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THE SOURCE | RETHINKING WATER THROUGH CONTEMPORARY ART

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THROUGH CONTEMPORARY ART

NADINE BARITEAU
RAYMOND BOISJOLY
ELIZABETH CHITTY
SOHEILA ESFAHANI
GAUTAM GAROO
PATRICK MAHON
COLIN MINER
LUCY+ JORGE ORTA
GU XIONG

Our era, marked by rapid climate change, destructive hydro-climactic weather events, loss of polar ice, and rising global sea levels, is witness to shifting shorelines, borders, migration patterns, and lines of economic and cultural exchange. In this exhibition, artists consider changing concepts of water and associated cultural, political, and aesthetic implications. By bringing together Canadian artists representing Indigenous and settling cultures, both French- and English-speaking, alongside international artists with roots in countries around the globe, *The Source* contemplates water from a nationless, borderless perspective that is profoundly human.

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THE SOURCE



Water seeks water, finding its own level as it flows. Our bodies, being mostly water, are sensitive to the call of the source. A longing for reunion pulls one to the edge of the level surface, only to recognize our reflection in its mercurial mirror. Like Narcissus, we find it hard to look away. We learn about ourselves when we contemplate water. Its essence pervades our physical life, our spirituality and our imagination. Water forms cultural ties that bind people, and informs our stories, myths, beliefs and customs.

STUART REID, PRIMING THE SOURCE: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION

Water has long played a role in the historical art-works of the West through pictorial representation, including in the Classical mythological narratives of the Greeks and Romans and later in Christian religious imagery. Eventually, following the Baroque, modern artistic developments and aspirations made water a subject addressable through means that emphasized its complexity, so it could be thought about non-metaphorically: in terms of socio-politics and technology. Eventually, the term *environmentally* also had to be appended as another way to frame considerations of water.

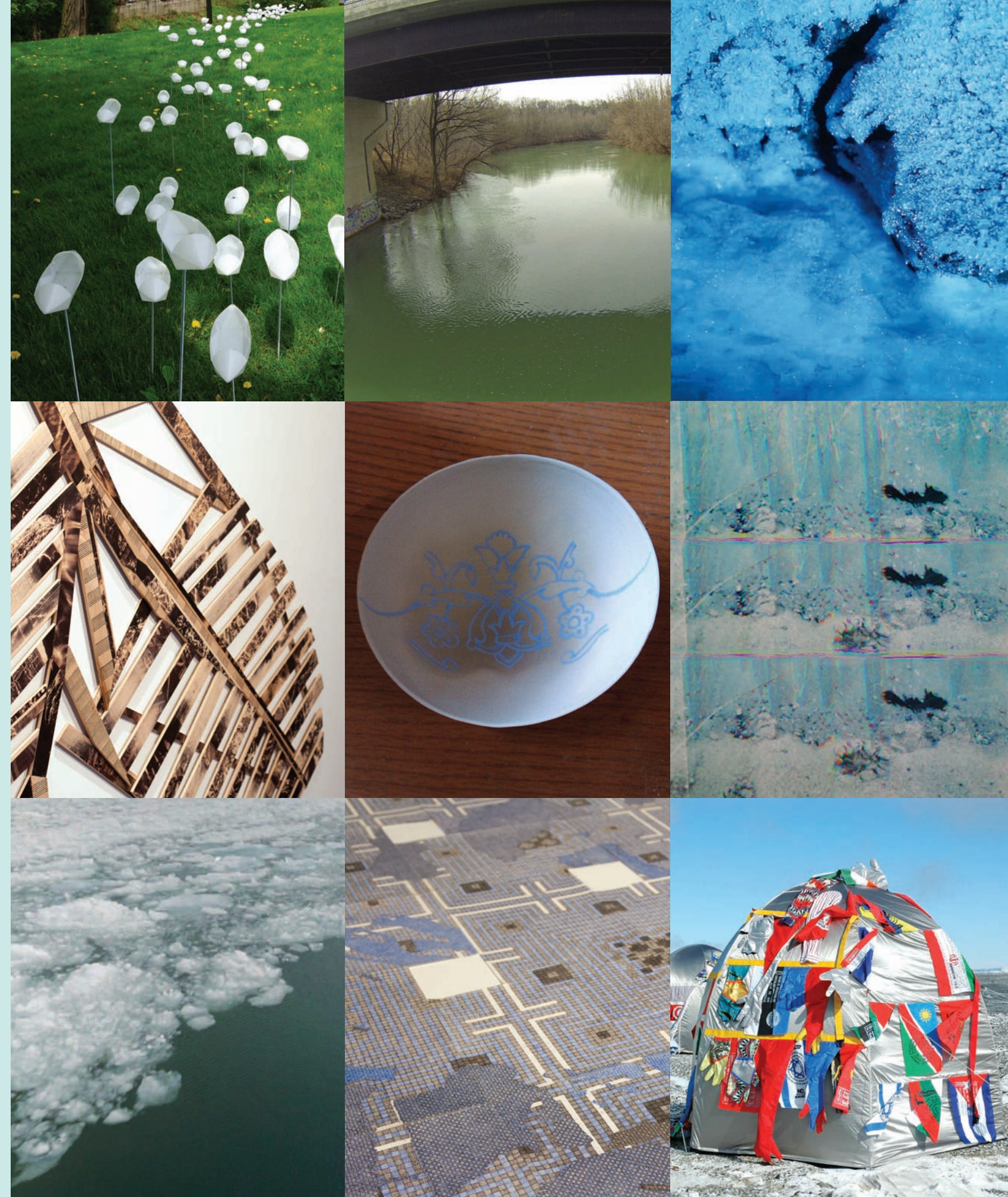
A more geopolitically widespread acknowledgement of water in the history of visual culture includes vast numbers of works contemporaneous with the art of the West: 17th-century Mughal painting in India, and Japanese ukiyo-e prints of the same era, are examples. Such inclusions indicate that water has been an ostensibly “ubiquitous” presence in art around the globe for centuries. Whether represented in its relationship to human culture, as fundamental within nature or for other more arcane reasons, water is, was and continues to be in the picture.

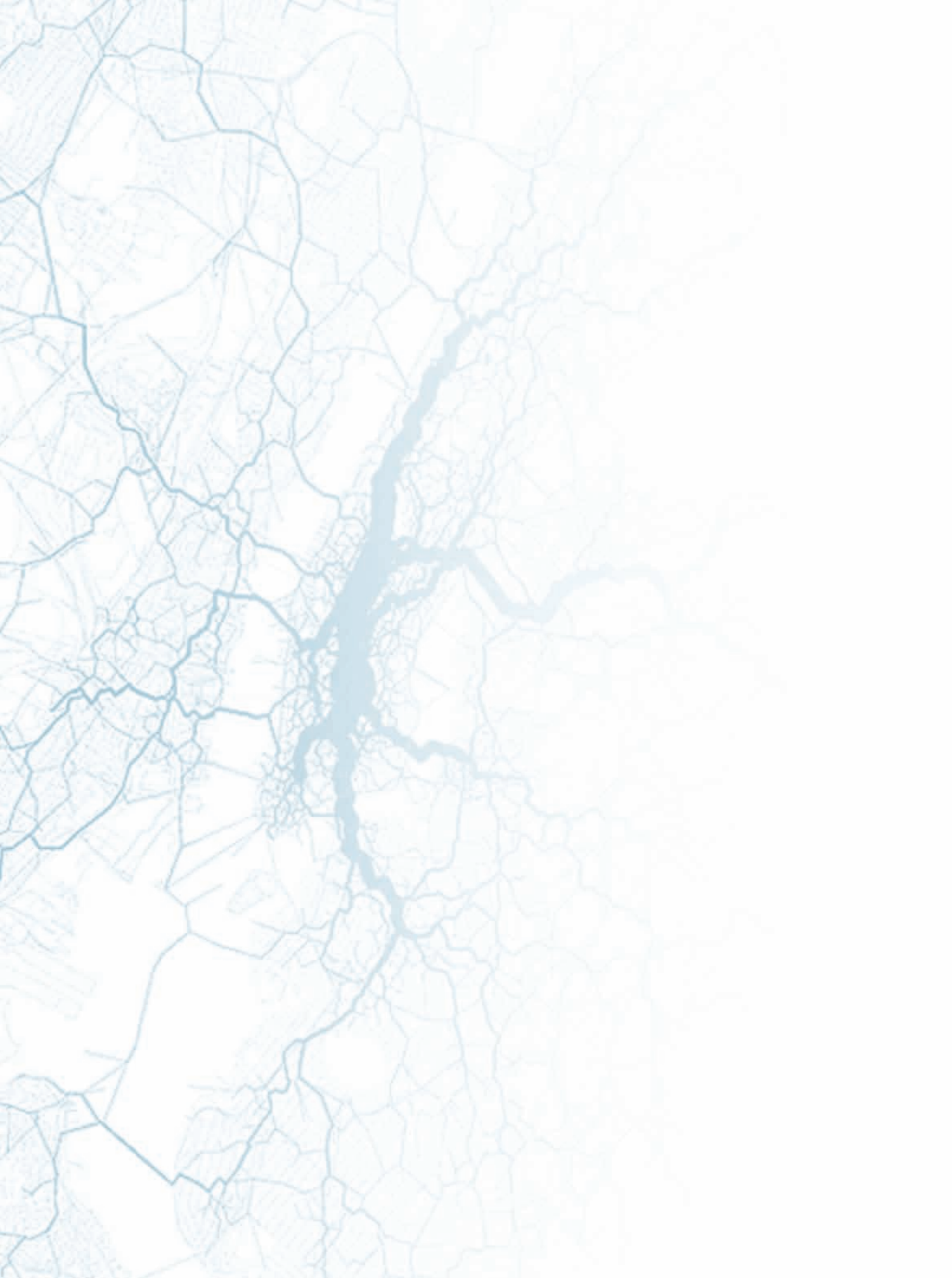
PATRICK MAHON, PICTURES, TIME, COLOUR AND APOLOGY: SOME TERMS OF ADDRESS IN ART ABOUT WATER



...changes in the composition of the global atmosphere have caused enough warming to change the rate and manner in which water moves through the global hydrological cycle. While we know that hydrological conditions on this planet have always been changing, we have been fortunate to have had a century or so of relative hydro-climatic stability. That era, however, is over. The long-term hydrologic stability of the climate we experienced in the past will not return during the lifetime of anyone alive today. This is a huge new concept – a societal gamechanger – and it is going to take time to get our heads around it. This, I offered, was why, as much as any other time in the past, we now need the perceptual leadership that only art can offer. We need art, I said in conclusion, to help show us the way to hope.

ROBERT WILLIAM SANDFORD, WATER AND HOPE: FACING FACT AND INSPIRING OPTIMISM IN THE ANTHROPOCENE





THE SOURCE

RETHINKING WATER
THROUGH CONTEMPORARY ART

THE SOURCE: RETHINKING WATER
THROUGH CONTEMPORARY ART

Nadine Bariteau, Raymond Boisjoly, Elizabeth Chitty,
Soheila Esfahani, Gautam Garoo, Patrick Mahon,
Colin Miner, Lucy + Jorge Orta, Gu Xiong

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FOREWORD

STUART REID

Rodman Hall Art Centre is very proud of *The Source: Rethinking Water Through Contemporary Art*, a major exhibition on the theme of water that coincided with Borders Without Boundaries, the 2014 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, hosted by Brock University. In this exhibition, artists from a multitude of cultural backgrounds, working in a diversity of media, considered changing concepts of water and associated cultural, political and aesthetic implications. The exhibition’s themes were particularly engaging not just to the thousands of academics attending Congress, but to a diverse public who visited the show and participated in the wide array of public programs associated with it. The show led to creative collaborations with other departments, including the Environmental Sustainability Research Centre at Brock University.

Rodman Hall is very grateful for the generosity of the artists participating in the exhibition: Nadine Bariteau, Raymond Boisjoly, Elizabeth Chitty, Soheila Esfahani, Gautam Garoo, Patrick Mahon, Colin Miner, Lucy + Jorge Orta and Gu Xiong. By bringing together Canadian artists representing Indigenous and settling cultures, both French- and English-speaking, alongside artists with roots in countries around the globe, this exhibition represents a diversity of perspectives on an important subject.

A wide variety of media employed in *The Source* occupied all of the galleries, including the Project Space and the Walker Botanical Gardens at Rodman Hall. Esfahani created numerous ceramic-cast water bowls that altered the outdoor fountain at Rodman Hall. An on-site *Antarctica Passport Office* created by the Ortas generated a lot of interest and discussion; the Ortas’ Antarctica flag flew proudly on the hill outside the gallery during the run of the exhibition. St. Catharines-based artist Elizabeth Chitty’s media installation, *Streaming Twelve*, included a live video feed of the flow of Twelve Mile Creek

as viewed from the roof of Rodman Hall, as well as drone footage shot by a local aerial photography company. The work opened up a discussion of governance issues over water that had great local significance. Gu Xiong’s residency in July 2013 allowed the artist to engage with migrant worker culture supporting the wine and stone-fruit industries along the Niagara River. His installation of floating boat forms moved from the inside of the building through windows, to traverse the lawns down to the edge of Twelve Mile Creek. This project drew in new audiences and forged new partnerships with the Niagara Migrant Workers Interest Group. Through a multi-sensory approach, the exhibition prompted visitors to engage with divergent viewpoints encompassing disparate stories and cultural perspectives on water.

The Source has benefitted greatly from a partnership with Western University’s Arts and Humanities department and the ArtLab who have been co-publishers of this book and have supported Patrick Mahon’s generous collaboration on this project. We offer special thanks to Patrick Mahon, who brought to life the *Immersion Emergencies* project that was the foundation of *The Source*. We are grateful for his thoughtful essay included in this book. Also to Robert Sandford, for his extensive expertise and knowledge of the contemporary world water crisis that led him to contemplate hope in the context of *The Source*. We thank Rob Gray of Designworks Studio for his elegant design of this catalogue, and Stuart Ross for editing our words. Rodman Hall is grateful for ongoing support from Brock University, the Ontario Arts Council, our members, donors and sponsors. We are pleased to acknowledge the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for the *Immersion Emergencies* project, the residencies and this documentation of that research.

We hope this book will convey the scope of this ambitious project in light of its relevance to our contemporary world.

PREFACE

PATRICK MAHON WITH SOHEILA ESFAHANI, COLIN MINER AND GU XIONG

Water’s capacity to exist in different states – liquid, solid and gas – and to perform in radically different ways (to leak, to flow, to dribble and to rush, for example) is an analogue for the multiplicity of ways artists often approach a subject. In light of this, it could be said that the work of producing the exhibition *The Source: Rethinking Water Through Contemporary Art* began as something of a trickle. Indeed it started with the modest intention to link some of my own artistic projects with those of other Canadian artists who I knew were also “aquaphiles.” In 2011, along with artists Gu Xiong and Soheila Esfahani, I applied for funding to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Our intentions – to work together and to eventually form a larger group of artists interested in water – led to the three-year project *Immersion Emergencies and Possible Worlds*.

The enterprise of working together around water and, ultimately, *the cultures of water*, was central to the ethos of our multifaceted, oftentimes heterogeneous undertaking. Soheila Esfahani had already concentrated on water in earlier works before joining in the collectivity. She recalls, “My initial interest was in looking into non-Western traditions around water, and at the depiction of water in visual arts in places with arid climates. This impulse led me to research cultural practices around the subject of water in a global context.”¹ Gu Xiong, whose work has a longstanding connection with water and human migration, had this to say, regarding the specific preoccupation he wanted to bring to the project: “The renowned Niagara Falls has always been an iconic ‘landscape’ of Canada, its grand magnificence attracting tourists from all over the world – each of them ready to exclaim over its ‘wonder’ when face to face with the awe of nature. But for me, Niagara Falls is not just a tourist site, it is a symbol of culture, migration and also sometimes a barrier regarding individual memories.”²

Upon receiving SSHRC support in spring 2011, I felt an urgent need to begin to work with a team and to move forward with the ambitions of the project; fortuitously, Colin Miner, then a PhD candidate at Western University, expressed his interest in becoming involved. He recalls that when we began, we recognized

“the need to collect as much information as possible about artists, exhibitions and visual art projects that in some way engage with water. A key decision we made concerned not becoming fixed on water as a discrete topic, or limiting ourselves to thinking about it via the ways it was already represented in the visual arts. Rather, we wanted to develop a position from which we could explore the depths such a project could reach, while developing a focal point from which to question, discover and facilitate expansive artistic approaches. What struck us at that stage in the development of *Immersion Emergencies* was the remarkable resonance of some works and research projects that had sought out seemingly indirect and sometimes idiosyncratic engagements and conversations with the subject. Such strategies appeared to relate to the aspirations described in the grant application, which proposed the value of practice-based research methodologies. Fundamentally, we determined that the project would not be as successful if it merely ‘depicted’ water...we knew we had to go further.”³

After a lengthy period of development in 2011, we ended up with a list of significant artists, institutions and projects we thought could operate as case studies regarding our group’s evolving work. For instance, artists Lucy and Jorge Orta had already done some amazing projects we hoped we could connect with. Above all, it was clear that we had to find a way to bring together a diversity of perspectives and practices, and self-organized residencies appeared to be the way to do this. The first of the two that we held occurred in Niagara Falls in spring 2012. Gu Xiong, Soheila Esfahani, Colin Miner and

I were joined there by artists Nadine Bariteau, Raymond Boisjoly, Gautam Garoo and curator Stuart Reid – as well as guest artist presenter Basia Irland. The second gathering, for two weeks, was an independent thematic group residency at the Banff Centre for the Arts (spring 2013), at which Lucy and Jorge Orta and water policy expert Robert Sandford joined us. Among the benefits of that second residency, the opportunity to include the Ortas in the exhibition and to have Robert Sandford’s thoughtful and impassioned written contribution to this publication were important outcomes. Following those gatherings, in order to chart the ongoing work that continued among the participants, we all contributed to a website that presents aspects of our individual and group research (see: <http://immersionemergencies.wordpress.com>).

Approximately a year after our residency at the Banff Centre, *The Source: Rethinking Water Through Contemporary Art* was presented at Rodman Hall Art Centre. Thanks to the patient and insightful guidance of Stuart Reid, the aspirations of *Immersion Emergencies* were harnessed within the gallery, providing a platform for a vast range of works that were often poetic, sometimes political and always highly engaged. The inclusion of the artwork of Elizabeth Chitty – a St. Catharines-based artist whose deep research into and commitment to water impressed us all – was important in helping “site” the project and give it a greater connection to the local waters.

What had begun at a comparatively modest point of origin had grown, and shifted and adapted, connecting to other new and welcome tributaries.

September 2015

¹ Soheila Esfahani, email to the author, May 2015.
² Gu Xiong, email to the author, May 2015.
³ Colin Miner, email to the author, May 2015.

