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PÊCHE À LA MORUE ET IDENTITÉ GASPÉSIENNE : ÉTUDE DES
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RÉSUMÉ

Ce mémoire création explore la représentation des industries de la pêche dans le nouveau circuit touristique gaspésien du Tour de la Morue. Ce travail est né d'une curiosité personnelle à vouloir explorer le parallèle entre la composition d'une photographie documentaire et la construction d'une identité nationale. J'explore comment ces deux « cadres » sont présentés comme s'ils étaient exhaustifs et neutres, tout en opérant une exclusion d'éléments qui viendrait vraisemblablement contredire leur uniformité. Je me questionne sur le rôle du paysage au Canada comme facteur d'identité nationale en relation avec l'économie basée sur l'extraction de ressources et donc de la destruction de la nature.

Lors de mes études à l'UQAM, j'ai développé une approche transdisciplinaire de l'image à la convergence d'autres disciplines telles que les études culturelles, les pratiques décoloniales et la philosophie. Ma nouvelle approche photographique, influencée par les philosophes processuels Gilles Deleuze et Felix Guattari, est caractérisée par un mouvement entre certaines disciplines de recherche, créant constamment de nouvelles connexions rhizomatiques entre la théorie et la pratique. Le rhizome devient ainsi une technique d'intégration de la pensée en action, ouvrant de nouvelles possibilités permettant d'aller au-delà d'une approche disciplinaire de l'art. Ce mouvement entre la théorie et la pratique me permet de réfléchir à la photographie en tant qu'entité abstraite, et donc pas limité par l'utilisation de négatifs et papier photosensible. Ceci qui permet la création d'œuvres par une déconstruction du système photographique.

Les œuvres réalisées pendant mes études à la maîtrise prennent forme au croisement de la matière gaspésienne et de la photographie. Influencées tant par les archives gouvernementales que les artéfacts touristiques de la région, mes œuvres juxtaposent ces deux formes dans le but de générer de nouvelles significations. Les textures, l'odorat et les matérialités issus de mes lieux de recherches agissent comme entités mnémoniques libérant des affects pouvant ancrer le travail de terrain dans la salle d'exposition. Il sera question de voir comment les idées voyagent et opèrent dans de nouveaux lieux.

Ce projet est centré sur l'acte de la disparition et de l'effacement. J'explore comment la perte d'un actant, la morue, cause une reformulation d'une situation par son absence et comment ensuite, les narratifs émanant de ces lieux sont modifiés.

Mots clés : Histoire du Canada, territoire, identité, recherche-crédation, ressource naturelle, extraction, pêche, capitalisme, cadrage, nouveau matérialisme, philosophie processuelle, cartographie, photographie, Gaspésie, tour de la Gaspésie, morue

ABSTRACT

This research-creation explores the representation of the fishing industries in a new touristic circuit of the *Cod Route*. This work explores the parallel between the framing of a documentary photograph and the construction of Canadian national identity. I question how these two “framing devices” are presented as both exhaustive and neutral while operating an exclusion of elements that would contradict their uniformity. The project emerged from questioning what are the connections between landscape and Canadian identity, and its relationship to the Canadian economic model centered on resource extraction.

During my studies at UQAM, I came to develop a transdisciplinary practice centred on the image, which sits at the convergence of disciplines such as cultural studies, decolonial studies and philosophy. My new photographic practice, influenced by process philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, is characterized by a move beyond individual disciplines of research, creating constant new connections between them in a rhizomatic approach between theory and practice. The rhizome becomes a way to implement thought into action, that opens up new possibilities beyond a disciplinary approach to art. This movement between theory and practice allows me to think about photography as abstract and not limited to a negative and photographic paper. This allows me to create artworks by deconstructing photography in hope to shed light on its historical and contemporary uses.

The artworks made during my Masters take shape at the intersection of matter from Gaspésie and photography. Influenced as much by governmental and touristic vernacular archives of the region, the works juxtapose these two narratives in hope to generate new meanings. The textures, odors and materialities from my field of research act as mnemonic devices, liberating affects that can anchor fieldwork in the exhibition room. Questions arise such as how these ideas travel through time and space and how they operate in new spaces.

This project is based on the act of disappearing and erasing. I explore how the loss of an actant, the Atlantic cod, cause a reformulation of a situation by its absence and how following this disappearance, the narratives emanating from these spaces are modified.

Keywords: Canadian history, territory, identity, research-creation, natural resource, extraction, fishing, capitalism, framing, new materialism, process philosophy, photography, Gaspésie, Gaspésie tour, cod

OUVERTURE

The narratives that are put forward in framing an imagined community become important as they inform identities and impact how possible futures can be imaged. Language is one of the factors that define identity, alongside cultural, geographical, religious and other shared affinities. Quebec's identity is strongly linked to francophone culture. It acts as an easily recognizable feature which allows Quebec's cultural scene to differentiate itself from the Canadian and American cultural identities (Beaudoin-Bégin, 2015). The French language represents a regenerative matrix of histories, experiences and ideals that is shared amongst who can speak and understand it. It is through this medium that artists have expressed their ideas, that knowledge is spread and policies are made.

Languages are a powerful creative tool, but can also be used for oppression and homogenization. Just think about the place of the English language in the world and its connection, many Indigenous peoples maintained connections across their territories, and their languages cohabited alongside one another: W8banaki (Abenaki), Anishinaabemowin (Anishinaabe/Anicinapek), Atikamekw, Nêhiyawak (Cree), Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet-Passamaquoddy), L'nu (Mi'gmaq), Innu-aimun (Innu), Ilyuw Lyimuum (Naskapi), Wyandot (Wendat) and Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk). The centralisation of the French narrative in Quebec operated an obfuscation of already established Indigenous histories and perspectives (Drapeau, 1993). They exist beyond the white heteronormative frame of colonial Quebec and Canadian identities (Kuokkanen, 2019). They belong to a multitude of alternative understandings alternative to Western hegemonic conceptions of what it means to be Quebecer and Canadian. The important point here is: this realization of the multitude of linguistic

heritages in Quebec prompts me to consider what else lies beyond the frame of national identity.

I grew up in Quebec, taking part in similar activities that have come to shape a shared cultural background: playing hockey or practice ice skating in the Winter, visiting sugar shacks in Spring, camping, hunting or fishing trips during the Summer and Fall. Quebecers often do a field trip in high school to visit Quebec city, attend the Montreal Jazz festival, and go on a family road trip to Gaspésie. These shared activities and spoken languages act as collective cultural baggage that goes into building what Benedict Anderson calls an “Imagined Community” (Anderson, 1983). Combine these activities and the use of symbols of nature by the Canadian government on official documents such as the flag, stamps and coins, and one quickly realizes that maybe there is more to this than meets the eye when thinking about the relationship between nature and Canada’s “image”. This will be my point of departure for this thesis that will delve into the tension between what mythologized constructs are used in framing Canadian identity and what lies hidden behind it. If Quebec and Canadian identities are tied to the natural world, why are their economic policies tied to extractive industry and thus the destruction of nature? If Canadians inhabit truly are “a native land” as the national anthem might suggest, why doesn’t the Canadian Government recognize Indigenous treaty rights?

Having situated the context of my research within this opening section about identities and language, I will now introduce my question for this research-creation : how did the transition of cod fishing to tourism operate in visual culture, taking as an example its (re)presentation in the *Cod Route* ?

In this thesis, I will question Canadian identities through an exploration of the economic transition of cod fishing to tourism in Gaspésie, through the region's

representation of the touristic circuit of the *Cod Route*. I will investigate what lies behind both the tourism and the fishing industries and what is the role of art in shaping these narratives through time and space.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. *State Symbol State Power* will start by laying out the foundation of Canadian identity, its relationship to landscape and to the Canadian economic system centered on resource extraction. I will take a closer look at how these narratives are reinforced through the use of monuments by Parks Canada, relying on the writing of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Vincent Marquis, and artist Thomas Hirschhorn. I will expose how the narrative put forward by cultural institutions, such as the *Gaspésie Museum* and the *Paspébiac Fishing Banks*, favour an anthropocentric and linear historical progression that forgoes the ecological and colonial damage the State has wrought and continues to make. I will delve into my own photographic and mapmaking practice by borrowing the concept of striated spaces as theorized by Deleuze and Guattari (1980). I end this section by exploring my archive-based research approach and how tourism artefacts influence my artmaking process.

In my second chapter *Mutualism*, I explore the relationship between theory and practice that define my rhizomatic research-creation approach. This chapter delves into my collaboration with materials from Gaspésie and how it allows me to create artworks inspired from photography and notions around the document. I do this by putting in dialogue my practice with photographers Taryn Simon, Trevor Paglen and Victor Burgin. This chapter elaborates on my central creative act of this series, the act of erasing. I analyse my methodology and its influence through process philosophy, post-human theory and intersectional cultural studies.

Subverting the codes ends the thesis by critically accounting for my use of text and recurring patterns in the creation of the artwork. I will discuss how I rely on the

“authorised narratives” concept by Jean-Marc Poinot (2008) when creating what I describe as a visual memory play. I bring my work in dialogue with sculptor Jason de Haan and artist and art historian Mark Clintberg who both use texts in different ways to relay important information to the viewer and finally I expand on my installation approach in a conversation with Hannah Doerken’s installative art practice.

