SITUATING THE FIELD-BASED ARTIST RESIDENCY:

AN ECOCRITICAL AND ART HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF SIGNAL FIRE

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes Signal Fire, a Portland-based arts organization founded in 2008. The organization produces extended, reading-intensive, and practice-oriented backpacking artist residencies in wild places. My own participation as both artist and researcher in a summer 2019 program called "Waiting for Salmon" informs my analysis of specific artworks made by fellow participants in order to situate and contextualize the residency. I focus on Signal Fire's pedagogical framework the organization's ecologically-driven public lands advocacy and collaboration with tribal communities and Indigenous perspectives. Signal Fire adheres to certain aspects of the American wilderness ideal and preservationist environmentalist ethics while simultaneously engaging with the tensions between settler colonial and decolonial approaches to the landscape. By observing Signal Fire, this thesis aims to provide an ecocritical and art historical framework for assessing the significance of other site-specific residencies within contemporary art, environmental humanities, and decolonial studies more broadly.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: SIGNAL FIRE, A FIELD-BASED ARTIST RESIDENCY

What does it mean for a group of contemporary artists to be intentionally situated in the wilderness? Where and how do they make art in this space? Do they consider the history of the landscape in which they stand? Do they think of its future? Is the art they produce site-specific or can it exist elsewhere? Is the art monumental and permanent, or is it ephemeral and transitory? This thesis considers these questions through an analysis of the *field-based artist residency*, Signal Fire. I define field-based artist residencies as a growing subset of artist residencies in which groups of artists work together, often nomadically, moving through either urban or rural sites (i.e. *the field*) over a significant duration. Other examples of field-based artist residencies include Land Arts of the American West (founded in 2000 at the University of New Mexico) and Cape Farewell (founded in 2001, U.K.-based).

The Portland, Oregon-based Signal Fire residency was founded in 2008 by activist Amy Harwood and artist Ryan Pierce. Its primary mission is to provide opportunities for artists and "creative agitators" to develop their practices while backpacking through wild places, underpinned by distinct activist intentions and affiliations.[1] One example of Signal Fire's direct involvement includes the annual Apache Stronghold campaign "March to Sacred Oak Flat." The artist residency invites its alumni to march with the Apache Stronghold campaign to protest the copper mining on their

[1] http://www.signalfirearts.org/mission-history/, May, 2019.

sacred lands.[2] Not only does the organization directly participate in protests when possible, but also Signal Fire's programming advocates for protections against industrial resource extraction (i.e. lumber, mining, etc.) by creatively responding to the ecological, historical, and cultural narratives embedded within each site they visit. As a contemporary artist residency, Signal Fire intentionally structures their organization in dialogue with social practice art, site-specificity, public land preservation, decolonizing methodologies, and climate change. The intent of this thesis is to acknowledge the significance of Signal Fire's complex social dialogue and to provide the residency with ecocritical art historical analyses. This eco-art historical methodology is modeled after the influence of scholars such as Emily Eliza Scott, Alan C. Braddock, TJ Demos, and Mark A. Cheetham.[3]

Artist residencies provide space for knowledge production, collaboration, and experimentation in order to support the artistic development of their participants.[4] Artist residencies often require an application process with intentions of hosting artists most compatible with the programs they offer. However, residencies can have limitations and obstacles for potential participants. For example, not all residencies are funded and require a financial commitment from their participants. Although it is out of the scope of this paper to fully analyze the demographics of residencies, additional obstacles such as race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation may be especially true for field-based artist

[2] http://apache-stronghold.com/march-to-oak-flat.html

[3] Emily Eliza Scott, "Feeling in the Dark: Ecology at the Edges of History"; Alan C. Braddock, "Ecocritical Art History"; Tj Demos, *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of* Ecology; Mark A Cheetham, *Landscape into Eco Art: Articulations of Nature since the '60s.*

[4] Taru Elfving and Irmeli Kokko, "Reclaiming Time and Space: Introduction," in *Contemporary Artist Residencies: Reclaiming Time and Space,* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2019), 10.

residencies where access to nature-sites have been historically limiting and restrictive based on these demographics.[5]

The term *artist residency* is often used interchangeably to refer to artist communities and/or artist colonies, but all three vary slightly in their characteristics. The term *artist community* is used broadly to describe almost any group of artists working together. An artist community can include those outside of the contexts of a residency, such as the artists working within a specific location or region, i.e. New York's artist community, or those working within a university or school, i.e. the artist community at the University of Oregon, etc. An *artist colony* can be an artist community or an artist residency but references older models of residencies or groups that might exhibit a permanent living situation like the nineteenth century European colonies that will be referred to later in this introduction.

While residencies, communities, and colonies tend to bill themselves as a safe haven for artists away from the outside world, their infrastructure tends to keep them connected to influences such as geopolitical, economic, ecological, and humanitarian realities.[6] For instance, it is not uncommon for a residency to be affiliated with a university, museum, business, or research facility and yet ask their resident artists to respond to societal issues that their own institution cannot or will not address directly.[7]

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[5] For sources on nature and demographics see: Anne Demo, "Imagining Nature and Erasing Class and Race: Carleton Watkins, John Muir, and the Construction of Wilderness," Environmental History, 2001; Evelyn C. White, "Black Women and the Wilderness" in *Literature and the Environment: A Reader on Nature and Culture,* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999); Lauret Edith Savoy, "Pieces toward a Just Whole," in *The Georgia Review* vol. 63, no. 1, 2009, 52-62; Erin Berger, "Pattie Gonia Is Shaking Up the Adventure World," in *Outside Online*, August 12, 2009.

[6] Elfving and Kokko, 10.

[7] Elfving and Kokko, 10.

Unlike these institutional models (universities and businesses), Signal Fire is a field-based artist residency that aims to be cognizant and direct about its relationship to society.

In 2019, Signal Fire chose the programming theme "Navigate Together," to focus on critical issues surrounding migration, fire ecology, and the challenges associated with climate change adaptation. The theme asked artists to consider "How does migration build empathy and interspecies connections? What can it teach us about adaptability and resilience in the age of climate change? How can artists strengthen routes of migration and support transitory populations?"[8] These questions situate Signal Fire within the context of environmental art and suggest the ways in which artists can be a part of these broader, political discussions. Under Signal Fire's 2019 programming umbrella of "Navigate Together," they offered single event writing workshops, several week-long artist residencies, and the Wide Open Studios Summer Immersion residency, a series of three four-week wilderness retreats for artists. I participated in one of these Wide Open Studio sessions, called "Waiting for Salmon," and my analysis of this experience will serve as the focus of this paper.

The "Waiting for Salmon" program was experienced by nine artists and two instructors, including co-director Ryan Pierce, also known by his trail name "Tarp," and artist Kerri Rosenstein. During a four-week period from July 14-August 10, 2019, participants traveled into the Wallowa Mountains in Oregon, the Selway River in Idaho, the Bitterroot Mountains in Montana, and the Methow Valley in Washington. We followed the upstream route of migrating salmon through mountain rivers and the

[8] http://www.signalfirearts.org/trip/waiting-for-salmon-wide-open-studios-summer-immersion/

homeland of the Nez Perce, an Indigenous tribe of the Pacific Northwest Columbia River Plateau Region, learning together the impact of climate change on the first foods of the region.

Edited by Taru Elfving, Irmeli Kokko, and Pascal Gielen *Contemporary Artist Residencies: Reclaiming Time and Space* includes essays assembled by artists, theorists, and facilitators of residencies, connect the ways in which specific residencies function, relate to historical and geographical themes, and are inherently influenced by external societal issues. This anthology provides a useful framework for considering the Signal Fire residency because it looks more broadly at the contexts for which the residencies have been created and what realities continue to shape them today. In this thesis, I leverage that framework in conjunction with literature on *ecopedagogy* to better understand the location and geographical context of Signal Fire.[9]

Artist residencies are of increasing popularity today. The Alliance of Artists' Communities organization speaks for over 1,500 residencies with residency members from twenty countries and parallels the residencies noted on the Dutch-based website of residency guide, "TransArtists."[10] These two online sources note a substantial portion of artist residencies and far more exist and continue to emerge each year. Given their global scale and their complex relationship with art communities and the world, I argue that

[9] *Ecopedagogy* is a critical term and movement put forth by Paul Freire to define the initiative that aims to create an environmentally conscious behavior and way of perceiving. In this text, ecopedagogy refers to Leave No Trace ethics and Traditional Ecological Knowledge. The term ecopedagogy was developed in 1992 according to: María De Los Ángeles Vilches Norat, Alfonso Fernández Herrería, and Francisco Miguel Martínez Rodríguez, "Ecopedagogy: A Movement between Critical Dialogue and Complexity: Proposal for a Categories System," Journal of Education for Sustainable Development 10, no. 1 (2016): 178-95.

[10] https://www.artistcommunities.org/history; https://www.transartists.org/residency-history.

artist residencies merit further examination within contemporary art discourse and I intend to contribute this gap in scholarship.

Michael Wilkerson, board member for the Alliance of Artists' Communities, suggests in the introduction to *Artists Communities: A Directory* that residencies are often connected to the simple act of retreating to rural areas. Wilkerson traces this urge to retreat from the city in order to create art to ancient Greece and Rome.[11] Although the *retreat* aspect of many contemporary residencies aligns with Wilkerson's historical claims, the retreating artist exists in multiple cultures throughout history, and therefore his claim reveals an unnavigable point of entry. In contrast to Wilkerson, I argue that the designation of a *community* confronting the landscape together, rather than the artist-in-solitude, serves as the defining quality of an artist residency.

A substantial exploration of the origin of artist residencies appears in Nina Lübbren's *Rural Artists' Colonies in Europe 1870-1910.* She identifies a population of "over three thousand artists from all over the world" retreating in communities to make art in rural spaces between the years 1830 and 1910.[12] Her research primarily investigates artists who traveled to central Europe, as she considers how "the first [of these communities] were formed in the 1820s [in] Barbizon [in France], Chailly [in France], and Frauenchiemsee [in Germany]."[13] From here, Lübbren identifies an emergent trend

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[11] Michael Wilkerson, "Introduction," *Artists Communities: A Directory of Residencies in the United States Offering Time and Space for Creativity,* Alliance of Artists' Communities, (New York: Allworth Press, 1996) xix.

[12] Artist colonies have existed prior to those that Lübbren's focuses on, such as the Nazarenes in San Isidoro monastery outside of Rome.

[13] Nina Lübbren, *Rural Artists' Colonies in Europe, 1870-1910,* Issues in Art History, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 1-3.

of artist colonies influenced by the Bauhaus (established in 1860 in Weimar, Germany), and Black Mountain College, which flourished in North Carolina from 1933-1956.[14] However, Lübbren notes historical inconsistencies and fragmented documentation of artist residencies resulting in physical and theoretical marginalization over time.[15] For example, she observes that until the 1960s, modern art historians focused primarily on traditional mediums (like painting), master artists (predominantly male), and Western art movements (narratives which neglect the social and process-based characteristics of artist colonies).[16] I argue that the abundance of social practice art, Earthworks, land art, and other process-based art from the 1960s, should expand the art historical canon.[17]

The three chapters of this thesis outline the significance of Signal Fire's backcountry programming within art historical and environmental contexts. In "The Campfire: Dialogical Framework of Signal Fire," I examine how the dialogical element of the residency not only influences the creative process of the artist but can itself be considered art. I argue that dialogical moments of exchange, between each participant and between the participants and the physical sites they enter, situate Signal Fire's work alongside other art historical movements including social practice art and the *Happenings*

[14] Elfving and Kokko, 17.

[15] Lübbren, 8.

[16] Ibid, 9. She does not want to suggest that the artists who were considered of these movements, such as the avant-garde or Realist, Impressionists, etc, should be considered separate from those participating in these communities, because she does identify overlap, but rather her intent is to identify the priority of art historians to this particular movement and their neglect of the significance of the role artist colonies had during this time. One can note that the artists who participated in the colonies with largely Western/European and/or American.

[17] Ibid, 10-11. In this way, artist residencies are connected to movements like the Land arts movement and similar creative practices but it is more accurate to trace the residencies back to the artist colonies of the mid-nineteenth century.

(single experimental events of art) created and popularized by Allan Kaprow in the late 1950s and 1960s. Further, I reveal the complexities embedded within the historical narrative of Signal Fire's sites being "wilderness areas."

The second chapter, "Leave No Trace: Tracing the Significance of 'Wild' Sites," uses the ethics of Leave No Trace (LNT), a wilderness use practice inspired and necessitated by the growing popularity of outdoor recreation, as a lens for understanding how Signal Fire upholds the ecological integrity of the land while simultaneously challenging the wilderness mythos commonly promoted by nineteenth-century American landscape artists. I argue the program's alignment with LNT exposes LNT's deeply colonial origins bringing into question the contemporary relationship between artist and site, particularly concerning public lands.

In the third chapter, "The Trail: Traditional Ecological Knowledge as Ways of Making and Knowing," I analyze ideas of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) evident in Signal Fire's practice as another way to consider the group's relationship to place. I see the integration of TEK and tribal engagement in Signal Fire programs to exhibit a greater potential for tribal relationships within arts organizations more broadly.

