



2023 season



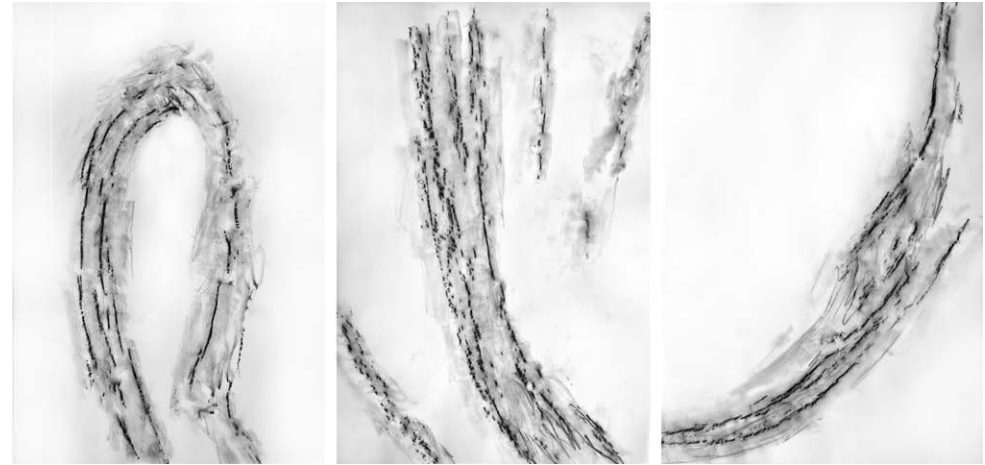
The Artists in Residence
2023

montello foundation

Elizabeth Billings

Tunbridge, VT

instagram.com/elizabethbillingsstudio



Juniper 1, 2 and 3, graphite on vellum 12.5 x 18 in each, 2023

Thwhack! Something hit the glass door. Hard.

A meadowlark.

His eyes were moving but his body was limp. His beak open. Was this the meadow lark whose song traveled through our days? A few minutes passed. His beak closed. A few more minutes, and then, he flew.

We watched his resilience. That will to just go on living.

Living out in the sagebrush, watching the rains come most afternoons, from miles and miles away, seeing new plants push up through the dry hard ground, then bud and burst into bloom, it was a visual life force.

I asked a neighbor, Philip Behenna, about the winters. He said last winter they could not get out for six weeks. That it was bitter cold, the harshest winter they had lived through. I asked him, knowing we were brief fair-weather visitors, what would he most like us to understand about this place?

Philip wrote: *That while "Life" itself is astoundingly resilient, individual lives are so fragile. "Life" bounces back from the frigid monochrome. But not everything gets to see it. Not everything gets to lie out and feel the warmth of the spring sunshine. You feel that struggle between life & death here very intensely and at times death can feel like a houseguest, just hanging around looking for an opportunity.*

But life goes on. We have new goat kids running around bouncing off the walls and a 3-week-old calf who loves to run circuits of her pen in the evenings while her mother feeds. You see the color of the tanagers, the grosbeak, the geese nesting down



on the ponds. And you understand that you've survived, they have too. And for now, we're part of the survivors' group. We won't always be. One day it will be our turn to go. But "life" will go on.

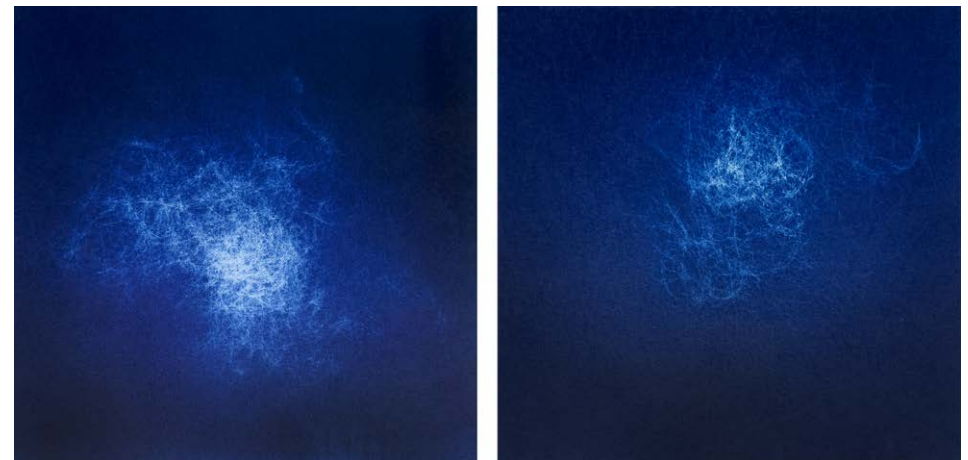
I had walked to the juniper grove to make rubbings when Philips's text came in. I sat down on an ancient fallen limb, tears streaming down my cheeks.

