

# Searching For What Isn't There

By: Carolyn Gennari

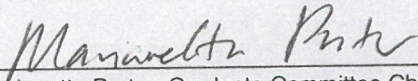
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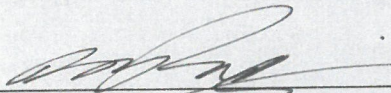
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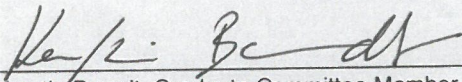
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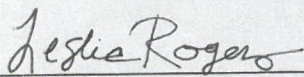
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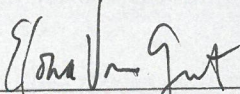
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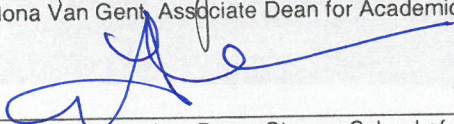
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## Searching For What Isn't There

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Spring 2017





UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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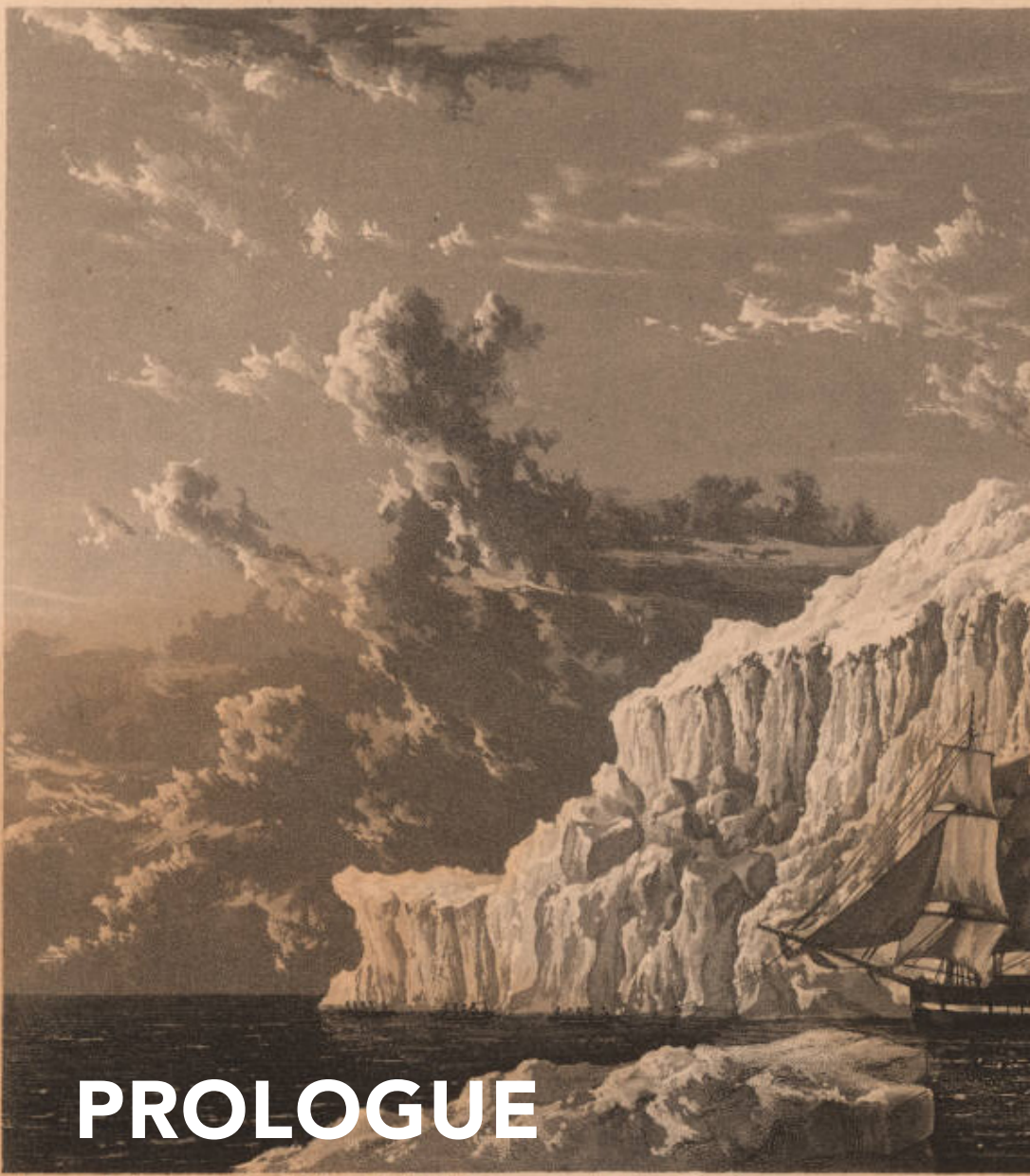
# Abstract

*Searching For What Isn't There*, is a film and installation piece that combines archival and first-person experience about arctic exploration. Research for this project stems from the voyages undertaken by Captain William Parry from 1819-1824. Locating the spot where Parry wintered, I traveled to present day Igloolik, a small community in Nunavut within the Canadian Arctic. This past summer I obtained a research license with the Igloolik Oral History Project and Nunavut Research Institute and spent a month researching Inuit oral histories connected to Parry, conducting interviews, and collaborating with an indigenous circus troupe, ArtCirq. Drawing from Parry's journals, Inuit oral histories, and my experience traveling to the arctic, *Searching For What Isn't There* complicates the notion of singular histories and considers the extent to which our understanding of the past is partial. This work carries the possibility for storytelling as both a process and a means of engaging with the past. By exploring multiple stories, perhaps we can better understand history and the people and places it claims to represent.

## Keywords

Archive, history, document, storytelling, performance, narrative, historiography, exploration, arctic, Inuit, Igloodik, oral history, Northwest Passage, Captain William Parry, myth, 19th century, dance, theatre, repertoire, representation, interpretation.





# PROLOGUE

Fig. 1: Engraving from Parry's Journal for a voyage Northwest Passage, 1819.

*Far from the mysterious place where “the northern lights adorn the azure sky” and where “wonder is not, as you may imagine, the only feeling excited by the view of an iceberg.” A place where you feel both awe and anxiety by tremendous bodies of ice.”*

*-Letters Written During the Late Voyage of  
Discovery in the Western Arctic Sea, 1821*



## 110°W, Halfway Across the Arctic And Back Again

During the summer of 2013 I first came across the *North Georgia Gazette and Winter Chronicle*. Comprised of some 200 pages, the *Gazette* includes lines of poetry, letters to the editor, and theatrical reports written on board the ships the *Hecla* and *Griper*. The *Gazette* is one of the many remaining documents tracing the arctic voyages undertaken by Captain William Parry from 1819-1824 to discover a

Northwest Passage. Parry's first voyage would bring him the furthest west of any previous attempt, reaching just beyond the longitude 110°W, granting him and his crew an award of £5,000 by Parliament. However, his ships would be halted by ice soon after, forcing his crew to anchor in a place Parry called *Winter Harbour*. To ensure their survival —10 months in total darkness— Parry implemented a shipboard school, a weekly newspaper and directed his officers to produce theatrical entertainments every fortnight. What first drew me to these materials were the incredible engravings of wooden ships surrounded by giant icebergs, lines of poetry that spoke of nostalgia and sublime beauty in the face of survival, and descriptions of the theatre which was installed on the upper decks with temperatures reaching -54 degrees F. This voyage would mark the first instance British ships would intentionally winter in the arctic. The first time sailors would eat canned food, and the first arctic vessel to create a shipboard theatre —which would be implemented in all expeditions thereafter (fig. 1).

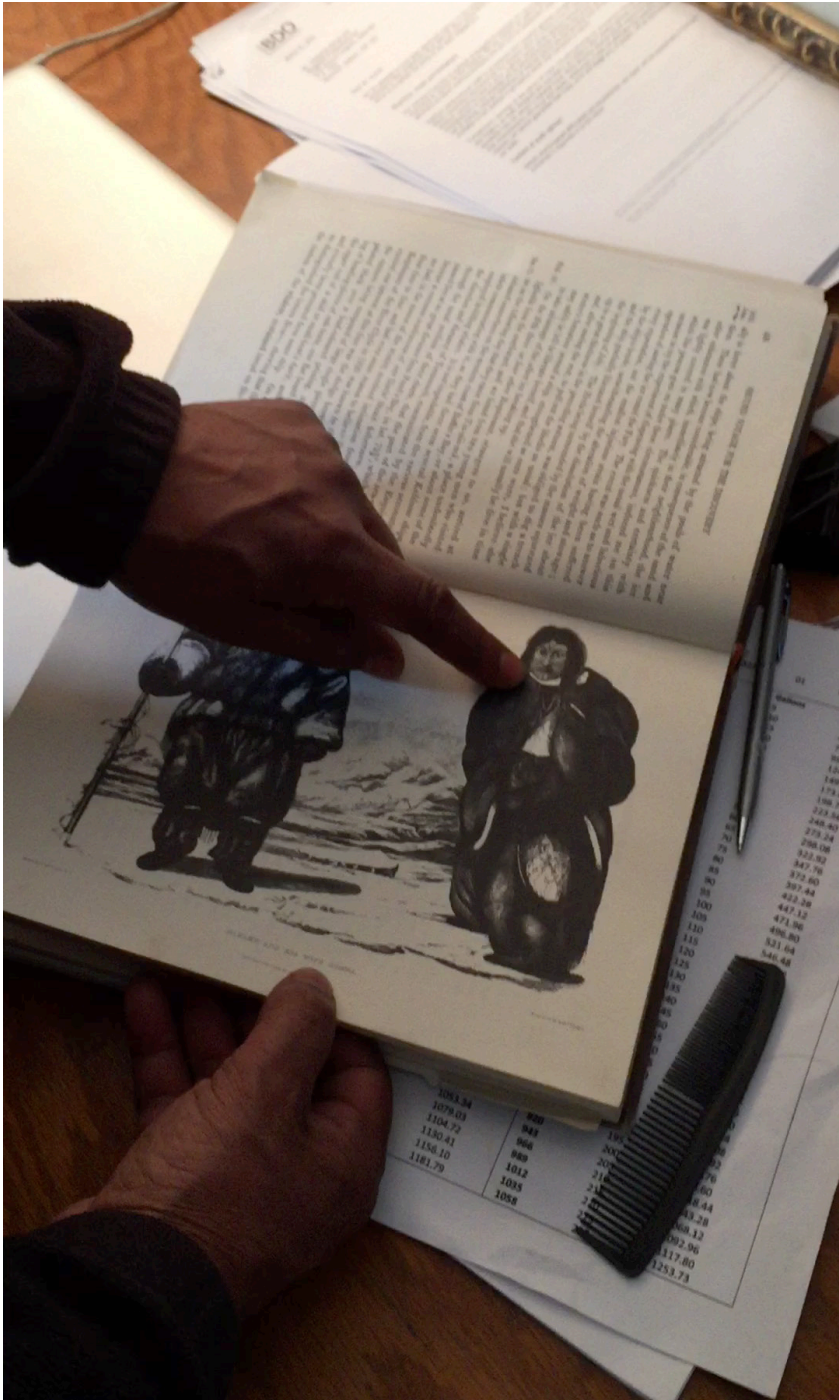
Fascinated by the materiality of these voyages, in 2014 I decided to write a play reimagining these documents through the voices of four women in Providence, RI. At the time I was interested in the ways I could activate these documents and connect my local community to historic materials archived in Rhode Island. Collaborating with a group of women farmers in Providence, we re-wrote and re-imagined Parry's expedition collaging different components of the journals into our own narrative. Dressing up as a ship's captain, the female narrator slipped in and out of character conflating both her identity and points in time between Parry's voyage and present-day Rhode Island. This initial work investigated the trope of 19th century exploration through a contemporary lens, reimagining the explorer narrative through female voices, —often left out the archive.

Although this project created multiple platforms for my community to engage with local collections, I was left with lingering questions. I had only researched Parry's first voyage, which had wintered in a

very isolated location without Inuit contact, therefore the narrative was primarily focused on life on board the ship. I wondered what information was contained in the second and third voyages, I wondered where the Inuit side of these narratives resided, and I wondered what stories existed outside of the official British narrative. More importantly, I began to question my intention to work with archival material and my role as the artist in the archive. Thus began a process of reflecting on my own archival investigations, which ultimately led me on a self-reflective voyage to the very site where these documents were first conceived.

*Searching For What Isn't There*, is a culmination of research in the form of a film and installation piece. Drawing from Parry's journals, Inuit oral histories, and my experience traveling to the arctic, *Searching For What Isn't There* complicates the notion of singular histories and considers the extent to which our understanding of the past is partial. In doing so, this work seeks to investigate the following questions: How does the archive act on memory, experience, and empirical knowledge? How might storytelling generate new ways of knowing? How do we consider collective memory and personal experiences when we contextualize place histories? And most importantly, how can the archive act as both a site of inquiry and point of departure for artistic production, engagement, and understanding?









# INTRODUCTION

SITUATION OF H.M. SHIPS FURY & BECLA. AT IGOOLIK.

## Parry's Journals

Upon my arrival to the University of Michigan, I discovered that many of these early exploration texts are held within the Clements Library at the University of Michigan. Looking at Parry's second voyage as compared to his first was of particular interest because it contains descriptions of Inuit contact. For example, Inuit were invited on board the ship to watch theatrical performances and take part in dancing. In turn, Parry and his crew recorded and participated in Inuit dances



and songs. Accounts from these later voyages reflect new types of exchanges involving trade, language, music, and cultural customs described from a British perspective. Important to the continued search for the Northwest Passage, locals drew maps for Parry indicating possible sea routes. These maps also included Inuit place names that included biographical information such as where a family member was born (fig. 3).

Drawn to these small points of Inuit information in the journals, I wanted to know more about the exact locations Parry was traveling and understand where these areas are today. Locating the spot where he wintered in 1822, a quick google search placed Igloolik on a map; a small community in Nunavut within the Arctic Circle (fig. 4).

Igloolik is an Inuit Hamlet and Island with a population of about 1500. The residents of Igloolik are called Iglulingmiut and the local language is Inuktitut. Numerous archeological sites are located on the island; some dating back more than 4,000 years. Many of the Island's visitors are archaeologists and scientists researching old Dorset sites and tracking wildlife data. The main scientific projects in Igloolik center on polar bear research. The first documented contact with Europeans came with Parry in 1822, and the one-room airport displays posters of Parry's journals detailing the early history of the Island. Although Igloolik is an extremely small and isolated community, it is a major arts hub. Igloolik hosts the only Inuit circus, Artcirq, as well as Isuma, the first independent Inuit film production company known for *Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner* —the first feature film ever to be written, directed and acted entirely in the Inuktitut language. As I began to read about this place, I became fascinated by how tradition and local history were preserved through circus arts, filmmaking, radio, and oral history projects. Between the lines of british travel logs, degrees of longitude and latitude, descriptions, and diagrams, there were other stories —and I knew that to hear them I needed to go to Igloolik and listen.



This past summer, I obtained my Social Sciences and Traditional Knowledge Research license with the Igloodik Oral History Project and the Nunavut Research Institute (NRI). I spent the month of July in Igloodik researching Inuit oral histories connected to Parry, conducting interviews, and collaborating with members of ArtCirq (fig. 5).

In preparation, I worked with a local translator to translate my project summary, documentation request forms, and interview consent forms into Inuktitut. My local sponsor for this project was Guillaume Saladin, founder of ArtCirq. Guillaume and I had several skype meetings in which he connected me with additional community members in preparation for my trip. My homestay was hosted by the regional wildlife biologist for the High Arctic who introduced me to the natural features of the island. My time in Igloodik was divided into three activities: (1) Working with local archivists to research Inuit oral histories within the Igloodik Oral History Archive. (2) Conducting interviews with community members about Parry, local history, and storytelling. (3) Collaborating with members of ArtCirq and the Igloodik Recreation office to organize art workshops for youth in the community. My thesis is a culmination of this work in addition to my research surrounding Parry's expedition records. The final work resulted in a feature length film and installation that traces my exploration of these narratives and my own experiences traveling to the arctic.

