

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