



CELEBRATING WILD BEAUTY

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Due to COVID-19, *Celebrating Wild Beauty* is presented online only. We are saddened to not present this exhibition in-person but we are finding the resiliency of the artworld heartening. While in quarantine, many of us have turned to artists for comfort. Whether it is a book, music, film or an artwork, creative industries are a major part of our culture and well-being. It inspires, teaches, and gives many of us a way to endure by turning to something sustaining.

Museums and galleries across the world have made major changes to the delivery of their exhibitions and programs, just as we are. I am so pleased that the Schneider Museum of Art staff and student team have made quick adaptations to this new way of working. I am delighted to report that we are able to deliver the same content and cultivation our patrons come to expect. Contemporary art is full of meaning which can range from an aesthetic experience, witnessing innovation or a being informed of a mission and charge at hand.

## FEATURING WORK BY

Isabella Thorndike Church  
Grayson Cox  
Malia Jensen  
Chris Russell  
Rick Silva  
Dot Fisher-Smith  
Mark Tribe



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## EXHIBITION STATEMENT

*Celebrating Wild Beauty* recognizes the 20th anniversary of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument (CSNM). It was established in a presidential proclamation on June 9, 2000 and expanded on January 12, 2017. The exhibition highlights artists who have directly worked in the monument, drew inspiration from it or similar wild spaces here in the Pacific Northwest. Each of the exhibiting artists are indebted to these kinds of lands.

Historically, we are most familiar with art about land as landscape art. This began over a thousand years ago in which the earliest noted are around 1500 BCE, found in frescos located in Minoan Greece. Landscape had become dominant forms of art in both East Asia and Western traditions. Over the centuries, styles changed. Landscape views could be real or imagined. *Celebrating Wild Beauty* is about real places but it is not about landscape alone or land as it is traditionally thought of in art. These artists explore views as a form of documentation, views as a means to disrupt or examine. There are views culled from memory. There are details examined and extrapolated from the land and dealt with in subtle ways. There is also a hidden eye, spying on life within and then there is the reflection of ourselves engaging with the beauty of the environment in both heroic and irrational ways.



Isabella Thorndike Church, *RECAPTURE*, Dried natural material, dimensions vary, 2020. Intended for the Schneider Museum of Art's Treehaven Gallery and installed at 25 E Main St, Ashland, OR 97520 storefront for safe viewing during COVID-19 pandemic. Photo credit: Juliet Ashley Photography

**Isabella Thorndike Church** is a young artist who grew up with the CSNM in her backyard, although it wasn't a monument until she was eleven years old. Her medium is natural, local flora materials such as sticks, flowers, weeds, grass etc. She creates both indoor and outdoor installations which may resemble a chandelier or an organic configuration crawling up and emerging from the wall. As a profession, she is commissioned to execute floral and plant designs and builds for celebrations and ceremonies. With opportunities to engage in gallery spaces, this becomes immersive, larger than life installations that are site specific environments. Thorndike Church writes:

"Everything I do begins in the field and the woods. There, the colors and textures of the natural world arrange themselves according to the seasons. I believe that local, seasonal flora, collected or cultivated responsibly, are healthy for us and for the earth. Each piece is a conversation with the nature of carefully selected materials, their arrangement determined through form and structure as much as through manipulation. Through the resulting design I hope to evoke a sense of place, time and wonder."

She has deep concerns about the future of the environment. She interacts with the land respectfully, lives in a small home and prefers trains over planes to reduce her carbon footprint. For many of us, nature is distant with only a municipality park as our closest opportunity for getting "outdoors". Her installations bring nature to the viewer in a way that transcends one's expectations. Not that it eclipses nature, but because many of us do not have opportunities to go to it, we are surprised by the beauty,



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aroma and when permitted, tactility of what Thorndike Church presents.

Isabella Thorndike Church has created her installation in a storefront located at 25 E. Main St, Ashland, OR for easy and safe viewing.

The CSNM is an ecological Shangri-La. With the convergence of three geologically distinct mountain ranges, the biological diversity is immense. Here, biological discoveries are still being made today. This is threatened by humans and climate change. Artist **Mark Tribe's** practice has made a major shift into investigating climate change and working towards climate justice. As Tribe writes, "climate change threatens every living being on the planet". He uses his artwork in hopes to create a powerful aesthetic experience that is to be added to a conversation started by scientists.

