Performative Strategies in the Extractive Periphery:

Resisting Colonial-Capitalist Logics of Dissolution in the Anthropocene

by

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Abstract

Performative Strategies in the Extractive Periphery:
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A thesis by Valérie Frappier (French settler ancestry, Toronto-based)
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Situated at the intersections of performance, decolonial and ecological theory, this thesis posits embodied performance strategies as a catalyst for subverting the colonial-capitalist logics of extractivism. Through close readings of the work of contemporary artists Ts̲ēmā Igharas (Tahltan), Otobong Nkanga (Nigerian-born, Antwerp-based), Warren Cariou (Métis and European ancestry), Carolina Caycedo (Colombian mestizx, Los Angeles-based) and Rebecca Belmore (Anishinaabe), this thesis argues that the performing body translates extractive politics into the immediacy of the senses through the micro and intimate aesthetics of the corporeal to engage in a form of critical public pedagogy. Drawing on the work of scholars Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Macarena Gómez-Barris, Laura Levin and Wanda Nanibush, this study queries what submerged perspectives are voiced and made visible in the extractive zone, and frames these perspectives within the current discourse of the Anthropocene. The artists' land-based praxes, foregrounding Indigenous knowledges, are examined as a type of field research of specific regions' geopolitics and temporalities—praxes which conceptualize alternative ways of representing and thinking about land through the performance of place-based relationality.

Keywords: extractivism, land-based performance, performance strategies, Indigenous knowledges, colonial-capitalist critique.

Acknowledgements

The writing of this thesis took place on the northern shores of Lake Ontario in so-called Toronto, a city situated on the traditional territories of several nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, and the Huron-Wendat, and is governed by the Dish With One Spoon land agreement to peaceably share the region's lands. These territories, in which I am currently based, are also the lands I have grown up on as a settler and uninvited guest. I am indebted by the opportunity to learn, work and live on these territories, and am grateful for all they sustain and make possible.

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Introduction
How to Face Extractivism?

The ever-present urgency of the environmental and climate crisis afflicting our planet has made it clear that an extractive status quo—one dictated by our dominant economic model of over-consumption and exponential growth as necessary for progress—not only maintains, but will ensure, continued disruption to the earth's natural patterns and deepening disparities between who is able to shield themselves from these effects and who experiences them first-hand. As a framework, extractivism—which activist Naomi Klein defines as "a nonreciprocal, dominance-based relationship with the earth, one purely of taking…[and] the opposite of stewardship"[1]—is a leading catalyst for ecocidal climate change, contributing to rising carbon emissions, the dispossession of Indigenous territories, and the widespread contamination of land, water, and air. Not only does extractivism significantly shape our economy and wield profit for those powerful few far removed from the aftermath of extractive industry, but it is equally propped up by our legal and governmental systems.

In light of these tentacular forces, politicized art and creative practices can play a critical role in disrupting the extractive status quo by probing its regulatory structures and envisioning the large-scale paradigm shift needed to transition humanity's relation with the earth to a reciprocal one. In advocating for the transformative potential of art, I echo visual culture scholar T.J. Demos who, in writing about political ecology to "insist on environmental matters of concern as inextricable from social, political, and economic forces,"[2] asserts that "art holds the promise of initiating exactly these kinds of creative perceptional and philosophical shifts, offering new ways of comprehending ourselves and our relation to the world differently than the destructive traditions of colonizing nature."[3] As a white settler born and raised in southern Ontario, Canada, I am indebted to the important critiques of extractivism levelled by Indigenous, Black, diasporic and feminist thinkers, and the way they guide my perception of how an embodied creative praxis is a critical mode for understanding our relation to land and envisioning this urgent paradigm shift.

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[1] Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (Toronto and New York City: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2014), 169-170.

[2] T.J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), 7.

I am equally inspired by the recent proliferation of contemporary art projects that intersect with activist-led organizing to address ecology, land defence and decolonial politics by employing embodied practice in the face of extractivism.[4] This thesis theorizes land-based performance within the realm of contemporary art as a type of field research of extractive zones. This approach contextualizes these regions' geopolitics and temporalities beyond the rationalized realm of the visual—that which has dominated art history—to evince how an embodied approach interprets localized politics through alternative senses alongside the visual. In so doing, I am interested in assessing how the performing body translates extractive politics into the immediacy of the senses through the micro and intimate aesthetics of the corporeal, broadening conceptions of eco-aesthetics to engage in a form of critical public pedagogy in support of environmental justice. My approach to considering land-based performance is anchored as an anticolonial critique, as any discussion of land and ecology in the Americas—the geographical focus of this thesis—must begin from an Indigenous perspective.

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[3] Ibid., 19.

[4] Recent publications, projects and conferences that have been particularly influential in my thinking about the role of embodied creative practice in the face of extractivism include: Macarena Gómez-Barris's *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017); *LandMarks2017 / Repères2017*, multi-site exhibition co-curated by David Diviney, Ariella Pahlke & Melinda Spooner (ACT), Natalia Lebedinskaia, Véronique Leblanc, Kathleen Ritter and Tania Willard, cross-Canada, June 2017; *The Work of Wind: Air, Land, Sea*, exhibition curated by Christine Shaw, Blackwood Gallery, University of Toronto Mississauga, September 14-23, 2018; "Resisting Extractivism, Performing Opposition," conference organized by Zoë Heyn-Jones at OCAD University, Toronto, March 2, 2019; the discussions and activities I had the privilege of participating in as a member of the "From Relajo to Refusal: Resisting Extractivism, Performing Opposition" work group at the XI Encuentro Hemisférico, titled "The World Inside Out: Humor, Noise, and Performance," organized by the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), Mexico City, June 9-15, 2019.

Before continuing to introduce the focus of this thesis, the artists and their use of embodied strategies that foreground Indigenous perspectives of land, I must first locate my own body in this text and in these words. I am a white settler woman of French ancestry currently based on the northern shores of Lake Ontario in so-called Toronto—where the writing of this thesis took place—and which is situated on the traditional territories of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, and the Huron-Wendat, and is governed by the Dish With One Spoon land agreement.[5] By bringing the strands of this thesis together, I am guided by what art historian Jessica L. Horton writes of ecological art and activism, that "Putting 'Native struggles for land and life' in dialogue with contemporary ecoaesthetics—or more specifically, considering their intersections in a continuum of First Nations texts and artworks—bears on some of the most pressing problems in both fields."[6]

Following Horton's call, this thesis centres on the work of contemporary artists Ts̱ēmā Igharas (Tahltan), Otobong Nkanga (Nigerian-born, Antwerp-based), Warren Cariou (Métis and European ancestry), Carolina Caycedo (Colombian mestizx, Los Angeles-based) and Rebecca Belmore (Anishinaabe), whose embodied praxes not only conceptualize alternative ways of representing and thinking about extractive zones, but also literally embody these alternatives through their acts of place-based relationality with land and the Indigenous histories of land. The work of these five artists addresses extractivism in the context of the Americas, with the geographical exception of Nkanga, who provides a notable counterpoint on the other side of the Atlantic. Together, these artists' land-based performative actions contribute to conveying "alternative means of organizing human-earth relations through a painful history to address our equally fraught present."[7] In what follows, I approach land-based performance as a twofold catalyst for disrupting and subverting colonial narratives of and capitalism's logics towards the land.

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[5] The Dish With One Spoon was an agreement made between several Indigenous nations including the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee to peaceably share the region's lands. The much later Toronto Purchase Treaty (Treaty 13) also covers this territory, and was made between the Mississaugas of the Credit and the British around the turn of the nineteenth century through proceedings that dubiously entitled the British to a large tract of land and was differently understood by the Mississaugas of the Credit.

[6] Jessica L. Horton, "Indigenous Artists against the Anthropocene," *Art Journal* 76, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 51.

It must be noted that this thesis is overwhelmingly informed by a Canadian context in the Americas, including through my Franco-Ontarian positionality as its writer and that over half the artworks discussed were enacted on Indigenous territories the Canadian nation-state occupies and extracts from. The lands of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit of northern Turtle Island were colonized by Europeans through the genocide of Indigenous peoples and the dispossession and displacement of these diverse nations from their lands—systemic violence which began over four hundred years ago when the first European settlers arrived, the French being some of its earliest, and which continues today. The colonization of Canada was also facilitated through the enslavement of Black and Indigenous peoples for over two hundred years, from the 1600s until 1834. Today, the Canadian nation-state is able to economically prosper on stolen lands due to this history of violence and its ongoing, extractive enactments. Although this thesis seeks to answer Horton's call and centre Indigenous perspectives of land, the anticolonial critique presented herein is inherently shaped by my positionality and my embodied privilege as a settler in colonial Canada.

Locating the Anatomy of Extractivism

The starting point for my thinking about extractivism can be traced back to the words and wisdom of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg activist and author Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. I first read Simpson's interview with Naomi Klein in 2017, which introduced me to the concept of extractivism and its intertwined implications of colonial-capitalist resource extraction and dispossession.[8] I have consistently returned to this conversation for Simpson's direct and accessible delineation of the insidious repercussions of extractivism, and also for her poetical and meaningful articulations of alternatives to these processes. In the interview, Simpson explains that an extractive status quo evokes multiple dimensions, as simultaneously a physical process of resource extraction on Indigenous lands as well as, and importantly, a mindset. Simpson defines the concept in the following way: "The act of extraction removes all of the relationships that give whatever is being extracted meaning. Extracting is… stealing—it is taking without consent, without thought, care or even knowledge of the impacts extraction has on the other living things in that environment. That's always been a part of colonialism and conquest."[9] She here makes clear how extractive processes imply a forceful removal and subsequent severing of relations—a logic which scripts nature but also bodies and knowledge as resources available for exploitation.

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[7] Ibid.

At its etymological root, the term extractivism stems from *extrahere*, the Latin word signifying "to pull out." On a broader transnational economic scale, it furthermore "refers to an international division of labour, which determines that some countries (usually Southern ones) produce raw materials, extracting them and exporting to the Northern countries, which produce industrialised goods,"[10] an asymmetrical economic flow which subsequently ensures "the industrial development and prosperity of the global North."[11] Government-approved multinational corporations are then able to access vast tracts of land, most often Indigenous territories, to prospect and extract materials with few legal restrictions or supervisions over their actions. These activities commonly cause human rights abuses of the communities who inhabit the regions being extracted.[12] Economist Alberto Acosta names this paradigm an "extractive mode of accumulation" and, following Eduardo Gudynas, upholds that extractivism should be defined in the plural since, in addition to mineral and petroleum mining which commonly come to mind as typical extractive industries, food production (monoculture agriculture and fishing), forestry and tourism are also anchored in extractivist logics of exploitation and profit.[13] This expanded concept of extractivism emerges from the discourse of *extractivismo* in Latin America, which is wielded as a language of resistance in naming the capitalist logic that oppresses regions subservient to the whims of an economy that largely benefits the Global North.[14] Settler colonial countries of the Global North—including Canada, from where I write these words—enact extractive processes across borders but also within their own borders, extracting wealth from the Indigenous territories they occupy—a continuation of their colonial foundations as "resource rich" countries.

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[8] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson in "Dancing the World into Being: A Conversation with Idle No More's Leanne Simpson," *YES! Magazine*, March 6, 2013, https://www.yesmagazine.org/peace-justice/dancing-the-world-into-being-a-conversation-with-idle-no-more-leanne-simpson. I am grateful to Professor Alison Crosby for assigning this interview as reading material in the fall 2017 section of the course "Gender, Globalization and Militarization" at York University, Toronto, in which I was a student.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Miriam Lang and Dunia Mokrani, eds., *Beyond Development: Alternative visions from Latin America*, trans. Sara Shields and Rosemary Underhay (Amsterdam; Quito: Transnational Institute and Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, 2013), 190.

[11] Alberto Acosta, "Post-extractivism: From Discourse to Practice—Reflections for Action," in *Alternative Pathways to Sustainable Development: Lessons from Latin America*, eds. Gilles Carbonnier, Humberto Campodónico and Sergio Tezanos Vázquez (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2017), 63, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctt1w76w3t.12.

By focusing on extractivism as a set of processes and a mindset, this thesis interrogates its interconnectedness with the formation of the geologic era known as the Anthropocene. In apprehending the tentacular nature of these formations, I query what methodologies are needed to register the macro scope of extractivism in the Anthropocene within the micro orbit of the human body. In response, I posit land-based performative actions as an important site of knowledge production against colonial-capitalist extractive logic and contend that an embodied creative praxis enables performers and their audiences to envision beyond, while also proposing alternatives to, the existing structures that regulate humanity's relationship with land and the environment. In addressing what cultural theorist Heather Davis names "the intimacy of extraction"[15]—the bodily acknowledgement of our personal entanglement within extractive processes—I consider what can be learned from performance strategies enacted in the heart of extractive zones and also in the urban centres where its capital flows, assessing how embodied approaches toward the land might help us see and feel outside of an extractive visuality and engage with these processes on a more intimate level.

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[12] Lang and Mokrani, *Beyond Development*, 190.

[13] Acosta, "Post-extractivism," 81.

[14] Thea Riofrancos's article "Extractivismo unearthed: a genealogy of a radical discourse," *Cultural Studies* 31, no. 2-3 (2017): 277-306, provides a comprehensive survey of this discourse from a Latin American perspective.

In discussing embodied methodologies, I am arguing against the technocratic visualities produced by the Anthropocene that prioritize a bird's-eye view field of vision over disaster zones of extractive industry. Rather, I am concerned with thinking about the potencies of embodied performance practice through an anticolonial feminist lens, emerging from the ground itself, to pose the following questions: How can the activation of a haptic perception through embodied approaches generate a different sense of the Anthropocene beyond the normalized logic of extraction?[16] In combining a visual sense (that which dominates art theory) with a haptic one, what new knowledge is produced when we both see and *feel* the effects of the Anthropocene? How does performance act as a frame and also as a magnifier, making visible the power dynamics that structure a site through the conduit of the corporeal? Situated at the intersections of performance, decolonial and ecological studies, this thesis works to address these questions by building an interdisciplinary analysis of the implications of land-based actions.

I begin by addressing these questions from a socio-ethical and political perspective anchored to Simpson's assertion that, "the alternative [to extractivism] is deep reciprocity. It's respect, it's relationship, it's responsibility, and it's local."[17] In undertaking the research and writing of this thesis, I questioned and continue to question my relationship to these large implications of extractivism, and self-reflexively examine the ground upon which I stand. As a settler of French ancestry who grew up on Lake Ontario's watershed and now lives in so-called Toronto, this means examining how settler colonialism as a structure has shaped my relation to land in these territories. In heeding Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's clear assertion that decolonization is not a metaphor, but in fact is "about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life,"[18] and in not wanting to replicate extractive patterns of settler research of Indigenous knowledges from within the academy, one of my intentions in undertaking this research is to unlearn and denaturalize the settler colonial system which has normalized mine and my ancestry's access to lands in so-called Canada.

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[15] Heather Davis, "Blue, Bling: On Extractivism," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 48, no. 1 (Autumn/Winter 2019): 19.

[16] A haptic perception here meaning the sense of touch, as literally enacted by the artists relating with their environments and imagined/perceived by viewers.

[17] Simpson in "Dancing the World."

My own connection to extraction is shaped by my personal history. My ancestors have accessed and lived off of these lands for many decades, with one of my earliest known ancestors arriving from coastal France to "New France" as a *coureur des bois*. Many of my ancestors lived in current-day Québec for at least two centuries, and more recently, I am directly preceded by three generations of Franco-Ontarians on both my maternal and paternal sides who largely made their living from farming and other land-based labour in northern Ontario. Settler colonialism as a structure today normalizes mine and my family's livelihood in Toronto and surrounding area, and also entitles our access to the Kawarthas region of the Williams Treaty near Peterborough as a site of leisure, dubbed "cottage country" by its white occupants for the escape it provides from the Toronto metropole, where I spent the weekends and summers of my youth. The settler colonial system facilitates this settler privilege by simultaneously surveying, and has a long history of criminalizing, Anishinaabe nations' activities on these same lands, being these nations' traditional territories—stark contradictions that Simpson discusses.[19]

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[18] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, vol. 1 (2012): 1.

In my practice as a writer and curator, I strive to counter colonial practices of extracting Indigenous knowledges to further a settler status quo and to instead, following Simpson, build ethical reciprocity and relationality, both with the histories of these territories and the knowledges they make possible. My objective in so doing is to contribute to building sustainable platforms that amplify the submerged perspectives of northern Turtle Island and its contested lands in the Americas, shattering the violently amnesic English-versus-French binary narrative of Canada that I was educated in in my youth.

Weaving a Theoretical Framework

Following the embodied methods of inquiry put forward by scholar Macarena Gómez-Barris in her book *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (2017), my approach to asserting the importance of embodied knowledge production in the face of extractivism has also been influenced by women of colour feminisms and queer theory, which upholds "lived embodiment as world-shaping activities."[20] Gómez-Barris describes her approach as one that aims "to understand ways of perceiving otherwise… as a decolonial queer and femme episteme and methodology,"[21] explicitly stating her decolonial intention by asserting that, "like women of color feminisms that analyze through a relational field of multiplicity, I situate the theory and praxis of de-linking from the colonial as refusing to see from a singular frame of analysis, standpoint, interpretation, or experience."[22] Just as ecology is an intersectional configuration affecting many strands of life,[23] so too must the creative modes of response that humans bring to critically examine/activate its potential. Plurality, multiplicity and specificity in relating to place are key aspects in examining embodied praxes against extractivism.

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[19] This violent history of the Williams Treaty region and how it directly informs the present is discussed in various writings by Simpson, such as her article "Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 3 (2014): 1-25, and her book *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

[20] Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone*, 9.

[21] Ibid.

In *The Extractive Zone*, Gómez-Barris introduces the concept of "submerged perspectives," which she defines as "the critical task of perceiving life otherwise… that allow us to see local knowledge that resides within what power has constituted as extractive zones."[24] She further defines these transgressive modes of perception as able to "pierce through the entanglements of power to differently organize the meanings of social and political life. In order words, the possibility of decolonization moves within the landscape of multiplicity that is submerged perspectives. Extractive zones contain within them the submerged perspectives that challenge obliteration."[25] Gómez-Barris here argues that in any extractive zone reside the local knowledges that resist extractivism—or what she terms "colonial capitalism and its afterlives"[26]—and its attendant logic of devaluation.[27] Her political project is to amplify these land-based perspectives as ways to envision and embody decolonial alternatives to the extractive status quo. In each of her five case studies of extractive regions in South America, she stages her argument by applying a decolonial queer femme methodology to surface these areas' submerged knowledges in order to uphold the alternatives to colonial-capitalism that have always existed within these lands. Critical to my analysis will be extending Gómez-Barris's notion of otherwise modes of perception to pierce through the structures of power that shape the sites of my study.

