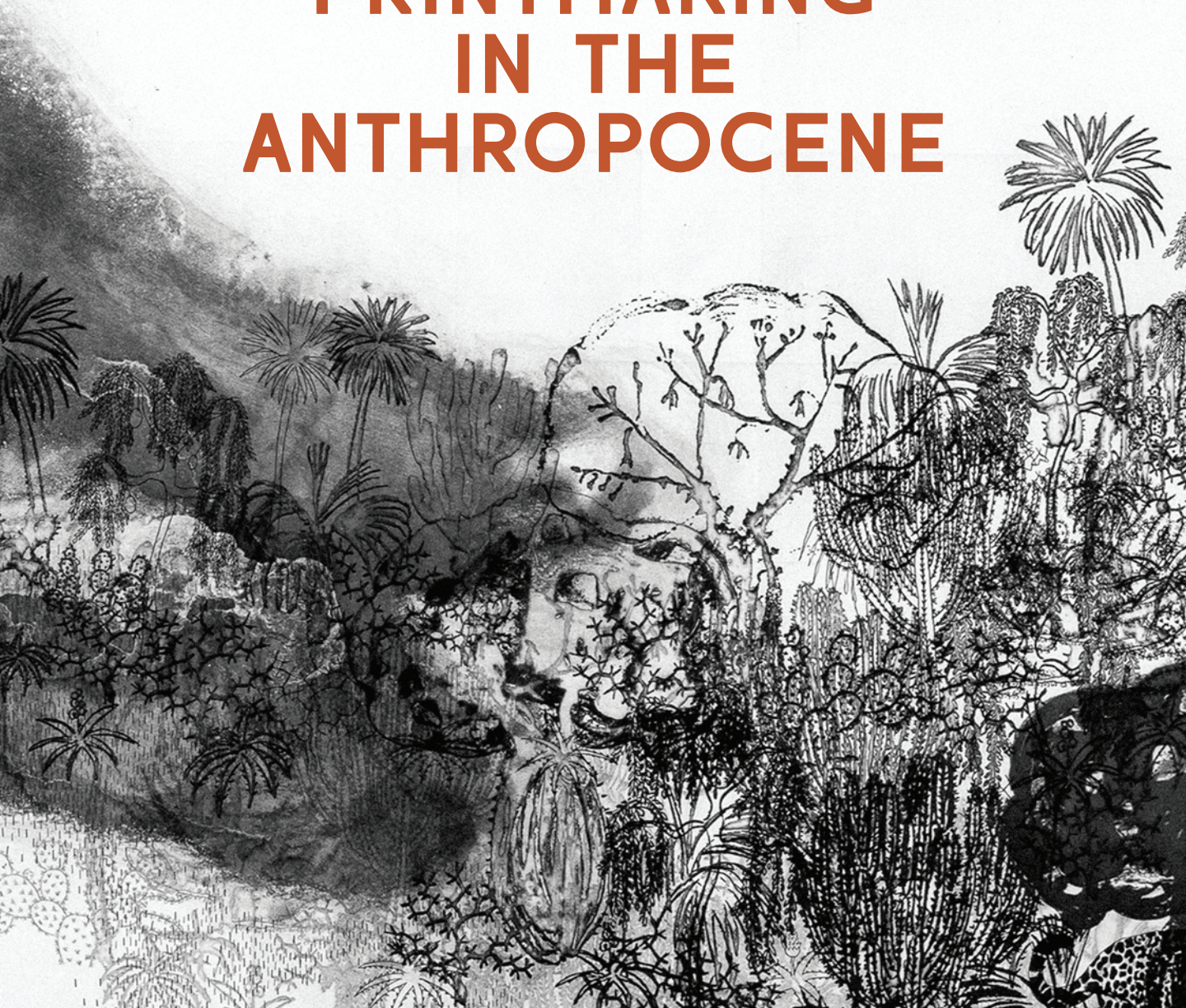
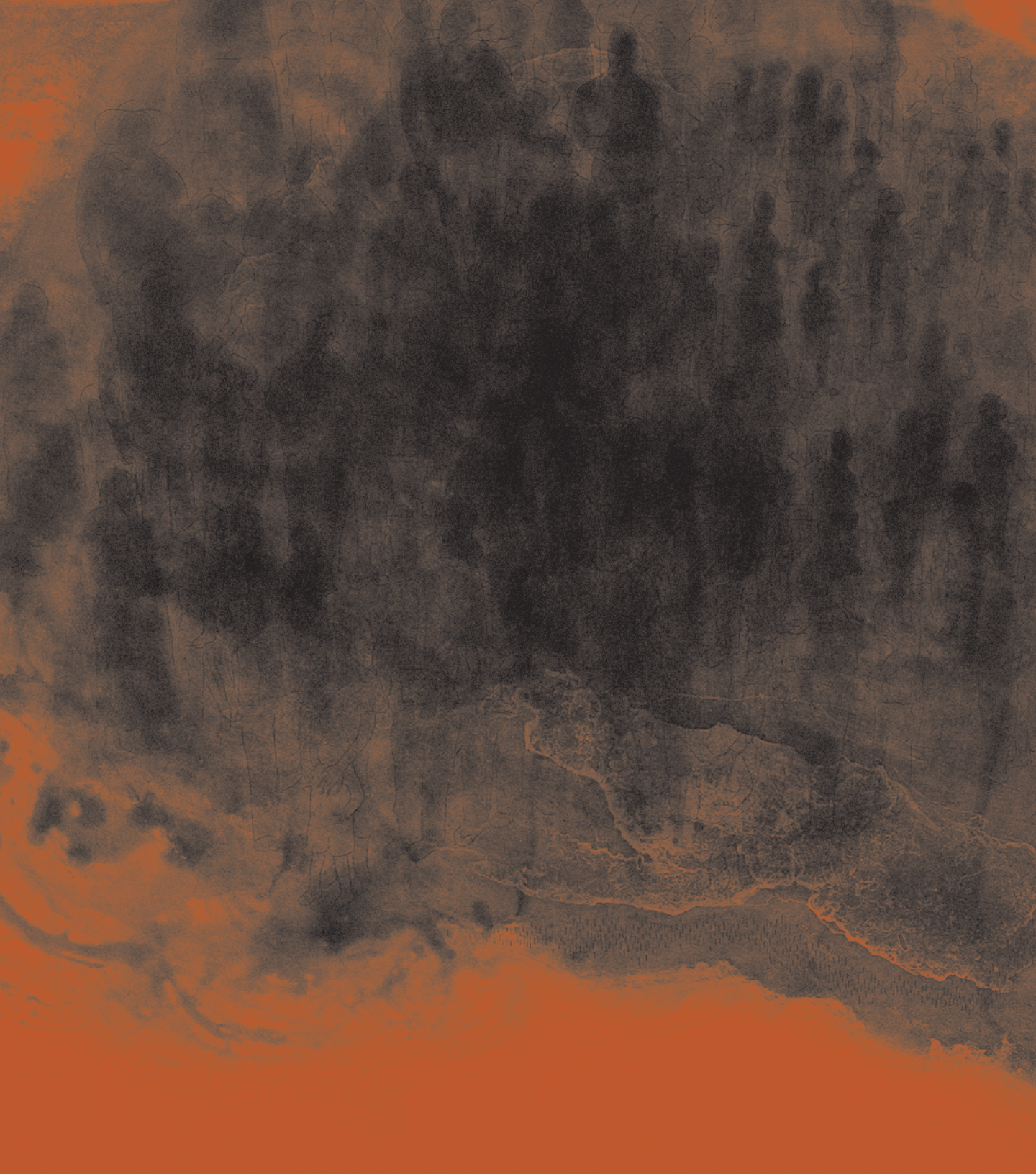


VISUAL RESEARCH FROM
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

PRINTMAKING IN THE ANTHROPOCENE







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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

