

Habitats

Target Gallery Exhibition
Juror's Statement
Ellyn Weiss

hab·i·tat /'habə,tat/

the natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism.

First, my great thanks to Leslie Mounaime for inviting me to jury this exhibition and to her and Hannah Son for making the experience such a pleasure. I wish that I could be with you to celebrate the astonishing creativity and diversity of the work represented here. I have been making my own artwork related to climate change for many years and it has been a special privilege for me to see the responses of artists from all over this country to the Target Gallery's call for artists to reflect on the meaning of habitat for them.

Well over 300 pieces were submitted by 120 artists; considerations of space allowed me to select only 22 pieces. Those come from Brooklyn to Idaho, Arkansas to Minnesota, Appalachia to Newark, NJ, New Orleans and Philadelphia, PA. (Plus the DMV, of course.) They range from etching to virtual reality and include every old and new medium in between.

It is perhaps not surprising that one frequent element of the work is the threat posed to the natural world by the incursions of humanity: For example, Delna Dastur's deep and complex painting, *Tendrils*, and Nancy Ramsey's *Portland* both suggest the dislocation of natural habitats by human structures. Laura Ahola-Young's mixed-media piece, *Ocean Floor*, interposes the outlines of oil-pumping equipment over a disturbed marine ecosystem. In Pam Eichner's digital drawing *Monumental Winds*, the buildings of the city aggressively advance on the forest. Michael Marks, in *How the Highlands Laid Low*, uses a variety of intaglio techniques to depict the violent rupture of the mountain ecosystem caused by mountaintop removal mining.

Other artists created their own habitats, life forms and dwellings. For example, Ceci Cole McInturff's *Troika* comprises three imaginary creatures assembled from animal skins and other organic elements. She conjures animals restrained and deformed, dislodged from their habitats. Perhaps the most intimate piece, Kamille Jackson's graphite drawing *Backyard*, reminds us of the role of the habitats created by our own families.

Finally, some pieces just grabbed me by the throat, like Adam Crosson's video *If At All*, which he describes as a "meditation on...the peculiar abutment of industry and leisure in South Louisiana." Likewise, Christina Hunt Wood's *Charlotte Creek Rd*, assembled from crushed metal cans collected from one road in her rural Appalachian community. The relationship of these artists to their home places is palpable in the work. I was also captivated by *Melting in the Grotto*, a collaborative virtual reality painting and animation piece submitted by Emily Dziejewczynski and Betsy Byers, which places the viewer in the scene surrounded by the sights and sounds of swiftly melting ice.

Each of the 22 works of art here is a truly individual response to the challenge to respond to the meaning of habitat. From the threatening to the violent to the charming and poignant, the work spans a wide range of emotions and invites reflection on our human place in the universe of living things.

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