Our changing earth is overwhelming. It is shifting so quickly, it is hard to find footing. I have worked to delve into this never never land of our current reality, I have experimented, recycled, discarded, always looking to find a way, a method, a strategy, anything, that would change everything.

I see now that I have been trying to work from the outside in. At Montello, being a part of the desert landscape, held by the vastness of the sky, I heard the clear song of my intuition. Did the place hear it too? Wasn't it a collaboration? Isn't it?

Because for now, we are part of the survivors group.

Cosmos 1 and 2, cyanotype on paper, 6 x 6 in each, 2023



Tracey Cockrell

Woodstock, NY
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Using sympathetic resonance as a metaphor and as a means of sound propagation, I build sculptures, installations, sound objects, and visual scores that explore the origins of language and challenge the authority of language for making meaning. I am interested in synesthesia and the poetic potential of the decay of language through acts of translation. My current research is about the complex relationships between language and landscape, psychoacoustics, and the subjectivity of place. Often, my projects begin with site-specific listening walks. I hike to collect field recordings, studying the sounds of natural and manmade landscapes and harvesting plant materials for use in my studio.

Poemophone: Quiet de Lux, typewriter, tonewood, zebrawood, hand-forged steel, 13 x 14 x 14 in, in performance at Museum of Contemporary Craft, Portland, OR, 2005 - 2011



Solanum melongena Soundgarden, Sound Sculpture, Solanum melongena, ebony, compact electronic components, audio (sheep herding at the Maine Common Ground Fair, Unity, ME), 26 x 27 x 3 in, 2023

I am profoundly grateful for my experience living and working off the grid at Montello Foundation. My two weeks stay there was daring, humbling, and transformative. Being alone in the sage prairie and in the studio, my thoughts could arise without disruption or distraction. I focused on the sounds of the prairie and spent my days hiking and listening—to coyotes at sunrise and sunset, a curious desert hare, a hummingbird's daily scout, songbirds across the tree groves, rain and pigeons on the roof, the percolating water collection dripping into the underground tank, wind whipping sagebrush and grasses, insects hopping and clicking in the sun's heat, swarming dragonflies, ranchers conversing on the walkie-talkie... I brought field recording equipment to collect these sounds and breathed into my own stillness to capture these sounds. Such an extraordinary shift in my experience of the world. I read slowly, hoping to understand more about the fragility and persistence of life and the nuanced weave of ecosystems and human culture. My experiments in the studio failed, clearing out the clutter of my mind. I came away with an amazing collection of field recordings that will be folded into my studio work over time. In my work, I am imagining how the language of the landscape is perceived by nonhuman ears, how to sound the thing described.

Jodi Connelly

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jodiconnelly.com



My art practice investigates the effects of our activities and consumption on the landscape and its native ecology. Working intimately with the land has illuminated the complex political and ecological systems at play in the Anthropocene. By placing ecological issues in an artistic context, my work aims to increase awareness of the necessity environmental stewardship.

When I arrived at Montello, I felt the frenetic energy I brought from day-to-day life. My mind felt loud and chaotic against the soft green palette of the desert. As I unpacked my things, the clamor of my activities succumbed to birdsong and cicadas. I smelled sage and earth and was elated to find so many colorful flowers blooming. As I marveled at each new discovery, I began to experience the calm, energized clarity of being fully present.

