Approval

Name: Ian McFarlane
Degree: Master of Fine Arts
Title: Weather Pattern #6: The Funeral Pageant
Examin ing Committee: Chair: Simone Rapisarda
Assistant Professor
Cole Lewis
Senior Supervisor
Assistant Professor
Ker Wells
Supervisor
Assistant Professor
Peter Dickinson
Supervisor
Professor
Kendra Fanconi
External Examiner
Artistic Director, The Only Animal

Date Defended/Approved: October 2nd, 2018
Abstract

*Weather Pattern #6: The Funeral Pageant* was an outdoor, public procession that considered community and ecology as collaborators while contemplating themes of mortality and transformation. Taking place over a distance of 10.5 kilometres across Vancouver and Burnaby, the project was a carnivalesque procession that included large-scale puppets, kites, aeolian harps, and lanterns. Travelling through residential, industrial and forested areas, the procession involved a series of participatory events, all based around the journey of a ten foot tall puppet of a human figure as it walked into night. The procession ended in the dark of night with the puppet, whose body was disintegrating from the rain, being destroyed in a feast of noise, red wine and revelry.

**Keywords:** Pageantry, Procession, Puppetry, Landscape, Weather, Experimental Performance, Community Engagement
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the faculty and staff at the School for Contemporary Arts for their relentless generosity and expertise, specifically my senior supervisor, Cole Lewis, committee members Ker Wells and Peter Dickinson, as well Ben Rogalsky, Andrew Curtis, John Macfarlane, Kyla Gardiner, Steven Hill, Eldritch Priest and Judy Radul.

Thank you to my collaborators for your limitless enthusiasm and curiosity. There are many of you. Particular thanks to: Annie Therrien Boulos, Evan Medd, Randi Edmundson, Megan Stewart, Stephanie Gagne, Han Pham, Howard Dai, Jordan Zanni, Robert Azevedo, Patrick Blenkarn, Shauna Griffin, Julie Hammond, Cindy Kao, and Matthew Ariaratnam.

Thank you to my family for their endless support.

Lastly, thank you to Geneviève Paré for showing me the forests, the mountaintops and the tides.
# Table of Contents

Approval ........................................................................................................................................ ii
Abstract .......................................................................................................................................... iii
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................................ iv
Table of Contents .......................................................................................................................... v
List of Images .................................................................................................................................. vi

**Defence Statement** ..................................................................................................................... 1

**Works Cited** ............................................................................................................................... 24

**Appendix A.** Project Documentation .......................................................................................... 25

**Appendix B.** Landscape as Stage, Weather as Dramaturge: The Contemporary Nature of the Pageant ......................................................................................................................... 26
## List of Images

Image 1. Weather Pattern #6: The Funeral Pageant. Photo by Stephanie Gagne....vii
Image 6. Parade. Photo by Stephanie Gagne. .........................................................13
Image 7. Sense Sketch by Annie Therrien Boulos and Ian McFarlane ..................15
Image 8. Constructing lanterns in a public workshop. Photo by Stephanie Gagn ....19
Image 9. The audience joins the procession. Photo by Stephanie Gagne. ..........19
Defence Statement

“Well, do ye ken, sir, that I never saw in a’ my born days what I could wi’ a safe conscience hae ca’d bad weather? The warst has aye some redeemin’ quality about it that enabled me to thole (bear) it without yaumerin (murmuring). Though we may na be able to see, we can aye think of the clear blue lift. Weather, sir, aiblins no to speak very scientifically in the way o’ meteorological observation – but rather in a poetical, that is, a religious spirit – may be defined, I jalousie (suspect), ‘the expression o’ the fluctuations and modifications of feeling in the heart o’ the heevens made audile and visible and tangible on their face and bosom.’ That’s weather.”

