



2017 season



The Artists in Residence
2017

montello foundation

artcodex

Mike Estabrook and Vandana Jain
Brooklyn, NY
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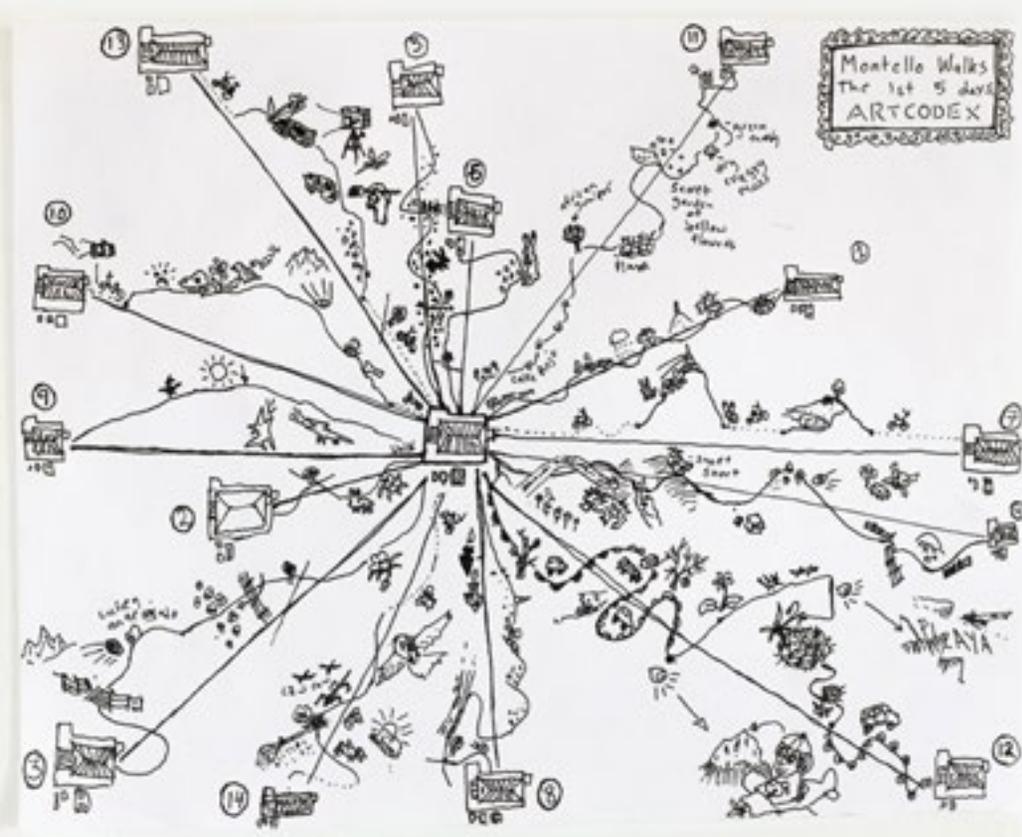


We are a Brooklyn-based artist couple who each have our own practice but work together as Artcodex to create space for collaboration. Our most recent works have been exploring human relationships to nature through humor and whim.

We came to Montello intending to continue our project “Blaze of Whimsy” from 2016, in which we walked around a pastoral landscape in central Pennsylvania and highlighted interesting little details in bright hunter’s orange.

In Nevada, our intention was to repeat this process, using a deep matte black that we felt would contrast nicely with the pale colors of the sagebrush desert. Once we began exploring the landscape, we were overwhelmed by the vast distanc-

where our feet fell, video still, 2017



Montello Walks: The First 5 Days, 2017

es and far away vistas. This made it difficult to restrict our eye to just the close-up details that had caught our attention in the Pennsylvania forests.

Instead, the walks themselves became our subject matter. We would set out each day, heading for distant landmarks and places we’d seen, but not reached, on previous walks. We followed the trails, the roads, the fences, mostly on foot, but occasionally on bike and once by car. At the end of every day, we would make detailed written logs of each of the day’s walks. These became the basis for a series of hand-drawn maps depicting each excursion as a linear experience, starting and ending at the cabin. In addition to the route, memorable moments from each walk, such as the animals we saw, the light conditions, the hills and gullies, flowers, and even the shockingly loud low flying military jets.

By engaging in this dialogue with the landscape, and getting away from the demands of society, of work, and even of friends and family, Montello became a much needed distillation. For those two weeks, we had ample time to walk and read and cook and make art, and to think about our place within the wildness surrounding us.

Cynthia Brinich-Langlois

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Through exploration of the landscape genre, my work considers human interventions in terms of altered topographies, narrative structures, and symbolic interpretations of ecological systems. I utilize a range of approaches, blending interests in printmaking, drawing, and writing to examine effects and perceptions of time, both on a human and geological scale. My creative endeavors depend on travel to sometimes remote sites, and my stay at the Montello Foundation cabin allowed me to devote extended time toward exploring a region that would normally prove difficult to access.

