




2020 season

A landscape photograph featuring a small, rustic wooden cabin with a metal roof and large glass windows, situated in a field of low-lying green vegetation. In the background, there are rolling hills under a vast sky filled with large, billowing clouds illuminated by the warm light of a setting or rising sun. The overall mood is serene and artistic.

The Artists in Residence
2020

montello foundation

Jordan Fein

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It's a rocky sandy road, through wild lands, crossing ancient washes. It's Native land, it's untouched land. It's a home to creatures of endurance (both animal and people). It's not easy to prepare for living in a way largely foreign to our modern experience. Untethered from connectivity.

I am a filmmaker in both unscripted-documentary and the interpreted narrative space. My work is steeped in the presentation of unique perspectives, the projection of the personal and the illumination of worlds un-explored and under-represented. In its simplest form, my concentration is on human nature. To reside at the Montello Residency, the person to study was myself.

I choose to use my time to complete a screenplay that is a story of isolation and the notion of what we call "home". As a working director, I am typically moving from project



Still from *The Blessing*. The film, directed by Jordan Fein, follows a Navajo coal miner raising his secretive daughter as a single father, struggling with his part in the irreversible destruction of their sacred mountain at the hands of America's largest coal producer.

to project almost daily, so allowing myself a prolonged uninterrupted opportunity to dedicate to a singular project was a privilege I haven't had in recent years. The result was that I surpassed the writing I intended to do and the self-study was truly revealing.

When first settling into the modest homey shelter in Montello, the silence was the first of many adjustments I'd make. Coming from New York City, the contrast was felt almost immediately. But then came the calls of crows, the scurry of the chipmunk and the desert shrew, the rush of warm wind that filled the ears like an aural hug.

The Second adjustment was to a vast desert landscape. I've long been drawn the American Southwest, having spend much time in various rural sites, but never have I seen land with virtually no interruption. No high tension power lines or pin-straight railways bifurcating sage brush and red earth. The land slowly revealed how time can change it. There is the light stretching shadows, and a late-day glow like fire. The powder sugar sprinkling of stars filled the night sky, and for my lucky timing, I watched the rise of the full harvest moon.

A final adjustment, and perhaps my own personal undertaking was a need to reclaim my attention span, turns out the mind can provide most all the entertainment, information and revolution we need.

As a documentarian, I couldn't help myself from exploring what the people of Montello, Nevada might reveal. A stop into the town watering hole, The Cowboy Bar, lead to a conversation with Victor, a self proclaimed gypsy, a wise man who left a life on the road to settle near his gold-miner son. I received tremendous hospitality from Tony and Lupe, the nearest neighbors, who work tirelessly on their homestead perfected "Game Island" -- a joy-filled oasis of classic and invented beanbag toss games that one day will belong to their grandchildren. I was sponsored to become a proud "member" of Area 52, another local hangout and private hunting club. It was there I witnessed the elderly owner fulfill a decade long wish of retrieving a 200 pound geode with the help of the annual visiting elk hunters.

Back home now, I listen for the wind, watch the light, and quiet the mind to day-dream of a simple desk in the Great Basin where work is done.



Ash Ferlito

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How wonderful to spend a moment on earth at the Montello Foundation. An easy side-step for me to make, out of the stream of influence and internet and into first light in the Juniper patch identifying birds. Sagebrush scented air, always— sometimes wet, sometimes dry, full of song. Listened to the chorus of sparrows, teasing apart the notes and trills and becoming familiar with the who's who in the soundscape, watched flycatchers sally out and back under brash ravens, and every dang time marveled at the impossible electric cerulean streak of a Mountain Bluebird, now hovering, it's mate joining. My vision brought back down by a bright new glowing orange bloom of Indian Paintbrush that emerged overnight, after the 3 days of rain, hail, and bit of snow. A few hours looking around and considering the potential of the plants, what color would sage give, if any? Would the Indian Paintbrush be a good brush? My work has been focused on using plants like this, for their color and for mark, in a combination of natural dyes and acrylic, dipped and pressed onto wet fabric. Stare out, think about how to make a painting here. How can I make something that feels like the sound? It's still way before noon. Walk back to the cabin, catch my reflection, smile at myself. I look a little nuts: recording gear slung across my body, sage sticking out of my pocket, binoculars, a feather behind my ear, shorts, socks, boots, dry skin. It's ok. Eat. Boil up the sack of onion skins and avocado pits I've been collecting for months and brought with me for dyes. Wind calms, attempt some sound