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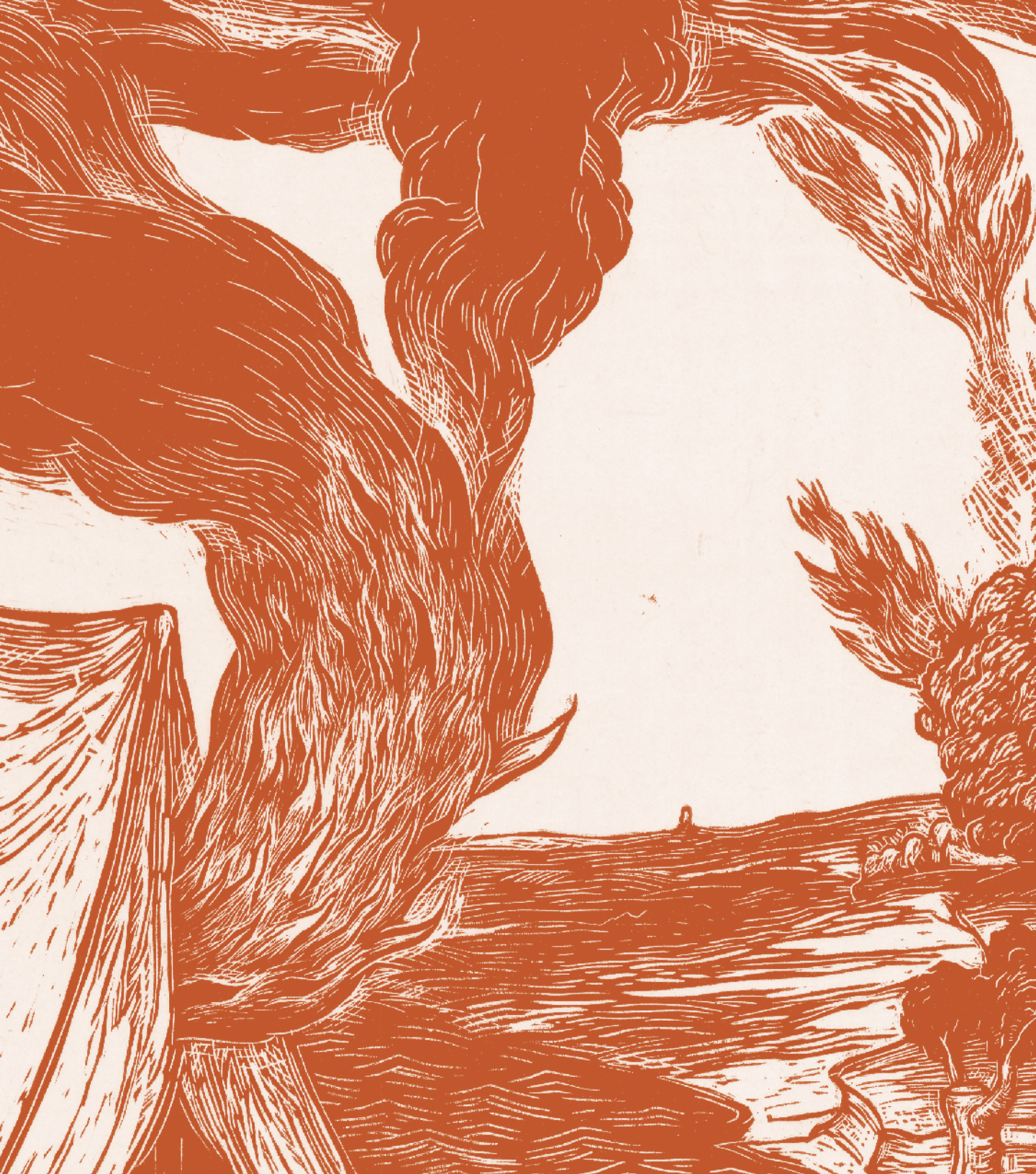
Miriam Rudolph

Morgan Wedderspoon



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INTRODUCTION

JOAN E. GREER

This publication is an outcome of an exhibition project, *Printmaking in the Anthropocene*, that highlights the visual thinking taking place around issues of Climate Change and environmentalism. Reflective and at times speculative in nature, it is directly related to the exhibition, and the thinking done in preparation for, during and after its display: that is, it engages the question of how an exhibition of art can communicate visually and function as a site of knowledge production in environmental discussions and as a catalyst to productive problem solving.

The exhibition *Printmaking in the Anthropocene: Visual Research from the University of Alberta*, was co-organized by Sean Caulfield and Joan Greer and curated by Joan Greer as part of a broader initiative entitled Change for Climate: Art for Change. It was mounted to coincide with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Cities and Climate Change Science Conference held in Edmonton, Alberta in March 2018. It was also organized in conjunction with the launch at the IPCC of the collaborative interdisciplinary initiative Speculative Energy Futures (SEF) of which Caulfield and Greer are both members

In recognition of the IPCC goals of “assessing the scientific basis of Climate Change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation” in order to inform climate-related policies,¹ the art presented here visually investigates related issues of the environment

and sustainability. It presents work from a broad range of creative perspectives, executed by four artists with strong ties to Edmonton and to the University of Alberta Printmaking programme: Sean Caulfield, Madeline Mackay, Miriam Rudolph and Morgan Wedderspoon.

ECOLOGICAL THINKING AND EXHIBITING ENVIRONMENTALISM

The *Printmaking in the Anthropocene* exhibition is an initiative that is intended to be organic in form, evolving and taking shape, in part, in response to and in conversation with its specific context. That is to say, this exhibition, in itself, is an interventionist, responsive form of art activism that is fully engaged with discourses surrounding environmentalism on multiple levels — whether these be in academic, political, corporate, or community circles.² It is not conceived as an inert, autonomous collection of art works brought together to present a single, finite and pre-determined message. Rather, analogous to a responsive, living organism within a larger ecosystem — one that depends on biodiversity and dynamic exchange with its surroundings — the exhibition is made up of smaller constituent parts and, as a whole, is dependent on and responsive to its shifting immediate and wider environment.

The exhibition was first conceptualized as a modest, interventionist display intended to inject strong examples of otherwise absent visual research on environmentalism being done in the Fine Arts into an academic conference on Sustainability in Higher education held in Banff in the fall of 2016.³ Since that time, it has been reconceived and enlarged to become what it is in its current form, an exhibition that was previewed on March 1, 2018 at the Alberta Gallery of Art

to coincide with the panel, *The Power of Art to Influence Social Change*⁴ (also part of the *Change for Climate: Art for Change* series mentioned above), after which it was installed in the Shaw conference centre at the time of the IPCC conference, March 5–7, 2018, both in Edmonton, Alberta. It will continue to travel, with another major port of call being *Petrocultures 2018* in Glasgow (August 29 – September 1), an international, multi-disciplinary conference on oil cultures and energy humanities.

AN ALBERTAN CONTEXT

The environmental envisioning presented within *Printmaking in the Anthropocene* is being carried out in an Albertan context, inflecting the work importantly. The scope of the issues explored is, nonetheless, undeniably global (an international scope that is particularly represented in Miriam Rudolph's enquiries into deforestation and dispossession in the Paraguayan *Gran Chaco*). Specific environmental challenges, however, are local, first and foremost, and need to be addressed as such, even while keeping the wider implications and global impacts in mind. The artwork here functions precisely in this way: that is, both locally and globally.

In the Albertan context, environmental issues in general, and Climate Change in particular, are addressed most frequently and most controversially in respect to issues surrounding petroleum extraction and transport, with the much studied, visualized and written about Oil Sands in the northern region of the province around Fort McMurray being in the forefront of these discussions. The volatile oil industry — both as the sector that employs and thereby affects, numerous Albertans and their families and indeed the provincial economy as a whole, and as the industry that presents the most serious and urgent

environmental challenges — creates tensions and anxieties felt by all. Such issues, as will be seen, are addressed directly by Sean Caulfield in his visual works and textual reflection piece; more broadly, they impact all the works seen here as part of the overarching socio-environmental context in which this art is produced.

PRINTMAKING AS AN ART OF SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Another point to be made here in respect to the Albertan context of the work in this publication has to do with the genre of printmaking itself. Seen here in a number of guises, it is an art form that holds an important place in Albertan art history of the past half century. It has gained a place of particular prominence in Edmonton with SNAP (Society of Northern Albertan Printmakers) and the printmaking programme in the Department of Art and Design at the University of Alberta providing support and ongoing encouragement and vision in this area of strength over the past forty years.

Of particular relevance to the activity of printmaking⁵ here, is its historical importance as a socially engaged art form intended to provoke and actively participate in community discussion and change.⁶ This aspect of printmaking is most commonly associated with protest and resistance (most fundamentally tied to issues of dissemination and accessibility of prints), especially dating back to the nineteenth-century. Here, these notions are joined by ideas related to an embodied, consciously reflective (and slow) “making process” that is part of printmaking, as well as to the experimental and investigative stances towards visual reproductive techniques and the specific relationships of these techniques to the environmental questions at hand.

