

## Aura Wolowiec

Newburgh, NY  
audrawolowiec.com



Entering the landscape from the small town of Montello, one travels along a dirt road for about twenty miles. In places, it is less like a road and more like a dry river bed, winding, tilting, rocky, alluvial indentations that bring to mind a shared traversal for bodies of water. The sense of beauty and remoteness was overwhelming. I made it to the house just before light completely disappeared from the sky, an orange glow punctuated the ridge of the mountains, grounded in deep blue.

*The color of that distance is the color of an emotion, the color of solitude and of desire, the color of there seen from here, the color of where you are not.*

After a few days, I learned a daily rhythm through waking with the sun, walking, reading, and a strong awareness of interrupting—in the conditions of the desert we become acutely aware of our needs, our fragility in relation to the fortitude of the desert moss, the unfathomable time contained in each stone.

I hung the Geologic Map of Elko County, Nevada on the studio wall and mapped the area from Montello to the house: Pluvial Lake Deposits, Aluvium, Limestone, Mudstone, Shale, Chert, Siltstone, Gray Quartzine, Marine Sedimentary Rocks.



sky music, collaged found photograph cut in the form of musical staves, on archival paper; 2020

blue blue blue blue  
blue — blue blue blue  
blue blue blue



blue vespers, blues cut from *The Blue of Distance* (Rebecca Solnit) with musical pauses from *Masses and Vespers* (from a series of 9), 8 x 11 in, 2022

Roland Barthes described voice through a geology of speech, the grain of the voice, where language, water, and rock are related. What are the fragmentary visuals where speech and material meet? A restless, embodied tectonics.

*It wasn't particular things, but the spaces between them, that abundance of absence, that is the desert's invitation.*

In the studio, I began extracting the pauses and silences in *Masses and Vespers*, a book of discarded hymns, paired on paper with crystalline forms, how auditory silences meet the material silences contained in geology. I loved thinking about *Masses* as physical mass—rock, stone, earth—and *Vespers* as the shifting desert air—clouds, wind, and breath. These pauses also joined the blues from a chapter in *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, by Rebecca Solnit, a wayfinding companion in the solitude of the desert. I extend deep gratitude to both the land itself and the Montello Foundation, for a short but immersive stay, with lasting resonance.