

Re:examining landscape

By Robert Tombs

The exhibition *New Topographies: Barry Pottle & Leslie Reid*, held in the Upper Gallery, 50 Sussex Drive, Ottawa from March 2 to 16, 2025, combined digital photographic images by Inuk artist Barry Pottle and Settler artist Leslie Reid. Their work alluded to two epistemologies – of Western scientific method with its observations, hypotheses, and conclusions – and Indigenous holistic beliefs, comprised of more experiential knowledge and a deep connection to the natural world. As intersecting methods of critical enquiry, however, it is difficult to assess to what extent these divergent belief systems impacted each artist's work or overflowed onto the other's.

In *New Topographies*, Pottle and Reid each presented a photographic record of a climate change-imperilled hydrographic system¹, Reid in the Saint Elias Mountains of Yukon Territory, and Pottle in urban Ottawa. By isolating aspects of landscape in this way, they sought a 'truth' which situates their work within in the documentary tradition – a genre which is typically focused on direct observation – but Reid and Pottle's images are also intended as aesthetic expressions – in line, shape, form and colour – and this permits us in the traditional sense to consider them 'Art'.

It is also important to note that Barry Pottle – an Ottawa-based Inuk artist originally from the coastal Labrador village of Rigolet, Nunatsiavut – was invited by Ottawan Leslie Reid, RCA to exhibit

¹ Hydrographic or hydrosatial networks are datasets containing representations of surface water features. These features can include lakes, reservoirs, rivers, streams, islands, glaciers, ice fields, snow cover, obstacles (e.g., waterfalls) and constructions (e.g., dams, wharves, dikes).
<https://natural-resources.canada.ca/science-data/data-analysis/geospatial-data-tools-services/hydrographic-networks>

alongside her in *New Topographies*, a consequence of their longstanding friendship and respect for each other's work.

In recent years, greater public attention has been given to the genocidal proclivities of Settler society and why not? The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 'Calls to Action' was an extraordinary initiative led by the late judge and senator Murray Sinclair, created to correct past, present, and even future injustices. But there are also many commonalities between Settler and Indigenous peoples – for example, the activity of 'making' – even though equal access to tools as mediated by the wage economy is decidedly not one of them.²

Prior to the invention of photography in 1839, images were most-often drawn, painted, engraved or carved. First analogue, and then digital photography represents the industrialization of image-making, which impacted both its method of manufacture, and the quantity that can be produced. Walter Benjamin famously argued in 1935 that, " ... in even the most perfect reproduction, one thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art – its unique existence in a particular place."³ None-the-less, 'making' is at the root of social existence, regardless of epoqe or ethnicity. Yet, the digital images of Reid and Pottle, mediated by technology, are still emblems of human perception.

In Susan Sontag's 1977 collection of essays *On Photography*, she writes that "In teaching us a new visual code, photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe. They are a grammar and, even more importantly, an ethics of seeing." Photographs also include the embedded though not necessarily

² "Research has shown that Inuit, as well as Métis and First Nations people, have experienced significant disparities in the labour market. These inequalities are reflected in lower employment and participation rates, and higher unemployment compared to the non-Aboriginal population."

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-653-x/89-653-x2019003-eng.htm>

³ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 21.

clear motives of their makers, and can be edited by skilled retouchers such as those Stalin used to airbrush away official enemies, or by Photoshop. And while widely-accepted as documents of truth photographs might alternately be tokens of falsity. Moving beyond the territory of 'the self' that many artists are anchored to, Reid and Pottle, in the work of *New Topographies*, manage the abovementioned risks to formulate cogent and ethical 'responsibility statements' about global warming for dissemination to 'the other'.

Ice into art

In 2022, Reid was invited to join Dr. Luke Copland, Associate Professor in the Department of Geography, Environment and Geomatics, University of Ottawa, and his graduate students on their annual maintenance trip to the Kluane Icefields, Yukon Territory and in particular to the Lowell Glacier, Yukon Territory, a significant 70 km-long valley glacier system within the Saint Elias Mountains of Kluane National Park and Reserve. Dr. Copland's extensive work includes monitoring changes in environmental conditions across the Saint Elias Mountains and includes recording of glacier terminus positions and downstream water flow.⁴

Reid's *New Topographies* works, derived from her role as an observer on this trip, were presented as both wall- and floor-mounted Giclée images printed on brushed aluminum, of scenes of the Icefields and in particular of the Lowell Glacier. Reid writes: " ... the underlying theme ... is ice, in images from the air and ground of glaciers as they form and flow in every direction from their source in the Kluane Icefield. The images speak to the effects of diminishing ice on the