CHAPTER I

STATE SYMBOL, \$STATE POWER

This chapter explores the link between landscape and Canadian identity through the paintings by the *Group of Seven*. I discuss how Canada is an imagined community through the work of Benedict Anderson and how it borrowed its values concerning a mythologized wilderness from British imperialism. Next, I take a closer look at how these narratives are reinforced through the role of the monument at the *Paspébiac Fishing Banks*, a Parks Canada historic site in Gaspésie.

I analyze how certain versions put resource extraction narratives forward, while other stories are omitted. I then explore my use of the anti-monument and put it in dialogue with artist Thomas Hirschhorn and authors Vincent Marquis and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. I end with a discussion about my practice of photography and cartography for my research-creation. I will take a closer look at the tourism artefact from Gaspésie and explore its relationship to car culture. Borrowing from the concept of striated spaces as theorized by Deleuze and Guattari (1980), my aim is to open a dialogue on the power of reproductive technologies and how they are used by the Nation State to control the discourse about landscape.

1.1 Au Canada

To look into Canada's relationship to landscape, it is pertinent to first take into account what is often considered to be the first Canadian art movement: *The Group of Seven*. "The artists [of the Group of Seven] and their supporters argued that national identity was inseparable from the geography and climate of Canada's boreal mass" (O'Brian and White, 2017, p. 3). Most prominent in the beginning of the twentieth century, their paintings depicted the vastness of Canadian landscape, perpetuating the idea of wilderness as *terra nullius*. *Terra nullius* was used by colonial powers to describe a territory that was inhabited by Indigenous or other non-European peoples they encountered that was not under the jurisdiction of an European state, disregarding multiple Indigenous peoples as occupants. These narratives were re-emphasized when the National Gallery in Ottawa launched the 1966 exhibition: *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*. This coincided with the preparation for the centennial anniversary of Canada and was a time when the Canadian government delved deeper into what defines this country and thus establishes the foundation for its future. By exhibiting the Group of Seven's paintings, it renewed its vows with the painters and their ideas surrounding landscape. As Erin Manning wrote in her book *Ephemeral Territories* (2003), this implies that a "national rhetoric [...] propagates a language of territory and identity that is borrowed from the ideological assumptions of imperial Britain for which the colonial landscape existed to be consumed, identified and ruled" (Manning, 2003, p. 7). As Manning explains, the rhetoric contained in identity and territory are in collusion with the focus of the 1966 exhibition which maintains the practice of resource extraction that is so prevalent in Canadian society. This enforces a national attitude which tends not to protect nature but to see nature as a resource to be controlled and collected. In the context of the Gaspésie cod fisheries, this resulted in seeing the cod banks not as

something extraordinary to be protected but instead, as a potential source of immense profit.



Figure 1.1 Carmichael, F. (1929). *Lone Lake* [Watercolour]. Recuperated from <http://www.artnet.com/artists/franklin-carmichael/lone-lake-mlde2ws3wp3G9RdIXufUhQ2>

The artworks in the 1966 exhibition, landscape and the matter they encompass, became Canadian symbols. The extended use of the maple leaf in governmental insignia/symbology, such as the illustration on the back of bank notes, on stamps or on the national flag, exemplifies the role nature plays as a national symbol in Canada. In Benedict Anderson's book *Imagined Communities* (1987), the author defines the nation state as an imagined community since "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 1987, p. 6).

It is by keeping the notion of an imagined community in mind that I want to explore how the Canadian government used landscape and natural symbols to put forward the idea of landscape, nature, and wilderness to represent Canadians. This cultural action by the Canadian government depicts all Canadians as living in harmony with nature while simultaneously not engaging with narratives surrounding the fact that the economic success of the country is based on the exploitation, extraction and thus the destruction of nature within its territory.

My research project explores how perceptions of Canada as a benevolent resource state may be experienced by tourists through a constellation of national parks, colonial museums, along with the construction of transport infrastructure (car, train, plane) to facilitate tourist experience.

1.2 Nation and Narration

When entering the *Paspébiac Fishing Banks* historic site, visitors are greeted by a commemorative plate (issued in 2005) which reads:

The Paspébiac fishing banks constitutes a landmark in the history of [Canadian] fisheries [...]. For more than 150 years, the labour of the

fishery workers was defined by the harsh trading practices of the cod companies, which left a deep imprint on the society and economy of the region.

Plates are commissioned by Parks Canada which relies on them for the designation of important events, places or persons of national historic significance. This made me reflect on a linear colonial narrative that is being put forward in this instance. By a “linear” colonial narrative, I am referring to the way colonial bodies present history as a series of events following a specific perspective instead of acknowledging a multiplicity of histories. This historical site is meant to educate visitors on what activities took place there, but there is no mention of both the colonisation of the Mi’gmaqs communities and the annihilation of the Atlantic Cod. This monument’s text, reinforced by other panels throughout the site, act as a state-sanctioned seal of approval, controlling which histories to uphold and which to silence. It recalls for me Rauna Kuokkanen's book *Reshaping the University* (2007), where she addresses intellectual discrimination in the production of knowledge. She asks, “Is it acceptable for a “site of learning to be so ignorant?” (2007, p. 5). This made me reflect on the role of the monument in shaping nationalistic discourse and made me wonder how a monument can be reused in order to tell a different story. In this way, I decided to create my own anti-monument, in the same way as artist Thomas Hirschhorn, to propose an alternative reading of events, questioning both the use of power by the state and the means to achieve it. Per example in his piece *Gramsci Monument* (2013), Hirschhorn designed an outdoor pavilion compromised of various architectural and functional spaces. His artwork was temporarily set-up in the Bronx, New York and when it was dismantled, only ideas are left behind. His use of the monument is meant to criticize hierarchy, linear history and “power imposed from above” (Marquis, 2016).

The Government of Canada's interests are centered on acquiring the land from Indigenous nations in hope of extracting resources (Simpson, 2017). This narrative is nowhere to be found in monuments present at the *Paspébiac Fishing Banks*. I thus decided to tell another story instead. I hope to open a dialogue on how both colonialism and capitalism are based on extraction and assimilation (Simpson, 2017). The text on the plate I produced is painted on wood, in the same way the fishing company would identify their property. This allows for a parallel to be established between methods of identifying both the salt cod boxes and important markers to interact with at the touristic site. In my thesis exhibition, the plate will rest atop a pile of Spanish salt, the same material used in the preservation of cod, but here, it is to reflect on a different legacy. The goal is for the sculpture's shape to hint at a tombstone, evoking the lost futurity of both the Mi'gmaqs and the cod. Futurity can be described as how our present actions and thoughts can impact the future. Finally, I will dip the base in water which will make it absorb the salt as the exhibition continues, to echo the way in which cod wooden boxes whiten over time.

My anti-monument serves as a reminder of the role that monuments play in shaping the understanding of events and histories. Monuments emphasize a specific narrative and are carefully chosen (Marquis, 2016). In this way, the Canadian government elevated segments of the national past as a means to invent tradition with the aim of ruling over an immense territory (Mitchell, 2002), connecting members of the imagined community. My use of salt and wood is deliberate in that they would slowly fade away if put in weathered conditions, in contrast with the traditional material of monuments which are usually made in stone and bronze. Monuments generally serve as anchors through history and facilitate their reading through a linear path (Marquis, 2016). I aim to draw attention to the way imagined communities shape the understanding of past events. I wish to question the tools used to reproduce extractivist values and how they frame certain narratives to reinforce Canadian identity along an unequivocal line.

1.3 Framing Canada

From the production of anti-monuments, I now turn to a discussion of the *Cod Route*, a touristic circuit based in Gaspésie around the Atlantic cod fisheries. It promotes the relationship between cod fishing and identity of the region, offering a series of sites related to the trade. I rely on a documentary approach when photographing the infrastructure listed in the *Cod Route*. My goal in adopting this approach is to establish a parallel between national imaginary and documentary photography and how both are social constructs which influence belief systems. The documentary aspect is important to my project, as I believe there exists a strong correlation between the witnessing of these types of images and the perception of a national identity. In his book *Camera Lucida* (2010), semiotician and theorist Roland Barthes demonstrates that documentary photography exerts a power of authentication that goes beyond its power of representation. This is important when thinking about what constitutes the perception of truth when shaping a national narrative. I wish to explore which events, perspectives and symbols are presented as the “true” history of Canada and what role photography played in authenticating these signs. As Shedden asks, “how do national narratives replicate photography by excluding elements and presenting the resulting information as reality?” (Shedden *et al.*, 1983, p. 193). These omitted narratives, when put forward, would conflict with what the Government of Canada projects through the framing of a national identity both onto its citizens and in international representative forums.

When making images for my project, I borrow concepts from the American documentary tradition of image making. I am referring here to the *New Topographics*, artists such as Stephen Shore, Lewis Baltz and Frank Gohlke. Starting in the 1970s, these photographers documented the man-altered landscape of the American West and

they were known for their interest in vernacular settings and American suburbs. By using similar equipment (medium and large format analog cameras and working with colour negative films), I intentionally slow down my working speed which helps me to create more precise compositions. This allows me to adjust the angle and viewpoint to make sure that there exist a strong dialogue between the architectural elements present in the photograph. I work in the footsteps of artists who made photographs exploring the tension between nature and culture. The aforementioned photographers broke with the tradition of landscape photography which created images of the natural landscape devoid of human activity. They instead depicted landscape and human activity as interconnected rather than separated, documenting the profound impact of industrialisation on the natural world.