- Professor Wilson, quoted from Richard Inwards, Weather Lore

Overview

*Weather Pattern #6: The Funeral Pageant* was an experimental, public, outdoor procession that extended across Vancouver and Burnaby on September 8th, 2018. Spanning a distance of 10.5kms, the event took four hours to complete, ending in the dark of night at the base of Burnaby Mountain. The work featured several different forms of puppets and performing materials that I designed and built with community members, students and creative collaborators. Each performing element was designed to respond to some element of the weather; a figure’s skin decayed in the rain, an aeolian harp played in the wind, a flock of kites attempted to take flight in a storm, and a chorus of lanterns arose in the fading sunlight.

As suggested in its title, *Weather Pattern #6: The Funeral Pageant* was the latest instalment of a performance series titled *Weather Patterns*. This performance series comprised several public experiments in material performance which were accompanied by public workshops in puppetry, and kite and lantern building. Each experiment
explored a specific tactic in weather-influenced object animation, taking place over the course of eight months in various outdoor locations across Vancouver and Burnaby. These experiments included improvisations with kites, nighttime lantern processions, rainy day parades and musical arrangements. The intent of this performance series was to examine alternative methods of object animation, both within the discipline of puppetry and beyond, while challenging my own understanding of collaboration by extending it out into the larger community.

In this performance series, I worked closely with a creative team composed of builders, performers and dramaturgs through all of the stages of the development. Members of this creative team were: Annie Therrien Boulos, Howard Dai, Randi Edmundson, Evan Medd, Megan Stewart, and Jordan Zanni. Working around our monthly workshops and public performance experiments, our process was grounded in a discipline of walking. As part of this practice, we documented our sensory experiences of walking through writing, drawing and photography. From that field research, images were collected and served as inspiration for puppet designs and building projects. We also developed a routine of teaching each other songs and singing together, a routine that later evolved into thinking of ways in which to encourage participants to make sound with us.

As the latest instalment of this performance series, *Weather Pattern #6: The Funeral Pageant* gathered inspiration from all of the previous Weather Patterns, but remains sequential in that it is part of ongoing research. I do not see this research as being completed, nor do I see *Weather Patterns: A Performance Series* as a finished product. As I discovered over the course of this research, engaging with or gathering a community takes time and these experiments in collaboration have only scratched the surface of what that collaboration could be. As well, I am finding that my experiments in weather-influenced object animation are quite young in their development and I plan to continue to work with them. In this sense, *Weather Pattern #6: The Funeral Pageant* is the culmination of my graduate studies, but not necessarily the conclusion to this research.
Artistic Background

I am a performer, scenographer, and puppeteer whose unique practice of landscape poetics, junkyard theatrics and performative alchemy explores the unexpected correspondence between the performing body and the performing-of the world. Using the disciplines of puppetry, eco-scenography, and sensory ethnography as foundations for creative inquiry, I create works for the theatre, outdoor spectacles and community engagement projects.

I have a background in acting, clowning, carpentry, scenic design and devised theatre, having trained with One Yellow Rabbit Performance, Swallow-a-bicycle Theatre and the Old Trout Puppet Workshop. In the last four years I have been focusing these practices into a study of puppetry, combining my experience as a performer with my skills in design and construction. In the summer of 2015 I apprenticed under Bread and Puppet Theater in Glover, Vermont, and have now been working with the company over the last three years. My work with Bread and Puppet Theater has drastically reshaped my practice. Pulling inspiration from the company’s “Why Cheap Art Manifesto”, I am coming to understand that my role as an artist is equivalent to that of a cook, or rather, a provider of nourishment. To quote Bread and Puppet’s Manifesto, “Art is food… art has to be cheap and available to everybody. It needs to be everywhere because it is the inside of the world” (Bread and Puppet). My practice has turned away from enclosed rehearsal spaces and theatres to open fields, streets and forests. The large scale, clumsy and complicated spectacle of puppetry has proven to be an indispensable tool for inviting audiences to engage, collaborate and critique my work within public spaces.