PREVIOUS SPREAD LEFT
Gu Xiong
Waterscapes [installation detail], 2014

BELOW
Patrick Mahon
Water Table #2 [detail], 2014



PICTURES, TIME, COLOUR AND APOLOGY: SOME TERMS OF ADDRESS IN ART ABOUT WATER

PATRICK MAHON

These days, water is a highly charged subject of discussion and debate. Canadians know it as a resource significant within history and also as an increasingly desirable international commodity. The collaborative artists' project about water initiated in 2011, Immersion Emergencies and Possible Worlds, focused on using research and practice in visual art to address this subject's cultural and environmental importance. Dedicated to relating the historical practice of picturing nature to the idea that contemporary art offers opportunities for aesthetic and socio-cultural engagement with the present, Immersion Emergencies also provided a context for speculation about water and the future.

A central goal of the project was to bring together approaches by Canadian and international artists/researchers from multiple backgrounds to highlight their varying attitudes and ideas. Focusing on water from multiple vantage points,

Immersion Emergencies challenged the idea that there could possibly be a monolithic attitude toward such a "universal" substance. With an emphasis on differing and possibly competing perspectives, it was a site where information, attitudes and values – even spiritual or religious ones – found a place and also a springboard for display and discourse.

The exhibition The Source: Rethinking Water Through Contemporary Art linked artists involved in Immersion Emergencies with other invited artists to establish a rich and variable context of engagement throughout Rodman Hall Art Centre, both inside and out. The ten artists whose works were presented in the show – Nadine Bariteau, Raymond Boisjoly, Elizabeth Chitty, Soheila Esfahani, Gautam Garoo, Colin Miner, Lucy + Jorge Orta, Gu Xiong and I – mobilized contemporary art to ruminate, educate and also mourn about water, inviting audiences to pay attention to a substance that is, in the truest sense, us.



Immersion Emergencies Poster Project, 2013
Co-production with Fuse Magazine, Toronto

INTRODUCTION

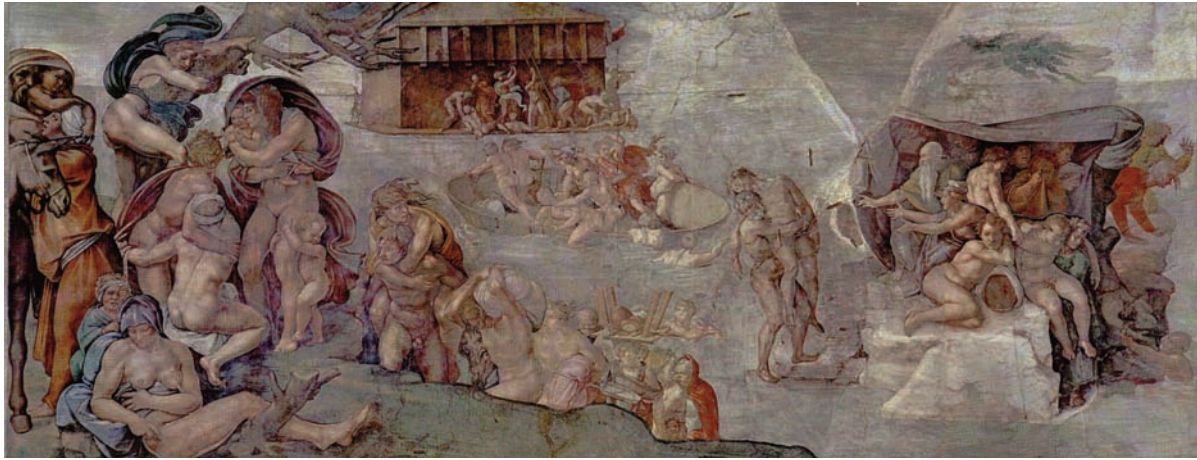
The artist's studio, whether in a garret, an office cubicle or on a laptop, *beckons* the artist as a site for creative work. Alongside this, 21st-century culture, following on the heels of a century of unparalleled change that showed modern art in the West giving way to the challenges and dramatics of postmodernism, fosters a ground of expectation for the products of individual and collective makers. Artistic work today can involve the finer points generated by graphite marks and paintbrush strokes, and also include pictures made using a robotic stylus, sculptures made with light, and experiments with bodily fluids and tissues. Utilizing tools both traditional and not, artists demonstrate that they know they have a job to do in these times of unprecedented flux – times that include environmental and political turmoil as well as advances in science, technology and the humanities.

In the face of all of this, it could certainly be argued that the challenging subjects and pressing questions of our day aren't intended first and foremost as mere invitations to artists' responses. Surely the troubles of the times won't be fixed by artistic works – will they?

Instead of wrestling directly with that broad query, we might instead remind ourselves about one of the most urgent topics at issue today – water – in order to be more specific about the relationship between 21st-century realities and the job of art. By doing so, our inquiry can focus substantially on whether creative aesthetic works can have a useful place in public discourse in general, and on whether relevant problem-solving concerning water needs input from artists.

How do we know when art matters?

In this essay, I will suggest that we can address this question and its potential answers in two ways: by looking at what artists are doing (in the case at hand, regarding water) and, inferentially, why artists are doing the things they do. In short, we may answer the question about whether art matters through engaging with artistic strategies and intentions, and consider how they come to be part of our lived experience.



PICTURES

Water has long played a role in the historical artworks of the West through pictorial representation, including in the Classical mythological narratives of the Greeks and Romans and later in Christian religious imagery. Eventually, following the Baroque, modern artistic developments and aspirations made water a subject addressable through means that emphasized its complexity so it could be thought about non-metaphorically: in terms of socio-politics and technology. Eventually, the term environmentally also had to be appended as another way to frame considerations of water.

A more geopolitically widespread acknowledgement of water in the history of visual culture includes vast numbers of works contemporaneous with the art of the West: 17th-century Mughal painting in India, and Japanese ukiyo-e prints of the same era, are examples. Such inclusions indicate that water has been an ostensibly “ubiquitous” presence in art around the globe for centuries. Whether represented in its relationship to human culture, as fundamental within nature or for other more arcane reasons, water is, was and continues to be in the picture.

John Withington’s significant volume *Flood: Nature and Culture* (2013) highlights shifting narratives of and changing social orientations to the subject of the “flood,” as pictured in a host of historic artworks. In *The Deluge* (1508-09) from Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel painting, water threatens to engulf humanity as punishment for people’s widespread sinfulness. In French painter Nicholas Poussin’s *Winter* (1660-64), the artist treats the flood within a wintry landscape that shows nature as a threat to terrified humans; it is an early Romantic example of what came to be called the “horrific sublime.”¹ English artist J. M. W. Turner also pictured the flood from a Romantic perspective, in *Shade and Darkness – The Evening of the Deluge* (1843), but as we shall see, his pictorial preoccupations also came to lend themselves to other newer modes for conceiving of water and its impact in the world.

With the dawning of high modernist painting in the 20th century and the lessening of narrative picture-making in visual discourse, in place of representations of water, “watery effects” in abstract works provided the major continuity of the subject in art.

Michelangelo Buonarroti
The Deluge, 1508-09
 from the Sistine Chapel, Rome
 Source/Photographer: The Yorck Project: 10.000
Meisterwerke der Malerei. DVD-ROM, 2002.
 ISBN 3936122202. Distributed by DIRECTMEDIA
 Publishing GmbH.

The HMS *Bounty*, an 180-foot sailboat, is submerged in the Atlantic Ocean during Hurricane Sandy, approximately 90 miles southeast of Hatteras, North Carolina, on October 29, 2012. (ABC News video capture)



Helen Frankenthaler
Nepenthe, 1972
 color aquatint on paper
 15 5/8 x 24 1/4 in. (39.8 x 61.7 cm)
 Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.
 © Helen Frankenthaler Foundation Inc./SODRAC (2016)

In witness to this, we may recall both the stain paintings of American Morris Louis, and also the delicate washes of Helen Frankenthaler, both from the 1950s. Such works bespoke the waning of an interest in utilizing a language of representation to plumb the potential within conventional picture-making to engage with social and political topics. Instead, visual evocations not directed toward narrative engagement predominated.

Nevertheless, following this reticence to “speak through pictures,” in the 1970s an array of postmodern artistic preoccupations involving various social, political and environmental concerns, including regarding water as both a phenomenon and a resource, emerged. Among such works, many used photography and became allied with significant sub-genres of contemporary practice: land art and eco-art, in particular. Allan Kaprow’s famous gesture of *performing a river* was documented in a photographic “activity booklet,” in which each moment of the performance, titled EASY, was appended with a subtitle – including “wetting a stone,” “dropping it” and so on. In addition, artistic practices eventually constituted under the rubric “relational aesthetics” emerged to include picturing the artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles washing the steps of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, in her famous *Maintenance Art* performance series.

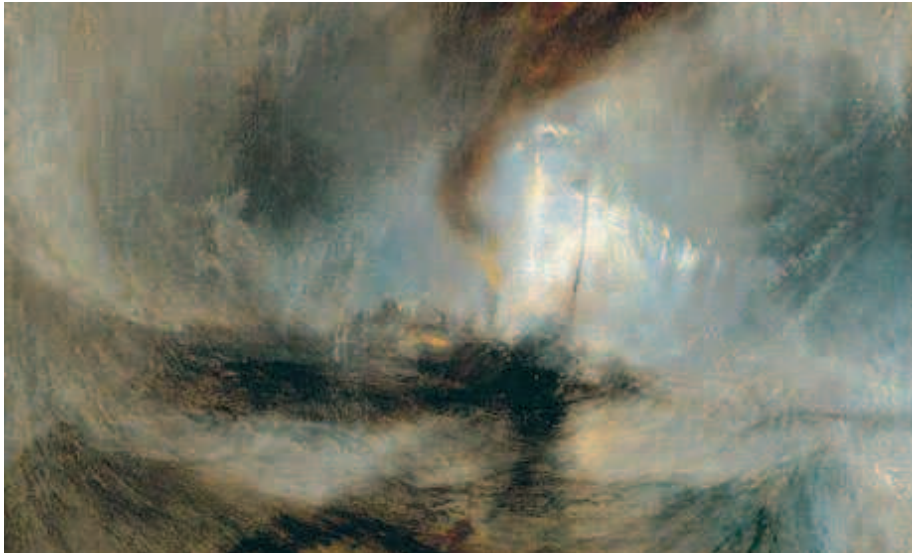
TIME

While pictures involving water in culture were significant at many stages in Western and non-Western art history, dramatic shifts in how water was represented in early modern art in the West arguably reshaped its status in cultural representation, with important consequences. To consider how this reframing led to revised understandings of the subject, we turn further to the graphic and painted works of J. M. W. Turner.²

Historian Simon Schama has acknowledged that Turner’s 19th-century depictions of the Thames were steeped in Romanticism, reversing the flow of the Thames in one image and borrowing from Dutch landscape in another.³ About Turner’s interest in rivers, the writings of French philosopher Michel Serres, in “Science and the Humanities: The Case of Turner” (1997), are compelling: they direct us to a consideration of the artist’s pictures of rivers as urgently speaking to us both *in time* and *of time*. Serres offers an understanding of Turner’s rivers not limited by sociological notions, but instead shows the artist presenting time and the river together. He invokes a social science via a hard-science context not freighted by traditional metaphors, nor, alternatively and too simplistically, by the “mechanics” of aqueous action:

Far from flowing in...continuous lines, like a well-behaved river under a bridge, upstream to downstream, time descends, turns back on itself, stops, starts, bifurcates ten times, divides, and blends, caught up in whirlpools and counter-currents, hesitant, aleatory, uncertain and fluctuating, multiplied into a thousand beds like the Yukon River.⁴

An artist dedicated to the representation of water at a particular moment in history, Turner worked through drawing and painting in a period when water was shifting from its subjection to mechanical power, and being put to industrialized service through thermodynamics. His paintings, and, indeed, the turbulent webs of his graphic representations of rivers, manifest this shift. So, water in Turner’s works came to demonstrate that “[t]urbulence deviates from equilibrium.”⁵ Water was no longer



J.M.W. Turner
Snow Storm – Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth, 1842
 Oil paint on canvas, 91.5 × 122 cm
 Source/Photographer: The Yorck Project: 10.000 Meisterwerke der Malerei. DVD-ROM, 2002.
 ISBN 3936122202. Distributed by
 DIRECTMEDIA Publishing GmbH

flowing benignly through the landscape, but moving in all directions, carrying with it an industrial, cultural and scientific revolution.

Keeping in mind such images of water shaped by modern notions of industry and science, let us also take a moment to turn to the idea of “the religious” according to contemporary conceptualizations, to further extend our thinking about water’s temporal nature. If we accept that water played a long-standing role within historical religious thinking, then we may speculate that the need to understand the relationship between water and beliefs and values remains (perhaps inferentially) urgent in a contemporary context. To address this, we turn to another text by Michel Serres: among his writings, the influential book *Le Contrat Naturel* begs for the establishment of a natural contract between humans and the earth that would enable a renewed system of balance and reciprocity. In making his case, Serres observes that, as a result of our historically determined need for mere social contracts, we have

...abandoned the bond that connects us to the world, the one that binds the time passing and flowing...outside, the bond that relates the social sciences to the sciences of the universe, history to geography, law to nature, politics to physics, the bond that allows our language to communicate with mute, passive, obscure things.... We can no longer neglect this bond.⁶

For present purposes, a brief section entitled “The Religious,” from the aforementioned book, is essential. Invoking the manner in which historical religious practitioners – Benedictine monks, Trappists and Carmelites – pray according to the hours of the day and night, Serres reminds us that such acts are not about spending time but sustaining it. Indeed, he says that – like Penelope, who never left her loom – “religion presses, spins, knots, assembles, gathers, binds, connects, lifts up, reads, or sings the elements of time.”⁷ And, offering us a picture of the religious as woven within the world through time, Serres adds, “The term *religion* expresses exactly this trajectory,



J.M.W. Turner
Shade and Darkness – The Evening of the Deluge, 1843
 Oil paint on canvas, 78.7 x 78 cm
 Source/Photographer: The Yorck Project: 10.000 Meisterwerke der Malerei. DVD-ROM, 2002.
 ISBN 3936122202. Distributed by DIRECTMEDIA Publishing GmbH

Edward Burtynsky
Nickel Tailings #34, Sudbury, Ontario, 1996
Chromogenic colour print, 102 x 155.5 cm
photo © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Nicholas
Metivier Gallery, Toronto.



Basia Irland
Tome I: Mountain Maple, Columbine Flower, Blue Spruce, Boulder Creek, Colorado from the series
“Ice Books,” 2007
Image courtesy of the artist

this review or prolonging whose opposite is called negligence, the negligence that incessantly loses the memory of these strange actions and words.”⁸ For Serres, negligence is religion’s opposite; in light of this, he asks, “While we uneasily await a second Flood, can we practice a diligent religion of the world?”⁹

Serres’ suggestion here invokes the attentive, time-sensitive practices of artists such as Allan Kaprow. The eco-artist Basia Irland, whose interventionist projects involve “collaborative and locally based actions encompassing an ethic of inclusion that focuses on important scientific and artistic outcomes along rivers,”¹⁰ also demonstrates the sort of “non-negligence” and temporal sensitivity regarding water that Serres’ theories so eloquently enlist.

COLOUR

Representations of water, whether invoking temporality or otherwise preoccupied, invariably rely on water’s myriad capacities to enliven colour, whether “natural” or not. Among the most troublingly colourful artistic images of water in recent memory are Canadian artist Edward Burtynsky’s photographs of the “runoff rivers” that emanate from mining projects. In *Nickel Tailings #34, Sudbury, Ontario* (1996), a wide stream of thick, orange fluid manifests a gash across the landscape, creating an impression at once shocking and beautiful. Undoubtedly this is a late-20th-century echo of the “horrific sublime” that Poussin’s *Winter*, mentioned above, portrays.

To speak of water and colour according to more seemingly naturalistic terms, it is notable that today a rhetoric involving the colour green surrounds discussions (and marketing) regarding the environment – often in a manner that is ubiquitous and even downright insidious. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, in *Prismatic Ecology: Ecotheory Beyond Green* (2013), notes:

Green dominates our thinking about ecology like no other [colour], as if the colour were the only organic hue, a blazon for nature itself.... Green has become our synonym for sustainability, but such a colourful ascription begs the question of exactly what mode of being we are attempting to sustain and at what environmental cost.¹¹

This assessment of the hue that overdetermines sustainability discourse is significant for our purposes; it is perhaps even more important for us to note that, functioning in parallel to the predominance of “green,” the colour “blue” has recently become ascribed to “water movements,” with their contemporary problems and interests. While presumably subject to similar impulses toward “branding an issue,” be they motivated by ideological or capitalistic aspirations, the blue movement is more nascent and therefore more interestingly nuanced.

Among the more publicly recognized examples of this phenomenon, in Canada, the Royal Bank’s *Blue Water Project* was launched in 2007: “a 10-year global charitable commitment of \$50 million to [helping] provide access to drinkable, swimmable, fishable water, now and for future generations.”¹² While it seems churlish to question such a worthwhile corporate investment distributed through charitable organizations dedicated to protecting watersheds, our interests in other undertakings bearing the rubric “blue” are potentially more valuable for present purposes, because, for one, of the readiness of some other projects to engage the work of artists.

British Columbia artist, poet, forester and mediator Michael Blackstock – who is of European and Gitxsan First Nations descent – has adopted the term *blue ecology* as an entrée to asking a fundamental political and humanitarian question: What is water? Blackstock describes his intentions as follows:

My purpose is to reveal cross-cultural assumptions and definitions of fresh water, thereby helping to reconcile forest-related conflicts between First Nations and government agencies. This approach is my local contribution to the emerging global recognition that fresh water has the potential to become a catalyst for co-operation rather than a source of conflict.¹³



Participants in *The Blue Water Project*, launched 2007
Image courtesy of the RBC Blue Water Project

Roni Horn
Vatnasafn / Library of Water, 2007
Commissioned and produced by Artangel
Photo: Gudmundur Ingolfsson





Mierle Laderman Ukeles
Washing, Tracks, Maintenance: Outside, 1973
performance at the Wadsworth Atheneum,
Hartford, Connecticut

Interestingly, the term *blue ecology* has also been adopted by the scholar Steve Mentz, in his book *At the Bottom of Shakespeare’s Ocean* (2009). Regarding Mentz’s usage of the term, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen notes that “against a landlocked green perspective, a blue ecology conveys what Mentz calls the ‘real taste of ocean...a sharp tang of nonhuman immensity’ that wrenches us violently from our ‘landed perspectives.’”¹⁴

Yet despite these compelling usages of “blue” to name attempts at harnessing possibilities for engaging with and sustaining water (which offer needed counter-points to “green” via a dose of rhetorical complexity), such language should not be taken as prescribing the signal “colour” for artistic addresses to water. An example of a water work that abjures blue – or any other dramatic hue, for that matter – in favour of the subtle and often bereft colours that nature, time and environmental degradation insist upon water, is the groundbreaking project in Iceland by American Roni Horn, *Vatnasafn / Library of Water*. Observing the project’s development, writer James Lingwood records:

Over the course of a year, blocks of ice were gathered from twenty-four of the major glaciers and glacial tongues in Iceland, formed many millennia ago and now rapidly receding. The collection of water, melted from the glacial ice, is housed in a constellation of glass columns which flow through the interior [of the space]....¹⁵

Horn’s elegant response to the loss of glacial ice across Iceland employs industrially made glass containers and a floor installation of text referring to states of water, in an elegiac site of muted greys and browns – a space for contemplation and mourning.

