

Art and the Environment

Contemporary Art from the Ulrich Museum of Art Collection

Social and Environmental Justice



Carolina Caycedo

Columbian, born in United Kingdom, 1978

A Gente Rio (We River), 2016

Video, 29:30 min.

2018.26

[Click here to watch on Vimeo](#)

Carolina Caycedo

A Gente Rio (We River) is part of *Be Dammed*, an ongoing project begun in 2012 by Carolina Caycedo, as she describes below.

In Indigenous cosmogonies of the Americas, all bodies of waters are connected. Rivers are the veins of the planet, their waters associate communities and ecosystems. *Be Dammed* investigates the effects that large dams have on natural and social landscapes in several American bio-regions. More than 250 large hydroelectric dams are projected or under construction by transnational corporations in Latin America, signifying the transition of public bodies of water into privatized resources. At the same time, the U.S. is the leading country in dam removal, allowing for the restoration of river ecosystems. In *Be Dammed*, aerial and satellite imagery, geo-choreographies and audio-visual essays intersect social bodies with bodies of water, exploring public space in rural contexts, and conjuring water as a common good.

Carolina Caycedo (1978), is a London-born Colombian artist, living in Los Angeles. She participates in movements of territorial resistance, solidarity economies, and housing as a human right. Carolina's artistic practice has a collective dimension to it in which performances, drawings, photographs and videos are not just an end result, but rather part of the artist's process of research and acting. Her work contributes to the construction of environmental historical memory as a fundamental element for non-repetition of violence against human and non-human entities, and generates a debate about the future in relation to common goods, environmental justice, just energy transition and cultural biodiversity.

Additional Resources:

[Artist Talk: Carolina Caycedo at the Ulrich Museum of Art, March 2019](#)

[Carolina Caycedo webpage](#)

[Citizenship Through Art: A Conversation with Carolina Caycedo, *Sculpture*, February 17, 2020](#)



Clemencia Echeverri
Columbia, born 1950

Sin Cielo, 2016
Video, 11:12 min.
2018.8

[Click here to watch video](#)

Clemencia Echeverri

Clemencia Echeverri is one of an increasing number of artists that are focusing their attention on the effects of extractivism in Colombia. *Sin Cielo* talks about the unregulated mining which poses a deadly threat to nature, poisoning the waterways, and in so doing putting in peril the survival of entire communities - thus becoming a veritable social as well as environmental crime. As Echeverri describes *Sin Cielo*:

The landscape in the Caldense town of Marmato, Colombia, due to the excavation in gold mining, disappears like a mountain that touches the heights, to come down like successive voids without control or limit. A landscape turned into aggressive brands for which the toxic virus transits. A sore and restless territory. It's a dark and bleak landscape that surprises and paralyzes, because it is open, naked, exposed and stripped of its origin.

This action leaves cyanide and mercury marks, moves gray water, green water, leaving devastation and drowning. Leave the death of the landscape hanging by cables, debris, garbage and dense waters that seeped into environmental pollution in every way. It is a "ruin moral" that has profound effects on the important political, social and ideological dimension of territory.

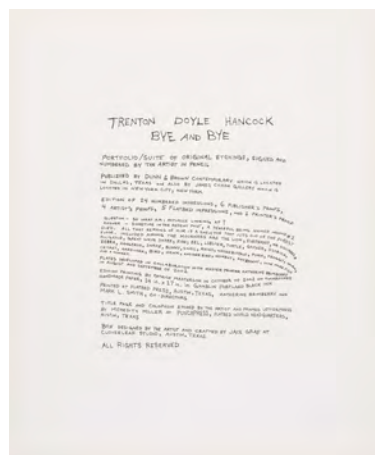
Clemencia Echeverri lives and works in Bogata. Clemencia Echeverri's (Salamina, Caldas, Colombia, 1950) work explores the political and social conditions of memory, loss and violence in Colombia utilizing a variety of media including installation, video, sound and interactivity, often setting a stage for an immersive experience. She completed undergraduate studies in Colombia and earned an MFA at Chelsea College of Arts, London.

