

Mine/Sublime

An image of an open cut mine site on the internet. Searchable, researchable, locatable. It offers a view into a 'private' territory. A territory that wields power, an ungracious theft from the land and its people. From Google Images we see the mine-sublime; rendered magnificent, with a high pixel count, as our gaze drips down from an aerial viewpoint.

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'Our culture has seen the development of the liberation of energy as an irreversible process. All previous cultures have depended on a reversible pact with the world, on a stable ordering of things in which energy release certainly played a role, but never on the liberation of energy as a basic principle. For us, energy is the first thing to be 'liberated', and all subsequent forms of liberation are founded on this model. Man himself is liberated as an energy source, so becoming the motor of a history and of a speeding-up of that history.'

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Carolyn Craig mines images from the internet and then transforms them. An emotional landscape develops as the JPEG image is returned to its origins, screen-printed onto mined metals. But the images are not simply transferred, they are converted into an emotional landscape; marked with desires, frustrations, and wit. By invading and individuating each image, creating a departure from the sublime, we are compelled to consider each mining site as unique, and not simply part of the rhetoric of the sublime.

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'For an industry that delivers so much, wouldn't you think there would be just a little more understanding and less negativity for what mining contributes to our country?'

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The rhetoric of mining is one of emotion. We may as well embrace the emotional charge. These artworks push out of the walls when I visit Carolyn's studio. The studio is also a home, is also a gallery. I peak around, ask questions, and am given an answer: 'But it's a joke! All of my work is a joke!'

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'The dangers threatening the human species are thus less risks of default (exhaustion of natural resources, dilapidation of the environment, etc.) than risks of excess: runaway energy flows, chain reactions, or frenzied autonomous developments.'

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Coal dust doesn't make it into the gallery space as often as the energy it produces does. The printing process in Craig's work incorporates coal dust, allows it to seep through these sublime photographs as a means to 'embed residues of man's capital desire.'

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'This remembering is something good we can do in response to the bad in our lands.'

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Personally, I've been mining quotations. Extracting words from Stacey Alaimo, Jean Baudrillard, Ross Gibson, Gina Rinehart. Pulling them from PDFs, from the musty pages of books, from the space in the back of my mind. The extracted words fill me with the hum of thought, a traveling energy.

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"The environment" is not located somewhere out there, but is always the very substance of ourselves.'

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In a consumption obsessed world how do we intervene with a site of mining? Can we stop the body from being mined? Or the mind? Craig's lines bring a sharp, frenzied graphic vim to the mine site. No longer exclusive or shrouded, the mine is scribbled over and repurposed. Perhaps erasure is attempted, and then abandoned; as the violence of colonisation and continued extraction from the land blisters through the mine site and pushes itself out through the work.

- **Harriet McInerney**

Reference list:

Stacey Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment and the Material Self*, Indiana University Press, 2010.

Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*, trans. James Benedict, Verso, 1990.

Ross Gibson, *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland*, University of Queensland Press, 2002.