

**Artist Trenton Doyle Hancock to Open Largest Solo Project To-Date
At MASS MoCA in March 2019**

**Exhibition to Feature Monumental Sculpture, Pages from New Graphic Novel, Selection of
Painting and Drawings, and Objects from the Artist's Personal Collections**

Opening March 9, 2019

North Adams, Massachusetts—September 2018—For more than two decades, artist Trenton Doyle Hancock has been portraying the tragic saga of the Mounds, mythical creatures whose peaceful existence is under constant threat. His paintings, drawings, mixed-media works, and staged performances explore the weaving plots and narratives of the Mounds as they struggle to survive in a world that seeks their imminent demise. On March 9, 2019, Hancock will invite visitors into the layered and complex universe of Mounds in an immersive and sweeping exhibition presented at MASS MoCA. Occupying the whole of Building 5—which runs the length of a football field—the exhibition, *Mind of the Mound: Critical Mass*, will feature a series of large-scale, interactive Mound sculptures, envisioned by Hancock and produced onsite in MASS MoCA's fabrication studios, alongside new and recent paintings and drawings. The exhibition will also feature pages from the 300-page graphic novel that Hancock is currently creating, as well as objects from the artist's personal collections. *Mind of the Mound*, which will be further activated by a series of performance once open, marks Hancock's most ambitious and largest solo project to-date.

About 50,000 years ago an ape man named Homerbuctas masturbated in a field of prehistoric flowers giving birth to a legend, no, "The" Legend. For years, there have been reports of large, furry, smelly heaps residing in wooded areas around the world. These reports are supposed sightings of the cryptid (creature not yet verified by science), simply known to cryptozoologists as Mounds.

I am, for reasons that I can't quite explain, connected to these mysterious Mound creatures. I share a psychic bond with each Mound. I am ground control, and they are my satellites. I remember things that they have done, and I recall things that they have seen even after they are dead. I am able to inhabit the reality of the Mounds. Therefore, it has become my duty to document the goings-on in their realm, an alternate space that exists in hidden Earthly pockets. I have come to know these spatial accumulations as The Moundverse. The first Mound I learned of was in 1997, at which time I began chronicling his life. This Mound was called Mound #1, The Legend. In the year 2000, I began telling the tale of this Mound's demise at the hands of Vegan rebels." – Trenton Doyle Hancock

For Hancock, the Mound is more than just a character; it is a way of life. Their stories are universal, speaking to our understanding and experience of authority, power, religion, moral relativism, race, and ultimately the battle between good and evil—and all the grey space in between. In Hancock's work, the world of the Mounds melds with his personal remembrances and influences, objects of individual and collective meaning, and with social and political happenings, historic and contemporary. The Mound, then, becomes the site for the creation and accumulation of artworks, which exist alongside his toy

collecting, comic books, superheroes, Garbage Pail Kids, and childhood drawings, connecting the personal to the universal. In this way, Hancock seamlessly blends culture and memory, not just for himself, but in order to release his mythology into the world where it gains yet additional depth and meaning.

To bring these ideas and notions to life, Hancock is creating four monumental Mound sculptures, which will be constructed in a variety of materials and whose interiors will feature a kaleidoscopic of installations. Visitors will be able to step inside each work, where they will be experience Hancock's diverse and prolific creative output. One Mound vignette will be designed to display Hancock's recently created Halloween costumes, while another will function as a micro toy museum, housing toys created by the artist alongside a sampling from his own vast collection. These immersive environments will be augmented by presentations of Hancock's two-dimensional works, including his new graphic novel, and an animatronic realization of a scene from the artist's 2015 video *What the Bringback Brought*.

This fantastical, otherworldly landscape will be further amplified by a series of performances that will take place in the exhibition throughout its run. Inspired by MASS MoCA's approach to infusing its visual arts program with a robust roster of performances, Hancock will work with the institution to engage a wide array of musicians, dancers, and preachers to further examine the lives of the Mounds. Of the importance of performance in his work, Hancock says, "Perhaps the most important function is to give me faith in the characters I am painting. I gained belief in the transformative power of these characters by being the first to undergo transformation. With that belief as part of my muscle memory, I could then paint, draw, write, or sculpt without hesitation." Together, these interconnected threads achieve a "critical mass" of Hancock's vision of the Moundverse.

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Trenton Doyle Hancock grew up in Paris, Texas, to a family of evangelical Baptist ministers and missionaries. Supplementing his religious upbringing with comic books and Greek mythology, at the age of 10 he invented Torpedo Boy—an alter ego and superhero he still uses today. At this young age, Hancock already began to develop a singular mythology, which has evolved over the years. Ultimately birthing his own creation myth—as played out through paintings, sculpture, drawings, prints, and installation—Hancock tells the story of the Mounds (gentle hybrid plant-like creatures) protected by Torpedo Boy, and their enemies, the Vegans (mutants who consume tofu and spill Mound blood every chance they get). These narratives explore universal themes of existence and humanity's struggle with the world its created. Referencing artists such as Philip Guston and Henry Darger, as well as making unapologetic nods to comic books, illustrations, animations, horror films, and toys, Hancock has created a body of work that is uniquely his own.

With the upcoming exhibition at MASS MoCA, Hancock comes full circle, merging his own backstory with his created mythology in a carnival-esque environment where viewers can revel in spectacle, get lost in childlike wonder, and learn to believe—while simultaneously contemplating how we build and share faith, mythology, information, and community. In the end, Hancock reminds us that Mounds are museums; they are our basements, our living rooms, our memories, our minds, and, most importantly, our collective understanding.

Hancock (b. 1974 in Oklahoma City, OK) earned his BFA from Texas A&M University, Commerce, and his MFA from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University, Philadelphia. He was featured in the 2000 and 2002 Whitney Biennial exhibitions. In 2014, his exhibition, *Skin & Bones: 20 Years of Drawing* at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston, traveled to Akron Art Museum, OH; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY; and Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art. Solo exhibitions include: The Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah and Atlanta; the Weatherspoon art Museum, Greensboro, NC; the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX; The Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, FL; Olympic Sculpture Park at the Seattle Art Museum, WA; and Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Hancock's work is in the permanent collections of the Dallas Museum of Art, TX; the Menil Collection, Houston, TX; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY; Brooklyn Museum, NY; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. In 2017, Hancock was named Arts League Houston's Texas artist of the year. He is represented by James Cohan Gallery, NY; Hales Gallery, London; and Shulamit Nazarian, LA. He lives and works in Houston, TX.

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