



ON CARE + ENTANGLEMENT:
BECOMING THE CENTER FOR
INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS
AGENCY

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Care is a complex thing.

ABSTRACT:

The Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency (CILMA), is a field study project that activates the natural landscape to investigate care, thing-power and land use. Through site-specific experimentation and ritual action, CILMA acts as a catalyst for engaging grief, healing, interconnection and object agency to deepen our environmental awareness.

CILMA employs a variety of disciplines including sculpture, installation, performance, video and fiber practices in conjunction with interdisciplinary research to explore care and ritual as methodologies for the construction of speculative futures within the context of a global climate crisis.





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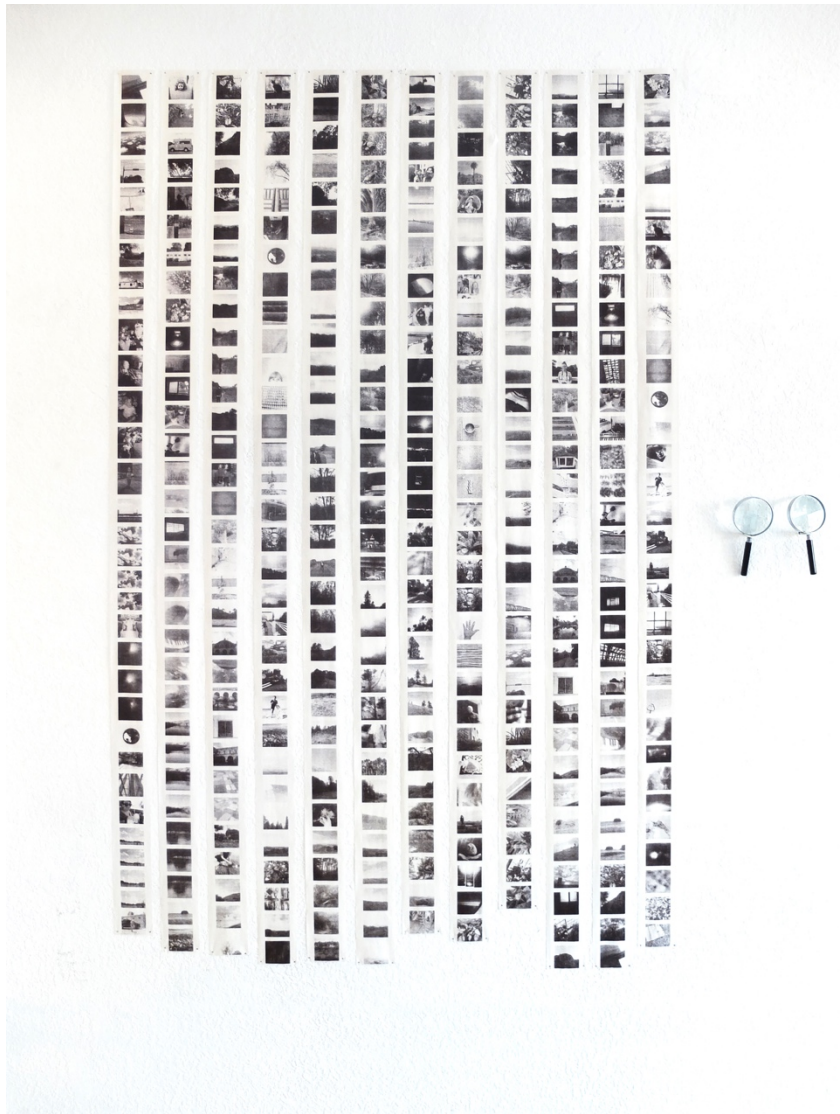
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INTRODUCTION

For the past decade my work has centered on grief. Often emotionally charged, I utilized process and materials as metaphors for loss, finding ways to connect to people and to reimagine grief. I have been trying to pin down what I was really questioning about grief. I was thinking about memories and the time it takes for them to fade, using materials like images printed on thermal receipt paper. Images that would similarly fade with time, remnants of a process.



TOTEMIC OBJECTS 01 & 02, (2017)
Images, thermal receipt paper, wool, cotton



RECEIPT PRINT INSTALLATION, (2016)
Memories, thermal receipt paper, magnifying glasses



UNDO, (2017)
Fabric, house paint and natural dyes on emergency blanket.

I saved materials that held sentimental value and deconstructed them: literally pulling apart the woven structure of an emergency blanket that I was wrapped in on the 8th anniversary of my mother's death. A care object cloaked around my body to mitigate the shock after nearly drowning while saving a stranger from drowning. All of this happening while in my mother's favorite place and with people I barely knew.

I continue to be attracted to the histories attached to materials and how they can communicate. I am interested in how materials hold and develop relation, how humans do the same and how the two intersect.

Process and materials function as metaphors for me. Their associations and relationships become semiotic cues, playing out in the work and in my materials lists. I've always thought of myself as someone who collaborates with these materials by viewing material's inherent limitations instead as material agency. Almost as though I don't make things, but we do. Me and the things co-create, together.



THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF EMPATHY, (2012)

PERFORMANCE VIDEO STILLS

Digital video, grief, seven-year-old cigarette, hand-built ceramic urn, tears, desert
Anza Borrego Springs Desert, CA

To experience empathy, you require both perceptive channels that take in the experience of others (as a researcher I call this the “afferent” or incoming route) and responsive channels that have been motivated to respond (with “efferent” or outgoing signals, words, or nonverbal behaviors like facial expressions and body language). --Helen Riess, *The Empathy Effect*

The Impossibility of Empathy (2012) is a performance I made seven years after my mother’s death, when I finished smoking her last cigarette while ashing into a ceramic urn I had hand-built for the occasion. The performance was done in the Anza Borrego Desert, an extreme example of the desert landscape I grew up in. I dressed in all black to recall funerary attire and sat upon a boulder, which seemed to exist separately from the surrounding landscape. Its isolation mirrored my own.

Throughout the performance my body convulsed and cried as I held flame to the trauma embedded in my physical form. My intention was to “breathe the same air as my mother” to prove that I could not empathize with her pain. Instead, when I finished the performance, I looked up to find that almost everyone watching me was also crying. They were crying with me.

I had more to learn about empathy and embodied experiences.

GRIEF IS A RHIZOME

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari theorize that reality is more akin to a rhizome than it is to a tree. The rhizome is a metaphor they use in contrast to the Modern Structuralist arborescent tree model. While a tree theoretically grows upwards in a vertical ascent stemming from the roots before expanding outwards, a rhizome, like grass, grows chaotically and horizontally—without origin. The tree metaphor, with its origin, implies the existence of an essential truth, a core, while the rhizome makes no such claim and instead professes a multitude of ‘truths,’ or rather a multitude of never-completely-knowable things. Deleuze and Guattari envision an origin-less entangled web-like system of interconnections, as opposed to the linear, stable, knowable world claimed to be by Structuralist thinkers and philosophers like Descartes.

Informed by Deleuze and Guattari, I believe that grief or mourning can be considered an apt metaphor for how we want to see (perceive) the world. My ideas surrounding (and feelings of) grief are always in flux, becoming in much the same manner as the rest of the universe. My position on and in grief will not remain static because my understanding will continue to grow as I delve further into my experience of grief and my curiosity surrounding its effects. My understanding is only a construction of my intertextuality. I am a compilation of the information I take in. As the information shifts, so do I and so does my understanding of grief.

Within the rhizome of life, everything is interconnected, and we find ourselves surrounded by multiplicities: entangled within our culture, our global position, our physicality and more. It is this web-like structure that leads me to question the subjectivity of grief. Western society claims to know the experience of grief because we covet a model which is capable of describing its stages, or so we think.¹ It is a model that follows a linear timeline. A simple google search will tell you that this timeline is called the Kübler-Ross model and it involves five stages: *denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance*, but what you don’t know until you experience grief is that mourning is much more complicated than Even through experience and time, grief cannot be fully grasped, as it becomes embedded in the bereaved.



EDEN V. EVANS
UNTITLED (GRASS), (2019)
Multi-channel digital video, landscape

I contend that grief itself can be considered as a rhizome. We do not move from one stage to another with any sort of linear trajectory and I posit that to become ‘healed’ is not only inaccurate, but not possible. In *Beyond Kübler-Ross: Recent Developments of Our Understanding of Grief and Bereavement*, Christopher Hall, notes that stage theories, such as the Kübler-Ross model, offer a kind of categorical ordering of emotions, which fail to address the idiosyncrasies and complexity of grief. In contrast to these stage models, in *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, J. William Worden views grief as an active process, which should be considered within the context of the individual experiencing it. Worden recognizes seven factors for building this context: who the deceased was, the attachment between the bereaved and the deceased, how the death occurred, social factors (like expected grief timelines), history of experiences, personality of the bereaved and other stressors. Worden’s seven factors propose a model for grief therapy and understand grief in a manner that embraces the complexity of grief by bringing awareness to our various diverse entanglements.

The Rhizome is a world of constant change, a place of 'becoming.' A place where the only whole 'truth,' if you could call it that, is that nothing is stable, and everything will change. My understanding that we don't heal from grief is not a simple and pessimistic one, but one that claims a complex world and affords credit to change. We may not find acceptance or 'heal,' but we are always altering our orientation to our grief and how we experience it. We are nomadic, both in our worldly positions and within ourselves. I do not believe it goes away, but I also do not believe it remains the same. This is exactly why the concept of treating grief as an illness that can be overcomeⁱⁱ is senseless. We are able to experience these 'stages of grief,' but they are not linear and can overlap, repeat, and become circular depending upon those in mourning. It is always in flux.



CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY:
HERBAL MEDICINE SHROUDS, (2021)

This recognition of Deleuze and Guattari's Rhizome of interconnection returns me to my woven forms, where warps and wefts entangle and intertwine to build shape, all apparently on the surface. My use of natural and unprocessed materials enable the woven objects to decompose and recompose into something new, always becoming.

Throughout my practice I have been continually captivated by gestures and processes because, to me, they refer to 'becoming.' It is the place where something is constantly in flux from what it was to what it will be. As such, my work never reaches completion. My intention in object construction is to refer towards the object's system of relation and its malleability or capacity to change over time. My incomplete objects gesture towards life cycles of materials, building relation through collections of objects and their orientation to one another. It is within these objects and their relationships to one another that fragments are culled together; pieces of various media and metaphorical references coalescing to shift their visibility for the viewer.

Processes like weaving become metaphors, charting and tracing events transpired, illustrating a system of repetitions or reactions. I am interested in the entanglements that occur within a process and what they tell us; a shroud constructed of herbal medicines dries, preserves itself, and has the potential to reduce tension and stability.

THE STUFF OF WEB-INESS

“Grief is a path to understanding entangled shared living and dying; human beings must grieve *with*, because we are in and of this fabric of undoing.”
--Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*

The web-like system of the Rhizome parallels that of Donna Haraway’s tentacularity, in *Staying with the Trouble*, which conceptually joins tentacled beings (cnidarians, spiders, finery beings like humans and raccoons, squid, jellyfish) with web-like structures (neural extravaganzas, nets, networks, string figures and science fact).

“The tentacular ones make attachments and detachments; they make cuts and knots; they make a difference; they weave paths and consequences but not determinisms; they are both open and knotted in some ways and not others.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Haraway works with these string figures as theoretical devices, which enable what she calls the “patterning of possible worlds.” For Haraway (and much like Worden’s consideration of the seven factors), if we are able to consider the world from within our webbed positionality, we can consider the world as vastly as possible in new ways. Our contexts and entanglements are key to understanding and operating in the world.

My most recent project, the *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency* (CILMA) invokes Donna Haraway’s ‘sympoiesis’ or *becoming with*, where individuals exist as tethered within a multi-species world of many, interconnected inside an amorphous system in order to reconsider the bounds of relation. Haraway regards grief as a lesson, which creates awareness for the future. By connecting ‘ecological grief’ to understandings of land as a teacher, CILMA facilitates a re-attunement of the senses and awareness of the webbed systems we reside within as practices of reciprocity and future-making.

Maria Puig de la Bellacasa similarly draws on Haraway, pointing towards the relation between humans and the natural world which surrounds us in *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds*. Puig de la Casa writes,

“The ecological perception of being part of the earth, a part that does its specific share of care, requires Earth not to be a spiritual or visionary image—for example, Gaia—but is felt. Earth as “real dirt under our fingernails” (Starhawk 2004, 6), and that our bodies are conceived materially as part of it, for example, responding to the needs of water because we are water (Lohan 2008); human energy, including activist energy (Shiva 2008), being a living material processed by other forms of life.”^{iv}

CILMA invokes these ideas from Puig de la Casa and Haraway as context within which performed actions or rituals enact care to disrupt the productivity and systems of logic often expected of research. In CILMA’s research, gestures and relationships become methods of inquiry that derive soft and counter power from the form of the institution and its records. Myth, as generated by the framework of the institution, and ritual, based in somatic and sensory action, are employed to consider perspectives of human positionality in relation to the natural world.

