

Ben Wahlund

Aurora, IL

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I'm incredibly grateful to the Montello Foundation for two transformative weeks of solitary silence living among the sagebrush and juniper of the great basin. I've been to a number of residencies and while each one is unique, this one more so than most, and about as different as is possible from my last one in Shanghai, from the crush of one of the most populated cities on earth to one of the most open. The most exceptional, and for me, valuable thing about this residency is its isolation. It was 4-miles from the nearest phone signal, away from the intrusion of the outside world, in this day and age that's a truly remarkable thing. While here you consider carefully the resources you use that we often take for granted. The cabin

operates off of solar power and uses a rainwater collection system, emphasizing for me how rare and precious water can be. I found that even after the first day I began to adjust myself to the rhythm of this stark and beautiful area. The sunrise and sunset, walks in the cool of the morning, the sometimes-fierce afternoon and evening winds, and the startling array of stars at night. My first few days there were defined by smoke from the tragic wildfires around Tahoe. Further underscoring the fragility of our environment. There's a beauty and subtlety to the landscape here, so much so that you begin to notice not just its openness and grand gestures but a multitude of small and wonderful things. This is a place that in its isolation compels reflection. While I spent plenty of time painting and drawing, a lot of what I did was consider my own practice, the threads of which are already forming the beginnings of a new body of work.

For recordings by Ben Wahlund please go to montellofoundation.org/audio.htm

