



2016 season



The Artists in Residence  
2016

montello foundation



Carlo Adinolfi

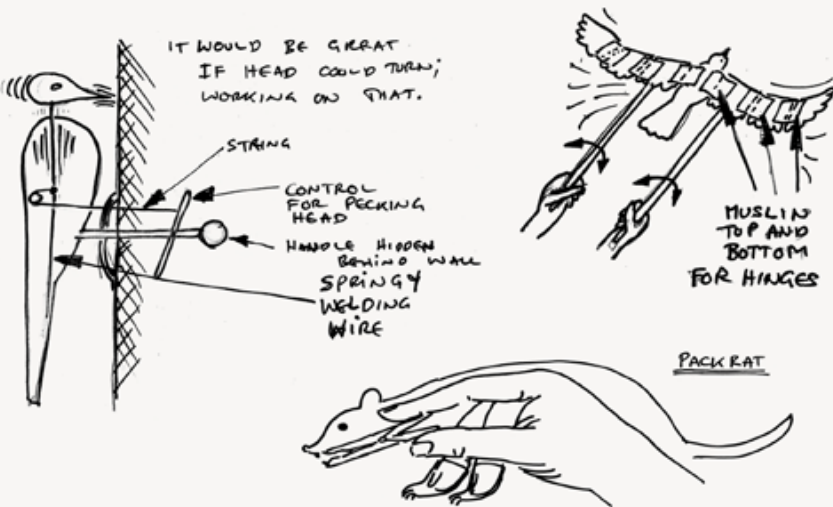
Hudson, NY

www.concretetempletheatre.com



I am a theatre artist. My work focuses on the individual's struggle for identity and society's need for cohesive community, incorporating drama, dance, puppetry, music and the visual arts. I applied for the Montello Foundation residency with the intention of reconnecting with two of my earliest artistic endeavors, visual art and dance. Prior to my residency, I broke my hip. So, I focused on drawing, painting and daydreaming about a new theatre project.

My residency was in early August, with most days reaching 100 degrees by noon; the first thing I found was that I needed to learn how to adapt my schedule to the climate. Within a few days, I was waking up at 6 am to eat breakfast and watch the wildlife. Then I'd go for a long walk or bike ride, while the sun was low in the sky. From the day I arrived, I began sketching the landscape, first in pencil and then watercolor. The landscape was either close-up or faraway; the scale of what I was



*Artemisia tridentata I*, 2016

seeing was hard for me to grasp. Then, I was so taken by the twisted forms of juniper trees. On walks, I discovered that the dead branches of sagebrush took very similar forms. I collected branches and began painting them in watercolor: still life studies, without any background. I wanted the branches to appear to be specimens, like insects or birds, being recorded for posterity, the painting preserving a fragile object in time. The branches kept shedding little pieces while I worked, continually decaying.

Before arriving in Montello, I had read about the unique fauna found in the Sagebrush Desert, but my research had not prepared me for the profound encounters with the animals! A packrat, who had taken up residence under the deck, greeted me on a daily basis. He was very cheeky, but through my encounters with him and other animals, the idea that we, humans, are just guest on this planet, really hit home. We are often intruders, as we seldom know how to live alongside the natural world. The packrat is of course going to be the star of the new show.

