

# TIME, PROCESS, LABOUR AND COLLABORATION

NADINE BARITEAU AND GAUTAM GAROO



NADINE BARITEAU

*Protecteurs des mers (Protectors of the Seas)* [installation view], 2013

*Your works emphasize time and process, both with respect to water, in life and regarding artistic practice. Can you talk about how you think about time and process as an artist?*

**N:** Time is an important part of my work, as you cannot express a concept or idea without some contemplation. Time allows you to process an event and bring you to a place of new understanding or wisdom. I compare time to the tide, a unit of measure, strong or weak, back and forth, something that is cyclical and a natural phenomenon. Time gave me the chance to master the process; that is just the way it works.

**G:** The process of making the mandalic patterns on the floor in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and the time spent in creating these ephemeral patterns, which upon completion are swept clean, have informed the interest and the importance I have come to give to the time required and the process involved in my artist practice.

The Buddhist mandalic patterns are metaphoric, as is my work, where the pattern drawn on a surface only indirectly speaks to the subject at hand. The process of drawing these complex patterns, although time-consuming, brings about a meditative state of being, not only in the person making them but also the ones bearing witness.

The drawing *On the Water's Edge: 57°00'13.98"N/111°27'34.47"W* examines this through the drawing of thirty-two pages of drawing arranged in a grid pattern that surveys the Athabasca-Wabiskaw oil sands in Alberta, and it also refers to Indian stepwells. The images of the Athabasca River are

derived from Google Earth; the lakes and the waters of the toxic tailings ponds are overlaid and rearranged in a random pattern over the base pattern of an Indian stepwell. The drawing is a result of more than one year of continued labour. I have always been interested in how a work informs the viewer about the time that has been spent in the making of it and if that influences the viewing of the artwork. The process of using repetitive lines that weave in and out over a long period of time was a conscious commitment; for me, these lines are not just marks of ink on paper, but rather like the markings a seismometer makes: the lines on the paper register the state of mind.

*In your work, there is a link between repetitive and/or ritualized labour and expression. Can you discuss how you think about this, including regarding water?*

**N:** Water is a powerful element that makes us who we are as human beings. Rituals around and with water have always existed in all cultures, but sadly today, in our Western culture, we have lost those rites. Using the element of water in this body of work (*Âme et océan*) was an occasion for me to embody or express a form of personal ritual as a way to transcend an event – the Sisyphus of Camus is invoked. Seeing my mother pass away in a car accident was so devastating that the only way for me to recover from this was to connect with something bigger and more powerful. The process of creating this piece was visceral in that way. The ocean gave me strength.

**GAUTAM GAROO**

*On the Water's Edge: 25°18'12.31"N/83°00'27.58"E [video still], 2013*

**G:** As a deeply religious culture, India finds her expression through repetitive and ritualized actions; for instance, the daily ritual of going to the river's edge or a village stepwell for bathing and cleansing (because water is considered sacred and doesn't just have material properties, but spiritual as well). This is perhaps paralleled in the drawing of water through a water pump twice daily in urban centres.

Being in Varanasi, India, you can get a sense of the sacred bond between the waters of the river Ganges, the people who live around the river and those who travel great distances to cleanse themselves in its waters. Through video, I have documented not the sacred aspect of water, but water in its more mundane state. The Ganges water is pumped via pumping stations to a maze of narrow streets all across Varanasi in the early hours of the morning, and then again in the late evening, just as the sun sets on the ancient city. It mainly falls on the women to collect and store the water in overhead tanks, using water pumps. This daily ritual is played out all across the urban Indian subcontinent, where water from the rivers is pumped to water towers, stored and re-pumped to homes, and pumped again to overhead water tanks

to be stored. The drawing in the exhibition, on the other hand, is about my repetitive ritualized labour.

*Is collaboration important in your work(s) in the exhibition?*

**N:** Collaboration began in my practice when I started to do performance. It's difficult to perform and document it at the same time, so it came out of this necessity.

**G:** The works in the exhibition, being abstract in execution and in an indirect conversation with the subject of water, require of the observer to engage with them, and to collaborate, so as to arrive at a more subjective reading of the works.

During the filming of the video in Varanasi, I too took on this role of an observer, a witness, and I see it as my silent collaboration with the subjects in the video, not just the people preparing for the day ahead, but also the three water pumps in the video. There is also the partial failure of the collaboration of the five weeks of walking the narrow streets and the ghats of Varanasi; nothing meaningful came of it, nothing that really talked about the underlying relationship we have with water – water as a source of life.