Although I acknowledge the documentary tradition on a formal and technical level, I also choose to move away from it in my treatment and presentation of the images. This is a way to break tradition with the movement in the same way the *New Topographics* broke tradition with the photographers before them. I give myself more artistic freedom in the treatment and composition of the images as I do not assume that these images are “truthful” representations of landscape. I question the notion of truth in documentary photography by creating images that are color desaturated and not composed around a specific subject matter, such as a building or distinct element in the landscape. Rather, I choose to depict the ambiguity of a space by including a series of elements instead of one. My intention of framing in this way is to keep the viewer looking deeper into the image, to notice smaller details in the photographs. I try to construct my images around a circular viewing, using different shapes and elements like buildings and horizon lines to point at one another.



Figure 1.2 Bigras-Burrogano, F. (2019). Abandoned mine *Tourist cruise in Percé* [Analog photography on self-adhesive vinyl].

In breaking away from the documentary approach, my goal is to create a mental space in the images that allows for a reflection on both what is seen and how it is seen. The goal is to produce an abstract visual space while creating a dialogue with photography's history and its use in Canadian discourse about landscape. In this way, for my research-creation, I decided to print images on silk instead of paper. Because the fabric is very sensitive to movement in the exhibition space it will allow for the image to move alongside visitors, imitating a sail or the ripples of the sea. The silk, combined with printing at a lower density allows for the images to gain a ghost-like quality. The print density is a lower resolution deprives the information from the viewer and acts as an

disappearing gesture. This erasing act is the central gesture of this project. It aims to establish an echo between the way the artworks are produced and the disappearance of the cod. I will expand on this creative act in the second part of the thesis.



Figure 1.3 Bigras-Burrogano, F. (2020). *Tourist cruise in Percé* [Analog photography on silk].

As I was doing research about photography and the Canadian nation state, I soon realized that there existed a strong relationship between them. Photography evolved concurrently with the nation state as Tagg explains, it was “bound up with the emergence of new institutions (the police, schools, hospitals) and new practices of observation and record-keeping” (Tagg, 2002, p. 5). In the Canadian context, two

elements need to be considered. Firstly, Canada and photography's shared birth years, both taking place during the mid-1800s. Next, photography depended on the silver and gold mined from the gold rush, including during the Klondike gold rush (1896-1899). The exhibition *Gold and Silver*, curated by Luce Lebart (2017) at the National Gallery in Ottawa, shows this correlation. This was an important exhibition for me as it tied further photography to the extraction of resource.

In Gaspésie, a double articulation (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) of the photographic medium can be explored. The double articulation is itself two articulations which respectively bind form and substance. This concept helps to understand the movement of form into substance and vice versa. The double articulation of this project can be found in my use of photographic technologies when creating artworks for this series and photography's historical connection to Gaspésie. Photographic technologies, such as the cyanotype, were used during colonisation to create blueprints of buildings and to map the area (see next section and Figures 1.3 and 1.4). Photography in the area takes a new form through tourism, which came to the area at a later date. Tourism contributed to the photographic double articulation of the region through touristic guides, postcards, and family photo albums. These photographic proofs of existence are reinforced through their circulation as mementos amongst friends and family circles.

1.4. Mapping a disappearance in blue

In looking at the large number of artefacts produced in the region, what really differentiated them from those explored through my artworks in *Hills of Home* (2014-2019) was the extensive presence of the automobile industry in the region's brochures and maps. Tourist guides were organized by highway stops, sponsored by petroleum

companies, and advertisements for motels and garages were found in almost all pamphlets. The *Tour de la Gaspésie* was made possible by the rapid commodification of the automobile (Desjardins, 1999) which in turn allowed for the touristic infrastructure of the region to take place in the same area where the cod fishing industry operated: on the coast. The coast became synonymous with the region as it allowed for the establishment of both tourism and the fishing industry. The rocky coast that enabled these economies was created around 400-360 millions years ago and was transformed over time, by erosion, into the landscape we know today (Desjardins, 1999). Erosion also created the Barachois, which are the pebble beaches found in the region. These beaches, synonymous with Gaspésie, are affectioned both by tourists and fishing communities. They are long and wide and allow for quick unloading and drying of the cods and swimmers, maximizing sun and wind potential.

Having noticed the similarities of elements between tourist maps and cyanotype, I decided to create my own assemblage. The goal is to create an anachronistic piece that would mix elements and artefacts from cod fishing and tourism (Figure 1.4). The recurrent elements I found in touristic maps of the region are the following: they are structured along the Highway 132, they usually include a series of small paragraphs giving historical details in line with the great Canadian linear narrative, they tend to be overcrowded graphically and they are sponsored by petroleum companies. Cyanotype, on the other hand, are quite simple, as the technology of that time would not allow for details in the printing process (Figure 1.3). Cyanotypes were compromised of thin white lines and simple writing on a blue backdrop. Coincidentally, they are about the same size as a small road map when unfolded. I assembled these different notions and proceeded to print the negative of the cyanotype using an ink-jet printer, allowing for greater detail to be transferred to the cyanotype. I then sensitised watercolour paper with cyanotype chemistry, allowing for deeper hue because of the thickness of the paper, then proceeded to print it using sunlight. Cyanotype was an obvious choice, not

only because of its blue colour and historical use in the region but also since it is considered a living chemistry: the print needs to be stored in dark conditions periodically, so as not to fade over time. In this way, I am creating a parallel between both the vulnerability of the fish and the print. They both die out if not cared for. The sun dries the fish and also prints the map. In a similar way to other maps, this piece showcases the *Tour de la Gaspésie* circuit, gives historical information from a colonial standpoint and inform the tourists on what is there to do and what amenities are available.

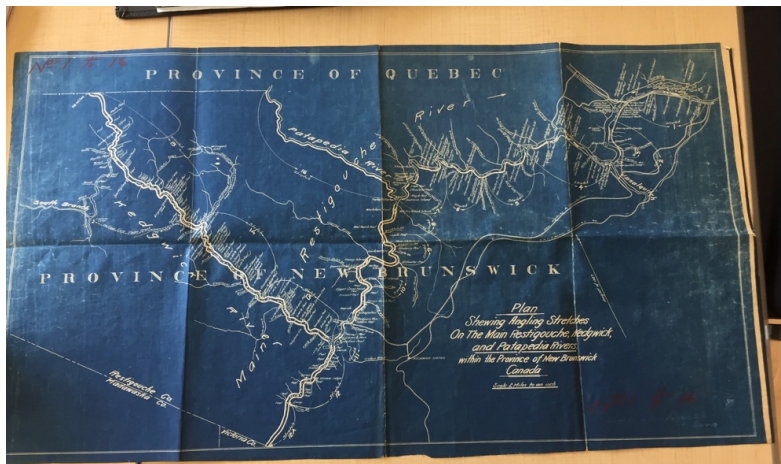


Figure 1.4 Bigras-Burrogano, F. (2019). *Cyanotype from the archives at the BANQ Gaspé* [Photograph].



Figure 1.5 Bigras-Burrogano, F. (2020). *Motoring in Gaspésie* [Cyanotype on paper].

My interest in maps for my project also relates to the way Western map-making is centered on the presentation of a ‘pointless’ portrayal of space (Pickles, 2004). Maps are made from an all-seeing perspective, situating the viewer in an abstract way from above, which is different to how people typically interact in a landscape. The combination of photographs and maps help situate the viewer on multiple planes by showing a perspective from the ground with photographs and from the sky with the maps. Photography and cartography complement each other as when combined they offer an enhanced rendition of the landscape they depict. In their book *A Thousand Plateaus* ([1980], translated into English in 1987 by Brian Massumi), Deleuze and Guattari remind us that map and nation state technologies are meant to organise space.

Striated spaces, as they name them, are meant to quantify the territory for capitalist means, means that are intrinsically linked to organising capital by nation states. By using both cartography and photography in my present project, I aim to establish a correlation between their use in art making and their roots as reproductive technology utilized in extractivist capitalism.

I started this chapter by laying down the foundation of Canadian identity and its relationship to landscape through the exhibitions of the paintings by the Group of Seven. I showed that our relationship to nature is shaped by our reading of these paintings and how they portray landscape as *Terra Nullius*, thus favorizing extractivist economies and ongoing colonial policies. The relationship to the natural is further framed by the uses of natural symbols on official documents, insignia and national agencies, such as on stamps and through Parks Canada, which in turns help to create the imagined community of Canada. I followed with how I deconstruct this narrative through the use of the anti-monument as a way to challenge the linear historical narrative of the nation state. Pursued by an exploration of my documentary photography technique to reveal the limit of the frame, both photographic and sociocultural in terms of Canadian identity, as exhaustive and truthful. I finish this chapter by analysing the close relationship between photography and Canada before exploring the role of artefacts in my practice and how I manipulate maps to let a different perspective emerge.