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Citing Kimberlé Crenshaw's articulation of intersectionality from a Black feminist legal standpoint, Demos writes that "ecology defines a method of intersectionality, which insists on thinking, being and becoming at the cross section of multiple fields of social, political, economic, and material determinations" (*Decolonizing Nature*, 25).

[24] Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone*, 11.

[25] Ibid., 11-12.

[26] Ibid., xvi.

[27] Ibid., 11-12.

As a way to further theorize the knowledge being produced through land-based actions, I turn to performance scholar Laura Levin's concept of "performing ground," as proposed in her book *Performing Ground: Space, Camouflage, and the Art of Blending In* (2014). Defined as "a performance strategy in which the human body commingles with or is presented as a direct extension of its setting,"[28] Levin's theory understands individuals not just as actors upon their settings but as inherently of and constituted by their settings. A key mode through which the body performs this extension is through camouflage, understood here as a process through which the body performs a type of mimesis with its environment—either visually, consciously, or both—which allows "individuals [to] transform their appearance – much like animals or insects – as a means of locating themselves within a larger environment or picture."[29] Levin delineates her theory of camouflage as a specifically political practice in which one locates themselves in time and space to foreground a political perspective, all the while surfacing an awareness of how deeply one is interconnected with their environment. For Levin, it also importantly refers to "performances that work against… binary thinking and illuminate ways in which figure and ground, visible and invisible, are chiasmically linked," positing "the strategic possibilities of embracing a 'hyper-spatiality' or an 'exorbitant groundness' that questions the very utility of figure and ground as separate conceptual categories."[30] Ultimately, a politicized camouflage strategy "is as much about revealing as concealing," as it equally "highlights the non-human site as itself a performing entity, reminding us that the communication between self and setting is rarely unidirectional."[31] Such an activation works to challenge the nature/culture binary as the performing body enacts a reciprocal relation to place, inciting the viewer to reflect on the nature of this interaction and their own relationship to place.

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[28] Laura Levin, *Performing Ground: Space, Camouflage and the Art of Blending In* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 13.
[29] Ibid., 4.
[30] Ibid., 14.

My close readings of performative actions by artists Ts̲ēmā Igharas, Otobong Nkanga, Warren Cariou, Carolina Caycedo and Rebecca Belmore in sites of extractivism critically engage the theories of embodiment put forward by Gómez-Barris and Levin, and analyze the implications of varied performative strategies. The close readings specifically apply Gómez-Barris's concept of submerged perspectives and Levin's multifaceted notion of performing ground to argue that the artists' strategies evince a reciprocal relation between humans and the land. I combine these theories to analyze the performative and site-specific engagements of the five artists by first locating and identifying the geopolitics of each extractive zone, then unearthing the histories of the sites by conveying the memories of land that each artist's action evokes. Following Gómez-Barris, I consider the submerged perspectives communicated through the artists' performative strategies and the structures of power their actions make visible. Following Levin, I interrogate what it means to perform ground within extractive zones, where land and water that have suffered extractive industry are themselves perceived as agential entities. Entwining the work of both theorists, I ultimately query: what submerged perspectives are voiced and made visible when performing ground in the extractive zone? Each artist activates a different facet of Levin's theory of camouflage to demonstrate the expansive ways performance initiates reciprocal relations with one's surroundings, and each activation is site-specific, magnifying submerged perspectives from/within each region.

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[31] Ibid., 97.

Summary of Chapters

To contextualize my discussion of the different perceptions of land in the Americas, the colonized "New World," I first provide in Chapter 1 a brief discussion of extractivism in the geological era now popularly known as the Anthropocene—a name which has not yet been adopted as an official moniker, and has generated much debate and controversy across different disciplines. The chapters that follow address the artistic strategies of performing material agency, becoming conduits for alternative perception, and re-narrativizing lands and water, to specifically highlight how these strategies counter the logics of extractivism and foreground Indigenous perspectives of/in extractive regions. In Chapter 2, I bring the works of Ts̱ēmā[32] and Nkanga into conversation to discuss how they map and make visible the flows of the mining industry to question Western systems of value and activate the memory of mined land through the material agency of minerals. In Chapter 3, I begin by analyzing the aerial photography of Canadian artist Edward Burtynsky to lead into a discussion of Cariou's reciprocal engagement with bitumen in the Athabasca tar sands to demonstrate how his actions visualize and sense land outside of an extractive gaze. And in Chapter 4, I highlight two collective performance works by Caycedo and Belmore to examine how they utilize voice to re-narrativize contested waterways and trace non-linear time, evoking the submerged memories of land beyond the omnipresent colonial-extractive mindset.

While I am aware that the performances I am analyzing in this thesis are not necessarily all explicitly activist in their intentions, I am interested in assessing how these strategies can help us think differently about human relations with land and how they help dissect the logics that underpin extractive industry. In the work of Ts̱ēmā, Nkanga, Cariou, Caycedo and Belmore, the body becomes a proxy, a conduit, a receiver, an incarnation and an extension to perform reciprocity with land that has been converted into sites of extraction. Ultimately, through these gestures, the body becomes a barometer, not as a unit of measure, but as a witness to land and a testament to what is possible when one shifts one’s perception of their environment, and embodies an alternative way of seeing and being.

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[32] The artist chooses to be referred to by first name, her name of preference.

This constellating analysis begins on the shores of Lake Ontario with my discussion of Ts̱ēmā’s work, and flows back to conclude on these same shores with Belmore’s collective performance. This intentional arc is drawn to contribute site-specificity to my writing and to acknowledge the land I write on. In citing once more Simpson’s stated tenets for the alternative to extractivism—deep reciprocity, respect, relationship, responsibility, locality—I endeavour to acknowledge how the lake is and has been a source of life to these lands and its human and non-human inhabitants for thousands of years. Part of the writing process included frequent visits to the lake, which played a significant role in the embodied thought process of this work.

Chapter 1
A Brief Account of Extractivism in the Anthropocene

In broaching the subject of extractivism, it is critical to highlight its roots in the structures of power violently imposed through the European colonization of the Americas in the formation of the "New World," as well as to show how centres of capitalist power which were produced through these same structures narrativize the continuation of extractive processes as "progress" to rationalize colonial Western frameworks and project, after Tuck and Yang, a settler-colonial future. As Simpson affirms, the inherent link between extraction and colonization is crucial to highlight because, "if we are not, as peoples of the earth, willing to counter colonialism, we have no hope of surviving climate change."[33] Making visible the links between extractivism and colonization continues to be a dire political endeavour in the current climate crisis. Economist Alberto Acosta equally upholds these links in shaping the dominant economic model and, from a Latin American context, writes that extractivism is more than five hundred years old. It is, he writes, "a concept that helps explain plundering, accumulation, concentration and colonial and neocolonial devastation, as well as the evolution of modern capitalism and ideas of 'development' and 'sub-development.'"[34] Acosta demonstrates how this system of accumulation in Latin America and other colonized parts of the world is held up by capitalist powers in the Global North as the only significant way for these countries to participate in the world economy, condemning these regional economies to over-extracting materials to be exported to so-called developed countries.

These processes are further obfuscated under the proposed naming of our current geological era as the Anthropocene, given its succession following the Holocene (an epoch dating back to the last ice age), and named as such due to the environmental impact caused by human activity (*anthropos* meaning human in Greek). The Anthropocene as a concept poses problems on various levels, mainly in that it centres a universally humanist, Eurocentric perspective that fails to account for the power dynamics that initiated these large-scale shifts in the environment, as facilitated through colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade.[35] T.J. Demos describes the effect of the Anthropocene's universalizing logic as "joining all humans together in shared responsibility for creating our present environmental disaster,"[36] while it obscures rather than names the histories that set the drastic changes in our environments into motion. Many scholars have argued that the current epoch actually began approximately five hundred years ago at the onset of the colonization of the Americas and, as scholars such as Davis and Zoe Todd contend, "that the Anthropocene, if explicitly linked to the beginnings of colonization, would at least assert it as a critical project that understands that the ecocidal logics that now govern our world are not inevitable or 'human nature', but are the result of a series of decisions that have their origins and reverberations in colonization."[37]

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[33] Simpson in "Dancing the World."

[34] Acosta, "Post-extractivism," 81.

Within the field of geoscience, researchers Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin have made critical contributions to providing scientific evidence for this argument, proposing the date of 1610 as the start of the Anthropocene. They identify this date as the geologic marker of the "Orbis spike" which is signalled by the significant decline in CO_2 levels in the atmosphere caused by the arrival of Europeans to the Americas and the subsequent genocide of approximately fifty million Indigenous peoples between 1492 and 1650,[38] namely due to the smallpox virus circulating through the Colombian Exchange.[39] This eradication of human activity, they posit, was so widespread that it allowed the regeneration of forests fifty years later, significantly lowering CO_2 levels globally, before they climbed steadily upwards. If such a start date were to be agreed upon, they state that, "The Orbis spike implies that colonialism, global trade and coal brought about the Anthropocene."[40] In light of this evidence, editors of *Art in the Anthropocene* (2015) Davis and Etienne Turpin assert that "these systems of globalization and trade were dependent on genocide and slavery. The Anthropocene, by this dating, is thus the era of colonial genocide."[41]

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[35] As advanced by scholars in the arts and social sciences such as Heather Davis, Zoe Todd, Kathryn Yusoff, T.J. Demos and their contemporaries.

[36] T.J. Demos, *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017), 47.

[37] Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, "On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene," *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 16, no. 4 (2017): 763.

[38] Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin, "Defining the Anthropocene," *Nature* 519, no. 7542 (March 2015): 176.

Other terms have emerged as alternatives to the Anthropocene to describe this era, such as Capitalocene, a name which Donna Haraway argues more accurately points to the economic structure that turns land into natural resources to be extracted in order to continue "accelerating nationalist, transnationalist, and corporate unworlding."[42] Demos has also advocated for such a change in naming to more appropriately denounce the neoliberal culprit of capital behind ecological devastation, stating that, "It is not Indigenous peoples, or impoverished communities, or the inhabitants of underdeveloped countries who are subsidizing fossil fuel companies… so that they can run their Capitalocene enterprises, driving us all toward climate catastrophe, but rather the governments of over-developed nations."[43] Adding her voice to the chorus of Anthropocene name debates, Jessica L. Horton has queried: "I wonder what historical culpabilities are quietly excused when we substitute modifiers such as ‘anthro’ or even ‘capital’ for ‘Euro’ and ‘American’?”[44] And Françoise Vergès has in turn furthered this naming to the more explicit *racial* Capitalocene, highlighting that racialized communities are disproportionately more affected by climate change, advocating for the implementation of “an analysis of capital, imperialism, gender, class, and race and a conception of nature and of being human that opposes the Western approach”[45] when examining racialized environmental practices.

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[39] Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin, "A transparent framework for defining the Anthropocene Epoch," *The Anthropocene Review* 2 no. 2 (2015): 134. They define the Colombian Exchange as "the global transfer of crops, domesticated animals, diseases and human commensals between the Old and New Worlds following the arrival of Europeans in the Americas after 1492 and subsequently developed global circuits of trade" (134).
[40] Lewis and Maslin, "Defining the Anthropocene," 177.
[41] Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, eds, "Art & Death: Lives Between the Fifth Assessment & the Sixth Extinction," in *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), 8.
[42] Donna Haraway, "Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene," *e-flux*, vol. 75, September 2016, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/75/67125/tentacular-thinking-anthropocene-capitalocene-chthulucene/.
[43] Demos, *Against the Anthropocene*, 55.

This brief survey of the debates surrounding the current geological epoch serves to explicitly locate my discussion of extractivism in the Anthropocene as one inherently linked to, and as a continuation of, colonialism. How one perceives the climate crisis is inextricably bound up with how one thinks about this genealogy of the Anthropocene. As Kathryn Yusoff argues, the Anthropocene extends liberal humanist thought through the whiteness of its geology, scripting all as equally implicated in the ecological crisis and, while it “proclaims the language of species life—*anthropos*—through a universalist geologic commons, it neatly erases histories of racism that were incubated through the regulatory structure of geologic relations.”[46] The Anthropocene’s humanist structures of thinking trace back to Western Enlightenment, underpinned by what Elizabeth A. Povinelli has termed “geontopower”: “discourses, affects, and tactics used in late liberalism to maintain or shape the relationship between life and nonlife.”[47] Povinelli further explains that geontopower is a wider concept encapsulating biopolitics, as “biopower (governance through life and death) has long depended on a subtending geontopower, a mode of power that polices and regulates the difference between the lively and the inert, and that has operated openly in settler colonialism."[48] She demonstrates her concept for the "difference between life/being (*bios*) and nonlife (*geos*)" by placing this binary within the equation "*Life (Life {birth, growth, reproduction} v. Death) v. Nonlife*," exemplifying how "the focus on biopolitics – *Life {birth, growth, reproduction} v. Death* – has come at the expense of a consideration of the larger problem of bios versus geos, of which biopolitics is but a part – *Life v. Nonlife*."[49] Povinelli's bios/geos concept sets the stage for contending with the constructed binary division between the human and the non-human, culture versus nature, identifying how this division perpetuates and reproduces colonial-capitalism's territory.[50]

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[44] Horton, “Indigenous Artists,” 59-60.
[45] Françoise Vergès, “Racial Capitalocene: Is the Anthropocene racial?” *Verso*, August 30, 2017, https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3376-racial-capitalocene.
[46] Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 2.
[47] Elizabeth A. Povinelli, “Acts of Life: Ecology and Power,” *Artforum International* 55, no. 10 (Summer 2017): 319.

In further delineating the structures of thought that have shaped extractivism in the Anthropocene, I here turn to what anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena has termed the "anthropo-not-seen," which implies "the world-making process through which heterogeneous worlds that do not make themselves through the division between humans and nonhumans – nor do they necessarily conceive the different entities in their assemblages through such a division – are *both* obliged into that distinction *and* exceed it."[51] De la Cadena also links this destructive process to the start of the colonization of the New World, and simultaneously refuses its totalizing reality by claiming that "the anthropo-not-seen was, and continues to be, the process of destruction of these worlds *and* the impossibility of such destruction."[52] She here points to the indestructible and enduring resistance of those not seen and acknowledged by the extractive gaze—namely Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities and the more-than-human—as agential entities. De la Cadena's definition of the anthropo-not-seen ultimately calls it an undeclared war that works to divide diverse living forms into a nature/culture binary which, as a result, seeks to homogenize all non-human entities into an unspecified category of "universal nature" to in turn facilitate "the translation of nature into resources."[53] She asserts that what resists this attempt to singularize the non-human and remove those in the way of its resources-for-profit is specific relations with land and an understanding of the interconnection between inhabitants and their territories' ecosystems.

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Elizabeth A. Povinelli, Mathew Coleman and Kathryn Yusoff, "An Interview with Elizabeth Povinelli: Geontopower, Biopolitics and the Anthropocene," *Theory, Culture & Society* 34, no. 2-3 (2017): 171, original emphasis.

[50] Povinelli, "Acts of Life," 320.

[51] Marisol de la Cadena, "Uncommoning Nature," *Supercommunity*, August 22, 2015, http://supercommunity.e-flux.com/authors/marisol-de-la-cadena/.

[52] Ibid.

Although the discourse of the Anthropocene continues to proclaim an impending apocalypse—the end of the human species if humanity doesn't drastically change its tune—it is critical to listen to the voices and worlds of Indigenous, Black and racialized communities for whom the apocalypse has already happened and which they continue to face and resist on a daily basis. Yusoff eloquently demonstrates this reality when saying,

> If the Anthropocene proclaims a sudden concern with the exposures of environmental harm to white liberal communities, it does so in the wake of histories in which these harms have been knowingly exported to black and brown communities under the rubric of civilization, progress, modernization, and capitalism. The Anthropocene might seem to offer a dystopic future that laments the end of the world, but imperialism and ongoing (settler) colonialisms have been ending worlds for as long as they have been in existence. The Anthropocene as a politically infused geology and scientific/popular discourse is just now noticing the extinction it has chosen to continually overlook in the making of its modernity and freedom.[54]

Yusoff's indictment makes clear how the apocalypse has already happened, and has deeply affected communities who live in the wake of it. As Horton herself states, "For many Indigenous people, apocalypse concerns the past as much as the future"[55]—a stance which is paralleled by Eriel Deranger, an activist of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, who declares: "Indigenous people have become the canary in the coal mine. I don't want my children to have to be the sacrifices for humanity to wake up."[56]

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Yusoff, *Billion Black Anthropocenes*, xiii.

[55] Horton, "Indigenous Artists," 60.

[56] Deranger qtd. in Wen Stephenson, "Keystone XL and Tar Sands: Voices From the Front Lines," *The Nation*, February 4, 2014, https://www.thenation.com/article/keystone-xl-and-tar-sands-voices-front-lines/.

Bringing the voices of these scholars together helps lay the groundwork for understanding the unequal relations of power that structure this era, as their articulations create the infrastructure for assessing the aftermath of colonization and the ongoing grip of extractivism, particularly as it concerns the settler colonial context of the Americas. As the climate crisis advances, the concealment of these structures of power becomes less and less successful. Connecting the dots between processes set in motion five hundred years ago to the current state of the climate and environment helps to fully understand the precedents for the IPCC's (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) 2018 report that states humans have less than twelve years to drastically lower their carbon emissions in order to avoid catastrophic rises in the climate's temperature. This thesis is specifically concerned with highlighting how Indigenous perspectives of land and water have been submerged through the extractive logic of the Anthropocene in the Americas and, in discussing the following artists' works, I will seek to connect some of these perspectives in how they envision land and living ecosystems beyond extractivism in the Anthropocene.