My days quickly attuned to the rhythms of the desert. I noticed the hues of each hour, the rising sun, the afternoon rains, painterly sunsets, starry night skies. I spent time wandering, journaling, drawing, dancing, meditating, reading, collaging, studying plants and collecting clay. At night I enjoyed the library, whose contents gave me a sense of belonging with the other artists that had been there. Below is an excerpt from the journal I kept during the residency:



Untitled, gold ink, paper, desert earth, 9 x 9 in, 2023

North Pit Diptych, charcoal on paper, cyanotype on paper, 36 x 16 in, 2023



Here on this land, wandering through its vastness, feeling its textures and topography, the changes in light and temperature, I have reconnected with my body, mind, and creative being. I notice how much more time and care I need than I give myself at home. I notice how the spaciousness here is both internal and external—as if my inner terrain reflects this environment. I am grateful for the invitation to wander, watch and listen. I often feel guilty about needing time to move slowly, to walk, to explore, to sit in silence. I've been taught that these things are frivolous, unproductive, or indulgent. But they are an important aspect of my art practice and self-care. It is through these quiet activities that my work comes to be. I will take this sacred knowledge with me back into the world.

Rachel Frank

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rachelfrank.com



My artwork for nearly the past ten years has been largely environmentally driven and is focused on how past species, rituals, and objects can shape our environmental future. Many of my recent projects specifically look at sentinel species—or plants and animals that are among the first in an environment to show the effects of climate change and can be used to gauge the overall health of an ecosystem.

I'm based in NYC where we experienced some major climate extremes this past summer. In June, the sky darkened to a dark rust-orange from the intense wildfires in Canada and we had to cope with the recorded worst air pollution in the world. Then in September, we experienced record flooding and a near shutdown of the subway system from heavy rains. Along the east coast, it's getting hotter and wetter and weather events are becoming more extreme. I was interested in traveling to an area of the American landscape that is experiencing the opposite—much of the west is experiencing drought,

Rewilding the Prairie at Franconia Sculpture Park, Performance still with ceramic rhyton vessel, 2022



Bird, ink, spray paint, and mica pigments on paper, 15 x 11 in, 2023

the nearby Salt Lake is drying up, and many areas are running out of water.

When I arrived at Montello, I was immediately surprised at the quietness of the landscape. Sometimes the loudest noises would be my feet brushing against the dry fall sagebrush or the sounds of a raven's wings flapping overhead. I organized my studio time between many walks and soon discovered the rhythms of activity tied to the extreme jumps in temperature in the desert. Some early mornings, I would see short-eared owls flying low across the open plain headed back to roost. As the sun rose, songbirds or kestrels could be heard hunting outside the cabin. In the afternoon heat, the smells of sagebrush would perfume my walks and as the desert got cooler by sunset, I would see plump Jerusalem crickets emerging from their burrows. At night the stars were phenomenal and sometimes I would hear coyotes.

Being in such a quiet remote area was great for my work. I used the wind twisted branches of the local Juniper trees as a reference for imagining the inner skeletal structure in a series of drawings of wading bird's feet. I made two or three ink drawings per day, worked on finishing some small bronze pieces, read several books, and expanded a lot of sculptural ideas through writing. I look forward to seeing how this beautiful experience will continue to shape my work.

Kiki Gaffney

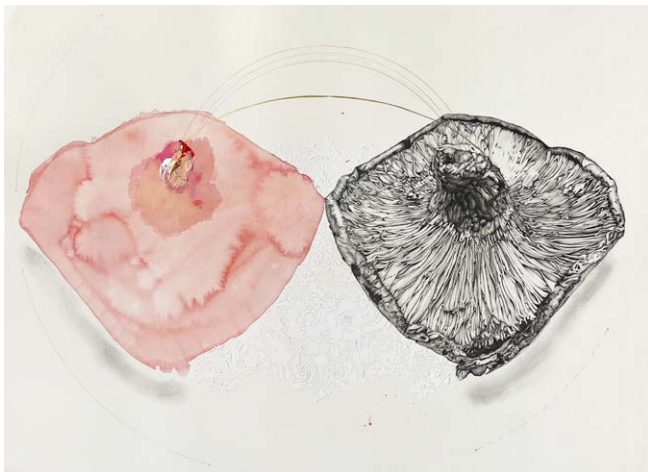
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For better or worse, I didn't have a car at the Montello Foundation. Not that I would have done much driving anyway, but the idea of having neither transportation (nor communication) for two weeks was of slight concern, but ended up being much more a triumph than a challenge. I live in a large city, so things like driving and daily interactions with numerous people are habitual. While I generally understood that the Montello Foundation was a 'solitary' residency when I applied, I had no idea what a profoundly moving experience it would ultimately end up being. I spend a good deal of time in nature, since my work (primarily drawing and painting) focuses on ideas around patterns and repetitions in nature, the passage of time, the movement of energy, and relationships between macro (what we see above the surface) and micro (what is happening below the surface, that which we don't see). I also think a lot about the communication processes in the natural world, and while things may appear chaotic, there is always order in that chaos.