Haraway tells us^v that it matters what thoughts think thoughts, what knowledges know knowledges and what worlds world worlds. For Haraway, like Worden and D + G, our perspectives are informed by specific contexts, which shape our understanding. Grief itself is a consequence of love, relation and loss. Much like my own understanding of grief is shaped by my experiences and my research, how we think, act and exist in the world-- within a more-than-human world-- has consequences. Therefore, how we relate to and engage with the more-than-human world has consequences.



THE MYTH OF TEKHELET, (2019)
Indigo dyed and natural mercerized cotton on cotton handkerchiefs

Tzitzit Construction Process Notes:

(4 tassels / handkerchief)

44" - 3 natural cotton

55" - 1 synthetic indigo cotton

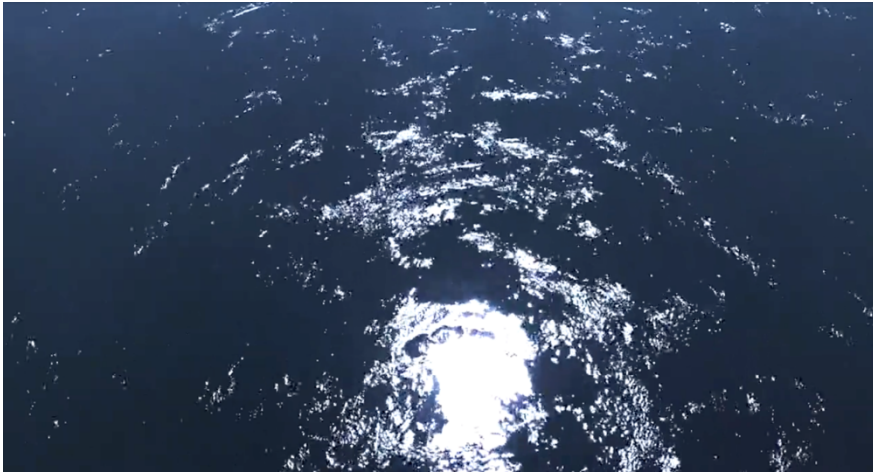
Make loop, 1 square knot, twist white, make tekhelet knot, repeat square knot, blue knot.

(10-5-6-4: YHWH)

In *The Myth of Tekhelet*, I utilize the history and contested origin of the Jewish Tekhelet, a deep blue, as a metaphor for the rhizomatic qualities of grief. The word "TEKHELET" is hand embroidered on cotton handkerchiefs using thread dyed with synthetic indigo. For the piece, I chose a raised satin stitch and a font that recalls monograms. Tzitzit (tassels) tied in the Ashkenazic tradition adorn the four corners of each handkerchief. Each tzitzit is comprised of a total of 49 knots, the number of times tekhelet is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible/Tanakh.

The forms and materials gesture towards the complexity of grief through their own relationships and histories. Handkerchiefs refer us to crying, while the name of the color blue is itself a synonym for sadness. Raised satin stitch, a process of layering stitches, obscures the stitches below the surface, which complicates the stitch process and reflects our embedded entanglements.

Additionally, the color blue's conceptual relation to tzitzit becomes metaphoric and iconic, heavily layered through cultural reference. The thread used to embroider *The Myth of Tekhelet* is hand-dyed using synthetic indigo in order to reference the contested history of the mollusk and its entanglement in the multiple truths that comprise the origin of tekhelet. Through its various truths, tekhelet becomes rhizomatic and web-like. Jewish Talmudic writings mention tekhelet, a midnight blue dye, which is said to be derived from a sea creature, the *Chilazon* or *Hilazon*. However, the creature's existence and identification has been lost. Many Rabbis and scientists have worked to rediscover the Chilazon and to produce tekhelet again. Some even believe that they have found the Chilazon in the *Murex trunculus*, a mollusk. Yet, there is no consensus amongst Jewish sects. Some sects, like the Karaite Jews, consider indigo and/or woad as the source. It is blue, it is origin-less, it is lost and entangled.



TEKHELET, (2019)
VIDEO STILL
Digital Video, myth, water, light

Tekhelet, is a corresponding video of rushing blue water, in which I explore the relationship between time and grief, the mollusk as contested origin, and blueness through color and time. *Tekhelet*, employs the meditative qualities of time, water and light as visual symbols for YHWH and balance. In Judaism, blue refers to the divine, by referencing the sky and the sea, and also towards equilibrium, seen as the color halfway between black and white.

In contrast, the sound of the water rushing produces a white noise, a calm tension or rather a low rumbling sound, which implies a buildup. This implication of building mirrors the layering of stitches performed in *The Myth of Tekhelet* and also refers towards the process of becoming, while the visual dance performed by the light on the water illustrates an entanglement. The rippling of the water is really a web, which like grief, constantly shape-shifts.



POOL PARTY (2019)
Digital video, wound cleaning gauze, ferrous sulfate natural indigo, aromatherapy blend

Pool Party is a sensory installation in which I emphasize a metaphorical relationship between Tsunami's and cycles of grief. Tsunamis become a metaphor for grief through wave cycles: an event occurs, a large wave is produced, destruction occurs, time goes by, aftershocks occur, time goes by, the waves return to normal, but the landscape is changed.

A soundscape composition juxtaposes the sounds of natural disasters with electronically synthesized sound in reverse, while a video of a wave plays backwards in slow motion on an old television set.

The TV sits atop a rippled quilt constructed from gauze used for cleaning wounds and splattered with ferrous sulfate natural indigo. The quilt is scented with an aromatherapy grief blend consisting of lavender, ylang ylang, clary sage, bergamot, frankincense, and geranium. The scent teeters on the edge of calming and putrid. *Pool Party* looks to water as a metaphor for grief. Triggered by an event, epic, and then in subsequent waves before rebuilding occurs.



INSTALLATION SHOT, *EYE LOVE YOU*, TROPICAL CONTEMPORARY, (2020)

(Left to right in installation)
SOFT ROCKS, (2020), Yarn, cloth
AGAINST RIGIDITY, (2020), Cotton upholstery piping, memory foam,
PEAK/PEEK, (2020), Silk, fur, safflower, madder, sodium alginate
THE NIMBLE LANDSCAPE, (2020), Mylar, landscape, video

In 2020, I began my initial considerations of the perspective of mountains while watching, *Mountain*, an otherwise boring feature filled with glittering generalities about mountains narrated over beautiful mountain imagery. When the narrator claimed that ‘the mountain watched us arrive and it will watch us leave,’ it triggered something in me.

In my mind, the theoretical distance between a mountain and humans created by timescales seemed to reflect my own experience of grief as a child. After experiencing the loss of my mother at a young age, I felt I had lost my capacity to connect to people. I wondered about the mountain’s relationship to living things, if it felt a similar disconnect between itself and the surrounding landscape of elements, objects and entities.

I also wondered how a mountain might feel loss and what it could lose, perhaps ecosystems or land mass. In addition, because I had been thinking about grief as an endless, rhizomatic part of becoming, immeasurably complex, I wondered how to measure a mountain.

When you google how to measure a mountain you find that it is measured from sea level to peak, but I questioned this categorizing of space based on something that seemed so arbitrary, like sea level, and I wondered if the mountain actually went beyond that, down into the earth’s crust and up into the stratosphere.

Soft Rocks, Against Rigidity, The Nimble Landscape, and Peak/Peek function best in relationship to one another. Each is a component or a variant in an investigation of malleable boundaries as they pertain to mountains. The works question whether a mountain is or has an umwelt, or an experience of the world that is its own.

What are the boundaries of a mountain?
 What is its relationship to time?
 Is a mountain just part of the earth’s becoming?
 Are rocks soft to mountains?

Throughout my work featured in Tropical Contemporary’s *Eye Love You* exhibition, the material language of textiles and its relationship to feminist making practices is employed through natural dyes, basket making techniques and tufting. The baggage of the media is utilized here in conjunction with components of the mountain landscape to refer towards eco-feminist worlding, yet another webby system, which considers our entanglement and the care necessary in our engagement with the world around us. Through both form (rocks, ridgelines, peaks, and landscape views) and the information encoded within the materials themselves, these objects speculate about the perspective of a mountain.

This interest in the mountain which had begun as a metaphor, later expanded to consider multi-species interconnection and the vibrant materiality of objects.^{vi} My interest in grief expanded as well: from an inquiry driven by individual grief into an examination of ‘ecological grief.’^{vii}

Through my expanded understanding of ‘the mountain,’ I came to a new understanding of grief. Despite the need for further research, the effects of ecological grief are akin to individual grief. When humans experience the loss of someone we love, we encounter the loss of everything that person was tied to in their lives as well.

These tethers vary across space and time, but regardless they exist for the grief stricken as markers and triggers. My own mother passed in the time before cellphones were popular, but my father’s recent passing left me with not only our ‘family plan,’ but his phone, his photos, his logins and his voicemail. Since his death in 2018 I have continued to pay for his line, simply so that I can occasionally call and get his voicemail and hear his voice. We used to speak daily and now that time is spent without connection. The recording is his ghost. A trace reminder that he existed once.

Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet^{vii}, recognizes similar chains of effect occurring in the natural world. We read, “Minor forms of space and time merge with great ones. An extinction is a local event as well as a global one. Extinction is a breakdown of coordination that has unintended reverberating effects.”^{viii} When loss occurs, it is not only the individual extinction that presents a problem, but also the innumerable unexpected shifts that will occur as a result. These are the traces left behind. The remains.

In *Ecological Grief as a Mental Health response to Climate Change-related Loss*, Cunsolo and Ellis define ecological grief as “the grief felt in relation to experienced or anticipated ecological losses, including the loss of species, ecosystems and meaningful landscapes due to acute or chronic environmental change.”^{ix} Ecological grief results from these connections, traces and remnants.

Edited by Jennifer Sills

Grieving environmental scientists need support

Rates of environmental destruction are greater today than at any previous point in human history (1). This loss of valued species, ecosystems, and landscapes triggers strong grief responses in people with an emotional attachment to nature (2). However, environmental scientists are presented with few opportunities to address this grief professionally.

Environmental scientists tend to respond to degradation of the natural world by ignoring, suppressing, or denying the resulting painful emotions while at work (3). The risks that this entails are profound. Emotional trauma can substantially compromise self-awareness, imagination, and the ability to think coherently (4). As Charles Darwin put it, one “who remains passive when overwhelmed with grief loses [the] best chance of recovering elasticity of mind” (5).

Academic institutes must allow environmental scientists to grieve well and thus emerge stronger from traumatic experiences to discover new insights about our rapidly changing world. Much can be learned from other professions in which distressing circumstances are commonplace, such as health care, disaster relief, law enforcement, and the military. In these fields, well-defined organizational structures and active strategies exist for employees to anticipate and manage their emotional distress (6). Effective systems can facilitate healthy grieving

processes, enhance psychological recovery, and reduce the risk of long-term mental health impacts, potentially leading to better practice, decision-making, and resilience in future periods of trauma (7–10). Improved psychosocial working environments for scientists might include systematic training of employees, early-intervention debriefing after disturbing events, social support from colleagues and managers, and therapeutic counseling.

The pervasive illusion that scientists must be dispassionate observers is dangerously misguided. Rather, grief and post-traumatic recovery can strengthen resolve and inspire scientific creativity. To understand and find solutions for our increasingly damaged natural ecosystems, environmental scientists must be allowed to cry and be supported as they move forward.

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TIMOTHY A. C. GORDON, ANDREW N. RADFORD, STEPHEN D. SIMPSON
GRIEVING ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTISTS NEED SUPPORT,
OPEN LETTER

Over the last 50 years, Global warming has become increasingly alarming. Species are becoming extinct, global temperatures are rising and our interconnection with the more-than-human world continually attempts to teach humans just how enmeshed we are. For Cunsolo and Ellis, further study of ecological grief has the potential to improve our capacity to assess the impacts and importance of climate-related losses as well as to identify methods for coping.

In considering ecological grief, I return once again to the webbed world of Haraway to consider our entanglements. Within CILMA's performances, I employ gestures of care as methodologies for investigating empathy, loss and relation amongst humans and the more-than human world. Actions such as combing the grass in a field reference these environmental hauntings^x while also drawing connections to the human experience of grief and mourning, where ecological grief is a result of ecological degradation and loss. I refer again to *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* where Gan et al claim that "our ghosts are the traces of more-than-human."^{xi} Ghosts here refer to previously living plants and animals that have gone extinct. Hauntings are the traces they leave behind. Ghosts and hauntings are used as theoretical terms which refer to the effects of humans on the Earth's climate, an epoch sometimes referred to as the Anthropocene.

