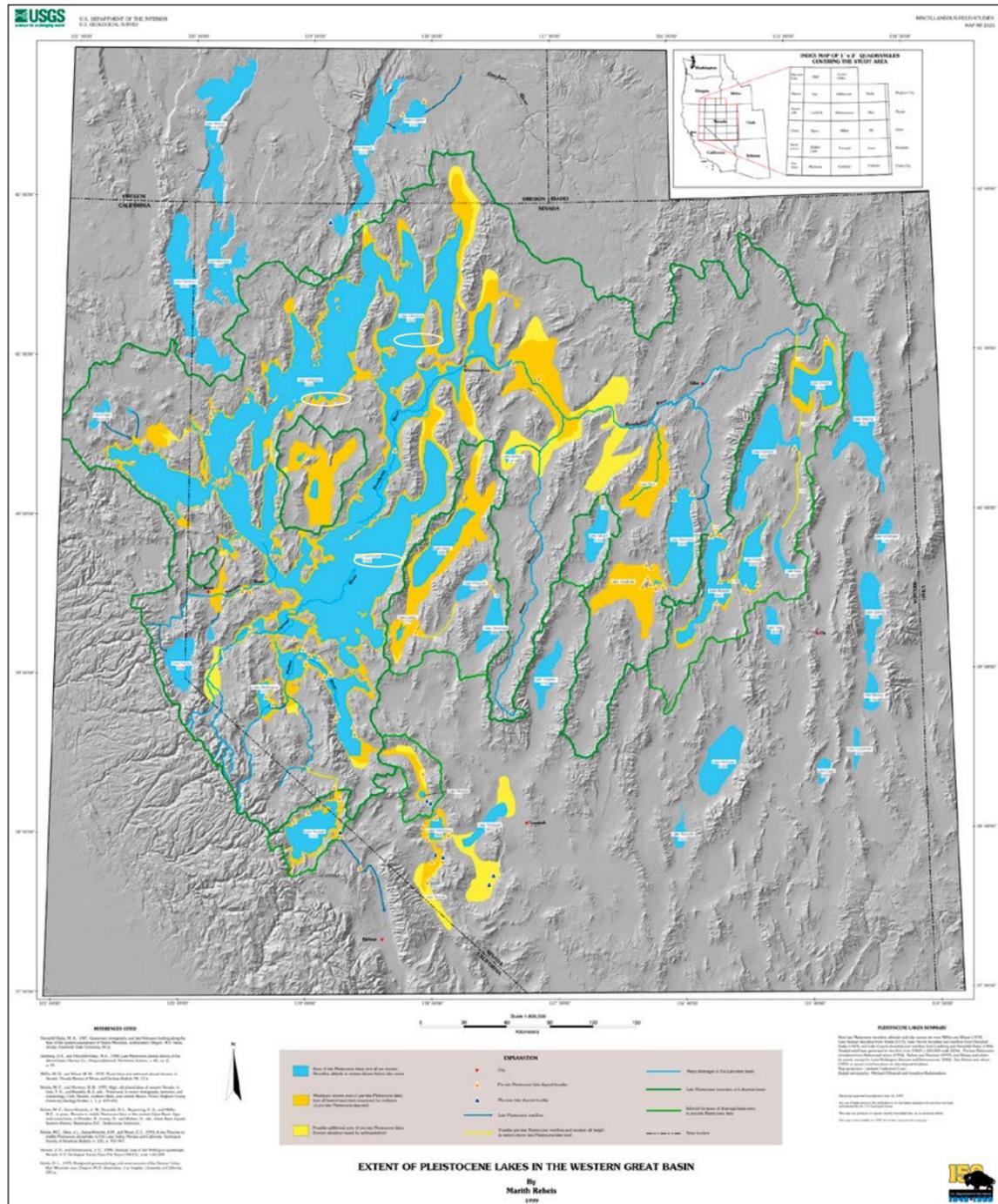
Lake Lahontan with related lakes (circled) during the Pleistocene Era, late Wisconsin stage, North American ice sheet. Ron Blakey©2013 Colorado Plateau Geosystems Inc.



Lake Lahontan Pleistocene water levels noted as horizontal shoreline markings, on Anaho Island, Pyramid Lake. The top of the island, at 1,334 m is 3m below the "Sehoo Highstand," approximately 12,700 years ago. Benson, Larry, *The Tufas of Pyramid Lake*, Circular 1267, USGS, 2004.

Ancient Lake Lahontan

Thought to be the product of climatic forces during the Pleistocene Epoch ice ages, ancient Lake Lahontan was an enormous endorheic lake covering much of northwestern Nevada, extending into northeastern California and southern Oregon. At one of the lake's highest levels, approximately 12,700 years ago ("Sehoo Highstand"), the lake had a surface area of about 8,500 square miles (20,700 km), with its largest component centered at the location of the present Carson Sink. The depth of the lake was approximately 800 feet (240 m) at present day Pyramid Lake, and 500 feet (150 m) at the Black Rock Desert. Pyramid Lake and Walker Lakes are among the last living, post-Pleistocene (Anthropocene/Holocene), remnants of Lake Lahontan. The Paiute name for Pyramid Lake is Cui-ui Panunadu, meaning fish in standing water.



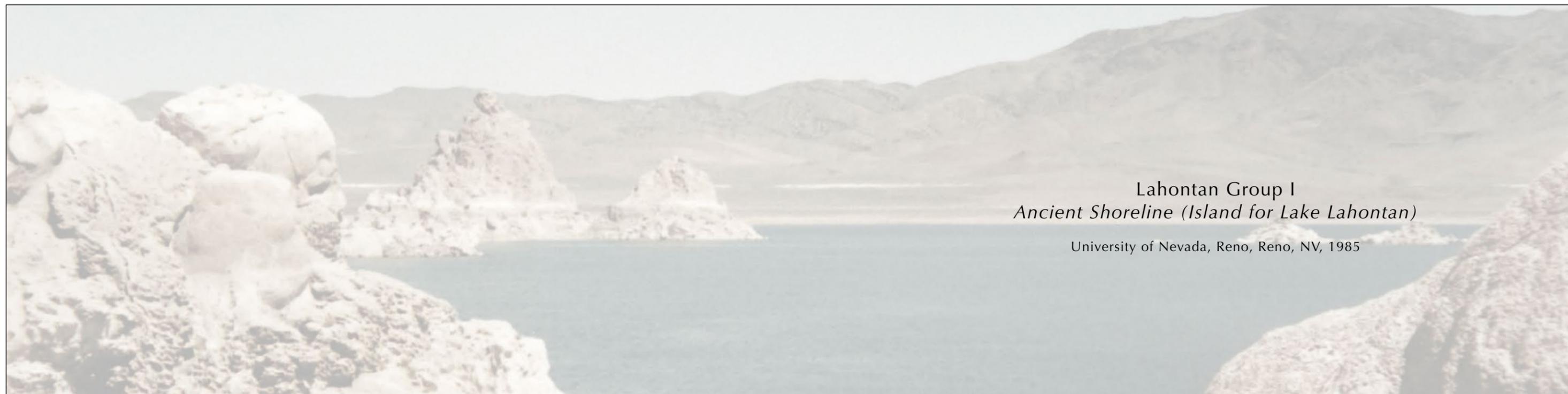
Extent of Pleistocene Lakes in the Western Great Basin, Marith Reheis, US Department of the Interior map, 1999. Lake Lahontan (name circled) is the largest of numerous Western Great Basin, Pleistocene lakes in what is now western/northwestern Nevada, parts of northeastern California and southeastern Oregon.



The Needles Rocks site at the north end of Pyramid Lake. The top of the white carbonate coating/cement at the base of the mounds is at the elevation of the overflow point from the Pyramid Lake sub basin to the Winnemucca Lake sub-basin. The tallest of the mounds reaches and elevation of 1,265 m, or about 105 m above lake level. Benson, Larry, *The Tufas of Pyramid Lake*, Circular 1267, USGS, 2004.

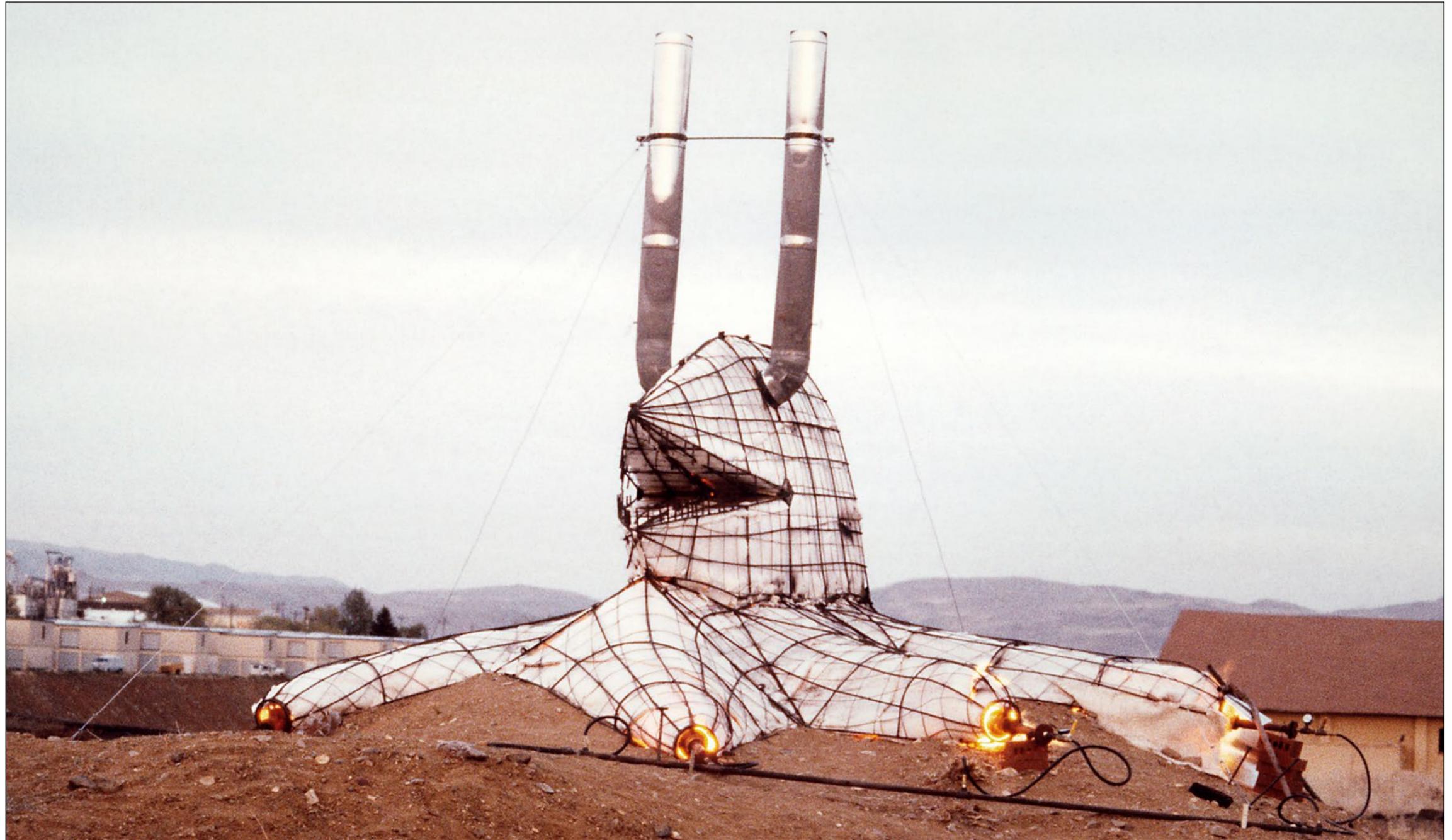


Pyramid Lake, north shore with tufa formations. Site visit early 1970's.



