



SIGNS OF WATER: COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON WATER, RESPONSIBILITY, AND HOPE

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IV. INTERVENTIONS: Thinking and Being with Water



Photo courtesy Robert Boschman

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Introduction

We are aware of the movement of water, and move through it, even in dreams, the way a boat moves through its wake.

—Richard Harrison, Chapter 10

Consider building a boat.

—JuPong Lin and Devora Neumark, with Seitu Jones, Chapter 11

All over the world, major cities are trying to buy back their watersheds.

—Barbara Amos, Chapter 12

Recipient of the 2017 Governor General’s Award for Poetry, Canadian poet Richard Harrison knows from experience what the rising waters of climate change can do to human homes and communities. His family home was inundated by the great flood of 2013 that took Calgary by complete surprise; but from this experience, Harrison did what artists do in crises: he allowed the emergency to inform his work—in this case, *On Not Losing My Father’s Ashes in the Flood*. In this volume, Harrison’s meditation on water contributes specifically to the ongoing historical conversation worldwide on the increasingly worrisome impacts of colonization on the environment. Calling himself a “child of the wheel,” Harrison makes important connections between technologies, colonization, environment, and cultures. We, readers, are invited to reconsider in particular the wheel’s impact on the waters of the Americas since 1492.

While Richard Harrison’s chapter concludes with the image of a boat creating a wake, the chapter that follows invites readers to think about building a boat and provides blueprints for boat design and construction, courtesy of Seitu Jones, a co-contributor to the chapter by artists JuPong Lin and Devora Neumark. Their remarkable performance score constitutes

a detailed, step-by-step program for bringing communities together to celebrate and acknowledge the core place that water holds for all humans. Their chapter sets forth a practice for any one at any time, now and into the future. Their forward-thinking model is also an inspiration, we hope, for others whose work takes them deeply into relationality and collaboration. Visual artist Barbara Amos engages in similar work, work that is relational, collaborative, and calls for direct action and participation. Her community work, shown here, exemplifies the crucial interventionist role that art and artists are taking relative to water. Amos' chapter also links readers to Sharon Meier MacDonald's subsequent chapter.

—Robert Boschman and Sonya Jakubec, editors