Harmonics, 2020, sage, dandelion, vetch, low larkspur, beardtongues, buckwheats, desert paintbrush on muslin, 33 in x 43 in, 43 in x 53 in and 42 in x 56 in

recording. Why does the bird clam up after hours of consistent singing or move so far away the moment I have my parabola microphone in hand? Relax, I'll get it, relationships take work. Calculate how many days I have left. Snip some sagebrush, a bit here, a bit there, slow down, realize that there is an entire universe on each branch, a teaming population of various insects. Be much more careful from now on, slower, vision more sensitive- I actually saw a butterfly, a Common Checkered-Skipper, iNaturalist helped inform me later, clench her abdomen and lay a tiny neon opal egg on a blade of grass. Moved to tears by the act. Wipe my face. Bike somewhere, sun still high in the sky at 7 PM. Return, into the driveway, back to what totally feels like home. Dinner. Make something nice for myself, lick my plate clean, getting off on how little water I can use— save it for the work. The place smells great from boiling sage for dye. Look at the horizon, consult the weather device in the kitchen, decide if it is ok or too windy to put out my moth collecting kit, a stretched sheet and an ultraviolet light— essentially a sail. Do it. I can always take it down, reason that it probably won't get going too far with all the brush around, right? Light the oil lamp. A private ping of joy as I turn down the wick to just the right height where the smoke ceases. It's reflection burning bright mirrored into infinity in the sliding glass door. Read. Get up to check to see what moths have arrived, if any. As I shuffle outside I'm startled by the constellations, the stars so low and big. There are moths, real beauties! Document them. Set my alarm for another mid-night check. After that an alarm for dawn chorus. Do it all again, day after day, activities structured by the wind and the light.

I felt deeply at peace at Montello— loose is the word. Loose and free, elevated by the design and thoughtfulness of the place, warmed by the generosity of it, the library, the care. I laughed at myself when I got stressed for a spell, when worry crept in, the chatterbox questioning if I'd make something good enough, something to show for my time until an afternoon's strong wind pressed me into a chair and forced it's way into my lungs making me breathe deeper, reminding me of my choice of how I want to be, how I want to experience this place, and after.

I took in so much, I got a lot done, I made something I love, I know the names and songs of all the birds around, attracted stunning and surprising species of moths and insects...but really, I could have just watched the weather happen, roll in, and over, in and over, and it would have been an excellent way to spend the time.



Perri Lynch Howard

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My work is a charting or mapping of sites and situations, expressed through painting, drawing, sculpture, and sound. I have always worked with this orientation; the search for my own felt sense of place, and that of others.

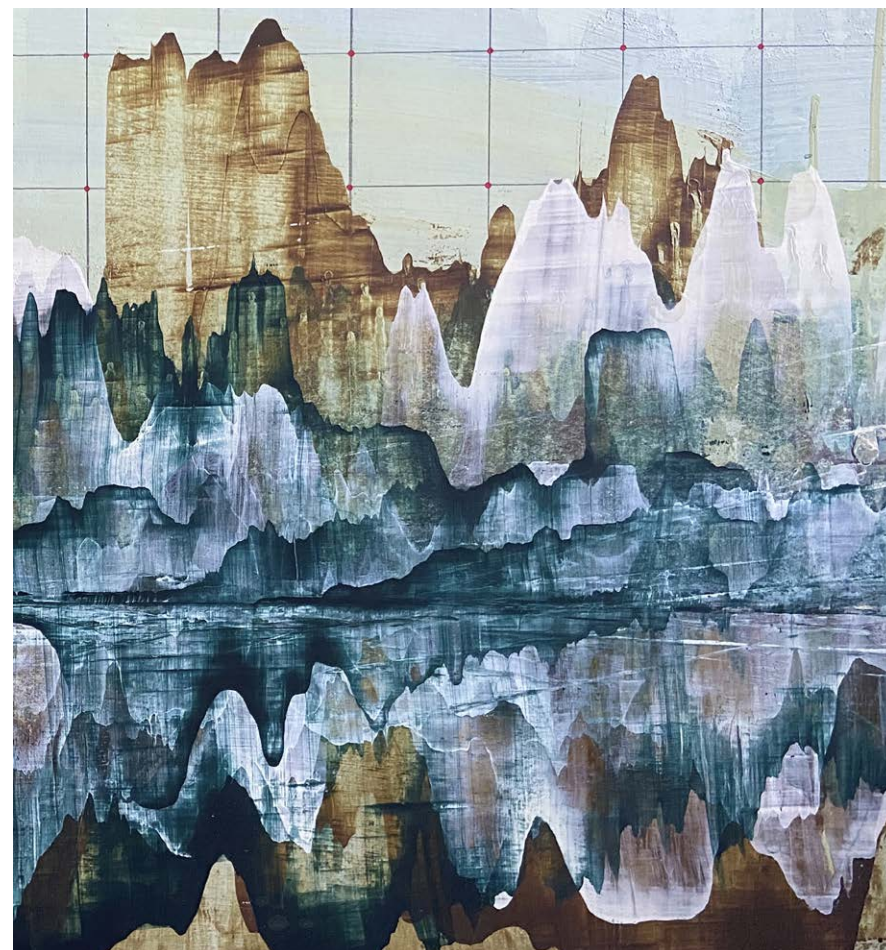
During October, the sonic signature of Montello was comprised of reckless winds, the momentary flapping of a raven's wings, a morning cattle drive, and the occasional rip of a low-flying jet.