Lahontan Group I
Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan)

University of Nevada, Reno, Reno, NV, 1985



Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan) / Lahontan Group I, early fire state, UNR Campus, Reno, NV, 1985.

Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan) / Lahontan Group I

The Land Kiln, *Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan)*, was constructed of refractory ceramic blanket, steel and site-derived materials, in the form of a mythological animal, part fish, part starfish and fired as a performance on the outskirts of the University of Nevada Reno campus, April 28, 1985.

The fish and starfish-like imagery are related to the Nevada state fossil, the Ichthyosaur, an immense fish-like creature of the Mesozoic Era and Native American stories of large creatures living in lakes of that region. The imagery also relates to unknown paleo-flora and paleo-fauna whose fossils are not yet discovered. The kiln's fired product, the 20 ft. diameter, *Black Coral Starfish Element*, composed of sage from

the firing site dipped in black clay slip interspersed with veins of turquoise Egyptian paste was revealed the following day with the removal of the kiln. The deconstructed kiln elements were experimented with on-site and became the inspiration for *Talking Tree/Glacial Epoch / Lahontan Group II*.

Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan) was preceded by several site-specific Land Kilns, performed in various sites across North America, articulated further in the *Lahontan Group / Selected Antecedents and Propagations* (Research, Land Kilns and Related Environmental Projects) section of this document.

Fusing earth and art

By Sandra Macias/Gazette-Journal

A starfish-thing hugs a dirt mound in an eastern corner of the University of Nevada-Reno. Its blackish orange rays and its body of glazed sagebrush and weeds looks weathered and hoary.

Actually, though, it's recently born. The starfish — which may not be a starfish at all, depending on the beholder — is a ceramic art piece molded and fired into the Nevada earth. It is part of an environmental sculpture, the creation of John Roloff, a Bay Area artist.

Roloff has been doing these earth works for about six years. This is the first piece he's done in Nevada and the second time he's used the starfish shape. (The other one is in Saskatchewan, Canada.)

How Roloff gets this fusion of earth and ceramic takes some doing. He calls what he does land kiln projects — to explain that is a little like trying to explain the Creation.

Perhaps the best thing to do it is take you to a quonset hut on UNR's campus. That's where Roloff was a week ago working on his kiln sculpture.

At that point the kiln was only a steel frame — yet it was shaping up into a piece of art in itself. The structure's bottom half was in the starfish form and the top half looked like Jaws. With the help of a university art student, Roloff was busy welding teathy rods to the snarling head.

Once the metal frame was complete, the next step was to wrap it from the interior (the contrast of light material to dark metal making the frame visible) with an inflammable fiber blanket which looks like foam rubber padding. Once wrapped, the structure became a

kiln, ready to create another piece of art, somewhat like a cookie-cutter makes a cookie.

Most of Roloff's pieces deal with water imagery. His Nevada project is no exception. The kiln sculpture relates to watery things; the mound he chose to use it on was altered "to suggest a shoreline of the past."

Before placing the kiln on the mound, one more step was left. Roloff spread clay and other ceramic materials in a starfish pattern. Then the kiln was placed over it and heated by placing propane gas jets at the end of the starfish's rays. The heat rushed through the arms, swirled into the cavity of the kiln and out through two vents in the fish head.

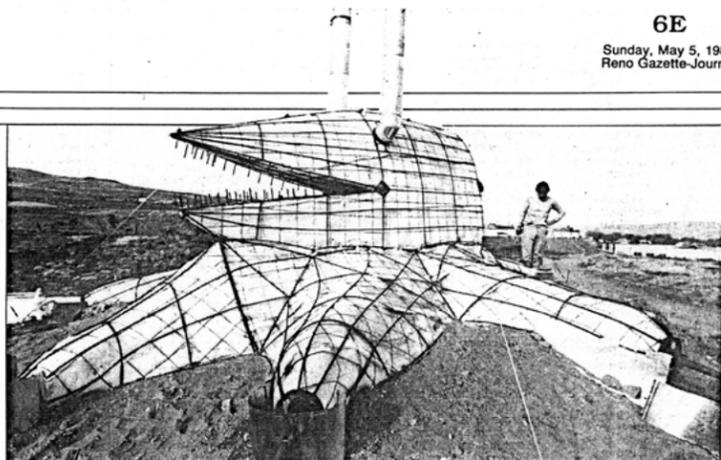
Roaring like a mighty furnace, the kiln began its work, fusing earth and ceramic substance together. The whole process took about four hours.

Roloff was surprised with what he got once the kiln was removed: "I expected more orange," he said, pointing to the starfish's brownish-black rays. But he's not disappointed. "The whole process involves a dialogue with the kiln and that gets into an unpredictable realm. It (the starfish) may not look pretty, but I'm more interested in this dialogue and the natural process."

The starfish is only one part of a total environmental piece, an art piece that is far from finished. "I don't know if it will ever be finished in the sense I have in mind," Roloff said, surveying the site with an eye that saw more than the average guy.

What the average guy would see is a starfish on one mound and the fish head, removed from the kiln sculpture frame, sitting on another mound nearby.

The site, however, isn't protected, thus making it vulnerable to the ele-



James Kenney/Gazette-Journal

KILN: The huge creature above is artist John Roloff's combination kiln-artwork, which is prepared to fire a ceramic piece underneath in the shape of a starfish. Three of the starfish-shape legs can be seen extending into the foreground. At right, Roloff contemplates the structure.



ments — as well as vandals and dirt bikers. The site is a temporary one, explained Walt McNamara, curator of UNR's Sheppard Gallery: "The project was really more a student involvement with Roloff and the (kiln) firing." Eventually the fish head will be placed permanently in the Sheppard Gallery which will be expanded later this year, McNamara said.

But Roloff envisioned something else with the fish-head frame: "I'd like to plant a cottonwood tree in the frame," he said. "It ultimately would become part of the tree."

Strange as that may sound — if you can imagine a suspended fish head in a tree — it's a fairly typical Roloff artistic statement. Many of his other works in New Mexico, Indiana, and California fuse nature and art pieces together.

At the moment Roloff is calling his Nevada earth piece, "Ancient Shoreline — Piece for Lake Lahontan." He says it's a "tentative title," one he might scrap because it's too literal.

"This piece is more about a time before man came," said Roloff, a medium-built man with a tanned face and workman's hands. "But it's not related to dinosaurs and things. I'm thinking more in terms of expansive time — in a romantic, even erotic way

... if you can think of time in that way."

Roloff, who has received prestigious grants to do his artwork, speaks on the same plane as poets and philosophers. Like many artists, his visions were in another dimension.

Roloff is toying with the idea of sprinkling the fish head with snow-like particles of cement. "Then there would be two seasons on the same piece" — Roloff was referring to the whole site as his piece of art — "a winter and a summer, only it's not like the summer we know. It's a season with no name, an emotional season . . ."

Besides land kiln projects, Roloff does large ceramic pieces. An exhibit of some of his ceramic works and photographs of some of his land kiln projects are on display through May 18 in the Sheppard Gallery in the Church Fine Arts Building on UNR's campus.

Roloff, born in Portland, Ore., thinks of himself as a Californian since he's lived in that state most of his life, and has exhibited all over the United States. His ceramic pieces, some as "small" as 16 feet, also are in private and permanent collections.

The 37-year-old who teaches at Mills College and the San Francisco Art Institute has some other projects on the front burner. He is one of a team of artists who will work on "a large scale thing at Candlestick Park," an area of land designated as a park around Candlestick Stadium. He also will begin work soon on a art piece for a train station in Sacramento.

The Nevada environmental piece and Roloff's exhibition was made possible through a \$3,600 grant, partially funded by the Nevada State Council on the Arts, the Dean of Arts and Science Office, and UNR's art department.



Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan) / Lahontan Group I,, mid-fire state, UNR Campus, Reno, NV, 1985. Photo: Elke Morris.

Macias, Sandra, *Fusing Earth and Art*, Reno Gazette-Journal, Section 6E, May 5, 1985.



Black Coral Starfish element, fused state/kiln removed, fired black clay slip coated sage brush, fused and altered sand, and turquoise Egyptian paste linear elements. UNR Campus, Reno, NV, 1985.



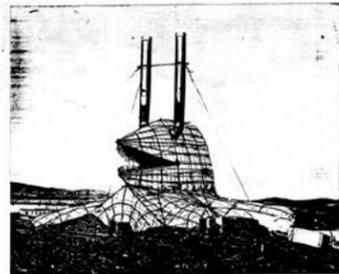
The original fish head kiln element frame (view I), ceramic fiber blanket removed, organic soil clump floor, dusting of plaster snow, as preliminary study for *Talking Tree/Glacial Epoch / Lahontan Group II*, constructed anew in 1987. UNR Campus, Reno, NV, 1985..



The original fish head kiln element frame (view II), ceramic fiber blanket removed, organic soil clump floor, dusting of plaster snow, as preliminary study for *Talking Tree/Glacial Epoch / Lahontan Group II*, constructed anew in 1987. UNR Campus, Reno, NV, 1985.



