

NANETTE BOILEAU

DAKOTA TERRITORY

Nanette Boileau bases her practice on the vast territory of the Louisiana Purchase, creating nuanced portraits of the contemporary American West through writing, painting, and video. Part of the 2016 Great Rivers Biennial, *Dakota Territory*, a three-channel video installation, was filmed over the course of several months and consists of a series of scenes—or “field notes”—examining the quotidian life of ranchers in southeastern Wyoming and the Black Hills of South Dakota. Boileau’s footage observes a herd of American bison, from grazing in Custer State Park to their annual roundup and auction. *Dakota Territory* also records the activities of a fifth-generation family caring for their herd of Black Angus cattle—cows being sorted and loaded, the herd moving across the landscape. Wind whistling, cattle mooing, and crowds cheering echo throughout the space, transforming the cinematic black box of the gallery into an expansive pastoral panorama.

With an acute understanding of rural agriculture’s drive towards modernization, Boileau’s *Dakota Territory* demystifies the “Wild West” by weaving together personal narratives of the western landscape. Themes of family, love, and animal husbandry reverberate throughout the work, revealing the symbiotic relationships between the land, the animals, and their human caregivers. Shifting away from the mythic idea of a cowboy on his horse heroically patrolling the Western front, Boileau instead portrays the rural realities of contemporary life in the West.

May 2016, Taken from *Great Rivers Biennial 2016 Gallery Guide*, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis