

Scenes of Extraction

صحنه های استخراج

A film by Sanaz Sohrabi

43 minutes | Color and B&W | DCP with 5.1 Sound, and Apple ProRes
Canada (Québec), Iran | 2023 | Farsi with English and Farsi Subtitles

Short Synopsis

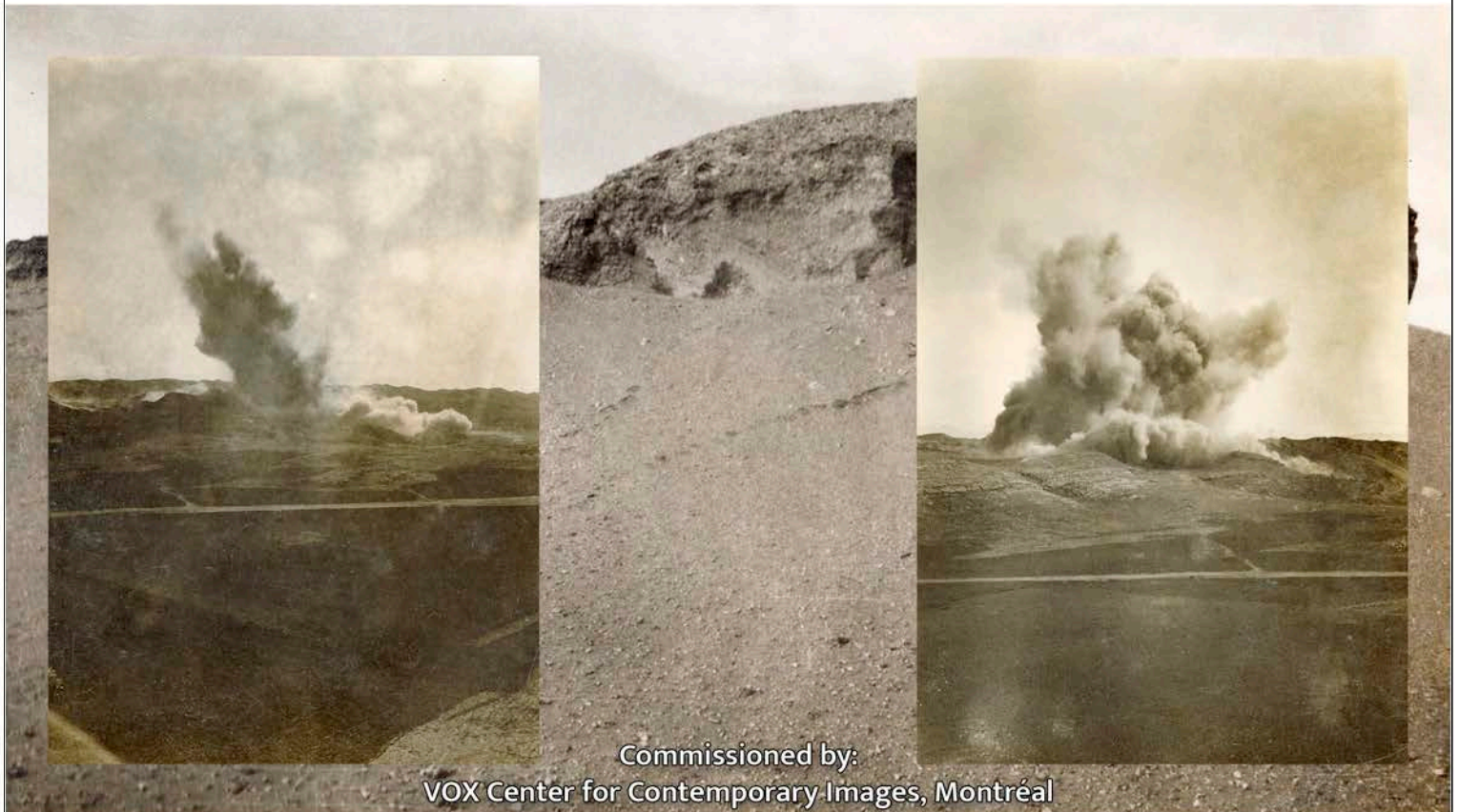
'Scenes of Extraction' creates an archival constellation with the still and moving images of British Petroleum Archives, documenting the expansive colonial network behind the British energy complex that spanned across Iran, but also reached other British oil operations in South East Asia. It weaves through decades of archival documents to parse out the visual history of the "Reflection Seismography" method for oil exploration which was heavily tested across the Iranian oil belt despite its destructive and probable nature. 'Scenes of Extraction' unpacks the relationship between the political economy of photography, archival technologies, and the visual history of resource extraction in Iran.

