

Just Who I Am

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Artist

Abstract This chapter researches New York City's water, made inaccessible through hostile architecture of the waterfront in Brooklyn. I cite my practice in relationship with this research, and reimagine possible outcomes of water accessibility through affordability, materiality, craft, and open-source research. In centring autonomous agency, this project creates multiple levels of intimacy with material, investigating toxicity and healing through environmental justice. My research is situated within significant environmental works such as Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch*, and Kathryn Yusoff's *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*.

Keywords Water. Ecology. Toxicity. Visual Art. Anthropocene.

Summary 1 Boundaries and My Inability to Set Them. – 2 Trash Goblin Mode.

1 Boundaries and My Inability to Set Them

1. we are interconnected
2. you are geology
3. to what end?¹

When I missed someone I loved, I would think the water connected us. Not in terms of the ocean, but in the movement of water in evaporation and rainfall, that one day I might drink the same water they drank or shower in the same water they showered in, and we were once again connected.²

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1 After a studio visit conversation with Hamza Walker, 2021.

2 This caused my friend who was reading an early draft to look up at me in horror. Water has history.

Living in New York City is living on a series of islands, an archipelago, surrounded by a common resource that residents need equitable access to – water (or fish) as a resource for sustenance. Here, the water is a medium holding the city’s history, with multiple possibilities for its future becoming an autonomous common resource for care and recreation.

At the centre of this chapter is the city’s water, made inaccessible through hostile architecture, a strategic approach in city planning that employs specific features of architectural and spatial design to intentionally influence or limit human behaviour and actions. This is especially evident in the design of the waterfront in Brooklyn. I reimagine possible outcomes of water accessibility through affordability, materiality, craft, and open-source research. In centring autonomous agency, this project creates multiple levels of intimacy with material, investigating toxicity and healing through environmental justice. My research positions itself within the context of seminal environmental works such as Silvia Federici’s *Caliban and the Witch*,³ and Kathryn Yusoff’s *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. I consider relations between the contemporary geology of New York City and economic systems, and how the interconnection of these issues impact residents in the city. In my visual art practice, I investigate the ecologies of pollution alongside public health policies within the urban landscape. Through methods such as collage, performance, and sculpture, I craft speculative ecologies that explore the intersections between ecology and capitalism.

The body of water between Red Hook and the Verrazzano Bridge, known as the Upper Bay, holds histories of violent intervention: from the poison inflicted on common resources through privatisation to borders placed on the waterfront to prevent access. Chemicals dumped directly into the water in Fresh Kills landfill, and raw sewage release points leach into the Upper Bay. They combine into the larger body of water, fish, and those who access the contaminated resources of the city.

Further north, in New Jersey, bad batches of Agent Orange used by the U.S. military reside in the sediment of Newark Bay. Public policy analyst Dave Pringle found that “one blue crab in Newark Bay has enough dioxin to give somebody cancer” (Flanagan 2017) while advocating for Clean Water Action, a Environmental Justice grassroots organisation. Twenty-five miles away, in Raritan Bay, the State of New Jersey officially advises that it is safe to eat one blue crab a month (State of New Jersey 2020). Once consumed, dioxins are “absorbed by fat tissue, where they are then stored in the body. Their half-life in the body is estimated to be 7 to 11 years” (World Health Organization 2016).

Steel and concrete infrastructure surrounding the Upper Bay intersect with the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. Both of these isolate the waterfront from the neighbourhood through land privatisation. Infrastructure in the Upper Bay includes Home Depot, The Metropolitan Detention Center, Industry City, Sims Municipal Recycling – Sunset Park Material Recovery Plant – Owls Head Wastewater Treatment Plant, and Con Edison – Gowanus Substation. Lining this hostile architecture is the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway,

3 I am thinking about Federici’s writing as an environmental work in the context of primitive accumulation, land privatisation and removal of common resources as actions that have impacted the waterfront of NYC.



