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The Exquisite Corpse Water Drawing Project / Patrick Mahon

Drawings by: Alison Norlen, Caroline Boileau, Chris Down, Ben Reeves, Patrick Mahon, Colette Urban, Sheila Butler, Sara Hartland-Rowe, Diana Thorneycroft, Sean Caulfield, William Noah. An artist's bookwork based on a collaborative drawing project produced in 2012-2013 in Canada.

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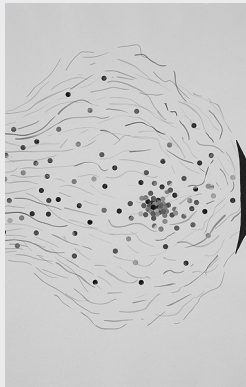






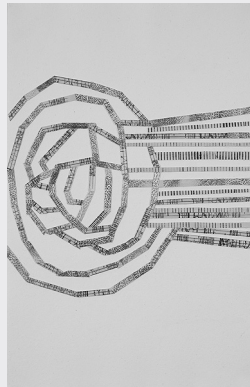
ALISON NORLEN  
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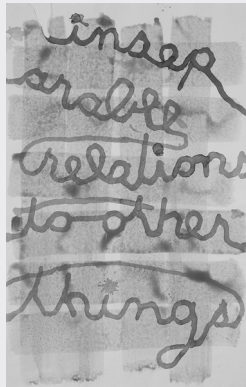
**COLETTE URBAN**  
McIvers, NL

Colette Urban produced this drawing in the last months of her life. She died on June 16, 2013, at her home in McIvers, Nfld. This, being one of her last works, is playful just like so many of Colette's projects – yet it is also deeply serious. When she made the drawing, Colette was conscious of the disease making its way through her watery body, so she chose to represent the usual flow of life using watercolour, and the 'invading bodies' with confetti punched from ordinary magazine pages. Those whimsical yet threatening dots appear to bounce along amidst the stream, while a dark and shallow funnel awaits them on the right hand side of the drawing. Nonetheless, the funnel receives the flowing waters, appearing somehow timeless.



**PATRICK MAHON**  
London, ON

As the artist initiating the Exquisite Corpse Water Drawing Project, I began by making my drawing first, in the centre of the piece. This allowed for the possibility of connecting mine to the drawings of two other artists at the same time, on both sides of my work. I thought of this as an efficient way to develop the project, and also a way to resist originating a 'river' that flows only in one direction. My specific approach to the drawing involved printing water patterns onto thin basswood sticks and collaging those drawing-embedded 'lines' onto the paper; the figure takes its inspiration from my interest in water towers. Here I turned the water tower on its side because I was conscious of the necessity for my drawing to act as a connector with others, or even to function as a sort of orifice or a passageway that enables a flow. Water towers are solid structures that contain liquids; I'm interested in the practicality of this, while also puzzled by its somewhat anachronistic character – especially at a time when water itself appears somewhat contradictory. It is a supremely important material and resource, but also a threat.



**BEN REEVES**  
Vancouver, BC

The flow of language is, perhaps, like water. Context is essential. The meaning of any word is deferred; it is subject to every previous and to each subsequent word. My piece plays off of a quote from Richard Tuttle, who described his work in relation to water. Water, he said, is infinite, because of "... its inseparable relation to other things, which is what water is – its relation to other things."

I used drops of water-based ink – bending and tilting the paper to make the words flow across, up and down – understanding that these trails would join with the drawings (unknown to me) to come before and after.



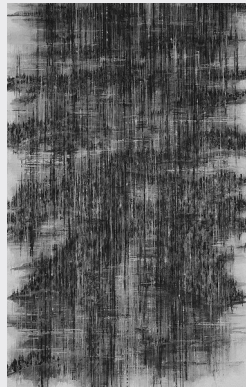
**CHRIS DOWN**  
Sackville, NB

In a museum, across from a chart illustrating geological time, I came across a glass case containing a stone pocked with fossilized raindrops. In a drawing, I traced the contours of a wood-grain whirlpool. Certain kinds of encounters can't be adequately paraphrased, but might instead be pointed to or mapped from a distance.



**CAROLINE BOILEAU**  
Montreal, QC

I worked with the idea of the human as a 'body of water,' working to incorporate, hint at or suggest a relationship of interdependency between the environment – water – and humans. The drawing ended up being very ambiguous, hesitating between pleasure and a sense of doom, where the figure floating between 'waters' is both the problem and the solution, the pollution and an agent of change.