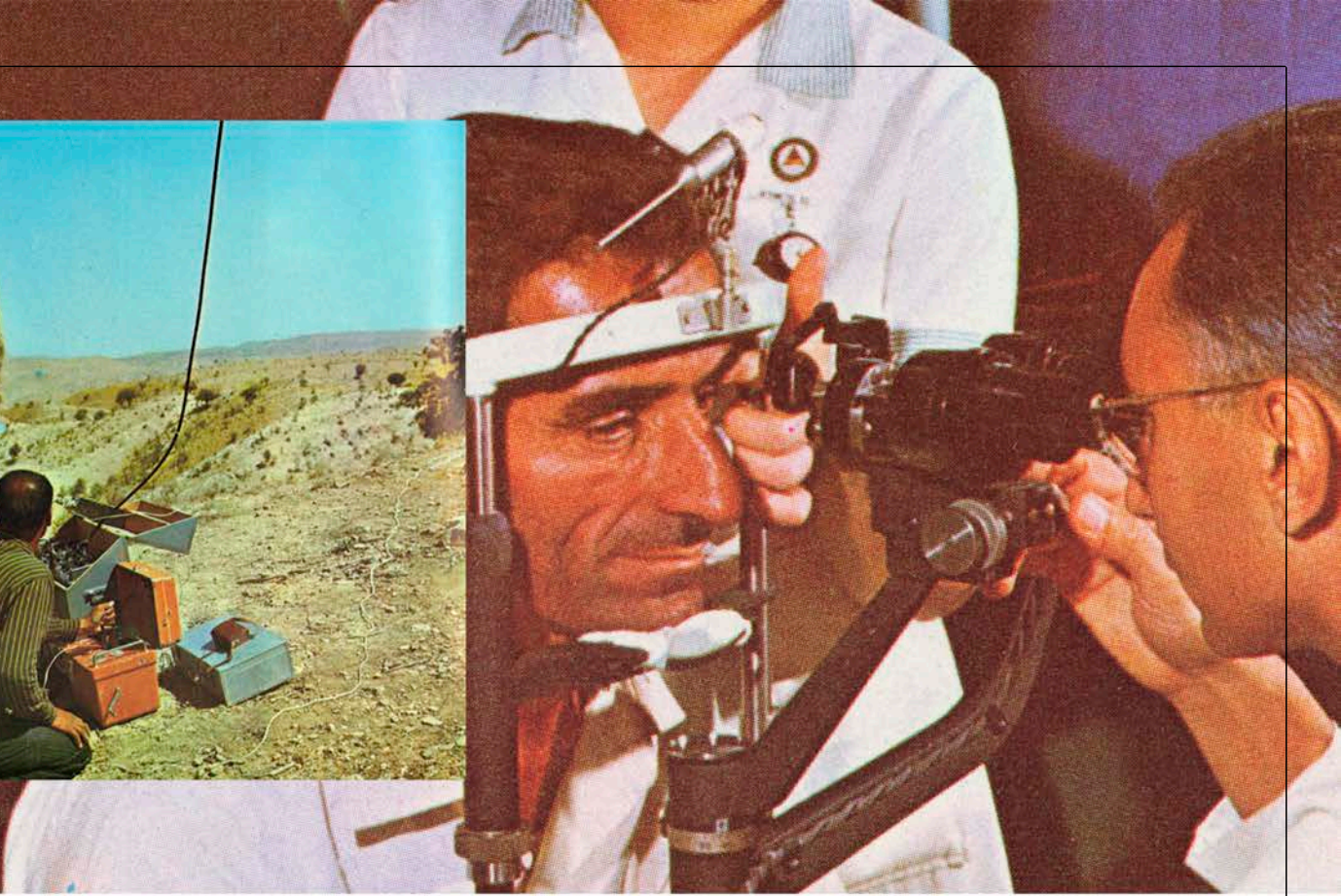
Contact Information:

Sanaz Sohrabi

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Long Synopsis

Between 1901 and 1951, the British controlled oil operations in Iran expanded their geological expeditions and geophysical methods for locating commercially viable oil reserves across its entire oil concession. “Scenes of Extraction” takes a deep archival dive into the British Petroleum Archives to unearth the still and moving images that documented this expansive colonial network of geological explorations that spanned across Iran, but also reached other British oil concessions in Papua and South East Asia. The film traces the technical and social entanglement between the infrastructures of oil and the camera during the operations of British Petroleum across the Iranian oil belt. “Scenes of Extraction” weaves through decades of archival documents to parse out the visual history of the “Reflection Seismography” method for oil exploration which was heavily tested across the Iranian oil belt despite its destructive and probable nature. A technical legacy that is still heavily utilized in fracking and deep-sea mining enterprises globally and is the backbone of the global energy complex.

“Scenes of Extraction” focuses on the parallel production of geological surveys and ethnographic surveys, both through amateur geological footage and official film surveys produced by BP. Situated at the nexus between science and technology studies and media archaeology, the film creates an archival constellation with previously unseen images and film footage taken during these seismographic tests. “Scenes of Extraction” creates CGI maps and spatial renderings by inputting the early geological aerial survey photographs and panorama films taken across the Iranian oil concession in an AI software. By blending the archival and speculative modes of representing the geological past, the film reveals the gaps and discrepancies between the archival and lived histories of extraction and the ecological ruination of its aftermath. Reading the political economy of images in relation to extraction of crude oil, “Scenes of Extraction” evokes the history of imperial and colonial extractive industries in relation to the history of photography and archives, both as embodied technologies of extraction and dispossession in and of themselves.

“Scenes of Extraction” is the second episode of a trilogy of essay films that unpack the relationship between political economy of photography, archival technologies, and visual history of resource extraction in Iran. The first episode is “One Image, Two Acts” (2020) which has been screened in over two dozen film festivals and has won six major international awards.

Director's biography

Sanaz Sohrabi (b.1988, Tehran) is a researcher of visual culture and filmmaker. Sohrabi works with essay film and installation as her means of research to explore the shifting and migratory paths between still and moving images, situating a singular image in a continuum of historical relations and archival temporalities. Since 2017, Sohrabi has done extensive archival research at the British Petroleum archives to engage with the history of photography and film practices of the British controlled oil operations in Iran, conducting a visual ethnography of resource extraction in relation to the media infrastructures of BP. Sohrabi's works have been shown widely in exhibitions and festivals. Including:

International Film Festival Rotterdam, Iran Cinéma Vérité Festival (Winner of International Mid-length), IndieLisboa (Silvestre Section Best Short Film), Valdivia International Film Festival Chile (Special Jury Mention), Mimesis Documentary Film Festival (Best Documentary Short), Ann Arbor Film Festival (Jury Award), 30—70 International Documentary Film Festival (Main Jury Prize), Montréal International Documentary Film Festival (RIDM), Sheffield Doc/Fest, Kasseler Dokfest, Videonale, Videoex Zurich, FIDBA Argentina, Festi-Freak, among others. Sohrabi's recent solo and group exhibitions include: SAVVY Contemporary Berlin, Carpintarias de São Lázaro, Lisbon, Centre Clark, and VOX Center for Contemporary Images in Montréal.

Sohrabi is currently a Fonds de Recherche du Québec Société et Culture doctoral candidate at the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Society and Culture at Concordia University, Montréal. She received her MFA with a merit scholarship at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and her BFA from University of Tehran, College of Fine Arts, Iran.