Figure 1 NBC, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, “Strange Beauty”. 2012, season 13, episode 22. NBC

Figure 2 RKO Radio Pictures, *Manhattan Waterfront*. 1937. Produced by the Van Beuren Corporation

Figure 3 *The Godfather*, directed by Francis Ford Coppola. 1972. Paramount Pictures

Figure 4 CBS. “Mayor Adams drinks water at Jacob Riis Houses to reassure residents”. New York, 10 September 2022. CBS

Interstate 278, which runs from New Jersey to the Bronx. Built by Robert Moses (1888-1981), a controversial public official widely criticised for not consulting the public in realising his designs, Moses “cut a trench through the working-class neighbourhoods of what was then known as South Brooklyn, separating Red Hook from the rest of the borough” (Spellen 2016) in 1961 to build a road on top of existing public transport. This changed the area from being heavily used by commuting pedestrians to an area with no resources for the local community. There have been attempts to dismantle Moses’ infrastructure, such as the 1998 sixteen million dollar feasibility study funded by the Federal Government (Stamler 1998), which was ultimately cancelled in 2011 by the Federal Highway Administration.⁴ The city’s hostile architecture and socio-economic borders, specifically in this neighbourhood, gatekeeps access to water for sustenance and pleasure as an autonomous and sustainable common resource. As my practice situates itself within this specific historical and ecological context, I engage with mainstream media portrayals to decode the narratives constructed around this architecture in dominant cultural discourse. I draw upon Jonathan Nichols-Pethick’s 2012 book, *TV Cops. The Contemporary American Television Police Drama*, to understand how justice is depicted in U.S. media, where “culpability and guilt are often located at the level of the individual. Justice is fulfilled when the guilty or culpable individual is punished” (Nichols-Pethick 2012, 117).

Visual culture has reinforced this ideological system of the interconnected ecology of the city. *Law & Order* (1990-), is the U.S.’ longest running

⁴ See <https://www.cnu.org/highways-boulevards/campaign-cities/nyc-BQE>.

television franchise, and frequently scripts the waterfront as being a part of the city which accessing alone provides grounds for questioning [fig. 1].

“Nobody fishes in the Gowanus Canal, it’s so polluted.”

Law & Order dun dun

“So you’re telling us you found the leg when you were fishing?”

“See? See? This is why I don’t trust the cops”.⁵

Law & Order did not begin this constellation of representation. The 1937 documentary *Manhattan Waterfront* [fig. 2] describes waterfront dwellers as “unholy ghosts of men who have failed in every opportunity that life in the land of opportunity can afford”.⁶ Jonathan Nichols-Pethick refers to the “spectacle of decay” (Nichols-Pethick 2012, 54) within city portrayals in 1980s police dramas, a motif that persists in *Law & Order* where suspicion is cast upon individuals opting out of dominant capitalist structures and pursuing autonomous access to urban resources. This architecture of New York is designed for environmental injustice, and media depictions of the city serve to individualise the issue, obscuring its systemic dimensions [figs 3-4].

Women under 50 and men under 15 are advised not to eat fish caught in the Upper Bay, but the water is an active fishing site. In *Caliban and the Witch*, Federici writes that “capitalism, as a social-economic system, is necessarily committed to racism and sexism” (Federici 2004, 17). The history of the removal of common resources in Medieval Europe consists of processes of witch hunts, colonisation, Christianisation, and primitive accumulation and is “still unfolding before our eyes, as it has for the last 500 years” (17). I believe that Federici’s intuition is relevant in thinking about the history of the city’s waterfront. The logic of primitive accumulation, first created in Medieval Europe, and its subsequent replication across different geographies, manifests in the urban fabric of New York City today. Ruth Wilson Gilmore positions that

it might be more powerful to analyse relationship dynamics that extend beyond obvious conceptual or spatial boundaries, and then decide what a particular form, old or new, is made of, by trying to make it into something else. (Wilson Gilmore 2022, 477)

My practice of researching geological structures of materials and their relation to the logic of late capitalism in terms of privatisation and individualisation informs my process of collaging, layering, and redacting speculative ecologies, transforming the logic of water in the city from a private, fixed entity to a public, collective, active body, and site of ongoing contention [fig. 5].

Ecological practices are impacted by histories of blocked access to common resources. Thinking about my practice in relation to Federici, Yusoff, and Wilson Gilmore’s writing helped me to inform my process of knowledge production around the city’s water through craft. I began exploring environmental care and the possibility of learning skills from an outsider

⁵ NBC, “Strange Beauty”. *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. 2012, season 13, episode 22, 10’35”-12’02”.

⁶ RKO, *Manhattan Waterfront*. 1937, 5’25”-5’30”. <https://archive.org/details/ManhattanWat>.