My work in puppetry and material performance has also driven me to consider the agential capacity of matter and how these inquiries might challenge our understanding of ecology, art-making and lifestyle. The discipline of puppetry is founded in working with the creative potential of materials, allowing materials to move and influence the visual dramaturgy of a work, but is more often than not still based in a practice of object manipulation. My recent research has looked into alternative methods of object animation that seek new ways of moving with matter and paying attention to the journey of materials before and after a production.
Context

My MFA research has focused on material performance and its contemporary applications, namely its role in pageantry, puppetry and procession. Specifically, I have navigated my practices of puppetry and scenography through theories of New Materialism and Object Oriented Ontology in order to discover new creative frictions and to put into practice alternative methods and mindsets within the theatre traditions I have been working in for the last decade. I have paid particular attention to how material performance is used in community-led spectacles in response to the community’s political and ecological climates.

In the summer of 2017 I embarked on a research trip to three different rural communities across North America that were organizing outdoor, political spectacles. These projects were: Bread and Puppet Theater’s *WhatForward Circus* in Glover, VT, *The River Clyde Pageant* in New Glasgow, PEI, and The Canadian Academy of Mask and Puppetry’s creation of *Iinisikimm*, a night-time lantern celebration of the return of bison to Banff Nation Park, AB. These projects were pivotal in reshaping my interests in puppetry and scenography away from the contained space of the theatre and into outdoor environments. Landscapes have played a central role in my recent work, accentuating how material animation can be transformed when put into play with weather elements such as the wind, the rain or the tides. This research trip also fueled my desire to open my work up to community and new forms of collaboration. Engagement was a distinctive feature of these projects, not only in their political content, but in how they actively sought input from the broader community and created space for marginalized voices.
On my return to Vancouver I discovered that the sky was charred. Wildfires in British Columbia were in the process of burning 12,160 square kilometres of forest. In the summer of 2018, The Globe and Mail reported that BC wildfires had reached record highs with over 2,011 fires accounted for in one season. My body felt foreign, as if the air I was breathing wasn’t meant for my lungs. One evening, my collaborator, Annie Therrien Boulos, prompted me to write a letter to my childhood home, giving me an envelope, a stamp and a piece of paper. To a distant stranger I described these feelings of displacement while remarking on the pleasure of time-travelling through the act of writing. I recognized that the space to which I was addressing the letter no longer existed as I had experienced it. Not only that, but I could never inhabit it again as I once had. This led me to the realization that, in same way that I could not return to my childhood home, I could never inhabit the same climates as I did in my youth. Perhaps these wildfires were becoming a yearly sign of the turning season, and I would come to learn how to live with them.

On finishing that letter, I believe I experienced something that Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian scholar and historian, would refer to as “cosmic terror,” that is, “the fear of the
immeasurable… the fear of that which is materially huge and cannot be overcome by force” (Bakhtin, 335). Through writing that letter, I had become aware of the infinitely powerful elements in which I was helplessly immersed; I saw myself in relation to the endless procession of time and the rapidly changing climate. According to Bakhtin, this cosmic fear has been capitalized on throughout history by dogmatic and authoritarian powers to oppress free thought. In opposition to this, he documents a history of folk traditions that have struggled against this instrumentalization through the use of imagery rooted in the material body, that is, the grotesque body:

The struggle against cosmic terror in all its forms and manifestations did not rely on abstract hope or on the eternal spirit, but on the material principle in man himself. Man assimilated the cosmic elements: earth, water, air, and fire; he discovered them and became vividly conscious of them in his own body. He became aware of the cosmos within himself. (Bakhtin, 336)

Taking inspiration from Bakhtin’s analysis, I began to visualize a project that invited an awareness of the cosmos within our material bodies. I desired to create a work that playfully provoked a surrendering into the world, a piece that captured the optimism of death, rebirth and our continuous movement into transformation. Applying my experiences from the projects I encountered on my research trip that put the content of their work in direct relation with a landscape, my vision for this piece was to create an image of the grotesque body and to put it in direct correspondence with our changing climate. I wanted to see this body fragment, be destroyed and dissolve into weather in the most hopeful way possible. For this, I turned to puppetry.

