



≡ ECOLOGIES ≡
of
LANDSCAPE ≡


10 NOVEMBER, 2018 to
26 JANUARY, 2019

CURATED BY
MARK A. CHEETHAM

Barbara
Edwards
CONTEM
PORARY



'Ecology' is a compound of the Greek terms for 'house' and 'knowledge.' 'Landscape' describes a genre of art, a tract of land, and in the popular imagination, notions such as 'media landscape' that map connections.



This exhibition gathers work by nine supremely thoughtful and accomplished artists to re-imagine our perceptual, aesthetic, and ethical relationships with our home planet through the interrelationships of land and landscape conceived as 'ecologies of landscape.' These artists ponder what our connections to the earth might be in this time of wide-spread concern about climate change. Collectively, their work reconceives 'land' as it is presented in art and challenges the commonplaces of the landscape

genre. The spectrum of media that they employ befits the extensive scope of the ideas presented in each work. What follows under the headings *In Camera*, *Intonation*, and *Being Terrestrial*, is one approach to these ideas. The arrangement of works in the exhibition space invites different visual and conceptual exchanges.

In Camera



'Camera' derives from the Latin for 'room.' Recorded as early as the 5th century BCE by the Chinese philosopher Mo Ti, the camera obscura ('dark chamber') is the original imaging device. The notion of holding pictures in an enclosed space connects powerfully to our sense that images are interior, private, *and* to the increasingly public life of photographs. The phrase 'in camera' suggests the confidentiality or secrecy of conducting proceedings in a closed room. Trials may be 'in camera,' for example, but in some jurisdictions, they may also be *on* camera. This compelling tension between the private and the public, the undisclosed and the transparent, also attends depictions of land and landscape made with modern cameras by James Nizam, Tacita Dean, and Shelley Niro.

JAMES NIZAM deploys the magic of the camera obscura to pause for our contemplation that most fundamental diurnal phenomenon, the rising and setting of the sun. Individually and as a pair, *From Sunrise* and *To Sunset* (2016), capture both the path of the sun across a room-sized camera obscura and an inverted architectural setting with its buildings and foliage. Invisible to us but integral to the work is Nizam's attentive operation of his camera in the room as he records in still format the layers of the images we see. Physically and intellectually immersed in their chronicling, he expertly captures and then carefully melds the three layers of time his camera has catalogued: the sun path as a line of light, the sunset and sunrise, and the moment when the sun illuminates the landscapes

and projects them into the camera obscura. Each time path is entirely drawn by "the pencil of nature," as Henry Fox Talbot, one of the inventors of photography and a prodigious experimenter with the camera obscura, might have put it, and then composed by Nizam into a procession of astronomical time made visible. Nizam emphasizes the authenticity of human perception and reveals the natural cycles of planetary movement and light registration that are independent of our gaze. In *From Sunrise* and *To Sunset*, he brings a sense of awe to both human experience and the cosmic routine of nature.



James Nizam, *From Sunrise, To Sunset*, 2016, light jet print on dibond, 32 x 40 in. each, edition of 5, installation view. Courtesy the artist and Birch Contemporary, Toronto.



TACITA DEAN uses exclusively analogue mediums in both her photographs and films. “Analogue implies a continuous signal – a continuum and a line, whereas digital constitutes what is broken up, or rather, broken down, into millions of numbers... [digital] tidies up our society, correcting it and then leaves no trace... It is too far from drawing, where photography and film have their roots: the imprint of light on emulsion, the alchemy of circumstance and chemistry...”¹ Kaja Silverman argues that photography is analogy – not copying, not reproduction – a living, still connected and thus integral part of what it images. Like the magnificently odd *Adansonia* trees – commonly called baobabs – that Dean found by chance in Madagascar, analogue is organic, never fully under the artist’s control. Dean’s photographs picture the baobabs in their stunning difference from anything

human. To bring these unusual beings into some sort of order by association with familiar reference points, however, people label them with analogies such as ‘elephant,’ or ‘monkey bread’ tree, or imagine root-like ‘arms’ spreading skyward. Dean’s insistence on the texture of analogue photo stock also encourages us to notice the ‘skin’ of these trees. While she may apprehend their forms with her camera, they always proclaim their uniqueness and difference, their resistance to being captured in any way.