APOLOGY

Early in this essay I suggested that “we may answer the question about whether art matters through engaging with artistic strategies and intentions.” This aspiration was recognized as involving the need to determine “whether creative aesthetic works can have a useful place in public discourse in general, and...whether relevant problem-solving concerning water needs input from artists.”

In response, this essay has invoked a range of art projects and strategies: some invested in “picturing” water, others engaging with it expansively, even “performing it” and, in the above citation of Roni Horn’s work, an example of saving or “archiving” water. This last project suggests that, in addition to shedding light on water through images, and finding other ways to invoke it productively and symbolically, artists sometimes charge themselves with a task of mourning – and perhaps *apology* – regarding water.¹⁶

The term *apology* is a dense and potentially fraught one in our time. In this regard, we should be reminded that the 20th century brought to the fore the many traumatic social consequences yielded by centuries-old colonial programs, typically motivated by oftentimes unconscionable attitudes to “progress.” In response, we have recently seen national governments apologize to groups whose suffering at the hands of programs of domination often continues today. And although many of those gestures could be seen as cynically motivated by the need for those in power to maintain control, including over public discourse, the “culture of apology” demands our attention. In response, we might consider the potential necessity of also engaging in apologies to the non-human “agents” – such as water – that also suffer the consequences of unchecked and dominating attitudes to progress.

Philosopher Nick Smith, in the study *I Was Wrong: The Meanings of Apologies*, offers a wide-ranging analysis that encompasses such potentials:

Apologies to inanimate objects raise [many] issues.... We can again notice how underlying metaphysical beliefs can make even an apology to a rock a significant ritual. If I understand the world as an interrelated web of kinship between humans and nature, as many Native Americans do, I might give thanks to killed prey by blowing tobacco smoke into its nostrils.... Because such a worldview considers a broad scope of beings within its moral horizons, it extends opportunities for gratitude and contrition...¹⁷

Smith’s example describes an apology to an animal presumably killed in a legitimate act of hunting for food. While the question of whether the ostensible “suffering” of our planet and its waters has been *legitimately* caused is beyond our scope here, asking whether gestures toward apology for that suffering are appropriate is not beyond us. Indeed, as suggested earlier, artists’ intentions often act as necessary or even compensatory social declarations. As such, a work that appears to suggest itself as a form of apology – Roni Horn’s *Vatnasafn / Library of Water* is arguably such a work – may be doing so according to an implied if unspoken imperative.

How do we know when art matters? Perhaps when our encounters with artworks suggest that they are speaking to and about urgent subjects, in the only form of “language” possible at the moment in history at which they appear.

¹ John Withington, *Flood: Nature and Culture* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), 87.
² An earlier version of this section appears in “Drawing on the River,” in *Patrick Mahon: Drawing Water* (Kamloops: Kamloops Art Gallery, 2009).
³ Simon, Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 395.
⁴ Michel Serres, “Science and the Humanities: The Case of Turner,” in *SubStance*, Vol. 26, No. 2, Issue 83: *An Ecology of Knowledge: Michel Serres: A Special Issue* (1997), 15.
⁵ Michel Serres, *Heremes: Literature, Science and Philosophy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 102.
⁶ Michel Serres, *Le Contrat Naturel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 48.
⁷ Ibid.
⁸ Ibid. 47.
⁹ Ibid. 48.
¹⁰ see: <http://www.basiairland.com/projects/gatherings/description.html>; *Note: Basia Irland was an invited guest presenter to the “Immersion Emergencies and Possible Worlds” group in Niagara Falls, ON, in May 2014.*
¹¹ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Introduction” to *Prismatic Ecology: Ecotheory Beyond Green* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), xx.
¹² see: Royal Bank’s Blue Water Project: <http://www.rbc.com/community-sustainability/environment/rbc-blue-water/index.html>
¹³ see: Michael Blackstock: http://forrex.org/sites/default/files/publications/jem_archive/ISS31/vol6_no2_art4.pdf.
¹⁴ Ibid. Cohen, xxxiv.
¹⁵ James Lingwood, *Roni Horn: Vatnasafn / Library of Water* (London: Artangel/Steidl, 2009), 17.
¹⁶ This sentence alludes to the important essay on abstract painting by Bois, a text whose resonance is not unwelcome here, but not crucial to my argument. See: Yve-Alain Bois, “Painting: The Task of Mourning,” in *Painting as Model*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990).
¹⁷ Nick Smith, *I Was Wrong: The Meanings of Apologies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 130.

PRIMING THE SOURCE: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION

STUART REID



ABOVE
The Source participants in Banff, Alberta, April 2013
left to right: Patrick Mahon, Gautam Garoo
Soheila Esfahani, Nadine Bariteau, Raymond Boisjoly,
Robert William Sandford, Gu Xiong, Colin Miner.
(not shown- Elizabeth Chitty, Lucy + Jorge Orta)

Water seeks water, finding its own level as it flows. Our bodies, being mostly water, are sensitive to the call of the source. A longing for reunion pulls one to the edge of the level surface, only to recognize our reflection in its mercurial mirror. Like Narcissus, we find it hard to look away. We learn about ourselves when we contemplate water. Its essence pervades our physical life, our spirituality and our imagination. Water forms cultural ties that bind people, and informs our stories, myths, beliefs and customs.

As much as water makes up our physical bodies, it pervades and surrounds us, comprising our earthly environment and atmosphere. From an ocean wave to a snowdrift to a rainbow, water interacts with energy and transforms itself into phenomena, both majestic and sublime.

Our inextricable links with fresh water as a life source prompt much anxiety in our fast-changing world. Our era, marked by rapid climate change, destructive hydro-climactic weather events, loss of polar ice and rising global sea levels, is witness to shifting shorelines, borders, migration patterns and lines of economic and cultural exchange. In decades to come, water will be the source of redefining our global community based on the collective interests of humanity.

Although many believe access to fresh water is an essential human right, it is now a valuable global commodity that is bottled and traded, fast becoming scarce. In 2015, we saw the massive metropolis of São Paulo, Brazil, tap into its final reservoir¹ and we witnessed the catastrophic drought and wildfires that ravaged California in the United States. As I write this, the Government of Canada has just appointed a minister dedicated to climate change, indicative of the growing sense of urgency we feel at this moment, what scientists call the eleventh hour. This season, we saw the warming Pacific spawn the superstorm Patricia – the strongest land-falling Pacific hurricane ever recorded. Social media is abuzz with stories about scientists’ concern over the fast-occurring bleaching of coral reefs as the temperature of our oceans rises. An acidifying ocean due to increased carbon dioxide could mean the collapse of the entire marine food chain because of the negative impact on shelled creatures. Changes to water cycles alter the life cycles of every species on our planet.

The Source: Rethinking Water Through Contemporary Art was an ambitious assemblage of artists who came together to discuss, explore and learn from one another. The resulting exhibition was constructed around those individual explorations and a new understanding of water. This shared focus spurred investigations that were far-reaching, divergent and informed by individual interest, cultural perspective and geographic viewpoint.

It was important to the spirit of the project that there was no summary or didactic messaging – fluidity and the changing course of questioning were important to show in their true states. Although there was a collective understanding that the topic of water spilled over into the political sphere, and issues are pressing and global in nature, a definitive stand on these issues did not arise. Instead the show opened up a cascade of ideas and directions that mirrored the intangible nature of the material we were discussing. *The Source* contemplates water from a nationless, borderless perspective that is altogether human.

The following pages serve to introduce each artist’s practice and their contribution to *The Source*.

¹ Claire Rigby. “São Paulo’s water crisis: In the Favela do Moinho, 2,500 residents rely on one impossibly thin blue pipe,” *The Guardian, Cities*, April 15, 2015.



NADINE BARITEAU

Nadine Bariteau is interested in water, particularly its commodification. In 2008, she made a piece called *Couverture d'eau* (*Water Blanket*), for which she bound together 3,000 plastic water bottles culled from a neighbour's recycling box over a ten-month period. The resulting raft of bottles was floated on the surface of several bodies of water and photographed. In 2010, she created a six-pack of hugely oversized plastic water bottles under the brand name *Crown*. This blow-up of the ubiquitous package of water bottles spawned several performances – the artist loaded the package into a shopping cart and pushed it through the city of Halifax from shopping mall to dock front. These earlier pieces were subversively political, and drew attention to the absurdity of the commodification of water and the negative impacts on our environment of the packaging of water.

In 2011, on an icy winter road, Bariteau was involved in a catastrophic car crash that took the life of her mother. The ensuing years have been a journey through grief to healing and wholeness. The power of the ocean has been a force the artist has returned to again and again for solace. Bariteau acknowledges that in the French language, the word for sea, *la mer*, is similar to the word for mother, *la mère*. In one of the text panels that forms the photo series *Âme et océan* (*Soul and Ocean*), she writes: “the sea calms me. it refocuses my will and gives me strength. it fills my being and feeds me. it heals me.”¹

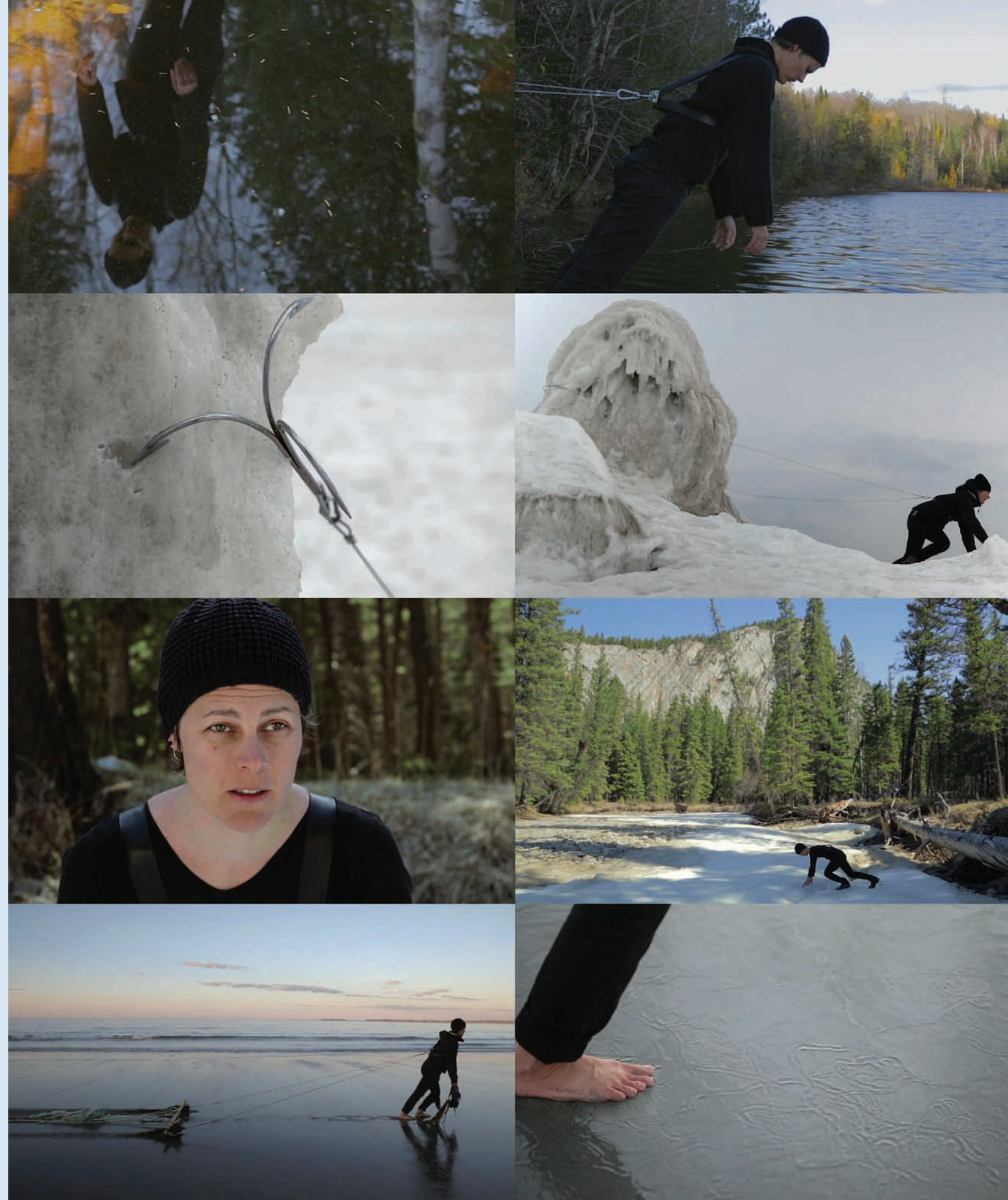
Protecteurs des mers (*Protectors of the Seas*) by Bariteau was an installation of hand-built ceramic fish heads situated in the Project Space at Rodman Hall – the former window casings of the historic mansion's bay windows that overlook the gardens and Twelve Mile Creek. The ceramic forms were glossy white against a black wall, which made the forms seem to hover, as if emerging from the surface of dark water. Each fish head had a gaping maw and spiky teeth that was both sinister and humorous. Each was unique, with unusual fins,

eyes, teeth and markings. Flanking the central vitrine, an oversized metal fish hook was installed on the right and a giant fishing lure with hooks on the left. Coated in a highly reflective silver finish, the hooks dangled sinisterly at the height of the viewers' heads. Carefully placed mirrors situated behind the hooks invited passersby to catch a glimpse of their own reflections.

In the video work called *Guérison en quatre saisons* (*Four Seasons of Healing*), the artist acted as performer and director, piecing together actions performed against landscapes from different parts of Canada in each of the four seasons. In each action, Bariteau utilizes two large fish hooks (seen in the vitrines), both attached to a long line and a body harness. On a partially frozen river in Banff during springtime, the artist is hooked onto a downed tree, pulling and tugging the immovable trunk. In deep winter on the icy shore of the Toronto Islands, the artist hooks herself onto a towering ice face and tries to propel herself forward, but constantly loses her footing on the sheer surface. Another sequence finds the artist cantilevered out over a still lake near her father's Quebec cottage in autumn, hooked to a tree on the shore. Here she doesn't pull, but hangs in stillness above her reflection. In the final chapter, the artist walks the ocean shore south of Halifax – the hooks drag behind her latched on to a beach rake that gathers up seaweed, driftwood and sticks. The artist writes about the piece: “These actions permit me to imagine an eventual life beyond death while practicing a certain level of resilience. This piece resonates with an echo of what all human beings must confront at some point in their lives: the inevitable passage of mourning.”²

¹ Artist statement, 2014.

² Ibid.





PREVIOUS PAGE
Guérison en quatre saisons (Four Seasons for Healing),
 [video stills], 2013-14

ABOVE
Âme et océan (Soul and Ocean Series), 2013

OPPOSITE PAGE
Protecteurs des mers (Protectors of the Seas)
 [installation detail], 2013



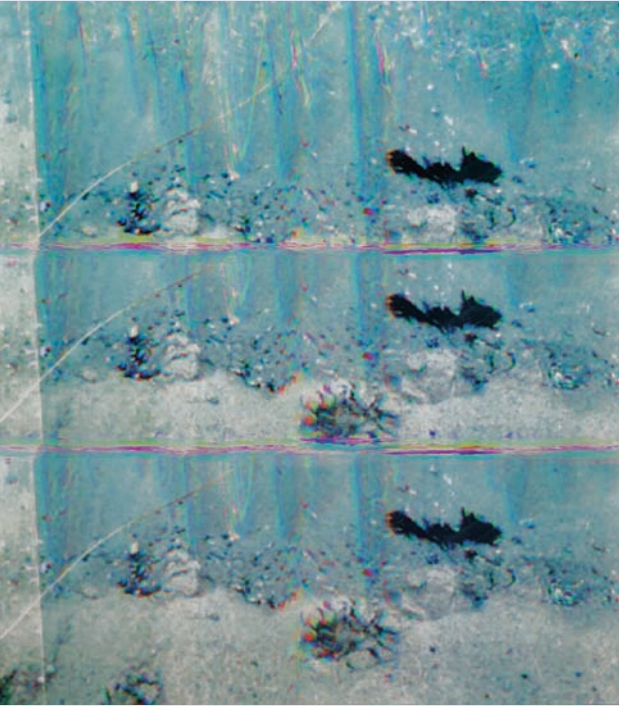


RAYMOND BOISJOLY

Raymond Boisjoly is an Indigenous artist of Haida and Québécois descent based in Vancouver. His contribution to *The Source* was a suite of mounted digital photographs that documented a disjointed conversation between two incompatible technologies, an iPad that captures video imagery and the raking eye of a flatbed scanner. Both technologies are recording devices; however, when meeting face to face, their conversation and the product created is fragmented.

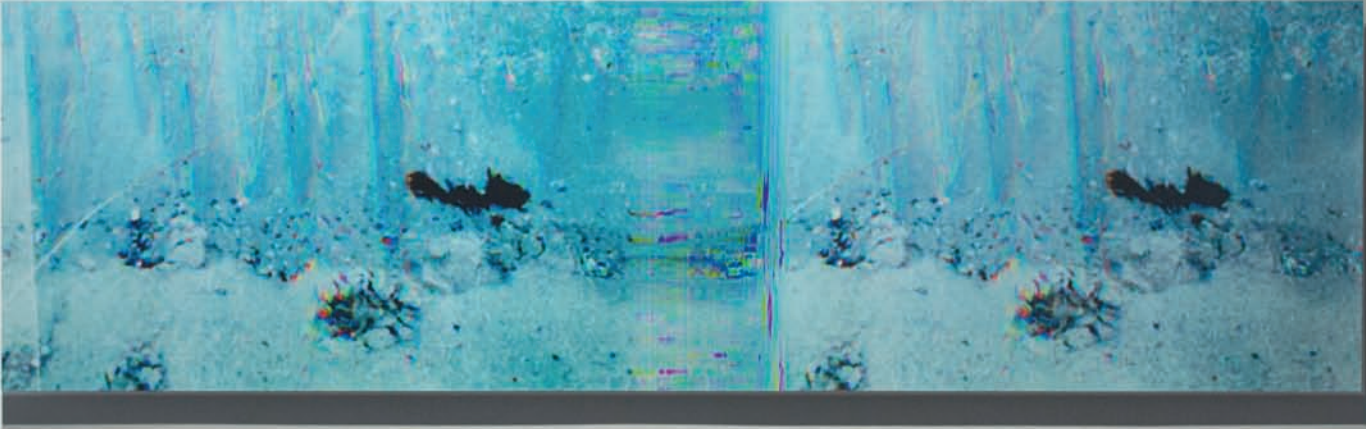
The works *Jericho (where there will be other places after)* and *This place (where there had been other places before)* took their source image from Jericho Beach in Vancouver. The artist produced a sequence of images in response to a poem by Daphne Marlatt called “this city: shrouded” from her book *Liquidities: Vancouver Poems Then and Now*,¹ which references Jericho Beach and the Musqueam village of Ee’yullmough that existed there before. Boisjoly created these prints by recording video imagery of the shoreline on an iPad. The moving images were then scanned on a flatbed scanner. The resulting images are distorted, unmoored from the logical reality of a linear reading. While the image is no longer representative of a specific place, it becomes another type of “found object” incorporating the scratches, imperfections, blurs and smears inherent in its making. The act of dislodging meaning from place draws attention to Indigenous peoples’ perspective on Jericho Beach as a culturally significant site, alienated from its traditional use and its displaced former inhabitants. The broken links between image and meaning allude to the effects of colonialism on long-held memory and human connection to place. The imagery Boisjoly has produced depicts the surface of water passing over the shore. Like the lapping action of a wave, which mimics the scan of the electronic eye, the artist draws attention to the fleeting nature of water, the washing away of imprints and the changing nature of shorelines.

