

TYLER LOS-JONES

a slow light



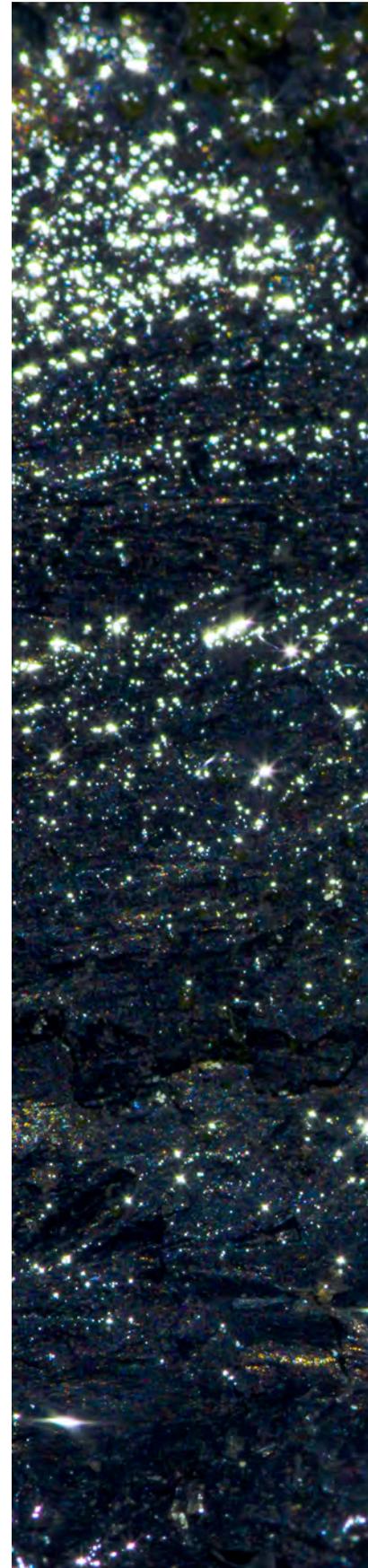
TYLER LOS-JONES

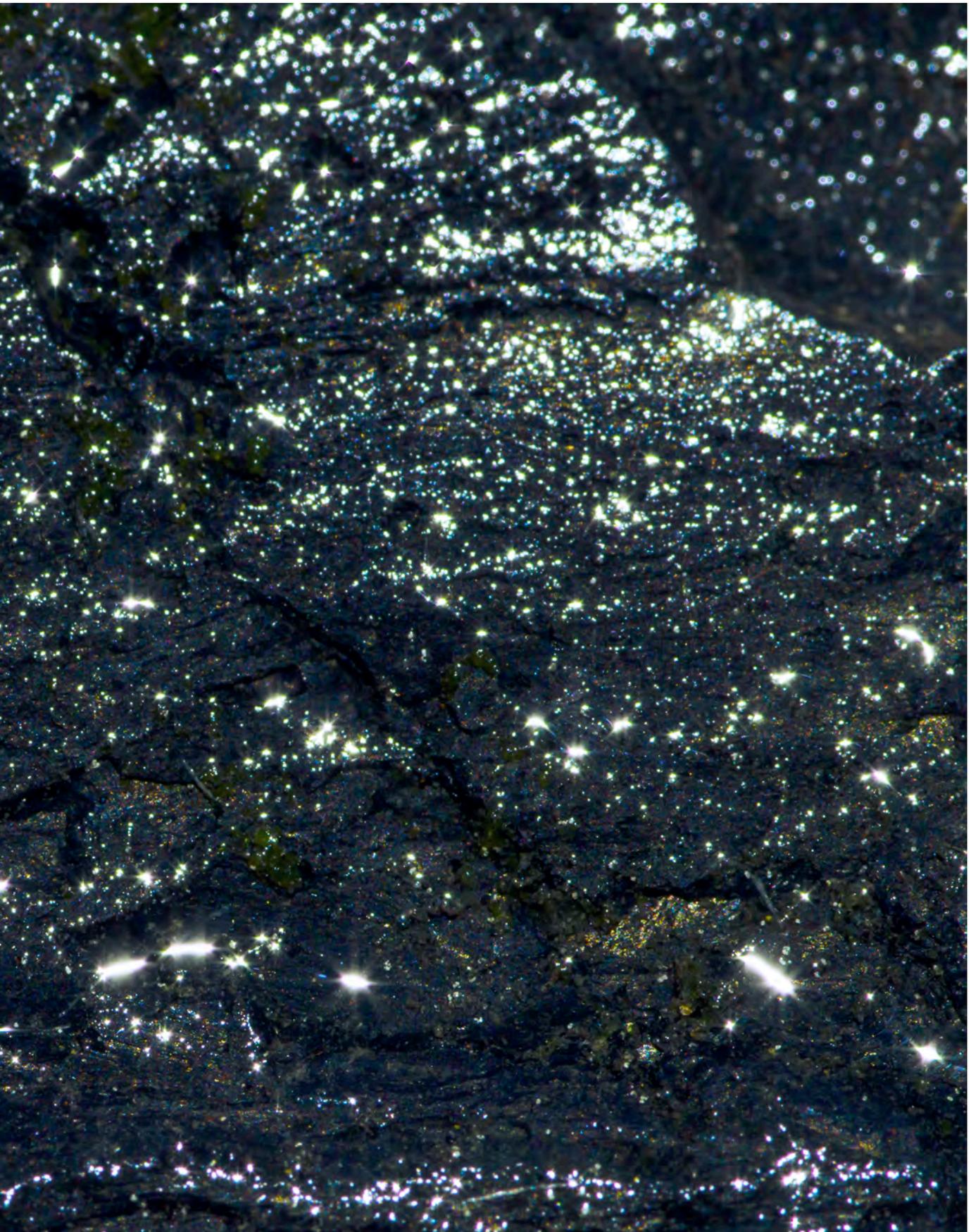
a slow light

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program
Curated by Shannon Bingeman © 2018 Alberta Society of Artists
First presented at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery

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ABOUT

the travelling exhibition program (trex)

Since 1980, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program. The TREX program strives to ensure every Albertan is provided with an opportunity to enjoy fully developed exhibitions in schools, libraries, healthcare centres, and smaller rural institutions and galleries throughout the province.