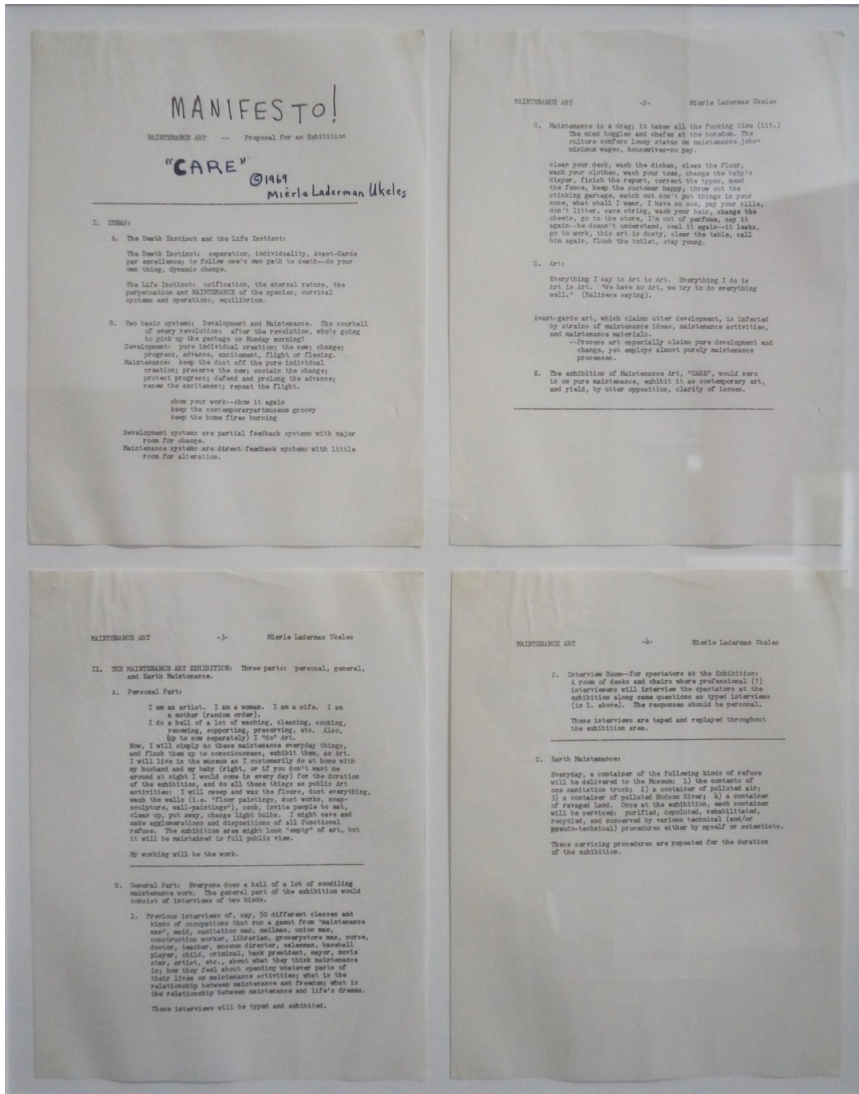
Care here aligns with definitions set forth by Puig de la Bellacasa wherein "adequate care requires a form of knowledge and curiosity regarding the situated needs of an "other"—human or non—that only becomes possible through being in relations that inevitably transform the entangled beings: living with is for Haraway a becoming-with."

"This caring obligation is not reducible to "feel good" or "nice feelings"; repulsion is not incompatible with affectionate care (as anybody who has ever changed a baby's soiled diaper or cleaned up the vomit of a sick friend might know). Neither is this obligation to care for an interdependent earthy other understandable as a utilitarian one—I take care of Earth, via soil and the worms, because I need them, because they are of use to me." --Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds*

Care is not always 'nice'; it is a complex act. If you hold an intervention for a loved one, they may despise you, despite the fact that you are offering care. We do things we don't want to do just as much as we do things we do want to do when it comes to care.



MIERLE LADERMAN UKELES,
WASHING/TRACKS/MAINTENANCE: OUTSIDE, (1973)



MIERLE LADERMAN UKELES, "MANIFESTO FOR MAINTENANCE ART 1969" PROPOSAL FOR AN EXHIBITION 'CARE,' (1969)

Acts of care can also include maintenance, as demonstrated in the performance work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles. Ukeles performs tasks like mopping and scrubbing the street in front of the gallery, calling attention to the labor of care. Acts such as this are able to question their own importance through their re-presentation in the art context. This calling of attention to otherwise invisible work is mirrored in the CILMA experiment performances.

In the *CILMA Field Study Experiments*, the performances rely on simple identifiable actions, which work *with* sensorial or embodied knowledge to place emphasis on the human relationship to the environment. The recognition of which has the potential to bring about more awareness for how we care for and engage with our environment. Embodied knowledge here is defined as when the body *knows* something, like how to act or respond, while sensorial knowledge functions similarly, but the senses (vision, scent, hearing, touch) are specifically involved.

In *CILMA Field Study Experiment 03: Combing the Field*, I, Agent Evans, gently comb blades of tall grass in an open field and occasionally look around. The field is open and yet shaped into an oval-like form by the trail which devises its perimeter. Space here is defined, yet indeterminate, which leads me to recall Tsing's hauntings.^{xii} The comb in my hand belonged to my mother. It's one of the only things of hers I use daily. Her use is borne upon the comb, as is mine. It is an object that holds generational history: I drag it through my own locks and imagine that my hair is hers. Now, in this field, I care for the grass with the same careful attention. As I pull the comb through, I entangle the experiences of the grass and the comb with my own and with my mother's.

I watch as traces from my own body are strewn upon the grass, as I kneel, forming impressions with my lower legs. The sensation of the grass on my fingers is almost sticky, and I notice the pressure each blade sends in response as I move the comb through the field.



CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY,
FIELD STUDY EXPERIMENT 03, COMBING THE FIELD, (2020)

Through the use of my mother's comb, I draw a line, a connection, between my own personal loss and the loss of species, landscapes, and peace of mind. It matters which combs you comb grass with.

"Mourning is about dwelling with a loss and so coming to appreciate what it means, how the world has changed, and how we must *ourselves* change and renew our relationships if we are to move forward from here. In this context, genuine mourning should open us into an awareness of our dependence on and relationships with those countless others being driven over the edge of extinction . . . The reality, however, is that there *is* no avoiding the necessity of the difficult cultural work of reflection and mourning. This work is not opposed to practical action, rather it is the foundation of any sustainable and informed response."

"Grief is a path to understanding entangled shared living and dying; human beings must grieve *with*, because we are in and of this fabric of undoing. Without sustained remembrance, we cannot learn to live with ghosts and so cannot think. Like the crows and with the crows, living and dead "we are at stake in each other's company." --Thomas Van Dooren, *Flight Ways*



THERE IS NO CENTER

"Care is not about fusion; it is about the right distance."
-Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care*

In David Abrams' *Spell of the Sensuous*, we learn that a shaman bridges a gap, functioning primarily as an intermediary between the community and the more-than-human world and only secondarily as a healer.^{xiii} Abrams tells us that the shaman maintains a frightening reputation amongst the community in order to, along with living on the outskirts, create distance between the shaman and the people. Myths about the shaman develop through rumors and even sometimes become inflated by the shaman herself so as to maintain distance from the community. As a result, the community only seeks help from the shaman when it is really necessary. This distance enables the shaman to focus on her primary objective: to maintain balance between the humans of the community and the entities of the more-than-human world.^{xiv}

In Western Colonial societies the shaman has come to be seen as broadly synonymous with healer and as such has begun to move into Western medicine. We see the growing popularity (and legality) of treatments utilizing traditional medicines like ayahuasca and psilocybin in workshops, retreats, and psychiatry offices, yet these practices fail to recognize the essence of the shaman's duties: to maintain balance. While these alternative uses for shamanic methodologies should be noted, they do not diminish the power and belief of the indigenous cultures within which these intermediary shamanic practices still exist.

The Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency's function parallels that of the shaman. The Center itself consists only of the research performed by its sole Agent, me, Agent Evans. The form of the Center as an Agency or Institutional entity parallels the role of the shaman with its enforced distance between the viewer and the practitioner, drawing connections to that of the shaman and her frightening character. The Center is made credible and legitimate through its institutional form and like the shaman, CILMA seeks to function as an intermediary. Just as actions taken by the shaman are mediated gestures, so too are the rituals performed by CILMA Agent Evans.



CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY
FIELD STUDY EXPERIEMENT DATABASE, FILE INSTALLATION

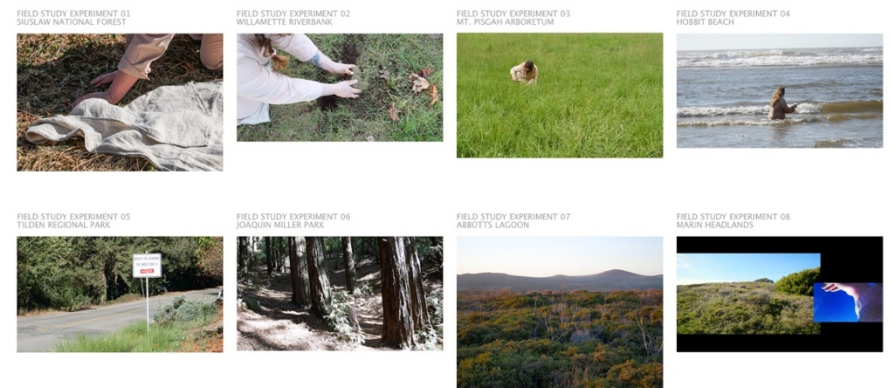
Through the dissemination of CILMA experiments, the Center demonstrates and correlates human relationships to the natural world. The *CILMA Database* of field study experiments, like the shaman's stored knowledge of the ancestors, acts as stored collective knowledge.

Still, to acknowledge the Westernization of the shaman as a healer leads me to acknowledge the futility of CILMA's ritual actions. While efficacy and productivity do have some stake in CILMA's output, as seen in the *Herbal Medicine Shrouds*, which I will discuss later on, actions

performed by CILMA are primarily non-functional interventions. As such, CILMA acts as a mirror intended to reflect the lack of connection and awareness humans hold for the larger ecological field.

"Institutional theory's inattention to the role of humans' sensory capacities largely stems from its widely recognized historical embrace of the "cognitive turn." With its emphasis on analytic rationality, pre- or subconscious schema, and taken-for-granted rule following, the cognitive turn is inattentive to people's "cathetic (sic) and evaluative orientations" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 24), orientations that animate their engagement with the world." --Creed, Taylor, Huson. *Institutional Aesthetics: Embodied Ways of Encountering, Evaluating, and Enacting Institutions*^{xv}

Contrasting the institutional form with the role of the shaman, in addition to considering the CILMA Reports information and language, maintains relation between scientific research or knowledge and more sensorial knowledges. Asserting that each holds equal importance for engaging with the world around us. An increased attention to the senses or practice of mindfulness can reinvigorate our connection to the broader lifeworld which we inhabit.



CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY
FIELD STUDY EXPERIEMENT ONLINE DATABASE



CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY
FIELD STUDY EXPERIMENT 05, GRASS SHOWER: MANUAL IRRIGATION, (2020)



BERKELEY FIRE DANGER WARNING SIGN, TILDEN REGIONAL PARK
DOCUMENTED DURING CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY
FIELD STUDY EXPERIMENT 05, GRASS SHOWER: MANUAL IRRIGATION, (2020)

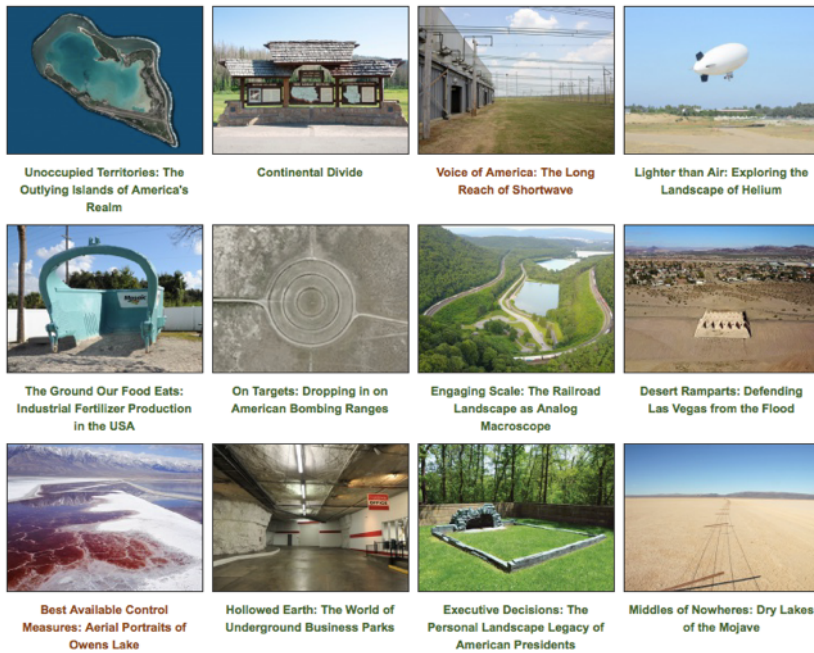
As a Southern California native, I am no stranger to wildfire season, but the effects of global climate change have escalated what used to feel like a yearly maintenance cleansing for wild landscapes into annual disasters, which span multiple states. Wildfire season along the West Coast of the United States, much like hurricane season on the East Coast has become increasingly alarming. In September of 2020, during what felt like an insane firestorm throughout Oregon, I decided to self-evacuate my apartment in Eugene and drive down to Berkeley, California, where at least you could see the sky. During my time there, the air quality was clean enough for me to perform some actions.

