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## "Reframing Canadian Oil Sands"

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# REFRAMING THE CANADIAN OIL SANDS

CURATORIAL ESSAY BY MERLE PATCHETT • PHOTOGRAPHS AND ESSAY BY ANDRIKO LOZOWY



“Reframing the Canadian Oil Sands” is a collaborative exchange between photographer Andriko Lozowy and cultural geographer Merle Patchett that engages photography and photographic theory to evoke a more critical and politically meaningful visual engagement with the world’s largest capital oil project. Since the appearance of Edward Burtynsky’s aerial and abstracted photographic-mappings of the region, capturing the scale of the Oil Sands from ‘on high’ has become the dominant visual imaginary. As a result, the dominant visual culture of Fort McMurray oil production is one of nullification or an erasure of representation. For the past five years Lozowy has been engaged in a photographic project—entitled *Where is Fort McMurray?*—which aims to explore and work with this sense of erasure by attempting to capture the shifting (and shifted) landscapes of the Alberta Oil Sands from the roadside. For this special issue of *Imaginations* on “Sighting Oil”, Patchett and Lozowy have curated a set of Lozowy’s photographs to present an alternative, on-the-ground, view of Oil Sands production sites. Through both Lozowy’s images and Patchett’s framing curatorial essay, they explore the disruptive potential of the image and the capacity of photography to both neutralize and energize political engagement with the Canadian Oil Sands.”

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Cet article est une collaboration entre le photographe Andriko Lozowy et la géographe culturelle Merle Patchett. La photographie et la théorie photographique y sont mises à profit afin de susciter un engagement visuel significatif des points de vue politique et critique avec le plus important projet pétrolier à ce jour. Depuis les photographies aériennes de la région des sables bitumineux par Edward Burtynsky, cette manière de photographier à distance les zones d’exploitation a connu une popularité croissante. Par conséquent la culture visuelle dominante de la production pétrolière de Fort McMurray s’est mise à vouloir invalider ou effacer cette représentation. Il y a cinq ans, Lozowy a entamé un projet intitulé *Where is Fort McMurray?* qui a pour but d’explorer et d’utiliser cette idée d’effacement en essayant de capturer les paysages mobiles (et démobilisés) des sables bitumineux albertains à partir des bords de route. Patchett et Lozowy ont organisé une exposition des photos de Lozowy pour le présent numéro d’*Imaginations*. Cette exposition présente une vue alternative—au niveau du sol—des sites de production pétrolière. À travers les images de Lozowy et les textes de Patchett, on retrouve le potentiel perturbateur de l’image et la capacité de la photographie de neutraliser et de stimuler à la fois l’engagement politique face aux sables bitumineux canadiens.

FROM ON HIGH TO THE ROADSIDE: SCALAR AESTHETICS  
AND THE CANADIAN OIL SANDS

MERLE PATCHETT



Fig. 1 “Mayday Mayday... we’re abandoning the radio room; we’re abandoning the radio room. We can’t talk any more, we’re on fire.”—Mayday Message from the Radio Room before it was engulfed by the fire

From ‘On-High’ to the Roadside: Scalar Aesthetics and the Canadian Oil Sands

Growing up in the Scottish coastal city of Aberdeen—the ‘oil capital of Europe’—I was keenly aware that oil and water can be a volatile mix. Aberdeen became the centre of the European oil industry during the North Sea oil boom of the 1970s. The international oil crisis of the same decade had led to a huge rise in worldwide oil prices and this made extracting oil from the North Sea an attractive opportunity for multi-national oil companies like BP, AMOCO and Shell. Although drilling platforms were stationed 100 miles off the coast in the North Sea, the spectre of oil pervaded the city: from the emergence of Europe’s busiest heliport which supplied the rigs with workers, to the mammoth oil service vessels docked in Aberdeen harbour, to the expansion of the city itself through new housing, offices and schools.

However the spectre of offshore production was rudely and radically illuminated on the night of July 6, 1988. In a series of explosions the Piper Alpha oil rig, located 120 miles offshore, was obliterated in a blaze of fire, killing 165 of the 226 men on board. Two crewmen operating a rescue vessel were also killed, bringing the death toll to 167 men on “the night the sea caught fire” (Matsen 27).

In the disaster’s aftermath the Cullen Inquiry, which began in January 1989 and lasted 13 months, established the causes of the tragedy and made recommendations for future safety regimes offshore. Those affected by the tragedy were left questioning why it took a multi-fatality event for an evaluation of the oil and gas regulatory system to take place and why the rig owner’s—Occidental Petroleum—were yet to be prosecuted. The victims of the disaster set up

the Piper Alpha Families and Survivors Association to campaign to bring Occidental to justice. Although the Cullen Report (made public on November 12, 1990) was highly critical of Occidental's safety program on Piper Alpha prior to the disaster, Lord Fraser, the Lord Advocate and Scotland's chief legal officer, concluded that there was not enough evidence for a conviction. As Lord Advocate for Scotland, his analysis could not be questioned and Occidental suffered no penalty for their negligence in the Piper Alpha disaster.<sup>1</sup> The lack of corporate accountability was a huge blow for the Piper Alpha Families and Survivors Association. In 1991, the association erected a memorial sculpture in Hazlehead Park, Aberdeen to ensure that those who perished, many whose bodies were never recovered, were at least publically and individually accounted for. The park is just a short walk from my family home. Engraved on a pink granite plinth, topped by a larger than life-size bronze sculpture of three oil workers, are the names of the dead. Their ages at death are also given. With the youngest 19 and the eldest 65 the dead span three generations.

Piper Alpha remains the world's deadliest offshore oil disaster and is an event that woke, not just Aberdonians, but the world itself to the human cost of investing in an oil economy. Revisiting the Piper Alpha memorial as an adult now living in Edmonton, Alberta—Canada's 'Oil City'—I am keenly aware that our continued dependency on oil as an energy source guarantees further fatalities and environmental damage because oil exploration, capture, refining and transportation are inherently dangerous and destructive processes. Yet, I am also aware my presence in Alberta is due to the relative economic stability and job security afforded by Alberta's oil economy. This is the dirty truth any Albertan has to reconcile with. Oil was first discovered in Alberta in 1902, and its production continues to fuel the province: oil and gas royalty revenues make up 30% of the Government of Alberta's total revenue (Nikiforuk). 1947 saw the drilling of the first successful conventional well at Leduc, just South of Edmonton and overnight Canada went from being "oil poor" to "oil rich" (McRory 82). Today, 1 in 15 Alberta jobs

are related to energy and Alberta's per capita GDP is higher than all other Canadian provinces and US states (Levant).

