

# **EXTRACTION**

ART ON THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS

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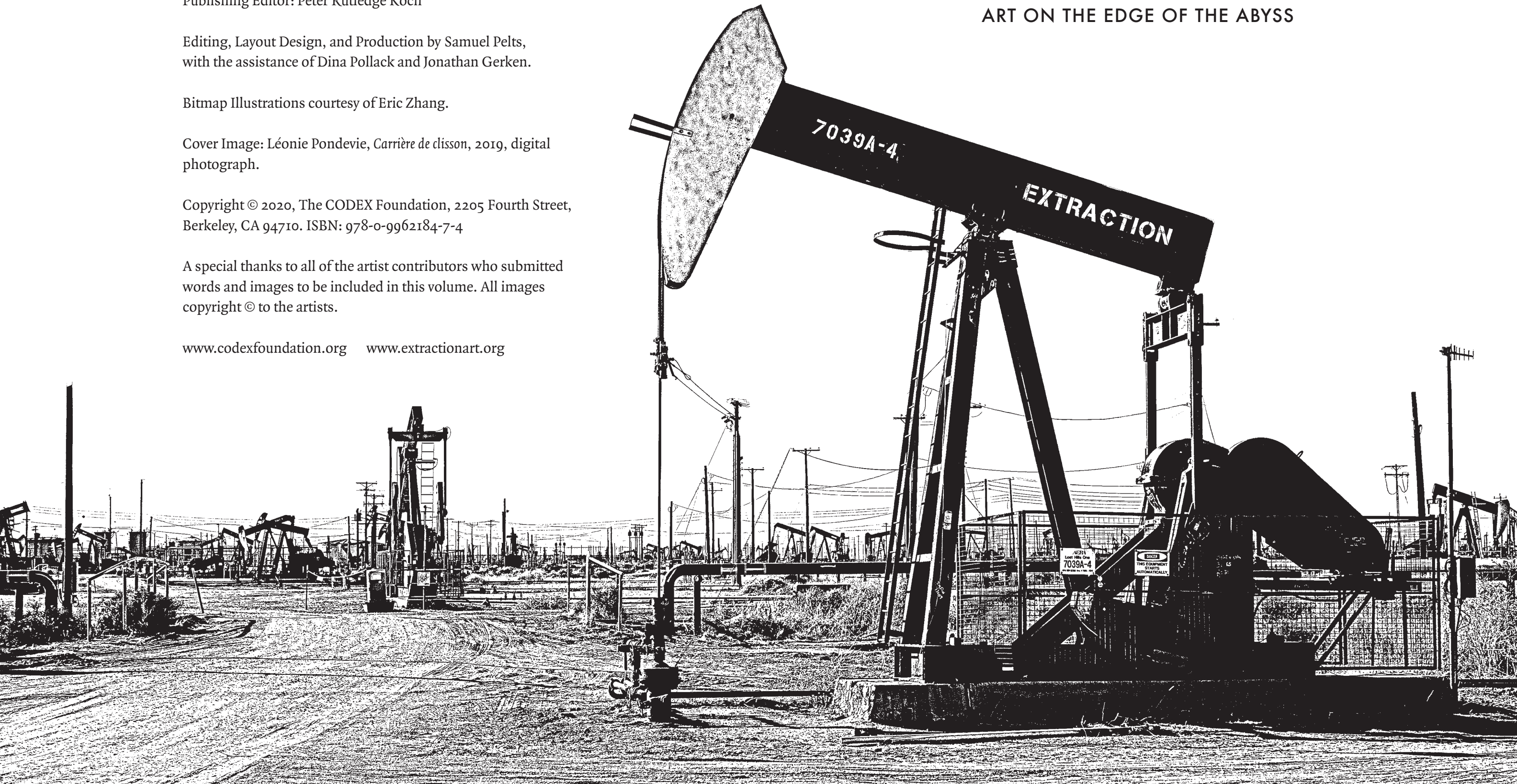
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# EXTRACTION

ART ON THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS



This book is dedicated to the memory of Edwin Dobb (1950–2019).

Ed was a co-founder of *EXTRACTION: Art on the Edge of the Abyss*, and for him the project was a pursuit of passion. His careful correspondence was instrumental in expanding the boundaries of the project to encompass the many hundreds of artists and creators, from all walks of life, who make up our ranks today. The diversity of our project, whether defined in thematic, ethnic or geographical terms, is largely due to Ed’s vision of inclusivity, not to mention his unshakable outreach efforts.

This ruckus is for you, Ed.

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Michael Light, 100 SUNS: 045 STOKES/19 kilotons/Nevada/1957, 2003, 16 by 20 inches, pigment print, ed. 5

## PREFACE

*“The prisoners of the system will continue to rebel, as before, in ways that cannot be foreseen, at times that cannot be predicted. The new fact of our era is the chance that they might be joined by the guards. We readers and writers of books have been, for the most part, among the guards. If we understand that, and act on it, not only will life be more satisfying right off, but our grandchildren, or our great grandchildren, might possibly see a different and marvelous world.”*

—Howard Zinn

The term “existential threat” has become overly fashionable in recent years, and it is now thrown around with such frequency that the phrase has lost most of its potency. For an information-based society helplessly addicted to spectacle, whose collective memory is daily impaired by a creeping barrage of media overstimulation, the term’s casual overuse belies both the magnitude and the historical uniqueness of the very real existential threats we face today—threats which we might categorize as anthropogenic, that is, originating from human activity. In such conditions, it’s easy to forget that the development of humanity’s capacity to destroy itself—whether by disrupting the delicate equilibrium of the earth’s climate systems, or through the proliferation and use of nuclear weapons—is an extraordinarily recent and unprecedented development, on both geological and human timescales.

The first irrevocable crossing of that bridge occurred within my grandparents’ lifetime with the harnessing of nuclear power. By splitting heavier atoms into lighter ones, scientists discovered they could create an enormously exothermic chemical reaction, capable of generating enough heat and energy to power a turbine—or destroy a city. Indeed, the destructive capabilities of nuclear power proved to be so massive that—when combined with the effects of the poisonous radioactive material it produces as a byproduct—its weaponization threatens to render the planet uninhabitable.

At the heart of the nuclear question is humanity’s obsessive need to convert chemical compounds into energy—energy to power our homes, our vehicles, our airplanes, our smartphones, our war machines, our bitcoin mining—the list goes on ad infinitum. That same need lies at the core of another, older anthropogenic process: one that’s been going on in an institutional fashion for nearly three centuries now, but which has accelerated so rapidly in recent decades that it, too, has crossed the threshold of becoming an existential threat to humanity. I’m referring, of course, to the extraction and burning of fossil fuels, an accelerating process which is causing global temperatures to rise over time by releasing heat-trapping gases into the atmosphere at a rate that is changing the very composition of the air we breathe.

To emphasize both the scope of the problem and the urgency of addressing these developments, let us put things into context: In the brief three decades I’ve been alive, humanity has produced more anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions than in the previous 200,000 years of human history. This means that an overwhelming amount of damage to the climate has occurred in the span of a single generation. Perhaps even more alarmingly, scientists also believe we have an even smaller amount of time to prevent further warming from causing truly cataclysmic levels of disruption in the form of food shortages, droughts, sea-level rise, ecosystem collapse and irreversible loss of biodiversity. There’s a certain incomprehensibility to the emotional weight of that sentiment. It’s as if a single human brain is incapable of processing just what it means to be alive under such truly unprecedented circumstances.

The situation calls to mind the cinematic trope of “the chosen one”—the prophecy-fulfilling protagonist on whose shoulders the world’s survival depends. In a sense, everyone living today (around 7 percent of the total number of humans ever born, it is believed) could be said to collectively comprise “the chosen generation:” the narrow sliver of hu-

manity whose decisions will be among the most consequential ever made by and for our species. Whether or not we measure up to the enormity of the task is up to us, but the actions and inactions of the world's governing bodies, international institutions, private industries, and ultimately, its people, will determine over the coming few years the course of history for thousands of years to come.

Given that the industrialization of the world's economies is at the root of our addiction to natural resource extraction and overconsumption, the struggle to change course will likely be monumental. After all, the modern growth economy itself was only made possible in the first place through the discovery, removal and burning of ancient hydrocarbons locked underneath the earth's surface—the remnants of plant matter that died millions of years ago—repurposed as a bulwark against the Malthusian trap that had restricted our population's expansion for millennia. For as long as economic systems continue to value growth above all else, it is clear that no meaningful policy changes will come unless or until governments are compelled to act by the collective will of the people. And we are quickly running out of time.

*Extraction: Art on the Edge of the Abyss* is a global coalition of artists and creators committed to shining a light on the effects of extractive industry in all its myriad forms, from mining and drilling to the reckless plundering and exploitation of water, soil, trees, marine life and other natural resources across the globe. A multimedia, multi-venue, cross-border art intervention, the project will provoke change by exposing and interrogating extraction's negative social and environmental consequences. The Extraction Project will culminate in a constellation of overlapping exhibitions, performances, installations, site-specific work, land art, street art, publications, poetry readings, and cross-media events, with artists spread out across four continents. Most of our programming is scheduled from Spring to Fall of 2021.

Joining with scientists and policymakers in sounding the alarm, we recognize the unique power of artistic expression to evoke a more visceral and emotional response than, for instance, a peer-reviewed study, a Superfund assessment, or a set of statistics from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Art succeeds in allowing a person to feel the effects of extractive industry in a way that numbers and graphs cannot convey. Through the creative process of artmaking we hope to facilitate what has been a decades-long struggle to communicate evidence-based scientific perspectives on environmental issues to the general public in a way that can break through into the cultural mainstream. Given the limited audience enjoyed by individual artists—even the ones who have attained some degree of notoriety—such a breakthrough is only achievable if we join all of our voices together, with each artist signal boosting the voices of their peers and collaborators.

