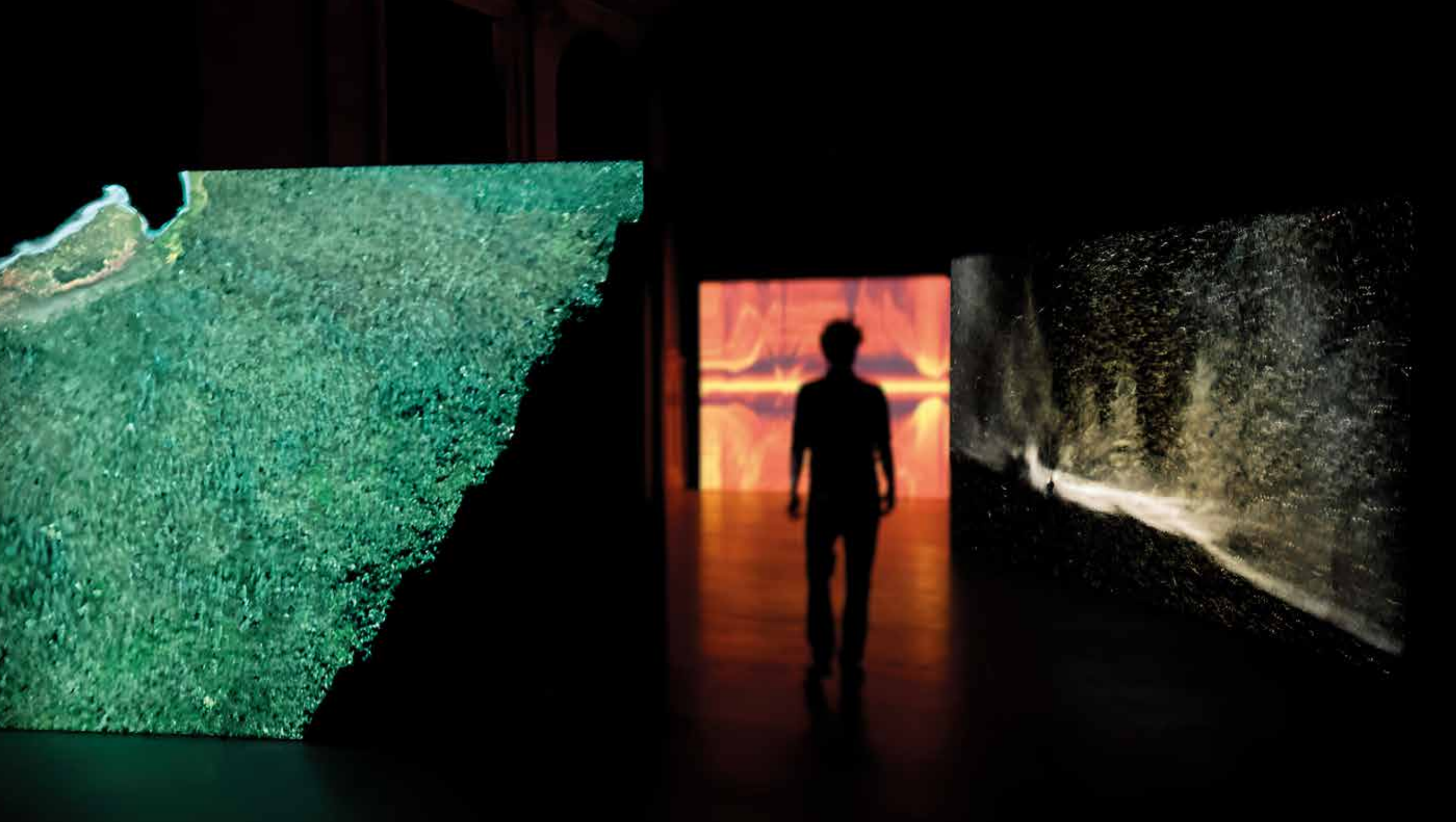




# MANICOUAGAN

210 million years of astronomical, environmental and historic upheaval

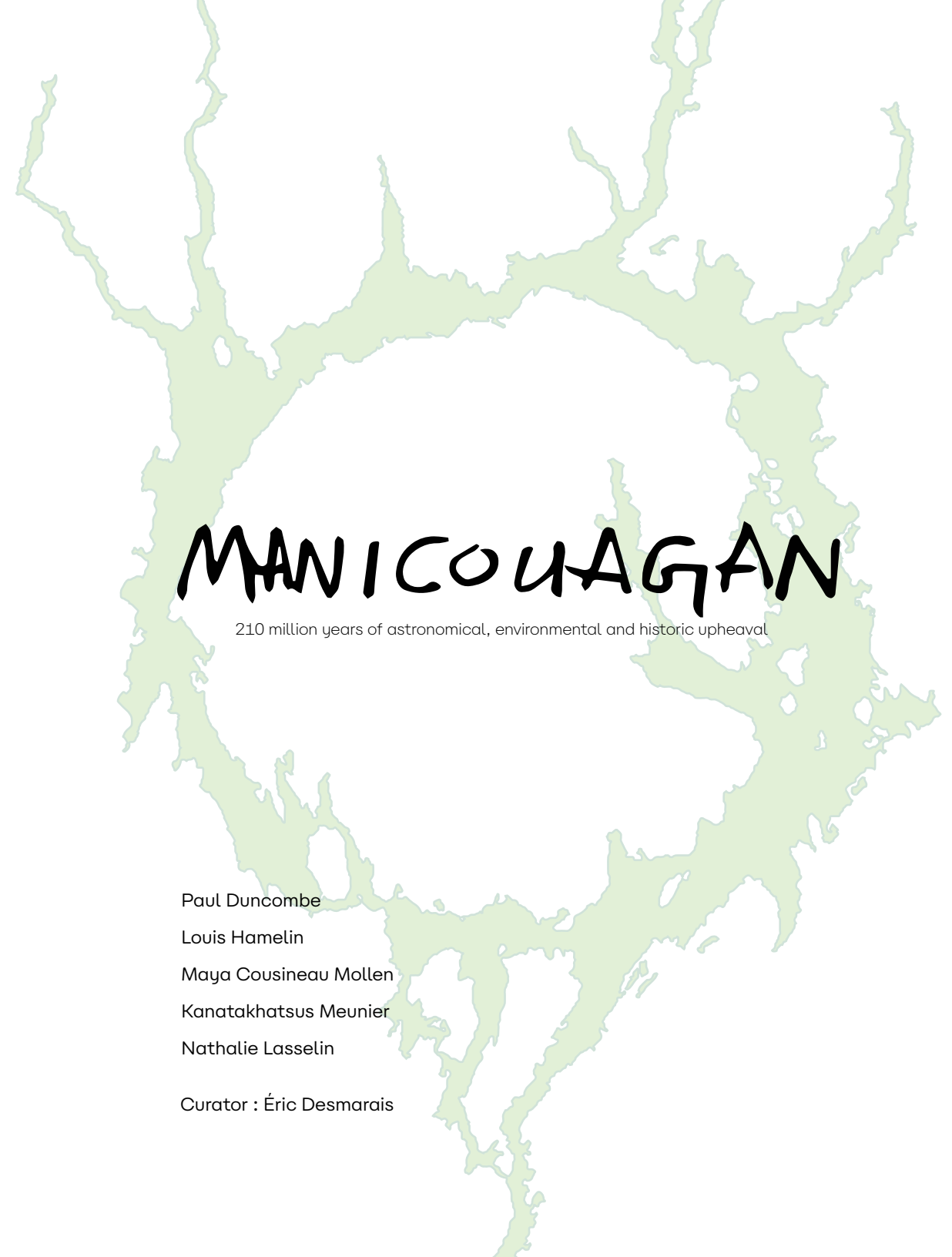


Credits: Paul Duncombe, *Manicouagan*, 2022, detail from the exhibition presented at Abbaye-aux-Dames, Caen (Fr) as part of the ]interstice[ #16 festival, produced by Station Mir.

