

Layered Time: Naoe Suzuki- On Land

Artist Statement

Extinction Studies: 2019 - ongoing

In my [Extinction Studies](#) series, I research maps of the Adirondack region and trace animal names from the maps for my drawings. These animals made their marks on the maps as names of places, such as “Eagle lake,” “Little Otter Pond,” “Buck Mountain,” “Beaver Brook,” “Salmon River,” and so forth. I was fascinated when I found that there were many places that bore animal names in the Adirondacks, and began to look for these earthly creatures on the maps. I paint in India ink except for these names which are left as blank paper by carefully painting around the letters. Floating in a sea of blackness, these names appear as tiny speckles from afar and begin to resemble stars in the sky.

Maps tell a story. In addition to the animal names, intricate decorative borders and ornate calligraphy lettering used for a title on the 1869 map, and the grid systems all tell us something about history and our relationships with the place.

These animals found on the maps, while some of them no longer exist or are in danger in this region, remind me that we are all temporary tenants of a habitat. Water, land, animals, and humans—we are all interconnected. Even though I’m looking back in history, I’m really saying something about the future of our environment and our relationship with land.

About the Adirondacks:

I fell in love with the Adirondacks ever since I visited there in 2005, and became fascinated with the natural beauty of the region and its history over the years. I became interested in the historical view of wilderness by Americans and how that view has evolved, and what wilderness means to us now. The early European settlers did not find the Adirondacks beautiful, but rather they were frightened by the vast untamed wilderness.

Once inhabited by Indigenous people and wildlife, the Adirondacks was not so different from the rest of the New World and the European settlers saw it as a place of opportunity with profitable natural resources to be exploited.

Shown as a blank space on a 1771 map, the Adirondacks was unknown and unexplored by the early Europeans in colonial America.¹ But by 1850, European settlers had destroyed enough of the Adirondack forest. The quality of watershed was declining due to the deforestation and it became a growing concern for the public. It was not just the lumber industry, but also the tanning, paper, and charcoal industries that chopped up trees as if they were an infinite resource, which affected the Adirondack watershed. In 1885, the Adirondack Forest Preserve was created by the public outcry over the declining water quality and the deforestation of the land due to heavy commodification of natural resources. Today’s Adirondack Park, a six-million acre parcel of public and private lands, was established in 1892 to protect the region from uncontrolled deforestation, and it remains as protected lands to this day.²

¹ Adirondack Mountain on Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adirondack_Mountains

² Adirondack Park on Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adirondack_Park