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Raisin Fingers

By
Sophia Hatzikos

A thesis presented to the
Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Chair, Master of Fine Artist in Visual Art Program
Lisa Bulawsky

Thesis Text Advisor
Anika Todd

Faculty Mentor
Chery Wassenaar

Thesis Committee
Cheryl Wassenaar
Anika Todd
Amy Hautf

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ABSTRACT

I am a sculptor that uses site reactive interactions, video documentation, and studio-based processes to explore landscape. I investigate my multifaceted relationship of self to my sensorial memory of landscape. Through themes of memory, loss and longing intertwined with my personal connection to water. I identify the intersections of sculpture and landscape seeking ways in which environments shapes decisions in the making process.

Through case studies of two distinct landscapes, Malaki and Tyson, I look at how these environments serve as sources of inspiration and material for experimentation. By identifying the ways in which I researched at each site respectively I aim to unravel the complexities of my relationship to landscape. I examine how I translate my personal lens of landscapes with others. My practice is a dialogue with the natural world as I seek to capture and preserve the fleeting moments of lived experiences. Through contemplation of my own artistic meanderings, I contribute to the ongoing discourse of sculpture and contemporary art, offering insights in which landscapes shape our understanding of self in relationship to place.

RAISIN FINGERS

TO BEGIN

“Finding ourselves in place, we discover that our bodies confer a radical specificity to the environment. We are ‘in’ place in the particular sense that our bodies are a first point of contact for the world. This has two major implications. First, being a body means occupying a particular location in a place. ‘Above’ and ‘below’ exist only in terms of where I am currently placed. With my bodily self as the determining force, I draw whatever is around me, into my body. However, as I draw nearer to that which is above and below me, so another horizon of distinctions are established. Neither static nor absolute these distinctions rotate and evolve in accordance with the movement of the body.”¹

- Dylan Trigg

¹ Dylan Trigg, *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny*, Series in Continental Thought 41 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012). P. 10

As a sculptor, I immerse myself in landscapes, seeking to understand. I translate my embodied presence within a landscape into tangible forms: sculptures. Working within this context I use my practice to share a poetic, personal lens that attempts to fully encompass my perception of space. Landscapes are natural systems, encompassing elements of nature, memory, loss, community, built environment, and identity. I aim to define what landscape means to me.²

Like the land artists of the 1960s, such as Nancy Holt and Mary Miss, I see myself as part of a lineage that broadens the definition of sculpture. Holt and Miss saw landscapes as canvases, and they manipulated land to create greater meaning. While I do not manipulate the land, I do make gestural marks in location through videos that I see as sketches. These site-reactive interactions serve as sources of inspiration for my sculptures, which are processed and translated in the studio rather than in the field.

Memory, particularly in relation to loss, plays a role in shaping my understanding of a landscape. I contemplate the palpable relationship of distance to longing. As the visuals of landscapes fade, what endures are the embodied moments and the feelings they evoke. There is an urgency to create, to preserve, to recall, driven paradoxically by a fear of loss itself. Themes of longing, particularly for water, are recurrent throughout my work, reflecting a yearning for distant places and sensorial memories of being submerged. When I depart a landscape there is a sense of mourning and adjustment, underscoring the fleeting nature of connection and the perpetual cycle of lived experiences.

What follows is an exploration of *In Malaki* and *At Tyson*, the two landscapes I spent time with from 2022- to present. Looking at how I work with each of them individually has led me to understand my process further. Rebecca Solnit, in her book, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*

² I choose to use the term "landscape" deliberately, as I see it being able to fully capture my emotional and sensorial connection to land.

writes, “Self only exists in reference to the rest of the world, no you without mountains, without sun, without sky.”³ I concur with this sentiment, and how this self-discovery can be revealed during the creation process. It feels like I can share those moments of solitude or collaboration with people from other communities and spaces by acting as a translator by acknowledging my personal relationship to nature.

Tyson and Malaki serve as living examples that demonstrate my perception of landscape as measured and specific. I work within landscape as a form of research and making, considering them as equally valuable components of the creation process. The work captures my varied interpretations, creating a visual and conceptual tapestry that reflects my engagement with space and time. I unravel the complexities of translating personal experiences into visual language, weaving together the threads of presence, memory, loss, home, identity, and time. Through this personal inquiry, I expand my practice outward, discussing broader themes of landscape, identity, cultural hybridity, and poetic environmental concerns, through sharing my process, sculptures, and influences while adding to the conversation of the field of sculpture and contemporary art.

³ Solnit, Rebecca. *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. (New York: Penguin, 2006.) p. 12

IN MALAKI

Growing up in Portland, Mt. Hood stands as a perpetual reference point, a gauge of the day's weather. Roni Horn in her photographic book "Weather Reports You" gathers personal testimonials concluding that a conversation about weather is not a boring conversation. Rather a conversation that she states is "a metaphor for the physical, metaphysical, political, social and moral energy of a person and a place."⁴

- Roni Horn

The year that I lost Emma, Emily to Mt. Hood and Nicole to Mt. Bachelor significantly shifted my perception and connection to the mountains that shape the landscape I grew up in. I no longer enjoy a conversation about the weather that includes the visibility of a mountain in it.

⁴ Roni Horn, *Weather Reports You*, Second edition (London: Artangel/Steidl, 2022).

Malaki, Greece. Population: 229. By bus, 6 hours north of Athens. Betty's home sits facing the sea. I stayed in Betty's home thanks to the generosity of my friend Nefeli, Betty's niece. In Malaki I did not create physical sculptures, instead I chose to spend time observing. I focused on absorbing the essence of the landscape. In Malaki, I researched through swimming, allowing the perspective from the water to shape my observations of the landscape (fig. 1). As I swam along the coastline each day, I could observe the structures along the shore but also delve into the submerged world, tracing the detritus and natural elements embedded in the seafloor. This method of exploration provided insight into spaces that would have otherwise been inaccessible.