Filmography

Scenes of Extraction | 43 minutes | Canada/Iran, 2023

One Image, Two Acts | 44:38 minutes | Canada/Germany/Iran/USA, 2020

Notes on Seeing Double | 11:10 minutes | Canada | 2018

Script for Groundless Images | 13: 25 minutes | Canada | 2018

The glory, the human, and the mother: a cartography | 17:25 minutes | United States, 2017

Auxiliary Mirrors | 12:07 minutes | United States/Canada, 2016

Disposables | 7:09 minutes | United States, 2015

Research Affiliations:

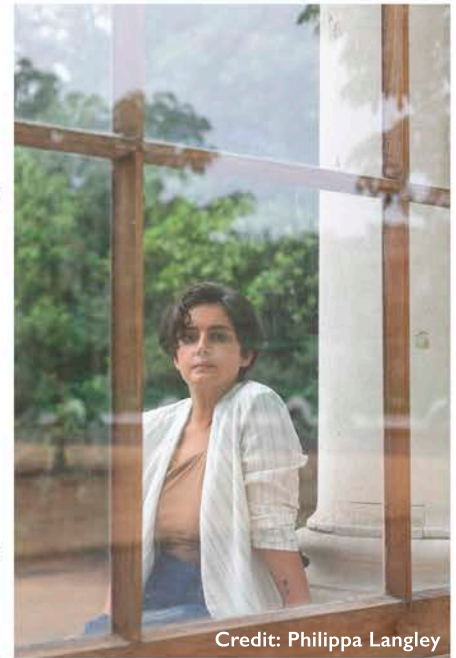
Global Emergent Media Lab, Feminist Media Studio, and Milieux Institute for Arts, Culture, Technology at Concordia University, Montréal

Additional support from:

Mitacs Globallink Research, Canada

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Team Members

Siavash Naghshbandi: CGI Realization and Animation



Siavash Naghshbandi (b.1987, Tehran, Iran) is a visual artist currently based in Tehran whose work explores themes such as social interaction in everyday life, virtual communication, archival research, and memory, using media like photography, animation, video, and artificial intelligence. His works have been exhibited in exhibitions and museums, like the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, the Chelsea Museum, in New York, Mattress Factory Museum, Pittsburgh, Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Arizona, Dastan Art Gallery, Aaran Art Gallery, Azad Art Gallery, Tehran, Tomin Videothek, Frankfurt, Hillyer Art Space, Washington D.C. Affenfaust Galerie, Humburg. His films have been featured in various festivals, including

SEH-TANK: Cinéma, Zurich. Middle East Now Film Festival, Florence. Göteborg Film Festival, Schkaneder Kino, Vienna. Skol Art Center, Montreal. Neverland Cinema, Rotterdam. Oyoun Space, Berlin. shortlisted for the Magic of Persia Contemporary Art Prize, London. Jury Prize - Ann Arbor Film Festival, Michigan.

Chris Leon: Sound Design and Mix



Chris Leon is a sound designer, mixer and digital content creator from Montréal. A shortlist of Leon's sound design work includes the Genie nominated documentary series Down The Mighty River and The Uluit: Champions of the North, and the feature documentaries The Instrument Bank, Falafelism: Give Peas A Chance and the multi-award winning documentary Sol, which was listed in the 2014 TIFF top 10 Canadian Films. In addition to his extensive work in documentary, Chris has collaborated on the sound design of several

fiction features including Upside Down, Ésimésac and Mars et Avril, which was nominated for Best Overall Sound at the Canadian Screen Awards. In 2016, Chris was nominated for the same award for his work on the documentary Sol. Chris was the supervising sound editor and re-recording mixer for all five seasons of the award-winning and critically acclaimed television and multi-nominated Canadian Screen Award series Mohawk Girls.

