

Master of Fine Arts Thesis

***Elementālis***

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## **. Abstract .**

Ceramic embodies water, earth, fire, and air in each of its transforming stages. I explore these aspects separately, giving them time and space to act; to later observe the relations which manifests between elements. I use natural materials that are either exploited or modified by humans. The additive process of foreign material to a natural environment demands the need for balance and respect for the ecosystem. My actions engage drawing that question the relations between the non-human and the human, bringing forward the metaphor of the cycle, a sensibility to the issues of climate change, and to the pursuit of global environmental sustainability.

Through my research, I explore gestures, natural elements, and matters that intra-define one another. My artwork attempts to dissolve boundaries accentuating the generative and resilience of the material forms with which social actors interact. I seek the relationship between the perceiver and the perceived to create a moment where natural elements and human experience are intertwined, where responsibility and attachment coexist, and where embody entails disappearance.

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ed. Paul Arthur Shilpp, Harper, 1949

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*“Our cultural explosion, our vast numbers, our technology and the resources we consume create imbalances affecting all other life-forms on earth. The genetic evolution of these life-forms is much slower than our cultural evolution and cannot keep up with the changes we created...Damage has been done to the earth, the environment and to human principles....As we have accelerated the extinction of plant and animal life, we have accelerated our own by allowing unchecked growth processes in all aspects of our existence”.<sup>1</sup> ( Denes, 1987 )*

Artists have been creating works that have ecological considerations and calling for both individual and systemic actions against environmental issues and global warming for decades. Whether we name this time the anthropocene epoch or great acceleration, it is evident that we are going too fast and we are taking too much.<sup>2</sup> We can't stop this positive feedback loop that we are entangled in, but we can slow down, engage, respond and see. Changes start with conversations.

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<sup>1</sup> Denes, Agnes. *Book of Dust: The Beginning and the End of Time and Thereafter*. Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> The term anthropocene defines the current geological epoch viewed as the period during which humans have had a devastating impact on our planet's ecosystems.

My work asks me to sit within, to take time to observe, to listen, and to allow intimacy with a natural place. My personal experience from the outside environment is translated to inside space, creating in parallel its own experiential place for the viewer. Throughout my thesis, the french passages, developed in the manner of personal storytelling, convey my perception of the environment at a particular time and place. They speak of my identity and sensibility. The english writing follows a more traditional academic format of dominant culture. It acknowledges the conceptual aspect of the work. For many readers, the french will need to be translated, using tools like a translator app. Unless one perfectly knows both languages, they inevitably lose some aspects of the writing in the translation process. The lost meanings leave a void to be filled by the readers and viewers. My thesis follows this format to better illustrate the transfer that happens from my personal experience in the natural environment to the experience perceived by the audience. The multiplicity of voices may sometimes seem disjointed. Oftentimes, they cover entirely different material, but they may repeat one another. Most significantly, in my writing and in my work, I emphasize the relational aspect of all the elements in play. This is in agreement to the thinking and writing method of Dr. Shawn Wilson within Indigenist philosophy and research methodologies.; I am bringing forward the relationship within research; the relationship within art-making, the material, the act or actor, and the maker; myself.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Wilson Shawn, *Research is Ceremony Indigenous Research Methods*, Halifax and Winnipeg, Fernwood Publishing. 2008 p.8 - 11, p.95, p.118 - 125

In his book, *Research is Ceremony, Indigenous Research Methods*, Wilson defines analysis through an Indigenous paradigm asserting that accuracy doesn't play a major part in depicting a phenomenon, but is more important in describing the set of relationships that makes up the phenomenon. Concepts are thus encircled within an entire set of connections. All participants in the research take part in analyzing these relations and are needed to ensure that the concepts are properly encompassed. For him, "knowledge cannot be owned or discovered, but is merely a set of relationships that may be given a visible form".<sup>4</sup> The scholar or artist's role, based upon the guidelines of relation and relational accountability, is to share information or to make connections with ideas. An Indigenist methodology research includes all relationships. To break things down into small pieces is to destroy the link around them. It uses more intuitive logic rather than linear logic. He illustrates that the data for analysis are like a circular fishing net, "you can try to examine every knot of the net to see what holds it together but it is the string between the knots that have to work in conjunction in order for the net to function". Thus, the synthesis is about connecting. The