To listen to a place is to know it deeply. Knowing a place deeply is the first step toward understanding and protecting it.

It's not the wind that was loud, but the surfaces it encountered. I became sensitive to the manic friction of sagebrush, the edgy syncopation of doors and windows, and the sighing stretch of the stove pipe, warming against the chill.

My hours were spent walking fencelines, stopping to listen through geophones in the earth and hydrophones in the wells and troughs, which were mostly dry.

Sound moves laterally across the basin and vertically through the wells. The low thrum of the propane pump at the Wild Horse Well, the surface disturbance of water, the



detail of *Frequencies: Wild Horse Well*, 2020, Mixed Media on Panel, 20 in x 16 in



soft trickle 18 inches down, and throaty murmurs from the silty bottom of the trough.

I brought these field experiences back to the studio to explore the intersection of sight, sound, and silence through a series of paintings called "Frequencies." This has become a new direction for my visual work.

The day before departure, 400-head of cattle were driven along the south fenceline by six cowboys and a thirty-pound dog. This was a monumental disturbance on the heels of such solitude. After two weeks of listening and seeing how Montello looks, the last two days afforded a glimpse into how this place works. Hardscrabble ranch land.

Here, the days are long and deep. The sunsets are absolutely breathtaking. There is so much freedom to wander and muse. You can do whatever you wish in the privacy of a great expanse, but just like the water, there is scarcity on every level, and, because we're in the great basin, it all drains inward.

Michael Dax Iacovone

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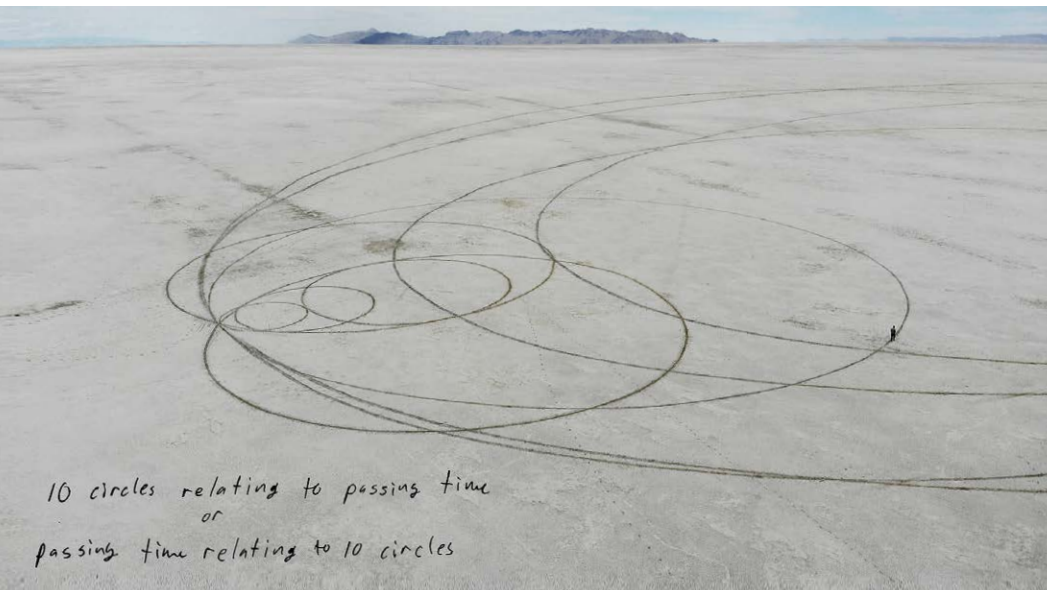
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My work is based on a collection of investigations that I've been researching for years, as well as my own interest in markmaking and impermanence.

