



2015 season



The Artists in Residence
2015

montello foundation

Lauren Frances Adams

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My residence in Nevada at the Montello Foundation was framed by my academic sabbatical from teaching in Baltimore - an intense period of rest, reflection, research, and art-making. I arrived at Montello at the end of summer, in time for the hordes of hummingbirds drinking from the Rocky Mountain Bee Plants during the work day and the numerous swooping of bats in the full moonlight. Growing up on a farm in rural North Carolina, I know there is nothing quite like seclusion and a close proximity to nature to replenish my artistic spirit. While at Montello, I took hikes every day - inspecting the land, the flora, and looking for signs of fauna (much of it hidden, but evident in their traces). I read numerous books by Edward Abbey, Rebecca Solnit, Thoreau - and many books about the Great Basin region's history and native life.

I found this time to be not just informative, but restorative. There was no rushing for deadlines or push to resolve an artwork. I made a few paintings, very different from my

American Catastrophe Report, installation at American University, Washington, D.C. 2015



Venus Fly Trap, 2013

typical research-based installation projects. Montello offered a contrast to my 'normal' studio behavior and patterns. A retreat in the desert was an ideal way for me to explore landscape, sky, and the history of the interior west. As an East Coast artist, this was an important and invaluable recalibration of my relationship to land, site, and time. Relevant to me is what Solnit writes in *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, "There are fossils of seashells high in the Himalayas; what was and what is are different things." Learning about the history of the Great Basin, both in land and in its people, forced me to reconcile subjects I do not normally consider. I was able to renegotiate my self in relationship to my studio practice and the broader world. This is a privilege that I will always remember.

An installation that acts as both homage and critique of the decorative frescoes in the United States Capitol Building, originally painted in the 19th c. by Italian-born artist Constantino Brumidi. The site-specific artwork is installed in American University's Katzen Arts Center, in both the upper and lower rotunda in the center of the building, less than six miles from where Brumidi's paintings are located. The prints forming *American Catastrophe Report* have the appearance of paintings due to the unique process I use, where hand-painted originals are digitally scanned then printed for long-term public display. I am updating Brumidi's Capitol ornamentation by directly addressing ecological disasters in America that have been caused by human activities.

Tyler Beard

Atlanta, GA

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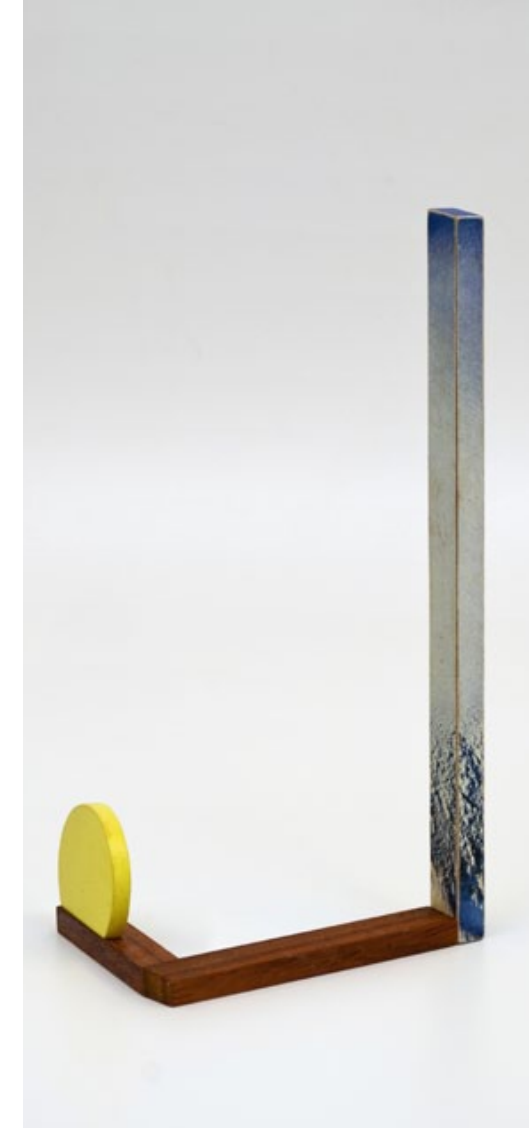


My work investigates the interaction of color, material, geometry, and image. In each composition, I seek a soothing formalism in which each part is necessary for the whole. The work is meticulously edited, arranged and rearranged, until I find an order that is curious and dynamic while maintaining a quality of lightness. I often think of the poetic structure and qualities found in a Haiku. Seeing through the lens of this format, I make individual works that rely on restraint and simplicity while simultaneously offering a subtle and quiet sophistication.