In *CILMA Field Study Experiment 05: Grass Shower: Manual Irrigation*, I present an offering to Tilden Regional Park in Berkeley, CA. I give the entire contents of my water bladder to a hillside. While my actions might otherwise have seemed futile, within the context of a blazing landscape, my efforts become a gesture of restitution.

Here, CILMA Agent Evans, embodies the shaman, perhaps more overtly than in other experiments, by performing a ritual, which symbolically attempts to restore balance between human driven ecological degradation (i.e. climate change) and the dry, golden, landscapes of the American West (specifically California and Oregon).

In *Vibrant Matter*, Jane Bennett defines thing-power as “the curious ability of inanimate objects to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle.”^{xvi} Throughout the CILMA experiments the vibrancy of the landscape, its ‘thing-power’ or object agency, is most legible in the waves of the ocean and its constant movement, however, it can be read in the wind powered movement of grass, soil’s capacity to hold its form, and is perhaps most evident in the increasing destruction of seasonal natural disasters. CILMA’s exploration of time and land-use are more abstract and represented through the wider narrative of human interaction with and upon the natural world, particularly under the ticking clock of climate catastrophe where land-use and time become perceptible and political in new ways.

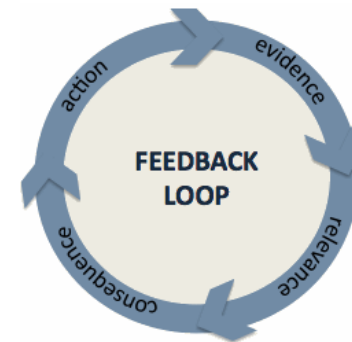
Just as I look to the shaman to give CILMA form, CILMA also draws on the institutional framework set forth by the Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI). CLUI utilizes its framework to both question and develop legitimacy, conceal authorship, and pose inquiries regarding land use. While CLUI takes many forms, I will focus primarily on its archive or 'Database', which functions like a collaboration and does not name individual authors. Through their participation, individual artists work not only to investigate land use, but also utilize CLUI as a method of legitimizing their research and critiquing the legitimacy of the institutional format itself. Collaboration is one method of drawing more agency towards an artistic project, but institutionalizing it signals even more power.



CENTER FOR LAND USE INTERPRETATION, PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS ARCHIVE

To employ the form of an institution is to recognize its power and to utilize it as both a helping hand and a middle finger. The Western world operates through Capitalist power structures within which expectations of upward "progress" and production value output. The legitimacy of the institutional form establishes value in CILMA's research methodologies, without the necessity for production, resolution, or commercial viability.

Collectively, reviews inadvertently market artists as objects, but what of the show that retards the pace, that never closes, refuses to name its practitioners and offers nothing to sell? The Center for Land Use Interpretation's (CLUI) Land Use Database possibly reengineers this particular flow of power within the art realm. The Land Use Database, simultaneously off-line and online, maps a constellation of sites (oil refineries, land art, chemical waste facilities, the ruins of the Mount Carmel compound, etcetera) throughout the United States that serve, as stated by CLUI, as "cultural inscriptions" produced by "human interaction with the earth's surface."^{xvii} -- Mary Blackburn, "Center for Land Use Interpretation"



The legitimacy of the institutional format is echoed in its language. The very fact that CLUI has a database, or an archive is a representation of this. To have an archive is a method of proving previous action. The word archive itself is even a synonym for record. Thus, a database or an archive is a record of your work, which for an institution incites trust and supports your legitimacy. The Institution/Archive format is a feedback loop of credibility.

Like CLUI, I have conceptualized myself as an institution in order to both critique institutional entities and exploit the power that comes along with participating in one. Acting as the sole agent of the Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency enables me to expand beyond my own perspective. With CILMA, I am able to obscure some of my subjectivity by acting as Agent Evans because my identity and personal experience with grief are fairly irrelevant. Instead, I am able to consider loss more broadly, such as in terms of ecological grief.

THE DOUBLE VOID

The work of Ana Mendieta could be described as haunting. Her *Siluetas* series speaks of loss and distance in complex layers. Whether or not her body is part of the documentation of the work, her trace remains. In *Bloody Valentines*, Miwon Kwon tells us that Mendieta distances the viewer in multiple ways, which Kwon refers to as the 'double void.'^{xviii} The first void is Mendieta's repeated absence from the work, as indicated by body shaped forms constructed of various earth-based materials found on site. The second void is the absence of the event itself. Because Mendieta never locates her works for us, the pieces she makes are temporal and never bound to place. We will never know their coordinates or location.



ANA MENDIETA
UNTITLED (*SILUETA SERIES*), 1970

Mendieta strengthens this distance by showing only the documentation of this work. Kwon considers Mendieta's video and photo documentation as akin to souvenirs. They are morsels of an event that has already transpired, one we as viewers will never access. The reason this work feels haunting is because it is. The imprint as a suggestion, or as an obscuring of Mendieta's body at various sites mediated through the camera are traces. What remains is the hole or void constructed and left by Mendieta's body. These remnants refer us to a mourning over something, but don't tell us exactly what we are grieving. All we know is that something is missing, but we don't know what was ever actually there. We are left to ponder the landscape, the body, and the connections between them.

These traces of existence that Mendieta scores upon the landscape also function as proof. The work in the *Siluetas* series does not impose on the landscape, it does not claim visibility or permanence. It is not dominating. Instead Mendieta's documentation works to legitimize her existence and the existence of the work. Its temporality can remain because of the double void and the documentation becomes a record that something happened. We may not be able to access it, but we can't question its existence because of this proof.

Similar to Mendieta's *Siluetas* series, all "experiments" performed by the Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency are mediated and do not locate themselves. CILMA's experiment "reports" indicate general place, yet do not provide any detailed information for the viewer. The double void is not employed in exactly the same manner as with the work of Mendieta, however the documentation and written reports function like receipts similar to Kwon's idea of the souvenir.



FIELD STUDY EXPERIMENT 05
TILDEN REGIONAL PARK
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA
09-22-2020

GRASS SHOWER: MANUAL IRRIGATION

Trail approximately twenty minutes North Eastward. Access via city streets, which advance into winding residential mountain roads. Elevation gain is significant and fast. Enter fire road on foot. Incline approximation at forty-five to fifty degrees stipulates elevation gain is, again, significant within short duration of time. Landscape dry with golden brush and caramel sands strewn with rock debris and fallen eucalyptus bark.

LOCATION: OFF TRAIL GRASSES

Grasses line trail perimeter, edging down into valley. Grass presents dry, brittle, weed-like.

CILMA Agent Evans employs gravitational field. Water vessel raised up, hose and spout lowered. Valve release engaged facilitates flow of water. Agent Evans moves hose and spout forward and backward, left to right, moving into and along grass area.

ENERGY: Closed, dense vibrational field, warm.

CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY
FIELD STUDY EXPERIMENT 05, GRASS SHOWER: MANUAL IRRIGATION, (2020)
Field study report

With CILMA, I use an institutional framework as an additional layer of separation between artist and the viewer. These distancing tactics are coupled with actions of care in order to gesture towards loss and mourning. The exact loss or object of grief remains obscured, but the intimacy between the actions of my own body and the landscape in these performances exhibits as communication and informational transference.



INTERVIEW WITH A ROCK
FEBRUARY 25, 2021
UNDISCLOSED RESIDENCE,
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

CILMA Agent: I'm not sure about rock etiquette, but how old are you?

Rock: To be honest I never kept track. Maybe it's because I exist in a different timescale than you do, so I just never really thought about it. I don't know.

(Laughter)

CA: That makes a lot of sense. So, do you measure time at all?

R: Sort of. I mostly notice when my environment has shifted somehow, or I am all of a sudden heavier or something. Like, you know when you gain weight gradually, so you don't really notice the shift in your form, but then one day you see yourself and you're just like, "damn..." That's more or less what it's like. From sand to boulder, like it's not even hard.

CA: Is that a joke?

R: Yeah, little joke.

CA: Hah.

(Awkward silence)

CA: What about family, do you have any in town?

R: I used to live at home, but then someone stole me and put me in this Zen garden. I bet they knew it wasn't legal, so I sent out some bad luck energy. We'll see what sticks. Maybe I'll get to go home.

CA: Wow, that's intense. A Zen garden? Are you pissed? I'd be pissed.

R: Hell yeah, I'm pissed! But mostly I just want to go home. This Zen garden is pretty chill for now, but the only traces left behind are from the hand of the woman who stole me. Every morning she spends like thirty minutes pushing that damn rake across the sand. I really wish she would give it up and let me alone with the sand for a while, so we can develop our relationship.

CA: I mean, we all need to connect to something. Sitting here, I realize it's ingrained in us.

R: You can say that again.

CA: It's ingrained in us.

R: I didn't mean literally.

CA: Oh. Well, yeah, anyway we're just about out of time. I know it was brief, but then again, I doubt you noticed.

R: Aaaaayyyyyee. Good One. Ha. Thanks for taking the time.

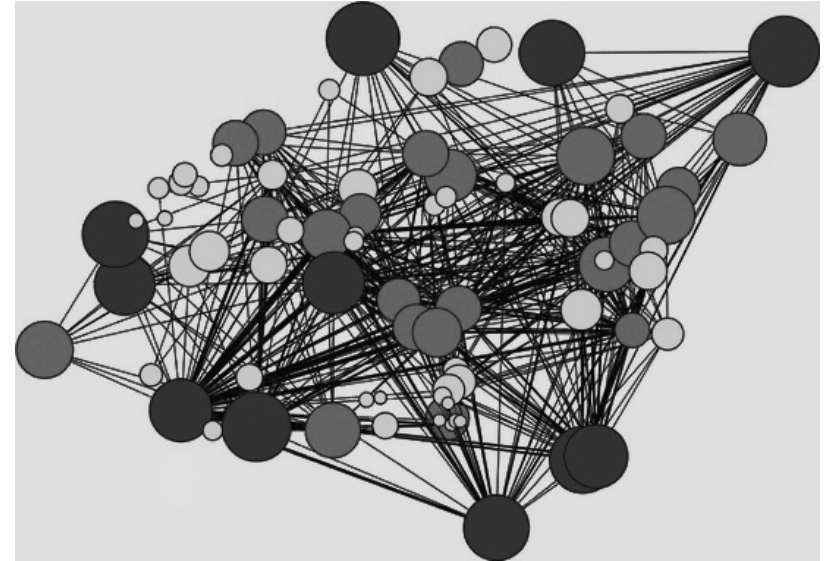
CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY
INTERVIEW WITH A ROCK, (2020)

COMMUNICATION + LANGUAGE

“We do not, as children, first enter into language by consciously studying the formalities of syntax and grammar or by memorizing the dictionary definitions of words, but rather by actively making sounds—by crying in pain and laughing in joy, by squealing and babbling and playfully mimicking the surrounding soundscape, gradually entering through such mimicry into the specific melodies of the local language, our resonant bodies slowly coming to echo the inflections and accents common to our locale and community. *We thus learn our native language not mentally but bodily.*”--David Abrams, *Spell of the Sensuous*^{xix}

While plants do not possess the same consciousness as humans, they do hold the capacity to communicate in various ways across species. This idea broadens communication beyond what we often consider the term to mean, a complex oral and written language.^{xx} Instead, communication here adheres more closely to its definition and refers to the sending, receiving, and processing of information. By sending out chemical substances, which carry encoded information, plants have the capacity to communicate with other plants, humans, animals, insects, and their environment. Amazingly, we are already familiar with this chemical substance: fragrance. Through her work analyzing plant communication, scientist Florianne Koechlin draws correlations between plant fragrance and human language, by paralleling plant fragrance with words. Koechlin tells us, “By now we know of two thousand fragrance words from nine different plant families.”^{xxi} Terpenes are the primary chemical substance responsible for these “words.”^{xxii}

Trees and mushrooms express these chemical signals for a variety of purposes. Namely, when they have experienced a threat and want to warn their network, a system of plants connected through a web-like mycelium network located in the soil. Terpenes are even sent out in order to block the heat of the sun on a hot day. Humans similarly understand the encoded messages expressed via terpenes when we spend time deep in the forest. The chemical communication here takes place between the terpenes produced by the trees and the human immune system, which is calmed by terpenes.



