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**artists statement, far and near**

In September of 2014, I traveled to Summer Lake Oregon, to spend a month as a resident of the Playa Fellowship Residency Program. The work in the ‘far and near’ exhibition is the product of that residency. At Playa, my plan was to expand my practice of recycled and ‘greener’ art making by exploring no press printmaking and the use of nontoxic water based inks, all new territory for me. Fueled by my desire to travel in combination with making art, my goal was to develop the ability to print in any new and unfamiliar landscape, with minimal supplies and impact on the environment. Stepping out of my comfort zone of making art with ‘family debris’ while working to expand my ability to work in a more sustainable way was an exciting, and intimidating challenge.

I have always been moved and inspired by the natural world around me. My daily practice and wellbeing are dependent upon getting outside, moving through the landscape, experiencing the light, the weather, the air, and the dramatic and subtle changes that passing time and seasons bring. The natural environment fuels my imagination. It fills me up with sensory information that forms the foundation of what I do and who I am

My residency experience was much more inspiring than I could have ever anticipated, and I feel forever changed. Though a lifelong east coaster, I was completely awed and exhilarated by the playa landscape: the muted but rich high desert palette, the varied textures, the stark and looming land forms with every dramatic fold and contour visually accessible, the vast clear blue dome of sky, the voluminous sculptural clouds and dust devils, the beauty of the landscape’s linear elements and the playa: a canvas of changing color, light, texture, motion.

The Great Basin landscape was the antithesis of what I knew and loved about New England, When I returned, I was struck by how verdant, cloaked and intimate the NE landscape felt, almost claustrophobic when compared to the wide open spaces and the always present horizon on the playa. While residing at Playa I embraced the differences and developed a serene and productive rhythm to my day. Every morning, before sunrise, I would head out to the playa to greet the day and spend a few hours of daily meditation, walking and building on the ancient intermittent lake bed. The result of 25 morning’s activity was the construction of a spontaneous and improvisational large scale land art piece created from collected and placed stones. After my morning’s work, I would head to my large studio, to explore gelatin and relief printing with water based inks on 3 different types of paper using the colors of the playa landscape and the textures of the natural materials around me. The resulting photographs, prints and mixed media works are my record of and response to a rigorous and idyllic artist’s life exploring the sublime in the Great Basin of South central Oregon.

Lisa Barthelson, January 2015