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<sup>4</sup> Wilson Shawn, *Research is Ceremony Indigenous Research Methods*, Halifax and Winnipeg, Fernwood Publishing.2008 p.119, p.11

Dr.Wilson brings forward that Indigenist epistemology and ontology are based upon relationality. Indigenous axiology and methodology are based upon maintaining relational accountability. With a deeper understanding of these concepts, he hopes that people will come to see that research is a ceremony. The purpose of a ceremony is to build stronger relationships or bridge the distance between aspects of our cosmos and ourselves. Relationality requires that you know a lot more about who or what you are dialoguing with.



collaborative analysis allows the results to be encircled within a set of ideas and links and therefore become explanatory. For Dr. Shawn Wilson, the personal history and sensibility of the researcher is key to the credibility of the results.<sup>5</sup>

Le soleil est sur le point de se lever. L'air est frais, on voit la brume au loin sur le fleuve. Mon père a déjà étudié la météo et me dit qu'il fera beau toute la semaine puis il part travailler aux champs. Depuis mon jeune âge, j'apprends sans m'en rendre compte à observer la nature, à suivre les cycles et à m'adapter. Chaque tâche à sa raison d'être et est guidée par les éléments. Chaque geste compte même si c'est toujours la nature qui a le dernier mot. C'est pour ça que le pain goûte si bon parce qu'on a vu le blé pousser au grand vent, sous le soleil.

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<sup>5</sup> Wilson Shawn, *Research is Ceremony Indigenous Research Methods*, Halifax and Winnipeg, Fernwood Publishing.2008 p.122-127

Dr. Wilson introduces the idea that the storyteller if to explain too much, they are not honouring you as the listener. It is removing all responsibility from you to do any learning. The main point of Indigenist discourse is to provide a foundation or platform from which to grow, without putting a ceiling or limit on the amount of direction of that growth. Is it your responsibility as a listener to learn and to grow, as you too are accountable to all our relations.

My values, attachments and sensibility to nature come with being aware of the impact humans have on their surroundings and the crisis emerging from their actions towards it. I soon realized that if I wanted to make art about human's connection with nature and to bring attention to issues of climate change, I couldn't continue blinding myself to the effect of my own art practice on my subject matter. Accordingly, I have decided to not throw away any material considered waste from my studio practice. I first made a cube with all the discards of the year 2019, after recycling and reusing all that I could. ( see image 1) I needed to visually and physically understand my waste production as an artist. I decided to repeat the act every year to hopefully come to a more sustainable practice. This decision guided me towards working with natural materials and to better evaluate the firing and materials involved in working in clay, the making of tangible objects, and my impact on the environment.

Je suis sur la route depuis maintenant 4 heures, j'approche la frontière. Je suis encore sous le choc. Je regarde dans mon rétroviseur et j'ai le goût de pleurer en voyant tous mes effets personnels en pile, mon vélo, de l'argile, du kaolin et mes outils. En l'espace de deux jours, l'école a subitement fermé et j'ai dû rapidement tout amasser pour retourner chez moi, sans avoir vraiment de chez moi, sans studio et ce sans savoir quand je pourrai revenir. Je dois continuer ma maîtrise et je ne sais pas comment. J'espère qu'ils trouveront un vaccin bientôt.

My studio practice changed. My ideas weren't generated from the skills I had developed in the past, or the working practice of making objects, or even the will to represent the subject, but the landscape which was previously seen as a passive subject matter, became the materials instructing the artwork. They became the agent. I soon entered a more mutable studio practice, opening myself to concepts of motion, fragmentations, transformation, and foremost to this new state of making, which asks me to be present and attentive to the material and the elements to develop ideas. It dissolves boundaries, allowing dialogues and intra connections.

I started working outside.

My current practice revolves around a site-specific approach to installation art that attempts to elicit the human perceptual relationship with nature and makes plain an attentiveness to the agency of the natural environment. My research explores the notion of responsibility or entanglement, permanence or ephemerality, perception or realism.

Ceramic art embodies water, earth, fire, and air in each of their transforming stages. I decided to explore these aspects separately, giving them time and space to act; to later observe the relationship which manifests between the elements. I use natural materials that are either exploited or modified by humans, such as kaolin, beeswax, firewood, or salt. In the piece *Drawing.Portal*, kaolin is used as a drawing material, a foreign element in an environment where different minerals reside.( see image 2) The additive process of a foreign material to an environment demands the need for balance. There is a fragile edge of how much one can add without wrecking the ecosystem. My insertive actions question the relationship between the non-human and the human, bringing forward the illustration of the cycle.