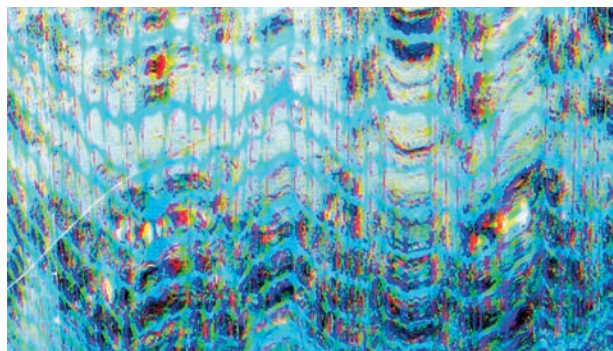
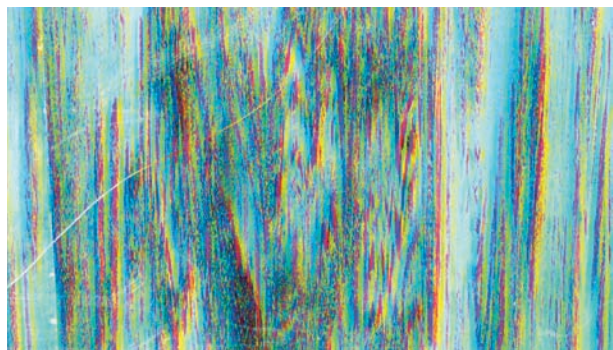
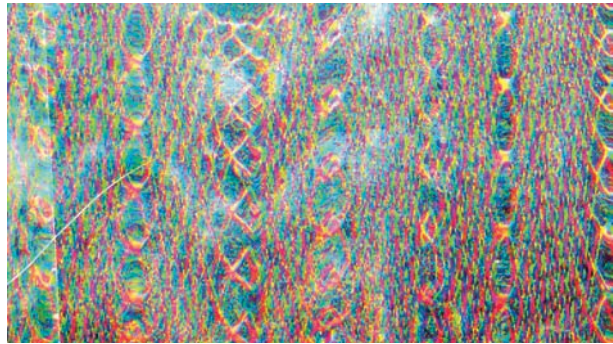
¹ Published by Talonbooks, Vancouver, 2013.



ABOVE
This place (where there had been other places before) [detail], 2014

OPPOSITE PAGE
Jericho (where there will be other places after), 2014





LEFT
From the series *Jericho (where there will be other places after)* 2013-14
screen resolution LightJet prints
mounted on Dibond
91.4 x 61 cm

OPPOSITE PAGE
Jericho (where there will be other places after) [installation view], 2014





ELIZABETH CHITTY

Elizabeth Chitty has long been engaged with the power of water, particularly as it relates to Ontario's Niagara watershed. Born in St. Catharines, she has travelled Canada in her career as an artist and performer, and returned to live in this community in the late 1980s. Her most recent body of work incorporates performance, social activism, film, video, audio and installation. It excavates the region's histories, focusing on the way humans have relied on water to build their communities, contrasting recent history with pre-Settlement times.

Her contribution to *The Source, Streaming Twelve*, is a multilayered video installation that incorporates image, sound, and text. It investigates notions of governance over water, particularly Twelve Mile Creek, which flows behind Rodman Hall. The artist writes: "I have long been interested in the interplay and interdependence of nature and human culture. In this work, my research was focused through the lens of ideas about ownership and governance. In Canada, no one can own water but of course it is not that simple as anyone who has ever seen a bottle of water knows. Ideas of ownership are themselves cultural."¹

Chitty's installation incorporated two large-scale projections and a smaller projection cast on a sculpture plinth with a soundtrack. One of the large projections in *Streaming Twelve* depicts recorded imagery shot by an aerial drone flying over Twelve Mile Creek, travelling upstream from the Burgoyne Bridge to the Glendale Bridge. The footage shows the creek from a low-flying perspective, just above the water and treeline. The imagery reveals that surveillance over water is a type of ownership; the authority of the aerial view is all-encompassing, and even captures images of the artist and drone pilot as they control the shoot from the shore.

On the adjacent wall, another projection of a real-time video stream of the creek's flow is captured by a camera secured to the roof of Rodman Hall. The image varies greatly according to the time of day and the angle of the sun. Bright summer morning shows the waters flash silver behind the trees; late afternoon plunges the shoreline into deep darkness.

The camera not only records the flow of water past Rodman Hall, but also the life that takes place along the creek: joggers, dog-walkers, people exploring the Walker Botanical Gardens seeking shade on a hot summer day. On one evening in May 2014, the resident groundhog in the gardens made an appearance, meandering across the screen, asserting dominion over his turf.

The third element in *Streaming Twelve* is projected on a short plinth next to a bench for close viewing, where headphones stream an audio track. The projection features archival still images detailing the construction of DeCew Generating Station #2, a hydroelectric power station just upstream from Rodman Hall built as part of the war effort during World War II. Cropped images focus on human work and activity, showing people making use of the force of water, building a city, powering a nation. While temporally specific, Chitty's piece, through its use of audio, broadens the scope to shift understanding of water among various peoples that have interacted with it over a vast expanse of time, reaching back to the treaties that define the relationships between Indigenous peoples and settlers in this part of Ontario. The audio track accompanying the moving image streams braids three sources of sound: the noise of electricity being generated in DeCew #1 (the oldest continually running hydroelectric station in Canada), excerpts read by the artist from the annual reports of the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario for 1942-44 and a translation of the Nanfan Treaty of 1701 governing this region of Canada, spoken in the Mohawk language.

A text available to visitors also addresses notions of ownership and governance over water from historic, contemporary and Indigenous perspectives. In it, Chitty writes: "I am interested in the local in a global context. Our enjoyment of abundant water, good infrastructure, and responsible government does not exempt us from the urgent global issues about water ownership, use and protection. This view from here resonates with water issues."²

¹ Artist statement, 2014.

² Ibid.



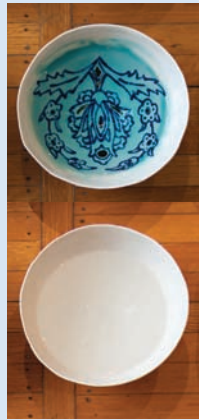


PREVIOUS PAGE
Streaming Twelve [video stills], 2014

LEFT
Streaming Twelve [video stills], 2014



ABOVE
Streaming Twelve, [installation view], 2014



SOHEILA ESFAHANI

Soheila Esfahani is interested in the sacred, sustaining nature of water. In her native Iran, fountains and water sources appear regularly in the city streets. For *The Source*, Esfahani created bowls in glazed ceramic, slip-cast forms. The decorations on the bowls reference the ornate decoration of the parlours of Rodman Hall. The Oriental decorations that Esfahani has used reference her own heritage and are evidence of colonial appropriation of those traditions, as apparent in the architectural decoration of the Victorian mansion. The Victorians borrowed heavily from the Middle East and Asia in decorative elements applied to furniture, textiles and architectural detail. The intricate articulated plasterwork on the ceiling of the parlours and the patterning that adorns the Italianate marble fireplaces are reflected in the delicate blue designs of 120 bowls laid out in a grid pattern on the floor of the Hansen Gallery. The patterns on the bowls compose an overall design that mimics that of a Persian rug.

Several of the delicate bowls were placed in the outdoor fountain of the Walker Botanical Gardens that surround Rodman Hall. The brightly coloured bowls were decorated with gold, a shimmering surprise that encouraged closer interaction with the bubbling surface of water and the cooling sound of the fountain.



ABOVE
Reflect, 2013-14

OPPOSITE PAGE
Wish on Water [detail], 2013-14





ABOVE
Wish on Water [installation view], 2013-14

OPPOSITE PAGE
Wish on Water [detail], 2013-14





GAUTAM GAROO

Gautam Garoo travelled to his native India as part of his research for *The Source*. His video piece *On the Water's Edge: 25°18'12.31"N/83°00'27.58"E* was shot in India in an alleyway near the ghats (steps leading down to the water) on the great Ganges River. This thirteen-minute video documents the relationship that exists between the people and the water in the city of Varanasi. Residents must use electric water pumps to push water upstairs to their apartments during the period of the day when electricity is available. The pumps often have to be primed by sucking the water through a tube. The video, shot at a low angle, shows the passing of life in this alleyway. An old woman sweeps the alley with a broom, a small dog passes by and a woman visits her pump several times, priming it and returning to check on progress. The comings and goings of people are directly linked to the necessity for access to water and how that relationship informs the actions of daily life.

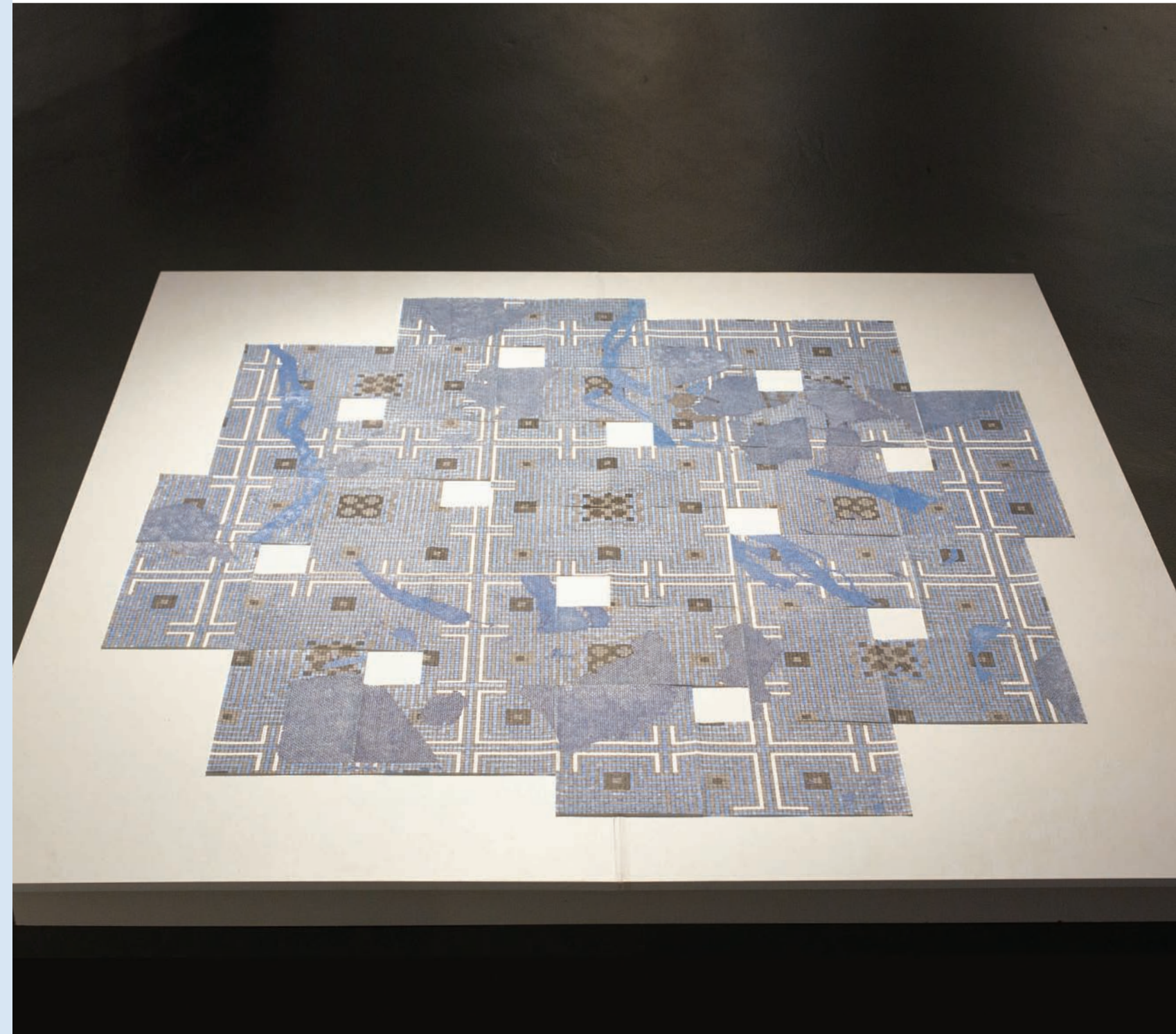
Garoo also created an ornate graphite-and-ink drawing on handmade paper called *On the Water's Edge: 57°00'13.98"N/111°27'34.47"W* that was displayed on a large plinth. The ornate geometric patterning of the drawing references the edges of water in both the ghats along the Ganges River in India and the tailings ponds of the tar sands in Alberta. There was a great tension in the drawing as two styles clash on the surface: the orderly geometry of the stepwells and the scarlike spatter of the tailings ponds. There is also a great contrast in how those two patterns reference

two divergent modes of human interaction with water sources. The ghats along the Ganges provide people access to sacred waters for bathing, ceremonies and celebration, and as cremation sites. The ghats are places of interaction and spiritual transformation. The tailings ponds are systems of dams and dykes that create a settling basin for the by-products of the oil-sands processing: a thick mixture of water, sand, clay and oil. These patterns of ponds are the spills of waste from the human activity of forcing hot water through the sand and clay to separate out the bitumen that will be refined into oil. The contrast of engagement with water for spiritual transformation and for capitalistic gain is emblematic of a much more complicated contrast between the West and the developing world in terms of culture, wealth distribution and economic development.

Garoo also collaborated with Nadine Bariteau as the cameraman who shot her video works. On a cold winter crossing to the Toronto Islands for one of Bariteau's shoots, Garoo filmed the five-minute loop *On the Water's Edge: 43°37'55.26"N/79°21'19.56"W*. The mesmerizing video showed the ice breaking as a ferry boat passes. The loop creates a sense of danger and cataclysm, watching the solid state of water cracking and overturning, much like the video footage of the calving of the Arctic ice shelf that ricocheted across social media, heralding foreboding record-breaking temperatures in the Arctic.

BELOW

On the Water's Edge: 57°00'13.98"N/111°27'34.47"W, 2013-14





ABOVE
On the Water's Edge: 25°18'12.31"N/83°00'27.58"E [video still], 2013

OPPOSITE PAGE
On the Water's Edge: 43°37'55.26"N/79°21'19.56"W [video stills], 2013





PATRICK MAHON

Patrick Mahon has addressed the idea of drawing water in an extensive artmaking practice over the past ten years. He works in a varied multimedia format incorporating drawing, printmaking, sculpture, installation and video. He is also a generous collaborator, interested in forging broader dialogues on seminal topics with groups of makers. The collaborative residency model for *Immersion Emergencies* (which led to *The Source*) was similarly employed by Mahon in *Art and Cold Cash* (2004-2008), a SSHRC-funded exhibition that examined the way capitalism was introduced to the Canadian Arctic, spawning markets for Inuit art. That project brought together three senior Canadian artists who had lived and worked in the Arctic to collaborate with an Inuit artist and an Inuit writer/curator. This fluid way of working inspires meaningful exchange and gives rise to projects that are multi-dimensional and probing in their summary treatment of various subject matters. Shared experiences create dialogue among makers that forges new pathways and experimentation in each practice.

Figuring prominently in *The Source* were several of Mahon's screen-printed balsa-wood constructions that appear as low-relief drawings hung on the gallery walls. The pieces appear as three-dimensional drawings in perspective, manifest as a frail lattice of wooden lines. His work *Water and Tower Allegory #4* sat in the ornate parlours of Rodman Hall, its intricate wooden construction echoing the marquetry in the detailed floors of the historic home. The artist writes: "In the series *Water and Tower Allegory*, printed wall sculptures based on images of water towers and pictures of coal mining tipples advance abstract arrangements where structures and flowing patterns comingle, suggesting human enterprise as filled with contradiction – with both failure and promise."¹

In another space, Mahon presented three "shipwreck" pieces, two entitled *Submersible (Hogarth) (#1 & 2)* and a third, *Bounty (Submersible)*. The idea of redrawing these historic vessels in distress is a potent allegory in a discussion of contemporary issues around water. The loose drawings of ships are open to the viewer's interpretation and reading; the ships exist as historic references that portend an uncertain future.

The artist writes: "The work *Bounty (Submersible)*, which is based in part on images of the wreck of the replica ship that sank off the coast of New York in 2012 during Hurricane Sandy, is a cacophony of signs that bring together historical references and present realities. Among them are details from a fourteenth century woodcut print by Titian, depicting the Biblical parting of the Red Sea, and a copy of a nineteenth century archival document reporting on the flooding of the Red River in Manitoba."²

Nearby, a video piece comprised of three monitors lying on their backs in a table format was like a glimpse into a reflecting pool. Entitled *Water Table #2*, the work incorporated the visual patterns referencing water that appeared as decorative surface on the series of *Submersibles*. The disparate patterns, each a drawing related to water, from Hogarth's etching marks to calligraphic script in a journal, appeared on the video screen as if glimpsed below the surface of the water. Periodically, a wave traversed the surface of the three monitors from end to end. Visitors to the exhibition, entranced with the illusion, would touch the screens to see if their hand affected the water's surface.

¹ Artist statement, 2014

² Ibid.



