

## Sienna Pinderhughes

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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.