

A grayscale topographic map of the world, showing landmasses and ocean depths. A red line originates from the left edge of the frame and points towards the Pacific Northwest coast of North America. The map is set against a dark gray background.

when we dig, things come up

Daniel Peltz

16 februari - 18 march



"God made these mou



contains of iron ore.

LIST OF WORKS

1/ The Journey of Mount Nameless
performance / video document - 30 minutes - 2014

Acknowledgements:

Co-written with 鍾敬生 Ching-Sheng Chung

Associate producer Jiyun He

Produced in collaboration with:

新竹市國劇研究協會 Hsinchu City Opera Research Association &

台中國劇演藝團 Taichung Chinese Opera troupe

2/ when we dig, things come up
ink brush painting series - 103cm x 50cm x 3 panels - 2014

Acknowledgements:

Chinese landscape Painter - 張亦足 Chang Yi-Tsu

Mount & Frame - 林義桓 Lin Yi-Huan

Interpreter - 張榕容 Chang Jung-jung

Assistant - Jiyun He

3/ Inventory of narrative fragments extracted from Tom Price
work on paper - 2014

4/ Tom Price: The Opera
poster / performance artifact - 100cm x 56cm - 2013

all works courtesy of the artist

when we dig, things come up

If there is one significant lesson that globalization has taught us (and there are in fact many more lessons of this kind that are being persistently denied or unacknowledged), it is that, in truth, nothing can be so remote that we (anyone of the inhabitants of the world today) are irreducibly separated from it. The illusion of an irreducible separation can only be maintained as long as money is invested in creating and maintaining bubbles (and in securing their walls), as long as histories that concern us all – and in which we are implicated, in our different ways – remain concealed or erased.

- Ioana Jucan [Performance Scholar]

When we dig, things come up contains artifacts from a public artwork produced in Tom Price, Western Australia from 2013-15 by the American artist Daniel Peltz as part of the SPACED biennial of social practice. Peltz was commissioned to spend two-months in residence in the town of Tom Price and to make a work that was informed by his experiences in this remote iron-ore mining company town. He responded to this charge by developing a 'narrative mining industry'. Over the course of his time in residence, Peltz extracted a series of narrative fragments that explore the complex relationship between this town (that bears the name of the U.S. industrialist and mineral prospector, Thomas Moore Price), the now abandoned U.S. steel company and steel manufacturing facility that he worked for outside of Los Angeles (Kaiser Steel) and the contemporary industrial town of Baotou in China's Inner Mongolia (where the Kaiser steel mill was relocated after the bankruptcy of the American company).

The basis for this project comes from an engagement with the transnational flow of people and resources that makes up Tom Price's brief history and Peltz' own sense that the Spaced 2 commission, and his arrival as an artist-in-residence in Tom Price, was something of a re-enactment of the American engagement with

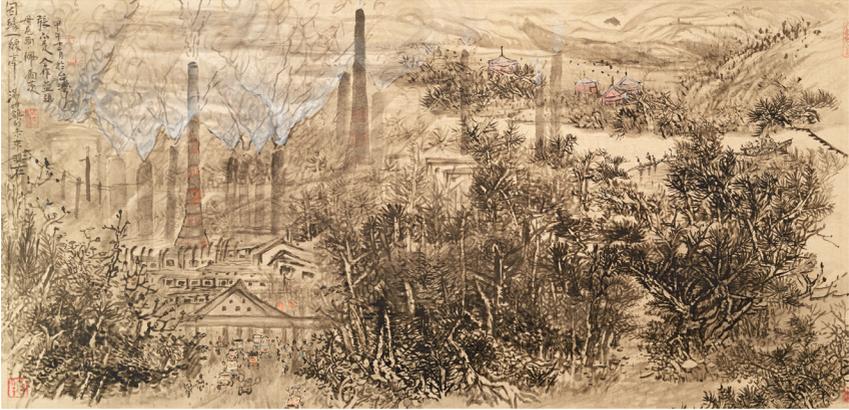
this place, a further mining of the site. Peltz developed a range of extraction and transformation strategies for activating the story of the two Tom Prices, the man from the California Steel Company and the town/mine. He then sent the narrative fragments he extracted from Tom Price to the Peking Opera director Ching-Sheng Chung (following the trade routes of the iron-ore), who Peltz commissioned to ‘process them into a traditional Peking opera’. The commissioned opera was then transported back to Australia for a public performance in the town of Tom Price. For the exhibition of this project at the Western Australia Museum in Perth, Peltz added to the work by commissioning the prominent Chinese landscape painter Chang Yi-Tsu to ‘process the narrative fragments into a series of Chinese landscape paintings’.

