



Mishibijiw and Morning Star (*Memory Landscape II #9*) (2019) 36.8 x 81.3 cm, digital print on canvas, glass beads, thread, wood and deer hide. Collection of the Artist.

PROVENANCE

Collection of the Artist

In *Mishibijiw and Morning Star* (*Memory Landscape II #9*), two images form the panorama of a vivid sunset Barry Ace recalls witnessing in McGregor Bay, Manitoulin. After fishing in the bay, the sunset “became increasingly more powerful as dusk fell.” For Ace, the imagery becomes an “emotional sign-post” of a shared moment in time. In the divide between the two scenes, black beadwork forms the outline of the mishibijiw, the underwater panther of Anishinaabe mythology whose domain is the watery depths. On the right side, the dark silhouette of a rock rises out of the water resembling the curve of the mishibijiw’s back. Also on the right, Ace has beaded a niigaanaasnok (morning star), providing an ambiguous quality to the scene - is it dusk or is it biidaaban (dawn), a sacred time?

The work is part of a larger series, *Memory Landscape I and II* (2014), that visually references the birchbark scrolls that the Anishinaabeg used for record-keeping. The images come from Ace’s own archive of digital scans of film slides from the 1980s taken during memorable journeys around Manitoulin Island and the surrounding areas. *Memory Landscape I* was created to honour the life of Ace’s close friend and was produced as a complete set. *Memory Landscape II* continues with the imagery. Each scroll exists as a standalone work or can be lashed to another. Ace states, “These works reveal their duality and dichotomy through the diptych image.” The images suggest presence / absence, day / night or the earth, where the mishibijiw can be found, versus the skyworld, the domain of the Thunderbird, a sacred being who offers protection during journeys in life as well as into death. For Ace, the dualities present a “continuous personal narrative that is simultaneously rooted in the ancient and the contemporary.”

Essay courtesy of Leah Snyder, digital designer and writer, The L.Project. Snyder writes about culture, technology and contemporary art, and is a contributor to the National Gallery of Canada's Gallery magazine and other Canadian art and architecture publications.