1. IPCC fact sheet, <http://www.ipcc.ch/>, accessed May 11, 2018.
2. See Isabelle Stengers on “interventionist” approaches including the need for brevity, collectivity and experimentation. Isabelle Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times. Resisting the Coming Barbarism*, Paris, La Decouverte, 2009; republished in English by Meson Press/ Open Humanities Press, 2015.
3. The small earlier version of this exhibition was shown at The International Conference on Sustainability in Higher Education, Banff, Alberta, October, 2016.
4. This panel on art and environmentalism was a joint initiative of the Art Gallery of Alberta with the University of Alberta Change for Climate: Art for Change project. The panel, organized and moderated by Joan Greer, featured Brittney Bear Hat, Debra Davidson, Natalie Loveless, Peter von Tiesenhausen, and Sheena Wilson.
5. An important resource on this subject will be an anthology still in press at the time of *Printmaking in the Anthropocene*: Ruth Pelzer-Montada, ed., *Perspectives on Contemporary Printmaking: Critical Writing since 1986*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, (in press) 2018.
6. See, for example, Josh MacPhee, ed., *Paper Politics: Socially Engaged Printmaking Today*, Oakland, California: PM Press, 2009, as well as a review of this book by Eric Triantafillou, “Printmaking as Resistance”, *The Brooklyn Rail: Critical Perspectives on Arts, Politics and Culture*, May 4, 2010, accessed electronically June 25, 2018 <https://brooklynrail.org/2010/05/express/printmaking-as-resistance>.



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JOAN E. GREER AND SEAN CAULFIELD

People we would like to gratefully acknowledge as part of the larger project *Change for Climate: Art for Change* include our colleague from the University of Alberta, Natalie Loveless, as well as Leslie Sharpe from MacEwan University. Other University of Alberta colleagues we would like to warmly acknowledge are Sheena Wilson and Sourayan Moukerjee, for their important support and contributions, and Naomi Krogman, who deserves special mention for her invitation to organize an earlier version of this exhibition, which, in a more modest form, was where the initial thinking behind the current exhibition project began. We would also like to single out and extend a very warm thank you to the organizational “Master mind” of the city’s entire art-related initiative connected to the IPCC, Jim Andrais, from the City of Edmonton, whose generous support from the project’s inception to its conclusion was sustained and enthusiastic.

We are also grateful to publication designer, Sergio Serranno, whose patience and consistently excellent work has assisted us immeasurably.

Many students were involved in this project, providing invaluable assistance throughout. Brittany Ball-Snellen deserves special mention, for the extensive work she

did both for this exhibition and for *Anthropocities*, an exhibition of student art. Thank you also to Angela Marino and Morgan Wedderspoon for work on both exhibitions and to others who assisted with these projects, including Michael Woolley for his photography, Jessie Beier for organizational assistance, and Phoebe Todd-Parrish for research and manuscript preparation assistance.

Sponsors we would like to acknowledge include Atco, Enmax, U of A, the City of Edmonton and SEF, with particular thanks to the SEF team leaders mentioned above, Natalie Loveless and Sheena Wilson; we also gratefully acknowledge the support and collaboration of Latitude 53, SNAP, and the Alberta Gallery of Art, with particular thanks in the case of the AGA to Catherine Crowston and Josée Blouin.

Many others assisted directly and indirectly and in numerous ways, including students working independently and in the context of Natalie Loveless and Leslie Sharpe’s classes, and artists, musicians and technicians involved with the *On The River* intermedia presentation. We are grateful to these and all participants and contributors. While *Change for Climate: Art for Change* began as a project, it ended as a community.



OUR ONLY HOME: PRINTMAKING IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

JOAN E. GREER

CATASTROPHIC TIMES: CALL TO ACTION FROM THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

In November of 2017, more than 15,000 scientists from 184 countries made a plea to global leaders to take urgent action to prevent worldwide environmental disaster. In an article entitled “World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity: a Second Notice”, they called for immediate action, clearly underlining the urgency of the situation:

To prevent widespread misery and catastrophic biodiversity loss, humanity must practice a more environmentally sustainable alternative to business as usual...

Soon it will be too late to shift course away from our failing trajectory, and time is running out. We must recognize in our day-to-day lives and in our governing institutions, that earth with all its life is our only home...¹

This warning had been preceded by the 1992 manifesto, “World Scientists Warning to Humanity”, signed by the Union of Concerned Scientists and more than 1700 independent scientists, “including the majority of living nobel laureates in the sciences”; the scientists already at that time imparted the seriousness of the situation and the urgent need for fundamental changes in order to avoid widespread human misery and irreversible environmental harm.² In particular, they outlined the need to stabilize human population, cut

greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by phasing out the use of fossil fuels, decrease deforestation and attend to biodiversity depletion.³

The 2017 statement, written on the 25th anniversary of the first warning, takes stock of the current state of affairs, concluding that “with the exception of stabilizing the stratospheric ozone layer, humanity has failed to make sufficient progress in generally solving these foreseen environmental challenges”.⁴ Clearly, more and different ways of addressing these issues in all their complexities and in communicating the urgency of the situation need to be considered.

Using language seldom heard in scientific communications, the statement continues in no uncertain terms, with special attention drawn to “the current trajectory of Climate Change” resulting from the use of fossil fuels, deforestation and agricultural production, especially that focused on “farming ruminants for meat production”.⁵ There is no way of saying it gently: the news is bad; and the warnings are not being adequately heeded. For Albertans, living in a northern climate and with many dependent on the oil industry, forestry and beef production, these pronouncements hold their own specific challenges.

THE “ANTHROPOCENE”: ADOPTING A LANGUAGE OF URGENCY

As is clear from the title, *Printmaking in the Anthropocene: Visual Research from the University of Alberta*, the project is framed within discourses of the Anthropocene, thereby taking a conscious stance that speaks to the urgency of our situation vis-à-vis destructive anthropogenic modes of life that are threatening the well-being of the world in which we live.⁶

The “Anthropocene”, a still debated and sometimes controversial designation, posits we are living in a “human epoch”; the term is invoked here, in agreement with theorists such as Donna Haraway, to emphasize the need “for a word to highlight the urgency of human impact on this planet, such that the effects of our species are literally written into the rocks”.⁷ In *Art and the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies* Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin elucidate the Anthropocene designation and, echoing the concerns of the Union of Concerned Scientists, underline a number of anthropogenic effects, which include:

*the rise of agriculture and attendant deforestation; the extract of coal, oil, and gas, and their atmospheric consequences; the combustion of carbon-based fuels and emissions; coral reef loss; ocean acidification; soil degradation; a rate of life-form extinction occurring at thousands of times higher than throughout most of the last half-billion years; and, perhaps most surprisingly, a ... completely unabated explosion in [human] population growth...*⁸

ALBERTAN ART IN THE ANTHROPOCENE: ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH VISUAL RESEARCH

The issues at stake, then, are well documented and clearly articulated, as is the urgency of the situation. In adopting a language of urgency, however, a very legitimate question arises: are we, in so doing, also endorsing a discourse of hopelessness? It is important to establish here that this is not the case. It is not only possible but also essential to move forward constructively, without succumbing to the numbness and inaction that accompanies seemingly hopeless situations. Indeed, what I am suggesting here is that even while accepting the seriousness of the situation, there is the potential of moving from a discourse

of doom to one of possibility and hope. Immediate, concerted action, however, is essential. As is the acknowledgement of the need for multiple approaches. Included in this is what is being presented here: a form of knowing, understanding and communicating about the world that is based on research done through, and as, art.⁹

Environmental problems are often felt to be the purview of scientists alone. Scientific discourses, however, and traditional modes of confronting problems, conveying knowledge and initiating action — while unquestionably essential — are, on their own, clearly not sufficient. It is here that “visual research”, when applied to complex problems, can contribute to the wider discourse, both in developing alternate methodologies for approaching the issues and in finding and communicating solutions.

In *Printmaking in the Anthropocene*, the visual research presented by the four artists addresses a number of the subjects identified above, both by the scientists in their “...Warning to Humanity” and by the editors of *Art in the Anthropocene*. This ranges from Sean Caulfield’s evocative dark images of dystopian futures or dreamscapes that recall recent flood- and wildfire-related disasters (in both local and international arenas) and imagined environments suggestive of petrochemical wastelands; to Madeline Mackay’s images of transience and biological decomposition that query binaries such as life/death and organic/inorganic form. And from Miriam Rudolph’s ghostly traces of colonial and corporate agricultural impositions resulting in loss of livelihood and biodiversity revealed in landscapes of displacement and dispossession; to Morgan Wedderspoon’s evocative ecologies of collecting, understanding and responding to the “detritus” found in today’s world.

The works here, while actively investigating specific environmental and socio-environmental issues, are doing so in a way that self-consciously interrogates how the artworks themselves function — materially, aesthetically, conceptually — given each artist’s particular print medium. The works, which represent a number of different kinds of

printmaking (from the historical — etching and woodcut — to the contemporary — digital prints), demonstrate varying relationships to both the technological and material aspects of the making process.

There are no easy answers provided in these works. As is the case with most art, the prints are open ended, allowing and indeed inviting the viewer to engage with each one, whether viscerally, emotionally, and/or intellectually: suggesting; provoking; inviting contemplation; eliciting embodied responses. Herein lies their power. They function in multiple ways and on levels that are different from those used in discourses relying on verbal languages. Perhaps surprisingly, one of the most poignant aspects of the art works in this exhibition is the reminder of the potential beauty and wonder that can be found even within the most difficult and complex subject matter.

