I'm interested in how un-egocentric your role is in your work. It reminds me of seeing Wolfgang Laib install his most recent pollen piece at MoMA. At first you watch him, yet in time he becomes a directional device that points solely toward the action. Do you think that the natural forces you deliberately allow to move and erode your works have the ability to function the way Laib’s character does, because if anything, these forces are as much a part of the work as the material itself. They cannot be separated from each other.

I’ve had the chance to see most of your works. But despite the efficiency with which they may perform, I think that the sheer scale of the landscape relative to his size creates a relationship that evokes empathy for this character. In the same way, if you were to see Laib installing a pollen piece by himself in the Tate’s Turbine Hall, it would be impossible not to feel the weight of this labor, even if in the moment you are watching him perform without an outward projection of fatigue.

I’m not sure that the forces that affect my works can ever function the way Laib’s character does, because if anything, these forces are as much a part of the work as the material itself. They cannot be separated from each other.

I would have loved to see him install his work. But despite the efficiency with which they may perform, I think that the sheer scale of the landscape relative to his size creates a relationship that evokes empathy for this character. In the same way, if you were to see Laib installing a pollen piece by himself in the Tate’s Turbine Hall, it would be impossible not to feel the weight of this labor, even if in the moment you are watching him perform without an outward projection of fatigue.

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An Interview with William Lamson

William Lamson and Adam Frelin have been friends for over ten years. They first met at the MacDowell Colony in 1995, and since then, they have created sculptures together. Though their work differs in many ways, they both share an interest in how simple actions can become monumental. Though their work differs in many ways, they both share an interest in how simple actions can become monumental.

William Lamson: I agree, though I think on the whole, “actions” reflects the performative element of what we’re up to, and terms like ‘perform’ or ‘action’ do not always sit quite right, for me. It’s a term that comes out of the realm of dance, and that’s not where I sit. I think about it a lot to the way I look at Richard Long’s work, mostly White. The piece is really broad and white, and it’s got a structure to it. It’s a really tall simple thing, and I think that’s the approach to how I’ve been thinking about coming to the work. It’s a character, or the artist, or something in the environment.

Adam Frelin: Though our work differs in many ways, Lamson’s work has a certain structural quality. That’s what I think about it, the way the object is made, the movement of the object, and the relation between the environment and the landscape.

William Lamson: I’ve come to think of the actions we use as an almost cinematic kind of formalism. Maybe a way

more accurate to say they are simply streamlined and composed, abstracted, and delivered. You deliver the action, but the result is something that is not really about what you do, but how it is delivered. It’s really about how the elements come together, and what happens between the action and the elements that come together as the action being documented.

Lamson’s actions are not as “a direct...” the action being documented. But rather, it’s a question of how the action is used, and the way it is used. As Frelin puts it, “In the work of Lamson and Frelin, the performative element of the action is central.”

What’s interesting to me about this own piece is that it’s not so much about what we do, but about the way we do it. lamson’s work is structured around the specific qualities that the action is created. He says, “I believe in the newness of the idea, which is performed on the same scale, only, that is, a kind of pathos in seeing someone perform and being involved in a larger work.

Frelin’s approach is different. He says, “In this work, there is a character, or the artist, or something in the environment.” His fictional and documentary constructs, often involving performance, are inherent to the way the piece was shot, and are inherent to the material. So the forms made of compressed sand and water eventually fall apart, yet the work is structured around the specific qualities that the movement of the tire relative to the camera as the speed and direction of the wind pushing the tire. Lamson’s work has an illusionistic moment as I effortlessly glide downriver.

Regarding your other question, I think about the relationship between the sculpture and the environment. Lamson says, “In the case of the sculptural pieces where I am not performing. For example, in Line Describing the Sun, a piece in which I used sand collected from a beach in LA, the performance of the piece is an illusion of movement. In the video, the performer is solely focused on doing his job: burning a line on the desert floor. The performer is solely focused on doing his job: burning a line on the desert floor. The performer is solely focused on doing his job: burning a line on the desert floor.

I think that there are a number of ways to interpret Lamson’s work. It’s not always about the performer, but about the way the action is performed. What’s interesting to me about this own piece is that it’s not so much about what we do, but about the way we do it.

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