

Paul Walde, Requiem for a Glacier. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (March 10, 2021–February 27, 2022)

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From within this vehicle, Haiti is revealed in a perfectly defined aesthetic offering, a gaze delineated as if the spectator were also shut into this closed space. Aside from a few stops, pretexts for songs or fragmented political conversations, the city awash in unrest is seen only from the backseat of this gleaming symbol of foreign power.

It is also from this position that passengers of various ages, social conditions, and professional backgrounds, some bedridden and others in good health, comment on the popular uprising, the

disrepair of the hospital system, and especially the destabilizing presence of the non-governmental organizations. "Two short tours and two little cheques, and then they're gone," one of them says about the humanitarian workers, and he isn't the only one who believes that these "charities" are built "on the misery of countries like Haiti."

Licha captures this destitution from inside the vehicle, which is forced to zig-zag between barricades and demonstrations. His journey is intercut with ironic counterpoints: a few slow travelling shots

taken in the middle of a huge Médecins sans frontières warehouse in Mérignac, France, as sterile and structured as if the place were run by Amazon.

With an uncluttered, coherent approach, Licha delivers his report in the form of an urban chronicle, giving centre stage to his protagonists, none of whom are identified and all of whom have a unique viewpoint. Even their silences, sometimes heavy, say much about the courage and nobility of Haiti. Not necessarily at war, but always struggling. *Translated by Käthe Roth*

— **André Lavoie** is an independent film critic and journalist. He holds a master's degree in film studies from the Université de Montréal and has been a contributor to the newspaper *Le Devoir* since 1998, as well as to the magazines *Sélection du Reader's Digest* and *L'actualité*. He has been awarded two *Grands Prix du journalisme indépendant*, including for best cultural critic, and is a speaker and debate moderator.

Paul Walde

Requiem for a Glacier

Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

March 10, 2021–February 27, 2022

Paul Walde's four-movement oratorio *Requiem for a Glacier* was originally performed in July, 2013 on a glacier in British Columbia's Jumbo Valley – or Qat'muk, as it is known by the Ktunaxa First Nation, the region's original stewards. At the time of the performance, the ancient glacial area was under direct threat of both climate change and resort development, as the building of a (now-cancelled) ski resort had obtained provincial approval despite resistance from environmentalists, local residents, and the Ktunaxa. Performed for the glaciers, with only the fifty musicians and thirty crew members present, the event was described in the press as a protest, an homage, and, of course, an expression of grief. For a space considered sacred by Ktunaxa, the grandiosity of the requiem gesture is both appropriate and questionable as it honours the spiritual import of the area, but in a language and tradition historically imposed on Indigenous lands.

Footage of the event was later incorporated into a video installation of the same title, in which the recorded oratorio is accompanied by field recordings and the visual documentation is supplemented with long shots of the landscape, vignettes of individual performers, and temporal and visual effects that mirror the dramatic urgency of the oratorio. The installation is on display at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts as part of the exhibition *Ecologies: A Song for Our Planet*, curated by Iris Amizlev.

Loosely based on a Catholic requiem mass, the score is evocative not only of mourning but of an odyssey or a struggle, the audio and video working together to construct something of a narrative arc. Walde drew on a variety of sources to compose the score: the first two movements are generated out of the letters j-u-m-b-o, referencing both the non-Indigenous name for

Qat'muk and the controversial resort; the libretto is a Latin translation of a 2012 press release announcing the BC government's approval of the resort's development; the third movement is drawn from data detailing temperature readings of the area from 1969 to 2010, with the increasing tempo reflecting rising temperatures; and the final movement pairs instrumentation with a droning hum to mimic the presence of an electrical power grid. All four movements are animated by the video in ways that distinguish the installation

frame; in another, a timpano conjures thunder to accompany a lightning storm. Interspersed throughout the score are field recordings of dripping and running water; it is, arguably, this sound of melting that is the most melancholic.