Lahontan Group II
Talking Tree/Glacial Epoch
University of Nevada, Reno, 1987



KILN AT SITE



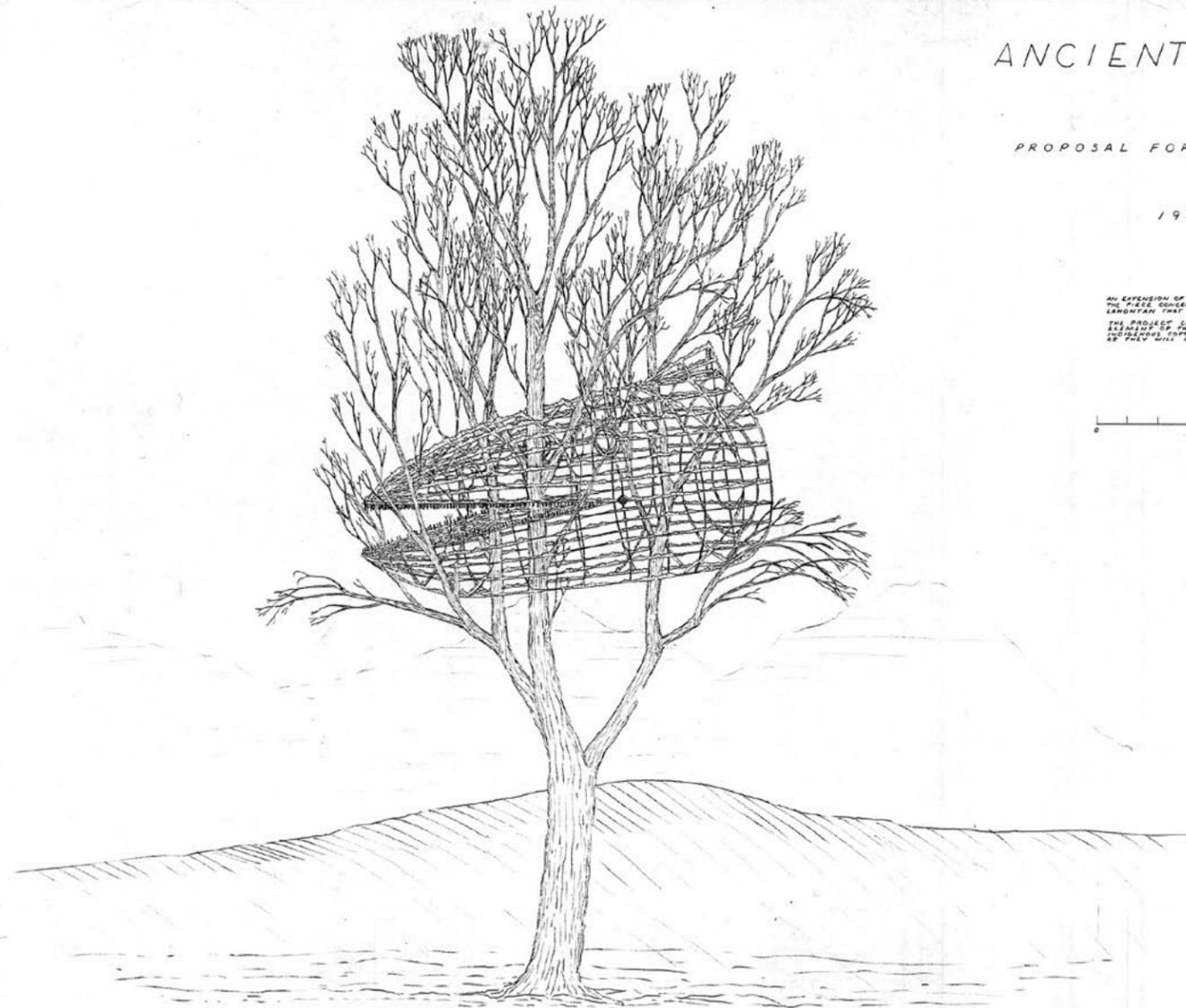
NIGHT FIRING



KILN REMOVED

FIRED BLACK CLAY SLIP OVER UNDERBURN BREAKERS, THROUGHOUT
ENTIRE INTERIOR, AND WITH INTERIOR 20" DIA. TUBES ON A
4" X 4" 1" DIA. GRID, BURNING

BLACK CORAL STARFISH
ELEMENT



POSSIBLE FUTURE CONFIGURATION

ANCIENT SHORELINE / ISLAND FOR LAKE LAHONTAN

PROPOSAL FOR "TALKING TREE / GLACIAL EPOCH" ELEMENT

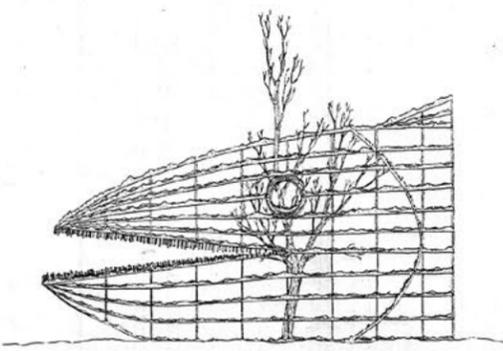
RENO, NEVADA

1985-87

© JOHN ROLOFF

AN EXTENSION OF A PROJECT BEGUN IN 1982 WITH THE SITE FIRING OF THE "BLACK CORAL STARFISH" ELEMENT.
THE FURTHER CONCERNS CERTAIN MYTHOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL AND ENDOGENOUS IDEAS ABOUT THE ANCIENT "ICE AGE" LAKE
LAHONTAN THAT COVERED A LARGE AREA OF WHAT IS NOW NORTHERN NEVADA.
THE PROJECT CONSISTS OF A STEEL STRUCTURE SIMILAR TO ORIGINAL PLAN FOR THE "BLACK CORAL STARFISH"
ELEMENT OF THE BURNING "TALKING TREE" ELEMENT PLANTED WITH THE 20" DIA. TUBES
AND 4" X 4" 1" DIA. GRID. THESE TO BE ALLOWED TO GROW IN PLACE, BEING DAY OR NIGHT THE STRUCTURE
BE THEY WILL FOR A MINIMUM OF 50 YEARS. A STREAMSIDE LIFE IS DESIRED.

SCALE OF DRAWINGS
IN FEET



INITIAL CONFIGURATION

Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan): Talking Tree/Glacial Epoch, 36 in x 81 in. pencil on vellum, b&w photo collage, 1985.
Title later changed to Talking Tree/Glacial Epoch / Lahontan Group I. Collection, UC Berkeley Art Museum.

JOHN ROLOFF at
University of Nevada, Reno

John Roloff's siteworks are informed by his interest in the history and mythology of a given region, his early training in geology, and mainly by his concern for our relation or connection with nature. For the latter he draws on sources as diverse as the paintings of the Luminists, the writings of Transcendentalists and the oral histories of Native Americans, interpreting nature as spiritual force.

By incorporating romantic myth and indigenous folklore in addition to material found on the land, his work relates both psychically and physically to the region. Yet his themes are often beyond the realm of our immediate experience, alluding to a prehistoric, prehuman era to which our only access is geological data and fossilized remains.

During Roloff's research in Nevada he became interested in the ancient Ice Age lake called Lahontan, which covered a large area of the state. Pyramid Lake, now an Indian reservation, and Walker Lake are the only remnants of Lake Lahontan. Two projects by Roloff on the UNR campus are thematically related, and both are based on that prehistoric site.

Ancient Shoreline/Island for Lake Lahontan: Firing for Black Coral Star Fish Element, a sitework from 1985, is now extinct. While siteworks are often temporary, either reclaimed by the elements or actually removed, this piece disappeared when the ground was leveled by bulldozers for a baseball diamond. Only the documentation remains. It shows a starfish shape which was formed directly on the ground with piles of sagebrush dipped in slip. Veins of Egyptian paste were drawn into the image and a kiln, 14' high and 20' in diameter was constructed for the firing. The night firing

was a spectacular event, underlining the transformation of materials under intense heat. This dialogue between process and product is always a major part of such firings, giving them the quality of ritual events.

In June of 1987 Roloff erected another sculpture, this time on a permanent location. He views this piece as a formalization of the earlier work, resembling it to a great extent in form, if not material or process. Its title is *Ancient Shoreline/Island for Lake Lahontan: Talking Tree*.

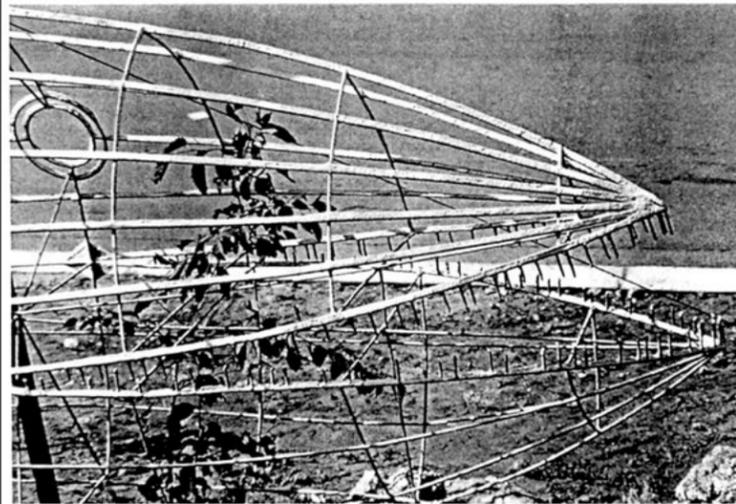
Unlike its predecessor, where the outer form served as crucible for the enclosed materials, this work consists of a steel structure to be acted on by growing trees planted in the interior. The intense dynamic of the firing has been replaced with the more gentle dynamic of trees and plants in interaction with the structure.

Laden with implied contrasts and extremes, references to geologic time and human time, to past and future, change and stasis, high-tech and nature, recur throughout Roloff's work. This piece is a hollow, porous structure, 6½' high, 12½' long, and 45" wide, which will fill as the trees grow. Cold-rolled steel rods were welded to form the skeletal head of an imaginary amphibious Ice Age creature, suggesting a Pleistocene fossil as a symbolic voyager through time beyond reckoning. After first painting the steel gray, a white surface was built up by alternating applications of sprayed-on acrylic mortar mix and sifted-on cement and plaster of paris. The white finish simulates the snow and ice of winter—a permanent winter which will appear in tension with the actually changing seasons.

Presently the sculpture is resting on the ground with three white alders planted inside. As the trees mature, their branches and trunks will pierce and lift the sculpture vertically along a guiding steel pole. Indigenous ground cover has been planted to ultimately complete the image of a shoreline. These plants were chosen on the basis of their local origin, their size, color, and ability to resemble a shoreline with its mineral deposits where land and water meet. The shoreline also functions as a geological definition of time.