I will begin my discussion outlining the historical context in which Parry's voyages took place as well as the frameworks of knowledge that shaped the types of documents that were a product of these scientific expeditions and the initial point of my inquiry. I will provide the historical backdrop for Parry's voyages and the search for the Northwest Passage, which I use as a metaphor for knowledge construction and an entry point in which to discuss epistemological boundaries. I will then discuss ways the archive has been defined across disciplines and how I work with and define the archive in my creative practice. In this section, I will also consider the types of archival



Fig. 4 Google map view of Igloolik, showing the greater arctic archipelago, 2017.

documents that constitute knowledge and discuss the relationship between archive and repertoire as outlined by Diana Taylor in her book, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Following this section, I will introduce the notion of the archival artist and the historiographic turn in contemporary art. I will then introduce my methodology and creative work.



*Fig. 5: Still from The Artcirq Inuit Performance Collective Demo reel, Igloolik, 2009.*



# PART I:

## **Arctic Exploration and Colonial Imagination**

During the 19th century, arctic exploration captivated the public imagination. Images of unfamiliar ice-scapes pictured in panoramas and magic lantern shows dominated visual culture. Expeditions launched by British admiralty relied on the visual materials they brought back, and these materials in turn spurred the public interest

that drove and justified further exploration.<sup>1</sup> For each major expedition an official representation had to be provided, not only textually but visually, including detailed journals, engravings, and sketches<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 6). At the same time, mass media in the form of illustrated newspapers and daily press became essential to the production and dissemination of colonial knowledge.

Multimedia constructions of an imagined empire were also created via forms such as the panorama, offering an immersive environment through which to imagine polar space (fig. 7).

In his book, *Magic Lantern Empire, Colonialism and Society in Germany*, John Short explains that such fabrications offered a “colonial experience”, which in turn became like actual colonization, agents of the formation of knowledge —of, indeed, a new representation of the global— as the empire itself.”<sup>3</sup>

In Siobhan Carroll’s book, *An Empire of Air and Water: Uncolonizable Space in the British Imagination, 1750-1850*, she explains the important role writing played in the history of polar exploration. In addition to explorers describing their discoveries in voyage narratives, polar space was also written upon physically; explorers wrote on rocks, left signs on beaches, and engraved the names of deceased crew members on tombstones (fig 8). Being the first voyage to inhabit the arctic in the winter, Parry’s expeditions pushed the border the possibility of British “habitable” space northward and thus opened polar space up to future occupation —a trajectory also suggested by Parry’s description of his

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1 Knopfmacher, U. C., and G. B. Tennyson. *Nature and the Victorian imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. Pg 95.

2 Potter, Russell A. *Arctic spectacles: the frozen North in visual culture, 1818-1875*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2007. Pg 14.

3 Short, John Phillip. *Magic lantern empire: colonialism and society in Germany*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012. Pg 15.

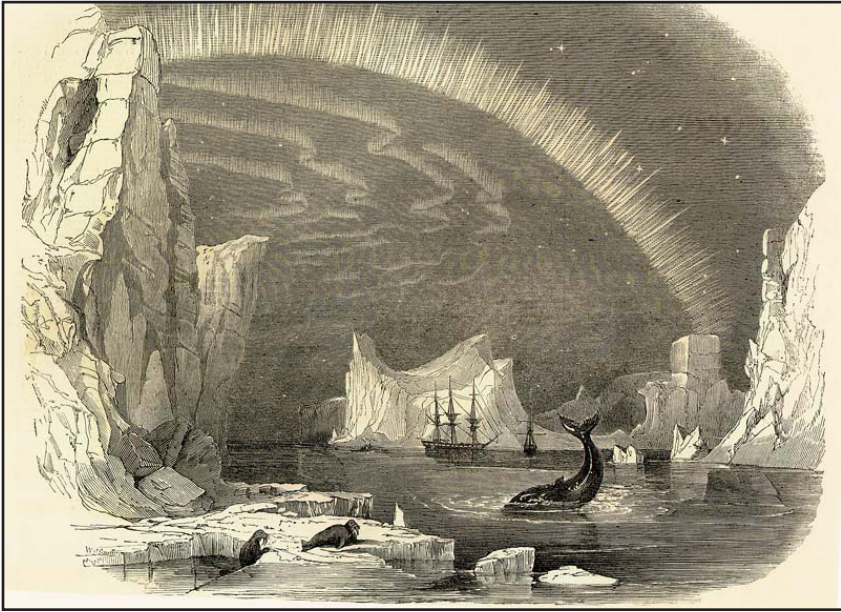


Fig. 6 image depicting arctic regions in the London News, 1849



Fig. 7 Unidentified photographer, Untitled (portrait of man in front of moving panorama with Arctic theme) 1850-1857 (ca). Daguerreotype. 5 x 6.2 cm. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco Accession Number: 1993.2





*Fig. 8: Photos taken by the author in Igloolik, July 2016. Headstone of Alex Elder, shipmate on Parry's Second Voyage, 1823.*



ship's winter camp as "our little colony."<sup>4</sup>

However, beyond pushing the colonizable borders, Parry himself was a topic of fan fare in the everyday lives of Britons: The young Brontë sisters, for example, found the story of his expedition inspirational and their characters "Parry" and "Ross" were major figures in the imaginary world depicted in their juvenile fiction.<sup>5</sup> In many ways the images of the arctic that literature helped develop, in conjunction with *official narratives*, continue to shape the romantic ways we continue to imagine the arctic. Indeed the wonder of these archival documents is what first caught my attention, —a place that to this day very few people have the opportunity to travel to— the fantastic images of icebergs and descriptions of theatricals reinforced a romantic image of the arctic in my mind.

During this stage of my research, I began translating archival documents into visual components that captured the landscape depicted in the journals, —a work of translation in itself. Exploring new material processes, I used polystyrene foam to create the effect of ice (fig. 9). I made a hot-wire tool to carve into 16'X8' blocks of foam, roughly mapping the shape I wanted the final piece to take (fig. 10). I wanted to make performative objects that revealed their artifice while offering an appearance of real icebergs. During this period, my research incorporated material exploration of myth, authenticity, and duplicity.

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4 Parry, William Edward. *Journal of a voyage for the discovery of a north-west passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific, performed in the years 1819-1820 in His Majesty's ships Hecla and Griper, under the orders of William Edward Parry* .. London: John Murray, 1821.Pg 175.

5 Carroll, Siobhan. *An empire of air and water: uncolonizable space in the British imagination, 1750-1850*. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. Pg 59.



*Fig. 9: sculpting polystyrene foam with a hot-wire tool*



*Fig. 10: Ne-yu-ning Eit-du-a (Winter Island), 2016. Hand-carved expanded polystyrene foam, nylon screen, digital projections.*



# PART II:



## History and Myth

In July 2016, while I was in Igloolik, the New York Times published an article stating that the promise of a Northwest Passage may now

become a reality due to melting sea ice,<sup>1</sup> realizing the mythological sea route sought in vain centuries earlier and yielding viable 21st century industry. The following month, the *Crystal Serenity*, the largest cruise ship to traverse the Passage, travelled from Alaska to New York allowing its passengers to, “follow in the footsteps of intrepid explorers through unparalleled landscapes of grand glaciers, stunning fjords, and rare wildlife sightings [and learn about] the Arctic culture and its fascinating people”<sup>2</sup> (fig. 11).

Parry’s voyages are part of a longer history to discover the infamous Northwest Passage; a navigable route connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans through the Arctic. In 1497 after John Cabot walked on the shores of North America, England initiated what would be a four century-long quest for the elusive strait. With the end of the Napoleonic wars at the end of the nineteenth century, locating the Northwest Passage became a major initiative of the British admiralty. For over 300 hundred years, the cartographic fantasy yielded endless quests as a performance of national traits; physical courage, undaunted tenacity, and endurance.

Seen within this larger mythological framework, Parry’s voyages —with their bearing on literature, imperialism, and scientific research of the time— more broadly reflect notions of representation and material traces. Scholar Frédéric Regard offers a semiotic analyses of the Passage exploring its role in the history of knowledge-construction and imperial discourse. As Regard argues, the construction of narratives about the Arctic and its inhabitants became fundamental to the

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1 Schwartz, Karen. “As Global Warming Thaws Northwest Passage, a Cruise Sees Opportunity.” *New York Times*, July 6, 2016. Accessed November, 10, 2016. <http://nyti.ms/29nANN2>.

2 “2017 Northwest Passage.” 2017 Cruise Specials | Northwest Passage. Accessed April 11, 2017. <http://www.crystalcruises.com/special-offers/2017-northwest-passage>.

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Fig. 11 advertisement from the Crystal Cruises website:  
<http://www.crystalcruises.com/northwest-passage-cruise>

construction of British national identity.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, the quest no longer appears as a marginal episode in the rise and fall of the British Empire but rather, as Regard suggests, a beacon of national mythology.

I'm interested in the ways the Northwest Passage serves as a metaphor for frameworks of history and knowledge and the questions it raises; How does myth continue to frame our understanding of the far north and how might the workings of the passage serve as a guide to decipher place histories? In addition to expedition records, I see the passage as another object of inquiry, another piece of the archive. In his book, *Politics of the Northwest Passage*, Franklyn Griffiths asserts that the Passage is both a cultural artifact and an arctic navigation route, that is "as much a metaphor for human perseverance and ingenuity as a physical reality."<sup>4</sup> If we consider the passage simultaneously as myth, site, and artifact, then how do we define it?

3 Regard, Frédéric. *The Quest for the Northwest Passage: Knowledge, nation and empire*. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012. Pg 2.

4 Griffiths, Franklyn. *Politics of the Northwest Passage*. Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987. Pg 3



Geographer Kenneth Foote equates the erasure of physical sites with the loss of an archival record. In his work, he contemplates the absence of the site of the Salem witch trials from the landscape of Salem, Massachusetts, arguing that without including the landscape in the record of this particular tragedy, the central record has been removed. He writes, “the landscape and its missing memories are both text and context for an event and its expunction.”<sup>5</sup> Foote goes on to say that like archives, cultural landscapes can be said to maintain a representation of the past.<sup>6</sup>

But how do we consider a site that only came into existence through the imagined record, in this case the Northwest Passage? Furthermore, how do we contemplate the notion of loss when it is paired with the emergence of something else, in this case the physical reality of climate change? Perhaps, by way of the Passage we can begin to consider how history and the archive frame the ways in which we think about the past and its implications for the future. In her essay, *Navigating the Northwest Passage*, Kathryn Yusoff asks:

If the search for the Northwest Passage is a geographical problem, of territory and movement, of desire and nightmare, of mythic and geopolitical imaginaries, of biophysical and cultural change, how might such a passage be navigated to give account of the different frameworks of thought and material relations, which make such journeys into knowledge and politics possible? And setting out on such a journey, what might we learn from these disjunctions of knowledge that we come

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5 Griffiths, Franklyn. *Politics of the Northwest Passage*. Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987. Pg 4.

6 Ibid.

upon?<sup>7</sup>

Following Yusoff, philosopher Michel Serres suggests that the Northwest Passage as a metaphor for transport can be used to think about epistemological boundaries between humanities and hard sciences. In this sense, sets of relations are understood as exclusive topographies in the space of knowledge —be that of science, politics, or myth, they remain at an incommunicable distant, like far-off shores. Serres suggests how travel between these shores might be possible.<sup>8</sup>

In my work, the Northwest Passage is both a backdrop in which Parry's voyages occurred as well as a metaphorical device with which to consider frameworks of knowledge and the power of the record. I use the notion of "passage" and "passages" to describe the ways in which we encounter new knowledge, produce information, and experience history in the present. It is not my intention to prioritize one *passage* over another, reject written histories, or prioritize oral accounts. Instead, this work intervenes by connecting established modes of recording, remembering, and practicing the past. Most importantly, this work situates the archive as a site of both inquiry and point of departure. It asks us to consider a more complex engagement with the past, as well as an expanded approach to interpretation. Finally, this work aims to reshape future action, dialogue, and understanding.

**Fictotaturio. Itaturi onsequis di saerspisp aut ea dolorem oditaerciet adicillabor sitiae laboreium nullabo. Nam, cumquis ad quia non et lamus id magnamenis et lab ipsus, untur sintion sequis rem endis qui cuptaspe**

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7 Daniels, Stephen. *Envisioning landscapes, making worlds: geography and the humanities*. London: Routledge, 2011. Pg 3.

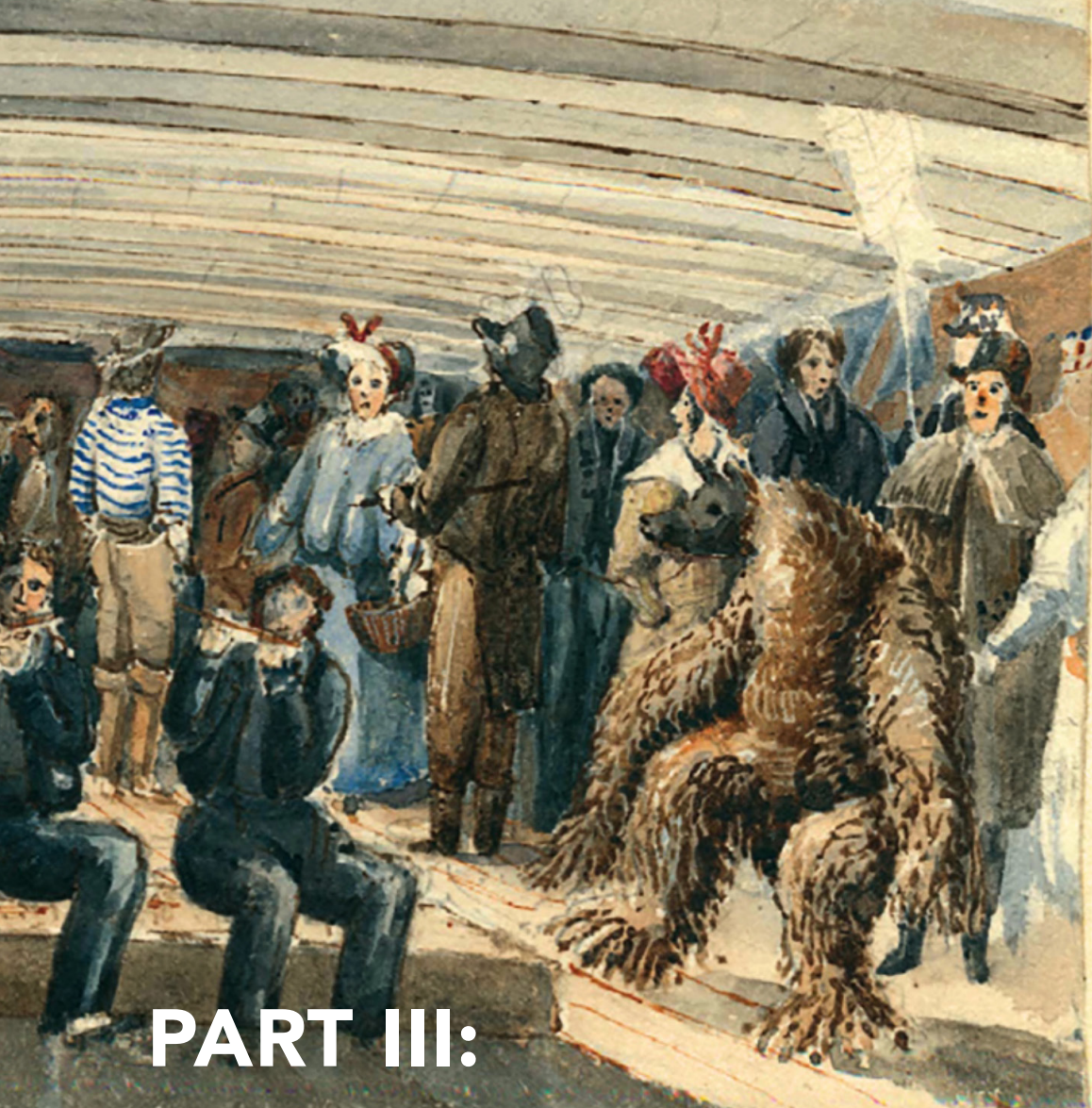
8 Ibid.



