



disPOSSESSION

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Printmaking

Department of Art and Design
University of Alberta

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disPOSSESSION
Artist Statement by Miriam Rudolph

I grew up in Paraguay, South America. My life and my thoughts are forever linked to that beautiful and complicated place. I was raised in a socially complex setting with a colonial past and present in which European/Canadian settlers live next to indigenous communities, landless Latino peasants, and large estates owned by Paraguayan elites or, increasingly, by international investors and transnational corporations. Living standards, access to land, food, and education, as well as interests in land usage vary widely between the different groups. *disPOSSESSION* is an exhibition that explores the accumulation of wealth of few and the displacement of many with a focus on the expansion of soy and beef production, ensuing environmental, social, and economic consequences, as well as connected indigenous land rights and peasant food sovereignty issues. In my artworks, I explore the disappearance of the dry forests of the Paraguayan Chaco due to deforestation, the idea of enclosure as a symbol of privatization and capitalist systems, the struggle to maintain diversity through seed saving traditions in the face of expanding monocultures, and the displacement of local populations due to land grabs. From this experience of unequal and unjust distribution of wealth and access comes a desire to bear witness and contribute to a dialogue that might encourage a kind of “redemption (that) can come only through a revision of thought.”¹

My methodology consists of gathering research materials, such as essays, articles, documentaries, literature, satellite imagery, personal testimonies and observations, and using them as layers of information in my artworks. In my etchings I have developed a process that takes advantage of the reproducibility and repetition of printing plates to achieve a complex build up of images that mirrors the multi-layered narratives involved in these issues. I have created a library of etched plates that I utilize as drawing tools to build up the imagery freely and intuitively on the sheet of paper, while maintaining control over the narrative content.

Through printmaking, I am building a visual narrative that not only analyzes but also embodies the issues I am addressing. In some of my prints, for example, I layer printed images over and over again to build up large-scale imagery that dwarfs smaller counterparts. In other instances, I print on both sides of a translucent Asian paper, allowing the paper to embody a physical barrier between the past and the present. Demarcations of plate marks subtly reference enclosure or the gridding of land surveying. In another series, I explore the imagery of lightly etched figures of men, women and children, fences crossing the entire image, and detailed drawn sections of dense forest printed upside-down and disappearing off the edge of the paper. The translucency of the figures suggests a lack of presence, either a distant past or a disappearing future, while the other components of the image suggest separation or enclosure and the disappearance of the dry forests, an inversion of the natural order.

The form of each print installation is important to carry its content. *Colonization by Cattle*, for example, is presented as a panorama built from multiple panels of Asian paper to portray the epic proportions of this ongoing linear narrative. *The Soy Field*, consisting of a grid of 145 paper tiles pasted on the wall, forms a fragmented vision of the land impacted by industrial agriculture. *Seeds of Hope* is a free hanging banner suspended above ceramic seed jars that hold the sacredness of life embodied in a seed. The vertical triptych invokes a gesture of blessing from above for the labour of planting and the traditions of saving seeds.

While my research and imagery pertain to a specific region in South America, the issues I address are global issues and also lend themselves to comparison with Canada's – and other countries' - colonial heritage and agricultural practices. The resulting artworks will contribute to the internationally relevant dialogue on such issues as cultural change, sustainable farming and the environment, dispossession and migration, while bringing international attention to the rapid alteration and destruction of the Paraguayan Chaco.

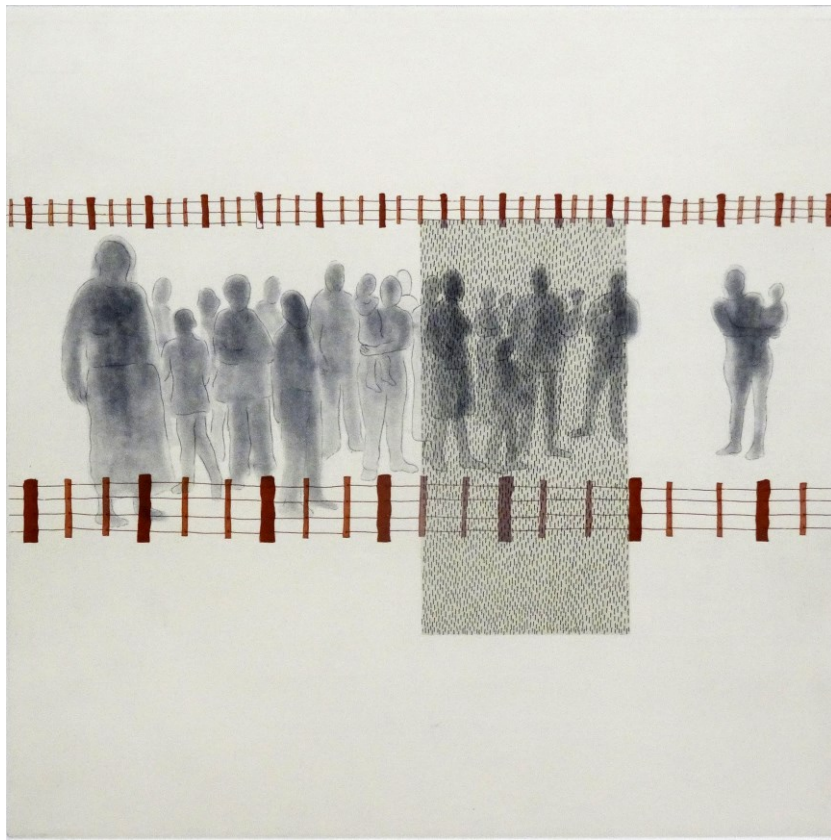
¹ White, Mark Andrew. “Alexander Hogue's Passion – Ecology and Agribusiness in The Crucified Land.” *A Keener Perception - Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*. Eds. Alan C. Braddock & Christoph Irmscher. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press. (2009). 184.



