Edited by Christopher P. Heuer and Rebecca Zorach

Clark Art Institute
Williamstown, Massachusetts

Distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven and London

01.Frontmatter.indd 3 2/14/18 5:41 PM

This publication was conceived by the Research and Academic Program at the Clark Art Institute. A related conference, titled “Ecologies, Agents, Terrains,” was held May 4–6, 2017 at the Clark. For information on programs and publications at the Clark, visit www.clarkart.edu.

© 2018 Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute
All rights reserved.
This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, including illustrations, in any form (beyond that copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law and except by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publishers.

Produced by the Publications Department of the Clark Art Institute, 225 South Street, Williamstown, Massachusetts 01267

Anne Roecklein, *Managing Editor*
Kevin Bicknell, *Assistant Editor and Rights Coordinator*
Ashton Fancy, *Publications Assistant*
Samantha Page, *Publications Assistant*
Anne-Solène Bayan, *Publications Intern*

Copyedited by Sharon Herson
Designed by David Edge
Layout by Carol S. Cates
Printed by Die Keure, Bruges, Belgium
Distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven and London
www.yalebooks.com/art

Printed and bound in Belgium
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Title page and divider illustration: Bruce McAllister (American, b. 1946), “Abandoned automobiles and other debris clutter an acid water- and oil-filled five-acre pond; it was cleaned up under EPA supervision to prevent possible contamination of [the] Great Salt Lake and a wildlife refuge nearby,” April 1974, from DOCUMERICA: The Environmental Protection Agency’s Program to Photographically Document Subjects of Environmental Concern, 1972–77

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Heuer, Christopher P., editor. | Zorach, Rebecca, 1969–editor. | Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, issuing body.
Title: Ecologies, agents, terrains / edited by Christopher P. Heuer and Rebecca Zorach.
Description: Williamstown, Massachusetts : Clark Art Institute, 2018. | Series: Clark studies in the visual arts | A related conference, titled “Ecologies, Agents, Terrains,” was held May 4–6, 2017 at the Clark. | Includes bibliographical references.
Identifiers: LCCN 2018002689 | ISBN 9781935998327 (publisher: clark art institute) (pbk. : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780300233162 (distributor: yale university press)
Subjects: LCSH: Ecology in art.
Classification: LCC N8217.E28 E29 2018 | DDC 704.9/43—dc23 LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2018002689

01.Frontmatter.indd 4 2/14/18 5:41 PM

Contents

Introduction vii
Christopher P. Heuer and Rebecca Zorach

Ecologies

The Ecological Site 3
James Nisbet

An Eco-Art History of Weathered Stone Sculptures from Southwest China 34
Sonya S. Lee

Character and the Climatic Imaginary 56
Vittoria Di Palma

"All Our Relations" as an Eco-Art Historical Challenge: Lessons from Standing Bear's Muslin 73
Jessica L. Horton

Talking About the Man in the Moon: Combating Climate Change with Art 94
Ghana ThinkTank, Sonnet Coggins, and Terence Washington

Agents

Premodern Geosphere: Nature's Workshop, Treasure House, and Deep Time 113
Robert Felfe

Gichi-mookomaanan miinawaa Gichi-maazhigaa-aabkook // From Big Knives to Big Pipelines 135
Dylan T. Miner

"Welcome to my volcano": New Materialism, Art History, and Their Others 147
Rebecca Zorach

Thinking Red, Wounds, and Fungi in Wangechi Mutu's Eco-Art 167
Chelsea Mikael Frazier

My Electric Genealogy: Excerpts and Notes on a Performance-in-Progress 196
Sarah Kanouse

Terrains

Ecology, Ethics, and Aesthetics in Pliny's the Elder's *Natural History* 219
Verity Platt

"Ark Thinking" 243
Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Julian Yates

The Entropic History of Ice 266
Maggie Cao

A Post-Critical Arctic? 292
Christopher P. Heuer

Peripheral and Central Places in the USA: A Photo Essay 310
Center for Land Use Interpretation

Contributors 325

Photography Credits 331

A Post-Critical Arctic?