Fig. 12: Owen Stanley. 'Arctic amusements, Dec. 1836' from 'The drawings made by Captain Owen Stanley when on the Arctic expedition commanded by Sir George Back in H.M.S. "Terror" 1836 and 1837'. Watercolor.

History –the past transformed into words or paint or play –is always a performance.

–Greg Dening



## PART III:

### Performing History

Although the desire for the Passage surpassed its actual existence, documents of these voyages are spun as heroic and successful feats, blurring historical truth with fantasy, Parry is no exception. Halted by ice mid-way through his search, Parry and his crew enacted a successful discovery of the passage in their play; *The Northwest Passage, or Voyage Finished*. This would also mark the first play written especially for performance during an Arctic wintering expedition.

Siobhan Carroll explains, by representing the expedition's triumph in fiction, Parry's officers obviously hoped to lay a psychological track that would help them accomplish their goals in reality.<sup>1</sup> However, aside from providing entertainment and perhaps hope for success, Parry's theatre was necessary for keeping his men occupied during the months they were ice-locked. Parry writes:

A regular system to be adopted for the maintainance [sic] of good order and cleanliness, as most conducive to the health of the crews during the long, dark, and dreary winter, equally demanded my attention” He adds: “for I dreaded the want of employment as one of the worst evils that was likely to befall us<sup>2</sup>

The “rigging” of the theatre as Parry called it, required a whole set of activities and chores that brought the crew together. In his essay, “No Joke in Petticoats”: *British Polar Expeditions and Their Theatrical Presentations*, Mike Pearson explains that polar theatre became an acknowledged means of maintaining morale: staging, watching, and criticizing performances as well as memorizing parts, making costumes and sets kept minds and bodies busy. Performances provided those rare occasions when the whole crew could come together and were often accompanied by an increase in food and alcohol consumption.<sup>3</sup> Dancing was also implemented on the ship as both entertainment and

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1 Carroll, Siobhan. *An empire of air and water: uncolonizable space in the British imagination, 1750-1850*. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. Pg 186.

2 Parry, William Edward. *Journal of a voyage for the discovery of a north-west passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific, performed in the years 1819-1820 in His Majesty's ships Hecla and Griper, under the orders of William Edward Parry ..* London: John Murray, 1821. Pg 182.

3 Pearson, Mike. ““No Joke in Petticoats”: British Polar Expeditions and Their Theatrical Presentations.” *TDR/The Drama Review* 48, no. 1 (2004): 44-59. doi:10.1162/105420404772990664. Pg 55.

exercise; the ship was equipped with a barrel organ that was used for performances, quadrilles, and masquerade balls. The theatre as well as dancing provided points of cultural exchange between Inuit and British. Parry describes inviting Inuit on board the *Hecla* to watch theatricals and engage in dancing.

By Parry's second voyage in Igloodik, he stocked the ship with theatrical supplies. As the public was well aware of his voyages and shipboard entertainments, before his departure an admirer gave Parry a magic lantern or "Phantasmagoria" to aid in theatrical productions. In addition to a stock of costumes, Parry had scenic backdrops painted with street scenes of England, making his ship not only a stage, but a representation of home. Looking at Parry's theatre is of particular interest because it provides an alternative lens in which to read this history. Not only does the performance of an imagined success mirror the illusion of the passage, Parry's ship becomes an actual stage upon which notions of myth, performance, and reality are conflated. As a result, we can begin to look beyond textual evidence and read both the objects and performances as relevant documents in which to understand both the archive of early arctic exploration history (fig. 12).

The transformation of Parry's ship into a stage also meant transforming the roles of officers and crew members. For instance, the expedition astronomer became editor of the *Gazette* and the theatrical review, the scientific illustrator moonlighted as stage manager and scenic painter, and Parry performed roles alongside the crew, subverting hierarchy within the confines of the theatre. However, turning a ship into a stage also meant altering the meaning and use of materials on board; costumes and sets had to be constructed out of the supplies at hand. Pearson illustrates this negotiation, explaining that, "objects [...] slip the boundary into the world of play, where they assume an enhanced-even arbitrary- value, beyond their material



*Fig. 13: Image of Michael Barne from the Discovery Expedition standing next to his scud which he constructed from the curtain of their shipboard theatre; The Royal Terror. 1903. Image from The Scott Polar Research Institute, image use pending.*

worth; where they stimulate action.”<sup>4</sup> As a result, objects are drawn into what Pearson calls “extra-daily juxtapositions” in which they assume unlikely assemblages through use and activity. For example, a bucket becomes a helmet, a sail becomes a scenic backdrop, or a mop a wig. Thus objects on the ship are activated through a world of play, activating their inherent “polysemic”<sup>5</sup> nature.

However, what complicates this notion of performance further are the social and functional activities that continue to transform shipboard objects in and out of play. We can best see this in an image from a later expedition. Pictured here is Lt. Michael Barne from the Discovery Expedition standing next to his “Flying Scud” (fig. 13).

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4 Pearson, Mike. ““No Joke in Petticoats”: British Polar Expeditions and Their Theatrical Presentations.” *TDR/The Drama Review* 48, no. 1 (2004): 44-59. doi:10.1162/105420404772990664. Pg 55.

5 Ibid.

Foraging for useful materials, Lt. Bared used the scenery of the Terror Theatre for his sled. Here you can see on the sail the word “THEATRE” as well as faint details of a volcano on the rear. In this picture we can see the changing role of materials; a ship’s tarp becomes a theatre curtain, which then becomes a sail.<sup>6</sup> In this barren setting, Pearson argues that these improvised responses to an environment with limited resources create a situation in which objects circulate, lose stability, and are no longer confined to their ascribed identity. Consequently, any object can, from time to time, become functional, decorative, representational, fictive, or cognitive.<sup>7</sup>

A discussion of performative artefacts is essential, as I’m translating archival documents into art objects. For example, in *The Stage Life of Props*, Andrew Sofer suggests that props are both visual emblems as well as vital participants in the action of performance. More than just three-dimensional symbols; they are part of the material fabric of the narrative event; they take on a life of their own.<sup>8</sup> Paige McGinley asserts in her book, *Staging the Blues*, that props can slip on and off the stage propelling different narratives and entangling what is real and what is performed.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, these readings of Parry’s shipboard theatre provided me with a framework to understand approaches to non-textual artefacts that are both functional and performative. Additionally, considering objects as documents in this way has informed my approach to presenting history through performance, and acknowledging performance as an ephemeral document in and of itself.

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6 Pearson, Mike. ““No Joke in Petticoats”: British Polar Expeditions and Their Theatrical Presentations.” *TDR/The Drama Review* 48, no. 1 (2004): 44-59. doi:10.1162/105420404772990664. Pg 56.

7 Ibid.

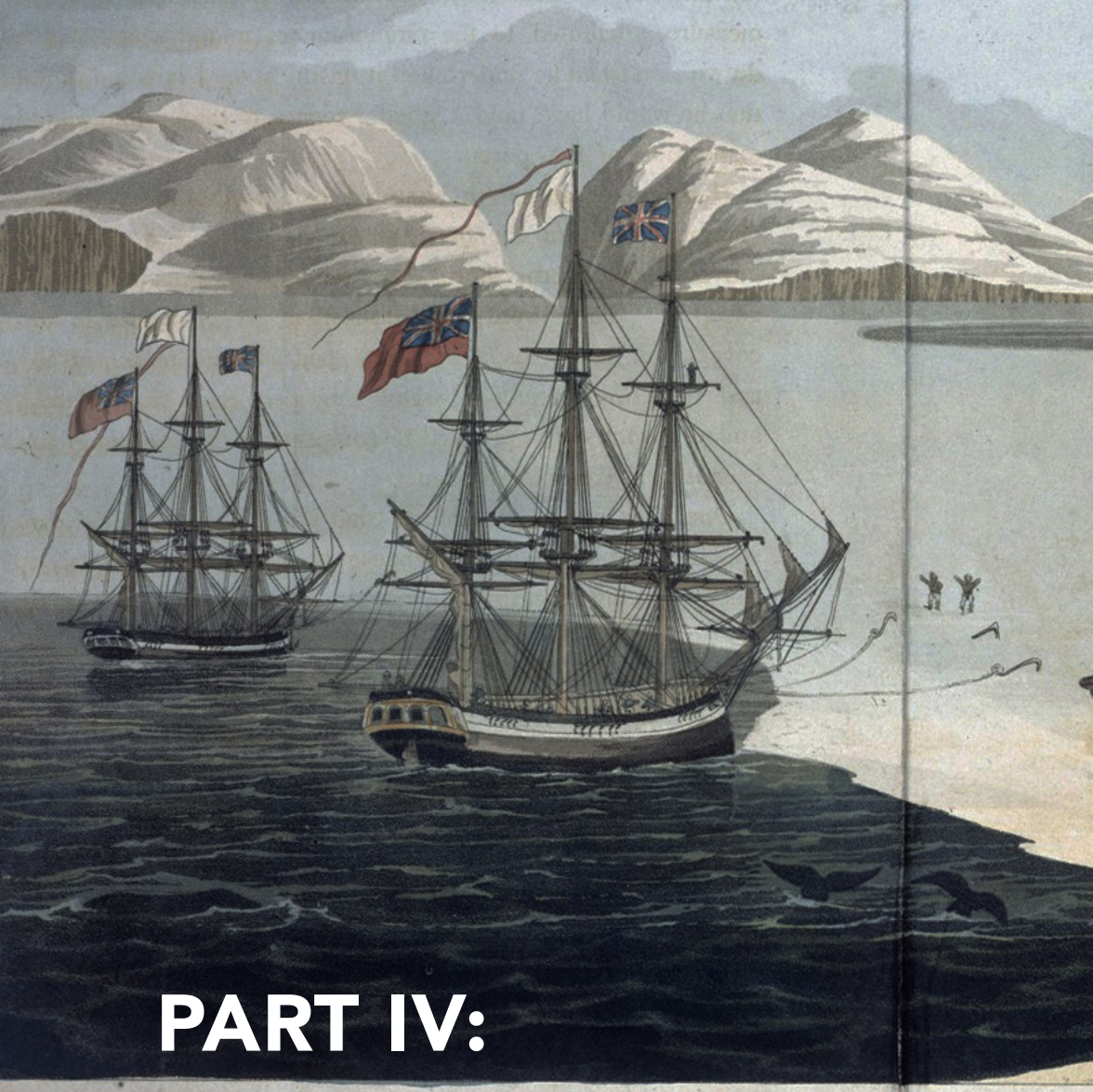
8 Sofer, Andrew. *The Stage Life of Props*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003.

9 McGinley, Paige A. *Staging the Blues: From Tent Shows to Tourism*.



As Pearson argues, polar theatre might help to critique modes of interpretation based solely on textual evidence and functionality. By looking at how objects were used for purposes that they were never intended and how new objects were made that created an ambiguous presence in the repertoire of equipment on board, we can begin to consider how play, improvisation, and performance challenge assumed narratives.





# PART IV:



## Frameworks of Knowledge

Parry's voyages as well as the material culture of the Northwest Passage can be understood as falling into what historian Peter Burke refers to as the "second age of discovery."<sup>1</sup> In his book, *A Social History*

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1 Burke, Peter. *A social history of knowledge. From Encyclopédie to Wikipedia*. 2014. Pg 52.

of *Knowledge II*, Burke discusses the ways in which different groups of people acquire, process, spread, and employ knowledge. He categorizes this into four categories: collection, analysis, dissemination, and action (CADA). He goes on to say that when knowledge is collected or gathered in academia it is defined as research. Originating as early as 1750, the word “research” is connected to the second age of discovery a period from 1750-1850.<sup>2</sup> The first age of discovery is marked by Vasco da Gama and Columbus with the exploration of coasts, where the second age of discovery extends exploration to the South Seas and beyond. He goes on to outline different explorations as distinguishing events of knowledge-gathering tied to an era of discovery, including astronomers and naturalists on board ships set out for scientific expeditions. Exploration of coasts led to the quest for arctic and deep sea exploration. Ultimately knowledge was collected and archived in the form of surveys, field notes, specimens, files, and expedition journals.

Echoing Burke’s discussion of material things associated with the accumulation of knowledge, Jeannette Bastien explains in her essay, *Moving the margins to the middle: reconciling ‘the archive’ with the archives*, that the materials and documents produced during the age of exploration are the very things that begin to define the archive. Bastien explains that the first ‘archival turn’ occurred in early 19th century European history studies when historians turned towards archival documentation as the essential evidence needed for historical truth. In this way, the tools of the historian were thought of as empirical, relying on firsthand accounts, grand narratives, and texts —primarily those found in archives. This ‘turn’ included a belief in historical objectivity,

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2 Burke, Peter. *A social history of knowledge. From Encyclopédie to Wikipedia*. 2014. Pg 52.

historical truth and trustworthiness.<sup>3</sup>

Historian Greg Denning discusses how these grand narratives and descriptive texts became to be equated with truth. In this line of thinking, Denning makes a distinction between historical actuality and historical reality:

By 'actuality' I mean what happened as it is known for its balance of the circumstantial and the determined, in its typicality as well as its particularity, known for its multivalent meanings. By 'reality' I mean what happened as it is reductively known, but its determinants, known in its simplicity of meaning, set in some hierarchy of acceptability<sup>4</sup>

Denning's argument to represent the past as it may have been experienced, rather than reduce it to a linear, singular narrative shifts the question from, "what happened?" to "how was what happened experienced and why was it remembered?"<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, Denning calls for historical complexity rather than reduction, as a way to represent the past in a way that allows for contradictions. Although I agree with Denning's move away from linear narratives, I hesitate to presume how an event may have been experienced by someone in the past who can no longer speak. Instead, I believe that through reading multiple narratives of the past we can create new experiences that respond to present modes of interpretation, action, and reflection.

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3 Foscarini, Fiorella, Heather MacNeil, Bonnie Mak, and Gillian Oliver. *Engaging with records and archives: histories and theories*. London: Facet Publishing, 2016. Pg 7.

4 Denning, Greg. *Performances*. Melbourne, Vic.: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Pg 55.

5 Davis-Fisch, H. *Loss and cultural remains in performance: the ghosts of the franklin expedition*. S.l.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Pg 14.

I examine colonial frameworks within the archive in order to reveal a relationship between information gathering and political power. In his book, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*, Thomas Richards describes how the administrative core of the British Empire was built around knowledge-producing institutions like the British Museum, the Royal Geographic Society, and the India Survey.<sup>6</sup> According to Richards, recording and documenting the empire was a way to solidify notions of imperial power, even without of full control of vast geographic territories such as the arctic.

Postcolonial scholarship has demonstrated that the colonial archive was shaped by the objectives of its creators, and that interpretation of the archive depends on the subjectivity of its interpreters. In this way, written history is mediated by a human interpreter. Marlene Manoff explains that the archive is explicitly designed for exercising power, noting that, “the archive anchors explorations of national identity and provides the evidence for establishing the meaning of the past.”<sup>7</sup>

My creative practice is informed by theoretical discussions of the archive by theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Stuart Hall, and Michel Foucault. Derrida claims that the archive actively shapes history, memory and defines what is archivable, thus archiving produces as much as it records any given event.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Stuart Hall explains that each archive has a “pre-history,” or prior conditions of existence that shape what an archive contains and how it is presented.<sup>9</sup> In defining

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6 Richards, Thomas. *The imperial archive: knowledge and the fantasy of empire*. London: Verso, 2011. Pg 4.