Five years ago I took a long road trip through the west to visit some of the Land Art I studied in grad school. I spent a night at Walter De Maria's Lightning Fields, I saw Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty, Nancy Holt's Sun Tunnels and Michael Heizer's Double Negative. But I also went to see the Hoover Dam, the Bonneville Salt Flats, and a handful of ghost towns in Nevada. I went by the Nevada bomb testing sites and traveled thousands of miles of desolate roads and wide open spaces.

It seemed to me that the Land Art wasn't that different from these other things. All of them left man-made marks on the earth, and all of them for different reasons. I spent the next couple years studying the bomb creators on google earth and from above, if you could divorce the intent and destruction of those bombs, they just looked like geometry; clean lines and circles relating to each other. I also researched the Nazca Lines in Peru, and made a trip there to fly over them to see them for myself. The more famous ones are animals and birds drawn hundreds of feet long into the desert by



simply moving rocks out of the way. But even more interesting to me were thousands of lines, straight as an arrow stretching out for miles. Those lines weren't walking paths or trade routes, they were precise and calculated drawings that when seen from above were incredibly meticulous, yet the Nazcas had no way of seeing them from above.

The Nazca Lines and the bomb testing sites influenced me as much or maybe even more than the Land Artists. And I spent a lot of time relearning geometry. I specifically concentrated on Euclidean geometry, at first for its elegant imagery, but then diving in even further it was clear that Euclid, and many others before and after him, were motivated by trying to find order in the world, and trying to understand more than they could see.

I make marks in the earth with a hand-held garden tiller that breaks through the top layer of crusty salt to reveal the dark clay underneath. And unlike the Nazca lines which are still there after 1500 years, my lines disappear as soon as it rains and the salt levels itself out. It doesn't matter to me that weeks of labor in the hot desert sun erase, and it doesn't bother me that I am likely the only person to see them in person. The investigation that I've spent years on, and the process of making the lines is the important part to me. I have photos and video taken from a drone, and those artifacts serve as a surrogate replacing the performance of markmaking.

I have been going back to Nevada every summer for the past five years to create land drawings in Bonneville Salt Flats. This year I was fortunate enough to spend time at the Montello Residency instead of the glamorous Motel 6 in Wendover. I spent some days driving to Wendover to draw in the salt, and I spent other days in the studio working on my drawing plans, reading, and enjoying the quiet space, walking through the sagebrush and looking at the stars. Having that time in that space was incredibly motivating and productive. Days of working flew by as I turned off my devices and never looked at the time. This year was my most productive trip yet, and I'll spend the next few months editing the work, and missing the quiet space of that cabin from my home in Washington DC.

Cara Rae Joven

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Being in the landscape always makes me think about the space of connection. *How To/You Can: Pacific* are two video performances of the artist executing four headstands on two different beaches. One beach is in the Philippines, the land I was born on and the other is Imperial Beach in Southern California, the land I was raised on. In these video performances, my body is literally tied with a rope to these two distant lands connected by the Pacific Ocean. The cultures of these two places collide in my body as they have formed my identity but not without the dissonance that occurs when there is no sense of belonging in either place, considered a foreigner in both countries. However, our identities are formed by our experiences, which go beyond our origins.

Every time I experience a new landscape, that place is absorbed into my body. These connections and disconnection form the bases of my art practice. Physical

Gesture 15, Performed at Imperial Beach in San Diego, CA on the shores of the Pacific Ocean
Rope, carabiner, earth anchor, 2019-2020, 9:26 minutes



clockwise from top left: *Gesture 4*, *Gesture 7*, *Gesture 3*, *Gesture 12*, *Gesture 5* and *Gesture 13*

connections between land and body, place and person, as well as the intangible material of personal and cultural histories come together in my work. Identities, places, and history may seem distant and different, but we are all connected. I applied for the residency in Montello because the foundation believes in experience as a material for generating artwork, which inadvertently becomes a form of preserving the landscape. The retreat gave me the most valuable material to my practice — time and space to contemplate our connection with the landscape. I believe that the more we understand how connected our bodies and our lives are to the land, the more we are able to look at the planet less as a resource, but rather as a living breathing entity.

Mia Mulvey

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My work explores issues of remoteness, climate, and geological/ ecological time as evidenced by the landscape through such forms such as ancient trees, ice and geology. Utilizing field research in the context of collected landscapes, mapping and materiality, I am interested in the ability of memory to be bound in the land through layers and forms. The works are links to time and an experience of place... to processes still unfolding.