Christopher P. Heuer

As a hackneyed symbol of climate change (and its touching denials), the Arctic is everywhere today.[1] Yet as spectacle, cartographic abstraction, symbol, or lode, the Far North today is something of a non-site, a constellation of images and geographies rapturously optical and grimly unseen: the place where city-sized glaciers slide spectacularly into the sea on IMAX, and also where resource extraction and military surveillance operate in legal and optical darkness. Such unsettledness imparts to certain art practices engaging the Far North a dynamism that critiques—and often redoubles—neoliberal binaries of nature versus culture.

Fig. 1. François-Auguste Biard (French, 1799–1882), *View of the Polar Sea, Greenlanders Hunting Walrus*, 1841. Musée du Chateau, Dieppe, France

Fig. 2. Robert Smithson (American, 1938–1973), *A Surd View for An Afternoon*, 1970. Ink on paper, 8 1/2 × 11 in. (21.6 × 27.9 cm). Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund, VAG 98.71.1. Art © Holt-Smithson Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY. Photo: Vancouver Art Gallery

The idea of the "Arctic sublime" has been revised often over the past century: this condition was once identified by Victorianist Chauncey C. Loomis as an aesthetic of monsters, shipwreck, heroism, and death (fig. 1), an aesthetic in which one is "privileged or doomed briefly to experience power, mystery, and terror."[2] It is a situation endlessly critiqued in postwar art (fig. 2). Yet the sublime has remained the Arctic's main mode of engagement for contemporary visual culture, even in (or because of) an era of warming seas. For some artists, however, the Arctic's physical status as a broken land (a literal archipelago) mimes its unsettled role as archive, documentee, or performative condition, its unsecure status as an actual "place."[3] In the Far North, cleavages between ideas of environment as an either/or proposition of *either* scientific knowledge *or* aesthetic experience simply are not sustainable;[4] and conventional ideas of what counts as "activist" art often dissolve.

15.Heuer.indd 293 2/12/18 1:10 PM

Sameness

On September 25, 1969, a group of North American art figures flew to the Canadian village of Inuvik, just inside the Arctic Circle. The travelers were all loosely associated with Conceptualist practice in New York and Canada: critic Lucy Lippard, artists Iain and Ingrid Baxter, Harry Savage, Lawrence Weiner, and curators Bill Kirby and Virgil Hammock. The group spent thirty-eight hours in the town creating ephemeral artworks and photographs, all intended for a show entitled *Place and Process* at the Edmonton Art Gallery.[5] Most of the pieces involved the movement of earth, stones, or waterways, or ironic photographic interventions in the marshy land around town. Gestures were both placid and violent: Weiner arranged rocks and sticks around a stream (fig. 3), while Harry Savage shot flares into the night sky.

Lippard later published a diaristic account of the trip.[6] Her commentary, offering selective descriptions of artworks, established a relationship between a barren Arctic landscape and the divided hamlet of Inuvik as a kind of newly globalized colony. At first, Lippard mapped the artworks onto an ideal of an eerie wasteland. "Northern spaces are grand, bleak, infinite, and reject autonomous man-made objects almost by definition."[7] This is an anti-property aesthetic, Lippard argued, akin to "the Eskimo language [which] contains no words for measurement of space or time."[8] Certain *process* artworks, however, turned away from such grandiosity to confront the local, chiefly in cartographic terms. In *Circular Walk inside the Arctic Circle Around Inuvik, NWT*, and *Sixteen Compass Points inside the Arctic Circle*, for example, Iain and Ingrid Baxter, operating as "NE Thing CO." made C-print photographs at stages along a 3.5 mile hike, a total of

Fig. 3. Lawrence Weiner (American, b. 1942), *The Arctic Circle Shattered*, in Lucy Lippard, "Art Within the Arctic Circle," Hudson Review 1969, plate 2. Lucy Lippard © 2017 Lawrence Weiner/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Fig. 4. N.E. Thing Co., *Circular Walk Inside Arctic Circle Around Inuvik, N.W.T.*, 1969. Collage, 17 7/8 × 24 in. (45.5 × 60.9 cm). Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, The University of British Columbia, gift of Iain Baxter and Ingrid Baxter, 1995 (BG1394). Photo: Howard Ursuliak