PARADISE LOST: BITUMINOUS WASTELANDS AND DISTOPIAN FUTURES

SEAN CAULFIELD's work deals with the petrochemical industry and natural disasters.¹⁰ These dark images, which evoke dystopian futures and dreamscapes, are about time and colliding temporalities. The disturbing imagery conjures up imagined environments of bizarre and disturbing infernos recalling the apocalyptic and Last Judgement scenes of northern Renaissance artists such as Albrecht Dürer or Hieronymus Bosch. The strangely conceived environments are suggestive of changing weather patterns and industrial wastelands, speaking to our shared imaginings and anxieties surrounding these issues. They are of global relevance, as well as relating more specifically to the Albertan context, recalling recent flood- and wildfire-related disasters and the environmental aftereffects of the oil industry.

The prints demonstrate a deep ambivalence towards the complex and fraught attitudes Albertans hold in respect to the oil industry and its far reaching impacts — which range from the historical and ongoing economic livelihood of many and wealth of some to widespread

environmental devastation and tragic health consequences, the extent of which is still seldom openly acknowledged or understood. The reality is difficult to deal with; and easy to suppress. Caulfield's own personal background, however, as expressed in his "Reflections from an Artist" piece, has forced him to confront these issues head-on. While growing up with family members in the oil business, and understanding its focal position in the lives of numerous Albertans, he is also deeply concerned about negative environmental impacts and health issues associated with the industry. As his prints convey, Caulfield is well aware of imperatives to examine and change attitudes and practices towards energy consumption and production.

Beyond the Anthropocene

Caulfield's work centres on this dilemma and on the anxieties it awakens: the past and future collide in his nightmarish envisionings of ecological wastelands. Here, industry and natural environments come together. We are confronted with the imagined consequences of human interventions upon larger ecosystems with oil extraction being the leitmotif. The result is environmental Armageddon. And yet, within these images there is also a suggestion of something primordial and enduring; the possibility of new beginnings; something — at first amorphous and unknowable — starting to arise and take shape.

In Caulfield's prints, oil is dominant. The inky black fluid oozes, seeps and spews in these images. While oil is generally associated with heavy industry and identified most commonly with what will be refined to become a highly commodified petrochemical product, here the bituminous fluid, like some impenetrable alchemical creation, regains some of the more mysterious properties that this organic compound undeniably possesses. This includes its geological properties as a substance that marks the material transition over millions of years of the remains of tiny plants and animals covered with mud and succeeding layers of sediment. With this understanding of oil, the idea of a single, coherent

period of time breaks down; it is a context in which past becomes present which, in turn, becomes future.

In *Prairie Siren*, for example, a strange form, spewing oil arises from the black mire, seeming to herald the dawn of a new age. Like some monstrous cross between a bulbous entrail, an alien seed pod, and an industrial pipe fitting, it inhabits an unknowable — perhaps unspeakable — world of organic mutations. It is a world just beyond our ken. And yet it is strangely familiar, with a sense of the primordial goo being a place where new forms are possible. A world in which the bituminous — rather than the human element — prevails: it is beyond the Anthropocene.

If *Prairie Siren* embodies a sense of foreboding, other images such as *Fire Tent*, or the two images of ships — *Cargo Ship* and *Fully Loaded* — are more explicitly ominous scenes of destruction and attempts at escape and/or salvage in the wake of environmental disaster. In *Resuming Production*, oil production begins once again. The black and white imagery of the first of these prints takes on an eerie glow in the final two images, underlining both the uncanny, dreamlike aspects of the environments, but also, like *Prairie Siren*, perhaps evoking the potential of the dawn of a new age.

Material Making / Embodied Creation

While very much an art about human anxiety, conscious and subconscious thought forms, Caulfield's art is equally about materiality: the material aspect of the oil that is represented but also the material, artefactual nature of the prints themselves and their processes of production. That is, it is an art about material making and embodied creation. The print making techniques Caulfield employs here — linoleum and woodcut prints — involve the hand working, more specifically engaging in the act of carving, cutting away from, and into, the physical materials: wood or linoleum. This results in a tactile relief of the image which becomes the plate onto which the ink is applied so it can then be transferred/ printed onto the paper.¹¹ The layering of print techniques involved in *Fully Loaded* and *Resuming Production*

evoke art making over time; reinforcing the focus on temporalities and the analogous underlying layering of geological strata.

DECOMPOSITION, VITAL MATERIALITY AND LIFE AT THE EDGE

This distinction between life and non-life is not correct. Life is made of death, and death is made of life.

(Thich Nhat Hahn, 2008)¹²

MADELINE MACKAY's art is about decomposition. It is also about edges — liminal spaces: one that queries oppositional notions of the material and immaterial world; of the animate and inanimate; of life and death. Accordingly, her prints investigate materiality and interconnectivity, with the notion of decay being central.

How does a rotting fish become the object of aesthetic contemplation? In what way does it relate to the world around us? To our own beings? And how do the two — the world around us and our physical beings — relate? The *Meat, Mud, Water* series of screen prints represent these three elemental components, bringing into question that which we determine to be “meat” and its relation to the human and non-human form, as well as its transient properties. The process of decomposition is scrutinized and visualized, as we are faced with the slow, deep contemplation of the most mundane of objects, changing over time: the half rotted form of a fish washed up on the river's edge, for example; or another unidentifiable carcass, more fully decomposed (*Fish Series II* and *IV*); organic form being broken down into smaller fragments. It is a reminder of the more fundamental biological systems of nutrient cycles of which these are constituent parts.

In this body of prints, as in Caulfield's, time is the invisible yet dominant unifying force. Here, with the focus on material decomposition, the work finds artistic antecedents in the *Vanitas* tradition of Dutch seventeenth-century still life paintings: exquisite

renderings of the opulent, material world that, upon closer examination, is beginning to show signs of death and decay with insects nibbling on exotic flower petals, and ripened fruit showing signs of rot. Whereas *Vanitas* paintings represent cautionary, moral reflections on human transience, however, Mackay's approach is more attuned to the deep ecology found in the Buddhist teachings of Thich Nhat Hahn quoted at the outset of this section.¹³ They also find resonance in New Materialist ideas. As political philosopher Jane Bennett posits, for example, all objects — in fact, all matter — is imbued with life and agency in a complex and entangled web of interconnectivity. About the human body she writes: "My 'own' body is material, and yet this vital materiality is not fully or exclusively human. My flesh is populated and constituted by different swarms of foreigners... the bacteria in the human microbiome collectively possess at least 100 times as many genes as the mere 20,000 or so in the human genome..."¹⁴

Mackay's work relates well to this kind of ecological thinking and, in this case, ecological *envisioning*. It also implies and makes explicit an embodied understanding of the art making process which in itself becomes part of the life cycle associated with composition and decomposition. With this comes the understanding of decomposition as a rejuvenating and life-giving process. Human flesh (the artist's flesh), is not only literally present in these prints — in the inclusion of the artist's knee, for example — it is also, in its material aspect, interrogated and investigated for its part in the larger scheme. We are dealing with the world of biological processes; and with the recognition that within this realm, such processes are the great levelers. Here, however, unlike in the *Vanitas* images mentioned above, the answer is found within the very matter that is being questioned. Its finitude is disproved: the ultimate life affirmation is found in the biological process of decomposition which leads to renewed life.

As in current understandings in the area of sustainability and regenerative cycles, "waste" is recognized as a life-giving resource as opposed to

a problematic aspect of life requiring disposal, compelling one to think deeply about the vitality of matter, its interconnectivity with its immediate environment and with other forms of matter. The prints serve to represent these ideas and this materiality even while possessing a specific vitality and complex web of their own materiality as objects of artistic production. This heightened awareness in the ecology of matter is a step towards critiquing complacent and superficial approaches to the world around us, denying problematic "out of sight, out of mind" attitudes towards matter, decomposition and the rich ecological systems in which we, like the partially decomposed fish, co-exist.

SEEDS OF CONTENTION – SEEDS OF CHANGE: LOSS AND DISPLACEMENT IN THE PARAGUAYAN CHACO

The arid and enigmatic Paraguayan Chaco is at the heart of the works by **MIRIAM RUDOLPH**, who was born and raised in Paraguay, before moving to Manitoba, Canada. It is an art about ecological destruction and human displacement. The Chaco is a region that continues to inform Rudolph's artistic sensibilities and themes. While very different in environmental specifics, it is one that, with its colonial past and ongoing environmental and settler-colonial challenges, possesses important similarities with the Canadian prairies in respect to socio-environmental issues.