I instantly felt at home and was able to ease into a routine. Rather than immediately checking the gross news in the morning, I watched a glorious sunrise, had breakfast on the deck and read one of the many stellar books in the library. I took fun (and challenging) bike rides each morning to take in more of the landscape (macro) and got to see herds of elk

Silent Symphony III, graphite, acrylic, colored pencil, gold leaf on paper 22.5 x 30 in, 2023



Silent Symphony I, graphite, acrylic, colored pencil, gold leaf, glitter on paper 30 x 22.5 in, 2023

leaping through the sage, as well as a coyote here and there. While working in the studio I watched dramatic storms roll in and out and noticed on many occasions how the sky in the northern facing windows could be so strikingly different than the sky out the southern facing windows – at the same time! Every late afternoon I'd pause on the work and go for a walk, to take in the landscape from a slower pace than the bike (micro). I would notice so many tiny details – circular patterns in the landscape, the shape of sage, a badger, and sounds – bees, the flapping of birds' wings, the wind. I think this was one of the biggest gifts of all from the residency – to have the ability to reduce all daily distractions to the point where I could truly observe what was right in front of me, through the senses. This is what nature allows, if we take the time to witness it. I think this particular residency will continue to unfold for me for quite some time, and I can say that I learned a great deal about myself – I have a little more tenacity and courage than I thought, for example. The Montello residency also provided pristine conditions for focus, since all distractions (cars, noise, people, cellphones, etc) were essentially eliminated, and with sustained focus artistic breakdowns can flow into breakthroughs to new ideas and clarity around ones' work. I am back to my 'normal' life now, but the need for balanced focus, along with the sense of peace, awe, amazement and respect for Mother Nature that Montello provided is in my mind and will remain there for a long time to come.

Satpreet Kahlon

Seattle, WA

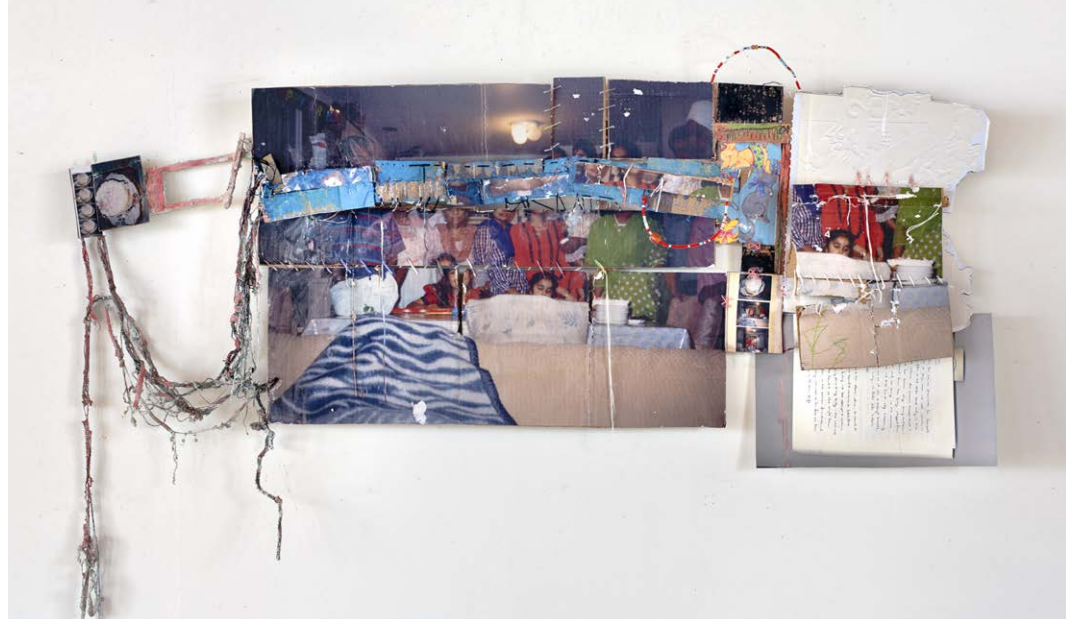
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My most recent work is a body of sculptural works using Dutch Golden Age still lives as a starting point, along with recent academic analysis reframing them as portraits of colonial souvenirs and the beginning of widespread ecological destruction. The work pairs photo transfers of the paintings on scrap wooden frames with sculptures recreating the paintings using contemporary waste materials that can be directly tied to the history of Imperialist conquest and our contemporary climate crisis.