7 Manoff, Marlene. “Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines.” *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4, no. 1 (2004): 9-25. doi:10.1353/pla.2004.0015. Pg 16.

8 Derrida, Jacques, and Eric Prenowitz. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1996. Print. Pg. 19.

9 Hall, Stuart. *Constituting an Archive. Third Text*: 89-92. 2001. Print. Pg.89.

the archive, aside from determining disciplinary boundaries, the stakes can be high. For example, Foucault suggests that the archive governs the possibility of what can be said, recorded, unsaid, or unrecorded. In this sense, the archive does not reproduce, but produces meaning and is an instrument of power.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, alternative modes of archiving, as well as the creation of community archives, have emerged to document and preserve a more diverse array of information otherwise not included in traditional archives.

As Manoff explains in her essay that explores theories of the archive across disciplines, many scholars investigating the concept of the archive begin with a standard dictionary definition: “a place where documents and other materials of public or historical interest are preserved.”<sup>11</sup> In support of this definition, historian Carolyn Steedman is skeptical of the idea that the archive functions as metaphor, suggesting that it is centrally a literal and concrete space. Most scholars share the concept of an archive as a repository and collection of artifacts that refer to the contents of museums, libraries, and archives and thus the entire extant historical record. However, Manoff points out that there are often two opposing arguments at force: the conflation of libraries, museums, and archives; and the expansion of the term as a loose signifier for a disparate set of concepts.

In her essay, *Archival Genres: Gathering Texts and Reading Spaces*, Kate Eichhorn suggests that the archive, in contrast to the collection, is referential, accumulative, and engaged in the construction of textual realities. Thus to ‘adopt the term archive over collection is to consciously choose to think about documentary assemblages as sites that are as much about texts and textual practice as they are about

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10 Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Tavistock Publications, London Pantheon Books, New York, 1972. Print. Pg. 7

11 Ibid. Pg 4.



people and relations of power.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, sociologist Thomas Osborne claims that “what makes the notion [of the archive] really useful is its very elasticity; that it goes beyond such a literal reference, or that it can be used to do so.”<sup>13</sup>

If the 19th century archival turn is marked by colonial frameworks, Jeanette Bastien explains that the mid 20th century marked a new kind of ‘archival turn’, one that redefined the relationship of archives to historical scholarship. This ‘turn’ not only questioned historical truth but also re-imagined historical sources. The archive expanded beyond text to include memory, witnessing, materials, performance, and art as well as a broad spectrum of what can be ‘known and not known.’<sup>14</sup> This more expansive view of the archive has contributed to a wider conceptual and analytical discourse and has led archivists to reconsider that which can be considered archival. This becomes important when considering indigenous narratives, oral histories, and embodied knowledge.

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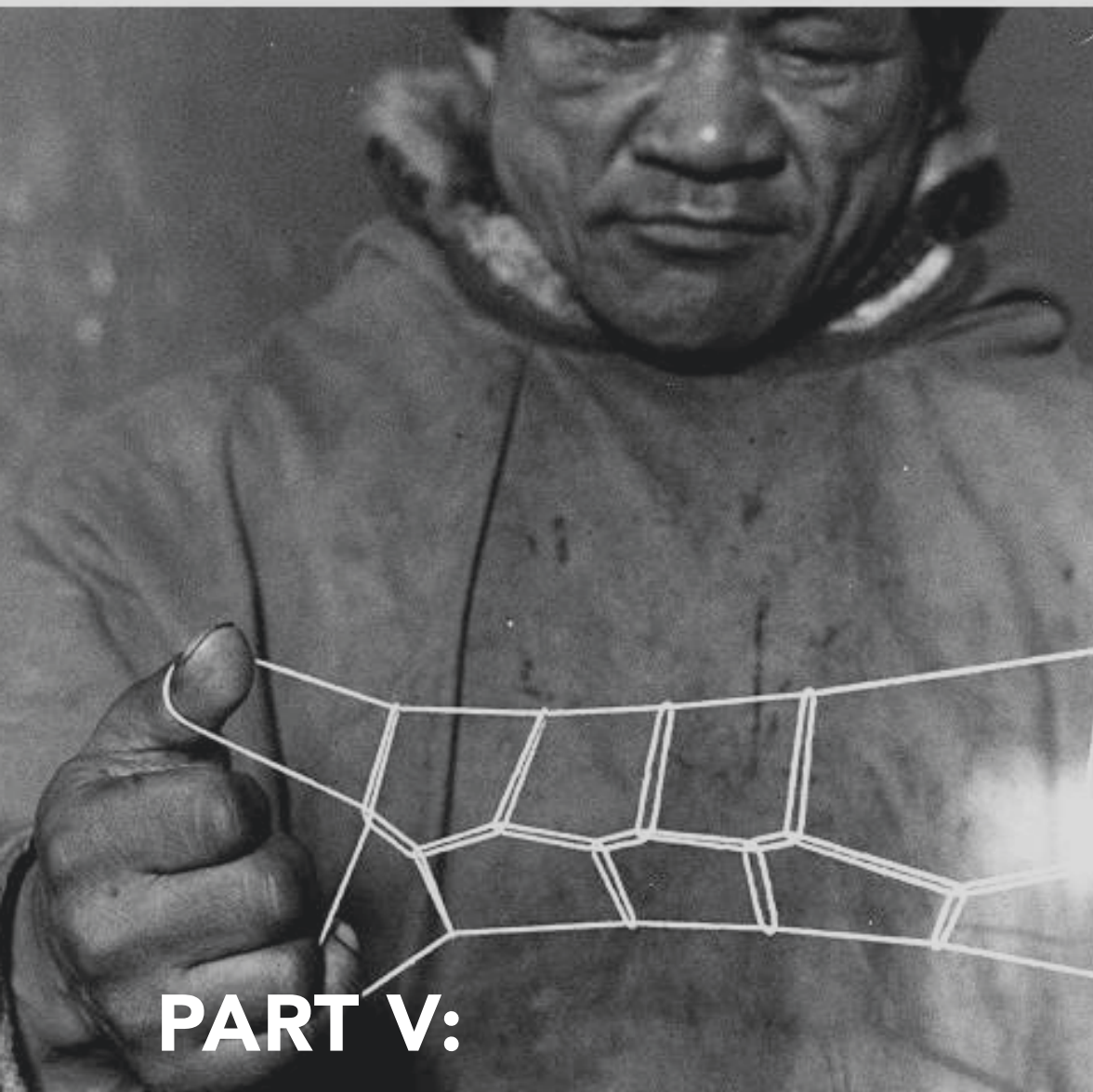
12 “Archival Genres: Gathering Texts and Reading Spaces Kate ...” Accessed April 12, 2017. [http://www.bing.com/cr?IG=E55F9CE4503746D3B7186ECD4F5ED616&CID=2644654C37DF6EDC26756F2E364F6F76&rd=1&h=flrqu92AApVkRSIIITqVpZlZvN4-sc-ZSnDs9bg5WNRQ&v=1&r=http%3a%2f%2fwww.rochester.edu%2fin\\_visible\\_culture%2fissue\\_12%2feichhorn%2feichhorn.pdf&p=DevEx,5062.1](http://www.bing.com/cr?IG=E55F9CE4503746D3B7186ECD4F5ED616&CID=2644654C37DF6EDC26756F2E364F6F76&rd=1&h=flrqu92AApVkRSIIITqVpZlZvN4-sc-ZSnDs9bg5WNRQ&v=1&r=http%3a%2f%2fwww.rochester.edu%2fin_visible_culture%2fissue_12%2feichhorn%2feichhorn.pdf&p=DevEx,5062.1).

13 Manoff, Marlene. “Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines.” *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4, no. 1 (2004): 9-25. doi:10.1353/pla.2004.0015. Pg 63.

14 Foscarini, Fiorella, Heather MacNeil, Bonnie Mak, and Gillian Oliver. *Engaging with records and archives: histories and theories*. London: Facet Publishing, 2016. Pg 7.







## PART V:

### Defining the Archive

In my practice I begin in the archive, in the physical spaces that contain records of the past, or as Greg Dening calls it, the *cargo* of the past. I begin my point of exploration at these sites, looking through collections, and ultimately choosing the objects that I am drawn to. In this way, I consider my presence in the archive as both performance and process. The act of encountering material is simultaneously subjective and random. This awareness opens new possibilities for

making and interpreting.

Greg Dening argues that the cargo of the past retains a double nature; the meanings of their origins and their translations for the moments they survive. He writes that, “relics of the past are the cargo to all the present moments that follow.”<sup>1</sup> It is only through identifying the processes through which remains of the past are constructed and preserved that we can begin to understand their dual nature.

For my thesis, I researched various types of cargo relating to both Parry and Igloodik. For example, I examine shipboard records and their translation into popular forms, such as 19th century panoramas, illustrated newspapers, and literature. As well as artefacts from the ship; Parry’s violin, uniforms, preserved crackers and rations, scientific instruments, descriptions of performances, leapfrog games, (fig. 14 and fig. 15) shipboard chores, masquerades, theatrical reports, dancing and sheet music. I also researched Inuit illustrations drawn on board the *Hecla*, transcribed oral histories, as well as present day performances and dances in Igloodik. I also recorded interviews with Elders, observed and documented the landscape. In her book, *Loss and Cultural Remains in Performance*, Heather Davis-Fisch explains that it is important to acknowledge that “history” is constructed by the process of preserving, reading, and interpreting cargo of the past. However, when the remains in question are embodied rather than strictly material or archival, Fish argues that we need acknowledge other processes for interpreting the past.<sup>2</sup> She goes on to emphasize that cargo remains are not dead, but continue to generate affect, bringing the past into the present.

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1 Dening, Greg. *Performances*. Melbourne, Vic.: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Pg 46-47.

2 Davis-Fisch, H. *Loss and cultural remains in performance: the ghosts of the franklin expedition*. S.l.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Pg 15.



Fig. 14: Sailors Playing at Leap Frog, from 'Sketches of the Second Parry Arctic Expedition, by Captain George Francis Lyon (graphite on paper) 1821.



Fig. 15: The Arctic Dandies, Melville Island, 1819-1820 Inscribed 'The Arctic Dandies during their residence on Melville Island, 1819-1820. by Captain Sabine. Watercolor, 6 5/8 x 10 1/2 in. This image depicts Parry and his crew as caricatures.

In terms of thinking of the past as an active moment of interpretation in the present, Mark Godfrey explains that we often think about the present moment as the point where history vanishes. Instead, Godfrey suggests that when we reconsider past events, we're not so much returning to another time and retrieving material or events, we are restaging those events in order to think about what's happening here and now, —to think about the present.<sup>3</sup> Similarly Greg Dening asks, how can one locate the repertoire of unrecorded events in and from the archive? Engaging with this question I begin my inquiry in the physical space of the archive, and work outwards. By situating the archive as a point of departure for my creating process, I explore alternative approaches to identifying and interpreting cargo of the past.

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3 Godfrey, Mark. "The Artist as Historian." *October* 120 (2007): 140-72. doi:10.1162/octo.2007.120.1.140. Pg 147.

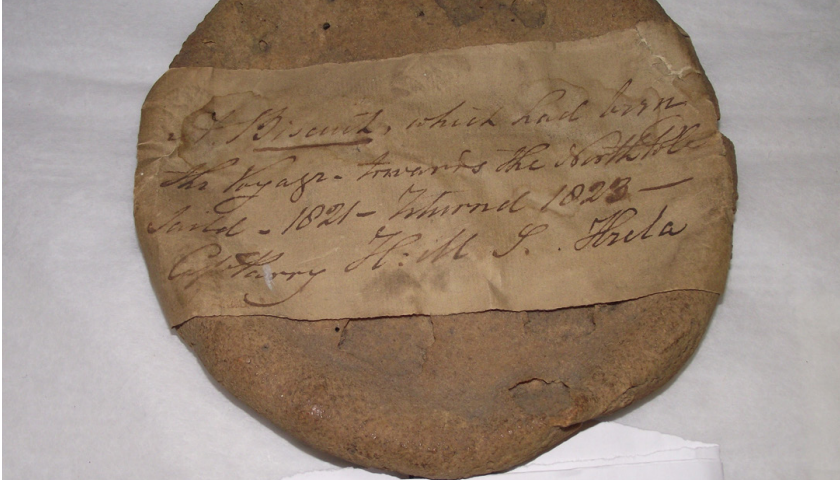


Fig.16 Biscuit ration from Parry's voyage, 1821. National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London



Fig.17 Royal Navy Uniform c. 1821-1830 National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London







# PART VI:

## Embodied Knowledge

My discussion of the archive is borrowed from Diana Taylor's book, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, where she uses the term "archive" to refer to textual and material remains, the supposedly permanent artifacts of practices, and "repertoire" to refer to the corpus of embodied and socially transmitted

memory, to the supposedly ephemeral, and to performance practice<sup>1</sup> In my research, the “archive” refers to shipboard records, maps, Parry’s journals and related objects housed in libraries or museums. I consider performance or “repertoire” as Taylor categorizes it, as the way in which memory, history, and tradition are practiced through storytelling, circus arts, games, dances, and shipboard theatricals. Taylor points out that the two systems, both archive and repertoire, operate together, sometimes in opposition and sometimes independently.<sup>2</sup> In Western thought, where writing has become the guarantor of preservation and of existence itself, I embrace Taylor’s call for alternative epistemic systems, specifically the role of performance as a tool for expanding what we understand as knowledge:

We learn and transmit knowledge through embodied action, through cultural agency, and by making choices. Performance, for me, functions as an episteme, a way of knowing, not simply an object of analysis. By situating myself as one more social actor in the scenarios I analyze, I hope to position my personal and theoretical investment in the arguments. I chose not to smooth out the differences in tone, but rather let them speak to the tensions between who I am and what I do.<sup>3</sup>

This understanding of performance as “a way of knowing” is a theme I explore within my thesis exhibition, in which archival and performance-based knowledge integrate and inform each other. In this sense, I use the archive and its material documents as a catalyst for creating points of engagement, new documents, and performances.

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1 Taylor, Diana. *The archive and the repertoire: performing cultural memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. Pg 20

2 Ibid. Pg 21.

3 Ibid. Pg XVI, Intro.

*In 2002, historian Greg Dening encouraged his colleagues to reflect on the processes by which they make sense of the past. He suggested that a good place to start would be for historians to think of themselves as performers. By acknowledging their own performances in the archives and in writing about the past, historians would be alert to 'the fictions in our non-fiction,'*

*-David Dean, Yana Meerzon, and  
Kathryn Prince in History, Memory,  
Performance*



# PART VII:



## Igloolik & Paarii

### *I've heard this story with two versions*

In my first conversation with my mentor Guillaume Saladin, the founder of Artcirq, I asked him if he knew anything about Captain Parry:

...yes parry, I know him from Igloolik, he got cursed  
I think, by shamans, him and his crew, and for  
white people not to comeback ever on their island..

and it took about 200 years for another ship to come...I think there is a sailor from his ship buried on iglulik island...<sup>1</sup>

In all of my research, I had not come across a story about a shaman's curse. My curiosity was peaked. It seemed that there were many other sides of Parry's narrative that were alive in Igloolik. Reading Dorothy Eber's book, *Encounters on the Passage: Inuit Meet the Explorers*, I discovered the shaman story that Guillaume had mentioned. Eber visited Igloolik in the mid-1990's to research stories within the recently established Oral History archive. She states, "In the central Arctic I quickly found, the canon of Inuit oral history gives centre stage to the specific expeditions of William Edward Parry."<sup>2</sup> Eber was referring to the oral histories of the Inullariit Elders' Society in the Igloolik Research Centre.