CHAPTER II

MUTUALISM

For me, working with landscape means working with all matter that it encompasses. As a means to pursue my deconstruction of documentary photography further, I started collaborating with matter in ways that push my practice beyond its bidimensionality. In this chapter, I will start by exploring how I juxtapose materialities from Gaspésie with those from the history of photography, taking a closer look at my use of bone china and salt printing and how I draw inspirations from archival material through Lisa Lowe's book *The Intimacy of Four Continents* (2015). Secondly, I will delve deeper into my practice as I lay out my methodology and describe how my master's project is centered on the erasing act and the notion of affect from Deleuze and Guattari. Thirdly, I follow by drawing from Deleuze and Guattari's ([1980], 1987) concept of the rhizome surrounding the organisation of knowledge and how my practice was influenced by photographers Taryn Simon, Trevor Paglen and Victor Burgin. Following this, I will explore how I integrate notions and concepts from sociology and philosophy to my art making, letting emerge a mutualism between theory and practice. I will put in dialogue the practice of Brian Jungen and Dana Claxton and the thinking of Rosi Braidotti and Anna Tsing to assess how they impacted my research-creation practice. Lastly, I will elaborate on my manipulation of matter and the importance of deconstructing the binary of the living and the inert in my practice alongside thinker Bruno Latour, by focusing on a post-humanist discourse influenced by Jane Bennett, Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Povinelli, aiming to let non-anthropocentric future to emerge.

2.1 Fishing the archives

Desjardins in his book *Histoire de la Gaspésie* (1999) made the following observations : tourism in Gaspésie dates back to the democratization of access to the automobile and is tied to the completion of the first road in the region. The *Tour de la Gaspésie* was initiated in 1929 along with a touristic brochure launched by the Quebec tourist bureau: *Romantic Quebec, Gaspé Peninsula* (Figure 2.1). This region is historically impoverished due to the system of share cropping established by the cod fishing companies, but rapid infrastructure was built to accommodate the tourists which helped to modernise the region. The Bishop of Gaspé urged local families to create souvenirs and be especially careful of the way they prepared food for tourists. They were being asked to showcase creativity and novel ideas to make the Gaspésie touristic circuit as memorable as possible. Local artisans made everything from woven baskets and rugs to sculptures made with wood and other beach objects. On top of creating an additional source of income, it provided a hobby for the long winter months when fishing was impossible. As a result, the tourism industry boomed. Towards the end of the 1960s more than 221 000 cars were circulating in Gaspésie for summer holidays. Unfortunately, tourism ended up suffocating the region as massive Americanization ensued. Gaspésie became the victim of its own success as the smell of French fries slowly replaced the smell of cod and locally made art were traded for goods made abroad.

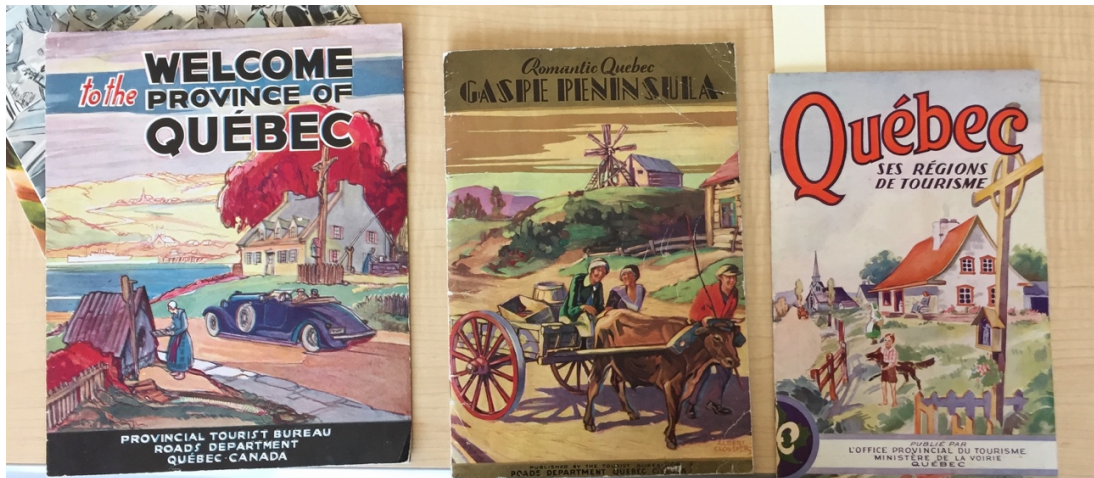


Figure 2.1 Bigras-Burrogano, F. (2019). *Touristic brochure from the archives at the BANQ Gaspé* [Photograph].

The artefacts I found from the region range from postcards and touristic guides to souvenirs. One type of artefacts that can be found over the years were decorative plates. Traditionally made using bone china in England, these plates were eventually produced with cheaper materials such as ceramic when manufacturing moved to Asia. When bone china is fired in the kiln, a chemical reaction occurs which causes the bone ash to liquify and become semi-translucent. What is interesting to note is that the bone ash used in British china most likely came from the massive buffalo hunt of the twentieth century: the near extinction of the American buffalo as a means to displace the Indigenous nations from the plains and prairies (Lawrence, 2019.). Monochromatic, the plates featured imagery drawing from local attractions, such as the Rocher Percé and the patriotic symbol of the maple leaf.

I decided to make my own series of plates as I saw a parallel between the plate acting both as a serving vessel for cod and as a touristic artefact. I experimented with making a series of bone china plates using cod bones instead of buffalo bones. Since cod bones are not as strong as the bones traditionally used, the hypothesis was that they would

sublimate during firing. The result would have been a series of perforated plates, losing their functionality and erasing a portion of their prints. Unfortunately I was not able to complete this part of the project due to unforeseen technical difficulty which had to do with the dexterity required with handling porcelain. I became interested in the illustrations used on these plates and wanted to establish a dialogue between cod fishing and tourism. I imagined that a series of three images, mixing traditional imagery with technology used in cod fishing would be use in the final piece. The centerpiece of every plate would not be a tourist attraction, as seen traditionally, but instead a fishing boat. I think that using the three main fishing vessels used in cod fishing: the barge, the small motorized boat, and the trawler, would establish a strong relationship between concepts tied to Modernity such as growth and expansion and the resulting destruction of nature. When doing the plate in the future I aim to use gradually more bone ash in each plate to reflect the larger catches made available with each new technology. Thus, creating a gradually more perforated plate, as the fishing technology got more efficient at catching cods. I want to establish a physical, material parallel between the greed and short-term thinking of the extractive economies fueling the technological advances which led to the disappearance of the Atlantic cods.

The fabrication of the plate is a parallel to how I ground my studio work in archival material. These artefacts, and their histories, guide me through the different narratives emanating from Gaspésie. My reflection around the archives was largely influenced by Lisa Lowe's book *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (2015):

I do not treat the colonial archive as a stale, transparent collection of facts. Rather as [...] a material bureaucracy of rule, and the historical trace of imperial activities, the colonial archive portrays a colonial governance as a strategic, permeable, and improvisational process: the tireless collection of tables, statistics, measurements and numbers; the unending volumes of records and reports [...] these actively document and produce the risks, problems, and uncertainties that were the conditions of imperial rule (Lowe, 2015, p. 4).

Archives like the one described by Lowe are not transformed into new artworks, they are implicitly taken into account when creating pieces. Colonial archives are for me a way to understand Gaspésie's extraction history through the collection of past documents. They are the foundation and set the direction for the new artworks to be made. Since I'm interested in the transition from cod fishing to tourism, the source materials I transformed are more vernacular in nature. I am particularly interested in documents from the 1950s to 1960s for both their aesthetic qualities, comprised of vibrant colours and mid-century graphic design, and how they inscribe themselves in the time surrounding the centennial anniversary of Canada. Artefacts and works of art cohabit in my exhibitions through an installation approach, I will return to this in Chapter III.

2.2 The emergence of a new power

Long before Canada's 150th anniversary, the first human settlements in what is today called Gaspésie were established around 9000 years ago. Their descendants have occupied this territory in a continuous manner and are now referred to as Mi'gmaqs or L'nu (Gesp'gewa'gi, 2018). The name Gaspésie is a derivative of the Mi'gmaqs name for the region: Gespe'gewa'gi or Gespegoag. Their ancestral territory occupied a portion of Gaspésie and New Brunswick, going down to Nova Scotia and the whole of Prince Edward's Island (Gesp'gewa'gi, 2018). First contact with European settlers happened in 1534 as Jacques Cartier met the first Mi'gmaqs in the Chaleur Bay of Gaspésie. French settlers were not usually living permanently in the area, instead they would come for one or two fishing seasons before heading back to Europe (Desjardins, 1999). The colonial conquest took a drastic change after the French defeat by the British in 1759. Soon after, fishing companies coming from Jersey Island took control

of the fishing industry, establishing permanent infrastructures such as docks, dryers, and general stores. The Robin Company was the largest in the region. They would trade equipment and supplies at the beginning of the season for dry cod in the fall (Desjardins, 1999). One very important commodity that the company brought with them was salt, which was not available in the region and had to be imported. Coming from Cadiz in Spain, salt was needed to cure the cods so they wouldn't spoil during their sea voyage to Europe (Samson, 1984).