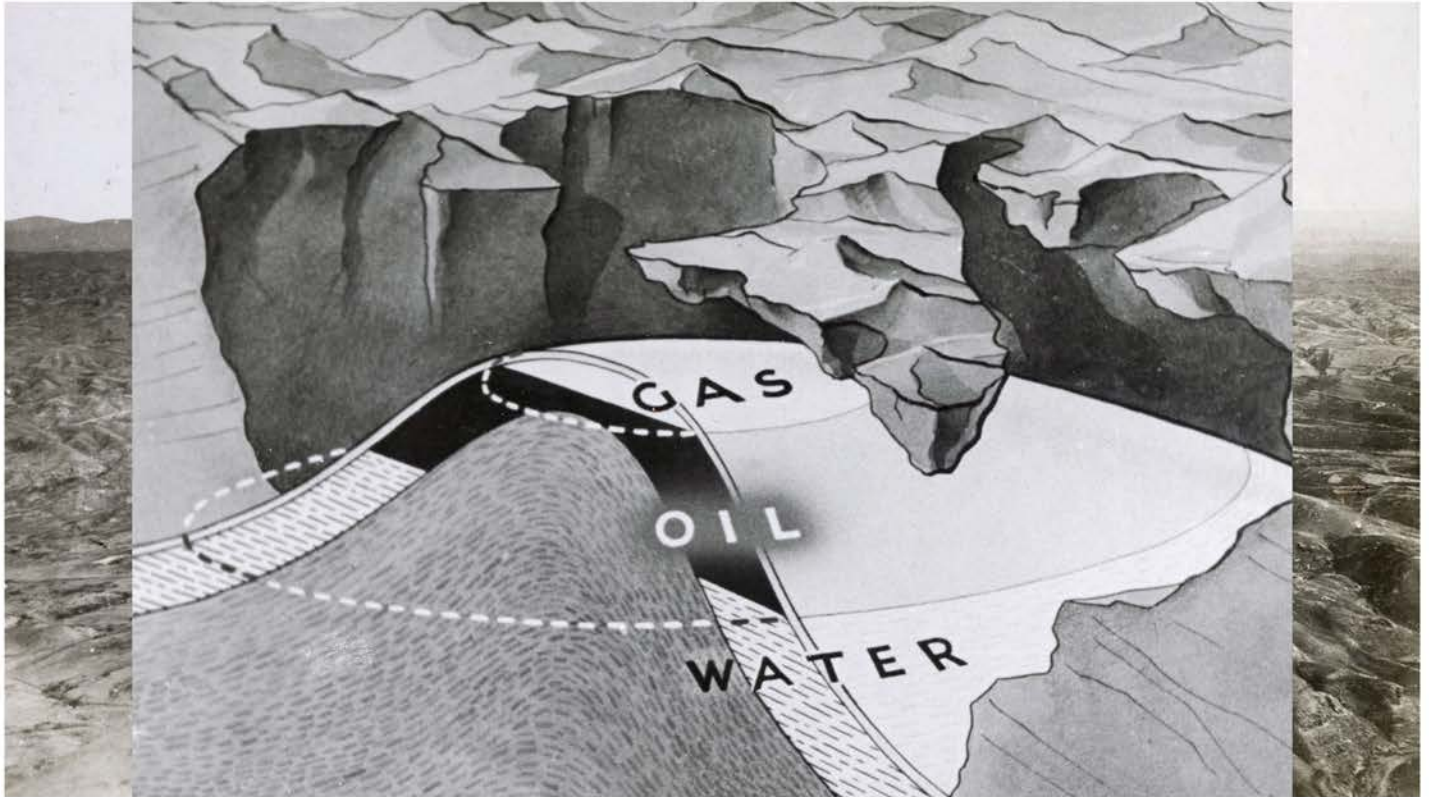
Showan Tavakol: Music Composition and Kamancheh



Showan is a Canadian-Iranian composer, born in Tehran (1979). His works have been performed in concert in Europe, Asia and North America, and he has also written music for the cinema, notably for the film Manuscripts Don't Burn (Mohammad Rasoulof), which was presented at the Cannes Film Festival in 2013. As a performer, he has appeared as the soloist for several of his compositions, including the Concerto pour kamancheh and orchestra symphonique, which was acclaimed by the jury of the Fajr International Music Festival. Heterotopia, his piece for Kamancheh and orchestra, was performed in Montreal by the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne (The NEM) with the composer as soloist. he has also participated in the recording of three albums of his

musical works (in Iran and Germany): "On trolley of time", "Parallax view", "Suge sarv" and also his co-composition album "Echo of the mountains" published by Analekta in Canada. Showan holds a bachelor's degree in music and a master's degree in kamancheh performance from Tehran University.


