

THE LAW OF LARGE NUMBERS



RINDON
JOHNSON

THE LAW OF LARGE NUMBERS

*Black Sonic Abyss, or I do not walk
a line that is thin, straight, or secure*

Rindon Johnson

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Part One

CROSSING DOWN



Fig. 2 - A human head and neck appear to have been peeled off the skeletal structure and stretched on a flat surface. The intact face appears at the lower center of the image, with eyes and lips closed in a serene expression. The ears are disconnected and placed to either side of the face. The skin is brown.

My oldest memory (likely a dream): I am somewhere very cold, great expanses of water and ice surround me, the horizon bows at the boundary of my vision, the sun is hot and my fingers are very cold. I am drinking water clear and thick, it feels like licking a thin calcium-laden wine glass, it is cold and deep with blue, milky, bloody even, filling my entire chest, cracking my sternum, thrusting my shoulders backward, slipping into me.

I replay this water memory with my eyes closed waiting for the late relief of sleep. Why is this the first thing I remember? I play the memory out often, trying to calm myself from thinking of everything else that I feel could happen. Why am I here in this city? Thousands of miles from San Francisco. Do we have enough food? Water? Books? Living in a zombie movie is banal. What a slog till we get to the other thing. Where are we going? Why can't we get there? A trillionaire, the word makes me taste trash, gritty dirt, plastic-swallowing sinister brown iridescent liquid like squid and peanut butter, I try to snap myself out of this worn thought pattern with the memory of the water in my chest—be patient for the revolution but demand it right now—I try to think of the school we will build, its long sprawl of trees, permaculture gardens, Earthen roads, wide airy spaces . . . Light everywhere. What will the art we make there look like? Who will come with me? How will we afford it? Should we go now?