Commonly used to preserve food before refrigeration was invented, salt was also used in early photography in salt printing. Salt prints are made with photosensitive allowing for the creation of the first negatives (Sandler, 2002). What is interesting in salt printing is that the images are not fixed, which means that they gradually disappear over time, after exposure to sunlight. Working primarily with photography for my research-creation, I wanted to use salt printing to establish a relationship between the use of salt in the preservation of the cod and also of the image. I decided to make a salt print of a cod fish (Figure 2.2). This print will be placed in a fishing crate during the exhibition. Viewers will be invited to open to crate to see the image, which will cause it to disappear as it is "consumed" by the viewer and by light. In this way, I am drawing a parallel between the overfishing of the cod and the overexposure of the image.

This is a prime example of how I juxtapose materialities from my field of research with those from the history of photography when creating the artworks in this project. The goal is to establish a dialogue between materials from Gaspésie and materials from artefacts used in disseminating knowledge about Gaspésie. This includes matter from photography, and to a lesser extent cartography, as they were both used to control the territory through the colonial era to today (Cook, 2002). combining materialities and techniques from photography with those from fieldwork, I investigate how art is implicated in the understanding and experience of actual places. In a similar way to the

commemorative plates described earlier, these new artefacts play a role in proposing an alternative reading of histories, keeping in mind the relationship between photography, cartography, and landscape.



Figure 2.2 Bigras-Burrogano, F. (2020). *La mer qui meurt* [Salt print].

2.2.1 The erasing act

The idea of a central creative act emerge from my series *Hills of Home* (2014-2019), where I was creating artworks through the act of stratifying and accumulation (Figure 2.4). This was a way for me to draw a parallel between the landscape and exposed geological strata of the region in Alberta, Canada, where the series took place, and the layering of mining and touristic architecture in the city of Drumheller. It was also a poetic way to reference the layering in the soil beneath the city where the coal and fossils to be found.



Figure 2.3. Bigras-Burrogano, F. (2020). *Femur* (from the *Hills of Home* series) [Gold / 3d printed plastic / fossil / pewter and bronze].

The creative act of my thesis project *La mer qui meurt* is the act of erasing. This takes shape either through removing pre-existing imagery and text from found artefacts which I transform, or through my collaboration with matter, which will be explored further in this chapter. I aim to establish an echo between the way the artworks are produced and the disappearance of the cod by making the central gesture of this series one of loss. I wish to draw attention to the impact of the disappearance of the cod and how the region reformulated itself despite its looming absence. I question how cod fishing is being represented today in the transition from fishing to the touristic circuit of the region and how this affects the understanding of both the histories and the landscape of Gaspésie.

Every artwork in my new series has a component that is either removed or is made through an erasing gesture. This takes different shapes, to adapt each piece and technology used in their creation. Photographs are printed on silk to appear underexposed, erasing details and depriving the viewer of its dissemination of knowledge. This not only serves to reverse photography's representational power over landscape, but also echoes the effect of time's passing which characterise archival photographs of the region which are often muted by time. It is similar in my method when working with bone china, the cod ash sublimates through the kiln, making a

portion of the plate disappear when fired. Finally, the salt print literally disappears as the exhibition goes on and as viewers « consume » the cod as its image gradually fades away.

The process of erasing and the act of disappearance are ways to work with the affect of compassion immanent to the pieces. I rely on the intensity of the pieces to charge the experience during the exhibition setting. I refer to the notion of affect as developed by Deleuze and Guattari to bring the artworks in a relational field that extends both the artwork and what is presented, or in this case, what is being lost. My desire is to engage with a sense of care and sympathy towards living matter in context of the loss of biodiversity. In this way, I am also reflecting on other affects, such as fear and greed, as perpetrated by extractivist capitalism. As Italian philosopher Franco Berardi explains in his book *Futurability* (2017), these negative affects are the result of an exercise of capitalist power which reduces the field of possibility by putting emphasis on the accumulation of surplus value through an extractivist economy as *modus operandi* (Berardi, 2017).

2.3 The emergence of a rhizome

I am interested in the work of photographers documenting abstraction and artists whose practice centres on photographing the unseen and the intangible such as Taryn Simon and Trevor Paglen. Simon's series *The American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar* (2007) documented subjects that resided in secret or out-of-view areas in the United States. She employs photography as a way to authenticate places and reveal the role they play in the functioning of America as an imagined community. Adjacent to the images lay an explanatory text which gave valuable information about what is depicted in the photographs. She combines image and text to bring greater awareness to the

notion of access to “truth” and to question the privilege of information. Her work was influential for me since it was an experiment with seeing with photography and was at the same time questioning the current political climate, as the United States was waging war in the Middle East, supposedly looking for secret weapons of mass destruction. She photographed her sites using a neutral composition technique usually centered on the subject.

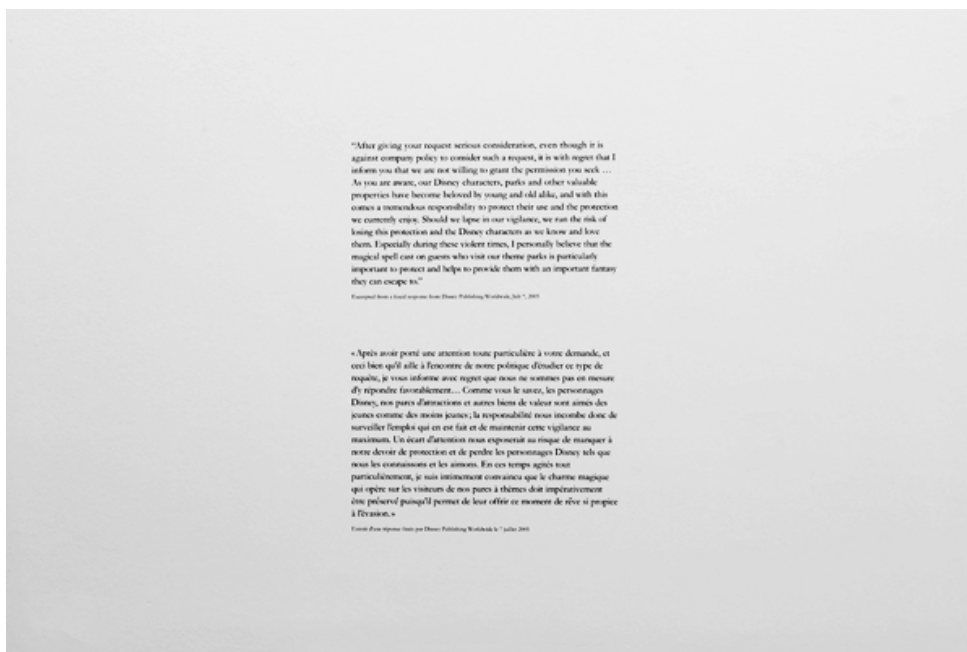


Figure 2.4 Simon, T. (2008). *The American Index of the Hidden and the Unfamiliar* [Installation View]. Recuperated from http://www.tarynsimon.com/installviews/2015_jeudepaume/#5

Paglen's work is interested in the visible and the invisible, often documenting undisclosed military facilities and covert activities. With his series *Limit Telephotography* (2012), he photographed classified military bases. Using high powered telescopes he was able to reveal hidden infrastructures that are invisible to the human eye due to their remoteness. These images have a painterly quality to them as

they are shot from so far away, pushing the limit of photography. The series is as much about photographing the unseen as it is about questioning what constitutes the threshold of the apparatus of vision.

These artists often rely on text accompanying the image to explain what is depicted. Text and images work well together for the dissemination of knowledge but I feel limited by this division and desire to integrate text in more subtle forms. I will return to this in Chapter III where I discuss the authorized narrative of the gallery.

With regard to my own artworks, I wanted to go beyond the duality of text and photographs when exploring the economic transition of cod fishing to tourism. I achieve this by thinking about photography as a system to be deconstructed. An instrumental series utilizing this method is the series *Voyage to Italy* (2006) by Victor Burgin. In his project, he treated Pompeii as a photosensitive plate akin to a negative. He drew a correlation between the ash that preserved the city and the way that a photograph would preserve an image (Figure 2.5). Although his approach is very much rooted in the binary relationship of text and photography, I proceeded to think about photography as a process to be manipulated and not only as a bidimensional medium. This expanded my practice beyond the duality of documentary photography and text and was the foundational thinking that was developed in my research-creation.



