## 27. To Do.

Exhibit thirty portraits of the Unknowable in a gallery accessible to no one, including yourself.

Divide every number by zero. It can be done, but only if you take no time to do it.

Visit every state's last remaining establishment dedicated to an obsolete method of creating reproductions: daguerreotype studios, typewriter repair shops, mimeograph stores, wax cylinder recording studios. Document them on each other's media: make daguerreotypes of typewriter repairmen, type descriptions of mimeographs, record the sound of that typing on a wax cylinder.

Distribute the resulting reproductions by mailing them to children in villages that still have no access to cell phones or the Internet.

Celebrate by offering libations of the five most commonly sold soft drinks to the five least-known gods of extinct peoples. They're thirstyand most in need.

Outdo the uniqueness of every snowflake by contemplating the uniqueness of every space between the snowflakes at every moment that they drift down to cover your basement windows with a milky veil.

Devise a way to recapture 0.0001% of the 99.999% of human communications that have been lost. Begin with your own childhood.

Get one square inch of your basement floor perfectly clean -- and I mean perfectly.

Devise a way to forget each item in this list as soon as it has been accomplished, so that the memory of the accomplishment will endure, but you will have no recollection of having planned to do it.

Compose thirty explorations of incompleteness, unfulfillment, absence, etc., on a multitude of obsolete writing machines, etc., then generate pixelated simulacra of them to be transmitted electronically at the request of known and unknown downloaders, human and nonhuman, in Canada, Australia, England, Mongolia, etc., etc., etc.

Keep writing even though the snowdrifts have become opaque, even though the sun is setting, even though your machine depends on an electric current that could be interrupted at any moment by this storm, so that

# 28. Climbing

When I was young we lived in the hills, in a neighborhood built before the Depression, when prosperous families were buying houses that tastefully, vaguely imitated styles of the past -- houses that clustered in the canyons and cantilevered their decks confidently out over the ravines.

Between and behind these houses there were steps that cut between roads and wound up into the higher hills. They weren't used much, and the city must not have bothered to maintain them, because they always had moss, lichen, and vines encroaching on them, and more vegetation pushed its way through the cracks in the concrete.

I loved them -- they felt like ancient ziggurats or Mesoamerican temples -- and my friends and I spent hours clambering up and down them, exploring.

One day I told Mom I was going across the street to Danny's house, but my real plan was to pick my favorite steps and just follow them up as far as they led. I had five pieces of beef jerky in my pocket and a little note pad and pencil. I still have that little pad.

It took about half an hour before I was in new territory. My pulse quickened and I started to take the steps two by two. I'd pause to jot down a note about a sculpture in someone's back yard, or a house number -- whatever caught my eye. Once I even saw a teenager in a bikini by the side of a pool. As soon as she turned my way, I ran on up the steps as fast as I could go.

After three pieces of jerky I was thirsty, so I snuck a drink from someone's garden hose.

Things started to thin out. The steps were passing some empty lots, grassy slopes with some isolated eucalyptus whose spicy leaves scented the breeze. The steps were dirtier and more overgrown up here, as if no one ever stepped on them.

It was getting late, and my underdeveloped sense of guilt was starting to kick in. It would be dinnertime before I got back. But the top of the hills spread out before me. The steps ended in a weedy, undeveloped plot -- I ran out and was amazed at how the hills spread out below me, the sun glinted on the water, and the wind was surprisingly fierce. I breathed it in.

In the middle of the plot, at what must have been the highest point of all, was the stone structure that looked like a kiln or a barbecue -- a rock igloo. I approached slowly and peered in through the opening of this old, ruined thing. It was just big enough for me to get through if I squatted.

There was darkness that could never be broken by the brightest day. There were echoes that vibrated my bones. There was the aroma of ancient earth. And there were others, countless others, generations who promised me that adulthood was a lie, that education and career were illusions that could only end in failure -- but Under the Hill there was immortality.

Won't you join us?

# 29. Smoke

How do you weigh smoke?

You can't.

But if you had weighed the unburned: confidence, first love, the inception, conviction, the new home, the just-told story, laughter, rage, perfect indifference

and had subtracted the ashes: diffidence, a broken heart, decline, doubt, the tired habitation of a jaded resident, the well-worn tale, snickering, annoyance, apathy

the result would be the weight of smoke.

How do you weigh fire?

You don't.

You take your own act of subtraction and conceive of it as an event outside your mind, then take the temperature of that act of conceiving.

Where does the smoke go?

Everywhere.

Pointlike, perfect particles, they can slip between moments, places, and visions, fertilizing, planting seeds of events.

How many particles are there?

Infinity or one.

Infinity: inside every corrupt object and sinful soul, inside every moment of anarchy and betrayal, there is the smoke of former conflagrations; for every point of smoke there is no next point next to it, but always an infinity of points between them.

One: the totality of souls and objects, of fire and smoke, of coming to be and passing away, is itself a point that gave itself the illusion of multiplicity.

# 30. The city

We built it out of solitudes held together by withdrawals.

We expect to see each other around the corner after the next.

We're secure in the knowledge that each of us has his or her apartment here, built only for its own inhabitant, immune to evictions.

We'll die here, but know that we could leave at any time; we'll take satisfaction, in the end, knowing that it didn't have to be this way.

We always welcome visitors, we are the most hospitable individuals imaginable. If anyone ever visited, we'd show them everything and there would be no barriers.

We inhale the products and waste of every other city, exhale our waste and products to every other city.

We each have our story, a story that each of us knows best except its end, which will be known only to the others.

We have each been given our own, customized impossibility, the thing that only we can fail to do, the words that only we should have said, the expectation that only we can feel as unfulfilled.

We each have our avenue by our apartment, an avenue that could take us as far as the most unsuspected corners of what has been familiar from the start.

We are each illuminated by a singularity and obscured by the same singularity.

We are identically irreplaceable, equally unspeakable.

We emerged from totality and will return to it.

We like to imagine that departures are reversible, that destructions are illusions, that selections will be recompensed with wholeness, and that we ourselves are being imagined by our true selves.

We all believe that someone, somewhere, knows; that there is, ultimately, a map of the city; that when we have to let go, the trust we will be forced to feel will not be in vain.

Let's keep building.

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November 1 - December 1, 2013
Olympia SG1 - Smith-Corona Golden Shield Silent Meteor - Olivetti Lexikon 80 - Burroughs - Smith-Corona Silent Super - L.C. Smith Super-Speed - Olivetti Graphika - IBM Model C Executive - Optima Super