

## Michael Grimaldi

Philadelphia, PA  
michaelgrimaldi.net

---



Drawing essentially serves as a focused mode of inquiry into subjects that embody America's complex (and often contradictory) relationship with its own identity. As an artist based in the population dense setting the East Coast, my primary subjects are people interacting with domestic and urban environments – essentially places infused with human presence.

The time spent at the Montello Residency was a means to remove the familiar while exploring related themes and concepts. From the outset – flying to Spokane in a jumbo jet, connecting to a turbo prop commuter plane to Boise, driving 250 miles to the turn off, and the final 21 miles on unpaved, unmarked 'roads' – clear radio reception gradually replaced by static and cellular navigation replaced by dead reckoning and the marking off of tenth-of-a-mile increments on the car's odometer and penciled lines on the ink jet printed map – human presence and the familiar gradually ebbed away to absolute solitude.

Arriving at the studio, I was immediately struck by the quiet – the only sounds being the faint and inconsistent breeze through the sage and juniper trees and the occasional



clacking flight of a grasshopper. As dusk approached, the distant howls of coyote were replaced by absolute silence as night fell and the wind ceased. In the following days and weeks I gradually became acclimatized to the surroundings. Working on drawings on progressively longer hikes on game-trails over the eastern and western ridges, I could feel myself becoming increasingly attuned to the cycles of the day: what time the moisture seeking flies were at their worst, what time the jack rabbits would be out foraging, and the time when the wind would shift direction bringing the smoke from the wildfires scattered through the hills to the northwest.

Throughout the two weeks, all experiences became increasingly poignant and marked by the contrast of the wilderness: details and nuance within an endless expanse, the delicate and rugged living side-by-side, and the complexities of subtle color within the predominately monochrome desert. Just as American Art, Literature and Culture have wrestles with its relationship to nature, I engaged in my own struggles living, observing and interpreting the wilderness. As my own notions of self were simultaneously enforced and contradicted, I was able to get a little closer to understanding the unique psychological potentials within the American experience and the desert wilderness.