In *Talking Tree* Roloff has incorporated two of his most prevalent images: creatures from the sea, along with boat forms and fragments. His themes extol the primal forces of nature and their power of transformation. He refers to a distant past, superimposing varying units of time and pointing to an all-encompassing relativism. The oneness of life and death is taken for granted—death is not the Other here, but is contained within Rilkean notions of a "great cycle" or "eternal stream."

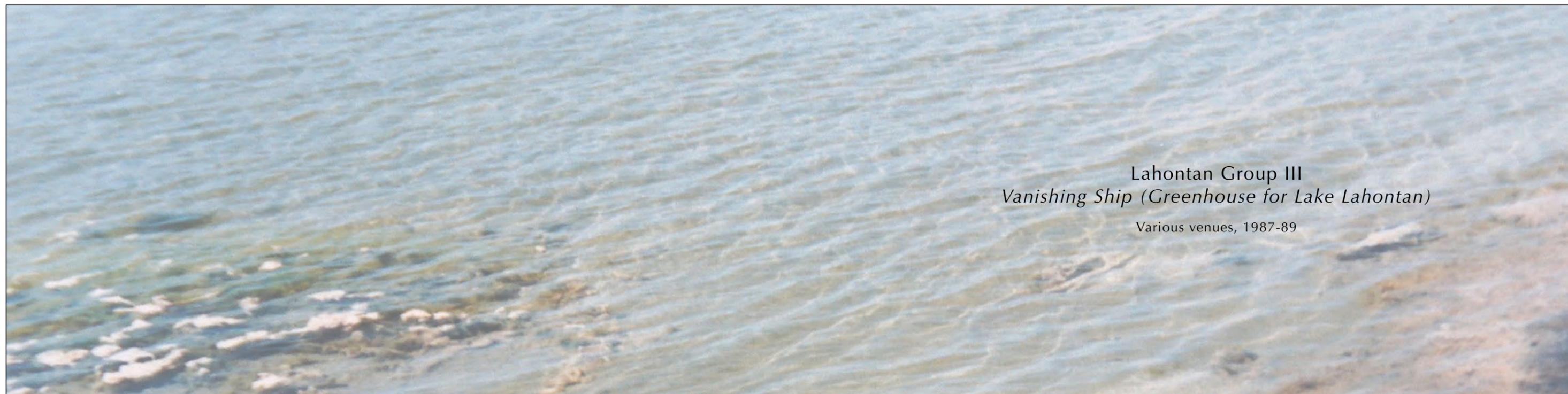
—Ingrid Evans



John Roloff, *Ancient Shoreline/Island for Lake Lahontan: Talking Tree* (detail), 6½' x 12½' x 45" steel, concrete, plaster, native plants and rocks.



Talking Tree (Glacial Epoch) / Lahontan Group II, 12 ft., steel, white cement, alder trees, tufa from Pyramid Lake, landscaping, UNR Campus, Reno, NV, 1987.



Lahontan Group III
Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)
Various venues, 1987-89

MATRIX/BERKELEY 110 Catalog

University Art Museum, Berkeley, CA
Early July-early October, 1987
Constance Lewallan

By the time Bay Area sculptor John Roloff had completed his graduate studies in 1973, the ship had become the central motif in his work. Roloff's fascination with the sea dates from his childhood on the Oregon coast and manifested itself in an ambition to become a marine geologist. He credits the dynamic and free-wheeling art department at UC Davis, where he studied ceramics with Bob Arneson, with convincing him that he was drawn more to the imagery and emotions in nature than to its scientific study. It quickly became evident to him, moreover, that in working with fired clay, he could replicate in his own art work such geologic processes as sedimentation, erosion and evaporation.

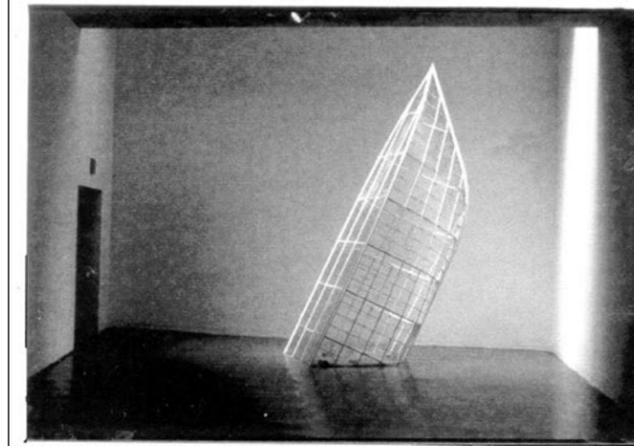
Roloff's ceramic ship series culminated, after over 15 years of involvement, in the *Night Ship/Frozen Sea* group. Roloff uses the ship as "an image of a personal voyage...and a metaphor of traveling to the distant past, particularly the vast distance of geologic time...a time of primal emotion." Successively fired to cause cracking and aging, his ceramic vessels look like ice-encrusted ghost ships in frozen waters. Roloff likens their texture and mood to that of Albert Pinkham Ryder's paintings of lonely, ocean-tossed boats. The art of both artists may be seen as a romantic, introspective journey into uncharted waters, rather than a record of nature.

In the late 1970's Roloff made his first monumental kilns of ceramic fiber blankets reinforced with steel rods. In the shape of a starfish, ocean waves or submarines, the kilns were fired with propane gas at remote desert or prairie sites as a kind of performance sculpture. The residue of the firings from the ceramic linings of the kiln seemed to be part of the land itself. In a permanent outdoor kiln piece, *Collision: Lava Ship/Trellis Ship* at the Falkirk Community Center, Roloff intersected a rough burnt-out ceramic hull with a steel trellis planted with ivy. The ceramic element was transformed by the intense heat of the kiln: the vine will effect a second, more gentle transformation, but one that will eventually overtake the lava ship. This piece pointed to Roloff's growing interest in the relationship of his work to landscape.

Inspired by the Earth Artists of the late sixties and early seventies, particularly Robert Smithson with whom Roloff shares a background in geology, Roloff has moved beyond object making and a commitment to a single material into the landscape. Smithson's interest in the relationship of art to the world, a opposed to art isolated by internal relationships, acted as a catalyst for many artists who wanted to create public work that would relate not only to the physical environment but to cultural and historical factors of the site as well. Roloff addresses such issues in several current projects such as the yet untitled work for Candlestick Point Park, San Francisco. Along with other artists, including David Ireland and Lisa Hein, Roloff was commissioned to create a permanent installation in this undeveloped shoreline area. The installation, which will be formed by a 120-foot-long grove of white trees and a 13,000 square-foot "wake" of black lava, will recall the many 19th century ships that are buried beneath the landfill site.

Roloff continues to find new poetic applications of the ship metaphor and to develop places that are set into motion by a process or transformative element, as evidenced in *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)*, a work he has created for MATRIX. *Vanishing Ship* is related to a proposal for the Djerassi Foundation entitled *Sinking Ship/Greenhouse (Alien Flora/Ancient Sea)* and to *Ancient Shoreline/Island for Lake Lahontan* for the University of Nevada, Reno (drawings for these proposal's are included in the exhibition.

"Talking Tree Element," one part of the Nevada project, is an open steel structure placed over several newly planted trees that are intended to engage with the sculpture and eventually lift off the ground. Similarly, *Vanishing Ship* has the potential for growth and transformation. A steel and glass structure inspired by 19th century greenhouses, *Vanishing Ship* is a sealed self-contained, artificial environment in the shape of a sinking ship. Projecting 12 feet above the floor forward the gallery skylight, *Vanishing Ship* is tilted at the angle of deeply tipped geologic strata. Containing silt, water, rock and algae from northwestern Nevada's Pyramid Lake, a disappearing remnant of the immense (over 8000 square-mile) ancient ice-age Lake Lahontan, *Vanishing Ship* is like a ship from the time when humans first set foot upon North American soil. It raises questions about nature in art and man's interface with nature.



John Roloff, *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)*, 1987, mixed media, 12 x 4 x 7½'. Installation view.

BERKELEY

John Roloff

University Art Museum

John Roloff is known for his site-collaborative ceramic installations, including the many forms of "ship"—his inclusive symbol—that frame them. Roloff grew up on the Oregon coast and attended the University of California at Davis with the idea of becoming a marine geologist. Engaged with what geologists call the Picture (or Big Picture) of metamorphic planetary events within "deep-time" millennia, he explores that larger reality of piecemeal, vertiginous timescapes in a contemplative mood, not as a would-be scientist but sensibly, with an eye to its human and emotional implications. One aspect of his sculptural installation *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)*, 1987, was that of an observatory for glimpsing temporal activities in nature, a kind of tableau vivant of geologic process. *Vanishing Ship* expressed in a limp image the slipperiness and vulnerability that inform both short- and long-term life on earth.

Conceived doubly along the lines of 19th-century English greenhouses and simpler lineaments of ancient seagoing vessels, the framework of the piece was a precipitous, mostly transparent glass and white-painted steel enclosure in the shape of the forward half of a sinking ship, mounted and sealed flush to the gallery floor. The ship tilted as it sank, pitched along the keel line at an angle like that of steeply dipped geologic strata. (It's the same angle taken by the uppermost ice floes in Caspar David Friedrich's painting *Polar Sea*, 1823–24.) Early on, the white metal struts showed orangish signs of corrosion, and those, together with the overall sense of glass seeming to tighten visibly between bent steel constraints, gave off a melancholic tingle.

Inside were silt, water, algae, rocks, and a gull feather, all gathered from Pyramid Lake near Reno, Nevada, a remnant of the Ice Age inland sea known as Lake Lahontan. (What is a gull feather doing amid this inland aggregate? An island in Pyramid Lake is an ancestral breeding ground for seabirds.) The rocks were tufa, a knobby calcareous deposit from the Pleistocene epoch. From a small cistern below floor level, up through two spray nozzles at different points along the keel, the water circulated; it dribbled down the inner faces of the glass panes, carrying silt to the muddy bottom where it pooled to a 1-inch depth. Interestingly, of all the parts of the piece, this mechanical drip system appeared the most improvised as well as the most immediately fragile.

Robert Smithson once wrote, apropos of monumental sculpture, "A million years is contained in a second, yet we tend to forget the second as soon as it happens." Though the earth, with its intraconnections, may be the center of everything that is our actuality, we tend to misremember actuality and concentrate instead on the culture that overlays it. Such a cultural solipsism causes us to forget that nature makes sense. In those terms, *Vanishing Ship* had the force of a pristine reminder, a compact hymn to actuality as much as a clear-eyed lament for humankind's stunted, or otherwise waylaid, physiographic imagination.