The TREX program assists in making both the AFA's extensive art collection and the work of contemporary Alberta artists available to Albertans. Four regional organizations coordinate the program for the AFA:

- REGION 1 Northwest – Art Gallery of Grande Prairie
- REGION 2 Northeast / North Central – Art Gallery of Alberta
- REGION 3 Southwest – Alberta Society of Artists
- REGION 4 Southeast – Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre

the alberta foundation for the arts (afa)

A crown agency of the Government of Alberta, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts was established in 1991 with a mandate to support and contribute to the development of the arts in Alberta.

the alberta society of artists (asa)

The Alberta Society of Artists is an active membership of professional visual artists who strive for excellence and through exhibition, education and communication will increase public awareness of the visual arts. The ASA is contracted by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts to develop and circulate art exhibitions to communities throughout southwest Alberta. Each exhibition is designed to unpack easily and install within smaller spaces found in schools, libraries, museums and other public venues.





EXHIBITION STATEMENT

The history of the Crowsnest Pass in southwestern Alberta is one of subtle and dramatic shifts. The area is notable for its geological formations, history of resource extraction, and the 1903 Frank Slide incident when the eastern slope of Turtle Mountain gave way in a rockslide, burying a part of the young mining town below. Over the years, the coal mining industry that once served as the community's economic bedrock gradually shut down, and the area has become increasingly dependent on tourism. The shards of crumbled limestone that remain scattered at the site of the rockslide have proven to be a draw for many curious visitors, but also serve as a humbling reminder of an ever-evolving environment. The site is a stark counter-narrative to the popular conception of mountains as steady, permanent fixtures.

In 2015, Canmore-based artist, Tyler Los-Jones, began his investigation of the Crowsnest Pass during a residency program organized by the Southern Alberta Art Gallery at the Gushul Studio in Blairmore, Alberta. He recalls encountering the region's stories in the way one encounters bands of strata—*there are those that are large and obvious that you can determine at a distance and those that are more contorted that you need to experience up close.*¹ The layered geological and economic narratives within the region became the basis for the photographs and sculpture in this exhibition, along with references to orientation markers that have helped people navigate the dynamic environment.

In *a slow light*, Los-Jones generates wayfinding experiences by disorienting and reorienting the viewer with the material history of the Crowsnest Pass. The interplay of man-made objects with coal and limestone reminds us of humanity's short time within the region by alluding to the geological forces that have been at play for millions of years—forces that are too slow to watch, but too powerful to overlook.

—Shannon Bingeman

1. Tyler Los-Jones, interviewed by the curator, paraphrased from a personal interview conducted through written correspondence, April 2018. See page 13 for full interview.

TYLER LOS-JONES

biography

Tyler Los-Jones produces objects and images from his home in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta. The work he has produced over the past decade aims to complicate inherited assumptions of environments by bringing the unnatural aspects of the western conception of nature to the forefront. Los-Jones is fascinated by the role photography plays in the production and the fulfilment of our expectations of environments.

Recent solo exhibitions have taken place at Division Gallery in Toronto, Jarvis Hall Gallery in Calgary and the Southern Alberta Art Gallery in Lethbridge. Los-Jones has been commissioned to produce multiple large-scale public artworks including, *A panorama protects its view* for the Art Gallery of Alberta in Edmonton and *To keep the promise* at the Calgary Airport Marriott In-Terminal Hotel. Los-Jones' work is included in numerous permanent collections: the TD Canada Trust, the Royal Bank of Canada, the City of Calgary, the Alberta Foundation of the Arts and the Government of Canada.





ARTIST INTERVIEW

This interview was conducted through written correspondence between curator, Shannon Bingeman, and the artist, Tyler Los Jones in April 2018.

S - I feel that a lot of people's impression of the Crowsnest Pass is marred by the visual aftermath of the Frank Slide incident. Having spent time there during your residency at the Gushul Studio, I'm curious about your overall impression of the community and what served as the impetus for this body of work?

T - I first visited the area because Ryan Dougherty and the Southern Alberta Art Gallery had invited me to spend a month in residence at the Gushul Studio in Blairmore, Alberta during the summer of 2015. You're probably right in that the Frank Slide is likely one of the first histories that many visitors encounter and associate with the area; it's a compelling story and the experience of standing in the debris field of boulders strewn across the valley is a pretty impactful experience. In spite of the well-known and dramatic Frank Slide, Crowsnest has so many entangled histories that it's simply not possible to view the history of the place through a single narrative. I'm so interested in the way the community has chosen to share their stories with visitors, and anyone who has visited the area will be familiar with the dozens of didactic panels found along the roadways. There is a real generosity at the core of the public display of these stories, as each panel is an invitation to position oneself in relation to the history of the place you are standing, even if you're not a member of the community. While producing the work for *a slow light*, I tried to remain conscious of how I had been granted access to the stories that influenced the work. I've been thinking about accessing these stories in the same way that you encounter different bands of strata in the rock walls of the area: there are large, obvious bands of strata, which can be easily identified from a distance; there are many thinner bands, which you need to be up-close to see (often these are folded and contorted); but the majority of the strata is below ground, hidden from sight. I think the way in which people living in the area interact with the bands of strata, both literally and figuratively, was the most compelling aspect of my research and became the impetus for the work in this exhibition.