Before moving to Edmonton, all I knew about the province was that it was home to the controversial 'Tar Sands' project, the largest surfaced-mined reservoir of crude bitumen in the world. Situated North East of Edmonton, roughly centered on the boomtown Fort McMurray, the Athabasca 'Oil Sands' is the world's largest Capital Oil Project, currently producing 1.3 million barrels of oil a day (see Fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> Commercial production began in 1967 and the total area of exploitable reserves covers 140,000 km<sup>2</sup>—an area larger than England (Levant 2011). Oils Sands are naturally occurring mixtures of sand, clay, water, and an extremely dense and viscous form of petroleum technically referred to as bitumen. The primary methods of extraction are surface mining or in-situ drilling and the three main operating companies are Suncor Energy, Syncrude and Shell Canada. About two tons of oil sand must be dug up, moved and processed to produce one barrel of synthetic crude oil, and up to 5 barrels of water are consumed for every barrel of oil produced, making the Oil Sands Capital Project the world's most carbon and water intensive oil production process.<sup>3</sup>

The Oil Sands Capital Project is also one of the world's most environmentally destructive industrial projects. For example, in order to surface mine the bitumen large swathes of Canada's Boreal Forest are being deforested to the point where the project is slated to have the second fastest rate of deforestation on the planet after the Amazon Rainforest Basin (Nikiforuk). The process of turning the oil sand into crude oil also produces numerous toxic byproducts. The water used to strip the bitumen from the sand, for example, is discharged afterwards as contaminated water into "tailings" ponds. The leftover "tailings" are a mixture of dirty water, clay, silt and sand but can also contain copper, zinc, iron, residual bitumen, mercury, arsenic, naphthenic acids and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH). Alberta's inventory of tailings ponds is now 720 million cubic meters, which cover an area of about 130 square

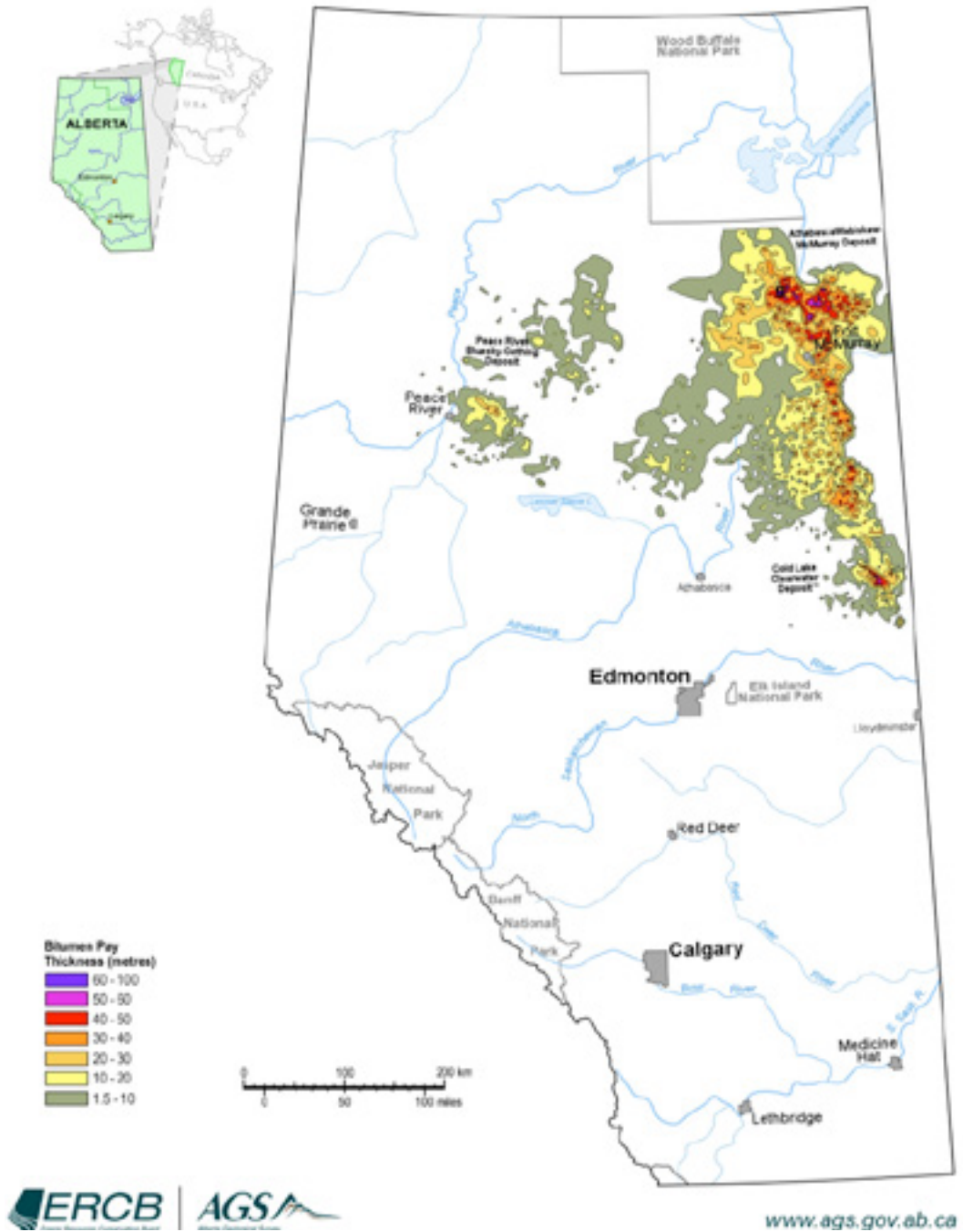


Fig. 2 Location of the Athabasca, Cold Lake and Peace River oil sands in Alberta. Map.



Fig. 3 Greenpeace activists enter Syncrude's Aurora North oil sands operation and suspend a banner that reads "World's Dirtiest Oil: Stop the Tar Sands."

kilometers. Their contents are highly toxic to all forms of life. This was brought to international attention in April 2008 when some 500 migrating ducks mistook one of these ponds for a hospitable stopover, and, on landing on its oily surface, died. When Greenpeace broke into a Syncrude processing facility and suspended a banner that read "World's Dirtiest Oil: Stop the Tar Sands" over the pipe discharging tailings, overnight they changed Canada's historically "green" image to one of "corrupt petro-state" (Monbiot).

#### Where is Fort McMurray?

The Greenpeace image introduced a worldwide online audience to the environmental hazards associated with Oil Sands mining in Alberta (see Fig. 2). It also introduced the same audience to the dominant aesthetic strategy employed to capture the Oil Sands industry: that of emphasizing the scale of the industry by

photographing it from on high. Since the appearance of Edward Burtynsky's aerial photographic-mappings of the region in 2007, aerial perspectives of the Canadian Oil Sands—capturing the scale of the oil sands industry from above—has become the dominant photographic approach.<sup>4</sup> This 'scalar aesthetic' is, according to Imre Szeman, "an obvious approach to a site like the Alberta Oil Sands, which are estimated to be the size of Florida and include numerous surface mining sites and vast tailings ponds that permit a direct visualization of environmental destruction" (435-6). Other notable examples of this approach include Peter Essick's 2009 photographic series that accompanies Robert Kunzig's National Geographic article "Scraping the Bottom: The Canadian Oil Boom" and aerial photographer Louis Helbig's 2010 touring exhibition *Beautiful Destruction*. This scalar aesthetic has also been mobilized cinematically in Peter Mettler's 2009 *Petropolis*, a film that consists entirely of aerial panning shots to emphasize the size and scope of the Oil Sands.

These aerial views of the Oil Sands have helped to shape and polarize perceptions of the world's most colossal industrial site, including my own. So, when I was presented with an opportunity to visit Fort McMurray and the Tar Sands, I jumped at the chance to see this site with my own eyes. Andriko Lozowy, a colleague at the University of Alberta, had invited me to join him on a planned research trip to the region. Lozowy was engaged in a photographic project led by the provocation "Where is Fort McMurray?" This question was in part a response to the lack of geographical specificity offered by the dominant elevated perspectives that promoted a visual culture of Fort McMurray that stressed nullification or an erasure of representation. For part of this project, Lozowy had invited a group of Fort McMurray high school students to offer their response to this question through the practice of photography. Through a collaborative exchange, Lozowy offered the students the opportunity of learning the basics of photographic techniques while engaging the students to create images that would offer a different visual narrative to the one found in the dominant visual imagery depicting the region. Before elaborating further on this project, it

is pertinent to explore the scalar aesthetic, originating in Edward Burtynsky's photographs, that the students were attempting to work against.