SHELLEY NIRO’s *Solace* (2014) makes an open plea to landscape photography in a familiar role, that of nature as a refuge from a violent human world. The six panels emerge from Niro’s period of “great contemplation” about the longstanding horrors of missing and murdered Indigenous girls and women in Canada. She thinks about “our environment and how I can contribute to make it a more reassuring place ...” in which a viewer can “find peacefulness and solace.”² Recalling her photographic negatives from the 1980s of the land we see, she found consolation in her own archive by scanning and then printing these landscapes on silver paper. Some of the work was shot in infrared film, whose preternaturally sharp yet unfamiliar registration indexes and enigmatically redeploys the life-giving warmth of the land. The unexpected look of these images protects them from assimilation to a generic landscape formula in which nature is an escape. The individual titles of the panels in *Solace* are intimate, specific to Niro’s and to her Indigenous ancestors’ lives on this land in what is now South-western Ontario: she names *Beauty*, *Dead*, *Ghost*, *Grace*, *Sparkly Waters*, *Trees and Sky*. Nature perdures, not unchanged by human activity and artistic attention, but not defined by it either.

previous page:
Tacita Dean, *Baobab V*, 2001, black and white photograph on fibre paper, 27.5 x 41.37 in., edition 4/6. Courtesy the artist, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris, and Frith Street Gallery, London.

right:
Shelley Niro, *Solace*, 2014 (detail view, *Sparkly Waters*), 6 framed, matted photos, 78 x 24 in. each, edition of 1. Courtesy the artist.



Intonations



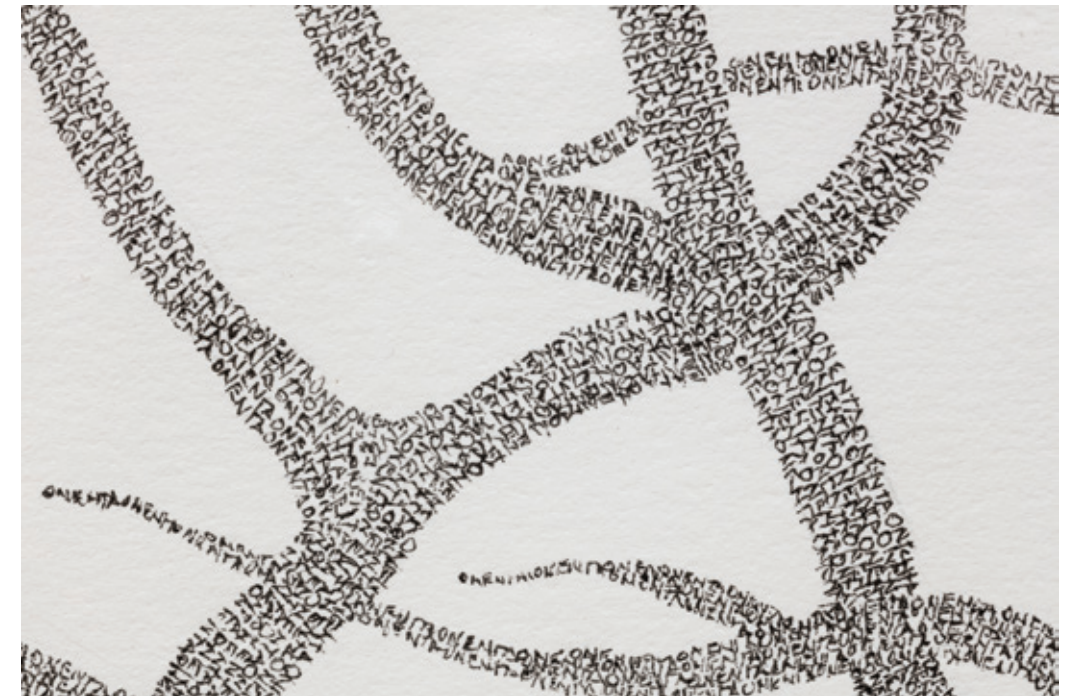
Several works in *Ecologies of Landscape* use repetitions of sounds, actions, and visual motifs to probe elements of land and landscape and to mark our particularly human relationships with these realities.