Figure 5 Zoë Fitzpatrick Rogers, *VISION BOARD I*. 2023. Cadmium yellow, cadmium orange, crap green, ultramarine purple, salvaged glitter, graphite, iron oxide, copier ink, Hurricane Henri (2021), on salvaged cotton paper

standpoint; as an artist not having scientific qualifications, or experience in law or public policy. In attempting to learn these systems of knowledge through my experience, I engaged with the idea that everybody in the city should have access to clean public water, and that this should already be in place, but under the logic of capitalism this is a radical demand. Alongside my practice, I teach boatbuilding to public school students across Brooklyn. Students collaboratively build an Optimist Pram in each classroom over a school year, using only hand tools, with four sheets of plywood. The students then sail in the East River, directly opposite the skyscrapers of Wall Street. I teach at a school in East New York that does not have clean drinking



Figure 6 Nintendo, *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*. 2020. Nintendo of America Inc.

water accessible for students. The disparities of wealth in the city are directly linked to the architecture crafted by previous generations. I am not only teaching how to build an object. I am working with young people in the city on how to autonomously access resources in their community, working with them to build their emotional intelligence through talking about our feelings as an integral part of the educational structure, and how to reimagine place. Wilson Gilmore identifies Environmental Justice activists as “reconstructing place so that concepts of ‘safety’ and ‘health’ cannot be realised by razor-wire fences or magic-bullet cures” (Wilson Gilmore 2022, 133), and that “women take the lead in everyday struggles against toxicities” in the intersection of impact and community building.

Even in imaginary and virtual spaces, creating a world that primitive accumulation has not contaminated and dominated seems impossible for designers. *Animal Crossing*⁷ is a game where a narrative in which common resources are commodified and exploited for individual capitalist gains [fig. 6]. Simulations of fishing and foraging in Nintendo’s *Animal Crossing* live on land devoid of history. Federici, Wilson Gilmore, and Yusoff are muted by a simulated reality in which the present extraction of resources is the only way to succeed and ever replenish. The player is situated in a village, placed into debt with the local shopkeeper, Tom Nook, and must exploit resources to repay their debt. Only then are they offered to reenter debt to continue to expand their home improvements while making friends with the other villagers along the way. The resources never fail. There are always more fish and more fruit growing on the trees. The island is never polluted, and the simulated land always repairs itself, ready for another round of harvesting. Models of capitalism never show the rampant oppression that must occur to create this imitated ideal of living. The village in the videogame is always

7 See <https://animal-crossing.com/> and <https://www.cheatsheet.com/entertainment/animal-crossing-new-horizons-october-direct-details-you-might-have-missed.html/>.



Figure 7 Zoë Fitzpatrick Rogers, *Boundaries + My Inability to Set Them*. 2022. Hurricane Henri, watercolour, oil on paper, 24 × 18.5"

'free' to be exploited and accumulated from. Peter Linebaugh describes the commons as "[encompassing] all those parts of the Earth that remained unprivatized, unenclosed, a non-commodity, a support for the manifold human values of mutuality" (Linebaugh 2000, 26). The Upper Bay remains un-privatized, a toxic inaccessible common resource guarded by hostile architecture.

Ecological practices circumvent these barriers through collaborations of knowledges. They propose alternative models of mutuality and access. Hostile architecture and pollution gain *animacy*. Mel Y. Chen unravels perceptions of toxicity and their temporality and defines animacy as a construct between living and dead, animate and inanimate, and frames toxins through animacy. Borders of public and private landscapes collapse by making tools to access and communicate with a common resource. Toxicity is personal, social, political, and environmental. Chen likens toxicity to economic recession. Toxicity becoming a bad "asset". The toxic assets accumulate into a "disabling" stance, where they consume the owner into financial death. He then counters this with the "multiplicity" of toxicity and its "persistent allure" (Chen 2011).

Chen explores borders, environmental toxins, and their inability to contain themselves within a manufactured territory. They make a case for the 'interiority' of borders being crossed, such as the domestic and the self.