Additional Resources:

[Clemencia Echeverri](#)

[Mining Columbian contemporary art: histories, scales and techniques of gold extraction, *Burlington Contemporary Journal*, May 2019](#)

Imaginative Fictions



Trenton Doyle Hancock
American, born 1974

Bye and Bye: 9 Sad Etchings
Etching
2003.21a-k

To access large images go to the [Ulrich Collection Portal](#) and search "Trenton Doyle Hancock."

Bye and Bye: 9 Sad Etchings is part of an ongoing epic that tells the story of the death of Mound #1 and the allegorical characters that inhabit the teeming universe imagined by Hancock since childhood—a group of creatures he calls "Mounds." Mound #1 is represented by a dead tree with a skeletal head in the print above. The other prints represent the animals, both predator and prey, who set aside their base instincts to gather to eulogize Mound #1. Their homage to the peaceful Mound #1 are provided by Hancock's handwritten texts filled with creative wordplay and humor.

Additional Resources:

[Art21: Trenton Doyle Hancock](#)

[Buzzworthy Artist Talk: Trenton Doyle Hancock at the Ulrich Museum of Art, April 2012](#)



Clive Smith

British, born 1967

Miro Thrush, 2019

Painting

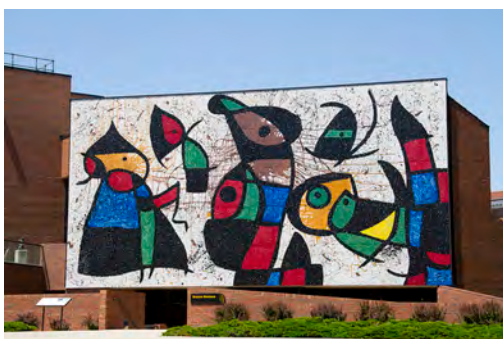
2019.3

At the Ulrich, Smith's *Miro Thrush* enters into direct conversation with our most iconic work, Joan Miro's *Personnage Oiseaux (Bird People)*, as a 21st century update on the Surrealist idea of crossing human and animal qualities. In addition to looking backward to landmark works of 20th century art, Smith's piece also looks forward in acknowledging nascent biotechnologies that promise to have a profound impact. Having this work in the collection allows us to open up conversations about species extinction, bioengineering, and the role that the arts and humanities, which often get at important truths through creating imaginative fictions, can play in guiding human aspirations and ethics needed for an ecologically responsible future.

Clive Smith was educated as an artist first in the U.K. at Kingston Polytechnic and then at the Art Students League in New York City, where he has resided since 1988. His work is held in several public collections, including the Cleveland Museum of Art, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, and the National Portrait Gallery in London. Smith's recent paintings are rooted in close observation of the natural world. In his on-going series *Speculative Birds of America and Europe*, he images living things that do not yet exist—birds crossbred with notable works of art—and brings them to life in vivid detail. Handwritten text inside the book reads:

Miró Thrush (Turdus Chittes et constellations)

A Transgenic Bird scientifically bred splicing together the DNA of the Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) and comparing the genomes of Joan Miró's painting *Chittres et Constellations amoureux June femme (Ciphers and Constillations [sic] in Love with a Woman)*, June 12, 1941 from his Constellations series of 23 small paintings. Through editing the germ-line of the Song Thrush with the painting a new Breed of Thrush has been generated in Captivity and released into nature. The Miró Thrush is adreamy poetic bird. The Thrush Navigates at night by the stars and is drawn to nest near Musical Venues. The Miró Thrush Migrates between Paris and Spain and can be spotted in Normandy and Mallorca. On a clear night The Miró Thrush can be seen staring all night at the Moon.



Joan Miro, *Personnage Oiseaux (Bird People)*, 1977-78. Ulrich Museum of Art facade.