### Death from Above

Burtynsky's large-scale aerial perspectives of surface mines, refineries, and tailings ponds in his series depicting the Oil Sands industry in Fort McMurray offer disturbingly sublime depictions of a landscape degraded by petroleum production. Equally at home on the office wall of a CEO of an oil company or the campaign materials of environmental lobbyists, his images of the Oil Sands have been critiqued for their aestheticization of the toxic byproducts of oil sands production, like tailings ponds and sulphur pyramids. Jennifer Peeples introduces the concept of the "toxic sublime" as a means of analyzing the tensions arising from visual representations of environmental contamination like those found in Burtynsky's Oil Sands series, where the beauty of the images "obfuscates the health and environmental risk of the polluted sites they photograph" (Peeples 373). For example, in *Alberta Oil Sands #10* Burtynsky produces an alchemical conversion of toxic tailings ponds into one of sublimity (Fig. 3). Although depicting a tailings pond, the viewer could easily mistake the vista for a river delta or estuary, where the intention of the photographer was to catch the light of a setting sky reflecting off the river channels and pools.

Burtynsky's painterly preoccupation with composition and light in his Oil Sands images resonates with the aesthetic registers of the picturesque and the sublime. In landscape painting, the sublime has traditionally been defined as the awe or anxiety felt in the face of nature's power over humankind (Haworth-Booth). Inversely, Burtynsky seeks to provoke the awe felt when witnessing the grandeur and horror of human-altered landscapes by capturing their scale (Burtynsky, *Manufactured Landscapes*). His method of using large-format cameras and reproducing the images as large-format (up to 100cm x 150cm) pictures is an intentional strategy to evoke the Kantian mathematical sublime where sheer scale produces awe. However, Burtynsky's strategy of capturing the toxic landscapes of the Tar



Fig. 4 Edward Burtynsky, *Alberta Oil Sands #10*, Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada, 2007.

Sands from on high (usually from the vantage afforded by a helicopter) provoke a crisis of vision, as the aerial perspective flattens the landscape, disorientating any sense of measurable scale. This flattening of the landscape presents a visual argument between foreground and background, magnitude and insignificance, the known and the unknown (Dielh 120). While this strategy makes his images visually and aesthetically compelling, and thus more in tune with Kant's dynamical sublime, Burtynsky's aerial mappings have been criticized for evoking the abstraction of remote sensing and setting up an aesthetic encounter of "disinterested contemplation" (Lang 425). By maintaining a studied ambiguity, aesthetic and ideological, about the epic scale and grandeur of bitumen extraction and its waste sites, Burtynsky, according to Mike Crang, "plays around with the balance between questions of beauty (the awe) and questions of ethics (the awful)" (Crang 1094).

Jennifer Peeples argues that the horror of the toxic

sublime—awe at the immensity of human-made environmental degradation—can call into question the personal, social and environmental ethics that allow places of contamination like tailings ponds to exist. However, the scalar aesthetics deployed by Burtynsky in his Oil Sands series can leave one feeling a sense of bewilderment and inertia at the thought of rectifying a problem that exceeds our comprehension. While Burtynsky's compositional choices render his images fraught with tensions that require thought and contemplation, which can lead to contradictory sensations of horror and wonder, this does not necessarily provide the impetus for attitudinal change. His scalar aesthetic, for example, confronts two major barriers to the impetus necessary to mobilize action on the part of the viewer. First, Burtynsky's high-angled perspective presents his subject matter of tailings ponds and open pit mines as transcending the scope of the frame, setting up a visual argument between magnitude and insignificance thereby resisting any meaningful visual representation. In other words, while Burtynsky's perspective indicates the massive scale of production of the Oil Sands, what is not clear is the magnitude of environmental degradation. Second, the high vertical angle summons questions of enormity and thus feelings of impotence, which can leave the viewer "unclear what action one could take, even if one wanted to." (Szeman 437).

Burtynsky's own lack of an overt critical positioning on the Oils Sands has left him open to the criticism of being a cosmopolitan privileged viewer who "floats free" from the environmental degradation and human labour depicted (Crang 1098). Furthermore, while Burtynsky has felt free to focus his lens on the human labour behind the landscapes of industrial mega-projects in China and Bangladesh in his 2000 Shipbreaking series, he has chosen to steer away from explicitly depicting the human labour involved in the manufacture of the Alberta Oil Sands. This could be because Burtynsky, aware of the polarization of the Oil Sands in both political and public discourse, feels the power of these images resides in their ambiguity. More cynically, with so many Canadians making a living from, or living

comfortably because of the Oil Sands, perhaps it is also in the ambiguity of the images that they maintain their largest audience and marketplace appeal. Burtynsky's limited captions describing the images have also been a point of contention for some critics. His captions for his Alberta Oil Sands series merely state the number of the photograph in the series, the location ("Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada"), and the date. For example, in a photograph from the series which depicts immense acid-yellow sulphur stockpiles with Syncrude's main processing plant in the background, the caption notes only "Alberta Oil Sands #6 Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada, 2007." Burtynsky's reticence to name operating companies or their toxic by-products, could be a preservation strategy employed in order to ensure his own continued access to the world's most colossal industrial sites. Yet, by partitioning the Oil Sands operating companies and their environmental contaminants from full view, Burtynsky also represses connections not only between the viewer and viewed, but between the Oil Sands and its broader geopolitical context.

In an article written for *The Walrus*, Burtynsky attempts to dispel some of the uncertainty around his environmental views and particularly his reticence to directly critique resource extraction in his own country (Burtynsky, "Extraction"). In the article, he calls for the Canadian government to mandate sustainable practices in the extraction and sale of Canada's natural resources, including the Alberta Oil Sands. However, his detractors see this as mere tokenism: a letter to the editor sharply noted that, despite his undisputed talent as a master photographer, "Alas, as an environmental activist, he is a failure" (Vincent). As one commentator summed up, "while Burtynsky's photographs of Canadian industry make for great art, they operate within the Canadian political mainstream and do little to shake up the consciousness of a public content to keep looking away from the social and environmental degradation that is taking place in its own backyard" (Nickerson).





Fig. 5 Six images from the series *Where is Fort McMurray?*.

## Reclamation

Andriko Lozowy has not had the luxury of being able to look away from the ‘dark specter’ of oil production actually taking place in his backyard. Lozowy grew up in Sherwood Park, Edmonton, in the shadow of ‘Refinery Row’, industrial home to the largest oil refinery facilities in Western Canada. Since a teenager, Lozowy has found photography a useful tool for investigating and making sense of the built environment of oil production that has dominated his neighbourhood skyline. Although fenced in and highly patrolled, the camera’s zoom offered a means of interloping into industrial sites deemed out of bounds. Of course, pushing the boundaries or railing against the establishment is the prerogative of the teenager, something Lozowy recognized later in life when engaging the group of Fort McMurray youth to respond to the question “Where is Fort McMurray?” Teaching the students the techniques of digital photography, Lozowy hoped to empower them by equipping them with the tools to create an alternative view of their own backyard. While Burtynsky’s images have certainly helped to bring the Oil Sands and Fort McMurray international attention, the reproduction of his scalar aesthetic has meant that the dominant optics in this case has become one of partitioning the Oil Sands as an active and place-based industrial site from view. By asking “Where is Fort McMurray?”, Lozowy seeks to address this loss of geographical specificity and dislocation by bringing us back down to earth, or rather in this case bitumen. Through the project, Lozowy and his student participants therefore sought to overturn the dominant scopic regime by offering a point of view in, rather than on Fort McMurray.