Chapter 2
Unearthing Flows of the Mining Industry: Tracing Materials to their Sources, Centres to their Peripheries

Areas of extractive industry and activity have typically been located in regions constructed as peripheries, geopolitically made peripheral to centres of power where the capital accumulated from extractive industry flows to. In *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (2014), Naomi Klein terms these areas as "sacrifice zones," meaning areas that can be sacrificed and made disposable, alongside the communities that inhabit them, in order to maintain economic growth.[57] She writes that the notion of sacrifice zones "has always been intimately tied to imperialism, with disposable peripheries being harnessed to feed a glittering center, and it is bound up too with notions of racial superiority, because in order to have sacrifice zones, you need to have people and cultures who count so little that they are considered deserving of sacrifice."[58] Klein illuminates how extractivism as an economic system depends on this single-value perception of land—solely its monetary one—as it wilfully ignores the inherent interconnectivity of ecosystems and all their lifeforms for its continuous perpetuation.[59] In its initial articulation as an economic model, extractivism referred to "economies based on removing ever more raw materials from the earth, usually for export to traditional colonial powers, where 'value' was added."[60] This question of where value is thought to lie in an extractive system, of where it is "added" and how it is produced, will be critical to consider while assessing artistic strategies that counter this Western value system and the epistemology that underpins it.

The phenomenon of regions being sacrificed to help maintain glittering centres of power has been rampantly reproduced across the Americas since the onset of European colonization, but so too have modes of resistance against these processes always prospered in these same regions, emanating from the lived experience of Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities and their peripheral ways of knowing in the so-called sacrificial zone. In parallel with Klein's notion of sacrifice zones, Gómez-Barris employs the term "extractive zone" as a way to "[name] the violence that capitalism does to reduce, constrain, and convert life into commodities."[61] She further extends her definition of extractive zones to signify what capitalism has deemed sacrifice zones beyond the point of repair as instead "transitional and intangible spaces[,] as geographies that cannot be fully contained by the ethnocentrism of speciesism, scientific objectification, or by extractive technocracies that advance oil fields, construct pipelines, divert and diminish rivers, or cave-in mountains through mining."[62] Gómez-Barris asserts the intangibility of these spaces by demonstrating how alternative systems of value—namely Indigenous philosophies which uphold respect for land and its different lifeforms—fuel resistance against an extractive mindset of devaluation and reject the logic of containment. She states, "Seeing and listening to these worlds [in the extractive zone] present nonpath dependent alternatives to capitalist and extractive valuation."[63] This question of extractive value lies at the heart of the colonial practice of sequestering certain lands for sacrifice in order to profit those in centres of power, and devaluing the lives of those placed in the wake of extractive violence.

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[57] Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 169.

[58] Ibid., 169-170.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid., 169.

This chapter applies the question of extractive value as produced by the mining industry to assess what methodologies enable extractive regions made peripheral to dominant society to be perceived and understood as intimately connected to those constructed as the centre, as exemplified in the work of contemporary artists Ṯsēmā Igharas and Otobong Nkanga. The formation that enables the practice of puncturing the earth in order to extract valuable minerals to accumulate wealth in a capitalist economy is that of the mine: a vast hole dug into the earth. As the mountain of land being mined depletes, the value of its extracted minerals soars as it enters the chain of production to be refined, processed, exported and sold elsewhere. In what follows, I examine performances enacted by Ts̱ēmā and Nkanga, respectively, to identify how their performative strategies make the asymmetrical flows of the mining industry visible and question the Western system of value that underpins capitalist mining. With the aim of troubling how the industry devalues ecosystems in order to produce value for its own revenue, I demonstrate how these artists' strategies trace the circulation of mined copper in a non-linear way to conjure the memory of their environments. By igniting the material agency of copper, the artists employ their embodied praxes to translate these extractive processes into bodily language, performing what Davis identifies as the intimacy of extraction to associate these flows to their places of origin through space and time to ultimately incarnate the hole that is the mine.

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[61] Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone*, xix.
[62] Ibid., 12.
[63] Ibid.

Ore Bodies: The Body as Proxy

Mining is a central focus of Ts̱ēmā Igharas's multidisciplinary practice. A member of the Tahltan First Nation, Ts̱ēmā references the long history of traditional and sustainable mining by her nation in the Tahltan mountains, notably in and around Mount Edziza in so-called British Columbia, and the more recent extractivist mining activity led by Canadian and international corporations in this same terrain, known to the mining industry as "The Golden Triangle."[64] Through her practice, she theorizes the multifaceted ways one can understand mining as an act. Typically, it refers to the extraction of minerals as "raw material/natural resources to feed society's consumable systems;" for the artist, it also signifies "a metaphysical and physical process for research, investigations, samples and collecting material for art-making."[65] By oscillating between these various meanings of mining—as both process and metaphor— Ts̱ēmā examines how different systems of thought assess the value of land, namely the differences between an Indigenous perspective and the settler colonial one employed by the corporate mining industry.

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[64] Today, the Tahltan territory is commercially mined for copper, gold, jade and anthracite coal.

One of Ts̱ēmā's key works that takes up these complexities of mining is her photographic series *(Re)Naturalize* (2015-16),[66] in which she conjured representations of copper mining in Tahltan territory in Toronto (see figures 1-4), where the artist was living at the time. In the series, she is photographed in an area called the Leslie Spit, a human-made peninsula approximately five kilometres in length along the city's south shore, which extends into Lake Ontario. In the work—a performance-for-camera which has been documented as individual images titled *No. 1 (Brick)*, *No. 4 (Recoil)*, *No. 6 (Rubble)* and *No. 7 (Rebar)*— Ts̱ēmā crouches nude amongst the Spit's eroded bricks and discarded strips of metal, her face shielded from view. Amongst the debris where she crouches, plants can be seen growing above mounds, sprouts of greenery lining the bleak grey- and red-coloured peninsula, showing signs of environmental naturalization (as the title of the series suggests). Her entire body is painted an earthy shade of reddish brown, camouflaged amongst the bricks and rebar of the same colour that surround the artist at the site. These discarded construction materials reference the peninsula's peculiar history as a dumping ground in the aftermath of demolition episodes in and around Toronto starting in the late 1950s, prior to which no trace of the peninsula existed.[67] The site has since been transformed and regenerated into a recreational zone under the name Tommy Thompson Park, becoming an "accidental wilderness" as a significant bird sanctuary and a habitat for various other species.[68]

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[65] Ts̱ēmā Igharas Skubovius, "LAND|MINE," (MFA thesis, OCAD University, 2016), 19.

[66] Ts̱ēmā performed and documented her series in 2015 with the help of Jonathan Igharas, and the images were then first exhibited in 2016 at the Winsor Gallery, BC. Ts̱ēmā Igharas, email correspondence with the author, December 17, 2018.

[67] "About Tommy Thompson Park," Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, accessed January 20, 2020, https://tommythompsonpark.ca/about/#1508176570627-736b8727-1712.

The work takes on further undertones of transformation for the reason that, in the series, the material Ts̲ēmā uses to coat her body is iron oxide, "iron oxide being what colours the mineral rich mountains in my territory red, as well as what colours our blood."[69] For the artist, this material connection between the red mountains and human blood has become "a beautiful metaphor for my connection to the LAND," specifically her home territory.[70] The reddish brown hue of Ts̲ēmā's body takes on additional meaning by also echoing the colour of copper, a mineral which has been mined from the mountains of her territory long before European colonization. Copper holds an important spiritual significance to hers and other Indigenous people's nations,[71] and has a "relation to both medicine and prosperity."[72] Through this act of camouflage, she performs the material connection of her body to the Tahltan mountains through the twofold implication of its exterior and mined minerals. She here transforms her body as something that can be symbolically mined, bearing knowledge from her territory in this new site, as she asserts the interconnectivity between humans, materials and land—land, from an Indigenous perspective, being the ultimate source of origin for all lifeforms. Although Tahltan territory, located in the north-west of so-called British Columbia, could seem far removed from the context of Toronto, through her embodied act of evoking the minerals from her territory's mountains, Ts̲ēmā unearths more covert connections between these geographies. In a conversation with Jaimie Isaac, she explains how she thinks about cross-territory correlations through the notion of material agency, using the Canadian penny as an example: "… money in your pocket has a static meaning in a capitalist society… but touching the copper of the penny that could have been mined in Tahltan territory connects you to that place and to all the issues surrounding corporate and Indigenous mining practices (since Tahltan have been mining copper and obsidian since time immemorial).”[73]

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[68] Ibid.
[69] Ts̲ēmā Igharas, email correspondence with the author, May 4, 2020.
[70] Igharas Skubovius, "LAND|MINE," 36.
[71] Léa Toulouse, "I Am Woman: The Decolonial Process of Indigenous Feminist Art," *Esse* (Summer 2017): 54.
[72] Jaimie Isaac, "generation future," in *Ts̲ēmā Igharas: future generations* [exhibition catalogue] (Peterborough: Artspace, 2018), 20.

Ts̱ēmā’s action confuses the binary boundaries between glittering centre (Toronto) and mining sacrifice zone (Tahltan territory) as a covert reminder that we are all connected to contemporary mining practices through our involvement, however involuntarily, in a capitalist society. What’s more, significant capital produced by the mining industry flows through the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX), headquartered in Toronto’s Financial District a short distance from where Ts̱ēmā is located on the Spit, including from the companies that mine and explore the “Golden Triangle”—70% of which is located on Tahltan land.[74] Some major active mines and mineral exploration projects that produce capital from this territory include the copper-gold Red Chris Mine, formerly operated by Red Chris Corporation, a subsidiary of Vancouver-headquartered Imperial Metals, and now majoritarily owned by Australian company Newcrest Mining Limited; the Schaft Creek Project, a copper-molybdenum-gold project under exploration and development by Canadian companies Teck Resources Limited and Copper Fox Metals; and the Galore Creek Project, currently under exploration by Vancouver-based Galore Creek Mining Corporation, a shared partnership between Newmont Goldcorp Corporation (Colorado-based) and Teck Resources Limited,[75] and “one of the world’s largest undeveloped copper-gold-silver deposits.”[76] The financing for these projects occurs through these corporations and their shareholders trading on the TSX.

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[73] Igharas in “generation future,” 11.

[74] Tahltan Central Government, *Tahltan Central Government Industry Review 2019* (2019), 2, https://tahltan.org/2019-industry-review/.

[75] These projects, among the many other projects and active exploration, are comprehensively described in the Tahltan Central Government’s most recent industry review.

[76] “The Galore Creek Project,” Galore Creek Mining Corporation, accessed March 13, 2020, https://www.gcmc.ca/.

In her writing on her artistic practice, Ts̲ēmā has explained how she casts rocks and minerals in her work as proxies for relating with her nation's land and its mining activities.[77] In the embodied action documented in *(Re)Naturalize*, by covering her body with the same mineral that colours the Tahltan mountains, she can be understood to perform the mountain by casting her body as a proxy for the ongoing resource extraction in her territory, and her entanglement within these practices. Ts̲ēmā's gesture assesses the ethical foundations of the capitalist mining industry through its contestation of a Western value system that casts land as sacrifice zone, and also through its acknowledgement of her own entanglement within this industry. Ts̲ēmā has reflected on the contradictions of being "caught in a quandary through the mixed experience of working for commercial mines and working against them"[78]—a nuanced position which is further amplified through her gesture of camouflage as most of the mining projects she has worked for were copper ones.[79] Ts̲ēmā recognizes the contradictions at the heart of such mining operations in the face of land politics and economic realities, an economy which now employs many people from her community.[80] Through her art practice, she seeks to consider mining from a nuanced perspective and dislodge it from a dualistic understanding of Indigenous versus settler capitalism, doing so by further engaging mining as a conceptual "play on words: mining for minerals/mining as research/mining as a way to blur the line between colonial and Indigenous."[81] In navigating these contradictions and her personal connection to mining, Ts̲ēmā centres a Tahltan perspective of land to look to her nation's traditional mining practices—of copper and obsidian, among other minerals—which have existed for thousands of years.

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[77] Igharas Skubovius, "LAND|MINE," 67-68.
[78] Ibid., 4.
[79] Ibid., 30.
[80] Ibid., 20.
[81] Igharas in Alexandra S Majerus, "Ore Body: Ts̲ēmā Tamara Skubovius," *Gallery 44*, May 18, 2016, https://e-artexte.ca/id/eprint/28557/.

Ts̱ēmā performing the body as a proxy parallels Levin's conceptualization of performing ground, which activates camouflage as a performance strategy, as "a process of performative correspondence: embedding oneself, or becoming embedded, in the surrounding environment through the physical and visual stylization of the body."[82] Levin identifies mimesis as a core aspect of the body's stylization[83] since mimicry is "the primary means through which living things take up an embodied relation to their surroundings."[84] Taking this further, she draws on Alice Rayner's rendering of mimesis to define her notion of performative camouflage as an "ethical accounting… [which] enables us to reflect on the ways in which we voluntarily and involuntarily fit into our environments, to reflect on the connections we are able (or willing) to recognize between self and group, producer and product, human and the natural world."[85] In engaging in this expansive practice of camouflage within the context of the extractive zone, Ts̱ēmā troubles the distinct categories of figure and ground by casting her body as an extension of the mine, that is to say the mountain, acknowledging how ground harbours agency.

The artist performs an ethical accounting of mining by mimetically casting her body as mineral—becoming a proxy for mining processes in her territory—allowing her to make physically visible her connections to these mining practices in non-linear time. Not only does Ts̱ēmā enact Levin's concept of performing the ground of the Spit—visually becoming an extension of the peninsula through a visual aesthetic—but she also symbolically performs the ground of the Tahltan territory, physically casting her body as a porous proxy for what is mined in and displaced from her territory, specifically copper. Through its intentionally covert implications, Ts̲ēmā’s action can be read as demonstrating the concealed and asymmetrical relationship between financial centres that reap the benefits of extractivism and the territories from which these materials are extracted. In countering the binary division of a centre/periphery logic through her performed aesthetic of porosity, Ts̲ēmā also acts as an extension of the contradictions born from an economic reality that leaves remote communities reliant on extractive jobs and the question of where the capital of that labour flows—which is always away from the local community and into the concentrated holdings of colonial cosmopolitan power.

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[82] Levin, *Performing Ground*, 4.
[83] In her deployment of mimesis as part of a performative camouflage strategy, Levin does not intend a Platonic definition of this practice—in that mimesis only reproduces inauthentic copies, distanced from the real—but instead injects her interpretation with much more nuanced possibility of "indeterminacy [that] allows us to engage with a wide variety of terms associated with camouflage ('correspondence,' 'blending,' 'passing,' etc.), and to expose their fluid and context-specific nature" (11), specifically as it concerns racialized and gendered subjects.
[84] Levin, *Performing Ground*, 11.
[85] Ibid., 13.

It is equally critical to point out that through her act of camouflage, Ts̲ēmā’s body does not become subsumed or assimilated to ground; rather, she enacts what Levin describes as a non-binary, porous camouflage strategy, “an aesthetic, or ethic, of closeness… [that] envisions an enabling porosity of self to world – a porosity that is both a form of ecological awareness and intersubjectivity.”[86] Ts̲ēmā’s gesture on the Spit precisely evokes this simultaneous aesthetic and ethic of closeness to assert her body’s inherent connection to land. By making her body’s placement on the Spit symbolically porous between centre (Toronto) and the sacrificial periphery (Tahltan territory), the artist “transcends a traditional or archetypal identity politic by assuming Indigenous bodies in city spaces, and active Indigenous bodies excavating the land for natural resources today and throughout history”[87]—“mining” her body against settler-colonial binary projections of Indigenous peoples. As curator Léa Toulouse states, Ts̲ēmā’s embeddedness on the Spit, on the edge of the metropole, “contradicts and confuses the Neolithic assumption of the [N]ative body in, or as, nature, and places her in a post-industrial landscape.”[88]

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[86] Ibid., 28.
[87] Igharas Skubovius, “LAND|MINE,” 6-7.
[88] Toulouse, “I Am Woman,” 54.

Heavy Weighs the Crown: The Body as Conduit

Through her multidisciplinary practice, Otobong Nkanga also seeks to trace materials back to their sources, and does so by highlighting how the body intimately relates with the circulation of mined metals. These questions are considered in her multidisciplinary series titled "In Pursuit of Bling" (2014-16), which takes the form of installation, photography, video, performance and archival research. When conceptualizing the series, Nkanga began with the concept of "bling," alluding to shimmery minerals mined from the earth, and how bling bestows status to its wearer as an expensive commodity, socially constructed as a marker of wealth. She became preoccupied with how bling "becomes [an] ironic term suggesting the indifferent nature of people whose purchases support the literal consumption of these [mined] environments."[89] She anchored her series to the Tsumeb mine site in northern Namibia to focus on its history as a significant site of extractivism over the twentieth century. As part of the series, Nkanga created *Reflections of the Raw Green Crown* (2014), a three-minute video which documents a performance she enacted in Berlin and which will serve as my point of focus in analyzing the series (see figures 5-6). In the video, Nkanga wears a large malachite crown on her head, shaped into a high-pointed cone, as she walks around the streets of the German city.[90] While Ts̲ēmā transforms her body to evoke copper from her ancestral territory, Nkanga here directly interacts with the mineral. She reclaims mined copper to, like Ts̲ēmā, perform an alternative function of the mineral as not just a capitalist symbol of wealth. Although this performance was not enacted within the Americas, the geographical focus of this thesis, the Nigerian-born, Antwerp-based artist's strategies are critical to examine alongside Ts̲ēmā's as they further question Western notions of land and value, and map the routes of these minerals' circulations across colonial boundaries and peripheries.

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[89] Omar Kholeif, "To Dig a Hole That Collapses Again," in *Otobong Nkanga: To Dig a Hole That Collapses Again*, ed. by Omar Kholeif (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2018), 75.

[90] As part of its inclusion in several exhibitions to date, the video work has typically been shown atop a low table, forcing the viewer to lower their body to the ground in order to view it, with the crown installed nearby on an interconnected table.

At its source, malachite is a derivative ore of copper—a copper carbonate of bright green colour[91]—and the malachite of Nkanga's crown can be sourced back to the Tsumeb mine, a site also known for its crystals. In the late nineteenth century, the site was named the Green Hill for its high levels of copper ores, including malachite,[92] which were said to radiate a bright green from its exterior.[93] Prior to the nineteenth century, the site had long been hand-mined by the local Ovambo people who only took what they required for local use.[94] When English colonial explorers arrived in the late 1800s, followed by the Germans who colonized Namibia and renamed it German South West Africa, these European groups began industrially mining the site at a much more extensive rate for exportation, ultimately leading to the rapid depletion of its ores.[95] The mine has now been closed for several decades due to this depletion, and today the Tsumeb mountain is a large gaping hole in the earth with an enormous pile of black slag at a distance from its crater.[96] In *Reflections of the Raw Green Crown*, Nkanga traces where this copper mined for colonial expansion has ended up, some of which is now in Berlin, the capital of the German Empire.