**ALISON NORLEN**  
Saskatoon, SK

I have chosen to take an aerial view of my hometown on Lake of the Woods, ON, as a starting point, joining the edges of the provided drawing to edges of lakes and islands...I grew up less than 50 feet from the water. Looking back, I recall that we did not have running water until I was 10 years old....(we hauled water from the lake and used it for all purposes from a big drum in our kitchen)... We were skating by 3-years old, swimming in diapers.... Water holds a fascinating combination of ideas for me...both practical and symbolic.....Kenora also intrigues me since it has an interesting history.....a French trading post; its name is created from a combination of Rat Portage/Norman/Keewatin, and labelled 'portage to the country of the muskrat.' The Lake has 14552 islands and 65000 miles of shoreline.....

Given the qualities of the paper, I decided to use non-permanent marker which bleeds uncontrollably when hit with water....simultaneously, I incorporated water-colour (and enjoyed the process of using media somewhat foreign to me).....Working thematically and in relation to my current work, I wanted to partially obliterate the landscape in an effort to obscure, alter and transform personal memory – and possibly one's experience of both 'place' and 'water.'



## THE EXQUISITE CORPSE WATER DRAWING PROJECT

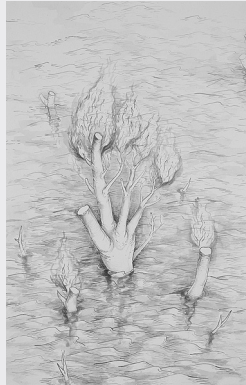
By Patrick Mahon

This limited edition publication is part of an artistic contribution to the collaborative project, “Immersion Emergencies and Possible Worlds,” a SSHRC Research/Creation project that began in winter 2011. It is an artistic investigation involving artists Gu Xiong (Vancouver, BC), Raymond Boisjoly (Vancouver, BC), Soheila Esfahani (Waterloo, ON), Nadine Bariteau (Montreal, QC/Toronto, ON), Gautam Garoo (Toronto, ON), Colin Miner (London, ON), Elizabeth Chitty (St. Catharines, ON), and Lucy and Jorge Orta (Paris, France). The production from “Immersion Emergencies” is being presented in the exhibition, *The Source: Reconsidering Water Through Contemporary Art*, at Rodman Hall, Brock University, from May to September, 2014, curated by Stuart Reid. For this bookwork project, I invited ten artists to participate with me in the production of an ‘exquisite corpse’ drawing of water. Artists from all parts of Canada were asked to engage in making an extended drawing utilizing the famous ‘blind’ process developed by the Surrealists (normally for representing the human body in three sections: head, torso and legs). The respective emphasis of each artist’s contribution in the bookwork was entirely up to its maker, whether focusing on water expressively, symbolically, rhetorically, through humour, or critique, etc. Given the intended surprising nature of the results of the process, no particular approach or material was unwelcome. The individual drawings were assembled by bookbinder, Dan Mezza, as a continuous accordion-folded structure, and are reproduced here as a limited-edition bookwork, designed by Liza Eurich.



**WILLIAM NOAH**  
Baker Lake, NU

In winter times it is all white desert; we Inland people make our own 6 foot deep water holes at the Lake. In spring and summer we have plenty of water everywhere: in big lakes, rivers, creeks, small lakes and on vegetation; it is pretty wet throughout the spring and all through the summer. In winter, for coastal communities, sometimes the ocean can be dangerous; and some people get stranded on the floe edge where there are big chunks of ice – and break ups of ice exposing the dangerous water.



**SEAN CAULFIELD**  
Edmonton, AB

The image of a flood has become increasing prominent in mass media with recent tragedies such as Fukushima and New Orleans raising awareness about the devastating power water can have in a natural disaster. At the same time, the destructive force of the deluge has also been pictured as a source of redemption in countless creation myths from around the world. The ability for water to be both a source of destruction and regeneration seems to be a particularly important idea to consider at time when so many ecosystems around the world are rapidly transforming due to pressure from human activities.



**DIANA THORNEYCROFT**  
Winnipeg, MB

Water Grave: Air India Bombing Flight 182: The largest mass murder of Canadians citizens took place June 22, 1985. My drawing depicts the water grave moments following the bombing of Air India Flight 182 off the coast of Ireland. Of the 329 people killed, 268 were Canadians.



**SARA HARTLAND-ROWE**  
Halifax, NS

This drawing came out of hearing a personal account of the Sumatra tsunami of 2004. The water was described as a ‘black wall’ that seemed to appear out of a flat sea. The left-hand side of my drawing shows dams, dikes and machinery used to change the landscape and exert control over the forces of nature. As with many of our interventions into environmental equilibrium, eventually there is a result that isn’t planned and can’t be contained.



**SHEILA BUTLER**  
Toronto, ON

“Exploiting the mystique of accident” is how William S. Rubin describes the intent of the Surrealists’ exquisite corpse collective works of art. I approached their deeply insightful motive by countering it with a visual reference to the inevitable: water in the form of the relentless ocean tide; a force exerted by the moon, pervasive down to the level of our own bodily fluids.

(Reference: Rubin, William S. *Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, fifth printing 1989.)