

MAT KEEL

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BIO

Mat Keel is a cultural geographer and critical political ecologist working across disciplines in the social sciences, arts, and humanities. He investigates how space – tactile, legal, affective, subtle – works: how is it thought, what can it do, and how does it conspire with and disarticulate from forms and experiences of trauma and alienation?

These questions comprise a larger investigational overture, asking how metaphysical infrastructure shapes the topology of violence, relation, and perception across colonial and postcolonial geographies.

Keel draws on both theoretical and ethnographic methods, animated by a commitment to dis-alienate knowledge from colonial habits and from any form that sustains, obscures, or reproduces violence. He is particularly invested in the work of Felix Guattari, recent critical geography from the UK, and the mimetic tradition of social and psychological thought represented by thinkers like Pierre Janet and Walter Benjamin.

Keel's doctoral research investigates dissociated afterlives of the plantation complex in the Gulf South for a project sited in and around Yes We Cannibal, a non-transactional project space for new art and thought which he founded with artist Liz Lessner in 2020. His dissertation draws on affect theory and mimetic thought to propose a nonrepresentational ethnography for attending to complex social and spatial registers by foregrounding the ambient, unassimilated, and unconscious excess which remains unintegrated after and beyond representation. Keel argues that trauma operates at the level of the social body not as a scalar extension of individual trauma or memory, but also through the foreclosure of relation itself.

In an earlier project, he studied and analyzed a 1999 Māori claim to the radio spectrum as a form of ontological politics as decolonial reparations for indigenous territorial sovereignty. He also authored a critical history of the ether and its transmutation into spectrum as a persistent metaphysical imaginary.

Before returning to graduate school, he worked as the head of research and development for a cartography company, as well as at meditation centers and an artist's residency. He holds an MA in Geography from UCLA and a BA in Geography from UMass Amherst and expect to receive his PhD in Geography & Anthropology from Louisiana State University in May 2026.

Keel is happily settled on a 5-acre homestead in Proctor, Vermont with his wife Liz, their son Gus, and two beloved rescue dogs.