S - The connection you've made between the bands of strata as an analogy for encountering layered narratives is really interesting and one that I think you've been able to translate visually in the work as well. As an audience, we see literal references to the long geological history of the area combined with chains, a coil and reflective prisms that speak to its more recent history. Can you describe the significance of these man-made items and how you encountered them?

T - The inclusion of the objects you've mentioned connects to this one pivotal moment in my research for the exhibition. During the summer of 2016, I participated in a popular tour of the Bellevue Underground Mine. This coal mine was in operation from 1903 to 1961 but the site is now a tourist destination that provides visitors with an example of what the daily experience of an underground miner would have been. As you are lead through the mine, it only takes a few hundred metres for the mine to become pitch black. While in this space of total darkness, I was thinking about the vast forests of ferns in the late Jurassic period and all of the work they had gone through to collect and store sunlight. These ferns were a kind of solar battery that have been storing solar energy collected from our sun seventy-five million years ago. I was surrounded by complete darkness in the mine, and yet I also had the uncanny feeling of being completely surrounded by ancient sunlight. When I was describing this strange feeling to my partner, she reminded me that Nancy Holt, the well-known American artist, produced an artwork in the mid-1970s titled *sun tunnels*, which is found in the Great Basin Desert of northwestern Utah. Holt's piece is made up of



four large concrete cylinders arranged in an open “X” on the desert floor. These cylinders are large enough for a person to walk into and are positioned so that they frame the sun during the winter and summer solstices. For me, Holt’s incredible artwork is an example of an object that can help visitors to orient themselves in relation to vast cosmic or celestial timescales. While I was in the Bellevue mine, I had found myself in another type of “sun tunnel” and decided that my research should focus on the objects found around Crowsnest Pass, which, like Holt’s piece, can be seen as wayfinding markers used to orient ourselves in relation to the much larger spatial and temporal scales of our environment.

As an example, the chain is a symbol included in the exhibition of a wayfinding marker I encountered during the same tour of the Bellevue mine. Near the end of our tour, our guide brought our attention to a chain suspended from the slanted wall of the mine. The walls of the mine are tilted by thirty-eight degrees and this dramatic geometry, coupled with the incredible darkness of the space, can be very disorienting for visitors. The chain was hung by the tour operator so that it would dangle from the overhanging wall and signify the vertical axis for visitors. The simple gesture of suspending a chain to help reorient visitors became a powerful image for me. I was certainly feeling disoriented by the strange architecture of the mine, but I was feeling much more disoriented by the feeling I described earlier of having the sense that I was surrounded by ancient solar energy. The collapsing of time and the growing awareness of the unfathomable chain of events required to produce the coal beneath my feet was much more destabilizing than the tilted walls. Forests had to collect light to grow, they die and become peat, the peat gets covered by sediment and eventually become folded into mountains when tectonic plates collide; the mountains are eroded so that strata is exposed, humans show up and dig around in the strata, we learn to burn rocks, we invent trains and other gadgets, we dig mines and then eventually make tourism sites out of the mines to learn about the effects burning rocks have on the entire globe. With all of this in mind, I feel that the chain was maybe the perfect tool for the tour operator to have chosen to help reorient us.



S - The concrete cylinders in the Nancy Holt piece you mentioned are pierced with small holes to represent various constellations and your work also references constellations in *Watching Falling – the Constellation of Turtle Mountain*. In light of what you just mentioned about the Bellevue mine chain being an object to help orient visitors, I'm thinking about the similar role stars have played in helping humans navigate their surroundings. What were the other wayfinding markers that you encountered in the Crowsnest Pass?

T - Yes, the connection between the constellations and celestial navigation in Holt's work is really incredible; the constellations in her piece are: Capricorn, Columba, Draco and Perseus. I was really compelled by the parallels between Holt's piece, and the solar energy trapped in the coal, but I became even more interested when I learned of the constellation-like series of prisms scattered across the summit of Turtle Mountain. Turtle Mountain, for those who may not know, is the site of the infamous 1903 rockslide that killed over ninety people and crushed a portion of the town of Frank, Shannon, you've already identified how central this tragic event is for the narrative of Crowsnest Pass; and the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre is the main hub for disseminating information about the event to curious visitors to the area. It was during a visit to the Centre when I noticed a small night-time image of Turtle Mountain with an array of illuminated points along the summit. The photo was accompanied by description of the laser-ranging monitoring system installed in the mid-2000s and used by the Alberta Geological Survey [AGS] to monitor movement in the still-unstable south peak of Turtle Mountain. The laser ranging or electronic distance measurement (EDM) system works by sending a pulse of light from a fixed location in the valley to bounce off prisms placed in specific points on the mountain. If it takes less time for the light to return to the source, then it means the mountain has moved closer to the valley and a rockslide may be possible. This EDM system is no longer operational and has been replaced by a series of more accurate and efficient GPS [global positioning system] and radar systems. Although no longer used to track the mountains movement, many of the prisms are still present on the mountain. After being in contact with some very, very helpful staff at the AGS, I was able to visit the location of the valley floor where the light originated before



bouncing off the prisms and returning. Standing at this correct location in darkness, even with just the flashlight on the back of a cell phone, you can see the prisms shimmer up as they reflect the light back at you. It's a pretty incredible feeling to see this secret, delicate image wink back at you from the summit of a mountain a few kilometres away.

