

Call for Papers

Contested Landscapes: “Wilderness” Parks and Shifting Narratives

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Lesbian National Parks and Services (Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan) on patrol, 2008. Photo: Josie Mills, University of Lethbridge Art Gallery.

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Deadline for proposals: November 1, 2023

Deadline for final contributions: June 15, 2024

This special issue of *RACAR* invites contributions that address the visual culture of “wilderness” parks and artistic responses to these highly contested landscapes. Since their inception in the 1880s, Canada’s national and provincial parklands have played a central role in generating a sense of Canadian identity, both domestically and abroad. Now a frontline against the commercial exploitation of nature, the image of the pristine park has also served to perpetuate the notion of *terra nullius*, the settler-colonial myth of an unspoiled and uninhabited land that justifies its occupation and seizure by the State. The figure of the leisure camper, whether pitting their mettle against the elements or enjoying a wholesome family weekend, has stepped in as the heir apparent of these scenic spaces, effectively negating other forms of land knowledge and use.

From Canadian Pacific Railway posters to Group of Seven paintings and tourist snapshots, Canada's parklands have been the subject of much celebrated visual representation. Visual culture has played a significant role in the protection and promotion of these natural preserves as well as in the projection of rugged wilderness as a central attribute of Canadian nationalism. But the fact that many of these parks were first created as an outgrowth of the Dominion Lands Act—the same federal law that expanded natural resource extraction, displaced Indigenous peoples into reservations, and drew European settlement westward—has often been overlooked. In the last few years, interventions such as Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan's *Lesbian National Parks and Services* (1997–) and the 2017 LandMarks/Repères public art commissions, including Rebecca Belmore's *Wave Sound* sculptures, Camille Turner and Cheryl L'Hirondelle's *Freedom Tours*, and Jin-me Yoon's *Long View*, have asked new questions about *who* these protected lands are for and what narratives we tell about them.

Attention to the topic of “wilderness” parks as objects of art-historical inquiry has grown in the last few decades, yet scholarship around the visual rhetoric of state-run nature reserves and contemporary artistic responses to them is still relatively scant in a Canadian context. Given the significance of natural imagery to the shaping of Canadian nationalism and the breadth of visual art that it continues to inspire, we invite papers, interviews, and artist's portfolios that draw attention to the various ways in which visual culture intersects with these contested landscapes.

Proposals may consider topics such as:

- Landscape
- National, provincial, or other forms of state-run parklands
- Indigenous worldviews
- Settler colonialism
- Nationalism
- Heteronormativity and nationalism
- Borders/enclosures
- Displacement
- Land claims
- (Mis)conceptions of “wilderness”
- Environmental conservation/devastation
- Representations of animals, plants, and the natural world
- Resource extraction
- Tourism, leisure, outdoor activities
- The figure of the camper, hiker, park ranger, guide, explorer, scientist
- Questions of access to land
- Maps and mapping
- Picturesque aesthetics
- Environmental humanities

We are soliciting articles (5,000–8,000 words, including notes) and accounts of practice (7–10 images and 1,000–1,500 words, including notes) in French or English. Articles will be submitted to peer review.

Proposals for contributions can be sent to steph.hornstein@gmail.com and glipamos@gmail.com before November 1, 2023. They should include a title followed by an abstract (300 words max.), a short biography (100 words max.) and a 1-page CV. If proposing an account of practice, please include 2–5 images with your pitch.