Deforestation and Land Grabs

In the Paraguayan Chaco, systematic land clearing continues to be done to turn the Chaco into prairie grasslands that can support large scale beef and dairy farming and biofuel production to supply the international market. As World Resources Institute reports: "In the last 15 years, Paraguay lost a greater share of its forests than any other country on Earth. While soy farming once drove deforestation in the east, the focus of Paraguay's forest loss has since moved west to the low-lying, thorn-forested Chaco, where cattle ranching has claimed over 3.7 million hectares (9 million

acres) of forest for pastureland — an area about the size of the Netherlands — between 2001 and 2015.”¹⁵

The rapid disappearance of the dry thorn forest of the Chaco, one of the world’s most fragile ecosystems, has been documented in satellite imagery with images revealing the decimation that is resulting from the ongoing systematic clearing of land through fire and bulldozer. This far-reaching deforestation has led to ongoing loss of biodiversity as well as the displacement of local people, figures who in several of Rudolph’s works are eerily revealed upon close examination, evoking layers of history. These people, appropriately, are present only in delicate traces; their narratives remain hidden; untold.

The works here are landscapes in so far as they represent a specific region, focusing on aspects of a very particular environment. They are, however, also personal meditations. It is an art in which personal and collective memory collides with the notion of “history”: the environmental and colonial history of a region and of its inhabitants — past and present with the suggestion of an uncertain future. It is an art about power, evoking current corporate-driven agendas of agribusiness, an abstract menace that is always present and only sometimes visually concretized, as in the blade of a bulldozer, the head of a seeding machine or the repetitive and decorative cow motif.

Endangered Species: the Tapir’s Watch

In *Transposition IV*, an intaglio print superimposed on a digital satellite image,¹⁶ two worlds meet head-on: the original Chaco with its native flora and fauna making way for a highly regulated, corporate world of agribusiness, here represented through the encroaching grid formation of land enclosures, which are destroying the rich biodiversity as they advance. A group of cows — the repeated form of seven identical animals — themselves innocent and oblivious victims, are emblematic of the unalleviated corporate march of agribusiness. These are no longer individual, living beasts. Products of the beef and dairy industry, they are envisioned here skinless, their carcasses exposed; that is, as meat; as economic

capital. Forming a poignant counterpoint to this herd of abstracted bovines is the equally emblematic lone tapir on the left. This nocturnal, forest-dwelling mammal, currently an endangered species, is recognized as an essential component of healthy South American forest ecosystems.¹⁷ At first glance, it appears that the tapir is here being backed out of the picture. There is something unassuming about this stalwart creature, however, and it seems just possible that, however doubtful the eventual outcome, the tapir, for now at least, is quietly standing its ground.

The two intaglio prints *Chaco Ranch I* and *II*, pick up on the subject introduced in *Transposition IV*, with the cow motif now being central but even further abstracted. The animals, again signifiers of the aggressive, multi-national agri-business imposed on the area, and representative of a range of broader ills associated locally and globally with this form of livestock production, are here represented ironically, in this charming but strangely inert and passive form, even as the presence of these decorative shapes define and control the entire environment. The final works here are *Advance* and *Displacement*, prints that belong to a series entitled *disPOSSESSION*. In them, the environmental and human dimensions of the long history of colonial land grabs followed by the systematic and catastrophic losses of biodiversity are underlined. The protagonist in all this work is the living organism that is an entire ecosystem.

Rudolph’s prints do not present a Romantic point of view; nor does the work fall into the framework of a Wilderness or Primitivist narrative. Instead, it adopts an eco-critical stance, one that exposes the vastness of the ecological problems associated with this fraught and fragile part of the world; problems that resonate globally — both for the far-reaching impact they have and for the parallels to be found in other parts of the world — including in the context of Alberta, in which these prints were made. Multi-faceted, the work is ethically complex. It also speaks to personal imperatives that have resonance for us all; imperatives that urge us, as a necessary first step, towards deep reflection upon

and personal contemplation of such complex issues, and one's own position in relation to them, including to issues of settler-colonial heritage. It is work that asks questions; invites engagement. It does not provide easy solutions.

RESILIENCE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF HOPELESSNESS: AN ECOLOGY OF COLLECTING/ASSEMBLING

MORGAN WEDDERSPOON concerns herself with collecting, assembling and representing the detritus of contemporary life, including material and textual traces of human life that are discarded and left behind: cultural objects; human artefacts. Her prints are meditations on these objects; related to this, they are also about human responses to environmental crisis in the context of anthropogenic global warming and climate change.

Catastrophic Times

How do we approach life in catastrophic times? The question is posed, acknowledging that we are no longer faced with the luxury of “if” and are confronted with “when”. Isabelle Stengers, responding to this situation and in particular to climate change in the context of the petroleum industry and new methods of oil extraction with which have come heightened levels of threat, says the following:

*It seems that we [now] have largely sufficient means to produce a degree of warming that would set off an uncontrollable disruption of the climate (runaway climate change). That the earth may then become uninhabitable for species which, like our own, depend on relative climatic stability goes without saying. That it may even, like Venus, become a dead planet is a question to which we will never know the answer.*¹⁸

What does it mean to live at this time? How can one possibly respond to such seemingly unstoppable and calamitous pronouncements? One way, Wedderspoon ironically — or is it resignedly — observes, is to *Give*

Up and Party, the title of the first of her inkjet and screenprint works, while a second one, quite differently, is entitled *Help Others*, and a third *Go About Your Life*. These are titles taken from a list in Margaret Atwood's nonfiction book *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth*.¹⁹ The prints here situate themselves within the dark and unknowable context (and literally undefined background in the prints) of catastrophic times with the problem of what it means to exist at this time as the overarching question.

Dipek Chakrabarty has noted in “The Climate of History”, that humans have become geological agents in recent history, thereby positioning human activity and accumulation within deep time and invalidating the nature/culture binary and distinctions between human and natural history.²⁰ Such reflections on the Anthropocene assist in making sense of Wedderspoon's strangely enigmatic material assemblages²¹ with their equally eerie and unknowable backdrops.

The Conversations of Objects: Incongruent Congruency

The objects in *Give Up and Party* appear heterogeneous and random in their diversity, revealing upon close inspection, everything from an accumulation of stones and bits of moss to small electronic components and cheap, glittering party favours; or from a paper clip to a broken piece of particle board. *Go About Your Life* represents an equally diverse array of objects, this time arranged in a circular fashion around the dark backdrop, while in *Help Others*, a much sparser set of objects — bones, the pieces of a delicately coloured shattered egg shell and piece of torn paper — float in the undefined inky space they share, upon closer inspection, with the diminutive form of a ladybug. Incongruity, here, becomes the norm; the congruent. The title of each work appears delicately and unobtrusively printed on the unifying darkness of the backdrop, which functions evocatively, conveying anything from an unfathomable abyss to a materially knowable (albeit “retro”) black chalkboard. This is not a project of categorizing and thereby making

sense of the disparate found objects, but rather one of allowing the complexity and diversity of form, function and material to co-exist in silent conversation, creating their own reality.

Wedderspoon informs us that what we see here are found objects collected from the ground, implying an embodied — perhaps even performative — stage of making prior to the technically complex and time consuming combined inkjet/screenprint processes. The artist shares Chakrabarty's anthropocenic position, underlining this work's potential to elicit "contemplation on our material legacy as geological agents".²² As such, it is about archaeologies of knowing; and future histories.

Words Matter: Words-Matter

Similarly, in the bookwork *Fight/Surrender*, "found" or borrowed bits of text are brought together to form collage poetry, with "chance" again being a determining factor. Wedderspoon is once more looking to Margaret Atwood's series of responses to crisis listed in *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth*. The result is a bookwork of collage poetry that is at once a material object and discursive assemblage.