The Igloolik Oral History project was established in 1985, as a community-based project created by Louis Tapardjuk, Leah Otak, Maurice Arnatsiaq, and John MacDonald. Elders made the crucial point that only through the use of their local language, Inuktitut, could their culture and traditions be adequately preserved and communicated. John MacDonald explains that the decision to translate the interviews into English was based on the Elders' deeply felt sense that the wider world should have unfiltered access to firsthand accounts of Inuit knowledge. This decision reflected Elders' concerns that researchers, particularly biologists, were dismissive of

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1       Saladin, Guillaume. "Artist project/ Igloolik." E-mail message to author. March, 5, 2016.

2       Eber, Dorothy. *Encounters on the Passage: Inuit Meet the Explorers*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.

Inuit specialized understandings of the environment and its ecology.<sup>3</sup> In keeping with the Elders' wishes, generally unlimited access is permitted to the collection. The interviews are widely used both by locals and visiting researchers. Educators in Nunavut use oral histories as a resource for curriculum-development and researchers, particularly those engaged in the social, biological and environmental sciences, consult the interviews regularly.<sup>4</sup> The collection is currently comprised of some 600 interviews, each about an hour in length, and can be accessed in three ways: by listening to the Inuktitut audiotapes, by reading transcripts, or by viewing the English translations on a computer monitor. Louis Tapardjuk is the only original project founder who still resides in Igloolik. Leah has since passed away, however, during my visit I had the pleasure of meeting with her daughter Toby Otak. John MacDonald has since retired and moved to Ottawa, however, many of my beginning conversations about this archive began with him:

3/10/16

*Dear Carolyn;*

*Thank you for your fascinating letter. Regrettably, we no longer live in Igloolik but in Ottawa where we moved for retirement about four years ago. We still, however, keep in regular touch with Igloolik and in fact have visited there a number of times since leaving.*

*I have attached an article I published a few years ago about Parry's visit to Igloolik. I think you will find it contains much of the Parry story*

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3 MacDonal, John. "New Snowchange Discussion Paper Published from Nunavut ..." So Near ... So Far Memory and Oral History in a Canadian Inuit Community. November 28, 2014. Accessed April 16, 2017. <http://www.snowchange.org/pages/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Snowchange-Discussion-Paper-5.pdf>.

4 Ibid.



*relevant to your project. In it most of the Inuit information relating to Parry's visit comes from interviews I did with elders as part of the Igloodik Oral History Project. Alas, with the exception of Herve Paniaq, all the elders interviewed on this topic have since died. It is therefore unlikely that much more original material on the story can be gathered in Igloodik these days. However I suspect each generation of Iglulingmiut will interpret the story in their own way - no matter how far it is from the original source - this is the way tradition works .*

*After you have read the article, should you have any questions relating to its content by all means please feel free to be in touch again.*

*Meanwhile all best wishes for the success of your project,*

*John<sup>5</sup>*

The Parry story that John refers to in his email to me, is the shaman story that Guillaume first led me to. Giving context to this story, Eber outlines Inuit contact with Parry and his crew:

The Inuit had drawn maps, repaired and sewn clothes, and on occasion hospitably hosted officers and crews in their sod houses and tents. Parry had tended the Inuit sick, had set up a makeshift hospital, and shortly before the Fury and the Hecla began their journey home, he left sledges, wood for bows and arrows, and many useful items for Inuit use, spreading them out around Igloodik in a variety of places, so that as many as possible would benefit.<sup>6</sup>

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5 MacDonal, John. "Artist project/ Igloodik." E-mail message to author. June 1, 2016.

6 Eber, Dorothy. *Encounters on the Passage: Inuit Meet the Explorers*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.

John MacDonald explains that these generally sympathetic accounts constitute the earliest and fullest descriptions we have of Inuit life in Canada's Eastern Arctic. However, toward the end of the expedition, harmonious relations were disrupted in a demonstration of Royal Navy justice, when Parry had an Inuk man named Oootook brutally lashed for the theft of a shovel. There are several versions of this story as told by explorers and Elders in Igloodik. In Parry's version he writes:

On the 3rd of March [1823]

The Esquimaux were excluded from the Fury for some hours, on account of a shovel having been stolen from alongside the preceding day. Soon after this, Oo-ootook, a middle-aged man, [...] was consigned to solitary confinement for some hours in the Heda's coal-hole. As, however, the Esquimaux only laughed at this as a very good joke, and as the time was shortly coming when numerous loose stores must be exposed upon the ice near the ships, I determined to make use of the present well authenticated instance of theft, in trying the effect of some more serious penalty. The delinquent was therefore put down into the Fury's store-room passage, and closely confined there for several hours; when having collected several of the natives on board the Fury, I ordered him to be stripped and seized up in their presence, and to receive a dozen lashes on the back with a cat-o'-nine tails. The instant this was over, his countrymen called out very earnestly, "Timun,

timunna,” (That’s right, that’s right,)<sup>7</sup>

In the Inuit version of this event, as recorded by Charles Francis Hall, a subsequent explorer who came to Igloodik in the 1860’s, a woman named Erktua, who had visited Parry’s ships claims that Ooootook is a powerful shaman who defies all attempts to be killed. Accusing Ooootook of the theft of the shovel, Parry has him taken on board, his hands tied to the mast and stripped. Parry then calls for him to be whipped a dozen times on the back. Inuit who witness the beating want to help Oo-oo-took, yelling, “Timun, timunna,” “enough, enough.” Parry’s whips, musket balls, and swords, managed only to subdue Ooootook, who cries, “Let the Kob-lu-nas\* try to kill me; they cannot, for I am an an-nat-ko\*.”<sup>8</sup> After Oo-oo-took had been one day and one night in the dark hole, he thought he would use his power as an an-nat-ko, and destroy the vessel by splitting it through the middle from stem to stern. When a great cracking noise was made, “the kob-lu-nas, fearing from such great and terrific noises that the ship would be destroyed, let Oo-oo-took go.”<sup>9</sup>

John MacDonald goes on to share another version of this story as told by Herve Paniaq of Igloodik, who highlights the powers of the shaman, here named Quliiqaujaq: “He stole a shovel [...] The white people wanted to cut off his arms with an axe, [...] but each time [they struck] his arm was untouched. When white men were finished,

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7 Parry, William Edward. *Journal of a second voyage for the discovery of a north-west passage ... 1821-22-23, in His Majesty’s ships Fury and Hecla, under ... Parry ... commander of the expedition ...* London: John Murray, 1824 Pg 412.

8 F. Hall: *his voyage to Repulse bay, sledge journeys to the straits of Fury and Hecla and to King William’s land, and residence among the Eskimos, during the years 1864-’69.* Washington: Govt. Print. Off., 1879. Pg 112.

\* “kob-lu-na” is translated here as a person of european descent and “an-nat-ko” is translated as a shaman.

9 Ibid. Pg 112.

Quliiqaujaq blew their ships away and told them never to return [...]” (Paniaq IE-141:1990).<sup>10</sup> Differing from this account, Rosie Iqallijuq links the shaman’s banishment of Parry’s ships to jealousy over a woman. However, the Shaman’s curse seemed to persevere, it was nearly a hundred years before Europeans returned across the water. In 1913, Alfred Tremblay, a French-Canadian prospector with Joseph Bernier’s private Arctic ‘gold-rush’ expedition to Northern Baffin Island, came here with Inuit from Pond Inlet. In 1921, Knud Rasmussen’s Fifth Thule Expedition reached Igloolik, and in 1927, Newfoundland’s Bob Bartlett arrived here by sea.<sup>11</sup> In addition to these stories, there are several other versions of the Shaman’s curse recorded in the Oral History Archive. Dorothy Eber explains that for generations this story has circulated not only in Igloolik but all along the Arctic ocean coast, sometimes melded with stories of other expeditions. In the versions people tell today, sometimes the theft of the shovel is mentioned; sometimes it isn’t.<sup>12</sup> However, Eber suggests that beyond the shaman’s story, there is another story in the Igloolik archives that suggests why Parry came to Igloolik in the first place.

Rosie Iqallijuq tells the story from her own Elders, the famous Ataguttaaluk and her husband, Ituksarjuat, whom southerners called the King and Queen of Igloolik, that links Parry’s arrival with the coming into existence of the Inuit, white people, and Native Americans. Parry is joined with the well-known story of the woman who refused to take a husband and so was banished to an island with her dog, where she eventually gave birth to a litter of puppies —half dog half-human destined to become the progenitors of the Qallunaat or Europeans.

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10 MacDonald, John. “Iglulingmiut and the Royal Navy: Narratives and Their Aftermath.” Accessed April 16, 2017. file:///Users/ingridandalistar/Downloads/Parry%20(1)%20(1).pdf.

11 Noah Richler and Michael Winter, *This is my country, what’s yours?: a literary atlas of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007).Pg 120.

12 Eber, Dorothy. *Encounters on the Passage: Inuit Meet the Explorers*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.

Interestingly, there is a variant of this legend that specifically mentions that the Qallunaat would come back by ship. Thus as John MacDonald argues, Parry's arrival at Igloodik can be seen as the fulfillment of this creation story.<sup>13</sup> In conversation with John MacDonald, author Noah Richler, quotes him as saying:

The interesting thing about mythology is that it's always local. The story that Indians and white men were the progeny of Uinigumasuittuq – the Woman Who Married a Dog – occurred right here in Igloodik. The name of the place where she lived suggests it was an island, and even now people will point to various rocks and will insist to you that this is where it happened. Versions of the story are told all over the Arctic, but people here will point to a particular piece of land when they tell the story of the arrival of the British. It is local to home.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly when I spoke to John McDonald, who recorded many of these stories, he said narratives are often remembered as fragments of a more complete story heard long ago. It seemed to me that in Igloodik finding a single account of the past did not exist. The different versions reflect the teller's values, which are passed down through generations.

These story variants revealed to me a complexity of arctic exploration history, both within the archive and in present-day Igloodik. Moreover, the idea that contradicting stories had equal value in Igloodik led me to see how different experiences and memories of the past could co-exist. Before I departed for Igloodik, I had all of these stories in front of me, I planned to dig deeper into the archives to understand more about

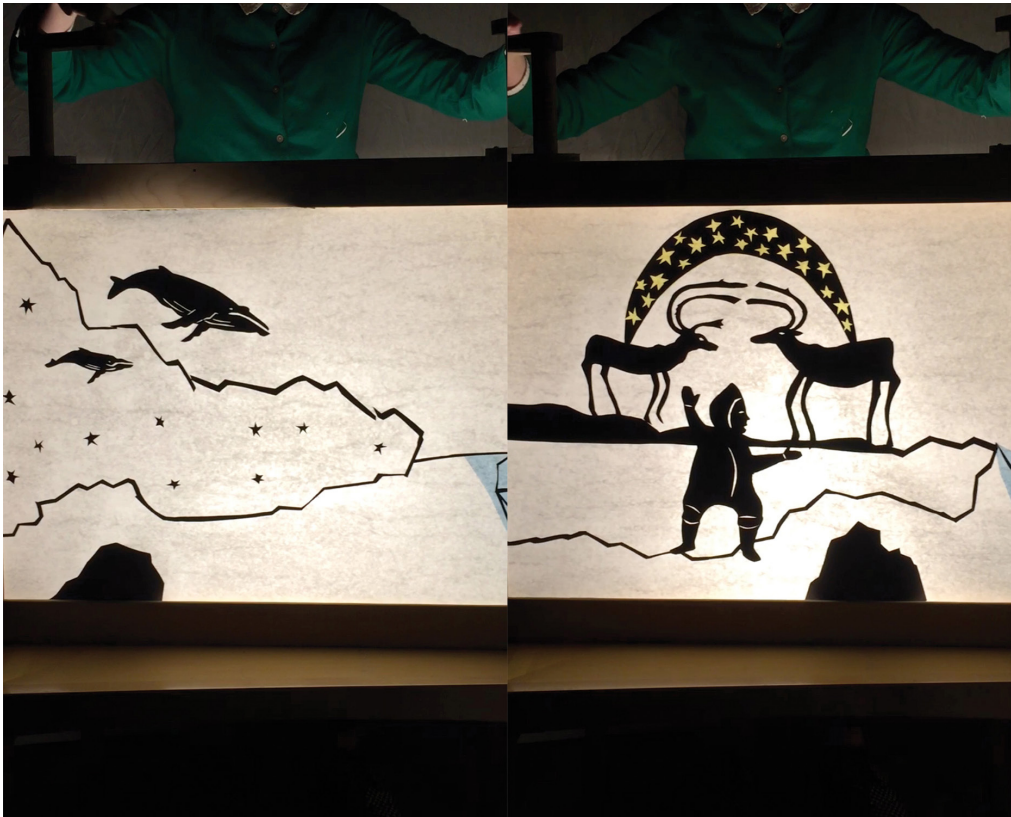
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13 Ibid.

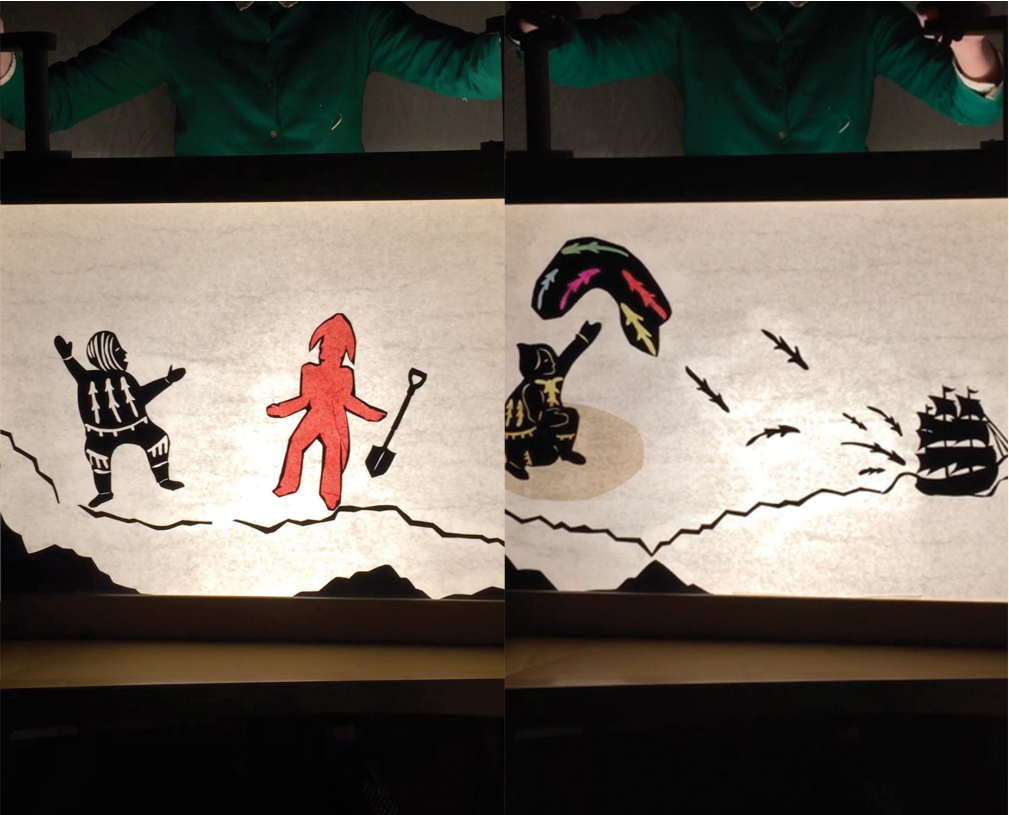
14 Noah Richler and Michael Winter, *This is my country, what's yours?: a literary atlas of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007).Pg 120.

the context of the oral histories. I wanted to know what people living in Igloodik today thought about Parry, if they knew about the shaman, and what value they placed on these older narratives. I also began to wonder more about the role of storytelling in practice and performance of history. I also began to reflect on my own interest in this material. I'm not Inuit, I don't have ancestors in the British Navy, nor do I specialize in arctic history. However, these narratives provide a larger framework for forming archival engagements within my work.

