

GO MINE!

Ruth Evans

Go Mine is a multifaceted project which critically explores New Zealand's mineral extraction industries, both historically and in terms of the contemporary context. The project consists of three components: a tabletop game, a collection of folk songs, and an anthology of zines. While these three elements work together to provide the audience with a broader understanding of the conceptual elements in the project, they can also stand alone in their own right. The zines are educational and informative. They appeal to the rational faculties of their audience. The music is emotive and universally accessible, with the ability to reach a wide audience through various formats, such as live shows and busking, and through recording dissemination on the internet and in the physical realm. The game conjures up a combination of both rational and emotive responses to the reality of climate change



Figure 1. Ruth Evans, *Go Mine* game box, 2016, mdf, 226 x 162 x 80 mm.

Go Mine: A Tabletop Game Based on New Zealand Mineral Extraction Industries is the studio manifestation of the project. The game represents the mining industry in contemporary society through the format of a subversive game.

Go Mine is cut throat and it brings out the worst in its players. No matter how environmentally aware you are of the consequences of industrial mineral extraction, the moment you agree to play the game, something takes over. I have witnessed friends who are staunchly pro-union refuse to pay medical aid for their invisible workers when attacked with a *Disease Outbreak* card, and an anarchist, who proudly wears an FTP tattoo, display excitement when they prevented a *Public Opposition* card from taking effect by playing a *Police Presence* card. To date, I have not come across one person who has not succumbed to the pursuit of power and/or show blatant disregard for the finite planet they are destroying when playing the game.



Figure 2. Cut-throat tycooning: first day of game launch, 2017. Photo: Pam McKinlay.

The players are invited to embrace the corporate tycoon within by mining the 'planet' deck of cards, winning one over their opponents, and gaining power through the bribing of political figures and those in position of authority. Through the application of a gaming mechanism called 'nomic,'¹ players are invited to participate in the game-making process by creating new rules and amendments to established rules during 'conference calls.' During their turn, players can approach the group with a suggested rule change within a fixed amount of time, dictated by the sand-timer. Should the rule change receive a majority vote, it becomes ratified on the next player's turn.

Go Mine provides players with the opportunity to experience what many of us cannot comprehend – why do these people do this? Why does the CEO of ExxonMobil, or the Prime Minister of New Zealand, demonstrate such little regard for our planet?

I feel the answer is this: Because of the power it provides, and because the lives most devastatingly affected are invisible to them, they play this system like a game, and they are winning. When the masses begin to see the game for what it is, they will be able to change the rules of play.

EXTRACTION

The project's second component, *Go Mine: An Anthology of Zines Based on New Zealand's Mineral Extraction Industries*, act as a bridge between my making practice and my theoretical concerns. Formatted in a way to inspire intrigue and interest in the broader framework of the project, there are 23 individual zines which, when compiled, act as the chapters of my dissertation. Through the zine format, the reader is invited to explore the complexities of my research in a non-linear fashion. Rather than publishing the chapters as a book, I chose zines because they encourage 'browsing,' allowing the reader to jump straight into an area of their own interest. The zines can be read individually or explored in depth as an anthology, providing the reader with research that relates to New Zealand's mineral extraction industries both in contemporary society and historically.



Figure 3. Go Mine zines in the Dunedin Gasworks Museum library, 2017. Photo: Anna Evans.

On the cover page of 20 of the zines within the anthology, a card face from *Go Mine* has been used, establishing a direct link between the zines and the game itself. The exceptions to this rule are the three zines *Go Mine: An Introduction* (which provides the reader with some background to my political art practice, and an abstract of the project and zine chapters), *Songs of Go Mine*, and the *Aluminium* zine.

While the minerals required to produce aluminium are not mined in New Zealand, the port town of Bluff is home to an aluminium smelter. This industry plays an important role in New Zealand's economy and is captured in the game *Go Mine* through the construction of dice and sand-timer stoppers made of aluminium. The *Aluminium* zine explains how the industry came to exist in New Zealand and the archaeological significance of the site on which the smelter is built.