⁴ E-mail correspondence with Dr. Copland, June 18, 2025

geographies of the Arctic.”⁵ Nàlùdäy, the Southern Tutchone name for Lowell Glacier, sometimes replaces the Settler designation, especially in scientific and park literature. With intentionally minimalist titles – such as *Lowell Glacier: Surface* (2025) and *Lowell Glacier: Surge* (2025) – each work evokes the plainspoken language of scientific classification taxonomy. Whether Nàlùdäy or Lowell, Reid’s *New Topographies* glacial images represent a compelling though understated case study of the fragility of a hydrographic system.

In the nine-image matrix of *Kluane Science* (2025), Reid revisited the combinative format of her 2016 *Mapping a Cold War* exhibition at the Founders’ Gallery, Military Museums, Calgary. In this exhibition, she presented works derived from her tenure in the Canadian Forces Artist Program. During the residency, Reid and her camera travelled with the military throughout the North, following in the footsteps of her father who, as a young man with the RCAF, flew aerial mapping missions in the early years of the Cold War.

As a result of her Arctic trips, with the Canadian Forces Artists Program (2013), the Canada C3 expedition through the Northwest Passage (2017), the Arctic Circle Residency in Svalbard, Norway (2018), and University of Ottawa (2022), she expanded her painting and printmaking practice to incorporate northern themes expressed in still photographic image, photo installation, and video. This sudden course change enabled her to expand on her growing concerns about global warming and the history of Indigenous-Settler relations.

Reid’s vision presents as an ornate composite of humanist values. For example, her *Mapping a Cold War* exhibit included the video *Heartbeat*⁶

⁵ <https://www.lesliereid.ca/artworks-new-topographies.html>

⁶ “The trauma experienced by the families, left on the shore with no shelter or food, and their resilience in the face of such a violation of human rights, are symbolically represented by the fortuitous presence of the heart of a Greenland

with its fortuitously-captured footage of the heart of a Greenland shark, still beating hours after the shark had died. Remarkably, Greenland sharks can live up to 500 years⁷ and Reid intends the shark's heart, in *Heartbeat*, as a powerful symbol of Inuit resilience in the face of the displacements of the High Arctic Relocation of 1953–55, when Inuit families from Pond Inlet on Baffin Island, and Inukjuak on Hudson Bay were forcibly relocated to the more severe climates of Resolute Bay, Cornwallis Island, and Grise Fjord, Ellesmere Island. Four large 2016 photo assemblages, *Resolute: Mosaic*; *Kaskawulsh: Mosaic*; *Llewellyn: Mosaic*; and *Yellowknife: Mosaic* – comprised of her own aerial colour photographs intermixed with historic black and white aerial photographs from the National Air Photo Library – were attached directly to the gallery walls, completing the *Mapping a Cold War* installation.

In moving from painting and printmaking's more labour-intensive artisanal processes to digital photography's more immediate results, she has migrated towards new subject matter, climate and social justice. With this shift Reid has retained the machinations of high craft, still present but repurposed. In *New Topographies*, she implicates 'the daguerreotype', a pioneering early 19th-century photographic process which presented a direct-positive image on a polished and silverized copper plate. This remarkably resulted in daguerreotypes that seemed to levitate over their reflective substrate. In Reid's Nàlùdäy images of ice, Daguerre's mirror-like surface is exchanged for a brushed aluminum plate, to impart a metallic essence that mimics a glacier's translucent surface. In this sense, her Giclée prints, created with a digital SLR camera, are still

Shark, still beating hours after the shark died after being attacked by another shark." <https://lesliereid.ca/video-heartbeat.html>

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenland_shark

very much material objects created within an informed aesthetic register.

The modernist, even utopic Upper Gallery space at 50 Sussex that hosted the work of *New Topographies*, while “... white, clean, artificial [and] devoted to the technology of esthetics ... ”⁸ benefitted from multiple ‘real’ views through the gallery’s wrap-around showcase windows. In revealing scenes of the planar white ice surface of the Ottawa and Gatineau rivers and the half-frozen Rideau Falls beyond, this proverbial ‘white on white’ *mis-en-scene*, fused together conceptually, elegantly isolated both artists’ voices, offering a didactic explication of the importance of preserving interconnected hydrographic systems.