In an effort to honor the “ground truth” of specific locations my process involves utilizing technology to sculpturally record and investigate the environment, as a way to see. Such technologies include 3d scanning (photogrammetry), digital photography, audio recording and 3d printing alongside traditional sculptural methods. Layering is a key element, compressed and organized into the comfort of repetition, it records the passage of time and the mark of process. It signifies both past and present, transforming surfaces into form. The role of technology is equally matched with an emphasis on materiality: re-contextualizing the digital and revealing the physical, historical and sensory qualities of materials.



Converse Grove, 2019, charcoal and salt, 6 ft x 4 ft x 6 in

I drove into my residency at the Montello Foundation during the Covid pandemic on the day Space X launched and the eruption of BLM protests. Once at Montello it took a few days to transition, exchanging one kind of intensity for another. My original plans for what I wanted to do during the residency had changed since I had not had access to my studio for the two months prior. When I arrived, I was more at the beginning than I had expected.

I was struck by the sound of the landscape, being alone in a remote location, my ears became attuned to every noise possible. Remoteness is definitely not quiet. For the first 3 days there wasn't a single plane that flew overhead so I was able to experience the landscape in a way unusual for our time. I made sound recordings, read, collected rocks, explored and experimented.

I was interested the geological history of the Great Basin and the concept that everything that flows into the basin, except for water remains. Reading from the many books in the site's library I was struck by a quote from Steve Peters in *Here-ings*, “The boulder we imagine as eternal, time knows to be soil in progress.” Working with objects and materials found in the area I made molds of rocks to be cast in salt and clay. A poetic and material process of transformation and an investigation and rewinding of geological processes.

I also worked on a series listening devices based on acoustic horns, “war tubas”, used for the detection of aircraft from the early 1900's. My forms were 3d-modelled on the computer, unfolded and then constructed in paper. The series of forms and documentations, titled *Listening to Distance*, explores the concept of sound and what it means to listen; not to the sound of humans but to remoteness and the passage of time. This is a new direction in my work that will develop, along with the other work, long after I have returned home.

Yuki Murata

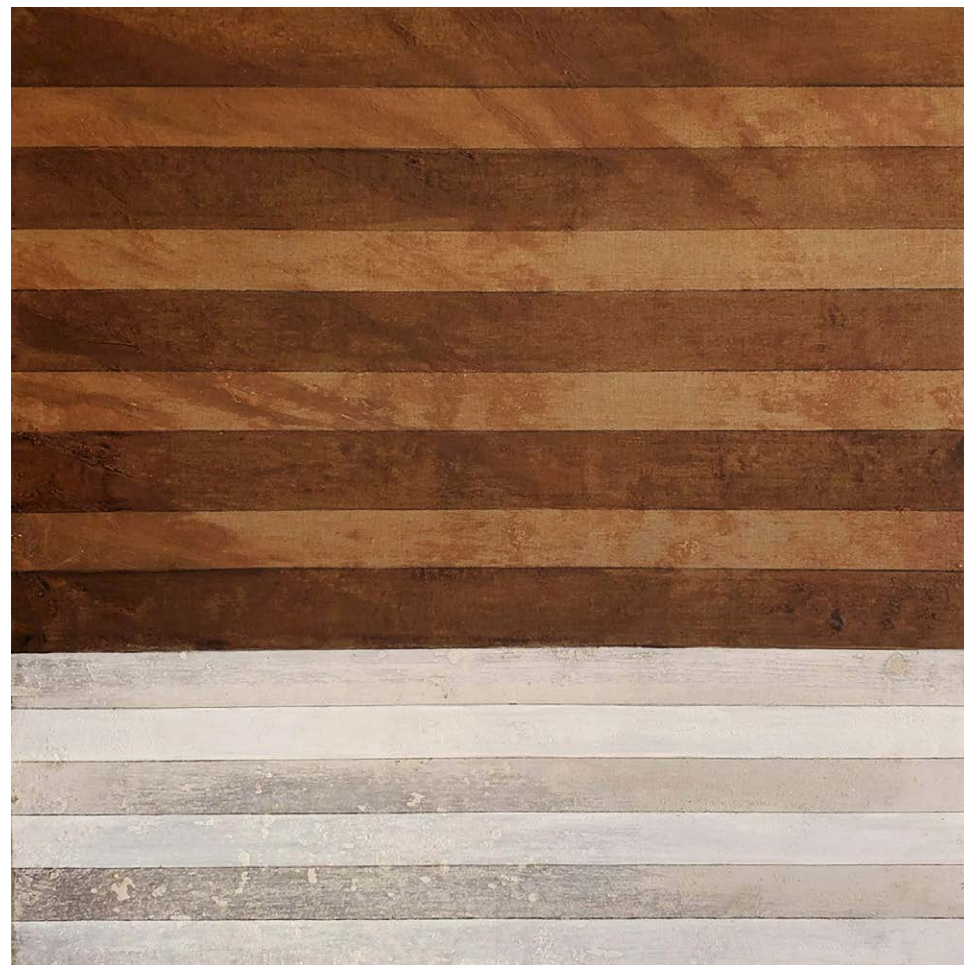
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Rhythmic linear repetition and a subtle color palette are my meditation on the restoration and repair I search for in our splintered, suffering world. The surfaces are repeatedly built up and sanded, scraped and burnished back as an homage to the making, death and remaking of all life. I habitually return to square formats to honor our human desire for stability and order. In my work I am trying to document time and location by using materials gathered from the properties around where I am working.