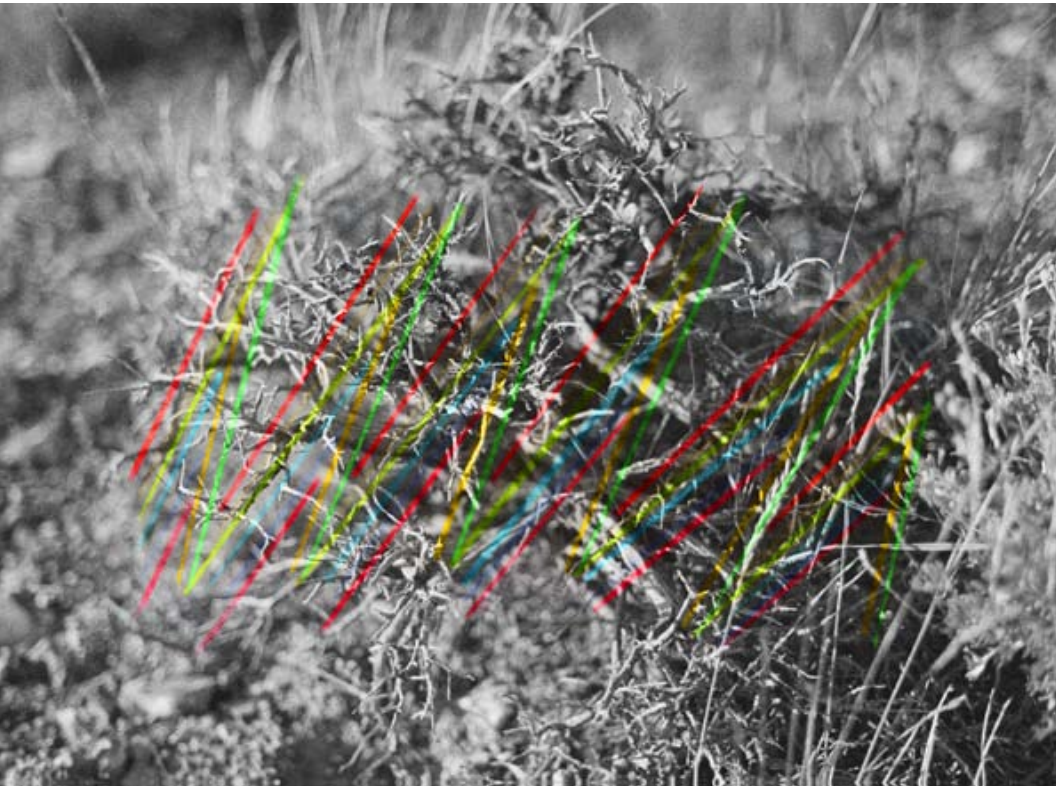
Lee Arnold  
Brooklyn, NY  
[www.learnold.net](http://www.learnold.net)

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Montello was a revelation. During my residency I hiked, took photographs, read books about environmental history, listened intently to bird songs, investigated local flora, and filled sketchbooks with drawings inspired by the subtle color and geometry of the desert. Before leaving for Nevada I was a bit apprehensive of the prospect of two weeks isolated in a foreign landscape. A fortnight alone had it's

*Interference (1), 2016*



*Interference (2), 2016*

challenging moments, but by the end of my time there I found that my perception of space, light, sound, texture and color had shifted.

My practice is inspired by the natural world and how we perceive it. Much like a scientist or philosopher in search of a theory that will support their observations, I make works that act like symbolic diagrams that attempt to interpret the structure of visual experience. This was my first extended stay in the desert of the Great Basin, and my experience there continues to inform the direction of my work. Recently I have become interested in making works in which the depiction of time is intentionally ambiguous. In my daily life, with responsibilities and distractions coming from all directions, it can be challenging to just let my mind wander. At Montello I had the opportunity to spend days staring at the horizon, quietly watching a feeling of boredom shift towards a sense of wonder. I am thankful for having been given that time.

Rian Brown  
Oberlin, OH  
[www.rianbrown.com](http://www.rianbrown.com)



My latest work is a hand-painted animation process that deeply connects me to tiny micro-movements of time. My process involves taking a short film sequence and printing out each frame onto paper and then painting each of the 450 frames. The process is very slow and meditative – but allows me to become deeply connected to the smallest changes, the tiniest gestures of movement. At Montello, I could spread these paintings out all over the wooden floor and paint for hours, witnessing the movement of light cast by the sun across the room. I felt like I was inside of a natural clock- working on my time-based images while suspended in a physical sundial marking the move-



ment of the planet around the sun. I was inspired by this and made a daily time-lapse film of the studio and the light passing from day to night.

Working in total isolation, surrounded by sage, hawks, and charmed black-tailed jack-rabbits shifted my entire reality, metabolism, even the way I saw, felt and dreamt. It was at times scary, and even tedious, which for me are both doorways that force a deeper understanding of things. The long difficult dirt road over the mountain pass and into the ocean of sagebrush to arrive at the house tucked up on a ridge was an important part of the journey. It meant leaving completely the world of humans. And without people, cars, phones, noise and light pollution- it allowed me to go deeper into my inner life, as well as to begin to see and hear more clearly the present landscape. And no need for entertainment – the night sky out there is ecstasy. I will carry the Montello experience with me for a long time, and as I am sitting at my desk right now thinking about it, yearn to return.

