

ATMOSPHERIC APPARITIONS

PARTICLE POLLUTANTS - DUST, ASH, SMOG AND SMOKE

An exhibition
and collective
conversation

UBC Geography x
UBC Liu Lobby Gallery

July 21 - Sept 26,
2025



*Credit: Still from "Dust Test #1"
Animation created by Alina Debyser*

EXHIBITION + MINI-SYMPOSIUM

Exhibition: July 21 - September 26, 2025

Mini Symposium September 18-19, 2025

Booklet Design by Tam-anh Nguyen

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Particle Pollutants - Dust, Ash, Smog and Smoke

An Exhibition and Collective Conversation at UBC Geography

About the Exhibition:

The spectral glow of particles surrounds the gallery. Smoke pushes in from outside, dust collects in the corners of the room. Suspended or grounded, inert or mobile, Atmospheric Apparitions invites viewers to contemplate particulate pollution created from dust storms, wildfire smoke, smog, and infrastructural residues. This group exhibition reveals the ways that UBC Geographers, students, staff, and faculty alike are engaging with themes of volumetric space, (im)materiality, and the elemental through a range of media – from landscape painting, to sculpture, zine-making, and through salvage practices and found objects.

Contributing Artists

David Adams

Alec Blair

Judee Burr

Kaitlin Chen

Marysa Lague

Alyssa Mawussi

Tam-anh Nguyen

Anna Pontin

Claire Sianna Seaman

Estraven Lupino-Smith

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Acknowledgments

Curation and Production Team:

Alina Debyser

Gillian Der

Tam-Anh Nguyen

Matthew Phan

Prof. Desiree Valadares, UBC Geography

With Ellinee Nelson, UBC Liu Lobby Gallery

Funding

This work is supported by SSHRC Insight Development Grant, the Liu Lobby Gallery at SPPGA and UBC Public Humanities Hub.



Mini-Symposium Schedule for September 18-19, 2025

DAY 1 – Thursday, Sept 18, 2025

Creative, Arts-based, and Cultural Geographies of Atmospheres

Welcome and Day 1 Introductions

- 10am **UBC Geography Contributing Artists - Pecha Kucha**
Moderator - Gillian Der (UBC Geography MA student)
Location: GEOG 229
- 11am **Dr. Sasha Engelmann (Royal Holloway, ULondon) Morning Lecture (via Zoom)**
Lecture Title “Artistic Experiments with Heat’s Atmospheres and Animacies”
Respondent- Judee Burr (UBC Geography PhD candidate)
Location: GEOG 229
- 12pm **LUNCH + Discussion: Arts-based and Creative Methodologies in Geography with Dr. Javier Arbona (UC Davis)**
Location: GEOG 215D
- 2-4pm **BREAK**
Self-Guided Tour of the Belkin Outdoor Art or the Musqueam House Posts
Visit the Museum of Anthropology – Rebecca Belmore: Value
Visit the Belkin Museum - Abbas Akhavan: One Hundred Years
Visit the Beaty Biodiversity Museum or the Pacific Museum of Earth
(Free Admission w/ UBC ID)
- 4pm **Light Refreshments and “Atmospheric Apparitions” Exhibition**
Location: Liu Lobby Gallery and Courtyard
- 4:30pm **Dr. Javier Arbona (UC Davis) Evening Lecture + Book Discussion**
Explosivity: Following What Remains, UMinnesota Press, 2025
Lecture Title: “after explosivity, what remains?”
Respondent: Peter Hudson (UBC Geography)
Location: Liu Institute- Room Place of Many Trees
Lecture Co-Sponsored by Public Humanities Hub

6:30pm - END OF DAY 1

DAY 2 – Friday, Sept 19, 2025

Critical Cartographies and Environmental Histories of Toxicants / Pollutants

Welcome and Day 2 Introductions

- 11am **Dr. Elsa Noterman (Queen Mary, ULondon) Morning Lecture**
Lecture Title “Counter-cartographies of Atmospheric Trespass”
Respondent Bella Pojuner (UBC Geography PhD student)
Location: GEOG 229
- 12pm **LUNCH + Mini-Lecture and Teach-in: Environmental Histories of Contaminants with Dr. Jessica Varner (UPenn)**
Facilitation: Tam-anh Nguyen (MA student, UBC Geography)
Location: GEOG 229
- 2pm BREAK
- 2:30pm **Dr. Melina Packer (UWisc-La Crosse) Afternoon Lecture + Book Talk**
Toxic Sexual Politics: Toxicology, Environmental Poisons, and Queer Feminist Futures, NYU Press, 2025
Lecture Title: “Toxicant Masculinity: Chemical Gaslighting and Toxicology”
Respondent: Estraven Lupino Smith (UBC Geography PhD student)
Location: GEOG 229
- 3:30pm **UBC Geography Artists Demos + Workshops**
Organizer: Gillian Der (MA student, UBC Geography)
Facilitation: Tam-anh Nguyen (MA student, UBC Geography)
Option 1: Plein Air Painting: Alec Blair
Option 2: Cooking Section: James Pangilinan + Sisi’s - Global Asias and Environmental Justice
Location: Geography Courtyards