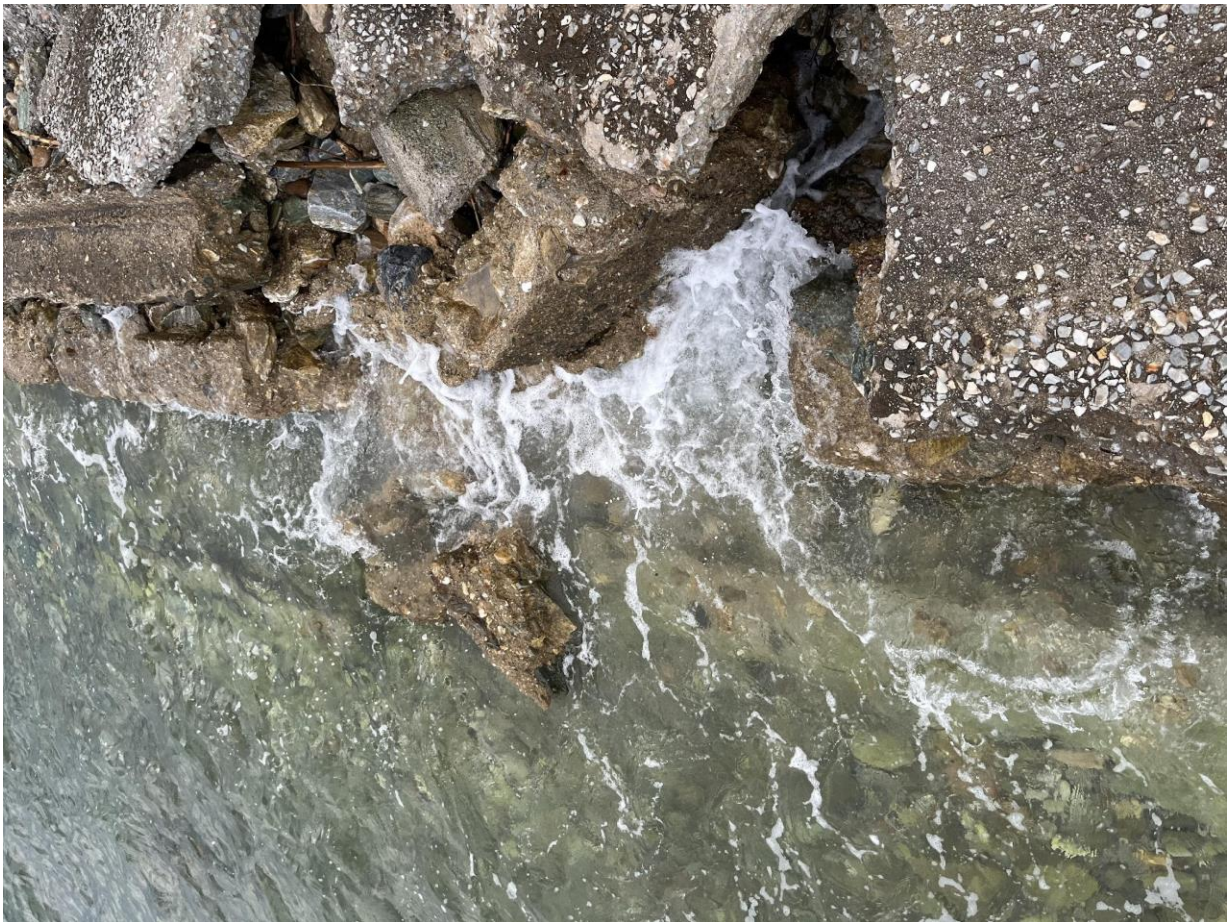


Figure 2: Sophia Hatzikos, Research Image, June 2023

I traversed the waters with purpose. I carried essentials like a beach wrap, flip flops, sunscreen, water, and sunglasses in a pink dry bag around my waist while swimming, so that I

could explore seamlessly between water and land. This fluid movement between environments reminds me of Allan Sekula's work *Dear Bill Gates*, 1999 where swimming was employed to gain access and visibility, as seen in his photographic triptych depicting Bill Gates' home in Seattle, accompanied by an anonymous letter addressed to Gates himself (fig. 2).

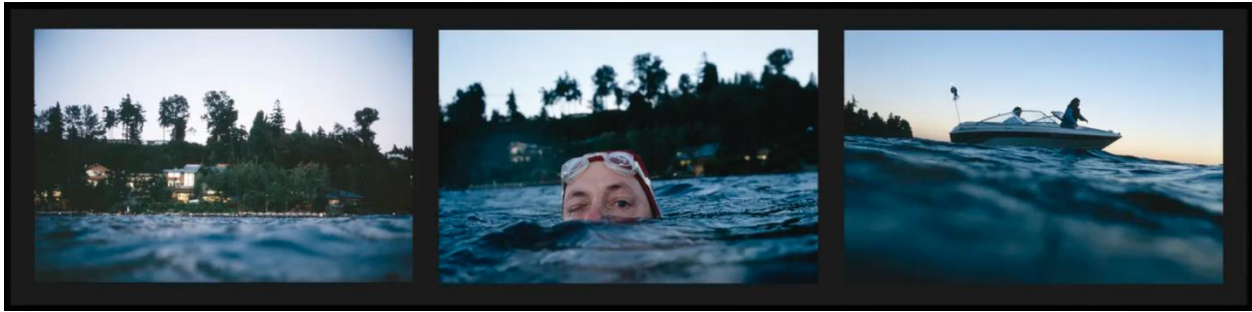


Figure 2: Allan Sekula, *Dear Bill Gates*, 1999, cinachrome prints.

David Company writes about Sekula's work more broadly in reference to the work *Dear Bill Gates* in his essay "Alan Sekula Making Waves": "Sekula was prolific, with a stream of photos, slide shows, videos, essays, and books. He understood that unpredictable times require unpredictable responses. As our politics, economics and climate grow more volatile, his work seems increasingly relevant."⁵ Company's reference to Sekula's process "unpredictable times require unpredictable responses" resonates with my practice of employing creative strategies to embed oneself in landscape to understand further. While swimming to gain access like Sekula, I was aware of my presence in relationship to the ownership of land. What I was seeing from the water was not accessible or visible any other way. I see the act of swimming as a tool to gain access.

Upon exiting the sea, I would place my gear in the dry bag, carrying it like a backpack as I ventured inland. The hot dry air of Malaki often beckoned me back to the water, where I found

⁵ "Allan Sekula: Making Waves | David Company." Accessed April 10, 2024. <https://davidcompany.com/allan-sekula-making-waves/>.

a different pace and understanding of the land. I would take a pause for meals, frapes, or conversations when I felt my buoyancy in the water change.

Below I share a narrative of finding a sea urchin and love of lemons, to describe how the wandering of my water research led to a series of videos and sculptures that considers memory of the body, and fragility of the sea. The process began with finding a sea urchin while swimming. The sea urchin's ability to sense and respond to my presence drew me in. If I extended my hand towards its needles, they instinctively pivoted to avoid contact. Upon sharing that I had removed an urchin from the sea Nefeli informed me that my action was not legal. We spoke to each other about the impact of the sea urchins and their ecological significance as ocean filters, absorbing toxins from the water. Despite my ethical desire to return the sea urchin, it was too late. I reluctantly left it on the white plastic outdoor table where its needles gradually dried up separating from its body. The urchin became a symbol of fragility, one that spoke to my individualized impact on the landscape and beckoned to the wider consequences of human influence on habitat. As the urchin gradually dried up, separating from its body, it visually reminded me of the lemon rinds I had been squeezing earlier that week. The lemons, which were an important part of my experience in the landscape, became the other symbol in the work, a symbolic stand in for the acidity of the sea.

I made a connection while picking lemons in Betty's backyard that the lemons were a bridge between land and sea. I gathered lemons in the skirt of my dress until they piled up and began to roll away. From picking to squeezing there was a sweetness to the process that contrasted with their symbolic potency of acidity.

Using the Lemons from Betty's backyard I attempted to recreate, Epsa lemonade, a brand of lemonade that I developed a kinship with while living in Malaki. Lemons became the main character in my love story with Malaki. The time and care I spent with the ingredient, squeezing it over potatoes to garden weeds, cemented its importance as an ingredient that is personal and

specific to the region. Due to my fondness for Epsa, the fizzy lemonade company whose product was manufactured just a short 20-minute swim down the shoreline, I made multiple attempts to gain insight into their processing plant. A series of failed phone calls, emails, and knocks on the door added to my urge to learn about the product through an attempt at recreation.

I aimed to capture the spirit of Epsa by bottling my own lemon concoctions in their iconic glass bottles, which even when filled with water, evoke the sensory memories of the lemonade that once occupied them. Despite my efforts, no amount of honey, sugar, or soda water seemed to replicate the tangy elixir I craved to produce. However, the rhythmic whirring of the motorized squeezing machine became a source of solace for me. Each rotation was grounding, and the satisfaction of extracting juice from each lemon was profoundly fulfilling. Despite not achieving the exact flavor of Epsa, the process itself became a meditative ritual, offering a sense of connection to Betty's backyard where the lemons grew.

Squeezing the abundant lemons, I found myself with a pile of lemon rinds, which sparked a new path to follow. Inspired by the act of creation and replication, I began to envision combining a lemon with an urchin, the lemon rinds transformed into a symbol for ocean acidity (fig. 3). I was struck by the homologous forms and structures between a lemon and a sea urchin, such as the distinctive belly button indent, and I embarked to merge elements from both entities. This hybrid creation extends beyond physical properties, standing in as a key object that unlocks memory in relationship to impact on Malaki's landscape.



Figure 3: Sophia Hatzikos, *Attraction - Cleaver Repulsion (Malaki)*, 2023.