Fungal network diagram linking trees groups or families

This is the foundation for therapies like Forest Bathing or *Shinrin-yoku*, which advise people to perform a particular method of breathing while deep in the forest in order to amplify these calming effects the terpenes have on the immune system. It's no wonder that trees can comfort us.

Our bodies know something before our brain does.

Humans have also managed to harness terpenes through the production of some essential oils for plants like lemon grass, lavender, pine, cedar, rosemary, and more. Through these concentrates, we are able to work with the intelligence encoded within the plant language as methodologies for entangled intentional healing.



CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY
MATERIAL INQUIRY: THE SCENT BANK, (2019-2021)

(Left to right)

Tsunami Blend 01: Oakmoss, PNW, smoke, beeswax, ylang ylang, nutmeg, ozone, geosmin, seaweed

Tsunami Blend 02: Oakmoss, howood, angelica, nutmeg, ylang ylang, smoke, white oak, ozone, geosmin, seaweed

Tsunami Blend 03: Oakmoss, kade, howood, angelica, nutmeg, ylang ylang, smoke, white oak, ozone, geosmin, seaweed

Mountain Blend: Sage commons, clary sage, bergamot, black spruce, fir needle, atlas cedar wood, ylang ylang, Virginia cedarwood

Grief Blend: Lavender, ylang ylang, clary sage, geranium, bergamot, frankincense

The Scent Bank, one sect of CILMA's *Material Inquiries*, is a growing collection of scents I've produced which currently include *Tsunami Blend 01- 03*, *Mountain Blend 01*, and *Grief Blend 01*. The vessels are composed of cork, a highly malleable and sustainable material, and rocks, implemented here to symbolize the earth-body as well as to refer to humans, tools, and survival. The composition of material elements thus conceptually elevates the use of these fragrances to a place of communication similar to and sometimes utilizing terpenes (*Mountain Blend 01*.) The fragrances become potion-like, filled with purpose and the implications of ritual.

The Scent Bank takes its naming inspiration from Seed Banks, which compile and maintain libraries of seeds in an effort to avoid total loss of seed diversity. The association, though obscure, presents a narrative of survival that is echoed in the use of the braided copper wire used to mount the rock vessels. Copper, as a material, has a myriad of uses that span from electrical uses (power generation, transmission, distribution) to aiding the human body through production of energy and red blood cells in addition to maintaining both the immune system and the nervous system. Copper is a trace mineral imperative to human survival.

The Scent Bank recognizes the importance of systems like seed banks as placing emphases on new methods of preservation and invokes this intention to incite dialogue about human interaction, communication and reliance in a more-than-human world. The implications of human survival within these objects refers the viewer back towards considerations of the climate crisis. Through this work, I explore whether re-imagining how and what we communicate with can bring about new awareness and consideration for our environment.



CARLA BENGTON, *SCELOPORUS*, (2018)
Perfume based on lizard pheromones in handblown perfume bottle, perfume, glass, metal, cloth

This attempt at re-imagining communication plays out in the work of Carla Bengtson, where she bridges communication divides through interdisciplinary and collaborative inquiries surrounding interspecies communication. She teams up with experts in relational fields of inquiry and production, such as biologists, choreographers or perfumers to investigate the materiality of the more-than human world. Her interventions work to expose the entanglement of relationships between species and across life-worlds.

In *Sceloporus*, Bengtson's focus on *Sceloporus* lizard language and relationality spans the senses, while simultaneously implicating human viewers in the work, calling them to engage. Bengtson investigates *Sceloporus* communication through the senses, particularly scent. Settled into the base of a hand-blown glass bottle, *Sceloporus* mimics the bodily form of the scent's namesake and references the lizard language code. The perfume itself is composed based on the pheromones of the *Sceloporus* lizard and concocted to blend with the wearer's skin chemistry, yet again pointing towards threads between species communication. Bengtson's scent speculates about this communication through its use of pheromones, which enable what she calls "communication [...] across time and space." By "translating" the lizard pheromone scent for a human application, *Sceloporus* begs the question, across whose time and whose space?

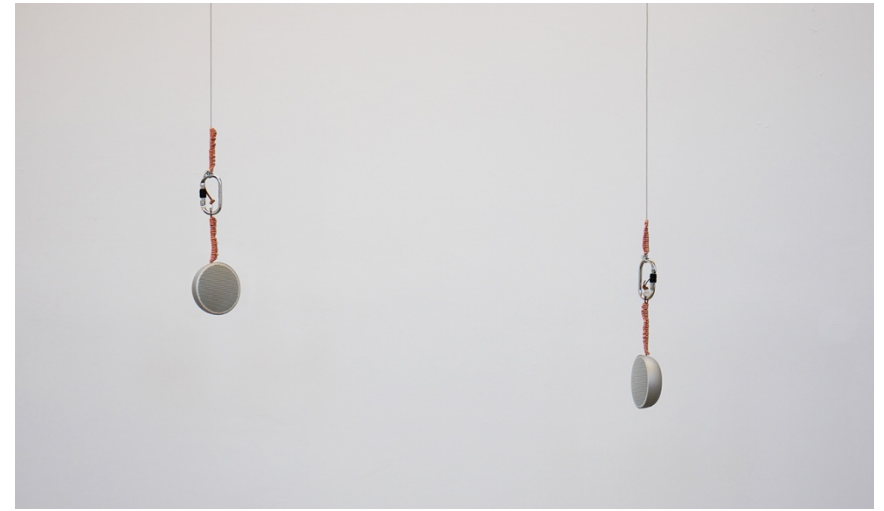
To feel the wind and to breathe air are both firmly grounded in sensory and embodied perception of experience. There is no deciding that you don't feel or do these things. Your body's intelligence reigns dominant.

CILMA Field Study Experiment 07: Correlation and Relativity: To Expire contrasts two audio recordings wherein I attempt to blend my breath with the wind. The two recordings coalesce into one in physical space to produce a sensorial experience through sound. Two Bluetooth speakers are employed as intermediaries between the simulation and the viewer, physically and metaphorically bringing them into relation.

Materials such as climbing carabiners paracord reference their associations within outdoor and survival cultures. The light grey paracord speaks to air, fog or clouds and is entangled with the beige pink CILMA brand uniform color paracord.

In some ways, this work references Richard Serra's *Boomerang*, wherein Nancy Holt loses herself in the echo of the feedback loop and produces a distortion of reality which refuses to name its origin. The audio here produces a similar effect between my breath and the wind, when my breath attempts to mimic the wind in cadence and tone, the borders between human and earth body become blurred.

Activated by viewer relation, *Correlation and Relativity* literally and figuratively establishes a web of connections between the human body and the earth body. Initiated through the layering of my breath and the breath of the earth body (wind), blending in the audio recordings the link occurs when the two recordings play simultaneously in relation through individual speakers, which surround the head of the viewer, entangling them in the system as their breath muddles with the rest.



CILMA Field Study Experiment 07: Correlation and Relativity: To Expire (2020)
Audio recordings, breath, wind, paracord, madder root, speakers, carabiners

RITUAL / KNOWING

“And so looking at human–soil relations through the articulations of temporality and care both critically exposes the prioritization of anthropocentric technoscientific futurity and makes visible coexisting alternative timescapes, possibly enriching temporal imaginings.” --Maria Puig de la Bellacasa. *Matters of Care*

Soil and dirt are two different things. One is teeming with microorganisms, bacteria and fungi, while the other is more or less lifeless dust. Currently approximately 25% of the earth’s topsoil has been destroyed through a process called desertification.

Herbicides and pesticides are used in non-organic farming practices to supplement nutrients lacking in the soil such as phosphorous, nitrogen, or potassium. However, these products require massive amounts of water to maintain, they are toxic to the microorganisms and fungi that help maintain good tilth (healthy soil) and they lower soil ph, which results in more acidic soil and therefore a less hospitable environment for healthy plant growth. Similarly, mass agricultural tilling contributes to the destruction of soil fertility by tearing apart soil structures and the environments soil life need to survive and balance.

Reforestation or rather re-habilitating our agricultural landscapes has hopeful potential for re-establishing more sustainable crop yields through the implementation of compost, crop rotation, herd rotation, and no-till practices. This organic agricultural model more closely reflects a balanced or reciprocal system; increasing our topsoil percentage promises significant reduction in atmospheric greenhouse gasses due to healthy soil’s capacity to trap CO2 molecules.

CILMA’s second sect of *Material Inquires* are the *Herbal Medicine Shrouds*, which includes shrouds compiled particularly for ailments specific to either mental health support, cold and flu remedies or pain relief for muscles, joints and epidermis.



CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY
MATERIAL INQUIRY: HERBAL MEDICINE SHROUDS, (2021)
Mind/Mental: Lavender, St. John’s Wort, Feverfew
Muscle/Joint/Pain: Rosemary, Calendula, Comfrey
Cold/Flu: Yarrow, Mugwort, Chamomile, Germander, Sage, Eucalyptus, Thyme

While each shroud does hold medicinal efficacy, their woven form relates to care, comfort, and women’s labor. The shrouds are gifts or offerings, which could boast either medicinal properties or compost support depending on need. These shrouds could not only provide chemical support for the human body, but they can also provide nutritional support for soil. The plant/cotton hybrid textiles are biodegradable and compostable and could be used to add carbon or nitrogen to soil depending on the dryness of the matter. Conversely, one could break off medicinal dosages from the shrouds for mental or bodily ailments that fall within the three shroud uses, as needed, and make into a decoction (tea), a tincture, or a poultice (comfrey specific).



CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY, (2020)
Field Study Experiment 02: Event and Residue: Soil Dig and Replacement
 Video stills

In *Field Study Experiment 02, Event and Residue: Soil Dig and Replacement*, I embodied Agent Evans and dug a hole in the soil on the Willamette Riverbank. After initiating the dig using a small shovel to remove the vegetation atop the soil for more efficient process reversal, I continued to dig a hole the depth of my arm using only my fingertips. When the hole was complete, I filled the hole back up with the soil I had previously removed, covering it with the vegetation that was extracted with the shovel.

This work plays on the “leave no trace” idea, where backpackers and hikers attempt to have zero impact on a given environment which they engage with. By deconstructing a smart part of the riverbank, I consider the reality of the effects of human presence on earth and attempt to reverse the damage I have inflicted. Using my shovel to thoughtfully and intentionally remove the webbed, rhizomatic grass for future replanting becomes a representation for mindful attunement to my presence and effects on the environment or space I occupy.

Ultimately, my trace on the landscape remains visible as I am unable to completely erase my imprint. The landscape left traces on me as well, as experienced through muscular fatigue in both of my hands.

How much of what we know is stored in the body?

Minimal mobility on the left side of my body is an indicator of stored trauma. It’s always the left. I find traces of this in my weavings. My lines are always leaning, the selvedge packed denser on the left side than it is on the right side. There is a tension in my body that translates at the loom and becomes actualized, fossilized, represented in my weaving. This a kind of knowing that my body has.

When I attempt to speak about my experiences, I go into “freeze” mode. It’s the third option in the fight or flight dilemma. And I am a freezer. My shoulders and neck tighten sometimes, but the most common display is my tongue, which feels somehow completely swollen and malleable, yet stiff. I have to fight to speak the words, not because I don’t intellectually understand the experience, but because my body remembers the feelings, what it was like to live the experience.

It’s a pretty amazing strategy if you can control it.

There’s a common saying in the arts, “your body knows before your brain does.” I have no idea who said this, but I’ve rarely encountered an artist who sought to argue against it. As artists, we engage our bodies often to draw out the knowledge they hold, and folks of all sorts accept this.

My body knows things that I don’t know.

I was born with a weight on my chest.
It is constant.
A feeling like blunt wooden knives pressed inches
below the collar bone and buried deep into the stomach.
It is an ache.
Possibly of my ancestors or past me(s).

It happens in my legs, too.
Except these knives are steel and sharp.
They move through the bone,
from ankle to hip
and they pulsate.
Fire and numbness. It is an ache.
Possibly sympathetic.
Possible of my father.

I feel it in my stomach, too.
Except it's closer to a fist,
kneading into my core.
Turning over and over.
Concave, Convex, Concave, Convex.
It is an ache.
Possibly of my mother.

My aches are remnants.
They are all that remains.
They are the traces left behind.

“explore[...] the meanings of knowing as touch, as a haptic technology that questions the modern humanist transparency of (distant) vision. It follows contemporary engagements with technologies of touch that are rejecting the primacy of vision in traditional epistemologies, it addresses the desire for thinking in intimacy, in proximity with the mediations that make the world possible. Touch therefore opens further meanings of knowledge that cares.”
--María Puig de la Bellacasa. *Matters of Care*

There is intelligence in the body.