The exhibition features a video of the opera performance, the landscape series and an email containing the raw narrative fragments.

Biography

Daniel Peltz is an artist and educator. Through his site-responsive projects and media installations, Peltz explores social systems, attempting to provoke ruptures in the socio/cultural fabric through which new ways of being may emerge and be considered. To accomplish these goals, he uses a range of intervention, ethnographic and performance strategies. His projects often take the form of existing social systems [instant messaging protocols, karaoke bars, political campaigns, parking regulations, etc.] to directly engage non-art audiences in the language of critical art practice.

Since 2009, alongside his art practice, Peltz has been co-directing the artist-run organization Rejmyre Art Lab, along with Sissi Westerberg. Through this organization, dedicated to long-term, place-based research, they host groups of artists to engage in ensemble research and facilitate a post-MFA fellowship program for recent graduates from a selection of Nordic and Baltic art and craft academies. Rejmyre is a rural glass factory town in the Östergötland region of Sweden.



extracts from an email interview between Sheridan Coleman and Daniel Peltz while Peltz was in the process of making *when we dig, things come up*:

Introduction – on the quandary of relaying an art ‘project’ as opposed to an art ‘object’

Sheridan Coleman - This project is a long-term one in which the research may play as important a role as the ‘event’ at the end. Is your work a process rather than an event?

Daniel Peltz - I’m not sure I would call it either a process or any event. I like when things happen and exist tenuously in between categorizations and I like objects that perform their function in a similar manner. I try to craft multiple points of engagement within any project. There is an action, or series of actions, and then there is some artifact of this action. I’m interested in the process of documentation being integrated into the work, so that an action documents itself. I’m also invested in this documentation serving, at least equally, the actors who created it and those who observe it from outside the action.

SC - If so, what aspects of the project fall into the ‘interior’ or ‘artist-only’

category, and which are the parts which you consider to be active, or that you will show? (i.e. – where is the art at?)

DP - As to what is interior and exterior, I try to remain open to the porosity, if not outright false dichotomy, of these categories. I find that the more fully I do this, the more connections reveal themselves and the closer I get to learning something I didn't already know. Of course, there is still a process of editing. The choices of editing are a mix of the mind and the other senses, I try to allow room for both to express themselves.



Section 1 – On interpreting history

SC - Whose perspective is this project coming from? What are the key aspects of the ‘Daniel Peltz Paradigm’ that inform what you are bringing to this residency?

DP - I don't want to become a paradigm, I'm alive and thus changing. I'm making the directorial and editing choices, even if these are being influenced by many people and interactions, so in some critical sense, the project is coming from my perspective and I try to acknowledge that. This project tells a story of Tom Price,

an American man who flew over this region of Western Australia where I currently find myself, in the 1960s. He was full of a lot of big ideas and aspirations that served himself and others, and had an impact on the place. I chose to focus on him and to think of my insertion into the history of Tom Price, as a resident artist, as a sort of re-enactment of his engagement. I am invested in finding ways of problematizing the role of art and my own role within a work, locating myself and the work inside the problems we are investigating with our particular and partial awareness.

SC - Your project involves a number of 'characters' who live in Tom Price, or exist in its history or in your future work with the town. What part do you play within or around this narrative?

In interpreting the history of a place, there is involved some perception of having a responsibility to address all parties, all issues and to account for minority voices. Given that your work borrows from historical narrative, how will you address these expectations?

DP - I'm sure I won't do so adequately;) I'm not looking to write "the" history of Tom Price. I'm living a life and writing a story; those processes are always impacted by a broad range of interactions. In terms of inclusiveness, I accept as many invitations and requests as possible, in whatever forms they come. I am drawn to the role of artist because it allows this to be a legitimate research methodology, as unsatisfying as it might be to those invested in measuring and quantifying notions of inclusiveness or diversity. Of course, working in an Australian context, the questions around aboriginal land rights and to some extent 'narrative' rights is ever present and extremely important. As I adopted the role of Tom Price, who took little responsibility for these rights, I didn't see taking that kind of responsibility as a critical aspect of creating this work. It's not important to me that I play a likeable character, just that I find a role that overlaps in some important way with the other roles I am cast in. By adopting the role of Tom Price, I am exploring relationships: the early mineral prospectors and the current multinational mining corporations ways of relating to this place and its 'resources', the miner-in-residence vis-a-vis the

artisti-in-residence and the fly-in-fly out mining worker vis-a-vis the fly-in-fly out artist worker.