Co-produced by Sporobole and Station Mir/Festival ]interstice[, the exhibition is toured by Sporobole.

The expedition was co-produced by Sporobole, Station Mir and La Tonne, with support from the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ), the Conseil des arts du Canada (CAC), the French Consulate in Quebec City and the Normandy region.

The entire team extends its warmest thanks to the Conseil des Innus de Pessamit, Station Uapishka, Saguenay aventures and especially Erwan Gavelle, scientific coordinator of the 2021 expedition.



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210 million years of astronomical, environmental and historic upheaval

Paul Duncombe

Louis Hamelin

Maya Cousineau Mollen

Kanatakhatsum Meunier

Nathalie Lasselien

Curator : Éric Desmarais

SPOROBOLÉ



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## Manicouagan:

### 210 million years of astronomical, environmental and historic upheaval

Initiated in 2018 by French artist Paul Duncombe, the project *Manicouagan* originally set out to explore the vestiges of the geological cataclysm that had so indelibly marked the region some 210 million years ago when a meteorite came crashing down, creating one of the largest known impact craters on earth.

This land also bears witness to the ancestral Innu presence that dates back over 8,000 years, as well as to the social shifts that rocked Québec of the 1960s. Between 1959 and 1968, Hydro-Québec built the immense Daniel-Johnson dam at the mouth of the Rivière Manicouagan, whose source is in the crater. For Québec, this massive construction project, a veritable symbol of the “Quiet Revolution,” also represents the passage from the status of a colonized nation struggling for freedom to that of a colonized nation turned colonizer.

The exhibition brings together the work of six individuals, each of whom was invited to survey, study and experience the region for a two-week period in 2021. While Innu poet and author Maya Cousineau Mollen probes cultural wounds and the fragility of peoples in a colonization context, Québec writer Louis Hamelin examines the area from a historical, ethnological and environmental perspective. French artist Paul Duncombe and geomatics specialist Erwan Gavelle, in turn, map the Réserve écologique Louis-Babel as a series of geological, geographic and ecological portraits, while undersea explorer Nathalie Lasselin invites us into the deep red waters of the reservoir, which harbours a drowned forest, the ghostly remains of an erased land. The entire project crystallizes under the unwavering gaze of Kanatakhatsus Meunier, a Kanyen'kehà:ka documentary filmmaker who highlights the lasting trauma brought about the perception of this region (by the majority Québec population to the south) as distant and uninhabited, and therefore open to exploitation. Collectively, these works elucidate a majestic land, witness to natural upheavals, social liberation, colonization, historical wounds, social conflict and environmental issues.

Éric Desmarais, curator

## Impact Immersion Manicouagan (2023)

### Nathalie Lasselin

Immersive documentary video, 7 min 30 sec.

In the depths of the Manicouagan reservoir, an entire territory has been swallowed up, the result of hydroelectric development. All that remains are the skeletons of the trees that once formed a nourishing and protective boreal forest inhabited by an Innu community. This community will never be able to return to its original territory, or even look upon it, as it now lies beneath the cold, black waters of the Manicouagan reservoir.

During her many dives into the reservoir, Nathalie Lasselin captured video images of the flooded forest, both beautiful and disturbing. These images have been adapted for broadcast through a virtual reality headset, giving the illusion of joining the diver in this strange universe, symbol of resilience.

Filmmaker, underwater explorer and lecturer **Nathalie Lasselin** travels the globe, whether on land or underwater, gathering audiovisual evidence of cultures and nature. From the Arctic floe to the depths of China's caves, and the tumultuous waters of the St. Lawrence River, her films and expeditions bring to life our complex relationship with the aquatic world and, more broadly, with our living environments. Through her lectures, she shares her discoveries and sheds light on obscure, enigmatic and inaccessible worlds. Between projects, she continues to work as a cinematographer in fiction and documentary, and acts as an expert on aquatic exploration in various documentary series. She was inducted into the Women Divers Hall of Fame (WDHOF), an international society honoring the achievements of women divers and their contributions to various fields of scuba diving. She is also a member of the Explorers Club and the Royal Geographical Society of Canada.