Island I, 2017



Island III, 2017

Recently, I have made works examining the shifting landscape of Glacier Bay in Alaska, specifically focusing on islands that are rising from the water as the weight of the ice melts away. The basin-and-range landscape of Nevada offers a different, yet similarly isolated environment. I continued this examination of “islands” from an ecological perspective, drawing the hills that rise up high enough to support cooler climate species of piñons mixed in with the junipers, as well as some that are utterly barren. As the weather continues to warm, the piñon stands creep ever higher, but at some point, they reach the top of the hill. During early morning hikes, I collected artifacts—rocks, bones, sun-bleached twigs, shell casings. These objects create a counterpoint below the floating hill-islands, not exactly grounding them, but offering evidence, along with GPS coordinates, of my investigation of the site.

I remain concerned about the reach of anthropogenic forces, even, perhaps especially, in remote parts of the country. My multi-disciplinary investigations record evidence of intention and accident, of the subtle adjustments and colossal transformations that characterize the natural world.

Kevin Cooley

Los Angeles, CA

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I work with video, photography, sculpture, and installation, to create platforms through which to observe experimental and performative gestures meant to decipher our complex, ever-evolving relationship to nature. My interest in the Montello Foundation Residency was not as a place to make a specific project, but the seclusion in nature seemed ideal for reflecting upon my practice without the usual pressures of making work for exhibition. I had planned to simply make coffee in the morning, and stare out into the landscape lost in contemplation about what my

the rig for light and variable



light and variable test, 2017

next big project could be. As soon as I arrived, however, I was enamored by the location, the light, and most of all the wind. I tried hard to keep to this stated regimen, spending my mornings reading from the foundation's carefully curated library, but as soon as the wind started to blow around noon, my attention was displaced by Montello's special location. I constructed a jury-rigged apparatus consisting of a video camera and a powerful flashlight that would pan across the epic stage brush in response to the shifting currents. This yielded a video I called 'light and variable' which, after about a week, I decided was a failure. Yet, I continued to work with the flashlight, creating a series of photographs from other locations long after I left the residency.

Reflecting upon my time at Montello four months later, I recognize that I'm out of tune with the more whimsical aspects of my practice, and my experience at the residency highlighted the difficulty I've found in tapping into it on a regular basis. Ultimately, I believe it helped me find a way to reconnect with my inspiration to become an artist in the first place.

**Dylan Gauthier
Kendra Sullivan**

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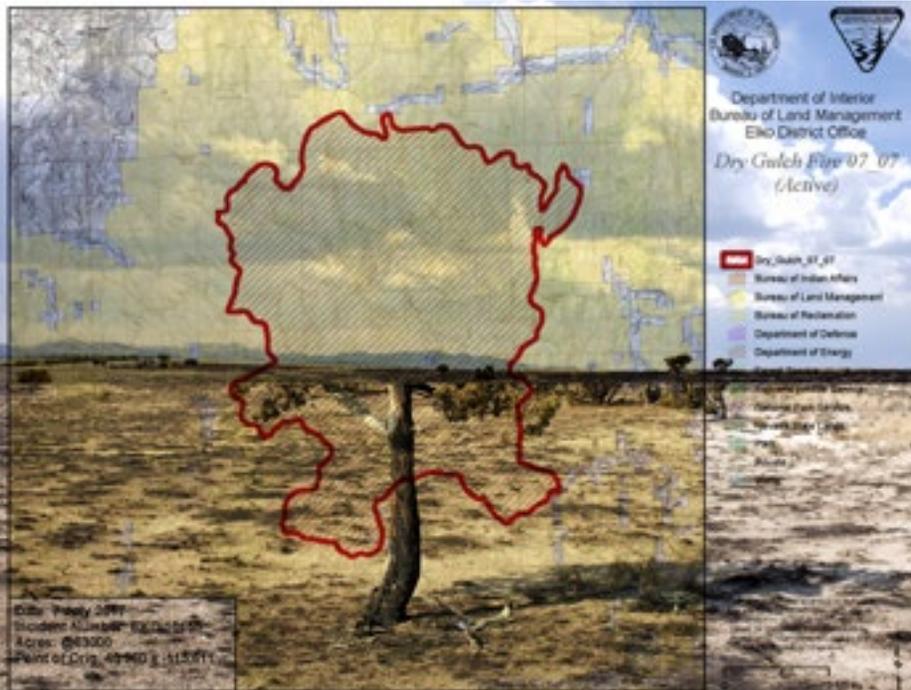


The Montello Foundation Residency was awesomely productive time. For two weeks our work expanded into the freedom and openness of the desert, and the freedom and openness of a day unwired, unplugged, unscheduled, and with no distractions (save for an occasional critter). At the same time, being out in the desert for two weeks in July is a challenging, humbling experience for two people used to living by the rhythms of a city, a clock, a social network. You fold your waking-working-sleeping patterns into a rhythm crafted by the day: arise with the pack rat on the porch around 3:30 in the morning, just before sunrise, and get to work. Usually reading one of the impeccably matched books - Basin and Range, Sagebrush