Water and Tower Allegory #4, 2013



OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP
Bounty (Submersible) [detail], 2013

OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT TO RIGHT
Submersible (Hogarth) #1, 2013
Submersible (Hogarth) #2, 2013
Bounty (Submersible), 2013

RIGHT
Water Table #2 [installation view], 2014
 Background: *Submersible (Hogarth) #2*, 2013





COLIN MINER

Colin Miner acknowledges that water has a constant presence in our universe in many physical states: gas, vapour, steam, fog, snow, and liquid and solid ice. For *The Source*, Miner painted the walls of the space a dark grey, creating a mystical, cavelike space where the mercurial, reflective and magical qualities of water align. Miner widens the viewer's gaze to encompass micro and macro views of water, looking at its significance within a controlled, contained space, but also within the infinite expanse of the cosmos. Miner created a suite of works in video, print, neon and drawing, taking on the subject of water as a fluid liquid presence that exists in relation to our vision, ultimately mediated by photography.

On a large video monitor, a luscious video called *RGB#4 (lava, ice cave, fall 2012)* depicted the passage of coloured light over the surreal landscape of an ice cave the artist shot in China. The scene showed water in the form of crystalline ice, shimmering and sparkling like a treasure box of precious jewels. The nature of the reflection and ambiguity of the surface of the ice, upon sustained viewing, became more amorphous and resembled a celestial cloud, perhaps of stars or other matter.

An adjacent installation, *Untitled (lynx)*, was comprised of a drawing of the cosmic black hole containing the universe's largest "water cloud," which exists in the Lynx constellation in outer space. The drawing was made by puncturing photographic backdrop paper. The paper was placed over the top part of a glass fire-exit door and allowed the bright summer sun to shine through the perforations, casting a moving light map of the constellation on the floor of the gallery, traversing the wall as the sun passed over the sky. The bottom of the door was covered in anti-glare window film, heightening the drama of the drawing's interaction with the light from outdoors. With such a simple gesture, Miner called to mind the otherworldly presence of water in sync with the movement of the planets and the energy of the sun's illumination.

Miner's dramatic installation within the dark space contemplated the mystical, transformative power of water. His chromogenic metallic print mounted on Dibond entitled *blue eye* documented the amazing colour of an exposed patch of ancient glacial ice on the Columbia Icefield near Banff, Alberta. This azure phenomenon has been uncovered by the rapid retreat of the icefield in this time of rapid global warming. Across from the photograph was another perforated work, *Untitled (heart of darkness)* – a unique chromogenic colour print hung loosely with aluminum push-pins on a painted corkboard. This dark, otherworldly object again contemplated water and light, but, in its very nature, nodded to the history of photography and the power of the negative.

Miner speaks and writes eloquently about his interest in liquid intelligence, a term Jeff Wall used in his brief 1989 essay "Photography and Liquid Intelligence." Miner writes: "I am interested in the qualities of lightness and darkness, and of our insistence of viewing water as a purity – both in form/structure and content. What happens when the impure is introduced, when its structure is made unpredictable? Further, what happens when we consider, and move towards, employing a liquid way of being/doing versus a dry and mechanical intelligence?"¹

In Miner's neon installation *Afterimage #21* and *Afterimage #22*, he brings the liquid nature of sight into the discussion of water. The two neon sculptures are coloured light drawings of the network of nerves and capillaries in the human eye. The term *aqueous humour* refers to the clear liquid that fills the space between the cornea and the iris and between the iris and the lens inflating the mechanism of the eye, allowing it to translate vibrations of light into visual images. Miner's glowing neon drawing in space pulsed brightly in cool blue and white light, burning a lasting impression into viewers' retinas that lasted long after they glanced away.

¹ Artist statement, July 17, 2014



PREVIOUS SPREAD
Untitled (heart of darkness) [detail], 2013

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP
Afterimage #21, 2014
Afterimage #22, 2014

OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM
RGB#4 (lava, ice cave, fall 2012) [installation view], 2013

LEFT
Untitled (lynx) [installation view], 2014



LUCY + JORGE ORTA

Lucy + Jorge Orta, who live and work in France, were special guests at the *Immersion Emergencies* residency at Banff, Alberta, in spring 2013. Their presentation at the Banff Centre about the history of their far-reaching international collaborative practice addressed a diversity of issues: political oppression, ecological sustainability, contemporary social issues related to water, food production and loss of biodiversity (after their recent visit to the Amazon rainforest). Their work so directly dovetailed with the issues emanating from the residency, they were invited to participate in the exhibition at Rodman Hall the following year.

As collaborators, the Ortas merge their diverse talents and experiences, drawing on shared roots in community activism as well as broad experience in architecture and fashion to create their works. The pair has come to work in a diversity of media, including sculpture, installation, drawing, painting, silk-screening, couture, video, performance and light. One of their many exhibitions at the world's great biennials and art fairs was at the 2005 Venice Biennale at the Bevilacqua La Masa Foundation, in which dirty water from the Grand Canal was pumped into the gallery, where it was filtered and purified, then issued as clean drinking water in an "OrtaWater"-branded bottle. This groundbreaking work resulted in the Ortas winning the 2008 Green Leaf Award "for sculpture with an environmental message by the United Nations Art for the Environment Program." The Ortas' practice had profound impact on discussions at the *Immersion Emergencies* residency in Banff.

Upon entering the Hansen Gallery at Rodman Hall, viewers were confronted with *OrtaWater – Life Line*, a hanging assemblage comprised of a handcrafted life jacket, a laminated photograph, silk-screened text on straps, all held together with rope and clips. The piece, essentially an

adorned life-saving device – figured prominently in the promotion for *The Source* – was a perfect metaphor for the precarious nature of the relationship between humans and water. The words EQUO, SURVIVE, VITAL, ECOSYSTEM, GLOBAL, PARTICIPATORY and CHALLENGE were screen-printed in bold graphics on the life jacket. The photo panel integrated into the life jacket depicted an ice-covered body of water in cold blue and white. The piece reinforced that issues related to water impact directly on human survival.

In the Harris-Godwin Gallery (mounted in its own room) was the Ortas' two-channel video work *Antarctica Village – No Borders*, projected as a diptych that wrapped around the room's far corner. In 2007, the End of the World Biennale in Ushuaia commissioned the Ortas to embark upon a remarkable expedition to ice-covered Antarctica aboard a Hercules KC-130 flight. Toward the end of the Austral summer, during the months of February to March, aided by the logistical crew and scientists stationed at the Marambio Base in the Antarctic, the artists founded their ephemeral *Antarctica Village*, comprised of fifty provisional handmade dome tents emblazoned with imagery related to the human body, and text and imagery from the flags of the nations of the world. The video depicted the Hercules flight, the landing on the barren land mass, the pitching of the tents and the full force of the dramatic weather in that part of the world. This placement of the frail tents on the windswept, snow-covered land evoked the precariousness of human efforts akin to Mahon's *Water and Tower Allegory*. The eleven-minute film also depicted the raising of the first *Antarctica Flag* created by the Ortas as a tribute to the Antarctic Treaty.

This Antarctic "métisse" flag represents a kaleidoscope of different nations, according to the artists: "As if through the filter of a prism, the flag concentrates all the national colours

into the sum of light.... All identities coexist, side by side, hand in hand. The edges blend, symbolising belonging to a larger common identity. This flag should become the flag of the new world community, to be raised as a supranational emblem of human rights."¹ During the run of *The Source*, the Ortas' *Antarctica Flag* flew proudly on a flagpole in front of the gallery.

The Ortas draw attention to the Antarctic Treaty, signed in 1959 by twelve countries; instituting the continent as common territory, it now counts signatures from fifty-three countries. The Madrid Protocol, ratified in 1991, preserves Antarctica from development by forbidding mining until 2048 and banning any corporate industrial research or exploitation for fifty years. Military activity is similarly prohibited. Since then, Antarctica has become a rare place of preservation, research and collaboration between nations. Outside the realm of the boundary disputes, capitalistic manoeuvring and militaristic posturing of the developed world, Antarctica holds hope for new modes of global cooperation.

During the run of the exhibition, the public was invited to visit the operational *Antarctica Passport Office* in an office in the west wing of Rodman Hall. The office had hours posted on the door and a volunteer attendant; often services were available in English, French and German. The Ortas' project intends to mobilize the citizens of the world to protect the Antarctic and its unique status and to take action against global warming and for peace. Visitors were invited to register for an *Antarctica World Passport*, a precious, limited-edition artwork that marks the visitor's entry into the Antarctica world community. Visitors could take an oath and become a citizen of Antarctica and be issued a passport registered on a worldwide online database, www.antarcticaworldpassport.com, joining over 12,000 other recent applicants. The attendant stamped the passport with one of the specially designed stamps authenticating the participants' commitment to uphold the tenets of their passport: "to combat all acts of barbarity, to fight against intimidation and poverty, to support social progress, to protect the environment and endangered species, to safeguard human dignity and to defend the inalienable rights to liberty, justice and peace in the world."²

¹ <http://www.studio-orta.com/en/artwork/35/Antarctica-Flag>

² Lucy + Jorge Orta, text from *Antarctica Passport*, London, 2012, edition of 30,000.



ABOVE
OrtaWater – Life Line, 2005



ABOVE
Antarctica Village – No Borders [video still], 2007

OPPOSITE
Antarctica Flag – No Borders, 2007
 Inkjet on polyimide, Edition of 7 (3 A.P.)

Antarctica World Passport, 2008–ongoing
 Limited Edition





GU XIONG

OPPOSITE
Waterscapes [installation details], 2014

Gu Xiong was born in Chongqing, China, and now lives and works in Vancouver. Gu Xiong works in a diversity of media, including painting, sculpture, photography, video, digital imagery, performance art and installation. His celebrated work has garnered broad international attention over the past decades. It often returns to the concept of the river as subject matter, particularly the Yangtze, which flows through his home province of Sichuan in China, and more recently the Fraser River in British Columbia. Regarding rivers as inspiration, Gu Xiong has written: “For me, there were no bridges to help me cross these rivers. I learned that you have to jump into the river and swim a long distance to experience another culture, and to be open to benefitting from differences. There is conflict in that process. I have asked myself, How can I bring the two main rivers in my life together? The answer: I have to become like a river myself – a river of migration, a river of trans-cultural identities, a river of change and uncertainty – in order to bring these forces into a third space.”¹

For *The Source*, Gu Xiong contributed a spectacular installation called *Waterscapes*, comprised of a suspended “river” of small plastic white boats that sailed through the spaces of the galleries, down hallways, through a window and across the lawns of Rodman Hall, to finally flow down the hillside as if returning to the waters of Twelve Mile Creek. Indoors the boats were suspended from the ceiling with thin nylon filament; outside they floated atop small steel rods that maintained the continuity of the flow of the river from inside

to outside. The laborious installation of 1,000 of these boats was a community exercise that involved many volunteers over several days. All who participated were enthusiastically engaged with the mounting of an artwork of such scale and impact. The small white boats were about the size of a child’s toy boat, and their luminous white contrasted greatly with the lush green of outdoors during the late-spring installation. The white line of the boats could be glimpsed from nearly a kilometre away as it passed out through the building and down the hillside. This spectacle drew many visitors to the doors of Rodman Hall during the run of the exhibition.

In July 2013, as part of his research for the *Immersion Emergencies* project, Gu Xiong came to St. Catharines for a week-long residency to document the culture of the migrant workers who support the agricultural industries along the Niagara River in Ontario. With support from individuals in the Niagara Migrant Workers Interest Group, Gu Xiong made community connections that allowed him to visit migrant workers at their work sites and temporary homes in various locations across the region. Because the workers put in long days in the fields and orchards, his encounters and conversations happened later in the evening, at the close of the workday. While the many documentary photographs of the workers in *The Source*, seen at work in the fields, worshipping at their church or in their living quarters, could be perceived as voyeuristic, Gu Xiong asserts his authorship in his commentary, which draws upon his own experiences as a



youth forced into farm labour in China (1966–1976) under Mao Zedong. Gu Xiong undertakes this project from a position of empathy and understanding. He writes: “Being with the seasonal workers reminds me of my time being an educated youth during the Cultural Revolution in China. We were urban youth exiled to the poorest villages in China, away from our family. Aside from the heavy labour, we could not see our future, and we lived in despair.”²

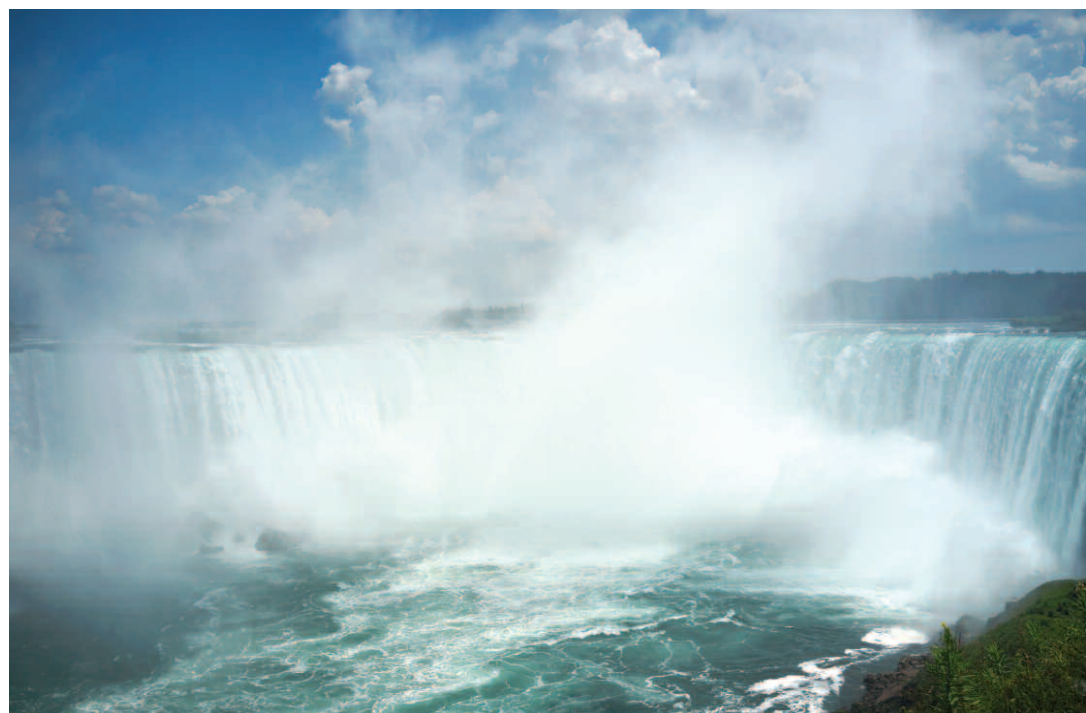
For *The Source*, Gu Xiong installed twenty images from his photo documentary of the lives of the migrant workers in Niagara in the ornate parlours and halls of the historic Niagara home. Rodman Hall as a community edifice speaks of the power, prestige and wealth of the Merritt family that built the house. It may have been an intimidating place to approach for the migrant workers, but several of the men photographed in Gu Xiong’s photos came to the opening reception of the show for a look and another talk with Gu Xiong.

Gu Xiong’s project acknowledges Rodman Hall’s association with the history of the Welland Canal and the former port of Shipman’s Corners. The canal was essential infrastructure related to water that opened up capitalistic trade and commerce to the rest of the Great Lakes and the development of Western Canada. Today, much of the world’s population live alongside waterways used to transport goods and people: indeed, in our age of increased globalization, migration and consumerism, rivers have become potent metaphors for global exchange.



¹ Gu Xiong, “The Invisible Group: Working Notes on International Seasonal Farm Workers,” July 2013.

² Ibid.



ABOVE
Jamaican Migrant Worker Series, [various images], 2014

OPPOSITE PAGE LEFT
Niagara Falls #1, 2014
Niagara Falls #2, 2014

TIME, PROCESS, LABOUR AND COLLABORATION

NADINE BARITEAU AND GAUTAM GAROO



NADINE BARITEAU
Protecteurs des mers (Protectors of the Seas) [installation view], 2013

Your works emphasize time and process, both with respect to water, in life and regarding artistic practice. Can you talk about how you think about time and process as an artist?

N: Time is an important part of my work, as you cannot express a concept or idea without some contemplation. Time allows you to process an event and bring you to a place of new understanding or wisdom. I compare time to the tide, a unit of measure, strong or weak, back and forth, something that is cyclical and a natural phenomenon. Time gave me the chance to master the process; that is just the way it works.

G: The process of making the mandalic patterns on the floor in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and the time spent in creating these ephemeral patterns, which upon completion are swept clean, have informed the interest and the importance I have come to give to the time required and the process involved in my artist practice.

The Buddhist mandalic patterns are metaphoric, as is my work, where the pattern drawn on a surface only indirectly speaks to the subject at hand. The process of drawing these complex patterns, although time-consuming, brings about a meditative state of being, not only in the person making them but also the ones bearing witness.

The drawing *On the Water's Edge: 57°00'13.98"N/111°27'34.47"W* examines this through the drawing of thirty-two pages of drawing arranged in a grid pattern that surveys the Athabasca-Wabiskaw oil sands in Alberta, and it also refers to Indian stepwells. The images of the Athabasca River are

derived from Google Earth; the lakes and the waters of the toxic tailings ponds are overlaid and rearranged in a random pattern over the base pattern of an Indian stepwell. The drawing is a result of more than one year of continued labour. I have always been interested in how a work informs the viewer about the time that has been spent in the making of it and if that influences the viewing of the artwork. The process of using repetitive lines that weave in and out over a long period of time was a conscious commitment; for me, these lines are not just marks of ink on paper, but rather like the markings a seismometer makes: the lines on the paper register the state of mind.

In your work, there is a link between repetitive and/or ritualized labour and expression. Can you discuss how you think about this, including regarding water?

N: Water is a powerful element that makes us who we are as human beings. Rituals around and with water have always existed in all cultures, but sadly today, in our Western culture, we have lost those rites. Using the element of water in this body of work (*Âme et océan*) was an occasion for me to embody or express a form of personal ritual as a way to transcend an event – the Sisyphus of Camus is invoked. Seeing my mother pass away in a car accident was so devastating that the only way for me to recover from this was to connect with something bigger and more powerful. The process of creating this piece was visceral in that way. The ocean gave me strength.

G: As a deeply religious culture, India finds her expression through repetitive and ritualized actions; for instance, the daily ritual of going to the river's edge or a village stepwell for bathing and cleansing (because water is considered sacred and doesn't just have material properties, but spiritual as well). This is perhaps paralleled in the drawing of water through a water pump twice daily in urban centres.

Being in Varanasi, India, you can get a sense of the sacred bond between the waters of the river Ganges, the people who live around the river and those who travel great distances to cleanse themselves in its waters. Through video, I have documented not the sacred aspect of water, but water in its more mundane state. The Ganges water is pumped via pumping stations to a maze of narrow streets all across Varanasi in the early hours of the morning, and then again in the late evening, just as the sun sets on the ancient city. It mainly falls on the women to collect and store the water in overhead tanks, using water pumps. This daily ritual is played out all across the urban Indian subcontinent, where water from the rivers is pumped to water towers, stored and re-pumped to homes, and pumped again to overhead water tanks

to be stored. The drawing in the exhibition, on the other hand, is about my repetitive ritualized labour.