In 2018, wildfires destroyed the southernmost portion of the CSNM. With the assistance of the Schneider Museum of Art, an Oregon Community Foundation grant, generosity from the Friends Group of the CSNM and Bureau of Land Management's Monument Interpretive Specialist Christine Beekman, as well as the artist's own Kickstarter campaign, Tribe was able to spend a week in the Monument and captured a 24-hour high definition digital film. This film will be available for generations to come. Tribe writes:

"In this work, I am interested in the traditions of Western landscape painting and photography, and how they reflect our changing ideas about the natural world. If, for example, we understand the paintings of the Hudson River School and the frontier photo-



Mark Tribe, *Dense Fog*,  
Cascade-Siskiyou National  
Monument, Oregon,  
July 16, 2019,  
Archival Pigment Print,  
34" x 44" #1 of 11, 2019



Mark Tribe, *Midday Sunshine*, Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, Oregon, July 16, 2019,  
Archival Pigment Print, 34" x 44" #1 of 11, 2019



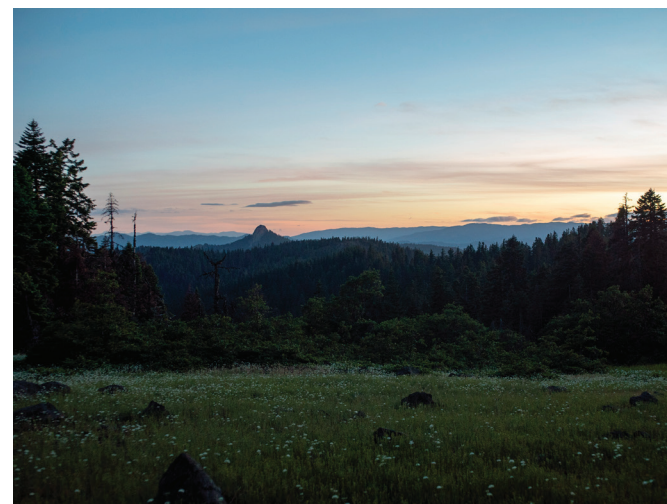
Mark Tribe, *Morning Fog, Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, Oregon, July 16, 2019*,  
Archival Pigment Print, 34" x 44" #1 of 11, 2019



Mark Tribe, *Afternoon Shadows*, Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, Oregon, July 16, 2019, Archival Pigment Print, 34" x 44" #1 of 11, 2019



Mark Tribe, *Evening Stars*, Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, Oregon, July 16, 2019, Archival Pigment Print, 34" x 44" #1 of 11, 2019



Mark Tribe, *Evening Twilight*, Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, Oregon, July 16, 2019, Archival Pigment Print, 34" x 44" #1 of 11, 2019

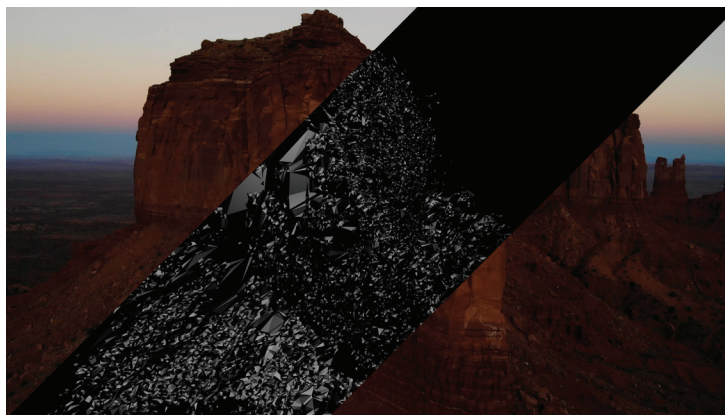
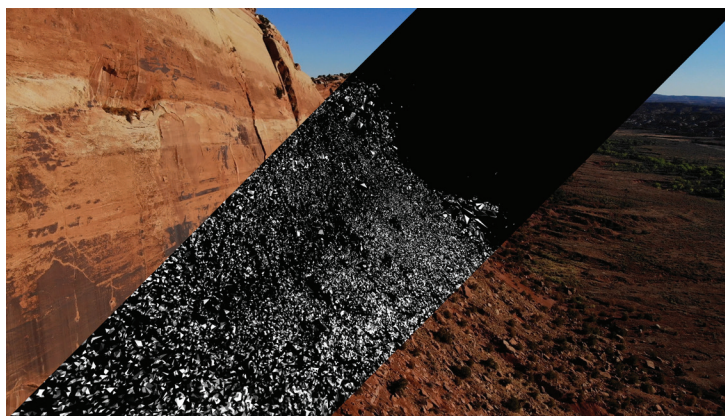
graphs of Carlton Watkins and his peers as expressions of manifest destiny, what kinds of landscape images might flow from the ideology of environmentalism in an age of climate change and mass extinction, as we come to realize that even the wildest places are being transformed by human impact?"