Collectively, these chapters analyze specific works of art and performances crafted by participants in the 2019 "Waiting for Salmon" program in order to put the Signal Fire residency, and field-based residencies more generally, in dialogue with social practice art, site-specificity, public land preservation, decolonizing methodologies, and climate change.[18] I wish to acknowledge that the observations I have made for this thesis

[18] The "Waiting for Salmon" participants will be introduced in the text by their full names and then, to follow, will be referred to by the trail names they received during the residency.

are from my positions as a descendant of the Oglala Sioux tribe and as both researcher and practicing artist.

CHAPTER II

THE CAMPFIRE:
DIALOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF SIGNAL FIRE

*"*We continue to talk about 'new forms' because the new has been the fertilizing fetish of the avant-garde since it detached itself from the infantry. But it may be that these new forms are only to be found buried in social energies not yet recognized as art."[19]

-Lucy R. Lippard in *"*Hot Potatoes: Art and Politics in 1980"

"The movement toward direct interaction[s] decisively shifts the locus of aesthetic meaning from the moment of creative plentitude in the solitary act of making (or the viewer's imaginative reconstruction of this act) to a social and discursive realm of shared experience, dialogue, and physical movement."[20]

-Grant H. Kester in *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*

The importance of dialogic inquiries between art and nature was evident from the first moments of the "Waiting for Salmon" residency. On July 14, 2019, not yet in the backcountry, eight artists and their two guides sat on two wooden picnic tables pushed together. The participants experienced their first night together at a campground in Eastern Oregon, en route to backpack through the Eagle Cap Wilderness in the Wallowa Mountains. Gathered with their course readers in hand and headlamps brightly positioned against their foreheads, participants engaged in small talk that was interrupted by a coyote singing nearby, its howls echoing across the water of the lake as the light faded. Everything and everyone became silent amidst the coyote's cries:

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[19] Lucy R. Lippard, "Hot Potatoes: Art and Politics in 1980," in *Get the Message: A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: Dutton Press, 1984), 172.

[20]Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art,* (Updated ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 60.

evening birds quieted, squirrels rested, water turned to glass, and the leaves above it froze in stillness. Others joined the lone coyote and the solo subsumed into a larger symphony. The gathering of coyotes mirrored the coming together of the participants, and the sincerity of bearing witness to their songs was acknowledged with a quiet moment of awe.

Eventually, class began. The participants discussed the texts they had read for that day, which included Agnes Martin's short and inspiring, "On the Perfection Underlying Life" and the informative "Waiting for Salmon," by Barry Lopez, after which the residency was named. These nightly *discussion sessions*, which would continue throughout the four-week program, served as a time for delving into the assigned reading and were instrumental in bolstering participants' creative growth and personal narrative/storytelling. Similarly, the program's weekly project *critiques* and *times of leisure* served as important moments of social exchange, emphasizing the unmediated use of time spent developing weekly projects. These three moments of social exchange are central to understanding how the Signal Fire residency, and artist residencies more broadly, relate to social practice art.

Prior to each Wide Open Studios residency, Signal Fire's guides curate each group through an interview process. The interviews screen artists for general interest and experience, discuss their work and process, and get a taste for their personality and character. The intensity of the residency extends over a month and they intend to assemble a diverse, dynamic, and coherent community in order to sustain conversations, debates, and constructive discussions throughout the experience. Though the program aims to cultivate a rich diversity of participants in each residency, Signal

Fire acknowledges that accessibility is limited by both physical and financial requirements. No previous backpacking experience is required, but one must be able to physically and mentally withstand the strenuous backpacking and immersive outdoor lifestyle for the duration of the residency.[21] As mentioned briefly in the introduction, field-based artist residencies can inflict obstacles on their participants because access to nature-sites have been historically limiting and restrictive based on demographics such as race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.[22] Furthermore, their programs are expensive. Limited scholarships are available, but for most participants, the four-week backpacking trip can cost up to $3,300. The nonprofit has largely sustained itself through these high cost programs; however, as of 2020, they have secured enough funding to provide their residencies for free to all participants, an accomplishment they hope to extend to all of their programs in the future.

Organizational structures and financial mechanisms inevitably shape Signal Fire's programs and the structure of Signal Fire's backpacking program is rooted in outdoor recreation. The relationship between conversations and storytelling around the campfire are rich in cultural symbolism and have a long history within society; these interactions serve to tether the residency experience back to the social world.[23] The cyclical gesture of exchanging dialogue around a campfire, or in the Talking Circles

[21] If unable to complete the full four-week residency, the participant can return home.

[22] For sources on nature and demographics see: Anne Demo, "Imagining Nature and Erasing Class and Race: Carleton Watkins, John Muir, and the Construction of Wilderness," Environmental History, 2001; Evelyn C. White, "Black Women and the Wilderness" in *Literature and the Environment: A Reader on Nature and Culture,* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999); Lauret Edith Savoy, "Pieces toward a Just Whole," in *The Georgia Review* vol. 63, no. 1, 2009, 52-62;

[23] Robin I. M. Dunbar, "How Conversations around Campfires Came to Be," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111, no. 39 (September 30, 2014): 14013–14, https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1416382111.

common among Indigenous and First Nations people, or in any number of other social situations, is at the core of the educational structure and intent of Signal Fire's field-based artist residency.[24] These social exchanges, which occur throughout the residency, must be granted as much attention as the art objects created during the trip and can themselves be considered art.

The history of social exchange and dialogic methods in art can be charted back to at least the 1950s and 1960s with the emergence of Allan Kaprow's Happenings, followed by the systematic, process-based works of the Fluxus group during the 1960s and 1970s. Similarly, Helen Mayer's and Newton Harrison's many environmental and ecological art projects from the 1970s embraced dialogic methods, as did the collaborations of Mierle Laderman Ukeles with the New York Department of Sanitation in the 1980-90's, and Amy Balkin's ongoing global collaborative project considering climate change, *A People's Archive of Sinking and Melting*.[25] Such examples show the trajectory of artists who shift their focus away from the individual art object to instead confront a crucial part of the artmaking process: the social. As demonstrated by these art historical cases, the moments of social exchange, referred to here as the *dialogical framework,* can be integral parts of the work of art, as opposed to the finished product alone.[26] In the case of the Signal Fire residency, the dialogical framework that makes up the artwork includes discussions, weekly project critiques, and times of leisure and

[24] https://firstnationspedagogy.ca/circletalks.html

[25] Allan Kaprow, "Just Doing. (experimental Art and Happenings)," TDR (Cambridge, Mass.) 41, no. 3 (1997): 101-106; Jessica Santone, "Documentation as Group Activity: Performing the Fluxus Network," Visual Resources 32, no. 3-4 (2016): 263-81.

[26] Conversations between artists and artist and site are described similarly in Kester, 60-69.

play.[27] I argue that Signal Fire utilizes a dialogical framework in a similar fashion to the Happenings, ecological art projects, and collaborations described above, and I propose that field-based artist residencies like "Waiting for Salmon" reflect a continuation of that discourse.

The conversations sparked by the social nature of the Signal Fire residency facilitated creative exchanges between collective participants and between each participant and each site, embedding the dialogical framework as a critical part of each participant's creative process. Margaret Meban discusses a similar framework in her article "The Aesthetic as a Process of Dialogical Interaction: A Case of Collective Art Praxis" stating: "dialogue becomes medium, listening becomes an active process of empathetic engagement, artists become co-participants, and community identity becomes an important conceptual site."[28] Dialogue *as* medium within an artist residency thus conceptualizes dialogue *as* art. In this sense, the three integral moments of social exchange built into the structure of "Waiting for Salmon" (the nightly *discussion sessions*, the weekly project *critiques*, and *times of leisure)* constitute a framework that can itself be considered art.

The prominence of social exchange within interdisciplinary art practices and

[27] The program's structure explains the dialogical framework, "Through a suite of individual and collaborative projects in various media, students will explore and actualize the potential for relocating their studio practice, working 'on site' and far from civilization. A foundation of readings and discussions as well as encounters with visiting presenters offer conceptual context and possible models for the work we make. Assignments emphasize multi-stage development including research, planning, and playful experimentation, and then follow-through in editing, presentation, and evaluation through oral and written group critiques," in "Wide Open Studios Summer Immersion: Waiting for Salmon, Syllabus and Day Plan," Signal Fire, 2019, 1.

[28] Margaret Meban, "The Aesthetic as a Process of Dialogical Interaction: A Case of Collective Art Praxis," *Art Education* 62, no. 6 (2009): 36.

field-based artist residencies underlines the need to prioritize this dialogical approach in the study of artist residencies.[29] A dialogical-based practice can be process-based, collaborative, and ultimately shifts the focus away from the art object. This desire to move away from the object is shared by the performance art, activism, and social practices that flourished in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, and is perhaps best embodied by Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) concept of the social sculpture, which he defined as art that blurs the lines between art and society and artist and audience.[30] Grant H. Kester, a leading scholar of social practice art and the author of *Conversation Pieces: Community + Communication in Modern Art*, states that the tradition of social practice art is "often focused on an internal critique of the work of art, into a set of positive practices directed toward the world beyond the gallery walls, linking new forms of intersubjective experience with social or political activism."[31] Beuys' social sculpture aligns with the motivations in Kester's description, dissolving the binary between art and life and creating a slippage between the individual and society.[32] Similarly, art historian Erika

[29] Jean-Baptiste Joly, Director of Akademie Schloss Solitude, traces the origin of this type of discussion-based exchanges in residencies to the Renaissance academy in *About the Necessity of Residential Centers in the Contemporary Context of Art, https://www.resartis.org/en/activities__projects/meetings/general_meetings/1996_-_dublin/jean-baptiste_joly/.*

[30] Catherine Wood. *Performance in Contemporary Art*, (London: Tate, 2018), 13. This category of social practice art is discussed outside of the academic realm in, Randy Kennedy's, "Outside the Citadel, Social Practice Art Is Intended to Nurture," New York Times, March 20, 2013 where he writes, "freely blur the lines among object making, performance, political activism, community organizing, environmentalism and investigative journalism…"

[31] Kester, 9. See also Meban, 34, and Pamela Harris Lawton, "At the Crossroads of Intersecting Ideologies: Community-Based Art Education, Community Engagement, and Social Practice Art," *Studies in Art Education* 60, no. 3 (July 3, 2019): 203–18.

[32] Fabio Montagnino, "Joseph Beuys' Rediscovery of Man–Nature Relationship: A Pioneering Experience of Open Social Innovation," *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity* 4, no. 4 (October 23, 2018): 3.

Biddle observes that dialogical interaction "enables art to become a creative means of building conversation, cooperative practices and organizational structure."[33] Thus, the dialogical framework of Signal Fire is comparable to the concept of social sculpture because both operate as influencers of creative practice and as creative practice itself. Understanding how the dialogical framework of the Wide Open Studios program translates into an art making strategy requires a close examination of the program's formal moments of exchange, specifically the daily discussions and the weekly art project critiques.

Daily Discussions

Circle-seating, like the structure and process for communicating in Indigenous Talking Circles and the iconic campfire scene, is a method of exchange that is often adopted into education pedagogy. This pedagogy is crucial to understanding the dialogic interaction at play in artists residencies like Signal Fire. Through personal experience as an art student and educator, Judy Chicago observes in her text *Institutional Time: A Critique of Studio Art Education* that hierarchical (and, more often than not, patriarchal) methods of art pedagogy are limiting and not conducive to a creative practice. In her text, Chicago identifies a harmful power-dynamic during discussion and critique. To resolve this power dynamic, Chicago finds success in implementing what she calls the circle method.[34] She argues that circle-based pedagogy makes "everyone feel as though their

[33] Erika Biddle, "Re-Animating Joseph Beuys' 'Social Sculpture': Artistic Interventions and the Occupy Movement.," *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (March 2014): 25–26.

[34]For this method see also: Simone Devore, Robin Fox, Lucy Heimer, and Brooke Winchell, "Meeting in the Circle: Examining Identity, Attitudes, and Pedagogy in the Context of an Early Childhood Teacher Education Program in the United States," in *Early Years: An International Journal of Research and Development* 35, no. 4 (2015): 394-410.

views are worthwhile and create[s] a communal atmosphere of support and strong group bonds that seem[s] to accelerate the learning process...and [students] discover that their life experiences can provide meaningful content for their art."[35] Like Chicago, Signal Fire guides adopt a similar circle methodology during their daily discussions and encourage a non-hierarchical learning environment throughout the duration of the residency (Figure 1).

(Figure 1) Photograph by Kerri Rosenstein, the daily discussion or camp class, Summer 2019.

[35] Judy Chicago, *Institutional Time: A Critique of Studio Art Education,* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2014), 9 & 26.

This commitment to a non-hierarchical structure is revealed in the routine activities that make up the Signal Fire residency. On a typical day, participants commute by van to a designated wilderness area before trekking together some five to eight miles until they reach a location for establishing base camp, often near water. Participants unload their own packs and set up their own tents, often taking a moment to jump into the adjacent lake or river to cool off. Around four o'clock, the participants gather for class, sitting together in a circle for dialogic interaction before they begin cooking the evening meal together. (Figures 2 & 3).

(Figure 2) Photograph by Cassidy Schoenfelder, Sophie (left) hiking behind Sarah (right), Summer 2019.

(Figure 3) Photograph by Cassidy Schoenfelder, Signal Fire campsite in Northern Cascades, Summer 2019.