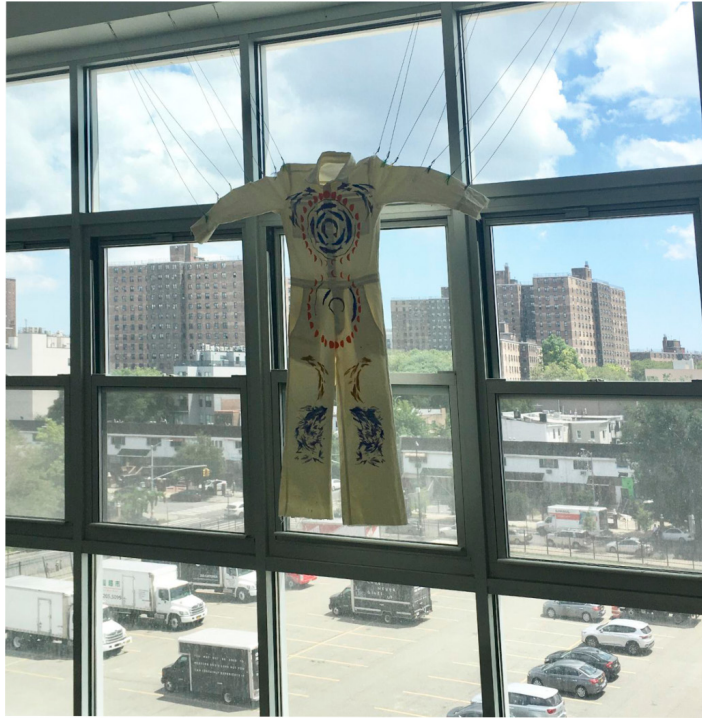


Figure 8
Zoë Fitzpatrick Rogers,
BODY CLOCK. 2023.
Ultramarine blue,
ultramarine violet,
cadmium orange, synthetic
iron oxide, gum arabic
on canvas, steel

Using an example of children's toys being the site of a border crossed, Chen analyses language from an article from the *New York Times*, recording a middle-class mother's perspective on the issue,

The Affected Thomas toys were manufactured in China [...]. "These are not cheap, plastic, McDonald's toys [...]. But these are what is supposed to be a high-quality children's toy". (269)

Chen unravels the implications in this statement of those holding privilege and wealth deserving of better health or immunity.

Chen focuses on domestic spaces as a site for toxicity, historical and present racism in medical research and care.

The iconic white boy is an asset that must not be allowed to become toxic: he must not be mentally deficient, delayed or lethargic. His intellectual capabilities must be assured to consolidate a futurity of heteronormative (white) masculinity, which is also to say he must not be queer. (271)

Toxicity does not recognise heteronormativity, or how its presence shifts labour of care, changing "development of able-bodied identities, practices and relations" (271) to undo systems of hyper-capitalism reliant on unrecognised and unvalued labours of care, intimacy, and nurture.

Interconnection led me to research New York's public policy on eating fish from the water. A connected body of water is rendered as inanimate bordered sections with different rules for eating. Robin Wall Kimmerer describes the

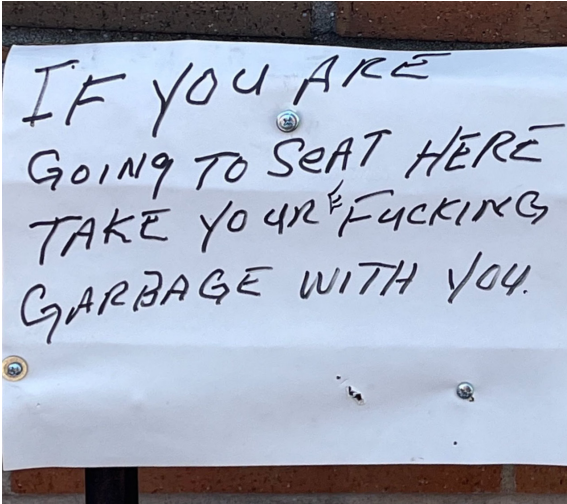


Figure 9 Gowanus, Brooklyn, New York. 7 May 2023. Photograph by the Author

grammar of animacy in Indigenous language structures, translating a body of water into English as “to be a bay” (Wall Kimmerer 2013, 55). English defines water as inanimate. Kimmerer reframes water as animate, a singular, autonomous being that actively chooses which form to take. I read this book when my stomach was not healing after surgery. I could not digest any food. Everything was making me sick. My body was starving me out.