Due to the size of the 24-hour 4K digital film, we are sharing a [clip](#) for the online exhibition with a possible longer version to come.

Also capturing 4K digital footage of the CSNM, artist **Rick Silva** uses the monument as a part of a series of digital films titled *Western Fronts*. In Silva's Statement about the work he writes:

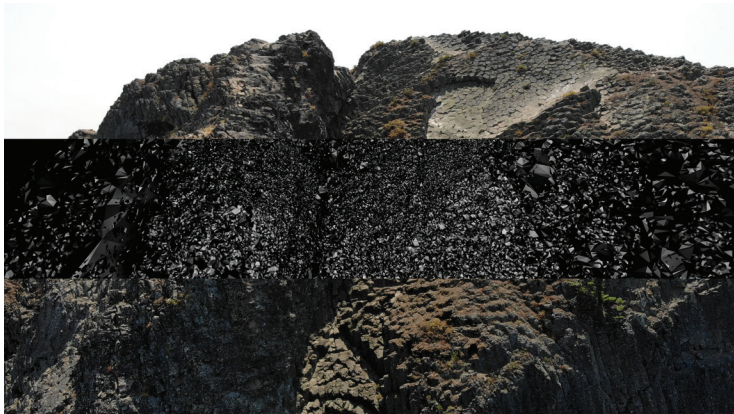
"In the fall of 2017 a memo was leaked from the United States Department of the Interior. The memo outlined plans to drastically reduce the borders and protections for four western national monuments: Cascade-Siskiyou, Gold Butte, Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears. On December 4, 2017 the administration signed Presidential Proclamations eliminating protection of public lands and sacred indigenous sites in Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments. Bears Ears alone was slashed from 1.35 million acres to 200 thousand acres, reducing its size by 85%. In the summer of 2018 mining companies staked claims for oil, gas, and uranium in both Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears."

## BEARS EARS



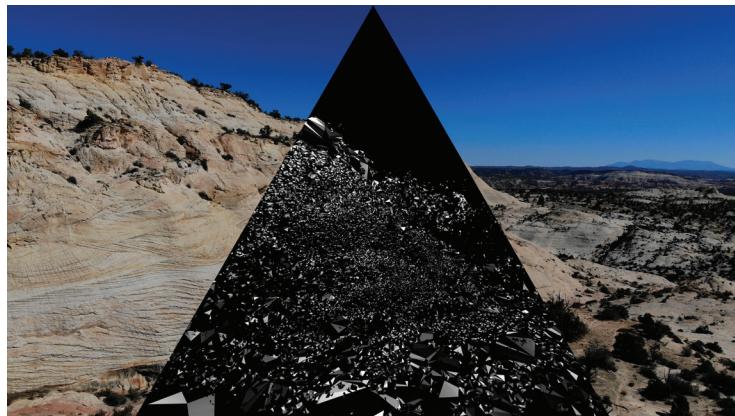
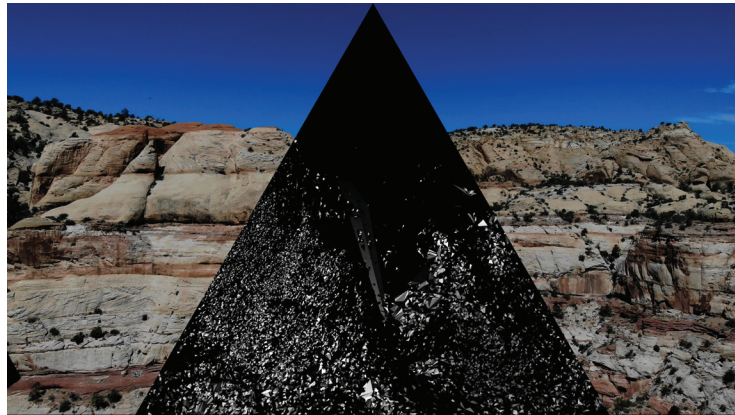
Rick Silva, *Western Fronts*, Stills from *Bears Ears*, Sound design by Kuedo + Holy Other. Assistance with drone cinematography by Zack Dougherty. Link with video [Here](#)