The Wide Open Studios evening discussion sessions are prompted by the material in four course readers, as well as site visits and visiting presenters. They often begin with experimental project prompts and experimental play. Each of the four course readers are created by the guides as a site-specific introduction to each week's destinations. They include approximately 250 pages of carefully curated material including cultural history, regional ecology, environmental ethics and issues, historical texts primarily written from Indigenous perspectives, art and artist profiles, poetry and creative writing, as well as critical texts by art historians, critics, and writers such as Rebecca Solnit, TJ Demos, and Robin Wall Kimmerer. Collectively, these texts manifest critical thinking and bolster dialogical interactions throughout the experience.[36] As participant Kaleb Bass, trail name Kalvin, describes, "the discussions [] braided together the authors' viewpoints, each of our perspectives, and the agency of the places where the discussions were held."

Perhaps the most influential reading of the "Waiting for Salmon" residency was Robin Wall Kimmerer's "Two Ways of Knowing," a transcribed interview conducted by Leah Torino from *The Sun Magazine.* In this text, Kimmerer describes the nature of her relationship with plants as an Indigenous woman and scientist. The two contradicting yet complementary perspectives intermingle and make up her identity. Kimmerer's text grapples with this apparent contradiction. She infers that: "Western science explicitly separates observer and observed but to the indigenous way of thinking, the observer is always in relationship with the observed, and thus it's important that she knows

[36] Some texts in the course readers include: "Culture of Conquest," by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz; "Is Google Making us Stupid?" by Nicholas Carr; various chapters from *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer; Excerpt from *Bluets* by Maggie Nelson, "Reclamation and Reconciliation from Belonging: A Culture of Place" by bell hooks; Chapters 2 & 3 from *Lure of the Local* by Lucy Lippard; "Uninhabitable Earth" by David Wallace Wells; and "Acts of Hope," by Rebecca Solnit.

herself."[37] Kimmerer further describes how, through acts of ceremony —thanking the land and plants for their gifts— she is reminded that, to her, there is a bigger purpose associated with her work as a biologist. These beings are owed a particular type of responsibility, and she feels that her work can provide that through reciprocity and balance. Kimmerer uses the format of an interview to expose different methods of inquiring about the natural world. Whereas Western science demands a conclusion to an interview, Indigenous perspectives are often interested in the conversation that takes place more than the result. Kimmerer is careful to state that the scientific institution is different from scientific inquiry, stating that scientific inquiry is in many ways inherently a part of an Indigenous way of knowing. The scientific institution, however, is not always conducive to a slow and intimate approach for gathering knowledge.[38] The method of the interview echoes Grant Kester in that this type of collaboration between subjects is complex and reflexive.

During "Waiting for Salmon," Kimmerer's text initiated a long discussion from the Signal Fire participants relating the content to their own lives. Many participants were formulating or interested in establishing transdisciplinary careers. Kimmerer's text showed that these interests could overlap instead of being diametrically opposed. Additionally, most participants were either in school or recent graduates at the time of residency. Kimmerer's text inspired participants to share their experiences, opinions and

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[37] Leah Tonino, "Two Ways of Knowing: Robin Wall Kimmerer On Scientific And Native American Views Of the Natural World," in *The Sun Magazine*, (April 2016).

[38] Themes related to non-Western epistemologies and methodologies also mentioned in John Lupinacci and Alison Happel-Parkins, "Ecocritically (Re)Considering STEM: Integrated Ecological Inquiry in Teacher Education," in *Journal of the California Council on Teacher Education: Issues in Teacher Education* 26, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 52-54; and Donna Haraway's, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575-99.

critiques of institutions and Western epistemologies.[39] For example, many commented on how the backpacking experience allowed for a personal and reflective —rather than objective— investigative approach, similar to Kimmerer's, that they had not found easily accessible within western institutions. Participants also noted a difference in how they were observing their environment, being a part of it and not separate from it, after their significant duration in the backcountry while discussing texts like "Two Ways of Knowing."

Discussions like those that occurred during "Waiting for Salmon" are often central to field-based artist residencies. Land Arts of the American West's (LAAW) programming also utilizes this approach. Like Signal Fire, LAAW is another field-based artist residency operating in the west. The two have similar pedagogical structures, and they both operate under investigative, site-based inquiries. LAAW has been around longer, however, and has direct affiliations with educational institutions unlike Signal Fire. The LAAW residency was founded in 2000 by Bill Gilbert and Chris Taylor at the University of New Mexico, and structures its experience around the American Southwest. The residency extends from August through October and includes fourteen studio-art participants, traveling by van over eight-thousand miles together each year.[40] LAAW's field-work is similar to the investigative approach of The Center for Land Use Interpretation in that they both aim to consider intersecting sites of land, culture, and urbanization (for example, they investigate sites like dams, abandoned testing sites in the

[39] It should be noted that not all artists who participate in Signal Fire programs are students, often many are following non-academic tracks or alternative education paths.

[40] Chris Taylor and Bill Gilbert, *Land Arts of the American West*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 25.

desert, Indigenous architecture, Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels* [1974] and Michael Heizer's *Double Negative* [1969-70] -- artists who respond to the landscape with large-scale sculptures derived of natural materials).[41] Much like the pedagogical structure of Signal Fire residencies, the LAAW residency centers on conversations and collaborations influenced by the "readings and seminar discussions [that] provide a set of conceptual frames for beginning the process of developing field-based practices," leading to, "work [that is] in a direct dialogue with environment and community."[42] The LAAW programming emphasizes how verbal interactions extend from the discussions directly into the making process as an art critique, which was a central element of the "Waiting for Salmon" residency as well.

In both field-based residencies, dialogue and discussion serve as art making strategies, but what kind of art do they produce? The following section turns toward the art objects and performances, specifically the exchanges inspired by those artworks during the Signal Fire weekly art critiques, which emphasize collaboration and active listening.[43]

Weekly Art Critiques

[41] Signal Fire and LAAW share interests in the cultural and historical narratives of their sites of inquiry, however Signal Fire's primary concern is ecological preservation and less-so the urbanism investigations of LAAW. Description on The Center for Land Use of Interpretation website reads: "The Center for Land Use Interpretation is a research and education organization interested in understanding the nature and extent of human interaction with the surface of the earth, and in finding new meanings in the intentional and incidental forms that we individually and collectively create," "About the Center," The Center for Land Use Interpretation, accessed January 22, 2020, http://www.clui.org/section/about-center.

[42] Taylor and Gilbert, 25-26.

[43]Characteristics of the social making process described in Kester, 60.

In visual arts education, the studio art critique is a central dialogical mechanism utilized by students and professionals in their practices.[44] The art critique can occur in a formal manner under the leadership of the instructor, or it can take place informally with fellow classmates. Art critiques are crucial opportunities to receive constructive feedback about ones' work at any stage of the making process.[45] The nature of the critique is described at length by Mariah Doren, faculty member at Parsons School of Design. Doren states "the format [of the critique] is always the same: observation, analysis and reflection," and functions as, "a dynamic, malleable process adapted to the needs of the class, the work and the individual being assessed."[46] In her research, she identifies limits to the critique within contemporary art, questioning its relevance because of the habitual neglect of subjective dialogue. She states that

> The use of critique as assessment in school works against the desire to celebrate [the] multiplicity of meanings generated. As contemporary artworks make comment, through varied means, on ourselves, our culture and our world, and are understood by viewers with equally varied lenses, the dialogue around the value of the artwork expressed through its assessment needs to shift. If we see this ambiguity or multiplicity as valuable then it is our notion of objective assessment that must be reformed.[47]

Considering the complexity involved in the art-making process of Signal Fire, I argue that Doren's analysis holds weight. It questions the validity of art critiques to accurately assess the value of contemporary artworks for a process-based or social practice art

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[44] Colin M. Gray, "Informal Peer Critique and the Negotiation of Habitus in a Design Studio," *Art, Design & Communication in Higher Education* 12, no. 2 (December 1, 2013): 196, https://doi.org/10.1386/adch.12.2.195_1.

[45] Also of relevance is the internal dialogue that occurs during the critique which is discussed in Donald A. Schön's, *The Design Studio: An Exploration of its Traditions and Potentials*, (London: RIBA Publications Limited, 1985).

[46] Mariah Doren, "Is the Critique Relevant? The Function of Critique in a Studio Art Classroom, Told Three Times," *Visual Inquiry* 4, no. 3 (December 1, 2015): 193–203, https://doi.org/10.1386/vi.4.3.193_1.

[47] Doren, 201.

audience. Therefore, the objective critique can fall short in an immersive experience like Signal Fire's, where the work of art does indeed contain a "multiplicity of meanings" sculpted by the multiplicity of what can be considered the art.

This is not to say that the critique cannot be useful in a field-based residency. Rather, because the artworks in the "Waiting for Salmon" program are often process-based themselves, their critique requires an emphasis on process-based dialogue that challenges the idea of a traditional critique. By adjusting to a more dialogic critique, the weekly critiques focus discussion on the process of the project instead of the value of the completed object, performance, and/or written work. Furthermore, because of the agency granted participants during the critique and their relationships that develop throughout the experience, these reformulated critiques foster a less judgement-heavy environment (Figure 4). This is in line with the second definition of what Doren describes as a successful contemporary art critique.

Similar to the discussions, the weekly art critique in the "Waiting for Salmon" residency is considered a formal practice to which all participants contribute Figure 4). The critique holds structure, unlike the times of leisure or play, where social exchange occurs candidly.[48] Although the critique is presented as a formal moment of engagement, the participants are encouraged to state what they want out of their own critique each week. For example, a participant might request general feedback about the installation and the materials used, or two positive comments and one negative comment, etc. This is

[48] "Whereas group projects and your journal may be 'shared' and discussed with the group in a casual way, these [] individual projects will be assessed in our version of a critique format," in "Wide Open Studios Summer Immersion: Waiting for Salmon, Syllabus and Day Plan," Signal Fire, 2019.

a significant departure from the traditional means by which the instructor guides and facilitates each critique through an objective approach.[49]

(Figure 4) Photograph by Cassidy Schoenfelder, weekly project critique of Kaleb Bass' canvas sculptures, Summer 2019.

[49] Doren, 196. The value of peer critique or peer relationships can be examined in Colin M. Gray, "Informal Peer Critique and the Negotiation of Habitus in a Design Studio," *Art, Design & Communication in Higher Education* 12, no. 2 (December 1, 2013): 195–209, https://doi.org/10.1386/adch.12.2.195_1.

Furthermore, the immersive and intimate community built throughout the residency dramatically alters the critique experience, which I argue is also a product of the remoteness of the experience. In the Signal Fire residency scenario, the critique, which Doren describes as "a highly subjective and painfully public form of judgement," becomes devoid of alienating power structures because participants feel safe and comfortable being vulnerable with one another.[50] "Waiting for Salmon" participant, Abi Joyce-Shaw, or Abracadabra, speaks to the power of this shift. She states: "When you have critique over your work, the people you're with actually know you instead of being thrown into a classroom full of strangers."[51] The comfortability with critique described by Abracadabra does not always occur within the walls of a traditional classroom, but seems more of a possibility during Wide Open Studios. This is a result of what participant Brittany Rudolf, also known as Roxy, describes as an "immediate bonding experience" built from "sharing meals and tents, and a collapse of privacy."[52]

The community development described by Rudolf is echoed in participant Rebecca Sexton's work. Sexton, trail name Sweet Tater, creates work that is deeply personal to reflect a trauma-based narrative. The locations visited during "Waiting for Salmon" were the same places her ancestors worked as loggers. Considering this, Sweet Tater focused her work on an exploration of her relationships with trees. She considers being a descendant of loggers to be a form of "intergenerational violence" and thinks of herself as "the inheritor of intergenerational sexual trauma."[53] She explained the

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[50] Ibid. 194.

[51] Abi Joyce-Shaw, interview by Cassidy Schoenfelder, on trail, August 1, 2019.

[52] Brittany Rudolf, interview by Cassidy Schoenfelder, on trail, August 1, 2019.

[53] "About the Artist," Rebecca Sexton, accessed November 11, 2019, https://www.rebeccasexton.net/about.

destruction of these logging efforts, which cut through vast old-growth regions in the Pacific Northwest where trees thousands-of-years-old once stood. At each campsite, Sweet Tater would find trees old enough to have come into contact with one of her family loggers. Using a polaroid camera, she took nude portraits with the tree. The resulting photographs are often ambiguous and blurry, which conveys a sense of tension and violence (Figure 5). She feels that "these photographs position the body and the land as sites of remembrance, rootedness, resistance, and resolve."[54] Sweet Tater uses her photos to create a social exchange with the natural environment. Her work attempts to resolve memories of trauma through the shared experience with trees.

When describing how the art critiques influenced her practice, Sweet Tater states: "seeing the way that the participants have been influenced differently in the same environment … Everyone's work has impacted me." [55] In this way, Sweet Tater often relied on consistent aesthetics to unite her body of work, yet she encouraged herself to experiment during the installation of her photographs. Sometimes she used the bark of the tree to hold her photographs into place or placed them on the ground assembled with the decaying wood of a nursing tree. For one of the weekly projects, Sweet Tater paired her work with short excerpts to be read when encountered by the participants. In another critique, she read expanded excerpts out loud while the photographs were passed around in a circle (Figure 6). With the addition of her voice, which voiced her trauma, Sweet Tater acknowledged a shift in trust, intimacy, and vulnerability during the critique that developed as a result of leisure and play.

