

MARISSA LEE BENEDICT

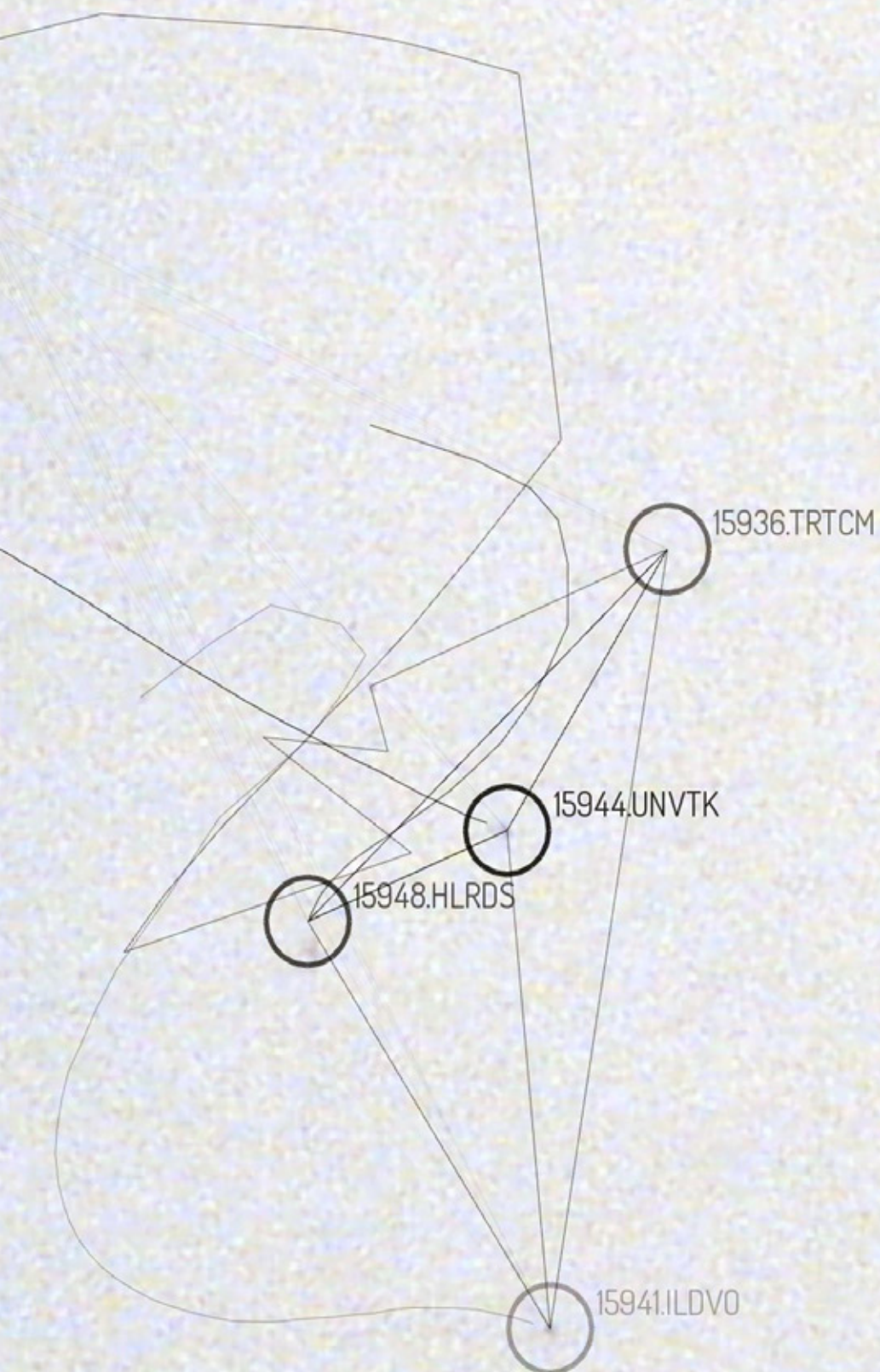
DAVID RUETER

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I CAN ONLY SEE SHADOWS

Museum of Contemporary Photography

2016



"...breathe as deeply as you will, dust will never be depleted."

-Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia*

*I Can Only See Shadows* is a three-channel video set in a troposphere awash in the byproducts of drilling, digging, fracking, cracking, and burning carbon-based fuels. Clouds of dusty molecules increasingly fill the air, irritating the nose and clogging particle filters: material records of energy histories.

Following the dusty, spiraling motions of particulate matter, *I Can Only See Shadows* erratically traces the logistical routes that petcoke (a dust-like waste product produced from refining bituminous sand) takes as it moves from its origin in Canada's Athabasca oil sands, through southeast Chicago (where it is processed and stored), to northern China (where it is burned as a low-cost alternative to coal). Weaving together narratives provided by artists, anthropologists, researchers in the "energy humanities," and environmental activists, the video projects a parallel world where liquid fossil fuels have been replaced by a new, dominant global energy source: untethered carbon particulate, which doubles as a medium for communication. The sparsely populated world, slowed by the sleepily violent interference of dust, envisions new forms of neoliberal labor where tiny particles are captured, scrutinized, and collected as data. Admist such an atmosphere, what new modes of resistance and interference might become possible or necessary?

*I Can Only See Shadows* was produced with contributions by Alejandro Acierto (concept, performance and sound), Jacqueline Drinkall (performance), Liz Ensz (concept and performance), Cameron Hu (performance), Adam Mansour (performance), Juan Luis Olvera (performance), Patrick Quilao (concept and performance) and Smart Air (location and performance).

Special thanks to: Heather Ackroyd; Christopher Baker; Olga Bautista; Rozalinda Borcilă; Edith Brunette; Stephanie Conaway; Michael Doerksen; Natasha Egan; Guy Etan; Terry Evans; Lindsey French; Snow Fu; Beate Geissler; Allison Grant; Dan Harvey; Brian Holmes; Karen Irvine; James Kinney; Lafarge S.A. and Jim Bachmann, Plant Manager; François Lemieux; Ernst Logar; Christopher Malcolm; Jennifer Matchett; Trina McQueen; Milad Mozari; Claire Pentecost; Phil Peters; Victoria Sambunaris; Smart Air: Anna Guo, Paddy Robertson, and Thomas Talhelm; Oliver Sann; Florence Twu; Jayne Wilkinson; and Jerry Zee.

Further information is linked here: [Petcoke: Tracing Dirty Energy](#). The exhibition included commissioned works by Marissa Lee Benedict and David Rueter, Rozalinda Borcilă, Terry Evans, Geissler/Sann, Brian Holmes, Claire Pentecost, Steve Rowell, and Victoria Sambunaris. The exhibition catalog features essays by art critic and cultural theorist Brian Holmes; the director of the NRDC's Midwest Program Henry L. Henderson; and community organizers and activists Olga Bautista and Alberto I. Rincón, both leaders in the Southeast Side Coalition to Ban Petcoke. *Petcoke: Tracing Dirty Energy* was created in partnership with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the Southeast Environmental Task Force (SETF), and was organized by Natasha Egan, MoCP Executive Director and Karen Irvine, MoCP Curator and Associate Director.





**INSTALLATION VIEWS AT THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY  
(CHICAGO, IL) IN THE EXHIBITION "PETCOKE: TRACING DIRTY ENERGY";  
THREE-CHANNEL 21:00 MIN VIDEO LOOPING VIDEO INSTALLATION**





This page and next: Video stills from the three-channel *I Can Only See Shadows*.