Lilah Fowler

London, UK

[www.lilahfowler.com](http://www.lilahfowler.com)



‘Why exactly am I here?’ I asked myself out loud in the audio log of my second day. My mind was a landscape, its terrain a challenge to navigate. I came with a set of ideas to start, continue and finish; nothing physical, since I was forced to purge all the usual materials I work with; travelling from a safe and green island, half way across the world, just to experience silence and the desert. In the end it was the silence that stumbled me; I drew and read, but what captivated me was how deafening, nothing could be. It’s startling how the mind adjusts. The onset being the captivating fear of reconciling the distance between myself and the space I had travelled to: a result of a worrying realization of an addiction to remote technological links to the world, combined with absolute solitary isolation in a landscape that calls on survivalist instincts. There was mellowing as I learnt to sense rather than think, the sounds revealing themselves in layers and shapes that filled the vast space.

The gusts of wind played chords and the insects ticked and buzzed, but curiously I

*14203, (Wool, string) 2016*



*Untitled, (film still), 2016*

found human solace in the planes flying 30,000 feet above me, the sole evidence of human presence. This drew my eyes to the sky and I began filming, finding moments to examine. The acute alertness brought on listening and sound as vibrational waves and static forms; feeling with hearing: the puckering, pinging and hissing, and I began to think about how sound can be heard in other ways. It is a bodily process, searching for sounds in the silence. The soundscape is the lasting descriptive memory of the space, infinitely more accurate than my images produced.

I arrived with a mind full of thoughts and research, all feeding the sculptures and artwork that I make; contemplating the often contradictory understanding we have of contemporary landscape, when it is shadowed or paired with technology. I was curious about this transformed global perspective that satellite maps give to my occupation of the space the under my feet, aside this space in a virtual map. It uncovers a vast system of infrastructure, miles of cabling and data centers, often placed in remote locations like this desert. Over the shifts in my practice, the core remaining feature is of finding new shapes in looking; only now, this extends to how the digital and physical collide, when, after all, they both rely on a hidden infrastructure in remote locations.

There’s a difference between being captivated by the aura of mountains and desert when living afar, to when the distance is reduced from the object (me) and the subject (the land) and in a way de-aestheticised. The beauty is actually monotonous. The extended time in the cabin broke down the separation of reading the environment as a ‘thing’ and set in to motion a kind of puncturing, rupturing, dissolving and re-approaching a co-existence with my surrounding landscape and related thought processes. It’s unique and rare to have the chance to work in this way and to fracture my pattern of making and thinking; the result will inevitably filter into future works.

Kirsten Furlong

Boise, ID

[www.kirstenfurlong.com](http://www.kirstenfurlong.com)

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My current artistic practice engages with a series of questions about our culture's multifaceted relationship to nature and the geography of human/animal interactions in urban and wilderness settings. These inquiries are utilized to contemplate various issues about the natural world and the concept of representation of animals and the environment. In recent work, including several I completed while in residence, my process is to mimic forms and patterns made by plants and animals: tree rings, concentric lines on seashells, woven grass in a bird nest, fractal patterns on ferns and corals, spider webs, or the meandering line of a snake. This is a way of understanding natural processes via imitation and representation using the tools of the artist - the pen, the blade, the needle.

The Great Basin desert ecosystem of Montello is relatively close (in Western landscape terms) to my home base on the Snake River Plain city of Boise, ID but I found many new things to explore and consider during the desert residency in the flora and fauna, environment, and land use in this remote and



*Unchopping a Tree #5, 2015*



*Birds of America #1, 2016*

beautiful place. I found the simplicity and functional design of the house and studio combined with the lack of distraction from daily news, digital communications, phones and media focused my attention to my work in the studio and intense observation to the sky, weather, wildflowers, insects, birds, and mammals. Having the constant reminder of knowing the power was coming from the sun and the water from the rain heightened my awareness of environmental and sustainability issues in my day to day living while at the retreat and since returning home.