Reflecting on these multiple narratives, I created a small scrolling panorama cranky that can be used to tell a story in a number of different ways (fig. 18). By only using silhouette images to create a visual narrative, the story told would rely on the person scrolling the cranky. Thus, the narrator has control over the story told. This allowed me to practice ways images could be paired with different narratives to give various dimensions to a particular story or event.



*Fig. 18: small cranky scroll that depicts different narratives of Parry's time in Igloolik*









## **PART VIII:**

### **My Journey**

The second day after I arrived to Igloolik, I made my way to the Igloolik Research Centre. Within this blue steel building is a small office where the Arctic College houses the Igloolik Oral History Project (fig. 19).

I knock on the door and I'm greeted by Rachel Qitsualik-Tinsley, who will be overseeing my work in the archives. Rachel introduces me to

Micah Arreak who is working on building a database of Inuktitut etymology. Micha begins to show me how the local language is constructed, teaching me a few Inuit words with corresponding syllabics, most importantly the word Igloodik.

I'm introduced to another researcher Jason Young, a University of Washington doctoral student in Geography who is studying Inuktitut and the use of internet and social media in Igloodik. His mentor Alexina Kublu also works at the Oral History Centre and is studying the history of Inuit "aya aya" songs, known as storytelling songs. Levy Uttak's desk is across from Micah. Levy is a well known hunter in the community. He explains the significance of hunting and spending time out on the land in terms of preserving Inuit traditional knowledge. Together these individuals have a strong impact on my experience in Igloodik and my work in the archive.

Rachel shows me the metal filing cabinets in her office that contain the recorded interviews as well as the computer that holds the english transcripts. Next to the computer is a closet that contains a small library of printed material: the Inuktitut magazine series, books on Inuit oral history and language, 19th century ethnographies including Parry's voyages, and books on Inuit tradition and culture. I'm anxious to dive right in and begin researching, but Rachel explains that we must first begin by taking a walk. Rachel takes me through town, showing me the local grocery store, The Northern, the Igloodik Co-op, the radio station, and the adjacent research building. Most importantly she introduces me to local community members explaining the reason for my presence in Igloodik. I quickly learn how important it is to have her as my initial interface with the individuals I plan to talk with in the community. I learn that Rachel and her husband Sean write children's stories together inspired from Inuit myths, many of which she grew up learning. Returning to the office, I ask Rachel if I can read some of the children's stories she has written. She pulls several hardback books above her shelf and sends me home with some reading.



*Fig. 19: Image of the Government of Nunavut Building that houses the Oral History office. Igloolik, 2017*

I spent each day in the Oral History archive, beginning my day talking with Rachel, Micah, Alexina, Jason, and Levy. Rachel and Micah were the sole individuals who were able to grant me access to the computer that held the digital transcripts of the oral histories. After logging into the database, Rachel or Micah would type in keywords, guiding my search. John MacDonald explained to me that there are several ways to find information related to Parry by typing in his name proper as well as his Inuktitut names: “Paari”, or “Paarii”<sup>1</sup>. In addition, Rachel and Micah would suggest other keywords, often their searches led

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<sup>1</sup> MacDonald, John. “Artist project/ Igloolik.” E-mail message to author. June 1, 2016.

me to topics divergent from Parry. I quickly learned that this was part of understanding the wider history of Igloolik and information that was deemed more significant than my research points. This was also an interesting lesson in understanding the role of gatekeepers within different archives.

### **Community workshop:**

In collaboration with Igloolik Recreation and members of Artcirq I hosted a two-week puppet workshop for youth in Igloolik. The workshop translated Inuit myths into large-scale puppets that were then paraded in a procession through town (fig. 20). My archive mentor, Rachel Qitsualik-Tinsley helped me search for Inuit myths and stories that I could use as source material in the workshop. She also loaned her children's books to use as inspiration. Artcirq provided use of their rehearsal space; the Black Box, and I hired three Artcirq members to help run the workshop with me. Aside from having their help with construction and support, they also were extremely helpful with translating my English instruction into Inuktitut. Before coming to Igloolik, I purchased a stock of art supplies to donate upon completion of the workshop. Recreation advertised the workshop and provided help with setup and additional materials. I ran three hour sessions and had about 30 children each day. On the final day we paraded the giant puppets through town.

Organizing this workshop allowed me to collaborate with members of the community on a shared project and explore different ways to tell stories through visual means. This work also allowed an opportunity to build relationships that ultimately helped strengthen my ability to conduct research and interviews.



Fig. 20: Puppet Procession, Igloolik 2016.

## **Interviews:**

With my research license I was able to conduct a series of interviews with community members in Igloodik. However, this did not grant me easy access into the community, and planning interviews proved to be less straightforward than expected. In one of my skype meetings with Guillaume, he told me that there is an unspoken expectation of monetary exchange for interviews. Guillaume went on to explain that during the 20th century, there was a swath of visitors to the island that paid locals for information. Knud Rasmussen's Fifth Thule Expedition in 1921, the establishment of the Roman Catholic Mission in the 1930, and the the erection of the Hudson's Bay Company created a tradition of payment in exchange for information (fig. 21).

Knowing this history immediately gave me a sense of how my role as an outsider conducting interviews might be received. Moreover, as a female, Guillaume advised, given the social norms, that I first reach out to women in the community who could help connect me with the individuals I wanted to speak with. This also proved to be extremely helpful when locating individuals, as there are no street names, often times no address, or phone number. I quickly learned while I was in Igloodik that my agenda had to be weighed against what the community would allow me access to. I also learned the importance of social capital and trust needed when it came to undertaking this research. As a result, the beginning of my trip involved meeting with many community members and sharing my project, taking walks, buying groceries or cooking dinner in exchange for conversation. This way of working was something I had to learn along the way, with the help of individuals who befriended me during my stay. All the same, there were still individuals who refused to speak with me or do an interview. As a result, I had to adjust my goals and respect instances when I did not have access to information. Within my time in Igloodik, I was able to conduct 10 recorded interviews, access 50 oral histories, and hold a two week puppet workshop for youth in the community.



*Fig. 21: Image of the first Hudson Bay outpost in Igloolik. 2016*

Interviews lasted about 45 minutes each. Because I do not know Inuktitut, I restricted my interviews to individuals who were fluent in English. Interview questions ranged from topics relating to Captain Parry, storytelling, and circus arts. I also allowed time for interviewees to discuss topics of their choosing. Interviewees chose where the interviews were conducted.

The purpose of these interviews were to gain an understanding of the dynamic ways in which the past is remembered and practiced. The other goal of the interviews was to understand the role of the arts,



performance, and storytelling in Igloodik. The interviews provided an alternative way to do research and to think about the archive.

In addition, in agreement with the terms of my research license, the culmination of my research (in the form of interviews, my final film, paper, and photographs) will be archived in Igloodik and available for the community to access.

## Stills from Igloodik Interviews:





















*Fig. 22: Still from my interview with Zacharias Kunuk, Igloolik, July 18, 2016.*

During the end of my stay I met with Zacharias Kunuk, a filmmaker from Igloolik and director of *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)* and *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* (fig. 22). He was in the process of moving his office into another building across the street. His current space is a small shack with the exterior walls painted with brightly colored murals. Zacharias met Jason Young and I in his office, which was completely bare except for his desk in the corner of the room. I looked around and tried to imagine a production company. Zacharias pointed to different rooms, “that was our sound engineering room, this is where we kept our library, and now...it’s all moving across the street.” The electricity had been cut off at that point and the three of us sat in a dark room. Zacharias sat in front of a sunlit window, his body a

silhouette that brought to mind images of spaghetti-Westerns which had inspired his latest film, the Searchers. He lit a cigarette and leaned back. We chatted for a bit and the next day I went to his new office to record an interview.

Zacharias tells me that there are different ways to tell the same story, that stories tell you where you are, and about myths from long ago. When I visited Zacharias, on his desk was a copy of Captain Parry's journal. I asked him why he had it. "Just imagine," he said. "You can picture these men, traveling to a place they've never been. Just imagine how difficult it must have been."<sup>2</sup> As he went on to describe the story of Parry's exploration, I began to wonder more about the nuances of story and truth.

Zacharias and I talk for nearly an hour. I ask him about how he got started making films, why he was interested in using explorer's journals, and how oral histories were a part of his creative process.

**Excerpt from my interview with Zacharias Kunuk:**

C: How did you start making films?

Z: "I was always interested in movies. I was interested in my culture and learning about my culture. The Elders would sit down and I would talk with them. But when you get to the editing table there is no footage of what they're talking about so we ended up creating it."

C: "have you heard about Captain Parry?"

Z: "I hear a lot about it, because they were the first Qallunaat to come here in 1822, I was interested. Just imagining their winter here, Inuit

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<sup>2</sup> Kunuk, Zacharias. "Igloodik Interviews, Zacharias Kunuk." Interview by author. July 18, 2016.

probably had their igloo nearby [...] That's how I picture it, it must have been some sight to see."

C: "Why are you interested in using explorer's journals in your films?"

Z: "back then they didn't have cameras, they had sketches that are over exaggerated. It's good to see the sketches, you see the land, you know the land especially in this area, just imagining how much trouble they had sailing, sailing through ice...a lot of trouble. But when they got to this little island there was a deer path, you know we don't have deer here. We have Caribou. And I was just laughing when I read it was a deer path. It's interesting trying to compare and see it, this is how it interests me."

C: "Do you find that there are often misperceptions in the journals?"

Z: "It's a lot of misunderstanding that is going on. At the time they were not speaking english and Qallunaat<sup>3</sup> were not speaking Inuktitut. It is his [Parry's] military point of view what he saw and wrote down. But when you know the culture when you know what is happening it is actually something else happening. Sometimes you really see it, most of the time it's correct.

C: "What is your method of using these journals in your films?"

Z: "In the journals we knew what the stories were, they were written down."

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3 People who are not Inuit, typically caucasian and considered a group

He goes on to explain that what wasn't written down were the experiences of Elders, of people in his community. As a result, Zacharias tells me "we gathered up oral histories and just did it, we learned a lot about Elders [and what they] experienced at this time. This became a way for our culture to understand the past."

In our conversation, Zacharias explains the production process of his films, how they restaged events and in doing so were able to practice indigenous knowledge. For instance, the making of costumes, the sharing of stories, the making of igloos and sets as well as hunting all served a double purpose, on one hand to make a film that represented his culture and on the other to preserve Inuit traditional knowledge that used restaging to practice tradition. What interested me was how the costumes and props were also living artefacts of both the present and the past. As Zacharias puts it, "we are really lucky to have these Elders to stitch these costumes, which are real." During my first week in Igloolik I came across archaeological remains of Inuit sod houses. What I didn't realize until after my interview with Zacharias, was that these were constructed for his film. The set had slowly dissolved into the landscape camouflaging itself alongside other archaeological sites. I slowly began to realize the faint line between actual and real.

In his travel memoir of Igloolik, Noah Richler writes:

In the Inuit universe, being one thing does not mean that you cannot also be another. Men and women, animals and spirits, move in and out of states of being – good, bad, young, old, alive, dead. The Myth World acts itself out on and in people, and the world is a morality play with the health of the community, not the individual, at its heart. Elements of a recurring story, not the fortunes of a single character, are the things that matter. In the Myth World [...] time has no beginning, middle, or end. The balance of the circle would be unchanged.





## PART IX:

### Artist As Archivist

There are an increasing number of artists whose practice starts with research in archives, and others who deploy what has been termed an archival form of research, with one object of inquiry leading to another. These varied research processes lead to works that invite viewers to

reconsider the ways in which the past is represented.<sup>1</sup>

Often categorized “artist as archivist” or “artist as historian,”<sup>2</sup> my process leads to works that make connections between events, characters, materials and objects; asking us to reconsider the ways in which the past is recorded and remembered in a wider dialogue. In Hal Foster’s essay on *The Archival Impulse* he characterizes the “archival artist” as one who presents historical information that is often lost or not physically present. Within this practice archival materials are found yet constructed, factual yet fictional.<sup>3</sup>

The retrospective historiographic mode —a methodological complex that includes the historical account, the archive, the document, the act of excavating and unearthing, the art of reconstruction and reenactment, and the testimony have become the content and form favored by a growing number of artists, critics, and curators.<sup>4</sup> Mark Godfrey’s 2007 essay, *The Artist as Historian* and Jane Blocker’s 2016 article, *Becoming Past: History in Contemporary Art* bookend this historiographic turn in art, while exhibitions such as *Documenta 13* in 2012, and *The Way of the Shovel at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago* in 2014 demonstrate the curatorial interest in historiography in contemporary art. I also turn to the writing of curators such as Okwui Enwezor to consider ways the archive has been contextualized in contemporary art practices in exhibits such as *Archive Fever*.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Godfrey, Mark. “The Artist as Historian.” *October* 120 (2007): 140-72. doi:10.1162/octo.2007.120.1.140. Pg 142-143.

2 Ibid.

3 Foster, Hal. “An Archival Impulse.” *October* 110 (2004): 3-22. doi:10.1162/O162287042379847.

4 Boardman, J. “The Way of the Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary in Art.” *Common Knowledge* 20, no. 3 (2014): 510. doi:10.1215/O961754x-2732988.

5 Enwezor, Okwui. *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*. New York, NY: International Center of Photography, 2008.







Fig. 25: Jeremy Deller, *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001).



Fig. 26: Still from Deimantas Narkevicius's film, *Once in the XX Century*, 2004.

In each of these projects the artist's aim is not to position themselves as new authorities in their areas of research, but to scrutinize our relationship with the past making it possible for us to think and talk about the representation of history in new ways.<sup>6</sup>

I'm drawn to artists such as Zoe Beloff, who uses archival accounts of unrealized films from the 1930s to reimagine the unperformed document<sup>7</sup> (fig. 23). Using film as her primary medium when engaging in the archive, Beloff uses a variety of visual technologies and archival documents to position the spectator in a constantly shifting relationship between image, representation, and apparatus. Beloff's work challenges us to refine our assumptions about the use of narrative in experimental film and its relationship with the archival document stating, "The archive is only there for us to activate and if we cannot, it is nothing."<sup>8</sup>

In other cases, artists turn to fiction not in order to evade historical representation but to represent historical experience more adequately. This tendency is best exemplified by the projects archived and exhibited by the Atlas Group whose work documents the contemporary history of Lebanon using performance, video, and photography to assemble collective memories in the form of factual and fictional documents<sup>9</sup> (fig. 24). Purporting to be real documents emerging from the Lebanese civil wars, the Atlas Group is less interested in revealing the fallaciousness

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6 Bool, Flip, Frits Gierstberg, and Frank Van Der Stok. *Questioning history: imagining the past in contemporary art*. Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2008. Pg 9.

7 Beloff, Zoe. *Two Marxists in Hollywood*. HD video Color Sound 26 minutes, 2015.

8 Griffith, Phillip. "WALID RAAD and ANDREA GEYER." The Brooklyn Rail. Accessed April 17, 2017. <http://brooklynrail.org/2015/12/artseen/walid-raad-and-andrea-geyer>.