1. William J Ripple, et. al, "World Scientists' Warning to Humanity: a Second Notice", *BioScience*, Volume 67, Issue 12, 1 December 2017, Pages 1026–1028, <https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/bix125>; published 13 November 2017.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. I have developed this subject at greater length elsewhere; Joan E. Greer, "Visualizations of 'Nature': Entomology and Ecological Envisioning in the art of Willem Roelofs and Vincent van Gogh", Abingdon, U.K., Routledge: 2019 (in press).
7. Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, eds., *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, Open Humanities Press, 2015, 6. For the history of the term and an overview of its origins, meanings and usages in relation to art, see the first essay in this book: Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, "Art & Death: Lives Between the Fifth Assessment& the Sixth Extinction", 4–29. While the term "Anthropocene" is useful here for the reasons outlined, it must be acknowledged that, in its very anthropocentrism, it also has shortcomings. This has been the subject of much discussion.
8. Davis and Turpin, 4, 5. While there are several theories amongst those supporting the Anthropocene designation of precisely when this era began, I adopt Dutch chemist Paul J. Crutzen's position that the era began at the end of the eighteenth century with the invention of the steam engine (by James Watt in 1789) and subsequent steady rise of carbon dioxide emissions that are evident in ice-core sample readings. Crutzen is generally credited as having coined the term The Anthropocene in a 2002 paper he published in *Nature*, 4.
9. This category of artistic enquiry and knowledge production is, in Canada, increasingly known by the term "research creation": see Natalie Loveless (2015), "Towards a Manifesto on Research Creation," *RACAR: Revue d'art canadienne*, 40(1), 52–54.
10. Lubos Culen, ed., *Sean Caulfield: Active Workings* (Vernon, BC: Vernon Public Art Gallery, 2017).
11. The first three works are on Japanese kozo paper (made from the sustainable process of annually harvested branches of the kozo bush); the others on German Hahnemühle etching rag paper.
12. Thich Nhat Hanh, *The World We Have: a Buddhist Approach to Peace and Ecology*, Berkeley California: Parallax Press, 2008.
13. Thich Nhat Hanh, op. cit.
14. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 112,113.
15. Pieter Veit and Ryan Sarsfield, "Closing Data Gaps to Eliminate Deforestation and Land Disputes from Beef Supply Chains in Paraguay", *World Resources Institute*, Nov. 1, 2017. <http://www.wri.org>, accessed July 3, 2018. See also Bauman, M., et. al. "Carbon emissions from agricultural expansion and intensification in the Chaco", *Global Change Biology*, 23, (5), 2017, 1902–1916.
16. For satellite imagery documenting Paraguayan deforestation see the NASA images in "Deforestation in Paraguay", Earth Observatory, <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/92078>, accessed July 3, 2018.
17. There is a great deal of recent literature outlining the

unique ecological importance and endangered status of the South American tapir. For a basic work on this subject, see Richard B. Bodmer, et. al., *Tapirs: status survey and conservation action plan*, Gland: IUCN, 1997.

18. Preface to 2015 translation of Isabelle Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times. Resisting the Coming Barbarism*, Paris, La Decouverte, 2009; republished in English by Meson Press/ Open Humanities Press, 2015, 7.
19. Margaret Atwood, *Payback. Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth*, Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2008, 186.
20. Dipek Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses", *Critical Inquiry* 35.2 (Winter 2009): 197–222.
21. I use the term "Assemblage", here, in a general rather than theoretically specific sense. Most frequently associated with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, there are varying uses of the term. As Stanford's Theoretical Archaeology Group articulates it, this ranges from "the understanding of assemblage as an equivalent term to Foucault's epistemes, Kuhn's paradigms, or Callon, Law and Latour's actor-network-theory, to its popular definition as 'a group of objects of different or similar types found in close association with one another'", Stanford's Theoretical Archaeology Group, <https://web.stanford.edu/dept/archaeology/cgi-in/TAG/drupal/?q=content/theory-assemblage-0>, consulted June 6, 2018.
22. Morgan Wedderspoon, Artist Statement, *Give Up And Party*, exhib. cat., Edmonton: Society of Northern Alberta Print-Artists (SNAP), 2017, 5.

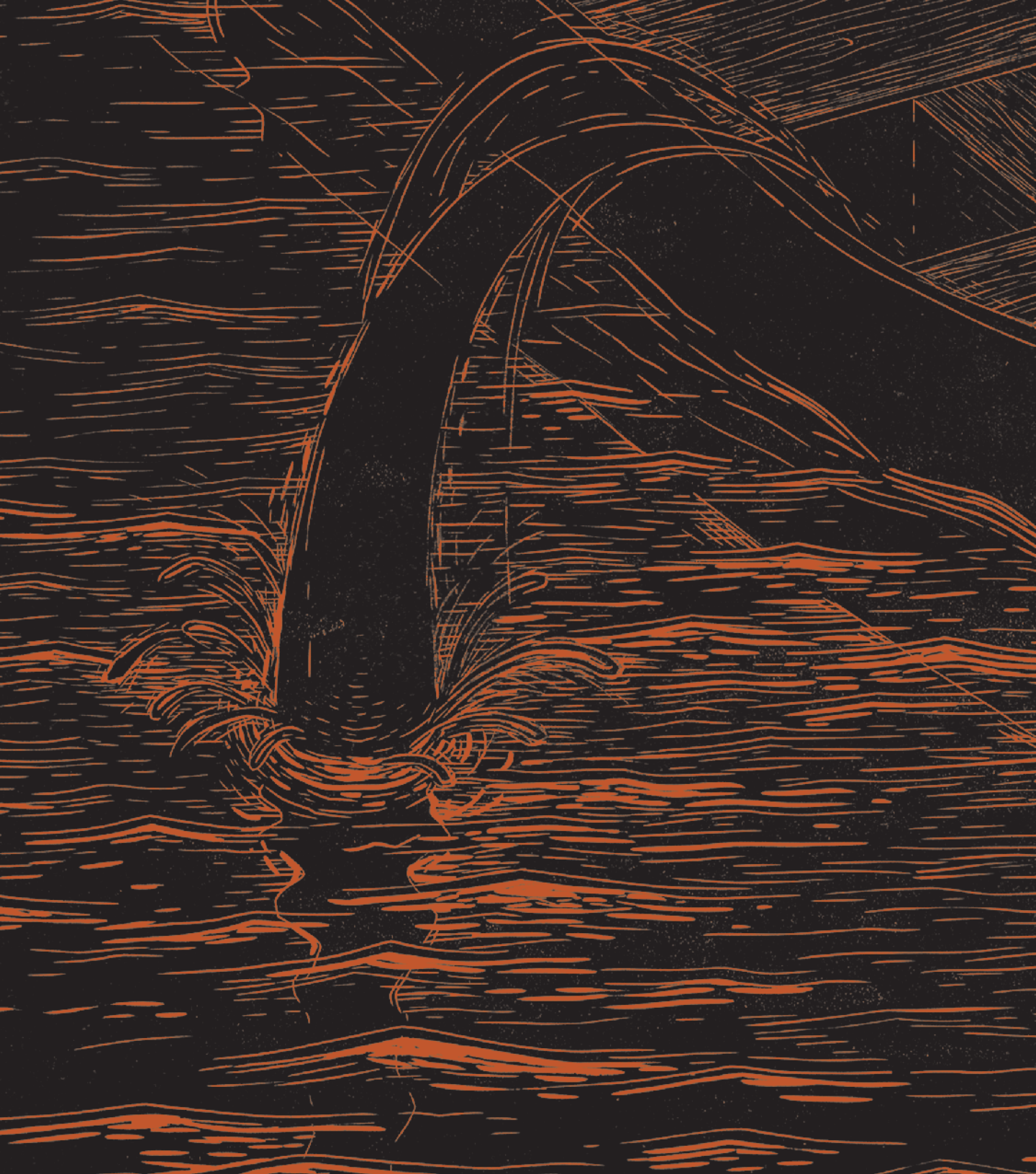


CONCLUDING REMARKS: ART INTO ACTION

JOAN E. GREER

How does the visual thinking and creative practice presented here translate into action? How do we, as set out by the “World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity”, both as individuals and as communities (whether they be local, national or international), recognize and identify in our day-to-day lives and in our governing institutions, the necessity of finding solutions and the ways towards their timely implementation? These are complex questions and the responses require sustained effort and creative thought. Indeed, the identification of and deep engagement with the issues is part of the solution. The visual work presented here is part of this larger project.

Printmaking in the Anthropocene, in this way seeks to open up a time and space for engaging deeply and on multiple levels with some of the most crucial and complex problems we currently face. A time and space in which deep, ecological thinking can take place. It is the hope, then, that this publication demonstrates and provokes thought about both methods and outcomes in visual research that contribute constructively and creatively to current environmental discourses. For, as the scientists mentioned above so clearly stated, we do need to be reminded that “earth with all its life is our only home”.



REFLECTIONS FROM AN ARTIST

SEAN CAULFIELD

My family immigrated to Alberta in the 1970's because of employment opportunities the province offered in the expanding field of oil exploration. My eldest brother still works in the oil sector as a geophysicist in Calgary. I know how stressful the recent economic downturn in Alberta has been for my brother, and I have heard countless stories of his friends who have recently lost their jobs and are now struggling to make a livelihood. From this perspective, the importance of moving forward with projects such as the Trans Mountain pipeline seems obvious — it is a way to get more of Alberta's oil to the coast and thus increase economic activity in the province.

At the same time, like many Canadians, I feel deeply conflicted about this issue. The impacts of climate change are very real. The effects of industrial activity on Alberta's varied ecosystems have been profound, reducing biodiversity in the province and threatening numerous species, such as the Woodland Caribou. From this perspective, the time for action on reducing carbon and shifting our society's dependence on fossil fuel seems far overdue.

How do we negotiate this tension between economic growth on the one hand, and environmental stewardship on the other? What environmental and economic policies should Canadian society adopt in order to foster prosperity and a healthy ecosystem not only for the immediate future, but hopefully for generations to come? These are extremely difficult questions to address, and there is a scale and complexity to them that is so overwhelming that it can produce a sense of hopelessness.

