

Lauren Strohacker

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I am an ecological artist living and working in Phoenix, Arizona. My work examines the ever-growing conflict between humans and animals in the Anthropocene. Often collaborating with environmental organizations, I compose interdisciplinary interventions that utilize human networks in order to reimagine and reintroduce wildlife systems destabilized by our manufactured environments. I went to the Montello Foundation not to make physical work but to have the time to think of new eco-art projects. Each day boiled down to basics: eating, sleeping, cleaning, writing and experiencing the land through hiking and stargazing. Beauty and fear were amplified in my remoteness, giving an intense clarity to my conceptual process. The residency was an exercise in awareness between myself, native wildlife, and the land.

Encounter, 2013



Animal Land (collaboration with Kendra Sollars), 2014

Reading and writing were paramount. Whether I read about the “Sagebrush Ocean” of the Nevada Great Basin or the history of Glen Canyon (eventually destroyed by the creation of Lake Powell), I realized I focused solely on beings (humans and non-humans) in previous projects, inadvertently leaving out the land as a connecting factor. With this realization, my research process now considers the natural landscape along with the built environment to more holistically understand wildlife, humans, and the terrain that sustains both. This conceptual expansion is a direct result of being placed at the mercy of the Nevada desert during the retreat. As an artist, I was humbled and reinvigorated by the Montello Foundation. I will take time to escape the city more often as a part of my studio practice. Ecological art depends on a deep understanding of the land, its historic biodiversity, how it has been transformed, and how it can be saved. With this knowledge, my future work will more authentically investigate and promote human/animal cohabitation rather than conflict.