[aquanath.com](http://aquanath.com)

*Babel, la montagne du petit diable (2023)*

## Kanatakhatsus Meunier

Documentary video, 90 min.

225 million years ago, a meteorite carved out the unique landscape of Nitassinan. In the late 1960s, the Manic-5 hydroelectric dam completed the geography of the Innu territory, although they were unaware of this pharaonic construction. The supernatural modeling of these lands destroyed the nomadic culture of the Innu who roamed this area.

Rowing across a river turned inland sea, five adventurers check the pulse of the landscape as they expose themselves to the elements. Intoxicated by the power of nature, they travel on water and land through a hostile territory where animals are scarce, but where surprising, luxuriant vegetation abounds, dominated by windthrow. Through scientific surveys, sampling and drone flights, the interdisciplinary Manicouagan team, led by an Innu guide, aims to reach Mount Babel, the epicentre of the crater, in order to map the territory and its components. Will they succeed?

**Kanatakhatsus Meunier** is a media/digital artist and science communication specialist who refuses to lock himself into an identity. "As Romain Gary once said, "We're all add-ons. Our identities are multiple and complex. We need to turn away from this illusory classification based on race. We need to get away from these differences that dominate and dictate exchanges, and aspire to no longer see the social and ethnic differences between people. Rooted in the Eastern Townships' Canton d'Orford for the past 22 years, this artist of Kanien:keha origin has made a number of documentaries, including *Le vieil indien*, shot in the Eastern Townships (2015), as well as films shot in Nunavik while working for Taqramiut Nipingat, a provider of communications services to the Inuit community of Northern Quebec, in the early 2000s. He is currently working on the sequel to *Le vieil indien*, and is preparing an immersive video experience in virtual reality and/or screen broadcast, with the animals of Parc national du Mont-Orford filmed at night as they roam, in five different locations, with high-definition cameras (Sony A7 III) converted to infrared.

*Manicouagan (2023)*

## Paul Duncombe

Video installation, fragment of impactite, LCD screens, microcontrollers.

Evoking the characteristic ring of the Manicouagan Astrobleme, the installation features a series of screens arranged around a fragment of impactite, a rock formed 214 million years ago during the meteorite impact that gave rise to the Eye of Quebec. The installation presents the various investigations carried out during the Manicouagan expedition in 2021: from science to poetry, from underwater reliefs to Mount Babel, various audiovisual sequences invite viewers to discover the site that witnessed the fourth great extinction through artistic sensitivity and scientific rigor. At the crossroads of art and science, combining illustrations, 3D animations, sound and poetry, the work resembles a digital cabinet of curiosities, unveiling the Manicouagan crater from an unprecedented perspective.

Through a singular reflection on the interactions between human beings and nature, **Paul Duncombe** explores the different scales of the landscape. His successive research projects on the ice floes of Labrador, the storms of the Celtic Sea, the boreal forests and the irradiated lands of Fukushima have focused on the contingent mechanisms that link these vast territories with the creatures that thrive there. Based on exploratory work in situ, followed by a series of methodical experiments in the studio or laboratory, his projects compare the apparent simplicity of nature's works with the increasing technicality of modern society. From simple gestures to the most complex and monumental installations, between performances, minimal sculptures and on-site interventions, his work crosses borders and disciplines.

A 2014 graduate of the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, Paul Duncombe develops and exhibits his creations in France and abroad: Elektra (Montreal, 2022), Coal Prize (IUCN, 2021), Némobienial (Le 104, Paris, 2021 & 2019), Festival Jinterstice[ (Caen, 2022-2018), Unicorn Center for Art (Beijing, 2018), Salon de Montrouge (Paris, 2018), Palais de Tokyo (Paris, 2017), Jeune Création (Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris, 2016), Avatar (Coopérative Méduse, Québec, 2015), Kyoto Art Center (Kyoto, 2012).