Contained within the *Go Mine* planet card deck are seven different resource industries which the players can 'mine' and later 'export' for the purpose of gaining the points required to continue their corporate endeavours. These resources relate to the minerals currently extracted across the country. The *Go Mine* zines invite the audience to learn how these industries came to exist and the manner in which these resources have been mined in the past, present and into the future. The seven resources are non-metallic minerals, ironsand, coal, oil, gas, silver and gold. 'Non-metallic minerals' is an umbrella term for numerous resources (such as clay, aggregate, limestone) which are currently, or have been historically, mined or quarried in New Zealand. Seabed mining, quarry rehabilitation and the connection between diatomite and the devastating 2015 forest fires in South East Asia are investigated within the pages of the *Non-metallic Minerals* zine.

Along the west coasts of New Zealand's North and South Islands, ironsand deposits can be found. In the North Island there are currently two operating ironsand mines, both located in the Waikato. The zine *Ironsand* explores how this industry came to be, and the potential future of seabed mining for the mineral, should the corporations get their way.

When Europeans arrived in New Zealand during the colonial era, they brought with them a reverence for industry. Coal mining's history is investigated in the *Coal* zine. Mining methods and their hazards are discussed, as is the changing landscape and impact on communities. Rotowaro – once a township, now a strip mine – becomes a subject in which to place this history into context and to question what lies on the horizon.

In New Zealand, the pursuit of oil began in 1865 and continues to this day. The search for oil – and public opposition to it – is discussed in an historical context in the zine *Oil*.



Figure 4. Ruth Evans, *Go Mine*: 'resource' cards, 2017, card, 89 x 57 mm each.

Gas has always been the consolation prize in the search for oil in New Zealand. But a rewarding prize it has turned out to be. The *Gas* zine explains how natural gas and its by-products have come to dominate the petroleum industry in New Zealand, and the alarming realities of contemporary methods of extraction, including hydraulic fracturing (fracking).

Currently, silver extraction is a by-product of gold mining in New Zealand. In the operating gold mines across the country silver is also sourced, often in higher quantities than gold. The *Silver* zine explores how silver extraction became possible once hard-rock mining of gold began. Methods of ore extraction are discussed, with a focus on the metallurgical technique of cyanidation and the environmental damage this can cause.

Gold mining has undergone many changes in New Zealand since it began in the mid-1800s. The *Gold* zine records the fluctuating industry and mining methods from early planter mining in rivers and underground mining of hardrock, to contemporary opencast operations. The future of gold mining is contemplated with reference to the current explorations taking place in Puhipuhi, in the Far North. The public opposition to this operation is discussed, and opponents' slogan of "no toxic mining" is explained.



Figure 5. Ruth Evans, *Go Mine*: back of 'planet' deck, 2017, card, 89 x 57 mm each.

ACTION

The 'planet' card deck in *Go Mine* also contains action cards which players can use to attack opponents or defend against their attacks. A variety of these action cards have an accompanying zine, such as *Resource Request*, *Disease Outbreak*, *Public Relations*, *Industrial Action*, *Industrial Disaster*, *Public Opposition*, *Scientist* and *Taxation*.

The *Resource Request* zine explains how the project *Go Mine* came to exist, providing the reader with an understanding of games as an art medium and tool to educate, discussed in the context of my own project and the work of others.



Figure 6. Ruth Evans, *Go Mine*: a selection of 'action' cards, 2017, card, 89 x 57 mm each.

Silicosis and black lung are two diseases that can be caused by exposure to mineral dust when mining. These conditions are briefly explained in the *Disease Outbreak* zine, alongside imagery relating to human health hazards and mining.

Public relations firms play a major role in our society, working with corporations and political parties to develop strategies designed to win the public's support. Often, these strategies are dirty, manipulative, misleading and/or distracting. The *Public Relations* zine explores the way that PR firms, with help from mainstream media, have influenced politics and social justice movements in a negative way, effectively eroding democracy.

The *Industrial Action* zine explores the historical labour movement in New Zealand and the industrial action used to fight for better working conditions, with a focus on the actions taken by miners. The miners' strikes of 1984-85 in Britain are discussed in both an historical and art context.

The government's delay in cleaning up the top ten worst contaminated sites in New Zealand is discussed in the *Industrial Disaster* zine. Alongside this text is a time-line that sets out some of New Zealand's mining-related industrial and natural disasters since 1840.