Through her performance of walking Berlin's streets, Nkanga approaches structures in the city where this copper can be found today, including cladding the spires of the Kaiser-

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[91] "malachite," Dictionary.com, accessed January 13, 2020, https://www.dictionary.com/browse/malachite?s=t.
[92] Kholeif, "To Dig a Hole," 76.
[93] Davis, "Blue, Bling," 17.
[94] "Comot Your Eyes Make I Borrow You Mine," Kadist Art Foundation Paris, Fall 2015, https://kadist.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/comot_your_eyes_make_i_borrow_you_mine_-_exhibition_broschure_-_fr_en.pdf. This brochure accompanied Nkanga's exhibition "Comot Your Eyes Make I Borrow You Mine" curated by Clare Molloy at Kadist Paris from September 27 to December 20, 2015.
[95] Ibid.; "European Discovery, Development, and Early Exploitation," Tsumeb.com, accessed February 12, 2020, http://www.tsumeb.com/en/history/european-discovery/.
[96] As part of the further research she conducted for the series, Nkanga visited Namibia in 2015 and re-enacted the route taken by the earliest European explorers to arrive at what was once the hill. This devastation is documented in her related video work *Remains of the Green Hill* (2015), in which Nkanga is filmed at the edge of the site.

Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche, a Protestant church.[97] In the video, Nkanga's tall malachite crown echoes the pointed spire of the church, all of its weight supported by her body. Through this embodied strategy, she connects the spire to its raw origins as a copper ore and to its even earlier origins from the earth of Tsumeb. In assessing the implications of making these connections visible, scholar Monika Szewczyk posits that Nkanga's gesture evokes questions of "how the material (the copper carbonates azurite and malachite) got there, how it symbolises or materialises colonial glory and whether it has a memory of the mined earth that housed it for millennia."[98] What is at stake in making the severed connections between materials and their sources visible is how it mines the memory enclosed within materials: namely the history of extractive displacement and colonial accumulation of wealth through mined peripheries. Nkanga plays on these notions to crown herself with the malachite, just as the German Empire crowned its monuments with its mined booty, replicating this performance of power in order to unearth its extractive implications.

For Nkanga, the body is a site that magnifies the intersections of extractive processes. She understands the body as able to make these transformations visible through the performance of displacement, which can demonstrate "how the body alters a mountain to become a hole, and how the body also becomes a tool to change the perspective of things politically or socially, and how the body becomes a weapon, or is used as a way of implementing certain kinds of politics and treatments."[99] In her practice, the body does not remain neutral; rather, "it's always something that can be manipulated, destroyed, transformed, or displaced."[100] Curator Natasha Ginwala further describes Nkanga's corporeal practice as evoking the intertwined nature of human bodies, mineral bodies and land bodies. She writes that the body in Nkanga's oeuvre becomes "an exploratory field, only to be repeatedly deconstructed: as layered stage, as mnemonic repository, as fractured domain of colonial wreckage, and as circulatory system of emotionality."[101] Curator Omar Kholeif writes of Nkanga's embodied performance in *Reflections* as a strategy in which, "Her body becomes a conduit, a voice for the raw materials."[102] The artist evokes these multiplicities through the symbolically layered nature of her action, stylizing her body through adornment in order to performatively mimic Berlin's architecture. In the framework of Levin's theorization of camouflage, Nkanga can be understood to perform the ground of the Tsumeb mine as her urban camouflage takes on an ethical dimension. As noted by Szewczyk, this ethics is one of entanglement through the ways her performance excavates the connections between Berlin and Tsumeb, its extracted periphery. Nkanga's body becomes a conduit to amplify the voice, or memory, of the copper—performing a material return from the sacrifice zone to its colonial-capitalist centre.

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[97] Monika Szewczyk, "Exchange and Some Change: The Imaginative Economies of Otobong Nkanga," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 37 (Autumn/Winter 2014): 50.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Otobong Nkanga in "Intricate Connections: Otobong Nkanga, Clare Molloy and Fabian Schöneich," in *Otobong Nkanga: Luster and Lucre*, eds. Clare Molloy, Philippe Pirotte and Fabian Schöneich (Berlin; Frankfurt: Sternberg Press and Portikus, 2017), 173.
[100] Ibid.

Interconnecting Material Agency with Bodily Agency

Both Tse̱mā's and Nkanga's embodied practices map the circulations of mined metals in a non-linear way to create a platform for the memory of the centre's periphery—the Tahltan mountains and the Tsumeb mine, respectively—where it gains visibility in the colonial centre. In each work, the extractive processes that construct Toronto and Berlin as centres of power and the communities affected by the centre's resource extraction are made visible through the artists' strategies that activate material memories. In thinking of their environments as themselves performing entities, each artist performs an act of reciprocal camouflage to transform their bodies into porous conduits that connect the physicality of their environments to the reality of their extractive ties. This porosity is also achieved through the artists' symbolic activation of copper and its material agency as a transition metal. Copper is easily malleable as a material and its physical properties mean that it is commonly used as a conductor for heat and electricity. Ts̱ēmā and Nkanga both galvanize this knowledge of the material and mimic its transitional properties to perform as a conduit for extractive mining's past and present. In *(Re)Naturalize* and *Reflections*, they utilize their bodily agency to conceptually mimic copper's material agency to conjure the submerged perspectives of the extractive zone. In this way, each artist's performance memorializes the mine in the mountain, as Ts̱ēmā coats herself with the same mineral that colours the mountains in Tahltan territory while evoking its interior copper ores, and Nkanga surfaces the hole of the depleted Green Hill through the conic shape of her malachite crown.

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[101] Natasha Ginwala, "The Refusal of Shine," in *Otobong Nkanga: Luster and Lucre*, eds. Clare Molloy, Philippe Pirotte and Fabian Schöneich (Berlin; Frankfurt: Sternberg Press and Portikus, 2017), 90.
[102] Kholeif, "To Dig a Hole," 75.

Another way we might understand this porous practice is through what Nkanga calls the "negative monument," which names a way of "thinking about how an emptiness actually protrudes somewhere else," a further realization "that everything that we build or construct is creating a hole or creating a kind of emptiness in another space."[103] Nkanga advocates for the hole—in this case, the mine—to also be considered as a monument and that any monument in the capitalist centre be conceptually sutured to the hole that made its construction possible. This duality in thinking of the interconnection between one space to another, the sacrifice zone to the capitalist centre, is embodied in both artists' performances. Nkanga apprehends monuments in Berlin to point to their connection to the negative monument of the Tsumeb mine, while Ts̱ēmā locates herself nearby the Toronto Stock Exchange, where Canadian mining capital flows, to connect the source of this wealth to Indigenous lands, in this case the Tahltan territory. Ts̱ēmā's action further reveals the Spit itself as a negative monument, as the peninsula's literal foundations reveal the history of urban community displacement in Toronto. As researchers Heidy Schopf and Jennifer Foster attest, the Spit is made up of materials from buildings that were demolished during Toronto's expansion in the latter half of the twentieth century, which significantly displaced lower-income communities through demolition episodes.[104] Negative monuments, it would seem, transgress the periphery to haunt the centre's amnesia. Both Ts̱ēmā and Nkanga acknowledge the agency of the negative monument by inhabiting the hole that is the mine, the amnesia of the centre, by incarnating the submerged perspectives of the extractive zone which constitute the centre's ground.

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[103] Nkanga in "Intricate Connections," 176.

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[104] Heidy Schopf and Jennifer Foster, "Buried localities: archaeological exploration of a Toronto dump and wilderness refuge," *Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability* 19, no. 10 (2013). Schopf and Foster write of the Spit as "a story about urban development processes, the destruction of the built heritage of Toronto, displacement of poor communities that got in the way of modernist ideals, and the ability of nature to transform industrial space into romanticised ruins" (1086).

Chapter 3

Sensing Beyond Anthropocenic Imagery to Perceive Otherwise: A Case Study of the Alberta Oil Sands

How to see and feel the extent of the Anthropocene? Is it possible for an individual to apprehend its extent, and should it be possible for an individual to think they *can* conceptualize the full scope of the Anthropocene? In the global age of the environmental movement, which took precedence in North America in the 1960s, technological advancements allowed for the earth to be photographed for the first time from the distanced perspective of outer space, instigating a planetary consciousness.[105] Photography has continued to play a key role in visualizing the earth as a whole entity, while also documenting and making visible its devastation to the wider public. Demos cites the importance of photography for the environmental movement in its ability to raise awareness about the repercussions of extractivism on the face of the planet.[106] Images of extractive zones circulate extensively in the media and are important documents of this violence, but in light of the evolving discourse on the climate crisis, what meaning do they intend to convey today? As art critic Jayne Wilkinson has asked: "do we need (more) images of the Anthropocene, and why?"[107]

In posing this question, Wilkinson was responding to the work of Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky, who has dedicated his artistic career to documenting zones of extraction as a continued subject of study. Exemplary of his work is the series of photographs Burtynsky produced of the Alberta oil sands in 2007, featuring large-format images shot onsite in Fort McMurray from an aerial vantage point. Looking more closely at *Alberta Oil Sands #6* (2007) from this series, the scene one might expect to see of the oil sands becomes aesthetically abstracted: the industrious infrastructure billowing smoke is recognizable in the distance, but in the foreground, large rectangular, lime-coloured tailings ponds dominate the field of vision as geometrical planes. The effect is one of bemusing scale as Burtynsky's vantage point confuses the viewer's understanding of the distance from which his lens is positioned in relation to the industrious landscape, making it challenging to discern the magnitude of the extractive operation. What's more, the green ponds, with undulating colour swirls playing upon their surfaces, become pleasingly aestheticized through Burtynsky's lens—downplaying the environmental devastation such a scene is meant to be exemplary of.

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[105] Demos, *Against the Anthropocene*, 19-20. Demos discusses the significance of NASA's photographs of earth that were circulated in the late 1960s and 1970s as significantly contributing to conceptualizing this planetary consciousness.

[106] Ibid., 33. Here, Demos provides the example of the live video feed of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which raised public awareness about its devastation.

[107] Jayne Wilkinson, "What Images Don't Do," *Canadian Art*, December 12, 2018, https://canadianart.ca/reviews/what-images-dont-do/.

This aestheticization of extractive zones is at play in much of Burtynsky's oeuvre, including in his contributions to the vast multimedia undertaking *The Anthropocene Project* (2018-19), which he produced alongside filmmakers Jennifer Baichwal and Nicholas de Pencier, and that was in part displayed in two image-based exhibitions of the same name, "Anthropocene," which ran concurrently at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto and the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa.[108] For this project, Burtynsky contributed large-scale aerial photographs evidencing humanity's impact on the earth, such as a palm oil plantation in Borneo, Malaysia, a coal mine in Wyoming, US, and a clear-cut forest on Vancouver Island, Canada, among many other such scenes of devastated land. Although the images succeed in documenting the extent of extractive industry's impact upon the earth, what meaning does the abstract aestheticization of extractive zones produce? And what does the aerial view foreclose in its framing of the landscape?

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[108] The "Anthropocene" exhibitions were exhibited from September 28, 2018 to January 6, 2019 at the Art Gallery of Ontario, and from September 28, 2018 to February 24, 2019 at the National Gallery of Canada. In addition to the two exhibitions, *The Anthropocene Project* also consists of the documentary film *ANTHROPOCENE: The Human Epoch* (2018), a podcast series, as well as an education program.

The Bird's-Eye View: Dissecting the Occlusions of an Aerial Perspective

Demos describes Anthropocene iconography as harbouring an innate tension that "both portrays the remarkable extent of the human-driven alteration of earth systems (with ample photographic and satellite-based imagery of large-scale mining, oil drilling, infrastructure, and deforestation projects), and documents the dangers of the unintended consequences of such ventures."[109] He indicts Burtynsky's monumental imagery as participating within this iconography, as a type of imagery that reconfigures the repercussions of extractive zones into "large-scale prints of industrial landscapes [that] are as seductive as they are horrific, as revealing as they are aestheticizing—and aestheticizing in an extremely disturbing manner."[110] This aestheticization is facilitated through Burtynsky's use of the aerial perspective, a bird-eye's view from above which allows one to view the wreckage of extractivism from a distance.

Sophie Hackett, co-curator of the Art Gallery of Ontario's "Anthropocene" exhibition, briefly genealogizes the tradition of aerial photography Burtynsky draws upon, noting that, in addition to the environmental movement, the aerial view has played a key role in many realms including militaristic mapping, nation-building endeavours and the advertising of industrial activity.[111] She asserts of this tradition that, "The potent mix of abstraction and information in [aerial] photographs continues to fascinate, as the viewer absorbs and *then* recognizes the information."[112] This definition of the aerial photograph's ability to persuade, then, would seem to rely on its visual authority to first disorient the viewer and then allow the viewer to assert interpretive control over the landscape.

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[109] Demos, *Against the Anthropocene*, 27-28.

[110] Ibid., 60.

[111] Sophie Hackett, "Far and Near: New Views of the Anthropocene," in *Anthropocene: Burtynsky, Baichwal, De Pencier*, edited by Sophie Hackett, Andrea Kunard and Urs Stahel (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2018): 16-23.

[112] Ibid., 16, original emphasis.

Visual culture scholar Nicholas Mirzoeff also links the aerial view to imperial intentions and to the wider process of militaristic visualization, a process whose "goal is to maintain the authority of the visualizer, above and beyond the visualizer's material power."[113] In his article "Visualizing the Anthropocene" (2014), Mirzoeff is concerned with how ways of conceptualizing the Anthropocene are deeply inflected by Western modernity and were birthed from its system of thought which upholds the notion of progress at all costs and posits nature as something to be tamed. Mirzoeff terms the effects of this mentality in our current era as "Anthropocene visuality": a human-centred visualization that "keeps us believing that somehow the war against nature that Western society has been waging for centuries is not only right; it is beautiful and it can be won."[114] I contend that Anthropocene visuality is exemplified in the solo work of Burtynsky and also in *The Anthropocene Project* through the imagery's aestheticization of extractivism, which rationalizes the dire state of the environment and climate through a Western imperial lens of inevitable "business as usual" within a colonial-capitalist economy, without pointing to alternatives and resistance to this status quo.

As part of her genealogizing of the aerial view in relation to Burtynsky's oeuvre, Hackett draws on philosopher Tristan Garcia's argument that "the primary impulse to try to locate ourselves from above is essentially one of hope, an existential impulse to attempt to understand ourselves and, ultimately, to take responsibility."[115] Though, looking at Burtynsky's photographs of extractive zones and their promotion of Anthropocene visuality, I would argue that the opposite is at work within his images: that an evasion of responsibility is produced through the aerial vantage point and that, instead, this view spectacularizes the earth's damage. Burtynsky asserts his main intention in his use of the aerial view is a documentary one and, specifically within *The Anthropocene Project*, the bird's-eye view method is intended to "visually translate the scientific findings of the AWG [Anthropocene Working Group]."[116] In a sense, Burtynsky succeeds in his intention, as the images both demonstrate the extent of environmental destruction while also attributing this responsibility of destruction to a generalized humanity—masking the unequal structures of colonial-capitalist power that generated the Anthropocene in the first place.

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[113] Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Visualizing the Anthropocene," *Public Culture* 26, no. 2 (2014): 216. In his book *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), Mirzoeff also discusses the military-industrial implications of the bird's-eye view and its uses for surveillance and attack (38-39).
[114] Ibid., 217.
[115] Garcia paraphrased in Hackett, "Far and Near," 30. (Original source: Tristan Garcia, "Le point de vue décollé," in Angela Lampe, ed., *Vues d'en Haut* (Metz : Centre Pompidou-Metz, 2013): 404-405.)

Writing on this evasion of responsibility produced through Burtynsky's images in the Toronto "Anthropocene" exhibition, Wilkinson states that the monumental aerial visuals "don't necessarily reveal a new truth of the world as we know it today, or elicit a call to action. Rather I worry that their primary effect is to produce viewers who simply accept the current scale of industrial pollution,"[117] distancing the viewer from their reality through complacency. She concludes her review of Burtynsky's work by denouncing the implications of these visual effects to ones of acceptance and subsequent apathy in the face of climate change by cautioning, "Whether any art can instigate change is up for debate but at this critical moment, where it will take so much more than individual will to produce change, it is dangerous to continue to uphold the aesthetics of destruction."[118] Herein lie the dangers in aestheticizing and spectacularizing damage: it reifies the totalizing logic of extractivism. What is foreclosed through these aerial depictions of extractive zones is a tangible relation to land and a sense of accountability. A view from above is one of control, of surveillance—an authoritative positioning through a vertical hierarchy, not a reciprocal one.

This tension between fascination and horror, documentation and aestheticization, becomes further neutralized by the viewer's ability to control the scene as they are hierarchically positioned above it via an aerial vantage point. Demos historicizes this way of perceiving land and nature to a longstanding colonial one, stating that, “Anthropocene visuality tends to reinforce the techno-utopian position that ‘we’ have indeed mastered nature, just as we have mastered its imaging—and in fact the two, the dual colonization of nature and representation, appear inextricably intertwined.”[119] Following Wilkinson’s and Demos’s warnings, how can visuality in the age of the Anthropocene promote a different discourse than that of marvelled and rationalized destruction, stepping back from what W.J.T. Mitchell calls the “aesthetics of sublime melancholy”? Which media can promote an alternative visualization of decolonized nature and, turning away from the trappings of the aerial view, from which angle should it be conceptualized?

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[116] Burtynsky qtd. in Hackett, "Far and Near," 23.
[117] Wilkinson, "What Images Don't Do."
[118] Ibid.

Apprehending the Anthropocene Differently

In his essay, “Visualizing the Anthropocene,” Mirzoeff contextualizes Anthropocene visuality within the history of the Western drive to conquer nature to extend his thinking with what he calls “Anthropocene (an)aesthetics.” He first describes the notion of anaesthetics as arising from the Western category of art, stating, “As we learn how to look at the (Western, imperial) artwork via aesthetics a paradox results: the conquest of nature, having been aestheticized, leads to a loss of perception (*aesthesis*), which is to say, it becomes an anaesthetics.”[120] He adds to his explanation that “aesthetics of the Anthropocene emerged as an unintended supplement to imperial aesthetics—it comes to seem natural, right, then beautiful—and thereby anaesthetized the perception of modern industrial pollution.”[121] He attributes the (an)aesthetics of the Anthropocene to a loss of perception (or aesthesis) that, according to Susan Buck-Morss, impacts all of the body’s senses, not just the visual.[122]

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[119] Demos, *Against the Anthropocene*, 28.