At once decentralized, non-hierarchical, and self-organizing, the Extraction Project encourages artists, art venues, curators, and art supporters to participate and collaborate as they see fit, including helping the project expand geographically. Though we are supported by the CODEX Foundation, a non-profit organization based in Berkeley, CA, Extraction is not owned by any person or entity. Everyone can be both creator and catalyst. At a time of growing despair and paralysis, people from all backgrounds and levels of experience—from the amateur to the virtuoso—can take action. We invite everyone to join us in creating an international art ruckus.

Like the project itself, the book you now hold in your hands is many different things at once. Partly a group catalog of extraction-related artwork, each artist or creator's individual contribution documents their own personal investigations into the extraction question, addressing a specific issue or set of issues under the broader umbrella of the Extraction Project. The project is by no means limited to the visual arts—in these pages you will also

find poetry, critical writings, philosophical treatises, manifestos, musical scores, conversations, historical or found photographs, and much more. The words and images collected here can thus be seen as discrete stories and aesthetic investigations that nonetheless make up part of a larger ongoing story in which we are all participants (the reader included). It should also be noted that the views expressed by individual contributors are solely their own.

A number of the submissions printed here offer snapshots of research projects that are ongoing, while others provide merely a small window into a larger body of work. For this reason the reader is encouraged to dig deeper, and to regularly check the Extraction website for the latest updates as the project continues to expand and develop after the printing and distribution of this volume.

I should also briefly address the timing of the printing and distribution of this publication, since the reader might at this point be wondering why we have decided to release an art catalog that seemingly precedes the events and exhibitions that make up the bulk of the project. This book can be thought of as the starting gun of the Extraction Project. Its primary purpose is not to document the project, but rather to facilitate its mobilization. It is meant to be a resource and a guidebook for some of the events and exhibitions slated to take place from early Spring to late Fall 2021. In the following pages you will find press releases and exhibition information from galleries, museums and public art spaces, a directory of events, and world and regional maps depicting the locations of every major Extraction event. Though much of the work gathered here will be on display in 2021, some of it may not be, and exhibitions will undoubtedly feature new work not included in these pages. To the extent that it possesses the characteristics of a catalog, this publication is an appetizer. Summer 2021 is the main course.

Four hundred centuries of artmaking have shown us that in times of great challenge, when

a culture has lost its way, the arts can serve as its moral guide—the light in the wilderness that leads us back to the path. Never have we faced greater challenges as a species than in the era we have just entered. To overcome the existential threats of our time, the majority of the people in the world must begin to understand their individual obligations to rise up and demand change. The fight cannot be won if it is left for scientists and policymakers alone, nor should the frontline soldiering be left to those vulnerable, disadvantaged or disenfranchised communities—often indigenous communities and people of color—who have no other choice than to resist as a matter of survival. For the revolution to be successful, the guards of the system must also revolt alongside its prisoners. An act of creation is the remedy for a destructive appetite, and artists, too, have a crucial role to play in the coming wars. This is our opening salvo.

—Samuel Pelts  
May 2020  
Berkeley, CA

For more information about how to get involved in the Extraction Project, organize or curate an event, become a participant, or donate, please visit [www.extractionart.org](http://www.extractionart.org).

Document and post your work with #ExtractionArt

## INTRODUCTION

### THE AGE OF THE SACRIFICE ZONE

Edwin C. Dobb

Some scientists say we've entered the Anthropocene, a new geological epoch in which Homo sapiens is the most dominant force on Earth. No more convincing—or unnerving—example of our recently acquired global influence exists than climate change, by which we are recklessly modifying every feature of the planet's surface. Melting glaciers and warming seas; prolonged droughts, floods of unprecedented scale, and ferocious super storms; diseased forests and dying reefs, mass extinctions, entire regions rendered hostile to all but weeds and cockroaches; along with tens of millions of our fellow human beings, often indigenous people, forced from their homelands and turned into refugees: If this be our moment in evolution, know it by the turmoil we cause and destruction we sow.

Climate change is one of many outcomes of our ability to remove coal, oil, and gas from the ground and place them in the service of human ambition—converting ancient carbon into instant energy. We've similarly laid claim to other raw materials, including timber; precious metals like gold and silver; base metals like iron, lead, copper, aluminum; sand, salt, shale, silica, clay, and gravel; uranium and plutonium; rare earths (used in electronic devices like smartphones); dwindling reserves of precious fresh water; the once-bountiful inhabitants of the sea; the fertile soil upon which all of life depends. And the pace is accelerating even as the social, cultural, and environmental damage expands. Now that China, India, and Indonesia have joined the Western world in adopting urban industrialization as the highest expression of civilization—and as the global human population draws closer to ten billion—our species is going to greater and greater

lengths, both technologically and geographically, to meet the ever-increasing demand for natural resources. As much as anything else, the Anthropocene is the age of extractive industry, whose worldwide signature is the sacrifice zone—an official government term first used to designate areas permanently devastated by nuclear attack but which now applies more generally to ravaged landscapes, poisoned waterways, and areas overwhelmed by impoverished human conditions.

How might artists respond to this extraordinary turning point in human history? Can we acknowledge the damage caused by extraction without inadvertently romanticizing it? Can we confront and defy without reducing our work to impotent, short-lived moral exhortation? Can we go further, subverting ingrained patterns of submission and self-delusion? Can we interrupt the narrative of historical progress that glorifies utility, exploitation, and inevitability, acknowledging that in the U.S., for example, extraction was part of a larger colonization enterprise known as “manifest destiny,” whose many unfortunate effects—stolen land, suppression of languages and traditional cultural practices, enslavement, and genocide—have been borne disproportionately by native populations and people of color? Can we break the spell that blinds us to everything humankind has known about hubris for thousands of years, since tribal smiths first dug up formless rock and transformed it into tools and weapons—an audacious act which, even then, people rightly suspected was fraught with risk?

Peter Koch, who conceived of the Extraction Project in a moment of “late-life impatient rage,” is well-acquainted with the mixed legacy of extractive industry. Koch grew up in Missoula, Montana, just downstream of the mines, mills, and smelters of Butte—one of world's richest copper producing centers, with around 22 billion pounds of extracted copper already removed and more on the way. Today, after 140 years of relentless industrialized mining, Butte is also the uppermost part of the largest



Jetsonorama, *I Am the Change*, installation, photograph by Ben Knight

Superfund complex in the United States, a place of staggering environmental ruin—“the black heart of Montana,” as journalist Joseph Kinsey Howard put it—that includes a vast reservoir brimming with toxic mill tailings; a long-idle open pit mine, now containing some 50 billion gallons of highly acidic, metals-laden water; a permanently contaminated aquifer entombed beneath the town; and a polluted watershed (the first one hundred miles of the upper Clark Fork River, which is a main tributary of the mighty Columbia River, the lifeblood of the Pacific Northwest). Like Concord, Gettysburg, and Wounded Knee, Butte is one of the places America came from, and it is where we must return, in the

manner of a pilgrimage, if we wish to grasp in full the implications of our appetite for metals.

At the end of such a journey, the intrepid pilgrim will arrive at the edge of the immense excavation known as the Berkeley Pit. A mile wide, a mile-and-a-half long, and a third of a mile deep, the Pit epitomizes our dilemma. Where once we depended on it for the metals it yielded (no copper means no electricity, which means no universally available light and power, to cite but one example), it now poses a grave threat, a threat that will persist long after the benefits it provided have been exhausted. Groundwater will continue to migrate into the pit, continue to become corrupted and rendered lethal, in per-





Chuck Forsman, Berkeley Pit, Butte, MT, 2019, photograph

petuity. Standing on the brink, before the towering back wall of the Berkeley, whose semi-circular sloping terraces resemble a gigantic Greek amphitheater, one is overtaken by a sense of doom. A tragedy has played out here. And the reckoning is far from over. As recently as the fall of 2017, some 3,700 migrating snow geese perished within hours of landing on the toxic lake. Viewed from the edge, the pit is a théâtre du sacrifice. The gateway to dominion is also a staircase to hell—Milton’s “wild Abyss,” the womb and grave of nature.

While the Berkeley Pit is the historical origin and symbolic nucleus of *Extraction*, the project encompasses much more. Multiply the Pit by hundreds of operations of similar size and impact, add thousands of underground mines (diamonds, gems, gold, and other precious metals) and strip mines (coal), then imagine them distributed across all of the world’s continents, save Antarctica. That will

give you a fuller picture of the predicament posed by modern industrialized mining. But a complete survey would also include the many other large-scale artifacts of extraction—clear cut valleys and mountain sides; oil and gas fields, refineries, and terminals; coal trains and power generating stations, petroleum tankers and transmission lines; dams, factories, and manufacturing facilities; abandoned quarries, waste ponds, dumps, and spill sites; lifeless barrens, dried-up lakes, and sterile streams where once plants and animals were plentiful; dust bowls, man-made deserts, and ocean dead zones; along with countless reclamation and remediation projects. Taken together, they form a brutal, ever-present cultural arena where most of us reside most of the time, as consumers of products and services to which we are addicted.

The question we must ask ourselves is whether we possess the daring and imagination to break



Roberto “Bear” Guerra, Cofán Series #4: Alejandro Cures Young Girl, Dureno, Ecuador, photograph

the silence surrounding the perilous bargain Homo sapiens has struck by hitching its fate to the metastatic growth of extractive industry. Can we plumb the source of our undoing—that urban industrial civilization is essentially sacrificial? That as surely as night follows day, nemesis follows hubris? That human folly of such colossal proportions exacts an inescapable and equally colossal if sometimes displaced or delayed toll? And can we reach the public with our efforts when the media remains obsessed with mind-numbing spectacles of little import? Can we induce ruptures in the all-encompassing waking nightmare of popular and commercial imagery, making our voices heard around the American West? Indeed, around the world? We launched the *Extraction* Project because we believe the answer is yes. More than that, we believe we have no choice but to try.