Laurie Lambrecht  
Bridgehampton, NY  
[www.laurielambrecht.com](http://www.laurielambrecht.com)



The westward drive from Salt Lake City through Wendover was a great prelude to the change of environment of the Montello retreat that was to come. Turning off Highway 233 near the tiny community of Montello on to the dirt road leading to my destination was like lifting the stage curtain to my imagination of what wonder this isolation of place and time could present. I was bound to the foundation's cabin 18 miles back on an unpaved road in Nevada's high desert. After driving only 2 miles I had to stop and leave my car to savor the surroundings. Awe (that word we overuse), was overwhelming me. I was in a dream! Someone had emptied the sea's water for me. Now I could journey and experience the expansive ocean floor, its flora, and swooping hills. In the breeze the abundant

*Bark Cloth, Linen prints in process at Montello*



*Jungle Road, grid of cyanotypes made in Captiva*

sage bush quivered like tethered seaweed waving in underwater currents. It was an auspicious beginning for my adventure alone deep into the wilderness. Arriving at the cabin the wind howled the first 36 hours encouraging me to set up the studio to work indoors. The autumn sunlight was bright and the plant-life was bleached and dry as I later ventured out to explore with my camera. The third day a sudden hale storm thundered on the roof and then the peaceful quiet descended. This continuing silence allowed me to hear a jackrabbit jump, the whooshing wings of a crow flying overhead and coyotes in the distance. My time alone in this beautiful expanse of wilderness was one of the best gifts I've ever received. I read, wrote, photographed, wandered in my mind and on foot, worked on an existing project and thought about life, the earth and my friends. The experience at Montello strengthened my spirit and refueled my sense of possibilities.

Sarah & Joshua McCarty  
USA  
sjm.inquiry@gmail.com

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Trained in sculpture and installation, Sarah builds platforms for collective making, healing, and transformation. Joshua, with a background in the culinary arts and hermeneutics, creates work that asks questions of consumption and ritual. Siblings who rarely got along, we now collaborate to facilitate communal settings advancing deepened inhabitation, communication, and play. Our process begins in microcosm: mending our relationship offers first steps towards healing the world. Having inherited the ancestry of the colonizer and a vocabulary of love assuming possession, we re imagine frameworks for moving and making that instead honor listening - through our bodies, our environments, and each other.

As visitors in Montello, we questioned the inherent violence in our movements. *How*

*paths* (detail), set of eleven, single-species plant presses, 2016



*absorptions*, set of eleven papers encrusted by the individual pulps of *paths*, 2016

*is our physical presence displacing and what are our ideological assumptions erasing? How is the concept of "nature" presuming, blinding, and colonizing? Can gesture reconstruct the method and quantity of this violence? What emerged was an ecology - a relational logic of dwelling - built upon slowness and wandering. As we stepped through the desert, our focus was not on the points along the way, but the quality of the advances: curiosity, study, awe. This openness dismembered preconceived notions of each other and our surroundings. We made paper to map these discoveries - a production marked by violence. The process offered a means to celebrate and explore the multidimensional qualities of the plants themselves - evoked throughout the picking, boiling, pounding, cutting, and pressing - as they broke down and transformed.*

Our technique of engagement solidified into a collection of four components: *paths* and *absorptions* (pictured); *communion*, a multitudinous paper to break apart and burn as incense; and *bundles*, a collection of plants to vaporize in a pot. The textures and aromas of each piece invite a haptic breath meditation, illuminating vitality and community by bringing people into a shared corporeal atmosphere. Installed within the intimacy of the home, the context further incites discovery and collaboration through the interpersonal, sensorial experiences generated by the pedagogical unfolding of the plants - boiled, broken, burned. This gathering functions as a proposal for how we engage with each other and our environments by questioning the authorship of making. People, plants, and place become co-conspirators, writing a new vocabulary for loving.

*The event will take place Winter 2017 in Brooklyn, NY.*



Evie McKenna  
Jackson Heights, NY  
[www.eviemckenna.com](http://www.eviemckenna.com)

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The artists retreat at Montello was in a word, intense, for me. I know that this word is used often in our contemporary life but for this experience the use is accurate. The highs of having the time to think clearly without interruption and to follow those ideas deeper than a normal day affords is intense – and a fantastic luxury. The process of getting to the site and traveling around was also intense in that the vastness of sky and desert landscape are a shock to city dwellers.

The variation of the skies along with wind, very brief rains, peak saturation sunsets and many smallish creatures made up the distinguishing factors of each day. The more you

*Pink Bends, 2016*



*Hairs on Fire, 2016*

paid attention it seemed that no two days were alike. Personally, this allowed me to go into a questioning period that was so deep and long overdue where I could piece together work that seemed to be different and whose trajectories were confusing to me, into one whole cloth. My work was asking for this connection and the answers became apparent in the quiet that was my time at Montello.