I continued experimenting with the symbols of the lemon and the urchin, I created videos that recorded my action in the landscape. In addition to the sculptures, I use video performance as a sketching tool, to document my embodied research method in place and to experiment with found materials in landscape. These performative gestures that can carry both utility and imagined absurdity. The captured actions via video act as sketches that allow for me to personally gain an understanding. The actions I perform within a landscape are not always concretized. The impulse to execute an action is not planned, but instead intuitive, and so the outcome or usage of gained understanding is unknown.

In the installation *Attraction – Cleaver Repulsion (Malaki)* I explored these speculations through a video component (fig. 4). The video depicted the freshly cut lemon rinds from the lemonade experiments floating in the sea. As the footage progresses, my body emerged

intermittently, almost blending into the scenery as I reach for the split lemon halves, engaging in a process of grasping and releasing against the backdrop of a cemented sea floor.



Figure 4: Sophia Hatzikos, *Attraction - Clever Repulsion*, still from performance video, 2023.

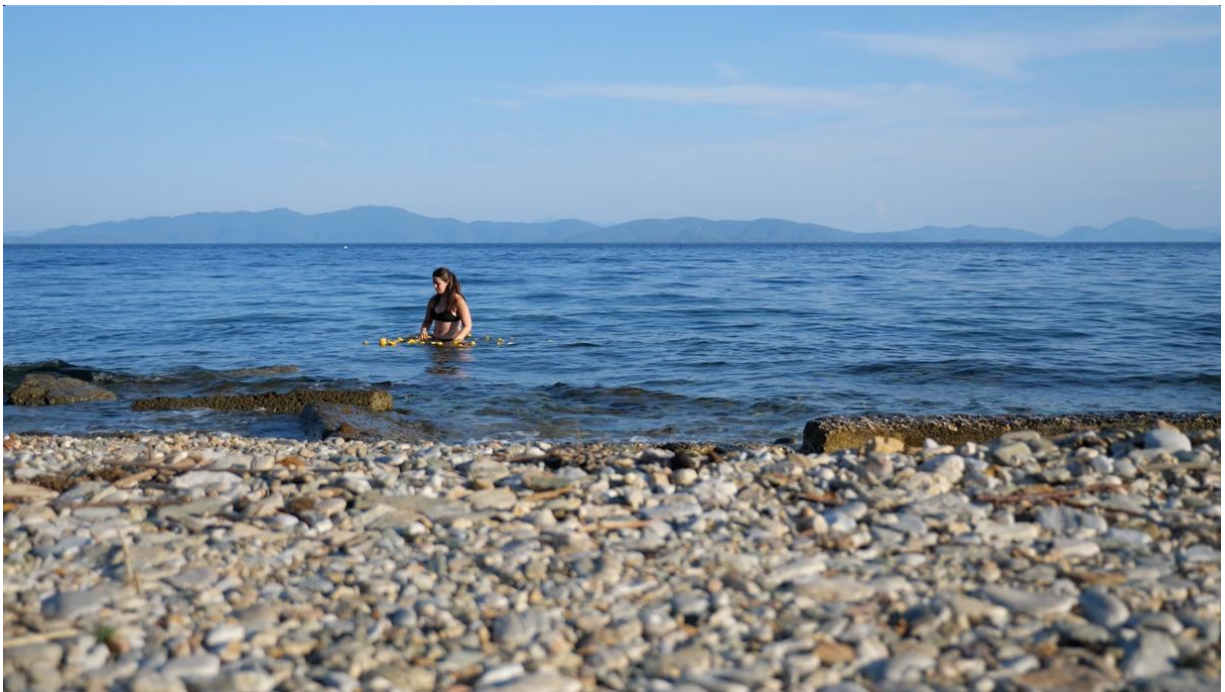


Figure 5: Sophia Hatzikos, *Attraction - Clever Repulsion*, still from performance video, 2023.

Midway through the video, the perspective shifts to the shoreline, where I walk into the water carrying a colander filled with lemon rinds, dumping them into the sea. The video ultimately returns to its starting point, depicting my body submerging once again, encapsulating a narrative of a process with no beginning or end.

The lemon's acidic nature serves as a metaphor for increased acidity and warming brought by climate change. In the video I place the lemons in the sea demonstrating that human impact. The urchin I had taken out of the sea, on the other hand, acts like a sponge, absorbing water acidity. Creating a gestural video in the landscape and a sculpture back in the studio is an example of how I process embodying landscape.

The colander featured in the video, used to transport the lemon rinds into the sea, is whisked onto the shore and out of the visibility of the screen in slow motion, this action holds a significance beyond its mundane appearance.

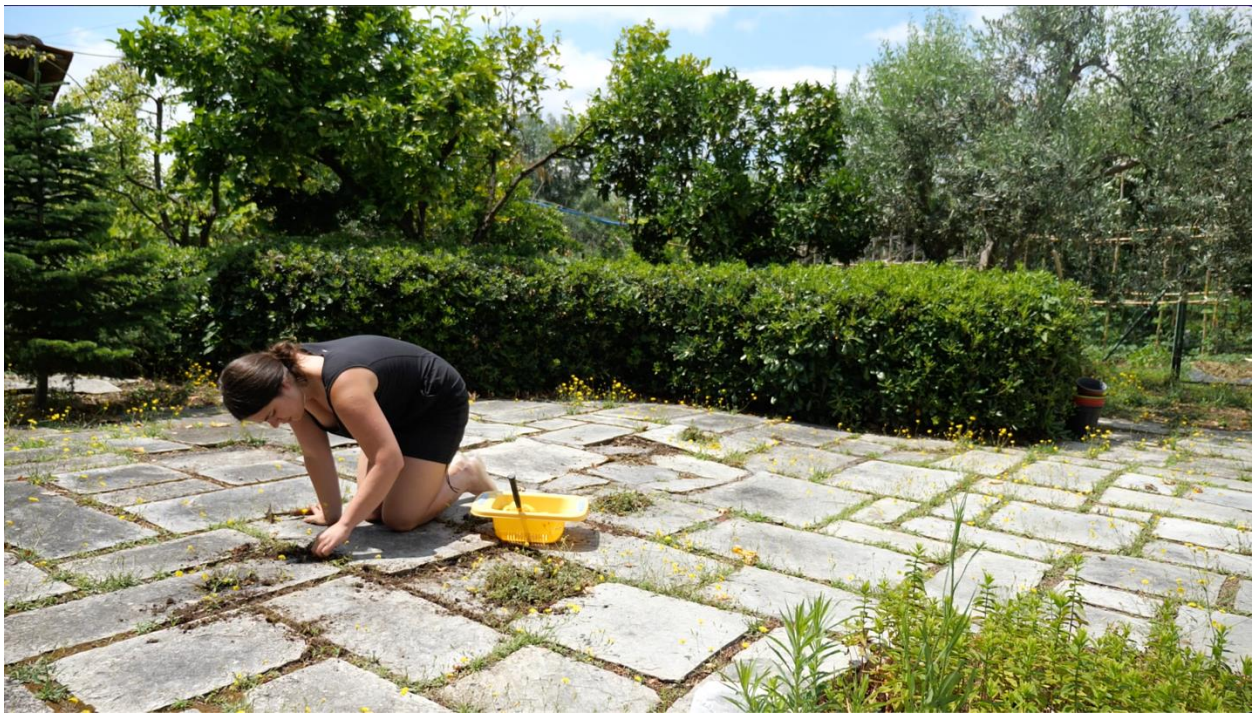


Figure 6: Sophia Hatzikos, process video still, 2023.

The colander served as a reliable vessel in my daily tasks around Malaki, from squeezing and storing lemon rinds to temporarily holding garden weeds. I use tools and gestures to guide my perception of space. The colander as a container serves as an example of this practice in Malaki (fig. 6).