In his meticulous and mesmerizing ‘text drawings’ of trees, **REINHARD REITZENSTEIN** reverentially depicts each form by writing the tree’s name at a nearly microscopic scale (some 60,000 iterations in larger examples from this series). Simultaneously, he intones the tree’s name. His incantation “becomes a tone poem echoing the name of the tree over and over many thousands of times.”³ Here the word is ‘Oneta,’ Mohawk for ‘cedar’ in English. Reitzenstein’s respect for the arboreal beings he calls forth is palpable. In this he renews the artistic veneration of individual trees that peaked in the late 18th-century landscape tradition in Britain.

PAUL WALDE’s *Tom Thomson Centennial Swim* (2017-18) engages with one of Canada’s most compelling landscape myths and mysteries, the famous artist’s unaccountable drowning in Canoe Lake, Algonquin Park, Ontario, on July 8, 1917. Beginning as an elaborate performance in which Walde swam the length of the lake one hundred years after the painter’s disappearance there, the work now exists in longer and shorter video versions. Walde was attended by synchronized swimmers, who performed shapes referring to log jams and to clocks, suggesting the passage of time both forwards and backwards as well as Canada’s Centennial in 1967. The work also deploys a flotilla of musicians performing a score composed by Walde and based on the rhythms, cadences, and sounds of his swim. An act of homage to the locale Thomson loved and evoked in his paintings, the videos invite us to explore the past and present of this environment and Thomson’s legacy through sound and vision, from underneath and above Walde as he courses the lake, and through echoes of the lake itself.

opposite page above:
Reinhard Reitzenstein, *Oneta*,
2017 (detail view), pigma ink
on stonehenge, 41 x 75.25 in.
Courtesy the artist and
Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.

Paul Walde, *Tom Thomson
Centennial Swim*, production
still from video installation, 2017.
Courtesy the artist and Barbara
Edwards Contemporary, Toronto.





SIMON STARLING's subtitle for his digital video *Project for a Rift Valley Crossing* (2015-16) suggests the conceptual and material capaciousness typical of his extensive aesthetic undertakings: "A canoe built with magnesium extracted from Dead Sea water and used on the 30th of November 2016 in an attempted crossing of the Dead Sea from Israel to Jordan." Intrigued by the story of British aeronautical engineer Frank Kirk's use of magnesium to build lightweight bicycle frames, Starling

above:
Simon Starling, *Project for a Rift Valley Crossing*, 2015-2016, set of 2 silver gelatin type LE/Selenium toned prints (diptych, detail view), 39.21 x 48.43 in., edition 7/10. Courtesy the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York.

next page:
Olafur Eliasson, *The small glacier surfer series*, 2007, 12 c-prints, 10 x 14.75 in., edition of 6, 1 AP, 48.5 x 48.25 in. installation dimensions. Courtesy the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/ Los Angeles.

chose to fabricate a canoe from magnesium derived from the very water he sought to cross. In a literal reiteration and transmutation, the intimate imbrications of the project's materials and methods are combined to form a meditative whole in the video. We see the canoe, its paddlers, the water, the weather, and the cameras used to film what we contemplate. Integral too is the hypnotic sound track, which combines composed music with the ambient sounds of the canoe's journey. Starling is keen to have us register the many telluric and human elements that comprise our quotidian activities. In an attempt to account for everything that went into the endeavour, the work's credits thus run for almost half of its duration. "You end up with this extraordinary web of connections facilitating this rather simple piece of footage – of a rather simple gesture," he suggests.⁴ Starling characteristically sets up situations to articulate and explore rather than to control. As if to comment on the fraught politics of the Dead Sea region – both political and environmental – the attempted crossing was cut short by an oncoming storm.

Being Terrestrial

It is a worthy challenge to see land and landscape in terms of the planet, the 'terrestrial' writ large, instead of places belonging to an individual, a people, or especially a country. Land and landscape are important to identity, but are they not also independent of our human obsessions with naming and mapping territories and with asserting the self?

In its interplay of title and image, **OLAFUR ELIASSON**'s *The small glacier surfer* (2007), succinctly displays a guiding principle in his extensive ecological work, that art has the potential to uncover and alter the ways we interact with our planet. For Eliasson, art "introduces a sense of responsibility in our engagement that has political as well as social and ethical consequences."⁵ We

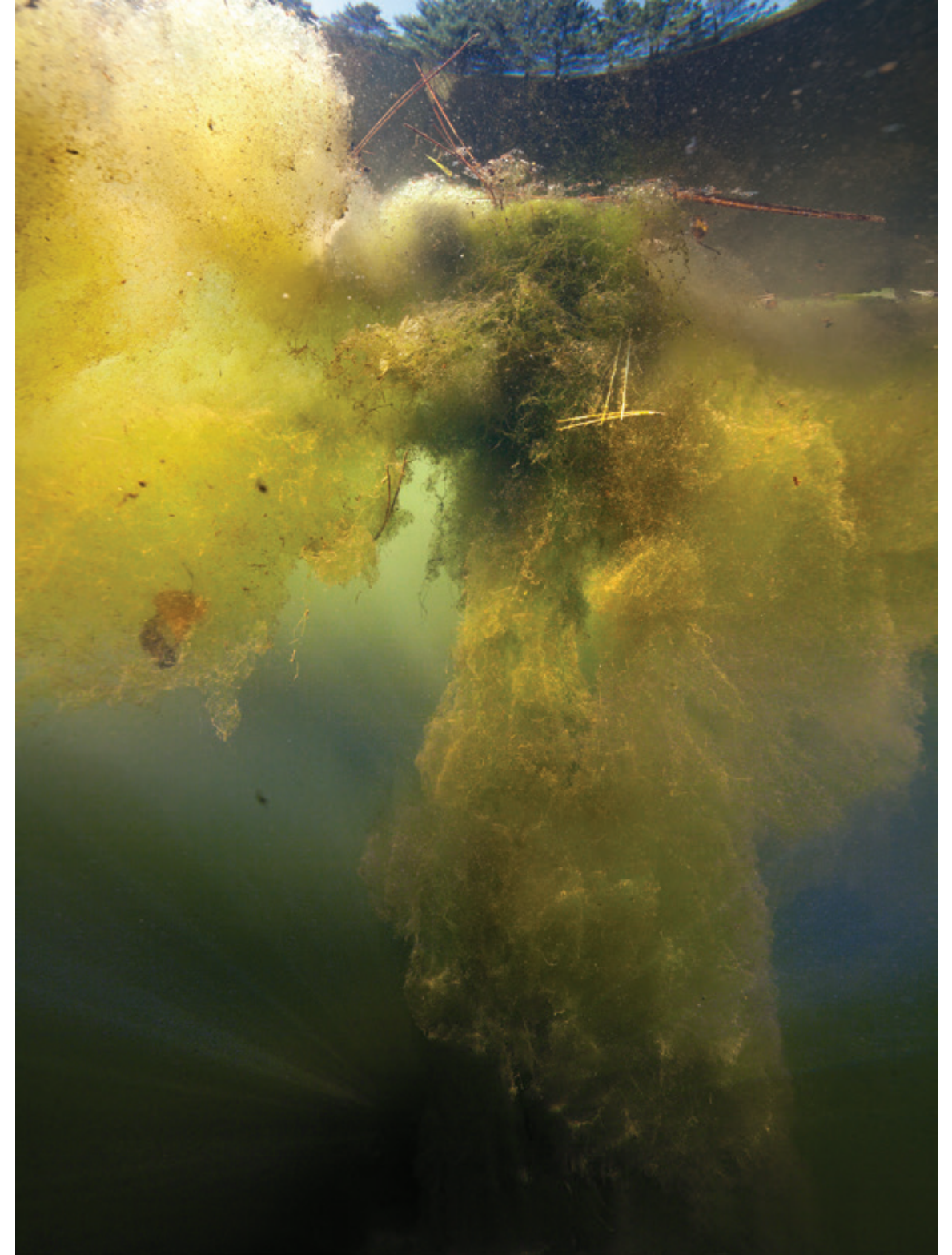
see a boulder transported on an Icelandic glacier. That it is a 'surfer' is a lighthearted anthropocentric metaphor that evokes our pleasure at being conveyed by the forces of nature. Geologists call these boulders by their scientific name, 'erratics.' Eliasson's trope is to show the long game of geological change and simultaneously to think in terms of the rapid human timeframes of surfing,