The *Public Opposition* zine focuses on art-based activist group Liberate Tate and its long campaign to put an end to BP's sponsorship of art and cultural institutions. Between 2010 and 2016, Liberate Tate engaged in creative civil disobedience through performance and installation art in order to challenge the relationship between the Tate Institute and petroleum giant BP. Seven of these actions are discussed, alongside the history of the relationship between BP and Tate, which was formed through corporate and political influence.

In the later months of 2016, oil giant ExxonMobil was outed for its cover-up of scientific data relating to CO² emissions and climate change, dating back to the late 1970s. The *Scientist* zine explores this data, how it was produced, and the way that Exxon used its position in the scientific community, through PR and scientific manipulation, to promote doubt and uncertainty over the reality of climate change.²

Multinational corporations – such as ExxonMobil – use tax loopholes built into legislation to avoid paying their fair share of income tax, and the New Zealand taxpayer ends up subsidising these industrial players.³ In the *Taxation* zine, corruption, tax evasion and tax avoidance by multinational corporations, as well as the art world élite, are investigated.

CORRUPTION

The *Go Mine* tabletop game also contains a 'bribe' deck, from which players purchase cards to gain further power and defensive capacity against certain action cards. A number of these bribe cards have been contextualised in the *Go Mine* zine anthology, including the *Minister of Conservation*, *Minister of Trade*, *Minister of Energy and Resources*, *Prime Minister* and *Police* cards.

In New Zealand, mining companies must be granted permits through the Crown Mineral Act 1991 (CMA) before they can begin their operations. Once these permits have been granted, companies are required to get resource consent through the Resource Mineral Act 1991 (RMA). The role of the Department of Conservation (DoC), the CMA and the RMA, with respect to the mining of conservation land, is discussed in the *Minister of Conservation* zine.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) is discussed in the pages of the *Minister of Trade* zine. Opponents' concern that corporations will be able to sue governments is explained using the example of OceanaGold's case against the government of El Salvador.⁴ The TPPA has been compared to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a deal which for over two decades has had a major impact on the signing parties, particularly Mexico. The Zapatista resistance movement in Chiapas is presented as an example of an ongoing struggle to free communities from the restraints of deals like NAFTA and the TPPA.⁵

The *Minister of Energy and Resources* zine acts as an archive of the petroleum 'Block Offers' made on behalf of the New Zealand Government to interested industrial players.

In December 2015, Paris was host to COP21, a United Nations annual climate meeting known as the Conference of Parties (COP). The purpose of the conference was to draft the so-called Paris Agreement, a global treaty to reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050. The conference has been criticised by many for not going far enough. The *Prime Minister* zine explains these concerns, and critically analyses the measures that New Zealand has committed itself to. The Kyoto Protocol is discussed as an example of historical COP treaties. The article "Art and Protest at COP21" provides the reader with a glimpse of the art-based protests that took place in Paris during the conference.



Figure 7. Ruth Evans, *Go Mine*: a selection of 'bribe' cards and back of 'bribe' deck, 2017, card, 89 x 57 mm each.

The *Police* zine is compiled solely of images displaying aggressive behaviour from police at political protests throughout New Zealand history.

DESTRUCTION

The role that music has come to play in my art practice is discussed in the *Songs of Go Mine* zine, alongside an analysis of the political power that music can exert, with a focus on the genre of folk. Accompanying this text is a song book containing lyrics and chords for the tracks on the album *Songs of Go Mine*. Like the zine anthology and the game, *Songs of Go Mine* can stand alone, incorporating another aspect of my art practice into the project, allowing music to act as a tool to raise awareness of the issues society faces when mining companies take command.

All three components of the project were displayed at the Dunedin Gasworks Museum in order to capture the work within an environment that had historical and contemporary relevance. The Dunedin Gasworks is listed as number ten on the Ministry for the Environment's list of contaminated land sites.⁶ Beneath the ground, there is a tar well which contains tar and related by-products. In 2005, asphalt was laid down in the hope of containing these contaminants, and public access was restricted. However, attempts at remediation failed, and subsequent testing has shown that there is a potential for the contaminants to leach into the local storm-water system and the surrounding soil.