In Montello, I immediately fell into the rhythm of the land and sky. The wind insisted that I listen to nature's raw power and ferocity. I walked aimlessly, but with a clutched compass and full water bottle, alone and hyper aware of the good and bad of solitude. Like many places, gender and race can make a difference in the wilderness. After being cooped up with my partner and children because of Covid I was giddy in my anticipation of the isolation and privacy. Ironically, the seclusion transformed my claustrophobia into a deep gratitude for community and companionship. The soundtrack of animals, wind and silence amplified my inner dialogue and mocked my independence. The vastness of the sky, both day and night, stirred my curiosity



Resolana Passage, 2019

soil, micaceous slip, handmade natural pigment inks, pencil and wax on undyed linen, 36 in x 36 in x 2 in

and altered my perspective profoundly. Montello gave me physical and mental space to review and recalibrate my art practice. The detachment from WiFi and news was jarring but deeply appreciated. The smell of sagebrush and the glow from the milky way soothed my nervous system. September burned hot during mid-afternoon and as the black sky began to glitter the chill of night lay down upon the land. Traveling to and from Montello became as much a part of the experience of being there, working in the studio. The journey along those rough roads literally and figuratively loosened my grip on a preciousness and precision in my painting that I was pleased to shed. Montello reminded me to accept what is happening right now instead of anticipating or wishing for what could be or feeling paralyzed by what might be.



Christine Nguyen

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My work is inspired by nature, science, the cosmos and its' connections with the micro and macrocosms. I collect, photograph, and research the flora and fauna of the region I inhabit. Through my inspiration of the sciences and natural world, I aim to create a comforting imaginative meditative environments in hopes it will have viewers slow down from their chaotic lives and find wonderment and curiosity in their own environment while finding harmony with oneself inspired by nature.

Auroras of the Desert Skies - Lightness and Darkness series IV, 2020, spray paint of rocks, dirt and sagebrush, salt crystals, dirt and cyanotype on watercolor paper, 21 in x 15 in



Double Mountain Stars, 2020, dirt, spray paint, salt crystals, cyanotype on watercolor paper, 108 in x 78 in x 15 in

Leaving the main road of Montello towards the mountain, I drove through different terrains vibrant in colors and textures along the dirt road which seems to be enchanted by the Great Basin Desert. Working in the beautiful studio during the stay was a meditative process but also was charged with desert creative energy. On days the temperature rose, I learned from the desert creatures that I should also conserve my energy and slow down. I read about the Great Basin Desert, Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty, and Sacred Sage. I also read about how sagebrush talks to other plants. They release organic compounds when in danger and the other sagebrush and plants around them listen. I also talked to them and the night sky often. I was amazed by the sounds of quiet, wind, and occasional bird and howling of coyotes. Fascinated by the sky and the weather patterns, I must have taken a million photographs while I was there. The Comet Neowise was passing and saw but a blur in the night sky below the Big Dipper above the Nine Mile Mountain. It was as if a ghost was present but I just couldn't focus on it. I was able to capture it with my camera against the night sky that was so glorious in presence of a choir of celestial beings. This place and experience will forever be in my practice where I was alone with my thoughts, nature, the cosmos and my studio dog Neptune.