I think that the history of the Turtle Mountain rockslide is so interesting because it points to a precise moment when geologic activity can be seen to manifest at a speed easily recognized by humans. I'm interested in these moments that can help one to recognize the dynamic rhythm of mountain environments, which is often difficult to identify, especially in relation to our short human lifespans. It's so easy to make the mistake of describing mountain environments as static, and I loved learning about the different methods used by the AGS to measure the slow movement of this massive mountain. The goal of monitoring a mountain's movement is pretty compelling; using reflective prisms to produce a constellation on the summit of a mountain is downright poetic. Much like Nancy Holt's work, I'm drawn to the way that these prisms frame our environment in a way that we can begin to see the dynamism of place.

S - In 1977, Susan Sontag wrote about how the act of taking a photograph can help orient people to new environments by helping them to take possession of an unfamiliar space.² Beyond the physical markers that you've identified as wayfinders in the community, do you consider photographic practice to be a form of wayfinding as well?

T - Hmm, it's a good question. I'm interested in wayfinding markers that help us to better recognize our complex entanglements, in spite of perceived barriers such as vast distances in time or space. The markers in Crowsnest, which resonated for me, all seemed to signify dramatic connection, in spite of assumed binary differences, such as: celestial / subterranean and human / non-human. Yes, I'm sure that photographs and photographic practice can operate as wayfinding markers for many people, but I'm uncomfortable with the idea that images provide a form of possession over whatever is being imaged. Photography, especially landscape photography, which we see so much of in mountain spaces, often works against a recognition of entanglement, as these images typically attempt to depict that cumbersome collection we call nature. I'm most compelled by images, objects and ideas that complicate these inherited assumptions of a singular, linear or easily defined Nature. The wayfinding markers I've identified don't necessarily provide clarity; in my experience they tend to make things a little more complicated, while seeming to also make a little more sense. That's the catch with entanglement: it's not straightforward. We find ourselves in disorienting times. The process of orientation isn't going to be straightforward and is unlikely to lead us to the places we have already been.

2. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 9.

LIST OF IMAGES





top row, left to right (courtesy of the artist):

Tyler Los-Jones, *Sediments and Sunlight no. 7*, 2017. Archival inkjet print. 30.5 x 40.6 cm.

Tyler Los-Jones, *Sediments and Sunlight no. 8*, 2017. Archival inkjet print. 30.5 x 40.6 cm.

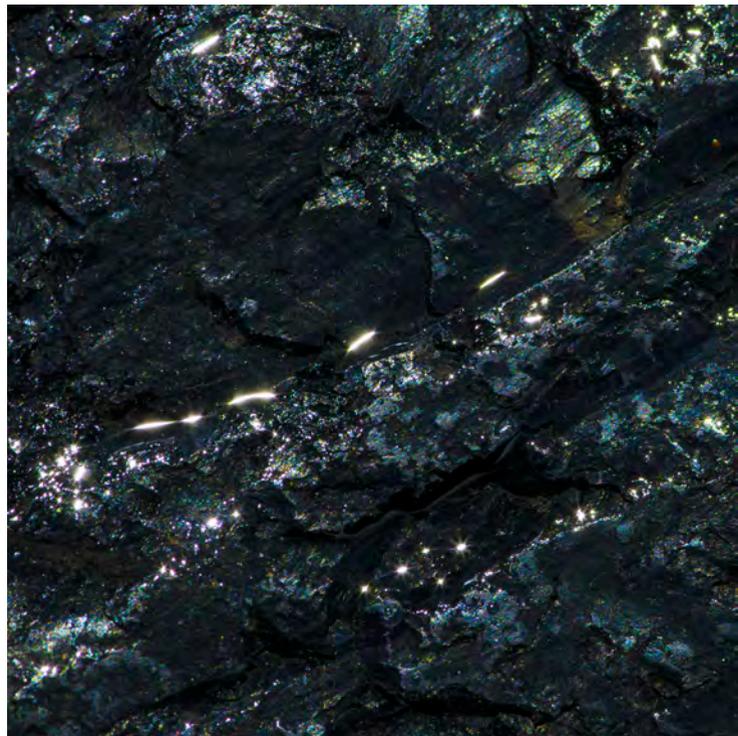
Tyler Los-Jones, *Sediments and Sunlight no. 9*, 2017. Archival inkjet print. 30.5 x 40.6 cm.

Tyler Los-Jones, *Wayfinding and Sun Tunnels - after Nancy Holt*, 2017. Coal dust, epoxy putty, dimensions variable.