Je marche sur les berges du fleuve au niveau de Kamouraska. Je suis native du bas St-laurent et j'y retrouve une paix et un sentiment d'appartenance. Le soleil brille.. La marée est basse.Tout est calme. Les glaciers intimidants m'empêchent de m'aventurer au-delà de la rive. Il fait un froid glacial. Je connais bien cet endroit. J'adore m'y baigner et y faire des feux de camp durant les journées chaudes de juillet. Cela fait maintenant deux semaines que je viens m'y promener, observer l'action des marées et des vents. La ligne de glace formée par l'eau montante est précise et droite. Le contraste entre les rochers et les glaces est extrêmement prononcé.

My first creative exchange outside happened in a place where I knew the lines of the landscape very well. I was born in this region of Quebec, Canada. I felt a sentiment of belonging even though I didn't feel comfortable taking from the land, an important aspect of my work that manifested very early in my process. I made a point to not exploit the native physical elements of nature present on the land such as rocks, wood or clay. I didn't want to use force, move dirt or appropriate natural components to bring it back to the gallery. There are a few things happening simultaneously for me in this idea when thinking about this decision.

First, It felt irrelevant to take from the land if my intent was to address the environmental issues and the impact of climate change. To take is to act like the natural elements belong to you, but it is also to overlook the matter's agency. It is impossible in our current system to reject all uses of material, but it can be done with responsibility and appreciation. There is a power dynamic and implied division in the action of taking. It speaks of consumption, exploitation, and colonization. The land which once belonged to the Wulust'agooga'wiks, Maliseet Viger First Nations, was claimed as the property of a mineral water company in the 1900's. Later it became part of the village of Kamouraska allowing local villagers to swim in the summer or enjoy a walk by the shoreline. Therefore, to not take is to enter into a respectful relationship with the land. For me, this choice is an acknowledgment of my French

Canadian white heritage, which is to say that this is not mine, although I will never understand it fully, I will listen. To introduce through my brush stroke a small amount of kaolin, which is a clay mined in England and originally from China, charged with historical meaning such as industrialization, exploitation, trade and power, becomes a visual metaphor for the need for human societies to interact sustainably within the environment and each other. The cycle, either in biology where it's seen as an ecosystem where many living creatures are interconnected for survival, or in culture with the entanglement of social behaviors, implies that many elements are in a constant relationship, in a stage of becoming one. Thus, to consciously enter the cycle with accountability encompasses an awareness of the past, where the land was once respected and belonged to the first nation people of the area, and where nature flourished. It is being in the present, staying with it, being responsible for our human impact on earth, acknowledging who we are, what we consume, what was stolen and what remains. It is allowing space for the other, dissolving the division of human power over everything else, to provide for a future where action, balance, respect and inclusion prevail. This action speaks directly to Dr. Wilson's concept of relational accountability which I described earlier. This cycle is translated into the gallery where the audience is invited to become a part of it: to stay with it, to observe, to listen, all of which are first steps into awareness and responsibilities.

The alchemists departed from the fundamental principle that minerals and most inorganic matter were given a type of “life”. Like animated creatures, these substances had the possibilities to evolve within the earth, to pass through a series of transformations which allow them to elevate from an imperfect stage to a perfect one.(translated from the ancient alchemist text *L'alchimie et les alchimistes*, Louis Figuier, 1854)<sup>6</sup> Parallel to the early chemists' ways of thinking, I am interested in the transformative facets of working with material, its philosophical and relational components, and its life qualities, but I reject the obsession to control every step of its transmuting phases. My actions in the landscape are not about investigating or dominating, it calls for a sensibility, the human ability to be affected by their surroundings and how emotional capabilities affect moral development. It can also exhibit the perceptivity to the entanglement of human and natural elements, drawing them towards a relationship or the causality and responsibility that they have in the system. To prioritize natural elements like water, wind, and ice agency, is to think of the earth as more than merely sculptural material.

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<sup>6</sup> Historical and critical essays on hermetic philosophy. Louis Figuier was a French chemist and writer in occult subjects, specialized in the popularizing of science, mainly physiology and medical chemistry. He published many notable works and was equally distinguished for his prodigious output and literary quality.

