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Ecocene Arts



Migratory Horizons

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Migratory Horizons

by prOphecy sun



About the Artist

prOphecy sun (Ph.D.) is an interdisciplinary performance artist, queer, movement, video, sound maker, and mother. 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 region and beyond. sun hosts Tapes and Beyond on Kootenay Co-op Radio. 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.

Migratory Horizons

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Caring means becoming subject to the unsettling obligation of curiosity, which requires knowing more at the end of the day than at the beginning.

—Donna Haraway

Recent extreme weather events, heat domes, and atmospheric rivers in western Canada; ice winter storms in Texas; severe droughts in Yemen; cyclones in East Timor; permafrost melts in Siberia's long frozen tundra; deadly flooding in the Amazon Rainforest; and sandstorms in Mongolia have revealed yet again the immersive relation between humanity and non-human systems. Weather, climates, and migrations, profoundly shape and bring into view not only the impact of human systems, but how these systems are dependent entirely upon biological architectures that are thinly understood. The affective resonance of eco-catastrophe and environmental forces serve as a stark reminder that human existence is enmeshed within a set of larger realities.

Pastorally comforting and idealized images of open fields with shepherds herding nomadic goats, sheep and cows have long dominated art. Shepherding requires continuous acts of care, protecting, comforting, and feeding the flock, whilst migrating across distance. Pastoral formulations remind us about the importance of care work that is complex and extends beyond animal bodies and through acts of connection with other bodies, species, and things. As Maria Puig de la Bellacasa poignantly argues, “the livelihoods and fates of so many kinds and entities” are our collective responsibility (2017, 1). What she suggests is that care work ought to extend to all facets of earthly existence, not just what is comfortable, convenient, or close to touch. While the pastoral carries with it a lineage of historical and contested baggage, it also holds out generative possibilities to consider ways of thinking about the environment beyond the immediate human cycles of need, use, and desire.

The third installment of “Ecocene Arts” introduces a range of intersectional and exploratory perspectives, geological epochs, migrations, temporalities, species entanglements, and rewilding practices. This selection presents five pieces—*Mineral Garden* (2020); *Agents of Change: Documenting Arctic Rewilding within the Anthropocene* (2019); *Flyways, Highways, and Byways* (2021); *Flipping the Island* (2020); and *Life like Us* (2021). Together, these interdisciplinary contributions engage with critical contemporary issues and topics that hover with and linger through processes of collective grief. They ask us to consider positions of domination over the land, post-anthropocentric worldviews, and imaginative and sustainable futures. Can the pastoral open our understanding of care? How does it fuse and break loose temporalities future and past? Where can we see possibilities of mutual care that extend to inter-species relationships?

The first piece, from **Randy Lee Cutler** and **Andrew Rewald**, illuminates the potent shared life-power of plants and minerals. Through a mix of archival objects, collages, posters, mystical and sonic elements and taxonomies, their multidisciplinary project *Mineral Garden* (2020) presents speculative stories about the diverse and interconnected geological systems and botanical organisms that surround us and how they are essential for our existence. Care here is wrapped in layers of gravity and expansive, intertwined, and complex systems.

Rewilding practices reintroduce species into geographies, social histories, and sites in a conservation effort. **Tara Nicholson’s** interdisciplinary study about rewilding and de-extinction projects in the Pleistocene Park in Russia offers another take on practices of care through various epochs of time. The piece focuses on Nicholson’s experiences documenting the melting ecosystems, “walking amongst layers of prehistoric earth, littered with mammoth bones,” and the impact this has on her practice of remediating a prehistoric archive.

Andrew Bateman and **Ella Tetrault** explore the intersections and impacts of bird and human migration from a variety of vantage points and creative perspectives. Utilizing stories and photographs from infrared critter cameras as a guide, *Flyways, Highways and Byways* (2021), reminds us of migratory processes that are often unnoticed, and the importance of shelter, trees, and sustenance for multispecies survival.

Migratory conversations and ecosystems in transition are a significant theme in **Jay Pahre’s** *Flipping the Island* (2020). Beginning with a story about the wolves and moose at the center of the world’s longest predator-prey study at Isle Royale National Park on Lake Superior, Pahre reflects on their experiences moving across distance, making artwork with copper during a series of artist residencies on Minong or Isle Royale. Pahre

muses on the power of atmospheric bodies, systems, and queer and trans ecologies to collide and float elsewhere, and about the deep entanglements and frictions of care work.

Care is paramount to survival. In the hand-drawn comic series, *Life like Us* (2021), Darren Fleet and Jim Holyoak reminisce about the immense improbability of life and the unexpected abundance of living things in the earthly fossil record. Conversing on top of shale rocks, fused with the skeletal bodies of ancient stone sea bugs and other long-lost species and plants, two trilobites share their experiences circumnavigating life on a journey around the edges of extinction. Care work is seen and felt here in pastorally vulnerable ways, in which the small—and their tender and vital affective states—reach well beyond the size of their bodies.

Together, the artists in this issue create work that is fused, fraught, and grounded in experiential fabulations, deep time, interdependent existence, and rethinking their relationships to resonance. Whether through migratory approaches or actions of climbing, flipping, watching, or collecting, care exists and is rooted in observation, production, and listening to other frequencies and sensibilities that register alongside collective practices of solitude and reverie.

References

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