



John Cage
Organ²/ASLSP
1987 St Burchardi
Church, Halberstadt,
Germany

**Katie Paterson and
Zeller & Moye**
Hollow 2016

eradicate all carbon-based life quite yet, despite current species extinction rates running at 1,000 times more than in 1900 and triggering the planet's sixth mass extinction event, the first since the last dinosaurs died out 65m years ago) and think about what kind of art might remain on a planet without humans and what it might look like. Let's start climbing the Dark Mountain for a while. (The Dark Mountain Manifesto proposed the notion that 'humans are not the point and purpose of the planet' and was the first manifestation of what is now called 'Dark Ecology'.)

Countless artists have been creating deep-time projects that go well beyond their lifetimes. One could perhaps start with the burying of the Time Capsule 1 at the Chicago World Fair in 1939, which included an anti-war message from Albert Einstein and a rather pessimistic note from writer Thomas Mann: 'We know now that the idea of the future as a "better world" was a fallacy of the doctrine of progress. The hopes we centre on you, citizens of the future, are in no way exaggerated. In broad outline, you will actually resemble us very much as we resemble those who lived a thousand, or five thousand, years ago. Among you too the spirit will fare badly.' Particularly if there is no one around to open the capsule.

A good starting point for artists might be Joseph Beuys's *7000 Oaks*. Started in 1982 for Documenta 7 and completed by his son Wenzel in 1987 at Documenta 8, each oak tree has an accompanying basalt column – just so you know it is an artwork – but also the basalt is said to act as a symbol for countering human extinction. It continues to be maintained by the city of Kassel and has been continued in cities like Baltimore in the US. Before his famous

dictum that every living being is an artist, a universally misinterpreted statement, Beuys also said in relation to *7000 Oaks*: 'Here my idea is to declare that art is the *only* possibility for evolution, the only possibility to change the situation in the world.' It's a tall order. But would the 7,000 oaks, or any other works for that matter, have any meaning at all in a world without people?

A forest has also been created by Katie Paterson for her work *Future Library* (Profile AM338). In 2014 the artist planted 1,000 trees outside Oslo in Norway, which in 100 years will be fully grown and will then provide the paper for 100 books, commissioned once a year, from authors and poets chosen by the Future Library Trust. Paterson, whose final degree work at Glasgow School of Art in 2007, *Earth-Moon-Earth* – which bounced Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata' in Morse Code off the moon in a radio transmission – has been shown worldwide, but *Future Library* is becoming the Scottish artist's defining project. Four books have been commissioned, by Margaret Atwood, David Mitchell, the Icelandic writer Sjórn and Elif Shafak. Each book is delivered in a ceremony in spring each year. The catch is that no one will get to read the book in the lifetime of the writer (or the artist). A library will be constructed from the wood felled to clear the land for the Future Library trees. 'It's a work of art that breathes and grows,' Paterson says, 'and which invites us to care for the planet while imagining future generations, an exquisite corpse of texts which assumes that in a hundred years, both books and forests will continue to exist.'

There are at least two music works which share this methodology. John Cage's 1987 work *Organ²/ASLSP* (As