In *CILMA Field Study Experiment 01, Mountain Care: Massage Treatment*, I embody CILMA Agent Evans and carry out a mission to tend to and care for a mountain. The massage treatment is performed at multiple locations in the Siuslaw National Forest including a large boulder and a cliff-side brush field. My hands cup the folds and ridges of the boulder. I squeeze gently, but firmly, moving along in a somewhat calculated manner.

I recreate the act on a field of brush while on my knees, bent at the waist. Placing my hands upon the brush, I press methodically into the hibernating biomatter and the soil residing beneath it. My actions mimic those one might perform on a partner, or a family member or a client, care-full and articulate. I use my body to draw correlations between the human body's need for care and touch and that of the Earth “body.”

Mountain Care: Massage Treatment recalls concerns for ecological grief and considers the mountain's experience of trauma or loss. In the human body Meridian pathways form energy systems that can be accessed through pressure, tapping and acupuncture. Derived from Traditional Chinese Medicine, interaction with these points moves energy and harnesses the body's internal power to reestablish balance as a means of healing. In the performance, I translate the gestures of massage onto the earth body in order to speculate about how possible energy shifts might affect equilibrium for a body on the scale of earth.



CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY
Field Study Experiment 01: Mountain Care: Massage Treatment, (2020)



CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY
Field Study Experiment 01: Mountain Care: Massage Treatment, (2020)

Additionally, the positioning and actions carried out by my body place it into the context of a care laborer, think Ukeles. My beige pink CILMA uniform aids in this neutralizing or lack of recognition for what might be construed as feminine labor: caring for something. My body then becomes a tool and a symbol for this act of care as it bends over, pressing and working on the flesh^{xxiii} of the landscape.

Throughout the performances a linen textile strewn upon a human-scale boulder also lays flat atop a brush field. I move the textile as needed while I work to massage the Earth body. In form, the linen mimics a burial shroud and the motions I inflict upon it, however slight, indicate shifts in energy or processing as I use my hands to caress the rock and brush around the shroud. In doing so, I work with this haptic technology to unpack and co-produce a new notion of care, which considers the more-than-human world.^{xxiv}

SYNTHESIS

“While we may all ultimately be connected to one another, the specificity and proximity of connections matters—who we are bound up with and in what ways. Life and death happen inside these relationships.” --Thomas Van Dooren, *Flight Ways*

In *CILMA Field Study Experiment 08: Uncertain Measurements: Slope Alignment*, CILMA Agent Evans traverses a coastal hillside before rolling down, against bushes and all, to level ground. Agent Evans ‘tests’ gravity, utilizing the human body as a slope measuring instrument. Engagement of the body in this manner references alternative knowledge acquisition by placing embodied inquiry and the tactile sense at the forefront of data collection.



CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY
Field Study Experiment 08: Uncertain Measurements: Slope Alignment, (2021)
Performance detail



CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY
Field Study Experiment 08: Uncertain Measurements: Slope Alignment, (2021)
Performance detail



CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION OF LAND MASS AGENCY
Field Study Experiment 08: Uncertain Measurements: Slope Alignment, (2021)

Resulting from the process of measurement, the hillside bears traces of the human body’s intervention. Agent Evans’ body, too, bears traces and punctures from the landscape itself in the form of cuts and scrapes resulting in the production of the physical scars, which remain.

Documentation for FSE 08 consists of dual channel imagery with one channel consisting of process documentation and the other channel providing body camera footage. The two perspectives clash, offering alternatives viewpoints for one another. The bodycam enables the viewer to implicate themselves in the experiment. The rotation of the lens along with the human body creates a centrifugal force through which the viewer is propelled and called to embody the Agent.



FIELD STUDY EXPERIMENT 08
MARIN HEADLANDS
SAUSALITO, CA
01-08-2021

UNCERTAIN MEASUREMENTS: SLOPE ALIGNMENT

Land mass located approximately forty-five minutes North Westward, accessed via interstate highway and coastal mountain roads. Initial destination ruled insufficient from lookout vantage point, initiating additional Westward advancement.

No significant incline at onset. Target land mass slope extending between forty to fifty degrees.

LOCATION: COASTAL RIDGELINE

Landscape moderate with coastal characteristics including dry brush, ice plant, porous sands, iron oxide. CILMA Agent Evans engages invisible forces. Traversal on foot up targeted slope. Rolling evaluation implemented, increased surface area engaged.

Standard Field Study Experiment documentation protocol implemented in addition to actuation of body cam.

ENERGY: Warm, static vibrational field, dense.

Through this interdisciplinary care work, I aim to broaden Western colonial perspectives as they relate to human entanglement within a more-than human world as demonstrated through analyses of communication and language, ritual, as well as embodied and sensorial knowledge. In addition, I seek to engage and expand my own sensory knowledge in experiencing and communicating with the world around me.

CILMA engages alternative research models in contrast to the progress and productivity often expected of academic research. These inquires find form in both embodied and sensorial capacities, like digging and filling a hole, plant medicines in the form of textile shrouds and rolling down a hill as methodology for slope measurement. Instead of asking one question so as to search for and provide one answer, CILMA illuminates a web of relation: glimpses into the intersections of various discourses including, but not limited to plant intelligence, herbal medicine, farming, interconnection, ecological grief, and object agency.

I believe that intentionality and mindful attunement can affect consideration for how we relate to the environments we reside in. These relations find support in CILMAs form, which derives its structure from the role of the shaman. Engagement of this work can take place online via the CILMA Database or in person via installation and talks. This accessibility offers opportunities to bring new minds and ideas into relation with environmental loss, ecological grief, and the larger relational natural world.



CENTER FOR INVESTIGATION
OF LAND MASS AGENCY
ARTIST STATEMENT

At the onset of 2020, I founded *the Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency* (CILMA), a field study project, which centers its inquiry on relation, grief, embodied knowledge and the more-than-human world. CILMA's inquiry can be separated into two branches: *Field Study Experiments* (FSE) and *Material Inquiries* (MI). FSEs utilize gesture and embodiment to produce experimental performances and written documents. Gestures include acts such as massaging a mountainside, watering redwoods during wildfire season and digging a hole by hand only to fill it back up. *CILMA's MI* engage healing through the senses with *Scent Bank*, a material library of scents intended to trigger memories or act to calm the body, and with the *Herbal Medicine Shrouds*, a collection of woven herbal offerings, which function simultaneously as potential medicines, comfort objects and compost nutrient support.

Within the organization I act as CILMA's sole Agent (Agent Evans) and administrator, drawing inspiration for my form from the Shaman and acting as an intermediary between the viewer (community) and the natural world, which I commune with in the work. As CILMA, I utilize an institutional framework as an additional layer of separation between artist and the viewer. These distancing tactics are coupled with actions of care in order to gesture towards loss and mourning. The exact loss or object of grief remains obscured, but the intimacy between both the material use in object construction and the actions of my own body within the landscape exhibit as communication and informational transference. Like the Shaman, CILMA's institutional framework operates as a tool for translation and communication which reinforces the distance, myth, power and care cultivated across CILMA's research.

To reconsider the bounds of relation, CILMA invokes Donna Haraway's use of 'sympoiesis' or *becoming/making with*, where individuals exist as tethered within a multi-species world of many, interconnected inside an amorphous system. CILMA's gestures and objects acts as catalysts for empathic connections and the teachings of grief, working to facilitate a re-attunement of the senses and awareness of the webbed systems we reside within.

CILMA's current and ongoing projects can be viewed via the *CILMA Database* at cilma.cargo.site.

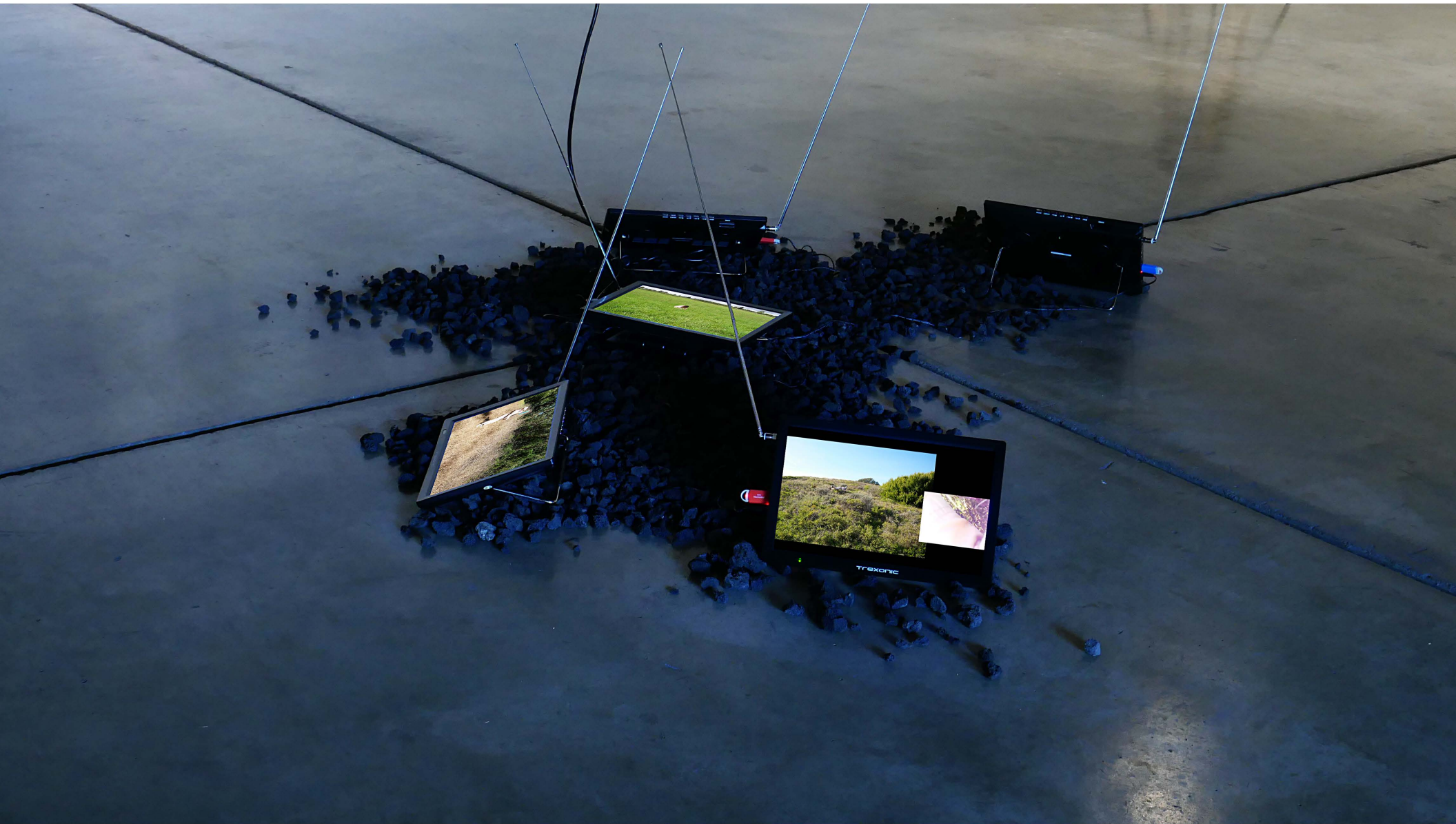
ENDNOTES

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- ⁱ See Hall, C. *Beyond Kübler-Ross: Recent Developments of Our Understanding of Grief and Bereavement*.
- ⁱⁱ See Hall, C. *Beyond Kübler-Ross: Recent Developments of Our Understanding of Grief and Bereavement*.
- ⁱⁱⁱ See Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble*. p 31.
- ^{iv} See Puig de la Bellacasa, María. *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds*.
- ^v See Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble, Tentacular Thinking*. p 35
- ^{vi} See Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: a Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press, 2010.
- ^{vii} See Gan, et al. "Introduction," *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Monsters of the Anthropocene: Ghosts of the Anthropocene*.
- ^{viii} See Gan, et al. "Introduction," *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Monsters of the Anthropocene: Ghosts of the Anthropocene*. p G5.
- ^{ix} See Cunsolo and Ellis, *Ecological Grief as a Mental Health response to Climate Change-related Loss*.
- ^x See Gan, et al. "Introduction," *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Monsters of the Anthropocene: Ghosts of the Anthropocene*.
- ^{xi} See Gan, et al. "Introduction," *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Monsters of the Anthropocene: Ghosts of the Anthropocene*.