10,314 steps in total (fig. 4). For the Edmonton show, these NETCO images were mounted on gridded paper alongside maps or framed as snapshots from a mobile viewpoint. In them, the landscape was gritty and unscenic; haphazardly framed garbage bins, marshy roadways, muddy tundra, telephone poles—all sutured into a cold informational matrix. In another piece, known only through Lippard's account, Baxter spray-painted a white East–West paint line directly in the brushy taiga. And in still another NETCO work, "Territorial Claim" photos were made of a small patch of ice that had been urinated on by Baxter. Invoking the bureaucratic processes of mapping and measuring, but also the animal gesture of territory-marking, the pieces parodied the southern mythology of the Arctic as a space of grandeur and majesty resistant to human presence. Instead, repeated Kodachrome images show mud-spattered trucks in fields, bulldozer tracks on puddled ground. "The [Arctic] landscape is not so exotic as I expected," Lippard wrote. "What makes it so uninteresting to describe . . . is the infinite sameness of the terrain."[9]

While these entries within the *Place as Process* show were not the first engagements of 1960s Conceptualism with an extreme landscape, they were among the first dealing with the Far North. In their bifurcating of advocacy and aspersion toward the Arctic environment (and its construction by exterior forces), the sortie marks an obscure return, and simultaneous travestying, of old notions of Far North as unmappable, the ultimate quest; the kind of muted spectacle we find in August-François Biard (see fig. 1), or, as Loomis once saw it, Samuel Coleridge's *Mariner*. Yet in her essay, Lippard went on to adapt this sublime to a by-then familiar Conceptualist poetics of resistance—to the gallery, to the object, to the highly wrought and picturesque. Much later, Lippard even suggested that her own photo-documentation of certain Inuvik work—haphazardly framed, unsystematically printed—was similarly de-skilled, if only by accident: "I didn't even own a camera," she modestly admitted, "someone somewhere chose me. Bad choice in terms of photography!"[10] The Baxters' Arctic work, for one, was framed as a midwestern reaction to the culture of super-cool New York minimalism and an inchoate land art movement (Virginia Dwan's legendary *Earthworks* show had been mounted the year before; critics had responded specifically to its recalibration of the idea of desert wastelands.[11]) Like these, documents of the Arctic installations often relied upon a sense of moving as the piece itself; and artists' experience of the terrain as stuff, rather than cartography or history.

The *Place as Process* artists, with their banal defilement of the Inuvik landscape (rifle shots, spray paint, and urination, interventions by transient artists), amplified as well as critiqued the Arctic landscape's debasement and possession by visiting forces, both material and academic. Vancouver critic Charity Mewburn argued how this staged a symbolic combat against a Greenbergian, flatness-based high-art discourse; the Arctic works were simultaneously *participating* in the project of aesthetic takeover themselves. As Mewburn puts it, the Inuvik works represented "a parodic exercise against the colonizing pretentions of high art formalism" while also a "highly ironic symbol *itself* of neo-colonialism."[12] In 1961, Greenberg had written a piece for the journal *Canadian Art* asserting "Northern" aesthetics as the logical locus, and landscape mode, for advanced painting now that its New York profile was dead. And in 1962, Greenberg had actually hosted a writers' workshop at Emma Lake, on the Saskatchewan tundra.[13]

Conspicuously absent in all the Inuvik works' engagement with the tundra is the silence about or lack of interest in Indigenous presence, and an outright

polluting of an environment later understood as fragile and symbolic. While Lippard stopped short of presenting any of the 1969 Inuvik pieces as "activist" in any overt sense, she proved sensitive to the nominally ecological slant (her words) of NETCO's pieces, specifically, *vis à vis* the Arctic surroundings. The "intricate balances of organisms and their environments"[14] are particularly well queried in such settings, Lippard wrote. But environmental observation was paired with the ruined social and physical state of Inuvik's own fabric, a sensitivity that she, writing in 1968, in the midst of the American civil rights movement, saw as an upshot of economic inequality. The town of Inuvik, in fact, was an opportunistic "instant" site built by the Canadian government in the 1950s to anchor mineral extraction, the town manned by a transient white executive class and an increasingly disenfranchised Inuit population living in neglect and in appalling housing conditions. A disgusted Lippard described "one of Canada's newest slums . . . a miserable conglomeration of lean-tos, tents, and shacks."[15]