Is collaboration important in your work(s) in the exhibition?

N: Collaboration began in my practice when I started to do performance. It's difficult to perform and document it at the same time, so it came out of this necessity.

G: The works in the exhibition, being abstract in execution and in an indirect conversation with the subject of water, require of the observer to engage with them, and to collaborate, so as to arrive at a more subjective reading of the works.

During the filming of the video in Varanasi, I too took on this role of an observer, a witness, and I see it as my silent collaboration with the subjects in the video, not just the people preparing for the day ahead, but also the three water pumps in the video. There is also the partial failure of the collaboration of the five weeks of walking the narrow streets and the ghats of Varanasi; nothing meaningful came of it, nothing that really talked about the underlying relationship we have with water – water as a source of life.

GAUTAM GAROO

On the Water's Edge: 25°18'12.31"N/83°00'27.58"E [video still], 2013



MEDIATION, HISTORY AND REALITY/FICTION

RAYMOND BOISJOLY AND COLIN MINER



RAYMOND BOISJOLY

Jericho (where there will be other places after), 2014

The technologies and discourses surrounding mediation (photography, digital imaging/scanning) are foregrounded in your respective works. How do these strategies relate to your thinking about your practice, and about the theme of water?

R: Mediation as both a productive and degenerative process is central to my work as it appears in various guises – such as cultural, political or technological mediation. All works require some type of embodiment – that is, all works require a material carrier; this material carrier is a primary mediation. Water, a seemingly simple substance, provides a useful entry into thinking of mediating processes. When is water ever simply itself? Water is modified, and filled, by its changing contexts.

C: For me, the considerations of technologies are positioned in the background rather than the foreground. Various photographic techniques and technologies are certainly engaged in the production of my work, but this is not a focus. As for *mediation*, I appreciate the attention this term places on a particular form of relation. I often find myself thinking about the quality of relations between things, and the space of composition is something I return to frequently. By questioning the methods and processes of my practice, I consider it to be continually developing, being unsettled and unfixed. Perhaps this can be related to water, through suggestions of unease and uncertainty that I feel are needed and in fact are required to reflect photographically on different qualities of space-time relations concerning the past, present and future.

Does the “history” of media, and history itself, play a role in your work? Does history intersect with the way you think about your role as an artist and, inferentially, about water?

R: The history of media – and by extension, communication – heavily informs my work, as does the concept of “history” itself. These fields allow a consideration of the very provisional arrangement of our understandings of the world and the sociopolitical implications of these understandings. My thinking continually returns to the fact that things could have always been otherwise, and to the potential agency afforded by this realization. The contingencies negotiated through my work frame issues that resist full articulation; all media is always already historical, bearing traces of its representational limits. As for water, it is also a communication network. As Harold Adams Innis describes the railway as a tool of communication, water can also be understood according to its historical and socialized uses.

C: While the history of media does not play a direct role in my work, I do spend a lot of time thinking about photography. I find the concept of history to be quite contentious when it is presented as singular, and not spatially as an arrangement of fragments. Further, I often find the term *history* to be veiled, and subsequently used to promote specific power relations, along with increasingly narrowed notions of progress. Essential to both traditional understandings of history and progress is linear movement, and the encouragement to go forward while prioritizing a “means toward an end.” This takes emphasis away from processes and duration in which

meaning is given space and time to take form, while not being fixed in the singular.

What I find interesting is the potential offered in conceptions of time as non-linear, and by extension the potential offered in realizing a multiplicity of histories. Bringing this back to water, my role as an artist can be understood as questioning and exploring the fluidity of history and my relation to the specific time and place I find myself within. A position that antagonizes history doesn't have to be monumental, it could simply take place through a critical engagement that asks how histories are conceived, in whose perspective they are formed and what specific power relations are being developed and promoted.

Does your work engage with questions regarding the “real” and, potentially, what might be termed “fictional”?

R: I often engage with issues relevant to questions of the “real” and the “fictional.” My works often concern fiction as a means to access reality. This draws upon the “fictive” as something made rather than simply something made up. The “real” impinges upon fiction as a contingency that frames the

legibility of the work itself. I have pursued this thinking in projects that attempt to rethink the premises of tools used in the production of photography. By highlighting the provisional character of images and image-making technologies, “fiction” can be understood as a threshold beyond which lies everything else.

C: What is the distance between the real and the fictional, and why do we need to separate the two and make a distinction? These are questions I could imagine my work addressing, while being more comfortably positioned in relation to abstraction, representation and the spaces between them. I am interested in these spaces and their potential to provide access to the photographic anxiety of questions without answers. My work converses with an ontology of photography in order to engage a questioning of meaning, and I think meaning is both absent and present, located photographically within the space between representation and abstraction. Paradoxes contain immense potential, in this case as a mode of questioning that contains the possibility of meaning itself as the answer – as being not singular but fragmented and composed in time and space: both a fiction and a reality.

COLIN MINER

blue eye, 2014



MIGRATION, CULTURAL MEMORY AND ADAPTATION

SOHEILA ESFAHANI AND GU XIONG



SOHEILA ESFAHANI
Wish on Water [installation view], 2013-14

How does the theme of migration with regard to water and culture operate in your thinking and practice?

S: The act of migration as the physical movement of people from one place to another has informed my approach to culture. This movement contributes to the emergence of the notion of cultural translation within the domain of post-colonial discourse. In my practice, my focus is on the notion of *translation* in its etymological meaning, as the process of “carrying across” units of culture from one culture to another culture. Therefore, in my work the theme of migration and subsequently cultural translation opens up non-Western (other) perspectives in regards to water and culture.

G: Regarding migration and water, for the past two years, the focus of my research and my art practice has revolved around the international seasonal workers and their living situations on Canadian farms among the waterways. I am interested in the living conditions of the workers, their repeated heavy and dull work, as well as the oppression, memories, sentiments and homesicknesses they experience during their extended periods of labour in a foreign country.

There are countless seasonal farm workers from countries such as Mexico, Nicaragua and Jamaica in both the eastern and the western regions of Canada. This year, the population of seasonal workers has reached 300,000 people. The current emphasis on globalization has established a specific working environment and conditions for this group. They have to endure their lives within this system, in order to fulfill the extensive demands associated with this profession.

To this day, the population of international seasonal workers in Canada is still rising.

Cultural practices regarding water, and memory, present themselves in your work; do you agree?

S: Yes, I have focused on specific cultural practices regarding water in my work. Contrary to the formation of the notion of landscape in Western countries around the presence of bodies of water, the notion of landscape in dry climates, such as the deserts of central Iran, is not defined by depiction of rivers, lakes, etc. However, water as a vital source of life still plays an essential role in such climates. *Sagha Khaneh* (houses of watercarriers/providers) provided drinking water to travellers and passersby in Iran for centuries. These water stations were commonly built close to natural springs by travel routes. The thirsty traveller would receive a drink of water traditionally in a bowl and light a candle in hopes of realization of a wish. My work is centred on cultural practices associated with *Sagha Khaneh*. It also draws a comparison between the tradition of wishing on water in *Sagha Khaneh* and various traditions of wishing on water around the world – from wishing wells to tossing coins in the water features of shopping malls.

G: I do. The history of seasonal workers in Canada can be traced back to forty years ago. Every day, after doing their repeated daily manual heavy labour from sunrise to sunset, they return to their isolated rooms in the field alone. There is no television or Internet; they can only communicate with

their families through cellphones and by using calling cards. They can only rely on sound, and on vague memories, to maintain their relationships with their families. They were once forbidden to have contact with local women, and were deported immediately if reported. Only in church are they allowed to have contact with the locals, a restrained communication gained through trading on their faith.

The produce, fruits and vegetables, which they harvest, are labelled as “Locally Made,” branding that completely erases their identity as international labourers. They lose their true identity while becoming living tools. Day by day, month after month, year after year, some spend their entire lives in this endless cycle of invisibility.

Speaking of the effects of globalization regarding water on workers in culture, it must be said that Chinese farmers have also needed to enter rapidly developing cities as migrant workers. By contrast, in developed countries, globalization’s current flow takes seasonal workers into the industry of the gradually fading farms. Yet, perhaps surprisingly, the common fate of such workers is the same as that of educated youths: to strive for fundamental rights – fairness, justice and dignity. Only in obtaining these rights can they finally live in the world as true citizens.

The Niagara Falls pour rapidly with rage, splashing their waters, spraying tens of metres high. It is the rupture of the river that helps the waterfall gain its magnificence, and people choose only to see the beauty of the falls. No one knows the pain of the broken river. For me, the seasonal workers are just like the broken river. The water also rushes down their bodies, carrying their painful experiences, their longing for their families, their loneliness and the struggles they experience in this strange foreign land. Everything comes together, and flows to a place unknown to all.

Is the theme of adaptation important to you and your work?

S: Yes, because I am an immigrant, the theme of adaptation has been an important aspect of my life in Canada and consequently has influenced my art practice. Adaptation is the bridge that links various cultural practices and ways of thinking in both my life and art. In my current art practice, I explore the processes involved in cultural transfer and

transformation and how these processes open up a space of negotiation, and the emergence of a new object within a space of in-betweenness. I view adaptation as part of these processes. However, adaptation may not necessarily result in assimilation, but rather may create hybridization.

G: All cultures are complex, but the one into which you are born is the one you come to understand most profoundly. Thus, this influence is what finds its way into the work of an artist and, I believe, is expressed almost instinctively. If a person should move to another culture, he or she must make both a conscious and instinctive adjustment in seeking to understand what at first is a strange new world. It is within this dynamic milieu that I have found myself. This conflict of cultures in my work is in a state of constant evolution. It is a continuous generation of “artistic electricity” that fuels change, in both my personal life and my work as a contemporary artist.

Through the years, the direction of my research has centred on the creation of a hybrid (maybe even an “adaptive”) cultural identity. Cultural conflict erupts when the individual and society undergo a process of change. A new cultural identity is born as individuals reconstitute themselves through their own cultural practice. My research always draws on the critical angle of visual art as a point of departure, and then encompasses other areas of knowledge such as sociology, geography, economics, politics and literature. It addresses integration and assimilation, histories both collective and personal, and cultural synthesis across boundaries. My art seeks to delve into the dynamics of globalization, local culture and individual shifts in identity, and to rethink the spaces where global culture flows.

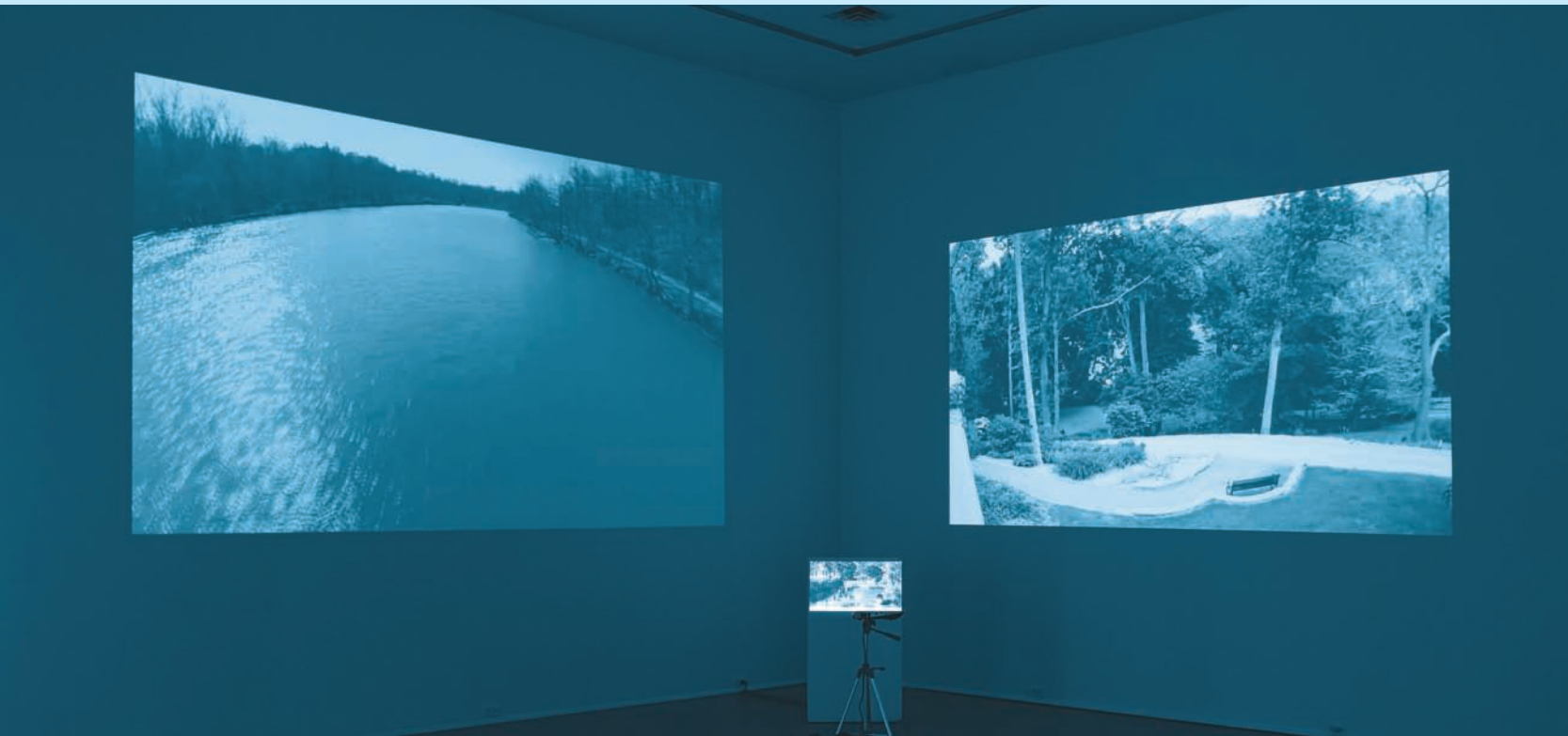
These shifts do not merely constitute a simple amalgamation of two original subjects, but instead seek to create an entirely new space. Alone and isolated from its birth, this new individual identity is nevertheless open and free. Visible and invisible global forces of social and cultural homogenization have overtaken the world. In this environment, individual spaces embody the seeds of difference and alterity. It is the construction of this new level of being in which I am interested. My art expresses this process, drawing upon my own life experience of displacement and rebirth in Canada.



GU XIONG
Jamaican Migrant Worker #8, 2014

ACTIVISM AND AESTHETIC PRACTICES

ELIZABETH CHITTY AND PATRICK MAHON



ELIZABETH CHITTY

Streaming Twelve [installation view], 2014

Is your work meant to be understood as a form of activism? Can you talk about your role as an artist in terms of activism and politics?

E: Because I see any work as completed by the viewer's subjective reception of it, I tend to not have an opinion on how my work is meant to be understood; I have artistic intent in what I set out to do. With *Streaming Twelve*, I am communicating my fascination with the cultural geography of the Twelve Mile Creek, the main waterway where I live, with the intent that, for the viewer, this engagement with place will awaken or strengthen emotional, intellectual, sensorial and aesthetic responses that enliven everyday life. I also believe that this engagement is the basis of participatory democracy (because when we are disengaged we don't participate) and that therefore it is possible that art can support or even motivate political change-making. To extend this logic, the vividness art brings to life could be regarded as a means to an end, but I am firmly a both/and person – therefore art is an end in itself as well as a means to varied ends, including the political. Therefore, my work could be and could not be a form of activism.

I tend toward a narrow definition of “activist art,” which is that it represents a polemic and posits a position or strategy, which *Streaming Twelve* does not. (As an aside, in life I have tended to be uneasy with being called an activist out of a concern that I haven't done enough to earn the label, but I accept it at this stage simply because others describe me in that way.)

P: The word *activism* might be thought by some people as invoking a “means-ends” type of engagement whereby the artist or cultural practitioner engages in strategies that are intended to elicit direct responses or outcomes. I'm certainly not opposed to this sort of activity in culture, but as a way of thinking about my practice, it's limiting. I think that a “poetics,” which operates in all art in some form or another, needs to be understood to figure within the toolkit of the so-called activist artist. So, I like the possibility of expanding the idea of activism in artistic contexts to include practices that take seriously the role of the artist in social and political life and discourse, but do so in ways that foreground *aesthetic* engagement. So, a practice that is predicated on addressing urgent problems or preoccupations, but does so by insinuating itself into public “discussions” in novel and even subtle ways, can for me be considered as an activist one. As such, in my work as an artist I choose to respond to some of the contemporary questions that perplex us, but I try to do so in ways that enlarge the field of inquiry and even usefully complicate the ways we talk about the moment in which we find ourselves and about our options.

To be specific, in *The Source*, my work features three “shipwreck”-inspired wall structures. I purposefully made these to appear as strange entities caught between “destruction and becoming.” In this way, I am hoping to utilize a Benjaminian form of allegory: addressing the ruins of the past, of modernity, in a way that also proposes an imagined – if perhaps precarious – future.

How do you link your aesthetic strategies and choices within your “politics” as an artist?

E: Here are two specific examples from *Streaming Twelve*. I determined very early on that I wanted to take the global issue regarding the concept of ownership of water and apply it to the local. Early research and the tangle of public entities governing hydroelectric power led me to the concept of governance. Because the number one issue in my personal politics is the necessity of changing the relationship between First Nations and settlers, it was a matter of personal integrity that I include the treaty governing our region. I wanted it spoken in an Indigenous language party to the treaty as a way of addressing problematics of voice. (The process of choosing the Nanfan Treaty and getting it translated into Mohawk is itself a story of issues around colonialization.) Audio-mixing decisions among the three audio streams were entirely aesthetic and done intuitively in the studio. (They were the sound of electricity being generated at DeCew Generating Station #1, the spoken annual report excerpts and the spoken treaty.)

The archival video is cut to a fast tempo and a 4/4 beat, and the verbatim text from the annual reports of the Ontario Hydro-Electric Commission for 1942-44 (Legal and Right-of-Way and Hydraulic Engineering section excerpts) is spoken to a basic rock beat. I don’t expect that this detail is experienced or even evident to the listener and viewer, but these methods build “texture” into documentary sources with the intention that it make the “dry” content more accessible to a broad public. I have continually struggled with the divide between my aesthetic interests and accessibility for a non-specialist public. I find this politic more difficult to label than politics around water or First Nations issues, for example. It is by no means a simple matter of “democratic” versus not.

P: While I’m sympathetic to the kinds of art practices where strategies are determined according to the dictates of a project and its specific conceptual or political intentions, my work doesn’t function like that. I want it to register as operating in a way that is accountable to some of the “traditional” aspects of aesthetic discourse and practice (including insofar as such terms as *beauty* and even *taste* can be talked about critically

in our times), so that viewers can locate what I’m doing against a backdrop that includes ideas about the long-standing roles of artists in societies. I’m strongly committed to the idea that artists have a distinct and important job to do as citizens – not a job that is in any sense “superior” to that of other citizens, certainly – and I want the terms of my engagement to be recognized as the very terms that artists have historically been expert in handling (visual representation, mimesis, etc.). This means that I try to produce my work in a way that fits within a category that values “expressive art,” but in such a manner that the expression is directed toward a public with an expectation of art as requiring some form of engagement and, ideally, a *response*. I think of this as a political gesture in itself, one that implicitly demands a relationship with an “other.”

