



BREAKING PROTOCOL

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SENSATION

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Sensation is a circuit of experience, a circuit of the felt traveling in and adjacent to the body.

The sensation. Of edges of density—to recall.

Of edges of dissipation—to breathe. Edges.

This is where Sugpiaq come into being. At the edges of imaq, nuna, lla, these spaces between.

The edges of history. The edges of surrender. The edges of violence. The edge.

What happens when we recall (harden)?

What happens when we surrender to dissipation, breath (being)?

Is restoration a transformation of that which can harden us, into breath?

Restoration of our being, a surrender to dissipation.

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Colonialisms are continuous actions; they are daily. They refuse Indigenous sovereignty. They seek to remove us from our lands, to dispossess us. They seek land and resources; their mode is extractive. They extract children from our families; they extract our ancestral and cultural belongings and ancestors' remains from our homelands and peoples. Ongoing colonialisms, settler and otherwise, dehumanize. They are multiple. They attempt to disappear us. They extract, remove, contain, and suspend our ideas. Colonialisms are systemic—a series of ideas that come to be embodied in everyday actions, in interactions, in relations, in institutions. They are felt.

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When Inupiaq, Yup'ik, or Sugpiaq singers stretch hide on drums, it moves. It is moved. Misted water droplets are rubbed into it with circular motions. Hands pull it tighter around a wooden edge. We strike this edge gently with sticks made for sound. As a material it expands, entering space as vibration. It responds to

what it is being asked to do. Its form and materiality shift. We call it and, in its response, hide (the skin of a sea or land mammal) is transformative. Hide is an edge.

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Like hide, gut has many lives. Gut was once in the belly of an animal. Worked by the hands of women, a preparation for its subsequent life. Like hide, it is cleaned, scraped, wrung, dried, tanned. Gut is a geometry of many strips sewn together watertight to clothe and shelter us. Gut breathes. Gut is stitched, plumed, painted, marked. Gut is adorned. Gut moves with us, protects us from sea salt spray and wind on ocean current. Gut expands and contracts with the weather. It expands with warm touch. Gut is worn by hunters, medicine people, and women dancing nude underneath. Gut is transparent. Gut reflects then fills with light shimmering. When we place gut in museums without sea-salt air, it hardens, brittles. Its ossification withers seams. Immobile and stacked in dark stale cupboards, it is rarely held or sounded. It tears over time. The forms of ancestral and cultural belongings change with the weather.

Twentieth-century Yankton Dakota writer and activist Zitkála-Šá describes shorn telegraph poles, still. No longer breathing or moved by wind. Electrical impulses pumped through their bodies. In her writings, she wonders about the life of these trees before they became a tool of white settler expansion. An ever-growing coded communication across her homelands, the prairies. She imagines many Indigenous children as forests that become shorn, milled into timber in service of white systems. She is implicated in these systems as a former student and teacher in Indian boarding schools. Yet she imagines and remembers the life of trees before they ever became telegraph poles. And she senses within the poles an older life force.