An understanding of the methods and chronology of Reid’s approach to landscape can help contextualize one’s understanding of the range and evolution of approaches that she has contributed to art’s landscape ‘canon’. Reid’s educational trajectory – of thinking and making – started at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario where she studied art history and political science. She went on to study painting and printmaking in London, UK at the Slade School of Fine Art, Chelsea College of Art, and the Byam Shaw School of Art. Studying art history and living in London during the late ’60s and early ’70s further exposed Reid to the works and legacy of British Art which includes painter Joseph M.W. Turner’s revelatory incantations of light. Whether acknowledged or not, Reid has inherited some of this tradition. The subtly-modulated colours of Reid’s *Cape Pine: The Station* (2011), now in the AGO Collection, reduce a deeply-felt landscape of fog draping Newfoundland’s barely discernable Cape Pine Fog Alarm Station to a virtual colour-field study arguably influenced by the astonishing late

⁸ Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (San Francisco: Lapis Press, 1986), 15.

works of Turner which presaged Abstraction by roughly 75 years.⁹ By foregrounding paint itself as the preeminent narrative, the literal and the typical fall away. Other painted works by Reid, like *Llewellyn I 59°04'N; 134°05'W* (2014), similarly assert that Reid has been a skilled practitioner within the landscape tradition but has not been constrained by its tropes or perceived limitations. Her migration to photography and video eloquently express this.

Romanticization of Canadian landscape has contributed significantly to Canada's somewhat undeserved reputation as a purist utopia. Images such as *The Icebergs*¹⁰ (1861), American painter Frederic Church's response to the search for the missing Franklin Expedition crew; *Icebergs, Davis Strait* (1930) by founding Group of Seven painter Lawren Harris, and the silent and somewhat fictional 'first documentary', *Nanook of the North*, directed by Robert Flaherty (1922), have helped stimulate this geo-exoticism.

As Petra Halkes has written in her 2015 *Border Crossings* review of *Glacial* at Galerie Laroche/Joncas in Montreal, "The North continues to be a flashpoint for conflicting interests of sovereignty, resources and preservation, inevitably affecting the lives of Northern peoples. Reid joins a roster of Canadian artists, including Inuit artists, who have contested the myth of a unified Nature of the North as a screen that silences the multiplicity and complexity of the peoples and nature who are a living part of it."¹¹

⁹ The Swedish painter Hilma af Klint is considered to have created the first abstract painting in her Stockholm studio in 1906, although for many years the first abstract painting was accepted as a watercolor, signed and dated '1910' by Wassily Kandinsky. <https://artsandculture.google.com/>

¹⁰ Considered one of Church's 'Great Pictures' – measuring 1.6 by 2.8 metres – the painting depicts icebergs in the afternoon light of the Arctic. It was first displayed in New York City in 1861, where visitors paid 25 cents' admittance to the one-painting show. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Icebergs

¹¹ <https://bordercrossingsmag.com/article/leslie-reid>, 2015

Physical Canada's accepted stature in the world's romantic imagination departs significantly, however, from institutional Canada's true legacy as a colonial oppressor and carbon emitter. While still one of the most-sought destinations for tourists and immigrants, Canada is among the top four oil producers worldwide, based on the latest published data.¹² And with this comes a substantial carbon footprint that perpetually eludes inclusion in glossy travel literature.

Romanticization is clearly far from Reid's intention. Though presented on the surface as visually-pleasing images, the potent backstory of *New Topographies* is the assertion that coal, and then oil – as tools of colonial expansion – have fuelled far more than conquest. Reid has written, "I was interested in how the scientists in the field provide us with the information we have on climate and climate change. The floor piece mimics the cold hard surface of the ice with the brushed aluminum panel were a way of foregrounding the environments and habitations I was visiting."¹³

Though Reid has received attention through exhibitions in museums and galleries across Canada and inclusion in important collections, her greatest ambition is to disseminate eloquent forewarnings – in the landscape tradition – of the perils of colonialism and by extension, global warming. These gestures are ultimately invested with an urgent sense of the importance of water to the collective community of species.

From Rigolet ... to Ottawa

Leslie Reid's co-exhibitor, Barry Pottle, was born in Rigolet, a remote coastal Labrador community established in 1735 by the

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_oil_production

¹³ Leslie Reid, in e-mail correspondence with author Sept. 16, 2025.