I was infected with antibiotic-resistant bacteria while in hospital. It had gained its animacy by entering water streams in medical waste, mutating in its environment, and entering food streams. I had been touched with an infected glove or blanket when my immune system was suppressed before surgery. It had colonised my body, blocking any nutrients from being absorbed. I took potent antibiotics every six hours for thirty days with no guarantee that I would be able to heal from it. I cannot take antibiotics anymore. My organs are still inflamed. The tracking of toxins in the body, and their animacy, is where my practice intersected with calendars.

Max Liboiron’s *Pollution is Colonialism* (2021) helped me to understand what had happened to me personally, and how policies governing resources, spaces, and toxicity are perpetuated on a systemic level globally. I approach my practice through personal experience and the intersection of these issues on a scale beyond myself. As I cited earlier through the example of *Law & Order*, culpability and responsibility are held at the level of the individual in the dominant system of justice. I reframe this fabricated ideology in my practice, considering interconnection and chaos as ecologies. Liboiron writes that

A core scientific achievement in the permission-to-pollute system was the articulation of *assimilative capacity* - the theory that environments can handle a specific amount of contaminant before harm occurs. (Liboiron 2021, 39)

I translated New York City’s policies of thresholds of harm into thirty-day cycles of maximum legal levels of consumable toxicity. This enables a critical examination of the constructs that define ‘safe’ levels of

toxicity – specifically, the point at which a toxin’s concentration is deemed inert within the human body.

The materiality of the works are interconnected. Every material used is linked to the known toxins in the water. I activate raw pigments, researching their sourcing through pigment factories [figs 7-8]. Sites such as Dead Horse Bay activate both performance and material research. This ecological practice is a constellation between the city and corporeal knowledge, consciously moving away from Western models that place humans at the top of a hierarchical structure of being, as separate entities from their environments. Instead, it emphasises the ongoing, mutual relationships between humans and their ecological surroundings.

Where Chen’s study of a toxic children’s toy is considered from the perspective of a white middle-class heterosexual cis-woman, Kathryn Yusoff describes “selective perspectivism” (Yusoff 2018, XIII) in the context of critical geography. Her study explores what is outside of domestic spaces and into common resources. Yusoff references Dionne Brand to explain that the Anthropocene too does not exist in a void:

it never occurs to them that they live on the cumulative hurt of others. They want to start the clock of social justice only when they arrive. But one is born into history, one isn’t born into a void. (Brand, quoted in Yusoff 2018, 82)

Materiality is firmly embedded within the structures of capitalism as a “geosocial [site] of coproduction in which shared histories unfold” (Yusoff 2018, 62). This includes both the Upper Bay and the materiality of the tools that will investigate the water. Yusoff further describes current climate change visibility as a “neocolonial enterprise that continues extraction through displacement of waste” (50). And as a result contributes to “ongoing [legacies] of colonial ‘experiments’” (50). Waste displaced into the Upper Bay crosses borders. It becomes sediment and enters food streams. It is reincarnated on the land in the bodies of those who have consumed fish caught from the water. The movement of fish continually disrupts the border. The toxins travel with the fish around the Bay, extending and transferring traces of the chemicals across the bodies of water.

I initiated communication with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, who then directed me to the Department of Health. The Bureau of Toxic Substance Assessment ultimately responded to my inquiry. Henry M. Spliethoff, Chief of the Prevention and Sustainability Section, guided me to a PDF outlining that New York City waters are contaminated with PCBs, dioxin, and cadmium. Spliethoff’s sole justification for focusing on this specific health issue was that the populations in question are “more vulnerable to health effects from exposure to contaminants”. This notion of unspecified vulnerability operates as an ambiguous claim by the Department of Health. It serves as a method of issuing guidance without fully disclosing the ramifications of such pollution on human health. In line with Chen’s argument, this lack of transparency contributes to the “development of able-bodied identities, practices, and relations” (McRuer 2006, 88-89 in Chen 2011, 186).