The space occupied by the Dunedin Gasworks fitting shop (and the library attached) was chosen as the location for the "Go Mine Game Launch" exhibition. Two tables were set up to allow the public the opportunity to play the game. A wall was installed where the components of the game were displayed, allowing visitors the opportunity to engage with the work, even if they did not wish to play the game. The *Bribe* and *Planet* cards were fixed to the wall, while the dice, timers, pins, maker, rule book, box and insets rested on a shelf. The anthology of zines was placed within the space of the Gasworks library, inviting the public to engage with the written material of my dissertation. A listening station was established to allow visitors to listen to the tracks on the album *Songs of Go Mine*. During the closing party, live bands performed these songs, amongst others, while gaming continued.



Figure 9. Two tables of gaming: first day of game launch, 2017. Photo: Pam McKinlay.



Figure 8. Live music at the *Go Mine* game launch: Red Roof, 2017. Photo: Bell Murphy.

Throughout the period of the "Go Mine Game Launch," games were being played consistently. Even with the amplification of live music and sounds from the audience during the closing party event, game play did not cease. This surely demonstrates the effectiveness of *Go Mines'* capacity to operate as a microcosm or mirror of industrial activity in Western society.

Figure 10. *Go Mine* wall display, 2017. Photo: Pam McKinlay.



HOW TO PLAY *GO MINE*

Go Mine is a tabletop game which can be played by between two and seven people. The game consists of two decks of cards (the 'planet' deck and the 'bribe' deck), five dice, seven scoring pins, one whiteboard marker, one sand timer, and one pencil. Players begin the game with a fixed number of points (determined by the roll of three dice) charted on their scoring pin, and three cards from the planet deck, held in hand. The 'Foundational Rule Set' prescribed in the *Go Mine Rule Book* provides players with an outline of how their turn can unfold.

Besides trading and the calling of conferences (which can occur at any time before exporting begins), players may enact any of the moves in the following order on their turn:

- 'bribing' an official at the cost of ten points per card.
- unconditionally 'mine' cards from the planet deck at the cost of one point per card.
- use or sell one action card. Should a player wish, they can sell their action cards at the cost displayed in the upper left corner of the card. When cards are used or sold, they enter the discard pile and are removed from circulation.
- 'exporting' resource shipments is the final move a player can make. Once exporting begins, the opportunity to establish a trade or conference call is closed. An 'export' consists of three of the same resource cards, known as a 'shipment.' These shipments are placed face up, and the dice are rolled to determine how much return the export brings to the player. Each resource carries its own value in dice displayed in the upper left corner of the card. The points gained are then charted on the player's scoring pin. There is no limit on how many exports can be played per move.
- The player's turn comes to an end when the marker is passed on.

If a player is required to pay more points than they have charted on their pin, then they must pay with cards (one card = one point). Should a player end their turn with zero points and no cards in hand, they are out of the game.

The first player to own five bribe cards at the end of their turn is the winner. However, should the planet deck be exhausted before this occurs, everyone loses. There can be no winners on a planet deprived of resources.

Ruth Evans believes that art has the capacity to act as a tool of resistance. Evans explores this approach within her multi-disciplinary practice, through the creation of contemporary jewellery, sculptural works and art-based games. Evans completed the Master of Fine Arts programme at the Dunedin School of Art in March 2017 and was awarded an MFA with distinction for her project *Go Mine*.

- 1 Peter Suber, *The Paradox of Self-Amendment* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), <http://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/writing/psa/index.htm> (accessed 8 February 2016).
- 2 "The Long Tale of Exxon and Climate Change," *InsideClimate News*, 15 September 2015, <https://insideclimatenews.org/content/long-tale-exxon-and-climate-change> (accessed 17 September 2016).
- 3 Matt Nippert, "Top Multinationals Pay Almost no Tax in New Zealand," *New Zealand Herald*, 18 March 2016, http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=11607707 (accessed 15 April 2016).
- 4 Ciara Nugent, "El Salvador vs Pacific Rim: The Price of Saying 'No' to a Gold Mine," *The Argentina Independent*, 28 September 2015, <http://www.argentinaindependent.com/currentaffairs/analysis/el-salvador-vs-pacific-rim-the-price-of-saying-no-to-a-gold-mine/> (accessed 3 September 2016).
- 5 Noam Chomsky, "The Zapatista Uprising," in *Profit over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1999).
- 6 "Contaminated Sites Remediation Fund Priority List," *Ministry for the Environment*, <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/more/funding/contaminated-sites-remediation-fund/csr-f-priority-list> (accessed 10 July 2016).