[120] Mirzoeff, “Visualizing the Anthropocene,” 220.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid., 219.

As part of his argument, Mirzoeff claims that an “antiaesthetic complex of the Anthropocene” also exists, and that it has been exercised for as long as Anthropocene visuality has, primarily through the perspectives of communities made marginal under Western imperialism, understood in this thesis as submerged perspectives. What Mirzoeff neglects to identify in his text is what this antiaesthetic complex of the Anthropocene fully entails and how it materializes within visual culture. He alludes to his political concept of “countervisuality” as a powerful alternative to Anthropocene visuality—which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter—but does not follow up on his notion of Anthropocene antiaesthetics. I would here like to propose an antiaesthetic of the Anthropocene as one that counters Anthropocene visuality by activating the body’s full sense of perception (aesthesis) in engaging an embodied approach towards the earth to surface a territory’s submerged perspectives. It is here that I once again turn to land-based performance as offering an alternative to the extractive bird’s-eye view of Anthropocene visuality, and one that allows for a much more subjective way of knowing as it directly implicates the body in this production of knowledge on and from the ground.

In what follows, I examine the work and research process of Winnipeg-based artist and writer Warren Cariou to exemplify my claim for alternative ways of understanding extractivism beyond Anthropocene visuality, specifically as it pertains to the oil industry. In looking at the artist’s process of bitumen harvesting in order to create image works of the Athabasca tar sands in so-called Alberta, I here shift my attention from photography to land-based action as a practice that allows Cariou to reciprocally sense the oil field by literally embedding himself within the bitumen’s natural environment. I ultimately assess how his actions surface the submerged perspectives of the tar sands, specifically its material memory and historical uses, and how understandings of oil shift when we visualize these lands from a bitumen’s-eye view.

Entering the Oil Sands to Sense Bitumen Otherwise

In our current era, oil and gas extraction are perhaps one of the most contested industries regarding the climate crisis. At the time of writing this thesis, four major pipelines in Canada and parts of the US—Coastal GasLink, Enbridge Line 3, Keystone XL and Trans Mountain—regularly made media headlines for the strong public resistance to these projects, or "setbacks" as the industry refers to these delays in profit, and for the response of governmental leaders who continue to prioritize their support of oil companies over Indigenous land rights and sovereignty. In Canada, much of the country's oil is produced in the province of Alberta, notably the Athabasca tar sands, and this production is only increasing. For instance, in 2014, the country extracted 3.8 millions of crude oil barrels per day (mb/d) and, of this total amount, 2.2. mb/d were obtained from the Alberta oil sands.[123] Four years later in 2018, Canada's total amount of crude oil production increased to 4.6 mb/d, with the oil sands accounting for 64% of that total production, at 2.9 mb/d.[124] As the fourth highest producer of oil worldwide, current statistics estimate Canadian oil production will increase twofold. These forecasts are in complete contradiction with the IPCC's report that carbon emissions will need to be reduced drastically within the next ten years. In the current polarized public discourse on oil, how are we to take stock of the increasingly unsustainable status quo of Canada's petroculture and how do those of us residing outside of the province of Alberta, not experiencing the environmental effects of this intensive oil extraction first-hand, come to understand and visualize the scope of the oil industry in Alberta, in Canada, and more broadly in a global context? As scholar Imre Szeman asks, how are we in relation to oil, and how do we understand the way it propels our current forms of social life?[125]

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[123] "Oil Supply and Demand," Government of Canada, accessed January 31, 2020, https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/our-natural-resources/energy-sources-distribution/clean-fossil-fuels/crude-oil/oil-supply-demand/18086.

[124] "Crude oil facts," Government of Canada, accessed January 31, 2020, https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/science-data/data-analysis/energy-data-analysis/energy-facts/crude-oil-facts/20064.

Szeman imparts that different ways of understanding oil "draw attention to the compelling political openings that emerge once we accept and understand the ways that oil and energy animate our cultural narratives" and "point, too, to the very real challenges and difficulties of trying to produce a different way of being in relation to a source of energy that has produced the societies we inhabit and has made us the subjects we are."[126] Such a grappling with these challenges of knowing oil are unearthed in Warren Cariou's ongoing petrography series, begun in 2014, of photographs of the Alberta oil sands made using a key medium: Athabasca bitumen. Drawing on early photographic processes from the 1800s that employed a form of bitumen,[127] Cariou experimented with bitumen from the tar sands as his exposing medium to create images of "the largest deposit of crude oil on the planet,"[128] using the same highly sought-after substance mined by the industry to create his images. Bitumen itself is a thicker and heavier form of petroleum, not unlike molasses at room temperature, which in its natural environment is combined with sand, water and clay.[129] Following the success of his experimentation with the natural medium, petrography became for Cariou "an embodied attempt to utilize petroleum as a medium of representation—to see the world quite literally through a film of heavy crude oil."[130]

The resulting petrographs—petroleum-based photographic works on aluminum or steel plates—are gold-coloured monochrome images of smokestacks, strip mines, tailing ponds and processing plants that take on a highly reflective sheen (see figure 7). Some of the petrographs are, like Burtynsky's oil sands photographs, taken from an aerial perspective while others are taken from an eye level view. In contrast to Burtynsky's images, Cariou's are much more cropped and zoomed in, bringing viewers closer to the scene of extraction, and the physical works are of much smaller scale, averaging between four by six to eight by ten inches in dimension. Cariou is interested in how the reflective surface of his prints affects the manner in which they are physically experienced, especially as the works return the viewer's reflection, "[serving] as mirrors of contemplation in the age of petroleum."[131] Although Cariou's and Burtynsky's images share the same subject matter, the material implications and much smaller dimensions of Cariou's petrographs expose the extractive zone in a very different way to Burtynsky's works, as they compel the viewer to intimately reflect on their connection to oil and experience themselves being reflected in the extractive landscape. Scholar Jon Gordon writes that Cariou's petrography is a way of interrupting the status quo of petroculture,[132] and that the artist's use of bitumen opposes and exceeds the modern capitalist uses of the substance—the drive "to make it do what we want it to do, predictably, consistently and profitably"—to instead cultivate a relationship with bitumen.[133] Although much can be said about the images themselves, within the purview of this thesis, I focus on Cariou's embodied process in sourcing the bitumen, which enables the works' creation.

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[125] Imre Szeman, "How to Know about Oil: Energy Epistemologies and Political Futures," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes* 47, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 145-168.
[126] Ibid., 148.
[127] Warren Cariou, "Petrography," accessed January 10, 2020, http://www.warrencariou.com/petrography. On his website, Cariou explains how he was struck by the idea to use bitumen as a photographic medium based on Nicéphore Niepce's use of bitumen of Judea in making the first known photograph in the early 1800s.
[128] "What are the Oil Sands?," Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, accessed February 21, 2020, https://www.capp.ca/oil/what-are-the-oil-sands/.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Cariou, "Petrography."

In recounting his experimentation and working process, Cariou writes of the "struggle but also collaboration" that working with bitumen necessitates, and that he "can't make the tar do something it doesn't 'want' to do."[134] Enacting reciprocity with the bitumen and acknowledging the medium's agency become crucial components to the artist's process. Equally critical to his process of establishing reciprocity with the substance is Cariou's acknowledgement of the Indigenous lands it is sourced from. The tar sands industry occupies the traditional territories of the Cree, the Dene and the Métis peoples of the Athabasca region and, in order for him to acquire the bitumen, Cariou must make his way to the Athabasca River in the heart of these territories, where he harvests the bitumen on the river's banks. This process has a personal dimension for Cariou as, being of Métis and European heritage from Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan—located just eastward of the Athabasca region—the environmental concerns of the tar sands also affect his community's homelands, which are increasingly being encroached upon by Albertan oil companies.

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[131] Ibid.

[132] Warren Cariou and Jon Gordon, "Petrography, The Tar Sands Paradise, and the Medium of Modernity," *The Goose* 14 no. 2 (2016): 3.

[133] Ibid., 12.

[134] Cariou, "Petrography."

In a 2016 article, Cariou recounts one such harvesting trip when he travelled to the river from Fort McMurray, a specific journey which shifted his understanding of bitumen. At this point, Cariou had become accustomed to the toxic atmosphere of the tar sands and the physical effects of breathing in the hydrocarbons that pollute the region's air. During this particular trip, he went further down the river than usual, past all visual markers of extractive industry, and arrived with his collaborators in a green and blooming valley in the boreal ecosystem which harboured the bitumen among its flora (see figure 8). In this moment of harvesting the wild bitumen, Cariou recalls how differently he experienced the substance's smell: it still exuded its usual tar odour but, encountered within its wild environment, "it was no longer offensive."[135] Cariou describes his epiphany as follows: "And suddenly I realized: *this stuff was natural*. I had known that intellectually of course, but somehow it was different to sense it in an embodied way, to see and smell the tar in what must have been its original context, before the oil companies came to the Athabasca and altered nearly everything. Yes, the bitumen of the tar sands is natural: it is part of an ecosystem that works, or can work, according to its own logic."[136]

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[135] Cariou in "Petrography, The Tar Sands," 8.

This significant experience ultimately changed Cariou's perspective of the tar sands as "not [being] monolithically disgusting or dangerous; they were instead startlingly ambiguous."[137] Experiencing the bitumen within its natural context shifted his understanding of the substance to a deeply entangled one, with much more complex significance and operating within the logic of the ecosystem that sustains it. Of this notable trip, Cariou further writes:

> I thought also about the Indigenous people who have lived and traveled on this river for so many generations, back when all of the riverbank looked like this beautiful place where I was standing, when the air smelled of this pleasant spice instead of a cauldron of chemicals. Some of those travelers were probably my own Michif ancestors, who worked as voyageurs on many of the fur trade's western routes. I knew that the Cree, Dene, and Métis peoples of the Athabasca had their own important use for the tar: they used it to seal their canoes. They understood that there was something valuable in this material, that it had a kind of power or unique properties that could help humans if they knew how to use it. They would have known where to find the best sources, what the best time of year was, how to process the sandy tar to get the particles out of it.[138]

Seeing the bitumen as part of a much older ecosystem ultimately made Cariou reflect on its historic uses by the Indigenous nations of the region and the knowledge that accompanied such uses of the substance. Through his working process, Cariou defies the dislocation of the oil industry's processes by grounding his self-reflexive praxis in the local, submerged epistemes of the region.

This experience of the Athabasca ecosystem allowed Cariou to perceive bitumen outside of the oil industry's narrative of the region as sacrifice zone, regulated by the anaesthetics of Anthropocene visuality. His embodied experience allowed him to enact reciprocity with the bitumen by interacting with it in its natural environment, bringing to the surface the submerged knowledge of bitumen's material properties and long associations with the Indigenous nations of the area. Before this trip, Cariou reflects that his view of the tar sands had been shaped by this extractive mentality, which he acknowledges was "flawed" as it constructed "a belief that the place was already unredeemable because of what had happened to it."[139] As scholar Taylor McHolm posits, envisioning beyond the oil industry requires a logic that defies colonial-capitalism because, "Methods of representing petromodernity that rely on its existing operational logic ultimately replicate the same techno-scientific rationality and dislocation that produce the harmful practices these works represent."[140] In writing about Cariou's oeuvre, McHolm demonstrates how his petrography series and broader body of work challenge the constructed rationality of settler-colonial petromodernity with what McHolm calls a "decolonial irrationality."[141] McHolm highlights how this irrationality is grounded in Cariou's relation with the local, "[performing] an epistemic shift rooted in a connection to place, traditional Indigenous relationships with bitumen, and Cariou's own Métis heritage"[142]—an epistemic shift towards submerged perspectives.

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[136] Ibid., 8-9.
[137] Ibid., 10.
[138] Ibid., 11.

Shifting his perception to encounter bitumen as an active agent allowed Cariou to understand it as something to be respected and to think of it "as a kind of medicine." As he states, "It is gathered from the land… and it requires particular knowledge to use it properly. Like many medicines, it is subject to misuse and abuse when it falls into the hands of those who don't have proper respect for its power."[143] Cariou enacts respect for the substance by reciprocally embedding himself within its environment. He performs the ground of the oil sands not by visually stylizing his body to aesthetically camouflage himself within its setting, but by using his senses to relationally enter the bitumen's natural environment in order to locate the substance. Activating his body's different senses, Cariou explains that he "[seeks] out the bitumen by its scent as well as by telltale marks it makes on the ground. I don't use machinery or scanning technology or complex maps. It is all about me being there on the ground, trusting my senses, and only taking the small amount that I need."[144] What is significant here of Cariou's embodied methodology is the intimacy he initiates with the substance and the personal relationship this embodied experience allows him to develop with the bitumen.

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[139] Ibid., 10.
[140] Taylor McHolm, "A Formal Spilling: Leaking and Leaching in Warren Cariou's Petrography and 'Tarhands: A Messy Manifesto,'" *Western American Literature* 51, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 429.
[141] Ibid., 431.
[142] Ibid., 430.
[143] Cariou in "Petrography, The Tar Sands," 13.

The importance of site-specificity cannot be understated through Cariou's process; the reciprocal relationship he establishes with bitumen is overall sustained by his respect for place and the histories of that place. In entering the tar sands, Cariou grounds his approach in the pre-existing logic of the Athabasca region, which interconnects epistemes from the non-human, the human and non-linear time to form its broader boreal ecosystem. He embeds himself within the bitumen's natural environment in order to surface both the submerged perspective harboured by the bitumen as well as that of the region's Indigenous communities, which have utilized bitumen long before petromodernity arrived to the Athabasca River. In lifting these submerged perspectives and legacies that reside outside of petromodernity's rationality, Cariou counters the sacrifice zone mentality that clouds the tar sands.

Connecting Cariou's petrographs to his embodied process of production reveal a much deeper and more complex meaning through its material and historical associations. His performance of ground and surfacing of submerged perspectives nuance his petrographs, which could be understood as the material end result of this bitumen harvesting. In performing ground, Cariou dislodges oil from a colonial mode of binary thinking to render its complexity in associations as part of a larger ecosystem. Returning to Burtynsky's *Alberta*

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[144] Cariou, email correspondence with the author, March 2, 2020.

Oil Sands #6, the bitumen is here abstracted, diluted through an aerial aestheticization and the image's macro perspective upon the tar sands. In Cariou's work, both his petrographs and land-based actions activate a micro perspective to produce a much more intimate knowledge and ethical accounting of this environment. Although today the bitumen is not used to seal canoes, but instead "to plug the holes in a sinking ship called modernity,"[145] Cariou's harvesting on the ground demonstrates how the bitumen he encounters resists containment by the pipeline as it continues to proliferate according to its own logic and autonomy.

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[145] Cariou, "Tarhands: A Messy Manifesto," *Imaginations: Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies/Revue d'études interculturelles de l'image* 3, no. 2 (2012): 23.

Chapter 4
Re-narrativizing Bodies of Water, Flowing into Non-Linear Time

The disjuncture between memory and history is one that pervades the colonial present of the Americas. In writing about the watershed moment of the 1990 Kahnesatà:ke Resistance (or the "Oka Crisis" as it is also known), when the Kanien'kahaka protected their ancestral lands from a golf course expansion by the nearby French-Canadian settler town of Oka, Anishinaabe curator Wanda Nanibush asserts that the seventy-eight-day siege "[claimed] that what is at stake in the resistance is a different perspective on history. If one can accept that Indigenous Peoples have legitimate historical knowledge, whether it is oral or written, then history becomes an image not of facts but of stories or narratives that compete for legitimacy and continue to change over time and with each teller."[146] This tension between competing versions of history, notably the singular one controlled by colonial states which seeks to overshadow and obliterate other perspectives on history, lies at the heart of any land claim in the Americas. The disjuncture between memory and history can be ascertained as one of legitimacy, as the state claims its own narrative of land and territories it has "claimed"—that is, stolen—to be the legitimate version of current-day occupation.

In his book *The Right to Look* (2011), Mirzeoff introduces the term countervisuality to apprehend this tension between histories. He writes that countervisualities do not only imply the visual realm, as these ways of knowing outside of a legitimated visuality "are and were visualized as goals, strategies, and imagined forms of singularity and collectivity."[147] He elaborates on this notion to state:

> It is precisely that extended sense of the real, the realistic, and realism(s) that is at stake in the conflict between visuality and countervisuality. The 'realism' of countervisuality is the means by which one tries to make sense of the unreality

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[146] Wanda Nanibush, "Love and Other Resistances: Responding to Kahnesatà:ke Through Artistic Practice," in *This is An Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades*, eds. Leanne Simpson and Kiera L. Ladner (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010), 169.

[147] Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*, 5.

> created by visuality's authority… while at the same time proposing a real alternative. It is by no means a simple or mimetic depiction of lived experience, but one that depicts existing realities and counters them with a different realism.[148]

Paralleling Mirzoeff's argument, Nanibush posits, "To question what is presented as natural, normal, simply reality is to question the way power is distributed in society. To question it is to create a new reality."[149] Nanibush's and Mirzoeff's enunciations are useful in considering art practices that seek to trouble the tension between memory and history by claiming that, through their alternative force, memories of land and ancestral connections to place are powerful tools against a colonial-extractive reality. In reference to de la Cadena's notion of the "anthropo-not-seen," it is specific relations to lands within the extractive zone that resist the severing and destruction of Indigenous territories and their ecosystems.

In the following chapter, I look to two performative works by Carolina Caycedo and Rebecca Belmore activated across Turtle Island to highlight how both artists employ a collaborative performance strategy to enact countervisualities of alternative realities to extractive processes and the colonial-extractive gaze upon water and land. Each artist's work counters this constructed status quo by supplementing extractivism's normalized reality with the much older realism of Indigenous cosmogonies of the Americas. Here, Caycedo's and Belmore's embodied praxes challenge the dualistically imposed authority of extractive industry and the state by conjuring solidarity with the lived realities of the Indigenous peoples who live in the wake of extractivism, surfacing Indigenous epistemologies of water and land. These knowledges constitute the embedded realism of the Americas, a reality that has existed long before the arrival of colonial-extractive forces on this continent. My reading of Caycedo's and Belmore's works highlights how their activations defy the logics of the anthropo-not-seen by activating Indigenous histories and knowledges of the lands being encroached upon by extractive industry through their performance of ground, using their bodies as tools to not only amplify, but also embody the submerged perspectives of water and land. Both Caycedo and Belmore utilize voice as an important part of their performative strategy to assert Indigenous land sovereignty and self-narrate their reciprocity with waterways.