I make my substrate out of used cardboard that I cut and stitch together and then gesso, on a wooden frame that I make from scrap wood collected from various waste sites related to global trade routes.

juxtaposition of two unlikely formal inclinations, detail, reclaimed materials, image transfer, 2023



from all of us, reclaimed materials, image transfer, 60 x 55 x 7 in, 2023

Faced with this material, where it comes from and where it's going, I can't help but think about cultural legacy. What we inherit and what we leave behind. The routes that these materials take to get to the hands of consumers, the route they will take on their freight ships back to Asia, and how these routes mimic the routes created by European Imperialists hundreds of years ago.

Legacy and history. Spools of thread still unraveling. A long, looming shadow. Where do these threads lead, and how are we implicated as artists working in an industry that continues this legacy of object commodification? By creating work from waste materials that I break apart and destroy after they are shown, I hope to stand in a lineage of anti-commodity and anti-monumentalist artists who came before me - prioritizing my love for environment and my politics above my own desire to be in an artistic canon or archive.

I had an amazing time at Montello. In the two weeks that I stayed in the desert, I went on countless walks, woke up and went to bed with the sun, encountered packs of coyotes, a herd of wild elk, and received nightly visits from two barn owls - and made two new works and made great headway on a book of poetry.

But above all, staying at Montello allowed me to reset my nervous system. As someone who suffers from c-ptsd, unexpected noises and experiences with strangers can be difficult to manage, and the August that I went to Montello was a particularly challenging time for me in my healing journey. To be able to come to such a remote, but well-designed and -allocated place, and experience a kind of peace, solitude and silence that I have never experienced before was amazing.

In my years of applying to Montello, I knew in my body that I really wanted to go there. It was only through the experience that I realized I needed it. I feel grateful and so lucky to have had the opportunity to meet and commune with the land, plants, and animals at Montello.

Lynn Kilpatrick and Hikmet Loe

Salt Lake City, UT and Las Vegas, NV
hikmetsidneyloe.com



Writers Lynn Kilpatrick and Hikmet Sidney Loe spent several days in 2022 in the vicinities of the former transcontinental railroad towns of Tecoma (NV) and Lucin (UT), exploring each region's cultural landscape. We were responding in part to artist Nancy Holt's statement, from her essay "Sun Tunnels": "In the surrounding area are old trails, crystal caves, disused turquoise, copper and tungsten mines, old oil wells and windmills, hidden springs, and ancient caves" ("Sun Tunnels," *Artforum* 15, no. 1 (April 1977): cover, 32-37). We scouted the land for evidence of each occurrence, from the site of the historic transcontinental railroad to the tops of regional mining hills.

We broadened our approach to the region once we learned about the arbitrary placement of longitudinal meridians, which were used to establish to designate each state.



GREAT BASIN SONNET

I am trying to get out of this poem
and I've only just begun. Writing means
staring out the window, watching sagebrush
interpret wind. Daily the breeze begins
gently, then gusts, gale force. Monday, noon
the monsoon mirrors my gray mood, stormy
brain. My struggle to write reveals the ruse
of representation: mere words won't stop
these angry black clouds, violent orange dusk
from fading. The dark descends, blotting out
any human try. No bother. Tonight,
Cassiopeia will still invite me
to comfort myself in the Milky Way,
insisting: tomorrow, tomorrow, now.

