

Laura Marie Peterson

Brooklyn, NY

www.oneplusone.plus



Writing is an edited way of thinking. My own memories are just as easily forgotten as those unwritten. I write to remember, but also as a process of thinking. Sporadically and without direction, I wrote more letters and took more photographs at Montello than I ever have. The desert overtook me. These snippets in time live on, and can never be quite reconstructed to portray the incredibly meaningful and life-changing experience I had at Montello.

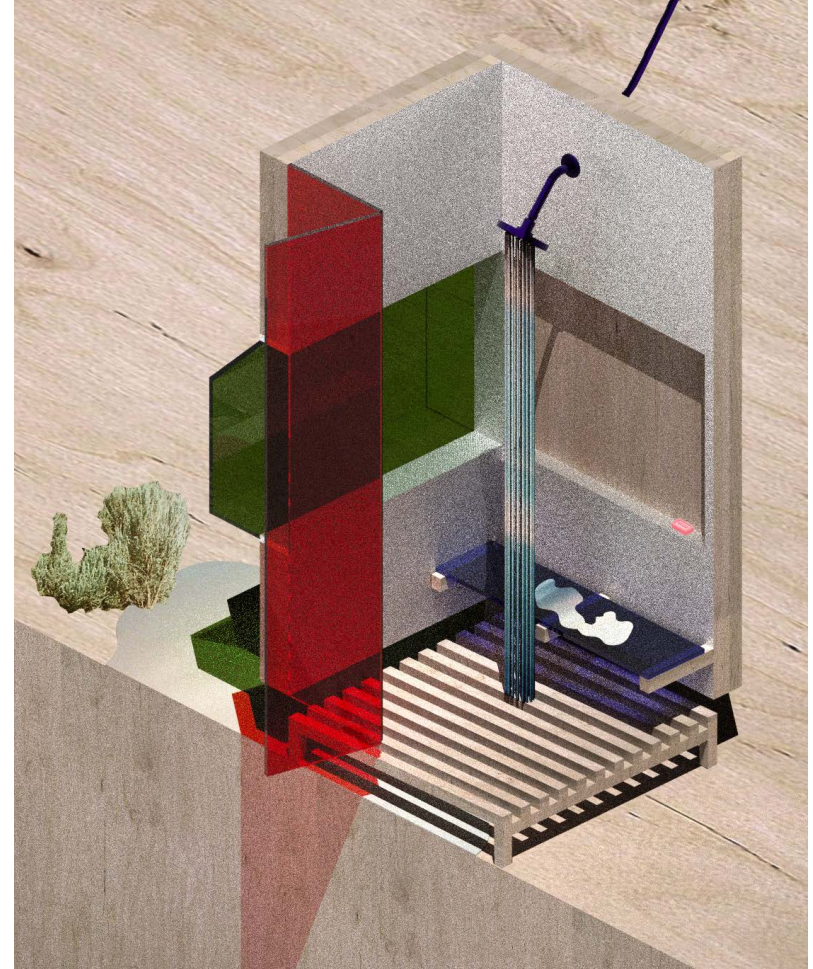
August 8, 2020 I've never had this much space and time to myself, and that in itself is daunting, but I can see and hear and smell the desert creeping in. It feels like a feat getting here -- the remoteness amplified by the pandemic. A retreat from the great retreat. A cloud hangs over the mountain, just sitting there and waiting for something to happen.

August 9, 2020 A giant water container the color of yellow plastic toys sits down the road some miles. In the golden hour it stands there like a cutout prop pasted into the desert. I walk further down the dusty road knowing only how to navigate the world through all things human. The desert scares me because I have never learned to traverse it without these markings.

August 11, 2020 The mere idea of mapping the sky is absurd, but we do it anyways. The map is an imprint, an abstraction of time that carries consequence into the future like any good photograph. I can say now for certain that the euclidean grid, born out of colonial expansion, will be our demise.

August 12, 2020 Nature is experienced in gradients, but the gardens constructed by humans are abrupt, compact, succinct. A hike reveals the slow change from a pine forest to a prairie to a swamp; the nomenclature creates distinctions. I want to design a Gradient House, a synthesizer of air, water, earth with all the subnatural elements we forget to celebrate: bugs, puddles, rainbows, dust.

August 15, 2020 Being able to live in the now and connect with everything around you can change your entire outlook on life, and have a tremendously positive effect on our world.



Gradient House, 2020, measures the rhythm of our body against our surroundings, capturing the subtle variations in light, earth and sky

August 18, 2020 I feel as if I am leaning into this place and the routine of the day - my own spontaneity driven by the temperature and weather of the desert. The sky, a purple-gray seconds ago is swaying towards blues. I spend too much time in capitalist directions that I've lost a part of myself.

August 20, 2020 We are part of a lucky entanglement with the earth. I will never be able to explain how much Montello has carved me to my roots, and I seek to always find myself back here in this very state of mind. This place is less about what you're planning to come here to do, and less about measuring your experience against your somewhat meaningless goals. If you think it is, you will miss out on everything that surrounds you. Take it all in, breathe it in, let the dust hit your face. Walk down the old road until you lose sight of the house and find yourself in a field of sagebrush near a river carved eons ago. Read. Read so much that you push past that constructed idea of the west, and the desert desolation that you've erected in your mind. Discover the life and death of this place, and how you are connected to all of it.

