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SCIENTIFIC METHOD AS ART FORM: COLLABORATION AND INSPIRATION



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Scientific Method As Art Form: Collaboration and Inspiration

Synopsis:

For this conference, I would like to present my creative practice and research, which has increasingly been seeking out and collaborating with scientific method as a part of the artistic process. Specifically, I intend to present recent research opportunities in the Bahamas (Cape Eleuthera Institute) and Washington State (Friday Harbor Laboratories), which has contributed greatly to my recent paintings and video works.

Scientific Method As Art Form: Collaboration and Inspiration

My creative work explores the hidden complexities of our natural world. These referential, yet invented spaces blend personal narrative with larger issues of environmental challenge. Much of my work has concentrated on related dichotomies: beauty and threat, health and illness, and microscopic versus macroscopic perspectives. Over the years, the work has specifically addressed unchecked chemical use, migration interruption, and disease—but has most recently focused on issues of ocean health.

My practice for many years has explored the painted image, due to its fluidity of process, poetic silences, and its ability to crystalize transition. More recently, I have also been creating video work—but frequently use video footage for my painting process, as well. The concepts of transience and flux are key.

For some time, I have been seeking out studio / project locations that provide rich content for my work, often in remote places. Increasingly, I have pursued opportunities that put me in contact with direct scientific experience and data, as well. In 2014, I assisted in fieldwork assessing coral health in the Cape of Eleuthera (Bahamas). Surveying patch reefs with a video camera and water resistant notepad in hand, my subsequent creative work became translations/meditations on these underwater ecologies.

This summer of 2017, I completed an artist residency at the Friday Harbor Labs/University of Washington where this rich intersection of scientific study merged with my process in the studio through fieldwork, participating in lectures, the observation of a seal necropsy, and research trawling for key invertebrates. To complement this experience, I received a grant to purchase a microscope.

I'm an investigator at heart, and obsessively document flora and fauna, rarely leaving home without a camera. Despite all of the video footage and digital stills of the observable, I am particularly interested in aspects of our world that are difficult to access. It is the forest floor, microbes, the line between water and air—these are the spaces (and their inhabitants) that particularly move me—making the unseen seen or the smallest of us, large.

Distortion, abstraction, shifting perspectives—these are central to the language of my work. I am interested in that tension between the graspable and the ill-defined. In the end, the work is an attempt to awaken others to humanity's obligation to the natural world that supports us, challenges us, and gives us vitality. We are inextricably linked.

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