The "Arctic," here, designated a zone of relative indifference. Lippard's 1969 writing cast the Arctic as a terrain of the *social*, a dire and riven one, to be sure. It was one acquitting new visibility just as it became *less different* than the rest of the industrialized world. As much as the *Place as Process* works were interested in the tension between lived landscape and mobile *traces* of such a landscape, Lippard's *Hudson Review* piece found itself unexpectedly distracted by the real-world exigencies of Arctic sites *outside* the gallery. Arctic "dematerialization," after such an experience, was a process within art *and* life.

The Administrative Sublime

Today, work ostensibly about the poles, as about other environmental precarities, often rehearses certain speculative realist tendencies, or object-oriented ontologies, as a kind of profligate existentialism. There seem to be two main issues at stake: on the one hand, art is manifesting alternatives to (and retrenchments of) mainstream environmentalist activism; on the other, in the face of climate emergency, practices are querying the real-life place of ecological concerns in politics, theory, and capital. And yet, they do this in vastly different ways.

In 2007, Guido van der Werve premiered a large-scale single-channel video installation, *Nummer Acht, Everything is going to be alright*. The piece, originally filmed on a single strip of 16 mm film, was shot in the Bothnian Sea in northern Finland.[16] In the work, van der Werve blithely walks toward a tracking,

Fig. 5. Guido van der Werve (Dutch, b. 1977), *Nummer acht, everything is going to be alright*, 2007. 16 mm transferred to video, still (color, sound). The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Fund for the Twenty-First Century (70.2009)

retreating camera in front of a colossal icebreaker, never arriving, never progressing—no destination for ship or man (fig. 5).[17] It is as if he is quietly, mightily chased, not oblivious to the hulking ship behind him, but moving toward some larger end point of contact. Ten minutes and ten seconds of film unfold, then loop, with the thudding bass of the ship's engines the only sound; the work turns the sublime aesthetic—think Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer* or Walter Benjamin's retreating angel of history—into a pictorial statement about futility, not in the *face* of some cowing Arctic landscape, but through apparent disregard for it.

Van der Werve's work would almost seem another allegory for environmental catastrophe: the solitary Westerner, expensively clad against the cold, plodding passively onward, all while the colossal, heaving forces of capital slowly and surely make ice disappear. But the piece makes no overt comment about climate change (there is no text in the film and van der Werve's other "numbered" artworks are sited elsewhere). Yet the disparities of (say) scale here actually look to other engagements within the polar regions, the sublime that Lippard sought to counter.

The artist-in-the-Arctic reappears in Marja Helander's *Modern Nomads* series from 2001. The piece consists of large photographs of northern landscapes in which a modern-looking flight attendant walks through a landscape wearing a

Fig. 6. Marja Helander (Finnish, b. 1965), *Modern Nomads*, 2001–3. Performance view

sarvilakki, a traditional Sámi headdress (fig. 6). As Helander writes: "The photos in the Modern Nomads tell about a modern person, who is totally lost in her traditional Sámi environment. She doesn´t understand her position. She walks on the mountains following the footsteps of her ancestors, reindeer-herdsmen. The movement continues, but the frame of reference is different."[18] The use of staged photography is quite different from van der Werve's use of crafted video, although both seem in dialogue with art history; the film gives a lived sense of duration in the now-repetitive actions, again in the north of Finland. Yet for Helander, this whiteness has specificity, a Sámi specificity, about the politics of dislocation.