The colander, with its perforated structure, functions metaphorically as a conduit for seepage, akin to a drain. The holes in the colander symbolize a means of facilitating the removal and transfer of material from one space to another. However, the residue or traces of those materials persist. The colander's punctured design allowed for the subtle drips of lemon juice to traverse from the kitchen sink, across the patio, onto the rocks, and eventually into the water.

I have an affinity for sculptural objects that act as hybrids. Mona Hatoum in her series *No Way I-IV* incorporates a colander. Hatoum's sculptural objects are often in conflict or contradiction with one another. Her poetic material choices are an example of this tension, as she puts bolts and nuts in the drainage spaces of a colander - eliminating the functionality of the object in its entirety (fig. 7). Christine van Assche and Clarrie Wallis in their book on Mona Hatoum write about Hatoum's colander series: "holes of a colander and draining spoon are plugged with metal bolts, giving them the appearance of a landmine or mace. These ordinary objects are transformed into something sinister, capable of inflicting pain."⁶ The use and addition of the metal bolts adds a new understanding to an existing object as two items collide to create a simulacrum which produces a greater meaning.

⁶ Christine van Assche and Clarrie Wallis eds., *Mona Hatoum*, English edition (London: Tate Publishing, 2016). p. 122-127



Figure 7: Mona Hatoum, *No Way III*, 1996, stainless steel 11 x 25 x 29 cm

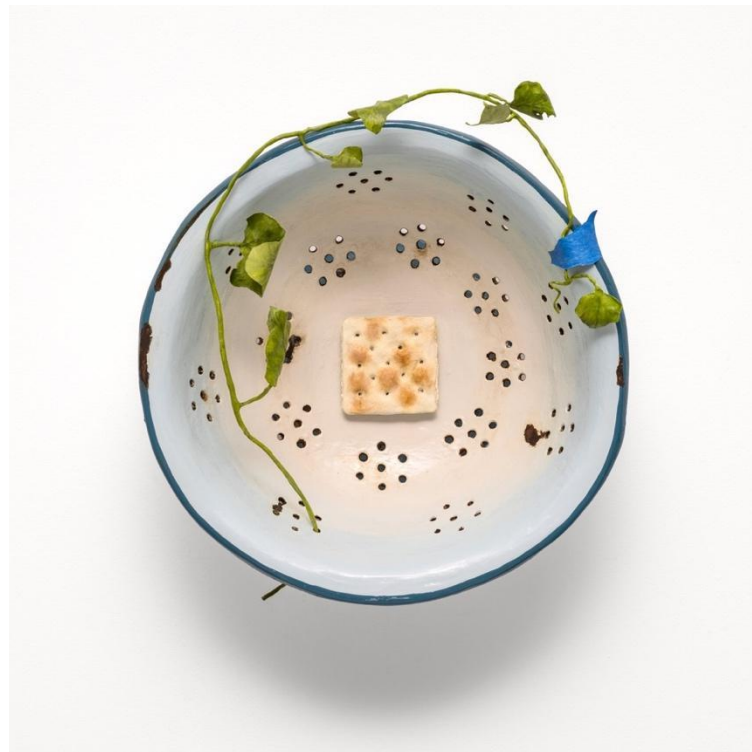


Figure 8: Tamara Johnson, *Colander with Cracker and Vine*, 2023

In support of adding objects to existing known identities of common objects I look to Tamara Johnson's series of colanders where she integrates a variety of objects into the basin or exterior adding to a narrative of hybridity (fig. 8). The conception of what a colander can be is shaped and formed through the addition of further material. Johnson referenced her work with colanders in an artist talk at the St. Louis Art Museum, stating that: "The colander is inherently a container, a holder of material, but also a metaphor for a filter. Materials that pass through this object become delineated and separated and their functions heightened ... kitchen sponges, bobby pins, saltine crackers, each object is suspended in a perpetual limbo."⁷

In this video that I consider a sketch, I am once again using lemons by symbolically squeezing this natural form of acidity in lieu of a toxin on this noninvasive non-bothering existence of yellow dandelions, breaking through the slate tiles in the backyard. A dandelion is a plant that we devalue as it is not what we planted or intended to grow in a space that is artificially manicured. This resilience of coming through the cracks mimics the tone of a colander.

A colander underscores the idea that all things are subject to change, and no substance remains in a fixed state indefinitely. The colander becomes a visual metaphor for the fluidity and mutability inherent in substances and their transformations over time. The metaphor of a colander is important, as it is a tool that evokes and transports liquid and air-matter. In my practice, my eye is seeking moments that match the presence of a colander in the landscape: glitches, things in flux, portals, pathways, envelopes, entry points, tools, ways into conversations that visually illustrate the transient state of the natural.

Back in Saint Louis, my studio practice became centered on working out how I could transfer my experiences in Malaki, and longing for that landscape, into sculptures. Distance became central to my work, the removal or rather departure turned lived experience into memory. The following

⁷ Tamara Johnson: from artist talk followed up by text message.

work, *Frame*, (fig. 11) was created in relation to this idea of distance. What would it mean to recreate an object from Malaki from memory? How could that speak to the dislocation of distance?



Figure 9: Sophia Hatzikos, process image, June 2023

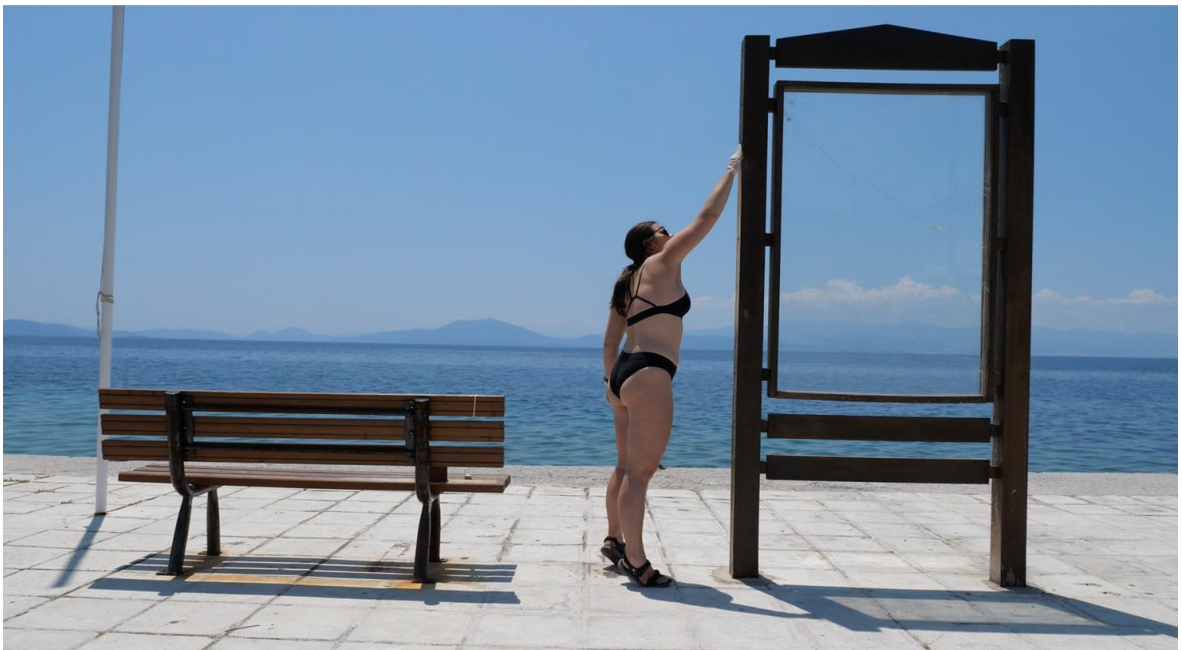


Figure 10: Sophia Hatzikos, *Frame*, still from performance video, 2023.