Reviewed by Bill Berkson.



Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan) / Lahontan Group III, 12 ft., steel, glass, misting system, water and sediment from Pyramid Lake, NV. MATRIX exhibition, UC Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA, 1987.

■ GALLERIES

Greenhouse Sinks Into the Sea

BY KENNETH BAKER

Bay Area artist John Roloff has recently installed a major work in the Matrix Gallery at the University Art Museum, Berkeley (through October 4).

For some years, Roloff's work has centered on the forms and lore of ships. He is probably best known for the black, breadbox-size ruined ships he makes in mixed ceramic media. Some of those objects are so nearly abstract that they might be mistaken for charred fireplace logs if their titles did not make their nautical reference explicit.

There is no mistaking the representational pretext of the piece now at UAM. It is instantly recognizable as the upended prow of a sinking ship, even before you see that its title is "Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)."

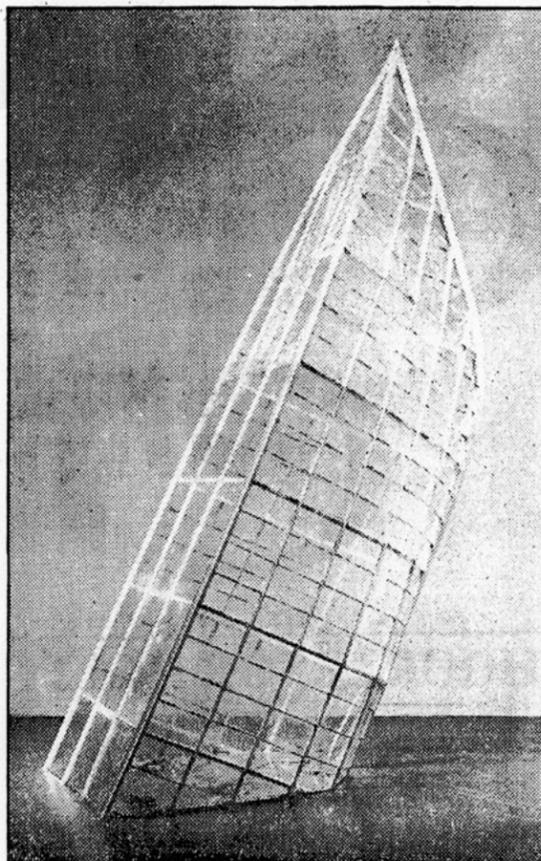
The work, which stands about 10 feet high, is also immediately recognizable as a greenhouse. Its hull and deck are composed of mullioned panes of transparent glass. Inside the structure, a circulation system keeps a fine mist falling. There is a pleasing affinity between the constant light shower in Roloff's piece and the sound of amplified cats' purrs coming from Terry Fox's show in the adjacent gallery. This is a rare instance of an audio piece enhancing rather than intruding upon the work of another artist showing within earshot.

Nothing appears to be growing in the "Vanishing Ship" yet, but with all that moisture and daylight, something is bound to. The soil and the water within this micro-climate were taken by Roloff from Pyramid Lake in Nevada, the vestige of a much larger prehistoric body of water known as Lake Lahontan.

The ship/greenhouse is intended to evoke the idea of a distant time encapsulated — or submerged — in the present. It reminds me of similar closed systems built by artists such as Hans Haacke, Alan Sonfist and Helen and Newton Harrison. However, Roloff is more interested in the formal poetry of his structure than these artists are.

There is an eerie beauty to Roloff's ship that I miss in the works of other artists who have worked with closed systems of growing things. He makes the most of the daylight that pours in from the clerestory overhead. With a gallery all to itself, Roloff's piece tempts you to envision it as the secret greenhouse of a gardener obsessed with fear of drowning or with frustrated wanderlust.

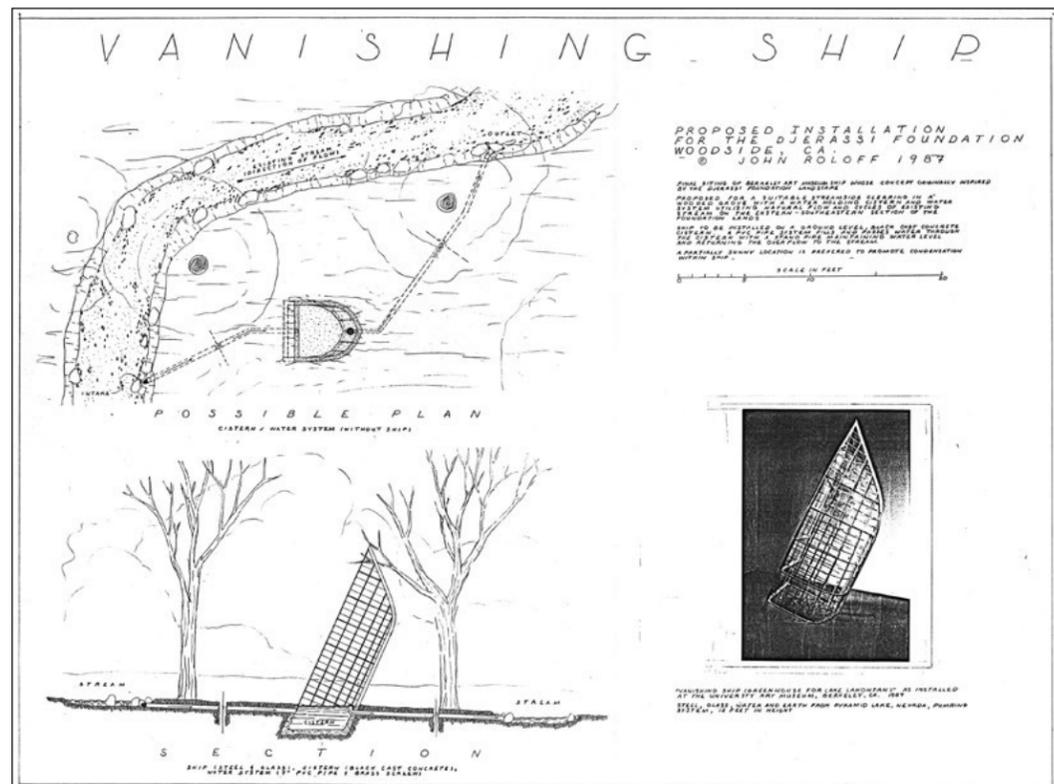
Two drawings for related projects accompany the ship/greenhouse that let us see how typical of Roloff's artistic thinking this piece is.



John Roloff's 1987 sculpture, 'Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)'



Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan) / Lahontan Group III, 12 ft., steel, glass, water and sediment from Pyramid Lake, NV. As employed within the UC Berkeley Museum installation of *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)*, water and sediment from Pyramid Lake, Nevada was gathered and shipped to Washington DC along with the steel and glass ship structure. "Boat Show," Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, 1989.



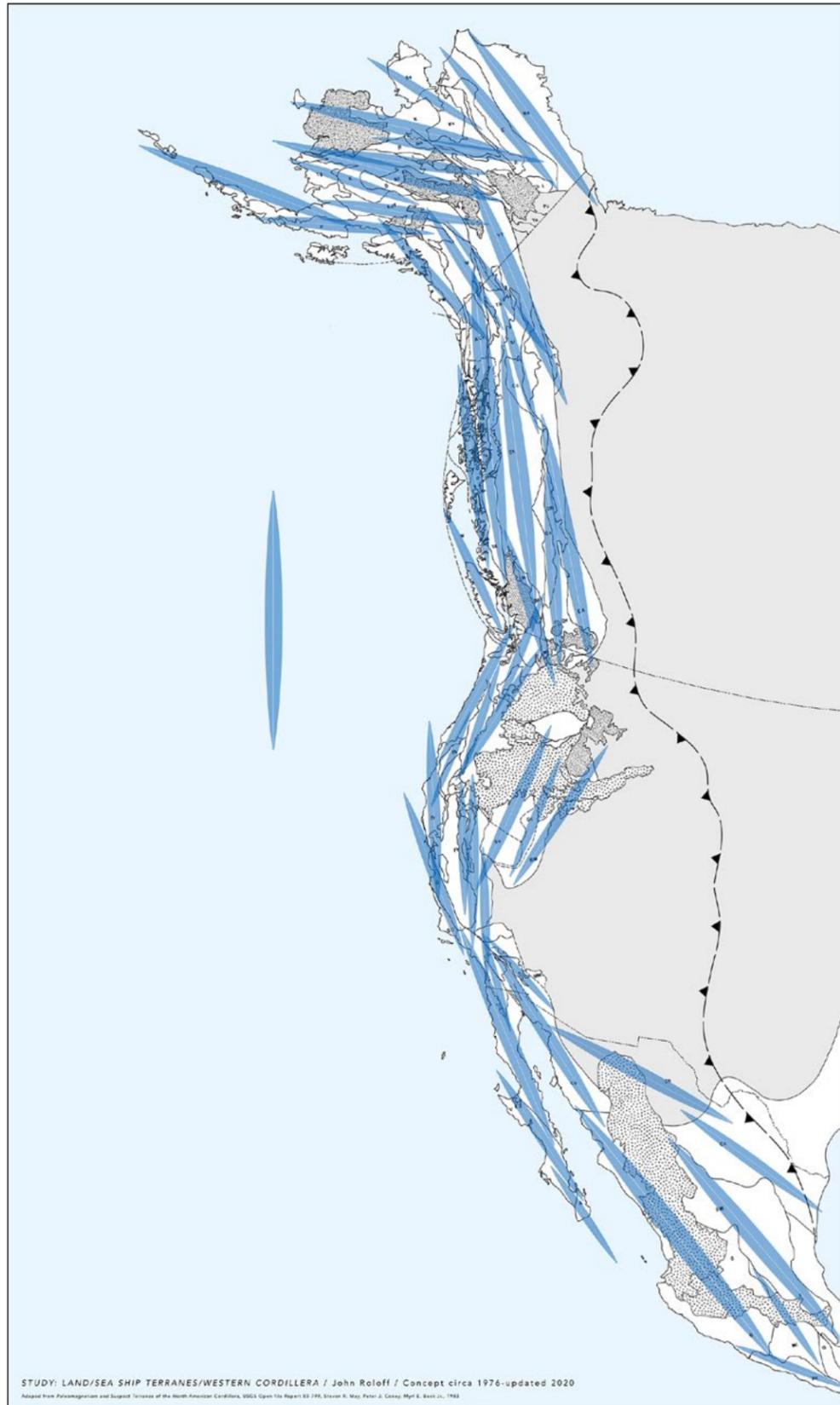
Vanishing Ship, installation diagram for *Vanishing Ship (Third State)*, pencil and photo on vellum. Djerassi Resident Artist Program, Woodside, CA, 1987.