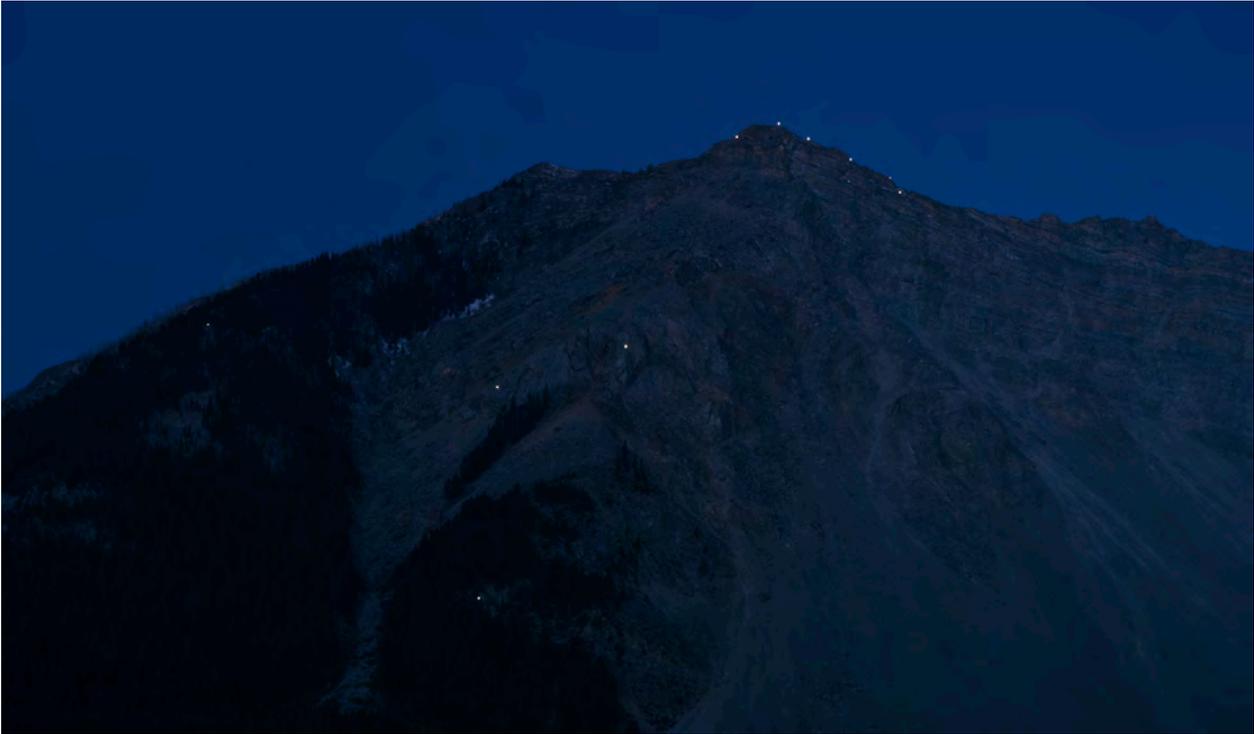
bottom row, left to right (courtesy of the artist):

Tyler Los-Jones, *As Lichens no. 7*, 2017. Archival inkjet print. 30.5 x 35.6 cm.

Tyler Los-Jones, *As Lichens no. 8*, 2017. Archival inkjet print. 30.5 x 35.6 cm.



list of images



top row, left to right (courtesy of the artist):

Tyler Los-Jones, *Medusa's Ferns no. 2*, 2017. Archival inkjet print. 61 x 61 cm.

Tyler Los-Jones, *Medusa's Ferns no. 3*, 2017. Archival inkjet print. 61 x 61 cm.

Tyler Los-Jones, *Watching Falling - the Constellation of Turtle Mountain*, 2017. Archival inkjet print. 55.8 x 96.5 cm.

bottom row, left to right (courtesy of the artist):

Tyler Los-Jones, *Medusa's Ferns no. 5*, 2017. Archival inkjet print. 61 x 61 cm.

Tyler Los-Jones, *Medusa's Ferns no. 6*, 2017. Archival inkjet print. 61 x 61 cm.





EDUCATION GUIDE

This education guide is comprised of activities to move the audience through the various themes presented in *a slow light*. The content of the exhibition and the following lesson plans have been carefully developed and designed to enhance the curriculum set by Alberta Education. The guide includes questions for discussion, vocabulary and activities designed for the level of ability, understanding and complexity of the participants:

Beginner – viewers who are just beginning their exploration of art.

Intermediate – viewers who have some experience looking at and creating art.

Advanced – viewers who have much experience looking at and creating art.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Below are questions that are intended to prompt meaningful discussion about the content presented in a *slow light*. The questions can be selected and the vocabulary altered to suit the appropriate age level.

Have you visited the Crowsnest Pass? What do you know about the area and its history?

In Watching Falling – The Constellation of Turtle Mountain, reflective prisms are lit up in a way that resembles a constellation. Historically, how have the stars been used as a tool for humans?

What does a geologist do? Can you create a hypothesis for why geologists installed prisms on Turtle Mountain?

Can you see visual references to constellations in any of the other artwork? If so, where?

How does darkness affect our sense of space? What do you think it was like for the coal miners in the Turtle Mountain mine who worked long hours in the dark?

Consider the chain that Los-Jones has created. How might it function to help someone navigate a dark space?

What tools do we use today to help us with navigation? How effective are these tools?

Look at the artist's Sediments and Sunlight and As Lichens photographs. How do you think they were made?

Are there details in any of the photographs that are disorienting? If so, why?

Look closely at the Medusa Ferns photographs. What is the artist photographing?

What are the adjectives that you would use to describe coal? What are the adjectives that you would use to describe the artist's Medusa Ferns photographs? How do your descriptions compare? Are they complimentary or contradictory?

What do you think the title of the exhibition refers to?



ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

navigating through the dark

Walking through a pitch-dark space can be extremely disorienting. In the summer of 2016, the artist participated in a tour of a decommissioned coal mine and encountered a chain that helped visitors orient themselves to the vertical axis in the dark cavern. In this activity, participants will mimic the experience of walking through a dark coal mine while their peers act as their *wayfinders* (see Vocabulary). They will take turns wearing blindfolds one at a time while the others attempt to guide them to locate a chunk of “coal” (you can use any material to signify the coal) using only their words. Select an open area that is obstacle free (a gymnasium or outdoor field) to conduct the activity. Remind everyone that this is also an exercise of trust. After everyone has an opportunity to wear the blindfold, ask: *How did the experience make you feel? Did you feel disoriented? Have you ever felt disoriented when exploring an unfamiliar place? What helps you to feel reoriented in these situations? What do you think it was like for the coal miners in the Crowsnest Pass who worked long hours in very dark caverns? What tools do you think they used to help navigate the space?*

changing industries

the history of industry in the Crowsnest Pass area has shifted since its first European settlers. The mining and sawmill extraction that was once their driving economic force has become one increasingly based on tourism. As a group, contemplate the industrial changes that have occurred in your community. Ask: *What were the primary industries 100 years ago? What are they today? What do you predict will happen in the future?* Have them compare their response to the history of the Crowsnest Pass area. *Are there any similarities and/or differences? Are there any abandoned buildings, equipment, railway tracks, etc., that relate to those past industries that still remain in their community today?*