Rudolph_002 **Enclosure I** 2015 intaglio, chine-collé 18 x 18 inches



Rudolph_003 **Enclosure II** 2015 intaglio, chine-collé 18 x 18 inches



Rudolph_004 **Enclosure III** 2015 intaglio, chine-collé 12 x 12 inches



Rudolph_005 **Enclosure IV** 2015 intaglio, chine-collé 12 x 12 inches



Rudolph_006 **Enclosure V** 2015 intaglio, chine-collé 12 x 12 inches



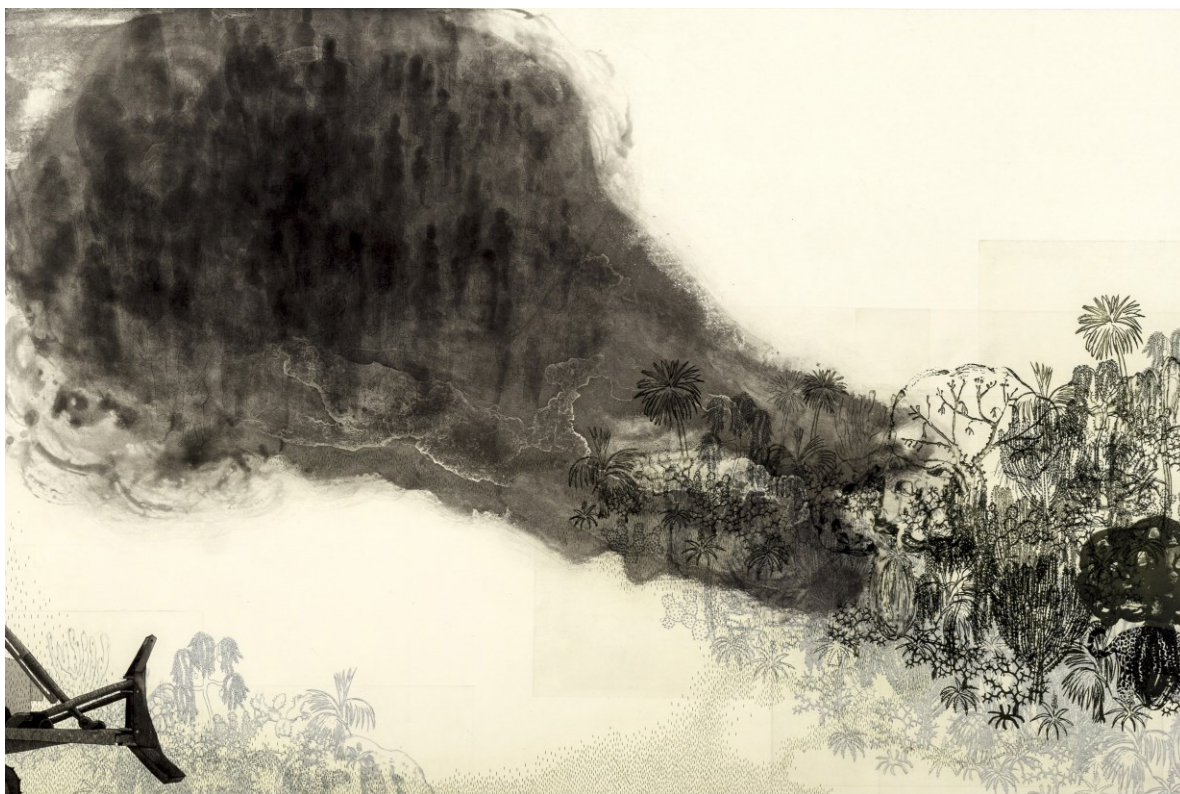
Rudolph_007 **Colonization by Cattle** 2016 intaglio 52 x 260 inches



