



PAUL WALDE'S *REQUIEM FOR A GLACIER*: AN ACT OF RESISTANCE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

British Columbian artist Paul Walde is interested in interconnections between landscape, identity and new technologies. Adapting to the context, his artistic practice takes diverse forms, such as performance art, sound art, video installation and even photography. *Requiem for a Glacier* is a quintessential Walde video that has been shown internationally and in Canada, including at Toronto's Ryerson Image Centre in 2016 for the exhibition *The Edge of the Earth: Climate Change in Photography and Video*, curated by Benedicte Ramade.

Requiem for a Glacier is a hymn to the uncertain future of a group of glaciers in the Jumbo Valley. The region, also known as Qat'muk, is located in the Purcell Mountains east of British Columbia.¹ Because of their high altitude, these glaciers are so far among the rare few to have escaped the ravages of climate change. However, intensified global warming will cause them to progressively lose mass, and their survival is further threatened by a province-backed project – the construction of a ski resort at the foot of the Jumbo Glacier that includes carving ski slopes down the glaciers' sides. Walde's work is a response to these environmental and political circumstances. Filmed on the Farnham Glacier, one of the target sites for the complex,

his video comprises four movements that feature an orchestra, choir and soloist. Ironically, the lyrics in the Latin hymns are taken from the government's press release announcing its support for the controversial project.²

In creating this video, Walde worked with over 50 professional and amateur musicians and singers, who were moved to get involved in the project by its artistic and activist merits. The artist and his musical collaborators wanted to voice their opposition one last time to the extensive land development project while preserving the region's memory. Writer E.C. Woodley notes how the requiem form befits this type of citizen protest: "*As an earthly demonstration of mourning for the dead, a requiem has always been a form of protest. It runs counter to death as it marks it. At the very least, it is an act of resistance against suffering and oblivion. Requiem for a Glacier insists on the necessity of conceiving of a future disfigured by our recent past and present. It proposes that the imagination is essential to exercise if we have any chance of saving ourselves.*"³ This artwork offers a sweeping immersive visual and auditory experience as well as a new take on environmental protection advocacy.

Walde is a graduate of the University of Western Ontario (BFA) and New York University (MA) and the winner of The Prescott Fund Award from the National Arts Club in New York City. Since 2012, he has served as Chair and Associate Professor of the Visual Arts Department at the University of Victoria, British Columbia. The artist is also a founding member of the Audio Lodge, a Canadian sound art collective, and EMU: Experimental Music Unit, a Victoria-based sound ensemble.

GENEVIÈVE GOYER-OUIMETTE

1. Official site of *Requiem for a Glacier*: <http://requiemforaglacier.com/audiovideo-installation/> [online] March 2018.
2. Press release of the announcement dated November 20, 2012: <http://jumboglacierresort.com/letters-patent-for-mountain-resort-municipality-of-jumbo-glacier-resort/> [online] March 2018.
3. Official site of *Requiem for a Glacier*: <http://requiemforaglacier.com/audiovideo-installation/> [online] March 2018.

Paul Walde (born in 1968)
Requiem for a Glacier
2013

Two-channel HD video, 1/5
Duration: 40 min.

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