Merely bearing witness is not enough. As visionaries and outsiders, we are capable of appropriating and reconfiguring contemporary propaganda and re-deploying it in service of our own alternative concepts and transformative objects. We can employ photography, video, painting, sculpture, land art, performances, installations, site-specific work, and various hybrids thereof to conduct “hardcore, nasty” investigations of extraction—all of its forms and all of its consequences, including its effects on human health and the social and cultural damage it causes, especially to poor, minority, and indigenous communities. We can follow a new model of inclusivity, recognizing and respecting stakeholders of all races, cultures, genders, and ages; and helping guarantee that the historically marginalized people who’ve suffered most because of natural resource exploitation are provided opportunities for interpreting their own experience and subverting op-

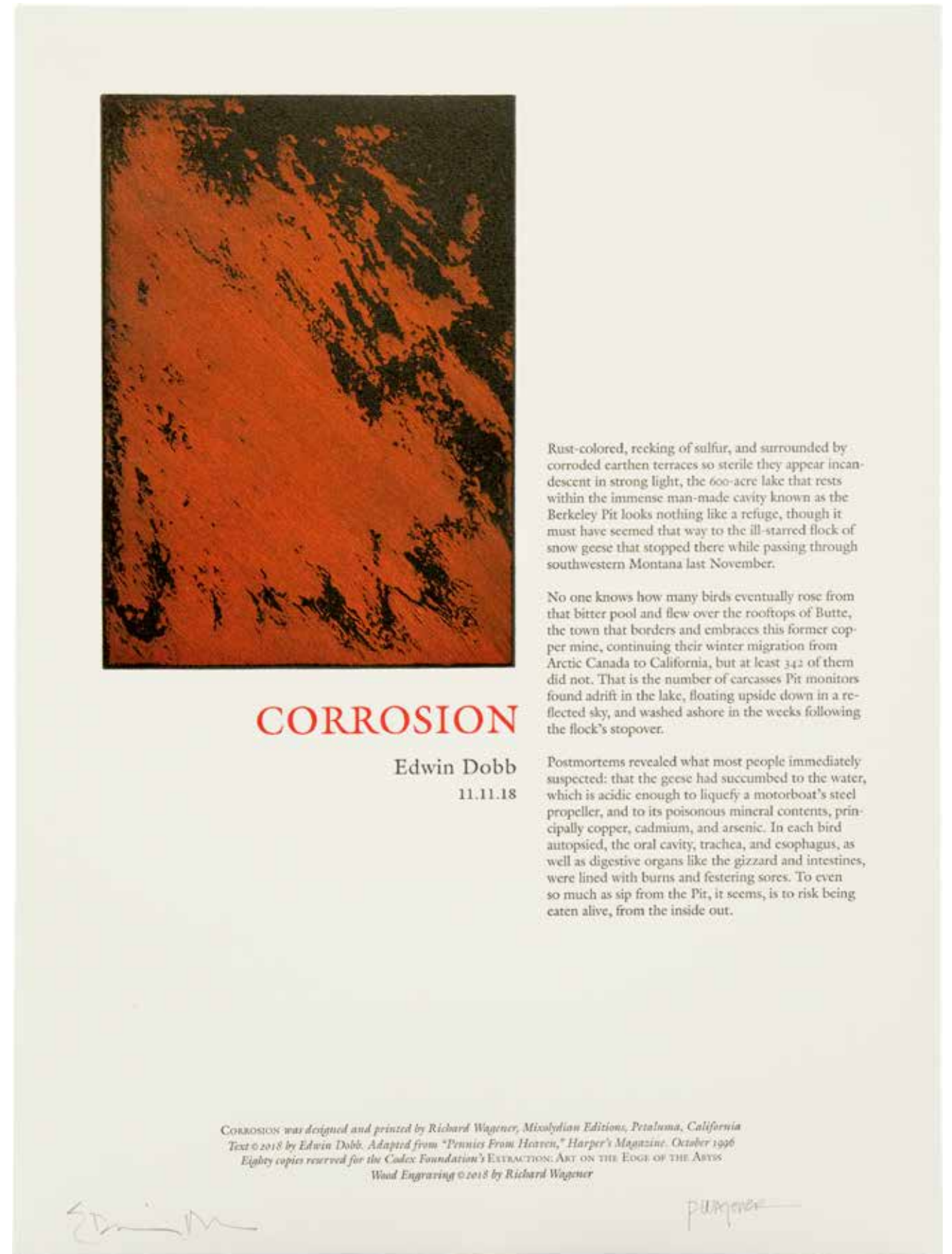


Richard Wagener and Edwin Dobb signing copies of "Corrosion," Edwin's contribution to the Extraction broadside portfolio WORDS on the Edge. Sales of the limited edition portfolio helped raise funds for Extraction: Art on the Edge of the Abyss.

pressive narratives. We can expose and interrogate the abundant evidence of Faustian overreach most people don't wish to acknowledge, and re-represent it with all the eye-opening, assumption-smashing power the arts have always exerted on the human condition. We can counter the violent subjugation of nature brought about by mining and drilling with the playful but liberating strategy of détournement. Through radical engagements and inspired de-arrangements we can destabilize the way extractive

industry is portrayed and consumer culture promoted. We can hijack and reroute the conversation about what constitutes a good life in the opening decades of the twenty-first century. We can sound an alarm.

We can raise a ruckus.



Edwin Dobb, "Corrosion," from WORDS on the Edge broadside portfolio, Mixolydian Editions, Richard Wagener, Printer

## A WAR WORTH FIGHTING IN CONVERSATION WITH PROJECT FOUNDER PETER KOCH

Samuel Pelts with Peter Rutledge Koch

SAM PELTS: I think it may be useful to the reader if I began by asking you where the idea for the Extraction Project came from. Can you give us a brief overview of the origins of the project?

PETER KOCH: Origins are often complex and when multiple influences converge there is a moment of clarity, and of vision. With *Extraction: Art on the Edge of the Abyss*, that moment came to me in the bookstore of Dia Beacon in New York on the banks of the Hudson River. The triggering moment came when I picked up a copy of a small book about an exhibition in Nanaimo, British Columbia entitled *Black Diamond Dust*, and published in Germany. On the cover, it read:

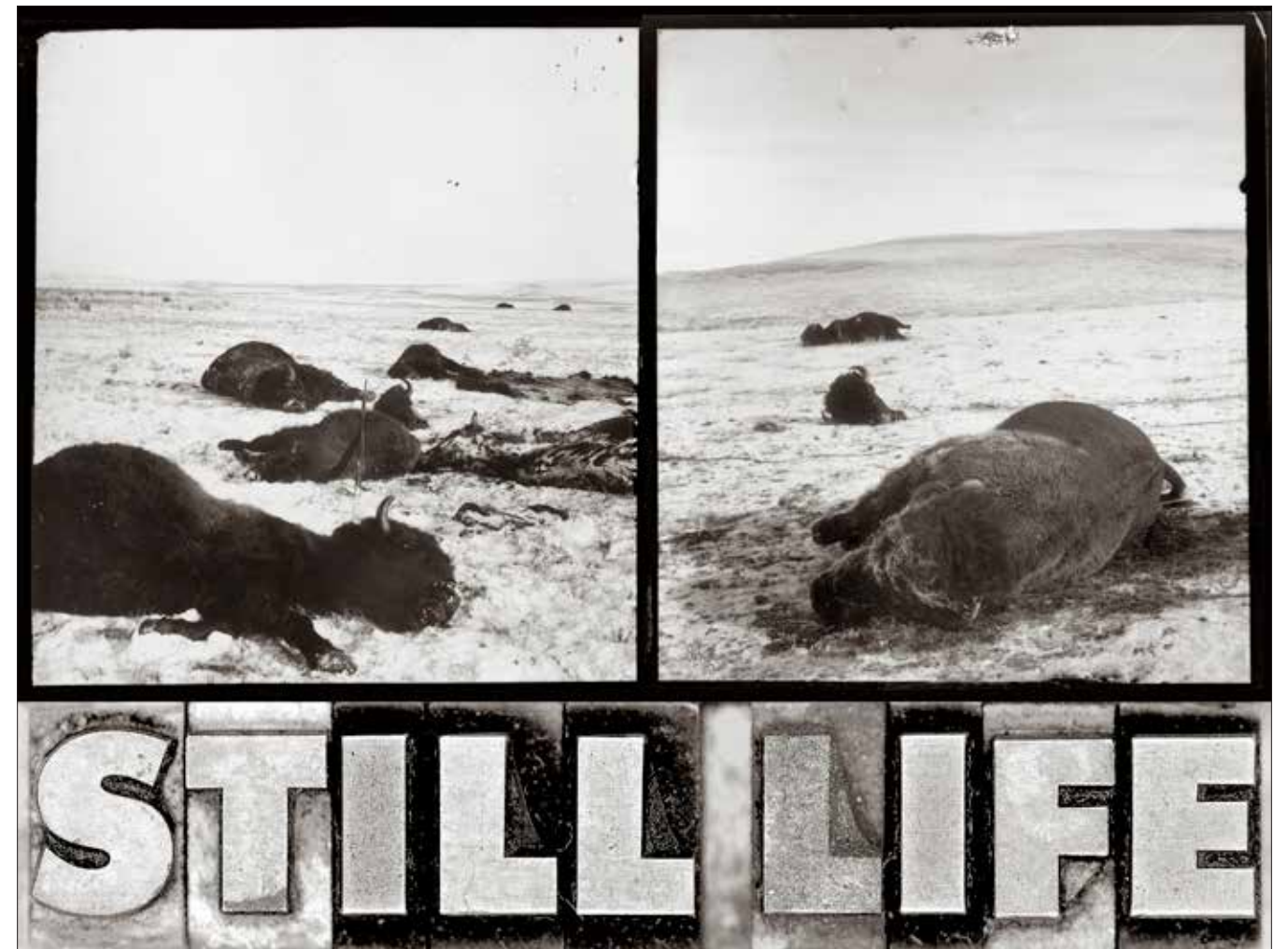
*“BLACK DIAMOND DUST is the first of three projects to engage the resource industries of Vancouver Island (mining, forestry, and fisheries) through contemporary art. This publication responds to coal mining: an industry that formed and fragmented communities through economic development, racial segregation, and labor inequity, while fueling the modern world.”*

I was stopped dead in my tracks. Here I was in the heart of the New York art world in November of 2017 and I was suddenly transported back to my childhood in Montana in the 1940s and 50s when the Anaconda Copper Company ruled the state both politically and economically, polluted its rivers, and deforested its great mountain pine reserves to serve industry’s need for copper to power a world demanding more and more electricity every day. My rivers, swimming holes, and trout streams—the air we breathed—all were affected by the monstrous

industrial hunger that was eating up every creek and meadow, right to the borders of the National Parks and wilderness reserves that my grandfather had fought his entire life to establish and preserve, while at the same time trying as hard as he could to balance wildness with the nation’s ever-growing appetite for timber and minerals. In our lifetimes, my father and I witnessed Montana’s transformation from a near pristine wilderness which once supported several nations of peoples who had lived there for thousands of years without destroying the wildlife and polluting the air and waters, into the Superfund site it is today.