Film Stills



It portrayed the foreign control
over the extraction of oil,



**THE
GEOGRAPHICAL
JOURNAL**


ADDITIONAL MEETING
The attention of Fellows is called to an additional meeting on Tuesday September 6 at 5 p.m. at which a film will be shown. For details see page iii.

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BAKHTIARI COUNTRY
Harrison

PAPUA
JANUARY 1954



Mr Blioux's Personal Servants



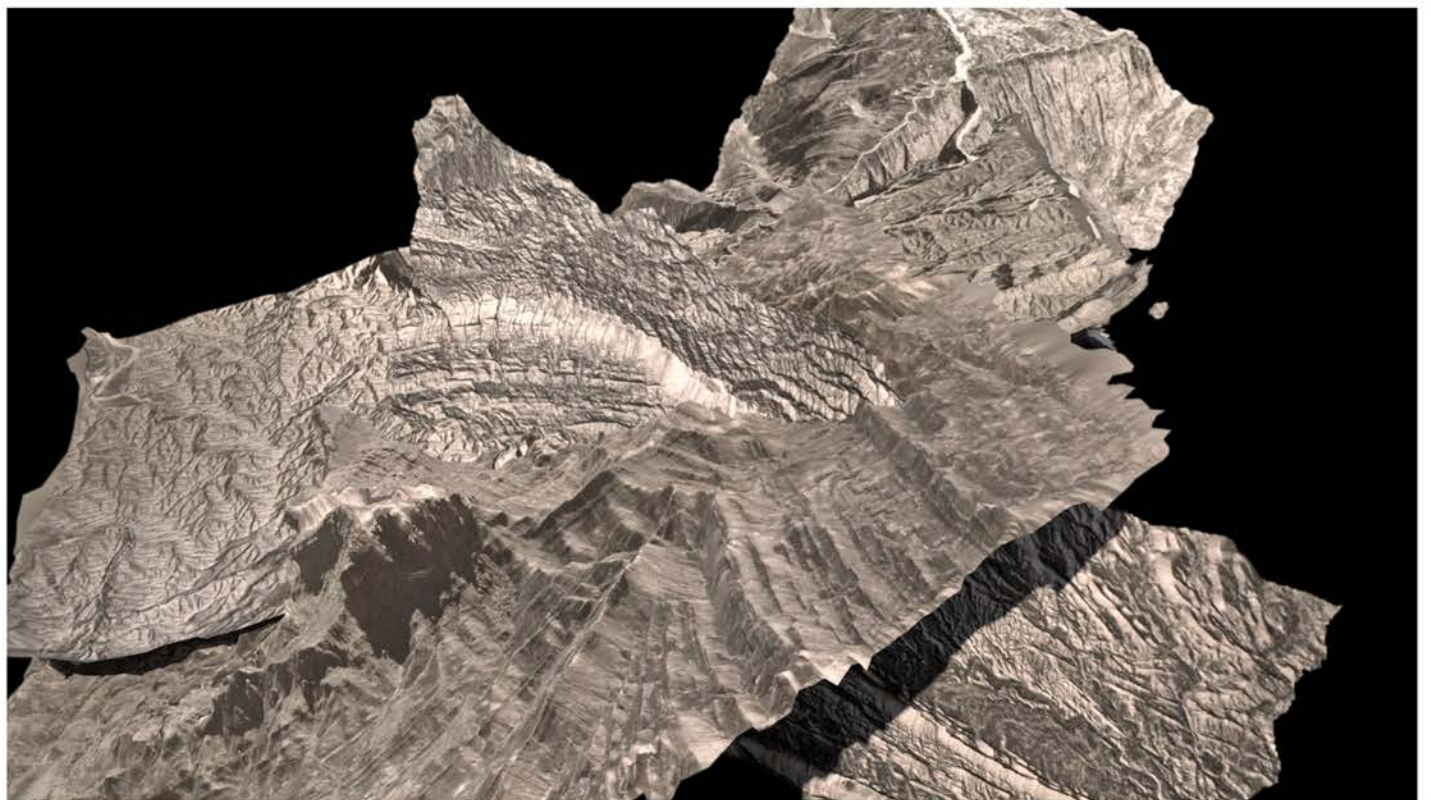
Flats at Port Moresby



ANGLO-IRANIAN OIL Co. LTD
BRITANNIC HOUSE, FINSBURY CIRCUS, E.C.
ALBUM
PERSIAN STATE
FROM BUNDERSHAHPOU
SALEHABAD, TO
64 VIEWS

Enclosure to EM/89 of 24/5/33 filed





Director's statement:

"Red earth, blood earth, blood brother earth."

زمین سرخ، خاک خون، برادر خونی، زمین

Aimé Césaire, Return to my Native Land

امه سزر، «دفتر بازگشت به زادبوم»

"Scenes of Extraction" is the second film episode to my ongoing investigation of the visual grammars of extraction during the operations of British Petroleum in Iran and the broader West Asia. Over the past five years, I have been researching the early geological surveys and seismic mappings that were done extensively in the South Western provinces of Iran wherein the majority of the oil fields were discovered and developed in the onset of the 20th century. Photographs, films, and magazines used in "Scenes of Extraction" are drawn from the British Petroleum's film library and photographic collections along with my personal archive gathered over a meticulous 5 year-long archival research process. As a filmmaker and researcher working at the intersection of documentary media practice and visual arts research, this film is guided by the archive as a conceptual prism, material object, and imaginative practice. I examine the archival temporalities and evidentiary aesthetics enmeshed in the ethnographic photography practices in the early colonial explorations of oil in Iran. In doing so, I consider the archive as a portal to an elsewhere and to an elsewhen, wherein the archival materials are both the evidence and the crime scene. "Scenes of Extraction" further navigates the archive as a modality and threshold to develop tactical, speculative and experimental artistic strategies to refuse, animate, and disavow the orientation of time and space in the colonial episteme.