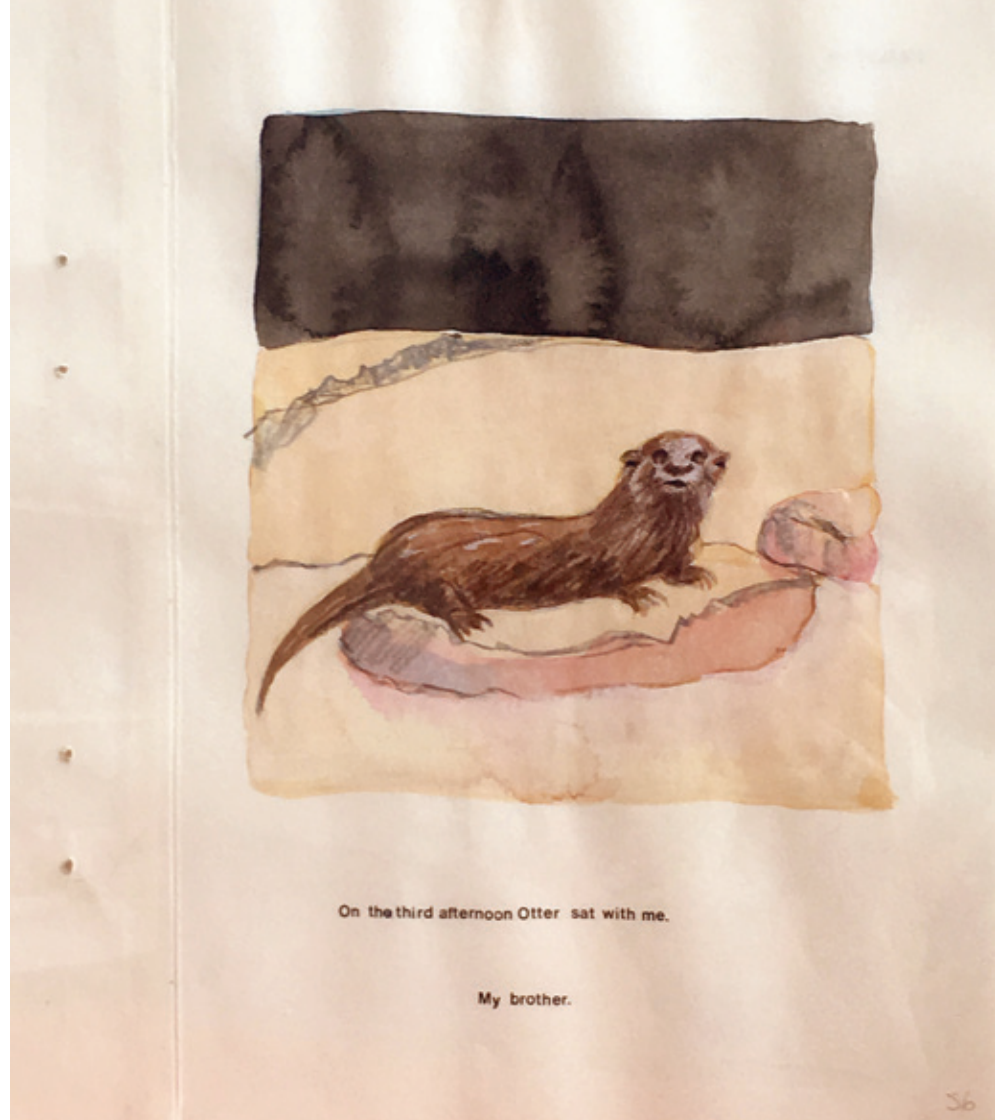
mimicked by the artist as he photographs the boulder from different angles. This composite image of terrestrial change helps us to acknowledge the profound difference between our temporal reference points and those of the planet, especially in an epoch in which there can be little credible doubt that the sum of human activities is accelerating the movements of glaciers.