Section 2 – On the theatricality of mining and heavy industry

SC - Brief update on how things are looking with the opera event

Aspects of this opera proposal suggest that you read mining processes as equivalent or synonymous to human narratives. Is this an exchange between the drama of human history and the drama of the landscape?

DP - There is certainly a lot of emotion, contained and released, in the scale and scope of the actions required by mining, and in the people who perform those actions. The logic and reason of industry attempts to mediate this emotion but there is always excess. I'm mining that excess.

SC - How important has scale become in your artistic gestures, considering the size of the process of mining and the internationality of the project?

DP - Scale and material transformation are important to most artists. Social scale is an important part of the way I think and work, what happens when a peripheral action is offered in a central location, a group action becomes that of an individual, when something deemed private becomes a public movement?

I've done some work around tourism and have found myself drawn to industrial tourism narratives. The narrative of mining is often marketed to tourists based on shock and awe: the overwhelming scale of the machinery, the scale of the resource extracted, the raw monetary scale. The information presented is beyond comprehension and yet is presented pedagogically. There is an aspect of this that is quite clearly strategic, as it is in battle, designed to obscure the underlying complexities of the act of mining. But I'm interested in other functions of this state, as a kind of opening to seemingly impossible possibilities. The scale of mining is like the scale of the universe, it provides perspective and forces us to lose perspective.

SC - What are the nuances and characteristics that helped you choose opera as an appropriate medium to enshrine the story of Tom Price with? And, what departures will you be making from that tradition?

Chinese Opera is embedded in the landscape of China as iron ore is embedded in the Australian landscape. I'm looking to extract this resource from China, to dig it up and bring it to Tom Price in order to tell a story of the

DP - The choice of opera was intuitive. Chinese Opera is embedded in the landscape of China as iron ore is embedded in the Australian landscape. I'm looking to extract this (cultural) resource from China, to dig it up and bring it to Tom Price in order to tell a story of the town. The story being told is what I will change but many other things will change along the way, based on the extraction, transport, processing and distribution network; in this case, composers, musicians, singers, funders, sponsoring institutions etc. Chinese opera, like iron ore, seems solid but it is the result of many years of pressure and transformation and is still in flux. What would iron ore have become if we'd left in the earth for another million years instead of transforming it into steel?

Chinese opera, like iron ore, seems solid but it is the result of many years of pressure and transformation and is still in flux.

SC - Is your residency in some way a performance?

DP - Performance can be a helpful framework for thinking about any action if it gives us greater insight into those actions and expands our sense of agency. My residency is no more of a performance than a wedding or a birth or a walk to work... which is to say, yes, it is a performance.



Section 3 – The itinerancy of the resident artist & the nature of FIFO (Fly-In-Fly-Out) in Tom Price

SC- How has being in situ altered your work? What has the landscape dictated?

DP - Being in Tom Price has grounded me in the natural and social landscape of the place. Elements of both these landscapes have entered the work. As very direct

examples, there are fragments that feature workers betting on horses, as they do at the local pub, and I'm working on a landscape painting, with a Chinese landscape painter, that features many elements of the social and political landscape.

SC - What expectations does the role of Tom Price Resident Artist engender?

DP - There is significant ambiguity in the role of resident artist outside of specifically coded artistic contexts. I am curious about the expectations people might have of my role and the role of art in their lives. The ways I work are unfamiliar to most people here. Sometimes things are asked of me, usually design and documentation work. Depending on my schedule, I enjoy engaging in those processes for the ways they develop my relationship to the place and the social access they provide. It is interesting to be in a position to give freely of your labor in a place where so many people come to have their labor valued.

