



2018 season

A wide-angle landscape photograph showing a valley with rolling hills. In the foreground, a small, single-story house with a dark roof and a chimney is situated on a grassy slope. The middle ground consists of a vast, open valley with scattered trees and patches of greenery. The background features a range of hills and mountains under a clear sky. The overall scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of late afternoon or early morning.

The Artists in Residence
2018

montello foundation

Jeffrey Austin

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As they pertain to my work, the concerns of social and environmental mindfulness are inextricably linked – the environment I'm referring to in this case being the whole of our collective livelihood on this strange, ever-changing planet. The fundamental goal of my work is to promote in its communities a consideration of the wonder and precarity of our shared environment and, in turn, an urgent sense of empathy toward all its inhabitants.

I approach the work as a terrain for staging visceral, philosophical movements

Installation view of *Stay alive*, 2017



That These Things Take Time, 2018

– a means through which we might exercise our muscles of empathy, humility and wonder, returning to our lived environment with those merits that much closer to the surface.

With a practice so rooted in mindfulness and a contemplation of our place in the grand scope of the cosmos, I can think of no more fruitful of an environment for my work to incubate as a vast, remote site like that of the Montello retreat. My two weeks in that cabin were, above all, an important and expansive step in my mental, emotional and spiritual development -- an evolution which then naturally shaped and illuminated the work I produced there and that I've produced since.

There are no words to express the gratitude I feel to have had the rare opportunity to experience that kind of true and uninterrupted solitude in nature. And what a gift it was to study and live under the roof of that self-sufficient structure -- always acutely aware of the resources I was spending in relation to the weather systems; always surrounded by this immensity of nature, able to step out at any moment and give my attention to the plants and the animals and the elements, to absorb the lessons and the poetry they bring. Living those two weeks felt like an artwork of its own, a collaboration with the desert.

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Discovery methods, speaking from the ancestral lands of the Shoshone and Paiute Peoples.

Excerpt from 10/29: Rudy is a lichen hunting dog. She led me to a lichen i hoped might live here, but could not “see”: *Xanthoparmelia* c., or tumbleweed lichen is a vagrant species that does not attach to substrate but tumbles, catching in the sagebrush. Often a sign of a healthy antelope population, *Xanthoparmelia*'s presence in the sagebrush ocean was unmistakable. I collected from a 5-mile radius, careful to avoid overharvesting. Calling on author/botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer, I sought permission from each outcrop to harvest some pieces for dye – I am still practicing this form of listening, I am



xanthoparmelia dye extraction



wild things are made from human histories, 2018

always practicing this form of listening. I lost my yellow hat on the hike—my favorite hat, and decided it was the trade for the lichen.

We encountered a rocky protrusion with a superabundance of crustose, foliose, and squamulose lichen communities. In a sea of sagebrush in the cold October Great Basin, the sunset oranges, ink blacks, rose pinks, and soft greens interrupt a dazzling monotony.

We left these lichens undisturbed and turned back for home as my ankles were sore in my new hiking boots. Eventually I walked 2.5 miles in only socks with my boots slung over my shoulders. Back home, I am going to attempt my first lichen dyes, using modern techniques modified from the long used dye recipes from the Navajo people. The simmering vats of *Xanthoparmelia* fill the small home with the smells of soil and a deep warm protection from the almost-freezing weather.

Work made at Montello Foundation is a part of *We are all lichen: Toward a resurgent symbiosis*, an upcoming public art installation in Albuquerque, NM, which will investigate the interrelationships of beings to one another, as well as the ways in which all parts of nature, including humans, create together triumphant and resonant ecosystems that have merged and altered throughout time. *We are all lichen* asks us to consider these questions in relationship to ourselves and our embodied surroundings. How can we create-together for a resurgent world? Thanks to Montello Foundation, I was able to further this project and others, while also breathing, thinking, reading, and learning: a fundamentally life/practice altering experience.

