About the cover art  Tire Totem 2 is from Erica Lord’s series Trash Totems (2005). Lord describes the idea for the series in the following way: “When I was a student at IAIA in Santa Fe, I used to wait tables. Tourists would [say] oh, you are Alaska Native and an artist, so ‘do you make totem poles & dreamcatchers?’ Which I always had some awkward response to. But it got me thinking about totems in general. And what it meant to make these markers, or why we would build something like this, as welcome, or warning. So, I began to think, well, we don’t have totem poles in the Interior. But if I was to make totems, what would they look like. And big trees don’t speak that directly to my contemporary life, so what does? In what way do we think about the land now? How do we relate to it? And what is on the minds of every Alaskan, American, and more is oil. So, the totems are all made from petroleum products and byproducts. Oil drums, tires, etc. I would go out in the middle of the night with my cousin Milo to junkyards and tire shops and I’d stack up these discarded objects into totems—all about 12 feet tall or so. I wanted to leave these markers. And since I was more interested in the action, the ritual of making these, more than the actual object I didn’t take the object, I just took the images of the creation. The objects were left for others to discover in the following days” (contemporarynativeartists.tumblr.com/post/1016307462/erica-lord-inupiaq-athabaskan).

Erica Lord (Iñupiaq/Athabaskan) is an interdisciplinary artist whose work examines the representation and conditions of contemporary Indigenous life and identity. Growing up between Alaska and Upper Michigan, and of Athabaskan, Iñupiaq, Finnish, Swedish, Japanese, and English descent, Lord makes work that seeks to address “how I traverse boundaries and blur lines that form between aspects of my identity and cultures.” Lord studied at the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) and Carleton College and earned an MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has exhibited nationally and internationally, including at the IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts in Santa Fe, the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian. For contact information and other projects, see http://ericalord.com/home.html.


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Cover
Erica Lord
*Tire Totem 2 (2005)*
Photo documentation of performance/ritual *Trash Totems* series
Fairbanks, Alaska
Digital C-print
Courtesy of the artist