- ^{xii} See Gan, et al. "Introduction," *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Monsters of the Anthropocene: Ghosts of the Anthropocene*.
- ^{xiii} See Abrams, David. *Spell of the Sensuous*_pp 14-15.
- ^{xiv} See Abrams, David. *Spell of the Sensuous*_p 15.
- ^{xv} See Creed, Taylor, Huson. *Institutional Aesthetics: Embodied Ways of Encountering, Evaluating, and Enacting Institutions*. P 416.
- ^{xvi} See Bennet, Jane. *Vibrant Matter*.
- ^{xvii} See Mary Walling Blackburn, "Center for Land Use Interpretation"
- ^{xviii} See Miwon Kwon, "Bloody Valentines: Afterimages by Ana Mendieta."
- ^{xix} See Abrams, David. *Spell of the Sensuous*. p 53.
- ^{xx} See Arvay, Clemens G. *The Biophilia Effect: a Scientific and Spiritual Exploration of the Healing Bond between Humans and Nature*. p 23-24.
- ^{xxi} See Arvay, Clemens G. *The Biophilia Effect: a Scientific and Spiritual Exploration of the Healing Bond between Humans and Nature*. p 23.
- ^{xxii} See Arvay, Clemens G. *The Biophilia Effect: a Scientific and Spiritual Exploration of the Healing Bond between Humans and Nature*. p 23.
- ^{xxiii} See Abrams, *Spell of the Sensuous*.
- ^{xxiv} See Puig de la Bellacasa, María. *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds*.

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FIELD STUDY EXPERIMENT 06
MARNI HEADLANDS
SAUSALITO, CA
01-08-2021

UNCERTAIN MEASUREMENTS: SLOPE ALIGNMENT

Land mass located approximately forty-five minutes North Westward, across highway and coastal mountain roads. Initial destination ruled insufficient point, initiating additional Westward advancement.

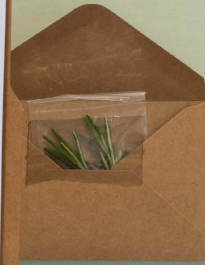
No significant incline at onset. Target land mass slope extending between

LOCATION: COASTAL RIDGELINE

Landscape moderate with coastal characteristics including dry brush, light oxide. CLIMA Agent Evans engages invisible forces. Traversal on foot up evaluation implemented, increased surface area engaged.

Standard Field Study Experiment documentation protocol implemented body cam.

ENERGY: Warm, static vibrational field, dense.

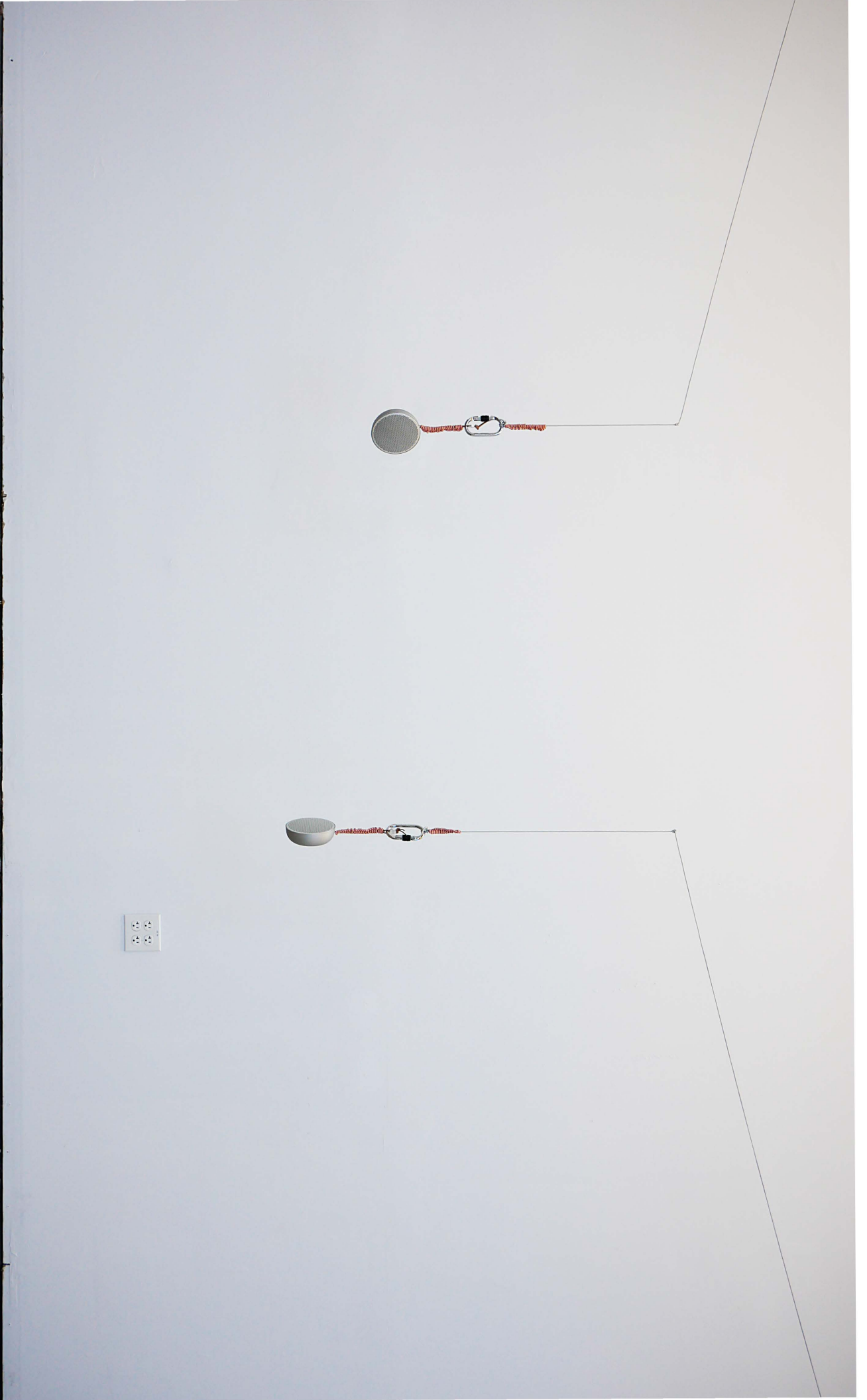


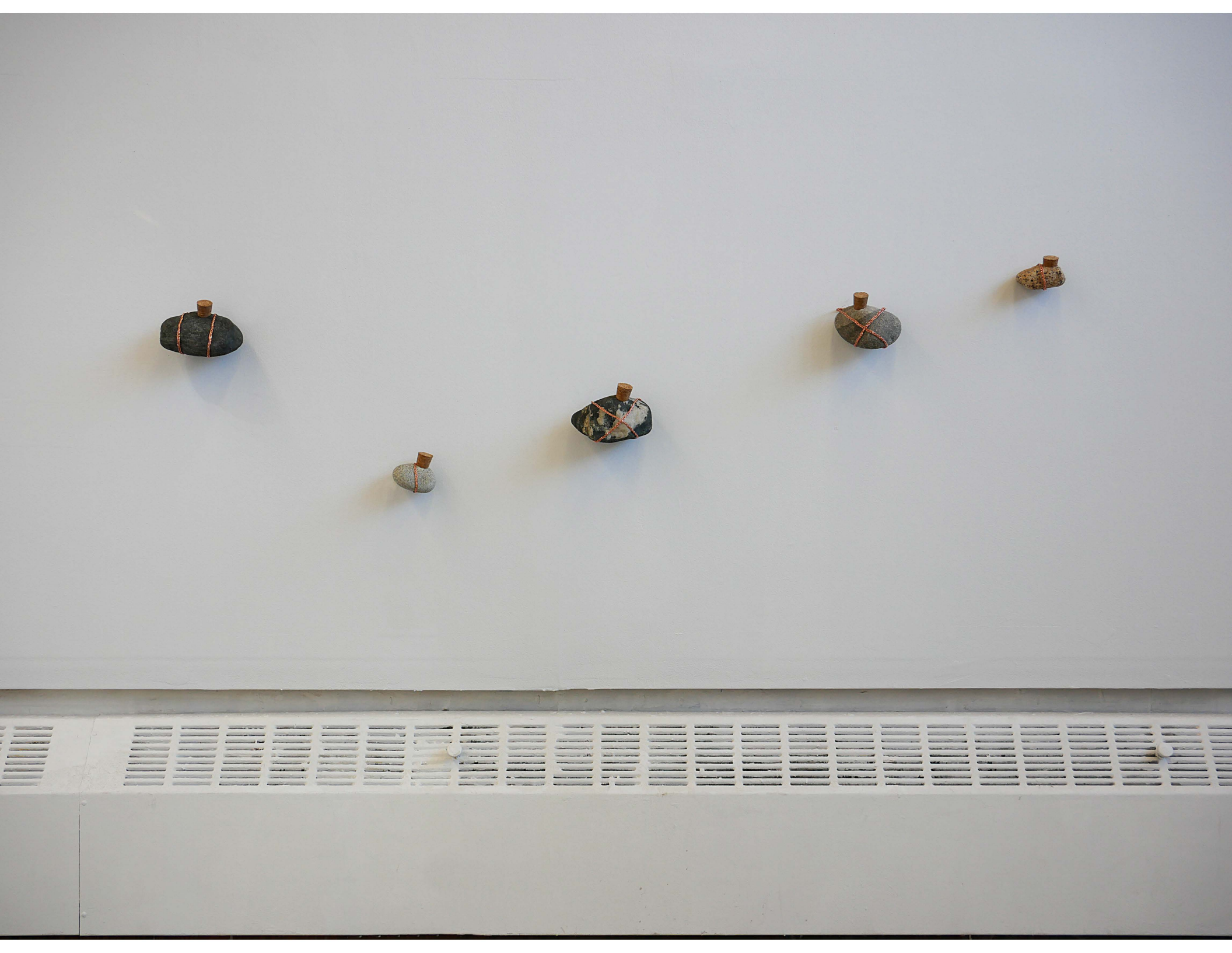


















FIELD STUDY EXPERIMENT 01
SIUSLAW NATIONAL FOREST
MARY'S PEAK
02-22-2020

MOUNTAIN CARE: MASSAGE TREATMENT

Summit approximately one hour and thirty minutes north-westward. Parkway roads advance to windy single lane mountain road. Roads narrow with increase in elevation. Landscape variable. Initial dry open plains, dense forest with iron rich soil, snow cover.

LOCATION: ROCK MASSAGE

Boulder stationed at edge of snow-covered cliff-side near summit. Boulder presents rough and cool to touch.

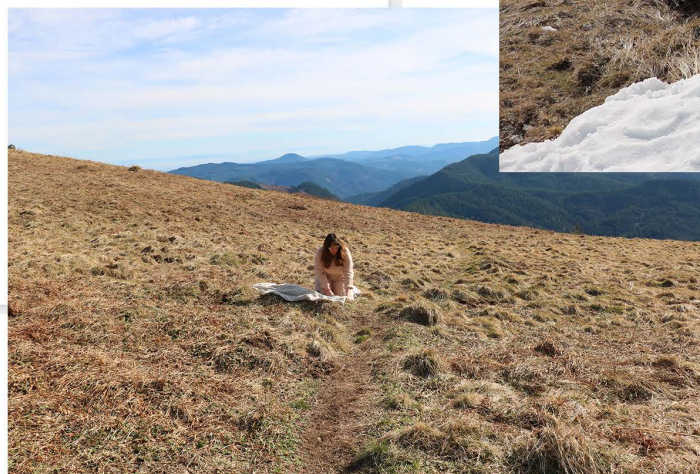
Blanket placed upon rock target area. CILMA Agent Evans placed hands upon earth material. Repeatedly applying pressure moving forward and backward, left to right.

ENERGY: Open, low vibrational field, calm, cool.

LOCATION: BRUSH FIELD AT CLIFF-SIDE

Brush field below snowline prior to summit. Brush presents lofty and dry to touch. Blanket placed upon mountainside target area. CILMA Agent Evans placed hands upon earth material. Repeatedly applying pressure moving forward and backward, left to right.

ENERGY: Open, low vibrational field, warm.





FIELD STUDY EXPERIMENT 02
WILLAMETTE RIVERBANK
EUGENE, OREGON
03-01-2020

EVENT AND RESIDUE: SOIL DIG AND REPLACEMENT

Riverbank approximately twenty minutes north-eastward. Traverse performed via vehicle and on foot. Landscape consistent with wooded river's edge and suburban city scape.

LOCATION: DIG SITE

Target area selected within open grass field. Grass presents green, healthy. Moist and cool to touch.

Blanket placed near target area. Initial dig by CILMA Agent Evans utilized small hand shovel. Shovel placed aside prior to engagement of hands upon earth material. Dig continued via fingers and cupped hands. Soil periodically removed and placed near dig site.

Upon satisfactory depth, soil previously placed near dig site gently combed back into earth void. Soil periodically pressed and placed until no more soil remains at which time grass and attached soil removed at onset of experiment replaced. Grass and soil pressed into surrounding earth-material.

ENERGY: Variable, medium to low vibrational field, calm, cool.