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“Tomorrow, off the grid until September...the unknown...” I wrote in late August, traversing the dirt road away from Montello toward Nine Mile Mountain. As dirt plumes coated the car with fine mist, it was surprising to see a landscape so often viewed online materialize in real space and time. Yet no amount of online research prepared for the perfect, self-contained building surrounded by a grey wooden porch under light passing slowly through agrarian time.

Starting each day tramping hills and gullies through juniper and sagebrush to watch the sunrise, I devoted mornings to the library situated conveniently near the bed. Each volume traced ways humans engage and cultivate the wild: national parks, land art, scientific research, white-water rafting, even advice for picking sagebrush on a full moon. My work responds to its immediate surroundings as scroll paintings do, balancing feeling and perception in sensory, even imaginary space. Manhattan’s artifice requires wallpaper



Near and Distant Views, detail, 2018



or textile patterns, while drawing Nine Mile Mountain from the light-drenched studio, silent except for the rasp of brush on paper, demanded portraiture. To contrast its *Near and Distant Views* a scroll-sized rubbing of the porch hung in a studio window added charcoal to the vista of dirt, scrub and sky beyond, its length trailing across the floor echoing the source outside. Witnessed only by me this work will never appear the same way it was created, only as a displacement.

In a slim journal, I recorded urgent reminders for later: “silence, air, space, emptiness”; “time allows directed action. Deep time.” Nine Mile Mountain, seen from different perspectives—driving to Elko to get homemade tortilla chips, Tony and Lupe’s hilltop—mirrored the solidity of freedom from distraction. After wending through caves and hills on the dirt road back to Montello, I surfaced in a Salt Lake City eatery blasting AC and Michael Jackson’s song *Thriller*: “After days and days of silence, I see how behavior gets controlled,” I wrote. “The silence, driving through the mountain pass, the sunrises, the sunsets—all hard to let go of.” Montello Foundation reconnects us to earth.

Marc-Antoine Durand

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The empty and the vast.

I am describing the desert from the translation of extracts of the latest book by English architecture critic and theorist Reyner Banham (1922-1988) *Scenes in America Deserta*, published in 1982 (MIT press). In this text, unpublished in French, Banham tells his explorations of the Mojave desert during his trips between Los Angeles and Las Vegas. In the beautiful descriptions of landscape he is moved by the precariousness of human settlements in these hostile environments, and pays homage, after a lifetime of work to study modern architecture in the era of the machine, to the beauty of an arid nature. It is an eminently literary and very personal work, so a real experience of the desert seems to me necessary to access it fully. My work this summer at the Montello Foundation Studio has consisted in the writing of a journal in which I transcribe my experience of the desert by comparing it with that reported by Reyner Banham in his book.

I began this work of writing by following Banham in two different ways, physically, by exploring the places where he was, and theoretically, by reading his texts.

The result is a kind of investigation where my reflections on his texts mingle with the descriptions of the places I cross. This work is the logbook of a research in progress, and aims to restore my progressive understanding of the work of Banham. A first extract was published in the French magazine *Paysageur*. It relates the discovery of the deserts of the Mojave by Banham in 1968 as described in the first chapter of his book, to the story of my crossing of Nevada from West to East, and my arrival in Montello on July 14, 2018.



Extract 1:

The perception from the ground is completely different, almost magical in fact: the salt lake appears between a foreground - brown hill texture - a few miles ahead, and a distant silhouette of a bluish mountain. It's sublime, it seems unreal. Some would inevitably have been content to describe this vision as a "lunar landscape", but Banham doesn't. He focuses on the irregularity of the white surface, the topographic deformations generated by the heat and the movements of hot air, the extreme luminescence of the salt crystals, the diffraction of the light, the perfect brightness of the white with this brown in the foreground and this blue in the background ... and with that the deep awareness of being there in the right place and at the right time.

Going back in the car, he thinks about all these impressions, the light in Monet's paintings, bushes, snakes and white mirages ... and long before they reach the road, he knows he has become a desert freak.