Figuier, Louis (Guillaume) (1819-1894) . " Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology. . *Encyclopedia.com*. (April 16, 2021).

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/science/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/figuier-louis-guillaume-1819-1894>

My performance in the creation of the work uses gesture and analogy of drawing as a visual metaphor to create lines that function as a cut into space. By erasing the horizon, or working close to the ground, or taking my body out of the composition, a dislocation happens. Without these signifiers, the mind stops trying to locate a familiar place, a known landscape, or a memory. Our brain implements predictive perceptions of an image depending on the beholder's prior life experiences, emotional memories, and idiosyncrasies.<sup>7</sup> By adding ambiguities, the viewer's previous expectations of what a landscape is fades, and more sensorial engagement is asked of the viewer to understand what they are experiencing; is it a river or is it a stream?

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<sup>7</sup> Kandel, Eric R. *The Age of Insight: The Quest to Understand the Unconscious in Art, Mind, and Brain, from Vienna 1900 to the Present*, Random House NYC USA, 2012

The "beholder's share", originally "beholder's involvement", concept was developed by art historian Alois Riegl, and his great disciples Ernst Gombrich and Ernst Kris. Dr. Eric Kandel explains that the human brain does not consciously create the images that we see any more than it does when we "perceive" the objects around us. In other words, vision is the information processing rather than the image transmission. What our visual receptors perceive is called (by the modern visual neuroscientists) "a percept" rather than "an image." Then our brain runs the percepts through the labyrinth of past experiences, emotions, and mirror neurons, and it creates the image, which we decide to empathize with or hate; to place on a pedestal or to discard.

Our perception is a kind of story telling. By telling more stories, by shaping this process, it helps our brain change our perceptions. A successful narrative doesn't work until you engage the person, finding the edges of what can be imagined.



My work aims to introduce just enough information to activate and make sense of the elements in place but enough vagueness so the location doesn't lead to the experience, and one can't pinpoint exactly where the scene is taking place. Thus, It demands to be in the present moment to engage with the phenomenon, highlighting the action of the matter.

I use a minimalist aesthetic that deliberately lacks expression to distill the meaning to its essential, to encourage observation, and therefore to accentuate my decision to relate to non-human agency. Differing from the main highlighted figures of the Minimalism art movement, such as Donald Judd, Carl André, and Sol LeWitt, I see my work resonate to the practice of Agnes Martin, which was tethered to spirituality. I aim for my work to offer a haven to explore silence and inwardness. For Martin "nature is like parting a curtain, you go into. I want to draw a certain response like this...that quality of response from people when they leave themselves behind, often experienced in nature, an experience of simple joy." Her paintings are about merging and formlessness.<sup>8</sup> In my piece *Drawing. Line*, the simplicity of the range of colors, the composition and the quietness intend to create an experience where the line becomes the entrance point for the viewer to relate to the space.(see image 3)

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<sup>8</sup> Agnes Martin, quoted in Ann Wilson, "Linear Webs," *Art & Artists* 1 (October 1966), 48.

My drawings in natural spaces happen in real-time and the installations created intentionally remain true to my experience in nature. The camera becomes my eye, the suggested entrance point into the composition. It is a communication tool to introduce the viewer body into the space. The connections between my bodily sensation and the elements are instilled through installation. The spatial experiences created by the specific height of the photograph or size of the objects for example, are essential for the perception of the work, echoing to my own body's relation with the outdoor elements. Often sensory aspects are activated in space to reference the outdoor experience, such as the smell of fire or the visually slow melting action of ice. The pieces which seem still at first glance in the indoor space are actually active over time; whether through material transformation, such as the slow crystallization of soda ash, or the changes of water stages, or the light sensitive clay variation of colors. Similar to how I return to places many times to develop a welcoming feeling that slowly allows ideas to emerge, the viewer is encouraged to revisit the space to relate to the full experience of the work.