"Scenes of Extraction" also explores the dialectical relation to the embedded petro-futurity in these archival configurations. On the one hand, the 'seismographic methods' and the geological imaginaries visualized the subterranean oil bearing layers to connect the geological past to an imagined future by creating a material continuity between crude oil and its invisible material descendant. On the other hand, the ethnographic surveys documented the myriad of ethnic and tribal norms and livelihoods to create a binary distinction between the modern and non-modern. At the same time, these ethnographic surveys were what became known as "salvage ethnography" within the anthropology discourse which refers to a process of preserving the past which is soon to be destroyed and erased for the future. This tension can also be explored between images of the subterranean as a form of continuity between the geological past and the petroleum's future image which is set against the ethnographic images as the portraits of a nation soon to be differentiated from its non-modern and tribal past.

Tracing the connection between the infrastructures of oil, the camera, and the archive, I focus on the parallel production of geological surveys and the ethnographic constructions through film and photography. This film asks the viewer to consider how and why did a geological camera become tethered to an ethnographic camera and what does this entanglement tell us about the racialized social stratification of geology? The infrastructures of oil have never been divorced from the representational realm and the overlapping modalities of extraction ranging from extractable matter and images is one of the main focuses of this film. "Scenes of Extraction" asks the viewer to question the social, material, human, and ecological parameters involved in the extractive processes. If the assumption is that extraction solely involves the earth, what happens if we rethink the material relations of extraction? How can we rethink extraction's social loss and cultural erasure? "Scenes of Extraction" is an active act of listening to images and sounding the images.