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[148] Ibid.

[149] Nanibush, "Love and Other Resistances," 173.

Performing Fluid Histories: Rivers as Veins of Memory

Much of Carolina Caycedo's practice—artistic and activist—is concerned with water. In 2013, the Colombian mestizx artist, currently based in Los Angeles, initiated her ongoing and wide-ranging project *BE DAMMED* to examine the effects of mega hydroelectric dams within ecologies of biodiverse regions in the Americas. With the reality that over 250 hydroelectric dams are either planned or already being built within Latin America, grappling with such widespread capitalist development takes on renewed urgency.[150] At the heart of Caycedo's project and her broader work is the declaration that natural and social ecologies are inherently intertwined, and that the political project of aligning both—despite extractive interruptions—is dire. As part of the project, Caycedo organized a collaborative performance titled *ONE BODY OF WATER* (2015) to further convey this inherent link which, as imparted through Indigenous cosmogonies, evokes perspectives of the world where "all bodies of waters are connected. Rivers are the veins of the planet, their waters associate communities and ecosystems."[151] By centring Indigenous epistemologies of waterways rather than an extractive gaze, Caycedo aims to surface submerged perspectives and recast this connectivity between the human and the non-human as itself a social ecology—the social not just denoting human society but the "too-often-ignored network of relationality"[152] between human and non-human beings, or, as de la Cadena terms it, that which defies the nature/culture binary.

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[150] Carolina Caycedo, "BE DAMMED (ongoing Project)," accessed January 28, 2020, http://carolinacaycedo.com/be-dammed-ongoing-project.
[151] Ibid.

ONE BODY OF WATER took place on June 13, 2015 around a fire pit at the Bowtie Project, an outdoor site along the Los Angeles River in California, featuring Mireya Lucio and Karen Anzoategui as Caycedo's performance collaborators (see figures 9-10). The performance's narrative intertwined the histories and perspectives of three contested rivers in the Americas: the Magdalena, which crosses Colombia; the Yaqui in Sonora, Mexico; and the Elwha in Washington, US. Each participant performed as one of the rivers—Caycedo as the Magdalena, Lucio as the Yaqui, and Anzoategui as the Elwha—through a written script composed by Caycedo, which lives on as a publication under the work's title.[153] The three rivers were chosen as subjects by Caycedo due to how they represented three bodies of water in very different phases of privatization or repair across the Americas. When performed in 2015, the Magdalena (also known as Yuma)—the river basin in which Caycedo grew up—was in the beginning phases of privatization as two mega dams had just been built, Betania and El Quimbo, and fifteen more were planned for construction.[154] Conversely, the Yaqui was already fully privatized by this time, which caused significant parts of the river to disappear following the construction of three dams, severely impacting eight Yaqui communities. Meanwhile, the Elwha in the Olympic Peninsula represented a starkly different phase, which at the time had just witnessed "the largest dam-removal project in the world,"[155] after the removal of two large dams from the river and the restoration of some of its ecosystem, including the spawning of salmon which had not taken place in the river in approximately a century.[156] For Caycedo, these different phases were representative of the broader politics of hydroelectric dams in the Americas, as a high number of large dams were being mapped for construction across Latin America, while approximately nine hundred dams had been removed between the years 1990 and 2015 in the US.[157] These differences in ventures are representative of extractive, "asymmetrical power relations and disjunctive modes of governance at work between countries and multinational corporations in the so-called Global North and those in the so-called Global South, where forms of colonial violence and oppression are still in operation."[158]

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[152] Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone*, 2.

[153] Carolina Caycedo, *ONE BODY OF WATER*, Los Angeles: Bowtie Project, 2015.

[154] Carolina Caycedo and Jeffrey De Blois, "The River as a Common Good: Carolina Caycedo's Cosmotarrayas," Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, accessed March 4, 2020, https://www.icaboston.org/publications/river-common-good-carolina-caycedos-cosmotarrayas.

[155] Michelle Nijhuis, "World's Largest Dam Removal Unleashes U.S. River After Century of Electric Production," *National Geographic*, August 27, 2014, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/8/140826-elwha-river-dam-removal-salmon-science-olympic/#close.

Composed like a play, the rivers become storytelling characters in *ONE BODY OF WATER*, whose dialogue centres Indigenous oral traditions of the origin stories around each waterway, contextualizing the extractive present. Caycedo, Lucio and Anzoategui had their faces painted in different colours, influenced by Indigenous masks of each river's region. Within the performance's narrative, each performer-as-river begins by recounting their respective origin stories, naming the Indigenous communities whose cosmogony these stories originate from and the rivers' deep kinship with these communities. Caycedo-as-Magdalena recounts how it is also known as the names Yuma, Arli and Guacacayo, and then names the peoples who have historically lived on its banks: "I carry the life of the ancestors / the Muisca, the Yanacona, Nasa, Misak, Pijao, Papallaqta, Quechua and the Tairona / I am the sacred snake that renews and cleanses life."[159] Magdalena then proceeds to recount its origin story from the perspective of the Tairona people; followed by Lucio-as-Yaqui recounting its origin story from the Surem people, ancestors to the Yaqui tribe; subsequently followed by Anzoategui-as-Elwha narrating its story from the Klallam people.

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[156] Caycedo and De Blois, "The River."

[157] Ibid.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Caycedo, *ONE BODY*, 6.

Halfway through the work's narrative, these histories of cohabitation and relationality between humans and the rivers shift to bear witness to when this relationship became one of extraction, leading to a loss of connectivity. Lucio-as-Yaqui describes that after a border between Arizona (the location of its headwaters) and Sonora (in which direction it flows) divided its body, three dams were then built upon it.[160] The river mourns these transformations when Lucio-as-Yaqui says of them, "My river bed is empty when it crosses the eight Yaqui pueblos, and my delta is so dry I no longer kiss the California Gulf. Hydraulic progress has reshaped and redefined me, as well as Sonora. Without me, Sonora wouldn't be Mexico's breadbox."[161] Here, Lucio-as-Yaqui describes how the power created from its waters and the distortion of its body by the dams facilitate additional extractive industry in the river's region, such as powering one of the largest open-pit mines in Mexico and empowering an automotive manufacturing plant.[162] These processes make clear how the extractive gaze and its colonial-capitalist logic are the origins of the interconnected devastation of the river's ecosystem.

In parallel to the Yaqui's chronology of destruction, Caycedo-as-Magdalena reflects on the year 1989 when the Betania dam was built, causing numerous fish to disappear from its waters. Caycedo-as-Magdalena cites that year as "The year of fragmentation / Everything started to get pulled out—extracted—with such force and velocity / as if no tomorrow, and no past / just today."[163] This reflection on time posits a compelling dimension to consider of the extractive mentality's relationship to time as being one solely grounded in the present—in capitalism's NOW—with no regard to the Indigenous communities' histories of relation with the rivers nor for the condition in which the waterways and their surrounding ecosystems will be left for future generations. The Magdalena expresses how this extractive mentality poured into its region, stating, “I witness how the geometry of extraction took dreaming away from my people. My children lost the clarity, lost the language to communicate with mountains, rivers, plants and animals; they lost the visions where they connected with the living that have passed, and the living who are yet to be born.”[164] Here, Caycedo-as-river addresses how extractivism, as a mentality, forcefully erases different temporalities by enforcing its naturalized omnipresence upon land and people.

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[160] These three dams built on the Yaqui were La Angostura in 1942, the Oviachic in 1952 and El Novillo in 1965, as identified by Caycedo in the *ONE BODY* script (18n1).
[161] Caycedo, *ONE BODY*, 12.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid., 13.

A key strategy employed by the three performers within the work is their use of the spoken word to amplify the voices of the bodies of water. Through spoken dialogue, the performance vocalizes the non-human as the performers literally embody the rivers, giving them human form and speaking from a first-person positionality, as if what had happened to the rivers had been experienced by their own bodies. Not only does this dialogue amplify the memory of the rivers—recalling what they have witnessed over the centuries—it also testifies to the agency of the non-human. This strategy to highlight the non-human’s agency engages what Gómez-Barris has conceptualized as a “fish-eye episteme” in relation to Caycedo’s lens-based work of the Magdalena/Yuma. Gómez-Barris’s term signifies “an underwater perspective that sees into the muck of what has usually been rendered in linear and transparent visualities” to instead “[change] how we might relate to Yuma as a sentient being, rather than as an extractible commodity.”[165] She has conceptualized this episteme in relation to video works by Caycedo which offer alternative views of the Colombian river “from below,” from the point of view of fish, by inverting the extractive gaze. Gómez-Barris asserts that the fish-eye episteme “displaces the ocular centricity of human development and instead reveals a submerged, below-the-surface, blurry countervisuality.”[166] In *ONE BODY*, the rivers themselves are not visually represented to the attendant audience, but instead evoked by the performers' embodied performance and dialogue. What's more, as the dialogue emerges from the point of view of the rivers themselves and not of the fish (as the rivers recount how many of their fish populations were depleted after the construction of mega dams), it is perhaps more fitting to amend this concept in relation to the performance to what I will call a "river-eye episteme." As Caycedo makes clear in writing the script, a river-eye episteme, as a submerged perspective and countervisuality, originates from Indigenous cosmogonies and foregrounds these epistemologies to resist extractive narratives of destruction. The performers voice this river-eye episteme—the submerged, localized knowledge of the waters—through their spoken words.

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[164] Ibid., 11.
[165] Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone*, 103.
[166] Ibid., 15.

A Monumental Mic: Amplifying Indigenous Voices

Much of the work of Anishinaabe artist Rebecca Belmore, of Upsala, Ontario, centres on the question of voice and, as Tlingit curator Candice Hopkins writes, "amplifies [the voices of] those that need a broader audience, those who are displaced and those who continually have to remake their home wherever they can."[167] These concerns with voice were literally activated and enacted in her landmark work *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother*, a large functional megaphone created in 1991. This sculptural participatory work continues to be as relevant today as when it was created almost thirty years ago in addressing Indigenous land politics and those silenced by colonial narratives, especially within a Canadian context. Belmore conceived of the work in response to the 1990 Kahnesatà:ke Resistance, which was spurred by the planned extension of a golf course and condo developments on Mohawk sacred burial grounds, and which saw the Sûreté du Québec police force and the Canadian army standoff against the Mohawk community protecting their lands. Belmore envisioned the work as a way to amplify the voices of Indigenous peoples in their address to land, and its inauguration one year later coincided with the festivities surrounding the five-hundred-year anniversary of Columbus's arrival to the New World. The work wielded its platform as a way to speak back to this legacy of *terra nullius*—the settler colonial conceptualization of Indigenous territories being uninhabited and available for settlement. The work toured extensively across Canada in its first year, and continues to do so, being activated on different territories and visiting First Nations in reserves, city centres and rural settings.

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[167] Candice Hopkins, "Rebecca Belmore," documenta 14, accessed March 9, 2020, https://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/13529/rebecca-belmore.

The work is a large megaphone made of wood measuring two metres wide and featuring moose hide detailing on its exterior.[168] It is propped upright with wooden poles when installed on land, which participants approach to speak into, via a conventional megaphone attached to the wooden horn, and sound out their voices. Belmore explains the work's original impetus as being "interested in locating the Aboriginal voice on the land. Asking people to address the land directly was an attempt to hear political protest as poetic action."[169] This amplificatory aspect had the function of shifting who, in the eyes of the Canadian state, is perceived as having the right to narrate land and its histories. As Nanibush observes: "In using the megaphone… you can feel the shift in authority. The authority to speak has been the state's but Belmore makes it clear that Indigenous Peoples answer to their mother, the Earth, and not the state."[170] Hopkins further emphasizes the empowering implications of the work by writing that the megaphone's sizeable scale "echoed the degree of tone deafness toward the dire issues facing Indigenous communities to become a transitory monument. It became a means to amplify the voices of the dispossessed and enlarge the platform for growing agency among Indigenous peoples."[171] The agency of voice became deeply interconnected in representing the political sovereignty of Indigenous peoples across Canada.

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[168] "Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother," Rebecca Belmore, accessed March 28, 2020, https://www.rebeccabelmore.com/ayum-ee-aawach-oomama-mowan-speaking-to-their-mother-2/.

[169] Rebecca Belmore qtd. in Sara Frizzell, "Creative Voices: 1991 – Rebecca Belmore Gave the Voiceless a Megaphone," Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, May 25, 2016, https://www.banffcentre.ca/articles/creative-voices-1991-rebecca-belmore-gave-voiceless-megaphone.

[170] Nanibush, "Love and Other Resistances," 173.

In a 2008 interview, Belmore reflected on how her impetus for the work "was motivated by my own need to hear our voices on the land, to recall this land as our audience—one that is listening."[172] Through the work's activation, land is denarrativized as colonized nature waiting to be tamed, and is rather related to as an agential, listening entity. As Jessica L. Horton writes, Belmore subverts the typical function of a megaphone as "a technology of modern manufacture and authority into a conduit for connecting a variety of human and other-than-human speakers and addressees."[173] She continues to say of the work that, "Instead of a timeless feminine essence inviting passive worship (or worse, colonial penetration), earth was grasped as a dynamic set of relations shaped by participants willing to both talk and listen."[174] This form of address asserts the interconnectivity between humans and land, as both speaking and listening to each other. Belmore describes one of the work's early iterations in Banff National Park, where the environment produced a notable echo, as an experience in which: "For those who spoke, this effect conceptually integrated the sound of their own voices with the land. This magnificent experience of an echo made all who were gathered profoundly aware of the body as nature. (…) The art object became merely a functional tool; the essence of the piece was the voice and its reverberations across the land."[175] The sonic experience of the human voice echoing through the megaphone ruptures the nature/culture binary, exposing how interconnected the body is to land as, in this instance, land reciprocated its reception of the voice's message by generating its own sound.

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[171] Hopkins, "Rebecca Belmore."

[172] Rebecca Belmore in conversation with Daina Augaitis, "Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother," in *This is An Honour Song: Twenty Years Since the Blockades*, eds. Leanne Simpson and Kiera L. Ladner (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010), 206. The interview took place and was initially published in 2008.

[173] Horton, "Indigenous Artists," 58.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Belmore, "Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan," 207.

Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother carries an expansive legacy over the last decades, having travelled to many far-reaching sites in only its first two years, such as Kahnesatà:ke; to a logging blockade led by Cree elders north of Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan; to Mount McKay on the Fort William First Nation near Thunder Bay; to Winnipeg near Louis Riel's resting place; to Citadel Hill in Halifax; and to Ottawa on Parliament Hill as well as the Prime Minister's residence (then Brian Mulroney).[176] Although many aspects of the work's history can be discussed, I here focus on a specific iteration of the work when it was installed at Gibraltar Point on Toronto Island, just south of the city's downtown core, on August 9, 2014 (see figures 11-12).[177] Curated by Wanda Nanibush, this installation recast the function of the megaphone to specifically address water, namely the waters of Lake Ontario. Situated in a site of spiritual significance of healing for the Mississaugas of the region, the group featuring Belmore and Nanibush along with participants spoke through the megaphone which faced out towards the lake to enact relationality with the waters. This transition from addressing land in the work's past iterations to water demonstrated the collective importance of water. As scholar Ellyn Walker states, "While the land represents our Mother within Indigenous world views, it is equally the water that represents our lifeblood and that maintains our continued existence on Mother Earth."[178]

Walker, who participated in the 2014 event, later wrote about this experience around the lake's waters and its deeply unifying effect. She reflects that,

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[176] Ibid., 207-209.

[177] The work was installed as part of the exhibition "KWE: Photography, Sculpture, Video and Performance by Rebecca Belmore" curated by Nanibush at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Toronto from May 15 to August 9, 2014.

[178] Ellyn Walker, "Resistance as Resilience in the Work of Rebecca Belmore," in *Desire Change: Contemporary Feminist Art in Canada*, edited by Heather Davis (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 142.

> On that summer day at Gibraltar Point, we were speaking directly to the water as something that is important to us all – Indigenous and settlers alike. Though the stories shared through the megaphone are not mine to tell, they reflect the different concerns and experiences specific to each person and their history, and did so in ways that unified us through the process of careful, deep listening. Through these acts of speaking and listening, *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan* teaches us many things – foremost, to care for our environment in the same way that we should for each other.[179]

This poetic reflection further evinces how natural and social ecologies are deeply entwined relations, which form our broader ecosystems. Returning to Caycedo's notion that "all bodies of waters are connected," these acts of deep listening and reciprocity with the waters and other beings also work to acknowledge the human body as itself a body of water. It becomes clear how water sustains all lifeforms, humans included, yet bears the heavy weight of industrialization. Lake Ontario has itself long been polluted since Toronto's colonial growth period and continues to be jeopardized through ever-growing development. These acts of reciprocal address with the lake by its human inhabitants, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, remain of great importance for the well-being of both the waters and ourselves. This process begins by giving close attention to the lake, and acknowledging its vitality as a life source.

Voicing the Environmental Unconscious

In her chapter "The Environmental Unconscious," Levin furthers her theorizing of the ways the body embeds itself in its environment through a politicized camouflage strategy. In acknowledging the simultaneous relationship between site and body, she further proposes that this performative approach can voice what she names the "environmental unconscious." By this term, Levin implies "that our engagement with space proceed not from the subject's projection of self onto its surroundings, but rather in the frames that we create to allow our environments (human and non-human) to speak."[180] In other words, the environmental unconscious refers to that which goes unspoken, or is forcefully suppressed through a web of power structures, in one's surroundings. Activating an environmental unconscious in one's relation to space by performing ground allows for the power dynamics that construct said environment and condition the way specific bodies are scripted to occupy that space to be pinpointed by the performing body. Levin applies her theory through the lens of a feminist environmental performance practice to identify "what has been camouflaged behind the practice of environmentalism as an art of spatial mastery,"[181] evidencing the gendered and racialized implications of who is made invisible in different environments and which discourses deaden the knowledge emanating from the ground. Levin specifies how "far from exhibiting a naive anthropomorphism, such an [environmentally conscious] approach can productively trouble distinctions between nature and culture, and ground murky words like 'space' and 'site' in the language of ecology."[182] Activating an environmental unconscious works to deny the extractive mentality and "redress those troubling philosophical legacies that we can reproduce when we impute to the world a solely representational status."[183]

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[179] Ibid.