The botanical world offers a complex assemblage of color, line and geometry to artists as source material. Like the 70's/80's painters in Pattern and Decoration movement, this natural world appeals to me for the order and balance as well as the ethereal combinations that are pure inspiration. As a photographer treading into this subject area, I am conscious of the historic aspects of representational works derived from nature and make a dedicated effort to unbalance my work. I am interested in sliding more towards abstraction in nature with my direction and using motion, blurs and silhouettes are a few of the camera's tools that I employ with this work while still keeping it recognizable as a photograph.

When the last clues are in place you can feel elated about the process. It was like that for me at Montello. What was going to happen there? No idea. And that is why it was a powerful experience in that there were no obligations to fulfill. Complete freedom to spend your time as you desired. And if that was a creative jolt which is has turned out to be for me, great. And intense.

Kevin McNamee-Tweed  
Austin, TX  
[www.kevinmcnameetweed.com](http://www.kevinmcnameetweed.com)

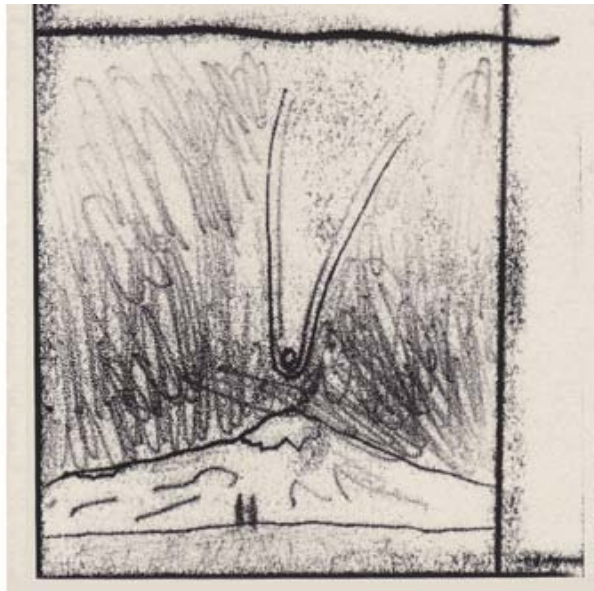
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In the months leading up to my residency at Montello, I'd been making mostly paintings of nature. I expected this to flourish in my time there. I found in the first few days that this wouldn't work; that my renderings of the land felt absurd and unworthy of the visual reality I was experiencing. On the third night, there was a full moon. After dinner I walked around the side of the house to discover the glowing pink plate sitting a few inches above the twisting horizon line. There were streaking clouds on this night so the waning daylight produced a spectrum of pinks and oranges which bled green into the dissolving blue which was cut by the black-green mountains. And there at the center of it was the pink moon, a hole of light.

The following morning, and for a few mornings more, there was a silver moon to the

*Comet, 2016*



*Tree with Sky, 2016*

east of the house until about ten AM. Circular forms have been an enduring element in my paintings for some time, but they became the focal point of my work at Montello. I produced a series of pseudo-perfect circles quietly situated in a field of two or three layered colors on raw canvas. This language of color and circle forms functioned in a way that depictions of plants, animals, and landscapes could not. It communicated just enough, nothing more. I found that the expansive and heavy silence, the gentle fluctuations of light and color, and the way time occurred in Montello pushed me to adopt a mode of expression that removed my own narratives and symbolologies. In the months that followed my time in Nevada I have returned to more familiar ways of working—painting and drawing natural settings—but I have also embarked on a printmaking project which has allowed me to delve into the mysteries and memories of Montello as I simultaneously wade into a new mode of image-making and story-telling. The house and the studio at Montello are lovely and quite comfortable but the greatest gift of the fellowship is no doubt that of pure time and space in its rawest, most truthful form.

Yasmeen Siddiqui  
Denver, CO

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Observation and Response

Before arriving, the word Montello conjured images of brush and gravel, dry beds of sand, rock peppered with low grasses, cacti, jackrabbits and coyote, amounting to a neat, self-perpetuating and isolated system. A place distinguished by views from a well conceived building standing over a site both in contradistinction and harmony with the landscape. Like great jazz.