The moment seemed ripe with possibility. I was galvanized by that book in that moment. I wanted to engage the art world in Montana in an intervention, a project that would respond to the environmental disasters that we had already experienced and were soon to experience again as our state and national government prepared to sell off all the remaining mineral rights, granting licence and permission to ever more powerful and greedy industrial interests crouched right at the edge of our remaining state and national public lands. I wanted exhibitions and performances in museums, on the streets, in galleries, and in garages.

I was so moved that I called Laura Millin, Director of the Missoula Art Museum and asked if she would consider spearheading an exhibition project focusing on the Berkeley Pit in Butte, Montana, part of one of the world’s largest Superfund sites and a mining disaster the likes of which had never been seen or foreseen on earth. She was more than supportive and committed on the spot. 2021 is a symbolic year at the heart of the matter. 2021 is the year when the acid-and-arsenic-laden water seeping into the pit at the rate of 150,000 gallons a day (48 billion gallons and counting) will rise high enough to runoff into the groundwater that feeds the streams at the headwaters of the great Columbia River. A harbinger of the coming attractions in Australia, Canada, Russia, China, all the undersea regions, the



Peter Rutledge Koch, *Still Life*, from *Nature Morte*. Editions Koch, 2005

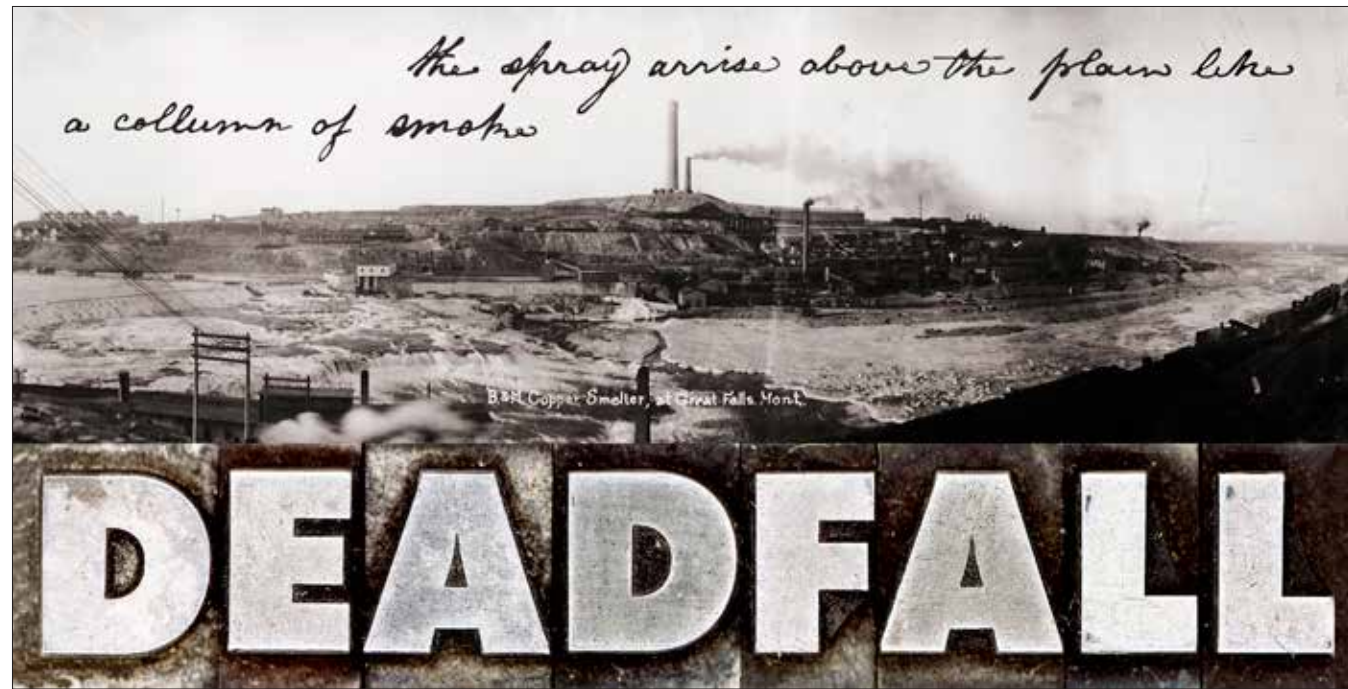
mineral and coal and oil laden territories in Africa and soon the Arctic and Antarctic regions as well.

The very next day I rang up the curator at the Holter Art Museum in Helena, Montana and received the same enthusiastic response. There! I had accomplished my goal—the two museums that flanked the greatest copper mining disaster of the twentieth century were collaborating. I called it a day and was so excited I called a friend (the painter Christopher Benson in Santa Fe and told him about the museum exhibitions in Montana. He immediately suggested I call Laurel Reuter, Director of the North Dakota Museum of Art, and before I had finished explaining, she was thinking ahead about oil and gas extraction photography and exhibition dates in 2021. The message I was reading was that the time was ripe to raise some hell. So I opened it

up all the way and began exhorting everyone I could to join us in our project.

SP: What brought Edwin Dobb into the project and how did you two begin to collaborate?

PK: Ed and I had been great friends since the late 70s when I was publishing *Montana Gothic*, a maverick literary and graphic arts journal in Missoula. Years later, when Ed was a contributing editor at Harper’s Magazine he wrote “Pennies from Hell” (1996), a lyrical essay about Butte and the Berkeley Pit—one of the finest and most sensitive essays ever published about his hometown. I called Ed one day soon after I had heard that North Dakota was joining up and explained my idea and how it was catching a wave of interest. Within weeks, Ed and I were conspiring



Peter Rutledge Koch, *Deadfall*, from *Nature Morte*. Editions Koch, 2005

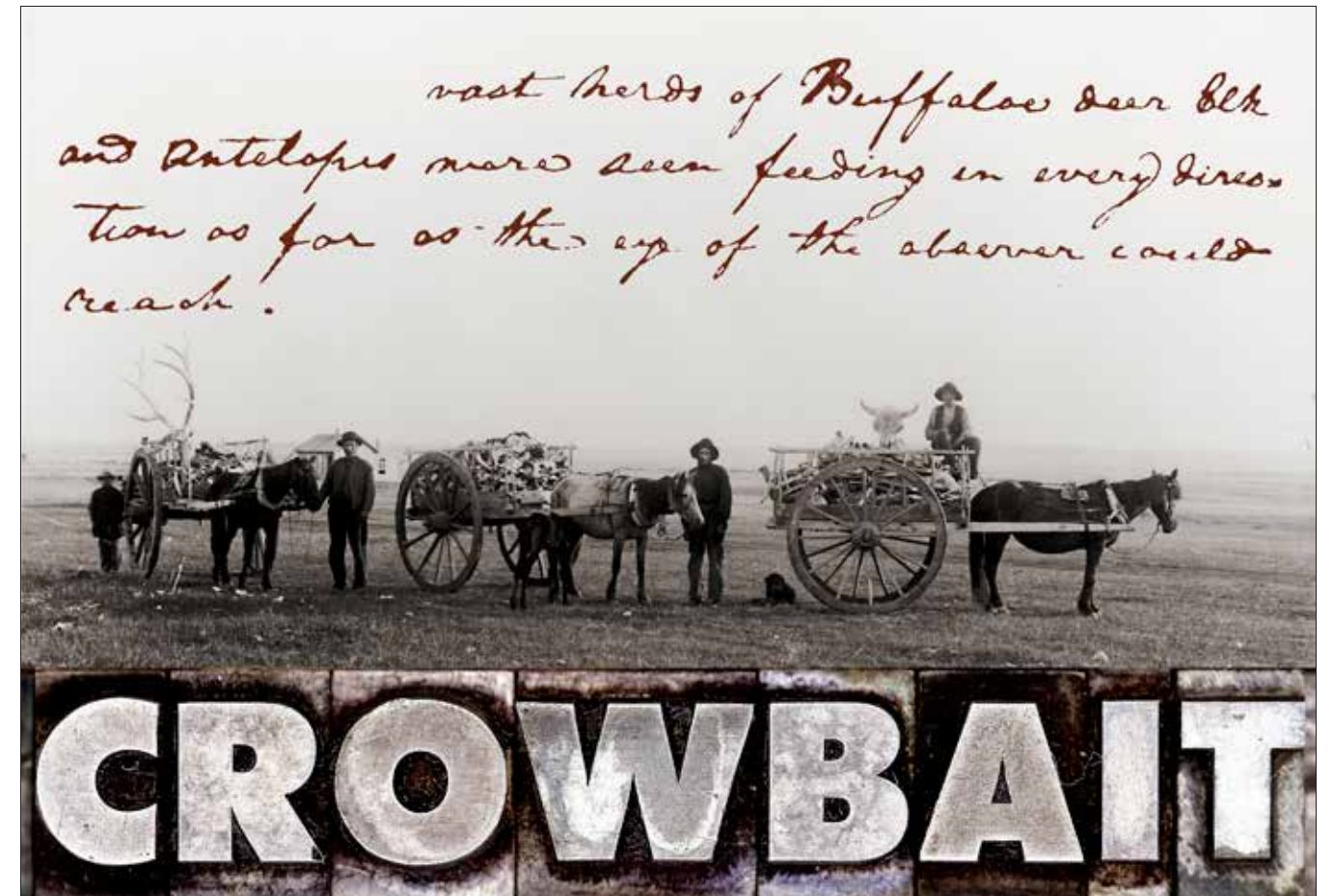
daily about how to negotiate the delicate political and social situation with regard to Butte and any possible collaboration with artists in the area.