Lynn Kilpatrick

Our interest in again collaborating with each other in 2023 with a joint residency at the Montello Foundation's residency site was to consider the impact of colonialist dividing lines, which we call "False Meridians." We posited the following questions: In a region such as NE Nevada, how do we come to know the landscape if we only rely on published maps, which often leave unpopulated areas featureless? What can we learn by studying and responded to the residency's landscape, which ripples out through the sagebrush ocean to encompass spaces designated with arbitrary names? How can nature be preserved through the identification of past cultural actions, and its re-envisioning through our future publications?

Hikmet

We drove, walked, talked, and spent hours in silence. The landscape in Nevada was green and lush in contract to Utah's flatter, alkaline passages. Retaining the memories and the words shared, which will make their way into my upcoming book "The *Sun Tunnels* Encyclo: Exploring Nancy Holt's Earthwork through Perception and Site" (The University of Utah Press, 2026). One night, falling stars.

Lynn

The work, like an old trail, meandered, taking me on unplanned routes, digressions, and side trips that led to meditations on clouds, plant names, and inquiries into Emily Dickinson.

I let the view, and the weather, inspire me, along with the nightly conversations with Hikmet. The quiet led to long bouts of introspection, within which a poem or two could be found.

Allegra Oxborough and Grant Cutler

Brooklyn, NY

allegraoxborough.com

grantcutler.com



We are an artist couple living and working in Brooklyn, New York. Allegra is a filmmaker working at the intersection of documentary and fiction, often examining the hidden realities of artishood and creativity. Grant is a sound-artist with a robust field recording practice and often works across film, performance, and installation - always incorporating natural soundscapes. We collaborate often, aiming to make work that highlights and challenges the relationship between culture and nature. Sometimes this work takes shape as films about the restorative potential of listening in our modern world, or media-installations concerning the spiritual consequences of environmental dissolution.

In conversation or in memory, a day doesn't go by where we don't joyously return to the small cabin in the great basin. Montello offered us a much welcomed counterpoint to our overstimulated urban lives, surprising us with so many gifts that could only be offered through the uninterrupted silence of the sagebrush desert. We worked on field recording, photography, film editing, writing, and research; balanced with hiking, reading, cooking, and contemplating the clouds. The wildflowers and fragrant sage were the backdrop to a scene of rejuvenation

Grant Cutler: *Silence*, exhibition image, 2019,



Allegra Oxborough: film still from *Blue-Green Music*, 2023

and an immediate connection with the landscape.

As a filmmaker and sound artist, respectively, having the opportunity to spend unstructured time listening, watching, and making recordings in such pristine countryside was incredibly valuable to both our creative practices. The landscape guided our lenses and microphones effortlessly, as every angle and space was filled with unique beauty - the wind as it whirled through dense juniper branches, the shadow-play on the hillsides - the land is sensational in all aspects of the term. Accurately representing our experience through language might be difficult, but the influence on our creative spirits will be far reaching and affect our art for the duration of our lives.

Our relationship with the land, not only in Montello, but everywhere, has been regenerated, and with it a yearning to return to nature, in art and in life, at every opportunity.

For a recording by Grant Cutler please go to montellofoundation.org/audio.htm

Grant Cutler: film still from *Wind Poem*, 2023



Sienna Pinderhughes

New Orleans, LA
spinderhughes.com



I am a second-generation image-maker and much of my work over the past decade has dealt with portraiture of self, loved ones and strangers. I am interested in the intersection between the personal and collective archives as they relate to past, present and future generations. Nature plays a crucial role in how I visualize and shape my world both literally and metaphorically.

When I arrived at the Montello Foundation, I cried. My tears were inspired by the sheer beauty of the landscape and the immense privilege to be present in that landscape by myself. I am honored to have experienced that vista, to have sat with and spoken to the land, to have witnessed a rain storm, an antelope and a shooting star. During my time

They Are A Reflection of You, archival pigment print, 16 x 20 in, 2014



Ancestor Altar, work in progress, archival pigment print, Nevada juniper wood, 23 x 23 in, 2023

there, I was smitten by the Juniper Trees. I found myself in awe of their unique twists and turns, the organic shapes that they made and I spent much of my time gazing, sitting with and reading about their history in the Great Basin. I also spent a good deal of my time meditating on an idea that I have for a film that takes place out in the wild. I immersed myself in the Montello library and was surprised to find that much of my research during the residency related to the cosmos. One book in particular, surrounding indigenous star knowledge, revealed several major clues that I had been pondering about my main character. I needed the time, space, silence and room for discovery that the Montello Residency and the Nevada Desert allow for in order to open myself up to this new knowledge that will undoubtedly inform my future work.

