

GRID Curatorial Statement
By Charlotte Thun-Hohenstein

“Why GRID?”

What is our relationship with modern science individually and societally? How does modern science shape our relations to our environment and ourselves? What agency can we, should we claim over it? These are the questions that GRID raises two hundred years after Mary Shelley illuminated science’s tragic potential for monstrosity in *Frankenstein*. Rather than asserting answers, GRID provides a framework for multi-sensory explorations by a program of artists, several of whom are professional scientists themselves.

The intersections of GRID’s lattice can be viewed as stitches. Stitches constitute a central, threefold theme of this project: they are a signature trademark of the Frankenstein monster’s ghoulish appearance in the popular imagination; the terrible process by which Dr. Frankenstein created his monster in Shelley’s novel; and a fitting metaphor for modern science’s relationship with the world. Like stitches, science continues to heal and disfigure us. As we enter the Anthropocene, recommended as a geological time frame at the 35th International Geological Congress in 2016, our ability to manipulate our environment has reached unprecedented extent, and yet our ability to do so responsibly on a global—and perhaps existential—scale remains elusive. Meanwhile, technology both animate and inanimate erodes the boundaries of ‘human’ even as it safeguards and enhances life. The opening questions can, therefore, feel fraught, charged, and simply vague. GRID creates a space where visitors can reflect upon and enrich their own sense of engagement with them.

“What is GRID as symbol?”

GRID is a monument to modern science. It dwarfs the viewer with objectivity’s foundational tool: a geometrical plane. The narrative of modern science itself has undergone various revolutions, but its tenets of measurement, quantification, and abstraction remain definitive. GRID presents the ephemeral table upon which the pursuit of knowledge continues to be built. In fact, the 1960s movement which the structure artistically recalls might be cited for the two pillars of observable fact: light and space.

GRID’s outdoor location establishes a juxtaposition between the abstract face of science and nature as its concrete interlocutor—in this case, Stanford’s iconic trees. Yet another complementarity lies one hundred feet away in the form of Andy Goldsworthy’s *Stone River*. If *Stone River* creates a subtle and winding path intertwined with its natural surroundings, GRID stands in artificial and bombastic dissonance awaiting a projected narrative. Perhaps the only quality linking these analogue and digital forms is their shared sense of timelessness.

“What is GRID as experience?”

Despite its obvious homage to light, GRID undermines science’s “tyranny of the eye” by creating an immersive sound environment. Visitors are invited to bring blankets and recline for any amount of the two-hour showings. Each evening focuses on a different theme. The opening and closing 30min feature solely GRID and sound environment; the central hour showcases a celebratory and critical variety of video compositions, live performance art, and concerts.

The current distinction between “art and science” emerged with the modernization of natural knowledge. GRID’s phantasmagoric quality evokes the tradition of science as popular spectacle that, ironically, accompanied this divisive process. GRID joins in the many ongoing efforts to restore a healthy spectrum to this binary.