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Rebecca Sexton, interview by Cassidy Schoenfelder, on trail, August 2, 2019.

(Figure 5) Photograph by Cassidy Schoenfelder, Rebecca Sexton's polaroid photographs with Sarah (left) and Brittany (right), Summer 2019.

(Figure 6) Photograph by Kerri Rosenstein, one of Rebecca Sexton's self-portraits that were passed around while she read to the participants, Summer 2019.

Conclusion: Leisure and Play

The dialogical framework in "Waiting for Salmon," which included the daily discussions and the weekly art project critiques, produced conversations and social exchanges that are an integral component of the final artworks. I argue that leisure and play also have a significant impact on the artmaking process equal to the discussion and critique. The times of leisure and play during the residency often produced moments that are themselves art, which differs from the formal structure of the discussion and critique. These moments mirror the Happenings of the 1950s and 1960s, which is one of the first times in American art where leisure and play were considered art. In "Just Doing. (Experimental Art and Happenings)," Allan Kaprow describes a few of his *Happenings,* or single experimental art events, by recounting the details of how they occurred. He considers many of the happenings to be "nearly indistinguishable from ordinary life."[56] Similar to Beuys' social sculpture, Happenings blur the lines between art and life. Unlike Beuys, Happenings often utilize play. Kaprow performed over two hundred Happenings during his career. He believed that "the playground for experimental art is ordinary life...play, of course, is at the heart of experimentation."[57] This sentiment suggests that play creates conditions rich for experimentation as well as art, and the two can be interchangeable. Such conditions apply to the participants of Signal Fire because their experiences during leisure and play are undirected, unmediated, and create space for experimental and direct interaction between each of the participants and the participants and site.

[56] Kaprow, 106.

[57] Ibid, 102-103.

Spaces for this type of social exchange in "Waiting for Salmon" occur during the van commutes or when hiking together on the trail. This is especially true in the hikes. The physical challenges of many hikes often brought the participants together more quickly because they either need support or could offer it. The daytime prior to class was also used candidly. Many participants chose to explore the area by hiking or swimming alone or in pairs/small groups. These smaller, informal ventures included casual discussions about project ideas, personal backgrounds, and/or reading quietly from the course reader or personally-selected books next to each other. Cooking meals together was also a prominent space for empathetic and encouraging conversations, which echo Kaprow's ideas of play. The dialogue and social exchange that occurred throughout the discussions, the critiques, and the times for leisure were often similar. However, one may argue that the leisure and play moments encouraged candid behavior that was more experimental. Because the performances and projects created during the residency were often unfinished and process-based, the process was an integral part of the art. Therefore, I argue that the leisure and play moments are crucial in defining the final art projects.

I conclude this chapter by suggesting that field-based residencies share significant dialogical elements in their programming that demand the artwork created there to be defined as process-based. Further, I argue that many of their artists seek out these kinds of participative experiences because they value the conversations and exchanges that emerge. For them, the traditional institution is no longer desirable as their intent shifts away from their individual career and towards collaboration with others, focusing their efforts on larger cultural and socio-political themes.[58] As Taru Elfving and Irmeli

[58] Elfving and Kokko, 10-19

Kokko's state in their introduction to *Contemporary Artist Residencies: Reclaiming Time and Space*: "Residencies are meanwhile increasingly integrating artists into various other sectors of society, from universities to technology companies, which are implementing artist residencies as instruments, usually aimed at dialogue."[59] The artist residency, then, becomes a site for the dialogical methods inherent to social practice art. As more dialogical-based work emerges in the artworld, more work can be done to trace the ways in which field-based artist residencies use social exchange and critical art-making methodologies in their programming.

On August 10, 2019, the eight participants and two guides of the "Waiting for Salmon" residency sat on two wooden picnic tables pushed together at a campsite as they did on the first night they shared together. It was their last night together in Washington before returning to their initial departing city, Portland, Oregon. Instead of discussing readings in the course reader, the guides listed what to expect when returning from the backcountry. The guides described a sensation of overstimulation and a loneliness that might occur from being away from the people with whom one just shared the residency. During this discussion, many of the participants cried quietly and shared how much they cared for one another. As nighttime crawled onto the campground, no headlamps were used. Instead, one could see the exchange of white smiles, bright like a campfire, circling within the community of artists.

[59] Elfving and Kokko, 19.

CHAPTER III

LEAVE NO TRACE:
TRACING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "WILD" SITES

> "Leave areas as you found them. Do not dig trenches for tents or construct lean-tos, tables, chairs or other rudimentary improvements. If you clear an area of surface rocks, twigs or pine cones replace these items before leaving...Consider the idea that good campsites are found and not made."
>
> - "Minimize Site Altercations" Principle, from *Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics*

Every day during the "Waiting for Salmon" residency included a number of rituals. With backpacks full and tightly packed, participants swept their campsites before trekking out of each wilderness area. This "final sweep" included: checking for trash, picking up discarded food scraps, and picking up forgotten clothes left out to dry in the sun. A discovered bobby pin near the cooking area would be placed in a pocket, a short string and unmatched sock placed in a backpack. The participants who laid their tents on the grass took time to gently lift and tussle it back to its previous state. Every action in the final sweep was made in order to ensure that the group leaves no trace of having been in that space. This behavior was the product of an outdoor recreation travel ethic/practice called *Leave No Trace,* or LNT.[60] LNT is a widely accepted practice in outdoor recreation circles meant to encourage people who enter wilderness areas to reduce their physical impact on a site.[61] LNT was adhered to

[60] LNT will be referred to in this text as an ethic and a practice.

[61] Laurel Sorenson, "Camping to Extremes: Here, Eat Your Tinfoil," Outside, July/August 1983, 59. See also: https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/.

throughout the duration of the "Waiting for Salmon" residency at all locations: the Eagle Cap Wilderness in the Wallowa Mountains of Oregon, the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness along the Selway River in Idaho, the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness in the Bitterroot Mountains of Montana and lastly the Pasayten Wilderness in Methow Valley of Washington. This chapter considers the significance of the concept, as both an environmental decree and an art historical theme, and discusses how it mediates the relationship between the Signal Fire residency and the public lands, or more specifically, *wilderness areas*, where its programming unfolds.[62]

As the previous chapter answered the question "what do they do," this chapter answers the question, "where?" In general, Signal Fire's programming focuses on 'wild' places "to draw attention to the value of protecting and preserving these resources for ecological integrity, cultural history, and quiet recreation (such as art projects)."[63] The values that they identify throughout their site-interventions— ecological, cultural, and recreational values— can be further located in the historical origins of LNT ethics. Observing the relationship between LNT and Signal Fire outlines the ways in which the residency occupies the tension between colonial and decolonial perspectives and methodologies— a tension that is significant to both contemporary art and environmental discourse.

LNT ethics are ultimately the product of the *wilderness* myth, or the belief in a "pure" and "uncultivated" nature, untouched by the whole history of human

[62] Signal Fire often uses language like "wild places" or "ecoregions" to describe wilderness areas in order to avoid supporting the colonial narrative embedded in these places.

[63] http://www.signalfirearts.org/where-weve-been/

development.[64] Signal Fire reinforces this myth through its preservation mission and outdoor recreation methods, which in some ways understands wilderness as an untouched space and that is separate from human artists. In this sense, the mission of the residency resonates with the colonial impulse to discover 'new' land and the belief that nature is acted on rather than lived in. However, the residency also embodies a decolonial perspective by deconstructing and countering this colonial history. Signal Fire positions their programming toward active stewardship of Indigenous relationships to these 'wild' sites, both historically and in the present day. To understand this tension, this chapter leverages the residency's commitment to LNT ethics to explore the relationship between the Wide Open Studios sites and the program's stated interest in public land preservation. I argue that the impact of LNT ethics can be used to trace a growing population of contemporary artists and residencies working in wilderness/remote areas who incorporate LNT into their own practices. Further, this chapter discusses how LNT impacts both the intentional and unintentional creative interventions of these site-based artists, emboldening their dialogic practice as a means of creating reversible or removable work.

The History of Leave No Trace

The advent of LNT is directly related to the advent of designated wilderness areas. Thus, to describe the origins of the practice requires an understanding of how ideas of wilderness operate as culturally constructed concepts. The instructors of the "Waiting for Salmon" residency ask in their syllabus: "What is the role of the human

[64] Which will be discussed later in this chapter. See: Gregory L. Simon and Peter S. Alagona, "Beyond Leave No Trace," *Ethics, Place & Environment* 12, no. 1 (March 2009): 25-26.

traveler in a wilderness setting? How has this changed over time?" [65] These questions were designed to ignite discussion on how one relates to and perceives the environment, and LNT is presented as a way in which one can approach their relationship with the environment.

During the second week of discussions, residency participants reflected on these initial questions. To encourage dialogic intervention, participants read an article by Michael Schulson, titled "The Religious Roots of the Wilderness Act." This was followed by "The Trouble with Wilderness" by William Cronon, an often-cited text that infers that the "trouble" with wilderness is that it creates a concept where nature is perceived as a place where humans are not. Cronon outlines how a dichotomy that pits nature against culture has been foundational for modern environmentalism, and harshly rebukes this notion. While discussing this text, some residency participants noted a similar sentiment regarding the history of wilderness in writer Roderick Nash's text, *Wilderness and the American Mind*. Indeed, Schulson, Cronon, and Nash all tie the wilderness concept back to the Garden of Eden, suggesting that the wild is perceived as an antithesis to the paradise of Adam and Eve.[66] And yet today, the garden is no longer seen as the opposite of wilderness and is instead conceived of *as* the wilderness. Within this contemporary notion of the wild garden, LNT ideals take root.

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[65] "Wide Open Studios Summer Immersion: Waiting for Salmon, Syllabus and Day Plan," Signal Fire, 2019, 1.

[66] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3rd ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 8-9; Michael Schulson, "The Religious Roots of the Wilderness Act," in *Religion & Politics,* (September 2, 2014), https://religionandpolitics.org/2014/09/02/the-religious-roots-of-the-wilderness-act/; William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," *Environmental History* 1, no. 1 (1996): 8-12.

In this way, LNT ideals grew out of the nineteenth century due largely to the work of romantic writers and landscape painters like the American artist Thomas Cole. In Cole's works, the wilderness is depicted as Eden: a daunting, pure, uninhabited landscape where one obtains divine moral stature.[67] While east coast city-dwellers admired awe-inspiring works by Cole and others on the walls of American galleries in the mid-1800s, frontiersmen and pioneers were "discovering" similarly Eden-esque landscapes across the American frontier. Inspired by beautiful depictions rendered by artists, fights to protect these locations ensued. This push began with Yosemite, which, as Cronon states, "was deeded by the U.S. government to the state of California in 1864 as the nation's first wildland park," followed by Yellowstone, which "became the first true national park in 1872."[68] Over time, more locations were deemed worthy of preservation, and fifty-eight national parks exist today.

However, these sites were not uninhabited when colonial Americans claimed to "discover" them. Cronon's "The Trouble with Wilderness" explains how these initial wilderness conservation efforts prompted the displacement of Indigenous populations throughout the West. He summarizes:

> The removal of Indians to create "uninhabited wilderness" —uninhabited as never before in the human history of the place— reminds us just how invented, just how constructed, the American wilderness really is...there is nothing natural about the concept of wilderness.[69]

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[67] For more information on the relationships between wilderness, Martin, and Cole, see: Eugene R. Cunnar,""Ut Pictura Poesis:" Thomas Cole's Painterly Interpretations of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso"," *Milton Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (1990): 85-98.

[68] Cronon, 9.

[69] Ibid., 17.

With the Indigenous populations pushed outside of the lands they call home ("call" in the present tense because these places are still the present territories of tribal nations today), tourists were able to encounter in person the pristine and virgin landscapes Cole had imagined in his paintings.[70] The erasure of Indigenous existence in these places was solidified in 1964 when the Wilderness Act was signed into law. The beginning of this law reads:

> In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness...an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.[71]

Here the wilderness is considered a "resource" that benefits the growing population of American people (presumably excluding Indigenous people). The law makes clear that this "untrammeled" landscape will maintain its Edenic character so far as humans only remain visitors to it. And yet, as philosopher and environmentalist Aldo Leopold stated in the early twentieth-century "it is not timber, and certainly not agriculture, which is causing the decimation of wilderness areas, but rather the desire to attract tourists."[72] Before Cronon, Leopold identified the wilderness as a tourist attraction

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[70] For fuller assessment of the relationship between the wilderness concept and Indigenous people see: Mark David Spence, "Looking Backward and Westward: The 'Indian Wilderness' in the Antebellum Era," in *Dispossessing the Wilderness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[71] The 1964 Wilderness Act, https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1981/upload/WAct_508.pdf.

[72] Aldo Leopold, "Wilderness as a Form of Land Use," *The Journal of Land & Public Utility Economics* 1, no. 4 (October 1925): 402.

which necessitates a code of wilderness etiquette like Leave No Trace.[73] Thus, with the advent of designated wilderness areas, the stage was set for the advent of an ethics of wilderness visitation.