Perhaps this is one vital role that art can play in relation to environmental discourse — articulating multivalent and contradictory feelings that range from anxiety and despair to hope and empowerment. To my mind, this is particularly important as one of the greatest challenges we face in addressing environmental problems is the tendency for these issues to polarize and divide society, stifling productive dialogue and meaningful action. With this in mind, I hope that the prints in this exhibition provide a space for nuanced contemplation and reflection that can offer viewers a counterpoint to much of the divisive dialogue we encounter in the media today around ecological debate.



CATALOGUE

SEAN CAULFIED
MADELINE MACKAY
MIRIAM RUDOLPH
MORGAN WEDDERSPOON

**SEAN
CAULFIELD**



SEAN CAULFIELD

Cargo Ship

linocut on kozo

38cm × 51cm

2016



SEAN CAULFIELD

Soffleur

linocut on kozo

38cm × 51cm

2015

SEAN CAULFIELD

Prairie Siren

linocut on kozo

42cm × 30cm

2015





SEAN CAULFIELD

Thaw

linocut on kozo

35.6cm × 45.7cm

2015



SEAN CAULFIELD

Fire Tent

linocut on kozo

35.6cm × 51cm

2014



SEAN CAULFIELD
Resuming Production
linocut and woodcut
60.96cm × 97.79cm
2017



SEAN CAULFIELD

Fully Loaded

linocut and woodcut

60.96cm × 97.79cm

2017

**MADELINE
MACKAY**



MADELINE MACKAY

Suspended

Lithograph, toner transfer and chine-collé on rag paper

386.36cm × 57.15cm

2017



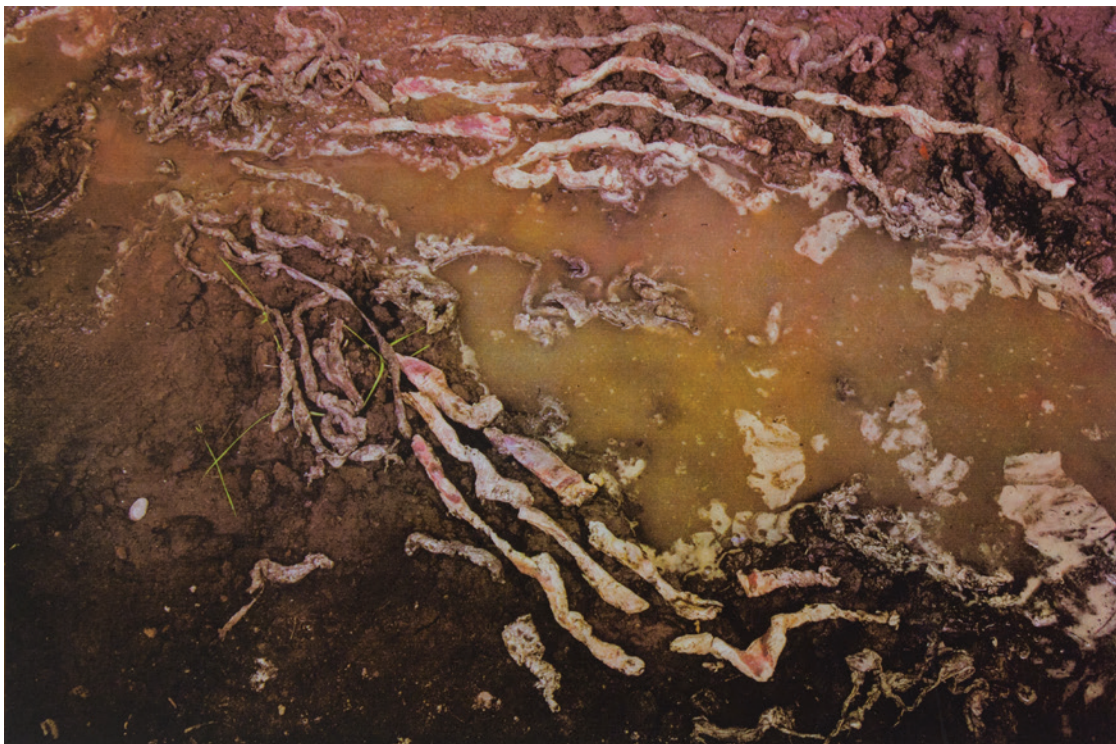
MADELINE MACKAY

Meat, Mud and Water III

CMYK screenprint on rag paper

386.36cm × 57.15cm

2017



MADELINE MACKAY

Meat, Mud and Water IV

CMYK screenprint on rag paper

386.36cm × 57.15cm

2017



MADELINE MACKAY

Fish Series II

etching

43.18cm × 66cm

2017



MADELINE MACKAY

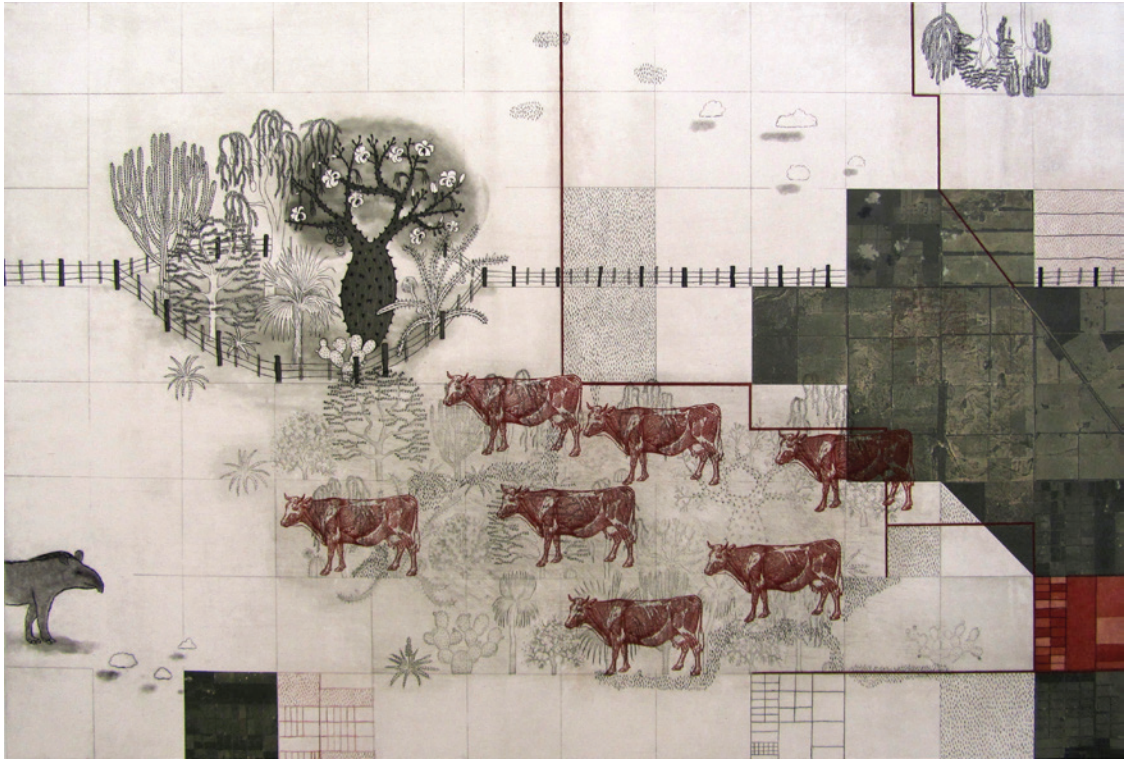
Fish Series V

etching

43.18cm × 66cm

2017

**MIRIAM
RUDOLPH**



MIRIAM RUDOLPH

Transposition IV

intaglio, digital satellite image, chine-collé

60cm × 90cm

2015



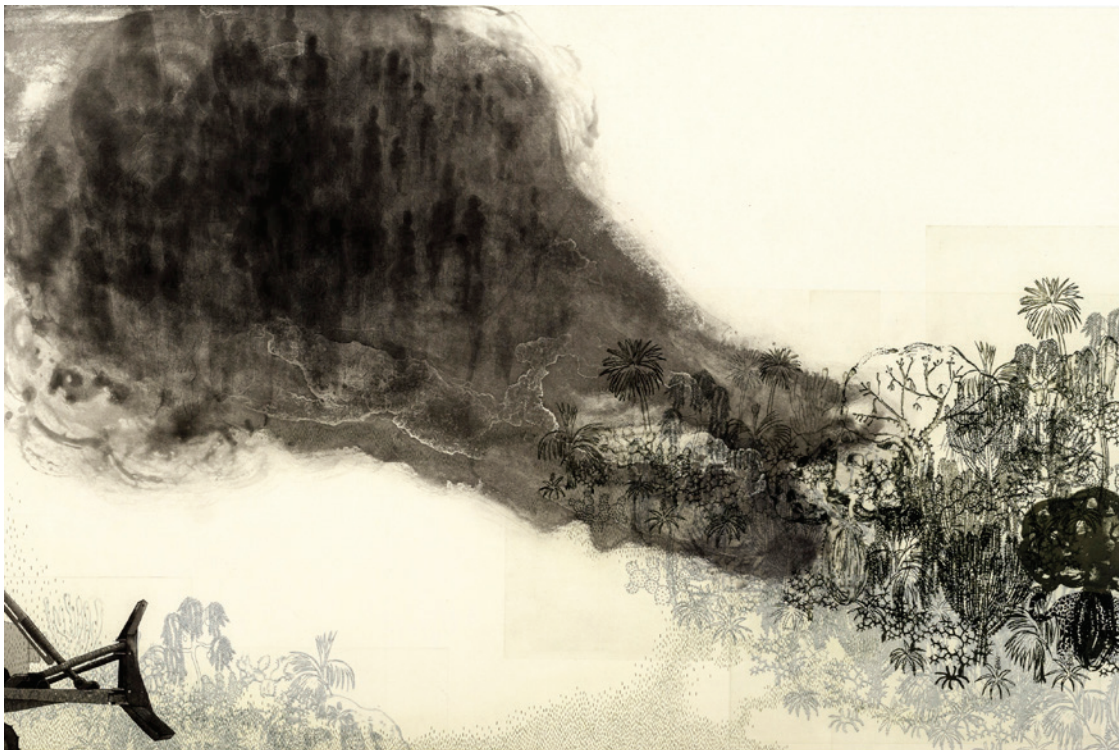
MIRIAM RUDOLPH

Displacement

intaglio, chine-collé

60cm x 90cm

2016



MIRIAM RUDOLPH

Advance

intaglio, chine-collé

60cm x 90cm

2016



MIRIAM RUDOLPH

Chaco Ranch I

intaglio, chine-collé

30cm × 30cm

2015



MIRIAM RUDOLPH

Chaco Ranch II

intaglio, chine-collé

30cm x 30cm

2015

**MORGAN
WEDDERSPOON**



MORGAN WEDDERSPOON

FIGHT / SURRENDER

photocopied and screenprinted hand-bound book

12.7cm × 17.78cm

2017



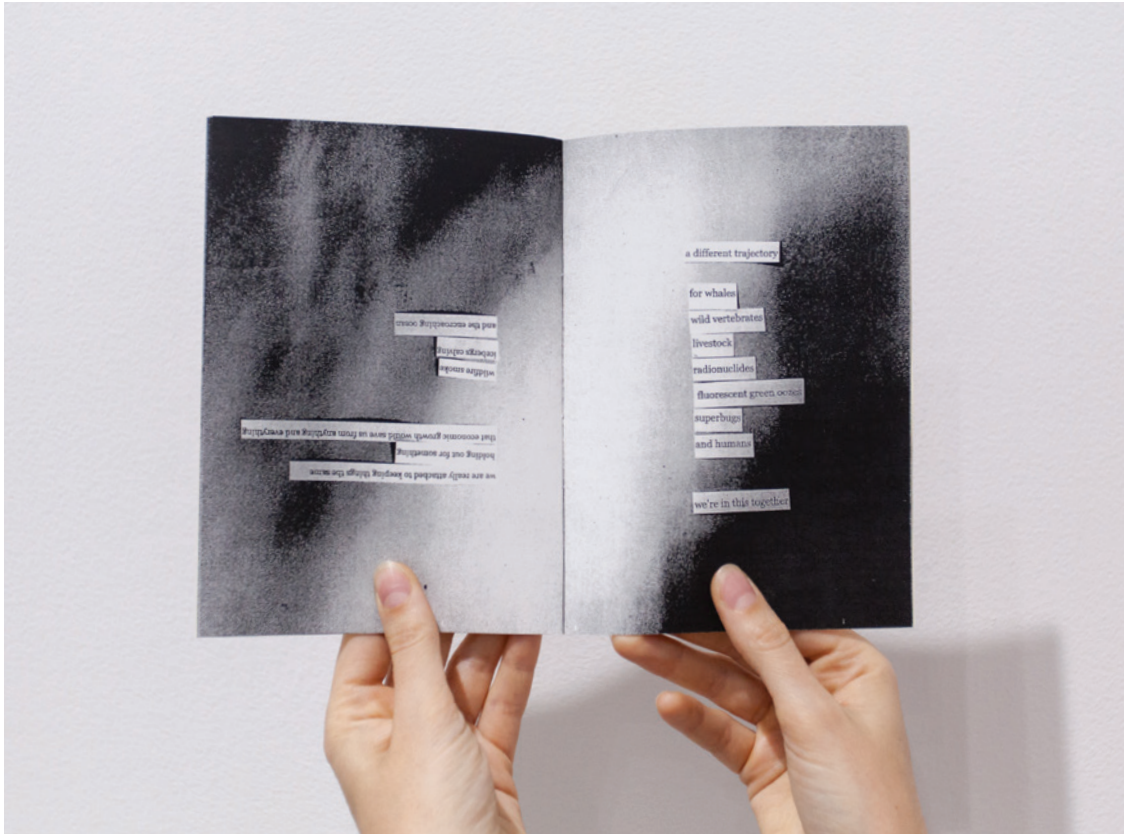
MORGAN WEDDERSPOON

FIGHT / SURRENDER

photocopied and screenprinted hand-bound book

12.7cm × 17.78cm

2017





MORGAN WEDDERSPOON

Go About Your Life

inkjet and screenprint

78.75cm x 111.75cm

2017



MORGAN WEDDERSPOON

HELP OTHERS

inkjet and screenprint

78.75cm × 111.75cm

2017



MORGAN WEDDERSPOON

GIVE UP AND PARTY

inkjet and screenprint

78.75cm × 111.75cm

2017

GIVE UP AND PARTY





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CONTRIBUTORS' BIOGRAPHIES

