

COMPOSITE

{Arts Magazine}

No. 11 The Wild

Spring 2013



COMPOSITE INFO

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Composite is a quarterly electronic magazine showcasing the work of artists from multiple disciplines, each issue focusing around a specific theme.

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More information can be found through the following vehicles:

Website: **www.compositearts.com**

Email: **compositeeditors@gmail.com**

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This issue falls in the middle of the Christian season of Lent. For those unfamiliar, Lent is a season of 40 days leading up to Easter, most popularly presented to the greater public by Josh Hartnett's 2002 masterpiece depicting relationship struggles during the season and stories of children giving up chocolate or television accompanied by a series of complicated loopholes. My wife and I, to varying degrees of success, have gone vegetarian for Lent the last 4 years.

While the coincidence escaped me until we began to put this issue together, a common theme within Lent is that of The Wilderness. You see, while giving up certain forms of consumption is an obvious allusion to a greater sacrifice, and fuel for feeding Catholic guilt when you inevitably cave half way through, a more intentional cause for abstaining is to consciously change your routine or quiet down your life to be aware of a higher power.

Really, isn't this why we are all drawn to nature, to spending time out in the wilderness? We leave the comforts of our home to sleep on the ground, to stand in rivers, to be alone on a mountain. We do all this to feel like we are part of something bigger than ourselves. No matter your belief system, we all can agree we are part of a system, or atleast some sort of family. This issue is proof; Atsuko reminds us the system never stops moving, Jessica shows us of the cycles of life and death all around us, Kevin reveals the information nature can give us, Crystal points out the responsibility we have to respect the environment around us.

We probably do spend too much time indoors and in cities. We definitely are all too comfortable. The wilderness can be uncomfortable and unwelcoming, but it also can bring renewal. The wilderness reminds us we're part of a story and it's going to keep going. So come along, spend some time in The Wild.

Zach Clark

Composite Editor

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Nature Study

Life always pushes up through the cracks.

Over all of Earth's landmasses and shallow waters, plants survive in the harshest conditions: lichen atop a mountain where the atmosphere thins, a succulent in the dryness of the desert—even weeds crack the cement carpets of human civilization. Seedlings on the bottom of the rainforest fight to catch the Sun's rays, inevitably choking a new sprout.

In the depths of a cave, creatures survive without sun and without sight. Bears hibernate for months without food every year. There are more kinds of crawling things and birds than humans can attempt to find and fit into taxonomic classifications, each living its own personal fight for survival. The sheer diversity of life on our planet is mind blowing, and it cannot be tamed.

The Wild

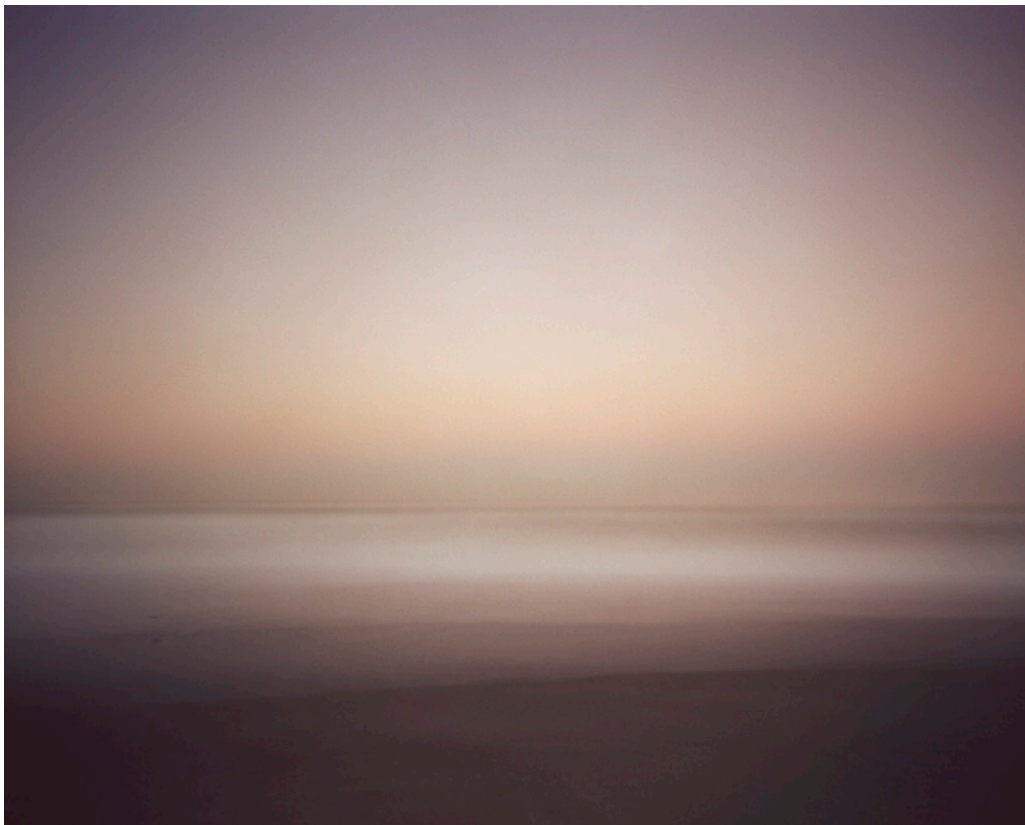
the comfort provided by homes, towns, and cities to live and write in the Alaskan wild. No matter what amenities are offered by civility, we, as a people, seek to immerse ourselves in the natural world, to capture its majesty and the awe it inspires, even if just for a moment.

And yet, we are in a daily struggle to do just that. Images of lightning are snatched from the sky with the click of a shutter. Expert climbers scale Everest every year. Sailors attempt to row across the Atlantic. Others willingly leave

When we look at the natural world, we see the reflection of ourselves, and the wild within.

