

Transforming Natural Phenomenon into Art



Sam Van Aken
Associate Professor, School of Art

CURRENT RESEARCH

Art and science engage the community

Nature has inspired art for centuries; from France Lascaux caves depicting horses from 17,000 years ago to Ansel Adams' photos in the 1940's; natural phenomena can be transformed to produce art enjoyed by entire communities. Sam Van Aken, an Associate Professor at Syracuse University, is an artist that engages in extensive research with implications that reach far beyond its initial intentions. While the primary significance of his work is artistic in its attempt to interrupt and transform natural phenomena to produce a miraculous phenomena, the scientific pursuits involved in the process make his work an important addition to the academic community. His current project, entitled *A Hole in the Sky*, came out of the notion that he and other community members would "do anything for a glimpse of the sun" in the middle of winter in Syracuse, New York. When he came across a phenomena known as "punch hole clouds" or fallstreak holes, he decided he could apply his creativity to creating punch holes for the sun to shine through, illuminating the city below.

Despite the fact that China has conducted extensive research in weather modification, since the 1970's, chemical and ballistic weather modification research has been prohibited by the US Congress so there is very little applied research or conclusive studies within this area. Therefore, in addition to his contributions to the artistic community, Van Aken's also hopes to utilize light to produce crepuscular rays, commonly referred to as Buddha's fingers, while researching the physics underlying the appearance of these phenomena. Similarly, his art lends to scientific research as he explores mechanical means of weather modification as opposed to current...

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AFFILIATION



Syracuse University

EDUCATION

- M.F.A. , University of North Carolina

AWARDS

- Joan Mitchell Foundation Award for Painters and Sculptors
- Creative Capital Grant in Emerging Fields
- Maine Arts Commission, Individual Artist Fellowship
- Juror's Award for Outstanding Artistic Achievement-Portland Museum of Art Biennial
- AICA (Association of International Critics of Art), Exhibition Award for Baja to Bar Harbor: Transnational Contemporary Art Exhibition
- and 2 more...

RESEARCH AREAS

Atmospheric / Space, Humanities, Performing Arts, Space

FUNDING REQUEST

Your contributions will support the continued research of Sam Van Aken, of Syracuse University as he explores the relationships between art, communities, and science by carving holes in alto-cumulus clouds. Donations will fund the proof of concept flights amounting to about \$4K. Additional funds will allow Van Aken to utilize a twin prop turbo plane costing approximately \$7,500 per flight with the hope of performing ten flights, in addition to making cloud predictions and collecting data. The cost of flights as well as personnel is estimated to range between \$150K-\$175K at the completion of the project. Participate in the art of the natural world; support Sam Van Aken.