A series of images from the venture was collaboratively curated by Lozowy and the student participants to form an online exhibit also entitled *Where is Fort McMurray?* (Lozowy, *Where*). The images offer a perspective of Fort McMurray from the vantage point of local youth: the regular repeated lines of suburban rooftops, the blur of a fast car, the overgrown tracks of a disused railway line, the lush greenery framing a winding river valley, and the cramped yet colourfully-decorated confines of a shared bedroom (see Fig. 4). These are windows into Fort McMurray at the human scale.

Lozowy has similarly taken a more on-the-ground approach in his own photographic practice when responding to the provocation “Where is Fort McMurray?”. In contrast to Burtynsky’s aerial mappings of immense ungraspable scenes, Lozowy’s approach is more modest: to see what you can document of the world’s largest industrial site from the public access roads running through it.

What answers do they offer to the question “Where is Fort McMurray?” Where his students, by nature of their age, were limited to directing their lenses on the town site of Fort McMurray, Lozowy was compelled to follow the 24/7 circular flow traffic heading north on Highway 63 to the town’s industrial heart: the Oil Sands. Highway 63 passes through the Oil Sands between Fort McMurray and Fort MacKay and offers a ‘public’ point of view for the committed (some may say foolhardy) photographer onto the private sites of industrial production. I say committed since stopping or merely slowing down on this highway—one of the most dangerous roads in Canada—is a risky endeavour. This is something I discovered when accompanying Lozowy on one of his photographic field trips.

## Touring the Tar Sands

Until 1970, Highway 63 did not even appear on a map. Since then the 240-kilometre-long, two-lane highway has become the critical artery in and out of Fort McMurray (see Fig. 5). Drivers in the know call it “Hell’s Highway,” or the “Highway of Death”. When Lozowy and I drove north to Fort McMurray from Edmonton along Highway 63, it was not hard to imagine why it had earned these monikers. On any given day, thousands of logging trucks, SUVs, semi-trailers, buses and tanker trucks form a frantic parade to and from Fort McMurray and the Oil Sands bitumen mine sites. Often a dozen different convoys of extra-wide loads carrying tires, turbines, and cockers the size of houses completely dominate the ridiculously inadequate two lane highway. Known as one of the province’s deadliest highways, forty-six people died in crashes on the road between 2005 and 2009, with another 310 people injured in the same period. On the day that we traveled Highway 63 it was



Fig. 6 Andriko Lozowy, Highway 63

mid-winter, making the already hazardous conditions seriously treacherous, a fact evidenced by the recurrent appearance of wrecked and abandoned vehicles along the hard shoulder of the highway. The four and a half hour drive north to ‘Fort Mac’ was the longest, most drawn-out white-knuckle ride of my life.

After such a journey, the sight of ‘Fort Mac’ does little to convince that it was worth the risks. Of course, for those working at the Oil Sands the economic rewards to be had there far outweigh the dangers of the drive and the numbing dullness of the town itself. To the tourist, Fort McMurray appears makeshift: a ramshackle grid

of functional building blocks that define a boomtown: a place to sleep and eat. Yet the town itself never sleeps. As the urban service centre for the region, it serves the 24/7 production of the Oil Sands. The constant hum of traffic and the repetitive approach, stop, idle and depart at the chartered bus stops which run workers back and forth to the mines make Fort Mac a difficult place to get some sleep for the uninitiated.

The next morning, bleary-eyed Lozowy and I joined the procession heading across the reinforced bridge above the Athabasca River north to the Oil Sands. Two oil-town kids, we shared an interest in exploring the oil



Fig. 7 Humphrey Lloyd Hime, *The Prairie, Looking South*.

landscapes that were ever-present, yet eluded us in our youth. Our intention was to document what we could of the private spheres of Oil Sands production from the roadside—Lozowy with his camera, and me with my sound recorder.<sup>5</sup> With Lozowy driving, I was free to take in the sights. Yet from the car window, with boreal forest cleared and land flattened, the view is not unlike that of the Prairies: a featureless and flat topography dominated by sky.

Historically, artists have encountered difficulties in depicting the Prairie landscape, primarily because of the Prairie's lack of geographical features that would contribute to a 'view'. Surveyor and photographer Humphrey Lloyd Hime famously captured the Prairie's flat and featureless topography in the 1858 photograph: *The Prairie, Looking South* (Fig. 6). A "monument to treelessness", this stark image reduces the Prairie landscape "to what Canadian novelist W. O. Mitchell has called 'the least common denominator of nature': earth and sky" (Schwartz 968). However, to view Hime's image as empty or desolate would be a misreading. Hime, as Schwartz records, was a surveyor for the

Canadian Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Expeditions whose purpose was to determine the possibilities of westward expansion (968). While treelessness had once been an indicator of aridity and sterility, advances in agricultural technology meant the vast ocean of Prairie photographed by Hime was no longer viewed as an arid desert but rather as a fertile, untouched territory receptive to settlement, agriculture and westward expansion. While Hime's vision was promoted by the Canadian government, it was not necessarily shared by those people already living on and from the land at the time, like the First Nations and Metis. Viewed in these terms, according to Schwartz, Hime's "quintessential portrait of the prairie, so bereft of content, can be seen as a geographical imagining, one which reflects the economic hopes and political dreams of Canadian expansionists and British imperialists" (969).

Understanding the active role photography has played in the processes by which people have come to articulate their assumptions about land and land use in Canada, Lozowy has recognized the power of displacing Hime's 'prairie aesthetic' to the flattened and cleared lands north of Fort McMurray on the roads cutting through the Oil Sands mining sites. Here treelessness becomes a monument to the significant clearing of Boreal forest it takes to access Oil Sands deposits and the resulting disturbance this has on the animal species and aboriginal communities that depend upon this ecosystem. Thus, instead of surveying an empty stage for the projections/imaginings of Canadian expansionists, Lozowy documents the actual landscapings of what some have called "modern Canadian imperialism" (Nikiforuk 68).

#### Amidst The Detour and Delay

The smoking chimneys of a Suncor refinery offered the first visual indication of mining operations north of the bridge crossing the Athabasca River. As we drove towards them, the air in the car grew thick with the aroma of hydrocarbons. Some have compared the smell of mined bitumen to that of heated sea coal, which is why the Oil Sands were historically known colloquially as 'Tar Sands' due to tar's similar appearance, odor, and colour. Having driven this miasmic stretch of Highway

63 many times on his photographic field trips, Lozowy acted as a tour guide to me as passenger-seat tourist. To the left he pointed out Crane Lake Reclamation Area: reclaimed wetland habitat from a former mining site. A giant roadside metal Crane sculpture invited us to make our first roadside stop and potential 'Kodak moment'. The form of roadside photographic touring practiced by Lozowy on Highway 63 is not unlike how one is encouraged to visually consume picturesque Canadian landscapes like the Rockies, either out of the car window or at the designated 'picture stops' that pepper the highway. Susan Sontag has famously argued that photography enables a touristification of the world, where "every subject is depreciated into an article of consumption, promoted as an item for aesthetic appreciation" (Sontag 110). However, while the 'romantic tourist gaze' seeks to reproduce static and unrealistic visions of untouched 'wilderness', Lozowy seeks to capture the contingencies the romantic tourist gaze seeks to edit out (Urry 139).

