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Stonehouse Residency: Koszut Artist Residency, CAS Grant

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Stonehouse Residency

College of Arts & Sciences Grant
Mary Beth Koszut, Assistant Professor
June 2014

PROJECT SUMMARY

Objective

I was looking to create a new series of artworks to push myself past my current habits of production to reach a new level in my artistic practice. During a focused period of study, I hoped to overcome the struggles that comes with developing a new concept for a new series of images. As my artwork is inspired by nature, I was looking to research new plant forms, (specifically those that grow air roots in order to sustain themselves), experiment with new media to begin an abstracted mixed media, air root series, and gather resource images for further work at King's Canyon and Sequoia National Parks.

Goals

In order to accomplish this goal, I attended an artist residency during the summer of 2014. While in residence for four weeks at Stonehouse Residency in Miramonte, CA, I hoped to re-energize my studio practice and complete four new works.

Results

At Stonehouse, I completed four new works, a collaborative piece, and started three more. Although the quantity of my original goal was greater, the conceptual basis of these works was split into two categories. Once onsite, I was inspired by the property and materials therein, pushing my work into a new direction. I completed three new paintings as studies of new media (aquaboard & clayboard) inspired by weathered and rusty objects on the grounds. This group of work is a continuation of the concept with which I have previously worked but with more presentational imagery. It deals with the dichotomy of growth and collapse, construction and destruction, as a metaphor for the complexity of life, particularly the spiritual journey in secular environments. Images and artist statement are on page 3 & 4.

The conceptual complexity for the air roots pieces grew. I finished one piece in this series and started two more. Interested in the idea of roots reaching out, roots that sustain plants without being grounded, I began to look at vines. Specifically using the idea of plants which look for other objects to support themselves. These images became much more personal, speaking to experience of reaching out, sometimes finding support and sometimes not, literally and spiritually. With these ideas in mind, I began to collect newspaper articles with which I felt a personal struggle or connection. I collaged parts of these articles into the images, conceptually corresponding to the physical characteristics, attributes or origins of the plants depicted. Although still experimenting on a new surface, each piece relates to a specific person or event in my life. An in-progress statement on this idea, as well as one completed work can be seen on page 5.

ARTIST STATEMENT & WORKS

The need to balance desires and responsibilities can be seen as one constant chaotic event. Through grace and perseverance, balance is often achieved until a situation or circumstance inevitably causes an element of collapse. This seeming failure, however, is only one aspect of the dichotomous nature of life.

Using rocks and planks as metaphors for individuals and their direction in life, my artwork strives to investigate the curiosity of continual contradiction that encompasses the growth process. I explore how paths seem impassable, yet we traverse them; how we constantly depend and interact with one another, yet often feel alone; how we are able to simultaneously build and collapse.

The Detritus vs. Progress series specifically deals with that element of collapse. When an event creates collapse in our lives, what do we do with it? How can we turn a “collapse” into an opportunity for growth? Working on new media (aquaboard and clayboard), these images investigate the above questions each with their own unique challenges. For example, in Trash pile II: Unconsumable Consumables, 2014, a shovel stands ready for the materials in the image to be placed in the oven, to get rid of that trash pile. However, only one object in that image could be burned for fuel. In Trash pile 1: Wheel Barrow, 2014, the wheel barrow presented with the detritus gives the viewer the opportunity to build from the collapse, but not without great effort. Lastly, in Recycled Piping, 2014, nature takes over and does the job for us. These images invite the viewer to analyze the collapse in their own lives, investigate solutions, and ponder how to move forward to create growth.



Trash pile 1: Wheel Barrow, 2014
Watercolor and gouache on clayboard, 16” x 20”



Recycled Piping, 2014
Watercolor and gouache on
clayboard, 20" x 16"



Trash pile II: Unconsumable Consumables, 2014
Watercolor and gouache on aquaboard, 20" x 16"

“Air Root” Series

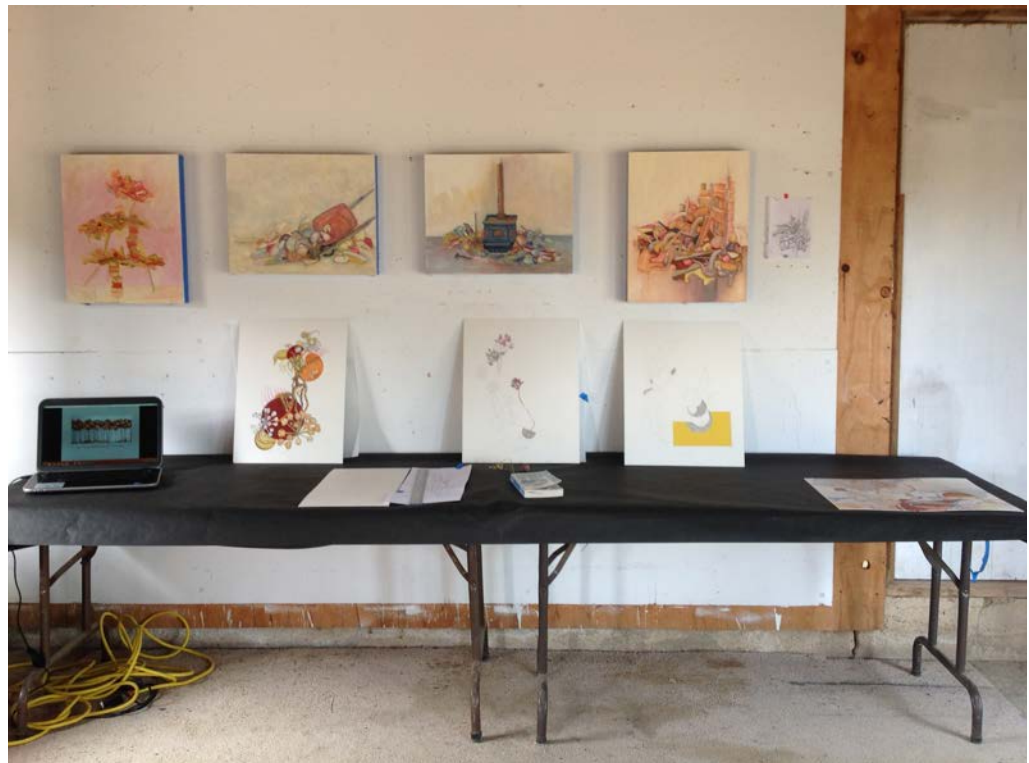
Humanity has a need to feel grounded: spiritually and physically with nature, and with one another. This idea of grounding is an important topic in many spiritual traditions, especially those involving mediation and meditative prayer. This need to ground ourselves raises questions of connectivity. What do we attach ourselves to? How are we grounded to maintain inner balance? Are we simply grasping at empty air, like an air root, searching for the very thing that will sustain us? How can contradiction co-exist in one being, like one with both grounded roots and roots grasping at thin air?

Metaphorically, these drawings explore the contradictions of solidarity and connectivity. They consider the importance of what it means to be grounded, like air roots that reach out to pull nutrients and moisture from the air. This air root and epiphyte series address personal situations in life where the struggle to find balance is encountered. Here, each drawing represents a particular “event” in this process. Through the abstraction of plant imagery, I invite the viewer to find beauty in the process of connecting and grounding oneself, one that is often full of mess and contradiction, and without resolution, be able to rest in that instability.





Studio at Stonehouse, 2014



Open Studios Event: Including Works in Progress
<http://www.stonehouser residency.org/index.htm>