## CASCADE-SISKIYOU



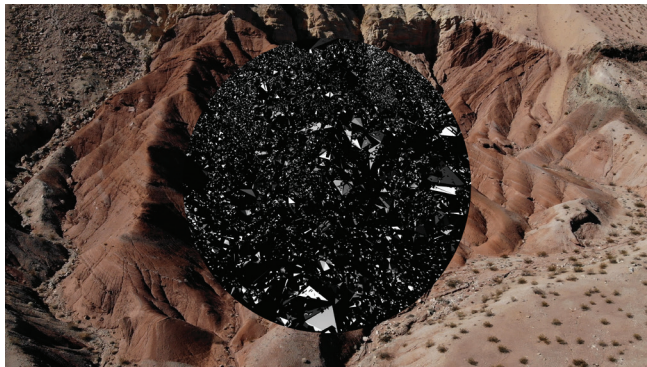
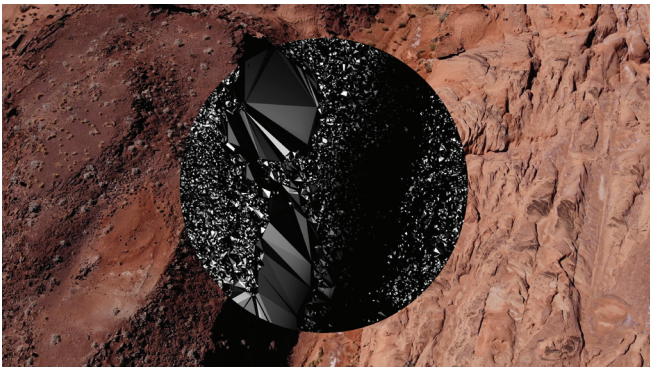
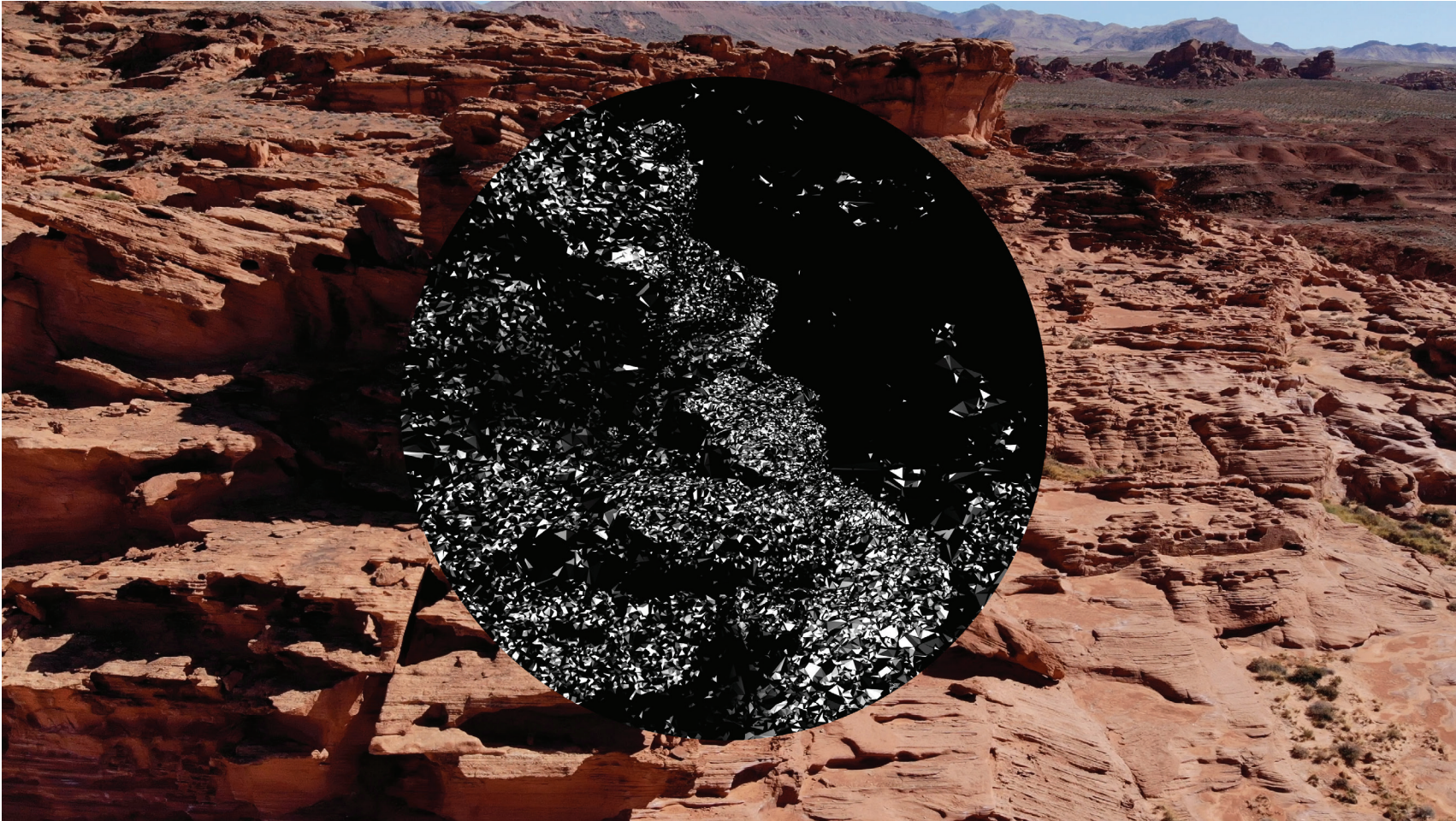
Rick Silva, *Western Fronts*, Stills from *Cascade-Siskiyou*, Sound design by Kuedo + Holy Other. Assistance with drone cinematography by Zack Dougherty. Link with video [Here](#)

