

## > FIELD EXPEDITION: CENTRAL PARK IS THIS THE ANTHROPOCENE?



*"Imagine yourself in Central Park one million years ago. You would be standing on a vast ice sheet, a 4,000-mile glacial wall, as much as 2,000 feet thick. Alone on the glacier, you would not sense its slow crushing, scraping, ripping movement as it advanced south, leaving great masses of rock debris in its wake. Under the frozen depths, where the carousel now stands, you would not notice the effect on the bedrock as the glacier dragged itself along."*

- artist Robert Smithson, 1972

**MATERIALS:** cameras, FNBKS, audio/video recording devices, graphite + vellum, pens/pencils

### ENTER PARK AT 6th avenue and 59th street

**HYPOTHESIS TO TEST:** We are living in the Anthropocene.

**DATA GATHERING:** Make aesthetic and scientific observations + data collection:

**Observe and "read"** the layers of geologic history materially present, including: the steps carved as a poetic human affordance in the Manhattan schist (450 million years old), the glacial scraping still visible on the rock (several thousand years old), to the materials that compose the surrounding buildings (150 years-present).

**Pause to consider** the massive planetary changes, both human and geologic, that have occurred to melt the ice (that would have towered nearly a mile above you) and have afforded the urban park and cityscape surrounding you today.

**Make responsive drawings to these experiences in your field notebook.** Take photos, audio recordings, take pictures of species that inhabit the park (plants, animals, people). Produce rubbings of areas where you can still see glacial scrapes on the rock. Record observations in your field notebooks (including time, location, environmental conditions). Collect material samples. **Print out at least two photos and paste them into your FNBK.**

**Answer the following in your FNBK:**

- 1) What does it feel like knowing that so much ice used to be here, but is now gone? Is it hard or easy to imagine this site being so different?
- 2) What sights, sounds, smells, structures and materials around you provide “evidence” of the Anthropocene?
- 3) Do you feel like you have contributed to material realities that indicate the arrival of the Anthropocene? How/why/when?
- 4) Do you think the public should be aware of the Anthropocene?
- 5) What kind of climates do you think are possible in New York City’s future?

**CREATIVE WORKS HOMEWORK:**

Design a small project (printed, digital, sculpture and/or video/audio) using the data and observations you gathered in Central Park **that express why you believe (or not) we are living within the Anthropocene.** Include your original photography, drawings, sound recordings, and/or found objects. The project can be offered as a personal essay about your experiences, be designed as an awareness campaign, or offered as a work of art.

PART 2: Research the Anthropocene. Based on what you find, chose ONE resource (article, video, book, project etc.) that you think best illustrates the concept of the Anthropocene. Be prepared to share this in our next class.