Visually, the evocation of melancholy, of Romanticism, and of the sublime is undeniable. The piece ends with what others have agreed is a clear reference to Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* (1818).¹ The slender figure of the conductor, Ajtony Csaba, dressed in black tails, stands in the

broader climate concerns tackled in the exhibition. When it was first performed, in 2013, it was directly linked to then current and regional politics. As of January 2020, after a thirty-year-long dispute, the controversial resort development has been permanently abandoned. The Ktunaxa have partnered with government and environmental organizations to preserve the area, with the First Nation back in charge of stewardship and conservation.² Despite these political shifts, the area remains vulnerable to the effects



TOUTES LES PHOTOS / ALL PHOTOS: *Requiem pour un glacier* / *Requiem for a Glacier*, 2013, vidéo HD à deux canaux / two-channel HD video, 40 min, MBAM / MMFA

from the initial performance. As rising temperatures are translated into musical notes, soprano Veronika Hajdu is pictured walking in slow motion, taking step after arduous step across the glacier's surface. At more than one point in the video, a black rectangle appears overtop time-lapse footage of the mountain range, like a censor-bar blocking access to the image. In one instance, the shape slowly expands to fill the

centre of the screen, filmed from behind, against the immensity of the mountain range – a *rückenfigur*, contemplating not only the awesome environment but, perhaps, its precarious future.

Although *Requiem for a Glacier* is included in the MMFA show, it is displayed in a separate wing of the museum. Visitors are therefore able to immerse themselves in the installation while also considering it in relation to the

of global warming, and Walde's installation remains evocative and arresting. The dispute over the glacier range encompassed, but often overrode, Indigenous territorial and spiritual claims. The projection of such a distinctly Christian and European lamentation as a Latin requiem onto sacred Ktunaxa territory raises additional issues that cannot be avoided. That being said, Walde's rooting of the score in both ancient

Euro-Christian traditions and contemporary Canadian politics is potentially productive for evaluating the divergent interests, importance, and emotions ascribed to particular environments.

1 T. E. Hardy, “Requiem for a Glacier Mourns Climate Change Loss,” *Canadian Art* (January 2014), <https://canadianart.ca/reviews/paul-walde-requiem-for-a-glacier/>. 2 Trevor Crawley, “Jumbo Valley to Be Protected, Ending Decades-long Dispute over Proposed Ski Resort,” *Nelson Star* (January 18, 2020), <https://www.nelsonstar.com/news/jumbo-valley-to-be-protected-ending-decades-long-dispute-over-proposed-ski-resort/>.

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Paul Walde
Requiem pour un glacier

L’oratorio en quatre mouvements *Requiem pour un glacier* de Paul Walde a été joué pour la première fois en juillet 2013 sur un glacier de la vallée Jumbo, en Colombie-Britannique, ou Qat’muk, nom que lui donne la Première Nation Ktunaxa, gardienne d’origine de la région. Au moment de la prestation, l’ancienne zone glaciaire était menacée directement, tant par les changements climatiques que par un projet immobilier, alors que la construction d’une station de ski (aujourd’hui annulée) avait été entérinée par le gouvernement provincial malgré

l’opposition d’environnementalistes, de résidents locaux et des Ktunaxa. Interprété pour les glaciers par cinquante musiciens et en présence de trente membres de l’équipe de production, l’événement a été décrit dans la presse comme une protestation, un hommage et, bien sûr, une expression de tristesse. Pour un espace considéré comme sacré par les Ktunaxa, la grandeur du geste du requiem est à la fois appropriée et discutable en cela qu’il honore l’importance spirituelle de la région, mais dans un langage et une tradition historiquement imposés sur des territoires autochtones.