LNT evolved into an official organization in 1994, and its "seven principles" remain the same today. They include: 1) travel and camp on durable surfaces; 2) plan ahead and prepare; 3) be considerate of other visitors; 4) respect wildlife; 5) minimize campfire impacts; 6) leave what you find; and 7) dispose of waste properly.[74] However, the characteristics and behaviors that inform these seven principles have been around far longer than the organization. These behaviors are evident in a 1968 study conducted by researchers from the U.S.D.A. Forest Service in the Pacific Northwest, which covered many of the same wilderness sites of the Signal Fire residency.[75] For this study, they sent long questionnaires to 1,905 recorded wilderness users.[76] In "Part II" of their study, the questionnaires revealed a specific group of users they labeled *wilderness-purist*, or wildernists, who, "opposed behavior and policies violating the complete naturalness of wilderness more than the average respondent."[77] The researchers described the wilderness-purists as champions of *Spartanism*, which endorses adventure and pioneer-like fortitude. They also note

[73] James Morton Turner, "From Woodcraft to 'Leave No Trace': Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America," *Environmental History* 7, no. 3 (July 2002): 462, https://doi.org/10.2307/3985918.

[74] https://lnt.org/leave-no-trace-turns-25/.

[75] John C. Hendee, William R. Catton, Jr., Larry D. Marlow, and C. Frank Brockman, "Wilderness Users in the Pacific Northwest: Their Characteristics, Values, and Management Preferences," *U.S.D.A. Forest Service Research Paper PNW-61,* (U.S. Department of Agriculture: Portland, OR, 1968).

[76] Ibid., 1.

[77] Ibid., 28.

wilderness-purists believe, "that wilderness use is strongly based on a rejection of man's permanent presence in the natural environment," which the researchers categorize and define as a behavior of *Antiartifactualism*.[78] This study thus traces the wilderness mythos by tracking continued colonial ideologies for pioneerism and support for a nature/culture dichotomy.

It seems likely that many of the wilderness-purists mentioned in this study were readers of the popular 1970 booklet, *How to Camp and Leave No Trace*. This booklet was produced by Gerry Cunningham, who was a successful outdoorsman and writer. His booklet contains one of the first mentions of "leave no trace" as an ethic.[79] Cunningham's ideas of LNT were published shortly before Patagonia-owner Yvon Chouinard published his concept of "clean climbing" in a 1972 booklet, which aimed to limit the physical impact of rock climbers.[80] These ideas were issued to address a dramatic increase in outdoor recreation in wilderness areas, which according to Gregory L. Simon and Peter S. Alagona in "Beyond Leave No Trace," tripled in less than a decade after the Wilderness Act of 1964 was established.[81] Today, Leave No Trace is widely implemented and supported by most outdoor recreation organizations, governmental and non-governmental institutions, and businesses. LNT is also becoming part of the field-based artist residency curriculum.

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[78] Ibid., 29-30.

[79] Gerry Cunningham, *How to Camp and Leave No Trace* (Gerry Division of Outdoor Sports Industries, 1971), https://books.google.com/books?id=CuhmHQAACAAJ.

[80] Yvon Chouinard and Tom Frost, "The 1972 Chouinard Catalog...," 1972, 10.

[81] Simon and Alagona, 20.

As Signal Fire was founded by two backpacking enthusiasts, it was natural for them to incorporate LNT ethics into their curriculum. However, LNT ideals were not implemented in Signal Fire to support humans' separateness from nature. In fact, they critique this notion by countering the "erasure of Indigenous epistemologies and bodies from the landscape."[82] Instead, the use of LNT in Signal Fire was implemented as a means of supporting the ecological integrity of the public lands they navigate.[83] To describe how this support for public lands is integrated into the residency, co-director Ryan Pierce stated:

> the government changes how they treat the land, but they are accustomed to making space for all uses of public land, recreation, restoration, logging timber, etc. Signal Fire is different from Center for Land Use Interpretation [CLUI] in that they are studying all of the ways that land is used, but Signal Fire takes the position that land *should* be used in a certain way, we want the land to be preserved for the sake of the land itself. [84]

The CLUI dictum Pierce refers to is stated as such: "the Center attempts to emphasize the multiplicity of points of view regarding the utilization of terrestrial and geographic resources."[85] As noted by Pierce, this initiative differs from Signal Fire's focus on the preservation of ecological, cultural, and recreational values. Unlike CLUI, the Signal Fire artist residency protests land uses like mining and logging that could disrupt or threaten such values. They often bring these issues to the attention of their participants during the residency, on their website, or in an email list-serve to all alumni. For

[82] http://www.signalfirearts.org/programs/indigenous-artist-retreats/.

[83]For more information on a recent study of an ecological perspective of wilderness see: Craig DeLancey, "An Ecological Concept of Wilderness," *Ethics and the Environment* 17, no. 1 (2012): 25.

[84] Ryan Pierce, interview by Cassidy Schoenfedler, November 29, 2019. Note that the Center for Land Use Interpretation was described in the previous chapter, http://www.clui.org/section/about-center.

[85] http://www.clui.org/section/about-center.

instance, Signal Fire supports organizations and campaigns like the Apache Stronghold campaign to Protect Sacred Oak Flat (fighting against off-road vehicle disruption, development, and copper mining) and the campaign to protect Bears Ears National Monument (this area left scarred from uranium and natural gas mining).[86] Their residencies sometimes incorporate visits to these locations to encourage their artists to participate through direct action. Within the context of LNT ethics, Signal Fire's chosen wilderness sites on public land offer an important classroom for understanding their environmental strategies for land preservation as well as their commitment to uplifting tribal communities.

Artists Working in the Wild and Leaving No Trace

The presence of artists in rural landscapes is a trope found throughout art history and around the world. For instance, painters of the Ming dynasty in China were depicting landscapes hundreds of years before similar techniques were adopted in Europe and America.[87] By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an abundance of European and American painters flocked to remote areas to record wilderness scenes, and their paintings became powerful expressions of "Manifest Destiny," or, the perception that the United States was entitled to the expanses of land it colonized. These romantic landscape paintings typically depict monumental scenes that exclude

[86] Signal Fire positioned their Southwest program with the San Carlos Apache campaign to protect their sacred land, *Chi'chil Bildagoteel,* or Oak Flat, from industrial mining. The residency's participants engage by writing to and calling government officials to protect the land. http://www.signalfirearts.org/where-weve-been/.

[87] W. J. T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," in *Landscape and Power*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 9. For more information on a site-specific landscape painting tradition in China see: Elizabeth Kindall, *Geo-narratives of a Filial Son: The Paintings and Travel Diaries of Huang Xiangjian (1609-1673),* Harvard East Asian Monographs; 389, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2016).

the human figure. If a human is present in the painting, it is often a colonial figure. Such visual representations of westward expansion exemplify Cronon's theory that the designation and reverence of wilderness areas during this period fueled the removal of Indigenous populations from their native lands; an act of colonial violence in service to the construction of a peopleless place.

These landscape paintings played a significant role in the rendering and shaping of Western understandings of the environment. Many contemporary artists are reinterpreting this relationship between the artist and the landscape, a motivation that is particularly apparent in the 2019 exhibition, *Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment*. Artist Valerie Hegarty's (b. 1967) *Fallen Bierstadt* was on display in this exhibition, and offered a direct critique of historical renderings of a romanticized, and depopulated, wilderness.[88] Created in 2007, her painting is a recreation of a nineteenth century Albert Bierstadt piece, *Bridal Veil Falls, Yosemite* (1871). Her painting replicates Bierstadt's vast landscape featuring a monumental waterfall framed by tall pine trees. However, Hegarty's piece hangs crooked on the gallery wall, and its lower half appears burned with the remains of the canvas scattered below on the floor. Hegarty's contemporary take on the romantic landscape painting brings into question the colonial perspective, acknowledging the results of Manifest Destiny by showing a landscape in ruins. Although Signal Fire sustains the colonial narrative by seeking out wilderness areas for outdoor recreation and advocating for public land preservation, this chapter has shown how the residency, like Hegarty, considers those colonial traditions to question and critique how those

[88] https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/184064

perspectives operate in the contemporary world. In this sense, Signal Fire mindfully occupies a colonial perspective, and LNT practices are a way in which the tension of that perspective can be observed.

Signal Fire is not the only residency that leverages or extends the colonial history of the Western wilderness. Other field-based artist residencies based on low-impact wilderness exploration include The Canadian Wilderness Artist Residency, more than fifty Arts in the Parks residencies through the National Park System, and Land Arts of the American West, who implements a "'no-trace' ethic" as a way of "[minimizing] the impact of our work and evidence of our inhabitation."[89] Similarly, curator and researcher Vytautas Michelkevičius identifies another code of wilderness conduct adopted by the Lithuanian artist residency program, Nida Art Colony. In his essay, "Rooted and Slow Institutions Reside in Remote Places" Michelkevičius discusses the *green cube* concept developed for the Vilnius-based program, and describes how: "the park is mostly used as a temporary but oversized studio or exhibition space, but the environment always has to be restored to the previous condition, as in any white cube."[90] Restoring the landscape back to its initial state, before human interaction, is thus the core principle of both LNT ethics and the green cube concept. Like LNT, the green cube is exemplified in the works and performances created at Signal Fire. Any and all material, art related or otherwise, must be packed out of the backcountry requiring participants to remove their projects

[89] Not all of the NPS residencies state the requirement of LNT. Chris Taylor and Bill Gilbert, *Land Arts of the American West,* 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 25.

[90] Vytautas Michelkevičius, "Rooted and Slow Institutions Reside in Remote Places," in *Contemporary Artist Residencies: Reclaiming Time and Space,"* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2019), 155.

and sculptures from each site or to disassemble them if made from natural materials. This demand differentiates the green cube from the white cube, the indoor studio from the outdoor studio, and necessitates the creation of work that emphasizes ephemerality, process, and experimentation.

Signal Fire participants often create work inspired by LNT. For Wide Open Studios participant Kaleb Bass, trail name Kalvin, the limits and restrictions brought about by LNT relate to the environmental ethics he developed with his family prior to the residency. In this way, he prefers to use natural materials or disassembles any sculptures or site-specific work he creates outside. During the first week, Kalvin made dyes out of natural materials and then poured them in layers onto watercolor paper to create a rich yellow ochre wash. In the last week of the residency, Kalvin strapped a roll of canvas onto his already-sixty-pound pack as he hiked through the Pasayten Wilderness of the Northern Cascade Regions. The canvas was six yards long and just over five feet wide. From the bleached and stained canvases marred by exposure, he created "canvas sculptures" hung from the trunk and branches of a fallen tree, suspended in uneven peaks and valleys inches above the rocky shore, miniaturizing the topography in the landscape (Figure 7). He wrote in his journal: "an intention in my artwork is to recognize the landscape as more than a passive backdrop for art, recreation, and life in general. For these canvas sculptures, I invited the wind and sun to collaborate as active contributors in shaping and lighting the piece."[91] He collaborated with the environment to create a site-specific happening. Kalvin packed his canvas away in his backpack and proceeded to sweep his site for any forgotten

[91]Kaleb Bass, email message to participant, February 8, 2020.

materials, adding to his piece. Thus, LNT ethics transformed the work into an ephemeral, performative gesture.

(Figure 7) Photograph by Cassidy Schoenfelder, canvas sculpture by Kaleb Bass, Northern Cascades, Summer 2019.

While in Idaho's Selway/Bitterroot Wilderness, Sophie Henry, or Sopha, performed a funeral for biodiversity, which was similarly shaped by the group's commitment to LNT ethics.[92] In her performance, she led the group across the rocks near camp and onto the hot sand bordering the Selway River. Sopha crafted relic-like objects that intertwined bones and plants. The bones belonged to unknown animals and the assemblage of plants appeared to be green and lively, stiff and shriveled—

[92] Biodiversity is the specific term used by Sopha and relates to the variety of life in the world itself or a specific ecology.

golden remnants of what used to be (Figure 8). As we approached, each relic lay resting in a small pre-dug hole. She buried the objects slowly as we watched, and then set pebbles atop their graves to mark their final resting place. After the burials, Sopha turned to face the river and began removing her clothing: kneeling to untie her hiking boots, removing her blue baseball cap, coral red tank top, and then finally her black shorts. Stepping into the river and sitting down facing away from the group, she filled her hands with rocks and sand, rubbing the sediment gently over her body (Figure 9). In a final gesture, Sopha leaned back to submerge herself fully in the river. For a brief moment, the current carried her downstream. She resurfaced a moment later and returned to the beach to get dressed. Through performance, she is able to articulate her grief through the movement of her body, physically connecting to the place around her. She describes that her ephemeral performance "allows the viewer to access it from different angles" and also "open[s] to a nonhuman place."[93] For Sopha, cleansing and bathing are rituals that she associates with her grieving process; she considers grieving as an emotional act that can be felt by human and nonhuman beings. LNT practice did not interfere with her work because of the natural materials that she used and her interaction with the river.

Neither Kalvin nor Sopha had to change their creative methodology to satisfy the demands of LNT. In this sense, their ephemeral or transitory practices are what make them well-suited for a field-based residency like Signal Fire and situate them as members of a growing class of artists that embody LNT principles in their work. However, other participants from this residency found this ethic much more limiting,

[93] Interview with Sophie Henry, February 26, 2020.

and still other considered it a challenge with the potential to transform and greatly influence their practice. Thus, the limits and opportunities of embracing LNT ethics were experienced unevenly within the group and merit further discussion.

