



Mnemonic Code

direct digital print, glass beads, thread, porcupine quills, microchips, plastic
on Somerset paper

signed and dated 2020

29 1/2 x 22 1/4 in, 74.9 x 56.5 cm

Many of the titles of Barry Ace's works reference terms employed in digital technology. In computer programming "mnemonic" is an abbreviation of a string of words used for a precise operation or instruction. Mnemonic also means a device - whether an object or other assistive aid - that is used to recount layers of associative meanings in order to convey a particular meaning and elucidation. "Code" is another word that implies communication as well as has application in digital technology. Used to embed information that may be intentionally hidden or inadvertently latent, once put into effect by an activation, code has the potential to spark an event that can link to other events providing a chain reaction.

Similar to the earlier work "*Manidoominens (Beaded) Landscape*" (2014)," in "Mnemonic Code" Ace revisits the same foreboding image. Printed on archival Somerset paper, the abstracted landscape was taken during his travels as a dancer on the powwow trail giving it biographical meaning. On the horizon line that splits the composition, a string of train car boxes are linked together. A line of digital refuse intersects it. Ace states, "The vertical microchips reference the train. They carry information like the cars, with products, as they travel across the country." In a market economy, the products we value speak to consumptive pathologies built on a colonial history of extraction and decimation, as with the bison that used to roam the Great Plains, now absent in Ace's image. Above the train dark clouds pile, for Ace a signifier for what waits for on the horizon. Three pointed quills jut out from the microchips, their outline like a warning flag. Although the strip of beadwork at the bottom recalls the palette of the landscape, it is severed from it, a gulf of white space like a '*terra nullius*' between cultural practice and the premonitory scene.

Excerpt - Encoding Culture 2 Catalogue.