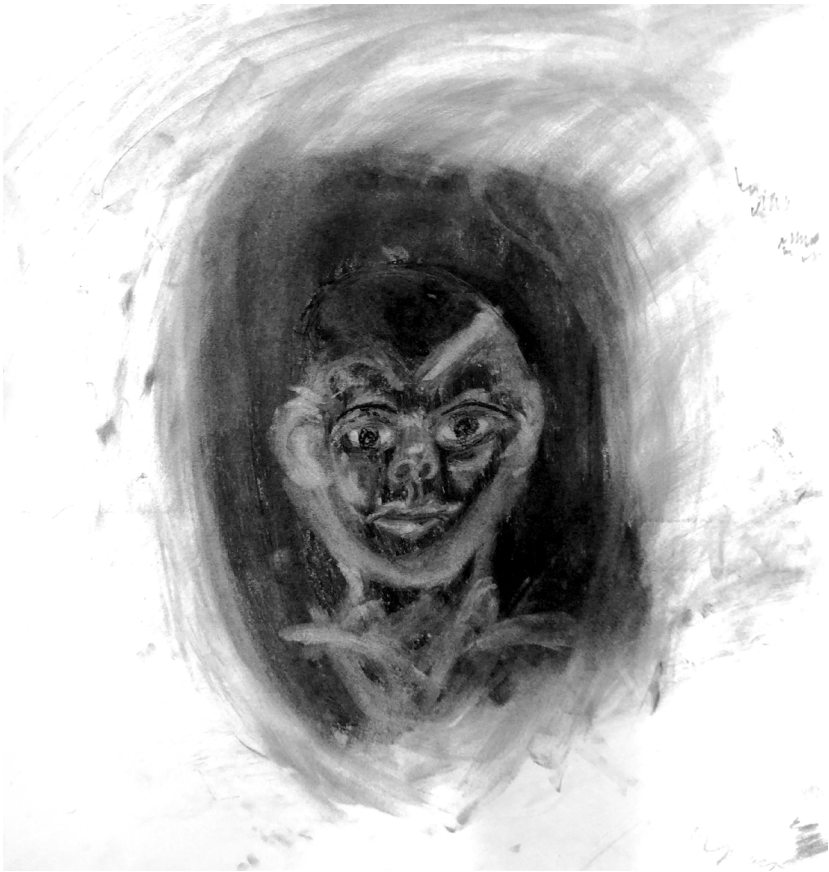


Fig. 3 - *The artist gazes toward the viewer from a darkened background.*

Rindon Johnson, *Bad Self*, 2012, charcoal on paper

The descent down the stairs into the cave is careful, the decline emphasized by the height of the stone above us, a gaping, scraggly pore, slow steep stairs as the cold creeps up towards us. This cave was created apx. two million years ago by an underground river cutting channels that we now walk through. The stone: pink, orange, sometimes the same color as holding a flashlight up to your finger, glowing, fresh like an open mouth.

A painting, a layer of images, pushed carved into the rock, a woman, a mammoth, a woman, a mammoth, a woman, a mammoth, they are drawn in a circle high above our heads body stretched outward, vulnerable to a 10-meter drop through the expanse of the hall with its gigantic snakelike openings, like trying to wrap your hands around an egg. The rock does everything that it should not be able to do, it does everything but act like rock, or everything it turns out can act like rock as I had once known it, and rock can act like everything.

For a minute as we've squished together along a pathway, admiring great big circles of stone with tablecloths caught in motion, our guide turns off the light behind us and grapples with the next light so that the cave becomes completely dark, emptiness surrounds us all swallowing our breath like an expansive cloak of a black sonic abyss, expectant, draping itself around our shoulders settling cool on our neck bones, a thumb on the collar and then suddenly it's gone, the lights are on again, revealing the cave's massive ceilings pre-cathedral, grand expanses of stone in radiant orange, pink, a satiated mouth sugared-up tongue of a palette, browns, pinks, alabaster teeth, brushed last night but not today. All this color is hard and pulled downward stacked by drops, floods, and so on.

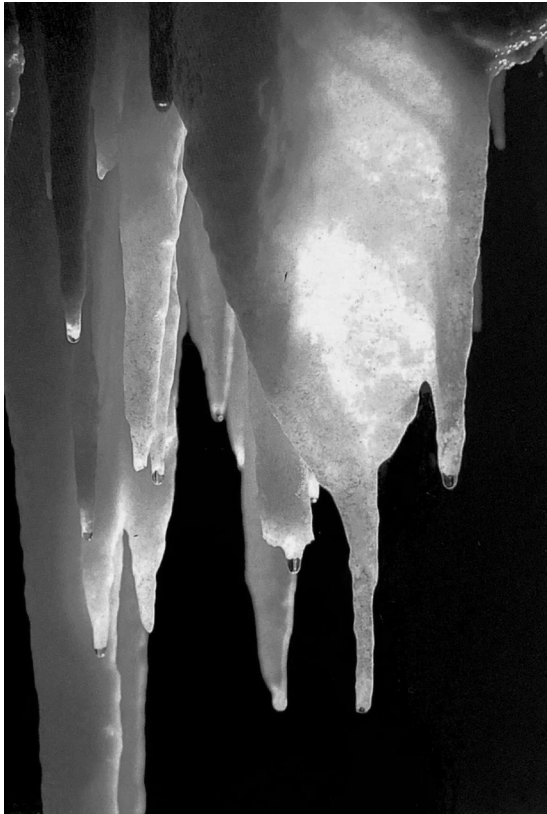


Fig. 4 - Stalactites, with droplets clinging to the tips, extend downward from a cave ceiling. The mineral formations glow yellow with transmitted light, but the background is pitch-black.