French-Canadian merchant, explorer, and seigneur, Louis Fornel. Though Pottle now describes himself as an “urban Inuk photographer,”¹⁴ he is informed by his earliest years in Rigolet where traditional Inuk practices encompassing hunting and fishing, dance, and storytelling prevailed. After several moves, first from Rigolet to Happy Valley-Goose Bay at age seven, then to St. John’s, Newfoundland and then Kingston, Ontario, he arrived in Ottawa. In the ’90s, Pottle studied in Carleton University’s Aboriginal Studies program where he took a variety of courses including art history where he had the opportunity to reflect on official ‘art’ both as a concept, and ultimately, a career.

Pottle has spoken of unsatisfactory attempts at drawing cartoons, stone-carving and writing poetry before discovering photographic image-making. The innate recording capacity of photography seemed immediately well-suited to Pottle’s proclivity to observe his environment.¹⁵ As inauspicious as it might sound, his first foray into photography was the result of acquiring an analogue Canon camera with Club Z points from Zellers.¹⁶ After a year of experimenting with his Club Z acquisition, he graduated to a Canon digital camera. His interactions with Ottawa’s Inuit diaspora¹⁷ – and their complex relationship with the city – also greatly influence his work. His personal reflections on the Inuk community, the urban landscape, and indeed colonialism, have become the centrepieces of his art practice.

¹⁴ The term “urban Inuk photographer,” coined by Barry Pottle, was conveyed by Pottle to the author in an interview on August 15, 2025.

¹⁵ Barry Pottle, conveyed to the author in an interview on August 15, 2025.

¹⁶ Zellers was a Canadian discount store chain founded by Walter P. Zeller in 1931. Though the chain peaked with 350 locations in 1999, it eventually closed all stores by 2020.

¹⁷ ‘Diaspora’ is a socio-linguistic term referring to a variety of languages spoken by peoples with common roots who have dispersed from their homeland, under various pressures and often globally. Ottawa’s Inuit diaspora comprises approximately 3,000 people.

In his artist statement for *New Topographies*, Pottle wrote:

“When I started out, the concept of Urban Inuit was relatively new and mostly unexplored, and I have tried to give voice and reality to this concept. I use photography to explore cultural, social, and political themes that affect Inuit living in an urban setting. ... I try to stay connected with the community and, whether at a community event, cultural gathering, family outing or in the solitude of nature, I capture the essence of Inuit life in Ottawa Valley and beyond.”¹⁸

In Pottle’s Giclée prints of *New Topographies*, sharply-focused debris zones under the surface water of the Rideau Canal present subtle details of this 19th-century engineered waterway. Though the 202-kilometer canal route, built in several phases between 1826 and 1832 by Britain’s Corps of Royal Engineers and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is widely-considered an engineering feat, the construction of its system of 47 locks dramatically transformed the natural flow and function of the Rideau River and its system of inter-connected lakes which were critical for Anishinaabe hunting and fishing. As the bewigged British parliamentarians of the day did not seek the consent of the Anishinaabe whose territory they ordered transformed, the Rideau Canal system – which today supports popular travel and recreation activities – remains a ‘contested landscape’¹⁹ for First Nations peoples.

Hung along the East wall of the Upper Gallery with the backdrop of a frozen Ottawa River and Rideau Falls clearly visible through the

¹⁸ “Barry Pottle: Artist’s Statement” from the exhibition handout *New Topographies: Barry Pottle and Leslie Reid*, 2025.

¹⁹ Contested landscapes are geographic areas where different social groups, often with varying levels of power and influence, compete for control over the meaning, use, and representation of its territory.

gallery's large windows, Pottle's *New Topographies* suite of photographic ice details appear initially to be purely abstract forms. There is much more at play, however, than mere abstraction as they collectively provided a provocative reference point against which to study the riverine site adjacent to the gallery. *Bytowne I* and *Bytowne II* (both 2020) are Pottle's earliest photos of chaotic detritus along the canal. Initially Pottle had no greater intention in mind but as he took more photos and reflected upon them, it seemed as if a future project was being revealed. He has written, "I was thinking about the canal, its history and those who were involved in creating it so I titled them 'Bytowne', given the history of Ottawa and Colonel By's initial involvement in the project."²⁰

When Pottle first looked at the photo that became *Memories and Membrane* (2022), it brought back long-ago memories of his brother Derrick preparing a seal skin. The lines in the image reminded him of the skinning process after Derrick's *ulu* had scraped the fat off the outer membrane. Pottle intends the word 'membrane' here as a metaphor that invokes the strength of the Inuk community's connection to culture, traditional practices, food security and food sovereignty.²¹