In both Caycedo's and Belmore's collective performances, the environmental unconscious of their respective environments becomes activated through their important use of vocality. Both artists' use of speech critically foregrounds the submerged perspectives of Indigenous knowledge of and reciprocity with the waterways and lands their performances address. Their strategies work to reclaim the social imaginaries of waterways and lands as a crucial life source, re-narrativizing the extractive-colonial script of nature as a casualty of progress. Through this re-narrativizing, Caycedo and her collaborators perform the environmental unconscious of the three rivers to expose their histories of dispossession of both human and non-human beings alike—interconnected processes that sustain extractivism's reproduction. Meanwhile in Belmore's work, participants spoke to the land and recounted their memories of land in the way they felt compelled to do so. Both Caycedo's and Belmore's works collectively perform the submerged perspectives of waters and lands across the Americas. By either becoming waterways or speaking with them, together, both works voiced the deep interconnectivity of humans with waterways, powerfully evoking how the notion that "all bodies of waters are connected" also speaks to how human bodies are themselves waterbodies.

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[180] Levin, *Performing Ground*, 98.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid., 97.
[183] Ibid.

Conclusion
Foregrounding Performative Action, Enduring Resistance

In returning by way of conclusion to a consideration of this thesis's intention of examining the effects of extractivism within the Anthropocene, it becomes clear how notions of time are themselves contested in resisting a colonial-extractive status quo. Indeed, the naming of the Anthropocene propels us to shatter the self-proclaimed omnipresence of extractivism and upend the future of impending doom scripted by the Anthropocene to place human existence within a deeper sense of time. Here in the Americas, this notion of time is shaped by the Indigenous realisms generated from this hemisphere for thousands of years—the cosmogonies and lived realities of the Indigenous peoples of these vast territories and their epistemologies of water and land. The performative praxes of artists Ts̱ēmā Igharas, Otobong Nkanga, Warren Cariou, Carolina Caycedo and Rebecca Belmore critically activate past temporalities to contextualize the extractive present but also imagine a future beyond extractivism. Nanibush writes about the importance of memory as "tied to ideas of responsibility in Indigenous thinking. One is both responsible to remember in honour of the past but also to recreate in honour of the future."[184] This non-linearity is echoed across the different performances that have been discussed, as the artists share a non-linear approach to surfacing the submerged perspectives of land and water that reaches to a time before colonial-capitalist extraction and dispossession, and also reaches to a relational time beyond it through the embodied reciprocity they perform with their sites. Their acts of performing ground, in making themselves porous with sites of extractivism, convey the enduring agency of land and water by surfacing its memory, and magnify the body as a conduit for resistance.

In our extractive present, it is also critical to ask what is the relationship of these strategies to activism. As Dene scholar Glen Coulthard states, the need for direct action remains crucial for Indigenous resurgence, land sovereignty and the protection of lands and waters.[185] During the writing of this thesis, direct actions were taking place across Canada in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en Nation in so-called British Columbia, resisting the Coastal GasLink natural gas pipeline which is still being pushed upon their unceded territory with force exerted from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In these times of continued confrontation with the settler colonial forces that are the bedrock of the Canadian nation-state, what role does art have?

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[184] Nanibush, "Love and Other Resistances," 172.

In her discussion of creative performance practices that refuse an extractive logic, Heather Davis concludes that, "Politically, this is of course, not enough. But it does offer a means through which to re-examine our relations to the mineralogical through practices that bind us to each other and to the earth."[186] Performing intimacy with processes of extraction allows for the macro web of extractivism to be examined through the micro lens of the body's senses, enabling close examination of the logics that maintain extractive zones for their ultimate subversion. The need for direct action against extractive forces can never be discounted, now more than ever, though positioning these performance practices in relation to direct resistance—itself a type of performance—helps to show how poetics allow one to reflect on their relation with land and unsettle extractive ways of thinking. To think of poetic performative strategies in conjunction with the direct actions of land defenders and water protectors on the frontlines of extractivism helps to build a plural approach to reconceptualizing our connections to these processes.

In a time when extraction remains the motto in the Canadian nation-state, fuelling resistance through different modes of production is critical. Without discounting the very necessary need for direct action on the frontlines, how can not only art-making but also writing and scholarship further service the proliferation of submerged perspectives against extractivism?[187] How can these modes of production, generally at a remove from the direct threat of the frontline, be further made vital in amplifying transgressive modes of perception to "pierce through the entanglements of power"?[188] From my position as a white settler writer, this strikes me as requiring a constant denaturalizing of the authority purportedly granted through the academy and other centres of power, and a relentless foregrounding of the ways sacrifice zones are not just a factor of the settler colonial status quo, but are what makes the system able to function in the first place.

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[185] Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.
[186] Davis, "Blue, Bling," 19.

In asking myself, "How am I performing ground in the extractive zone?,"[189] I begin by analyzing my immediate position and the formation of this thesis from within the site-specific context of the university—an institution which has historically functioned to extract knowledge from communities of colour and service the knowledge production of the colonial project. The academy is not situated on the periphery of extractivism but very much in its centre, with a legacy of not reciprocating the knowledges it takes from communities made peripheral, a legacy which in turn easily facilitates the reproduction of unchecked whiteness through a lack of self-reflexivity. In continuing to locate my position in relation to extractivism, I recognize that I comfortably occupy multiple extractive centres (as opposed to their peripheries) as a settler living in the metropole of Toronto, the nexus of extractive capital in Canada; as the beneficiary of investments in natural resource extraction through my banking institution; and as having the privilege of being removed from experiencing the first-hand effects of the Anthropocene on its frontlines, among other privileges. My attempt to perform ground as a settler writer while I move through these spaces is an ongoing performance and a question I cannot fully answer, as I continue to strive to embody my words and build reciprocity with the sources of knowledge that inform them, to uncover the power dynamics that scaffold them, and to connect my writing to embodied action. Through writing, I strive to contribute one mode of solidarity with land and water defenders on the ground by performing ground in the extractive centre, ethically accounting for my environment's unconscious and uncamouflaging the power structures that naturalize its hierarchical operations by contributing to the amplification of submerged perspectives.

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[187] I thank Laura Levin for inciting this generative line of questioning.

[188] Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone*, 11.

[189] I would like to acknowledge and thank Peter Morin for encouraging me to ask myself the same question I ask the artists, and to answer it from my own site-specific context.

The Perpetual Proliferation of Submerged Perception

Of the artworks discussed, the interconnections between art and activism are perhaps the most explicitly articulated in Belmore's *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother* which, as Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill and Sophie McCall write, is a work that "frames barricades as places of creativity and community, and asserts a role for art and artists at sites of dissent between Indigenous people and the settler colonial system."[190] By bringing the work to the frontlines of land defenders, Belmore exemplifies how art and performative action help sustain dissent against the colonial-extractive machine. Interruptions to extractivism's status quo—through re-narration of land, embodied presence in the extractive zone, blockades, marches—undo its self-proclaimed naturalization. As Leanne Simpson writes of the recent blockades across Canada in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en Nation, "We can have the same old arguments we've been having for centuries about inconvenience, the extra-legal nature of Indigenous blockades, and we can pit jobs and the economy versus the environment. We can perform superficial dances of reconciliation and dialogue and negotiate for the cheap gifts of economic and political inclusion. Or we can imagine another world."[191]

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[190] Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill and Sophie McCall, eds., "Introduction," in *The Land We Are: Artists & Writers Unsettle the Politics of Reconciliation* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2015), 1.

For Simpson, Indigenous blockades on the frontlines of resource extraction profoundly embody this reimagining in that "Blockades are both a negation of destruction and an affirmation of life."[192] From their perspective as settler scholars, Allison Hargreaves and David Jefferess posit that barricades should initiate critical social transformation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Rather than adhering to the dominant settler view of barricades as "sites of seemingly irreconcilable conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities,"[193] barricades can "provide an opening onto a different relationship to land and to one another—one that both acknowledges the violence of settlement and resource extraction, and that affirms shared obligations to care-take the land for the well-being of future generations"[194]—shared obligations that specifically implicate settlers to step up to this care-taking.

Nanibush echoes Belmore's work and Simpson's words in asserting that ways of seeing outside of an extractive gaze must start from the periphery and remain Indigenous-centred. She states that building an anti-extractive approach must start with "those on the frontlines in the fight against extraction-based economies who have the precarity of isolation away from capitalist centres and its media where any kind of violence can occur."[195] In order to ethically produce knowledge against extractivism, she writes how she is "aimed at the edges, the extremes, the precarious and the most vulnerable"[196] of the lived realities on the frontlines of extractivism. Nanibush interconnects this resistance to the extractive-colonial machine with a responsibility to one's community and one's territory and, ultimately, to a deep sense of love.[197] She writes that, "If we know how to love well then we know how to see another's needs, claims, desires and demands as necessary expressions of self-determination rather than threats to our own autonomy."[198] Barricades are a proclamation of self-determination, sovereignty and love—a love for the land, for one's community and for a calibrated future. If we, specifically us settlers on Turtle Island, are to learn to see the barricade not as threat but as an act of love, it will require the solidarity-based response Nanibush writes about. Only then, when one perceives from a place of love and justice, does it become apparent that the only threat the barricade presents is, as Hargreaves and Jefferess note, "its capacity to highlight the violence inherent in the colonial nation-state."[199]

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[191] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Indigenous Blockades Don't Just Decry Destruction—They Affirm Life," *YES! Magazine*, February 24, 2020, https://www.yesmagazine.org/opinion/2020/02/24/canada-pipeline-native-resistance-wetsuweten/.

[192] Ibid.

[193] Allison Hargreaves and David Jefferess, "Always Beginning: Imagining Reconciliation Beyond Inclusion or Loss," in *The Land We Are: Artists & Writers Unsettle the Politics of Reconciliation*, eds. Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill and Sophie McCall (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2015), 209.

[194] Ibid., 210.

[195] Nanibush in "Thinking and Engaging with the Decolonial: A Conversation Between Walter D. Mignolo and Wanda Nanibush," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 45 (Spring/Summer 2018): 29.

[196] Ibid.

I began this discussion with the words of Simpson and now end it by returning to her words. My analysis of the performative land-based strategies of Ṯsēmā, Nkanga, Cariou, Caycedo and Belmore was set in motion with Ṯsēmā's performance of camouflage on the shores of Lake Ontario, and came full circle to end with Belmore's participatory performance on the same shores, so it is only fitting that I end my discussion at these waters I am also situated near as I write these words—a watershed I have grown up on. In writing of how extractive industry and development have damaged the lands and waters in southern Ontario, the location of the Alderville First Nation of which she is a member, Simpson states: "I've chosen to live in my territory and I've chosen to be a witness of this. And I think that's where, in the politics of indigenous women, and traditional indigenous politics, it is a politics based on love."[200] Echoing the entwinement of love and resistance in the face of extractive realities that Nanibush speaks of, Simpson describes Lake Ontario as a loving relation:

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[197] Nanibush, "Love and Other Resistances," 192.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Hargreaves and Jefferess, "Always Beginning," 210.
[200] Simpson, "Dancing the World."

> So when I think of the land as my mother or if I think of it as a familial relationship, I don't hate my mother because she's sick, or because she's been abused. I don't stop visiting her because she's been in an abusive relationship and she has scars and bruises. If anything, you need to intensify that relationship because it's a relationship of nurturing and caring. And so I think in my own territory I try to have that intimate relationship, that relationship of love—even though I can see the damage—to try to see that there is still beauty there. There's still a lot of beauty in Lake Ontario. It's one of those threatened lakes and it's dying and no one wants to eat the fish. But there is a lot of beauty still in that lake. There is a lot of love still in that lake.[201]

As Simpson demonstrates, the alternative to extractivism is an embodied ethic of reciprocity, an interconnected relation with land, waters and with ourselves that is premised on love, respect and responsibility. These are the types of relations, proliferated from the resurgence of Indigenous knowledges, that will bring about the end of extractivism. As Simpson powerfully affirms, "the purpose of life… is this continuous rebirth, it's to promote more life."[202]

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[201] Ibid.

[202] Ibid.

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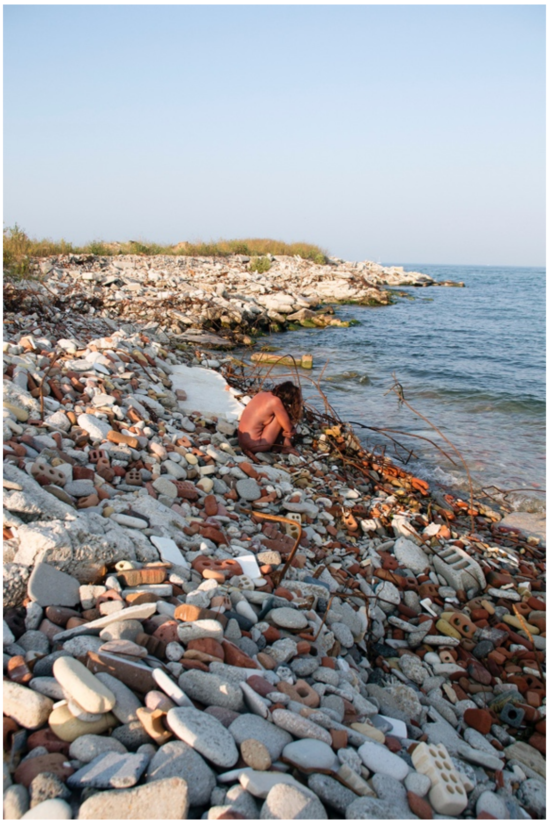
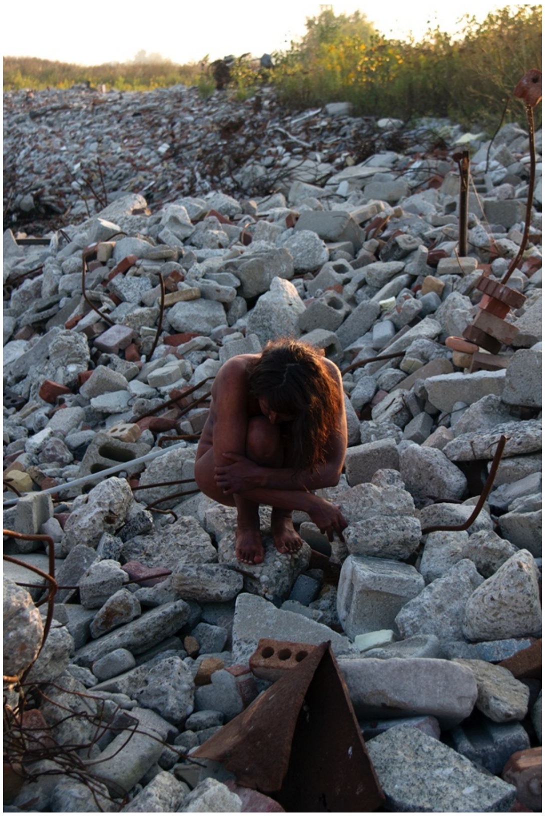
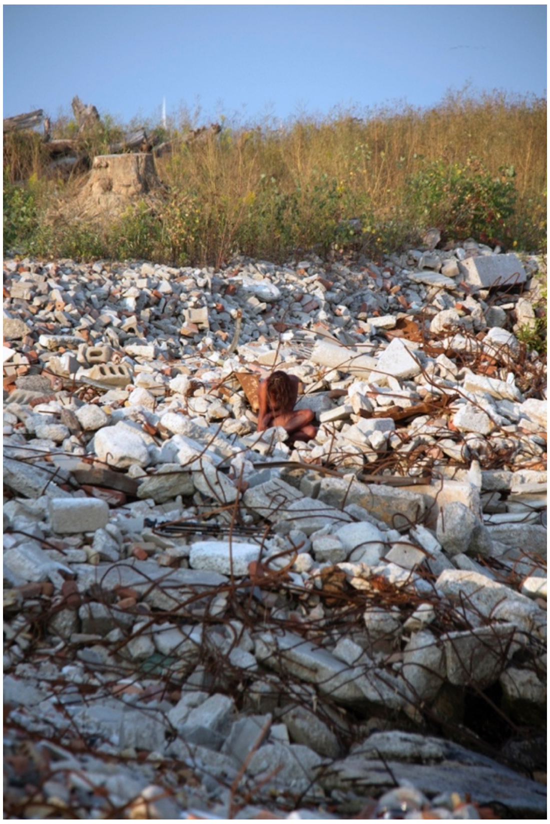
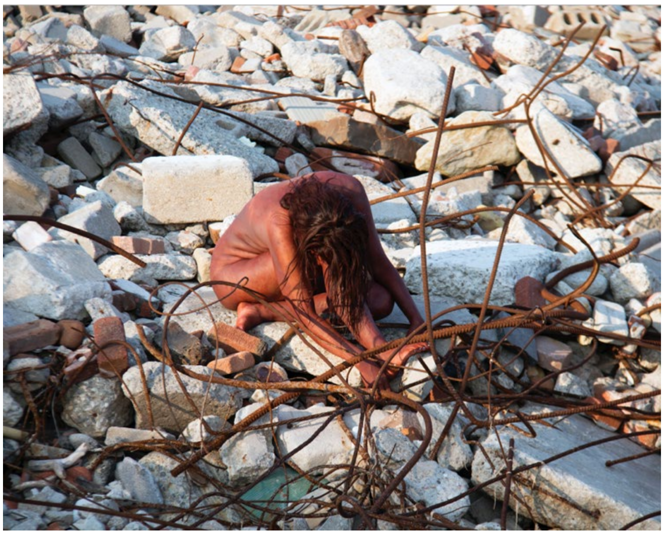
Figures









Ts̱ēmā Igharas, *Clockwise from top-left*:
Figure 1. *No. 1 (Brick)*; **Figure 2.** *No. 4 (Recoil)*; **Figure 4.** *No. 7 (Rebar)*; **Figure 3.** *No. 6 (Rubble)*, *(Re)Naturalize* series, 2015-16, Digital prints, Dimensions variable. Photo documentation by Jonathan Igharas. Courtesy of the artist.