Figure 2.5 Burgin, V. (2006). *Voyage to Italy* [Installation View]. Recuperated from <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/events/2799/victor-burgin-voyage-to-italy>

During my studies at UQAM, I came to develop a transdisciplinary practice centered on the image. This new photographic practice, influenced by process philosophy, is characterized by a move beyond individual disciplines of research, creating constant new connections between them, a rhizomatic approach between theory and practice. Deleuze and Guattari in their book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987, translated by Brian Massumi) refers to a rhizome as a space in-between things, actions and disciplines where new connections can emerge. This approach is defined as an opposition to disciplinary way of organising knowledge described as arboreal by philosophers Deleuze and Guattari who remind us that:

any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other and must be.
This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an

order [...] On the contrary, not every trait in a rhizome is necessarily linked to a linguistic feature: semiotic chains of every nature are connected to very diverse modes of coding (biological, political, economic, etc.) that bring into play not only different regimes of signs but also states of things of different status (Deleuze and Guattari, trans. Massumi, 1987, p. 7)

By thinking of my practice as a rhizome I can unshackle myself from a disciplinary-specific approach to art and gain greater artistic freedom. Actors, processes and thinkers can become connected in an heterogenous way, allowing for other futures to emerge. In my practice, I do not wish to establish a hierarchy and a separation between theory and practice. Both activities are in a mutualistic relation as they allow me to bridge a gap between disciplines while creating a crosspollination of ideas.

2.3.1 Between theory and practice

In the context of understanding the transition of cod fishing to tourism in Gaspésie, I relied on a combination of different thinkers and artists. I deployed thinkers outside of the field of art to help me gain a broader understanding of the forces at play, such as global capitalism and settler colonialism, when exploring Gaspésie. I put these ideas into relationship with my archival and studio work. This assemblage allows me to elaborate simultaneously both ideas and possible techniques to explore the economic transition in Gaspésie. A major source of inspiration comes from the *Sochi Project* (2007-2014) a collaborative series made by photographer Rob Hornstra and writer and journalist Arnold van Bruggen. This long-term documentary work depicts the rise and fall of the Sochi Olympics held in Russia in 2014. They used a combination of cartography, photography, and text in the exhibition setting and in the creation of their book *The Sochi Project* (2014) (Figure 2.6). Maps were used to depict large swaths of lands around Sochi and show the relationship of the city to the Balkans. Photography

and text were used in dialogue, similarly to Taryn Simon's practice, both mediums supported one another to give information about Sochi. The project established a multi-layered network of different impacts the Olympics had on various communities in and around the town of Sochi. Underlying the whole project is a critique of Russia and its corruption. This influenced me to tackle larger issues in my practice and explore them over longer periods of time. In this way, I began thinking about cod fishing and tourism and what kind of legal framework such as laws and tax breaks were put in place to make these economies flourish. In my project, I am asking what type of governmental infrastructure was mobilized and put in place for the maintenance of intertwined economies of cod fishing and tourism in Gaspésie.



Figure 2.6 Hornstra, R. and van Bruggen, A. (2014). *The Sochi Project: An Atlas of War and Tourism in the Caucasus* [Installation View]. Recuperated from <https://collectordaily.com/rob-hornstra-and-arnold-van-bruggen-the-sochi-project-an-atlas-of-war-and-tourism-in-the-caucasus-aperture/>

By studying the Gaspésie region and its long tradition of cod fishing, I explore how the histories were told and from which perspective, in a way to understand the past, the

present, and what could be imagined as a possible future. I recognize that by working with history and, by extension, its archives, the narratives presented are embedded within colonial and extractive frameworks (Lowe, 2015). In Canada, this leads to the exclusion of Indigenous peoples as active participants in dominant history (Simpson, 2017). This is why I read the archives and the histories of Gaspésie through a critical lens, embracing decolonial epistemologies that go beyond the linear narrative put forward by the Canadian settler colonial state. For me, a decolonial practice is a way to fight the hegemony of the colonial state and present an alternative reading of history as a multiplicity and not history as conquest. I do this by incorporating decolonial modes of thinking at the intersection between art and history alongside Indigenous scholars and artists.

The practices of Dana Claxton and Brian Jungen were very influential for incorporating a critique of colonialism within my work. Claxton juxtaposes historical and contemporary narratives in order to draw various correlations between the two. Her work *Mustang Suit* (2008) is a series of five photographs exploring contemporary Indigenous families and the mustang. The portraits show them interacting with their own form of the mustang which ranges from a Ford Mustang to a live pony. These complex images question cultural appropriation and the performance of identity by juxtaposing contemporary Mustang with cliché of indigenous culture often seen as static (Priegert, 2008). This influenced me to think about history as being in dialogue with the present which always needs to be recontextualized.

Brian Jungen's deconstruction and reconstruction of consumer goods into sculptural work helped me redefine the boundaries of what materials can manipulate. Drawing strongly from museology and its institutional authority, Jungen's practice helped to create a dialogue between artworks purchased by cultural institutions and mass-produced goods. His work *Cetology* (2002) is created from white plastic chairs

assembled in a way to resemble a whale's skeleton. In this way he is operating a critique of global capitalism relying on the emphasis of mass-produced goods.

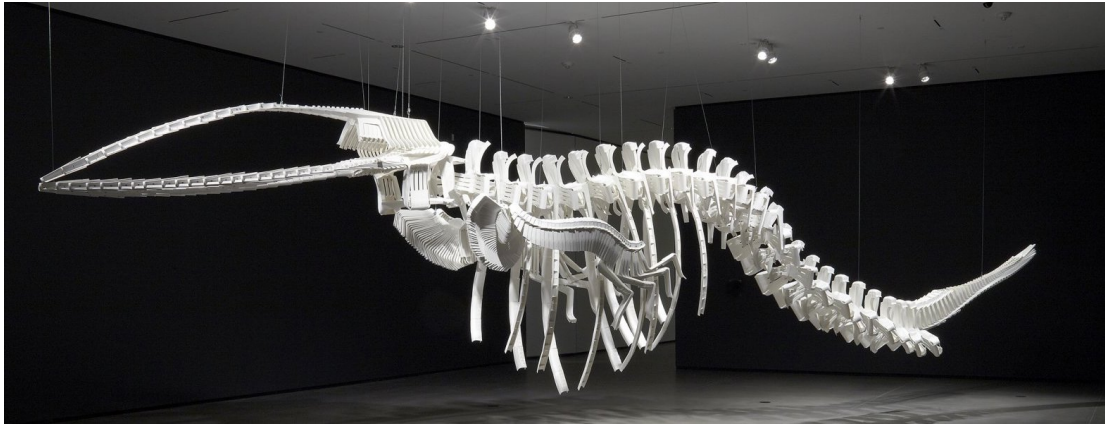


Figure 2.7 Jungen, B. (2002). *Cetology* [Installation View]. Recuperated from <https://catrionajeffries.com/artists/brian-jungen/works/brian-jungen-cetology-2002>

As I anchor my work deeply in a critique of capitalism and its extractivist mode of production, I turn to a post-humanist mode of thinking for support. This allows me to deconstruct modernist binary thinking and anthropocentrism, favoring a multiplicity of rhizomatic connections instead of a series of dualities and oppositions. The philosopher Rosi Braidotti defines the post-humanist approach as a deconstruction of the human and its exceptionalism, favoring a dialogue that creates a connection between what has been defined as the other (Braidotti, 2018). For Braidotti, post-humanist thinking also includes a deconstruction of what is constituted as alive or inert, as both are vulnerable to the power of capitalism (Braidotti, 2013). Anna Tsing's *Mushroom at the End of the World* (2015) is another precious ally when trying to imagine a world beyond extractivist capitalism and neoliberal economics. Tsing's ideas explore the relation between capitalist destruction and collaborative survival through the lens of the

Matsutake mushroom. This influenced me to look at events through other-than-human and more-than-human actors and how they propose an alternative reading of history and events.

2.4 Materialities

I often feel limited by both the linguistic frame of reference, as feminist scholar Rosi Braidotti puts it, and the partial explanatory power of the image. This semiotic understanding of art and text feels limited to me as it rejects an empirical way of knowing that is tied to materialist and affect-driven ontologies. Braidotti prefers a “more materialist route to deal with the complexities of the posthuman” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 39). I can identify three sources of matter in my work and I refer to this grouping of matter as actors. Borrowing from Bruno Latour and the Actor Network Theory he helped to develop, actors are defined not as the source of an action but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming toward it (Latour, 2005, p. 46).

The first *mattering*, meaning what matter can do, is the one found de facto in nature which combines the biodiversity of the region to both elemental and periodical components. These are the actors that exist without human interventions and are at the centre of most of the artworks humans create. In Gaspésie this includes water, salt, cod, and rocks. These materialities will act as a mnemonic conduit for the works in my future exhibition space to Gaspésie. I hope to put these aspects in dialogue with a second set of mattering: what I call composite material. These are the archives and artefacts found when doing fieldwork, such as official and vernacular documents, but also the man-made landscape and its infrastructure. I see the archives as traces of the imperial colonial system of governance which helps me to navigate the legal and judiciary framework that established the cod fisheries over time. In Gaspésie, this

means a juxtaposition of French and British infrastructures composed on the ongoing erasure of Mi'gmaqs systems of governance, as seen in Chapter I.

The third set of mattering comes from the medium of photography. I delve into its histories and draw inspiration from an array of materials and techniques to help me in establishing correlations between the medium's use in the region and the establishment of extractive and tourist economies. By adding photography to the assemblage of mattering in my master's project, I propose a re-reading of events, questioning ideas around reality, representation, and the dissemination of knowledge. I explore how national narratives are constructed and what role does photography play in history as a marker of significant events?