9 Ra'ad, Walid. *The Atlas Group. Missing Lebanese Wars*, 1999.



*Fig. 27: Mariam Ghani, What we left unfinished: short cuts of unfinished films screened with live improvised scores by 4 States Sessions for Salon-e-Girdbad at Secession, Vienna, fall 2014*



*Fig. 28: Matthew Buckingham, Northwest Passage, 2002. Black and white c-print 39.4 x 47.6 inches / 100 x 121 cm*

of the material it presents than in suggesting that only through fiction can an adequate image of the Lebanese wars be created. As a whole their work might be considered a kind of performance, with Raad playing the role of a genuine archivist.<sup>10</sup>

There are also artists that respond to the singular nature of documents discovered after directed searches in archives. Zoe Leonard for instance documents the life of an imaginary black actress, Fae Richards whose accomplishments have disappeared from the archive due to the implications of her blackness.<sup>11</sup>

Artists have also used traditional forms of re-enactment to recreate and reflect on historical events. For Instance in Jeremy Deller's project, *The Battle of Orgreave* he organized the restaging of a clash between police and miners from a miners' strike in 1984 in which Deller recreated a troubled event in recent British history with protagonists from the clash and a battle reenactment society (fig. 25).

There have also been historical turns in performance-based art and film. In *Performa, Defying the Canon: Performing Histories*, artists working primarily in media and performance have probed the idea of historical reconstitution by restaging, rethinking, and remaking. For example, Lithuanian film and video artists, Deimantas Narkevicius engages with historical material to question the extent to which our understanding of the past is fragmentary and constructed. In his film, *Once in the XX Century*, Narkevicius addresses this idea by reversing footage from the Lithuanian National television archive of the dismantling of a larger-than-life-size bronze statue of Lenin in Vilnius

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10 Godfrey, Mark. "The Artist as Historian." *October* 120 (2007): 140-72. doi:10.1162/octo.2007.120.1.140. Pg 145.

11 Leonard, Zoe. *The Fae Richards Photo Archive*. 1996.

following the collapse of the Soviet bloc<sup>12</sup> (fig. 26).

Similarly, Brooklyn-based artist Mariam Ghani creates video and photographic installations that investigate built and natural landscapes that have layered and complicated histories. Exploring five unfinished feature films that were made between 1978-1991, during the years of Afghan Communism, Ghani explores the possibility of reconstructing hidden and parallel narratives that draw on images of state propaganda. She uses a multifaceted approach to communicating these histories; spoken narrative, musical score, and dance performance, encouraging viewers to reflect on challenging issues through multiple layers of meaning and imagery that unfold over time (fig. 27).

In his series, *Northwest Passage*, Matthew Buckingham juxtaposes an image of a military submarine passing the Statue of Liberty next to a text written by the artist about Henry Hudson, who in 1609 was commissioned by the Dutch East India Company to search for a route between Europe and Asia (fig. 28). The text further notes that global warming may soon open the Northwest Passage to shipping. Resonating with my project themes, Buckingham's narration attends to the way representation precedes reality as much as records it.

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12 "Performa · Defying the Canon: Performing Histories (1)." Accessed April 17, 2017. <http://www.bing.com/>





# PART X:



## Methodology

### Process:

Both archival and performance based knowledge are significant to my project. Beginning in the physical archive, I identify materials that I am drawn to, in this case, the romantic descriptions of the arctic as described by Parry. An important part of my process involves reflecting on my own desires and imaginations surrounding these



materials. During this stage I begin a process of deep research where I comb the archive for related material. From there, I begin to look at contextual information and contemporary discourse related to these documents. During this period of research I collect information in the form of images, descriptions, and diagrams. For instance, popular images of the arctic during the 19th century in the form of newspaper advertisements, lantern slides and illustrated newspapers as well as images from later expeditions of ship interiors, images of frostbite, and scientific instruments. These are the things that make up the source material for the next phase of my process; interpretation. During this phase I consider, what themes I draw from the materials I've collected as well as the questions they present. I consider the contemporary resonance and in what way I will form a dialogue with these materials and their wider context. From here, I begin the making stage.

#### Studio as archive:

My creative practice positions history in a state of revision and renewed interpretation. Brazilian artist Paul Bruscky, whose studio in Brazil houses a personal archive of over 15,000 items when interviewed said, "my art and life have always been inseparable, and the studio-archive is clearly an expression of that. How do we give form to knowledge? In this space I make no difference between my works and everything else here, the archive, my library my life."<sup>1</sup> In a similar vein, I consider the material remains of my process as constituting its own archive. Thus, the studio and the projects I develop become their own sites that allow for constant renegotiation and rewriting. In this way, previous scripts for plays can be used to develop choreography for dances, interviews can be used to create narration for scenes, and research can

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1 Foscari, Fiorella, Heather MacNeil, Bonnie Mak, and Gillian Oliver. *Engaging with records and archives: histories and theories*. London: Facet Publishing, 2016.

be generated to create new objects, music scores, and installations. It is important to my process that I apply the same archival interventions to my own work, allowing for renewed reflection and possible reinterpretation.

Artist as archivist, artist as explorer:

When I first came across the story about the missing shovel and administration of “Naval Punishment” in Parry’s second journal, I immediately became interested in Inuit stories that shed light on early arctic exploration history. On one hand these stories provide Inuit perspectives and experiences lost to the archive. Furthermore, the different versions of the same story among Elders suggests how storytelling is an active part of remembering the past in present-day Igloodik. However, what stood out was the entangled nature of these different types of knowledge. Sometimes Parry’s journals corroborated Inuit accounts and vice versa, sometimes they contradicted each other, and other times it was a combination of the two. It seemed that there was no one reliable version of the past. In the process of collecting different stories to present a singular narrative, I found that what I was searching for didn’t exist. Rather what I realized was both contradiction and coherence, myth and reality, past and present... and I was right there in the middle of it. Not only was I confronted with many different narratives, I was also confronted with my own frameworks for understanding the past. Rather than present Parry’s story accompanied by Inuit accounts, I started to understand the complicated nature of history and my role as both archivist, artist, explorer, and individual with my own personal history.

If you were to publish the journals from my trip to Igloodik, on the first page you would read about an airplane ride in July full of anticipation, then my waning enthusiasm for Captain Parry’s

expeditions, my interactions with people and an environment that is friendlier, flatter, more private, more creative, more specific, and more true than the romantic images painted by foreigners 200 years ago. You would read about the radio station and the \$30 bag of rice and the meat called “country food” brought on Canada Day to the community center for everyone to take. Eventually you would read many blank pages because eventually I gave up. I surrendered to the experience, which is the only truth I have. I’m not the authority, I’m not giving you the answers..... because I don’t have them<sup>2</sup>

What surfaced from this experience was a need to create my own narrative that reflected my journey through this research. When I returned to Providence, RI, I collaborated with a Theatre collective, *Strange Attractor*, to develop a play that presented the different narratives I came across during my time in Igloodik. Using different storytelling devices; a cranky scroll, magic lantern slides, actors, and myself as the narrator, I created a play inspired by my research and experience in Igloodik.

#### Initial Phase:

Upon my return from Igloodik, I experimented with different ways to visually communicate my experience. I wanted to create a narrative in which the very storytelling medium reflected the framework of its construction.

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2 Gennari, Carolyn. “Paarii in Igloodik.” Unpublished play script, 2016. Performed in Providence, RI summer 2016.

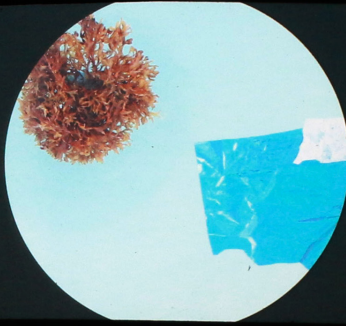
I made a set of 40 magic lantern slides from my travel photographs. These were a combination of images taken during interviews, community events, and walks out on the land (fig. 29). I edited the images adding a circular mask to give the effect of an old slide. I printed the images on acetate and pressed them between two pieces of antique lantern glass and bound them in paper tape. At the time of Parry's expeditions, the magic lantern would have been the very device in which the general public would have seen depictions of this region.... explorers often giving lantern lectures themselves in hope of generating revenue for future expeditions. By inserting my photographs into the medium of a magic lantern slide, I was positioning my narrative as yet another story, that should be framed within the context of many other stories.

Experimenting with another Victorian mode of storytelling, I made a large scale scrolling panorama, also called a cranky. Inspired from Oral Histories, images from Parry's journal, as well as Inuit artwork seen during my trip, I cut out black paper silhouettes and pasted them to white butcher paper creating a 50ft paper scroll.

During this time I hired a theatre group, *Strange Attractor* to work with me on a play inspired by my research. Within a four-week bracket of time, we generated a script, created original music scores, and did a live performance in Providence, RI. The actors I worked with specialize in physical theatre, a genre of theatrical performance that encompasses storytelling primarily through physical movement (fig 30 & 31). The process for developing the play involved holding a series of initial focus groups where I shared my research and the stories I had come across in Igloodik. I showed the performers images from Parry's journal, present day pictures of Igloodik, images of frostbite, a list of shipboard chores and routines, descriptions of weather, theatrical reports, music and the shovel story. After this initial week of sharing information, I worked with a movement director and dramaturg to help translate this research into content for the play. Using my source material as prompts, the actors would generate material through



Fig. 29: Igloolik Slides, Carolyn Gennari, 2016. 4.5in. X3.25in. C-print on acetate, antique lantern glass, paper tape.





*Fig. 30: Performance still from Parii in Igloolik. Carolyn Gennari, 2016.*



*Fig. 31: Performance still from Parii in Igloolik. Carolyn Gennari, 2016.*

movement and action. We experienced with different ways we could visualize my research without using voice narration. I had never worked this way before, and I was immediately captivated by the way a story could be told through the body. I began to see parallel connections between our rehearsal process and the types of embodied knowledge and storytelling practiced in Igloodik. I liked the effect that bodily translations had on my research and the type of information I was trying to get across. I particularly liked the ways that performance could offer multiple points of interpretation by way of abstraction, movement, and gesture. It was through these rehearsals that I found my methodology for making my next piece, *Searching For What Isn't There*.

#### The Present in the Past, a Choreographic Inquiry:

*Memory is not a process of being in the past. Rather it is a process of allowing the past to enter into present circumstances.*

–Kent De Spain, *Landscape of The Now*<sup>3</sup>

When I returned to UM I decided to enroll in a dance class to further investigate ways choreography could be used to communicate narrative. In my dance class we practiced a type of improvisation called “memory form” adapted by choreographer Susan Sgorbati. In a memory form the score unfolds in five phases: the event, the repeated event, substituting roles, multiples, and finally the remembered present.<sup>4</sup> This exercise required us to actively redefine our concept

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3 Spain, Kent De. *Landscape of the now: a topography of movement improvisation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pg. 174.

4 Sgorbati, Susan. "Emergent Improvisation: Emergent Forms." *Emergent Improvisation: Emergent Forms*. Accessed December 14, 2016. <http://emergentimprovisation.org/emergent-forms.html>.



of the past through a process of memory, repetition, and replication. Trying to preserve a performed event called into question the ability to authentically represent a moment that passed. In this way, the act of remembering and re-enacting, resulted in collective and individual constructions of the past.

Reflecting on my work over the summer with physical theatre actors and my dance class, I began to think of ways I could communicate my experience in the arctic through a choreographic lens. Using my research as source material, I created a series of vignettes that translated archival fragments into movement. In his book, *Landscape of the Now: A Topography of Movement Improvisation* Kent De Spain suggests that, “placing ourselves ‘inside’ fragments of past images and events brings our present senses to bear upon them.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, I began to explore how fragments of my research could be translated into new visual narratives. Ultimately this exploration led to the creation of my film, *Searching For What Isn't There*.

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5 Spain, Kent De. *Landscape of the now: a topography of movement improvisation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pg. 174.





# **PART XI:**



## Creative Work

### Film:

The culmination of my research led to the creation of a 44min film, *Searching For What Isn't There*. In the role of creative director and producer, I worked with the theatre group in Rhode Island and dancers from the School of Music, Theatre, & Dance at the University of Michigan to create 3-5 minute screendance pieces. The choreography



*Fig. 32: behind the scene of the making of, Searching For What Isn't There, Carolyn Gennari. 2016.*



*Fig. 33: behind the scene of the making of, Searching For What Isn't There, Carolyn Gennari. 2016.*

emerged from archival sources such as Parry's journals, interviews, oral histories, photographs, and my first hand experience in Igloodik. Additionally, I reworked the material I had developed for the play over the summer into new performance scenes. In this way, my own script became part of the continuous archive. Working with the Duderstadt Video Team and a videographers from Rhode Island, I split the film shoot into two phases; Part 1 was shot at the Argus studios with actors and Part 2 was shot at the Duderstadt with dancers. The film is comprised of 12 chapters in addition to a title sequence and prologue. The chapter titles are excerpts from Inuit oral history transcripts related to Parry. There is no dialogue except for my voiceover narration.

In this work, I reiterate the contingency of knowledge, reminding the viewer that none of the stories told are objective - that each is communicated through different representations, and that each is told with its attendant histories. Using the Northwest Passage as metaphorical backdrop, *Searching For What Isn't There*, creates a site where archival and performance-based knowledge integrate and inform each other. Ultimately the viewer is led on a thematic search through the author's own journey, exploring the role of historic material, personal experience, and the meaning of representation in the formation of our historical understanding.

I will now introduce each of the scenes and outline the ways in which these concepts are framed.

## **Searching For What Isn't There**

The titles sequence introduces the thematic context for the Northwest Passage with icebergs slowly moving across the screen opening up into a white abyss, creating a mythic space that shifts our perception of time. In the prologue the viewer encounters Parry's narrative as described in his journals. We are guided through this story by way of a paper scroll. The narrator begins by saying "My story begins with the

voyages of Captain William Parry...” The narrator’s story, serves as the starting point in which this journey is about to take place, delineating the point of archival inquiry as well its point of departure. The camera pulls back from the paper scroll, and we see a large cranky frame that is being operated by two individuals clothed in white coveralls. It is at this point that we understand the story’s construction and see its operators (fig. 34).

### **Ch 1: There Was a Ship That Wintered Into This Place:**

In Chapter 1, the narrator offer’s another version of Parry’s arrival to *Winter Island*, sharing the story told by the King and Queen of Igloodik. As the narrator describes a large ship sailing toward the island, we see three figures emerge on a step ladder, which immediately stands in as a ship in our minds (fig. 35). In this scene we begin to see the polysemic nature of objects and props within the video space. Similar to the tradition of the shipboard theatre, objects become emblems for other things, serving as storytelling devices that also bear their original use. In this scene, the object in question is the ship itself. As a result, the very means of Parry’s expedition —the ship— is now an object of play, a site of negotiation and myth. Thus the audience does not enter the story with any fixed framework and instead is brought into a world of play where, “objects circulate, lose stability, and are no longer confined to their ascribed identity. In this way any object can, from time to time, become functional, decorative, representational, fictive, or cognitive.

### **Ch 2: Whale Bones for Rafters**

In Chapter 2, we see the character gazing out beyond the camera. The viewer has to imagine the landscape that the character is looking out onto beyond the video space. The title enters and the character looks up. We begin to make connections between the phrase, “Whale Bone



Fig. 34: Still from, *Searching For What Isn't There*, Carolyn Gennari. 2017.



Fig. 35: Still from, *Searching For What Isn't There*, Carolyn Gennari. 2017.



For Rafters,” and the following activities that the character engages in. He begins to conduct a series of actions that the viewer can only guess their associations (fig. 36). The character’s performance of labor slips into a dance in which he ends this sequence in a confused bow. By his expression, we might suppose that the character lost control for a moment, slipped into Parry’s metaphorical theatre, and forgot his original purpose.

For this scene I created the choreography based on descriptions of chores outlined in Parry’s journals. Part of the chores involved tarping the ship with a heavy cloth to create a tent above the upper decks. Ultimately this would be the space used for the production of the shipboard theatre.

### **Ch 3: By The Position of The Stars One Could Tell**

In Chapter 3, we are introduced to a ghostly figure wearing strange regalia: a sail, dress and parka. A star constellation is projected overhead casting projections over the figure. We see the ghostly figure dance within the circle, entering in and out of the projection (fig 37).