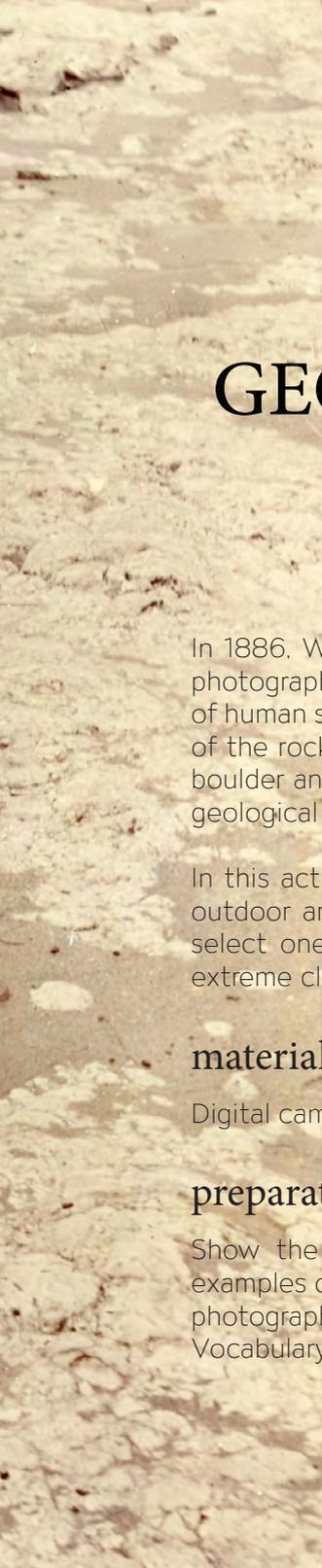
charcoal frottage rubbings

the artwork in *a slow light* references the geological history of the Crowsnest Pass area, including coal that dates back to the Lower Cretaceous period millions of years ago. This natural resource is well known for its energy usages, but it has also been used as drawing material dating back to cave paintings created during the Paleolithic era. In this activity, participants will explore the geology of their city or town by creating charcoal frottage rubbings of found rocks. They can either do the rubbings on site or collect rocks to bring back to the classroom. To create the frottage, participants will place a sheet of newsprint over the rock and use charcoal to lightly rub over the surface, revealing its texture. Ask: *How does the texture in your rubbing compare to the texture in the artist's Medusa's Ferns photographs? What might a geologist learn from looking at similar rubbings?*

create a geological sun print

the energy that emanates from the sun is powerful. It formed the coal found in the Crowsnest Pass over millions of years and can also be used in a very basic photographic process called a *calotype* (see Vocabulary) or sun print. Calotypes are created using a photo sensitive emulsion, selected objects and exposure to ultraviolet light, but can be mimicked quite easily in the classroom using coloured construction paper. In this activity, participants will act as geologists by collecting rocks outside, placing them on sheets of coloured construction paper and leaving them under direct sunlight. Immediately after they have created their composition, have them create a hypothesis about what will happen to the paper after it sits under the sun for a long time. The prints are finished when the exposed paper has noticeably faded. Once that happens, have the participants remove the rocks to reveal their prints. Ask: *Are you surprised by the result? How does it compare to your initial hypothesis? What else can the sun's energy do?*





TWO APPROACHES TO GEOLOGICAL PHOTOGRAPHS

In 1886, William Jerome Harrison became the first photographer and geologist to stage photographs of man-made objects alongside rock formations. The photographs were devoid of human subjects but included pocket knives, watches and hammers to give an indication of the rock's scale. Without the objects, a small pebble could have been interpreted as a boulder and vice versa. Like Harrison, Los-Jones also photographs man-made objects and geological materials, but the spatial scale in his images are much more ambiguous.

In this activity, participants will act as geologists and explore the rocks found in a local outdoor area. Armed with cameras and man-made materials found in the area, they will select one rock that they find visually interesting and stage two photographs: one in extreme close-up detail and the other with one of the man-made materials alongside it.

materials

Digital cameras and found objects.

preparation

Show the participants examples of William Jerome Harrison's photographs alongside examples of Los-Jones' *Medusa's Ferns* series. Have them compare the two approaches to photography and review the following concepts: *scale*, *texture*, *focus* and *close-ups* (see Vocabulary).

instructions

1. Have participants explore a selected outdoor space and collect man-made materials that are safe to handle.
2. Next, they will locate a rock or rockface that they find visually interesting.
3. The first photograph that they take will be of the rock in extreme close-up detail. Have them zoom in so that the rock takes up the whole of the viewfinder. They may need to take a few shots until they are satisfied with the result. The focus should be as clear as possible.
4. The second photograph that they will stage will be of the rock alongside one of the man-made materials they gathered. For this image, they should stand further away from the subject matter; the objects should fit fully within the viewfinder.
5. Have participants select their favourite images from step 3 and 4. Delete the rest.
6. Have the images developed.
7. Display the collective images in the classroom and talk about the experience following the discussion questions below.

discussion questions

Which photograph is more effective at conveying the size of the rock? Why?

Which photograph is more effective at conveying the texture of the rock? Why?

Were you surprised by any of the man-made materials that you found in the area? Do they look as though they belong alongside the rocks?

If a geologist were to study your photographs, what would they learn about the area that you explored?

variations

Match the corresponding images – after the photographs have been developed, scatter them on a large work surface and ask participants to try to match the corresponding images together.