Doxology (2), 2017

fire-lines, 2017



Desert: landscapes within and without - in the cabin's small library as a start to the day. By 2 pm it is 115° inside the house and the brain insists the work must stop. You lie on the studio floor, melting into the plywood, melting into a nap. Arising for a cooling shower and the setting sun, a walk through the coyote landscape, a glimpse of a jackrabbit, elk, antelope pack, brings you into the cool of the evening. The birds are working. You return to the studio to shake a few more thoughts into the world. It rains for ten minutes and it's enough to raise the rain gauge measuring the underground cistern a percentage point. The rain monitor is a clock that moves in both directions.

Le Corbusier designed "machines for living." The house in Montello is a machine for creating, designing, making, thinking. With its solar and rain catchment, it breathes a life support that enables a daily observation of the environment. From the porch you can see 360° and at least 20 miles in every direction. In all that space there is no sign of another human dwelling though we learn that the strip of cleared sand just a few miles from us is the underneath trail of a gas pipeline: the desert remade into a machine for delivering energy.

Midway through our stay, a lightning storm ignites a couple hundred acres of the desert to the west, and to the northeast we could see the flames of a 64,000 acre blaze. And there we are making work about climate change while in the distance the desert, drier than usual perhaps after a record heat and drought, was on fire.

Markus Guschelbauer

Vienna, Austria

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Highlight N° I - Sitting at the backside of the house and watching chipmunks, cottontails and jackrabbits doing their daily morning routine

Highlight N° II - It's so quiet!

Highlight N° III - The howling of the coyotes

After my residency period at Montello, I went on a three-week road trip across Utah, Nevada, Arizona and California, where I saw landscapes that were more amazing than any other place I had ever seen before. And now, three weeks later, I am back in my daily routine, asking myself: What is left of this two-week residency in a house far out in the desert of Nevada? The water meter dropped from 80 to 65 % during our stay; I am wondering if the pack rat is still alive and nibbling holes into the fly screen. And gosh, who invented the joke with the snake in the box? You got my full attention for some moments with that one! Going through my memories, I can easily recall various moments and movements in and around the house. To remember the smell of the desert, I took some branches of sagebrush with me. And flicking through the hundreds of photographs I took of the landscape, the sky, the colours and the projects, I can say that I worked quite effectively and busily during those days. But what is gone is the privilege of being at a place of total remoteness - something I would cherish above all. The lack of internet and mobile connection, and the fear of not being connected with the rest of the world, immediately turned into the advantage of being totally focused on the physical environment. It grounded me and I felt rather connected to the world than disconnected from it. And while not being distracted by messages or announcements popping up or by drawing



comparisons in any way, while being in the creative process, it made me feel very autonomous and productive. This state of mind is very important for my practice: beginning with observing, watching and perceiving, and then turning these perceptions into artistic action.

The main topic of my body of work is the interaction – me as a representative of the human being in general - with the landscape and its depiction through photography. Last year, while working at an artist residency in Upstate New York, I invented an object. The object is a wooden grid with an approximate size of three by four meters which makes it congruent with the aspect ratio of the screen of my camera. Therefore, it is an expedient tool for defining an image detail and so became a 3-dimensional object that wandered from place to place to perform a specific function. The orthogonal object stands as a representative of the rational mind in juxtaposition to the organic nature. Furthermore, it is a tool to measure and analyze dimensions, colours and topographies of various landscapes.

My journey to Montello started with a flight from Vienna to San Francisco. By traversing Canada and the northern part of the US by airplane the orthogonal structured topography of the Great Plains, which is a very significant evidence of human population in American history, struck my attention. And this was a decisive moment, as this encouraged me to continue my involvement with the grid during my stay at the two-week residency. The vast and the very specific characteristic of the surrounding land provided the perfect conditions to work on my project. What I found was a pristine piece of land where all basic human needs were met, and I just had to go from there. My approach to the ephemeral and non permanent objects and installations in the landscape is a very archaic one, and it relates to the history of civilisation and cultivation by means of abstraction.



Micol Hebron

Los Angeles, CA

www.micolhebron.com



The time I spent at Montello realigned my sense of time, self, and space. Time was reframed and redefined by sunrise and sunset; the waxing and waning of the moon; the lengths of the spontaneous windstorms; the swiftness of the clouds; the frequency of coyote howls. I came to Montello with a stack of hard drives full of projects that needed organizing, sorting, archiving and revising, and was immediately confronted with the drama of the contrast between the characteristics of the digital world as defined by mega- and giga- bytes--and the analog world that surrounded me, defined by the bend in the grasses, beetle tracks in the dirt, the cautionary squawks of a mother falcon, the silent zig-zags of jackrabbits navigating the sage-brush ocean. Removed from the hyper-real that is my home in Los Angeles and the incessant simulacra of the internet in which I am submerged daily, I became immediately overwhelmed as the vastness and peace of natural ecologies amplified the immensity of emotional space in my head and heart, and became catharsis. Within the first hour of my arrival to Montello, I sat on the porch crying, exorcising anxiety and uncertainty. Then, I was ready to begin.