Extract 2:

Fifteen minutes later, the light is less direct, more yellow, the shadows lengthen and the colors are reviving. I recognize the nine-mile mountain that Stefan often talks about in his document and who faces the house. I take a right, the barrier is in front of me. Looking up at the hill, it is there.

The first impression coming out of the car: silence. This house, which I had imagined differently, each time. Matter, gray, dried wood, cracked by the sun; the shelter as consumed by the desert. Part lost in advance ... So immediately it's beautiful, the vain gesture of building.

On the terrace, a rustic raft of gray wood, and the house, sits evenly framed on it. The beauty of the small building shines in this moment in its transparency through the fully glazed entrance door: the living room parquet, smooth and varnished, the wood stove on the right, a bouquet of dry herbs, a small table on the left flanked by two profiles of Scandinavian chairs, and perfectly above: a light, a semi-spherical suspension. The view represents a magnificent twenty-mile orange panorama: sky fire, mountains fire, earth and vegetation fire.

Lewis Flinn

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I don't have a lot of time for reflection. I think a lot about meditating, about taking more time to just think, but with 2 kids, 2 dogs, a career, and aging parents, there is little time to for this luxury. I had been intrigued by Montello for years, it was an escapist fantasy. Finally, it seemed that 2018 was the time- I would logistically be able to withdraw from life, and selfishly focus on me. I prepared as best as could, watched many YouTube videos on how to change a tire, flew from New York City, packed the rental car with water and food, and headed out from Salt Lake City. The landscape was so foreign, so empty, so unfriendly. I called the family and said a final farewell before going off the



grid down “the dirt road”. Soon, I began seeing hills, trees, cows, and mile after mile of nothing but a sense of space and quiet. Finally, the house appeared on the horizon, as if an oasis. Once inside, and unpacked, I sat on the deck and watched the sunset. No noise, no human, only my thoughts. A blank journal had been left for my use- all those years of waiting for an opportunity for reflection had arrived. Go. I left the page blank for a couple of days as I explored the vicinity, sat at Blinky’s way, biked around. All of a sudden, there was so much time. And nothing to fill it other than eating, reading, walking, working, or reflecting. As the days went by, I set up my “studio”, I had come with no agenda other than to see what happened. I started projects I had not had time to think about before, and wrote songs for no reason. I gave myself the opportunity to create without a deadline or other requirements. I luxuriated in the absence of anything, and promised to remember that feeling when back in New York. A little stem of sagebrush now sits in my noisy and cramped NYC studio as my reminder of the Montello mindset.

For a song written by Lewis Flinn please go to montellofoundation.org/audio.htm

Julie Gemuend

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In my work, I aim to explore our relationship with the natural world by probing the edges of identity and environment, interiority and exteriority, the tamed and the wild, and the places where the two merge. Often using the body as a conduit and a canvas, I consider the intrinsic nature of these dynamics by imprinting my skin with the landscape. It is always with feeling, intuition and energy that my work is formed.

Our earliest loves, like revenants, have a way of coming back in other forms, or to paraphrase Wordsworth, the child is mother to the woman. This perhaps explains why,

Untitled photograph from the *Imprint* performances, 2017



Untitled photograph from the *Reed Drawing on Back* performances, 2015

despite growing up in a place famed by water (Niagara Falls, Canada), I gravitate towards the land. I spent my youth playing on the fringes of well-manicured backyards, enchanted by the damp, fragrant, early-morning forest floor, the light play on the silver dollar surface of the Lunaria, the smudge of a magenta wildflower. My process draws heavily on these formative years. As an adult, my approach to art-making reflects this element of child's play. I embrace a sense of curiosity (grass imprints on my knees, dandelion stains on my arms), wonderment, and tenderness coupled with an agenda to dismantle the theory that nature is inexhaustible, self-renewing, and ever bountiful, something independent and apart from us.