My challenge is to find ways in which the experience of my art-making can be created and shared with minimum impact on the environment. I am interested in the ways my gesture disappears, exposing the notion of time. The ephemerality of my work brings me to question the importance of the evanescence of my body and my fingerprint in

the work. I found similitude in my approach with work of the artist Ana Mendieta. Throughout her earthworks, especially her *Siluetas*, Mendieta carried the disappearance of the art object to its apex when she produced works in which she dug a narrow channel into the body of the earth figure, poured gunpowder in the channel, and set it ablaze.(see image 4) Her work rejects modernist conventions and advocates a re-contextualization of art experience. Mendieta's works can be thought of as performance to the extent that they invoke dissolution, movement, and indeterminacy. In this way, her work fits into the movement toward "dematerialization" which began in the 1960s. Her installations refuse to fetishize the object in emphasizing contingency, fragmentation, and disembodiment.<sup>9</sup>

I find these concepts particularly interesting when thinking about my physical presence in the work. My marks are erased by the elements. The matter fades with time. Without firing, clay returns to earth as is. Related to the main concept of dematerialization, there is a fragmentation that happens in the way I individually explore every aspect of ceramic making. In this case, my work does something similar to what art critic Lucy R. Lippard observes in the essay *The dematerialization of art*. Highly conceptual art upsets detractors because there is "not enough to look at," or rather, not enough of what the viewer is accustomed to seeing. Monotony or simplicity exist in time as well as in space because of two aspects of the viewing

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<sup>9</sup> Blocker Jane, *Where is Ana Mendieta? Identity, Performativity, and Exile*. Durham and London Duke University Press, 1999. p. 17-24

experience. The work demands more participation. More time must be spent to experience a detail-less work, for the viewer is used to focusing on details and absorbing an impression of the piece with the help of these details. Secondly, the time spent looking at minimal art pieces seems indefinitely longer than *action-and-detail-filled* time.<sup>10</sup>

Or is it a more true materialization? Not a materialization in the representational form but the material as actant. The matter I create with, is enacted in entanglement with the way I perform with it. In the piece *Drawing.Drift*, I am allowing clay to enter the flow of the wind. (see image 5)The wind is essential to the drawing; without the wind the piece can't be. It is about the relationship of the wind, the clay, the snow and my gesture. My mark is essential to the making of the work but it is not the main focus. It's all about the materials emerging from their actions.

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<sup>10</sup> Lippard, Lucy R. John Chandler. *The Dematerialization of Art*. Written in 1967 and published in *Art International*, 12:2 (February 1968), pp. 31-36.1971

Je me pause sur le bord du ruisseau avec mon sceau et un contenant de kaolin. Cela fait plusieurs mois que je travaille dehors et je décide de prendre un moment pour mieux comprendre le geste de peindre avec de l'argile. Je me penche au-dessus du cours d'eau et j'y puise de l'eau. Je mélange l'argile au liquide et avec mon large pinceau, j'entreprends l'action de peindre sur les plateaux rocheux qui m'entourent. Je répète encore et encore. Je recouvre les rochers complètement. Le temps passe. Je trempe mon pinceau dans l'eau et j'inverse l'action effaçant toutes traces de mes gestes. Mes coups de pinceau se dissipent et l'argile fuit dans le cours d'eau. J'observe.

My artwork is materialized through performance, video, earth art, sounds, and installations. The author Jane Blockers in writing about Mendieta's similar uses of mediums, proposes that these media continually enact the cold facts of mortality and disappearance. As participants in culture, there is a will to evaluate the disorienting effect that dematerialization has on art but not the disorientation effect that it has on our historical accounts. Blockers states that we retain a language that is blind to the deaths that these media encode, we say "isn't it beautiful how it disappears!" but,

“Nonetheless, it needs to be preserved.”<sup>11</sup> I find strength in dissolution. My marks visually dissipate but the material remains. In the piece *Drawing.Glacier*, the salt dissolves and slowly returns to the ocean where it was once harvested.(see image 6) It re-enters the ecosystem. When working with ice, I freeze water to create an object. The melting illustrates time, but mostly by exposing the different stages of transformation such as freezing, melting and evaporation, I aim to introduce the concept that disappearance implies reality. This void leaves space for connections and for the other. Is there a need to preserve to demonstrate our presence on earth? Or is there a real power in performance and other conditions that we cant see visually?

