

Brie Ruais

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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.