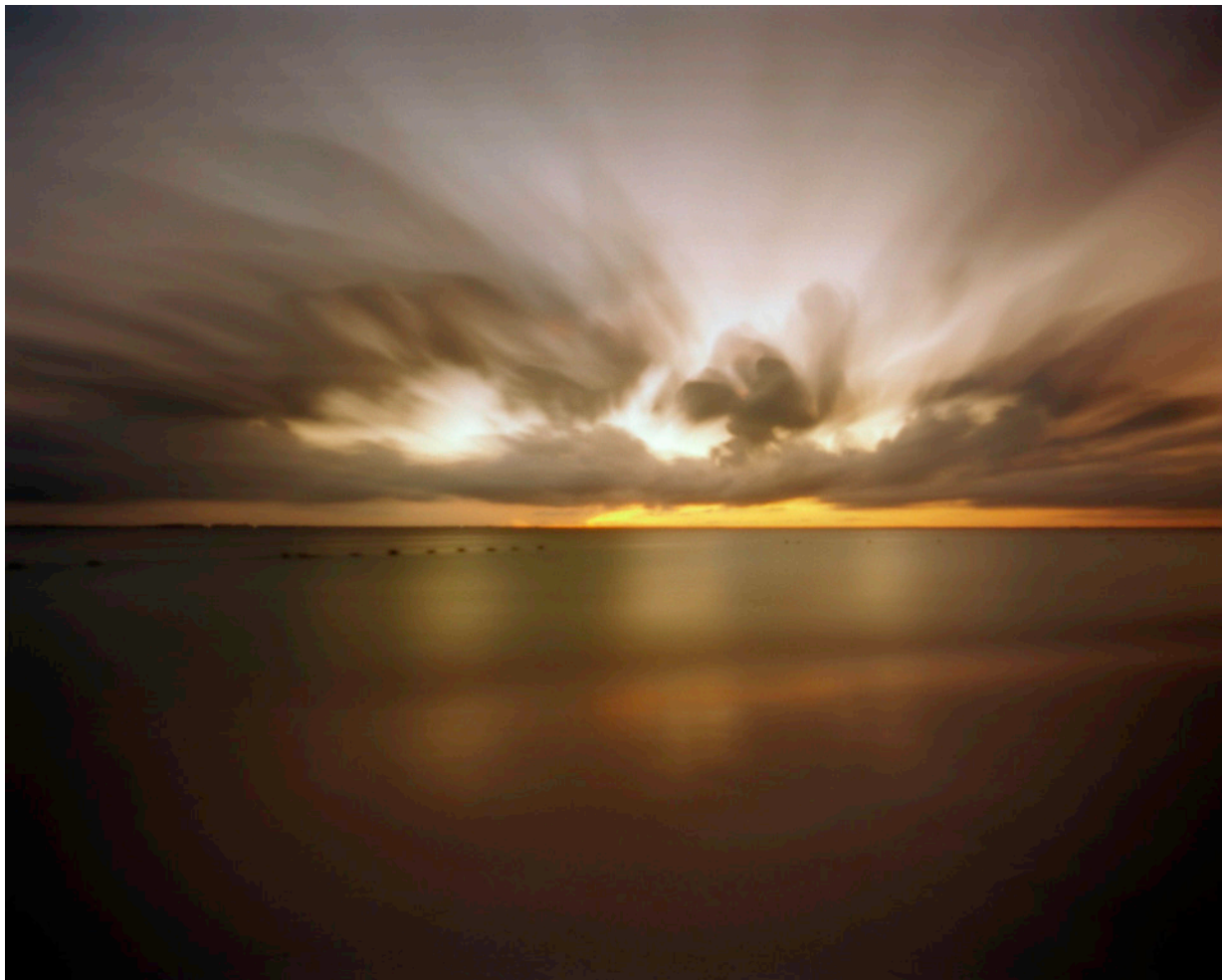
Atsuko Morita

Transitory



Half Moon Bay. Pinhole Color C-Print

Nothing stays forever, just like moving clouds, ocean waves, blooming flowers. I want to capture the time spans of a particular place. Pinhole photography gives a picture a dreamy look and feel, even slightly surreal. Life itself can often seem like a dream. If the lifespan of a person could be captured in one shot it would be the ultimate pinhole photo.



Islam Muheres. Pinhole Color C-Print

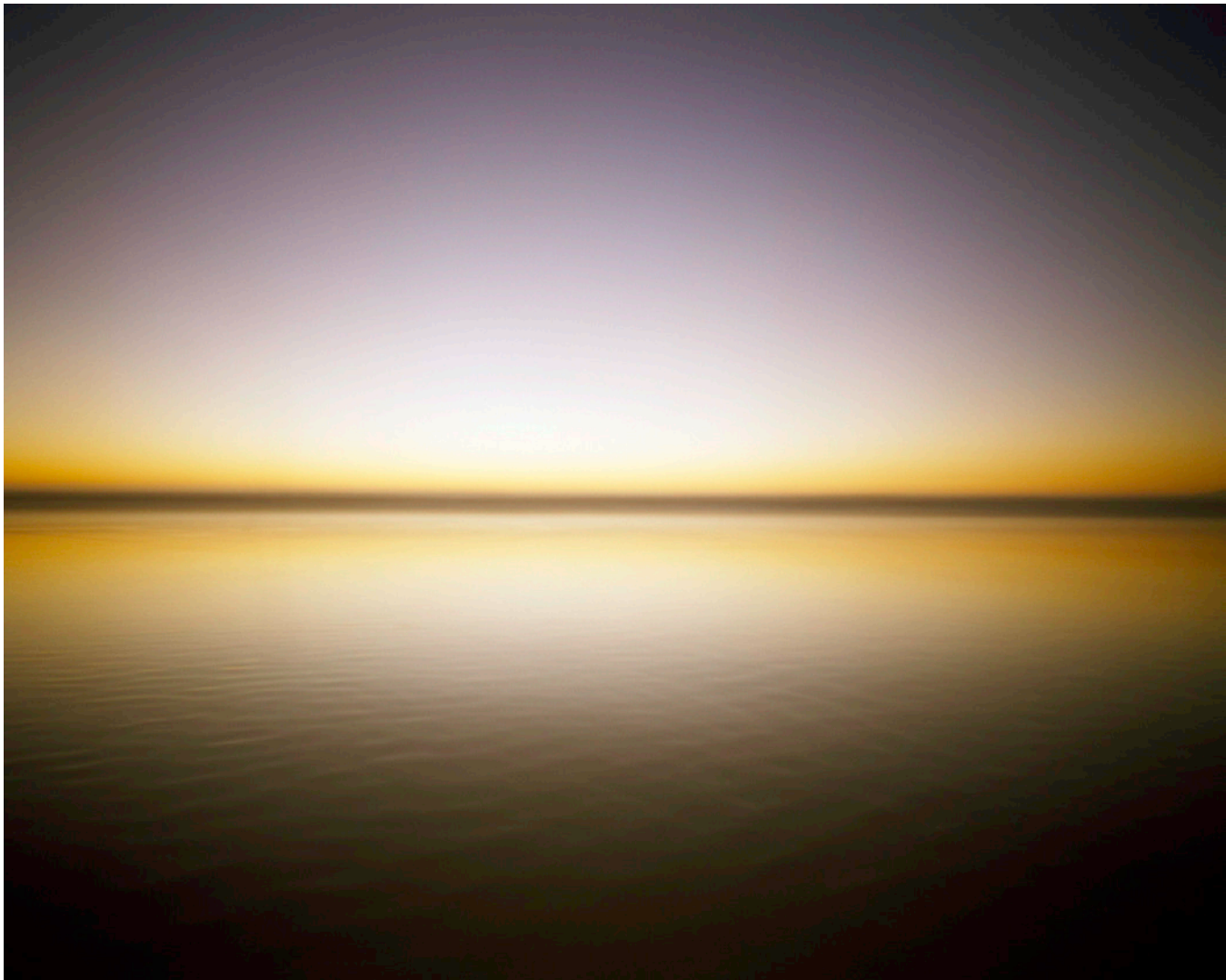


Lake Tahoe. Pinhole Color C-Print

Atsuko **Morita**



Rockaway Beach. Pinhole Color C-Print



Ocean Beach. Pinhole Color C-Print

Atsuko **Morita**

Crystal Morey





I grew up in Nevada City, a small town in the Sierra Nevada foothills of California. Living so close to nature filled my early years with an appreciation for the natural world and gave me an understanding of plant and animal life cycles. I spent my free time swimming in the river, climbing trees, playing in the snow, and exploring and building forts out in the forest. These early experiences filled my life with joy, imagination, and a tendency for inward contemplation.

My experience of living in this place is what inspires my work today. I am interested in both how people are affected by their environment and how they affect the environment. I now live in Oakland, California and the urban landscape in my daily life is a stark contrast to the mountains and trees I grew up in. *Our days are filled with so many modern amenities and I wonder if what we have is worth it.* Today every action has a reaction we can see: in climate change, deforestation, ocean acidity, and the hunting of animals. All of these actions are causing havoc and leading us to an unsustainable environment.









These are the ideas I keep in my mind when I am making sculpture. I am interested in the effects these difficult situations have on the human psyche and how we respond to them. I try to show the stresses in our cohabitation through making sculptures of humans, animals, the environment and the delicate dependencies we share.

Research plays a distinct role in the concepts behind my work. My research gives my work a starting point and a foundation that I am able to build upon. I try to create reinterpretations that are more relevant to the narrative I am trying to convey and find a way to really relate an idea with beauty and emotion.

Crystal **Morey**



Crystal Morey

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Crystal Morey



In my most recent work I have researched animals that have become endangered or extinct due to human impact on the natural environment since the Industrial Revolution. I am interested in how human advancements in technology, agriculture, and urbanization have imposed stress on natural ecosystems and the species that live in them. Through my sculptures I try to humanize these ideas and present them in a way that is both accessible and interesting in order to provoke a conversation.