FIELD STUDY EXPERIMENT 03
MT. PISGAH ARBORETUM
SPRINGFIELD, OREGON
04-29-2020

COMBING THE FIELD

Trailhead approximately one hour and thirty minutes North Westward. City streets open to single-lane high-way roads. Terrain varied: agricultural, forest, coastal forest landscapes. Traverse coastal cliffside on foot. Slow descent towards beach access. Coastline primarily unpopulated.

LOCATION: Open Grass Field

Target area selected amongst grass field. Grass tender and long.

CILMA Agent Evans indulges careful repetitive or cyclical brushing motions. Right hand dominant, left hand passively engaged. Comb utilized sourced via Agent Evans' maternal line.

ENERGY: Calm, medium frequency vibrational field, warm.





FIELD STUDY EXPERIMENT 04
HOBBIT BEACH
FLORENCE, OREGON
08-31-2020

TEMPERMENT + PLAY: MIST EACHOTHER

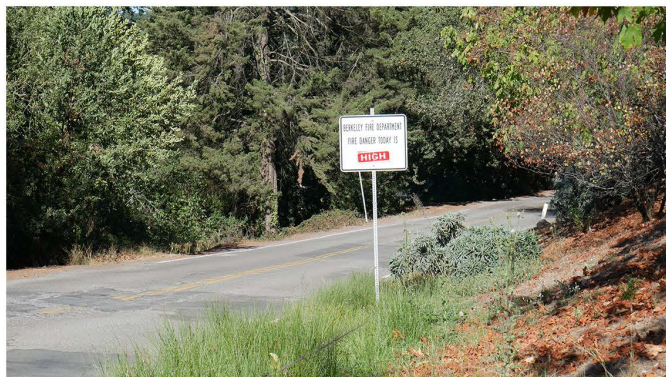
Trailhead approximately one hour and thirty minutes North Westward. City streets open to single-lane high-way roads. Terrain varied: agricultural, forest, coastal forest landscapes. Traverse coastal cliffside on foot. Slow descent towards beach access. Coastline primarily unpopulated.

LOCATION: Wave Shallows
Target area selected within open coastline. Water presents frigid, wave pattern unpredictable.

CLIMA Agent Evans engages waves, utilizing glass spray vessel containing Willamette River water in addition to their own physical form. Ocean waves engage Agent Evans in reciprocal play.

ENERGY: Open, heavy vibrational field, violent, cold.





FIELD STUDY EXPERIMENT 05
TILDEN REGIONAL PARK
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA
09-22-2020



GRASS SHOWER: MANUAL IRRIGATION

Trail approximately twenty minutes North Eastward. Access via city streets, which advance into winding residential mountain roads. Elevation gain is significant and fast. Enter fire road on foot. Incline approximation at forty-five to fifty degrees stipulates elevation gain is, again, significant within short duration of time. Landscape dry with golden brush and caramel sands strewn with rock debris and fallen eucalyptus bark.

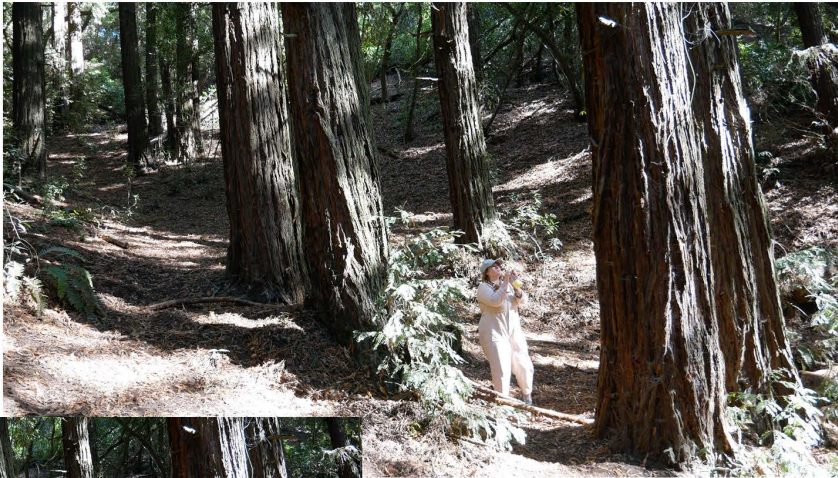
LOCATION: OFF TRAIL GRASSES

Grasses line trail perimeter, edging down into valley. Grass presents dry, brittle, weed-like.

CILMA Agent Evans employs gravitational field. Water vessel raised up, hose and spout lowered. Valve release engaged facilitates flow of water. Agent Evans moves hose and spout forward and backward, left to right, moving into and along grass area.

ENERGY: Closed, dense vibrational field, warm.





FIELD STUDY EXPERIMENT 06
JOAQUIN MILLER PARK
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA
09-24-2020

DAMPENED FUTILITY: WATER DISBURSEMENT

Trail approximately twenty minutes South Eastward. Access via city streets, which shift to highway mountain roads before becoming residential. Enter main trail on foot. No significant incline at onset. Landscape is moderate. Descent from main trail is gradual with trail declining at approximately 30 degrees.

LOCATION: REDWOOD GROVE

Second-growth redwoods, fern and umber abscission occurring off trail. Foliage appears dry, but shaded.

CILMA Agent Evans distributes moisture amongst small collection of Redwoods. Water vessel swept side to side, up and down, along tree trunks and accessible root structures. Periodically Agent Evans shifts distribution focal point. Alternate utilization occurs when trigger finger fatigue results from vessel application. Action continuously maintained until vessel reaches total depletion.

ENERGY: Open, undulating vibrational field, cool.



FIELD STUDY EXPERIMENT 07
ABBOTT'S LAGOON
POINT REYES, CA
12-29-2020

CORRELATION AND REALTIVITY: TO EXPIRE

Coastal lagoon approximately one hour and thirty minutes North Westward. Travel via interstate freeway, before advancing onto mountain roads. Mountain roads give way to remote coastal roads and open pastures.

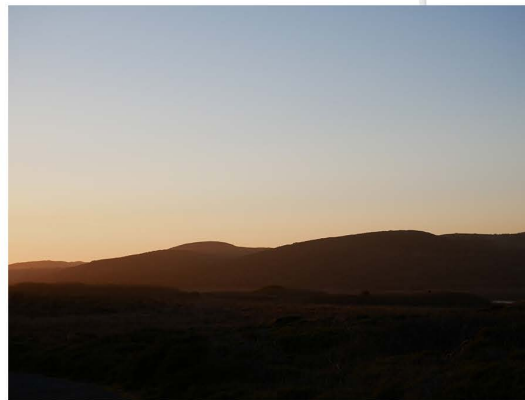
Enter marked trailhead on foot. No significant incline to note.

LOCATION: LAGOON ESPLANADE

Landscape consisting of dry brush, grassland and ice plant. CILMA Agent Evans simulates air current through slow, engaged, mindful breathwork documented in audio format.

Comparison of documentation indicates blurring between simulations and earth-based current. Further consideration recommended.

ENERGY: Open, undulating vibrational field, resonant, cool.





FIELD STUDY EXPERIMENT 08
MARIN HEADLANDS
SAUSALITO, CA
01-08-2021

UNCERTAIN MEASUREMENTS: SLOPE ALIGNMENT

Land mass located approximately forty-five minutes North Westward, accessed via interstate highway and coastal mountain roads. Initial destination ruled insufficient from lookout vantage point, initiating additional Westward advancement.

No significant incline at onset. Target land mass slope extending between forty to fifty degrees.

LOCATION: COASTAL RIDGELINE

Landscape moderate with coastal characteristics including dry brush, ice plant, porous sands, iron oxide. CILMA Agent Evans engages invisible forces. Traversal on foot up targeted slope. Rolling evaluation implemented, increased surface area engaged.

Standard Field Study Experiment documentation protocol implemented in addition to actuation of body cam.

ENERGY: Warm, static vibrational field, dense.

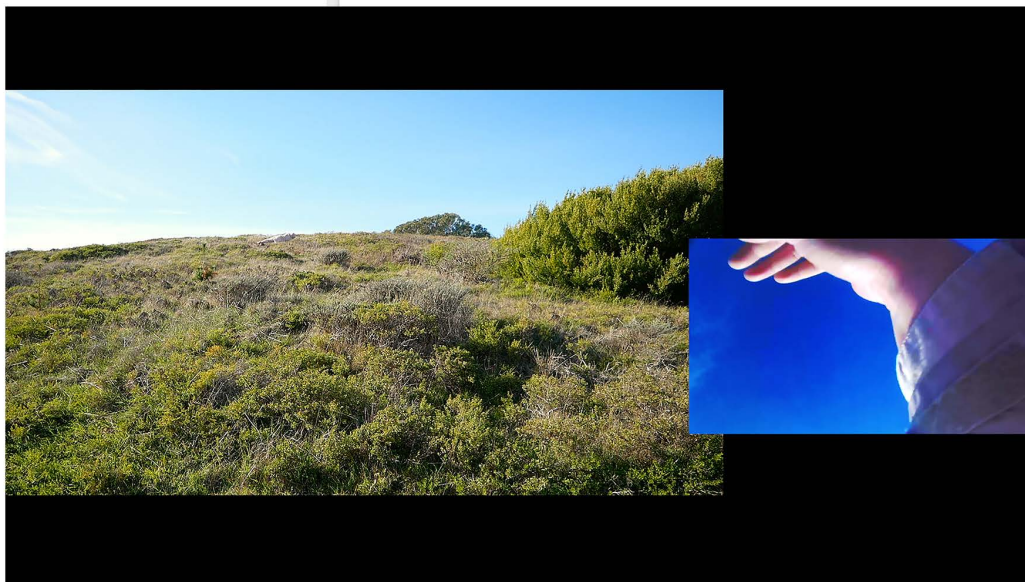


IMAGE LIST

1. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency, Field Study Experiments*, (2020), video/installation
Video performances, camping televisions, volcanic rock
Varying dimensions
2. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency, Field Study Experiments*, (2020), video/installation
Video performances, camping televisions, volcanic rock
Varying dimensions
3. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency, Report Files*, (2020), Installation
CILMA Folders, CILMA Reports, Performance stills, material sample, hardware
Varying dimensions
4. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency, Report Files*, Installation detail
CILMA Field Study Experiment 08: Uncertain Measurements: Slope Alignment File, (2021)
CILMA Folder, CILMA Report, Performance stills, rosemary, hardware
5. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency, Report Files*, Installation detail
CILMA Field Study Experiment 08: Uncertain Measurements: Slope Alignment File, (2021)
CILMA Folder, CILMA Report, Performance stills, rosemary, hardware
6. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency*, Installation,
University of Oregon MFA Thesis Exhibition, (2021)
CILMA Files, Herbal Medicine Shrouds
7. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency*,
Material Inquiry: Herbal Medicine Shrouds, (2021)
flowers, herbs, cotton, bamboo, saddle rack
Varying dimensions

Shroud materials:
Mind/Mental: Lavender, St. John's Wort, Feverfew
Muscle/Joint/Pain: Rosemary, Calendula, Comfrey
Cold/Flu: Yarrow, Mugwort, Chamomile, Germander, Sage, Eucalyptus, Thyme
8. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency*,
Material Inquiry: Herbal Medicine Shrouds, (2021), detail
flowers, herbs, cotton, bamboo, saddle rack
9. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency, Field Study Experiment 07:*
Correlation and Relativity: To Expire, (2020), Installation
Audio recordings, breath, wind, paracord, madder root, speakers, carabiners
10. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency*,
Material Inquiry: Scent Bank, (2019-2021)
11. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency*,
Material Inquiry: Scent Bank, (2019-2021), detail
12. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency*, Installation,
University of Oregon MFA Thesis Exhibition, (2021)

Field Study Experiment video performance installation, Files, Herbal Medicine Shrouds, Scent Bank, Field Study Experiment 07 sound installation

13. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency,
Field Study Experiment 01: Mountain Care: Massage Treatment, (2020)*
Video stills, CILMA Report
14. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency,
Field Study Experiment 02: Event and Residue: Soil Dig and Replacement, (2020)*
Video stills, CILMA Report
15. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency,
Field Study Experiment 03: Combing the Field, (2020)*
Video stills, CILMA Report
16. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency,
Field Study Experiment 04: Temperment + Play: Mist Eachother, (2020)*
Video stills, CILMA Report
17. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency,
Field Study Experiment 05: Grass Shower: Manual Irrigation, (2020)*
Video stills, CILMA Report
18. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency,
Field Study Experiment 06: Dampened Futility: Water Disbursement, (2020)*
Video stills, CILMA Report
19. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency,
Field Study Experiment 07: Correlation and Relativity: To Expire, (2020)*
Video stills, CILMA Report
20. *Center for Investigation of Land Mass Agency,
Field Study Experiment 08: Uncertain Measurements: Slope Alignment, (2020)*
Video stills, CILMA Report