Are there other themes that are important to you?

E: I have almost always worked from my lived experience as opposed to specifically artistic frames, and there are many and varied themes in my work. The most “activist” work I have made is probably *Song for a Blue Moon* (2004 performance), which had peace and non-violence as its theme. *Streaming Twelve* is third in a series of works about the North Niagara watershed. The second, *Distance of Their Mouths* (2011 performance), interpolated personal narrative into the landscape of the numbered creeks, disrupting the convention of the land as something to be viewed and consumed. While that is a theoretical and even political position, the work was largely driven by the deep grief I was living through.

I would choose my spiritual practice as the spinal column of my life; more than my politics, however, they are intertwined. How I live my life and make my work have always been interdisciplinary, both in the relationship among artistic disciplines and regarding the content silos of thought human beings create in order to be in this chaotic world.

P: In the essay I wrote that appears in this publication, I have addressed themes regarding the “pictorial,” and “time,” and also “colour” and “apology.” These are all significant to my own practice as an artist and, I think, resonate broadly within *The Source* as an exhibition.



PATRICK MAHON

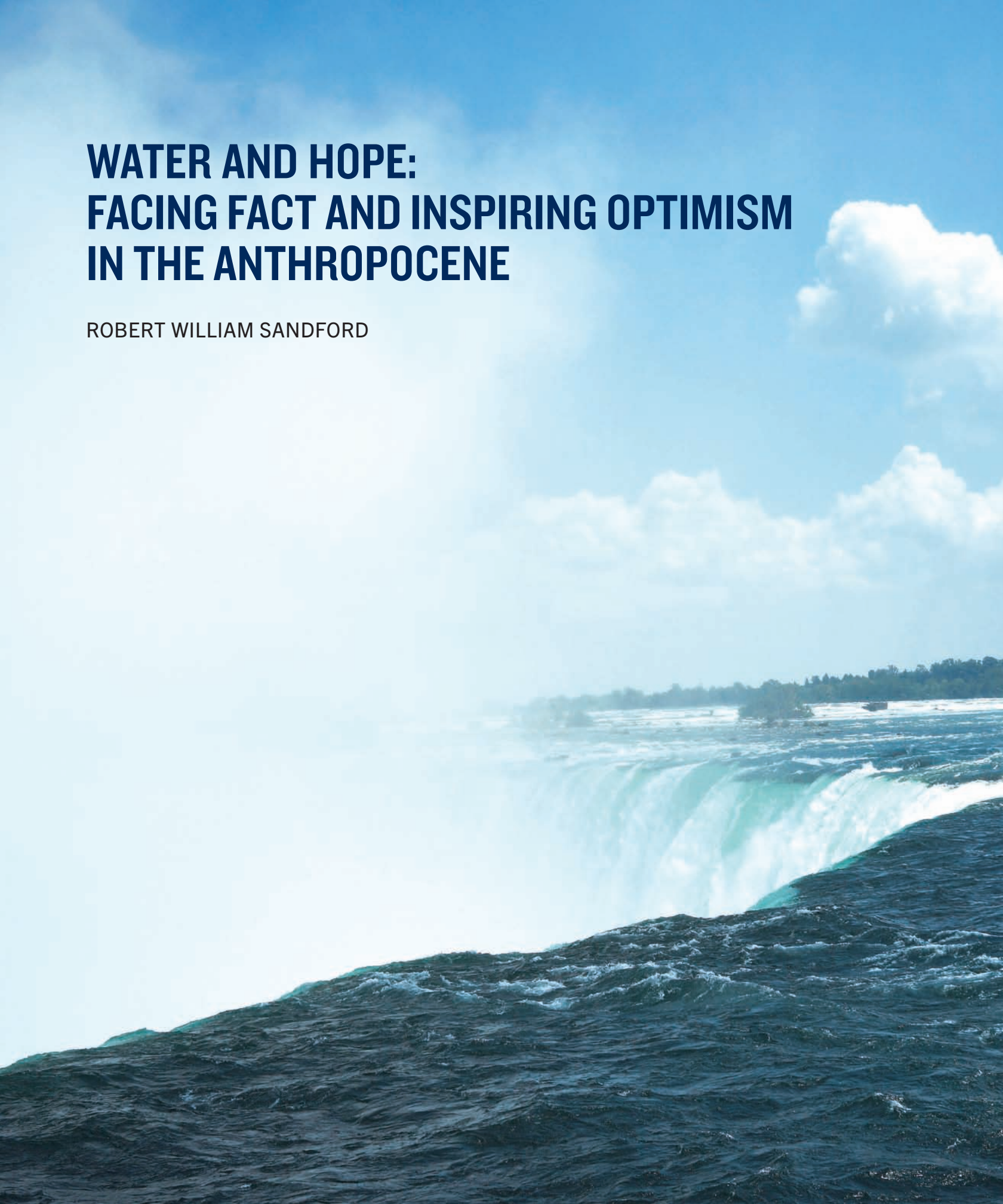
Exquisite Corpse Water Drawing Book [detail], 2013-14

Produced with artists: Caroline Boileau, Sheila Butler, Sean Caulfield, Chris Down, Sara Hartland-Rowe, William Noah, Allison Norlen, Ben Reeves, Diana Thorneycroft, and Colette Urban.

Handmade accordion-folded book with twelve panels and cloth binding, mixed media, dimensions variable.

WATER AND HOPE: FACING FACT AND INSPIRING OPTIMISM IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

ROBERT WILLIAM SANDFORD



ABOVE
Soheila Esfahani
Wish on Water [detail], 2013-14

OPPOSITE PAGE
Gu Xiong
Niagara Falls #2 [detail], 2014

The goal of the work in which I am engaged with the United Nations is to build a better bridge between science and public understanding on matters related to water and water-related climate impacts. It was under the auspices of this work that I was invited by Patrick Mahon to speak on the subject of water’s relationship to climate before a group of internationally renowned artists who happened at the time to be at the Banff Centre creating works that would later be shown in an extraordinary exhibition called *The Source: Rethinking Water Through Contemporary Art*, which opened the following year at Rodman Hall Art Centre.

I was very interested in this opportunity because I have always believed that art is an important medium for sharing understanding of what is central about our relationship to one another and humanity’s relationship to the rest of the world. Art, in my estimation, is a form of perceptual leadership. Meaningful art allows us to see clearly into the depths of reality and to return again to the surface of our everyday lives with new insights and hope for the future. People tend to trust art, not just because it speaks on so many levels to so many matters that are of importance to us, but because even though they may have views different from the rest of society, artists speak sincerely from the heart. Because I was speaking to artists, and because I so respect art, I made sure I spoke from the heart also.

As a foundation for discussing what hope is up against in our time, I told the artists involved in the project all I could about our current knowledge with respect to the state and fate of water and its effect on climate in Canada. I observed that our weather appears to be all over the place and explained why. I explained why rainstorms, ice storms and snowstorms are paralyzing our transportation and electricity distribution systems, why both high and low temperature records are being broken everywhere, why cold snaps are persisting – with snow falling in places and in volumes seldom witnessed before – and why flooding is occurring widely.

What we are seeing, I said, is that changes in the composition of the global atmosphere have caused enough warming to change the rate and manner in which water moves through the global hydrological cycle. While we know that hydrological conditions on this planet have always been changing, we have been fortunate to have had a century or so of relative hydro-climatic stability. That era, however, is over. The long-term hydrologic stability of the climate we experienced in the past will not return during the lifetime of anyone alive today. This is a huge new concept – a societal game-changer – and it is going to take time to get our heads around it. This, I offered, was why, as much as any other time in the past, we now need the perceptual leadership that only art can offer. We need art, I said in conclusion, to help show us the way to hope.

The artists to whom I spoke, however, did not seem to accept that there is much to be hopeful about, based on the information I shared with them. They could not see how more forceful interpretation of the evidence should make one any more hopeful about a positive outcome to the climate issue.

Gu Xiong, who is originally from China, was working on a massive sculpture that would interpret the most recent catastrophe to hit the front pages in his home country, which involved some 16,000 rotting pig carcasses disposed of in a river. He maintained that, given the regime presently in power in that country and the damage being done to natural systems, and in particular to water, he could not countenance hope. Such threats had been highly visible in China for decades and little had been done to react to the worsening situation.

Soheila Esfahani, who came to Canada from Tehran about twenty years ago, was carefully crafting exquisite ceramic bowls and covering them with painted motifs that suggested they represented the different cultures around the world that might use them to drink water. After witnessing the rapid decline of the quality of life circumstances in her home country, she indicated that she could point to no hope politically that suggested that things might turn out differently than they currently are in the Middle East. If nations continue to exist without possessing at least a hint of positive interest in addressing the declining state of our planetary life-support system, then, for her, hope seemed logically out of the question.

Gautam Garoo, an artist from India, a Hindu, had a different view. He declared that hope was not something he expected to have, in that practicing Hindus are trained to accept the world as it is and don't attempt to impose their personal values upon that which operates at a higher level of order and destiny.

And Nadine Bariteau, an artist from Quebec with a great interest in water, indicated that she had given up on having hope for the future long ago. She is forty-two, she told me, and is not having children because she thinks it irresponsible to bring people into the kind of world she sees clearly coming into existence.

As the conversation proceeded, none of the artists backed away from these positions. All we could agree upon was that we should all hope to have hope in the future. What we arrived at was in essence what psychologists call "radical hope," a condition in which those who hold hope do not yet have an appropriate understanding of the end to which hope might be directed.

These troubling discussions left me with no alternative but to give further thought to how one might frame hope within the context of the rapid changes that are occurring



Colin Miner
Afterimage #22 [installation view], 2014

Patrick Mahon
Water Table #2 [video stills], 2014



Lucy + Jorge Orta
Antarctica Flag, 2007
Lamda colour photograph mounted on Dibond
Edition of 7 (3 A.P.)

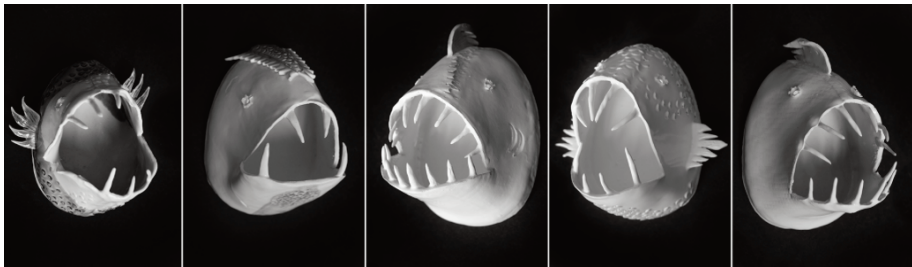


in the world, changes that threaten to make it a very different place than the one from which we emerged and evolved toward in our current circumstances. So, in a real sense, by challenging my optimism, art performed its function. It has forced me to articulate more defensible reasons for having hope and to describe a new end toward which hope might be directed.

I decided the best way to initiate this new inquiry was to poll graduate students and younger working professionals with an interest in water on what hope means to them and why we need to have it for the future. I did this by way of two workshops offered as part of a major water conference held at Queen's University in Kingston in May 2013. I asked volunteer participants to weigh in on three matters related to what we think our prospects for the future may be as a society. The first was whether there is hope. The second asked – if indeed there is hope – what there is to be hopeful about or, to put it another way, in what we should invest our hope. And finally, I invited them to explore how, if there is hope, we can inspire others to possess it and act on it.

I was surprised by what we learned. By the shaking of their heads, I came to understand immediately that, nope, this group was not buying it either. It occurred to me that it may be fashionable in youthful circles to accept that the world in the future is going to be somehow less than the world today. Perhaps this generation has been told this so many times that they are blasé about it. But I didn't have to press very hard to find out that this was just a front. While there were some holdouts, when challenged, most participants acknowledged much more reason for hope than they initially let on. They saw the value of education, the potential for technology and innovation to make things better, and the possibility of unanticipated shifts in perspective that could make the future brighter. There was also a significant difference of viewpoint regarding hope based on where you grew up and what hope meant in those circumstances.

If you grew up in Iran, or Egypt, West Africa or India, the parameters of hope were different than if you came from Canada or the United States. If the country you came from had a history of instability, the preconditions for hope are different. Hope for people who come from such places is situational. They hope loved ones are safe; that people they care about are not going to die in meaningless crossfire; that the countries from which they came would not become failed states. They could not understand why Canadians declared themselves resigned to hopelessness for no good reason when we have all the tools – the education, the technology and the wealth – to construct any future that might be imagined.



Nadine Bariteau
Protecteurs des mers
(Protectors of the Seas) [details], 2013

Once shared, these arguments proved persuasive, and soon almost everyone conceded that they were, in fact, at least somewhat hopeful about the future. But along with hope there was also fear. Grave concerns were expressed about human numbers and the impact of ever-growing populations on the integrity and function of the earth system. Deep frustration surrounded how denial and prevarication were standing in the way of the public and adult conversation we so desperately need to have, on how volatile nature has become and how bad things must be before we act. In this context it was held that hopelessness was a cop-out, a form of passive denial. If you have a duty toward water, one participant said, then you have a duty toward hope.

It was noted that in many instances it is helplessness that begets hopelessness. It is critical, therefore, to reject helplessness. Participants in the forum were emphatic that not everyone is apathetic. We have to get past the apathy that does exist and restore gratitude for what we have. We have to fight against fatalistic acceptance. Humans are capable of making changes and are willing to do it. We are all in this together, they pointed out. Young people need to become the leaders they want – a new energized form of civic engagement is needed. Networking is critical. Intergenerational dialogue is necessary. It was interesting that when asked to create a symbol of hope for the future, the results almost always had something to do with water. The most common symbol of hope for the future was a boat.

In all of these discussions, however, the general sense was that the future is still going to be largely an extension of the world as we know it today, suggesting a certain “linearity” to the idea of hope. But that is not likely to be the case. The loss of hydrologic stability has created effects that have already begun to cascade through every ecosystem on the planet and through every economy. In a dramatically changed world, hope will also lose its linearity. So, how shall we frame hope in a different world? We may have to reframe the world first and then frame hope around that new world.

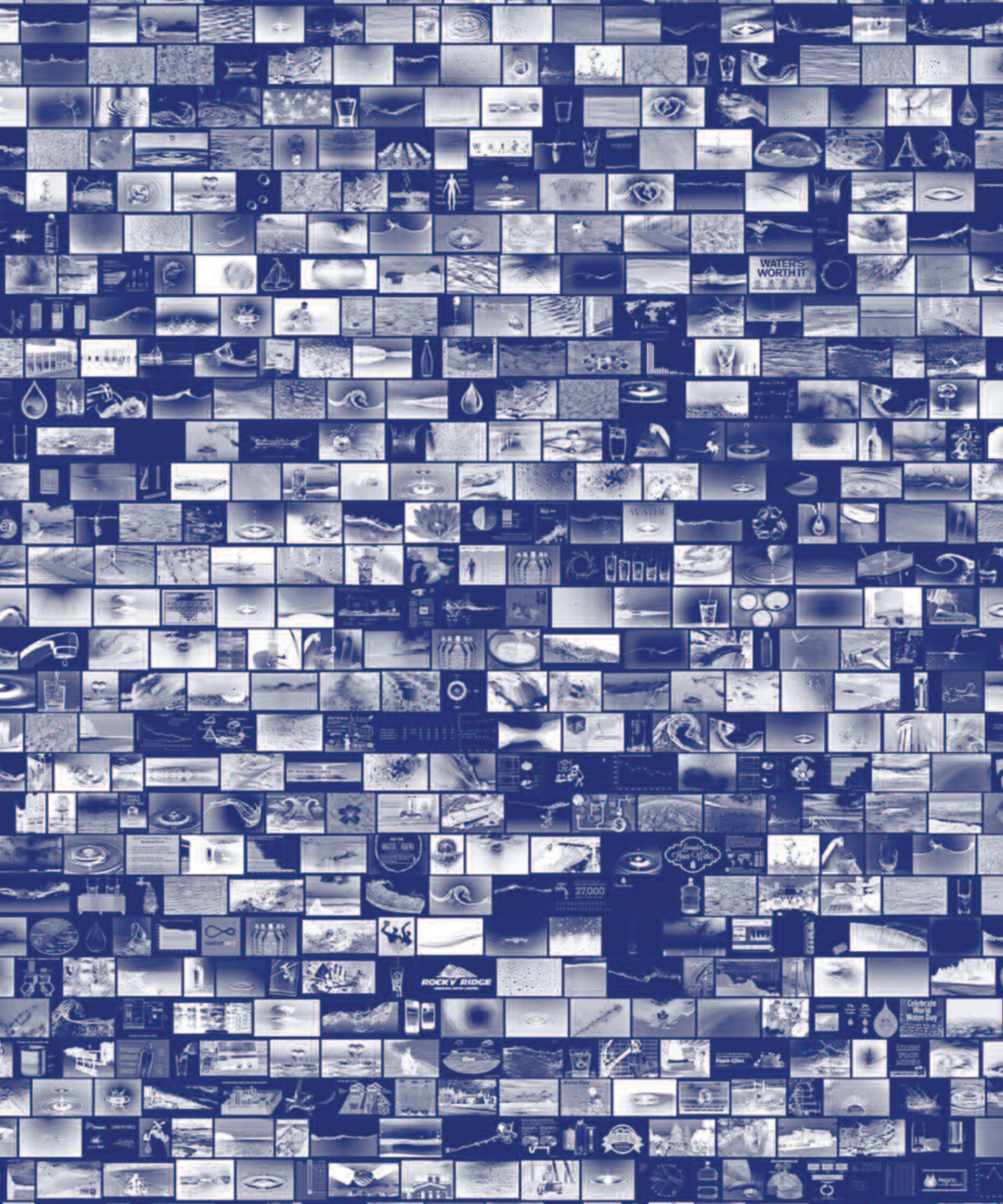
One way our current situation is being reframed is through the notion that we have entered a new geological era in which human activities rival the processes of nature itself. This new geological era is being called the Anthropocene. Unlike earlier epochs in the earth’s history, which were brought about by meteorite strikes and other geological events that resulted in mass extinctions, this epoch is marked by our overall impact on the earth system. Climate disruption is only one of these impacts. By virtue of our numbers and our activities, we have altered the global carbon, nitrogen and phosphorous cycles. We are causing changes in the chemistry, salinity and temperature of our oceans and the composition of our atmosphere. Changes in the composition of



ABOVE
Soheila Esfahani
Wish on Water [installation view], 2013-14

OPPOSITE PAGE
Gu Xiong
Waterscapes [detail] 2014





the atmosphere, in tandem with land-use changes and our growing water demands, have also altered the global water cycle. The cumulative measure of the extent to which we have crossed these boundaries is the rate of biodiversity loss. We have entered an era in which we can no longer count on self-willed natural landscapes to absorb human impacts on the earth system. We now have to assume responsibility for earth-system function we have damaged. We have no choice now, for example, but to work *with* a changing climate, not against it. We have to prepare for more powerful storms and more frequent flooding, because that is what we are likely going to get.