Material

Puppetry has been my object of study for many years, and the axis around which my grad research has turned. One of the many reasons I turn to puppetry is its rich and
complicated relationship with death. John Bell, contemporary puppetry scholar and teacher, describes the role of the puppeteer as a “leap of faith” that turns outward, to the external, dead, world, as opposed to inwards, to the living body (Bell, 1). Traditions of material performance that correspond with death, such as animating corpses or providing houses for the souls of the dead, can be found in multiple cultures, from the English tradition of “The Cutting Wren”, where a bird corpse is dressed in lace and hailed as a king, to “The Screen of Death” in China where an emperor was said to have spoken with his dead lover through a shadow puppet screen. (Bell, 3)

For me, the discipline of puppetry is fertile ground for questioning human and non-human animacy and considering the creative potential of the material world through the act of bringing our deepest fears into material form. The puppet is a being that thrives on death, perhaps even acts as an ambassador of death, allowing us to imagine our own bodies as inanimate material, returning our human desires to the earth or a greater cosmic whole. Kenneth Gross, a leading contemporary puppet theorist, remarks that puppetry “remind[s] us that we do not yet know what it means to be inanimate… we do not know fully the different kinds of death that humans own” (Gross, 47). In the hands of a puppet, death is not necessarily a lack of life, but a vibrancy that allows us to move with it, to see through it.

To return to Mikhail Bakhtin, he speaks of death in relation to what he calls, “grotesque realism”:

> Death is not a negation of life seen as the great body of all people but part of life as a whole – its indispensable component, the conditions of its constant renewal and rejuvenation. Death is here always related to birth… Thus, in the system of grotesque imagery death and renewal are inseparable in life as a whole, and life as a whole can inspire fear least of all. (Bakhtin, 50)

Here, in his book *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin speaks to the folk humour traditions I have mentioned earlier and their antiauthoritarian history. Carnival, for
instance, in the medieval ages, was a way of creating a “second world” (Bakhtin, 6) outside of the church and the state in which the system was ruled from the bottom up. Bakhtin refers to “the grotesque body” as being the foundational imagery for carnival in which the body is fragmented, ever expanding; it is the body that eats, that shits, that makes love, that gives birth, that bleeds, and transforms into dirt. It is the material body that is rooted in a cosmic whole, characterized by the body’s lower stratum.

Bakhtin’s theories of the grotesque appear to thrive in puppetry. The puppet is itself a fragment, or rather, a “sum of destructions” as Picasso said of his paintings (Gross, 95). This openness, or expanding into the world, is an easy endeavor when the world is already a world of destroyed things, dead things, partial things or uncompleted things – that is, the world of the puppet. For instance, a discarded boot becomes a face, a destroyed piece of hardware serves as a spine, a scrap piece of fabric reveals itself as a pair of lungs; the puppet thrives in the ruins of our world.

I was interested in accentuating this relationship with death and the grotesque in Weather Pattern #6: The Funeral Pageant by making the event a funeral procession. Through the act of walking the puppet across a relatively great distance (a total of 10.5km), we were adopting a traditional processional form while actively inviting the puppet to destroy itself. The puppet was a fragmented open form. Its materials were left in their raw state (the papier maché left untreated, the glued joints left exposed) ready to be consumed by the elements, and its body was a collection of pieces assembled and disassembled over the course of the event. The puppet’s steady pursuit of night coincided with its deteriorating body, and by the time the darkness had settled in, the puppet was nothing more than a ruin of itself, ready for its flesh to be offered to the dirt, the rain and the wind.
Site / Space / Weather

In May 2017, I created a piece titled *Weather Pattern #1: An Object Opera* as part of the MFA Spring Exhibition and Performance Series. Part theatrical puppetry, part kinetic noise orchestration, *Weather Pattern #1: An Object Opera*, was a series of living images that explored unexpected connections between body, sound and object. This piece was my first experiment in incorporating the idea of weather into a work. I was interested in how one could create weather onstage, whether it was listening to the subtle shifts in air pressure, incorporating live weather reports into the performance, or actively making bodies labour on stage in order to change the humidity and temperature of the room. The central character of the piece was a kabuki-styled puppet strapped to my body that orchestrated a soundscape of human voices, pouring water, strings and a flock of thirty umbrellas suspended from the grid. This experience appeared futile in many ways: why
were we making a piece about the weather when all we needed to do to experience it was step outside? Most of our efforts in the theatre came across as a representation of something, as opposed to a response. This eventually inspired me to create *Weather Patterns: A Performance Series*, in which I navigated new ways to approach the weather as a dramaturge or a collaborator.