SEAN CAULFIELD is a Centennial Professor in the Department of Art and Design at the University of Alberta. He has exhibited his prints, drawings, installations and artist's books extensively throughout Canada, the United States, Europe, and Japan. Recent exhibitions include: *The Flood*, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton; *Firedamp*, dc3 Art Projects, Edmonton; *The Body in Question(s)*, UQAM Gallery, Montreal; *Perceptions of Promise*, Chelsea Art Museum, New York, USA/Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Alberta; *The New World*, The Centre for Modern and Contemporary Art, Debrecen, Hungary.

MIRIAM RUDOLPH was born and raised in Paraguay, South America. In 2003 she moved to Winnipeg, Canada to study Fine Arts at the University of Manitoba where she graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Honours in 2007 and a Bachelor of Education in 2010. In 2017 she completed a Master of Fine Arts in Printmaking at the University of Alberta, Edmonton. She currently lives and works in Winnipeg.

MADELINE MACKAY is a Scottish visual artist, currently living and working in Edmonton, Canada. She received her MFA in printmaking from the University of Alberta in Spring 2018. She completed a BA(hons) at the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, University of Dundee, in 2012. Mackay has exhibited in juried, group and solo exhibitions at galleries and artist-run centres in the UK and Canada and has taught drawing and printmaking both at the University of Alberta and in Samba K'e, NT, where she was artist-in-residence in 2014. She has upcoming solo exhibitions at Alberta Printmakers, Calgary and Martha Street Studio Gallery, Winnipeg.

MORGAN WEDDERSPOON is an artist working in print media and found-object sculpture, including artist books and print-based installations. Her ongoing creative research explores ecology, poetry and speculative thought. Her works assemble textual fragments and material traces of contemporary life to reflect on the feeling of living in a time of anthropogenic global systems upheaval. Originally from St. Catharines, Ontario, Wedderspoon is a graduate of Queen's University (2009) and holds a Master of Fine Arts in Printmaking from the University of Alberta (2016). She currently lives in Edmonton, Alberta, where she teaches printmaking at the University of Alberta and the Society of Northern Alberta Print-Artists (SNAP).

JOAN E. GREER, PhD Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam (Professor, University of Alberta, Canada), a founding member of the U of A Environmental Studies and ongoing member the Religious Studies and Science and Technology in Society Interdisciplinary Programmes, teaches the History of Art, Design and Visual Culture. Her research engages with issues of artistic identity, the history of environmentalism, and theories of nature and ecological envisioning, both historically (most particularly in the long nineteenth century) and in contemporary art and design. Her current major project is entitled *Visualizations of Nature in late nineteenth-century Dutch art and print culture: Religion, Science and Art*.

COLOPHON

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Visual Research from the University of Alberta**

Joan E. Greer

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