5pm - END OF DAY 2

Speaker Profiles - Day 1



SASHA ENGELMANN (Royal Holloway, ULondon)

DAY 1 Sept 18; 11am-12pm GEOG 229

“EMERGING CULTURAL GEOGRAPHIES OF HEAT: Artistic Experiments with Heat’s Atmospheres and Animacies”

Sasha Engelmann is a London-based cultural geographer and creative practitioner. Her research centres on long-term collaboration with artist-activist communities; through these collaborations she develops arts and humanities-led tools for environmental knowledge making, and advances the field of the geohumanities. She is co-founder (with Soph Dyer) of the feminist satellite imaging project open-weather. Sasha is Reader in GeoHumanities at Royal Holloway University of London where she teaches at the intersection of geography and the arts and humanities.



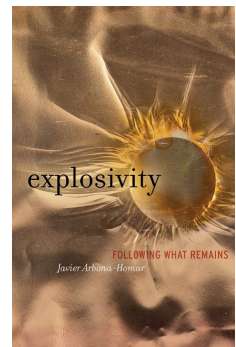
JAVIER ARBONA (UC Davis)

DAY 1 Sept 18; 12pm-2pm GEOG 215D +

4:30-6pm – Liu Institute’s Place of Many Trees

“AFTER EXPLOSIVITY, WHAT REMAINS?”

Javier Arbona-Homar is a Puerto Rican geographer and an Associate Professor with a dual appointment in the departments of American Studies and Design at the University of California, Davis. He is an experimental scholar focusing on the emerging field of explosivity studies (how, when, and where things do, or do not, blow up—and why). He researches the spatial politics of landscapes shaped by explosions—or the latent potential thereof—and the racial conditions of explosions. For over a decade, he has also collaborated with the demilit collective on geofictions, soundscapes, and critical walking tours.



Day 1 Guest Speaker - Moderators and Facilitators:

Gillian Der (MA Student, *UBC Geography*)

Judee Burr (PhD Candidate, *UBC Geography*)

Peter Hudson (Associate Professor, *UBC Geography*)

Day 2 Guest Speaker - Moderators and Facilitators:

Bella Pojourner (PhD Student, *UBC Geography*)

Tam-anh Nguyen (MA Student, *UBC Geography*)

Estraven Lupino Smith (PhD Student, *UBC Geography*)

Speaker Profiles - Day 2



ELSA NOTERMAN (University of Nottingham)

DAY 2 Sept 19; 11am-12pm GEOG 229

"COUNTER-CARTOGRAPHIES OF ATMOSPHERIC TRESPASS"

Elsa Noterman is an Assistant Professor in Human Geography at the University of Nottingham. Her research considers questions related to everyday collective struggles over land and housing. She draws on critical legal, feminist, decolonial and antiracist theories of property and social reproduction, as well as her background in community organizing, public education, and community development. Elsa's research bridges conversations in the social sciences and humanities, and draws on qualitative, critical cartographic, and participatory research methods.



JESSICA VARNER (University of Pennsylvania)

DAY 2 Sept 19; 12pm-2pm GEOG 229

"THINKING LIKE A CHEMICAL, TEACH-IN AND WORKSHOP"

Jessica Varner, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Landscape and Environmental History at the University of Pennsylvania. Her work explores the intersections between synthetic chemicals, design histories, toxicities, and environmental advocacy. She is a trained architect and has worked collectively with two non-profit organizations, the Environmental Data & Governance Initiative (EDGI) (researcher and steering committee member since 2019) and Coming Clean (toxics-free coalition member since 2022), to center justice in toxics policy and turn research into action.



