

Zugunruhe
(migratory restlessness)

By:

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***Zugunruhe* (migratory restlessness)**

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Abstract

Zugunruhe is a German word for migratory restlessness used in ornithology that I found applicable to the ideas I am investigating through printmaking and textile-based techniques. In my art I am exploring landscapes both physical and mental, exterior and interior. I am looking at the landscape through the lens of memory. Throughout this text, I discuss how different methods of traveling through a landscape influence our perceptions of it, the ways interior landscapes can shift our focus to memories, the comfort gained from those memories, and the way historical shifts in the views of wilderness have brought us to the understanding of the world that we have today. All of these ideas contributed to the work I created for my thesis exhibition.

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Introduction

We experience places differently based on how we travel through them. Walking through a landscape is very different from driving through a place—or flying above a place. When we go to new places, we experience both the place and whatever is going on in our heads. Due to my background in biology, I also often consider how we relate to the other living things—both plants and animals—we encounter. In my art I am exploring landscapes both physical and mental, exterior and interior. I am looking at the landscape through the lens of memory. Printmaking with its layers, easy repeatability, and variety of processes is ideal for the ideas I am exploring.

Zugunruhe

The title of my thesis comes from ornithology. Zugunruhe is a German word co-opted for use in ornithology in 1930 by Wagner and means migratory restlessness.¹ Birds are one of the easiest animals to spot; I find them very relatable and useful as a filter through which to better understand human experience. Although there are few birds in my thesis work, the term Zugunruhe fit well with my emphasis on travel and place. Many of my ideas are the result of the numerous road trips I have taken since coming to Kansas. Lawrence is centrally located between Dallas, Texas, Denver, Colorado, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. All of these places are inhabited by family and friends and I have traveled to each of them several times while living in Kansas. Lawrence—and Kansas in general—has a “location on the central flyway” of the continent that “ensures that huge numbers of migratory birds occur during the spring and fall migration.”² On

¹ Gwinner, Eberhard, and Dieter Czeschlik. “On the Significance of Spring Migratory Restlessness in Caged Birds.” *Oikos*, vol. 30, no. 2, Oct. 1978, pp. 364–372., doi:10.2307/3543485.

² Gress, Bob, and Pete Janzen. *The Guide to Kansas Birds and Birding Hot Spots*. University Press of Kansas, 2008. p. 8.

these road trips I “migrate” like the birds of Kansas. I also see the birds migrating if I am traveling at the right time of year.

It is well known that “Twice a year, many species of diurnal songbirds migrate at night several thousands of kilometres to reach their wintering grounds in late autumn and breeding grounds in late spring.”³ The earliest recordings of this behavior date to the beginning of the nineteenth century when Ekström wrote, “I maintained a number of migratory birds in cages where they wanted for neither food nor water. In spite of this, I observed that they became extraordinarily restless in their cages around the time they normally migrate.”⁴ Many studies since then have explored these behaviors with birds held in captivity to test how restless they get and to investigate what factors contribute to the timing of *Zugunruhe*. The restlessness of the birds has been very relatable in the past year. The road trips I would normally have taken were put on hold because of travel restrictions. I am also feeling restless about what is next for me after graduate school. I have felt stuck like those birds in the studies and am ready to—figuratively (and maybe literally)—fly on to the next place.

From Above

Flying

As we observe the world from above, the landscape constantly changes beneath us. We see the patterns of agricultural fields, the rivers that meander across the land and the roads that slice through it. We see the lakes that reflect the sky back to us, forests to get lost in, plains to

³ Rani, Sangeeta, et al. “A Circadian Clock Regulates Migratory Restlessness in Blackheaded Bunting, *Emberiza Melanocephala*.” *Current Science*, vol. 91, no. 8, 25 Oct. 2006, pp. 1093–1096.

⁴ Gwinner, Eberhard, and Dieter Czeschlik. “On the Significance of Spring Migratory Restlessness in Caged Birds.” *Oikos*, vol. 30, no. 2, Oct. 1978, pp. 364–372., doi:10.2307/3543485.

gaze across, and sublime geological features of mountains and canyons made small. We also see the way humans have used the land for our benefit such as agricultural fields, and the highways that connect the cities and towns to which we travel.