Maxus is the corporation accountable for producing Agent Orange, a herbicide deployed by the U.S. military during the Vietnam War. This chemical was eventually disposed of in waste batches in Newark Bay. The inception



Figure 10 Zoë Fitzpatrick Rogers, *UNTRAINED AMATEUR*. 2022. Marine-grade plywood, salvaged wood, Titebond III, steel, fiberglass, cadmium orange, cadmium red, crap green, iron oxide, ultramarine blue, ultramarine purple, graphite, Thompson's Water Seal, duct tape, fishing net salvaged from Long Island fishery, and rope, 48 × 96". Photo: Martin Seck

of this herbicide drew inspiration from the U.K.'s employment of chemical agents during the 'Malayan Emergency'. In Vietnam, over 20 million gallons of Agent Orange were dispersed to decimate crops and forest canopies. Empirical studies have established that this synthesised chemical is linked to a multitude of health problems, including cancer, congenital disorders, dermatological issues, as well as severe psychological and neurological

complications.⁸ The company was purchased by YPF SA, an Argentine company, in 1995 – which gradually transferred Maxus’ assets and finally filed bankruptcy in 2016. When YPF SA was asked to pay the State of New Jersey for the costs of environmental clean-up and conservation (Maxus Energy Corp. v. YPF S.A. 2021), “YPF says it isn’t responsible for covering the cost of the cleanup. And the bankrupt subsidiary, it says, has no money to pay for it” (Brickley, Morgenson 2018). YPF SA purchased Maxus, moved all of its assets to a different part of the company, and claimed bankruptcy for the section of the company responsible for the environmental damage to avoid accountability. The toxicity of this water directly links to the “on-going legacy” Yusoff identifies as a devastating weapon manufactured directly out of colonial ideology into a “neo-colonial enterprise” (Yusoff 2018, 50). Leaving decades of transference between environment and the body, court cases have been dismissing Vietnamese victims.⁹ Capitalism gains from poisoning common resources and is protected from dealing with the devastation caused by its actions.

2 Trash Goblin Mode

1. undisciplined is a strategy
2. yeah I am intentional
3. going for a lil walk with my lil iced coffee

Ecological practices must be cognizant of the forms of belief shaping them, and as referenced in the first chapter – to what end? With ongoing settler colonialism, I sit in the intersection of being on land I was not born on. Coming from the U.K. as an artist in the U.S., I grew up with Christianity as a dominant culture, and the impacts of many aspects of the belief systems I grew up in, even without personally practicing the religion. Included in this is the idea of works having to perform some kind of purpose, despite being embedded in an oppressive system.

Claire Bishop wrote that

the discursive criteria of socially engaged art are, at present, drawn from a tacit analogy between anticapitalism and the Christian ‘good soul’. [...] This self-sacrifice is accompanied by the idea that art should extract itself from the ‘useless’ domain of the aesthetic and be fused with social praxis. (Bishop 2006, 67)

While many art practices are related to this, ecological practices must be especially aware of the belief systems informing them, and internalised values that may be harmful or irrelevant.

I am implicitly connected to a toxic environment in the city, and I love living in the city. I know when I am biking, I inhale toxic fumes. I know that the trains I ride and the plastic coffee cups I use are terrible. I ingest the city, leaving geologic traces in my body, and it stays with me. I know I am

⁸ See Frumkin 2003; Martini 2012.

⁹ See, for instance, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/12/agent-orange-case-after-defeat-woman-79-vows-to-keep-up-fight>.



Figure 11 Zoë Fitzpatrick Rogers, *UNTRAINED AMATEUR*. 2022. Handmade boat. Performance, duration variable. Dead Horse Bay, Brooklyn, New York. Image courtesy of Charles Park

also leaving geologic traces in the city with my presence. I am inherently flawed in how I live versus what is happening environmentally in the city. We are deeply entrenched in each other. I am not separate [fig. 9].

The works I make are about geological movement and change, and human boundaries placed on waterways being ineffective. They are also about the body being in this relationship with a transmuted environment. I have an inability to be 'good' in a time of ecological despair. There is possibility in transforming in this and understanding and being accountable to the ecologies that are present and connected in every artistic practice.

James Voorhies (2023) reframes contemporary artistic practices in *Post-sensual Aesthetics. On the Logic of the Curatorial* through case studies of Documenta, and defines practices as being cosmologies, or constellations. Voorhies describes fugitive art as

work that boomerangs from the field of art to siphon the knowledge of other fields, get the expertise it needs, and then bring it back as an integral part of presenting work in the public realm. (43)

In this context, I consider that ecological practices are fugitive art, engaging with multiple disciplines and approaches to materiality and concept. Voorhies also questions the function of art as Bishop did in 2006, considering:

What role can art play - presupposes that art should play a role, that it should function. And on the spectrum of functionality, the leading role it is asked to play is a critical one. All of this becomes more muddled as prominent contemporary art in the form of cultural entertainment meets the experience economy, which the field of art at present upholds economically and culturally. (43)

The constellations of ecological practices engage with even the unethical parts of being in a transmuted ecology. The systems artists constantly engage in outside of exhibitions inform the cosmology. Voorhies describes “deeply integrated and largely invisible modes of collaboration” (43), which ecological practices are especially interconnected with. The artist and the works become part of the ecosystem within the cosmos of the environment and of the artist’s practice.