Vanishing Ship (Third State), steel, glass, concrete, water, Djerassi Resident Artist Program, Woodside, CA, 1990. The third (and final) site for "Vanishing Ship / Lahontan Group III," completing the cycle that began with the proposal: *Sinking Ship / Greenhouse (Alien Flora/Ancient Sea)*, 1984, and related concepts generated during a residency at DRAP, 1984.



Lahontan Group
Selected Antecedents and Propagations



Study: *Land/Sea Ship Terranes/Western Cordillera*, inkjet on paper, size variable, concept circa 1976 - updated 2020. Adapted from, Steven R. May, Peter J. Coney, Mryl E. Beck Jr., *Paleomagnetism and Suspect Terranes of the North American Cordillera*, USGS Open file Report 83-799, 1983.

Lahontan Group / Selected Antecedents and Propagations

Research, Land Kilns and Related Environmental Projects

Geologic interpretation and inspiration from researching and experiencing terrains/terraces of the Western Cordillera of North America lies at the heart of many projects preceding, following and including the *Lahontan Group*. Narratives and processes embedded in the history of the Western Cordillera: accretion of micro-continents, island arcs and suspect terranes, propelled by sea-floor spreading, depositional and erosional systems and their resulting landscapes in geologic time have been compelling and continuing to define concepts of expanded ceramics and environmental explorations since undergraduate studies as a Geology and Art major at UC Davis, Davis, CA, in the late 1960's.

The Land Kilns, 1979-1994, are a series of environmental projects using unique kiln structures as alchemical instruments to explore the materiality, narrative and mythology of a given site related to the fields of ceramics, geology and environmental art. "...a firing can approach an irrational point, the verge of losing control, a metaphor is suggested of the unconscious in a primitive or vulnerable state where time becomes emotion, chemistry spirit and matter theater" Roloff, J., *Artery Magazine*, Feb-Mar., 1983. "Project: *Land Kilns*," published 2018-19, gives detailed background and information of the series.

The Land Kiln, *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, Craven, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1980, was an important antecedent to *The Lahontan Group*. This project involved geologic research of the central Canadian plains, that focused on the Pleistocene, paleo-climate and paleo-geography of that area. Numerous episodes of Ice Age glaciation with episodic advancement and retreat of ice sheets often over a mile in thickness, characterized this time period and terrain. The starfish imagery, referring to this "sea" of ice and mythical inhabitants of that impossible sea. The engagement of the fire with the starfish-shaped kiln during the firing had the effect of a 'conjuring,' the fire becoming a primal vitalization of the form, playing with the boundaries between myth, organic and inorganic life. The geologic research and attention to the site's visual and physical materiality, essential to *Prairie Starfish/Glacial Epoch*, deeply informed *Lahontan Group I-III*, 1985-87, who's focus was on the Pleistocene climate of the northern Great Basin through the historical narrative and mythic potential of ice age, Lake Lahontan. The imagery and process of *Prairie*



Prairie Starfish (Glacial Epoch), (kiln in place, post fire state), Craven, Saskatchewan, Canada. 1980.



Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid, kiln tableau/site installation, pre-firing state, ISC Conference, Oakland, CA, 1982.

Starfish/Glacial Epoch were especially instrumental in the creation of *Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan)*, *Black Coral Starfish* and *Talking Tree/Glacial Epoch*.

The Land Kiln, *Mountain Kiln/Black Orchid*, Oakland, CA, 1982, explores a poetic and structural relationship between the instrument of change (kiln) and what is changed (interior work). The *Mountain Kiln* structure was developed from the shape of the interior floor image. The 30 ft. long *Black Orchid* of self glazing clay resting on a shaped mound of sand, is the floor of the kiln with the 'throat' of the orchid connecting underground to a remote flue of galvanized metal forming a down-draft kiln structure. This conceptual approach was

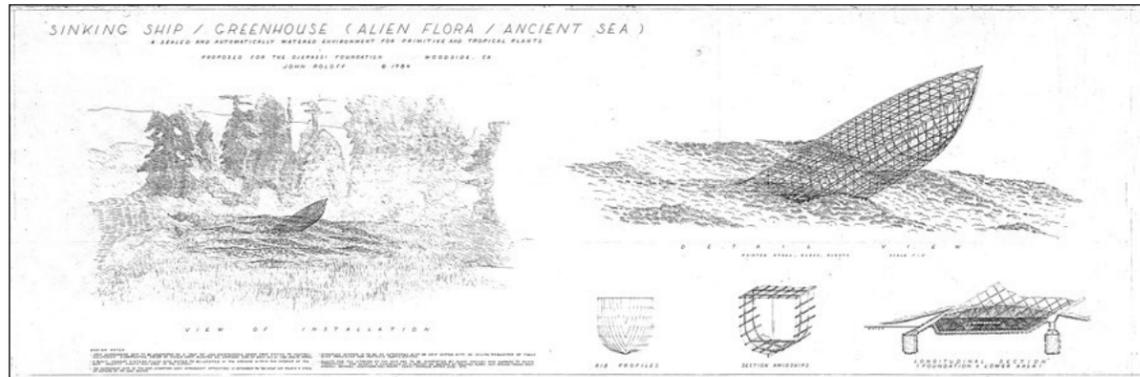
an antecedent to the kiln structure of *Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan)*, the on-site re-workings of the fish head armature and the extension of the kiln imagery to inspire *Talking Tree/Glacial Epoch*.

Coral Orchid, 1983, examines the relationship of fossil fuel as an animating force in the form of propane or natural gas, and the fuel's organic origin. Primarily a studio kiln, *Coral Orchid*, was an initial study into the use of refractory cement for furnace works. It has been exhibited as a fire-altered structure in several exhibitions including: *John Roloff: Ceramics and Drawings*, University of Nevada, Reno, related to the firing of *Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan)*, on campus in 1985. The orchid refers to both its appearance in romantic landscape painting by artists such as Martin Johnson Heade, the paleo-botanical origin of fossil fuel and perceptions of organic nature as analogous to many geologic processes.



Coral Orchid (fire state), 9 ft. w., steel, refractory cement, ceramic fiber blanket, propane, studio firing, Oakland, CA, 1983. Fired/ altered state, collection University of Nevada, Reno.

Sinking Ship/Greenhouse (Alien Flora/Ancient Sea), a conceptual study for a greenhouse as a sinking ship adrift on a floral sea containing ancient plant species was pivotal in the conceptualization and development of *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)*. The drawing was done during a residency at the Djerassi Resident Artist Program, Woodside, CA in 1984 and response to the paleo-geography, ancient flora and geologic history of the California Coast Ranges, the program's site. The drawing is an extension of numerous notebook sketches, studies and notations and studio blackboard diagrams reaching back to the early 1970's. These studies and related ceramic sculptures perceived the ship as an analog for transformation: the ship a symbol for geologic time and process as well as between organic and geologic processes. Some of the early drawings from the late 1960's explore the sea/land, sea/sea ideas conceptually by using negative space for a ship form, the hull being an operational, conceptual membrane between water and an invisible form. This concept is further examined through other materials including fire and earth. Through the drawings as a preliminary stage in a sculpture or as a site proposal the ship evolves as a vehicle for containing, engaging, penetrating, inverting or transiting a range of materials, processes and sites physically, metaphorically, metaphysically



Sinking Ship/Greenhouse (Alien Flora/Ancient Sea), detail, 36 in. x 96 in., inkjet print on paper. Original made during a residency at the Djerassi Resident Artist Program, 1984. Inspiration for and exhibited with *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan) / Lahontan Group III*. Original pencil on vellum drawing, collection, UC Berkeley Art Museum, 1987.

and poetically. Numerous geologic analogs such as: metamorphism, plate tectonics, accreted terranes, denudation and deposition of landscape, become integral with the ship. Visits to the San Francisco Conservatory and the Palm House at Kew Gardens, London, inspired ideas of the greenhouse as a contained, potentially transitory climate. Like the transformations within the kiln's interior of the Land Kiln projects, both being an analog to the scientist's test tube.

Collision: Lava Ship/Trellis Ship, Falkirk, San Rafael, CA, 1984, comprised of two large environmental ship forms, *Lava Ship* and *Trellis Ship*, set in wave-like landscaping. Completed in the same year as the conceptual study, *Sinking Ship/Greenhouse (Alien Flora/Ancient Sea)*, 1984, the horizontal ships are also seen as symbols of transformation and passage through land, sea and time. The 30 ft.. long *Lava Ship* was

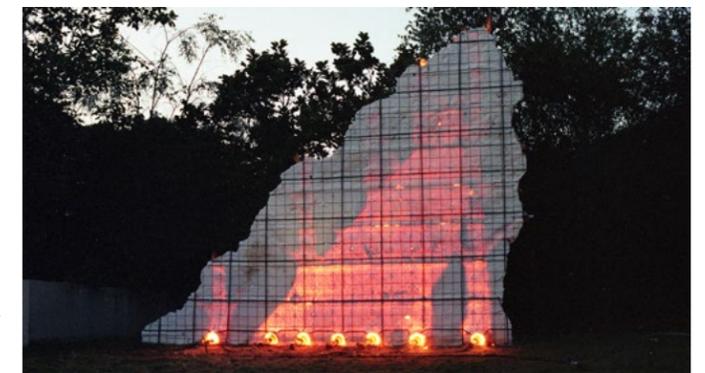
built of seven tons of clay, mineral and organic mixture with site-derived, organic inclusions, applied over a steel armature and fired on site as an evening performance. The inserted organic elements burnt out in the firing, leaving fossil-like traces on the surface of the structure. The 40 ft.. steel *Trellis Ship* element, planted with *Clematis montana* and earthen wave-like landscaping was added after the firing. Completed the year preceding *Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan)* and several years before *Ancient Shore-*



Collision: Lava Ship/Trellis Ship (post firing); *Lava Ship*, 30 ft., steel, fired clay, transected by *Trellis Ship*: 40 ft., steel, wave form landscaping, Falkirk, San Rafael, CA 1984.

line (Island for Lake Lahontan)/Talking Tree (Glacial Epoch), the collision or engagement of two dynamics and fossilization were investigated. The mineral/organic, fossil-like nature of *Black Coral Starfish of Group Lahontan I*, is prefigured in *Collision: Lava Ship/Trellis Ship*. The white flowered *Clematis* vine was selected both to bring a ghost-like quality to the work as well as its relatively aggressive growth ultimately encompassing both structures, suggests the engagement of the alder trees with the permanent 'snow' encrusted fish head structure in *Talking Tree/Glacial Epoch*.