Following *Weather Pattern #1: An Object Opera*, I stepped out into the world and staged *Weather Pattern #2: Kites*. I was inspired by the consideration of the kite as a puppet. Was this not an object that we perceived as having a life of its own, activated by the hands of an operator who engaged it with strings? Unlike a puppet, however, a kite seems to harness the movement of the surrounding forces, namely that of the air. Theorist and anthropologist Tim Ingold, speaks of the act of flying a kite as “a dance of animacy”. In his view, the flyer, the wind and the kite do not so much interact as correspond. The kite “sets up a correspondence between the animate movements of the flyer and the currents of the aerial medium in which he or she is immersed” (101). The idea of agency in both the flyer and the kite seems to dissolve into a dance, a dance where each partner responds to the movements of the other. Thinking of the kite in this
way presented an exciting challenge to how I thought about puppetry. Instead of manipulating objects in order to make them appear alive, I began to pursue ways of dancing with them, using the weather as my medium. On January 27th, 2018, Weather Pattern #2: Kites took place in CRAB Park, Vancouver. Having facilitated a workshop in how to build three basic kite designs, I proceeded to orchestrate a 30 minute improvisation with an ensemble of seven volunteers that sought to further explore this ‘dance of animacy’ in a collective effort.

This improvisation lead to Weather Patterns #3 through #5. Each of these pieces explored a new space. For these performance spaces, I considered locations that staged the infrastructure of the city alongside forest and ocean. These places of tension, where the multiplicity of the city’s ecology existed in its most dramatic state, became our laboratories. Eventually, and I connected all of these locations together, I began to discern a pathway through the city. This turned out to be a fragment of the Trans-Canada Trail, a pedestrian pathway that stretched from New Brighton Park in Vancouver to the base of Burnaby Mountain. This trail travelled through densely forested areas, hugged the edges of oil refineries and wiggled its way through residential streets. The majority of the trail ran right over high-pressure petroleum pipelines that connected the greater network of inland pipelines to the Pacific Ocean upon which resources could be exported to distant lands. The complexity of this trail was a charged space in which to set our funeral procession and ended up being our stage for Weather Pattern #6: The Funeral Pageant.
Walking

In his article “Footprints through the weather-world: walking, breathing, knowing,” Tim Ingold, describes walking as a way of “becoming knowledgeable” (Ingold, S121). According to Ingold, “moving is knowing.” (Ingold, S121). Instead of considering knowledge as a library of data, collected through a series of fixed points, Ingold argues that we know as we go, perceiving and understanding our world by moving through it. Seeing the human body as both a “body-on-the-ground and a body-in-the-air” (Ingold, S122), the weather is thus the medium through which we experience that world.

Inspired by Ingold’s text, I began my own experiments in “becoming knowledgeable” though walking. In the spring of 2017, I organized a workshop with a small ensemble where we staged an experiment in walking that inquired into the agential capacity of
matter and how that might affect the way we move. We began by collecting materials that surprised us – ‘actants’, as Jane Bennett might call them (Bennett, 9). Gathering these materials into a space, we then explored ways of moving with them, allowing possibilities for the materials to guide our movements. The second half of this workshop was set in Stanley Park, where we extended our exploration into an open space and allowed external forces to navigate us. From an outside perspective, this would have looked like a group of people walking with some things.

This experiment led to further inquiries into how sensory attentiveness might reshape or disrupt our understanding of place. How can the weather affect the way I move through space? How can my moving through space influence my understanding of the weather? These questions became the foundations of an ethnographic journal I kept throughout the Spring semester of 2018. Inspired by my curiosities into sensory ethnography, I was interested in how these experiments in movement might be documented. According to anthropologist Sarah Pink, sensory ethnography (otherwise known as anthropology of the senses) is part of a ‘sensorial turn’ (Pink, 3) in which there appears to be a shift from classical methods of observation in anthropology and an
increasing practice of sensory based perception. This practice is open to “multiple ways of knowing and to the exploration of and reflection on new routes of knowledge (Pink, 5). In brief, sensory ethnography attempts to grasp the data that is not spoken or written and accounts for the ethnographer’s embodiment while understanding the body as a site of knowing.