Center of the Universe, 2020, salt crystals, archival pigment print on Moab Entrada Rag, 42 in x 104 in



Laura Marie Peterson

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Writing is an edited way of thinking. My own memories are just as easily forgotten as those unwritten. I write to remember, but also as a process of thinking. Sporadically and without direction, I wrote more letters and took more photographs at Montello than I ever have. The desert overtook me. These snippets in time live on, and can never be quite reconstructed to portray the incredibly meaningful and life-changing experience I had at Montello.

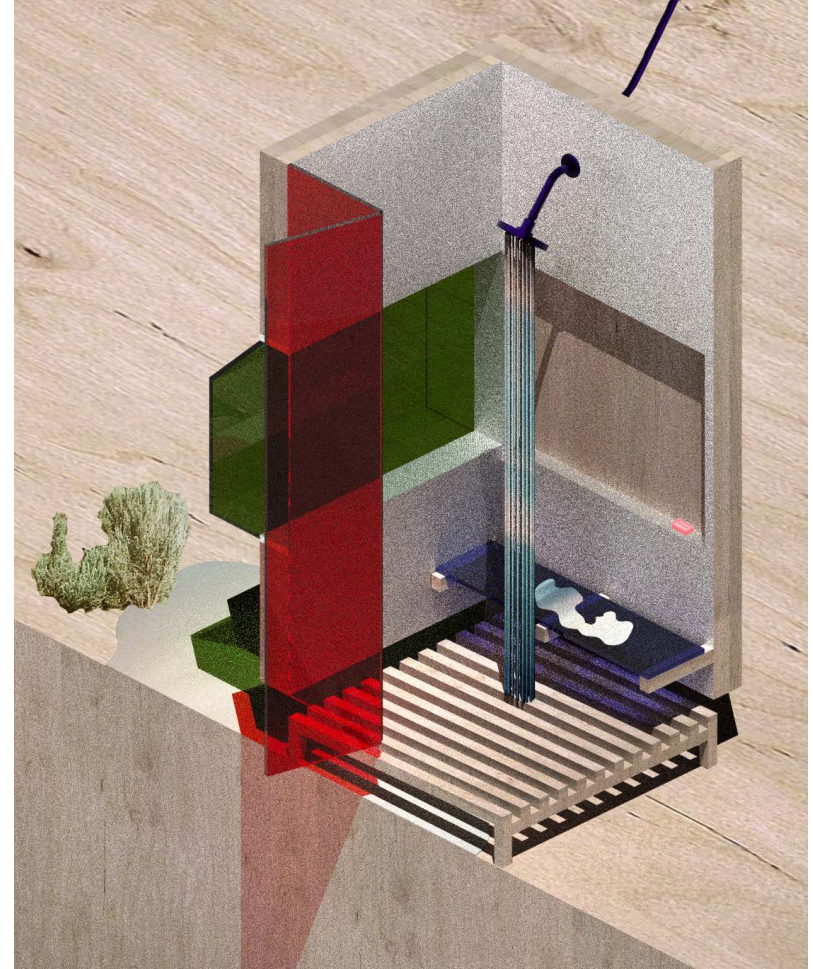
August 8, 2020 I've never had this much space and time to myself, and that in itself is daunting, but I can see and hear and smell the desert creeping in. It feels like a feat getting here -- the remoteness amplified by the pandemic. A retreat from the great retreat. A cloud hangs over the mountain, just sitting there and waiting for something to happen.

August 9, 2020 A giant water container the color of yellow plastic toys sits down the road some miles. In the golden hour it stands there like a cutout prop pasted into the desert. I walk further down the dusty road knowing only how to navigate the world through all things human. The desert scares me because I have never learned to traverse it without these markings.

August 11, 2020 The mere idea of mapping the sky is absurd, but we do it anyways. The map is an imprint, an abstraction of time that carries consequence into the future like any good photograph. I can say now for certain that the euclidean grid, born out of colonial expansion, will be our demise.

August 12, 2020 Nature is experienced in gradients, but the gardens constructed by humans are abrupt, compact, succinct. A hike reveals the slow change from a pine forest to a prairie to a swamp; the nomenclature creates distinctions. I want to design a Gradient House, a synthesizer of air, water, earth with all the subnatural elements we forget to celebrate: bugs, puddles, rainbows, dust.