The traditional assumption is that photography is an inert form of visual representation that freezes and captures discreet moments in time and space. Having made many return visits to this area, Lozowy's aim is to document the changeable nature of this manufactured landscape. Trees are felled, tons of soil and sands are dug up and moved, tailings ponds fill and are then drained, filled in, contoured, and planted. This landscape is far from static. Of course, the traditional tourist snapshot can be thought of as technology dealing only in the 'frozen moment' (Henning 138). For example, Burtynsky's framed aerial snap-shots of the Athabasca Oil Sands, touring worldwide as part of his *OIL* exhibition, offer audiences a vision of this industrial landscape in aspic. Although taken several years ago, the ideological authority of Burtynsky's mappings presents a static understanding of the landscapes of Oil Sands production, resonating with Barthes' notion of the camera's ability to "embalm" the living world (Barthes 14). Furthermore, within the context of *OIL*, which narrates the story of oil from extraction and refinement to transportation and the end of oil, the Alberta Oil Sands become buried within the scale of

oil that Burtynsky seeks to emphasize. Ranging from NASCAR rallies in the United States, to gigantic parking lots of Volkswagen cars in China, to fields of abandoned oil derricks in Baku, Burtynsky's *OIL* images underline the global permeations of oil on humanity and the environment. Yet, by doing so they also work to further erase the Oil Sands from view as they become enmeshed within an even greater scalar aesthetic.

Lozowy, by comparison, seeks to explore this sense of the Oil Sands industry falling away from view. Moreover, by working with rather than against this sense of erasure, he also seeks to resist the inertia and stasis found in Burtynsky's images in order to capture the shifting (and shifted) nature of the Oil Sands. It is Debbie Lisle's view that, far from being static, there is inherent mobility in photography and by extension the photograph, and this has an important antecedent at the level of production. Lisle's point is that the action of clicking the camera's shutter is never an isolated moment: "rather, it is punctured by all the previous clicks and moments leading up to it" (Lisle 3). As such, the photographer's contact sheet or computer file becomes a "visual travelogue of discrete moments that bleed into one another." (3) This is certainly the case in Lozowy's series *Looking Left at Syncrude*, a digital archive of photographs Lozowy took from his car window while driving around one of Syncrude's tailings ponds (Lozowy, "Looking Left").

Taken at close intervals, the photographs contained in this online archive act almost as a praxioscope: one image bleeds into the next, capturing the fluctuations of land, sky and dust the moving car affords around the perimeter of the pond (see Fig. 7). Here, it becomes clear that it was Lozowy's movement prior to clicking the camera's shutter that shaped and determined the photograph's content. Lisle goes one step further than this to argue that all photographs, no matter what they depict, are saturated with "the potential mobility of the world's materials" and so in this sense are never still: "indeed, the world of flux out of which the image is extracted includes the image itself, and in this sense, an image can never be isolated from the world in which it was derived" (Lisle 4). Following this, Lisle argues



Fig. 8 Andriko Lozowy, Image 19

that a photograph should be read counter-intuitively, “not as an arrest of movement or a freezing of time, but as a collection of signs that is always potentially mobile”. This relates to Gilles Deleuze’s notion of the movement-image, where the movement-image reflects a commitment “to show or create the kind of space of movement that is prior to the representation of static objects” (Thrift and Dewsbury 417).

While Lozowy’s approach to photographing the Oil Sands from the roadside may seem similar to that of the roadside tourist in search of the perfect ‘Kodak moment’, Highway 63 disallows for the leisurely composition-time usually expected for this type of image-making. His

method of taking photographs on-the-move, often out the window of a moving or idling car, underlines the fact that one is not encouraged to stop and take in the view on the roads that intersect and frame Oil Sands production areas. For example, beyond the Crane Lake Reclamation Area stop, which is marketed as a Nature Reserve with a designated car park and connecting nature trails, there are no more parking stops between it and the Oil Sands mining sites. Attempting to stop your car along this stretch of Highway 63 is a dangerous business, as I found out when Lozowy stopped on the hard shoulder during our road trip. As soon as Lozowy stopped the car, the gargantuan trucks buffeting past us honked their horns in protest to our slowing their

beeline to the mines and refineries. On the passenger side, I learnt very quickly that opening the door had to be timed carefully to coincide with a break in the traffic, as the almost constant stream of over-sized vehicles stopped for no one.

By comparison, I found Lozowy to be quite the expert in roadside stealth. Even when a newly erected fence occluded a previously open view onto one of the tailings ponds, Lozowy climbed atop the stationary station-wagon (from the starting position of his car seat) and managed to take several shots, even though both he and the wagon were being buffeted by the force of the trucks driving past. As such, Lozowy's method produces a seeing body that is able to respond to contingencies and accidents *en route* (Dubow 268). For Walter Benjamin, it is only amidst the detour and delay that critical practice can begin. Following Benjamin, one could argue that Lozowy's detours from the expected drive opened us up to experiencing particular types of encounters—the unplanned, the contingent, and the unforeseen. Coupled with this for Lozowy is a resistance to integration or closure: the 'delay' and 'detour' are characteristic of an in-between spatio-temporal frame, a moment of contemplation, a 'working through' of the creative process rather than a conceptual context aimed at fixing the objects of landscape in time and space.

Working in this way, Lozowy produces an alternative view, one that encounters the contingent as it folds in and out of the path of observation. By taking us with him on his tour amidst the detour and delay through the Oil Sands epicenter, we become his passenger and the car window our frame. This strategy, of offering a point of view in, rather than on the Oil Sands, reconnects the viewer with the viewed and relocates the Oil Sands in placed-based experience. This rescaling of the Oil Sands makes them seem more approachable physically, politically, and representationally. However, Lozowy is not simply restoring representation. By taking his photographs on the move and by making return visits, he also emphasizes the strangeness of the momentary and the material of a landscape in flux. If, as viewers, we break with the view that the photograph presents

a "vision-as-semblance" and instead pay close attention to its affective intensities, it becomes possible to recover these "contingencies the gaze edits out" (Dubow 268). In Lozowy's photographic series that follows this essay, it is the fleeting flashes of affective detail that jump out and grab us: orange scarecrows warn of potential toxicity and harm to health, clouds of dust signify unsettled earth, ringed water marks document disappearance, a newly erected fence yet to soften into its surroundings has something to hide, and worker camps are reminiscent of the Gulag.

### Affective Aesthetics

The function of a photograph cannot be simply reversed from freezing a moment in time to animating a moment in time. Rather, Lozowy's images set in motion "feelings of absence in the present (i.e. 'it is not there') and present imaginings of the past (i.e. 'but it has been there')" (Lisle 4). This argument is in tune with Benjamin's concept of the dialectic image, where "what has been comes together with the now" to constitute what Benjamin calls "dialectics at standstill" (Benjamin 463). Yet, rather than read Benjamin's concept of standstill as turning the world to stone, Lisle promotes an understanding of Benjamin's conception of stillness as "something fizzing and pulsating with 'political electricity'" (Buck-Morss qtd in Lisle 219).<sup>6</sup> Photographs for Lisle, just like the dialectic image, are charged with an "affective punch" that is fizzing with political electricity (219).

Here, Lisle extends agency to the photograph by arguing that it is the photograph itself that shapes the emotive and affective experience of the viewer: i.e. it is the image that demands something of the viewer, rather than the other way round. She bases this understanding on Deleuze's dispersed account of agency in the act of perception:

For Deleuze, a work of art—for our purposes, a photograph—is not an inert or still document, but rather a 'block of sensations' (Deleuze 31). It is not a finished object produced by an autonomous viewer; rather, it is a combination of percepts (initial perceptions) and affects (physical intensities) that

passes through all subjects at the point of visual perception. This kind of relational encounter with an image not only deconstructs Modernity's foundational distinction between the subject and the object, it also opens up an affective connection between all subjects engaged in the act of looking; in this case, the photographer, the subjects and objects within the photograph and the viewer. (Lisle 5)

It is, therefore, Lisle's contention that taking account of the affective level of perception (i.e. the pre-interpretive moment when images reach out to grab us) changes our traditional understanding of how a photograph 'moves' us.

The "affective punch" of Lozowy's images resides in their ability to conjure the past and present together in a flash. Take, for example, Lozowy's image of an Oil Sands refinery at night (Fig. 8). For me, this photograph initiates an awakening to the burning rays of a past light that lit up the North Sea on the night of July 6, 1988. That night my dad, a BBC cameraman, had taken me and my sister to the swimming baths, but before we got into the pool my dad was paged and asked to cover a news story: the Piper Alpha oil platform was on fire. With the aid of a helicopter, my dad was the first news cameraman to the scene and the first to capture the towering inferno that had engulfed the rig, its crew and lit up the surrounding sea.

In Benjamin's terminology, this is the shock effect of the dialectic "at a standstill": the sudden spark, the profane flash that lights up a dark thought and allows it to make itself felt in the present (Benjamin 462). The image for me lights up a night when a culture that kept the oil flowing at all costs set the scene for the destruction of an oil platform and the deaths of 167 men. It also portends that this volatile scene, now displaced, is poised to spark again. History will repeat itself, as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill evidences, because oil exploration, capture, refining and transportation are inherently dangerous and destructive.

Not long after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Burtynsky was unsurprisingly back in his helicopter, taking aerial

photographs to capture the scale of the spill, 50 miles off the Louisiana coastline in the Gulf of Mexico. Many of Burtynsky's pictures from this day are aesthetic masterpieces.<sup>7</sup> His aerial vistas depicting the lustrous and painterly gestures of oil slicks emulsifying into the cobalt blue gulf, much like his images of Oil Sands tailings ponds, produce a toxic sublime. The aesthetic pleasure to be found when encountering these images is impossible to forestall, the context notwithstanding. This again underlines the risks of invoking the toxic sublime. The beauty of Burtynsky's images "obfuscates the health and environmental risk of the polluted sites they photograph", which in this case happens to be an oil spill of epic proportions (Peeples 373).<sup>8</sup> Similarly, his use of an aerial perspective to capture the epic proportions of the spill reproduces the same problems associated with the scalar aesthetics deployed in his Oil Sands series. The view from on-high summons questions of omnipotence and thus feelings of impotence, leaving one feeling a sense of bewilderment and inertia at the thought of rectifying a problem that exceeds both the frame and comprehension. While Burtynsky's compositional choices render his images fraught with tensions that elicit contradictory sensations of attraction and repulsion, his images ultimately, to my mind, do not provide the impetus for attitudinal, never mind behavioural, change.

To conclude, Burtynsky's scalar aesthetic has trained us to see and aestheticize the Canadian Oil Sands in limited and troubling ways. By offering the viewer a point of view in, rather than on the Oil Sands, Lozowy's photographic project *Where is Fort McMurray?* disrupts the dominant obfuscatory aerial imaginaries, enabling a more critical and politically meaningful photographic engagement with this oil project. Similarly, by reworking the Prairie aesthetic to reflect modern times, Lozowy is able to relocate the Alberta Oil Sands in place-based experience. Thus even for those of you who have not, and may never, visit the Oil Sands, or who never grew up with landscapes of oil production in your backyard, living in a time of peak oil, its dark spectre will permeate your lives. This is why Lozowy's following tour of the Alberta Oil Sands may provoke emotive and affective experiences to awaken *your* attention to its crude realities.





**FRAMES**  
ANDRIKO LOZOWY

In this exhibit, Merle Patchett, a geographer, interprets and contextualized my photographs and my photographic practice that is informed by the discipline of sociology. Together, Sociology and Geography are taken up here as a point of reference towards thinking critically about limitations and potentials for the emergence of combined thinking in creative ways. Patchett asked me

why I photograph? I replied that I do it to document crude realism, to engage in a categorization of sorts, to perform active engagement with people and landscape, to create a physical and material artefacts, to challenge structures of power, and as an aspiration of being part of a great documentarian practices of which all forms of photography are initiates.

In my hands the camera becomes active, an apparatus of production, creating objects of a certain order: images. As such, I consider the etymology of ‘image’, which comes from the French *image* (c.1200), or artificial representation and *imagier* (late 1300s), meaning “to form a mental picture.” Imagination, as a noun follows to refer to “a faculty of the mind that forms and manipulates images” (*OED*).

I also consider the production of images and photography itself in a manner that is similar to Vilem Flusser’s (1920-1991), although transposed into a contemporary twenty-first century context. In *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, Flusser argued that images signify material elements in time and space that are made comprehensible to us as abstractions, a reduction of dimensions (8). In order to render images out of space and time, the precondition of imagination must be in play so that we may encode phenomena into two dimensional symbols and be able to read these symbols (*ibid*). Flusser illustrates a kind of underpainting of normalized image uses. In order to read images, we apply our collected and collective knowledge as we gaze.

Working in the early 1980s, Flusser followed his publication of *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* with *Into the Universe of Technical Images*, where many of the undertones of the initial text are taken up and ordered into a linear and pragmatic approach. Flusser insists on a dialogical system logic. Like Innis, Barthes, McLuhan, and Baudrillard, Flusser is often categorized as a media theorist concerned with the interdependence and relationships of humans as social actors in relation to technology. In Flusser’s view, contemporary societies need to embrace the visual’s multi-dimensionality and relinquish long-held linear texts of reductive abstraction. Flusser passed away in 1991, and if we may appropriate his thinking to the present day then we can think into the ways in which information exerts a decisive influence

on our lives, images as flowing streams;; photographs, films, videos, computers, all operating in a profoundly different way than linear writing. Images have mutated our modes of behavior, our perceptions, our values (Flusser 5) and as such Flusser makes the point that what it means to publish is “to put a subjective observation into the symbols of a social code” (2011, 1985: 12).

Perhaps this is precisely the point at which fate has brought together the geographer and the sociologist. On the one hand, we can think of these two disciplines as each occupying a clearly defined epistemological position and establish an approximate stance on how macro or micro, or how small or large the scale and scope of vision ought to be. Indeed, both approaches seem to align their trajectories, at least as broadly defined, around an impetus to broad vision, and it seems to us, that in each case, the depth of vision is often pursued by the sub-disciplines, those seeking some manner of spatial or cultural specificity from which one could gain insight.

If we consider Max Weber and the aim of sociology, then we should note that the goal is clearly outlined as concerned with understanding the cultural conditions and meanings of society (Weber qtd in Burri 46). Regula Valerie Burri keenly points out, that classical sociologists have mostly neglected the understanding that such analysis must include “the visual” (Burri 46). Geography, although an historically ‘visual’ discipline has been criticized for not properly theorizing how and why it is visual and what kind of power relations are at play until Gilliam Rose’s famous intervention in 2003.