ISABELLE HAYEUR's *Moss Pond* (2015) provides a dramatic close up of a plant that we would not usually think warrants such attention, Spirogyra. Photographed from underneath in a shallow pond in Québec's Eastern Townships, the algae dominate the scene, dwarfing the sky and trees that we glimpse at the top of the image. In her ongoing *Underworlds* series to which this photograph belongs, Hayeur disrupts the seductive beauty of conventional underwater photography: there is no pristine water, no exotic flora and fauna. Spirogyra thrives on pollutants deposited by humans. Creating a landscape garden can thus also produce an aquatic monoculture. The pastoral pleasantness that we imagine in the domestic garden above comes at a cost that we might extrapolate to the deleterious effects of intensifying human activity on the planet. Even Lake Baikal in Russia, one of the largest fresh water lakes in the world, suffers from the choking efflorescence of Spirogyra. 'Being terrestrial' means understanding the ecological implications of actions large and small. In this spirit, Hayeur abjures the depiction of dramatic environmental disasters often seen in contemporary eco art and focuses instead on the creeping infestation that is the new and deadly normal.

The selection of drawings from **BONNIE DEVINE's** *Radiation and Radiance* series (1999) narrates the discovery of uranium near Elliot Lake in the Algoma region of northern Ontario and its impact on the lands and waters of the Serpent River watershed and the Anishinaabe/Ojibwa of the Serpent River First Nation, to which Devine belongs. Devine divided the bookwork in which these drawings originally appeared into three thematic parts, the *Book of Radiance*, *Book of Transformation*, and *Book of Radiation*. Here we see the 24 images of this first book. About this and related works, Devine writes, "My primary desire has been to examine and perhaps articulate the delicate yet elemental relationship of land to consciousness, especially as this is revealed in the technologies, designs and narrative traditions of the Ojibway."⁶ Her account is at once intensely personal and disturbingly prophetic, given that radiation ignores human parameters of geography and time. Disarmingly simple and direct, her drawings and running text relate the story of her uncle's youthful discovery of the river environment on a vision quest in 1946, its transformation into a site for uranium mining – replete with domes of the sulphur used to separate uranium from rock – and the impact of splitting the uranium atom, which unremittingly contaminates the land, river, all inhabitants, and, finally, "makes us see the face of the Manitou," the spirit inhabiting a potent local landmark such as Rooster Rock. Saulteaux artist Robert Houle elaborates: "Devine's visualization of what happened to the territory outlined on [her uncle's] trapline map is created with a rawness with which elegiac verses are 'written'. As a totality, the work may be seen as emotional maskings and territorial mappings. The three [books] charter a path of discovery and hope. As art, they are immediate yet pensive; they are a parable. The



Isabelle Hayeur, *Moss Pond*, (*Underworlds* series), 2015, inkjet of polyester, mounted on aluminum and laminated, 50 x 36 in., edition 4/5. Courtesy the artist.



forms and colours found in these drawings are from a language of empiricism, a sensory experience of uranium, whose immediate currency is an image of a shattered world. The thought of knowing that this had been prophesized is enough to make one shudder.⁷ Closely allied to this narrative is *Canoe: To the North Shore* (2003). Devine constructed the boat's delicate skin from the copious research notes she made for the *Radiation and Radiance* drawings. Hopeful, but also realistic about the canoe's antiquity and fragility as a human conveyance, she suggests that today, we must urgently "paddle out of the dilemmas" expounded in these works.⁸

Bonnie Devine, "On the third afternoon..." from the *Book of Radiance*, 1999, mixed media on paper, 14.5 x 15.5 in. Courtesy the artist.