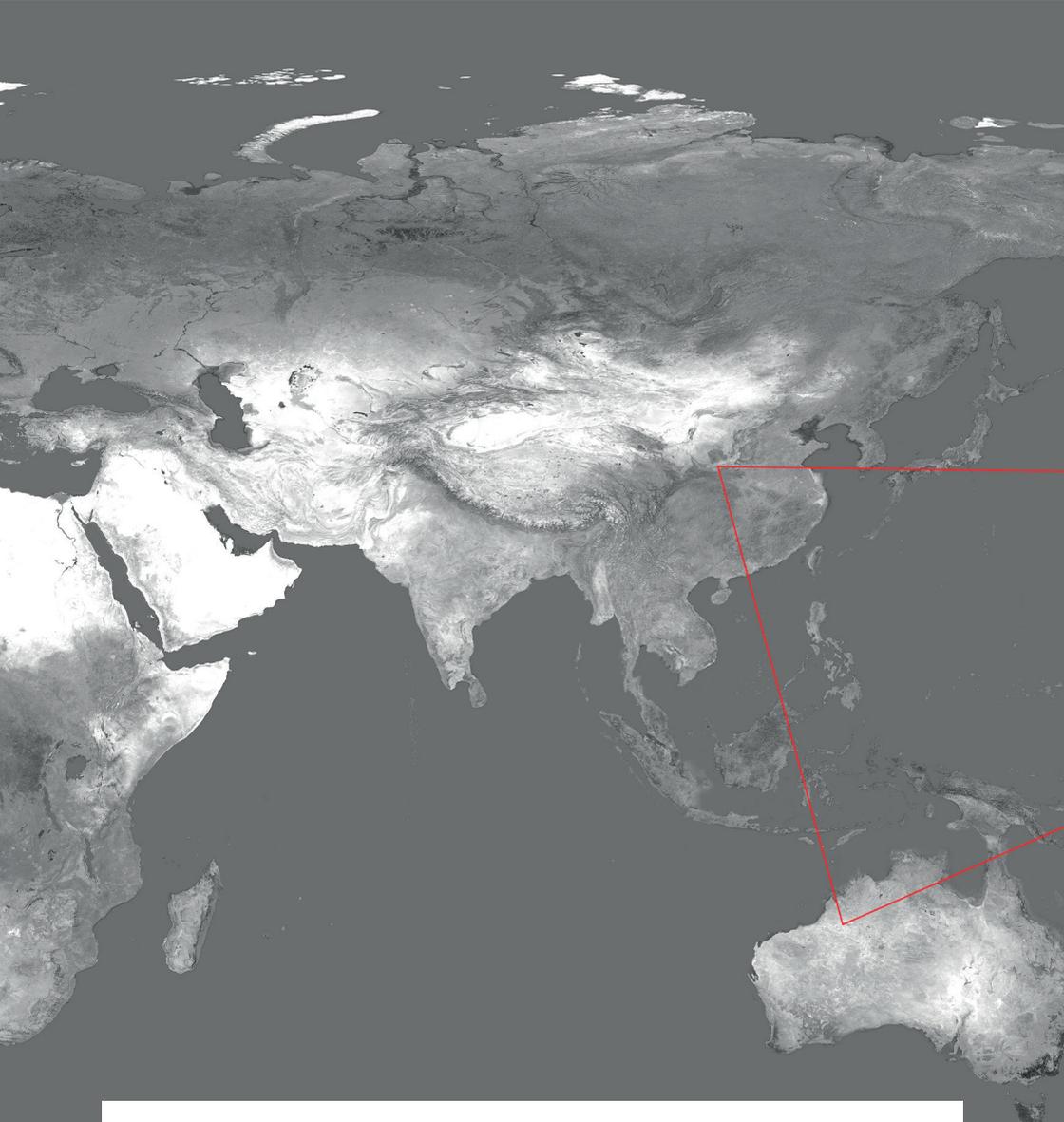
SC - Given the dominance of FIFO workers in the population, is your goal to create a work that outlasts them or which synchs in with their temporality? Have you resisted or harmonized with the fact that you are a short-term resident?

DP - The population of Tom Price, while transient, is not largely FIFO. There is a strong contingent of resident workers and Rio has made an effort to get people to bring their families here. The town has several schools and other attempts to provide the infrastructure to sustain a family life. I see the work as something that exists for the current population of the town and lives on as a narrative of something that happened here, something that is embedded in the landscape, but also, hopefully, as a story of relevance here and beyond.

That said, I've very much harmonizing with my status as a temporary resident. It's part of what drew me to Tom Price, the unusual way in which the status of everyone as a 'temporary resident' is naturalized in this context makes it an interesting place to reconsider some of the assumptions in social practice art around the relationship between an artist who is residing in a place and other residents.

Informational text panel, likely a title or description of the artwork.





BOX

Galleri Box
Kastellgatan 10
411 22 Göteborg

tisdag–fredag 13–17
lördag–söndag 12–16
Fri entré

www.galleribox.se
info@galleribox.se
+46 (0)31 13 20 37

Galleri Box stöds
av Göteborgs Stad
och Kulturrådet.