The American philosopher Judith Butler offers the analysis, which is influenced strongly by Derrida, that performance is not acting but a repetition of (dis)empowered acts. It involves performing actions and utterances that are already heavily encoded semiotically, and are already imbued with power. She suggests that we think of identity, not as something that we have, but has something that we do. For Butler, identity is the effect of socially regulated actions that nonetheless, as action, as process, erode the self and create oppressive identity categories. Just as Butler is

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<sup>11</sup> Blocker Jane, *Where is Ana Mendieta? Identity, Performativity, and Exile*. Durham and London Duke University Press, 1999. p.134

suspicious of presumed benefits of establishing identity categories, Peggy Phelan, American feminist scholar, is suspicious of the presumed benefits of political visibility for the subaltern. She argues that, in the rush to visibility, minorities and women become victims of their own public representation, which contributes to rather subvert dominant ideologies. She reminds us that there is real power in remaining unseen. She prioritizes the strategic potential of performance as, in her terms, “representation without reproduction”<sup>12</sup> I see my artist identity defined by my actions, by the repetition of movement, and by my capability to relate to matter. If one considers painting, a heavily encoded idea in the art world, and remove the canvas and the archival oil paint what is left is the action. My painting movement is a tool to allow the visual action of the work to happen, which is where the water comes in contact with the clay for example. The fact that the painted clay washes away and returns to the earth or that the video will eventually lose its visibility access because of the speed of digital media evolution doesn’t diminish my presence as a maker. Moreover, the visual disappearance of my mark making suggests a dissolution of categories or hierarchy, in this case the human power over the non human. It evokes a balance of authority and real empowerment as an artist.

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<sup>12</sup> Blocker Jane, *Where is Ana Mendieta? Identity, Performativity, and Exile*. Durham and London Duke University Press, 1999. p.24

Repetition brings forwards the ritual aspect in the making, whether I need to visit the space many times to develop intimacy with the place in order for an idea to emerge, or by the repetition of a movement while making. In the piece *Drawing. Fire*, I am throwing hand picked clay into a fire, repeating the action over and over.(see image 7) It embodies time as well as underlines the relational notion between the elements of clay and fire. The clay is touched by the flame, the water left in the clay body is expelled, sometimes leaving violent marks on the piece. It records the energy of the fire, its presence through smell, and my action. The ritual affects not only myself, the performer, but also those who view it. It emphasizes the dialogue aspect of the work, adding one more layer into the conversation.

Alongside the evolution of my art practice, my material research led me to find a correlation between my ways of making art and New Materialism theory, especially



the work of feminist theorist Karen Barad and Donna Haraway.<sup>13</sup> My initial mark-making as an artist went from a personal representation of nature (a more reflective approach) to a relationship within place and material which could be defined as more diffractive means. Diffraction is a physical phenomenon where waves spread as they pass through an aperture or around objects. It occurs when the size of the aperture or obstacle is of the same order of magnitude as the wavelength of the incident wave.(see image 8) More than a visual metaphor, Karen Barad suggests that in a deep sense we can understand diffraction patterns as patterns of difference that make a difference.<sup>14</sup> For Barad, reflection (or reflexivity) holds objects of investigation at a distance. A way to illustrate this would be to think about observation drawing.

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<sup>13</sup> Donna Haraway is Distinguished Professor Emerita in the History of Consciousness Department and in the Feminist Studies Department at the University of California, Santa Cruz.Directory. Accessed May 10, 2021.  
<https://humanities.ucsc.edu/academics/faculty/index.php?uid=haraway>.

Karen Barad is Professor of Feminist Studies, Philosophy, and History of Consciousness at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Barad's Ph.D. is in theoretical particle physics and quantum field theory. They are known particularly for their theory of agential realism. "About Karen Barad," About Karen Barad, accessed May 10, 2021,  
<https://people.ucsc.edu/~kbarad/about.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Barad Karen, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham and London Duke University Press. 2007. p.185  
*"Practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated. We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming. The separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse."*

The artist aspires to find accurate representations, free of distortion, across the different aspects of the composition and is concerned with the interactions of separate entities. It aims to situate the viewer in a place or a period of time. Yet, as Haraway states: “Reflexivity has been recommended as a critical practice, but my suspicion is that reflexivity, like reflection, only displaces the same elsewhere”.<sup>15</sup>

In the piece *Drawing.Drift* the ambiguous character of the scenery where the tree line and the horizon are absent, a dislocation is created that invites the viewer to tune in on the action of the wind, its sounds, and its interaction with the clay.(image 5) Is it a large mountain or is it a small snow mount? The identification of the body of snow, its representation, isn't the focus, thus leaving headways for relationships to form with the elements in place and the viewer. This diffractive approach to drawing erodes the set concepts of past, present, and future, releasing space for experiences to emerge. Therefore, it allows the viewer to dive within, to become part of the work.