Montello is a space conducive to reflection and concentration. Like a very special gift that has the profound quality of timeliness, I arrived at Montello during a crossroads in my practice. I came to the retreat with piles of books and no certain direction. I left the retreat, however, feeling inspired, having realigned myself with my practice—in some ways a new self / a renewed practice. This otherworldly place grants permission to step outside of oneself, to escape the entrapments of one's mind and roam freely in a space that is at the same time alien and familiar, other and you. My research during this time has resulted in what will be the foundation of a doctoral thesis, a book, and a film.

Michael Grimaldi

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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.



Matthew Hamon

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The Montello residency is precisely located at the geographical center of the portfolio I am developing, “Chinook;The Ice Eater.” Chinook is focused on the tensions around the melancholy mythologies, dreams, and often clumsy efforts by men to tame and prosper within this landscape. My time at Montello allowed me to wander the highways and backroads looking for relics and vistas that might aid in reveal-

Homestead and Mirror, Loray, NV, 2018



Abandoned Homes and Pilot Peak, Montello, NV, 2018

ing this story. This residency also put me in proximity to locals who were a wealth of information, oral history, and tips on pursuing my creative research.

Chinook winds are dry, warm, down-slope, foehn winds that occur on the lee side of mountain ranges in the interior West of North America. Chinook is claimed (incorrectly) by popular folk-etymology to mean “ice-eater.” Climate change issues in the post-rural West are also encoded in this title. The photographs here are from an emerging project that includes landscapes, portraits, and architectural images of the rural American West, that contemplate drosscape between industry and wildlands, progress and stasis.

Post-rural describes themes emerging out of, and tangential to, a pastiche of Postmodern concepts. The themes, narratives, objects, and aesthetic sensibilities present in these images consider the boundaries between urban, suburban, rural and wilderness areas of the American West. Generally, post-rural themes consider the commodification, narratives and shifting mythologies of rural areas since the 19th century and earlier as urban areas encroach on rural lands or mechanized agriculture draws workers away from the rural landscape.

Nicole Jean Hill

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In my photo work, I explore evidence of human and animal activity and mark making on the land in the outskirts of rural communities in the American West. I was surprised to find that the extremely remote environment at the Montello residency posed physical challenges for me. I had difficulty negotiating my cumbersome camera and lighting gear in the wind and terrain in the surrounding area. So, I used my time there as an opportunity to observe the landscape without my usual art making tools. I rode my bike along the dusty roads free of camera gear and started collecting objects.

I became equally mesmerized by two things: the abundance of wild flowers flourishing in the June Nevada desert and the bleached white matte empty beer and soda cans that I found strewn amongst the sage brush. I began to think of these two



things equally as markers of time. The precise assortment of perennial desert flora blooming indicated a specific and fleeting few weeks in mid-summer just before the later summer heat would singe the landscape. And the cans became markers of the passage of years and months, as they must have been in the desert long enough to have the sun completely bleach the text away, but not long enough to have been crushed or completely swallowed by the surrounding dirt and mud. I would attempt to “date” each artifact based on the whiteness, surface quality and shape.

I have not yet resolved the work I started at Montello, but I am excited about the possibilities of still life images that reflect the experience of the Nevada desert landscape. I ultimately photographed as many wildflowers as possible and returned home with a car full of bleached cans to photograph in the studio - both subjects an essential component of the Nevada desert.

Andrea Pinheiro

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The events and sites depicted in my images range from the autobiographic to subjects that transcend yet intersect the personal; often focusing on sites impacted by nuclear bomb testing and uranium mining and waste storage. My interactions with photographs and objects question the limitations of the visual in representing time and place. While much of my work has focused on sites near my home in Northern Ontario, the long and complex history of the nuclear industry in the Southwest desert has long compelled me to experience these places myself.

Before arriving at Montello I travelled through the desert. I visited the periphery of the Nevada Test Site, the Trinity site, and a number of uranium mining waste disposal sites across the Southwest. I camped for a night within the boundaries of the Nevada Test Site, accessing my sleeping area through the eastern edge of



the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. I experienced an unnerving sleep; fighter jets circled over me as I set up my tent and built my fire.

Montello provided a deeply calming refuge to contemplate my experiences traveling through the desert. I continued a form of collage making with my photographs that I began earlier this year in Iceland and Portugal which has opened new questions around my own relation to land and how I represent this connection. I make the collages in conjunction with simple installations in which I arrange found objects and materials from the land. The studio provided an ideal space to photograph my interactions and to experiment with making more complex and layered 16mm films. Observing the light change, watching the chipmunks storing away the sage for the winter, and listening to the coyotes and the often overwhelming silence led me to a deeper trust in the rhythms and trajectories of my own practice.

Everest Pipkin

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I am an artist from Bee Caves, TX, producing physical work as drawings, chapbooks, and zines, as well as digital material in software, bots, and games. My work follows landscape as complicated by digital space- it follows the internet in the landscape, whether as fiber-optic cabling, data center construction, or network infrastructure. I also study how physical space is digitized in projects like Google Street View, or satellite imagery and census data. By looking at archives, big data repositories, and other online resources for information, I aim to reposition these often-corporate spaces as intimate, gentle, ecological, and personal- demanding an internet with room for softness.

I had a remarkable time at Montello Foundation. The gift of relative isolation in the landscape cannot be understated - it was remarkable to begin each day with reflection on place or self, rather than an immediate reaction to the news of the wider world.

More broadly, however, I began to feel connected to this world in more abstract ways than the one afforded by the portal of my phone or computer. I knew that several acquaintances and friends had been through the residency before, and in some small way we were sharing this space over time. The quiet comfort of knowing that this kettle or that table were used by a friend once, a while ago, in the pursuit of their work is a strangely comforting feeling that is unique to a residency like this.

Much of my work while at Montello reflected this emotion, as I primarily worked on a poetically focused table-top roleplaying game called 'The Ground Itself', which looks at the practice of world-building spaces in conversation with friends, over very long periods of time.

I also continued a series of drawings called 'Hallucinating the Cloud', in which I look at places in the landscape where network infrastructure (cable lines, data centers, etc) meet the physical namesake they are named for. These drawings see these architectures of connectivity dissolving back into the ephemeral space of cloud and sky, becoming invisible in much the same way these network behemoths become invisible in a political landscape which seeks to hide them.

The level of focus and attention that Montello Foundation afforded me was truly remarkable, and over the last month I have caught myself drifting back to that



landscape regularly. It is unlike any other residency I have ever completed both in location and in feel, and has provided a fundamentally positive direction for my work - I am immensely grateful to have attended.

Lea Thomas and John Thayer

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I am a musician and textile artist. John is a drummer, composer and audio engineer. We first heard about Montello Foundation when Stefan commissioned me for a large weaving to hang in the living quarters at the residency in 2016. As a couple who has spent many years prioritizing travel, seeking inspiration from a range of ecosystems, the concept of the residency resonated with us deeply and offered an opportunity to commune with a landscape whose song we had not yet heard.

John and I traveled to Montello with two heavy suitcases full of what we imagined a 'survivalist' home recording studio might require, with the intention of translating the sounds of the desert wilderness into a new collaborative record. We set up our first-ever solar-powered studio and spent most mornings exploring the surrounding areas by foot and by bike. Unexpected challenges involving our compact car's incompatibility with the weathered roads became a recurring and humbling theme for us, revealing new boundaries of our emotional and mental capacities. In spite of the uncertainties of our circumstances- or, in some ways, inspired by them – we spent most



of our waking hours recording meditative improvisations, rarely going back to what we had done in days prior. Melodies and lyrics drifted in with the meadowlark calls.

We gathered field recordings like we gathered kindling- daily and with intention. The crackling of our nightly fires, the full moon cries of nearby coyotes, the storms and the near-silence of the nights that followed, the patter of juniper berries collecting in the bowl of my hat for later use as dye- sounds like these, significant to our experience on a whole, appear on our final album as immersive vignettes woven into and in-between ambient drones, guitars and vocals.