Ed decided early on that this was a project that he could throw himself into; one that would bring him much closer to the art world that, as a professional journalist, he had worked around the edges of but never at the center. He was readying for retirement from UC Berkeley and wanted to make *Extraction: Art on the Edge of the Abyss* his passion and his main subject of inquiry, as well as a focus for his writing. Ed was a philosophical and a poetic essayist and was just beginning to see how the Extraction Project was a perfect marriage of his finely honed skills as an investigative writer on environmental issues (he had only recently contributed essays on fracking in North Dakota and gold mining in Alaska for *National Geographic*) and the poetic vision that he had been nurturing all his adult life. Ed was especially interested in photography and said to me on at least one occasion that he thought photography reached deeper into the human psyche than any other other art form when it came to our major theme and focus—environmental disaster and industrial irre-

sponsibility. He was deeply influenced by his years writing for *National Geographic*, working closely with photographers of consummate skill.

Together, we set out to exhort, encourage, and recruit every sort of artist—painters, poets, musicians, dancers, and curators, critics, and administrators to join us in raising a “ruckus” (Ed’s term, and an endearing one too) all over the American West. Before too long—because the word was rapidly spreading—we were talking to artists and independent curators in New York, Paris, Berlin, and Dubai. As a team, we began introducing each other to everyone we could roust from our professional and personal lives and suddenly we were being introduced by word of mouth and reputation all across the globe.

It was not long before we realized that we could not carry on entirely by ourselves and here I want to introduce you, Sam—we were fortunate to have you working at the CODEX Foundation (and my press) while you were preparing for graduate school. We asked you to take care of our online presence, and eventually help us produce this publication. At around the same time my participation thinned



Peter Rutledge Koch, *Crowbait*, from *Nature Morte*. Editions Koch, 2005

considerably due to my diagnosis and subsequent treatment for multiple myeloma, a bone marrow cancer which pretty much knocked me out for the next twenty months. As a consequence you [Sam] and Ed became the de facto directors-in-chief of the project—insofar as there is any “direction” in a project like this one, where there is no center, no hierarchy, and no boundaries other than the shared themes that are raised by art and extraction.

SP: I wanted to talk a little bit about the goals of the Extraction Project and how they have evolved as we’ve grown. In the early days, you would often talk about “raising a ruckus,” to bring back Ed’s phrase you mentioned earlier. Do you still feel that raising a ruckus may be perhaps the truest expression of what we hope to accomplish in this project?

PK: I can only say that the goals remain exactly the same as Ed and I knocked them out in 2018. In the beginning we set out to invite the artists of the West and subsequently, due to the international reception we received, the borders of the project just melted away. Under Ed’s and your direction we became an international series of events and actions that reflect the condition of the artist in a world in crisis. After all, the crises we face today (as we have just seen with the Covid-19 pandemic) truly know no borders. I certainly hope that there will be a ruckus—and some hell raised as well! From where we stand today, we need to shout out loud and clear, before we are buried beneath the media swarm that will surround the 2020 presidential election and its aftermath.

SP: Let me zoom out for a minute and ask you more generally: What do you believe to be the role of artists in addressing issues of reckless natural re-

source extraction and environmental deterioration? Do artists have the capacity to be active players in geopolitical events, or is our role that of the passive observer or commentator? How do we get people to understand that the 2020s is likely to be the single most crucial decade in all of human history up to this point? With the possible exception of the Cuban Missile Crisis, we are about to face what I would consider to be our first big “make-it-or-break-it” moment as a species.

PK: The artists and scientists and philosophers and poets that I have been most deeply impressed with have all been active players fighting injustice, ignorance, and the abuse of power to the fullest extent of their own personal ability—a range that extends from the mere act of voting, to starting an underground newspaper or alternative food distribution network. To hide your head like an ostrich in some ivory tower of art makes for a silly bird with no idea how to fight against the species death that is in store for it if the war is lost. Or is artistic purity an attempt to disappear into privilege and hope for the best? If you don’t think this is a war just take a hike through the Alberta Tar Sands, or see what happens when you wear the wrong t-shirt in oil country. Have you ever been shot at for your political beliefs? Believe me, it is bracing—and as close as the next time you take a wrong turn down a certain back road (you name the place, pretty much every state and country has them).

SP: Right. The privilege of purity—sounds about right. It seems to me that for Ed, the driving question our project always sought to answer was: What can artists do? It’s been interesting for me to read other participants’ attempts to grapple with this same question (many of which are strewn throughout this book). Richard Misrach, for instance, discusses the role of art in “bearing witness” to bad behavior in an effort to change course moving forward, though he believes that actual real-world policy transformations rarely, if ever, stem directly from artistic

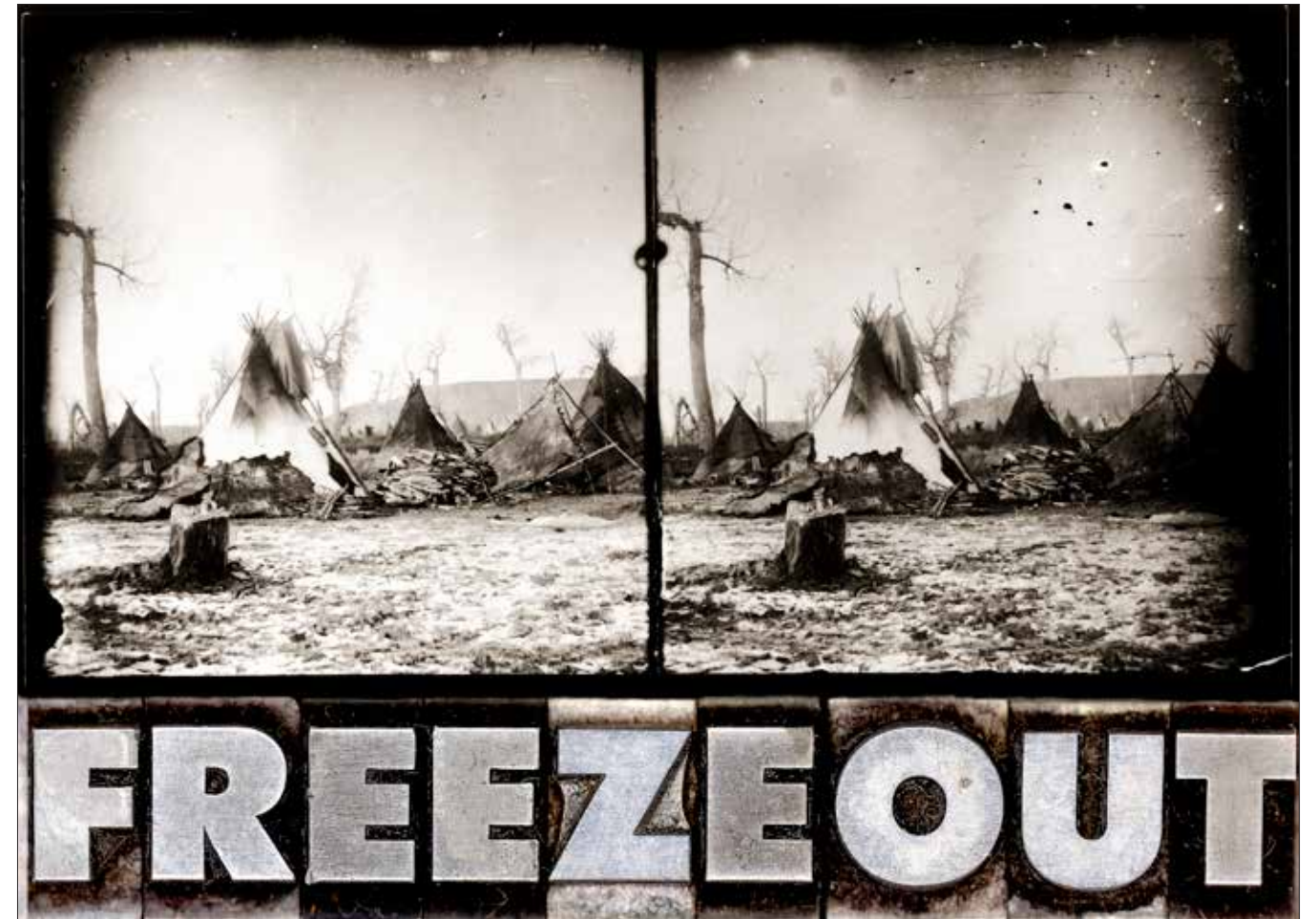
expression. Likewise, Christopher Benson writes of the potential for art to elicit an autonomous experience in the viewer that can effectively rouse one to action, but notes, crucially, that the artist is hardly in the driver’s seat when it comes to producing or mediating such an experience. Rather, it comes from within the viewer. Where do you come down on that question? What can artists do? How directly or indirectly do you believe the artist is capable of creating the conditions for change?