The Montello Foundation offered isolation unlike anything I had ever felt or participated in before. This experience truly silenced most daily distractions and tasks that traditionally tend to fill my schedule on a day-to-day basis. With this two-week retreat from technology, people, and commerce, I was able to find enjoyment in the silence and the simple joy of making. My creative ideas quickly boiled over, causing an energetic new studio thrust. My work has been strongly entrenched in utilizing elements of landscape prior; however, I had a new opportunity to consider and investigate nature as it surrounded me in every direction as far as I could see. In my daily hikes and adventures around Nevada, I took many photographs and found myself looking and experiencing the slow changes of light and how this affected the color of all elements that made up the land and sky. There were many unexpected moments of delight as this interest remained constantly through the looking glass of the studio. I realized that there were moments when the landscape seemed to come alive, and moments when it was at rest. These transitions, sometimes subtle and sometimes drastic, have made me even more sensitive in the selection of dimensional imagery and its strong visual role, alongside color and geometric shapes, in my work.



Maquette 12, 2015



Maquette 7, 2015

I also found that isolation outdoors brought on emotions of fear, boredom, and anxiety. Prior to this residency, I tended to only think of vast landscape from a more sublime point of view. Perhaps it seems quite simple or even easy, but in my time there, I digested more potential effects of landscape on the human mind and how the power of this component in my artwork can further communicate or affect others who come in contact with it.

Max Bellamy

Dunedin, New Zealand
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My interdisciplinary art practice utilizes sculpture, installation, video and photography. The subject of my work draws on social fantasies and references cinema as a place, device and way of thinking. I am informed by a cinematic aesthetic in executing my work.

While artist in residence at the Montello Foundation, I created a series of sculptural and performance improvisations recorded in the form of video loops. This suite of new work attempts to materialize forces that are overlooked or passed by. I was interested

White Line Fever (working), video still, 2015



Surrender (working), video still, 2015

in making images that take accountability for the resources that are included in constructing them. I achieved this by working with found material that happened to be at the residency and by reconsidering framing conventions, including normally externalized apparatus on screen.

The extreme isolation of the residency was both a challenge and an opportunity. I embraced the chance for complete immersion and took two weeks of supplies into the desert, planning to not to travel the entire time I was there. Feeling so stationary, after an extended period of touring the western USA, was dissonant and difficult at first, but after taking time to understand the rhythm of such an unfamiliar studio environment, I was rewarded with solace and focus. In an unexpected way, I was able to gain understandings about what factors my regular studio practice thrives on, by removing almost all of the facilities and research tools I would normally have access to. To be alone in one place for so long gave me a great appreciation of the sagebrush clad Great Basin, the rich heady smell of the over-ripe flowers, the luminous twilight that yielded an awe inspiring night sky, and the accompanying howls and silent swooshes of night wanderers. I took a piece of the desert with me, and left a piece of myself there.

Kyla Hansen

Los Angeles, CA

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As a native rural Nevadan, living in Los Angeles, I am committed to exploring the shifting aesthetic culture, economic landscape, language, and idiosyncrasies of the West in my artwork. For the first time in history, more of the world's population is living in urban rather than rural areas. I use my artwork as a lens through which to view this shift and its multiple implications.

I used my time at the Montello Residency to read, hike, and experiment in the studio. I was able to complete one large fabric piece while at the residency. During my travels to and from the retreat I visited Lehman Caves in the Great Basin National Park, which was particularly edifying source material for my artwork.

Fool's Gold, 2012



Tarbender, 2015



Perhaps the most significant outcome of my time at the residency was a deepened understanding of the natural history and ecosystem of the American West, a region my artwork centers on. The Foundation supplies a small but library for residents. During my stay I read Stephen Trimble's *Sagebrush Ocean: A Natural History of The Great Basin*. I would take time each morning before my hike and studio time to read a few chapters. There was something very valuable about reading about the geology, flora, and fauna of the Great Basin and then being able to walk directly outside to physically observe that landscape. It was fascinating to slow down and really look at the small details of the desert, rather than looking at it as one large expanse.