As a witness to the rapid hydro-climatic destabilization that is taking place in Canada and abroad, I have often been asked if in such circumstances it really is possible to have hope for the future. When I ask exactly what is meant by that question, the answer I most often receive relates to whether there is any hope for a resolution to these problems before they accelerate beyond our capacity to manage them. Can we turn these problems around while they are still more or less linear and incremental? Before they become non-linear, and everything we rely upon for stability in the world begins to change all at once? There is widespread recognition that our political systems are not designed and structured to easily allow them to be capable of addressing issues of this magnitude. The scales are all wrong. While political systems are designed to function over periods of four or five years within limited and often competing jurisdictions, the problems we have created for ourselves are mismatched both spatially and temporally. Many people doubt it is possible to rescue our political systems from the influence of vested economic and ideological interests, and the self-referential focus of party politics, in anything close to the time needed to prevent the collapse of important elements of the earth system.

A growing number of people today do, in fact, feel helpless to do anything to prevent the society of which they are part from sliding over the edge into the abyss. This feeling of helplessness often masks as a loss of hope. Nevertheless, so many who I have worked with, including the artists involved in this project, concluded that we are not helpless. While we must always be on guard against false optimism and self-interested government and corporate happy talk, this is not the time to allow hope to fail us. While in their more defensive moments artists may proclaim otherwise, the making of art is fundamentally an act of hope.

There has likely never in the history of humanity been a time when we have needed art more than now. The works in *The Source: Rethinking Water Through Contemporary Art* prove – once again and as always – that society can count on art for the uncompromising honesty, clarity and perceptual leadership that insists we unflinchingly face the fact of who we are, and what humanity must do now if we are to have hope for the future. Welcome to the Anthropocene.

OPPOSITE
Raymond Boisjoly
Immersion Emergencies Collaborative Poster
[image detail], 2014
collage, mixed media

LIST OF WORKS

All works are courtesy of the artists.

NADINE BARITEAU

Guérison en quatre saisons (Four Seasons for Healing), 2013-14
video projection (colour, sound, 9:24 minutes)
Directed and performed by Nadine Bariteau
Filmed by Gautam Garoo

Âme et océan (Soul and Ocean series), 2013
inkjet prints

Protecteurs des mers (Protectors of the Seas), 2013
ceramic, chrome-plated steel, mirror

RAYMOND BOISJOLY

Jericho (where there will be other places after), 2014
screen resolution LightJet print mounted on Dibond

This place (where there had been other places before), 2014
screen resolution LightJet print mounted on Dibond

ELIZABETH CHITTY

Streaming Twelve, 2014
three-channel video installation with sound

SOHEILA ESFAHANI

Wish on Water, 2013-14
glazed slip-cast porcelain bowls

Reflect, 2013-14
glazed stoneware bowls

GAUTAM GAROO

On the Water's Edge: 25°18'12.31"N/83°00'27.58"E, 2013
video (colour, sound, 13:31 minutes)

On the Water's Edge: 57°00'13.98"N/111°27'34.47"W, 2013-14
graphite and ink on handmade paper

On the Water's Edge: 43°37'55.26"N/79°21'19.56"W, 2013
video (colour, sound, 4:58 minutes)

PATRICK MAHON

Water and Tower Allegory #4, 2013
ink on wood

Submersible (Hogarth) #1, 2013
ink on wood

Submersible (Hogarth) #2, 2013
ink on wood

Bounty (Submersible), 2013
ink on wood

Water Table #2, 2014
three-channel video, table construction

Exquisite Corpse Water Drawing Book [detail], 2013-14
Produced with artists: Caroline Boileau, Sheila Butler, Sean Caulfield, Chris Down, Sara Hartland-Rowe, William Noah, Allison Norlen, Ben Reeves, Diana Thorneycroft, and Colette Urban.
handmade accordion-folded book with twelve panels
and cloth binding, mixed media

LUCY + JORGE ORTA

OrtaWater - Life Line, 2005
life jacket, laminated photograph, silkscreen, clips, rope

Antarctica Village - No Borders, 2007
two-channel video projection (colour, sound, 11:13 mins)

Antarctica Passport Office, 2008-ongoing
chair, desk, flag, maps, Antarctica World Passports,
passport stamps, ink pads

Antarctica Flag - No Borders, 2007
inkjet on polyamide, eyelets
Edition of 7 (3 A.P.)

COLIN MINER

blue eye, 2014
chromogenic metallic print mounted on Dibond, artist frame

Untitled (lynx), 2014
anti-glare window film, photographic backdrop paper

RGB#4 (lava, ice cave, fall 2012), 2013
HD video (colour, silent, 1:50-minute loop)

Untitled (heart of darkness), 2013
unique chromogenic colour print, aluminum push-pins,
painted corkboard

Afterimage #21, 2014
Afterimage #22, 2014
neon

GU XIONG

Waterscapes, 2014
1,000 plastic boats, steel rods, filament

Niagara Falls #1, 2014
inkjet print

Niagara Falls #2, 2014
inkjet print

Grape Field, 2014
inkjet print

Grape Plantation, 2014
inkjet print

Farm Land, 2014
inkjet print

Home, 2014
inkjet print

Praying, 2014
inkjet print

Cellphone, 2014
inkjet print

3 Mexican Migrant Workers, 2014
inkjet print

Under the Apricot Tree, 2014
inkjet print

Jamaican Migrant Worker 1-11, 2014
11 inkjet prints

Beyond the Glory, 2013-14
video (colour, silent, 6:30 minutes)

CONTRIBUTORS' BIOGRAPHIES

NADINE BARITEAU was born and raised in Montréal in 1970 and now resides in Toronto. She is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice is rooted in printmaking, sculpture, installation and video performance. Bariteau is a graduate of Concordia University in Montréal (1999), and obtained her Master of Fine Arts degree at York University in Toronto (2007). She has exhibited her work extensively, both nationally and internationally. In 2014 she was a visiting artist in the Department of Art and Design at the National Taipei University of Education in Taiwan, where she exhibited her recent work. Bariteau has also shown her work in Belgium at the Frans Masereel Centre (2012); in Australia at the International Multi-disciplinary Printmaking Conference (2011); in New York City at the International Print Centre (2010); in Russia at the 6th annual Novosibirsk Graphic Art Biennial (2009); and in Japan at the Tokyo Screen Print Biennale (2009). Bariteau has received several grants and awards for her work. Most recently she was the recipient of the 2014–2015 Nick Novak Fellowship at Open Studio in Toronto. Her work can be seen in private and public collections, including Foreign Affairs Canada and the National Library of Québec. Bariteau teaches printmaking at the Ontario College of Art and Design in Toronto.

RAYMOND BOISJOLY was born in Chilliwack, B.C., in 1981 and is currently based out of Vancouver. Boisjoly is a West Coast Indigenous artist of Haida and Québécois descent whose work connects these worlds and speaks to the complexities of contemporary Indigenous experiences in a present-day context. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design in Vancouver (2006) and his Master of Fine Arts from the University of British Columbia (2008). His recent solo exhibitions include “*From age to age, as its shape slowly unravelled...*” at VOX in Montreal (2015); *Interlocutions* at Carleton University Art Gallery in Ottawa (2014); (*And*) *Other Echoes* at Simon Fraser University Gallery in Vancouver (2014); *Raymond Boisjoly* at Catriona Jeffries Gallery in Vancouver (2013); and *As It Comes* at the Contemporary Art Gallery in Vancouver (2013). Boisjoly has participated in numerous group exhibitions and projects including *Pleinairism* at the Walter Phillips Gallery in Banff (2013); *Tools for Conviviality* at the Power Plant in Toronto (2012); *Phantasmagoria* at Presentation House Gallery in Vancouver (2012); and *Raymond Boisjoly, Jordy Hamilton, Laura Piasta: Studies in Decay* at Or Gallery in Vancouver (2011). He was awarded a Fleck Fellowship from the Banff Centre in 2010, and in the fall of 2015 served as lead faculty for “In Kind” Negotiations, a thematic residency at the Banff Centre. Boisjoly is represented by Catriona Jeffries Gallery in Vancouver. Boisjoly is ECUAD: Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Studio in the Faculty of Visual Art + Material Practice at Emily Carr University, Vancouver.

ELIZABETH CHITTY is an interdisciplinary artist working out of St. Catharines, Ontario, where she was born in 1953. She holds an Honours Bachelor degree in Fine Arts from York University in Toronto (1975). Chitty also studied at the Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation in Ottawa (1997) and the University of Waterloo (1998). In her work, site, corporeality, temporality and attention to process are threaded through, and her projects expand on ideas, emotions and sensations regarding what it means to be in a body, a place, with others. Chitty’s work primarily entails performance and video-based installations involving sound. She has created public artists’ gardens, constructed photographs and has worked with community-based strategies, all of which span the gallery, the stage and the public realm. Chitty is known as an innovator in early Canadian performance art and as a video artist, with exhibitions including the 11e Biennale de Paris (1980) and the opening of the new National Gallery of Canada (1988). *Streaming Twelve* is part of a body of work, begun in 2008, which engaged with the North Niagara watershed. Her most recent work is the 2015 performance *Lucius’ Garden*. She is currently expanding this body of work with the website, walking project and exhibition *Confluence Field Trips*, to be presented in early 2016.

SOHEILA ESFAHANI was born in Tehran, Iran, in 1972 and moved to Canada in 1992. She received her Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Western Ontario (2010) and her Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Waterloo (2003). As a culturally diverse artist living in Canada, she navigates, through her recent art practice, the terrains of cultural translation and explores the processes involved in cultural transfer and transformation. Esfahani has recently exhibited in *Human Nature* at Carleton University Art Gallery, and the Kenderdine Art Gallery at the University of Saskatchewan (2015). She is also a recipient of grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Ontario Arts Council and the Region of Waterloo Arts Fund. As part of the SSHRCC grant, Esfahani participated in a research/creation group entitled *Immersion Emergencies and Possible Worlds: Engaging Water as Culture and Resource Through Contemporary Art*. In 2015 she was nominated for the Jameel Prize at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England. Currently, Esfahani is a lecturer at the University of Waterloo and works from her studio at Kitchener’s artist-run centre, Globe Studios. Her work is represented in public and private collections, including the Canada Council Art Bank.

GAUTAM GAROO is a native of Kashmir, India, born in 1983; he currently resides in Delhi, India. Garoo received his Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Western Ontario in London (2011) and his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in sculpture from Delhi University. The repetitive actions he uses throughout his practice present an emptiness that is emulated on the surface of the work. Of interest to him is the past resurfacing in the present: what can be situated within the is and the was. More fundamentally, Garoo is invested in working between that which manifests before us and that which is *non-manifest*. His desire is to express ideas beyond the strictly utilitarian, which makes his use of ordinary objects all the more complex.

PATRICK MAHON is an artist, curator and teacher/academic. He was born in Winnipeg, in 1957, and currently resides in London, Ontario. Mahon studied at the University of Manitoba (1983) and the University of British Columbia, where he received his Master of Fine Arts degree (1991). His work includes print-based projects that engage with historical and contemporary aspects of printmaking, and involves responding to gallery and museum collections, as well as establishing community-based art initiatives. Mahon's artwork has been exhibited widely in Canada, at Museum London, the Art Gallery of Hamilton, the Southern Alberta Art Gallery and Kamloops Art Gallery, and internationally, including at the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in Chongqing, China (2005) and in Barthète (Toulouse), France (2011). The SSHRC-funded project *Art and Cold Cash*, which involved artists from southern Canada and Baker Lake, Nunavut, was produced and exhibited between 2004 and 2010 at MOCCA in Toronto; MacLaren Art Centre in Barrie; Platform in Winnipeg; Dunlop Art Gallery in Regina; and a book was published by Toronto's YYY in 2010. Mahon was in residence at the International Studio and Curatorial Program in New York in 2007, and the Frans Masereel Centrum in Belgium and at La Maison Patrimoniale de Barthète in France, both in 2011. Recent exhibitions include McMaster Museum of Art (2013); Robert Langen Art Gallery at Wilfred Laurier University (2013); and Gallery 1C03 at the University of Winnipeg (2014). The catalogue *Water Structures*, with an interview by Robert Enright, was released in 2014.

COLIN MINER was born in Halifax, N.S., in 1978, and currently lives and works in Toronto. He completed his PhD at the University of Western Ontario (2014) and holds a Master of Fine Arts degree (2007), as well as a Bachelor of Fine Arts, from the University of British Columbia (2002). His work draws attention to photography's relationship to the scientific, as well as to the materiality of photographs. Alongside his art practice, Miner works on writing, facilitating exhibitions and the artist project Moire. Recent solo exhibition projects include Album Gallery in Toronto (2015) and the McIntosh Gallery in London, Ontario (2013). Selected group exhibitions include, most recently, Art Gallery of Alberta in Edmonton (2016); Gallery 44 in Toronto (2015); the Beijing Center for the Arts in Beijing (2009); Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery in Vancouver (2007); and Kulturforum Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, Germany (2001). Miner is the recipient of numerous awards and grants, including the Barbara Spohr Memorial Award (2014), the Toronto Arts Council (2014) and, most recently, the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council, both in 2015.

LUCY ORTA was born in 1966 in Sutton Coldfield, U.K., and is currently based out of central Paris and Les Moulins in Seine-et-Marne, France. She graduated with an Honours degree in Fashion-Knitwear Design from Nottingham Trent University (1989). After moving to Paris, Orta began practicing as a visual artist in 1991, exhibiting her work in galleries and museums internationally. She is currently Chair of Art and the Environment at the University of the Arts London, where she has been a Professor of Art and the Environment at the London College of Fashion since 2007. Orta was the inaugural Rootstein Hopkins Chair from 2002 to 2007 at the University of the Arts London, and head of Man and Humanity at the Design Academy Eindhoven, a pioneering, socially driven and sustainable master's program she co-founded, from 2002 to 2005.

JORGE ORTA was born in 1953 in Rosario, Argentina, and is currently based out of central Paris and Les Moulins in Seine-et-Marne, France. He studied at the Universidad Nacional de Rosario in the Faculty of Fine Arts (1979) and in the Faculty of Architecture (1980). Orta was a Fine Arts lecturer there and a member of CONICET, the Argentinean national council for scientific research, until 1984. He then received a scholarship from the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs to pursue a Diplôme d'études approfondies at the Sorbonne in Paris, where he now resides.

LUCY + JORGE ORTA's collaborative practice draws upon ecological and social sustainability issues to create artworks employing diverse media, including drawing, sculpture, installation, couture, painting, silkscreen, photography, video and light, as well as staged ephemeral interventions and performances. Among their most emblematic series are *Refuge Wear*; *Body Architecture*; *HortiRecycling*; *70 x 7 The Meal*; *Nexus Architecture*; *The Gift*; *OrtaWater*; *Clouds*; *Antarctica*; and *Amazonia*. The Ortas' artwork has recently been the focus of major solo exhibitions at Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery in Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut (2013); Yorkshire Sculpture Park in Wakefield (2013); Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art in Ithaca (2014); and Parc de la Villette in Paris (2014). Their work can be found in public and private collections and has been the subject of numerous monographs. In recognition of their contribution to sustainability, the artists received the Green Leaf Award in 2007 for artistic excellence with an environmental message, presented by the United Nations Environment Programme in partnership with the Natural World Museum at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo, Norway. In 2013 the artists' monumental series *Cloud / Meteoros* was selected for the inaugural Terrace Wires public art commission for St Pancras International station in London.

STUART REID was born in Dundee, Scotland, in 1962. He completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at York University in Toronto (1986). Reid was Director/Curator of Rodman Hall Art Centre at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, from 2012 to 2016. From 2009 through 2011, he was Executive Director of the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina, Saskatchewan, one of Western Canada's premiere venues for contemporary art. He has also served as Director/Curator of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery in Owen Sound from 2001 to 2009, Curator of the Art Gallery of Mississauga from 1992 to 2001, and Associate Curator at the Ontario Crafts Council from 1990 to 1992. In 2002, Reid attended the prestigious Museum Leadership Institute at the Getty Leadership Institute hosted by the J. Paul Getty Trust at the University of California at Berkeley. He is the author of over sixty exhibition catalogues and several published art books. In 2013, he won the Ontario Association of Art Galleries' Curatorial Writing Award for his text in the catalogue *Simone Jones: All That Is Solid*, and won again in 2015 for his curatorial text in *Mary Anne Barkhouse: Settlement/Regency*.

ROBERT WILLIAM SANDFORD is the EPCOR Chair for Water and Climate Security at the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health. He is the author or co-author of numerous high-profile works on water. In his work, Sandford is committed to translating scientific research outcomes into a language that decision-makers can use to craft timely and meaningful public policy, and to bringing an international example to bear on local water issues. Sandford is also senior advisor on water issues for the Interaction Council, a global public policy forum composed of more than thirty former heads of state, including Canadian prime minister Jean Chrétien, U.S. president Bill Clinton and prime minister of Norway Gro Brundtland. Sandford is also a Fellow of the Centre for Hydrology at the University of Saskatchewan and a Fellow of the Biogeoscience Institute at the University of Calgary. He sits on the advisory board of Living Lakes Canada and is a member of the Forum for Leadership on Water (FLOW), a national water policy research group centred in Toronto. In 2013, *Alberta Ventures* magazine recognized Sandford as one of the year's fifty most influential Albertans.

GU XIONG is a multimedia artist who was born in Chongqing province, China, in 1953. He currently resides in Vancouver, B.C., working with painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, photography, video, digital imagery, text, performance art and installation. Gu Xiong has exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally, in solo and group exhibitions, as well as realizing public art commissions. He has participated in the 55th Venice Biennale Parallel Exhibition *Voice of the Unseen: Chinese Independent Art 1979–Today* (2013); *Border Zones: New Art Across Cultures* at the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver (2010); *Post Avant-garde Chinese Contemporary Art: Four Directions of the New Era in Hong Kong* (2007); the Shanghai Biennale (2004), where he was one of four Canadian representatives; and the groundbreaking exhibition *China Avant-Garde* at the China National Museum of Fine Arts in Beijing (1989). His work is represented in institutions such as the National Gallery of Canada, China National Museum of Fine Arts and the Vancouver Art Gallery. Gu Xiong has published books, exhibition catalogues and book covers, and worked as curator for exhibitions by Canadian and Chinese artists. His artwork has received significant critical recognition, including reviews in the international art magazines *Flash Art* and *Art in America*, as well as the *New York Times*.

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