

Autumn Factory

I traveled across the Great Lakes region, the northern Great Plains, and the Canadian Shield. Following trade routes, I photographed visual discontinuities: a colonial company's insignia on a department store shopping bag, a cactus pavilion in an extra-territorial park on the Manitoba-Dakota border. I observed barge traffic along the Upper Mississippi, and drove as far north as Bird Lake in Manitoba. Threads of the history of the fur trade served as clues that I was in the right place, and led me to the next.

I found not just places but also primary and secondary sources. In Winnipeg, I visited Hudson's Bay Company Archives, which collects images and documents of corporate history spanning over three hundred and fifty years. Harold Innis's 1930 work, *The Fur Trade in Canada* and Chester Brown's historical cartoon biography *Louis Riel* helped me to articulate socio-political repercussions of the flow of furs between English trading corporations, First Nations peoples, and Métis voyageurs.



The cyclical voyages of the fur trade are “beneficial circles.” A familiar example is the universal recycling symbol, which suggests that the detritus of consumption can be endlessly reconstituted as fresh products. Such diagrams hint at perpetual motion and provide comforting abstractions which smooth over the friction and incongruity of extraction and production. To its proponents, the fur trade could seem a perpetual motion machine: Furs transited west to east, trade goods east to west, and wealth accumulated to Companies.

There are still pieces left to this work. I will now work in the tundra to the north of the boreal forest. I look forward to pursuing *Autumn Factory* to completion, as a compilation of image and text.



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