PK: I am with Misrach on the idea of bearing witness. My own work has always been an attempt to provide evidence through pictorial intervention and verbal interpretation—evidence for the prosecution of evil, wasteful practices and the puppets that provide the laws and routines that perpetuate the abuses I see everywhere I look. I have never been called to either legislate or to testify, but I am ready when you are. If only the artists ruled for a time... imagine all the billboards with quotations from Rachel Carson and Barry Lopez under and above photographs by Misrach and Dorothea Lange with invitations for paid free medical training for anyone who applies.

I believe artists are morally and ethically called to imagine alternative ways and worlds that, with as much persistence and innovation that we can bring to the job, will effect change. How we see the world is how we treat the world. Artists should always be seeing and making the world they want to inhabit. Nothing else can pass as art.

SP: Do you believe that artists have always had an obligation to address social issues? Or do you think it’s because of the uniqueness of the circumstances in which we are living that more and more contemporary artists and creators have been conscripted into political wars, so to speak?

PK: Artists are and always have been citizens. The mythology of artist as outsider is an old and romantic tale, but largely fictional. Outside what? Either



Peter Rutledge Koch, *Freezeout*, from *Nature Morte*. Editions Koch, 2005

you are a member of a society, a social order, one which includes sculptors and musicians and poets, or you are an outcast—and true outcasts, whether rogues or the insane, are dangerous both to themselves and to others. As for the rest of us, we are not so much conscripted by circumstance into this war—we are just in it. It came to us—pre-manufactured by us, sold to us, and actively consumed by us. The war is everywhere and we are all warriors. The only question is—which side are you on? Anyone, including artists, can choose to ignore the war against biological diversity, planet and individual health, and the right to life and livelihood—but to ignore the situation is to choose the side of the sheep. Passive consumers are the best example of what the warriors for indiscriminant reign of capital desire.

You mention the present circumstances, which are certainly compelling. As artists we are no different than any other consumer-victim except in how we fight and with what tools. We are free to choose...

SP: Agreed. I would only add that to the extent that art is inherently political, it seems uncontroversial to assert that, at the very least, we place a higher premium today on that kind of content over aesthetics than in previous generations.

PK: Yes, that is how it looks to me.

SP: Much of your work in the book arts has dealt with issues of resource extraction for many years, with *Liber Ignis* being perhaps the most explicitly extraction-oriented work. I’m curious if you see

the Extraction Project as a logical extension of your own artistic output, a continuation perhaps of decades-long investigations? Or do you consider it to be something separate entirely?

PK: I had been working on *Liber Ignis* since 2013, and when the Extraction Project came to me (much the same way the CODEX International Book Fair and Foundation did in 2005) it was, as you observed, a logical extension of my practice. As much as I enjoy working in the solitude of my studio and study, I enjoy the entrepreneurial challenges of the marketplace, the polis, and the university.

SP: The climate crisis is obviously one of the central issues of our time. Nonetheless, Ed was always very adamant that we are more than “just a climate change project.”

PK: Yes, Ed was adamant on the subject. He was seeking the root causes of our self-destructive activity. Climate change is just an effect, and only one among many. The roots were embedded in the trans-human scale of operations; the industrial and financial might that created vast reserves of capital to be invested in ever farther and deeper extractions, and not a penny spent for social harmony, education, universal health care, preservation of the wild, etc. This behavior needs investigation and redress; exploring the disease of restless consumerism was Ed’s real interest and motive for recruiting art into the army of resistance.

SP: To me, responding to climate change without addressing the underlying philosophical questions that are at the root of our cultural addiction to extractive processes is like treating the symptoms of a deadly disease, while allowing—even encouraging—its continued spread.

And speaking of disease, I also wanted to briefly address the pandemic, which is ongoing at the time of this interview. In many ways, I’ve been thinking

about the global response to the coronavirus outbreak as something of a dress rehearsal for the coming climate crisis. And while it may be too early to tell whether that makes me more or less optimistic for the future, a lot of the themes are strikingly similar. In the U.S., for instance, we’ve been plagued with a clumsy, slow, and ineffective response from the federal government, in a hyper-polarized political landscape where seemingly anything can be reduced to a partisan issue. Meanwhile, the fractured nature of our media ecosystems fosters denialism and conspiracy theories across the board.

On the other hand, early adherence to the so-called shelter-in-place orders has shown that rapid collective action on a global scale for the benefit of humanity is possible after all. I’m particularly impressed by the fact that by mid-March, people were already staying indoors and heeding advice from epidemiologists—even before formal statewide orders were enacted. So in spite of everything I’m still hopeful that we can emerge from the present crisis with a renewed appreciation for the value of scientific expertise, and finally dispense with this anti-intellectualism garbage once and for all. What’s your perspective? When you look around at what’s happening, are you hopeful? Or is it all despair?

PK: Sam, I have lived to see forests logged and burned and grow back again. I have seen the effects of mankind’s benign absence and destructive presence. Maybe one day the Sahara will bloom again—maybe not. Maybe mankind will destroy itself, and maybe it won’t. I have seen people completely forget recent fires and build their homes smack dab in a forest likely to burn again soon. Stupidity and hope make for some interesting dramas. Maybe the bad guys will lose—but most likely not hard enough to disappear. In any event the show will be worth watching. And the war is worth fighting.



Peter Rutledge Koch, *Zeitgeist*, from *Nature Morte*, collage from engraved stock certificate. Collection of Peter Koch

*“I can not but believe, that the time is not distant, when those wild forests, trackless plains, untrodden valleys, and the unbounded ocean, will present one grand scene, of continuous improvements, universal enterprise, and unparalleled commerce: when those vast forests, shall have disappeared, before the hardy pioneer; those extensive plains, shall abound with innumerable herds, of domestic animals; those fertile valleys, shall groan under the immense weight of their abundant products: when those numerous rivers, shall team with countless steam-boats, steam-ships, ships, barques and brigs; when the entire country, will be everywhere intersected, with turnpike roads, rail-roads and canals; and when, all the vastly numerous, and rich resources, of that now, almost unknown region, will be fully and advantagously developed.... And to this we may add, numerous churches, magnificent edifices, spacious colleges, and stupendous monuments and observatories, all of Grecian architecture...”*

— from Lansford W. Hastings, *The Emigrants’ Guide to Oregon and California* (Cincinnati: George Conclin, 1845), pp. 151-152



## WORDS on the Edge

A limited edition portfolio of poetry & lyric prose in broadside format

[WWW.EXTRACTIONART.ORG/WORDS-ON-THE-EDGE](http://WWW.EXTRACTIONART.ORG/WORDS-ON-THE-EDGE)

WORDS on the Edge consists of twenty-six poems and lyrical texts addressing themes of natural resource extraction, overconsumption and ecological degradation.

Twenty-six notable poets and writers paired up with an equal number of highly regarded letterpress printers from four countries. Each author/printer pair then collaborated to produce an editioned broadside or print. Proceeds from sales of the portfolio helped to raise funds for *Extraction: Art on the Edge of the Abyss*.

Limited edition of 50 portfolios available for purchase. Portfolio dimensions: 48 by 32 by 3 cm. Portfolio comprises title leaf (with additional text, "The Edge," by Robert Bringhurst on verso), table of contents leaf, with colophon on verso, and 26 broadsides. Broad­sides printed by various printers; each is autographed by the author, some are also numbered and/or auto-graphed by the printers.

## THE EDGE

Robert Bringhurst

Reprinted from WORDS on the Edge broadside portfolio

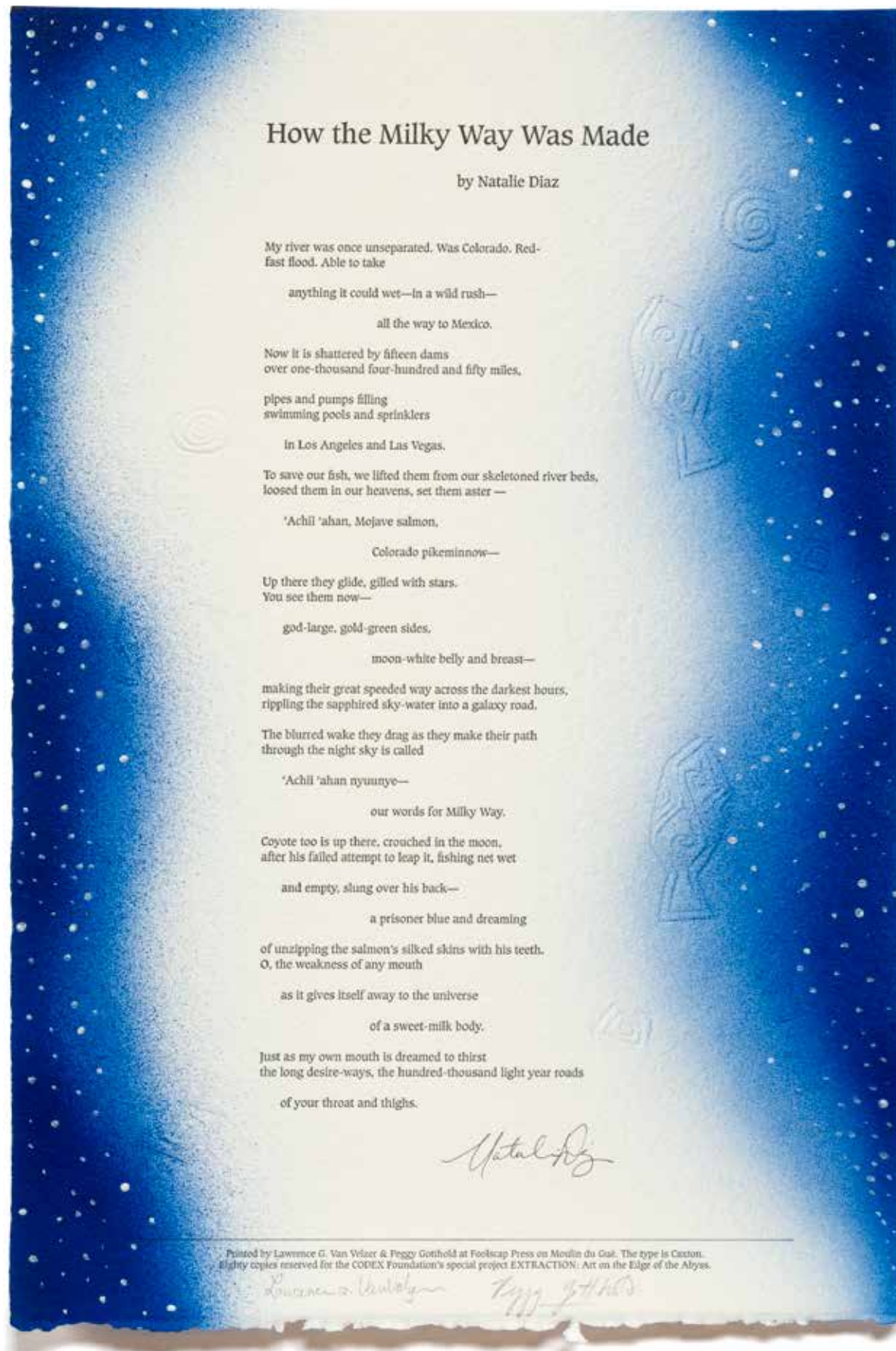
Planets and stars, like glaciers and rivers and forests, are mortal. They live long enough that we all find it easy to take them for granted, but pay them just a bit of the attention they deserve and you will notice that, like you, they do not last forever. The sun, for example, at four and a half billion years of age, has apparently lived about half of its natural span. Four billion more years may sound like a lot, but it is only fifty million human lifetimes. Long before we reach that mark, you can expect the dying sun to swell and swallow all the inner planets, earth included. Not long afterward, the sun will shrink and cool, losing so much weight it can no longer hold the surviving planets in orbit, and losing so much heat and light it cannot fuel a summer's day. By then, however, no one will be troubled by the climate or puzzled by the weather. When there are no planets left in the system, there will be no place for day and night or summer and winter to happen.