In their introduction of New Materialisms, the authors Diana Coole and Samantha Frost articulate this concept of relationship, this stage of becoming which is present in my work.

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<sup>15</sup> Barad Karen, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham and London Duke University Press. 2007.

Conceiving matter as possessing its own modes of self-transformation, self-organization, and directedness, and thus no longer as simply passive or inert, disturbs the conventional sense that agents are exclusively humans who possess the cognitive abilities, intentionality, and freedom to make autonomous decisions and the corollary presumption that humans have the right or ability to master nature. Instead, the human species is being relocated within a natural environment whose material forces themselves manifest certain agentic capacities and in which the domain of unintended or unanticipated effects is considerably broadened. Matter is no longer imagined here as a massive, opaque plenitude but is recognized instead as indeterminate, constantly forming and reforming in unexpected ways. One could conclude, accordingly, that “matter becomes” rather than that “matter is.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Coole Diana and Frost Samantha. *Introducing the New Materialisms*. Duke University Press. 2010. p.10

I look at the conceptual underpinnings of diffractive methodology to explore a type of art that exists on the edge where artistic gestures, natural elements, and matters intra-define one another. I explore the relationship between the perceiver and the perceived and think about how my installation can create a moment where natural elements and human experience are intertwined, where responsibility and attachment coexist, and where embody entails disappearance.

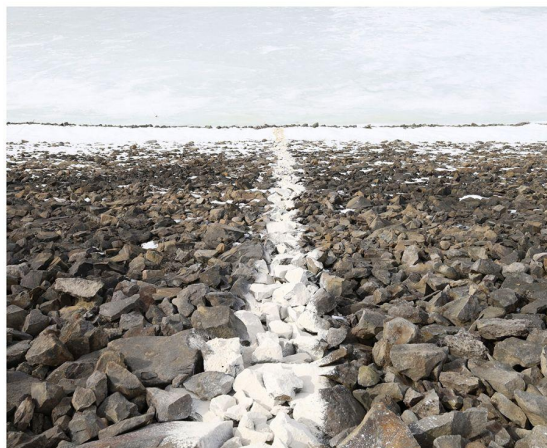
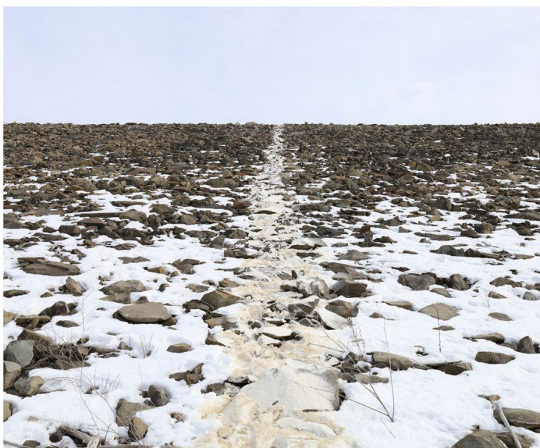
**Image 1**