Being in the northeast Nevadan desert, with no other human to talk to, no digital noise from the internet, no words spoken about gender, post-colonialism, semiotics, politics, or Marxist theory, I began to rethink my relationship to feminism, to the land, to history, to the present. Thoughts about my role in the anthropocene became magnified. I watched the ground carefully with each step, hyper aware of my presence and its potential impact. So many questions filled each day. What role does gender have - if any - when in the wilderness alone? Did the birds, coyotes, rabbits, bugs and shrubs care how I self-identified? Did it matter at all? I speculated that my pheromones and hormones would be relevant - as the surrounding creatures would no doubt smell me. But otherwise, I was relieved that my ego had no place here - and I didn't need it. I enjoyed being reminded that every part of this ecosystem was equally important. I wondered, 'what role does art have, when one is in the wilderness alone?' Is it purely and merely a tool for and within culture? How could art compete with all that the environment amplified in my phenomenological experience: the consciousness, the self-awareness, the rhythms of time, light, and life. Perhaps art could serve to remember these moments; to summarize, or condense; to convey the experience with others. But, then, no. It couldn't. You just need to go, and be, and see, for yourself.

Each morning I walked for 2 hours in a new direction. Each evening I walked for an hour in another. I was learning to read. I was learning to read the weather, the animal tracks, the growth patterns of the grasses, flowers, and trees. I was learning to read the way sound travelled across the hills and valleys; the way birds moved across the tops of the shrubs; the way the air quality and weather affected the color of sunlight reflecting off the clouds; the way woodrats pile their arsenal of branches. I learned to read the way branches were broken by hungry animals; the way that cows carved meandering paths through the prairies; the way cicadas mated and molted; the way ants claimed space with their hills of sand. At night, I learned to read the moon and the stars and the planets.

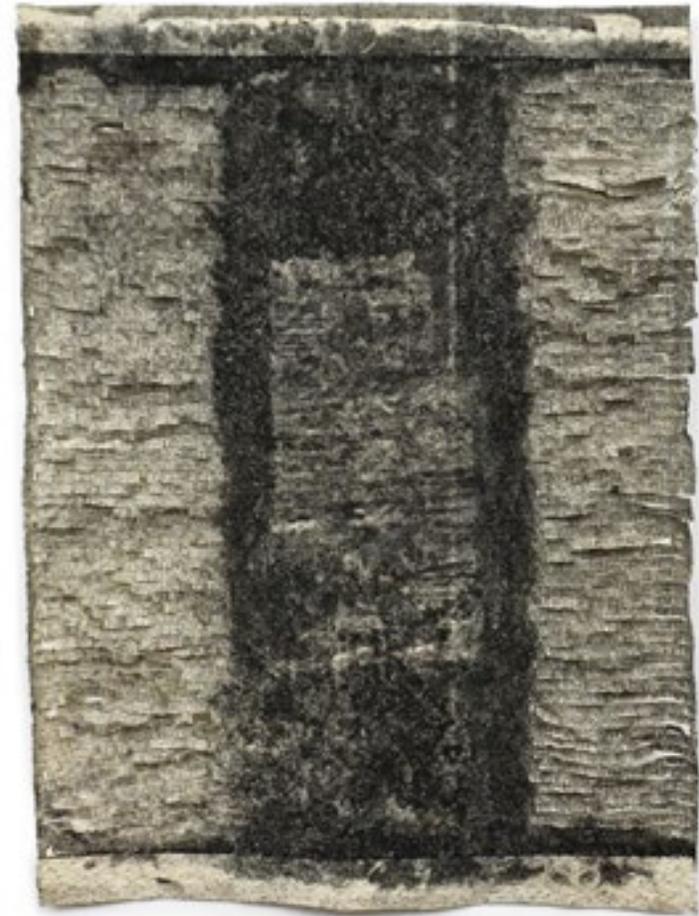
SaraNoa Mark

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My explorations stem from the innate human desire to document experience. I am mystified by our non-negotiable temporality. I seek evidence of the constant and invisible activity of time, time as a mark maker draws its presence in the form of wiggly waves washed up along the shore. The disintegrating effects of the wind working repeatedly for an unfathomable period of time eventually shapes a stone and sculpts the landscape. All my works are attempts to explore the language of drawing. The practice of making art prompts me to be present in my experiences through intentional observation and the act of making art allows me to participate in the world by responding with visual creations. I came to Montello hoping to make 'land art' when I arrived I couldn't even bring myself to play a song. For the place I came to was complete and I dared not disrupt its natural order. I learned to be the silent observer, witnessing the repetitive yet mystifying



patterns of a day. I have never stayed in the same place for so many days yet the place I stayed had the power to shift from dusty orange to deep blue. For the first time in my life I felt inside time, inside the fabric of a day. All there was to do really was to exist. All day I could recall my dreaming for there was nothing to pull me out of my imagination.

