



THE DREAM LIVES OF OBJECTS: PETER EUDENBACH'S TO ARRIVE WHERE WE STARTED

By: Anya Ventura

Redwood Library and Athenaeum • Newport, RI • redwoodlibrary.org • Through June 30, 2013



Peter Eudenbach, Captain Charles Hunter: *Lost in a Sea of His Own Hair*, 2012, dimensions variable.

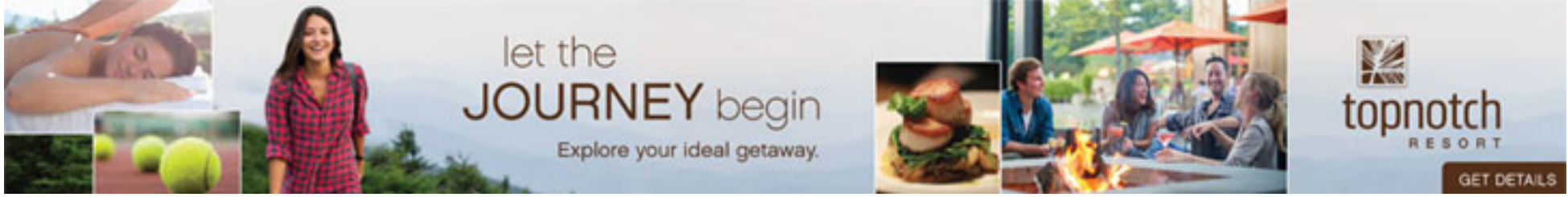
In Newport, history is a bustling industry. In a city that trades in its patrician past, the romantic sea cliffs and opulent mansions are like natural wonders unto themselves. It is against such a pastel landscape that artist Peter Eudenbach has installed his series of six curatorial interventions, *To Arrive Where We Started*, at the Redwood Library and Athenaeum, offering up an interpretation of the past departing wildly from the slickly packaged tours.

Founded by the belletrists of the new republic in 1747, the stately library is one of the country's oldest, a steward of 200 years' worth of cultural wealth. Yet, trailed by a sense of fussy elitism, the library struggles to connect its impressive collections to the interests of contemporary audiences, many of whom don't even realize it is open to the public.

Following a tradition of artists rummaging around the stacks and storerooms of august institutions, Eudenbach's installations revivify these neglected objects with mystical significance. In an artist's hands, the act of curation becomes a kabbalistic production, the objects invested with a new utility. Layer upon layer, Eudenbach peels back the dense strata of Newport's nautical past in search of the poetic, "the kind of truth that is the enemy of the merely factual" as the filmmaker Werner Herzog once said.

In the main gallery, the marble bust of a sea captain faces the etching of the shipwreck that claimed his life, the whorls of the waves echoing the sculpted curls of his hair. Elsewhere, a life raft balloons in an unlikely location; a display case exhibits all the library's books on islands; and a silver skeleton key rests atop a skylight, forever out of grasp. Cryptograms marooned in time and space, these objects recall the isolation of the seafarer. They speak a meandering language—laying out a historical narrative that does not plot a linear progression through time, but instead entangles us within a mythic coil of layers, connections, reflections, and repetitions.

—Anya Ventura



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