I have often considered trees to be both relatives and elders with wisdom to share. 'Ancestor Altar' honors the many Juniper trees present on the Montello retreat property and seen in my daily walks. I found myself consistently photographing their unique shapes and collecting their eccentric wood. At some point I started imagining a frame built from the wood I had gathered as a way to share the history, plight, beauty and distinct energy of the Juniper Tree. Although 'Ancestor Altar' is still a work in progress, pictured here is my first attempt to create a frame from wood I found on the Montello retreat grounds, featuring an image of my maternal and paternal ancestors looking upon the view from the Montello cabin as seen by the reflection of the vista. What would life have been like on these plains during our ancestor's lifetime? It's a view, a way of life and a sense of peace within nature that's worth fighting for.

Zak Podmore

Ellen Meloy Fund
Desert Writers Award Winner
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Clouds were flowing over the mountains when I arrived at the Montello Foundation cabin on a late May evening. They were massive thunderheads with great billowing tops that glowed pink in the sunset. Dark coattails of rain trailed from their flat bottoms. Lightning flashed, too distant to hear the thunder.

I lit a candle as dusk settled, made a quick dinner, and fell asleep, thinking I'd go for a long hike the next day. When I awoke, the mountains were framed perfectly by the plate glass doors that invite the northern Nevada landscape into the cabin. The dawn alpenglow reflected on the snow that still clung to the high ridges, and another storm was moving in. I put off my hike.

During my two-week stay, I never made it to the mountains. I watched them instead. I set my laptop on the small table beside a stack of research material in front of the windows. The clouds kept arriving. When rain fell nearby, the gray clay roads — which never seemed to see any use — turned to a thick impassable gumbo. Once the sun broke back through, the roads dried quickly, and I'd go for a walk or a short run before the next storm arrived.

I was writing the final chapters of a book about how drought and climate change are revealing Glen Canyon from the waters of Lake Powell. The sea of sagebrush around the cabin allowed my mind, which had been mired in policy reports and climate models, to relax into the story I was trying to tell.

The days blended together in wonderful uneventfulness. I was used to backcountry trips that took me away from phone reception, but I was always moving on those trips, backpacking or running rivers. It had been years since I'd worked for days without internet access. The silence engulfed me, and the pages poured off my keyboard. Chapters that I'd been picking at for months coalesced between sunrises and sunsets. When I was tired of writing, I'd lift a book off of the desk or choose one from the cabin shelves and read for hours. Then dusk, lightning, and another solitary dinner by candlelight.

Only twice was this rhythm broken. About five days into the retreat, I decided to drive to a ridgetop to contact the outside world. I passed a car ten miles from the cabin, and its driver asked me if I'd seen his horse. I hadn't. But when I got back to the cabin, a mare was standing in front of the window, wearing a bridle and chewing

on a clump of grass. I searched for its owner, but he'd left. The horse returned twice daily, and it wouldn't let me get near. I eventually drove back to service and contacted one of the neighbors, who called a local cowboy. By the time the cowboy arrived with a trailer the next day, the horse had vanished like the wispy virga that was falling from the clouds. The animal never returned to the cabin.

Virga turned back into rain, and I settled in for more mudbound isolation. Sometime in the second week, my writing progress suddenly ceased. I was trying to tell the story of a hike I took to a Las Vegas casino in the middle of a four-month-long kayak trip down the length of the Colorado River, but I wasn't happy with any of the gambling scenes — a setting that seemed so far removed from the sagebrush and juniper out the door. So I decided to break my solitude again. I timed a getaway between storms and drove to Jackpot, Nevada. After the cabin, the modest floor of Cactus Pete's Casino might as well have been on the Las Vegas strip. I stayed up half the night, throwing red dice down the green craps table with roughnecks and elderly men in cowboy hats. I chatted with the dealers as servers brought me cold beers on black trays. I pushed chips around the roulette board, watching them go up and down for hours until they finally disappeared. I was \$100 poorer when I got back in my truck to catch a few hours of sleep.

