

CO-TERMINOUS

Boundaries in time and space, so often alienating or abrupt, also offer a place for enmeshment, a recognition of assorted, inherent continuums. Artists here work to illuminate indiscernible thresholds, subtle rhythms of horizons, watermarks of catastrophe. Our shared environmental futures depend upon recognizing the particularities of loss and inequality, while also demanding a constant realignment of vantages, so justice becomes actionable. Our fortunes, our fates, our borders, our bodies are all co-terminous, and they require heightened perception to witness the fainter spectrum of what's being lost and what could be gained.

The Station Signal

Outside the southeast windows of Union Hall trains come and go, passengers wait and depart, in mortal flow. Underneath the cement platforms and metal tracks, the soil is clay, silt, sand, and gravel—alluvium deposited over centuries by a nearby river whose waters imperceptibly trickle to aquifers bounded by sandstone and shale below.

The slow, meandering river goes by many names: *niineniiniicie* in Arapaho and *wašįj wakpá* in Lakota, both meaning “tallow river,” the same as in translations by the Cheyenne and Kiowa. The Crow name doesn't deviate much in *tasshé aashe*, meaning “grease river.” Otoe and Omaha tribes call it *nibrathka* and *nibthaska*, respectively, or “flat water,” echoed by French trappers and traders with “flat river,” *rivière platte*. Distance, scale, and history cause the tendrils of names and ideas of Earth's features to coalesce, disperse, and join again, as with genealogies and journeyers, ever-crossing in braided futures.

When gold was discovered in Colorado, Denver arose as a city of immigrants, delineating its boundaries with cottonwood logs and railroad ties meeting at Union Station, newly built in 1858. Even at that time, Arapaho people were camping on the banks of *niineniiniicie*, alongside the settlers, though in starkly different kinship with place. The artists in *CO-TERMINOUS*—their work set between the river and Union Station's Track #8—congruently recognize the physical, historical, and temporal layers permeating any given plot of land; they have a shared understanding that natural worlds can readily reflect imbalances and infinitudes. Slow-moving violences exist, too, which ripple through different communities in different ways, sometimes across generations, all the harder to represent because of their embeddedness. These eight artists look for various material and sensorial evocations to alternatively map out responses to environmental realities such as stolen waters and lands, melting ice, forest fires, and mining contamination.

Rivers innately change, amid flood and drought, as Tania Candiani has studied in her portraits of the Yamuna River in India, the Rio Magdalena in Colombia, and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal (longtime carrier of coal) along the Potomac River, showcased here in *Walking the River* (2019). Candiani foreshadows the water wars of the future; she reiterates the shipping workhorses of our past; and unfolds the multidimensional aspects of water infusing an ecosystem. Amy Felder reminds us with *Balance* (2020) that rocks perform directive feats, too: her precarious-looking cairns are objects typically maintained in the wild by mutual generosity. Yet Felder's cairns are made of mere paper, pointing to futures that may not be able to withstand any more weight, relics lacking mineral substance.

Individual trees, as Erika Osborne suggests in her “Mapping Bodily Connections” series (2003-2015), can be singular guides. They offer us their own topographical bodies as entry into “the realm of tactile, sensory awareness,” Osborne says, turning the abstraction of a map into a physical reality. Like all bodies, they are vulnerable, easily leveled by wildfires and disease. Camila Friedman-Gerlicz’s sculpture, *Project(ive)* (2020), floats above us, moon-like, and also made only of paper. It defies orientation—in geometric terms a “Werner Boy surface” that folds back upon itself—and serves as a reminder that hierarchies of direction, up versus down and north versus south, can fail us.

What about horizon lines, then, those stabilizing forces that demarcate diurnal time? In his paintings on wood, Herbert Pförtl exposes our present blindness to rhythms of the natural world and vanishing abilities to sense our positionality. We are caught in monochromatic outages—whiteouts, blackouts, smoky hazes, storms—that obscure signs of life or even inanimacies that might once have steered us. Pförtl titles the series *departed landscapes* (2019-2020), which lends itself to imagining how we are left time-struck. Where are we and what are we without other species as reference, without larger landmarks like rivers, mountains, to fuse the strands of collective memories?

(1 line space)

In moments of hopelessness, groping and lost, music may be one of our best orienteers. Raven Chacon gives us explicit, if unexpected, directions in his quartet *The Journey of the Horizontal People* (commissioned by the Kronos Performing Arts’ Association in 2016). Changes, he tells the musicians, must be made in volume, emphasis, amplification, distortion, and pressure. Chacon also notifies players, that “it is preferred that the quartet performing this work contains a female player.” This person must be the “*guide* when all others are lost” and “[i]f there is more than one woman in the quartet, the eldest woman will guide.” Finally, she exists as a critical safety measure for realignment if the musicians have gotten “out of time or sync.”

Music can be heard, of course, but it can also be seen here in the form of Chacon’s airborne score, parsed out for two violins, a viola, and a cello. An echo of these four instruments tremors through the four selected paintings made last year by Diane Burko, who maps not for utility but to remind us that beauty can offer internal calibration. Thick pigmented color can retaliate against the thinness of digital veneers. On Burko’s canvases we see the literal ends of the Earth consolidated into rectangular frames. Sometimes we need to be grounded.

Back between the river and Track #8, artist Alejandra Abad pins us to this exact physical place, with paper and light, excising the outline of an adjacent neighborhood, Globeville. In a site-specific commission, *BIOME vs BORDERS* (2020), Abad looks to the aftermath of the gold rush, when this area became a hub for smelting gold, silver, lead, copper, cadmium, and zinc. The eponymous Globe smelter plant was built in 1889 and was abandoned in 2006 by ASARCO (the American Smelting and Refining Company—which declared bankruptcy but still manages to operate in Arizona and Texas), leaving the local soil, air, and water highly contaminated. Globeville, only a few hundred yards away from Union Hall, has routinely been cited as the most polluted zip code in the entire United States and highly unnavigable on foot, with 60 dead-end streets and 60 acres of land, the so-called Mousetrap, where I-25 and I-70 intersect. Even after being remediated as a Superfund site over the last decade, groundwater continues to pose a problem.

Water refuses to stay within any boundary lines, seeping through silt and clay, looking for paths, fates, and openings. It is searching for other ways down or around the people on the

surface, vertical in their everyday—down into the horizontal realms, where the immortal world of time traveling carries things as varied as names and maps and soils, paper and air and light. And suddenly we might surface, in a nexus, in the center of a group of musicians in search of a matriarch who signals that it's time for us to realign.

-E. Espelie

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— Erin Espelie