One of the defining attributes of good artwork is its ability to change our perspective and perceptions of the world around us. The Montello Foundation offered me a similar privilege by providing the time and space to reexamine my understanding of the Western landscape.

Regin Igloria

Chicago, IL

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Creative time in the desert was a much needed and unexpected challenge for me, and I say this with the utmost respect and gratitude for the unique Montello Foundation residency I experienced. In the two weeks spent at the studio cabin, I literally sifted through my life, creating works that spoke about personal histories, psychological spaces, and my relationship to the outside world.

Within the first three days, I completed a site-specific installation, *Desert Desertion* (*Ashes*), made up of four milk crates' worth of papers, documents, and collected ephemera dating back to 1992. The materials gathered were to be manipulated and collaged into artists' books—but in my then state of mind, the materials resulted in a

Desert Desertion, 2015



Sushi Grass in Sagebrush, 2015

kind of laborious organization that could only be done in that space, where a carved circle on the floor served as a guiding frame. It was a ceremonial catharsis, culminating in a performance walk that took place on the summit of a distant hill.

One of the other larger, more elaborate projects I worked on was the creation of *Cargo Box*, a sculpture for the roof rack of my car, which became the catalyst for a network of performances and two-dimensional drawings/designs. Its direct immersion in the landscape and the photo documentation I took will feed my creative practice for years.

Both projects had me utilizing only media that I already had with me - *stuff* I needed to use up, get rid of, or make obsolete, but I wouldn't have made or done anything if it weren't for the solitude. Loneliness was a medium. I used it from the first day as incentive to work and on the last day as my reason to return home.

Large, open spaces always influence my work, and I seek them often. I've purposely traveled to places where I could walk the fine line between the wilderness and civilization, finding moments of joy and sadness, attempting to come to terms with its effect on the human condition. But the vastness of this particular desert was beautiful on a completely new and profound level.

The combination of one's mind working in creation mode and in the necessary, routine-based tasks like fetching water and lighting fires in the fireplace to stay warm was a slow but gentle method, and it allowed me to humbly pursue the most important aspects of my work.

Katie Miller

Seattle, WA

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I create site-specific and experiential installations often with a participatory element. My work provides a space for engagement, inviting a break in routine that challenges the way we look at and deal with objects or situations in our lives. I aim to create experiences that offer a moment for the viewer to pause, observe, contemplate, and engage through the body.

I was drawn to the untouched landscapes at Montello Foundation, the open expanses with natural silence because it offered time for isolation and reflection. While on the property, I focused on looking inward and outward. I spent hours writing and drawing about my responses to the landscape, as well as capturing texture, contrast, and subtle aspects of the world around me through the lens of my camera. I hiked



Within/Without, 2015 Photo: Alec Miller



through the landscape daily, listened closely to the subtle sounds and observed movement all around me. I created cyanotypes using the sun to capture dramatic light and shadow of found objects, as well as a way to transform my photographs.

The clouds and weather patterns were visible in all directions from the building, which increased my awareness of how weather can quickly and subtly change the landscape around me. I found myself spending time quietly observing these changes, like the shadow of a cloud moving across the ground or how the rain often evaporates as it falls. The writings, small works, and photographs I created at Montello are now being used as a reference and starting point for new works, exploring how light and shadow affect the way we experience and perceive the world.

Residencies play an influential role in my artistic growth, and Montello provided the opportunity for me to respond to a new environment and challenged the way I experience the world. Montello allowed me to deepen connections with nature and renewed my fascination for natural phenomenon. The residency has influenced me as an artist, by enlivening my interest in the sense of self as experienced through the body and the many levels of our relationship with our direct surroundings.

Soyoung Shin

Los Angeles, CA

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My stay at Montello was varied, unexpected, and beautiful in so many ways. When I arrived, the sky was smoky from wildfires. A few days of heavy rain and thunder followed. Then cloudy skies and cold wind, and then heat! The region smelled of dust and sagebrush. There was sandstone, mountains, and salt flats. I spotted migratory elk and also a silver mine.