2.4.1 Deconstructing the living and the inert

As I articulated my work around a critique of Western extractivist economies, I came to the realization that what needs to be addressed is the notion of *the other*. If the white heterosexual male signifies the norm in current Western society, than anybody or anything else becomes this *other* (Braidotti, 2013). What lies at the core of this division is the notion of *other* as a pejorative difference, something less than the human standard, a white male. For this section, I will focus on the non-human *other* and how my collaboration with matter is anchored in a post-humanist approach. Rosi Braidotti describes the post-human turn as

An enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' others. This practice of relating to others requires and is enhanced by the rejection of self-centered individualism. It produces a new way of combining self-interests with the well-being of an

enlarged community, based on environmental inter-connections
(Braidotti, 2013, p. 48).

The key idea for me here is the constantly emergent connectivity between human and non-human actors. This multiplicity which goes against modern binary thinking favours a rethinking of the role of humans within larger ecologies, not as the most important member but as an element cohabiting with so many others. Post-humanist thinking is inscribed in a nature–culture continuum, similarly to a “carbon imaginary” (Povinelli, 2016), or a world full of “vibrant matter” (Bennett, 2010).

At the centre of my approach lies the deconstruction of anthropocentric thinking from the Enlightenment and its legacy as argued by (Braidotti, 2013): Descartes’s Cogito and Kant’s “Community of reasonable beings”, differentiating humans from other animals because of the ability to reason, as legible to Europeans. Braidotti explains that this mode of thinking extends itself further in the division between living and inert matter, as inert matter is not seen as self-organising and thus is less than its living counterpart. This binary logic is at the core of the current extractivist worldview as it gives humans the right to use inert matter for personal economic gain, with little regard to the carbon imaginary they are participant within. Deconstructing the hierarchy of the living and the inert became an important factor in surpassing human exceptionalism, favoring often neglected non-anthropocentric actors. Elizabeth Povinelli, in her book *Geontologies* (2016), states that the division between the biological and the inert is a mechanism of late liberalism that seeks to exclude Indigenous epistemologies giving living qualities to all matter. In this way, instead of focusing my research on the already established literature about the unemployment of fishermen linked to the disappearance of the cod, I wanted to switch the perspective and visit the events and territory from a decolonial perspective of multiple actors and their shared trajectories. In my artworks, my goal is to speak with these other actors and not to objectify them or speak on their behalf, to paraphrase filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha (Trinh, 2011).

In this chapter, I analysed the transitions from fishing to tourism through the angle of materiality at the intersection of theory and practice. I started with examples of my work which are tied to the archives from tourism and how they can be transformed through my collaboration with matter. I followed with the exploration of the creative act of this series which is one of erasing and how I propose that it can release affects of compassion to charge the viewers. In the third section, I laid out my methodology influenced by philosophers Deleuze and Guattari and how it pushed my photography beyond the binary of image and text resulting in a transdisciplinary practice centered on the image. I followed with how I welcome thinkers outside of the art world to help me gain a broader understanding of the forces at play when exploring Gaspésie, such as global capitalism and colonialism. This led me to shed my modern heritage by deconstructing human exceptionalism for non-anthropocentric futures to emerge.

CHAPTER III

SUBVERTING THE CODES

Moving beyond the binary of text and image as discussed by Braidotti doesn't prescribe the use of texts in the creation of artworks. In a similar way that it is found in the *Cod Route*, text is used in this series to relay important information to the viewer such as the artworks titles and their materials. I borrow the codes found across the *Cod Route* as a way to infiltrate the institution and make visible the way (and which) information is shared. In this chapter, I will explore my use of texts in the series and how I create recurring patterns of important actors and matters through my installation practice. It will delve deeper into the different frames of references that I rely on to critique the art institutions and bridge a parallel between Gaspésie and the final exhibition. In the first section, I will explore how I rely on the "authorised narratives" concept coined by Jean-Marc Poinot (2008), a French historian and curator known for his institutional critique, when creating what I describe as a visual memory play. I will reflect on my work in relationship with Canadian Prairie artist Jason de Haan. I will follow with two examples of how I use the map legend as an index of important actors in this series through the use of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "striated space". I will explore how an artwork changes when it is offered as a gift, by relying on a comparison with the artwork *Meet me in the Woods* (2010) by Mark Clintberg. I will end this chapter with a short paragraph describing my installation approach in conversation with Hannah Doerken's practice.

3.1 Forensic memory play

According to my method of working with matter and archives from Gaspésie, it seems appropriate to also borrow the museological codes from institutions in the region. I decided to borrow from *the Gaspésie Museum* as its permanent collection includes an exhibition about the cod trade and is featured in many publicity documents as an integral part of the *Cod Route*. This allows me to permeate the institutions by establishing a relationship between how they present texts and artworks and how to appropriate their museological framework is in the creation of artworks for this series. To guide me, I rely on the concept of the authorised narrative (2008) developed by Jean-Marc Poinot. Poinot describes the authorised narratives as the texts accompanying artworks. These narrative devices include: the artwork's description, found either on the wall or in a gallery pamphlet, the map legend, the project proposal, the artwork's label and any interview or declaration made by the artist. In my project, I borrow from the codes used in *The Gaspésie Museum* which consist of descriptive texts, map legends, and labels. These texts situate the viewer by giving valuable information on the artefacts presented and their narrative, such as their material, name and historical significance.

I rely on these texts to give away important information about the pieces which have the potential to change the reading and interpretations of the artworks. Similarly to Canadian artist Jason de Haan whose unassuming work can go unnoticed if the exhibition label is not read. If we take for example his work *Cannon Ball* (2012) (<https://sequences.is/Jason-de-Haan-1>) which consists of coins from around the world

which he then melted and cast in a shape of a cannon ball. Discovering the nature and history of the material, and the transformation process they went through drastically changes our reading of the work. In a similar way, I rely on text to list the transformation and collaboration with matter which are at the centre of the artworks. Over the course of viewing multiple artworks in the series, I hope that the viewer might be able to identify a recurrent motif. This motif is not only a constellation of actors based in tourism and fishing around Gaspésie but also of a series of transformations that are based in the act of the cod disappearing, as discussed in Chapter II. These erasing gestures can come to light because the viewer will have access to the original archives and thus, perhaps a difference might be noticed between the two. This is my method to create a kind of visual memory game, by which I propose to activate the visitor's curiosity. If following these cues, the viewer might become familiarized with the alternative narrative I propose. This is also a way for me to slow down the pace of the consumption of artworks, as it takes time to follow the individual clues in the visual memory play, if the visitor chooses to engage with the artworks. The viewer is invited to discover slowly and pay attention to the subtle details in and around the artworks, so as to identify recurring elements coming from both fishing and tourism industries. The separate pieces come together as an installation which I will extrapolate on further in the last section of this chapter.

For my series, I use text in the same way as it is used in *The Gaspésie Museum*, to further establish a relationship between my field of research and the artworks. I rely on these texts to tell an alternative story, once which is not anthropocentric and is critical of the unsustainability of cod fishing in Gaspésie. Similarly to the anti-monument, which questions the state sanctioned narrative enforced by commemorative plates, I rely on textual components within the artworks to draw attention to the artwork's material with the purpose of proposing an alternative reading of Canadian histories and its colonial and extractivist agenda.

3.2 The map legend as an index of important actors

I realized that a common feature of road maps and touristic artefacts from Gaspésie is their use of map legends/keys to inform visiting tourists about different activities or businesses found in the region. Map legends/keys are useful not only because they give visual information on the symbols used in maps, but also because they enable the inclusion of multiple layers of infrastructure. In reference to the tourist maps of Gaspésie, one can notice two main sets of infrastructure one on top of another: sights/sites of interest, such as museums or national parks and private businesses, such as gift shops, hotels, and restaurants. Most often these private businesses are actually the one issuing these maps for free as a way to get their publicity in the hands of the many tourists visiting the region. I decided to play with the notion of the map legend/key when creating artworks as an index of the key concepts of the piece: showing the different layers of cod fishing and touristic infrastructure present in the same territory.

I use the map legend/key in two artworks: the cyanotype, as described in Chapter I, and in the diner placemat that I will discuss here. In the cyanotype work, the map legend/key gives the location of car-centred infrastructure in the region, such as gas stations, motels and garages. My aim is to point to the predominance of car culture for tourism in Gaspésie and its dependence on fossil-fuels. From the creation of the first highway until today, tourism in the region is highly dependent on the car and road accessibility. As described in the first chapter, during the high point of tourism in Gaspésie, it was common to find tourist brochures sponsored by the petroleum companies; such as Esso, BP, Shell and Imperial Oil.

The second artwork which contains a map legend is the placemat. I created a similar piece for my *Hills of Home* series (2014-2019) in which I put together an assemblage of advertisements from the area to form a diner placemat (Figure 3.1). Restaurants in Drumheller, Alberta, use the placemat as a vehicle for promoting local businesses and tourist activities. They greet the customers as they sit down to eat, acting both as a guide and a mat to keep the table tidy, allowing for a faster turnover of customers. I found similar placemats in Gaspésie which persuaded me to create another one for this series (Figure 3.0). When making a place mat, I take inspiration from the graphic aesthetic of the ads found in the region, as I did for the placemat from my series *Hills of Home*.