In his book *I Swear I Saw This*, anthropologist Michael Taussig reflects on his drawings in his ethnographic fieldnotes. Here, the drawing serves as a new form of data, one that surpasses the realism of written word and works with what Roland Barthes might call a “third meaning” (Taussig, 6).

The drawings come across as fragments that are suggestive of a world beyond, a world that does not have to be explicitly recorded and is in fact all the more “complete” because it cannot be completed. In pointing away from the real, they capture something invisible and auratic that makes the thing depicted worth depicting (Taussig, 13).

My own ethnographic journal, which I often referred to as my weather journal, was a collection of sketches, writings and photographs that I gathered on numerous walks throughout the city. These walks were often shared with a collaborator and the documentation often turned into a collaborative effort. For instance, there are several sketches that are free-form line drawings that were created in tandem with another person while responding to sensory stimuli.
My work in puppetry and public spectacle has led me to question the potential of walking as a performance form. Traditions in procession are of particular interest to me in that they are often based around ways of defining place; that is, displaying who is important, who has power and what they are proud of. For example, a city’s parade may display the current political leaders, a government’s procession may display military might, etc. I became curious as to how this could be altered. Instead, could procession be a way of coming to know place? How has parade and pageantry been used as tools for questioning and disrupting our understanding of social and ecological conditions? Could puppetry be a form of sensory ethnography? Could spectacle be a way of becoming knowledgeable?

Political writer and curator, Nato Thompson, remarks in his article “Good-bye to a Riot” that “being in a parade [is] far better than watching one” (Thompson, 20). If a parade is like a popularity contest where middle-school politics still govern how we interact with space, then who is included in that procession defines the possibilities of that space. Reflecting on second-line and funeral parades in New Orleans, where “there is no audience… everyone participates,” Thompson claims that “[t]he parade becomes a
mobile collective space of becoming” (Thompson, 22). While conceptualizing my own procession, I decided that collaboration needed to be a central element to this work.

**Collaboration**

In the process of writing about Weather Pattern #5: Walking in an online blog I kept over the spring and summer of 2018, I made the following statement:

It has become apparent to me, in the process of putting together this performance series, that I am a collaborator first and foremost. I need to listen, to respond, to push against a number of similarly responding, breathing, conflicting bodies in order to feel compelled to fall into the work and take the risks necessary to bring ideas into their full form. All of my attempts in this project so far at bringing visions into material form have been but a shadow of what I imagined. When in correspondence with other active collaborators, I experience less of a shadow and more of an expansion, a folding into something unknown.

Collaboration has been the vehicle by which this project was created. It has taken many forms throughout this process. Primarily, it was based in public workshops where I shared my scattered curiosities and taught practical skills in puppet construction. These workshops were open to anyone, primarily taking place on a monthly basis in my studio at 611 Alexander over the course of the spring semester in 2018. After hosting several of these workshops, I realized that the majority of the people attending were either my friends or students I knew through the school. One of my dramaturgs, Megan Stewart, referred to this as our inability to escape “Fortress Alexander.” I longed to include strangers into the work and to be working out in the community in which the piece would take place. On August 16th, 2018, my creative team and I hosted an open session in kite and lantern building at the Kiwassa Neighbourhood House which brought together a summer camp, residents of the Sunrise/Hastings neighbourhood and students from
Simon Fraser University. This event felt like a gateway into the expansive potential of the project and into what collaboration could look like.

As the project culminated into the final event, I became attentive to how many different forms of collaborators were involved in the project. There was my immediate creative team, who had been working with me for the past several months, there were volunteers who had just heard about the project and were jumping into it out of curiosity, there were loved ones who I had personally invited to participate or experience the project, there were countless strangers we had yet to meet on the day who would inevitably contribute to the event through their responses and participation, and lastly, perhaps most importantly, there was the weather that would give the event its breath.