In her book, *Loss and Cultural Remains in Performance, The Ghosts of the Franklin Expedition*, Heather, Davis-Fisch explains that ghosts play important roles in Inuit stories of encountering Franklin survivors and also appear in British theatrical representations of the expedition.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, when I was in Igloolik I had difficulty finding someone to bring me to the grave of Parry’s shipmate Alex Elder. Several individuals including one of my mentors told me that it was haunted. Although, there are different references to ghosts and haunting in both Inuit and British stories of the past, I mark the Northwest Passage and

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1 Davis-Fisch, H. *Loss and cultural remains in performance: the ghosts of the franklin expedition*. S.l.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Pg 20.



*Fig. 36: Still from, Searching For What Isn't There, Carolyn Gennari. 2017.*



*Fig. 37: Still from, Searching For What Isn't There, Carolyn Gennari. 2017.*



*Fig. 38: Still from, Searching For What Isn't There, Carolyn Gennari. 2017.*



*Fig. 39: Still from, Searching For What Isn't There, Carolyn Gennari. 2017.*

the circular notion of history as a form of apparition. I also connect the idea of haunting to the stage and theatrical tropes as outlined by Marvin Carlson. In his book, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*, Carlson explains the symbolic gesture that ghosts play in theatre; ghosts appear when audience members recognize that they are seeing what they have seen before, not merely as a citation of past performances, but that the ghost is critical to the phenomenological structure of the theatrical event: “theatre itself gives appearance to the unseen the hidden, and to the chronic return to the theatrical event from nothing into something.”<sup>2</sup>

In *Searching For What Isn't There*, I perform as a ghostly character that reappears throughout the film. The ghost is bound with multiple identities; myself as the explorer retracing earlier events, as both the ship and colonizer, as well as the past and present.

#### **Ch 4: I have Heard This Story With Two Versions**

In Chapter 4, the narrator explains that although Parry never found the Passage, he performed the success of his voyage in the ship's final theatrical, *The Northwest Passage, Or Voyage Finished*. I created this scene using descriptions of the theatre, as well as descriptions of shipboard exercises in which seamen ran in circles on the upper decks to the tune of an organ (fig. 38). The three characters in the scene begin to clasp their hands and rub their bodies to warm up and begin dancing to organ music which is a song documented in Parry's journals.

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2 Davis-Fisch, H. *Loss and cultural remains in performance: the ghosts of the franklin expedition*. S.l.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Pg 20.



*Fig. 40: Still from, Searching For What Isn't There, Carolyn Gennari. 2017.*



*Fig. 41: Still from, Searching For What Isn't There, Carolyn Gennari. 2017.*

### **Ch 5: When I Started to Remember Things That Happened Around Me**

In Chapter 5, we are reintroduced to the moving iceberg choreography. As the icebergs slowly move across space, the narrator reflects on her time in Igloolik, trying to recover details about Parry's expedition (fig. 39). This marks the first time that the viewer places the narrator as the main character herself, in which her journey will unfold.

### **Ch 6: Frozen Right in Front, Ungauujat**

The title of this sequence, *Ungauujat*, is the Inuit name for the place where Parry's ships were frozen-in. Here we see one of the characters move in and out of a petrified state until he freezes back in place. In this scene the body takes on different physical states of the land, suggesting that both the body and land are carriers of information and stories (fig. 40).

### **Ch 7: This is The Pattern That They Follow**

In this scene we see the reappearance of the sail apparition and the circular diagram on projected on the floor. Each of the characters pair together to form a circular dance that weaves in and out of the projection (fig 41).

### **Ch 8: Even a Stone, as Long as It Is Left Alone, Can Not Be Found Again**

In both my research and experience in Igloolik, rope appeared on multiple occasions:

-Rope was used as a guide between ships in Parry's winter encampment



*Fig. 42: Still from, Searching For What Isn't There, Carolyn Gennari. 2017.*



*Fig. 43: Still from, Searching For What Isn't There, Carolyn Gennari. 2017.*

-Rope is used in 4-way tug-of-war games in present-day Igloodik during celebrations

-Rope has been used to practice string games, also known as cat's cradle to tell stories and preserve traditional knowledge

In this piece, rope becomes a metaphor for navigation, entanglement, and embedded histories. In Chapter 8, I treat the rope in the same manner as an archival document. As the performer, I uncoil the rope and retrace the history for the search for the Northwest Passage. Marking the floor with colored tape, I created a map that traces specific expeditions for the Northwest Passage throughout history (fig. 42). In this scene I overlay the rope in a durational performance as I reflect on my own journey with this research. In this way, the rope serves as both archival object, lines of navigation, and ultimately entanglement in which I am the main subject.

### **Ch 9: I was Never Good at Hearing Stories About The Past**

Using rope in a slightly different way in Chapter 9, the scene unfolds with a bird's eye view of rope being twisted and crisscrossed. Initially we see the rope being handled collectively by five characters; they work together to manipulate the rope into different forms and shapes reminiscent of Inuit string games used to tell stories (fig. 43). Here, the string becomes a signifier for storytelling where meaning is communicated through the manipulation of the material form. We begin to see string figures emerge, however, we are not able to make out their shapes—a certain translation is lost. Slowly the rope tightens and the scene cuts to four characters each pulling at different ends of the rope to form a 4-way tug of war (fig. 44). Now the cat's cradle has collapsed into an endless struggle. Several metaphors are suggested by the four points: the fight for the poles, a non-binary narrative, as well as an endless battle of interpretation with each 'author' fighting for the



end of the rope.

### **Ch 10: In Those Days They Only Has Sails**

In Chapter 10, we see the final appearance of the ghost character. In a final dance, she hooks arms with an invisible partner, retracing her steps until the camera rises into a red abyss (fig. 45).

### **Ch 11: There Might Be Some Truth to That**

Chapter 11 serves as the explanation for the piece. Here the narrator shares a story from her experience in Igloolik, reflecting on how she had been searching for something that was never there, but found something else, “ how a story is inevitably rooted in the storyteller’s hometown and what winter was like there, in her country at that moment, in her race, in her experience of power, in her dance, and in how the adults told stories when she was a kid...). The film ends with a slide show of magic lantern slides of images taken in Igloolik (fig. 46).

## **Objects**

### **String Games**

#### **Rope from whaling ship c. 19th century**

By placing the rope used in the film within the space of the installation, there is a relationship created between the space of the screen and the space of the installation. Using antique rope is significant, because it gives the object a certain weight by way of its use over time. The smell of the rope as well as the physicality of its fibers pull the viewer into a different type of encounter that is not accessible on film. The title of this piece, takes its name from traditional Inuit string-games, or Ajaraaq. In this tradition string is used to create images that reference stories and information passed down over time. These abstract shapes



Fig. 44: Still from, *Searching For What Isn't There*, Carolyn Gennari. 2017.



Fig. 45: Still from, *Searching For What Isn't There*, Carolyn Gennari. 2017.

and string figures are important visual histories offering clues about the past. The title of this piece suggests that through the object's manipulation new forms and meanings can be made over time. Lying in a partially coiled state, this object represents imbued meaning from its past use as well as the possibility for new meaning to come (fig 47).

### **Preserved in Ice Series:**

#### **12 Digital c prints on aluminum Diameter: 12”**

Photographs in this series are taken in Igloolik, NU during my walks over the frozen bay where Parry's ship wintered in 1822 (fig. 48). Serving as my travel journal, these images document my movement through the landscape. Each of the twelve photographs take their name from a chapter in, *Searching For What Isn't There*. In this way each photograph provides an alternative access point to the film, wherein the landscape is a document itself with embedded histories. Taking on a circular format, the photographs bring to mind the lantern slides shown at the end of the film. The round format also suggests a microscope and porthole, in which one looks out and zooms in (fig 49).

### **Hukki Stage:**

#### **Acrylic on canvas Diameter: 8’**

Inspired from early quadrilles, this piece connects a present day cultural form, square dancing, with the repertoire of past shipboard performances. Quadrilles, the ancestors of the modern square dance, were popular in England from the 1810s onward eventually making their way to North America. These early dances were often adapted onboard ships by crew members during long voyages. Today square dancing known as, *Hukki* is a popular form of entertainment in Igloolik. The graphics of this dance platform are borrowed from Thomas Wilson's quadrille panorama, published in 1819, the same year as Parry's expedition. Wilson's panorama is comprised of multiple dances in which



*Fig. 46: Still from, Searching For What Isn't There, Carolyn Gennari. 2017.*



*Fig. 47: String Games, Carolyn Gennari, 2017. Rope from whaling ship c. 19th century, Dimensions variable.*

several participants “thread the mazes of the dance.” This diagram also references early cosmology maps used for navigation and is inspired from Inuit celestial knowledge used to determine the passing of time.

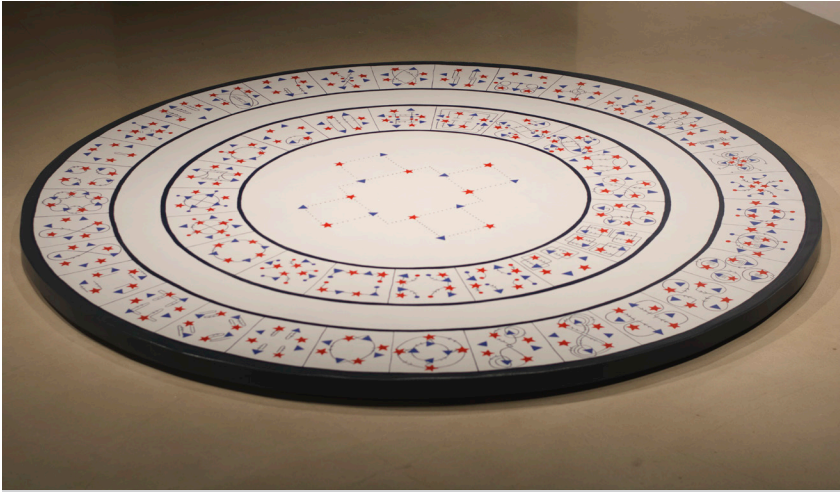
Referencing the projected image in the film, this piece further translates the archival document from diagram, to projection, to dance stage. Using similar material that was used to create backdrops in Parry’s theatre, I painted heavy canvas cloth with an intricate dance pattern. The canvas was then stretched over a circular wood platform. Intended to be danced and walked on, the surface of the stage will bear marks of its use becoming its own archive of traces (fig. 51-52).



*Fig. 48: Preserved in Ice, Carolyn Gennari, 2017. Series of 12 Digital c prints on aluminum Diameter: 12"*



*Fig. 49: Preserved in Ice, Carolyn Gennari, 2017. Series of 12 Digital c prints on aluminum Diameter: 12"*



*Fig. 50: Hukki Stage, Carolyn Gennari, 2017. Acrylic on canvas Diameter: 8'*



*Fig. 51: Close up view, Hukki Stage, Carolyn Gennari, 2017. Acrylic on canvas Diameter: 8'*

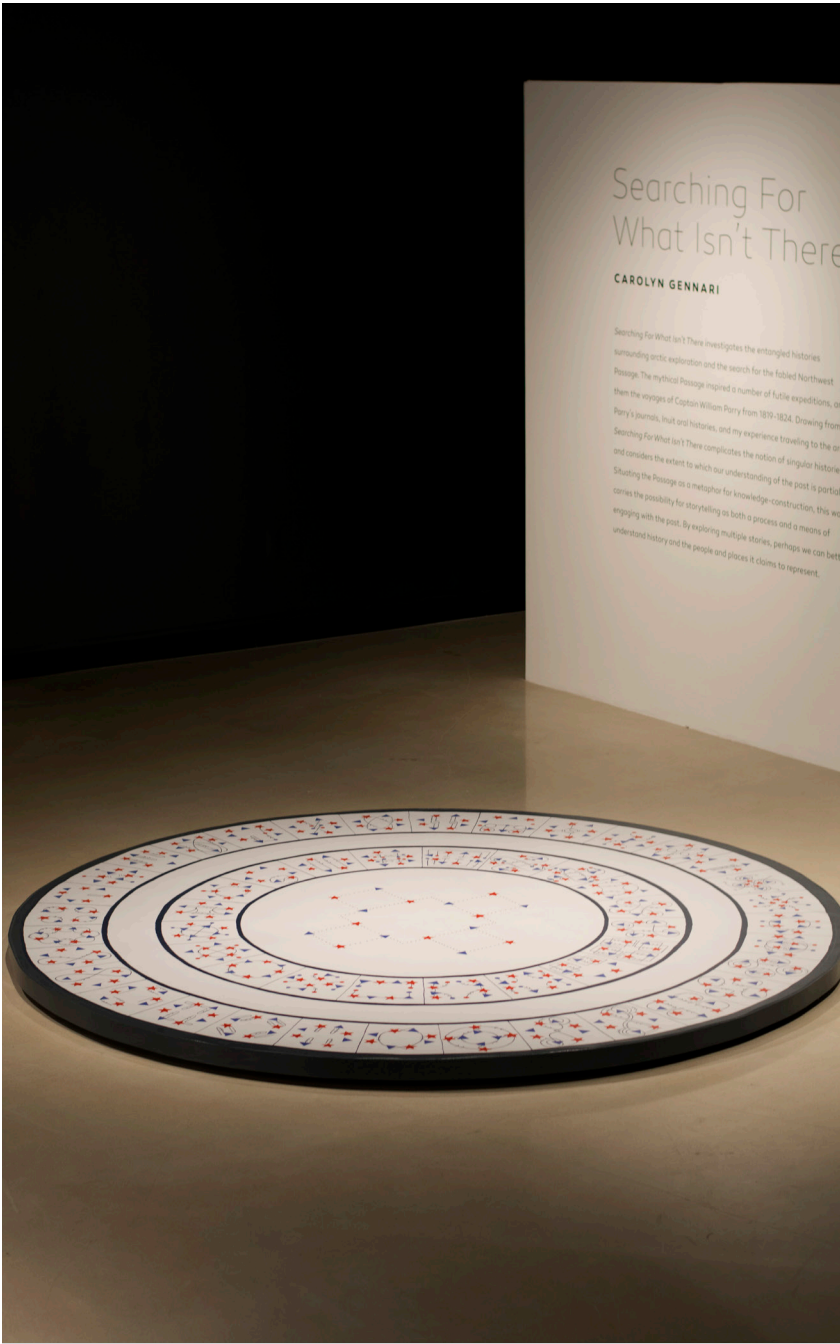


Fig. 52: Exhibition view, Hukki Stage, Carolyn Gennari, 2017. Acrylic on canvas  
Diameter: 8'



### Square dance performance:

I began to think about way the sculptural objects could move in and out of play; how could I activate different meanings through movement, materiality, and performance in the installation? As a way to activate the space, I hired local square dance callers Jim and Loretta Mckinney to host a square dance in the Stamps Gallery (fig. 53-55). I wanted to create an event in which viewers could actively participate in such a way that their experience would give the installation a performative element. Participants were also invited to walk on the Hukki stage providing its first marks.



*Fig. 53: image of Hukki Stage being walked on*



*Fig. 54: Square Dance in Stamps Gallery, April 2017.*



*Fig. 55: Square Dance in Stamps Gallery, April 2017.*

## Conclusion

Exploring how the archive can serve as a point of inquiry, this work examines the ways in which art practice can play an active role in revising readings of history through critical engagement and artistic production.

*Searching For What Isn't There*, uses a multimedia approach to working with the archive wherein, the original event is no longer being replicated, but as choreographer Susan Sgorbati suggests, “plumbed for deeper meaning... reentering in a process of composing, remembering, and reconstructing present readings for unfolding movement metaphors.” In this work, It is no longer important that original historical events be portrayed as much as the interpretation of those events spun from a process of fragmentation, imitation, and reimagination. In this way categories of performance and archive meet, merge, integrate, and mutually inform each other providing alternative ways in which we can engage with the past.



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