## GRAND STAIRCASE-ESCALANTE



Rick Silva, *Western Fronts*, Stills from *Grand Staircase-Escalante*, Sound design by Kuedo + Holy Other. Assistance with drone cinematography by Zack Dougherty. Link with video [Here](#)

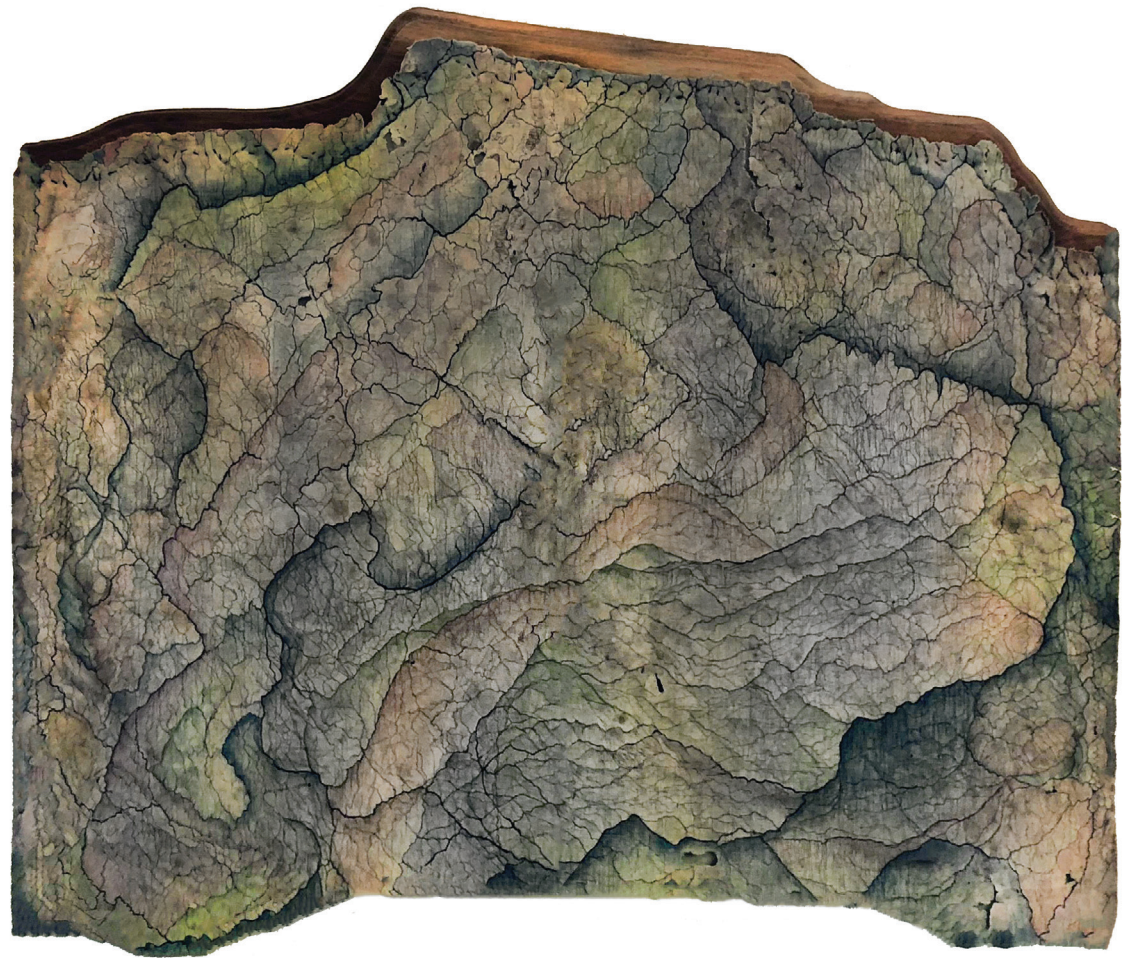
# GOLD BUTTE



Rick Silva, *Western Fronts*, Stills from *Gold Butte*, Sound design by Kuedo + Holy Other. Assistance with drone cinematography by Zack Dougherty. Link with video [Here](#)

Silva disrupts his video through digital manipulation as an invitation to imagine what may lie within. He is unveiling the proposition of minerals and resources. Silva's four videos captures each individual monument noted above. He offers us his response to the United States Department of the Interior's decision, a nod towards an economic and moral crisis. Here, the landscape becomes critical. In Silva's handling of the