Humboldt Ship, California State University Humboldt, Arcata, CA, 1989. Completed after *Lahontan Group I-III*, and the same year as the installation of *Vanishing Ship (Third State)*, the descending ship image of *Humboldt Ship* represents the settling and deposition of botanic materials as part of the process of their geologic transformation into fossil fuels used to fire and alter the cast refractory cement structure. As in *Coral Orchid*, the ceramic fiber blanket was removed after the firing to reveal the final altered structure. *Humboldt Ship's* internal "flues," are negative castings from contemporary trees altered by the addition of a coating of a clay and pine needle texture to resemble Mesozoic cycads.



Humboldt Ship, (night firing, early), 15 ft. h., cast refractory cement, ceramic fiber blanket, steel, propane, Arcata CA. 1989.

The next several pages of this section present selected projects that propagated from the *Lahontan Group's* research, experimentations, and development of imagery and site-relationships. *Metafossil (Pinus: ponderosa, radiata, balfouriana)*, 1992 and *Deep Gradient/Suspect Terrain*, 1993, grew out of and expanded these analogies and explorations. More recent projects, *Devonian Shale (Aquifer I)*, 2000 and *The Sea Within the Land/Laramide*, 2011, bring industrial, architectural and paleo/Anthropocene-ecological relationships into greater focus.

Metafossil (Pinus: ponderosa, radiata, balfouriana)

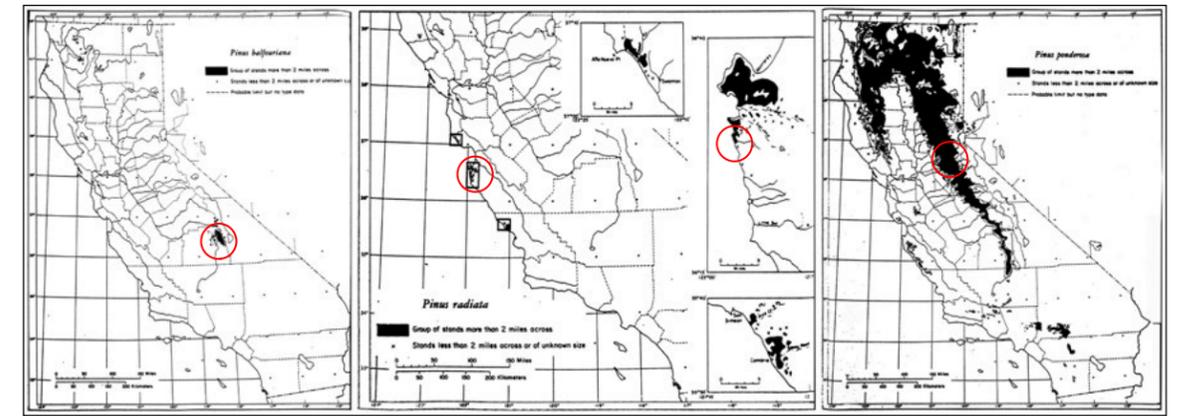
A near, half-scale, steel-frame, studio model for *Vanishing Ship* (*Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan*), was later clad with refractory cement and Monterey Cypress needles and branches to create *Cypress Ship*, 1990, a prototype for *Metafossil* (*Pinus: ponderosa, radiata, balfouriana*), 1992. *Metafossil...* is composed of three principal elements each in the form of a descending ship, as a migratory "fossil" of a species of pine. The form of each ship was developed by the layering of needle-laden pine branches in wet refractory cement over a steel armature. The pine branches/needles exposed at the surface will eventually erode leaving species-specific impressions over the entire form of the ship. The pine needles were each collected from their native habitats in the Coast and Sierra Nevada ranges of central California. Refractory cement is used in some of the Land Kilns and is seen as a geologic material comprised of limestone and clay transformed by industrial process, reconstituted into a structure both anthropogenic and natural. The form of the fossilized descending ship refers to the process of geologic deposition of sedimentary material and the transience of 'indigenous' bio-cultures across the landscape as a result of long-term climate change. These process-laden ships integrate land and sea through metaphor and image.



Cypress Ship, 86 in., 1990.

"Bay Area artist John Roloff also makes sculptures with natural materials that connects them poetically and geologically to particular sites. In *Metafossil* (*Metabolism and Mortality*) *Pinus: ponderosa, radiata, balfouriana*, [original title], 1992, he covered each of three cement forms, each in the shape of a truncated ship hull, with a single species of pine branches and needles indigenous to the central California region, thus creating a "fossil" of each species. Roloff is associated with the ship motif, which in earlier works acted as "a metaphor for traveling into the distant past, particularly the vast distance of geologic time...[,] a time of primal emotion."¹

¹ Lewallen, Constance, catalog essay, *Metaphor, Matter, Canvas, Stage: Conceptual Art 1968 to 1995*, in "Facing Eden: 100 Years of Landscape Art in the Bay Area," de Young Museum Press, San Francisco, 1995, pg. 118-119.



Native pine species collection sites for *Metafossil* (*Pinus: ponderosa, radiata, balfouriana*),



Metafossil (*Pinus: ponderosa, radiata, balfouriana*), Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA, 1992



Exterior installation of *Metafossil* for: "Facing Eden: 100 Years of Landscape Art in the Bay Area," de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA, 1995.

Devonian Shale (Aquifer I)

Fluency

Fosdick-Nelson Gallery, New York State College of Ceramics, Alfred University, Alfred, NY, 2001
Collection, Alfred Ceramic Art Museum, Alfred University, Alfred, NY

The research, site dynamics, climatic references and material identification of the *Lahontan Group*, were important precursors to the site work, *Devonian Shale (Aquifer I)*, 2000. The structural dynamics of a drainage/irrigation system interacting with physical and historical properties of a geologic formation constitute the conceptual basis for *Devonian Shale: Aquifer I*. This project was developed by researching a site in western New York state near Alfred University that embodied two related but distant time and environmental dimensions: recently, as an abandoned surface mine for shale/clay used to produce roofing tile and bricks by local ceramic factories in the late 1800's, and geologically as a exposure of shale and sandstone strata deposited in a shallow sea during the Devonian period, some 400 million years ago, now acting as an active aquifer system. The core structure of the artwork is made of the site's Devonian shale, processed, extruded and fired in a manner similar to the technology of the early ceramic factories. The modular and extensible configuration of this work refers to the original sea floors of Devonian time where the shale was deposited as mud and fine silt. This process of deposition underwent a continual, fractal reiteration through geologic time creating strata after broad horizontal strata now exposed by erosional and tectonic forces.



Devonian shale outcrop and source of project materials, near Alfred, NY.

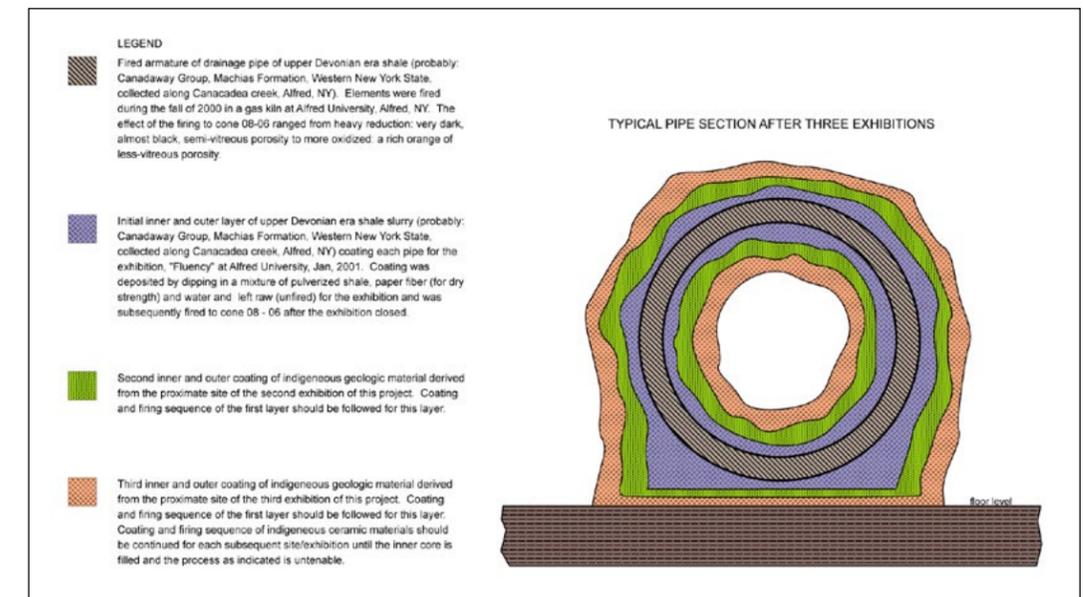
As installed in it's primary configuration for the exhibition, *Fluency*, 2001, *Devonian Shale: Aquifer I*, consists of three primary elements: the main pipe layout developed from a specific central cross-pipe, a stack of alternate cross-pipes and a series of drawings showing different configurations of the pipe and conceptual ideas. Twelve dwarf Alberta spruce trees with their roots bared sitting in shallow pans were used as part of the piece ostensibly to give the work a model-like scale, refer to other aquifer-like systems such as the roots of trees and echo the drawings that show a relationship of larger, theoretical versions of the piece to actual trees, climactic and meta-chronological systems. Part way through this show the trees were removed from positions within the pipe structure to a row along the gallery wall. The stack of alternate cross-pipes represent different "flow" possibilities in both a literal and metaphorical sense. They are permutations of different combinations of inward-flow, outward-flow and filtered-flow. Flow direction is indicated by the presence or absence of a connecting collar. The default configuration for *Devonian Shale: Aquifer I* indicates an outward and dispersing flow in all directions from the center, a flow with no visible (perhaps metaphysical) origin, only destination, the open, collared ends of each line of pipe. Other formations of the pipes using different cross pipes (and flow patterns) are studied in the drawings that refer to outdoor and larger scale possibilities. A critical aspect of the exhibition cycle and evolution of *Devonian Shale: Aquifer I*, is the coating of unfired sedimentary material (slurry) added to the inner and outer surfaces of the pipes and subsequently fired or in geologic terms 'lithified' after the end of each showing. This slurry is made from a clay or shale-like sediment derived from near the site of each exhibition. The unfired silt or slurry coating is an signifier of the site of each exhibition, as well as the transient nature and transport of the work from exhibition to exhibition, landscape to landscape, accreting a new layer of sediment for each landscape it traverses and temporarily resides within.