I found the frame while swimming in Malaki, I came across a dilapidated signpost (figs. 9 and 10). Its presence was striking. The frame's minimalistic but evident details exhibited a level of design that went beyond structural function. I documented myself tending to the frame. The actions of care included sanding, filling, and staining blemishes. I replicated the frame's design, using measurements of my body from the video sketch I created while on site (fig. 11). It was an imperfect measurement system. It became more it was not just another object that passed by casually; rather, it became a focal point, revealing the interconnectedness of all things, including the imagined drainage flowing from the lemonade factory. This interconnectedness underscores the essence of my practice, drawing attention to the specific places and specific objects that I see overlap within a particular landscape.



Figure 11: Sophia Hatzikos, *Frame*, 2023.

After I had departed from Malaki, I realized the loss of not being in proximity to the frame. *Frame* lingers as a promise, a connection back to my experiences, straddling the line between the sea and the land. *Frame* is presented in conjunction with an 11 second looping video of the found frame in location (fig. 12). By presenting the video of the frame in Malaki with *Frame* I sought to emphasize the connection between where it originated and what I made.



Figure 12: Sophia Hatzikos, *Frame*, still from performance video, 2023

I make new objects inspired from my interactions in the landscape. The choice to not repurpose or show the physical material from the landscape is born out of the understanding that the material from the landscape is too close of a facsimile to the physical experience in space, too close to the truth. This closeness inhibits imagination. I am not a documentarian; instead, I create a new understanding of the sensorial memory of a place.

AT TYSON

“Generally speaking, I do not hunt blue things down, nor do I pay for them, the blue things I treasure are gifts, or surprises in the landscape”⁸

-Maggie Nelson

⁸ Nelson, *Bluets*. P. 25

My relationship to Tyson, a 2000-acre environmental field station, was akin to an arranged marriage. Tyson occupies land taken from Wazhazhe, Ogáxpa Ma-zho, Kaahkkaajkia, Kiikaapoi, Očhéthi Šakówin, Niúachi/Niutachi people.⁹ The property has since been incorporated by Minky Hollow Mining, used during World War II for ammunition storage, clear-cut for lumber, and used as a public park. Washington University purchased the land in 1963.

My interactions at Tyson marked an important developmental research period for my work. Experimenting at Tyson, I began to develop the methods of interacting with landscape that I then used in Malaki, exploring the landscape with a multi-sensory lens, documenting my actions utilizing sound and video recordings, and then creating sculpture that attempt to transfer/translate my experience of the space offsite.



Figure 13: Sophia Hatzikos, *Blue Gloved Explorations*, still from performance video, 2023.

My time at Tyson initially took on a performative quality as I interacted with the environment wearing thick tall plastic blue gloves. I documented myself wearing these gloves in

⁹ “Land Acknowledgement,” Tyson Research Center, accessed April 27, 2024, <https://tyson.wustl.edu/land-acknowledgement>.

a series titled *Blue Gloved Explorations* (fig. 13). These gestural videos made at Tyson serve as sketches where each mundane gesture is a mark, a notation of the initial instinctual connection that I developed with my surroundings. As I trace the contours of bunkers or glide across frozen blue pools, I am documenting the landscape from my personal experience. I relied on these documented sketches as memory.



Figure 14: Janet Cardiff, *Her Long Black Hair*, 2004.

While conceptualizing *Echoing Filing Cabinet 1-52* I drew inspiration from Janet Cardiff, who makes guided walks using a binaural sound recording technique guiding you through her interpretations of a space. Marla Carlson in her Journal Article, “Looking, Listening, and Remembering: Ways to Walk New York after 9/11,” writes about Janet Cardiff’s sound walk in Central Park, “Her Long Black Hair,” that was commissioned by the Public Art Fund in 2004 (fig. 14). Carlson writes that “These experiments, as Janet called them, also brought Central Park’s past into my present moment. [...] It’s a media-built memory of time when this wasn’t my

city, what Andres Huyssen refers to as an ‘imagined’ memory.”¹⁰ This concept of “imagined” memory and sound walks as a documentation structure fit the layers of translation I wanted to share from my time at Tyson.



Figure 15: Original Map Found at Tyson, 1966

I created an audio inventory *Echoing Filing Cabinet 1-52*. Finding a map from 1966 in the basement of the present-day Tyson Research Center Headquarters sparked a desire to use the map to navigate the landscape (fig. 15). I zoomed in on the existence of the 52 marked bunkers on the map. I drove to match markings on the map with physical structures in place chasing after notations such as 106-1, 303-33, 306-7. I drove a red Pathfinder around the site seeking out each bunker mark. When I entered a bunker, it was pitch dark. The concrete walls billowed. My breath was amplified yet invisible. By turning my headlamp on upon entering, the light

¹⁰ Marla Carlson, “Looking, Listening, and Remembering: Ways to Walk New York after 9/11,” *Theatre Journal* 58, no. 3 (2006): 395–416.

illuminated the interior. I documented my findings through voice memos. The disparate scenes kept me motivated to open one bunker after the next: a blender collection, workout weights, bottled sheep brains, a swirling disco ball, architectural remnants from the 1904 world's fair, and abandoned office equipment from the 90's kept me entertained during this process of excavation. I was in search of clues – thread lines- connections to make sense of what I was encountering sensorially. Gaining access to these seemingly impenetrable vaults encrusted with vines and rust became an activity I would frequently undertake during my visits to Tyson.



Figure 16: Sophia Hatzikos, *Echoing Filing Cabinet 1-52*, 2023.

I see this process of audio recordings as documentation as experimental in my practice, like Cardiff, as a way of processing Tysons landscape. I augmented the original map that I unearthed and highlighted, through erasure of other lines, the notation of the bunkers (fig. 16). I created my own key located to the bottom right of the map and made notes on the left of notable details. I digitally mapped and coded the sound recordings, aligning them with the physical

layout of the bunkers. This allowed for a deeply personal exploration of the site, inviting others to experience Tyson through my lens.

Like my process in Malaki, tracing elements of the environment allowed me to isolate variables that would become important elements in my future sculptural work. Several of the videos from the *Blue Gloved Exploration*, center my interactions with the pools at Tyson, objects that I would then use to transfer my experience of Tyson into work for the gallery. The pools at Tyson were originally agricultural troughs that served as space for scientific research about aquatic species habitat density. They created an unmistakable patina in the landscape, akin to an alien disc. Their repurposed use intrigued me, and I aimed to redefine their utility once again. My attention was drawn to the vivid blue hues, contrasted against the stark winter scape, prompting me to rubberneck from inside the red Pathfinder. I stopped the car to investigate them further. These pools that had collected rainwater and debris presented a unique sight. Solid as a lake, I tested them with my body weight, indulging in the sensation of frozen water. My interactions and footage of these pools clarified for me that I was seeking the blue, longing for water. I wanted so badly to find an inroad, a point of connection to Tyson, a way to fall in love. I was searching for an emotional connection to the landscape – the blue was as close as I got.



Figure 17: Sophia Hatzikos, *Blue Gloved Explorations*, still from performance video, 2023.

In *Blue Gloved Exploration*, I skate across frozen blue pools (fig. 17). My gestural motions in Tyson’s landscapes parallel *Whacker*, a short video work by Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn, which shows Kahn:

“Under a cloudless Los Angeles sky, Kahn—dressed in incongruous heels and a summery dress running an electric weed whacker through a hill of overgrown grass. During breaks, the whacker's annoying buzz gives way to the trill of birds and distant sirens, with Elvis Presley's *In the Ghetto* leaking from a passing car or a radio somewhere. *Whacker* conjures a tangible L.A. landscape, representing its distinctive mix of desultory glamour and urban hustle, cohabitating in the desert air”¹¹

The mundanity of the action of using a weed wacker in *Whacker* makes it clear to me that Stanya and Kahn capture the simple yet absurd action of diminishing the weeds at a nondescript corner of the LA landscape (fig. 18). According to Dodge, "It's about the feral - the persistence of the weeds, the wild grass that insists on growing," to which Kahn adds..."and a woman who is as tenacious as the weeds”.¹²



Figure 18: Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn, *Whacker*, 2005 6:25 min

¹¹ “Electronic Arts Intermix: Whacker, Dodge and Kahn,” accessed April 23, 2024, <https://www.eai.org/titles/whacker>.