Being present for the entire operatic length of the sunrise then listening to the day from the last chirping sounds to the first howls of night teaches you everything there ever is to learn. I cannot name the knowledge I acquired in this time I can only say I felt closer and that I felt aligned. All of these experiences allowed me to abandon hesitation, and trust creative impulses. I learned to make my thoughts visible and to begin more than I could finish. After many months of avoidance in the studio I almost instantly gathered a renewed urgency and ability to welcome uncertainty into my practice. I believe it will take a long time to unpack and process my time at the Montello Foundation however I know that I can never un-know the feeling of standing alone in the swaying sagebrush.

Allen Moore

Baltimore, MD

www.vimeo.com/allenmoore



My plan of work at Montello was to explore the aesthetic, spiritual and transcendental importance of light in the landscape, specific to the northern Nevada Great Basin, using video to interpret of the natural environment. This project evolved into a series of visual mediations also exploring the important variables of time and perspective. First, I worked on several time-lapse studies of movement in the celestial sphere over the course of my many nights at Montello. The absence of light pollution and the crescent phases of the moon afforded me an exceptional view of the night sky. I also chose a non-human perspective from which to shoot the daylight landscape, from altitudes only reachable from a drone. I successfully



explored a variety of stunning geological formations from a point of view, before the advent of this cinematic technology, only seen by birds.

When not out exploring this “sense of place” that is the environment near Twentyone Mile Draw, my residency at Montello allowed me an extended period of time to focus on exploration of a place that I have already had the privilege of filming for several years of my career. I spent nearly 100 hours at my computer, editing video for a new documentary about the island community of Berneray in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland, where I had made a one hour 16mm film 40 years before. The peace and solitude at Montello was instrumental in allowing me to dive deep into the visual material for this new project.

Through my experience at Montello, having the time and space to be immersed in the wondrous natural landscapes of northern Nevada, I developed an emotional and aesthetic connection to this place. I hope to have the privilege to return again someday to revisit the majesty of Montello.

Sara Morawetz

Sydney, Australia

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From our births we are creatures of movement, compelled by an intuitive desire to experience, to travel. Our first steps instigate a life lived in motion, motion that will shape the shell of our vision. The world is a decidedly different place when viewed at pace, our periphery absorbs and our parameters alter as reality succumbs to the unknown blur. We detach from the recognisable and accept the sight of objects not as they are but as they appear. And then we slip; oscillating within time and space at an exponential rate. Speed, 'the mechanical soul of modernity'¹ has created a perceptual shift, as the relevance and revelation that can be found within the comfort of ones own stride elapses into obscurity.

The expeditious rate at which we travel moves in disjunction with our body's internal mechanisms - a pulse, a canter - that omits the possibility of interacting with the world that we inhabit. So what is it then to stop - slow - retreat from speed?

The act of walking has become anachronistic. Our sensory instincts, inured to ac-



celeration, have lost the ability to read the environment from within our own measure. To steady oneself through walking is to regain a form of sight almost lost; the discovery of simplistic beauty in absence of speed and reverence to ones own body that exists within the stride. To slow down forces a recognition that the pace we maintain inevitably blinds us from the transcendental and ethereal that exists in the everyday.

My time in Montello was framed by a desire to consider the act of walking as a mode of performative practice - to invest in a physical, temporal and conceptual experience that would respond to site, sense and self.

I was immediately struck by the beauty of the landscape and humbled by its expanse. In my walks, I discovered an emptiness and an amplitude – hidden pathways and an internal pace that required me to remain at once observing and observant of the natural realm. My solitude illuminated the world around and a world within - infusing each action with stillness, silence, surface and sky. *Time slowed and I slowed with it* and the trace of this tempering has lasted long after I left the desert behind.

Walks for Richard, 2017 - Documentation of action

Fifty years ago artist Richard Long produced his photographic work *A Line Made by Walking*, documenting a physical yet ephemeral intervention with the landscape. In homage to this central figure of conceptual art and walking as performative practice, I staged a series of *Walks for Richard* during my Montello residency, illustrating the unseen labor embedded within Long's historic work.

¹ McQuire, Scott. *Visions of modernity: representation, memory, time and space in the age of the camera*. London: SAGE Publications, 1998, 184

Joseph Mougel

Milwaukee, WI

uwm.edu/arts/directory/mougel-joseph



I am fascinated by the manifestation of self through the disruption of structured systems. My work transforms places through the manipulation of objects, memories, and rituals to create manufactured scenarios that explore manual labor, land use, and tactics for deciphering space and time on a human scale. This creative research spans genres of performance, video, and photography, while engaging with topics of site specificity through a field-based practice. In some projects, the transformation of the landscape occurs through my own physical effort, while in others, I interact with the sites to reference ecological, historical, and/or contemporary management of resources.

Encounters Sec3 Sec2, 2017



Effortless Sage Before - After, 2017



The Montello residency offered me the time and space to produce work in response to the Nevada desert, both initiating new investigations and continuing existing endeavors. On early morning hikes, I identified sites to photograph during the cooler conditions after sunset. These scenes bathed in colored light capture a surreal presence, human or otherwise, that permeates the remote landscape. During the daytime, I worked on an additional installment of my *Effortless* series, examining the history of range management and sagebrush removal throughout the region. At the conclusion of the residency, I traveled to Muley Point, Utah, and completed another *Effortless* piece featuring tinajas, which considers access to water in the desert. My creative documentation of these transient works persists, even as the products of my activity are ultimately undone when, for example, the rains come again with the change of seasons and the field inevitably returns to its overgrown condition.

Brie Ruais

Brooklyn, NY

www.brieruais.com



My sculpture practice primarily involves the full use of my body in choreographed movements recorded in clay. These clay sculptures are large, abstract, sometimes raw or fired, and usually wall-mounted. Clay has the ability to address conceptions of the internal body and the body of the earth; it is in this space that my work reflects on the history of shared repression and exploitation of both bodies and the environment.

William Fox wrote that the oldest way of measuring the land is to travel through it, gauging its size in relation to your body. I began my time at Montello with walks to orient myself and reading about the unique topography of the Great Basin Desert. The Great Basin truly is one: all waters flow inward to arid sinks. Thinking sculpturally about



Magenta Playa, 2017, Paper pulp, rock, branch, dirt, dye 22 x 30 x 3.5 inches



the form of the landscape itself inspired the sculptures that I made there.

While reading a book from the Montello Foundation library, I came across a quote by Michael Heizer who said “Material is place, and place is material”, when speaking about why he purchased his land in southern Nevada. I thought about the materials that surrounded me, and after a series of trials and errors, two trips to the distant Walmart for a blender (after the first one burnt out), and the kind of decision making that leaves no room for doubt, I was making paper pulp and sculptures in the gravel driveway. It is a body of work that adapted entirely to the place, its limited resources, and required me to experience the severity of the landscape by working outside. I used my own grey water to soak the paper, repurposed paper for the pulp, and the gravel driveway as a work surface which provided drainage for the wet pulp.

This body of work, its process and resulting forms, has opened up new methods within my practice. One should not underestimate the value of undistracted time in isolation for an artist’s practice; ideas run wild, unchecked, unwitnessed. A reignited sense of trust in the making process and in the spirit of the place humbled me.

Zoë Sheehan Saldaña

Brooklyn, NY

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I got nowhere to run to, baby, nowhere to hide - Martha and the Vandellas

Before I left for Montello I told my friends that they could find me by looking up nowhere on the map, and I'd be smack dab in the middle. A particularly smart friend told me that utopia means nowhere [ou (no, not) + topos (place)].

The morning after the first night I walked east into the big wash where the sagebrush grew lush and every eroded hole in the dry caliche held traces of animal nests.

Another day I went south toward the pass and when I stopped to pee I found a big piece of petrified wood.

I saw no other humans until the fourth day when I was riding the bicycle west and came up over a rise to find myself face to face with a pickup carrying three men in camo. I'm not sure who was more surprised. Turned out they were on their second day of tracking an elk

Kite in the sagebrush



Bandana Kite Train, 2017

they'd shot but only wounded. The driver asked if I knew of any springs nearby.

"No, sorry, I don't."

"Ok thanks anyways. You want some water? You sure?" They rode on.

I rode north fifteen miles along the wash, past the scar of the gas pipeline, under a pair of thermalling golden eagles, across a meadow of dried grass, until I got to the Thousand Springs Creek that traced a portion of the 19th century overland trail from Missouri to California. Then as now as ever it seems we are all just passing through.

Unless the wind was howling, the days were so quiet I could hear crows' wings flapping two hundred feet above. While working in the studio one afternoon a loud rumbling sound startled me. I thought a truck might be pulling into the driveway so I stepped outside to look and realized it was an airliner flying over at 30,000'.

Coyotes sing any time they damn well please.

The piñon pine might be my favorite tree.

One night long after moonset I was awakened by the brightness of starlight.

I built kites from bandanas and flew them in long lines tracing the invisible eddies of air rushing over the earth.

The evening before I was to leave, rain fell steadily for an hour or more, and in the morning I could see snow at 7,000'. I was prepared to stay for several extra days if the road was unforgiving but it still seemed dry so I packed up the car and carefully drove out. At 5,500' a coyote dashed across the way. At 6,000' an elk sauntered by. At the pass I stopped to collect snow-dusted juniper berries. Just beyond the pass a buck mule deer and his harem gathered at cloudbase, the last visible members of the farewell committee.

