

Kiki Gaffney

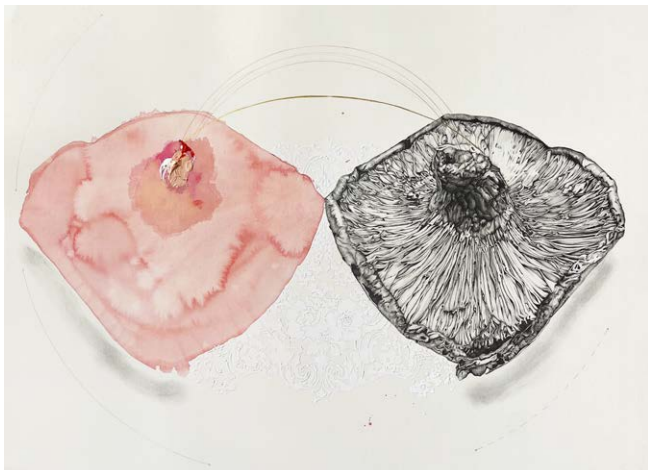
Philadelphia, PA
kikigaffney.com



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.