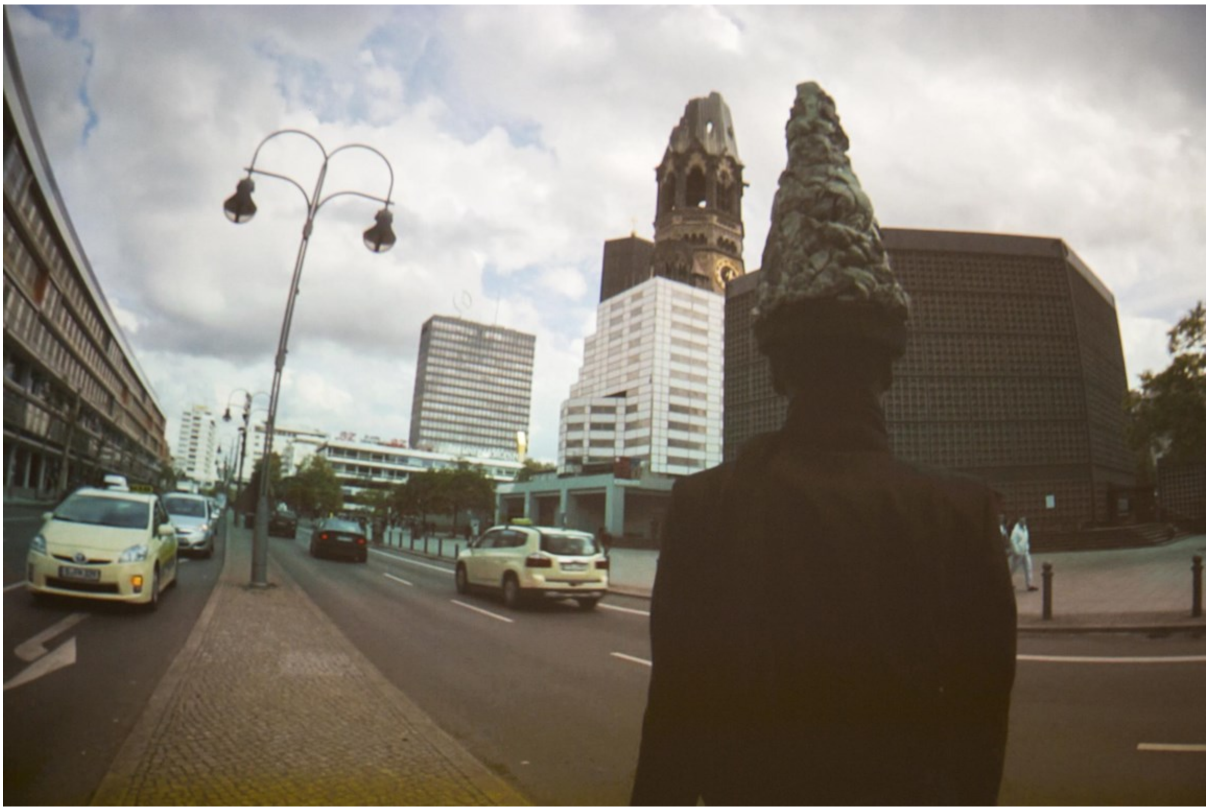


Figure 5.
Otobong Nkanga, *In Pursuit of Bling - Reflections of the Raw Green Crown*, 2014, Video still from the installation *In Pursuit of Bling* - HD video with sound, 2:52 minutes. Photo by Titus Simoens.

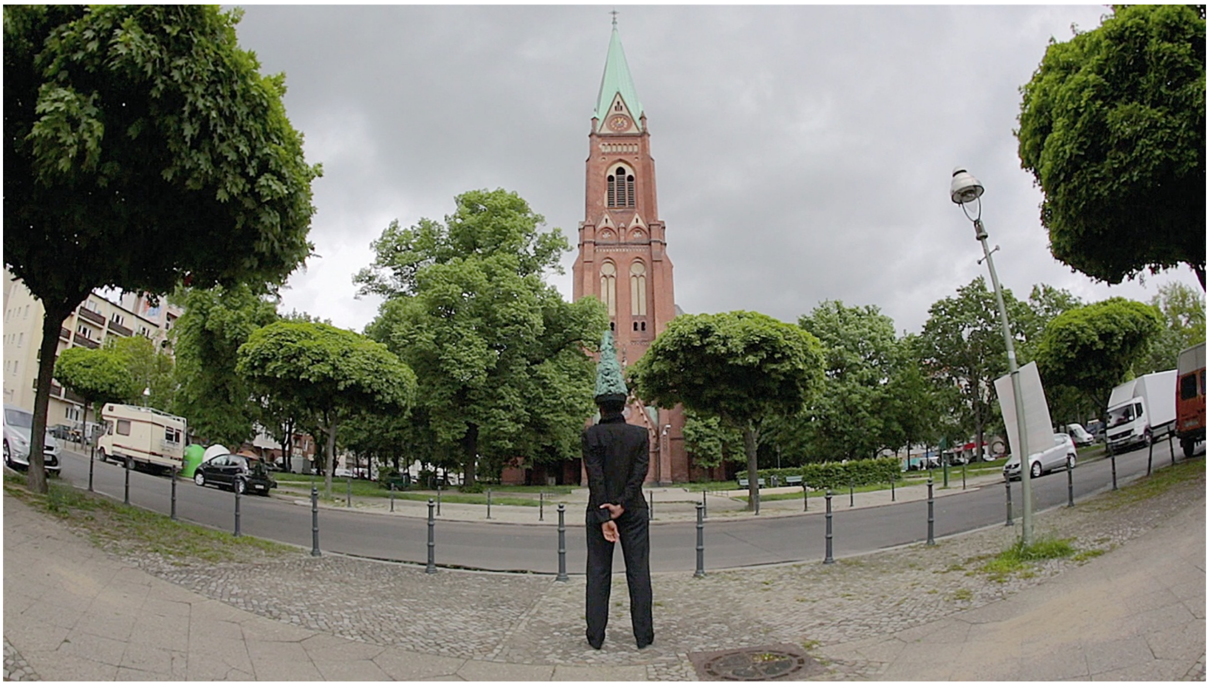


Figure 6.
Otobong Nkanga, *In Pursuit of Bling - Reflections of the Raw Green Crown*, 2014, Video still from the installation *In Pursuit of Bling* - HD video with sound, 2:52 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.

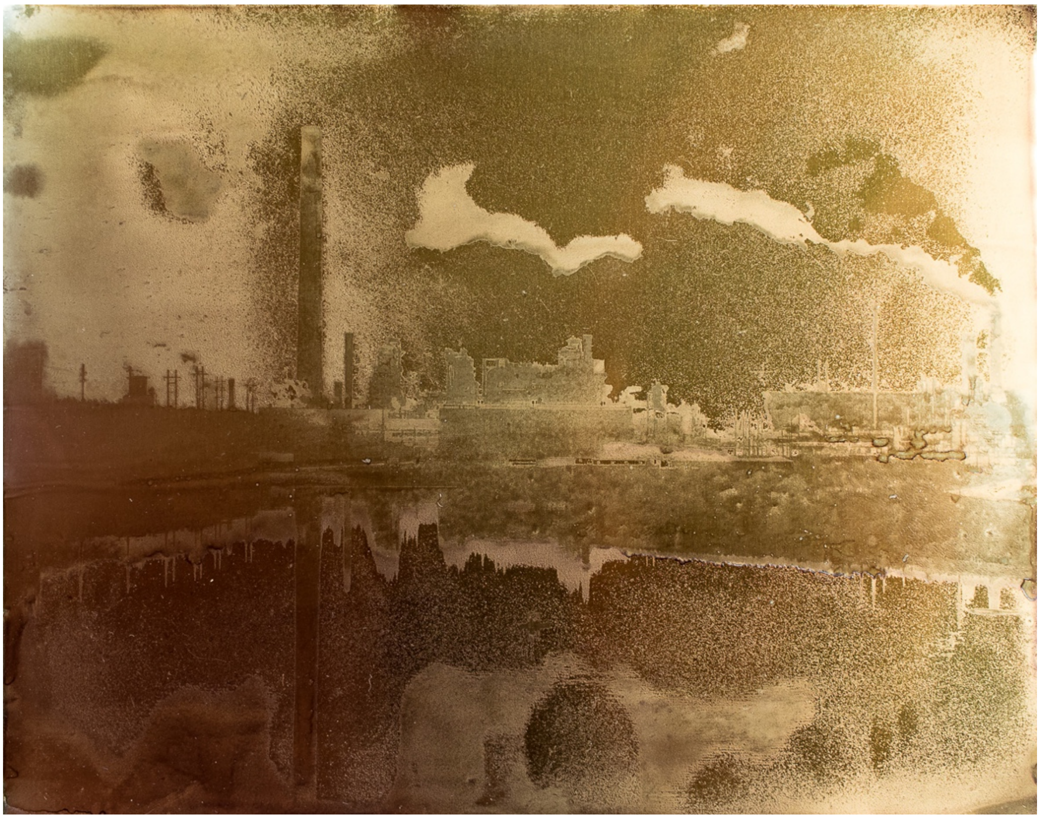


Figure 7.
Warren Cariou, *Syncrude Plant and Tailings Pond Reflection*, 2014, Petrograph on aluminum, 8 x 10 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

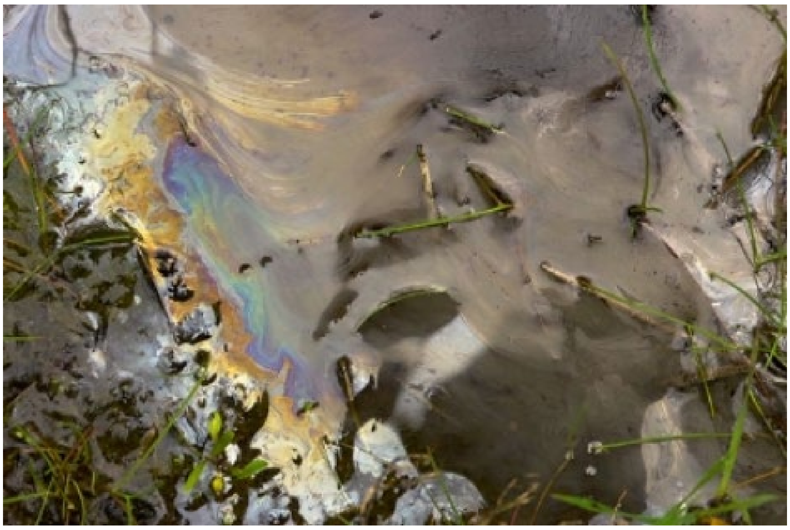
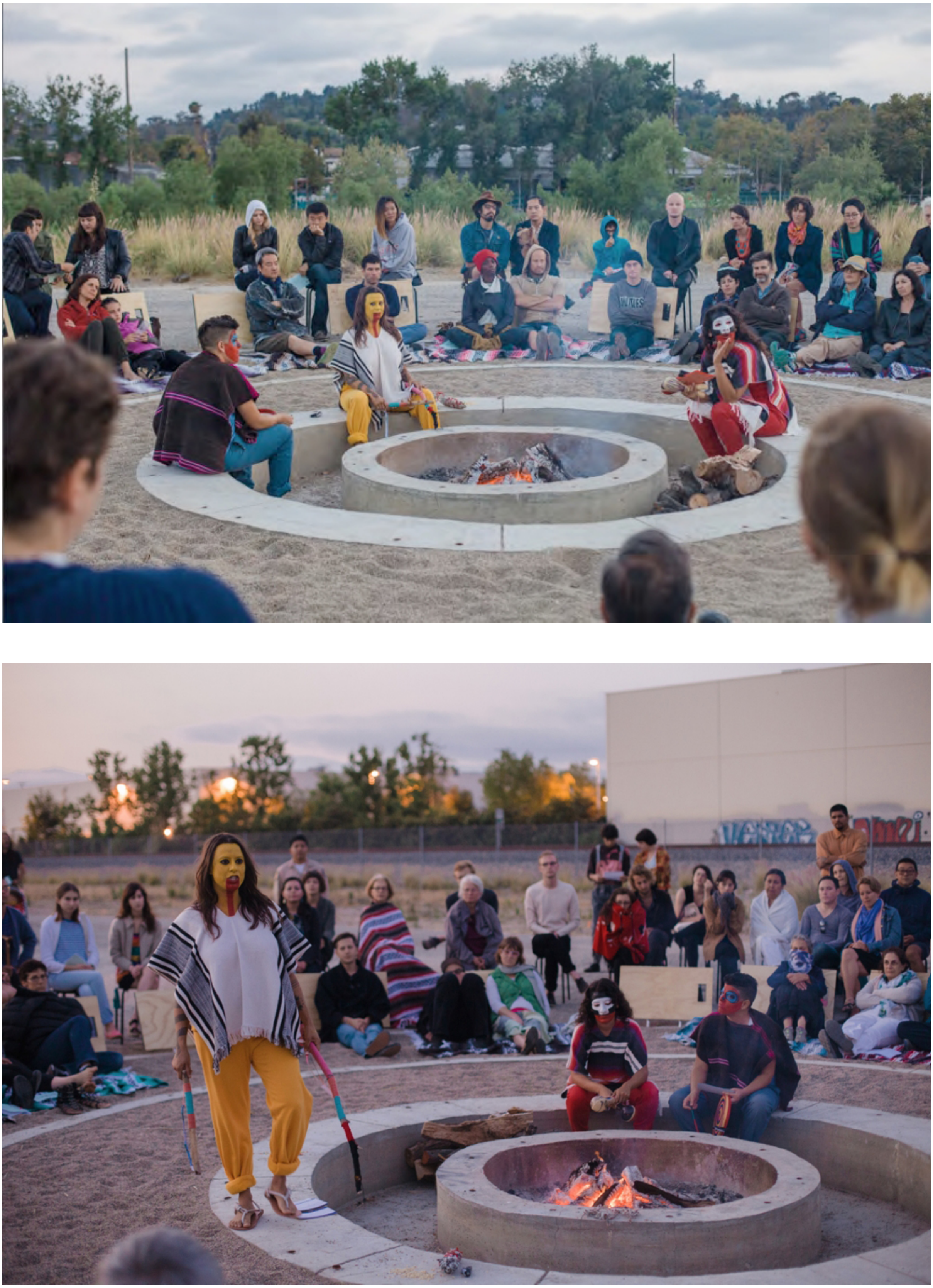
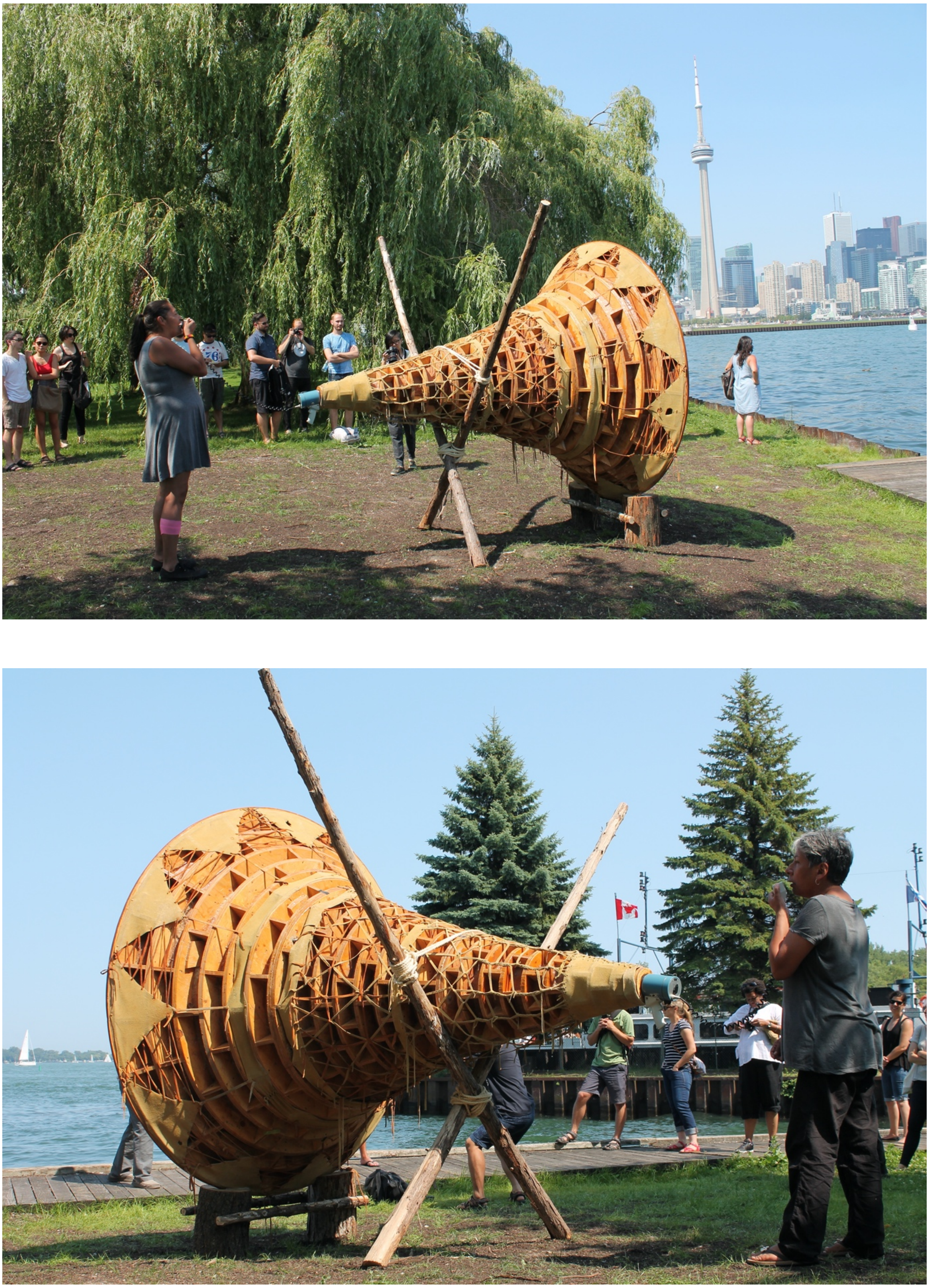


Figure 8.
Natural bitumen deposits on the Athabasca River. Photo by Warren Cariou. Courtesy of the artist.



Figures 9-10.
Documentation of Carolina Caycedo's performance *ONE BODY OF WATER*, June 13, 2015, Bowtie Project, Los Angeles. Photos by Gina Clyne. Courtesy of Clockshop and the artist.



Figures 11-12.
Documentation of Rebecca Belmore’s performance *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to their Mother Gathering*, August 9, 2014, Gibraltar Point, Toronto. Photos by Jessie Lau. Courtesy of the Art Museum at the University of Toronto.