FOSSILS FOR THE FUTURE

In the artist interview, Los-Jones recalls encountering the layered histories of the Crowsnest Pass in the way that one encounters bands of strata on a rock face: “there are large, obvious bands of strata, which can be easily identified from a distance [and] there are many thinner bands, which you need to be up-close to see (often these are folded and contorted).”³ Beyond this analogy, rocks have also been a vehicle for conveying narratives about what life was like on earth millions of years ago. Nestled between shards of limestone and granite, paleontologists have found remarkable fossils that have provided insight about distant geological ages.

In this activity, participants will create a fossil for the future. Using a combination of man-made and natural objects from a selected area along with clay and Plaster of Paris, they will form their fossils in paper cups. Once the Plaster of Paris has dried, they will trade cups and act as paleontologists to uncover their fossil.

materials

Plaster of Paris, found objects, water, air dry clay, paper cups, popsicle sticks, black permanent marker, newsprint, charcoal, notebooks and pencils.

preparation

Explain how fossils are formed and what we can learn from them about the history of our planet.

3. Tyler Los-Jones, interviewed by the curator, quoted from a personal interview conducted through written correspondence, April 2018. See page 13 for full interview.

instructions

1. Participants will explore an outdoor area and collect two small items: one that is natural (e.g., a leaf, a flower, a pine cone) and one that is man-made (e.g., a lost coin, a gum wrapper, a bottle cap).
2. Back in the classroom, participants will each be given a ball of clay and asked to flatten it into the inside bottom of a paper cup, smoothing out the top. Explain to them that the clay will act as the dirt that their found objects will be placed on.
3. Using the found objects from step 1, participants will carefully press each object into the clay, making sure the most textured side of the object is facing the clay.
4. Remove the objects from the clay. If participants are not satisfied with their first attempt, they can smooth out the surface of the clay and try again.
5. Add half a cup of dry Plaster of Paris to each participant's cup.
6. Add one to three tablespoons of water to each cup and have participants carefully stir the mixture using popsicle sticks. The consistency of the mixture should resemble thick pancake batter. The powder should be fully saturated by the water. Add a bit more water, if necessary.
7. Have participants put their initials on the bottom of their cup using the black permanent marker.
8. Store the cups in a dry place overnight.
9. After the Plaster of Paris has set, hand out the cups so that everyone is given a fossil created by someone else.
10. On a sheet of newsprint, participants will write down the initials on their cup in the top right-hand corner of the paper.
11. Next, they will carefully tear open the cups and remove the clay to reveal the fossil.
12. Place the newsprint over the fossil and carefully rub the charcoal over the surface to reveal the texture of the fossil underneath.
13. Using notebooks and pencils, the final step is for participants to pretend they are paleontologists living in the future. They will write a paragraph describing their fossil discovery, how they imagine the objects ended up in that location and what they think the objects reveal about life in that area when it was formed.



discussion questions

What have fossils taught us about life millions of years ago?

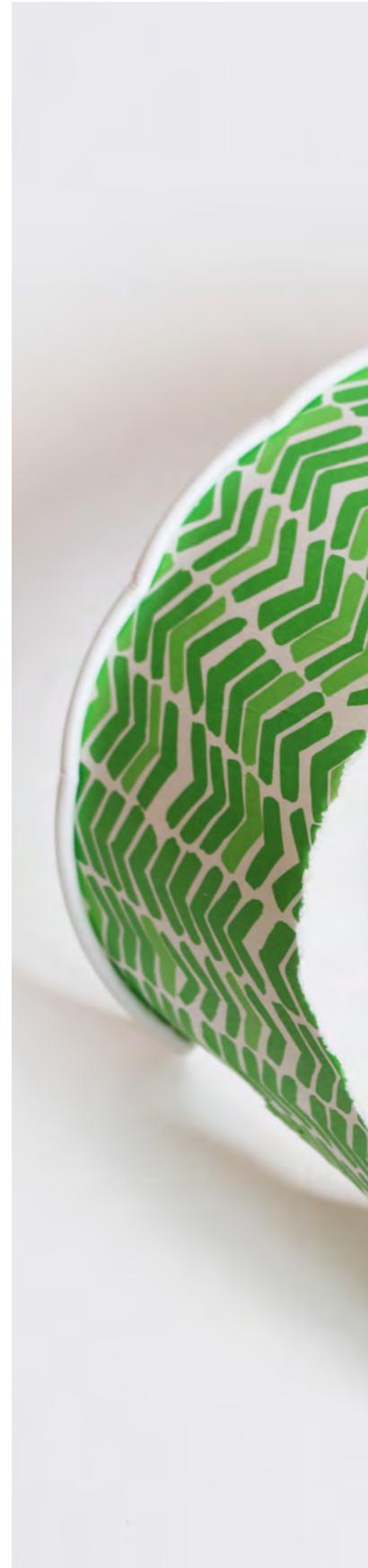
Do you think fossils will play the same role in the future? Will they teach humans living thousands of years from now about what it was like to live on earth during the first half of the 21st century? Will there be other methods or technologies that they'll use instead?

Do you think photographs are like fossils? Why or why not?

variations

For younger participants – simplify the project by omitting step 13.

For older participants – rather than using found objects to create an impression in the clay, in step 3 participants will use clay tools to carve their own fossil design into the surface.