The works in *Ecologies of Landscape* intersect in their concerns for land, landscape, and ecology. The artists and works gathered here reinforce and productively complicate our ineluctable and increasingly precarious connectedness to our own planet.

Mark A. Cheetham
Toronto, 2018

TACITA DEAN is a British European artist born in Canterbury, UK. She has been the recipient of numerous prizes including the Sixth Benesse Prize at the 51st Venice Biennale in 2005, the Hugo Boss Prize at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 2006 and the Kurt Schwitters Prize in 2009. Solo exhibitions have been held this year at Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria; The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland; The Royal Academy of Arts, London, England, in conjunction with the National Gallery, and the National Portrait Gallery. Dean lives and works in Berlin and Los Angeles, where she was recently the Artist in Residence at the Getty Research Institute (2014/2015).

Works appear courtesy the artist, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris, and Frith Street Gallery, London.

BONNIE DEVINE is an installation artist, curator, writer, and member of the Serpent River First Nation of Northern Ontario (Anishinaabe/Ojibwa). She has exhibited extensively, including McMichael Canadian Collection, Ontario; Art Gallery of Ontario; Eiteljorg Museum, Indiana; Museum of Contemporary Native Art, Santa Fe, New Mexico; and, most recently, Art Gallery of Mississauga (2018). Devine was the 2011 recipient of the Eiteljorg Fellowship for Contemporary Native Art. She is Associate Professor at OCAD University and the Founding Chair of its Indigenous Visual Culture Program. She lives and works in Toronto.

Works appear courtesy the artist.

OLAFUR ELIASSON's practice spans sculpture, installation, photography and architecture. His major projects include *The Weather Project* at Tate Modern, London; *The New York City Waterfalls*, New York; and *Contact* at Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris. Eliasson's works are held at Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; and Kunstmuseum Basel, among others. He received the 2013 Mies van der Rohe Award and is the founder of Studio Olafur Eliasson in Berlin. He is slated for an upcoming exhibition at Tate Modern, London in 2019. Eliasson grew up in Iceland and Denmark and now lives and works in Copenhagen and Berlin.

Work appears courtesy the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles.

ISABELLE HAYEUR's photography and experimental videos take a critical approach to the environment, urban development, and social conditions. Her exhibitions include Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin; Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris; and Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima. Hayeur's works are held by National Gallery of Canada; Art Gallery of Ontario; Fonds national d'art contemporain, Paris; Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; New Orleans Museum of Art; and Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago. Hayeur has participated in international artists' residencies such as Florida's Rauschenberg Residency; International Studio & Curatorial Program, New York; and A Studio in the Woods/Tulane University, New Orleans. Hayeur lives and works in Québec.

Work appears courtesy the artist.

SHELLEY NIRO is a multidisciplinary artist and a member of the Six Nations Reserve, Turtle Clan, Bay of Quinte Mohawk. Working in various media, including beadwork, painting, photography, and film, Niro challenges stereotypical images of Aboriginal peoples. She has exhibited extensively, including the 2003 Venice Biennale, the 2004 Sundance Film Festival, Utah, and recently at Art Gallery of Hamilton and Ryerson Image Centre. In 2017, she received the Scotiabank Photography Award and a Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts. Niro's work is held by National Gallery of Canada; Art Gallery of Ontario; Canada Council Art Bank; and Canadian Museum of Civilization. Born in Niagara Falls, NY, Niro lives in Brantford, Ontario.

Work appears courtesy the artist.

JAMES NIZAM's expanded photography combines documentation, sculpture, architecture, technology, music and the sciences. He recently exhibited at Reiter Galerie, Berlin; Sharjah Art Museum, UAE; and Vancouver Art Gallery. His work is held in the collections of Vancouver Art Gallery; Toronto Dominion Bank; Bank of Montreal, Toronto; and Donovan Collection. Born in Bedfordshire, England, Nizam now lives and works in Vancouver, BC.

Work appears courtesy the artist and Birch Contemporary, Toronto.