...to be lost is to be fully present, and to be fully present is to be capable of being in uncertainty and mystery. And one does not get lost but loses oneself, with the implication that it is a conscious choice, a chosen surrender... Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide To Getting Lost*

For recordings by John Thayer and Lea Thomas please go to montellofoundation.org/audio.htm

The emphasis on mindfulness is often a reoccurring theme in the reports we receive from the Montello Foundation's Resident Artists: mindfulness as they approach the nature, mindfulness in their work practices, and also a mindfulness towards their audience. It is of course part of our selection process to look for this quality in Resident Artists' applications, but we believe that our setting, and the fact that they are approaching it on their own, makes a big impact on their awareness. In addition, they have to rely on their own minds to navigate the Sagebrush Desert, as only mindfulness can help here.

In 2018, the Montello Foundation's Artist Residency program hosted 13 artist and numerous visitors at our retreat in this remote valley near Montello. This season, visual artists, but also composers and recording artists, set up their temporary home and workshop in the Montello Foundation's retreat.

In the enclosed report are examples of their art as well as brief quotes from their experience at the retreat. That said, as listening to the sounds of the desert is often an important part of the visual artists' experience, the retreat is ideal for recording artists and composers. Of course, we can't present their work in this printed brochure, but on our website, there is a page with audio files: a direct recording of the desert and files of how the artists have processed, reimagined these sounds through their craft.

This year, we also focused on a new project. To compliment this solitary experience of the resident artists, we are now planning to create a place for the general public, a waypoint to focus on the original purpose of a journey — a waypoint that is also accessible directly from the road.

Especially when we travel, it is in our nature to seek points of rest, to reorient ourselves. We want to understand the place we are traversing; but we also want to focus our mind on the original purpose of our journey rather than just on the logistics and technicalities of our transportation. We are looking for guidance.

Driving is how one mostly moves through the deserts of Nevada, traversing a valley with few distinct features recognizable, and we all drive at high speed. We measure our journey in minutes; walking the same crossing would take one the better part of a day. Without stopping, we have no chance to understand the place we are traversing. We need a waypoint; we need to stop and find new ways to measure a journey.

Historically these waypoints were often created in a spiritual or religious context, focusing us through commonly known symbols, but as the Montello Foundation is dedicated to fostering artists, we will let them be our guides, focusing us on nature and its fragility. Their work will also focus us on time; artists are able to stop us, forcing us to rethink and question our journey. Then they create, within us, this energy that carries us on and has us embark on new perspectives, even if we can't exactly say how and why.

Nancy Holt observes: "Time' is not just a mental concept or a mathematical abstraction in the desert. The rocks in the distance are ageless; they have been deposited in layers over hundreds of thousands of years. 'Time' takes on a physical presence."

Stefan Hagen, Founder

We decided that to find the most innovative design for the Waypoint we would hold a competition for students currently finishing their Architecture degrees. So, a call for designs went out in December 2017 to colleges around the world, and we received 50 entries; this is quite a humbling experience, considering the amount of work the students poured into their proposals. We are now preparing for the construction of the design by Naoki Ono, Tokyo University of Arts and Tinca Decuseara, Institute of Technology in Karlsruhe, Germany.

Naoki and Tinca's design consists of 5 slabs, to be cast directly from the earth at our building site in Montello, incorporating the local topography, and so these walls will reflect the specific place. Their placement will also be framing the landscape, creating a critical relationship with the exterior environment. The roof will be for shading Waypoint visitors from the sun, and over the interior space, glass roofing will protect the walls and visitors from precipitation. This glass roofing references the Greek Peristyle and also the Native American ceremonial space, the Kiva. The structure will also address the relationship of the individual to this landscape, as well as with other visitors. In this way it can also function as a meeting point to exchange thoughts on nature and its fragility.





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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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