But what happens when dislocation takes place for declaredly Arctic *matter*? Olafur Eliasson's much-adored *Ice Watch* was installed in Paris in November 2015, in collaboration with the Danish geologist Minik Rosing.[19] The piece consisted of twelve large blocks of ice harvested from the sea off eastern Greenland. The shards were towed through the North Sea, loaded on freezer trucks, driven

15.Heuer.indd 299 2/12/18 1:10 PM

Fig. 7. Olafur Eliasson (Danish, b. 1967), *Ice Watch*, 2014. Twelve ice blocks. Place du Panthéon, Paris, 2015

to Paris, and then arranged on the Place du Panthéon to coincide with the United Nations Climate summit of 2015 (fig. 7). The shards—giant, cumbersome, militantly sculptural—were meant to be left at an indeterminate span to melt away: pops and cracks of ancient water now discernable, a localization of far-off climate change, a wholly sensory snapshot of its effects. *Time*—in the form of geological eternities meeting imperiled futures, and, more subtly, urgent presents—was to become a metric.

Eliasson's piece, in fact, entered something of a canon of melting-ice-as-artwork, together with works by Alÿs, Ferrer, and others, discussed elsewhere in this volume by Maggie Cao.[20] To this list we should add Jane McMahan's *Arapaho Glacier*, first installed in the *Weather Report* show at Boulder in 2007, curated by Lucy Lippard (fig. 8). McMahan constructed a small metal box apparatus with a solar panel. She then appropriated a foot-square block of ice from not far away, but from a nearby glacier in Colorado. She installed it and kept it cold with machines powered by the sun. The scale was intimate, the visual mundane, and the apparatus constantly struggled to keep pace with natural entropy. McMahan likened the work to an altarpiece, mourning, like Eliasson, for a seemingly doomed present, nevertheless arguing not for castigation and wonder but for active human

Fig. 8. Jane McMahan (American, b. 20th century), *Arapahoe Glacier*, from The Glacier Project, 2007

solutions—utopian and inconclusive as they might seem—all while admitting technology's uneven capacity for salvation.[21] McMahan made ice a relic, both sustained and eroded by its environment. The idea of *Arapaho Glacier* "meaning" something specific about climate change was pushed to the side, making it actually a far more trenchant engine for thought.

Eliasson's *Ice Watch* installation, of course, was different. Its appearance came to coincide with the Paris terrorist attacks of November 13–14, 2015. In the Place du Panthéon, now redoubled as a pilgrimage site, the ice accrued (for some) a poignancy of loss and tears, and more morbidly, the fragility of bodies, of spilled blood—the social centrality of such phenomena, all while cleaving to its stated intent of making climate change sensible. Eliasson spoke of the work: "Let's appreciate this unique opportunity—we, the world, can and must act now. Let's transform climate-knowledge into climate action. . . . I hope it will inspire shared commitment to taking climate action."[22] And indeed, for a paralyzed Paris, Eliasson's literalism was romantic and hopeful, the intimacy of a desperate local and global situation made viscerally clear. Over the course of five weeks, the imported sculptures disappeared, a foil to the preservational gesture of the Pantheon nearby. Michael Bloomberg's foundation (which sponsored Eliasson's project in

part) lauded the piece as "a great example of how public art can spur people to action."[23] Eco-literary theorist Timothy Morton championed *Ice Watch*'s potential to "start a conversation" about the Earth.[24]

But a conversation among whom? What would the actually existing action that people might be "spurred to" look like? One critic pointed out that "the carbon footprint resulting from *Ice Watch Paris* is 30 metric tons (about 33 US tons) of carbon dioxide . . . largely based on the transportation of the 12 blocks of ice, weighing a total of 80 metric tons (~88 US tons), from the Nuup Kangerlua fjord outside Nuuk to Paris."[25] Maybe the piece somewhat inaccurately universalizes the idea of the "human" who is actually behind Anthropocene warming, ignoring who is forced to work to render such consolatory spectacle possible. Climate change affects all spheres of human activity differently, a factor that often drops out of much traditional environmentalism's tone of self-righteousness, as its mostly first-world proclamations are about "us." Jason Moore diagnoses this with his concept of the Capitalocene, a paradigm for thinking about the politics of environmentalism that refuses to universalize climate change's agents.[26] And this might be how any "activist" angle for *Ice Watch* needs rethinking: at the level of spectatorship and production, the piece tended to emphasize the self.