Rudolph_008 **Colonization by Cattle** 2016 intaglio 52 x 260 inches



Rudolph_10 Colonization by Cattle Detail 2016 intaglio 52 x 37 inches



Rudolph_11 **Advance** 2016 intaglio, chine-collé 24 x 36 inches



Rudolph_12 **Dispossession** 2016 intaglio, chine-collé 24 x 36 inches



Rudolph_13 **Migration** 2016 intaglio, chine-collé 24 x 36 inches



Rudolph_14 **Displacement** 2016 intaglio, chine-collé 24 x 36 inches



Rudolph_15 Installation View in FAB Gallery 2017



Rudolph_16 Installation View in FAB Gallery 2017



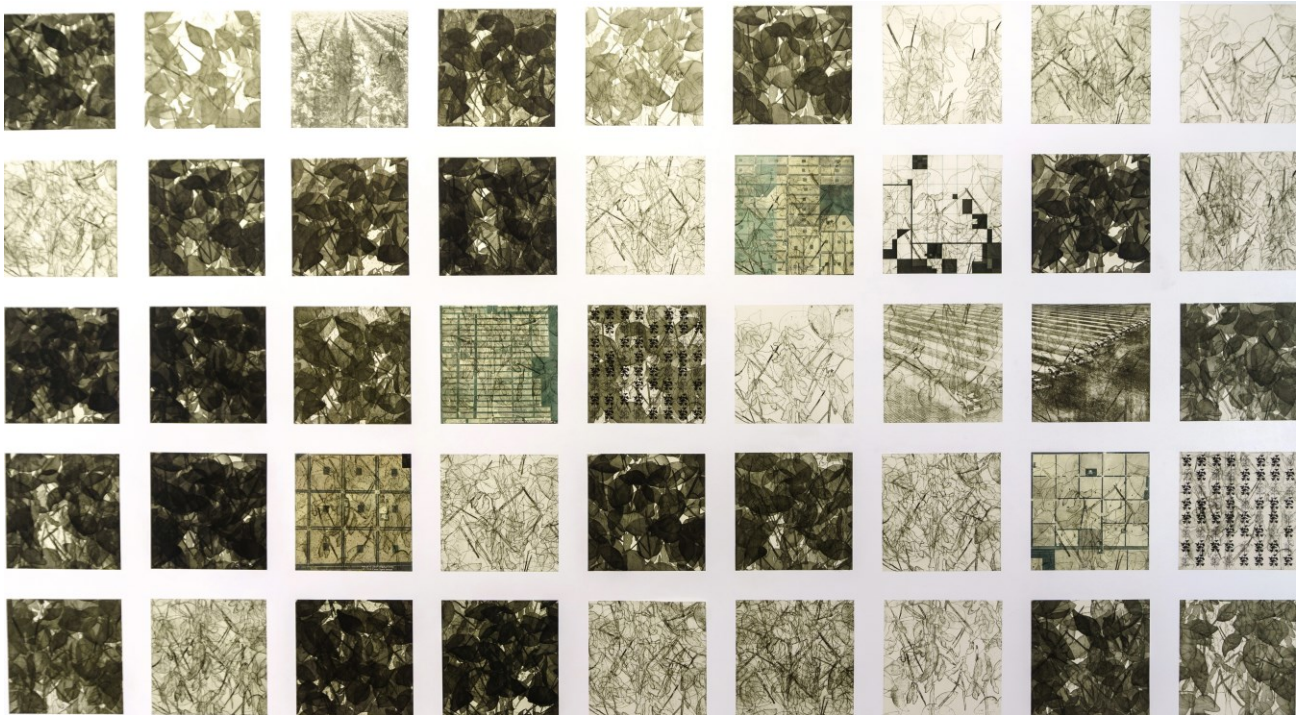
Rudolph_17 Installation View in FAB Gallery of **The Soy Field, The Garden, & Broken Seed Jar 2017**



Rudolph_18 **The Garden 2016** intaglio 12 x 12 inches



Rudolph_19 **The Soy Field** 2017 intaglio, digital satellite print, laser cut woodcut 72 x 297 inches



Rudolph_20 **The Soy Field (Wall 2)** 2017 intaglio, digital satellite print, laser cut woodcut 72 x 132 inches



Rudolph_21 **The Soy Field Detail** 2017 intaglio 12 x 12 inches



Rudolph_22 **The Soy Field Detail** 2017 intaglio 12 x 12 inches



Rudolph_23 **The Soy Field Detail** 2017 intaglio 12 x 12 inches



Rudolph_24 **Broken Seed Jar** 2017 porcelain, digitally printed decals, 8 x 8 x 12 inches
in collaboration with Terry Hildebrand



Rudolph_25 **Seeds of Hope** 2017 intaglio, porcelain, screen printed decals, top soil, beans, corn, & squash seeds
120 x 96 inches, in collaboration with Terry Hildebrand.



Rudolph_26 Seeds of Hope Detail 2017 intaglio



Rudolph_27 **Seeds of Hope Detail of Jars** 2017 porcelain, screen printed decals, in collaboration with Terry Hildebrand.

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