Untrained Amateur was my initial project related to the water I worked on from 2020-22 in an attempt to gain access to the water. With a boat I built using plans I bought for \$20 online. I painted the wood with oil paints I made with toxins matching pollutants in the water [fig. 10]. I navigated city bureaucracy health and legal access policies.

The boat plans are designed by Ken Simpson, a retired Mechanical Engineer based in Arizona. The search for a suitable and economical boat design was extensive, as I was looking for material requirements, dimensions, and suitability for sailing on the East River without any prior experience or knowledge. This process moved me outside of my area of knowledge of materials and construction techniques in relationship to the body. It required me to become precise in visualising the complete process of fabrication in relation to industrially manufactured materials. I had to ensure that a safe and functional sculpture would be made. *Untrained Amateur* disrupted the literal facticity of a boat. It is an interrogation of the craft behind a successful functional structure. It is an artefact as a vessel and as a tool for access. I hacked pre-existing factual plans to transform them into a live interrogation of the privatisation of the water.

As I researched the Marine Grade Plywood I purchased, I had opted for the most affordable material. It is yet another moment that uncovers literally the entanglement of problems addressed in this project. *Meranti*, native to Southeast Asia and mostly critically endangered, is grouped within the 196 species of *Shorea genus*, named after Sir John Shore (1793-98), governor-general of the British East India Company. In attempting to make the work affordable, I had potentially purchased wood that is contributing to deforestation and displacement of Indigenous communities in Indonesia. The boat cannot be separated from the history of its material sourcing. The materiality of the boat is firmly embedded within the structures of capitalism and does not exist in a void. It is inextricably locked within the histories of extraction.

In researching deeper into the standardised manufactured plywood received on the back of a truck in Brooklyn I uncovered a symptom of the very issues that the project is built to interrogate. How can materials be truly ethically sourced and accessible through their modes of production and affordability? My source, Roberts Plywood, advised that I had purchased *Shorea parvifolia* which is currently listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources as being a material of ‘Least Concern’. The website providing this information is funded by Toyota Motor Corporation.

Muscle memory, spatial memory and emotional memory are embedded in craft. The definition of craft leans to *cheating*, and *cunning*, as manipulation of material could be interpreted as deceitful. I used *cunning* and *band-itch* to hack craft, learning the rules of building a boat and disrupting them, through flaws, growth, inexperience, and unrelenting iterations of investigation. I learned the rules of the public water and aligned the project within the parameters, while conceptually still existing within contention



Figure 12 Zoë Fitzpatrick Rogers, *I JUST WANTED YOU TO KNOW*. 2023. Cadmium yellow, cadmium orange, crap green, ultramarine purple, salvaged glitter, graphite, iron oxide on linen

of the city. The boat is a form of connection to the water. It is a desire to intervene in historical sedimentary presence while remaining specific to its own material history. It transfers its form beyond a functional tool. A transformation of communication through performance; the nature of collaboration happening within the vessel.

During my performance at Dead Horse Bay [fig. 11], a closed landfill site in Brooklyn, a NYPD helicopter began circling the water. In summer 2023, I helped to teach a week long sailing program to a group of children from public schools across Brooklyn in their handmade boats in Sheepshead Bay, at a private yacht club that loaned its space to us. On the third day of programming the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreations directly contacted us and ordered us to stop using the water, as we allegedly did not have the correct permit for an unused dock that we were accessing. Surveillance by the local community had directly contacted the Commissioner to stop children from the same neighborhood accessing public water. We built a floating dock as a circumvention of this law enforcement. A NYPD helicopter circled above us on our last day as we left the water. Accessing New York City waters is heavily surveilled and policed, and my practice, as an ecological constellation, engages with addressing the interconnection of these systemic constructs.

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