

Miho Suzuki

Brooklyn, NY

www.miho-suzuki.com



Nature is incomparable guide if you know how to follow her.

Carl Jung

I am intrigued by the concept of memory: both what is remembered and what has been forgotten. My work has often employed the camera and its potential to generate physical and temporal space parallel to an event and, effectively, place recollection on top of an unfolding moment in the present. My work reflects the continuous process of negotiation between two cultures. It is based on my experience of locating and relocating myself in relation to “home” in social and cultural contexts.

My work reflects the continuous process of negotiation between two cultures. The current state of anti-refugee hysteria and racial discrimination in America has made me want to learn about Japanese internment camps during WW II. Many internment camps were built in a desolated high desert. My concern and eager to understand better the history made me visit the former campsites during and after Montello residency.

A remote location without human interaction, an undeveloped desert valley surrounded by sagebrush steppe, unpaved dirt roads, the wilderness - all were the very unknown world for me who was born in Tokyo and have lived in the city for long years. For many years I had imagined what it would be like to live in an uncivilized place in total isolation. Eventually I would find myself standing between two dusty pickup trucks and filling up gas at the Montello Gas & Grocery. A long anxiously awaited adventure began the



Topaz Camp , Delta, UT



Minidoka Camp Jerome, ID

moment I left a paved road to a gravel road at 2:50 pm on September 17. Wi-Fi was out of reach already that I had to solely rely on the written direction Montello Foundation had sent me. Soon enough I encountered a trouble that I did not anticipate driving in a desolate desert. A fork road split into three separate paths - if I chose the wrong path I would drive farther away from my destination. What does a well in the desert look like? How big is the enclosure? The path? I anxiously questioned to myself. I don't live in a country I do not know any of these! Driving on the dirt roads was challenging. The narrow valley path was especially hard to drive: there were lots of rocks, mud holes, slopes, and deep ruts. Anytime I passed steep hills I would imagine seeing the Ninemile Mountain, yet there was always another ridge right in front of me. There were two weeks' supplies of food and water in the car. By looking at the sun's altitude at 25 ° I considered camping out if I could not make it to the retreat before the sunset. When a flock of 25-inch length ravens flew over me I promised myself that I would not sleep in the car, I would make it to my destination, and I would celebrate my arrival with the sunset.

It was a huge relief when I drove the last ridge and saw the Ninemile Mountain. At 5:00 pm I recognized the small wooden house just like the photo from Montello Foundation catalogue. Yes, yes, yes!! I cheered to the most striking house on the hill in the desert valley that stood glowing so beautifully in the late afternoon sunlight. At 6:10 pm I set a table and a chair on the deck. The warm sunlight hit my face and illuminated the desert valley a golden amber. The sound of dry grass and sagebrush was speaking loud like waves washed up on the shore. Uncivilized land was not quiet; nature was loud. I placed my hands together and gave thanks to nature. At 6:50 pm the sun went behind a mountain. In the following days the unpredictable and constantly changing weather in the desert required me to adapt and flow with nature. From the pleasant autumn days with blue sky and bright sun to heavy rain and a sudden hailstorm, the landscape was suddenly transformed into a winter wonderland. Nature reminded me how tiny I was that my own personal matters were so small in comparison to the nature that surrounds us. I felt lighter. *Panta Rhei*, flowing with the nature, everything constantly changing. Whenever the weather allowed me to explore the surrounding I grabbed a mountain bike to fly like a bird for the field study. “Nature is incomparable guide if you know how to follow her.” I found the quote from the Montello foundation library. It will stay with me for a lifetime along with my experience at the Montello Foundation.