REINHARD REITZENSTEIN is a multidisciplinary artist, who connects nature, culture, science and technology. He has participated in international solo and group exhibitions and public art commissions. His work is held by National Gallery of Canada; Art Gallery of Ontario; University of Toronto; Lutz Teutloff Collection, Germany; and CONAC, Venezuela. He teaches Sculpture and Interdisciplinary studies, and is the Director of the Sculpture Program at SUNY, Buffalo. Born in Uelzen, Germany, he lives and works in Niagara, ON and New York.

Works appear courtesy the artist and Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto.

SIMON STARLING has exhibited at Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art; Guggenheim Museum Bilbao; Power Plant, Toronto; and Tate Britain, London, to name a few. His recent exhibitions took place at Moscow Museum of Modern Art; Kanal-Centre Pompidou, Brussels; and Manifesta 12, Palermo, Italy. Starling was shortlisted for the 2004 Hugo Boss Prize and won the 2005 Turner Prize. Born in England, he now lives and works in Copenhagen.

Works appear courtesy the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York.

PAUL WALDE is an intermedia artist, composer, and curator. His site-specific works involve performance, photography, and sound and video installation. He recently exhibited at NEoN Digital Arts Festival, Scotland; Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum, Norway; and Ryerson Image Centre. His multichannel sound and video installation, *Requiem for a Glacier* (2013), has been exhibited across Canada and is held by the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal. Walde's numerous awards include: Prescott Fund Award from the National Arts Club, New York City; Canada Council for the Arts; and British Columbia Arts Council. He is the 2018 recipient of the UVic REACH Award for Creativity and Artistic Expression. Born in London, UK, Walde now lives in Victoria, BC. He is Associate Professor of Visual Arts and Department Chair at the University of Victoria.

Work appears courtesy the artist and Barbara Edwards Contemporary, Toronto.

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1. Tacita Dean, "Analogue," in *Analogue: Drawings 1991-2006*, edited by Theodora Vischer and Isabel Friedli. Steidl, 2006, 8.
2. Caption for *Solace* in *Shelley Niro*, Steidl/Scotiabank, 2018.
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8. Bonnie Devine, comments to the author, September 10, 2018.

Principal Acknowledgement

Ecologies of Landscape marks the inaugural exhibition of BEC Project Space, an ongoing collaboration between Barbara Edwards Contemporary and the Chloe Danyliw Collection, committed to presenting curated exhibitions of the highest calibre. This exhibition could not have been realized if not for the steadfast support of Andrew Danyliw, whose generosity and enthusiasm for the work have been crucial to this project.

Curator's Acknowledgements

It is a great pleasure to thank the institutions and individuals who have supported the curatorial dimensions of *Ecologies of Landscape*. Research funding came from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the University of Toronto student work-study program. Thanks to my excellent researchers Alexandra Forand, Yuan Gao, and especially to head research assistant Hana Nikčević. Special thanks to Danielle Forest at the Marian Goodman Gallery. Neda Omidvar worked tirelessly as Assistant Curator. The nine artists in the exhibition were singularly generous and helpful in lending work and aiding with logistics. Particular thanks to Andrew Danyliw for his vision in creating such a beautiful gallery space, and to Barbara Edwards, who instantly saw and magnanimously supported the ambitions of this international exhibition.

We wish to acknowledge the land on which this exhibition operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Wendat, Seneca, Anishnaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Métis, and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work side by side on this land.

Supporting Artists and Representing Galleries:

Tacita Dean, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris; Bonnie Devine; Olafur Eliasson, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; Isabelle Hayeur; Shelley Niro; James Nizam, Birch Contemporary, Toronto; Reinhard Reitzenstein, Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto; Simon Starling, Casey Kaplan, New York; Paul Walde, Barbara Edwards Contemporary, Toronto.

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Didactic Panels

Hana Nikčević

Design

Natalia Reis Design

Ecologies of Landscape is curated by Mark A. Cheetham, Professor of Art History at the University of Toronto. His most recent book, *Landscape into Eco Art: Articulations of Nature Since the '60s*, was published in 2018. Neda Omidvar, Director at Barbara Edwards Contemporary, is the Assistant Curator.

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