Jim Lasko, Artistic Director of the former Chicago-based public spectacle company, Redmoon Theatre, speaks to the role of material performance in public settings in his article “The Third Thing.” Referencing Claire Bishop, he describes the importance of a third party, a neutral object, that is able to absorb input from all collaborators and encourage what he refers to as “radical listening”.

[Radical listening] involves an incremental opening of the sphere of influence as mediated through the performing object. Radical listening expands the creative attention in ever widening circles; from the self, to the group, to the site, and finally to the social circumstance in which the theatrical event will be presented. Radical listening means that each voice changes the work itself, takes form, and develops and evokes the next set of iterations, which subsequently must also be heard. This dynamic cycle culminates at the presentation of the work. (Lasko, 100)

For Lasko and the work of Redmoon Theatre, the medium was the public. Following Lasko’s text, I was inspired to create opportunities for found audience members to participate or engage with the work. For example, at the beginning of Weather Pattern #6: The Funeral Pageant, a group of people were flying kites, encouraging others to join them. At another point, a large procession of puppets and instruments paraded through back alley ways, offering a kazoo, a rain stick or a puppet to anyone who wanted to join us. Lastly, at the end, lanterns were shared with any curious follower, creating a line of
lights that walked through the forest. It was my hope that these access points encouraged collaborators of all levels (involved, invited or found) to participate in my own attempt at “radical listening,” using a large-scale puppet as our mediator.

Reflecting on the process of *Weather Pattern #6: A Funeral Pageant*, the reality of our collaborative efforts ended up being but a shadow of what I had dreamed of. Having experienced several recent collaborative projects on my research trip in 2017 that engaged communities and bridged social gaps, I was disappointed in the lack of connection I was able to make with the larger Vancouver community. As I have mentioned, engaging with or building community takes time and this project has given me perspective on that process. What is interesting to me about this project, in comparison with previous community engaged/ community created works that I have been deeply invested in, is that this project was set in a densely populated urban environment. This was a factor that presented some unexpected challenges. For one, it was hard to define what community I was interested in collaborating with. The complexity of the neighbourhoods we were working in meant we were not necessarily trying to connect with a site, but several layers of social, economic and cultural structures. Unlike in projects such as *The River Clyde Pageant* where the event gathered people from a common geographic location, *Weather Pattern #6: The Funeral Pageant* gathered people from one or two fragments of a complex social web. In addition to this, sustaining attention and commitment to the collaborative process proved difficult as the urban environment offered various distractions and demands of our collaborators and as a result drew their presences elsewhere. In reflection, I question whether or not a city is the ideal context for this work, or in contrast, if it provides the perfect challenges in which to realize this work.

Image 9. The audience joins the procession. Photo by Stephanie Gagne.
Audience

The greatest unknown that this project encountered was its audience. Having limited opportunities to put participatory elements to the test, there were large facets of the event where we were unsure of who would be there, how they would engage with us and what would take place as a result of that. I would like to address some of the experiences that happened on September 8th and reflect on how they might have contributed, fallen short of, or transformed my vision for the project.

There were several moments in the performance where the audience responded in ways I had not anticipated. For instance, instead of hopping from one marked location to another via transit or personal vehicle, almost the entire audience present at the beginning of the piece joined in the procession behind the puppet. This immediately created a critical mass that was a spectacle in itself. In this formation, the audience (now collaborators) was not necessarily witnessing the images we had created, but walking with them and with each other. In many ways, this was a pleasant discovery. The audience was embodying the experience, empathizing with the images as opposed to watching them go by. It also brought a lot of attention to the procession, turning the image outwards and presenting it to an undiscovered audience. It also put the collaborating audience members in direct contact with the performers; snacks were shared, conversations were had and even one audience member volunteered to help operate the large puppet.

