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# VAN MCELWEE: TIME FORK

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*Time Fork* stems from the premise that each choice creates a world. Individuals and societies chart courses through a space of possibilities. The viewer is asked to entertain a playful fiction: almost a thousand years ago, time branched to create a parallel world, which has continued to change and develop to the present. We call this World B, which split from our common timeline around 1054 C.E, concurrent with the appearance in the sky of Super Nova 1054 (which created the Crab Nebula). This celestial event was visible worldwide and is associated with the rise of Cahokian civilization.

*Time Fork* uses Augmented Reality (which combines computer graphics with real world video) to reveal features of a settlement that exists in this parallel world, overlapping what we know as Laumeier Sculpture Park.

The free *Time Fork* App allows us to use our mobile screens as windows to peer into this space, revealing structures that seem to be under construction or in ruin; buildings that could have a ritual, municipal or even an industrial function. The features of World B appear as self-luminous, abstract sculptures, with texture and detail left to the imagination. We move like ghosts here, passing through walls and other barriers, archaeologists of a parallel world.

Note: There is considerable variation in terrain between our world and World B; the two landscapes drift in and out of "phase" with each other. Some structures seem to float, others are buried. There is also evidence of large bodies of water surrounding the World B site.

Approaching the complex from the Aronson Fine Arts Center, one encounters structures arranged loosely along a processional axis:

## **ANCESTOR HOUSE**

This stairway may be the core of a buried watchtower, a floating catacomb, a subway entrance or a lighthouse.

## **CEREMONIAL GATE**

The strata here suggest levels of temple construction; a cutaway of history. This "slice" could have at least two meanings: the gate could be a celebration of cultural growth, of eras of religious and political authority. Alternately, the bands could represent a catastrophic mound slump, in which sections of earthen mounds collapse, revealing levels of construction. These sudden events probably undercut the authority of rulers and destabilized Mound Building cultures. For us, the stratification tells two different stories, one of growth, one of collapse.

## **CAPSTONE**

This small pyramid with an intimate interior space may be a personal temple, or the tip of a buried pyramid of unknown size.

## **TOWERS**

These structures may have a religious or ritual function (they call to mind the large poles or obelisks that once topped numerous Mississippian mounds). Alternately they could be defensive towers or communication devices. Windows point to Cahokia (26 miles away), Winterville Mounds in Mississippi (418 miles distant), and Teotihuacan in Mexico (1,700 miles from Laumeier). Other windows open to unknown sites that have no correlation in our world.

A nearby pile of gigantic rings could be materials laid out prior to tower construction or alternately, a collapsed tower.

## **PASSAGES**

A modular tunnel emerges as two bridges, incomplete and/or collapsed.

## **BOAT LANDINGS**

These docks, apparently built in stages, suggest a large body of water with varying levels. We cannot determine if the positioning of the docks represents a historic rising or lowering of the water levels.

## **TERMINAL**

This prominently situated structure is most likely a temple, a transport hub or a government building. The large openings appear where steps would be in a Mesoamerican stone pyramid. They lead to a vast octahedral space opening to an oculus above and to an inverted pyramid below. Standing at the center, one is suspended precisely between real and virtual space.

## **DOORS (Tombs/Dwellings)**

Crossing a threshold, one is either entering or exiting a tomb or a dwelling. Most of the doors deviate from a "classical" style. Whether a particular door precedes or follows the classical period is unknown.

## **INDUSTRIAL SITE**

This technical structure could be a floating subway station, a granary or a factory.

## **DISTANT UNKNOWNNS**

These mysterious structures, seen through a floating window, indicate the extent of World B's built environment.

*Time Fork* is a setting for pondering time, dimensionality and the nature of reality. -Van McElwee, 2020

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