¹² “Electronic Arts Intermix: Whacker, Dodge and Kahn,” accessed April 23, 2024, <https://www.eai.org/titles/whacker>.

Through making a video, I realized the potency of the pools in relation to the poetics of the landscape. I began to brainstorm how I could take the connections from making videos into sculptures. At Tyson like in Malaki I gravitated towards objects in the landscape that I saw as symbols that I could communicate my personal embodied experience of place through. I used objects as visual language. Some examples of elements I found and used as key signifiers were blue pools and a pair of bats. Using these elements, I created an architectural installation that combined both re orienting found material and developed fictional material born out of findings from the site.



Figure 19: Sophia Hatzikos, *A Single Pool, A Pair of Bats, a Triad of Daubers Nests*, 2023.

The sculpture *A Single Pool, A Pair of Bats, a Triad of Daubers Nests* features a 9-foot diameter plastic pool suspended over a square grass courtyard, enclosed on three sides and accessible from one side (fig. 19). Surrounding the inaccessible sides is a metal railing. The rigging system supporting the pool involves airplane cables attached to the metal fence through handcrafted

steel brackets, using $\frac{3}{4}$ inch airplane cable, turnbuckles, and wire rope clamps. This system is connected to a welded X shape rather than the pool itself, ensuring the outward pressure is on the steel, not the plastic (referred to as pool brackets). The pool's top is suspended just over 6 feet from the ground, allowing for easy entry. The inner space possesses a distinct essence, separate from the outer courtyard. The 1.5 feet tall walls of the pool obstruct visibility beyond, creating an enclosed environment.

Taking a pool out of the Tyson landscape meant that I could share the connection I found with these pools with others. After bringing a pool back to Washington University's campus, I made *A Single Pool, A Pair of Bats, a Triad of Daubers Nests, 2023* creating a space beneath for people to gather – reminiscent of a childhood fort, fostering a sense of sharing and communal being.

Inside the pool, scattered concrete sculptures, a pair of bats and a triad of daubers nests are strategically placed, each no bigger than a human hand. These concrete moments feel precious and frozen in conjunction with the pool's existence.



Figure 20: Sophia Hatzikos, *Bat Research*, 2023.

The bats called back to a foundational experience I had in the bunkers, while entering the bunkers to create audio recordings I inadvertently harmed a bat that was nestled next to another. This loss fostered a newfound sense of care towards the bunkers. The loss of life reshaped my prior assumptions about these architectural spaces, challenging the notion that they were devoid of life. This newfound understanding altered my approach of care for the bunkers from that point

onward. To memorialize the moment of loss and to express care, I sought to recreate the lost scenario of a pair of bats nestled together, disrupted by my intrusion.

The bat, initially sculpted from clay, were cast in silicon rubber, and the mold cast in concrete to record the spatial and material context in which they were found. Similar to the *Frame* from Malaki, in recreating the bats, I am not interested in creating an exact replica, but instead in capturing the memory and meaning of finding the object in the landscape.



Figure 21: Sophia Hatzikos, *A Single Pool, A Pair of Bats, a Triad of Daubers Nests*, 2023, detail.

Using casting to recreate the bats, I create an artificial artifact that merges the material of the bunker with the tiny fragile body of the bats. Including the element in the installation of the pools, I sought to incorporate the intimacy of the story of the bats into the architectural experience of the pools.

Inside the bunkers like inside the suspended pool natural elements such as light and wind that make landscapes stimulating are halted. The architecture of the bunkers and pools change one's spatial understanding of the natural. The pool is suspended in air and is positioned lower than the towering walls, offering viewers an above and below perspective. Changes in light alter the perception of the piece – as the sun shifts, the shadow pivots, creating varied images and effects based on the time of day and weather conditions. Those in the pool's interior experience an

augmentation in light, thanks to the translucent nature of the opaque weather-worn manufactured plastic, making it sensitive to external light while viewing the elements from within.

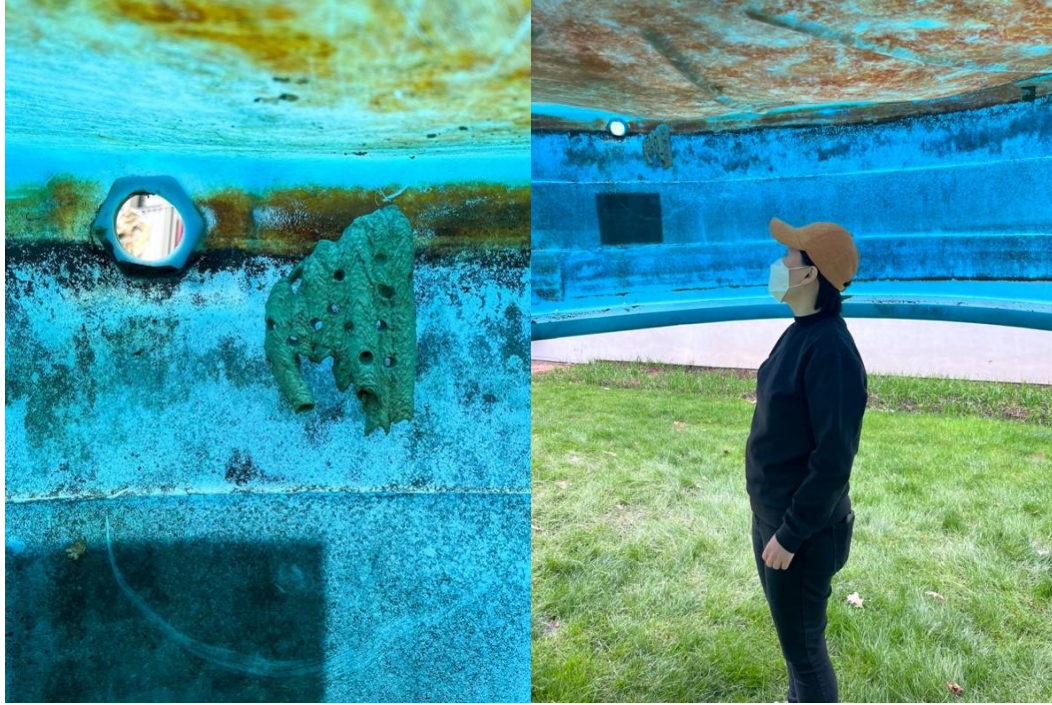


Figure 22: Sophia Hatzikos, *A Single Pool, A Pair of Bats, a Triad of Daubers Nests*, 2023, detail

Anne M. Wagner explores and contemplates the work of Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson in her lecture *Measures of Distance: Space and Sign* at the Whitney Art Museum, emphasizing the importance of “Holt’s down to earth viewpoint” in relationship to her work *Sun Tunnels*, in contrast to Smithson egotistical *Spiral Jetty*.¹³ Wagner talks about the perspective that Holt achieves in relationship to the natural elements:

“It intends I think to being an immensity of a surrounding into a place that can be seen with human eyes from an ordinary human height so that a viewer can take its measure. Sunlight and moonlight and starlight are focused by an apparatus just big enough to do that work at a daunting scale to bring them into a room of sorts, a porous space made by the cement circle on the sand and the four circles squaring it. They two are locaters. Immensity is not out there when we stand in the tunnels or on the cement. It is here. We are inside something big enough but also open enough, to contain it.”

¹³ *Measures of Distance: Space and Sign in the Work of Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson*, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Rraj8tOKSY>.

I appreciate how Wagner spoke about the transformative aspects of Holts work with concrete and natural elements in relationship to our existence as humans on this earth.