Human Interaction and the Landscape



Gerco de Ruijter
Dutch, born 1961

WPR 04, 2015
Photograph
2016.6



Gerco de Ruijter
Dutch, born 1961

WPR 06, 2015
Photograph
2016.8



Gerco de Ruijter
Dutch, born 1961

WPR 05, 2015
Photograph
2016.7

Dutch artist Gerco de Ruijter was the Ulrich Underground artist-in-residence in the summer of 2015. Based in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, de Ruijter has spent much of his career documenting open landscapes of the Netherlands and Iceland, as well as many trips to the American Southwest. The view of his subject is most often from above, with images unconventionally captured while skillfully piloting a kite or fishing rod. With the help of Google Earth, de Ruijter has also turned his creative attention to agriculture—especially the crop irrigation circles so familiar to anyone passing through the arid high plains. Working in video as well as still image photography—and Photoshop manipulation of Google Earth images—de Ruijter captures the subtle variations of landscape altered by human intervention over time. While in Wichita, de Ruijter continued his aerial observations of the land. He launched a new project that examines "grid corrections" along Kansas county boundaries, represented in the images above. Our human imprint on the rural landscape is at the center of de Ruijter's photographic works.

The Ulrich exhibition of de Ruijter's photographs produced during his 2015 residency also included his 2012 stop motion film, *Crops*, created from Google Earth images of center pivot irrigation in the USA. Although not acquired for the Ulrich collection at that time, it is a stunningly beautiful visual experience that "shows the landmarks man leaves on our tiny planet" and raises awareness of the impact this system of irrigating circular fields of crops in semi-arid environments has on our vast aquifers and river systems.

[Click here to watch *Crops* on Vimeo.](#)

Additional Resources:

Gercoderuijter.com

[Large aerials of "Crops" experiment with new dimension in landscape photography, Washington Post, March 12, 2015](#)

[Art + Science: Gerco de Ruijter, *LENS/CRATCH*, September 21, 2017](#)



Terry Evans

American, born 1944

Green Watering Hole, Aerial, July, from the series
Matfield Green, 2009
Photograph
2011.12



Terry Evans

American, born 1944

Wetland Drained, from the series *Inhabited Prairie*,
1991
Photograph
2011.14

After spending eight years photographically exploring the fragmentary but still extant undisturbed prairie in Kansas, I came to a stopping point. It wasn't that I was bored with its intricate life, its sensuous colors and textures of grass, wind, and sky. It was just that I had photographed it to the limits of my vision. It was only the pristine prairie ecosystem that interested me then. -Terry Evans

Terry Evans' project statement on Ancient Prairies: Since 1978, all of my work is connected by an abiding interest in and love for prairie. This interest began more than forty years ago when I photographed the Fent prairie, an 80 acre virgin prairie near Salina, Kansas, where I lived. I explored Fent and other prairies for the next eight years, which introduced me to the wondrous balance of an undisturbed ecosystem, and has informed all of my work to date. In *Ancient Prairies*, I'm visiting prairie remnants once again. In late May, I went back to the Fent prairie to photograph its intricate botanical complexity after having photographed the effects of fracking in North Dakota and petcoke pollution in Southeast Chicago, which both showed human disregard for land and its people. I'm deeply disturbed by our seeming inability to confront the current and impending disasters of our intensive fossil fuel overuse and the climate change our lives are provoking. This work is about remembering the wisdom and beauty of intact prairies. It is about SEEING them. These prairies would not exist without human care, and *Ancient Prairies* serves as a tribute to the kinship between humans and nature.

The prairie ecosystem has been a guide for Terry Evans since 1978. She photographs the prairies and plains of North America, the urban prairie of Chicago and landscapes threatened by climate change. Combining both aerial and ground photography, she delves into the intricate and complex relationships between land and people, especially recently where local people's landscape is threatened by corporate industrialization. Her current work is about ecosystems-prairies, oak savannas, dune and swale-that have been restored by human care. She has recently been photographing a three-hundred year old Bur Oak tree in Chicago.

Additional Resources:

Terryevansphotography.com

[Artist Talk: Terry Evans at the Ulrich Museum of Art](#)

[KCUR on Terry Evans](#)

[NRDC on Terry Evans](#)