**Cube.** discarded studio waste, ceramics.  
24 x 24 x 24 inches. 2020

**Image 2**

**Drawing. Portal.** kaolin, inkjet  
print on cotton watercolor  
paper.  
42 x 48 inches. 2021

Image 3



**Drawing. *Vertige*.** kaolin, inkjet print on cotton watercolor paper.  
Diptyque. 35 x 41 inches. 2021

Image 4



***Siluetas series.*** Ana Mendieta 1945-1985  
Estate of Ana Mendieta.

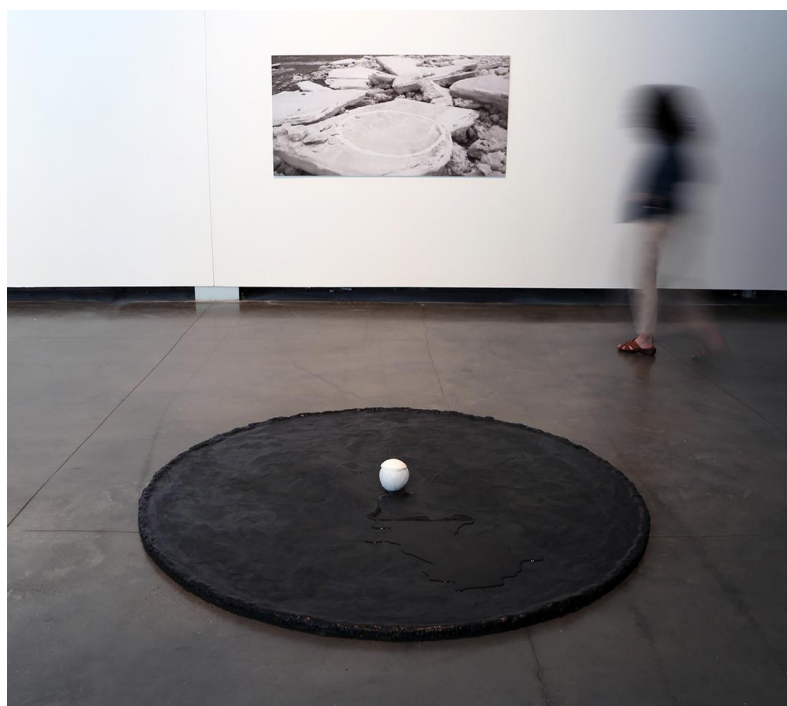


Image 5



***Drawing.Drift.*** Kaolin, snow, natural silk, recycled polyester,  
video and sound installation 3:37 min.  
96 x 120 inches. 2021

Image 6



***Drawing. Glacier.*** kaolin, inkjet print on cotton watercolor paper.  
soda ash, beeswax, food grade coarse salt.  
Photography 36 x 72 inches. Circle 72 inches diameter. 2021



Image 7



*Drawing. Fire.* inkjet print on cotton watercolor paper, porcelain wood. Photography 43 x 72 inches, circle 72 inches diameter. 2021

Image 8

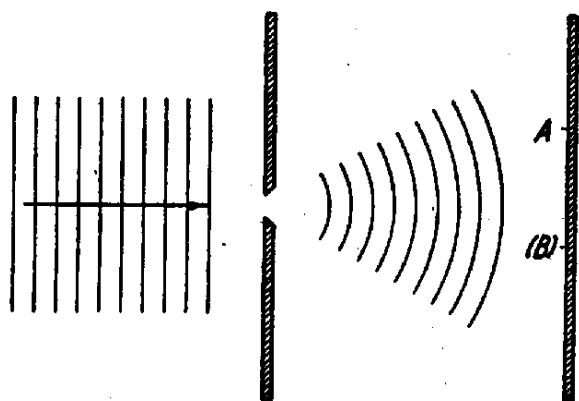


FIG. 1

**Diffraction Pattern Drawing**

From Discussion with Einstein on Epistemological Problems in Atomic Physics, from Albert Einstein, Philosopher-Scientist, ed. Paul Arthur Shilpp, Harper, 1949

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## **. Technical statement .**

Kaolin. China clay grolleg from England |

paint . dust . flow . dissipate . trace .

Porcelain made from the recycled ball clay, kaolin, talc, and silica collected from my window project at Alfred which was aged in the forest for one month |

inprint . pinch . throw . dry . smell . break .

Natural beeswax from Canada colored with black Mason stain 6600 |

smell . melt . shape . waterproof. smooth .

Maple firewood harvested in Québec Canada |

cut . assemble . transport . light . burn . heat . energy.

Soda ash mixed in 1 liter of Alfred's water and frozen |

dissolve . melt . flow . dry . crystallize .

Natural silk and recycled polyester fabric |

curve . move . transparent . opaque . light . reflect .

Watercolor paper |

absorb . matte . print . granular . opaque .dull . snow .

Weather |

-30 celsius . -20 celsius . - 12 celsius . partly cloudy . 37 km/h wind . white sky . snow .  
no wind . low tide . sunny .

Supports and main tools |

Box frame made of maple, white washed, with Truvue premium clear glass . ACM panel  
. waterproof MDF . camera Canon EOS RP . tripod . Michael's sound recorder . short  
throw projector . photoshop . touch designer . premiere pro . audition . madmapper .  
inkjet printer . cold mount from 3M . pc11 . subwoofer . two speakers . lots of cables .