Since leaving, Montello behaves as a catalyst in both my understanding of aspects of the creative process and the mechanics of creation. Physically set apart, distant and

distinguished from all previous experience, Montello magnified and set into wild frenzy fundamental aspects of my psyche. At each turn, driving up and down the Rockies, across the Salt Flats and toward and into the Great Basin, I felt the expansion of my map. This is an extreme place, far away from anywhere I had been or where I live, that brought to the fore self-knowledge that I must have been repressing.

Getting there safely proved challenging, for reasons obvious and anticipated by those who know me well, but a complete revelation to myself. But, slowly, it is becoming clear. I



resist planning. Planning anything at all, including studying maps carefully. Even when traveling to this unknown and remote location with my sensible nine year-old son. My tendency to remain in densely populated areas where shelter and answers are a stone's throw away is a crutch I now recognize as problematic. Life at Montello demands awareness and self-reliance. While it is possible to call on those who know its rhythm and cadence, facts about water and darkness, they are difficult to reach because of distances and the absence of communication technology. And this is the brilliance of this project.

Nearby towns, Native American reservations, and a cattle ranch are the trails that at first organized my own looking onto the sagebrush. I clung to and conjured images of predecessors in order to fathom my location. Over time, these thoughts of settlers and native inhabitants were muted by the loud quiet of the winds across the brush and the hyperactive chipmunks buildings nests and having their fates sealed by predator hawks. My attention shifted, but my anxiety persisted. I worried about the ridiculous, thoughts of marauding bandits and other terrifying fancies. Again, humans and their activities permeated my thoughts even though I intentionally focused on what I could see from the studio, while walking the hills, and resting under juniper trees. The importance of presence and the absurd manner in which anxiety can hijack meaningful encounters and a capacity for observation and the resultant process of creation, has made an indelible mark on the way I now conduct my days, the way I sit at my desk, reading and working through impressions and images as they take form in language.

*Yasmeen Siddiqui is an independent curator, essayist and lecturer, committed to voicing the unorthodox, stories that traverse and toy with prevailing political and art historical categories. [yasmeen.m.siddiqui@gmail.com](mailto:yasmeen.m.siddiqui@gmail.com)*



W. Scott Trimble  
Seattle, WA  
[www.wstrimble.com](http://www.wstrimble.com)

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I create site-specific sculptural installations often using reclaimed building materials. The relationships between architecture, nature, figure and machine have long been sources of my inspiration. I enjoy exploring new materials and processes every few years, investigating different methodologies as a project evolves. There is a physicality to creating these works that is often obsessive in technique and process. The

*Wave Sine*, 2015 Photo: James Harnois



*Sticks on Stones Study #1*, 2015



work tends to straddle the worlds between art, architecture and the surrounding environment, usually interfacing with the viewer. With the aid of visual and tangible cues within a work, my intentions are to facilitate the creation of the viewer's own personal narrative. I strive to make art that is inclusive, integral, and serve as a catalyst for exploration. I see my work as ephemeral and specific to an environment and usually only experienced in that particular context.

Montello afforded me the chance to be totally separate from the energy of a city, people, and other utilitarian distractions. I was part of another community; a place of silence, a place of great expanse, and a place where one can be free of all interruption of human invention. An eddy of refuge within the stream of perpetual noise. I experienced a restored sense of appreciation and respect for the natural world that had been within me for a long time.

Annie Varnot

Brooklyn, NY

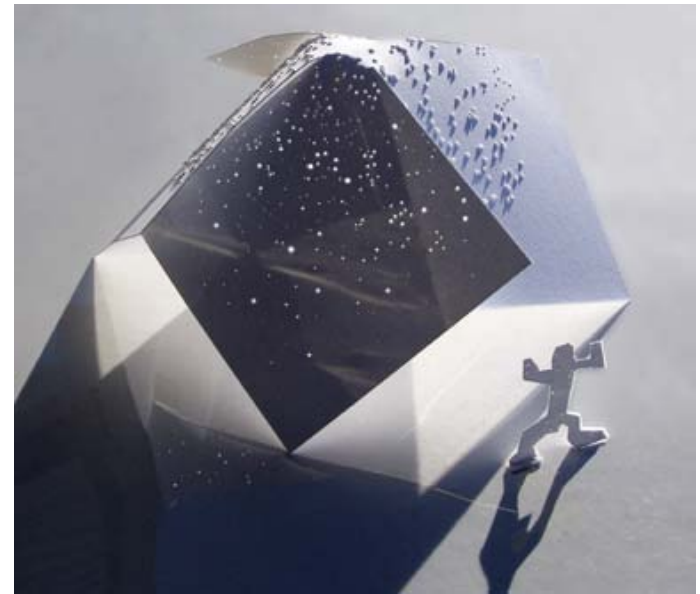
[www.annievarnot.com](http://www.annievarnot.com)