In titling *Coco Canal* (2020), Pottle was responding to the dark colours and make-up of an ice image. The photograph also reminded him of times with his brother Danny when they worked together to gather and cut their own wood for heating the house and for cooking while *Spilt Barista (Flow)* (2020) was taken at the locks and dam at Long Island Park in the south end of Ottawa. While looking down at the idle part of the dam Pottle noticed a build-up of form and debris which

²⁰ Lieutenant-Colonel John By (1779-1836) was an English military engineer best known for having supervised the construction of the Rideau Canal and for having founded Bytown in the process which developed into the Canadian capital, Ottawa.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_By

²¹ Barry Pottle in e-mail correspondence with author Sept. 8, 2025.

reminded him of watching a barista in a coffee shop create swirling designs on the top of a coffee only to sometimes have it spill over the cup's edge. For Pottle, this flow was a reminder of the flooding of land. His associative responses to completed images remind one of a remark purported to have been written by Leonardo da Vinci: "Look at walls splashed with a number of stains, or stones of various mixed colours. If you have to invent some scene, you can see there resemblances to a number of landscapes, adorned with mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, great plains, valleys and hills, in various ways."²²

The floor-mounted image *What's Next* (2024) frames the last several locks of the Rideau system as a virtual staircase descending to the Ottawa River. Indeed, what is next?? The web site Indigenous Climate Hub writes, "An increase in sea-level will result in increased erosion and a loss of coastal ecosystems, including wetlands and spawning grounds for fish. Increased sea-levels will also impact the infrastructure and safety of coastal Indigenous communities [as] a result of increased risks from storm surges."²³ While coastal communities are in immediate danger of sea level rise, inland waterways such as the Rideau system are also at risk.

Pottle's subtly-subversive photographs of man-made debris along what he calls Rideau Canal's "dead zones"²⁴ are intended as documents which implicate the Settler-engineered waterway by which "Algonquin culture has been uprooted, dispersed, denied and forgotten."²⁵ In Pottle's invocation of memory – of the pristine constellation of lakes, rivers and streams that existed for many thousands of years prior to the

²² <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/978797>

²³ <https://indigenousclimatehub.ca/sea-level-rise/>

²⁴ Barry Pottle in e-mail correspondence with author Sept. 8, 2025.

²⁵ Barry Pottle in e-mail correspondence with author Sept. 8, 2025.

canal system's construction, but also of his youth in Rigolet – he essentially asks, 'what governs the re-engineered waterway now?' Money? Taxes? Clicks? Visitors? Boats? Pollution? Travel? Real estate opportunities?

Another of Pottle's projects helps build a fuller picture of his concerns as an urban Inuk photographer. In the *Awareness Series*, created between 2009 and 2011, his images of Eskimo Identification Tags presented the unique disc number system that was developed by the Government of Canada in the '40s and '50s as a means of identifying Inuit for census purposes. Eskimo Identification Tags were made of burgundy-colored pressed fibre and were similar in shape to a coin. Each Inuk was given a hole-punched disc which had a crown and "Eskimo Identification Canada" pressed onto one side, while on the obverse, an individual's unique number was stamped. These tags were simply referred to as 'disc numbers' and were required for any government interaction, including record-keeping of hunting and trapping results, medical services, education, housing, family allowance and getting food and supplies. The system was unique to the Inuit as no other Canadian was ever required to have a number to access basic services or to monitor their actions. This system was conceived as a remedy to a perceived inefficiency as Inuit did not traditionally have surnames nor did their names correspond to the European-style patriarchal naming convention of a first name always appearing with a shared family name.²⁶

Though the Eskimo Identification Tag system impacted Inuit communities and individuals in both positive and negative ways, the system itself was an early example of our present-day 'surveillance society' where virtually everyone is tagged 24/7 as a geo-locatable digital asset of the corporate and civic state. Yet, by subsuming the Inuit to a naming

²⁶ <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/inuit-disc-numbers>

system that aligned with Western convention, a colonial act of erasure was imposed. This classification regime summons memories of the Nazi tattoo numbers that were used at Auschwitz and other concentration camps, in which prisoners received a serial number tattooed onto their arms to replace their names. The tattooing of numbers was a way to both organize and dehumanize people, marking them as property rather than people. Of the *Awareness Series* as it appeared in the 2012 Ottawa Art Gallery exhibition *De-Colonize Me*, curated by Dr. Heather Igloliorte, John Fleming wrote, “Barry Pottle’s extraordinary photography tracks and produces through its technical processes and perspective its own digital origins, analogous to the tags, that turn numerical loss to digital gain...”²⁷

A companion piece to Pottle’s *Awareness Series* is Library and Archives Canada’s Project Naming which, over the past fifteen years, has provided a virtual space that enables First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities to access Canada’s historic photo collections and engage in the naming of heretofore anonymous people whose identities were never sought originally. This new initiative, which seeks to reverse the historically-dismissive attitude towards recording Indigenous names in government photographs and films, brings Indigenous agency to Canada’s history.²⁸ With this Library and Archives Canada initiative, the Canadian Government seems to be acknowledging that “The white saviour trope [has been] a deeply rooted [photographic and] cinematic lie that perpetuates the myth of white exceptionalism and ignores the complexities of marginalized communities.”²⁹

²⁷ John Fleming, “‘Eskimo Identification Tags’ in Arctic Canada,” *Ornamentum*, Winter 2016, 17.

²⁸

<https://canadiangeographic.ca/articles/the-power-of-a-name-every-picture-has-a-story/>

²⁹ Roxane Gay, “Bad Feminist,” quoted in Luba Soyey, “An Exploration of the White Saviour Trope in Movies: Hollywood’s Representation of Privilege and Power,” *Level the Playing Field in Development*, <https://www.lpfdevelopment.org/community-contributions/an-exploration-of-the-white-saviour-trope-in-movies-hollywoods-representation-of-privilege-and-power>

In expanding the body of images of authentic Indigenous self-recording, Pottle follows in the tradition of Peter Pitseolak (1902–1973), James Robert Andersen (1919–2011), Bob Mesher (1958–1921), and the currently-active Jimmy Manning (b. 1951), each of whom had or has a direct approach that differs¹

markedly from the Settler tradition of photographers of Indigenous culture influenced by the nineteenth-century Pictorialists and the photographs and films of Edward Curtis (*The North American Indian* [1906–1939]); Robert Flaherty (*Nanook of the North* [1922]); and the continuing white exceptionalist genre of Hollywood Westerns.³⁰

In *Do Glaciers Listen?*, author Julie Cruikshank, in writing about the glaciers of the Saint Elias Mountains which straddle the borders of British Columbia, Yukon Territory, and Alaska, states: “Athapaskan and Tlingit oral traditions attribute to glaciers characteristics rather different from those discovered through science. Glaciers have long provided travel routes that enabled human connections between coast and interior, and they are characterized by sentience. They listen, pay attention, and respond to human behaviour.... The historical and cultural crevasses separating Indigenous oral tradition from narratives of geophysical science seem so deep that they rarely connect. Yet, glaciers figure prominently in both conventions, and approaches sometimes collide unexpectedly in contemporary conversations about climate change.”³¹ Interpretations of ice, whether of the Lowell Glacier, or on the surface of the Rideau Canal, have indeed collided in Reid and Pottle’s works of *New Topographies*.

³⁰ There is no standard definition of the term, but in general it refers to a style in which the photographer has somehow manipulated what would otherwise be a straightforward photograph as a means of creating an idealized image rather than simply recording it. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pictorialism>

³¹ Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 25.

Clearly, the aestheticization of ‘the image’ or ‘landscape’ is not the artists’ greatest ambition. Rather, their intent is to provide a lens onto the consequences of industrialized society, and to show a path forward. The word ‘topography’ simply describes geological events – such as hills, mountains, valleys, rivers, and craters – within any given landscape. But how does one define a ‘new topography’? In Reid’s example, it is the present condition of a sub-arctic glacial system in the Yukon Territory, one that has been dramatically altered due to environmental change. Pottle, as an Inuk urban photographer, however, presents decidedly urban territory, the ice and debris of a ‘man-altered’ waterscape near his Ottawa home.

Each as an outcome of the Anthropocene,³² the human-derived ‘edits’ to Reid and Pottle’s hydrographic systems foreground the preeminent peril facing humankind – global warming – and by extension, the schism between those who accept the crisis brought on by increased greenhouse gasses and those who don’t. There are not enough column inches here to expand on the factors that keep the current extraction regime in place. In *New Topographies*, we have been alerted through the cross-cultural and empathetic strategies of Reid and Pottle – who, like glaciers, have listened – to the likely consequences of late-stage capitalist acts against all living things, including but not limited to, the survival of the swift fox, the wood bison, the woodland caribou, the eastern wolf, the peregrine falcon³³

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³³ From the list of at-risk species in Canada.
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Wildlife_Species_at_Risk_\(Canada\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Wildlife_Species_at_Risk_(Canada))