As I have mentioned, Weather Pattern #6: The Funeral Pageant spanned a distance of 10.5kms. Many of the sites that this event visited were unmarked or hidden. These included back alleys, forested trails, industrial roads and residential intersections. Needless to say, informing people of where this event would take place was perhaps one of our greatest challenges. In preparation for the event, I created several resources that I hoped would not only guide people to these subtle locations, but prepare them for a participatory experience. The first resource I created was a PDF document that contained a map, a description of the project and details about what events you could experience or be involved in. In addition to this, I also created a link to a custom Google map that allowed anyone to zoom in on locations and see a detailed outline of the route.
Lastly, I made regular posts on social media that described certain elements that would take place on the day and where to find them.

On September 8th, the procession ended up running over an hour behind schedule. As a result, there were some audience members who showed up to locations without any sign of the event and no way of being informed of its arrival. Reflecting on this, I would have also liked to have provided the audience with a real-time tracking app in which you could see the current location of the procession as well as estimated wait times. I do question, however, if this resource would have distracted the audience from the anticipation of the performance’s arrival. An event that might not arrive has the potential to provoke an unexpected attentiveness. What did the audience members who were waiting for us experience? Did our absence perform for us?

Due to the singularity of the event, a film crew was present throughout the entire duration of the piece. Part audience members, part performers, this dedicated team was part of the image at every stage of the event. After experiencing this, I have become aware of the fact that their presence was a filter for the audience. Instead of the performance taking place as an event, we were immediately aware of a future audience who would be experiencing a more complete picture of that event. It also elevated the performance, highlighting its significance, as opposed to allowing the subtleties of its happening to emerge and fade on their own accord. In spite of all of this, I cannot ignore how important documentation will be in the evolution of this research.
Conclusion

Who was this project for? In reflection, this is a question that I cannot help but return to and ponder extensively. The event was shaped around the labour of its performers, resulting in an intense and transformative experience for all involved, but did that experience translate to its audience? Were its witnesses truly invited into the transformative potential of this endeavour? How could this have been approached differently? What were we wanting from our audience?

Moving with these questions into the future of this research, I would like to see the audience play a more central role in the performing of the event. In *Weather Pattern #6: The Funeral Pageant*, the audience was mostly waiting or following, watching as the performing ensemble experienced the task at hand. Are there other ways for the
audience to contribute to the unfolding of the event? How does the event become something that doesn’t simply pass by, but an action that extends into the future?

I believe the most inspiring aspect of this work was the ways in which it discovered its emplacement and sought new methods of responding to its environment. This environment, however, encompasses the event’s witnesses. In other words, the event’s context is not composed of distinct natural and cultural elements, but rather a complex web of interrelated possibilities. To neglect one’s audience is to neglect one’s environment.

As mentioned in this statement’s overview, I do not see this research as completed. If anything, I see several paths that offer new ground in which to continue my “wayfaring” (Ingold, 1). As a puppeteer, I continue to seek new ways in which to work with the weather as a medium and to complicate my work with objects. What this project has achieved is the actualization of several ideas that have become central to my work: considering weather as dramaturge, the realization of grotesque realism, approaching walking as a way of knowing and the practice of radical listening. The resulting work is my own effort at understanding place. This effort has made clear the work that needs to be done with this project if it is to continue. If the work’s intent is to understand place, my collaboration needs to be extended to those communities that have stories rooted in this place, namely the communities of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-waututh nations. In addition to this, I see this work evolving in a pedagogical way, one that decentralizes the work away from my own personal research to that of a collective experimentation.
Works Cited


Additional References:


Last, Angela. “Negotiating the Inhuman: Bakhtin, Materiality and the Instrumentalization of Climate Change.” *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 30, no. 2, March 1, 2013, pp. <60-83>
Appendix A.

Project Documentation

Description: A video of the event, created by film maker, Han Pham.

File name: Weather pattern 6 final cut h264 .mp4
Appendix B.

Landscape as Stage, Weather as Dramaturge: The Contemporary Nature of the Pageant

Description: This essay reflects on a research trip I embarked on in the summer of 2017 across Vermont, Prince Edward Island and Treaty 7 Territory, Alberta. Examining outdoor, politically driven, community lead spectacles across North America, this research trip shaped the critical thought underlining my graduating project.

File name: Landscape as Stage, Weather as Dramaturge.pdf