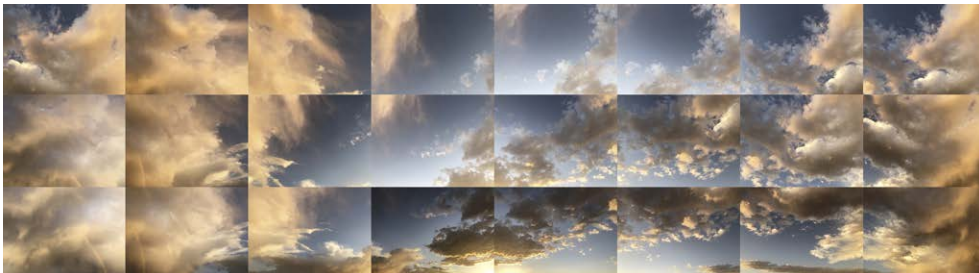
August 15, 2020 Being able to live in the now and connect with everything around you can change your entire outlook on life, and have a tremendously positive effect on our world.



Gradient House, 2020, measures the rhythm of our body against our surroundings, capturing the subtle variations in light, earth and sky

August 18, 2020 I feel as if I am leaning into this place and the routine of the day - my own spontaneity driven by the temperature and weather of the desert. The sky, a purple-gray seconds ago is swaying towards blues. I spend too much time in capitalist directions that I've lost a part of myself.

August 20, 2020 We are part of a lucky entanglement with the earth. I will never be able to explain how much Montello has carved me to my roots, and I seek to always find myself back here in this very state of mind. This place is less about what you're planning to come here to do, and less about measuring your experience against your somewhat meaningless goals. If you think it is, you will miss out on everything that surrounds you. Take it all in, breathe it in, let the dust hit your face. Walk down the old road until you lose sight of the house and find yourself in a field of sagebrush near a river carved eons ago. Read. Read so much that you push past that constructed idea of the west, and the desert desolation that you've erected in your mind. Discover the life and death of this place, and how you are connected to all of it.



Cedra Wood

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I'm primarily a painter. I'm especially invested in wild and inhospitable places, and human relationships with those places.

That interest has led me to generate imagery for paintings and drawings through my own physical and immersive experiences. I've been buried in a sandy tinaja to play-act the desiccation cycle of tadpole shrimp in Utah; obscured my senses with prickly paddy melons in South Australia; hung upside-down, quilt-swaddled, from a tree, to put myself in mind of New South Wales's flying foxes; and knotted my hair into a ship's rigging in the high Arctic.

Mares (The Viewer's Back to the Tonopah Test Range), 2019, Acrylics on panel, 18 in x 24 in



Plot, 2018 -19, Graphite on paper, 45 in x 45 in

Everything about my experience at Montello spoke to deep and slow time. Centering myself in that vast range, it was easy to imagine myself in a capsule—a ship on an undulating sea—surviving beyond my allotted human span. I spoke aloud to myself respectfully and thoroughly, as though I were someone whose good opinion I suddenly craved. I wondered what it would be like to live here the rest of my years (presumably three hundred or so), my only human interactions with the books on the studio shelves or the fading fingerprints on the rafters.

I went looking for a patch of earth to faithfully draw, and rather than replicating the grasses and brush I had anticipated, I was transfixed by an unexpected profusion of lichens on stones on a west-facing slope, my camera and pencil witnessing the slowest living growth I could imagine. Time seemed some days to contract and collapse, and on others to expand infinitely. This holds true after my return home: a looping dream of the hills and studio plays itself out in my mind as my hands carry on with the work—as one remembered moment stretches, drawn out, transmogrified into hours.

*Inside you've got heaven and earth, and all of Creation.
You are a world—everything is hidden in you.*

- Hildegard von Bingen

This year has been hard. This year we have all become very aware of isolation, and its effects on us. Isolation was often not a choice. So how is a self-imposed isolation, without it being for medical reasons, in any way necessary, even justifiable?

The residents at the Montello Foundation retreat go even a step further in their isolation with barely any connection to the outside world, including no connection to the virtual world at the house. How can this retreating be important in a year when caring was and is the mandate, and so many in the healthcare community worked tirelessly and cared?

Does the mind in isolation care? The artists longing for time and space retreated into their own worlds. Where is the caring? Their caring is in their work. Their work becomes the messengers of their internal worlds, worlds in which the artists observe minutely, explore, and dream. With these messages, their work, created in remoteness, we can experience their world.

They then can carry us all at this time through our various states of isolation. By focusing on their own practices and sharing their work, they are caring and giving us a path.

Please have a look at their work and enter their worlds, here and on their websites, you will find many beautiful messages.

Stay safe!

Stefan Hagen, Founder



Ash Ferlito
detail of *Freshkills Park 7_15_19*, 2019, Cyanotype on paper



Thank you to all the individuals for all the help and support they have given to us.

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Photo by Christine Nguyen

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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