

Dan Peterman: art, science and activism

BY LUC CLÉMENT

Autumn 2017, on the initiative of his Department of Arts, Science and Culture, the University of Chicago presents *Slipping and Jamming* by the artist Dan Peterman. Commissioned for the 2nd Chicago Architecture Biennial, the work is made up of thousands of elements of recycled plastic dubbed Z-Forms, each once cut into a Z shape. Why? To make stable objects, not through an arrangement of ordinary individual elements, but with random disorderly configurations that end up evoking a liquid volume.

This installation is the result of a collaborative project, funded by the Graham Foundation, between the artist and the physician Heinrich Jaeger's lab at the University of Chicago. This work is at the intersection of contemporary sculptural practice and scientific research. The process calls on concepts derived from granular physics, generally studied on a low level, produced here on a larger, essentially architectural scale.

Beyond this quasi-scientific practice, *Slipping and Jamming* fits in with Dan Peterman's work on the recycling of material since the early 1990s. This artist, researcher and activist was, for example, one of the first creators to stigmatise the obsolescence of IT equipment with his work *With carrying Case Series* (1990-92), made of five tool boxes and their moulded plastic inside tray. He founded the *Chicago Compost Shelter* where the heat generated by the fermentation of compost was used to heat the inside of a vehicle destined to house homeless people. He is also behind the *Blackstone Bicycle Works*, an educational programme to teach young people about environmental protection methods.

danpeterman.com
chicagoarchitecturebiennial.org
museumartutil.net/projects/chicago-compost-shelter