

REIMAGINING FIRE: THE FUTURE OF ENERGY



EVELINE KOLIJN, editor
Durvile & UpRoute Books
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Review by Margaret Tessman

“We need stories by the fire—essays, poems, art, fiction, all of it—to help guide and inspire us.”

—Chris Turner, author of *How to Be a Climate Optimist*

Eveline Koliijn is a visual artist, mainly working in printmaking and digital media, with a focus on biodiversity and climate change, specifically as they relate to marine life. With her 2020 project, *Tidelectics*, she followed in the tradition of print portfolio production with a collaborative letterpress work of essays and images. Koliijn lived in Curaçao in the Caribbean, where she connected with marine biologists and other printmakers, who shared their expertise in the creation of the portfolio.

“I decided I would like to do the same thing in Alberta, but looking at the regional energy transition sector,” says Koliijn. The result is *Reimagining Fire: The Future of Energy*, a portfolio and book that bring together science and art to examine topics



Eveline Koliijn, *Transition Prism*, constructed etching.

related to climate change, the oil industry and transitional energy.

Koliijn is a fellow with the Energy Futures Lab (EFL), a member of the Natural Step Canada network, a non-profit that fosters cross-sector initiatives and advisory services supporting the integration of sustainability within organizations. Natural Step describes itself as “part of the ‘radical middle’ in Alberta.” The organization works toward energy transition in a feasible way by engaging government, oil companies, academics and entrepreneurs.

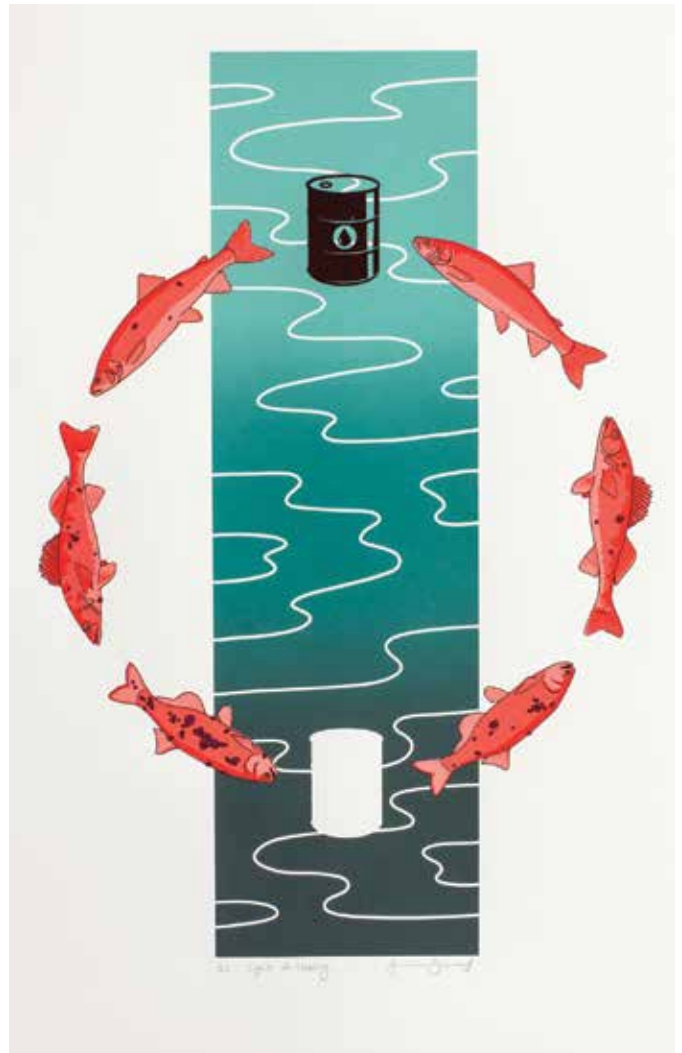
Koliijn pitched her portfolio premise to the EFL of using art as a different angle from which to look at the issues, and secured funding for the project from them and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. Her first step was to put out a call for submissions via her networks. She eventually narrowed the contributors to 20 printmakers, who were paired with 20 specialists who would each write a one-page essay.

Zoom meetings during the spring of 2020 introduced the contributors to their colleagues but getting 40 people together working electronically was an impossibility. Kolijn instead asked the writers to do a short presentation on their areas of expertise and “everyone started creating,” she says. “I created a rigorous framework for the process but within that contributors were free to do what they wanted.”

The artists experimented with an eclectic mix of subject matter and media including fabric, 3D construction and plastic for their prints, while the writers produced multifaceted stories that went beyond just fossil fuels and transitional energy and into the impacts on fish, water and soil. One ecologist in the group knew a publisher, Lorene Shyba, who was interested in turning the portfolio into a book. Kolijn submitted a proposal, which would expand the written sections. “I suddenly became an editor,” she says. “I asked for help and feedback from the authors. It was hectic, but we got it done.”

Jessica Semenoff is an emerging artist living and working in Calgary whose work is included in the portfolio and book. A nature-based artist originally from Rossland, Semenoff has produced commissions for murals in Fernie, Trail and Kimberley. “Living in the Kootenays inspired my love of nature,” she says.

Semenoff responded to the call for submissions for the project and was paired with a writer who sent her a number of poems. “I chose one that resonated with me about fish in the Athabasca



Jessica Semenoff, *Cycle of Healing*, screen print, 13x19 inches.
Photos: Eveline Kolijn

River.” She was given the opportunity to speak to individuals in the environmental industry about toxins and the ability of the environment to heal itself. The result is “Cycle of Healing,” an eight-layer screen print.

The 13-by-19-inch portfolio prints and one-page essays were produced in a small run: one for each artist, two to circulate for gallery shows and two to cut up and assemble into folders each writer received, containing an original print, relevant text, portfolio cover and author bio page. VISAC Gallery in Trail will host an exhibit of the prints in March, and copies of the book will be available for sale.

Kolijn hopes that the book can be “a small drop to raise awareness and educate. People are afraid that there are no other options for Alberta beyond oil and gas and no one is trying to get a good dialogue going. We should panic, but not believe that there’s nothing to be done. The middle ground is the interesting ground versus denialism and uncertainty.”

Check visacgallery.com for the upcoming exhibition schedule.

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