footage, we see shimmering geometric forms. Some see this as possible wealth through extraction. Others see what may come, flora and fauna stripped away and ecosystems destroyed for monetary gain.

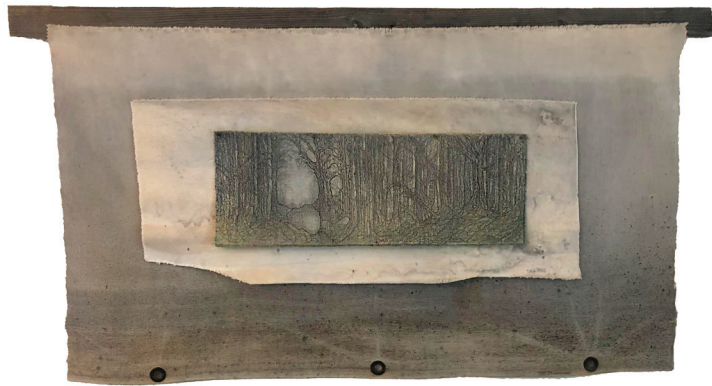
The CSNM provides a great source of inspiration for the 92-year-old artist **Dot Fisher-Smith**. Fisher-Smith lives in Ashland, OR and had lived directly next to the monument for many years. In creating her art, she uses canvas salvaged from the meditation yurt she had on her land, canvas marked by lichen and streaks from the rain. The work is not executed plein-air, it is gleaned from memory and experience. Fisher-Smith writes; "It's all about allowing myself to be flowing with what my eyes see and what my body is telling me." Her canvases are meditations on the CSNM as well as mountains and valleys she hiked around the world.