“could the world be located by or through a set of concrete devices? If the answer is yes, than we would be located too, pinned down at long last. [...] Maybe then we could truly, finally, counter the view from nowhere, which has been so much to our cost the human view the human error. Holt was a down to earth thinker but her ambition was not”

I look to Holt’s work as a leader in shaping the movement of using the land to question and understand further (fig. 23).



Figure 23: Nancy Holt, *Sun Tunnels*, 1973–76. Great Basin Desert, Utah.

The unexpected relationship to time within the pool became evident with the changing sun, which altered the shadow on the ground, visible from above the courtyard like a sundial. Sweet time was shared within, momentarily obscuring the hurry that is visible from bodies moving quickly between buildings - the collective group of people held within the edges of the pool share collective time together - by choice - or rather selection. The objects inside, such as bats and dauber’s nests, invite invested observational time, manifesting a determination to suspend time and allow the energy to be still from within. This is like how I spend hours with a snorkel on my head to gain suspended access to the below, to watch the interactions of the ocean floor.



Figure 24: Sophia Hatzikos, *A Single Pool, A Pair of Bats, a Triad of Daubers Nests*, 2023, detail

WATER

My relationship with water was cemented when I learned that swimming could act as a thermometer for problem solving what medical professionals didn't have answers to. I found solace in the water's feedback. It became a reliable indicator of my health, regulating the inexplicable swelling of my eyes. The interdependence between being submerged in water and my sensory perception between the ages of 11-16 years where I did not consistently have vision made me learn to compensate with senses that had greater consistency.

*"The nostalgia relationship to memory and place encourages a profound spatial-temporal ambiguity, which guided through by the body's encounter with loss and sorrow."*¹⁴

- Dylan Trigg

¹⁴ Dylan Trigg, *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny*, Series in Continental Thought 41 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012). P. 193

Whether skating across frozen blue pools at the Tyson Research Center or swimming with a snorkel in Malaki, Greece, engaging with water across landscape is central to my artistic research. In my practice, water is a conduit for conversation about the relationship between humans and the natural world. My thesis installation, *Absence*, features a monumental ceramic installation comprising of a 141 relief tiles strategically arranged in an installation to evoke the sensation of being submerged in water (fig. 26). The tiles are a symbol of waterproofing and they construct an environment that attempts to contain.



Figure 25: Sophia Hatzikos, *Absence*, 2024.

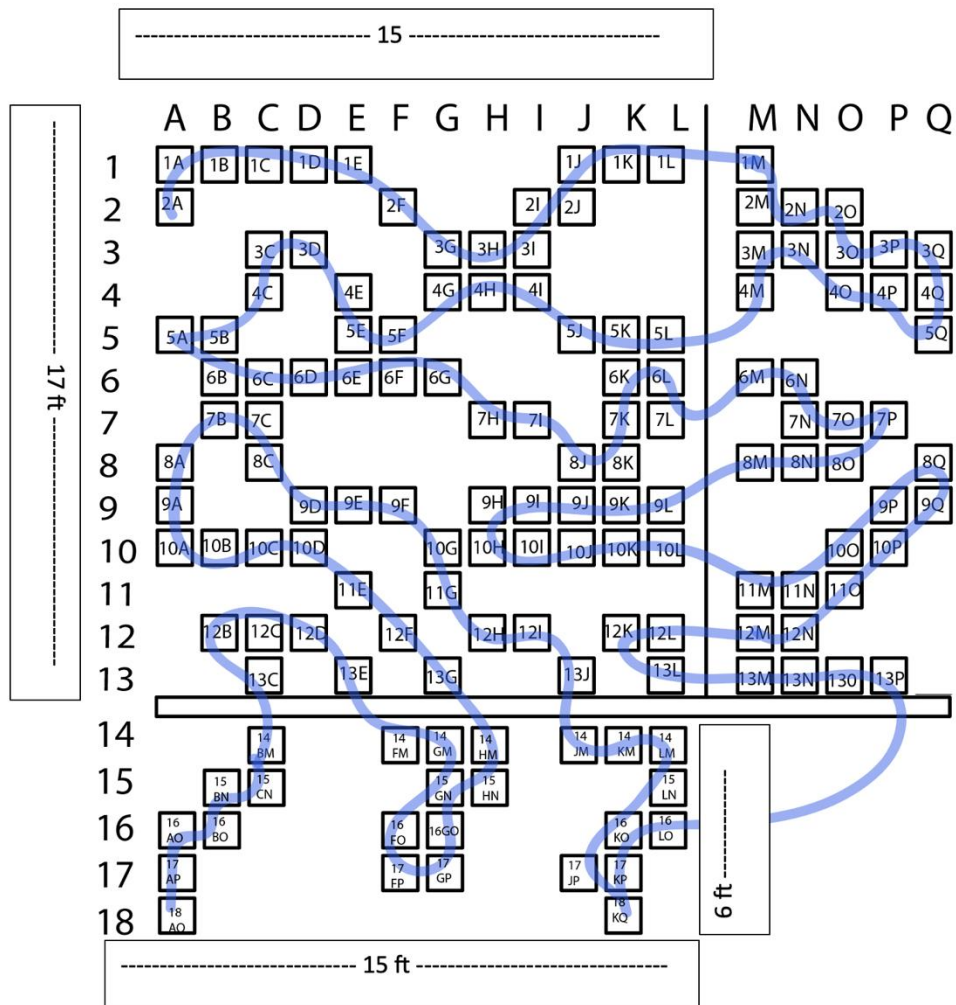


Figure 26: Sophia Hatzikos, *Absence*, Installation Layout, 2024.

While living in Betty's home in Malaki, I had access to the sea right outside my front door. This ease disappeared when I returned to St. Louis. There is something undeniable about the vastness of water that allows for me to feel grounded, located. From a distance I longed for the sensation of my jaw clenched and feet undulating to maintain the positioning of my body through the waves. In the pool I returned to swim in, looking underwater with a snorkel was incomparable to the natural elements of the sea. It was a loss that I felt deeply. The lack of salty sea water promoted me to inquire how I could address the loss and grieve.



Figure 27: Hatzikos, *Absence*, 2024, detail.

I view *Absence* as a container – my attempt at containing the uncontainable feeling of being in water. My body’s relationship with the sea is not linear. I lean in and listen. The waves, dependent on the directionality of the wind, jostle my body. When I swim in the sea there is an impossibility of encountering its entirety. The encounter of my body with the sea is present in the line throughout the installation. The line evokes a sense of motion I wanted to preserve, the fleeting motion of one’s wake in water.

To accomplish this interconnected line throughout the work, I laid the tiles out on tabletops and cut out paper to trace the motion I was imagining. However real, the impact of my body on the vast sea is nominal. This momentary disappearing mark from real space is preserved and remembered through a line of semi-gloss majolica glaze against a blue underglaze that lines up across a grid consisting of negative space. The variation in this line, how blue or white it may

appear, is dependent upon the thickness of glaze application. This is reminiscent of how the force of one's body in the water and its visibility can be based off the strength of a kick or swing of an arm against the water's surface tension.



Figure 28: Sophia Hatzikos, process image, 2024.

The way I planned and created the line across the work made me think of Matisse's *Swimming Pool*. Karl Buchberg, in a video produced by MoMA, talks about Matisse coming to visit and conserving *The Swimming Pool*: “In 1952 he had taken a short trip with one of his assistants to a favorite pool in the south of France to see divers and it was so hot and so sunny he said “I’m going to die of the heat, let’s go home. I’ll make my own swimming pool myself.” He cut blue painted paper into forms of swimmer, divers, and sea creatures.”¹⁵ The gestural lines of Matisse’s *Swimming*

¹⁵ Henri Matisse: *Conserving “The Swimming Pool,”* 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rke7RmxwfY>.

Pool and his process of going somewhere and returning with inspiration and symbolism is relevant to the process of *Absence* (fig. 29).