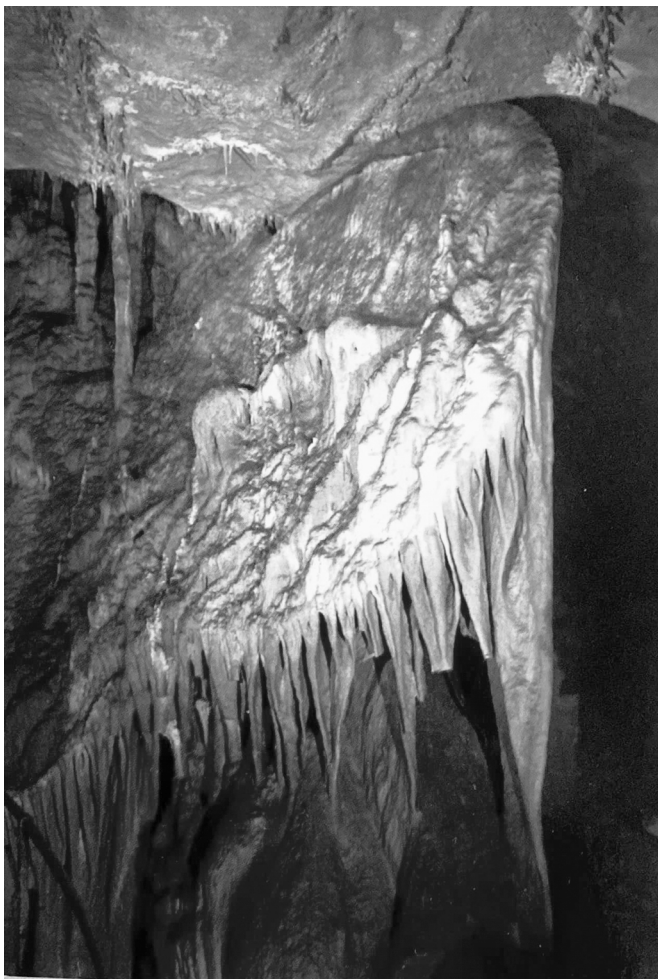


Fig. 5 - A harshly illuminated cave wall of ruddy layered sediment features arching stone surfaces, one fringed with a row of stalactites.

Later, overlooking a big castle on a high hill supported only by a gray-white gash of stone, squinting into the afternoon sun, we realize that we had never thought about the scale of ancient human mark-making. Charlotte says, Well think about it . . . If they could paint these things in the caves, who is to say that cliff face was not rubbed completely red?

Rindon Johnson
Law of Large Numbers: Our Bodies

SculptureCenter, New York
March 25 – August 2, 2021

Law of Large Numbers: Our Bodies is curated by Sohrab Mohebbi, Curator-at-Large.

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Rindon Johnson
Law of Large Numbers: Our Selves

Chisenhale Gallery, London
September – December 2021

Law of Large Numbers: Our Selves is curated by Ellen Greig, Senior Curator.

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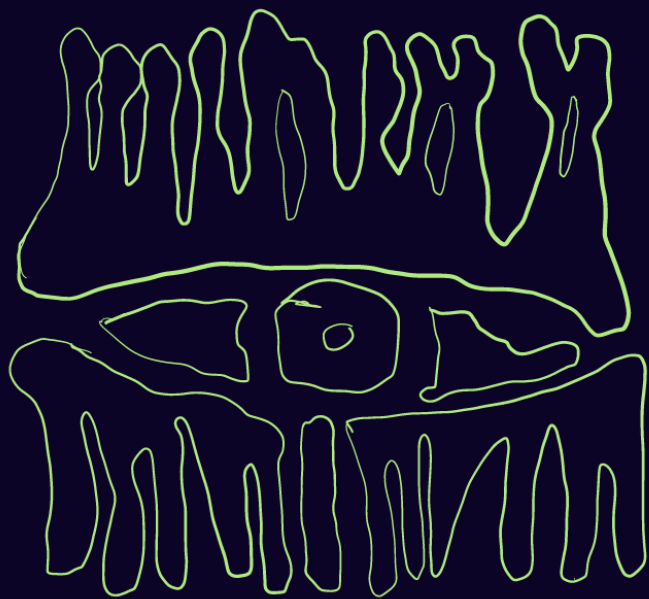
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