Until soon, nowhere land.

Miho Suzuki

Brooklyn, NY

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Nature is incomparable guide if you know how to follow her.

Carl Jung

I am intrigued by the concept of memory: both what is remembered and what has been forgotten. My work has often employed the camera and its potential to generate physical and temporal space parallel to an event and, effectively, place recollection on top of an unfolding moment in the present. My work reflects the continuous process of negotiation between two cultures. It is based on my experience of locating and relocating myself in relation to “home” in social and cultural contexts.

My work reflects the continuous process of negotiation between two cultures. The current state of anti-refugee hysteria and racial discrimination in America has made me want to learn about Japanese internment camps during WW II. Many internment camps were built in a desolated high desert. My concern and eager to understand better the history made me visit the former campsites during and after Montello residency.

A remote location without human interaction, an undeveloped desert valley surrounded by sagebrush steppe, unpaved dirt roads, the wilderness - all were the very unknown world for me who was born in Tokyo and have lived in the city for long years. For many years I had imagined what it would be like to live in an uncivilized place in total isolation. Eventually I would find myself standing between two dusty pickup trucks and filling up gas at the Montello Gas & Grocery. A long anxiously awaited adventure began the



Topaz Camp , Delta, UT



Minidoka Camp Jerome, ID

moment I left a paved road to a gravel road at 2:50 pm on September 17. Wi-Fi was out of reach already that I had to solely rely on the written direction Montello Foundation had sent me. Soon enough I encountered a trouble that I did not anticipate driving in a desolate desert. A fork road split into three separate paths - if I chose the wrong path I would drive farther away from my destination. What does a well in the desert look like? How big is the enclosure? The path? I anxiously questioned to myself. I don't live in a country I do not know any of these! Driving on the dirt roads was challenging. The narrow valley path was especially hard to drive: there were lots of rocks, mud holes, slopes, and deep ruts. Anytime I passed steep hills I would imagine seeing the Ninemile Mountain, yet there was always another ridge right in front of me. There were two weeks' supplies of food and water in the car. By looking at the sun's altitude at 25 ° I considered camping out if I could not make it to the retreat before the sunset. When a flock of 25-inch length ravens flew over me I promised myself that I would not sleep in the car, I would make it to my destination, and I would celebrate my arrival with the sunset.

It was a huge relief when I drove the last ridge and saw the Ninemile Mountain. At 5:00 pm I recognized the small wooden house just like the photo from Montello Foundation catalogue. Yes, yes, yes!! I cheered to the most striking house on the hill in the desert valley that stood glowing so beautifully in the late afternoon sunlight. At 6:10 pm I set a table and a chair on the deck. The warm sunlight hit on my face and illuminated the desert valley a golden amber. The sound of dry grass and sagebrush was speaking loud like waves washed up on the shore. Uncivilized land was not quiet; nature was loud. I placed my hands together and gave thanks to nature. At 6:50 pm the sun went behind a mountain. In the following days the unpredictable and constantly changing weather in the desert required me to adapt and flow with nature. From the pleasant autumn days with blue sky and bright sun to heavy rain and a sudden hailstorm, the landscape was suddenly transformed into a winter wonderland. Nature reminded me how tiny I was that my own personal matters were so small in comparison to the nature that surrounds us. I felt lighter. *Panta Rhei*, flowing with the nature, everything constantly changing. Whenever the weather allowed me to explore the surrounding I grabbed a mountain bike to fly like a bird for the field study. “Nature is incomparable guide if you know how to follow her.” I found the quote from the Montello foundation library. It will stay with me for a lifetime along with my experience at the Montello Foundation.



Lea Titz

Vienna, Austria
www.leaditz.com



Found-Fiction

My video is about a fictitious sculpture park combines my usual way of working, with the influence of landscape, literature, and the time and concentration I found at the Montello retreat.

In my video and photographic work, shifting scale is often part of my method, as well as combining images of nature with thinking rooted in civilization.

The sound for the video, which is not finished at the moment of writing this report, will consist of statements given by people from various professional fields while watching the video. Important to me, while working on the project, was the use of resources when making art and whether art is an enrichment or disturbance in a specific scenery, as well as questions of authorship, the art market, and even biological explorations.

Sculpture Park Montello, Videostill, 2017



Sculpture Park Montello, 2017

Dwarf Forest

All the sagebrush bushes around the house become the huge and old trees, they probably really are, if you kneel or lie down next to them. These gigantic woods of only 1-2 feet high trees fascinated me, and I started to work with them.

At the same time, I collected things: bones, stones, dry mushrooms, color-samples from the hardware store in Wendover, as well as leaflets and a present from Montello based artist, Jerry Tidewell, with whom we had had an intensive talk.