Dot Fisher-Smith, *Archipelago*, Colored pencil, ink, pastels, graphite on worn canvas hung on found wood, 31" x 36", 2019



Dot Fisher-Smith, *Endless Mountains*, Colored pencil, ink, pastels, graphite on worn canvas mounted on found wood, 7.5" x 13.5", 2015



Dot Fisher-Smith, *Magic Forest/Vast Emptiness*, Colored pencil, ink, pastels, graphite on worn canvas hung on found wood, 19" x 32", 2011



Dot Fisher-Smith, *Interbeing*, Colored pencil, ink, pastels, graphite on worn canvas hung on found wood, 34" x 30", 2012



Dot Fisher-Smith, *Himal*, Colored pencil, ink, pastels, graphite on worn canvas hung on found wood, 26" x 18", 2010

For the sake of online viewing, **Malia Jensen** offers us a 24-minute preview of her project [\*Nearer Nature: Worth Your Salt\*](#). This is a 6-hour video which is comprised of 24 hours of footage. Beginning in spring 2019, Jensen created a series of lifelike carved salt-lick sculptures based on parts of the human anatomy and she laid them across Oregon. Jensen's sculptures include a head referred to as the Brancusi inspired muse which was placed in Portland, a hand with a plum in Nehalem, a breast in Tygh Valley, Donuts to humorously represent the stomach was placed in Sisters, a foot in Joseph and for the CSNM in Ashland, an open hand with the palm facing out as a graceful gesture. Motion activated cameras captured the exchanges between the salt-licks and wildlife.

In Jensen's [\*Field Report number one\*](#), she writes:

"Human nature is animal nature, inseparable and essential. It's a big, wild interconnected system. Roads that began as animal trails crisscross the landscape. Forests hum with energy like wiring in our walls. Salt moves through our bodies, transmitting data and regulating blood, muscles and nerves. Fragile relationships are underpinned by resilience, determination and a powerful life-force."

"What we're not seeing is brought into focus by the imperfections of surveillance, the blurry, off-screen narratives framed by geography and time and everything that's left out. Patterns emerge; changing light, growing antlers, pairings, births, deaths. The mundane becomes wildly beautiful, underscoring our deepest connections and passions for life and supporting the myriad ways we walk on shared ground."



Malia Jensen, Video still from *Worth Your Salt (Nearer Nature Project)*, 2019, video, 6 hours, Edition of 10, 4AP. Courtesy of the artist and Elizabeth Leach Gallery



Malia Jensen, Video still from *Worth Your Salt (Nearer Nature Project)*, 2019, video, 6 hours, Edition of 10, 4AP. Courtesy of the artist and Elizabeth Leach Gallery



Malia Jensen, Video still from *Worth Your Salt (Nearer Nature Project)*, 2019, video, 6 hours, Edition of 10, 4AP.  
Courtesy of the artist and Elizabeth Leach Gallery

Jensen's intention is for the footage to be placed in unsuspecting alternative spaces such as taverns, hospital waiting rooms, laundromats and movie theatres. She is bringing art, nature and the unknown to audiences. Just as wild animals come across her salt-lick sculptures and get an appetizing dose of salt, we get a delightful experience ourselves by seeing what takes place in human absence. Audiences may follow along and view more on Jensen's [Instagram](#) page and her Field Report's [number one](#) and [number two](#). Her project has been supported by the Creative Heights Initiative of Oregon Community Foundation.

As noted on the Russo Lee Galley's website:

**"Chris Russell's** paintings explore the tension between observation of the natural world and its recreation on the painted plane. He embraces his Portland home, and its access to nature, but is constantly aware of human-imposed boundaries on the natural world. Similarly, he is engaged by the formal act of painting: mark making, rendering, spatial construction, and how these actions translate the observed experience of nature, especially the dense layers of forest that are ubiquitous in the northwest. Russell states, "I am interested in a painting that becomes an image of the process of its creation." The painters' marks are clearly evident, while the lush, entangled landscape imagery constantly vies for our attention."

Russell, known for riding his modified ten-speed titled *Art Rambler*, which is designed to be both a bicycle and plein-air easel around the Portland area, captures nature in traditional and unique ways. With the exception of his interior paintings, you almost never see anything manmade in



Chris Russell, *Encircled*, Oil on Linen  
62" X 56", 2019. Courtesy of the artist and  
Russo Lee Gallery, Portland, OR



Chris Russell, *Cantilever*, Oil on Linen  
68" X 64", 2016. Courtesy of the artist and  
Eleanor Harwood Gallery, San Francisco, CA



Chris Russell, *Rustle Bustle*, Oil on Linen 66" X 56", 2016.  
Courtesy of the artist and Eleanor Harwood Gallery,  
San Francisco, CA



