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What is Environmental Consciousness? A Thematic Cluster



## Environmental Traces

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# Environmental Traces

by prOphecy sun



## *About the Author*

*Dr. prOphecy sun is an interdisciplinary performance artist, queer, movement, video and sound maker, mother, and current Jack and Doris Shadbolt Fellow in the Humanities at Simon Fraser University. Her practice celebrates both conscious and unconscious moments and the vulnerable spaces of the in-between in which art, performance, and life overlap. Her recent research has focused on ecofeminist perspectives, co-composing with voice, objects, surveillance technologies, and site-specific engagements along the Columbia Basin in the BC region and beyond. She performs and exhibits regularly in local, national, and international settings, music festivals, conferences, and galleries and has authored several peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and journal publications.*

## Environmental Traces

### *prOphecy sun*

*The experience of the fires materialized in the haze of smoke that travelled vast distances on global jet streams, prompted advisories for children, elderly, and the immunocompromised in local meteorological reporting, and carried particulate matter that reduced visibility and darkened even the longest days of summer. While the sun was rising at 5:55 am in some of the northern parts of the province, sensor-controlled streetlights remained lit until well into the late morning.*

—Caitlin Chaisson

The inaugural issue of *Ecocene Arts* brings together international contributions from artists, writers and creatives working within a wide range of disciplines from across the arts and humanities. The urgency of the climate crisis has amplified long standing environmental tensions and conversations in our world. However, to focus on the environment in the midst of a global pandemic is difficult. Lockdown, incubation period, quarantine, curfew, shelter-in-place orders, social distancing, pods, hotspots, red zones, clusters, community transmission, PPE—these are all things at the forefront of everywhere, and they are also uniquely environmental. What is for certain in this moment is how quickly the cultural imagination and social norms can be transformed. For instance, how do we care for one another? How do we cope with isolation? How do we see, hear or feel? How do we reimagine our dreams and our understandings of the natural world? And so, taking up Haraway's prompt to stay with the trouble (Haraway 2016), I have created a set of daily logs to manage my grief. Each of these ruminations are an exploration of the openings and entanglements of this time (see Fig. 1).

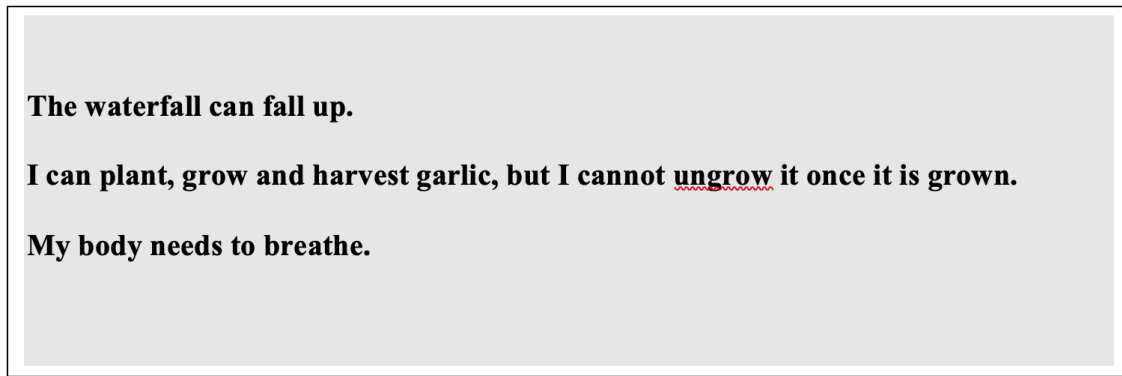


Figure 1. sun, prOphecy. *Rumination 1*, 2020.

Taking this as our starting point, this issue invites new ways of thinking about material feeling bodies, acts of care, temporality and modes of production within and outside of the institution. This selection presents three important artworks, *Carbon Studies: Walking in the Dark* (2019); *Survival Kit for the Anthropocene—Trailer* (2015), and *An Ecosystem of Excess* (2014) that speak to the current social, cultural, and environmental moment. The works are rich with discursive and narrative tensions, inviting critical reflections on complicity, denial, disaster, extinction and hope.

**Caitlin Chaisson** writes about Genevieve Robertson’s interpretive drawings of fossils from the Carboniferous Period of the late Paleozoic era in the Kootenay region of interior British Columbia. Using carbon-based compounds and other materials collected from the forest floor and landscape, the artwork depicts the complex and intertwined process of retrieving speculative and extinct lifeforms. Borrowing from Chaisson, the drawings explore ruptures, entanglements and “expose the filaments that conjoin the rapid pace of extraction to the long duration of ancient life forms” (2020).

**Maja Smrekar** enacts survival practices to counter impending devastation. *Survival Kit for the Anthropocene—Trailer* consists of photographic prints, a manifesto, and a mobile tool kit that also functions as a water reservoir (Smrekar 2015). The sentiment here is not lost: extinction comes to us all, sooner or later (Aksioma 2020).

By 2040 our oceans will be filled with 29 million metric tons of plastic pollution (Parker 2020). Daily, plastics are swallowed, eaten, rubbed onto and absorbed through the skin, live in our blood stream, organs and bodies (Waring et al. 2018). This is a staggering dilemma. **Pınar Yoldaş’s** *An Ecosystem of Excess* (2014) mirrors some of these tensions introducing variegated, wildly colored bodies, marine reptilia, insects and other life forms who are endowed with organs that can metabolize plastics and survive apocalyptic environments. Complicating the demise of humankind, this work seeks joy in illumination, vibration, and transference.

Together, these interdisciplinary contributions expose the complex and enmeshed ways environmental traces are encountered, collected, processed, and transformed through bodily, affective, technological and artistic means. Building on Rosi Braidotti's emergent strategies of becoming and emptying out (2014), these works collectively forge creative and intuitive moments of space giving that pollinate the terrain of the environmental imagination.

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