(Figure 8) Photograph by Cassidy Schoenfelder, Sophie's funeral for biodiversity, Selway River, Idaho, Summer 2019.

(Figure 9) Photograph by Cassidy Schoenfelder, Sophie's funeral for biodiversity (cleansing), Selway River, Idaho, Summer 2019.

Conclusion: The Limits and Potentials of LNT and Art

When meeting the demands of LNT ethics, Signal Fire participants were limited in the kinds of art materials they could use. The need to pack their materials both in and out of each site presented a physical limit to the size and weight of their supplies, and the lack of electricity and running water presented limits to the available processes. Artists who work with digital technology and software, or who work on a large scale, were forced to change their approach to conform to LNT ethics. For example, Brittany Rudolf, or Roxy, had been using sound recordings in her work prior to the Signal Fire residency, but because of the limited power sources and unexpected weather, she opted to leave her recording instruments at home. Similarly,

anyone working with oils, silicone or resin molds, or chemicals that could cause damage to the ecosystem had to abandon these ways of working. Abi Joyce Shaw, or Abracadabra, who often worked with acrylic and oil paints prior to the residency, chose instead to focus on fine line drawing and found objects for many of her projects. Similar restrictions are noted in Land Arts of the American West's residency, where co-founder Bill Gilbert explains that: "Our space in Land Arts is nomadic. We have to pack it in and out of vans, set it up and break it down to keep moving. It's a challenge for anyone whose practice is linked to a particular type of space or a less-than-portable technology."[94] Gilbert's co-founder, Chris Taylor, agrees. He explains that "the most exciting work is a whole new synthesis that occurs when the experiences in the field get cross-fertilized with life in the urban center."[95] Signal Fire's own process-based method places them within this larger conversation. Thus, the transition to remote, field-based practices can be positive even for those who are forced to make the largest shifts. In this sense, the doctrine of ephemerality and transience inherent to LNT artmaking encourages a shift away from object making and toward dialogical exchange which many participants saw as a useful and interesting opportunity.

Though LNT provides opportunities for artists to expand their methods, it nonetheless poses ideological contradictions. LNT is inherently rooted in Western-colonial ideologies meant to dictate who is allowed access to the wilderness and how they *should* navigate the landscape with as little physical disturbance as possible. However, as

[94] Taylor and Gilbert, 239.

[95] Ibid.

implemented in contemporary field-based residencies, the purpose of LNT is not to further mythologize wilderness, but rather to encourage participants to question how they relate to their environment, both on public lands and elsewhere. Environmentalists Gregory L. Simon and Peter S. Alagona champion this sentiment in their article "Beyond Leave No Trace." They argue that, in addition to being rooted in wilderness myths, LNT ethics are problematic because they are limited to the use of parks and wilderness areas, thereby failing to encourage the same care for one's environment outside of these spaces.[96] The authors believe that a true LNT ethic should reach beyond the wilderness areas and parks and essentially transform even "routine" and "mundane, everyday activities" like "shopping, disposing of garbage, and walking through the woods."[97] Jenni Nurmenniemi, a Helsinki-based curator echoes this sentiment, stating in her essay "Going Post-fossil in a Neoliberal Climate," "while striving toward a more livable planet (and more meaningful lives), the transformation of language, decision-making systems, daily habits and art practices has to be a joint process."[98] For her, a remote artist residency is the ideal experience to begin shifting one's relationship with one's environment. She argues that residencies "tend to operate as somewhat undefined structures where art and the everyday, public, and private realms permeate each other. A lot of people come to a residency willing to absorb and cultivate new aspects into their practices."[99] The blurring of everyday activities with one's creative practice is especially evident in field-based

[96] Simon and Alagona, 27-28.

[97] Ibid, 30.

[98] Jenni Nurmenniemi, "Going Post-fossil in a Neoliberal Climate," in *Contemporary Artist Residencies: Reclaiming Time and Space*, (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2019), 205.

[99] Nurmenniemi, 201.

artist residencies like Signal Fire, where the experience is so immersive that the lessons learned can more directly filter into participant's everyday lives. Participant Sarah Mills, or Nugget, reflected on this element of the experience, noting that the residency bolstered her interest in botany, and how the minimalist way of working and living in accordance with LNT ethics opened her eyes to a more sustainable way of pursuing this interest. She appreciated the slow pace and intimacy of the experience, which allowed her to focus on her observations and thought processes. She stated: "I want to learn more outside of this experience and advocate for these plants and their uses...I was drawn to nature in my work before but I wasn't truly an advocate for it before."[100] Nugget intends to incorporate LNT ideals into her lifestyle and creative practice outside of the residency.[101]

As this chapter has shown, participants like Nugget exemplify the potential for residencies like Signal Fire to redefine how artists relate to and engage with place. By embracing the ethics of Leave No Trace, field-based residencies can both confront the problematic history and culture embedded in wilderness areas while leveraging that history and culture to make significant contributions to contemporary environmentalism and art. Not only does Signal Fire connect artists to place through ecologically-driven public land preservation methods like LNT, they also extend their environmental activism by supporting tribal communities in the regions through which they backpack. As the residency tradition grows, adoption of (and departure from) LNT ethics within varied art practices traces a growing population of contemporary artists and artist communities

[100]Sarah Mills, interview by Cassidy Schoenfelder, on trail, July 31, 2019.

[101] For example, like with her gardening practice and further self-education regarding the uses of local plants. More work could be done to observe the reasons why an increasing number of artists and residencies are using these ethics and identify if these motivations depart from their dichotomous and colonial origins.

working in wilderness/remote areas and brings to the fore different possibilities for relating to place through dialogic engagement. Signal Fire's deliberate incorporation of Indigenous modes of relating to place makes it possible for them to occupy the tension of colonial *and* decolonial perspectives and methodologies, but their commitment to decolonization requires further discussion.

CHAPTER IV

THE TRAIL:
TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE AS WAYS OF MAKING AND KNOWING

> "Indigenous ontologies structure worldly understanding [] through firsthand experience in *place*...By engaging in and with these places, researchers learn what it means to be a part of a community with whom they are collaborating."
>
> - Jay T. Johnson and Soren C. Larsen in *A Deeper Sense of Place*: *Stories and Journeys of Collaboration in Indigenous Research*

On July 14, 2019, the Signal Fire participants stood in the golden-yellow prairie grasses that hugged a dirt road in Eastern Oregon. The dry air pushed the scent of pine through the grass and around their bodies. Standing among them was Wenix Red Elk, Public Outreach Specialist for the Confederated Trails of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. She told the group of a traditional food-gathering song that let the plants throughout the prairie know there was a digger present. Referring to the plants as her sisters, she explained that the song is meant to also thank them for their gifts. While sharing this knowledge, she walked a few steps forward to carefully uproot a camas flower (Figure 10). All eyes were focused on the small bulb that clung to its roots that was roughly the size of a grape. The camas bulb would be one of hundreds collected for food.[102] She then invited the participants to walk through the grass for a brief moment to dig their own camas bulbs and peel back their outer shells to taste the bulbs themselves (Figure 11). Some followed this invitation, while others sketched the plant in their

[102] After harvest, one peels their outer shell off; they would be dried or later baked.

notebooks or took notes on its characteristics. This gathering tradition around camas bulbs, as Red Elk described, extends back thousands of years. This type of gathering also includes salmon, berries, deer and elk, which together make up the First Foods of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla Indians. Prior to colonization, these three tribes would travel to gather the first foods in different locations during different seasons depending on the availability of the food.[103] Following Red Elk back from the grasslands, the Signal Fire participants spent the rest of the afternoon with her by the shores of Indian Lake. Red Elk stopped periodically to explain how other local plants are used, including the tea that is made from the berries of the princess pine (Figure 12). After walking a few more paces, Red Elk plucked a flowering top of a white yarrow plant and rubbed the petals together in the palms of her hands. She cupped her hands and dipped her nose in to smell a potent eucalyptus-like scent. This plant too, she explained, can be used for tea. The petals were passed between one another's hands throughout the evening as the night went on. This experience brought to the surface another way of relating to and perceiving the landscape— an Indigenous way of knowing—which complicated the practice of LNT to which the participants would become accustomed. The integration of Indigenous perspectives in the Signal Fire program brought many of the residency's goals full circle and raised new important questions about the environmental and cultural impacts of field-based residencies.

[103] https://ctuir.org/history-culture/first-foods.

(Figure 10) Photograph by Kerri Rosenstein, Wenix Red Elk digs camas flower, Summer 2019.

(Figure 11) Photograph by Kerri Rosenstein, Wenix Red Elk instructs the participants how to peel the camas bulb, Summer 2019.

(Figure 12) Photograph by Kerri Rosenstein, Wenix Red Elk around the shores of Indian Lake, Summer 2019.

In her discussion with the Signal Fire participants, Red Elk imparted her belief that her tribal community's understanding of their past and present relationship with the land is sustained through knowledge of the first foods. This Indigenous knowledge, passed from one generation to the next, is a form of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, or TEK. Scholars in the study of natural resources Fikret Berkes, Johan Colding, and Carl Folke, define TEK in their essay, "Rediscovery Of Traditional Ecological Knowledge As Adaptive Management" as the "cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief,

evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment."[104] In this sense, TEK is a distinctively Indigenous way of knowing that explains how one lives and practices *with* the land and in relationship with human and more-than-human beings. This chapter explores the centrality of contemporary Indigenous narratives and TEK in the Signal Fire experience and makes the case for its inclusion in field-based residencies more broadly.

Potawatomi scholar-activist Kyle Powis Whyte perceives that "renewing Indigenous knowledges, such as traditional ecological knowledge, can bring together Indigenous communities to strengthen *their own* self-determined planning for climate change."[105] Whyte argues that TEK offers decolonial approaches to environmental issues like climate change, an existential issue for all of humanity that is further intensified for Indigenous communities due to the violence and power structures created by colonialism.[106] I argue that the decolonial approach described by Whyte is currently being both observed and enacted through artist residencies. Curator and writer Taru Elfving writes in "Cosmopolitics for Retreats" that residencies which "foster sharing amongst, for example, indigenous artistic practices and knowledge" are positively inclusive and show

[104] Fikret Berkes, Johan Colding, and Carl Folke, "Rediscovery Of Traditional Ecological Knowledge As Adaptive Management," *Ecological Applications* 10, no. 5 (October 2000): 1252. Berkes also acknowledges, as do many other scholars, that TEK can be a problematic term because "traditional" can insinuate that this knowledge is primitive or "savage," however, Wenix Red Elk, in an interview, acknowledged this problematic tie to the term but stated that it is widely used within many tribes today. See also: Peter J. Usher, "Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Environmental Assessment and Management," *ARCTIC* 53, no. 2 (January 1, 2000): 185.

[105] Kyle Powis Whyte, "Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing The Anthropocene," in *English Language Notes 55*, no. 1-2 (2017): 154.

[106] Whyte, 153.

a sensitivity to the local sites, especially within the context of place-based creative practices.[107] Such positive outcomes can be seen as a product of TEK, which grants artist residency participants (Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants) non-Western ways of making and knowing.[108]

TEK manifested in a variety of ways during the "Waiting for Salmon" residency, and was fundamental to many of the dialogic exchanges discussed in chapter one. For instance, Signal Fire's primary mode of travel on the trail—walking—is one form of learning-through-site, which is significant to TEK as well as to contemporary art, an example being Hamish Fulton, who considers himself a *walking artist* and is known for projects such as his *The Crossing Place of Two Walks at Ringom Gompa* (1984). While Indigenous ways of knowing were briefly mentioned in earlier chapters, this chapter delves deeper into Signal Fires's relationships with tribal communities and highlights how their influence within its programs helps to resituate the organization's engagement with the colonial perspectives inherent in their wilderness-based activities. Because the residency occupies both colonial and decolonial perspectives, it is crucial to outline how Signal Fire is critically entangled with Indigenous perspectives to resolve that tension during the "Waiting for Salmon" program.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge & Indigenous Geographies

[107] Taru Elfving, "Cosmopolitics for Retreats," in *Contemporary Artist Residencies: Reclaiming Time and Space*, (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2019), 228.

[108] These pedagogical methods were learned through the descriptions and practices of Indigenous visiting guests, including: Wenix Red Elk and Debra Magpie-Earling. Participants also learned TEK through their course readers, particularly through the included work by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Although not read by the participants during the Wide Open Studios residency, Kimmerer's "The Honorable Harvest," in *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants,* is another text relating to the gathering of First Foods.