Out of this collection, I created sculptures for these desert woods, for the Dwarf Forest. In addition, I made one specific hill my Sculpture Park, placing my sculptures of collected objects amongst the sagebrush. Each sculpture placed in the Sculpture Park is homage to artworks of other artists or myself.

High Performance

I shared the space with colleague, friend and artist, Markus Guschelbauer. I was not alone, but one other person, one place and no internet or telephone reception was still much less communication than usual. We were never bored in those two weeks and didn't even have the wish to watch the movies we brought on our laptops. The surrounding nature offered a high level of entertainment at every moment I was observing.

The setting truly demands and enables slow and focused moves. Without planning to do so, we found ourselves in a very regular day and night rhythm. But within this daily routine, I saw once more that a (self-chosen) limitation of possibilities just opens up more new possibilities.

Patricia Watwood

Brooklyn, NY

www.patriciawatwood.com



92° East, Thursday, 6:50 am, 2017

Who can wait quietly while the mud settles?

Who can remain still until the moment of action?

Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching: Fifteen*

Other interpretations of this text ask, “Do you have the patience to wait until your mud settles and your water runs clear?” In traveling to Montello, this was my primary question. How long a time and how far from home is far enough from the cacophony of urban life to gain the quiet needed to hear the still, soft voice of my mind? Arriving at Montello, my first realization was that I had brought the spinning energy of the city with me.

The first days were spent simply in arriving mentally to the presence of the land and the quiet. Settling into the house, exploring the earth and sky around me, observing the sun, measuring points of the compass, and gauging the weather then became the swirling activity of my mind. I had to reckon with the experience of isolation, until then completely unfamiliar. I had to give myself permission to be unreachable by my children. Cultivating familiarity with my surroundings and the simple acts of self-care were both an act of survival and a discipline of being still. I learned to accept quiet and being alone as a normal condition. I had to make friends with the fear of being alone, and become comfortable relying completely on my own resources.

90° East, Wednesday, 6:30 am, 2017



Later, at home, I would describe to friends the setting around the house by detailing the great expanse of land to the distant hills and say something like “there’s nothing else there.” But, I realized that what I really meant is that there’s nothing else human there. The place is entirely full of all the things that live there - the sagebrush and juniper, sedums and cactus, animals, rocks and mountains. The realization was a reminder that our anthropocentrism blinds us to what is and what is not. The earth may not be full of things useful to and made by man, but it is completely whole, with our without our presence.

I found that my “job” there was simply to be the conscious presence marking that time and place on earth - those particular sunsets and moonrises, those storms and clear skies, that rabbit, that coyote. In Rilke’s “Ninth Duino Elegy,” he writes,

*But because truly being here is so much; because everything here
apparently needs us, this fleeting world, which in some strange way
keeps calling to us. Us, the most fleeting of all.*

Rilke indicates that the world is served by us simply being present and alive to it, naming it, marking its beauty, praising, writing, and painting.

So, it was in this spirit of marking conscious presence, honoring the sacredness of the earth, and cultivating mindfulness that I came up with the theme of creating artwork based on the Book of Hours, a medieval illustrated prayer book. In that era, an “hour” was a non-specific period of time dedicated to work or religious practice. In Montello, I created eight works mirroring the eight traditional canonical hours. Each “hour” marked a different time of day and different direction of the compass in around the house. During the week, I worked on 2 or 3 pieces at various times during each day. The final set comprises 8 watercolors in a cycle that begins with “Before Sunrise” and ends with “Last Light”. The watercolors were planned before, and finished after, but executed in large part at the time of day corresponding with the canonical hour. Fragments of text that were inspiring over the course of the week, or specifically to the individual work, are incorporated in the legend on each one.

The artist as an explorer, with no agenda, with no theory to prove - even sometimes without an aim - was a reoccurring theme in the reports of our Residents this year. Then, in terms of exploration, the artist's role became one of the observer and the note taker. There is a great tradition of artists being observers and note takers. While observing and recording the human body was of course historically the original focus, a quest to understand the entire natural world, its geometry, its light and the relationships between all the elements soon became essential. Artists became then interpreters of their own observations, rather than interpreters of an imposed dogma. Their message became based on their exploration.

The unfamiliarity of the setting of the retreat, definitely foreign to most of our fellows, is an important part of our residency program. It can be a challenge but also an opportunity. It stimulates the urge and need to explore and interpret the observations: the desert as a muse.

In 2017, seventeen artists stayed at the Montello retreat from early May until early November and observed everything from freezing nights to hot summer days, wildfires and muddy roads and were able to take in the skies, the fleeting moments of colors in the morning and evening, as well as a majestic night sky.

Please have a look at their notes, their first messages from their stay, and please view more of their work on their websites: explore!

Stefan Hagen, Founder

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Patricia Watwood, detail of *90° East, Wednesday, 6:30 am, 2017*



Photo by Allen Moore

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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