The work of Flusser and Burri both emphasize the importance of considered and critical analysis of the scope of the visual. On the one hand, Burri works to persuade her audience that “the visual,” is a kind of matter in which we live (Jenks). On the other hand,



Flusser insists that we must take note of the cultural mutation afoot, from linear text to another kind of image world entirely. Burri and Flusser press upon us that we ought to consider the ways in which three dimensions, plus time, are working as interdependent systems, in dialogue, interacting, reflecting, refracting, and all the while we need to be diligent as scholars to take note of the ways in which humans interact, change the dimensions, and are shaped by them.

In short, the geographer and the sociologist emerge as social-geographers, cultural geographers, human-geographers. Through collaboration Patchett and I stand to resist the notion that text alone is the beholder of an “objective” truth (Daston and Galison). The goal here, by publishing, writing, editing, and thereby shaping the now muddied waters of a given discipline, is to press upon the thinking faculties of our dear readers to apply self-analysis of individual notions of how ideas, images,



myths, become known, how they work to change thought, and how thought is transmitted as imaginaries.

#### **Frames for Reading the Image Series**

Whatever the aesthetic merits, every representation of landscape is also a record of human values and actions imposed on the land over time. What stake do landscape photographers have in constructing such representations? A large one, I believe.

Whatever the photographer's claims, landscapes as subject matter in photography can be analyzed as documents extending beyond the formally aesthetic or personally expressive. Even formal and personal choices do not emerge *sui generis*, but instead reflect collective interests and influences, whether philosophical, political, economic, or otherwise. (Deborah Bright 126)



Camera in hand I consider the ways in which photography as action, as process, as performance, can be an embodied manipulation towards a synthesis of specific techno-logical and scientific/mathematical constraints. The camera compresses, reduces, takes note of light, and fuses together all manner of the photographer's aesthetic, cultural, social, sign+signified concepts and, in a flash, captures a reduced form of a world 'out there.' Out there, becomes, here, and here, quickly turns to join again with out there.

My methods are syncopatic, and tangential, in order to approach a given subject I find that immersion, and fresh eyes lead me towards planes of vision requesting their capture. I follow black-top thorough fares and laneways towards zones beyond my usual traversals. In the region of Wood Buffalo that contains the municipality of Fort McMurray, there are many fences and signs that clearly mark spaces as private, no trespassing allowed. In Calgary, at the tops of office towers, neos signs bearing the names of 'Suncor' and 'Syncrude' beam brightly,



whereas in Fort McMurray these same signifiers rest on humble placards mounted to wooden fence posts. Their message is clear; private property, danger, keep out!

The highway resembles a long stage, automobiles press their rubber tires into the surface. The highway provides a false sense of security. Highway 63 serves a primary purpose, to guide workers to the Oil Sands operations. The highway is public, but on either side is private property—it is bordered on all sides by the subject, objects of order in space.

To me, Highway 63 represents an access route to visit places that magnify the views of oil refineries near my birthplace in Edmonton, Alberta. In other words, visiting the Oil Sands is like coming to the well.

So why come and photograph? I travel as an explorer, a researcher, a photographer - these are my points of reference. This triad of actions is a process, a motif, a way of seeing the world. Photography underscores and supports my larger research project that is academically based and geographically rooted in the town of Fort



McMurray. As traveller, I move from Edmonton to Fort McMurray and beyond in order to work with others, and what exists outside, out there.

As a photographer, I engage with photography from the point of view of public lands as points/spaces of access that allow me to direct my gaze and camera at—or into—or upon private sites of production. Images speak as evidence of the strangeness, the sublime, the uncanny topographical features that arise in a place where boreal forests stood untouched by human force just a short time ago.

Even before I visited this landscape, I knew that I needed to go and see for myself. At first gaze I was struck with a sense of horror and a deep sense of loss and tragedy. Two terms to help describe the psychological perplexities and emotions that arise: One is *Saudade*, which is a deep longing for that which is gone and may never return. This sense of loss developed as a form of *Solistalgia* (Albrecht), which is the loss felt by environmental change, the feeling one may have when returning to a place after a long time has passed—like New Orleans after Katrina. Following on these two terms, *Saudade* and *Solistalgia*, the question of why photograph can be



answered by a single word: duty, a service to memory, to public perception, to landscape changes. It is a duty to document, to provide evidence and artefacts for hard dialogues and discussions.

Since 2009, I continue to return, to travel, to ask with a researcher's critical eye, and to bring into focus using a camera as production apparatus and creator of representation.

Even if the images are just for myself, I find value in this endeavor as an active process. More recently I have been asked to share—colleagues and friends say, “you’ve been there, can we see your photographs?”. And in these instances the duty becomes clear. My responsibility is to share these photographic images that compress and obscure time and space.

I work to express photographically the imaginary of subject as place. In this instance, the imaginary is the





story of place transformed through the distribution of photograph as objects and artefacts. Rather than obscure the relationship between image and object, my mode has been to re-enter the image of place: photograph again and again, and establish a visual dialogue of communication that intends to move beyond the rigid constraints of singularity. I ask, what would the land, and the landscape itself reveal if it was shown the objects of our perusal?



**Image Notes:**

Figures that are unmarked, Reproduced with Permission of Photographer. Lozowy, Andriko.

Fig. 1 Image of the Piper Alpha ablaze taken by a crew member operating one of the rescue vessels. Image © Cardiff University Engineering Department.

Fig. 2 “Location of the Athabasca, Cold Lake and Peace River Oil Sands in Alberta.” *Alberta Oil Sands*. Alberta Geological Survey, May 9, 2012. Web. August 20, 2012. Image ©Energy Resource Conservation Board.

Fig. 3 Guy, Karen. *Greenpeace Activists Enter Syncrude’s Aurora North Oil Sands Operation and Suspend a Banner that Reads “World’s Dirtiest Oil: Stop the Tar Sands.”* Photograph. *Latest Photos*. Greenpeace, July 23, 2008. Web. August 20, 2012. <<http://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/photos-and-video/latest/braving-toxic-fumes-and-the-sa/>>.

Fig. 4 Burtynsky, Edward. *Alberta Oil Sands #10* (Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada). 2007. Photograph. Edward Burtynsky Photographic Works. Web. August 20, 2012. <[edwardburtynsky.com](http://edwardburtynsky.com)>.

Fig. 5 Riordon, Nathalie. Untitled. 2009. Where is Fort McMurray? Web. August 20, 2012. <[whereisfortmcmurray.com](http://whereisfortmcmurray.com)>. Gonzales, Priscilla. Untitled. 2009. Where is Fort McMurray? Web. August 20, 2012. <[whereisfortmcmurray.com](http://whereisfortmcmurray.com)>. Loutitt, Paula. Untitled. 2010. Where is Fort McMurray? Web. August 20, 2012. <[whereisfortmcmurray.com](http://whereisfortmcmurray.com)>. Chen, Yicun. Untitled. 2009. Where is Fort McMurray? Web. August 20, 2012. <[whereisfortmcmurray.com](http://whereisfortmcmurray.com)>. Desai, Milauni. Untitled. 2009. Where is

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Fig. 6 Lozowy, Andriko. *Highway 63*. 2011 Unpublished. Reproduced with Permission of Photographer.

Fig. 7 Hime, Humphrey Lloyd. *The Prairie, Looking South*. 1858. Photograph. 1936-273/C-018694. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

Fig. 8 Lozowy, Andriko. Image 19. 2011 Unpublished. Reproduced with Permission of the Photographer.