Cross-pipe stack, fired Devonian shale.



Devonian Shale (Aquifer I), 25 ft. dia., fired and unfired Devonian period shale, dwarf Alberta spruce (not shown), xerox on bond. *Fluency*, Fosdick-Nelson Gallery, New York State College of Ceramics, Alfred University, Alfred, NY, 2001



Devonian Shale (Aquifer I): Exhibition Coating/Firing Process

The Sea Within the Land/Laramide

Overthrown: Clay Without Limits
Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO 2011

Extending the language of the *Lahontan Group*, in particular, *Vanishing Ship (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)*, the installation, *Sea Within the Land/Laramide*, employs the ship image as a metaphor for geologic time, site and process, specifically adding the site architecture as an important component. The focus of *Sea Within the Land* is to examine the interchangeable and analogous nature of sea and land as a poetic/scientific theme by exploring its paleo-dynamic and anthropogenic relationships within the central Colorado landscape. Two image systems: the ship as a land and sea metaphor and conceptual/land-seascape meta-windows, are employed in this proposition. The ship as depositional reservoir in the form of a mold and it's cast form of geo-chronological layering of sediment becomes a sea/land analog to the epicontinental sea that covered much of the late Cretaceous Colorado landscape and subsequent deposition of sediments that now make up much of the regional terrain. Paired, architectural-sited photographic images of Pacific Ocean and in-situ exposures of the ship's sediments as part of the larger *Landscape Projection (for an Unknown Window)* series, evoke a theoretical dimension and sea/land dialectic further echoing the Cretaceous inland sea as well as the influence of the Mesozoic/Cenozoic West Coast Farallon oceanic-plate subduction episode on the Laramide Orogeny uplift of the Rocky Mountains and extensional terrain of the Great Basin, the landscape of ancient Lake Lahontan. Installations of project elements utilize selected sites of both the Hamilton and Poniti Buildings of the Denver Art Museum.



Left. Poniti Building, lower and ground floors, *Landscape Projection: Marine Sediments (Laramide Orogeny) III*, image: Laramie formation sediments with fossil palm impressions, 17ft.-8in. x 11ft.-9in., inkjet print on vinyl, glass curtain wall.
Right. Poniti Building, 7th floor, *Landscape Projection: Pacific Ocean (Laramide Orogeny) III*, image: Pacific Ocean, 11ft. x 5ft.-4in., inkjet print on vinyl, window, Rocky Mts.



Wall, left to right: *Landscape Projection: Pacific Ocean (Laramide Orogeny) I*, image: Pacific Ocean, *Landscape Projection: Marine Sediments (Laramide Orogeny) I*, image: I-70 road cut of Jurassic and Cretaceous sediments, each 12ft. x 8ft., inkjet print on vinyl, halogen light, ultra-white paint.

Platform: left to right: *Seascape Structure: Marine Depositional Basin*, 66in. x 44in., wood, metal, sediment residue; *Landscape Structure: Marine Sediments*, 60in. x 40in., chronologically sequential/unconformable Cretaceous Western Interior Seaway associated sediments, steel.



Left: Lower/ground floor stairwell, *Landscape Projection: Marine Sediments (Laramide Orogeny) II*, image: probable Dakota formation sandstone structure, *Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception*, Denver, CO, 12ft. x 8ft., inkjet print on vinyl, halogen light, ultra-white paint.



Right. Hamilton Building, left: 2nd floor, *Landscape Projection: Pacific Ocean (Laramide Orogeny) II*, image: contemporary Pacific Ocean invertebrates, Monterey Aquarium, Monterey, CA, 12ft. x 8ft., inkjet print on vinyl, halogen light, ultra-white paint.

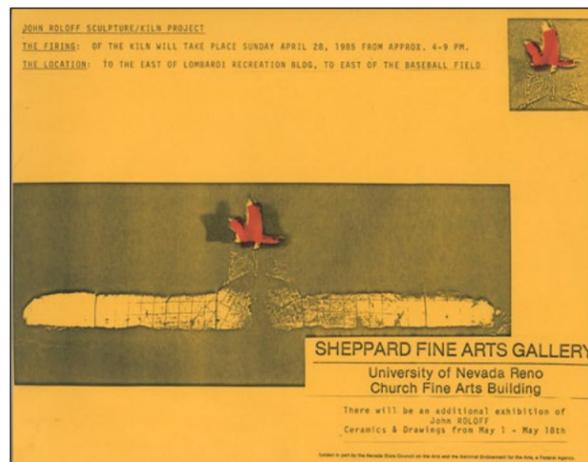
This document is dedicated to three extraordinary people who were instrumental in the development of the *Lahontan Group*. The curators: Walter McNamara, Gallery Director, University of Nevada, Reno and Connie Lewallan, MATRIX curator, University of California, Berkeley Art Museum, and Carl Djerassi who founded the Djerassi Resident Artist Program in Woodside, CA.



Walter McNamara, left, helping with site preparation for *Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan)*, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 1985. Photo: Elke Morris.



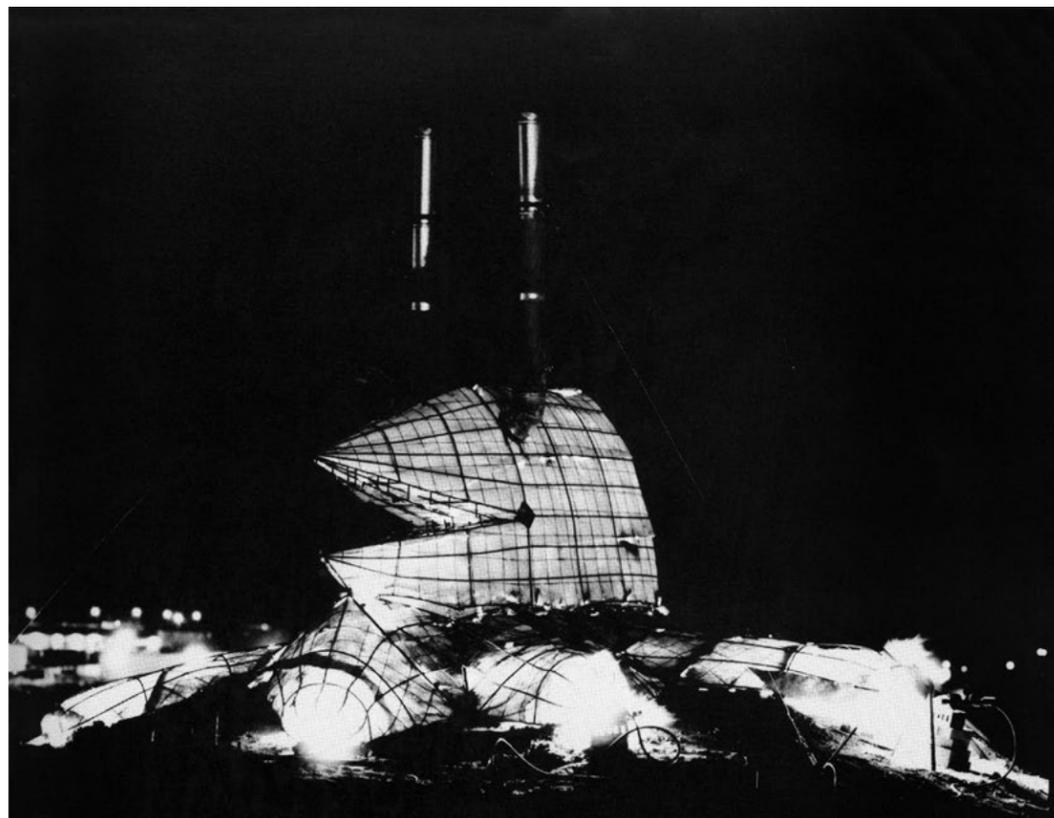
Location and scale simulation for potential ship/greenhouse or kiln structure, Djerassi Resident Artist Program, Woodside, CA, 1984. Project not realized until *Vanishing Ship (Third State)*, 1989.



Project and exhibition flyer by Walter McNamara, for *Ancient Shoreline (Island for Lake Lahontan)* and *John Roloff: Ceramics & Drawings*, University of Nevada, Reno, NV, 1985.



Connie Lewallan, left on ladder, helping with the installation of *Ancient Shoreline (Greenhouse for Lake Lahontan)*, UC Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA, 1987.



JOHN ROLOFF

**Night Firing of Black Coral Starfish Element
For**

“Ancient Shoreline/Island for Lake Lahontan”

University of Nevada-Reno 1985

John Roloff is represented by:

Fuller Goldeen Gallery
228 Grant Street
San Francisco, CA 94108
(415) 982-6177

Sponsored by:

Sheppard Fine Arts Gallery
University of Nevada-Reno
Reno, Nevada 89557
(702) 784-6682
Walter McNamara, Curator

Photo by Elke Morris

Funded in part by the Nevada State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal Agency.

John Roloff is a visual artist who works conceptually with site, process and natural systems. He is known for his ceramic works and outdoor kiln/furnace projects done from the 1970's into the 1990's, as well as other large-scale environmental projects, gallery installations and objects investigating geologic and natural phenomena. Based on an extensive background and ongoing research in the earth sciences, he works from geochemical and global metabolic perspectives. His work since the late 1960's engages poetic and site-specific relationships between material, concept and performance in the domains of geology, ecology, architecture, ceramics, industry, metabolic systems and history. The ship is a central image of his work, metaphorically evoking psychological and transformative processes of the sea and land in geologic and contemporary time. He studied geology at UC Davis, Davis, CA with Professor Eldridge Moores and others during the formative days of plate tectonics in the late-1960's. Contemporaneous with geology he studied art with Bob Arneson and William T. Wiley also at UC Davis. He received a master's degree in art in 1973 from CSU Humboldt. In addition to numerous environmental, site-specific installations in the US, Canada and Europe, his work has been included in exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, UC Berkeley Museum, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Smithsonian Institution, *Photoscene Cologne* and the Venice Architectural and Art Biennials, *The Snow Show* in Kemi, Finland and *Artlantic: wonder*, Atlantic City, NJ. Art works in the public realm that explore geologic and related concepts can be found at sites such as: Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco, CA, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, I-5 Colonnade Park, Seattle, WA and Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA. He has received 3 artist's visual arts fellowships from the NEA, a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship, a California Arts Council grant for visual artists and a Bernard Osher Fellowship at the Exploratorium, San Francisco, CA. He is represented by Anglim/Trimble Gallery in San Francisco and is Professor Emeritus of Sculpture/Ceramics at the San Francisco Art Institute. More information is available at www.johnrolloff.com.