Maybe we could be crassly schematic and say that a work like *Ice Watch* marks a neo*materialist* turn in Arctic art practice. The human's ontological continuity with things or matter is framed; not much is specifically asked of us; "being," a kind of theology, replaces epistemology.[27] We intuit what these pieces want us to think. These are dynamics that have been institutionalized across art-critical discourse, but that, arguably, retain special relevance to "environmental" practice, concerned as it is so concretely with the symbolic qualities of matter *qua* matter—not necessarily as "place" in various models of thought. There might be an unexpected historicity here, but there is also a paradox: material like Eliasson's in Paris helps mobilize a public in its icy actuality and meta commentary about it, but it is a public that, in its institutional framing, tends to be limited as to its socioeconomic makeup. Bits of Greenland expensively dragged to Paris reveal an inconvenient truth, but also *franchise* that critique and then largely walk away.[28] Dialectically, the state of Eliasson's piece summarizes a binary that faces most works dealing with climate change: art's capacity either to "raise awareness" about global crisis—often by seeing a bunch of stuff that is supposed to change our minds (struggling polar bears, speeding Greenpeace zodiac boats)—or to interrogate its actually existing (and unevenly distributed) effects upon social spheres.

Fig. 9. Charles Stankievech (Canadian, b. 1978), *The DEW Project, (installation view), Confluence of Klondike + Yukon Rivers, Yukon Territory, Canada*. 64o03' N, 139o27' W

On the latter, there is the work of Charles Stankievech, a founding member of the Yukon School of Visual Arts, the northernmost art school on the North American continent. His work moves between video, installation, performance, film, interviews, and research to embrace's the Far North's science-fictional imagination. In Stankievech's 2010 *DEW Project*, for example, electromagnetic waves were records around disused American radar stations in the Far North of Canada (fig. 9). In interviews, the artist noted how the construction of the DEW lines in the 1960s was contemporaneous with Minimalist sculpture, the white space of the Arctic recalling the white cube of the gallery.[29] Like Stankievech's other "fieldworks" (his term), the *DEW Project* was difficultly visual; it contained other components like writings "possibly" authored by the artist in various venues, and stories about geodesic domes. Not an eschewing of sincerity, the combined practices raised the possibility that "Arctic" art might be capable of framing a discursive mode that is not entirely recognizable to a para-Arctic public, one that often yearns for exoticism at all costs. Of his work, the artist has written: "The only taboo would be in making an absolute distinction between theory and fiction or art and writing."[30]

The sprawling practice of the Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI), based in Culver City, California (represented elsewhere in this volume),[31] has been an important influence for Stankievech's research aesthetic. In 2006, CLUI staged *Ultima Thule*, a fixed-video installation set in extreme northern Greenland, detailing the famous Arctic underground city and radar surveillance base (fig. 10). In an arrangement of photographs and video at the National Museum in Nuuk, CLUI displayed details of military listening equipment from the base *in situ* on the barren tundra. Less about the Arctic than its militarization, the document-heavy installation was viewed by only a few hundred people. Like Stankievech's piece, it agnostically framed the Cold War as a conflict of the unseen—of radar, submarines, radio transmissions, front lines across the North Pole. Yet the project militantly de-centered expressive presentations of data and explanation. The implication was subtle: with climate change, a site-specific, static Cold War Arctic of missiles and lines has given way to a fluid Warm War Artic of tankers, space, and land claims.

Defining itself as a "research organization involved in exploring, examining, and understanding land and landscape issues," CLUI has quietly pursued this—the interpretation not of the Earth but of human intervention with the Earth across various landscapes, militarized or not—in heterogeneous activities since the 1990s. As with Greenland's Arctic tundra, CLUI looks at places that are not conventionally beautiful, but places where people actually live, places subject to climate change as much as anywhere. Although this seems parodic, CLUI intends dead-serious social practices for a world in which, as one critic puts it, "the ability to change people's minds through argument [is] seen as [an] exhausted mode."[32] As with the *Thule* piece, most CLUI work is not blatantly critical either of the human alteration of the Earth or of its preservation; as Matthew Coolidge has written: "Humans are a part of nature and nature shouldn't be something considered exclusive of humans."[33] Discarded with the practice are ecologies simply of mankind *versus* "environment"; these are exchanged for ecologies of politics, ecologies of information, capital, and history. "There is something performative in how CLUI refuses to allow their activities to be categorized exclusively as art, geology, land reclamation, or political activism," states historian Cornelia Butler, "preferring instead an amalgam of these."[34] A work like CLUI's *Ultima Thule* might be compelling because it doesn't *brandish* itself *as art*—at least not in the conventional way. It suggests that the critical work of (say) "Arctic" art is not making stuff (even tragic stuff) visible and *meaningful* in easily recognizable ways,