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Crystal Morey

Ben Tanzer

Vision

“What are you building?” Joe at the lumber yard asks me, the slight sign of a smirk crossing his face, his crazy eyes looking as crazy as ever.

We both know that I fucked his wife Stacey in high school, and they apparently have a running debate about whether she left him at the time for the sole purpose of doing so, or he left her because he was tired of hearing her talk about me.

Regardless, we fucked at a party. She was drunk and laughing and bent over a small fence in the backyard of the house we were at, her summer dress floating there in the night air, her head bouncing with every thrust.

When we finished, we both smiled, she walked back into Joe’s arms, and that was mostly that.

Now they are married, we occasionally drink together at Thirstys, and when Stacey is really drunk, she likes to talk about that night.

It’s a game we play.

“You were the last one I was with before Joe and I went and got married,” Stacey will say, “What do you remember?”

“That you were a vision,” I say, “and that I compare everyone I’ve been with since to you.”

This makes her smile, which makes me happy, Joe too apparently.

“Hey man,” he once said, “whatever it is you and Stacey talk about back there in the bar, please keep doing it. Those nights are crazy. Last time you guys hung-out, I ended-up doing her in our backyard bent over the fence, awesome, right?”

I suppose so, and it’s not that I’m lying when I tell her she was vision or that I compare everyone to her. She was a vision with her creamy skin and flowing blonde hair. And I have compared everyone to her since then.

That night, that fuck, is preserved in amber, like a fossil, or a time capsule, a perfect little memory where everything else fall short. Every fuck, every woman, every relationship, they all pale in comparison, and they have to, they are real, and that, that isn’t, not any more.

“Hey man, seriously, what’s the wood for,” Joe says, “and do you think you might want to get some drinks with us tomorrow night? Stacey and I are planning to go out and I’m sure Stacey would be happy to see you.”

“I don’t know brother,” I say. “You know I’m happy to take care of you and all, but I need to work on this thing.”

"Think about it," he says grinning. "Please."

"Of course," I say, before taking my wood and throwing it in the back of my truck.

From there I head out to the cemetery where my dad is buried. It's peaceful here with its sloping hills and trees, the endless skies, and the view of the river off past the woods and across the way.

On a quiet day you can even hear the water sloshing up on shore, which is nice for when I sleep here, which is often. I don't know when it started. At first, it was a place I came to drink, and hang-out, and acknowledge that I wasn't going to escape my father's long, drunken shadow any time soon.

But at some point, being here seemed better than being anywhere else. Things didn't make sense in other places. They never did, but it's worse now. Now that I can't blame my anger or confusion on his sickly, ghost-like presence.

It's just me and the life I didn't make and don't have, and who needs that?

I place an open can of Yuengling on the grass, I lay the two-by-fours down by the grave, side by side, and I start to drill. I am building a platform with a small roof, a place to sleep, and maybe keep a cooler, a generator, a mattress, and a lamp.

I can get away with this, because no one really comes here, it's a dying town, and though my dad liked to joke that the cemetery was the only place everyone was dying to get into, even that's not true anymore.

Everyone is dying to get out, well, everyone but me, and Joe and Stacey maybe.

I drift off, hammer in hand, empty cans and nails scattered everywhere, my work half-done at best. I awake at dawn to the plink, plink, plink of rain on my face, at first light, and then stronger.

I pop a beer and get back to work, drill, hammer, repeat, my platform slowly expanding from something the size of a man to something more akin to a small deck.

The rain keeps coming down. It's pouring now, and it's almost impossible to see anything more than a few inches away from my face.

I climb into the truck to dry off and as I look out of the window I see for the first time how high the river is, the water swirling and roiling, and begging to pour onto the shore and beyond.

When I turn on the radio they say it is the storm of the century, that there is no end in sight, and that residents are being encouraged to stay inside of their homes, ride it out, and as is their want, pray to whatever higher power they may ascribe to.

I pop open another beer and get back to work.

As I kneel there, the hammer slipping with every strike of a nail, two deer, a buck and a doe, walk out of the woods on the outskirts of the cemetery. They are followed by two skunks, and then a pair of raccoons, all of whom dutifully line-up a small distance from the platform.

*But at some point,
being here just
seemed better than
being anywhere
else.*

I don't make eye contact with them, or even treat their presence as anything but normal. Instead I continue working in this manner even as two brown bears sidle-up to the others, and a pair of geese take residence on their backs.

The rain keeps coming, I keep working, and I when I finally look at my watch I see that the whole day has passed.

I realize that I am getting very low on wood and that the lumber yard will be closing soon. I then think about Joe and Stacey, who will be getting drinks storm or no storm, and briefly lose myself in how lovely Stacey is, her kindness and still creamy skin merging into something more than the woman I've been flirting with since high school. Something earthier, more regal, and after all these years, one of the few people I know how to spend time with at all.

I shake my head like an Etch-A-Sketch to make her image go away, I wave goodbye to the animals who nod accordingly, and I head down to the lumber yard where Joe is closing-up.

"Hey man," he says his crazy eyes popping, "what are you doing out in this weather? This is like end of the world shit."

"I was working on that thing," I say, "and I'm starting to think that I'm going to need more wood, a lot of it."

"Yeah, well we're closing brother, maybe when the storm lets up," he says.

"Yeah, well it's not going to let up, so what if I promise to join you guys tonight. Can I get some wood then?" I reply.

"Take all the wood you need," he says.

I load up the truck and then I drive over to Thirsty's where I drink with Joe and Stacey and anyone else who ambles by.

At some point Stacey and I steal our way to the back of the bar.

"You were the last one I was with before Joe and I went and got married," Stacey says, "What do you remember?"

"That you were a vision," I say, "and that I compare everyone I've been with since to you."

She smiles.

"Hey," I say, "are you happy?"

"What," she says, "why would you ask me something fucked-up like that?"

I realize that I have messed with the order of the way things are, have been, and are supposed to remain, but if this rain is going to continue, and the end of the world is upon us, maybe it's time to throw caution to the wind.

"I want you to meet me tomorrow morning at the cemetery," I say, "I want you to join me for something."

"In this weather, no, I don't know, maybe, why not," she says.

"Good," I say, "take care of what you need to tonight and then come up first thing, okay?"

"Okay," she says.

I get back into my truck and I drive through the flooded streets, passed the downed power lines and trees, the river now crashing over the riverbank, as it courses through town.

When I get back to the cemetery, I see that two garter snakes, a pair of chipmunks, and a couple of horses have joined the menagerie, all standing there stoically despite the storm, and the wind buffeting them from all sides.

I start to work again, and the animals keep coming, cows, possums, dogs, and cats. By morning the water from the river is slowly climbing up the hill and towards the cemetery, still far enough away to not yet be a concern, but close enough that time is escaping us with every drop of rain.

Stacey pulls up in her car and looks at me spellbound.

“Is that what I think it is?” she says stepping out of her car.

“It is,” I say, “and you are a vision. Are you ready to come with me on a journey?”

“Why not,” she says.

With that, Stacey joins me on the platform, where is she followed by the animals, two by two, the world now underwater, the rain unceasing, and the possibilities endless.

Kevin Richards

Richards Wood Craft



All photos by Stephen Henderson

I was once given a spoon as a gift. It is small, curved, delicate, and made from a cat claw branch that caught the craftsman’s eye. After hours of carving, sanding and careful shaping, I received this token for my birthday.

It was special because it was just for me, and because there was something in the wood that impacted the outcome of the spoon. That’s where it all started. Ever since then, I’ve valued and held a deep appreciation for crafts produced by someone else’s imperfect hands.

My hands, too, are far from practiced; I’ve never taken myself too seriously, and the little skill which I’ve discovered is far from being honed. But it’s my exploration into woodworking which has kept this little project exciting every time I pull a fresh piece of wood off of the rack.







There is a policy that I adhere to in my woodshop. I don't go into my projects with a plan in mind, at least not until after I begin to cut the wood to see what's in there. I've gone against this rule a few times and have always been disappointed with the outcome. But when I pay attention to what the next layer of wood holds, there have been a number of Zen-type moments when something just appears out of nowhere and my glasses get fogged up when I audibly say to myself, "wow." Those are the moments that keep me excited when things appear promising, and hopeful when other things don't work out.

I get to explain this process after the pieces are done in the last step of every project.

Kevin Richards



Before sending out a bowl or spoon to a buyer, I sit down and write a short letter on the inside of the butcher paper that the pieces get wrapped up in. It's my opportunity to share a bit of love for what I'm doing and explain the details of what went into it. This is the part that makes that particular shaped piece of wood their own, and something special.

In these letters I explain how the sawdust from this East Indian Rosewood smelled like an earthy nutmeg while I stayed up late to finish it. Or how two bowls cracked and another came off of the lathe and past my face before I took one last chance in the early hours of the next day on a block of Osage Orange wood that absolutely worked with me and found itself in the shape and color of a pot of gold. On a small section of that brown paper I get to portray how naturally bright and red the Padauk spoon is without any dyes or added oils.



Kevin Richards



Too many people have told a younger version of myself to find something you love doing and pursue it. I think that I've found a bit of that mysterious "something" in making and selling some of these unique and individual things. The wood doesn't always work towards my expectations, but more often than not, I find it exceeds any of my preconceived notions.

Kevin **Richards**



Darren Rigo

The Woods



Bore. 2012. 48"x38". Color C-Print

I grew up on Fred Rigo's Farm, or at least that's what it said on our mailbox. Fred Rigo is my grandfather and the hundred-acre parcel of land that he bought and later built a house upon for my family was more of a weed lot than a farm. There were no animals and the fields were left untended for years before I was born, but it was a marvelous place to grow up. As a child I would explore the woods and swamps pretending I was on a quest for a treasure, a lost civilization, or on an odyssey home. Along the way I would encounter monsters, thieves, steep cliffs, and bottomless pits, all of which were just exaggerations of the features I discovered around the property. A gnarly tree became a giant to fight. A series of stones became the only way across a raging river. A hunter's shelter became a hermit's camp. I always persevered in the end and made it home for dinner.

My grandfather, having grown up during the Depression, was a bit of a hoarder. The barn on our farm was his cache. It was filled with just about anything he found a good deal on: meters of fire hose, a long wooden ladder, a wine press. But by far what he had the most of was endless boxes of scrap fabric and string. Tucked in the corner of the barn there was a loom and on it he would weave these scraps into colourful rugs. I'd visit him while he was working and he would tell me about his plans for what he could do with all this stuff or his own theories about the farm: how something was buried in the hill east of our house by an ancient civilization, or how the skating pond was formed by a huge meteor.



Tangle. 2012. 38"x48". Color C-Print



Innermost. 2011. 48"x38". Color C-Print



Zephyr. 2012. 48"x38". Color C-Print



J Tree. 2012. 38"x48". Color C-Print



Escape. 2012. 48"x38". Color C-Print



Peregrine. 2011. 48"x38". Color C-Print

Rick Lamplugh

Vanity at Trout Lake

I'm alone and heading for Trout Lake, to find my place, sit quietly, and see what wildlife appears. Daylight is arriving and light snow is falling. A hundred yards from the parking lot I come to a big bull bison, lying across the trail, his back collecting snow like a well-insulated roof. He stares at me with old brown eyes that deliver a clear message: I'm not moving.

Here in Yellowstone National Park, bison are "25-yard animals." That's the space visitors are supposed to give them. For good reason. Bison are wild, fast, and unpredictable; they are not just big cattle. This old bull could be up and on me before I could make a clumsy snowshoe turn and try to run. Or he could lie here all day. I can't know what he's thinking.

But I can think about my options. The trail is crowded on one side by a steep slope and on the other by trees. I can't sneak past the bull and maintain that safety cushion. I can head back to my van or take another route to the lake, though this is the only trail.

I am on this trail because MacNeil Lyons, a Yellowstone guide and photographer, inspired me yet again when he spoke last night about how he finds and photographs wildlife. The key, he said, is moving quietly and sitting patiently. I decided right then to return to Trout Lake for a second time. The first was with MacNeil two years ago.

It was a Christmas holiday and my wife Mary and I were finishing four days as participants in our first wildlife-watching seminar. MacNeil, the instructor, led all ten participants along the trail to Trout Lake, where he asked us to form a circle and take turns sharing what those four days had meant to each of us. Two people cried with joy as they spoke. Then MacNeil delivered an inspiring sermon on the importance of wildness. He closed by reciting a poem, and I'll never forget him standing there, sunlit on a snowy ridge above the lake, eyes closed, enraptured by the wild.

That moment inspired me to return with Mary for other seminars as well as to snowshoe and cross-country ski by ourselves. We fell in love with Yellowstone, retired, and were accepted as volunteers. This winter we live at the Lamar Buffalo Ranch in the remote northeastern corner of the park, helping MacNeil and other instructors deliver seminars like those we attended. We are in the perfect place to experience the wild which MacNeil spoke of.

So maybe this bison is a sign that I should take a wilder route, avoid the trail completely, bushwhack to the lake. Maybe I'll find more wildlife that way. Maybe that's what MacNeil would do. And—it's hard being this honest—I would surely love to be more like MacNeil.

I nod to the bison and start bushwhacking up the steep slope through virgin snow. I'm immediately postholing—sinking knee-deep into the powder—and soon panting. Sage abounds and every time I brush uncovered

branches, its sweet, pungent aroma refreshes me.

I reach an old snowshoe trail almost refilled by recent snowfall but still packed underneath. I've learned by watching wolves and coyotes that I'm better off walking in someone's steps. I follow the trail upslope until it disappears, and I'm postholing again.

When the slope gets even steeper, I take another lesson from the animals and drop onto all fours. Though climbing is easier, I'd be embarrassed if anyone saw me. But efficiency trumps vanity, and I crawl upward.

*I've learned by
watching wolves
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I'm better off walk-
ing in someone's
steps.*

At the top of the slope, I stand and look around. Ahead, the grade levels for a bit before there's another ridge to climb. Behind, I see the snow-covered road. Across from the road, a high ridgeline appears miragelike through a shroud of snow. Though I don't know exactly where the lake is now that I'm off trail, the road and the ridge-line are good landmarks for the return trip. I should be able to find my way back. It's only a mile for god's sake.

Two slopes later, I stop, wipe sweat from my eyes, and mutter a few curse words. Certainly, the trail along which we followed MacNeil on that memorable day was not this hard. Maybe bushwhacking isn't a good idea. Maybe I should turn around. What would MacNeil do?

First off, since he's been exploring Yellowstone for a decade and has led many groups to the lake, he'd probably have some idea of where he was. If not, he would likely have a compass and a map. Oh, I have a compass, one I've used successfully for wilderness route finding. It's in the glove compartment of the van at the trailhead. And I have a map, too, neatly stored in our cabin. I forgot both this morning in my rush to the wild.

And I've certainly reached the wild; there's not a trail—except mine—visible anywhere, just smooth snow under flocked conifers. Swaying trees creak against each other; falling snow murmurs onto my hood; the call of an unseen raven reverberates. I look upslope to where conifers end and sky begins. Hopefully, I'll see the lake from there, and I won't have to return to the ranch having failed to reach my goal.

After still more postholing, I reach the crest and there below me is the lake and the distinctive footbridge across its outlet creek. I snowshoe to the middle of the footbridge. The creek below roars under a cover of ice and snow.

I made it! And for the first time since leaving the trail, I actually know where I am. Relief and pride flow through me as sweat trickles down my back. I shake through an uncoordinated little victory dance. Then I look around for a place where I can sit quietly and patiently—like MacNeil.

But before I can find that place, the snowfall that's been light all morning intensifies. Dumbfounded, I watch as the trees across the lake—about a quarter mile away—disappear from view. This is not good. I'm tired, cold, and unsure where the actual trail is. Heavier snowfall will increase the difficulty of trail finding, seeing the landmark ridgeline, and hearing road noise. This is a recipe for getting lost.

Rick Lamplugh

Common sense finally wins out. I'm not going to sit here like MacNeil would. No way! I'm retreating to the van right now. And I'm going to take the real trail, the easier route, bison or no bison.

Determined and anxious, I step from the bridge onto the obvious trail that winds through the forest. This should lead to the main trail. There's little snow on the ground under these thick trees, and I move along easily. Until the trail starts to veer to the right, the opposite direction from the way I want. Damn! Somehow I missed the main trail.

Decision time. I can keep following this trail, but it's turning away from the road and the van. I can backtrack and try to find the main trail. I can bushwhack from here and hope for a shortcut.

The climbing and postholing to get this far have beaten me down; I don't want to go in the opposite direction or backtrack. Forget options one and two. But, the snow's falling heavier by the minute, cutting visibility further, and making the third option dicier. I stop and tell myself—literally mutter to the trees—“As long as I go generally downhill, I'll eventually hit the road. If I can't see the parking lot, I'll just have to guess where it is.” I shrug my shoulders and bushwhack away.

As I leave the forest and wallow into much deeper snow, the wind smears snow across my glasses. Everything looks squiggly, but I don't want to waste time wiping them. Besides, every few steps I fall over and get them snowy again. Swimming in and rising from the deep snow is tiring. I yell at myself for not bringing trekking poles. They would make getting up so much easier, might even stop me from falling. But I wanted to leave my hands free for capturing MacNeil-like pictures of wildlife. Who was I kidding?

After a few more falls, I notice that I always topple to my left. Lying once again in the deep snow, feeling my heart pound and energy drain, I curse the snow. Why will it support my right foot but not my left?

I struggle back up, brush off now wet gloves, and trudge forward. Until I fall again. This time I denounce myself, shouting that I'm too damned old for this. I don't ask what MacNeil would do; he's half my age and wouldn't be in this predicament. My heart's frantic pounding scares me. How much more can it take? I wrestle myself upright.

With the next fall, I rest in the snow waiting for my gasping to subside, even though I feel chilling moisture soaking into my pants. Finally, I use what seems like the last of my energy to get up. Within a few steps, I reach snow that supports me. Relieved, I make good time in a direction that I hope leads to the road. But I'm wobbly and feel out of sorts. Am I tired, dehydrated, or just too old?

I come to a steep slope and decide to slide down on my rear—anything to make this easier and quicker. I sit down, lean back, raise both feet well out of the snow, and push off. Fatigue and uncertainty vanish, and for a moment I'm sleigh riding like a kid. I even let out a joyous whoop before I plow into the snow at the bottom.

After I slide and whoop down another ridge and walk out from behind a little hill, I hear the diesel rattle of a speeding pickup truck. The road! I stop and laugh; what a wild story I have to tell. Then I look down at my feet. And do a double take. I'm wearing only one snowshoe!

Suddenly, the staggering and falling makes perfect sense. I must have lost my left snowshoe before I started falling down. Back there. About a mile back there. Up two steep slopes. Unbelievable!

Rick Lamplugh

I look at the road and then behind me. I'm soaked and starting to shiver, but I face two big decisions. The first is whether to tell anyone about this. How could I walk for almost a mile without a snowshoe? Why didn't I figure this out, when I always fell to the left? How could I not notice the snowshoe missing when I slid down two slopes with both feet way up in the air in front of me? My ego shrinks just thinking about it.

The second decision is whether I'm willing to slog back to where I lost the snowshoe. Up two steep slopes, through that postholing-deep snow, maybe all the way back to the lake.

But if I don't retrieve that snowshoe, I'll have to answer the embarrassing question from Mary and my other adventure partners, "How could you lose a snowshoe?"

Foolish pride prevails. I turn around and start re-tracing my steps. I pretend that I'm a search and rescue guy tracking an idiot wearing only one snowshoe. His tracks are obvious: snowshoe on the right foot, boot on the left. He must be deranged. People like that shouldn't be allowed in the wild.

I claw my way up the two slopes. I reach the deep snow where I struggled. The places where I fell are obvious—little bomb craters—and I search each one.

Finally, after much huffing and puffing, I see the lake. And there, under a conifer in the middle of the trail, in an area almost devoid of snow, sits my snowshoe. Mocking me. It's right side up and looks like a display in a store window. I pick it up and inspect it. I can't force my boot into it without loosening the straps. But somehow my boot had slipped out. Without my knowing it. And I had just walked away.

I sit down and put the snowshoe on. I tighten it and try to kick it off. Not possible. I snug my other snowshoe and take a drink of water. I start walking—for the third time—through the deep snow. But by now, I've made a wide trail that even I can follow since the single snowshoe packed down the trail's right side on the way to the road and its left side on the way back.

Eventually, I reach the road but the parking lot is nowhere to be seen. I guess that I'm a half-mile west of the van. I long to stroll down the road's hard packed snow and ice. But to reach it, I have to get over the roadside berm made by weeks of snowplowing; it's taller than me. I start up the berm and immediately sink to my crotch.

Standing there, feeling trapped, I again drop down on all fours and inch myself to the top of the berm. A car goes by; faces pressed against windows stare. I don't care; desperation has driven out vanity, I'm immune to embarrassment—all I want is to get in the van, out of these wet clothes, and in front of the heater.

When I reach the van, its thermometer reads twenty-two degrees. I climb into the back and strip; every layer of clothing is soaked. I change into spare clothes, snuggle in front of the blasting heater, and recall the morning. Decisions based on pride and vanity led me to flounder around in the wild for almost four hours. And in all that time, I only knew where I was for about fifteen minutes. I didn't sit quietly and patiently like MacNeil. I didn't take a single photo.

*I realize just how lucky
I was and say aloud,
“What was I thinking?”
No answer comes.*

I didn't see any animals except the old bison that I interpreted as a sign to take the wilder route. Maybe I read that sign wrong. Maybe that old bison was actually a reminder that I should pay attention to my age. Maybe his lying there was a sign I should take the easier route, which would have been to come back another day when he was elsewhere. But instead, I bushwhacked without map or compass, at times wondering whether my body could take anymore.

Sitting in the van safe and starting to warm, I stare through the windshield at the wild landscape. I realize just how lucky I was and say aloud, "What was I thinking?" No answer comes.

I'm going to have to work on my MacNeilness. I'll have to ask him for a private lesson in quiet and patience. And wilderness decision making. Then, I'll stealthily watch how he keeps his snowshoes on.



Jessica Cochran

Coast





I volunteer as a citizen scientist for COASST in Seattle, a seabird survey program for which I collect measurements and other data on dead birds that have washed ashore. I was struck by the beauty and variety in the creatures I found brought in by the tides and decided to document my finds in more than just numbers.

Jessica Cochran















Patricia Rodriguez

The Path of...



The Path of Patience. 24"x24". Acrylic & Krylon on Canvas.

This body of work I'm currently exploring deals with Nature in a contemporary and abstract way. Natural and organic forms are the basis of my work and are inspired by roots, stems, florals, colors found in nature, animals we can apply human-like characteristics to, etc. Some abstracted organic forms might remind one of internal organs, drawing a correlation to our own bodies and that of the natural world or Nature — in essence we are all connected and one and the same. ***We perpetuate our species, experience disease, pests, life and death and share the same natural resources in order to survive.***

The animals and insects in my work are put into compositions that emphasize some of our own human traits and virtues, such as hard work and diligence, intuition and patience. All of us on the same "Path of" survival, further reminding us that we are connected to that strange world and its creatures outside our doors in so many unfathomable ways.



The Path of Diligence. 24"x24". Acrylic & Krylon on Canvas.

Patricia **Rodriguez**



The Path of Intuition. 24"x24". Acrylic & Krylon on Canvas.

Patricia **Rodriguez**



The Path of Attraction. 24"x24". Acrylic & Krylon on Canvas.

Patricia **Rodriguez**



The Path of Fruitfulness. 24"x24". Acrylic & Krylon on Canvas.

Patricia **Rodriguez**

Amaris Feland Ketcham

First Rust

In early spring, when the temperatures first crack fifty degrees and the sun breaks through the ceiling of clouds, when the ice groans with the sounds of first melt, expanding and contracting around gutters, in early spring, I often experience that reawakening of possibility. After months of feeling trapped in the fulsome nothing, suddenly, anything can happen.

In the early spring, I returned to my rough country town, a pitstop on the Bourbon Trail. Much had changed during my decade absence. Wal-Mart super sized and abandoned the old location for a larger one closer to the state capital, shifting the center of town further from its original heart. The old Main Street had become nothing more than a thin division between a small-town megachurch and the courthouse. Even the Masons had gone out of business. They sold their building to the Baptists, who would demolish it and build a worship center extension. All of the fast food joints and shopping centers sprawled away from the first settlement, and the civil engineers had neglected to draw sidewalks on their blueprints for the new vision of Little America. It was difficult to get from point A to point B without a car. But with the first sunburn of the season, I only wanted to be outside, in the world of fresh possibilities.

The animals seemed to feel that, too. They were waking from winter, taking chances again. I wished I had a dollar for every time someone said, "I used to hate the smell of skunks, but once I started smoking pot, I began to enjoy it," while driving down the highway. A pride of stray cats invaded my house one night, and I had to chase the hissing mess outside with a broom. Daffodils pushed up from thawing soil. It was spring; we were chancing life. After a winter of hibernating laziness I even started jogging again.

On my route, I left my house in bright sweat-wicking spandex and jogged through suburbia to the town park. The suburbs had only been on the map for two decades, and only recently incorporated into a township. It was a lower class, working neighborhood, and the houses reflected storm and mildew damage, which made them much older than their construction dates. What was whitewashed new in my childhood stood spotted, the siding blackened. Muddied tire tracks led from the road to the side yards, where vehicles parked without probability of moving again. Ecosystems matured around foreclosures. They helped me measure my pace to the park.

Five laps around this park was the equivalent of running two miles. The park was small enough to see from one end the backyards of adjoining houses and from the other, the old Wal-Mart cum abandoned strip mall. Within the perimeter stood a playground, a volleyball court, and a pavilion, where teens learned to chain-smoke and carve budding loves into picnic tables.

I ran in circles, experiencing the shortness of breath that produces the same kind of dizzy euphoria that the teens get from inhaling paint. Any marathoner would have laughed at my fitness attempt: you can't get too far

with a twelve-minute mile pace, profuse sweating, huffing and puffing. But in Central Kentucky, just outside of city that was recently ranked as the most sedentary in the US, I was an oddity in a different way. One woman called out as I passed her, “I wish I was in your shape!” I was too flushed to blush with gratitude, and yelled back, “You can be!”

As I rounded the path by the pavilion, a teen yelled, “Here comes a deer!” I thought she was making fun of my stride, calling me a Bambi, or some insult I was too old, too out of touch to know. I noticed the other teens freeze in place. Someone yelled, “Look out!”

That’s when I saw the deer.

She galloped at full speed. We were set on a collision course.

People struck deer every day on the country roads. I’d even heard unlucky stories of one person hitting two deer in the same day.

But those people were in cars. They had two tons of protective steel and fiberglass, and still the car was always totaled by the end of the story. I had no baffling headlight; the deer was not going to stop. I was about to be tackled by a wild animal in a place set aside for quiet reflection.

She was all legs and rippling muscle and could destroy anything at the right velocity. She strained her neck to the side as she ran, as if looking for a hole in the fence. She must have come into this clovered clearing and realized that she’d made a terrible mistake. Perhaps she remembered something else in this place, some woods she frolicked in her youth. Perhaps she did not see me. Perhaps I would die by deer.

I stopped.

I stood so still that I didn’t even pant, though I was out of breath.

At what seemed like the last second in a quick eternity, she glanced at me. She skirted me by six inches. She smelled of a strong musk, the scent of fear, I assumed. I felt her humid wake in the air. I turned to watch her run. When she came to the end of the park, she didn’t seem to see the open gate that would lead her to the alley of the unused loading dock and then the parking lot, one McDonald’s away from freedom.

She doubled back, retracing her our path. She passed within inches of my life five times in this manner, darting along the fence. Finally, she either found the gate or recognized it as her only exit, and there left the park.

Slowly, as if dazed by what they’d just seen, people returned to what they had been doing before the deer appeared. A mother lit a cigarette and pushed her toddler on the swing set. A teen pulled out a pocketknife to carve into a picnic table. He probably drew crude hearts. A kid pumped the park’s well for a drink of water. I never knew you could feel alive in such a place. I started jogging home. Somewhere, territorial opossums prowled a backyard. Rather than playing dead when caught, they acted immortal. Somewhere, raccoons lifted trashcan lids to steal balls of aluminum foil and used margarita limes. Squirrels mated vertically on volunteer oaks. A triumph of songbirds unloosed from the clouds. The deer was now, perhaps, crossing a potholed parking lot, perhaps passing the high school and running beyond, into the tobacco field. We were waking in a rough country.

*She was all legs and
rippling muscle and
could destroy anything
at the right velocity.*

Nathaniel Parsons



I AM WILDLIFE. 2011.

Your Story Is Better Than Mine.

I have been producing work where the final piece is never accomplished. I focus my attention on how things strive to add up to ideas rather than one particular idea. I want their appearance to have the creation of accumulation; I encourage other people to interact with the work by having the situation take the form of games, acts of storytelling, or culturally symbolic objects. I want viewers to question their attitudes and understandings of what they believe. I have viewed my objects as working as souvenirs, yet I don't want them to become purely nostalgic. I want to see how the act of making something doesn't have to be a recreation of a past but because it's activated in a performance or production it begins to be a breathing thing. I act primarily on the opportunities I find myself in; the work is primarily concerned with issues of man's connection to nature. *When does a story get to be a tall tale, how is a moral born, and if the artist has a desire to consider all that, when and where does it become relevant?*

I like to embrace an idea and find that moment where it becomes embarrassed.

I make art for situations where I can share experiences with friends and hopefully make new ones within the activities. I have found that in art it's always an event at best. The viewer is there to see something. I aim to give them an experience.

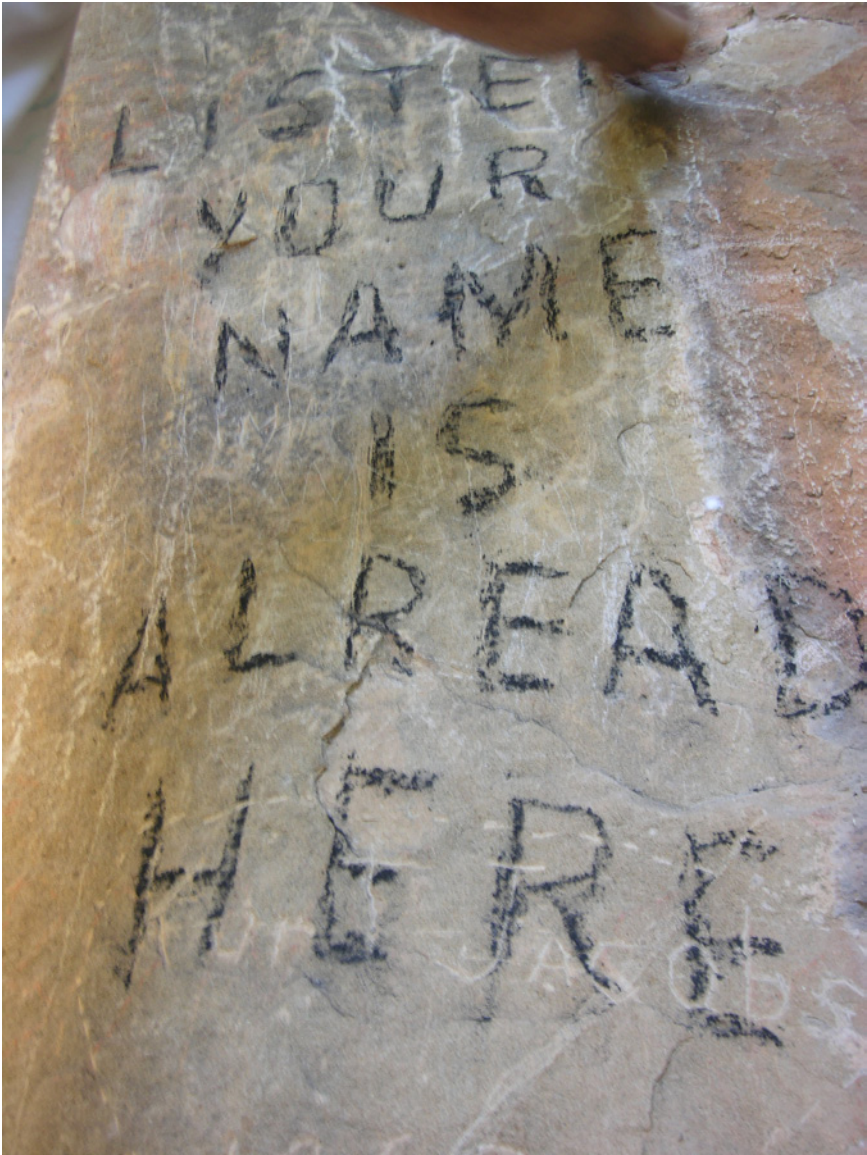


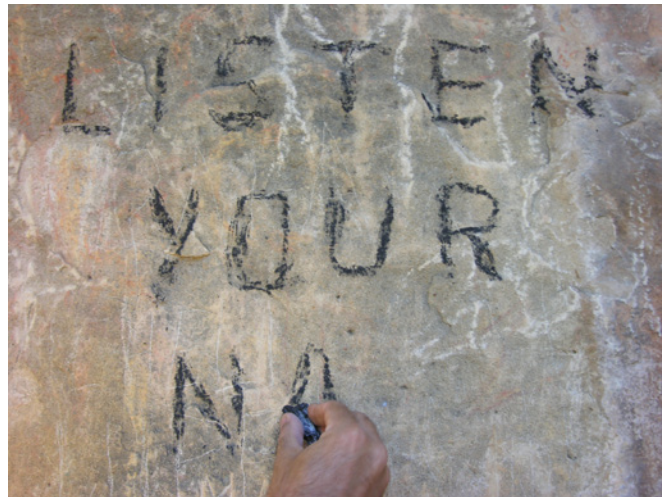


Jah/hero. 2013.



On Opposite: *TAKE/RULE. 2006*





Listen Your Name. 2011. Fire Pit Charcoal on Rock Wall



Pinnacles Walking Stick. 2011



The works I have chosen to share mostly happened on lands that were once privately owned. They are now public parks. The things I reacted to are from both timelines. Is there anything wild out there, does wild mean a place where man's footprint never has been left? There's no such place, the power of nature to straighten itself after us is remarkable but it takes time, and still we should always know that someone before us walked with different intentions.



Walden Drag, 2013.

Guillermo Delgado

Haikus

no. 302

Light reflects off plane—
in an easterly approach;
summoning spirits.



no. 304

Quilt of night slipping:
the sun creeps over rooftops—
shining light on dreams.

no. 231

We drink the black earth
steeped in sweat of sunburned hands—
consuming our own.



no. 294

Springtime in winter—
lake and river levels low...
can't have it both ways.

no. 291

Folks cheer warm weather
in early January;
Great Lake disappears.



no. 208

The wave of dried leaves —
tumbling and scraping the road;
bliss at a red light.

no. 233

The decaying rat
on a bed of golden leaves...
the best I can do



[77] COMPOSITE

The Miller / Spring 2013

Guillermo Delgado

no. 326

In light of young moon...
closer to understanding—
I'm a late bloomer.

Heather Baker

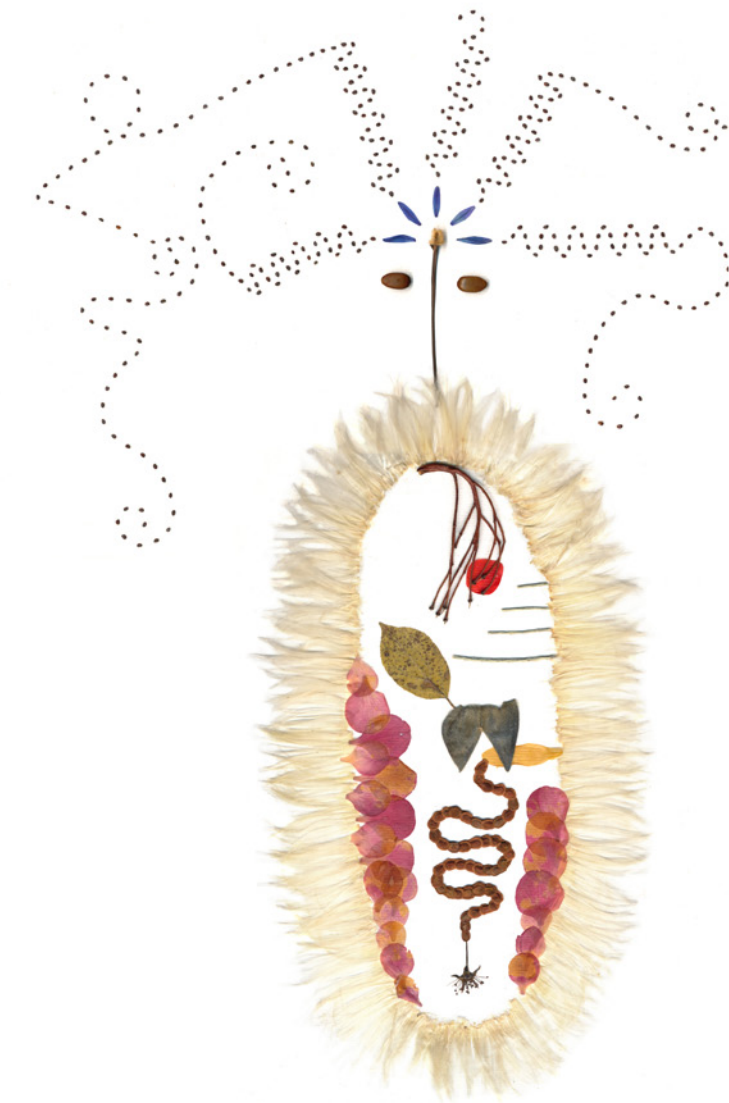
Nature Study



Anatomical Specimen. 2012. 14"x11". Grass, Pressed Leaves, Rocks, Seeds, Canvas Board

I am very seriously in love with nature. I love its honesty. For me, it is a place where I can clear my mind and be free, without being judged. I can regenerate and feel more whole and connected with the world around me. I am also immensely inspired by the diversity and complexity of life on Earth. As far as we know, Earth is the only place where such an abundance of living things exist. The evolution of life on earth is fascinating.

My work revolves around these thoughts. For the past three years I have been creating my own biological specimens out of plant materials. Playing with shapes and forms repeated in nature, different kinds of creatures evolve from imagination. More recently, I have also been making mandalas out of plant materials. These mandalas play with the same ideas of repeated shapes in nature creating new forms, but also bring in the element of nature as being a sacred space. The circular form of the mandala represents wholeness, and for me, the connectedness of all things.



Anatomical Specimen. 2012. 16"x20". Pressed Leaves, Petals, Seeds, Twigs Canvas Board



Mandala. 2012. 24"x24". Pressed Leaves, Petals, Seeds, Twigs, Rocks, Canvas

Heather Baker



Anatomical Specimen. 2013. 11"x14". Pressed Leaves, Petals, Seeds, Grass, Twigs, Canvas Board

Heather **Baker**



Mandala. 2012. 12"x12". Rocks, Seeds, Grass

CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

No. 11 The Wild

Atsuko Morita has substantial experience in the field of photography. Most recently, her photography was selected and exhibited in numerous juried shows including: TASTY at Cabrilo Gallery (Aptos, CA), PROOF at the Southern Exposure (San Francisco, CA), FOOD at the Center for Fine Art Photography (Fort Collins, CO), and 3rd Annual Juried Pinhole Show at the RayKo Photo Center (San Francisco, CA). These are a highly acclaimed international competitions judged by distinguished professionals in the field. In Japan, her photography has been exhibited in the Maronie Gallery and Ississ Gallery in Kyoto, Japan. Her work can be seen at atsukomorita.com

Crystal Morey Is an Oakland, California based artist and educator. Her work can be seen at crystallmorey.com

Ben Tanzer is the author of the books My Father's House, You Can Make Him Like You, So Different Now and the forthcoming Orphans, among others. Ben also oversees day to day operations of This Zine Will Change Your Life and can be found online at This Blog Will Change Your Life the center of his growing lifestyle empire.

Kevin Richards is an amateur woodworker from Broomfield, Colorado who currently resides in Salt Lake City, Utah. He currently runs his Etsy shop, Richards Wood Craft, and maintains a Facebook page by the same name. He can often be found during the daytime in his shop, and late at night trying to outbid you on eBay over various exotic hardwoods. He can be reached at richardswoodcraft@gmail.com.

Darren Rigo was born and raised in rural southern Ontario. The relationship he has formed with the local landscape heavily informs his work. Now living in downtown Toronto as a graduate of the Ontario College of Art and Design, he regularly returns to the local, natural landscape to photograph and collaborate with the land that means so much to him. His images are an attempt to beautify what we normally view as ordinary while they dissect the ways we are connected to nature and to each other. His work can be found at darrenrigo.com

Rick Lamplugh's creative nonfiction has appeared in Phoebe, Soundings Review, and The Feathered Flounder and has earned third place in the Oregon Writers Colony short story contest, and won the Jim Stone Grand Prize for Non-Fiction. He is the author of Job Search That Works and consultant to Living Through Job Loss. He also wrote and produced a public radio series, Work in Oregon.

Jessica Cochran lives in Seattle and works a desk job but is a Midwesterner and biologist at heart. She can be contacted at jeccalee@gmail.com.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

No. 11 The Wild

Patricia Rodriguez is a native of Oak Cliff, Texas and has been creating art and music for over eighteen years. She is currently freelancing as a painter and draws a major part of her inspiration for this body of work from Nature. She has work published in the Fine Art in Dallas engagement calendar put out by CityArtsCal and a feature in the Wichita Falls Art Review. Patricia has been featured on television show GOOD MORNING TEXAS and has her first major show at WAAS Gallery showing alongside Neil Matthiessen set for the Summer of 2013. All upcoming exhibits, press, reviews and TV appearances can be found at tigerbeearts.com

Amaris Feland Ketcham is an honorary Kentucky Colonel and a former managing editor at Willow Springs magazine. He contributes the arts and literature blog Bark and has been published in Sacred Fire, Rio Grande Review, Flycatcher Journal, Bosque, and the Utne Reader.

Nathaniel Parsons lives in Oakland, California. Parsons engages viewers in participatory installations and projects that draw from the act of storytelling, focusing on shared information and how that oral knowledge gets translated into various retellings. He holds a BFA from California College of the Arts and an MFA from The University of Iowa. His work has been shown at the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, South Bend Regional Art Museum, Southern Exposure SF, and CEC Arts Link in Skopje, Macedonia. His work can be seen at nathanielparsons.com

Guillermo Delgado is an interdisciplinary artist with a history of art creation and teaching since 1994. Currently, he teaches at the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities (RCAH) at Michigan State University. For more information about Guillermo Delgado and his art and poetry, please visit his website at gdelgado.com

Heather Baker is a photographer/artist/nature conservationist. She received a BFA in photography and a BA in anthropology from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Heather started her plant collage work for her senior thesis in college and has continued this work ever since. She currently lives in Dekalb, IL and has been working/volunteering with The Nature Conservancy doing prairie restoration, taking photos of the prairie and documenting the work there, and creating all kinds of art. Her art and photographs can be viewed at hbaker1.jimdo.com.

COMPOSITE INFO

Submissions

Composite Arts Magazine is now accepting proposals from visual artists for inclusion in upcoming Issues. We began as an invitation only project, and during our second year, we began accepting submissions of written work. Moving forward, we want to open up the conversation we are having by allowing visual artists to submit work as well. We will be announcing issue themes two issues in advance, on the date the most current issue is released; for example, on the date of the Fall release, we will announce the Spring Theme. Proposals for the newest themes will be due within two months of their announcement.

One of our favorite aspects of this publication has always been providing a venue for artists to show work that exists as a form of experimentation, does not fit into their normal repertoire, or they have been unable to show publicly for one reason or another. We're hoping through this process we'll be opening up to artists we are unfamiliar with or provide a space for those we know looking to branch out in their practice.

Selected proposals are currently unfunded. However, along with publication of the project, we are here to support and work with all artists as much as possible and can provide the use of our blog, web hosting of project collateral, and any other resources we may have access to. Please specify in proposal what you may need from us. We are interested in cultivating relationships with artists through the process of their projects.

Proposals are open to all mediums as long as they can exist within the final publication in a .pdf format. Proposals can be for work yet to be made, work in progress, or work that has been completed. Work that has already been completed must be no more than 2 years old, and also must include a written proposal/artist statement.

WE ARE CURRENTLY ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS FOR:

Visual art proposals for our Fall Issue; Corporal. Proposals are due on June 17th, 2013.

Literary open submissions for Composite No. 12 Pattern. Submissions are due on May 20th, 2013.

Instructions and theme statements for all open calls can be found at compositearts.com/submit.

COMPOSITE INFO

No. 11 The Wild

Coming Summer 2013: Issue No. 12 Pattern: *We exist in a world of algorithms and codes. Defined systems are involved in almost every interaction and activity we participate in daily: a strategic placement of zeros and ones allow us to make calls, search the Internet, watch the nightly news, and play Angry Birds. Seasons progress, spring summer winter fall, as they have since we began recording them. Everything is born, and everything dies. We are creatures of habit; we live within a pattern.*

Composite is managed, curated, and edited by:

Zach Clark has no interest in eating locusts. His work can be viewed at zachclarkis.com.

Kara Cochran grew up with rabbits, cats, pigs, horses, dogs, lizards, snakes, turtles, fish, various saltwater creatures, lovebirds, and ducks. Her artwork of animals can be seen at karacochran.com.

Xavier Duran can't tell which leaves of three not to eat. You can view his work at xavierduran.com.

Suzanne Makol finds the waves of Lake Michigan to be both frightening and calming. Her work can be viewed at suzannemakol.com.

Joey Pizzolato hiked to Machu Picchu once. The porters carried all the heavy stuff. He can be reached at joeypizzolato@gmail.com.

Composite is a free publication. If you like what we're doing and would like to help support us financially, there is a donation area on the website. Anything helps, so thank you in advance.