[paulduncombe.com](http://paulduncombe.com)

## *Manicouagan, la terre-histoire (2023)*

### Louis Hamelin

Artist's book, 25 1/4 X 18 1/4 X 1 inches.

Using the format of the book-object, Louis Hamelin recounts his experience of the territory around the Manicouagan reservoir. Writings, images gleaned here and there and illustrations accumulate over the pages to tell the story of the expedition. From a variety of angles, the writer reflects on the astronomical impact, Innu territorial occupation, hydroelectric development, biodiversity and climate change. The very form of the book recalls that of the logbook, notebook and album, once indispensable paper artifacts for exploration. Printed in a limited number of copies, the book is a tribute to the upheavals surrounding the Manicouagan reservoir, to the boreal forest and to the Innu people who have suffered the consequences of these disruptions.

**Louis Hamelin** holds a bachelor's degree in environmental biology from McGill University and a master's degree in literary studies from Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). In 1990, his first novel, *La rage*, won him the Governor General's Award for Literature. He subsequently wrote articles and fiction for a number of periodicals. A columnist for *Le Devoir* since 1999, he has published a collection of short stories, *Sauvages* (2006), an essay titled *Fabrications : Essai sur la fiction et l'histoire* (2014) and several novels. In 2010, his work *La constellation du lynx* won five awards, including the Prix des libraires, the Prix des collégiens and the Prix Ringuet from the Académie des Lettres du Québec. The author has also held writer-in-residence positions at the University of Ottawa and McGill, taught narrative writing at Université de Sherbrooke and been a visiting professor at UQAM. He also translated Muriel Wylie Blanchet's *The Curve of Time (Les étés de l'Ourse, Boréal, 2020, Prix John-Glascoe)* and currently directs the "L'œil américain" collection at Éditions du Boréal. His tenth novel, *Un lac le matin*, was published in 2023.

## *Pipmuakan (2023)*

### Maya Cousineau Mollen

Sound recording, fifteen poems, 10 min.

Maya Cousineau Mollen's poetry deals with memories of territory, culture and roots, and history. She celebrates Native femininity while evoking the intimate body. Through her writing, the artist opens a dialogue on various social issues and evokes a painful, melancholic past, but also the beauty of the land, the wildlife that inhabits it or her ancestors who still wander across it like revenants. Words enable her to express the unspeakable in terms that move and elicit empathy. Her writing, calmly enraged, imaginative and imbued with original myths, is an ode to Innu identity and culture.

Read by the artist, the poems written during the expedition are broadcast through headphones that allow viewers to move around the exhibition space. The mobility of the text encourages immersion in the poetic universe of all the works produced by the *Manicouagan* project. While Maya Cousineau Mollen's poetry bears witness to a relationship with the land that borders on the sublime, it also echoes the various ways in which artists view historically and emotionally charged places through their work. Between the collective pain and the melancholy provoked by beautiful landscapes, the poet's discourse envelops the traces of the expedition presented in the gallery space.

Originally from the Innu-Montagnais nation of Ekuanitshit (Mingan), **Maya Cousineau Mollen** was raised by a Quebec family chosen by her biological parents, who encouraged her never to lose touch with her roots. She began writing poetry at the age of 14. Her texts have appeared in anthologies and literary magazines, including the *Amun* collection edited by Michel Jean. In 2019, she published her first book, *Bréviaire du Matricule 082*, with Editions Hannenorak. Her second collection, *Enfants du Lichen*, published by the same imprint, won the Governor General's Award in 2022.

Founder of the Native Student Association at Université Laval and co-founder of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Youth Council, now called the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Youth Network, Maya Cousineau Mollen believes in the potential of youth, whose energy and determination deserve to be encouraged. Since 2017, she has been involved with Projets Autochtones du Québec, which aims to offer housing and social integration services adapted to First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures. She has held the position of project manager for relations with First Peoples at Bibliothèque et Archives nationale du Québec since January 2023, and continues to give lectures in Quebec and Europe.