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After spending the last couple years observing and absorbing the collective trauma and grief of the pandemic, politics, and climate crisis, I needed this opportunity as an artist to think, and then respond creatively.

I spent my first two days at the retreat giving my nervous system a break from the chronic stress it had grown accustomed to, and felt wonder and gratitude for the intentional stillness I could have in this vast and unfamiliar landscape. I often thought about the nearest humans; ranchers or people who simply wanted to live in remote settings. I imagined we may have very different political views and backgrounds. But I also contemplated our shared connection to the land, and the fact that these were the people who would most likely help me in an emergency. I thought a lot about stew-

Align, marker on colored paper, 22 in x30 in, 2022



Clarity, watercolor on paper, 12 x 18 in, 2022

ardship of the environment, but also each other. And Otherness. And caring for the “other.” It reminded me of this quote by Aruna D’Souza, from *Empathy Will Not Save Us*.

“Solidarity is rooted not in our capacity to cross divides and understand each other, but in recognizing we have the obligation to care for each other no matter what stories they tell about themselves, no matter if they refuse to speak, and no matter if we have any sense of ourselves reflected in them.”

This quote resonated during my stay at Montello. I pondered, “What if we applied this idea to the natural environment, and created collective solidarity in our stewardship of it not because we directly profit from it, or because our identity is rooted in a specific place, but because we have an obligation to care for it, just like we do each other? How can you not love something that you care for? How can you not defend it when it’s threatened?”

So, as this question gently occupied the backdrop of my mind, I made drawings inspired by my intangible sense of absolute smallness and undeniable belonging that I felt in the greater ecosystem around me, where human destruction felt minimal and distant and where I felt a sense of peace that I had not felt in a very, long time.