SPEAKER PROFILE: MELINA PACKER (UW-La Crosse)

DAY 2 Sept 19; 2:30-3:30pm GEOG 229

"TOXICANT MASCULINITY: Chemical Gaslighting for the Undoable Science of Toxicology"

Melina Packer is Assistant Professor of Race, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse, on Ho-Chunk Nation land. She received her PhD in Society and Environment, with a Designated Emphasis in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, from the University of California, Berkeley, on the unceded land of the Chochochenyo-speaking Ohlone. Her research interests include queer feminist and anticolonial science and technology studies, antiracist animal studies, critical public health, and environmental justice. She is author of *Toxic Sexual Politics: Toxicology, Environmental Poisons*, and *Queer Feminist Futures* and co-author of *Feminism in the Wild: How Human Biases Shape Our Understanding of Animal Behavior*.

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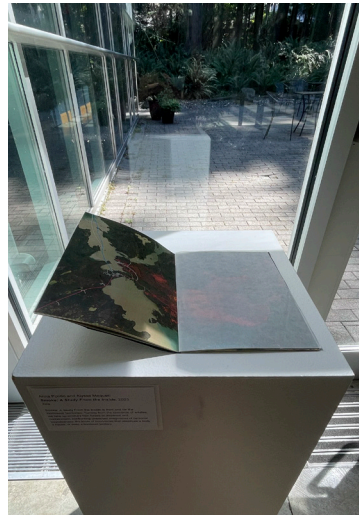
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Liu Lobby Gallery at SPPGA



Photographs by Tam-anh Nguyen and Desiree Valadares, August 2025

Contributing UBC Geography Artists

David Adams

Found Footage: Spectres of Environmental Change, 2025

Archival Photographs on Paper

Found Footage: Spectres of Environmental Change reanimates discarded teaching slides of cloud formations and industrial pollution. Smog and sky coalesce in ghostly convergence, blurring boundaries between natural and human-made atmospheres. The work reflects on memory, material decay, and questions whether we can still recognize environmental harm when it takes on the appearance of nature itself.



David Adams is a researcher and consultant in geomorphology. Originally from Melbourne, Australia, he moved to Vancouver to pursue graduate studies at UBC. David has a passion for history and film photography, using visual storytelling to communicate complex environmental issues and explore the intersection of natural systems and human impact.

Contributing UBC Geography Artists

Alec Blair

Sunset, Sunshine Coast, 2017

Oil on Panel



These paintings were sketched outside in various locations in Western Canada, depicting landscapes tinted and shrouded in the increasingly common wildfire smoke present in our summers. Like so many activities, the pollution and haze that this brings alters and challenges practices in outdoor painting, limiting and sometimes precluding opportunities to practice.

In these works, are two ways that the haze of smoke may be understood: how it changes the scenes in an aesthetic sense, altering our perceptions of colour and distance, and how it pervades our idealized conceptions of the landscape, and insists upon an agency in our consideration of the environment depicted.



Howe Sound from Murrin Park, 2023

Oil on Panel

Alec Blair is a Lecturer in the Geography Department at UBC, who grew up and currently lives in Vancouver. Human-environment relations, including exploring how painting intersects with ideas of 'Nature' in the Anthropocene, are areas of academic interest, supplemented by an enthusiasm for oil-painting outside on site.

Contributing UBC Geography Artists

Judee Burr

Challenging, beautiful bioregion, 2021

Photograph and podcast

This episode of the podcast *Listening to Fire Knowledges* in and around the Okanagan Valley takes us into the challenges of living in an area that experiences wildfires. Memories of wind-fueled flames, the fearful adrenaline of evacuation, the comfort of gathering in the aftermath of loss, and the intermingling residues of anxiety and appreciation are some of the apparitions that circulate through this sonic history. This podcast was published in the journal *BC Studies*. It was created on unceded Syilx Okanagan territory.



A link to Episode 2: “Challenging, beautiful bioregion,” From the podcast *Listening to Fire Knowledges* in and around the Okanagan Valley. See the full podcast at the *BC Studies* “Podcasts and New Media” page or search the podcast title on your favorite podcasting platform to find the episodes.

Judee Burr studies the history of governing wildfire risk in western North America. She is pursuing her PhD in Geography at UBC.

Contributing UBC Geography Artists

Claire Sianna Seaman

Humanity Needs Nature; Nature Needs Humanity, 2025

Oil on Canvas

Understanding how to care for one another is crucial to a healthy relationship. The natural world already knows how to do this for humanity, but in the age of settler-colonialism, many communities must re-learn reciprocity. Look back, empower and follow Indigenous leadership. Because humanity needs nature, and nature needs humanity.



Claire Sianna Seaman is a painter, filmmaker, and printmaker who seeks to share and cultivate community-based climate solutions through art. She holds a BA in Studio Art and Climate Change studies from Smith College, and is currently earning her MA in human geography at UBC.