Signal Fire, which was created by two white, cisgendered co-founders, has worked to incorporate the shared knowledge of Indigenous employees, board members, and guides, as a means of becoming a better ally to the communities they aim to protect. In this way, Signal Fire's relationships with Indigenous communities and epistemologies extend beyond visiting guests and course materials and into their programming, activism, and mission. Signal Fire employs Ka'ila Farrell-Smith (Klamath Modoc), the Rural and Tribal Community Coordinator at Signal Fire; she is one of their three co-directors. Together, Farrell-Smith along with musician/educator Quiahuitl Villegas (Yoeme Yoreme) developed Signal Fire's Indigenous Artist Retreat, which they now direct. While backpacking through tribal territories in the west, participants in the Indigenous Arts Retreat discuss and engage in activities centered around "decolonizing philosophies, the praxis of fugitive Indigeneity, dreaming cultures, and Indigenous Futurisms."[109] Thus, this residency in particular is rooted within the decolonizing and Indigenizing strategies of contemporary artists.[110] The activities that Farrell-Smith and Villegas enact through this program are similar to those enacted by the interdisciplinary arts collective, Postcommodity, founded by Cristóbal Martinez and Kade L. Twist in 2007. As a voice for Indigenous perspectives, the collective's work creates

> new metaphors capable of rationalizing our shared experiences within this increasingly challenging contemporary environment; promote[s] a constructive

[109] http://www.signalfirearts.org/programs/indigenous-artist-retreats/. Tribal territories are listed on their website including: the Cascades home to the Chinook, Wasco, Kalapuya, Yakama, Molalla, Sahaptan, and Klamath, among others; the Klamath-Siskiyous region home to the Klamath, Wintu, Karok, Hupa, Yurok, Yahooskin, Shasta, Takelma, and Tolowa among others; the Pacific Northwest Rockies Sub-Ranges homelands to the Nez Perce, Cayuse, Walla Walla, Umatilla, Bitterroot Salish, Kalispell, and Coeur d'Alene; the Sonoran Desert Sky Islands regions home to the Apache, O'odham, and Yavapai; and lastly the Four Corners regions of the Puebloan, Diné, Apache, and Ute people.

[110] See Zoe Todd, "Indigenizing the Anthropocene," in *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, First ed. Critical Climate Change, (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), 243-247.

> discourse that challenges the social, political and economic processes that are destabilizing communities and geographies; and connect[s] Indigenous narratives of cultural self-determination with the broader public sphere.[111]

Such content (which can include practices of TEK) foregrounds Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies that may otherwise be absent from traditional institutions and contemporary art communities. The work of Postcommodity is often physically-immersive and directly related to the localized experience of being in rural tribal territories, or inhabiting extensions of those territories built within urban contemporary art spaces. Both Postcommodity and the Indigenous Artist Retreat create artwork that directly counters the colonial narratives and interventions embedded in the regions where they operate, working to re-narrate and reclaim space for *Indigenous geographies*. Writer Natchee Blu Barnd, author of *Native Space: Geographic Strategies to Unsettle Settler Colonialism,* defines *Indigenous geographies* as spaces, both physical and non-physical, that "have quietly overlapped and coexisted in tension with the geographies of the settler colonial state. They have been submerged, but not eliminated."[112] Similarly, Macarena Gómez-Barris, department chair of social sciences and cultural studies at the Pratt Institute, describes Indigenous geography as an *extractive zone*. Like Indigenous geographies, Gómez-Barris's term "extractive zone" refers to "the colonial paradigm, worldview, and technologies that mark out regions of 'high biodiversity' in order to reduce life to capitalist resource conversion."[113] Like the wilderness areas that Signal Fire

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[111] http://postcommodity.com/About.html.

[112] Natchee Blu Barnd, *Native Space: Geographic Strategies to Unsettle Settler Colonialism,* First Peoples (2010), (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2017), 1.

[113] Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives,* (Dissident Acts, Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), xvi.

engages with in their programs, Indigenous geographies and extractive zones are areas of rich resources where the use of those resources causes tension and conflict.

Signal Fire's acknowledgement of the wilderness as both an Indigenous geography and an extractive zone echoes the historically paradoxical management of public lands in the US. For example, in 1855 the U.S. government and the Umatilla, Cayuse and Walla Walla tribes "negotiated a treaty in which 6.4 million acres were ceded in exchange for a reservation homeland of 250,000 acres."[114] The treaty stated that the continuation of tribal activities like hunting and gathering were allowed in those 6.4 million acres, but the tribes nonetheless faced obstacles when trying to access them.[115] Many of those acres became government-designated wilderness areas (some of which were included in the "Waiting for Salmon" residency), and still more of that land became both public and private property wherein the tribes were not permitted to hunt (Figure 13). This narrative of Indigenous displacement has been repeated across North America and globally.

As is the case in the Umatilla Reservation example, public lands are not necessarily wilderness areas. In fact, they often are subject to use for industrial, capitalist extraction, like logging and mining, as well as commercial outdoor recreation. Gómez-Barris suggests that one strategy for resisting these types of land use in such areas might include "embodied activities that reject colonialism." She argues that such activities "continue to alter and expand how we see and what we know about Indigenous spaces

[114] https://ctuir.org/history-culture

[115] Ibid.

especially within the extractive zone."[116] TEK is the type of performative and embodied activity to which Gómez-Barris refers.

(Figure 13) The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, "The Umatilla reservation is dark red and the land they ceded to the United States is light red. The Columbia Basin is dark tan," https://www.critfc.org/member_tribes_overview/the-confederated-tribes-of-the-umatilla-indian-reservation/.

[116] Gómez-Barris, xvii.

Red Elk's initiative to continue to educate and practice TEK through the gathering of the First Foods is ultimately a spatial practice and method of spatial production; she is actively producing Indigenous geographies.[117] By sharing her knowledge, Red Elk sustains cultural traditions, resisting the erasure of Indigenous geographies as well as further industrial development. Much like Red Elk's presentation with the "Waiting for Salmon" participants, Signal Fire's Indigenous Artist Retreat also works on a larger scale to create and promote embodied activities in tribal territories that deepen and sustain Indigenous outreach, collaboration, and intercultural alliances. Thus, TEK is a central element of Signal Fire's pedagogical approach. In the case of the "Waiting for Salmon" residency, the knowledge shared by Red Elk served as just one instance in which TEK was allowed to take center stage.

Storytelling as Art & Art as Walking

Two weeks after meeting with Red Elk, the "Waiting for Salmon" residency participants were travelling from the trails in Idaho toward the Pasayten Wilderness in Washington when they stopped at the University of Montana in Missoula to meet with Debra Magpie-Earling (Bitterroot Salish). Magpie-Earling is a writer and a creative writing professor whose work focuses on oral histories as an Indigenous way of knowing. For her, sharing stories orally allows them to be presented from an individual perspective that is at once personal, time-based, and manifest in the land itself.[118] During her meeting with the Signal Fire group, she shared personal accounts of the land the group had been

[117] Barnd, 2-6.

[118] For stories from the land, see also: Debbie Lee, "Listening to the Land: The Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness as Oral History," The Oral History Review 37, no. 2 (2010): 235-48.

inhabiting, including one where a single leaf on a tree shook in front of her on a windless day. The leaf, she explained, warned her of a nearby grizzly bear. In another story, she described a moment when the land did not aid or welcome her. Instead it instructed her to hang herself. While she spoke, the participants were silent, attentive, and frightened. They were encouraged to share some of their own stories, which led to a larger discussion about the ways that artists, who in many ways are inherently storytellers, can sharpen their narration skills by producing dialogical art.

Robin Wall Kimmerer also referred to storytelling in "Two Ways of Knowing" when discussing her identity as both a scientist and an Indigenous woman who embodies two contrasting and yet similar worldviews. Like her scientist and indigenous identities, Kimmerer argues that Traditional Ecological Knowledge is not all that different from many of the methods employed in scientific observation today. For the Signal Fire participants, Kimmerer's perspective inspired them to think of TEK strategies as akin to their own investigative practices. This point was driven home when the group read Kimmerer's text, "The Gift of Strawberries." In this text Kimmerer, like Magpie-Earling, explores the performative and transformative potential of stories and links behavior and perception to personal narratives. She writes:

> Our human relationship with strawberries is transformed by our choice of perspective. It is human perception that makes the world a gift. When we view the world this way, strawberries and humans alike are transformed…The stories we choose to shape our behaviors have adaptive consequences.[119]

In this sense, the relationship between humans and nonhumans built through

[119] Robin Wall Kimmerer, "The Gift of Strawberries," in *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, First ed. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Milkweed Editions, 2013) 30.

storytelling and manifests through direct engagement with the landscape.[120]

Through direct engagement, Signal Fire participants implemented what they had learned from Red Elk by continuing to pick the blossoms of the yarrow plant she helped them identify. When they found the flower along the trails, they would harvest a small amount to boil later for their evening and morning tea. Others participants chose to follow Kimmerer and Magpie-Earling's methods of storytelling by changing the way they referred to the more-than-human beings in the landscape. This change came especially after reading Kimmerer's article in *Yes!* magazine titled "Nature Needs a New Pronoun: To Stop the Age of Extinction, Let's Start by Ditching 'It.'" As a student of her own native Anishinaabe language, Kimmerer discusses how nature is referred to differently in this language than in English. The word "it" is never used in her language to refer to a being in nature because "In Indigenous ways of knowing, other species are recognized not only as persons, but also as teachers who can inspire how we might live."[121] Instead, beings of the Earth are referred to in Anishinaabe as *"Bermaadiziiaaki."*[122] Using the end of this word, Kimmerer suggests that "ki" and its plural form "kin" should be used to replace the pronoun "it."[123] Many Signal Fire participants made an effort to adopt "ki" and "kin" into their everyday language

[120] It goes without saying that this human/nonhuman relationship that Kimmerer and Magpie-Earling refer to within an Indigenous ontology has been described at length through various scholarship in post-humanism, new materialisms, non-representational theory, etc. However, it is not within the limits of this paper to explore all such theories.

[121] Robin Wall Kimmerer, "Nature Needs a New Pronoun: To Stop the Age of Extinction, Let's Start by Ditching 'It,'" in *Yes! magazine*, May 30, 2015, https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/together-earth/2015/03/30/alternative-grammar-a-new-language-of-kinship/, Accessed May 18, 2020.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid.

consistently throughout the residency.

As the participants learned food gathering and storytelling methods, they subsequently recognized direct and embodied engagement occurs by walking.[124] For the participants of Signal Fire, the act of walking was not only their primary method of travel -- it also became a way to observe the landscape and listen to its stories. As writers Jay T. Johnson and Soren C. Larsen argue in *Deeper Sense of Place: Stories and Journeys of Collaboration in Indigenous Research*, walking is central to an Indigenous way of knowing. They state: "Walking and dwelling in collaboration constitute a sociable act. Walking and dwelling afford the opportunity to learn about the place-based struggles and storyscapes of our collaborators."[125] In this way, walking is a crucial method of acquiring knowledge and a sense of place, which has made it a central tenet of TEK as well as many contemporary art practices. Considering walking as a method of tracing (referring to the artistic act of tracing), its visual language is one of ephemerality, motion, and transitory and impermanent mark making. In particular, British artists Richard Long and Hamish Fulton made careers as walking artists in the 1970s, and they continue to walk as art today.[126]

In 1967, Richard Long stopped in a field in Wiltshire (U.K.) and began walking backwards and forwards through the grass. This piece titled "A Line Made by Walking"

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[124] Jay T. Johnson and Soren C. Larsen, *Deeper Sense of Place: Stories and Journeys of Collaboration in Indigenous Research*, First Peoples (2010), (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2013), 65.

[125] Ibid.

[126] On an interesting note, it is stated that Hamish Fulton also uses Leave No Trace ethics while walking: "Using humble materials and adopting the wilderness ethos of 'leave no trace', Fulton's work attempts an alignment with nature without exploiting or altering it," Exhibition Press Release for Hamish Fulton's, "A Decision to Choose Only Walking," *Parafin*, 22 November 2019 - 8 Febraury 2020, http://www.parafin.co.uk/current-exhibition--hamish-fulton.html; See also: https://www.hamish-fulton.com/hamish_fulton_v01.htm.

is the product of Long's repeated act of pressing down on the grass forming a line in the landscape.[127] His act of walking and his subsequent physical traces in the landscape are ephemeral and therefore leave an inevitability of being absorbed by the surrounding environment; only the photograph he took of this line remains. In this way, walking highlights the impossibility of Leave No Trace within the landscape.

In another instance, Hamish Fulton began his walks in 1970. He walked in over twenty-five countries by 2008, mostly alone, but sometimes in collaboration with others.[128] To Fulton, walking is its own experienced-based artform that works to undo what he sees as a separation of humanity from nature.[129] In fact, he states that this "rejection of nature is the cause of global warming" and continues that: "Walking (and especially including wild camping) allows us the opportunity to be influenced by nature and gain an attitude of respect for all life-forms not just human life."[130] The experience of the environment is an undeniable component of walking for Signal Fire participants.