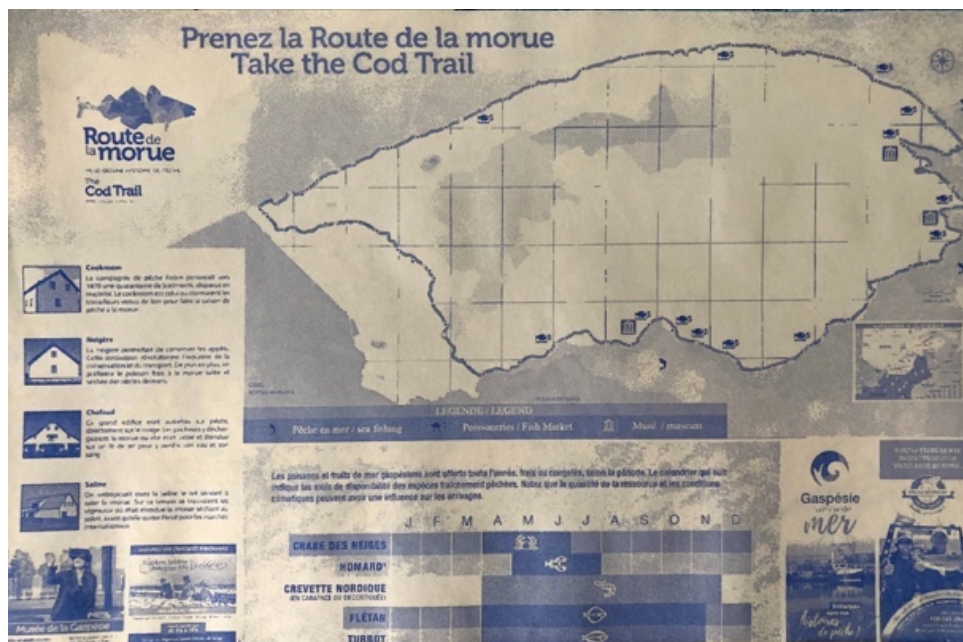


Figure 3.0 Bigras-Burrogano, F. (2020). *Placemat #2* [Photopolymer on newsprint].



Figure 3.1 Bigras-Burrogano, F. (2020). *Placemat #1* [Photopolymer on newsprint].

I created a placemat of publicities from Gaspésie featuring ads from local fishmongers and museums that can be found when driving across the *Cod Route*. Inspired by the concept of the striated space by Deleuze and Guattari, a means to quantify and control the territory for extractivist means, I created a map using a combination of archival materials and included a grid overlay which delimits the continent from the ocean. This is a way for me to draw attention to the use of cartography that numerically organizes and controls the landscape. In addition, I added a series of publicities centered around fishing. These publicities mention an array of different activities related to fishing where one might expect to see cod. It is interesting to think about a cod route that could exist without any physical contact with the Atlantic cod. In this artwork, I question how cod is a symbol to lure tourists to the region, despite the fact the fish is almost extinct.

To create this placemat I relied on photopolymer printmaking. I chose this method of printing because of its materiality and its relationship to photography. To create a

photopolymer plate, the plate is exposed to sunlight under a negative. After exposing the plate, what has not been exposed is eroded and washed away. This act of erosion is a way for me to poetically recall the formation of the Gaspésie coast, as it was created through erosion by the sea and wind as discussed earlier in this text. What is not exposed is then washed off from the plate. I decided to print this image with ultramarine blue ink because of the deep colour of the sea around Gaspésie. Newsprint was chosen for paper to evoke the inexpensive and disposable promotional prints given to tourists. I have produced a limited edition of 154 prints, reflecting Canada's age as a settler colonial country at the time of creating of this edition. This allows me to draw a parallel between the extractivist narrative put forward in Gaspésie and its relationship to Canada's extractivist policies. These prints will be given away during the exhibition in the same way that the tourist material is given to tourists in Gaspésie. The prints not only act as a mnemonic device to remember the exhibition and its central themes but also to renegotiate the relationship with artworks through gifting. I feel akin to the way Mark Clintberg describes the poster component of his project *Meet me in the Woods* (2010) (Figure 3.2), which was composed of two aluminium signs and a set of 3000 offset posters. He describes this as an opportunity for the viewer to post this message in their own way, with their own system of meanings. By bringing these placemats home, the viewers can renegotiate their relationship with it.



Figure 3.2. Clintberg, M. (2010). *Meet me in the woods* [Poster]. Recuperated from <https://cargocollective.com/markclintbergcom/Meet-me-in-the-woods>

3.3 *in situ*, installation, institution

Throughout my master's thesis, I have described individual artworks and the methodologies employed in the process leading to their creation. For me, they represent a series of individual pieces to be presented together in an installation format. It is only by putting them in conversation that we can experience their full potential through the visual memory play that constitutes the motif of the "event". Borrowing from Deleuze, events are part of the process of becoming and allow for a new line of inquiry to emerge. They are tied to both the physicality of the exhibition and the affect of compassion which has me in the production of the artworks, which I hope will resonate with the

viewer long after the exhibition. With an installation practice, there isn't a prescribed scenography to follow and viewers are invited to interact with the pieces in whichever order they wish, as we can find in the artistic practice of Hannah Doerksen. Her eccentric multimedia installations are vernacular pieces and artworks. Various elements of art history, pop culture, anthropology and philosophy cohabit in her installation practice in an attempt to complicate the references and reading of what is presented. The installation practice of Doerksen contains curious visitors in the infinite feedback loop of details and possible echoes between the infinite different possibilities of combinations of objects present. Much like my own work, a dialogue is created between the items and is reinforced through subtle motifs that allude to a central theme or narrative plot. The installation nature of my work allows for a heterogeneous dialogue between the artworks, guided by the visual memory play.



Figure 3.3. Doerksen, H. (2015). *I have come to believe we all gonna drown* [Installation view]. Recuperated from <http://www.hannahdoerksen.com/i-come-to-believe-we-all-gonna-drown.html>

I draw inspiration from actors and archives in Gaspésie and I will base my forthcoming thesis installation on the museology from *the Gaspésie Museum*'s museological display and interpretive devices. This is a way for me to both address various institutional frameworks and deconstruct their ideological convention. I aim to put them in dialogue to let new narratives emerge. At the forefront of this project is the desire to explore the friction between the relationship of landscape to Canadian identity and Canada's economic model based on the extraction of resources, this is explored through the economic transition in Gaspésie from cod fishing to tourism. Secondly, there is the deconstruction of duality of what constitutes self-organising or living matter and inert matter. I explore this through my collaboration with matter and my critique of extractivist policies. Finally, there is the critique of linear narrative that I analyse through an alternative frame of reference through the use of texts and information panels.

I reveal in this chapter that the artworks are as important as the authorized narrative present when exhibiting them. I opened this chapter by exploring my utilization of legends/keys as indexes of important actors and how they help viewers to identify clues that lead to a visual memory play through an exploration of two artworks. Following this, I exposed my installation practice and how it is tied to deconstructing multiple frames of references. I rift on museological codes, and ideological convention as a way to make boundaries and frames apparent, this in turn helps me to deconstruct them through my artwork and offer a critique of the systems of power at play.

CODA

La mer qui meurt is in the process of taking shape around the materialities, archives, and narratives emanating from Gaspésie. I am learning to weave them into the creation of artworks, every piece acting as a culmination of individual research and realizations. Over the course of my two year studies, I have explored the economic transition of cod fishing to tourism through its representation in the *Cod Route*. I came to develop a transdisciplinary approach centered on the image, which sits at the convergence of disciplines including cultural studies, visual arts, and philosophy. Influenced by process philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, I deconstructed photography in a rhizomatic approach, creating constant new connections between theory and practice. What seemed to me as two different phases before my masters, archival research and studio work, are now understood as one continuous process of research-creation. The constellation of artworks that remain are a testament to how my practice has evolved and how I have embraced these new immanent potentials. I have learned to balance planned execution of artworks with a collaborative approach with matter that lead to experimentation through relinquishing control over the creation process and the visitor's experience of the artworks.

This project started by understanding the foundation of Canadian identity, its relationship to language and landscape and what role art has plays in this. I delved into the connections between landscape and Canadian identity and the latter's relationship to the Canadian economic model centered on resource extraction. I explored the coast of Gaspésie, looking at various cultural and historical sites, determining in particular how their framing favoured an anthropocentric and linear historical narrative let by settler communities to the silencing and continuing Mi'gmaq histories. I pursued this

interrogation by deconstructing and proposing an alternative understanding of past events through the creative act of erasing. This, in turn, I hope, will release affects of compassion to charge the viewer. One of the central pillars of the project has always been to question how national identity is framed and how it is presented as both exhaustive and neutral while operating an exclusion of elements that would contradict their uniformity. By revisiting notions such as reality, objectivity and the nature/culture duality, I have learned that agency is distributed, leading to renounce human exceptionalism and binary thinking. This led my practice to shed its modern heritage and focus of the emergence of non-anthropocentric futures. These futures come to challenge neoliberal affects of fear and offer a range of possibilities beyond the accumulation of capital and the expansion of markets. Through critical and creative practice, *La mer qui meurt* directly addresses the socio-ecological catastrophe of today within a re-imagining of possibilities centered on vital affects of emancipation and hope.

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