One of the most lasting nature lessons I had at Montello happened at a friend's parcel of land. I was asked to move from certain areas to preserve the cryptobiotic soil. It gives a distinct crunch when stepped on. Most astoundingly, it typically forms over periods of 5,000 - 10,000 years. My wandering had ended thousands of years of nature's work. I was reminded of the mission of the Montello Foundation: nature is fragile, and we must protect it. In that moment, I understood why Stefan had chosen this place and why the word "special" appeared in so many of our email exchanges. Time and stewardship has shaped this region.

An Object for Measuring Distance - Gullane, UK, 2014



Untitled, 2015

My work lately has been durational. Colleagues have commended my projects that require years of cooperation. To learn of natural processes that take thousands of years with minimal disturbances caused me to rethink what a "long time" is within an art practice. I make artwork that concerns identity, and I'm infatuated with the societies people create. I often repeat an action in different locations and over long periods of time. This allows themes to emerge gradually and lets locale, subject, and time rise to the forefront of the project. Lately much of my work has investigated my identity as a first generation Korean-American woman and has taken the form of videos, performances, and installations.

As an artist living in a city, time can feel frantic. Will I make it from point A to point B in time? Do I have enough time to finish my art, residency application, or dinner? If the 10,000 year cryptobiotic soil could speak, I imagine it would say, "Relax, take your time and make something beautiful."

Lauren Strohacker

Scottsdale, AZ

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I am an ecological artist living and working in Phoenix, Arizona. My work examines the ever-growing conflict between humans and animals in the Anthropocene. Often collaborating with environmental organizations, I compose interdisciplinary interventions that utilize human networks in order to reimagine and reintroduce wildlife systems destabilized by our manufactured environments. I went to the Montello Foundation not to make physical work but to have the time to think of new eco-art projects. Each day boiled down to basics: eating, sleeping, cleaning, writing and experiencing the land through hiking and stargazing. Beauty and fear were amplified in my remoteness, giving an intense clarity to my conceptual process. The residency was an exercise in awareness between myself, native wildlife, and the land.

Encounter, 2013



Animal Land (collaboration with Kendra Sollars), 2014

Reading and writing were paramount. Whether I read about the “Sagebrush Ocean” of the Nevada Great Basin or the history of Glen Canyon (eventually destroyed by the creation of Lake Powell), I realized I focused solely on beings (humans and non-humans) in previous projects, inadvertently leaving out the land as a connecting factor. With this realization, my research process now considers the natural landscape along with the built environment to more holistically understand wildlife, humans, and the terrain that sustains both. This conceptual expansion is a direct result of being placed at the mercy of the Nevada desert during the retreat. As an artist, I was humbled and reinvigorated by the Montello Foundation. I will take time to escape the city more often as a part of my studio practice. Ecological art depends on a deep understanding of the land, its historic biodiversity, how it has been transformed, and how it can be saved. With this knowledge, my future work will more authentically investigate and promote human/animal cohabitation rather than conflict.

Allison Wiese

San Diego, CA

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I create poetry out of common things, repurposing and repositioning common materials to make new meanings. I use firewood, fruit, hay or straw, standard highway signage, a commercial awning or a whistled song. I also use shards of common language – both literal texts like slogans, maxims, exhortations and symbolic language such as flags and football “fight” songs.

I’m fascinated by the way we look at our surroundings through invisible cultural and political lenses. My work attempts to subvert inert objects and signs by remixing them. I’m often concerned particularly with the mythologies of American cultural and natural landscapes: California as a paradise reducible to a commodity cornucopia, for instance; or the positioning of industry and work ethic as icons of American character.

For artists, time set aside, somehow, is crucial - a direct resource in the production of

Rio San Buena Ventura, 2015



Name It, 2015

work. But time and space away can also allow important questions and decisions about art and life. The specific and real faraway, that a residency at Montello provided me with, demanded questions about how we live, individually and collectively. Note: faraway from neighbors, artificial light, and email, but embedded in a fascinating environment rich with sagebrush, jackrabbits, and herds of steers.

Montello acted simultaneously in a couple ways: as a beautiful away place, devoid of interruptions; and as a shockingly concrete example of the way one interprets a landscape, only to invite a collision with its actualities. What qualifies as a “wash” in the landscape? In my mind? On a map? Who named things? And what does it mean to rename as an artist?