In an experimental video piece created by Kalvin, he utilized the same conceptual motivations as Fulton to create his own walking piece. In the piece, Kalvin investigated the way one moves through the landscape while working to collaborate with the landscape itself. He invited other participants to collaborate with him along the Selway River, instructing them to attach three GoPro cameras onto any part of their

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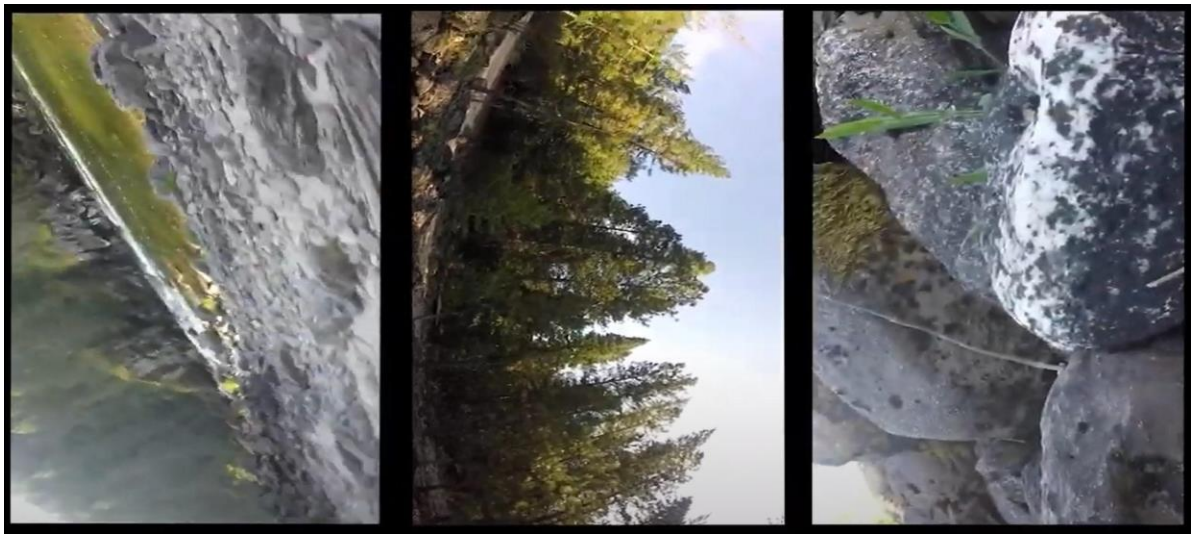
[127] Guy Tosatto, "Richard Long: A Line Made by Walking, England 1967," Art Press., no. 138 (1989): 104.

[128] These walks have taken place in "England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Norway, Lapland, Iceland, United States (including Alaska), Canada, Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Nepal, India, China, Australia, Japan, and Tibet," Hamish Fulton, "Walk," *Visual Studies* 25, no. 1 (March 23, 2010): 1.

[129] Ibid, 2.

[130] Ibid.

body and face the camera in the direction of their choice. They were then instructed to go about their morning routine around the campsite and record for five to fifteen minutes. They would then pass the GoPro to another participant to continue recording. The footage was then edited into a three-channel video, featuring simultaneously streaming segments from each of the three cameras (Figure 14).



(Figure 14) Screenshot of *Selway*, by Kaleb Bass (2019), Youtube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSbYAbToek8&feature=youtu.be.

Kalvin observed during this experiment that "the very act of attaching a camera to a part of the body not consistent with our visual conception of the world from forward facing eyes at the top of our standing figure disrupts how we see and move through our surroundings."[131] For example, a camera strapped to someone's ankle facing up towards the sky might still mimic the movement of the walking self, but from a much smaller scaled perspective like that of the sand or the grass. If, however, the camera faced forward on the ankle or shoe, one might imagine seeing through the eyes of the rattlesnakes that were found near camp or the small rodents heard talking in the

[131] Kaleb Bass, excerpt from journal entry on Selway River, July 2019.

morning. To disrupt the entirely human perspective and bring forth the attempted visual perspective of a more-than-human being is foundational to the perspective of Traditional Ecological Knowledge because it encompasses the relationship between all beings within their environment. Thus, walking can be viewed as a method driving TEK as well as art.

TEK: Moving Forward

While observing the moments of TEK interwoven throughout the programming of Signal Fire, one can identify the relationship of TEK as a pedagogical strategy operating alongside other place-based investigations such as LNT. More broadly, these place-based investigations contribute as methods of knowledge production that can be considered in conversation with Donna Haraway's term *situated knowledges*. Situated knowledges, which Haraway coined in 1988 to reconsider scientific inquiry, is knowledge that encourages a *thinking-with* and embodied perspective that more readily applies to both human and nonhumans and considers the depth of objects and their own agency. [132] Traditional Ecological Knowledge, similar to the motivations of situated knowledges, is a form of knowledge production that encourages a *thinking-with* perspective by encouraging a symbiotic relationship between humans and nonhumans. Haraway's term is useful for recognizing knowledge production and its epistemological, ontological, political, and ethical consequences; all of which I consider necessary when analyzing LNT and TEK in the context of Signal Fire. To further explore this entanglement between LNT and TEK as producers of knowledge, I bring

[132] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," Feminist Studies 14, no. 3 (1988): 581.

forward art historian Jessica L. Horton and her term *ecolonial relation,* which she describes her as:

> Rendering sensible the mutual transformation of diverse peoples and environments throughout a history of colonization that is still unfolding. Bridging a justice-oriented critique of the transformations wrought by colonial violence with attention to the creative survival of Indigenous land-based knowledge…[133]

A term like ecolonial relation does more than merely acknowledge the complexity of Signal Fire's colonial and decolonial methodologies but also emphasizes the possibilities for "mutual transformation" as two historically significant narratives continue to grow and change over time.

Signal Fire's Indigenous programming, employees, guides, and board members, as well as their attempts to decolonize their programming and pedagogy, offer an entry point for further integration of tribal communities within contemporary art. This collaboration with Indigenous communities comes during the vibrant resurgence of Indigenous land and climate justice movements including No Dakota Access Pipeline (NoDAPL) and the 2016 protests at Standing Rock, the Idle No More Movement, and The Apache Stronghold Campaign (which Signal Fire alumni participate in its annual march).[134] Horton states that these movements "underscore a resurgence of Indigenous land-based knowledges that survived Indian removal and assimilation, offering compelling sources for reconnection amid ongoing conditions of extractive

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[133] Jessica L. Horton, "An Ecocritical Reassessment of the Indian Craze: Elbridge Ayer Burbank and Standing Bear," in *Ecocriticism and the Anthropocene in Nineteenth Century Art and Visual Culture,"* Routledge Advances in Art and Visual Studies, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020), 50.

[134] https://www.nodaplarchive.com/; For more contextual and personal dialogue considering Standing Rock see: Nick Estes and Jaskiran Dhillon, eds., *Standing with Standing Rock: Voices from the #NoDAPL Movement* (University of Minnesota Press, 2019); http://apache-stronghold.com/.

capitalism."[135] Signal Fire is directly participating in this resurgence movement through activism while also providing space for further development of "Indigenous land-based knowledges" (which I refer to in this text as TEK).

Signal Fire thus provides an example of practiced and enacted decolonial strategies within the context of human-environmental relationships, the academy, and art.[136] The way that Signal Fire works to learn from Indigenous communities epistemologies and decolonial methods (creating ecolonial relations), is an example of how this artist residency impacts society, and this chapter provides just one model of how art historians can leverage the work of such residencies to better understand how their communities of artists impact the world. I have traced the significance of Signal Fire's framework to the societal and geographical influences the residency critically considers and responds to. I see more work like this possible for other field-based residencies moving forward.

[135] Horton, 49.

[136] Such tribal engagement and Indigenous practices in an art context are considered by Zoe Todd to be practiced and enacted decolonial strategies in "Indigenizing the Anthropocene," in *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, First ed. Critical Climate Change, (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), 243-247.

CHAPTER V:

CONCLUSION

Signal Fire's physical and theoretical interventions with wilderness areas exist at a time when public lands are at the crux of political debates, igniting significant discussion within discourses of science and the humanities.[137] Environmental studies professor Ashely E. Reis observes that the larger discussion of public lands is, "an unprecedented moment of confluence between politics and rhetoric, as a result of these Indigenous activists and their efforts, collective continuance and decolonial possibilities are bearing out materially on US public lands."[138] Reis supplements her observations using examples such as digital storytellers (such as bloggers and Instagram accounts) and organizations like "Get Out, Stay Out," a nonprofit youth-led organization founded by Karen Ramos who takes Indigenous children into the outdoors for hiking and backpacking excursions.[139] Ramos' efforts within her organization are intended to counter the marginalizing of certain populations that have had limited access to public lands, which I have noted a similar motive exists within Signal Fire's Indigenous Artist Retreat. The observations and examples offered by Reis' run parallel to the arts programming and activism of Signal Fire, thus, the growing social involvement of arts organizations are another attractive element to their potential participants.

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[137] Mikaela S. Ellenwood, Lisa Dilling, and Jana B. Milford, "Managing United States Public Lands in Response to Climate Change: A View From the Ground Up," Environmental Management 49, no. 5 (May 2012): 954–67.

[138] Ashley E. Reis, "#EquityOutdoors: Public Lands and the Decolonial Mediascape," *Western American Literature* 54, no. 1 (2019): 64.

[139] Reis, 66; http://vamosafuera.org/.

The reality that artists may be motivated to participate in field-based artist residencies because of the organizations' social involvements acknowledges a shift, a moving away from the individual practice. An artist residency (viewed as a stepping stone toward success) has often been recognized only insofar as it relates to the artist in focus and their participation is often linked to professional ambitions and to gain exposure and engagement with the international arts circuit.[140] The artworks created throughout a residency can, as I have shown here, exhibit the artist's interests, materials, and conceptual and physical influences; however, such components are inherently informed by the structure of the residency, its level of social engagement, and its immersive experience and, thus, the experience itself cannot be ignored as an element of the work produced. The informative structure and immersive experience of Signal Fire's "Waiting for Salmon" residency represents a key component of every project created during the program. None of the works can be considered art historically without referring to the dialogical framework that informed its creation; the ecological, cultural, and historical significance of the public lands where it was made; or the non-Western perspectives (TEK) that each participant was exposed to and immersed in throughout the experience.

I see the framework that I have used to contextualize Signal Fire as a framework that can benefit art historical observations on other field-based artist residencies moving forward such as The Canadian Wilderness Artist Residency, the more than fifty Arts in

[140] Elfving and Kokko, 10. For example, one of the most prominent residencies mentioned in this thesis, Cape Farewell, although referenced because of its creative research in climate change, is granted more attention primarily as a means of contextualizing an artist's work, this trend appears in Mark A. Cheetham's *Landscape into Eco Art: Articulations of Nature Since the '60s* and TJ Demos' *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology*.

the Parks residencies through the National Park System, Cape Farewell, and Land Arts of the American West. One might begin with critical analysis of the several recent publications produced in an effort to contextualize residencies within larger discussions. Such written works are produced from organizations like Land Arts of the American West (LAAW) and Cape Farewell.[141] In *Land Arts of the American West* (2009), residency co-founders Bill Gilbert and Chris Taylor catalogue the programming and sites of their 2000 to 2005 residencies. The catalogue includes interviews with residency participants and transcribed conversations with guest speakers between pages of photography taken during their field-work. Similarly, *Burning Ice: Art and Climate Change* (published by Cape Farewell in 2006 but republished in 2016 by the Gaia Project) assembles 200 color photographs with journal entries and other written works from invited participants of their various Arctic expeditions. These documentary books, in addition to the extensive digital archive that both residencies display on their websites, provide visual and material representations of the programs, and yet these self-published documents lack the critical distance necessary for an objective analysis of their impact. In this way, while artist residencies position themselves within the social, geographical, and political contexts, the scholars of art history can follow this trajectory.

Future scholarship could be conducted to compare such contemporary residencies to the nineteenth century artist colonies mentioned in the introduction by considering their dialogical components and relationships to place. I have outlined that this dialogical

[141] David Buckland started the nonprofit residency, Cape Farewell, in 2001 to bring participants on a trek to the Arctic by ship for several weeks. The Arctic is meant to represent a landscape at "the heart of the climate debate," a debate at the crux of politics, socio-economics, science, and the humanities. The most recent excursion was the 2013 Northern Islands Expedition in Scotland, from August 19 to September 8, and had a "crew of 27 artists, scientists and informers." Following is yet another Art/Science expedition set for July 2020 in the Marshall Islands. https://capefarewell.com/who-we-are.html

component is central for observing the moments of exchange between each participant *and* between the participants and the physical sites and locations they enter. I have argued that to consider the participants' creative interventions in the sites, it is necessary to first understand the complexity of the historical narratives embedded in those sites. For example, one might use the eighteenth and nineteenth century Arctic expeditions to situate Cape Farewell. While exposing a deeply colonial narrative, LNT ethics are nonetheless implemented within Signal Fire to uphold the ecological integrity of the land rather than to strengthen the wilderness mythos, and a similar shift might be identified in Cape Farewell's intentions for their own expeditions surrounding climate change. The entanglement of Traditional Ecological Knowledge and LNT practices in the Signal Fire residency may provide a foundation for observing geographically-specific, place-based practices in other residencies and colonies. Collectively, more direct connections can be made to field-based artist residencies and their ties and departures from early European artist colonies. With more nuanced questions, this research can extend beyond the scope of the Signal Fire case study and develop further observations considering the contemporary field-based artist residency. Such questions include: What histories and futures are layered within the places that artist residencies are situated in? Do artist residencies consider and even confront these histories and futures? Is there a dialogical element to other residencies and what impact does it have on the individual artist as well as the collective? What kinds of obstacles can be identified–such as gender, sexual orientation, race, or financial obstacles– that may change or limit an artist's experience in a particular site? How do artist residencies engage with contemporary discussions that are both inside and outside of the artworld? How might artists take what they learn from their

experience during a field-based artist residency and apply such knowledge to their everyday lives?

APPENDIX:

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