

Anna Hepler

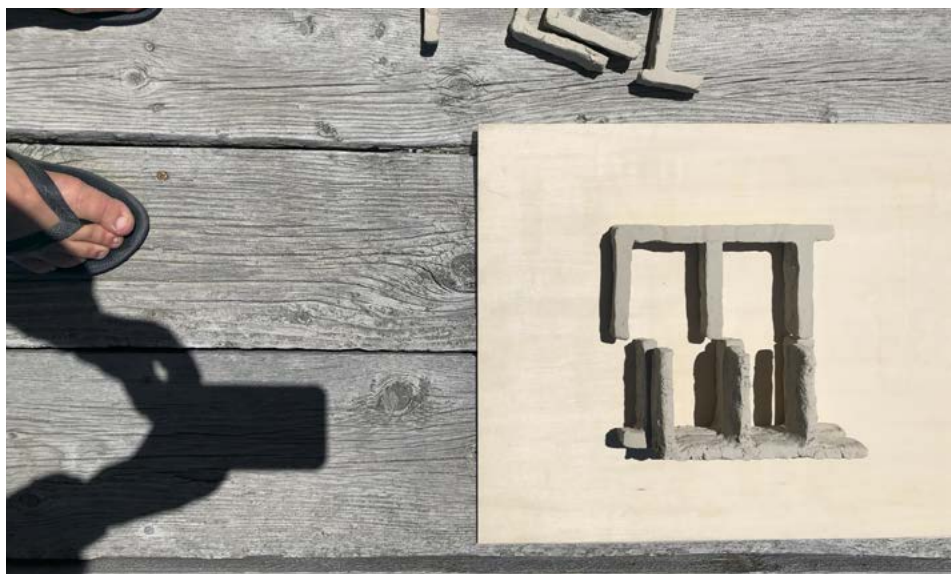
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Arriving at the Montello retreat, I heard only the meadowlark, but soon my ears trained on other sounds — cicada, locust, coyote, raven. With traces of human endeavor reduced to a few dusty roads, there was space to observe and revel in the strangeness of the landscape. Into these spaces, with all senses alert, I began to unfold. Slow wandering in every direction through sage brush and juniper, reading, writing, and laying on the deck with eyes closed — these were the unfamiliar activities that held my days. I could not remember when I last felt that kind of happiness.

My work is rooted in the transformative process of printmaking; the surprise of how each impression retains the material presence of the original inked surface — a woodblock shows its woodgrain, a metal plate, its smooth hard edges. This communion between paper, ink, and material occurs out of view, underneath the blankets of a press — a secret encounter to which we are not witness but which is plainly apparent, embossed into the paper of the finished print.



From this observation, one begins to see all objects and materials as holding the potential to generate a secondary ghost image, to show some aspect of physical presence in absence. Every object casts a shadow, also a kind of print.

And so I worked in the desert, almost despite everything, a kind-of afterthought, a inner imperative brought to life by new impulses. The studio felt unnecessary. My work was outside, taking shape in tandem with the shifting light, the sounds, the complicated web of spiders silk connecting everything to everything. I built low reliefs from dirt and water, captured as photographs casting disorienting shadows, an investigation in light, the models later crushed under the wheels of my rental truck as I departed, leaving no trace.