Figure 29: Henri Matisse, *The Swimming Pool*, Later summer 1952.

I was intentional about my time in Greece this summer, unlike other visits, that are often consumed with visiting family. I paid attention to how I felt in the landscape alone. I cemented that I have an emotional relationship to the sea. It is a home of mine that carries an ancestral lineage of being in proximation with blue. The sea and sky. Swimming daily was the way that I understood the landscape best.

The four differentiated relief patterns I created speak to what the memory of embodied experience in the sea in Malaki felt like. The quirky yet conceptually functional relief patterns that amalgamate in the installation's density support the narrative of preserving the feeling beyond the gesture of the body's visibility. Rather, the relief tiles are abstract symbolic representations of sensorial memory of physical experience. I took inspiration from the lineage of Greek relief ceramics, the tiles adorning Betty's home, and spaces I know that have the ability to hold water such as sinks, bathrooms, and pools.

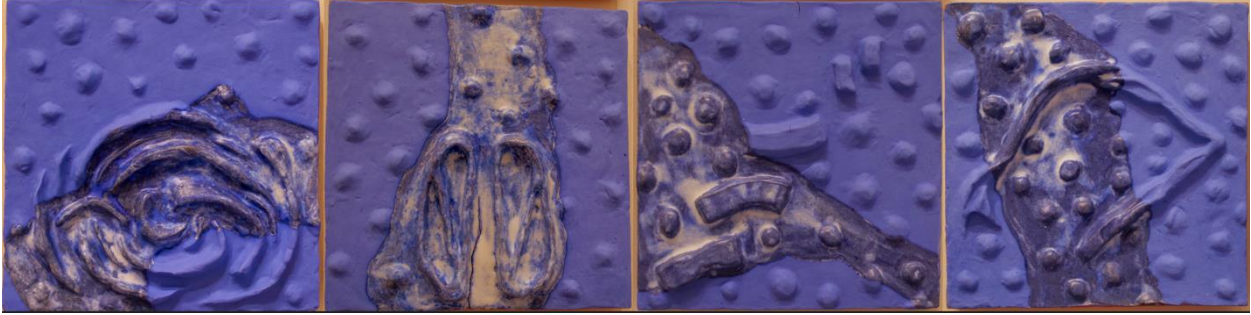


Figure 30: Hatzikos, *Absence*, 2024, detail.

To create the differentiating relief tiles I relied on a series of molds. These molds, which were developed with support from artist Dryden Wells, are plaster hydraulic press molds. The magic of these molds is that you can release them as fast as you can work (fig. 32).



Figure 31: Sophia Hatzikos, process image, hydraulic press molds.

Making *Absence* evolved into a community endeavor, driven by the transformative capacity of the mold-making technique. I reached out to my community and assembled a willing team. Each step unfolded systematically: crafting the initial tiles to be cast, pressing the clay into the molds, releasing them with an air compressor, drying them on cement board, bisque-firing, glazing, firing again, adding epoxy and hardware, and finally installing them. This process relied heavily on the support of the team. I am overwhelmed by the power of community and the power of collective appreciation an ice cream sandwich can muster. This support made the installation achievable on a large scale (fig. 34).

Reflecting on the experience of working with the team I think about being held by water as a support system. The sensation of water lifting you up. I am aware of waters power and utility, prompting me to explore the systems that it inhabits.



Figure 32: Sophia Hatzikos: Process image of tiles being produced, pictured left to right Carmen Azevedo, Cora Trout, Charlotte Fleming.

I recognize those not pictured who contributed their time and energy to make this project possible: Eva Agüero, Elliott Andrew, Jean Brownell, Lynn Brownell, Audeep Cariens, Brooke Cowan, Nitzia Davalos - Reyes, Maddie East, Nicole Farnsley, Jordan Geiger, Mad Green, Hope Hewett, Macy Iyer, Jungsoo Kim, Heley Levin, Sebastian Llovera, Alex Mclaughlin, Zack Michaliska, Tai Moore, Mulan Mu, Mik Patrik, Haley Precopio, Robin Pyo, Carmen Ribaudó, Helen Rossmiller, Beecher Sanderson, Emily Sheehan, Izzy Silver, Lynne Smith, Carolyn Tang, Hazel Tao, Gia Thomas, Ashley Valazquez, Emma Wang, and Ray Yanagita.

TO END

Gathering natural materials to press with my cousin Carol growing up sparked a vibrant dialogue between us. We grappled with questions of permission and ownership as we navigated the neighborhood blocks. Should we pluck the perfect petal from someone's garden? What was our relationship to that neighbor if we were caught in the act? What did it mean to remove the natural – would it replenish? These questions of where to push – where to pull – what to remember and what to reengage with to understand arise throughout my practice.

“Places have influenced my life as much as perhaps more than people. I fall for (or into) places faster and less conditionally than I do for people. I can drive through a landscape and vividly picture myself in that disintegrating mining cabin, the saltwater farm, that porched house in the barrio. (my taste runs to humble dwellings nestled in cozy spaces or vulnerable in vast spaces.) I can walk through a neighborhood and picture interiors, unseen backyards. I can feel kinesthetically how it would be to hike for hours through a vast “empty” landscape that I’m dashing though in a car – the underfoot textures, the rising dust, the way muscles tighten on a hill, the rhythms of walking, the feeling of sun or must on the back of my neck”¹⁶

- Lucy Lippard

¹⁶ Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, 1997. p 4

In my work, I explore the connection to all spaces to which I have sensorial connection, the longing to be where I am not, and the adjustment and loss I experience upon leaving a landscape. This transition, the mourning, and the drive it develops to create the work are central to my practice. I can parallel this sense of loss to the imminent climate change, questioning if a return to that landscape will ever be the same, especially in spaces at the nexus of water and land, where human intervention makes the future even less predictable.

My relationship with Malaki was forged through swimming in the sea, and I plan to return this July despite knowing that conditions will be different due to a recent storm that flooded the shoreline and rendered Betty's home unlivable. Despite these changes, I intend to camp and use outdoor facilities, anticipating that the relationship with the landscape will remain similar while perhaps offering new perspectives. While my time there will be shorter than before, I view the return as crucial to my research and continued understanding of my practice, providing an opportunity to delve deeper into my longing for elsewhere and to witness how the landscape has evolved. I wonder how the return, or the ability to return, will augment my process – the urgency to recreate and preserve memories of being elsewhere. Will the longing persist even after departure? Longing and loss may fade with time, but the ability to visually translate them evolves into a more abstract condition, as I have experienced this past year.

This connection between the loss of remembered experience and the increasing distance that hinders remembrance is palpable. At Tyson, a site closer in proximity but not frequented daily like Malaki, I am excited about continuing my research and activating the landscape for community and cultural collaboration. Co-curating a bunker and hosting workshops on ecology and art in the near future fills me with curiosity about how sharing the landscape with others will broaden my understanding. Will it alter my initial interests or findings? Will it feel rewarding to share the space with others? I am intrigued by the concealment and protection of a site, but also by the act of sharing it outwardly, wondering how that will evoke, solve, and reshape my

understanding. The generosity of this project excites me, and I look forward to seeing what it will become.

I bring up the idea of return and continued conversations with both Tyson and Malaki because I do not see any landscape I work with as being complete. Instead, it is an ongoing interaction, a conversation of the moment that I embrace. Even if the return is prolonged or not immediate due to distance, lack of accessibility, or time constraints, I anticipate how my relationship with these landscapes will evolve over the duration of my practice. Will they expand, or will I be drawn to working with the same places again and again, like Roni Horn's captivating interest in Iceland, a place she has frequented more times than she can count.¹⁷ I ask myself these questions with the anticipation that time will provide answers, acknowledging and finding patterns, and connecting one experience to another, taking gestures and tools from one landscape to the next.

¹⁷ Horn, *Weather Reports You*, p 17.

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