Hovering between abstraction and representation, my art engages with several environmental themes, albeit in a non-linear, poetic way. These include human interference with nature, spectacular natural phenomena, and my own relationship to the landscape. I am interested in creating a dialogue between contrasts such as synthetic and natural, geometric and organic, and excess and nothingness. The compositions come from a hunger to link landscape with the human desire for connection. Positive forms interact as if they are stretching, breaking, forming, reaching, piercing, filling, protecting, or spilling into voids.

My artistic practice is characterized by an unconventional use of materials and processes. My materials, including drinking straws, plastic and natural debris, poultry eggs, and envelopes, are integral to the content of my work. My process for obtaining these

*Sunset Storm at Montello, 2016*



*Paper Model of Constellation Shelter I with Petroglyph Anasazi Yellow Jacket Man, 2016*

items includes such means as draining poultry eggs and gathering drinking straws from around the world, actions that are also fundamental to my work.

At the Montello Foundation, I spent the first two weeks of May nervously yet cavalierly, driving a rental compact car through mud puddles two feet deep, getting accustomed to the composting toilet, being mindful of my water usage, listening to the melodic wind, watching the sun rise and fall, waking to the staccato drilling of woodpeckers, and taking in the spaciousness of the remote high desert. The first seven days I was in awe of the environment, not quite grasping how it would affect my artistic practice. I found that the desert was eerily still by day. With a desire to become similarly still, I patiently rendered still-lives of dirt-road debris like faded Budweiser cans and wild cacti. At dusk, the sky was my television. I spent all evening entranced by it. Every evening, I painted the sun until it had retreated below the horizon. I then laid flat on my back and stared at the 360-degree view of the stars. Watercolor as a medium seemed perfect for the ephemeral and epic sunsets. Still searching for deeper inspiration, I explored and watched the landscape, hoping to harvest an idea I could explore more once I was back in New York City. After days of near artistic despair, I finally lit up with creative fire and imagined and explored something that I hope to develop further: constellation sculpture shelters. The dominant chords for me in the North East Great Basin are sky, sun, heat, light, wind, and stars. These outdoor sculptures would act as shelter from the sun and wind. At Montello, I pricked holes into paper, corresponding to the South West sky at night. I folded the paper to create a maquette example of one of these shelters. Within the constellation map, I added fictitious constellation characters inspired by my discoveries at the Montello Foundation.

Our retreat program centers around the idea of raising awareness.

I believe that to reach a higher level of awareness, one needs to be guided. Language, spoken and written, can be a guiding force, but so can many other forms of art. But how does one guide those who create, those who are the ones guiding our society? Our approach is to nurture them with space and time in a place where no ostentatious scenery is prevalent. Sure, the sky can be quite dramatic (as can getting to the retreat), but otherwise the features of the setting are subtle. Here, a heightened awareness is necessary to understand nature; only a heightened awareness leads one to discover elements of beauty and revelation. What we have done is taken distractions away and have created a *base station*. From there, we are pushing the residents to search for these elements of beauty and revelation. Their level of awareness is being tested. This little bouquet was at the retreat when I arrived for my last stay of the season, a bouquet that wouldn't draw much attention in many other settings, but as it is the essence of this environment, it is a testament of the heightened awareness one gains at the retreat. In 2016, thirteen artists stayed at the retreat and, as we can see from their reports, did amazing work there and were inspired for their future work. They will certainly be guides for all of us towards awareness, awareness for details and the larger picture.

Stefan Hagen, Founder



Thank you to all the individuals for all the help and support they have given to us.

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[www.montellofoundation.org](http://www.montellofoundation.org)  
195 Chrystie St Suite 303 M  
New York, NY 10002  
Tel 212 645 7830







Montello Foundation is a foundation dedicated to support artists who foster our understanding of nature, its fragility and our need to protect it.

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195 Chrystie St Suite 303 M • New York, NY 10002 • 212 645 7830