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As I unloaded my belongings onto the porch, the welcoming committee arrived -- four towering jackrabbits who affixed themselves towards me as a tight gang just eight feet away. We stood frozen in this standoff for what seemed an eternity. Embarrassingly, I was scared, and tried to alleviate the tension by making those cooing sounds you produce for babies. But the coordinated group, as if connected by radio transmitter, charged at me, at the last second ducking below my feet and under the porch, then finally sprinting out the other side of the building and into the vastness.

In hindsight, I imagine them shouting in unison over their shoulders: "Wake up!" While people have a habit of changing their environment rather than themselves, participating in Montello encouraged greater awareness of my environment. By slowing down, looking more closely, listening more carefully, and being open to subtleties, this was my opportunity to research the overlooked and to nurture deeper respect for that which I take for granted.

Eightmile Whisper, 2016

I went to Montello to investigate fieldwork in the arts, and brought nearly 200 books and articles. I didn't crack a single one; instead, I found myself humbled, more enchanted by what was already there. Moving through the desert was like a pilgrimage – when I thought I had arrived at a destination, I would pass yet another ridge into a new horizon and have to continue. Through lush cliffs of fragrant lupines, I made a mental map of the landscape by smell, changing with each shift in elevation. The desert was a tapestry more lush than I could have imagined. Everything stood out. Every sound. The whole desert was walkable, and each day I waded through it like the shallows of an ocean. I found the desert had a natural balance – everything had a comfortable two-foot perimeter of gravel. I often found myself conflicted in that, while I didn't want to disrupt that ecosphere, I wanted to be a part of it. And I was. At night the jackrabbits' ears made soft thuds as they whacked the flooring beneath my desk, and the moths tapped on the windows like rain, while I, like a desert Dudamel, orchestrated their sound with my flashlight.

Following my stay at Montello, I was invited to make a sculpture for the I-Park Foundation in Connecticut. The sensitivity that was reinforced by my desert immersion at Montello inspired me to more deeply explore I-Park's woodlands before I began fabricating. I was interested in the acoustic footprints of different environments, and noticed that the woods were quieter than normal as the leaves of deciduous trees had been decimated by a Gypsy Moth invasion. I rebuilt a deciduous canopy along a hiking trail by a rapid-laden riverbank so that the broad flat shapes of my leaves would amplify the sound of the river again.