Contributing UBC Geography Artists

Marysa Lague

Assiniboine Sunset, 2024

Acrylic on Canvas

Mount Assiniboine sits on the Continental Divide on the British Columbia – Alberta border. This painting shows the north face of Mount Assiniboine, with Sunburst Peak in the foreground.



Marysa Lague is a climate and atmospheric scientist, and is an Assistant Professor in the Geography Department and the University of British Columbia.

She studies how the land surface modifies the rest of the coupled Earth system, and develops and uses numerical models of the Earth to explore how water and energy influence surface temperatures, cloud formation, and atmospheric circulation, from the scale of a single plant to the scale of the entire planet. When she isn't writing computer code or hiking, she paints mountain landscapes with acrylics on canvas.

Contributing UBC Geography Artists

Kaitlyn Chen

you must imagine the rain, 2025

Umbrella, string, watercolour, many hands

Dust: irritant, nuisance, debris, dirt, to be swept away or under the rug.
dust, too: rays of sunlight, Saturn's rings, cloudy days. Without dust, there is no rain and no snow, no blue sky, and no pearls. You must imagine the rain. Please do.



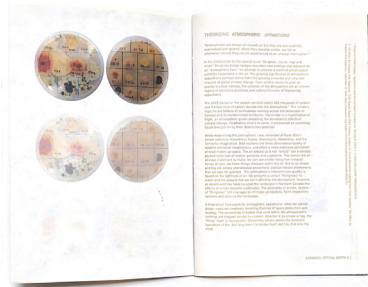
Kaitlyn Chen is an undergraduate human geography and philosophy student at UBC, living on unceded Musqueam First Nation land. She thinks often of what it means to live a beautiful life, and wants you to find your own answer to that question as much as you can.

Anna Pontin and Alyssa Mawussi

Smoke: A Study From the Inside, 2025

Zine

Smoke: A Study From the Inside is from and for the Northwest Territories. Turning from the spectacle of wildfire, we take up smoke's twin forces of dispersal and containment, confronting cherished imaginaries of personal boundedness: the kinds of boundaries that constitute a body, a house, or even a bordered territory



Anna Pontin and **Alyssa Mawussi** are students working in the unceded territory of the Musqueam people. Alyssa is an interdisciplinary artist and writer whose work can often be located at the intersection between migratory politics and environmentalism. Anna is a resident of the Northwest Territories and her connections to Yellowknife ground her interest in environmental and temporal theory.

Tam-anh Nguyen

Mnemic I.III, 2025

Wood, Ash, Char, Anemometer, Aluminum, Ink



This woodblock carving transposes the structural and atmospheric histories of the Great Vancouver Fire that swept through the city on June 13, 1886 onto salvaged wood. The Granville township, outlined through the squares chiseled onto the block's surface, had only been established a few months prior, before being reduced to ashes in the span of 45 minutes. Documentation through oral testimonies detailing the rescue efforts of the Squamish first responders of Eshhá7an; 1885 fire insurance plans of the Granville township located on the South shore of the Burrard Inlet; and elemental depictions of the fire, smoke, ash, wind, and particulate that swept through the community overlap to form an artifactual rendering. Once pressed, the hollowed out buildings, canoes, and atmospheric residue leave no visible trace on the resulting woodblock print.

Special thanks to the Department of Theatre and Film's scene shop for donating the wood used in its recent stage production of *The Arsonists*.

Special thanks to Devin for work on the aluminum armature, Adam for additional assistance and the Department of Geography's geomorphology lab for the donated aluminum materials used in previous physical models for testing sediment transport.

Tam-anh Nguyen takes a research based approach to designing objects and installations that create opportunities for (re)encountering the temporal continuities of our surrounding geological and geopolitical landscapes. Informed by her experience in archival documentary filmmaking and critical design, Nguyen carries this practice into her current studies, as she pursues her M.A. in the department of Geography.

Contributing UBC Geography Artists

Estraven Lupino-Smith

Felt/Gort, 2024

Wool yarn, rovings, sheep fleece, sheep locks, various wool pieces

A field is a site of cultivation. There are fields of crops, livestock, oil, coal. A field is a way to see land, a way of assigning and extracting value. This piece exists in tension, materially mapping extraction with Norwegian wool as it relates to North Sea oil production.



Originally from Tkaronto, **Estraven Lupino-Smith** is a PhD Candidate in Geography at UBC currently residing on WSÁNEĆ and Lekwungen territories. Their work explores human and more-than-human relationships, using weaving as a creative and collaborative method to engage with the cultural, political, and ecological ways that power creates and re-creates terrains.

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