Stars and planets cannot go to heaven when they die, because that's where they've been all their lives. So have you, if you live on a planet – this planet, for instance, which moves like the others through heaven. But humans have a knack for turning heaven into hell. They do this just by shifting their perspective, losing track of where and who and what they are. Then they tend to think it's possible – even essential – to saw off all the limbs on which they sit, cut down the trees that give them food and shade and shelter, dig up the earth that bore the trees, suck out its innards, and move on, leaving lifeless tailing ponds and slag heaps in their wake.

That is the edge on which these words are dancing: the edge between heaven and hell. It is an edge that humans forge wherever they go – and an edge that we are expert at turning a blind eye to.

One of the facts about heaven is this: there is more than enough. In this particular corner of heaven, for instance, there is more light and heat, more air and wood and water, fruit and grain and meat and fish, more granite and sandstone and limestone, iron and copper and silver and gold than anyone needs. More – but not an infinite amount. There is also more time than anyone needs – but not, again, an infinite amount. Fewer, in all probability, than another fifty million human lifetimes. Yet we as a species, we as a culture, are working hard to make it fewer still.

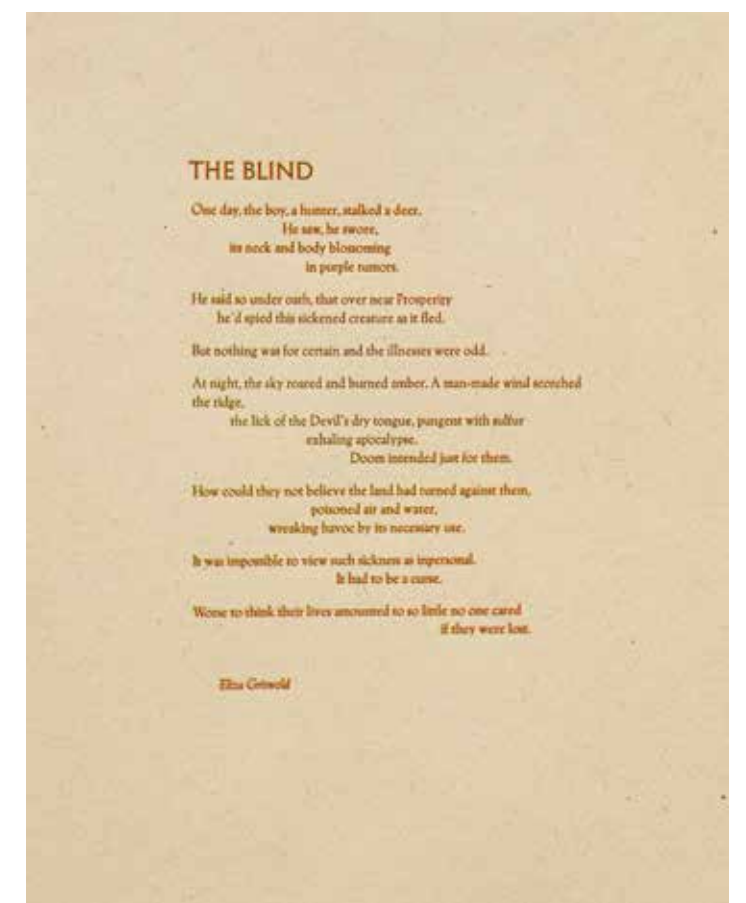
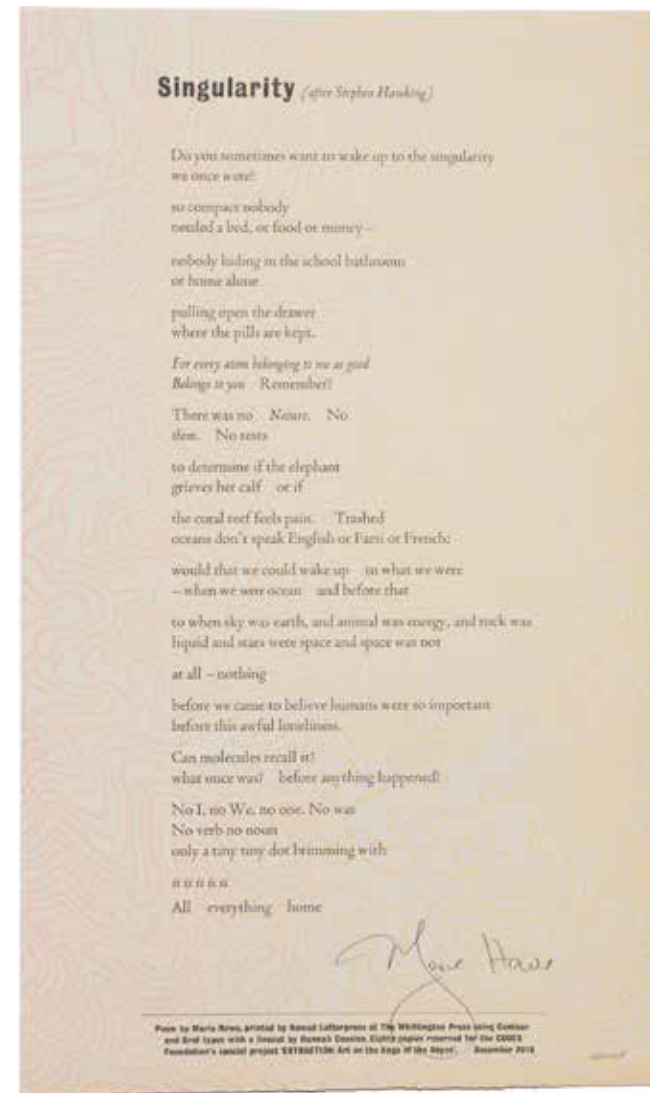
The grass will bear a lot of grazing and the shrubs a lot of browsing. The limb will bear some sawing, and the trees will bear some cutting, the earth will tolerate some digging, and the rivers and oceans and air will bear some gentle poisoning. But one of the salient facts about hell is that people who live there are never content. They not only want more than they have; they want more than there is. So the edge between heaven and hell gets sharper and closer. And those at the edge dance faster and faster.



Natalie Diaz, "How the Milky Way Was Made," Foolsap Press, Peggy Gotthold & Lawrence Van Velzer, Printers; Santa Cruz, California. Natalie Diaz was named a 2018 MacArthur fellow.



Images from the printing of Words on the Edge. From left to right: Juan Pascoe holding up Forrest Gander's "A Clearing"; Natalie Diaz's "How the Milky Was Was Made" hanging to dry at Foolsap Press; the type set for "Singularity" by Marie Howe; Jason Dewinetz surveying the broadside for Rick Bass's "The Wild Marsh" at Greenboathouse Press.



Above: Eliza Griswold, "The Blind," Russell Maret, Printer, New York, New York. Eliza is a 2019 Pulitzer Prize winning poet.

Left: Marie Howe, "Singularity," Nomad Letterpress, Pat Randle, Printer, Whittington Court, England



*A Clearing: Forrest Gander* 20 Printed by Juan Pascoe at the Taller Martin Pescador, near Tacámbaro, Michoacán, Mexico | Mexico

WHERE are you going? Ghosted with dust. From where have you come?  
The dull assertiveness of the stone heap, a barren monarchy.  
Wolfspider, the size of a hand, encrusted with dirt at the rubble's edge.

What crosses here goes fanged or spiked and draws its color from the ground.  
Xanthic shadow at the edges.  
Where are we going? Ghosted with dust. From where have we come?

Sweater loaded with clods by a spavined work shed.  
What does it mean, a cauterized topography?  
One step forward and he is with us. One step back, another realm absorbs him.

The sense of epoch loosened, unstrung.  
Each one thinking it is the other who recedes like a horizon.  
The miraculous cage visible under his skin.

I cannot be discarded, his eyes say.  
A flute that plays one note. A face.  
In the open pit at noon, men waning in brightness.

I can be read, say the rocks, but not by you.  
The air burnished, almost mineral, like a thin peel of mica.  
Mound in the photograph, iris in the eye.