I returned to the cabin and finished the chapter while rain poured off the roof in sheets.

After that, I'm pleased to report, absolutely nothing happened. It was perfect.



Rashanna Rashied-Walker

Santa Fe, NM

rashannarashied-walker.com



Slow was the prevailing current. Driving from New Mexico to Nevada I experienced the wellspring of open breathable space sustained by our interior states. Long stretches of in between land framed by layered oyster-blue mountains reshaped over millennium by changes in weather. Awe and wonderment coursed through my body as I turned off the interstate onto the unpaved dusty road leading to Montello. I have driven down many country gravel roads but this was a different kind of road. A road where faith would be the victor.

I trusted the one way path oriented towards my next destination. This novel route, much like art and life required my complete attention, maneuverability, time,

Mountain Study In Five Parts, Acetate, Copic Marker, 8.5 x 11 in, 2023



Object and Awareness, Sage Brush, Native Perennial Grasses, Bimini Blue Crescent Matt Board, Dimensions Variable, 2023

and patience. It appeared to be an invitation of sorts onto a slower reflective pathway. My creative practice is approached in the same way; with contemplation, appreciation, and reverence, I seek to capture poetic moments within the natural world through the lens of impermanence.

Object and awareness softly folded into my mind's eye while sitting in the car in front of the artist house watching the unique unfolding panorama. Playful shadows emerged from dancing sagebrush, perennial grasses, and the transitional wheat all in conversation. Sharp sounds materialized from the juniper groves and small birds in flight presented like distant twinkling stars. I sensed the anxious frantic energy of the wind and the waning urgency of night. My intuition was heightened, alone, living with the rhythmic intelligence of the land.

My time at the retreat was saturated with physical site based activity during the day whilst dusk induced a volcano of deep introspection. Montello presents one with slackening the pace of life. This window of opportunity and gift of immersion allowed me to respond to the world through both a meditative and reflective lens.

A conduit for transformation, I leave Montello with a stronger sense of self, my own inner resilience anchored in the pearl of presence, a flowering voice still remains.



works by Blane De St Croix, Victoria Sambunaris, Brie Ruais, Markus Guschelbauer, SaraNoa Mark and Renate Aller



works by Lea Thomas and Yoshihiro Sergel, Patricia Watwood and Mia Mulvey

This Earth at Concord Art

In our manual for the house, the residents are advised to disregard their plans for the retreat and first observe and listen to the nature around them. So, it was incredibly meaningful this past spring to present the residents' work near Walden Pond in Concord, MA, at [Concord Art](#), near the site of the original listener and observer of nature, Henry David Thoreau. This exhibition included works shown previously at Montello Foundation's exhibition at the Southern Utah Museum of Art in 2021. New at Concord Art was a piece by SaraNoa Mark incorporating water from Walden Pond, an installation by Concrete Temple Theatre and an olfactory experience by Lea Thomas and Yoshihiro Sergel.



works by Laurie Lambrecht



works by Mike Dax Iacovone, Sara Morawetz, Lea Titz, Jill Sebastian, Elisabeth Condon, James Kao and SaraNoa Mark



installation by Concrete Temple Theatre

It is not always explicitly but many of our residents arrive at the retreat on a mission to connect with nature. So how does a connection with nature become possible, specifically at the Montello retreat? How does one connect with nature in its various forms, the geological grand arc of time, the yearly and daily weather, as well as the flora and fauna. All of these have their own trajectories and will confront and question one. The terrain is comprised of patches of fine sand, almost silt, and rocks. Both will make one's journey to the house a challenge. The weather is never mild and only on occasions (not for one's occasion) pleasant. The living elements behave maddeningly opportunistic; their thorns will hurt you, and they try to claim their space and howl at night. Connecting to nature means first to *accept* nature in every way. I know that this is often hard. Too many unforeseen challenges arise; ideas have to be thrown out, and the "connection" isn't happening as planned. But many of our 2023 residents did accept what nature told them and listened. Not all this *accepting* translated right away into their language or their work, but a connection happened. Their future messages will carry what they experienced forward and help their audience accept the course of nature and its fragility. Please have a look at their reports and please follow their further paths and their stories yet to be discovered.

Stefan Hagen, Founder



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