Letha Wilson

Brooklyn, NY

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It seems somewhat absurd that I need to travel halfway across the country to get to a place where I can really think. I thought this to myself while out at the Montello Foundation this summer. The process of living at an artist residency and escaping the everyday duties of normal life is always fruitful, the richness of time in a faraway place. In this case the Montello Foundation is a very special one indeed, particularly in light of its extreme remoteness, the unmarred natural beauty of the vistas, and the opportunity to rid oneself of communication such as cell phones and the internet.

So what did I DO out there? People always ask. Well, I would lie down and stare up at the sky for hours at sunset. Really, hours! I read several books, from start to finish. I would hike for several hours a day, each day a few miles in a different direction. During these walks, I searched the ground for rocks, strange sticks, the perfect sagebrush, and

Nevada Paper Moon Fold, 2015



Nevada Sunrise Sundial (Two Lines Blue), 2015



wandered around with eyes down; my GPS keeping me tethered. Some days I would bring my camera along, and some days I would not. I stretched; I sketched; I jogged; I made coffee; I biked, and often I couldn't stop staring at the sky or the sunbeams that moved across the studio walls.

Can you slow yourself down? This seems simple and yet so important to the process of our lives, and for an artist in particular. Can your pace become one with the landscape's? Can the day and light change as you do, so that your body's cycle falls into rhythm with the high desert hills? By the second week, I felt completely comfortable there, so very alone (not lonely), full days passing without a trace of human activity. What a special space that is, not easy to come by, to daydream, to sit down and put to paper floating ideas, capturing moments of clarity and vibrancy. Thank you!

Solitude in the city is about the lack of other people or rather their distance beyond a door or wall, but in remote places it isn't an absence but the presence of something else, a kind of humming silence in which solitude seems as natural to your species as to any other, words strange rocks you may or may not turn over. - Rebecca Solnit

Interaction is a vital part of being human and being an artist. Interaction with an audience is the artist's focus throughout their entire process, from conception to presentation. An artwork does not exist as an artwork without an audience.

So, it might seem that setting-up a residency for artists in an isolated setting is counterproductive. But a void of something always focuses the inquisitive mind on the existing. This residency was built to give inquisitive minds a space to experience the environment in ways they cannot normally experience it, especially those minds that have the ability to eloquently report their findings.

The retreat is not located in a region with wildly flourishing nature. It is in a desert, a region where the flora has, for the most part, a very slow growth rate. The vegetation there is in an unassuming state. Appreciation of this environment requires attention to detail, but then the weather can easily demand attention on a grand scale.

This year was the first season the Montello Foundation offered residencies. Of course, we had many questions as the residencies began: Would the artists be able to focus in the extreme isolation? Would the environment be too overwhelming? Would sudden rainstorms make the bad roads impassable? Would the building function as planned? There were hiccups and challenges, but the Residents met them with utmost grace. For this, we are humbly grateful. The artists also had to face their share of uncertainties. They each prepared for a solitary and undisturbed retreat and made their plans how to spend their time there, but in the end, they all stood mostly in awe, listened and observed.

So, the idea of this residency really worked: Ten amazing artists were inspired, rattled, distracted by the clouds and had an experience to draw from for their further development of their work, their message. These messages will surely inspire their audiences to listen and observe and stand in awe in a quiet desert setting and in all nature.

Stefan Hagen, Founder



Thank you to all of you (whose names follow below) for all the help and support you have given to us. These residencies would not have been possible without you: Adam Bateman • Tyler Beard • Emily Cantrell • Laura DeGuise • The Demirjian Family • Chris Dixon • Nicole Eisenberg • Mileta and Marshall Fisher • Dr. Malvine and Dr. Ulrich Hagen • Kitty Hawks and Larry Lederman • Holly Harrison and Jim McManus • Micol Hebron • Guendalina Herminghaus • Jonathan Lasker • Aimee Lee • Jennifer McGregor • Linda and Doug McLellan • Jennifer Nelson and Burkhard Bilger • Kristin Nieuwenhuis • Renee Philippi • Barbara Probst • Brittany Sanders • Ludwig Seyfferth • Marjorie Smith • Mark Symczak • Susanne Vogel • Patricia Watwood • Cheusa Wend • Everybody at The Winecup Gamble Ranch • Monika Wührer.

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Montello Foundation is a foundation dedicated to support artists who foster our understanding of nature, its fragility and our need to protect it.

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