Fig. 10. Center for Land Use Interpretation, Details of *Ultima Thule*, 2006. Installation view

15.Heuer.indd 305 2/12/18 1:10 PM

but in interrogating the *limits* of Arctic visibility, of Arctic meaning, via practices which the art world (as complicit in polar melt as any capital-based force today) cannot easily frame.

Perhaps we could put it this way: in comparison to the Greenland of Eliasson's *Ice Watch*, the Greenland of the Center for Land Use Interpretation was collaborative, softly anonymous, de-centered, hard to get to, unironically bureaucratic, oriented toward the permanent. It was kind of boring. CLUI installations often swap out romantic sentiment for an "administrative sublime."[35] But they are not cynical, and not hectoring. Of course, such studied ambiguity runs the risk of sounding a lot like miasmic neoliberal shrugging at intellectual commitment of any kind. And yet, across its practice CLUI rigorously complicates any fetishization of "place" as a site of Heideggerian intimacy with the local; it often reads places as half-connected networks, ones that can fail, decay, disconnect. In its vast archive of photographs, CLUI charts the unexceptional: sites like shopping malls, sewer pipes, and water towers. Through CLUI we think about land—such as Arctic—less as experience than as land as inventory. A preservation operation, yes, but one far more engaged with the notion of nature as something everyday rather than as an excursionary respite.

But across the realm of other art in and *of* the extreme North, we are otherwise threatened by a post-critical turn.[36] Certain contemporary art practices engaging the polar regions, although well meaning, tend to ape globalization's uncritical adoration of connectivity, with works dawdling into either technologized scolding or a limp aesthetic of "edgy," mashed-up tourism.[37] Fair enough. But castigating human behavior on the Earth does not translate into actually saving the Earth. Maybe we can say that any Arctic practice which is stentorian about what it is *about* might be the most problematic. Lippard, after her own polar junket, touted the power of questions raised "out of sight."[38]

If the Far North's original place within early modern culture was as terrain of flight and madness, then surely we are seeing both a return and a *détournement* of the tradition today, for better or for worse. At least for now, the art world's own ecosystem has yet to ruin completely what it might just mean for an art *of* climate change — an art of urgency — to intervene critically in the vitally *unscenic* world of public democracy: itself human, itself precarious.

1. On this phenomenon see, most recently, Julie Decker and Kirsten J. Anderson, eds., *Up Here: The North at the Center of the World* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016).

2. Chauncey C. Loomis, "After the Arctic Sublime," in *Nature and the Victorian Imagination*, ed. Ulrich C. Knoepflmacher and G. B. Tennyson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 99.

3. The survey literature on such practices is already extensive: for a sample, see Nicola Triscott, "Critical Art and Intervention in Technologies of the Arctic," in *Arctic Geopolitics and Autonomy*, ed. Michael Bravo and Nicola Triscott (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2010), 19–36.

4. Benjamin Morgan, "After the Arctic Sublime," *New Literary History* 47, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 2. On the "archipelagic" episteme of the early modern North, see Adriana Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

5. Iain and Ingrid Baxter organized the Edmonton show. See Nancy Shaw, "Siting the Banal: The Extended Landscapes of the N.E. Thing Company," in *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art*, ed. John O'Brian and Peter White (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 63–68; and Grant Arnold and Karen Henry, *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada, 1965–1980*, exh. cat. (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2012), 73–74.

6. Lucy R. Lippard, "Art Within the Arctic Circle," *Hudson Review* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1969–70): 665–74.

7. Ibid., 672.

8. Ibid., 673.

9. Ibid., 666.

10. Lucy Lippard, personal communication with the author, April 14, 2015, and further: "I have no idea where the other prints or negatives [from the Inuvik trip] are. I certainly took more than what was in the article." See also the work of Caroline Kelly, which engages with the Lippard photographs explicitly, at http://carolinekelley.com/section/207755-Arctic-Circle-Project-I-II.html (accessed November 20, 2017).