PERSONAL WAYFINDERS



A wayfinder is a sign, landmark or other indicator that is used to assist people in navigating a particular location. They can be useful in helping people to orient themselves in unfamiliar spaces, but they serve a role in familiar places as well. For example, a particular building might serve as an indication that someone is halfway to their school, or a tree might indicate the start of a common walking trail. For the residents of the Crowsnest Pass, a limber pine known as the Burmis Tree serves as one of their beloved landmarks, marking the site of Burmis, Alberta—a former coal mining town. The Burmis Tree is estimated to be between 600 and 750 years old—the tree died in the late 1970s, was blown over by a windstorm in 1998 and was damaged by vandals in 2004. Nevertheless, residents have rallied to preserve it using stainless steel rods, brackets, glue and a prop pole to keep it in place. Today it is widely recognized as one of the most photographed trees in Canada.

In this activity, participants will select a wayfinder in their community with which they identify. They will start by photographing the object from multiple points of view and will use the printed images to create a contorted relief sculpture collage.

materials

Digital cameras, photo paper, scissors, utility knives, rulers, double-sided tape, white foam core and white matt board.

preparation

Discuss the significance of the Burmis Tree to the residents of Crowsnest Pass.

Review the terms: *wayfinder*, *perspective*, *relief sculpture* and *contorted* (see Vocabulary). Look at Los-Jone's *Sediments and Sunlight* photographs and discuss possible connections to those terms.

Have the group brainstorm wayfinders in their community.

instructions

1. Have participant identify a wayfinder in the community that holds personal significance.
2. Photograph the wayfinder from multiple perspectives.
3. Select images to work with and print them full scale on 8.5 x 11-inch photo paper.
4. Use utility knives and/or scissors to cut out images in a variety of shapes. Use rulers to assist in cutting straight lines when necessary.
5. Play around with the arrangement of the cut-out shapes, folding the photo paper along the way, if desired.
6. Once the final composition is resolved, use double-sided tape to attach the photo paper to the white matt board background. Use small pieces of foam core between some of the layers to create subtle depth.
7. Photograph the final collage (optional).

discussion questions

In what way does the object you selected to photograph serve as a wayfinder?

Did anyone choose the same wayfinder in step 1? If so, how do the final collages compare?

Are the subjects of the photographs recognizable? Why or why not?

In what way does the deconstruction and reconstruction of the photographs mirror the process used by Los-Jones in a slow light? How does it mirror the way people engage with the subject matter of the images on site?

variations

Create a series of prints – follow the lesson plan until the end of step 3. Rather than creating a collage with the printed images, have participants display them in a series and write an artist statement about why that object serves as a personal wayfinder.

Create a 3D photo collage – complete the lesson plan as outlined, but for an added challenge, have participants create a 3-dimensional photo collage that can be looked at *in the round* (see Vocabulary). They will need to mount their photo paper on a sturdy work surface (e.g., balsa wood, matt board) to give the sculpture stability.





VOCABULARY

Calotype - a photographic process by which a large number of prints could be produced from a paper negative.

Collage - an artistic composition made of various materials (such as paper, cloth or wood) glued on a surface.

Composition - the way in which something is put together or arranged: the combination of parts or elements that make up a work of art.

Constellation - any of 88 arbitrary configurations of stars or an area of the celestial sphere covering one of these configurations.

Contorted - to twist into an unusual appearance or shape.

Fossil - a remnant, impression, or trace of an organism of past geologic ages that has been preserved in the earth's crust.

Frottage - the technique of creating a design by rubbing (as with a pencil) over an object placed underneath the paper.

Geology - a science that deals with the history of the earth and its life especially as recorded in rocks.

In the round - see round [def.] : in full sculptured form unattached to a background.

Lichen - any of numerous complex plantlike organisms made up of an alga or a cyanobacterium and a fungus growing in symbiotic association on a solid surface (such as on a rock or the bark of trees).

Perspective - the technique or process of representing on a plane or curved surface the spatial relation of objects as they might appear to the eye from multiple points.

Paleontology - a science dealing with the life of past geological periods as known from fossil remains.

Relief sculpture - see relief [def.] : a mode of sculpture in which forms and figures are distinguished from a surrounding plane surface.

Sediment - material deposited by water, wind or glaciers.

Wayfinder - a sign, landmark or other indicator used to assist people in navigating a particular location.

Merriam Webster Dictionary (online), s.vv. [calotype, collage, constellation, fossil, frottage, geology, in the round, lichen, multiple point perspective, paleontology, relief sculpture, sediments.] [composition, contorted (from English Language Learners dictionary).] Accessed April 16, 2018. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>.

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[Vocabulary definitions simplified and/or paraphrased; spelling Canadianized for print purposes.]

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CREDITS

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Artist – Tyler Los-Jones
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Front and back cover – Tyler Los-Jones, *Watching Falling - the Constellation of Turtle Mountain* (detail), 2017. Archival inkjet print, 55.8 x 96.5 cm. Courtesy of the artist.
Page 5, 6 – Tyler Los-Jones, *Medusa's Ferns no. 3* (detail), 2017. Archival inkjet print, 61 x 61 cm. Courtesy of the artist.
Page 9, 10 – Tyler Los-Jones, *As Lichens no. 8* (detail), 2017. Archival inkjet print, 30.5 x 35.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist.
Page 11, 12 – Tyler Los-Jones, *Sediments and Sunlight no. 9* (detail), 2017. Archival inkjet print, 30.5 x 40.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist.
Page 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 – Installation photographs of *a slow light* at Division Gallery in Toronto. Courtesy of the artist.
Page 23, 24 – Tyler Los-Jones, *Medusa's Ferns no. 5*, 2017. Archival inkjet print, 61 x 61 cm.
Page 25, 26 – Tyler Los-Jones, *As Lichens no. 7* (detail), 2017. Archival inkjet print, 30.5 x 35.6 cm. Courtesy of the artist.
Page 29, 30 – William Jerome Harrison, *Sheringham Beach. Paramoudra in Chalk*, 1886. Courtesy of the British Geological Survey.