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- (Endnotes)**
1. While Lord Fraser stated that "public interest would not be served by a prosecution," this attitude was the very opposite of the public interest at the time. This attitude may have reflected Lord Fraser's own interests, however. Fraser served as Scotland's minister of energy and also had a number of ties to Big Oil: Fraser served the oil industry in a variety of capacities including: 1) Nonexecutive chairman, JKK Oil and Gas plc, an oil and gas exploration and production company with license interests in the Ukraine, the United States, Italy, and the Caspian Sea. 2) Nonexecutive chairman of "theoilsite.com," which specializes in e-tendering solutions for the oil and gas industry worldwide. 3) Nonexecutive director, International Petroleum Exchange, Europe's largest energy market, best known for its futures contracts in North Sea Brent crude oil. 4) Nonexecutive director of Ram-energy Ltd, an independent exploration and production company that operates primarily in the United States. 5) Nonexecutive director of TotalFina

Elf Upstream UK Ltd, one of the world's largest oil conglomerates.

2. Oil companies have reverted to using the geological classification of "oil sands" over "tar sands" in a bid to move away from the 'dirty oil' smear suggested by tar sands. I will be referring to the Athabasca Oil Sands as the "Oil Sands" to encompass its status as the world's largest Capital Project.

3. Production of bitumen continues to grow in Alberta, accounting for more than 72 per cent of Alberta's total crude oil and raw bitumen output. Total bitumen production in Alberta is about 544 million barrels (86.4 million cubic metres), of which 55 per cent is from mining operations and the remainder is from in situ methods. The ERCB expects Alberta's annual bitumen production to increase to around 1 billion barrels (160 million cubic meters) by 2019: [http://ercb.ca/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_0\\_303\\_263\\_0\\_43/http/ercbContent/publishedcontent/publish/ercb\\_home/public\\_zone/ercb\\_process/enerfaqs/enerfaqs12.aspx](http://ercb.ca/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_303_263_0_43/http/ercbContent/publishedcontent/publish/ercb_home/public_zone/ercb_process/enerfaqs/enerfaqs12.aspx)

4. Other high profile photography series include Peter Essick's National Geographic photos (<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2009/03/canadian-oil-sands/essick-photography>) and Louis Helbig's "Beautiful Destruction" exhibit ([www.beautifuldestruction.ca/ottawacityhallea.html](http://www.beautifuldestruction.ca/ottawacityhallea.html)). Documentary films following this visual trope include: *Petropolis* (2009) a Greenpeace film by Peter Mettler and *Rethink Alberta* (2010), produced by Corporate Ethics International.

5. To view the outcomes of this trip, both photographic and sound recording go to: <http://changeableplaces.wordpress.com/2011/03/17/sights-and-sounds-of-bitumen-extraction-in-alberta-canada/>

6. Theodore Adorno has famously interpreted benjamin's concept of stillness as turning the world to stone (see Adorno 227-42).

7. These photographs are available through his website, [edwardburtynsky.com](http://edwardburtynsky.com); the Oil Spill Series is collected

under the title "Gulf of Mexico," in his "Water" works.

8. The leak amounted to about 4.9 million barrels (780,000 m<sup>3</sup>) of oil, exceeding the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill as the largest ever to originate in U.S. controlled waters and the 1979 Ixtoc I oil spill as the largest spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

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**Patchett, Merle:** Merle Patchett is Lecturer in Cultural Geography at the School of Geographical Sciences at the University of Bristol. Her research broadly investigates interactions between people and the material world and the ways in which these interactions are imagined and practiced in science, art and everyday life. Merle has published her research widely and in a range of formats. Interested in expanding the conceptions of research output, Merle has also curated material culture exhibitions to national and international acclaim. Her most recent curatorial productions have included the urban design competition *Strip Appeal: Reinventing the Strip Mall* ([www.strip-appeal.com](http://www.strip-appeal.com)) and the museum exhibition *Fashioning Feathers: Dead Birds, Millinery Crafts, and the Plumage Trade* ([www.fashioningfeathers.com](http://www.fashioningfeathers.com)). These exhibitions were completed during her time as a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Alberta, a time which also inspired her current research interest in the aestheticization of landscapes of oil production.

**Patchett, Merle :** Merle Patchett est maître de conférences en géographie culturelle à l'École des sciences géographiques de l'Université de Bristol. Le but de sa recherche est d'investiguer les interactions entre les gens et le monde matériel ainsi que les manières selon lesquelles ces interactions sont perçues et pratiquées dans les domaines de la science, de l'art et de la vie quotidienne. Merle a plusieurs publications à son actif; celles-ci sont de formats très variés puisqu'elle s'intéresse aussi à l'élargissement de nos conceptions de la production scientifique. Elle a organisé des expositions sur la culture matérielle qui ont été acclamées aux échelles nationale et internationale. Le concours en design urbain « Strip Appeal: Reinventing the Strip Mall » ([www.strip-appeal.com](http://www.strip-appeal.com)) et l'exposition muséale « Fashioning Feathers: Dead Birds, Millinery Crafts, and the Plumage Trade » ([www.fashioningfeathers.com](http://www.fashioningfeathers.com)) sont deux exemples de projets récents qui ont été mis au point pendant sa recherche postdoctorale à l'Université de l'Alberta, où elle a trouvé l'inspiration pour ses travaux actuels sur l'esthétisation des paysages de la production pétrolière.

**Lozowy, Andriko:** Andriko Lozowy's current research considers the Canadian Oil Sands through a sociology of images, photo-methodologies, and collaborative youth practices of resistance. As a doctoral student at the University of Alberta, Andriko has been fortunate to be stationed at the Northern gateway. Edmonton is marked as a place of flow, and serves as a zone of secondary oil sands industry, as well as being the major city that services Fort McMurray with commuting workers, and industrial tools. His work is currently in multiple stages, as a dissertation: *Photographing Alberta's Oil Industry Landscape: Prom Practice to Collaboration*, as well as parsed out as a series of connected articles: Lozowy, Shields & Dorow, "Cameras Creating Community" *Canadian Journal of Sociology* (Forthcoming, 2012); Shields and Lozowy, "Mashups, Youth Culture", *Environment and Planning: Society and Space* (Under Review). "Mega-Haulers," *Encyclopedia of Consumption and Waste* (2012); "Picturing Industrial Landscapes" *Space & Culture* (Under Review).

**Lozowy, Andriko :** La recherche actuelle d'Andriko Lozowy consiste à analyser les sables bitumineux canadiens à travers une sociologie des images, les méthodologies liées à la photographie, et les pratiques collaboratives de résistance de la jeunesse. Andriko peut compter sur une proximité avec le nord pétrolier pour son étude doctorale à l'Université de l'Alberta puisque Edmonton, étant une zone secondaire de l'industrie des sables bitumineux, est considérée comme un endroit de haute circulation ainsi que comme la ville principale d'approvisionnement pour les services et les outils industriels qui sont acheminés vers Fort McMurray. Son travail est divisé en plusieurs parties, y compris sa thèse, *Photographing Alberta's Oil Industry Landscape: Prom Practice to Collaboration*, et divers articles : « Cameras Creating Community », Lozowy, Shields et Dorow, (*Canadian Journal of Sociology*, à paraître en 2012), « Mashups, Youth Culture », Shields et Lozowy, (*Environment and Planning: Society and Space*, en évaluation), « Mega-Haulers » (*Encyclopedia of Consumption and Waste*, 2012), « Picturing Industrial Landscapes » (*Space & Culture*, en évaluation).