What does it mean, a cauterized topography?  
To salvage rocks the color of all else from all else the color of rock.  
I can be read, say her eyes, but not by you.

As if the landscape had abandoned itself.  
Rain-flushed from denuded hills, the soil powders, in wind.  
One step forward and we are with them. One step back, another realm absorbs us.

Don't pick up the rocks, he says, because rocks belong to the dead.  
Xanthic shadow at the edges.  
The distance flat as horse-hair plaster, all depth sponged away.

Black knoll of tailings.  
There is nothing between his eyes and ours, not even invitation.  
Each stone carrying its death sentence into the animate world.

Fly maggot eating the red ant's brain.  
The sense of epoch loosened, unstrung.  
Light broken off in the air.

The twig's shadow has the same quality as the shadow of a man.  
Glance held, an afterglow.  
All depth sponged away, the distance flat as horse-hair plaster.

Iris in an eye, mound in the photograph.  
Don't pick him up, rocks say, because the dead belong to the rocks.  
Encrusted with dirt at the rubble's edge: wolfspider the size of a hand.

A man's shadow has the same quality as the shadow of a twig.  
What crosses here goes fanged or spiked and draws its color from the ground.  
The air burnished, almost mineral.

*Set in the Poliphilo roman type and a Castellat cap to printed in an edition of 100 copies on Tamayo De Ponce paper with an Ollander Strymer Extra Heavy hand press; 80 copies are reserved for the CODEX Foundation's special project EXTRACTION: Art on the Edge of the Abyss.*

JP & Pascoe

Forrest Gander, "A Clearing," Taller Martin Pescador, Juan Pascoe, Printer, Tacámbaro, Mexico. Forrest is a 2019 Pulitzer Prize winning poet.

## A Map to the Next World

by Joy Harjo for Denny Kierx Clax

In the last days of the fourth world I wished to make a map for those who would climb through the hole in the sky.

My only tools were the desires of humans as they emerged from the killing fields, from the bedrooms and the kitchen.

For the soul is a wanderer with many hands and feet.

The map must be of sand and can't be read by ordinary light. It must carry fire to the next tribal town, for renewal of spirit.

In the legend are instructions on the language of the land, how it was we forgot to acknowledge the gift, as if we were not in it or of it.

Take note of the proliferation of supermarkets and malls, the altars of money. They best describe the detour from grace.

Keep track of the errors of our forgetfulness; the fog steals our children while we sleep.

Flowers of rage spring up in the depression. Monsters are born there of nuclear anger.

Trees of ash wave good-bye to good-bye and the map appears to disappear.

We no longer know the names of the birds here, how to speak to them by their personal names.

Once we knew everything in this lush promise.

What I am telling you is real and is printed in a warning on the map. Our forgetfulness stalks us, walks the earth behind us, leaving a trail of paper diapers, needles, and wasted blood.

An imperfect map will have to do, little one.

The place of entry is the sea of your mother's blood, your father's small death as he longs to know himself in another.

There is no exit.

The map can be interpreted through the wall of the intestine—a spiral on the road of knowledge.

You will travel through the membrane of death, smell cooking from the encampment where our relatives make a feast of fresh deer meat and corn soup, in the Milky Way.

They have never left us; we abandoned them for science.

And when you take your next breath as we enter the fifth world there will be no X, no guidebook with words you can carry.

You will have to navigate by your mother's voice, renew the song she is singing.

Fresh courage glimmers from planets.

And lights the map printed with the blood of history, a map you will have to know by your intention, by the language of runs.

When you emerge note the tracks of the monster slayers where they entered the cities of artificial light and killed what was killing us.

You will see red cliffs. They are the heart, contain the ladder.

A white deer will greet you when the last human climbs from the destruction.

Remember the hole of shame marking the act of abandoning our tribal grounds.

We were never perfect.

Yet, the journey we make together is perfect on this earth who was once a star and made the same mistakes as humans.

We might make them again, she said.

Crucial to finding the way is this: there is no beginning or end.

You must make your own map.



*Joy Harjo*

*ne*

Letterpress by Norman Clayton, 2019. Illustration by David Shuman Mages, 2019. 100 copies printed for the CODEX Foundation's special project EXTRACTION: Art on the Edge of the Abyss. A Map to the Next World, NECC Press, NE, USA, 2019.

Joy Harjo, "A Map to the Next World," Classic Letterpress, Norman Clayton, Printer, Ojai, California. In 2019, Joy Harjo became the first Native American U.S. Poet Laureate in history.

## WRITERS AND PRINTERS

MARGARET ATWOOD, "Time capsule found on the dead planet"

Peter Koch, Printer

RICK BASS, "The Wild Marsh"

Jason Dewinetz, Greenboathouse Press

WENDELL BERRY, "Questionnaire"

Grey Zeitz, Larkspur Press

ROBERT BRINGHURST, "All Over the World"

Richard Seibert, Printer

ANNEMARIE NÍ CHURREÁIN, "The Turf-Cutter Speaks"

Jamie Murphy, The Salvage Press

PETER COYOTE, "Mining Words"

Harry & Sandra Reese, Turkey Press

NATALIE DIAZ, "How the Milky Way Was Made"

Peggy Gotthold & Lawrence Van Velzer, Foolscap Press

EDWIN DOBB, "Corrosion"

Richard Wagener, Mixolydian Editions

DAVID JAMES DUNCAN, "One River"

Chad Pastotnik, Deep Wood Press

FORREST GANDER, "A Clearing"

Juan Pascoe, Taller Martin Pescador

ELIZA GRISWOLD, "The Blind"

Russell Maret, Printer

JOY HARJO, "A Map to the Next World"

Norman Clayton, Classic Letterpress

ROBERT HASS, "September, Inverness"

Patrick Reagh, Printer

BRENDA HILLMAN, "Triple Moments of Light & Industry"

Crispin & Jan Elsted, Barbarian Press

JANE HIRSHFIELD, "Ledger"

Peter Koch, Printer

LINDA HOGAN, "Trail of Tears: Our Removal"

Felicia Rice, Moving Parts Press

MARIE HOWE, "Singularity"

Pat Randle, Nomad Letterpress

WILLIAM KITTREDGE, "The specific danger is us...."

Aaron Cohick, The Press at Colorado College

ED LAHEY, "The Blind Horses"

Aaron Parrett, The Territorial Press

BARRY LOPEZ, "In Antarctica...."

Inge Bruggeman, INK-A! Press

EMILY MCGIFFIN, "Cerro Rico"

Tara Bryan, Walking Bird Press

KAY RYAN, "The Niagara River"

Marie Dern, Jungle Garden Press

GARY SNYDER, "Dillingham, Alaska, the Willow Tree Bar"

Jonathan Clark, Artichoke Press

ARTHUR SZE, "Black Center"

Thomas Leech, The Press at the Palace of Governors

GAYLORD SCHANILEC, "In Vento"

Gaylord Schanilec, Midnight Paper Sales

KAZUAKI TANAHASHI, "Extraction"

A calligraphic rendering of the Japanese character for "Extraction"

JAN ZWICKY, "Seeing"

Carolee Campbell, Ninja Press

## QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How much poison are you willing to eat for the success of the free market and global trade? Please name your preferred poisons.
2. For the sake of goodness, how much evil are you willing to do? Fill in the following blanks with the names of your favorite evils and acts of hatred.
3. What sacrifices are you prepared to make for culture and civilization? Please list the monuments, shrines, and works of art you would most willingly destroy.
4. In the name of patriotism and the flag, how much of our beloved land are you willing to desecrate? List in the following spaces the mountains, rivers, towns, farms you could most readily do without.
5. State briefly the ideas, ideals, or hopes, the energy sources, the kinds of security, for which you would kill a child. Name, please, the children whom you would be willing to kill.

—Wendell Berry



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Wendell Berry, "Questionnaire"; Grey Zeitz, Larkspur Press, printer, Monterey, Kentucky

### Trail of Tears: Our Removal



Trail of Tears: Our Removal

### ALL OVER THE WORLD

ALL OVER THE WORLD

ROBERT BRINGHURST

### BLACK CENTER

BLACK CENTER

### INFORMED BY INDIFFERENCE

INFORMED BY INDIFFERENCE

### Dillingham, Alaska, the Willow Tree

Dillingham, Alaska, the Willow Tree

### The Nature of Generosity

The Nature of Generosity

### CORROSION

CORROSION

### TIME CAPSULE FOUND ON THE DEAD PLANET

TIME CAPSULE FOUND ON THE DEAD PLANET

### ONE RIVER

ONE RIVER

### ONE RIVER

ONE RIVER

### Seeing

Seeing

### JANE HENNINGFIELD Ledger

JANE HENNINGFIELD Ledger

### THE NAGASA RIVER

THE NAGASA RIVER

### The BLIND HORSES

The BLIND HORSES

### THE WILD MARSH

THE WILD MARSH

### TRIPLE MOMENTS OF LIGHT & INDUSTRY. BRENDA HILLMAN

TRIPLE MOMENTS OF LIGHT & INDUSTRY. BRENDA HILLMAN

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TRIPLE MOMENTS OF LIGHT & INDUSTRY. BRENDA HILLMAN



Printer Richard Wagener examines his broadside print of Edwin Dobb's text "Corrosion," at Mixolydian Editions in Petaluma.



Gary Snyder signing copies of his poem "Dillingham, Alaska, the Willow Tree Bar", printed by Jonathan Clark at Artichoke Press in Mountain View, California.



Linda Hogan's, "Trail of Tears: Our Removal" on the press at printer Felicia Rice's Moving Parts Press in Santa Cruz.



Felicia Rice closely examines her print of Linda Hogan's, "Trail of Tears: Our Removal" at Moving Parts Press in Santa Cruz.



A copy of Marie Howe's poem, "Singularity" comes off the press at Nomad Letterpress in England; Pat Randle, Printer.