Chris Russell's modified ten-speed he calls the *Art Rambler*, which is designed to be both a bicycle and plein-air easel



Chris Russell, *Subalpine Time to Shine*,  
Oil on Linen 42" X 36", 2019. Courtesy  
of the artist and Russo Lee Gallery,  
Portland, OR

the work, just pure landscape of wild spaces. Russell's oil on linen paintings lend a sensitivity to the materials and subjects. He often leaves exposed linen as the ground and emphasizes the living flora in the foreground, bringing the beauty he sees right up to our face. There are luscious greens, dots and streaks of vibrant flowers, draping mosses and hints of blue skies. The work is brilliant and alive and although it is not hyperreal work, you may feel the sun on your face as you see it on his leaves and smell the bouquet of healthy soil.

**Grayson Cox** brings us back to us. The human in the landscape. Cox creates a modern-day portrait of ourselves by way of anthropomorphizing the proverbial to-go iced coffee; cup, lid, as well as the malevolent straw in some of the works. The iced coffee is either positioned in view of something or amidst a dreamlike state floating in the sky. Cox utilizes the iced coffee as a transitional object, one that invites the viewer in with familiarity. It helps us see ourselves in the work and relate to it more readily. This continues in the piece titled *Alexa Allegra* where Amazon's Alexa as well as the artist's Allegra allergy medicine sit side-by-side on what looks to be grass in front of a hazy glow. Cox carries forward the tongue-in-cheek in the piece titled *Khakis*. In the artist's Creative Industries Discussion which can be viewed [here](#), Cox talks about the *Khakis* as a representation of people who make policy decisions. Moreover, it appears to be more specifically about male policy decision makers. Cox writes:

"I am curious about the relationship with humans and the environment during this extraordinary time of isolation and natural rebirth, of our sudden trajectories and heavy leaning on interfaces and platforms, and



Grayson Cox, *The Other Side 2*, Acrylic on Linen, 12" x 16", 2019



Grayson Cox, *Khakis*, Bleach and acrylic on khaki cotton fabric with shaped wood support, 33" x Variable Installation size depending on number shown, 2019



Grayson Cox, *Collective Daze*, Acrylic on Linen, 12" x 16", 2019

our innate thirst for human connection and the freedom of wild existence. For several years, I have been playing with the object of the iced coffee as a symbol of modernity, of slight excess and indulgence, of the treating and cheating of time and temperature of something as simple as a humble hot cup of coffee. The iced coffee acts as a sort of secular iconography of upwardly mobile freedom, that extra \$5 to purchase a pick-me-up.”

Cognitive dissonance is prevalent in Cox’s work as well as other underlying and coded meanings. In the piece titled *Existential Iced Coffee*, there is play on perspective, literally as well as figuratively.

We have varied relationships with nature. Perception and perspective can go a long way and have long term effects. We hope to share some of these perspectives. Through documentation, examination and memory, we see varied interpretations and experiences. In the time of COVID-19, wide open spaces have become more meaningful for many. Although no silver lining can over shadow the devastation the virus has presented, awareness and appreciation for nature and such spaces has grown immensely. Some of us find ourselves with more time in which we cannot help but reexamine privately and publicly what may have previously been taken for granted. The CSNM is here now.

SCOTT MALBAURN, DIRECTOR



Grayson Cox, *Alexa Allegra*, Acrylic on Linen, 12" x 16", 2020



Grayson Cox, *Existential Iced Coffee*, Acrylic on linen, Oil, acrylic and india ink on wood, vacuum formed plastic, silicone and silicone dye, 43" x 33" x 13" 2019

## Supporting the Schneider Museum of Art

There are many ways to support the Schneider Museum of Art and its educational programming. Please consider becoming a member by clicking [Here](#) to support exhibitions, Free Family Days, and programs such as artist lectures. We thank you for all your support and engagement with our exhibitions and programs.

## Thank you to Our Supporters

We would like to thank our Museum Members and Volunteers without whom we would not be where we are today. We would also like to thank Dr. David Humphrey, Director of the Oregon Center for the Arts; Sue Walsh, Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs; and President Linda Schott for their continuing support. Thank you to our Museum Council and valuable students working within the Museum as well as the following:

