

## Nina Elder: It Will Not Be The Same, But It Might Be Beautiful

### DESCRIPTION

*It Will Not Be The Same, But It Might Be Beautiful* is an ongoing multimedia project by artist and interdisciplinary researcher Nina Elder that investigates change – climate, economic, political and social – by focusing on natural and human-made objects that have been exhausted by use and transformed by time and extreme environmental fluctuations. Elder is particularly focused on geographic and geologic boundary and border sites where systems come in contact with each other; ocean and shore, desert and mountain, glacier and land. This exhibition of 16 framed large format representational drawings and two multi-channel videos provides a close meditation on the remains and residues of change amidst environmental demise and how these can inspire wonder, help people to understand the past, and embolden resilience for the future. The formal beauty of Elder's velvety drawn surfaces and their documentarian verisimilitude is powerfully strengthened by their meaning-laden materiality; they are drawn with wildfire charcoal, petroleum lubricant, industrial pulp mill waste and glacial silt commingled with traditional graphite, charcoal, and chalk on heavyweight white paper.

Drawings from the *Puzzle Stones* (2021) series document the fractured shards of naturally occurring puzzle stones, which are fragmented rocks that have been shattered by rapid temperature shifts. They exist in most environments, and are evidence of natural seasons and extreme climate events, but here their decomposition is a way to understand loss, human responsibility, eco-grief, and living with change. The puzzle stones featured in Elder's drawings and accompanying 3-channel video are the result of rapidly retreating glaciers in Alaska. The video, produced by the artist in collaboration with filmmaker Michael Conti, brings together a broad cross-section of Alaskans, for whom these stones are familiar, nearly mundane, reminders of climate change. By touching these stones with intention and care, participants were asked to recompose carefully collected puzzle stones; performative acts which exposed a mix of emotions – hope, creativity, anxiety, diligence, and futility.

A series of drawings entitled *Bonds and Breaks* (2021-ongoing) similarly depict fragments of knotted ropes, mended anchor lines, and frayed nets collected along the coasts of Alaska and Maine. These symbolically mark a shifting human relationship to the sea and fishing across individual and industrial space and time. As metaphors for living through climate devastation and social upheaval, each image forces quiet recognition of the complexities of dependency and brokenness; what tethers humanity during periods of extreme change and how we will exist with what remains. Drawings from the focused series entitled *Fray* (2020) intimately study a single fragment of a frayed woven industrial strap found by Elder among regrowth forestation in California and originally used to secure a failed helicopter-delivered slurry drop over an active wildfire; a once powerful object rendered obsolete and drawn with precise observation from multiple compelling views.

The recent two-channel video installation work entitled *Overburden* (2021) provides a bridge linking the works in this series. Using hand-sewn industrial strapping, Elder attempts to care for and carry away toxic mining slag left on the US border in Arizona. While accentuating both strength and softness, her recorded act uplifts and dignifies the pulverized, leached, melted, dumped, and forgotten rocks. *Overburden* considers the multiple definitions of the term “overburden,” which can refer to a weight that is too great for someone to carry. It doubles as a term for the geologic material that is removed to expose a desired underground material; part of a nomenclature central to extractivism practices associated with fossil fuel and mining industries.

Elder’s ongoing investment of time in science libraries and archives, and in collaboration and communication with scientists in the field, imbues her work with a unique array of inter- and multidisciplinary perspectives. She has lived at scientific research facilities and worked alongside scientists from Alaska to Maine and New Mexico, where many of the works in this exhibition were inspired and created. Likewise, science and emergency services are increasingly interdependent during this era of ecological collapse. Elder is committed to ongoing engagement with emergency workers, land management experts, and indigenous communities, all of whom recognize and offer particular remediation strategies arising from their respective values, spirituality, and communities of expertise. Such engagement deepens the relevance of her artistic practice and her aspiration to communicate the interdependent necessity of all approaches at a time of Anthropocenic urgency.

The work in *It Will Not Be The Same, But It Might Be Beautiful* was made possible, in part, by the Speranza Foundation, National Performance Network, Bunnell Street Artist Residency, Sagehen Experimental Forest, the McCarthy – Kennicott Historical Museum, The Onion Foundation, and Waterfall Center for the Arts.

Images available at artist website: <https://www.ninaelder.com/it-will-not-be-the-same>

#### **ARTIST BIO:**

Artist and researcher Nina Elder creates projects that reveal humanity’s dependence on, and interruption of, the natural world. She examines historic land use and its cycles of production, consumption, and waste. Mines, bombing ranges, and junk heaps are source material for her landscape paintings and representational drawings that explore the line between land and landscape, beauty and banality. Similarly, her video works and performances document human engagement in these same sites.

With a focus on changing cultures and ecologies, Elder advocates for collaboration, fostering relationships between institutions, artists, scientists and diverse communities. She is the co-founder of the Wheelhouse Institute, a women’s climate leadership initiative. Nina lectures as a visiting artist/scholar at universities, develops publicly engaged programs, and consults with organizations that seek to grow through interdisciplinary programming.

Nina's artwork is widely exhibited and has been featured in *Art in America*, *VICE Magazine*, and on PBS. Her research has been supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation, the Rauschenberg Foundation Award for Arts & Activism, the Pollock Krasner Foundation, and the Mellon Foundation. She has recently held positions as an Art + Environment Research Fellow at the Nevada Museum of Art, a Polar Lab Research Fellow at the Anchorage Museum, and a Researcher-in-Residence in the Art and Ecology Program at the University of New Mexico. She migrates between rural places in New Mexico and Alaska.

**ORGANIZER:** artepodia, in collaboration with ViVA Virtual Visiting Artists, a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization

**CONTENTS:** 16 framed large-scale works, 1 three-channel video, and 1 two-channel video.

**ACCOMPANYING MATERIALS:** Wall text and labels will be provided.

**APPROXIMATE RUNNING FEET / SQUARE FEET:** Flexible; 175-250 running feet/1,500-2,500 square feet. Video projection and installation is flexible. Minor editing permitted, with consultation.

**SECURITY:** Medium

**AVAILABILITY:** July 2022-December 2027

**IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL VISITS:**

Artist fees (see below) for the exhibition and for an optional in-person artist visit are included in the fee (travel, room and board, per diem not included), schedule permitting.

A sliding scale discount, based on budget size, will be offered for venues choosing to book a ViVA Virtual Visiting Artists (See [vivavirtualartists.org](http://vivavirtualartists.org)) virtual engagement with this touring exhibition. e.g. A venue with a total budget under \$250,000 would receive a 22% discount on exhibition fees if they contract a ViVA engagement. The advantage: ViVA's services include an expertly-supported virtual public talk, conversation or workshop by the artist (50-90 minutes) and exhaustive educational materials and consultation by an experienced museum and university educator to support the integration of the artist and exhibition into your campus' curricula, local and regional community, and diverse audiences.

**ViVA's EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS:**

Each ViVA Virtual Visiting Artist's 10-12 page educational toolkit (See sample here: <https://www.vivavirtualartists.org/how-it-works>) is filled with content that helps gallery and museum curators, educators and outreach coordinators situate the artist within a community or classroom conversation. Packets include:

- Curated and annotated writings and video by and about the artist;

- Ideas for interdisciplinary activities and lesson plans;
- Sample discussion questions;
- Artist's personal list of inspirational readings, films, and other cultural phenomena;
- Ways to engage different kinds of audiences or museum members, and;
- Other useful prompts, all researched and authored by ViVA Educators and Staff.

Nina Elder enjoys working with communities to deepen important conversations through collaborating in new ways. As a team, we are dedicated to working closely with venues to understand the specific needs and desires of a community, the learning objectives of traditional students and life-long learners, and creative engagement with traditional or unusual collections to foster meaning-making and relevance across time and space.

#### **FEE STRUCTURE:**

This equity-based sliding scale fee structure is intended to make artepodia projects accessible to a wide range of organizations while directing a fair wage to exhibiting contemporary artists.

Tiered fee levels are based on the approximate Total Operating Budget of prospective venues. Have a unique situation? Just reach out and start a conversation – we're excited to work with you.

<i>Total Operating Budget</i>	<i>Tour Fee (shipping is separate)</i>	<i>Discount with ViVA booking</i>
Up to \$250,000:	\$5,000	22%
\$250,000-\$1M:	\$7,500	15%
Over \$1M:	\$10,000	11%

artepodia transparently and equitably splits its fee. 50% is directed to the artist for exhibition support and in-person engagement (travel, room and board, per diem separate) for between 3-5 days. The remaining 50% is directed toward administrative and design costs, crating, framing, materials, curatorial research, educational and installation consultation, and labor associated with managing the project.