11. Cf. Sidney Tillim, "Earthworks and the New Picturesque," *Artforum* 7, no. 4 (December 1968): 42–45.

12. Charity Mewburn, *Sixteen Hundred Miles North of Denver* (Vancouver: Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, 1999), 26–28.

13. Ross Fox, "The Greenberg Factor," in *The Canadian Painters Eleven (1953–1960) from the Robert Mclaughlin Gallery* (Amherst, Mass.: Mead Art Gallery, 1994), 26–37.

14. Lippard, "Arctic Circle," 669.

15. Ibid., 666.

16. See Tineke Reijnders, "De atleet die het landschap voorbij doet rollen: Over kunstenaar Guido van der Werve," *Ons Erfdeel* 2 (2013): 80–89.

17. Christine Ross, *The Past is the Present, It's the Future Too: The Temporal Turn in Contemporary Art* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012).
18. https://www.grossestreffen.org/marja-helander (accessed November 20, 2017).
19. http://icewatchparis.com (accessed November 20, 2017).
20. See Maggie Cao, "The Entropic History of Ice," in this volume.
21. Lucy Lippard, Stephanie Smith, and Andrew Revkin, eds., *Weather Report: Art and Climate Change* (Boulder, Col.: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007); on the history of such an approach, see SueEllen Campbell, *The Face of the Earth: Natural Landscapes, Science, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 118.
22. Eliasson's comments appeared on the various versions of icewatch.com; on the problematics of the idea of "action" herein summoned with regard to the environment, see TJ Demos, *Against the Anthropocene* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017.)
23. http://www.artists4climate.com/en/artists/olafur-eliasson (accessed November 20, 2017).
24. Quoted in Cynthia Zarin, "The Artist Who Is Bringing Icebergs to Paris," *The New Yorker*, December 5, 2015.
25. http://hyperallergic.com/260217/olafur-eliassons-sundial-of- melting-icebergs-clocks-in-at-half-past-wasteful (accessed November 20, 2017). See David Balzer, "The Carbon Footprint of Art," *Canadian Art*, Feb. 20, 2017.
26. Jason W. Moore, "The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of our Ecological Crisis," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 44 (2017): 594–630.
27. Emily Apter et al., "A Questionnaire on Materialisms," *October* 155 (Winter 2016): 3.
28. Website notwithstanding: see *icewatch.org*.
29. See Joshua Bolchover and Jonathan D. Solomon, *Sustain and Develop* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 298–300.
30. Anna-Sophie Springer, "Traversals," in Charles Stankievech, *Loveland* (Berlin: K. Verlag, 2011), 203.
31. See the final essay in this volume, "Peripheral and Central Places in the USA: A Photo Essay."
32. Astra Taylor points out that "activist" began as a slur in the 1930s leveled against leftist protesters by reactionary forces of management. "Organizer," by contrast, is a word self-applied in trade union and labor circles during the same decade. See Astra Taylor, "Against Activism," *The Baffler* 30 (2016): 123–31, esp. 127.
33. In Kate L. Haug, "The Human/Land Dialectic: Anthropic Landscapes of the Center for Land Use Interpretation," *Afterimage* 25, no. 2 (September–October 1997): 3–5.
34. Cornelia Butler, cited in Eugenie Tsai, Cornelia Butler, Thomas Crow, and Alexander Alberro, *Robert Smithson*, exh. cat., Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (Los Angeles, 2004), 237.

35. Michael Ned Holte, “The Administrative Sublime or the Center for Land Use Interpretation at the Circumference,” *Afterall* 13 (Spring–Summer 2006): 25.

36. Hal Foster, “Post-Critical,” *October* 139 (Winter 2012): 3–8.

37. See, for example, Paul D. Miller’s *Terra Nova: Sinfonia Antarctica* project (2009) or its related book, *The Book of Ice* (New York: Mark Batty Publisher, 2011).

38. Lippard, “Arctic Circle,” 674.