Des séquences de l’événement ont été par la suite incorporées dans une installation vidéo éponyme, dans laquelle l’oratorio s’accompagne d’enregistrements sur le terrain; la documentation visuelle est complétée par de longs plans du paysage, des vignettes individuelles des interprètes et des effets temporels et visuels qui font écho à l’urgence dramatique de la pièce musicale. L’installation est présentée au Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal dans le cadre de l’exposition

immobilier; le troisième mouvement est tiré de données sur les relevés de températures dans la région de 1969 à 2010, le tempo accéléré reflétant les températures en hausse; le dernier mouvement associe l’instrumentation à un bourdonnement qui imite la présence d’un réseau électrique. Les quatre mouvements sont animés par la vidéo d’une manière qui distingue l’installation de la performance initiale. Alors que la hausse des températures est traduite en notes de musique, la soprano Veronika Hajdu est représentée marchant au ralenti, franchissant difficilement, pas après pas, la surface du glacier. Plus d’une fois dans la vidéo, un rectangle noir apparaît au-dessus de la séquence de la chaîne de montagnes, comme une barre de censure bloquant l’accès à l’image. Dans un cas, la forme s’étend lentement pour remplir le cadre; dans un autre, une timbale évoque le tonnerre qui accompagne un orage. Des enregistrements d’eau qui dégoutte et coule sont intercalés dans la partition; c’est sans doute ce son de fonte qui est le plus mélancolique.

musée. Les visiteurs peuvent dès lors s’immerger dans l’installation tout en faisant le parallèle avec les préoccupations climatiques plus larges abordées dans l’exposition. Au moment de sa première représentation, en 2013, l’œuvre était directement liée à la politique régionale du moment. En janvier 2020, après un litige de trente ans, la construction du projet immobilier controversé a été abandonnée définitivement. Les Ktunaxa ont noué des partenariats avec le gouvernement et des organismes environnementaux pour préserver la région, la Première Nation étant de nouveau responsable de l’intendance et de la conservation². Malgré ces changements politiques, la région demeure vulnérable aux effets du réchauffement climatique, et l’installation de Walde reste évocatrice et saisissante. Le litige entourant la chaîne de glaciers a englobé les revendications territoriales et spirituelles des Autochtones, lesquelles ont aussi souvent été bafouées à cette occasion. La projection d’une complainte si distinctement chrétienne et européenne qu’un requiem en latin sur le territoire sacré des Ktunaxa soulève des enjeux supplémentaires qui sont inévitables. Cela dit, l’enracinement par Walde de la partition tant dans les anciennes traditions eurochrétiennes que dans la politique canadienne contemporaine est potentiellement utile pour évaluer les intérêts divergents, l’importance et les émotions imputables à des environnements particuliers. Traduit par Marie-Josée Arcand

1 T. E. Hardy, « Requiem for a Glacier Mourns Climate Change Loss », *Canadian Art* (janvier 2014), <https://canadianart.ca/reviews/paul-walde-requiem-for-a-glacier/>. 2 Trevor Crawley, « Jumbo Valley to Be Protected, Ending Decades-long Dispute over Proposed Ski Resort », *Nelson Star* (18 janvier 2020), <https://www.nelsonstar.com/news/jumbo-valley-to-be-protected-ending-decades-long-dispute-over-proposed-ski-resort/>.

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Capture Photography Festival 2021

Vancouver
April 1–30, 2021

It’s impossible to review the Capture festival, a rambling aggregation of events in Vancouver that celebrate photography, as a whole. Here, I focus on public art billboards and the major festival commission.

Billboards are of a scale to command attention in the urban landscape. Works by Anique Jordan are located on Expo Boulevard along the Northeast False Creek inlet, set in the hardscape of viaducts and concrete towers. The two

images, on the front and back of a single billboard, first appear as black-and-white abstractions. But if you’re walking or stopped at the light, you can see the highlights and contours of dark skin and a wisp of tightly coiled hair. These images are the most understated of the 2018 *Darkie* series pairing stark white planes and a black female body. The works are defined by contrasts – white, hard, unyielding/black, organic, vulnerable – and so unsettle the abstraction

they evoke. Jordan talks about her artwork as haunted, “patronized by what cannot be represented.” In this time and place, the billboards quietly both indict loss and proclaim presence in relation to the patriarchal space of development, the history of art, and the imperative of Black Lives Matter. The most notorious of the Capture billboards this year were a series of seven images by Vancouver artist Steven Shearer situated on a walking and bike