The bird's eye view has often become one of the first ways we experience a new place. Flying into an airport allows us the chance to look out the window and see from above the landscape we are about to enter. We see it all at once and as we embark on our trip, we begin to see the details of the place by driving and walking through it. The view from the plane window becomes our first impression of a place.

Maps

Maps afford us a different and usually rather pared down bird's eye view of a landscape. Maps are such an important method of orienting oneself and relating places to each other. Although maps have been around since at least 600 B.C., the advent of GPS and satellite imagery have fundamentally changed how we interact with the world.⁵ Google Earth has allowed us to look long and hard at the earth from above, freezing what we see from the plane window. "We are growing increasingly accustomed to what used to be called the God's Eye view" says Hito Steyerl in her text on vertical perspective.⁶ "The growing importance of aerial views: overviews, Google Map views, satellite views" and the like is the result of the "new technologies of surveillance, tracking, and targeting."⁷ Many sophisticated tools are involved behind the scenes, but less imagination is needed to mentally translate a satellite image into the spot one is standing on than to translate the drawn lines of a map into a physical place. This translation is

⁵ Thompson, Clive. "From Ptolemy to GPS, the Brief History of Maps." *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 1 July 2017, www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/brief-history-maps-180963685/?page=3.

⁶ Steyerl, Hito. "In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective." *e-flux*, vol. 24, April 2011. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/24/67860/in-free-fall-a-thought-experiment-on-vertical-perspective/>. Accessed 05 December 2019.

⁷ *Ibid.*

made even easier thanks to street views. Google has even started photographically mapping trails, allowing people to “walk” a trail. The digital maps we now so heavily rely on fit in our hands but have the range to show us the entire world or a specific street in a specific town.

My pieces centered on maps are based on satellite imagery. The impetus for these works were the six road trips I took from Lawrence, KS to Dallas, TX and back in 2019. I traveled the same route twelve times throughout that year and saw the variations based on time of day and

season, and whether I traveled north to south or south to north. One of the most prominent landmarks on that drive is the Red River. For me it symbolizes either leaving my home or returning to it. I thought that any “map” I made needed to include the Red River. I centered that first “map”

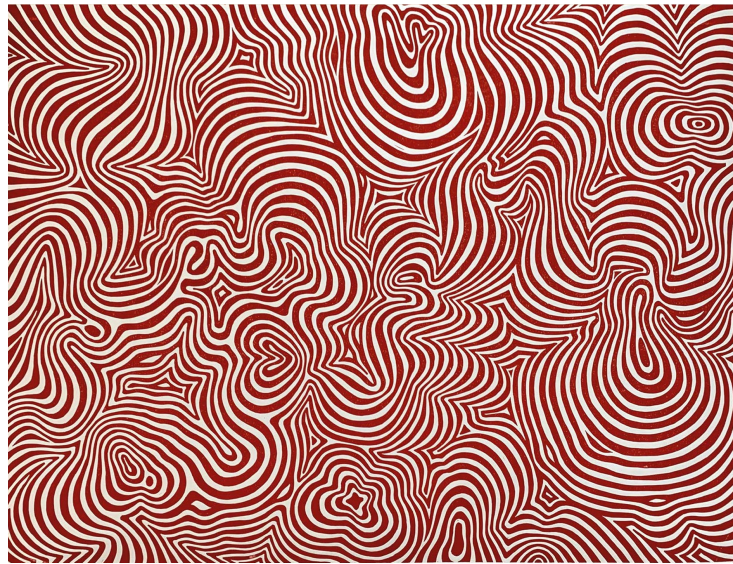


Figure 1: *Red River, Texas, 26” x 20,”* relief print, 2020.

on the Red River and picked out other landmarks such as lakes and towns to work from. I emphasized the landmarks so much with line that they became hidden in a mass of swirls. *Red River, TX* (Figure 1) and the other pieces in this series reference topography through the use of landmarks and line but are far from topographical. I chose to use relief printing because it is such a physical process. Carving out the lines is meditative and is like digging in to the landscape I am representing. The blocks themselves have a topography and the paper used to print is embossed with that topography. These pieces are about specific places that stick out to me in my memory. Although these works are from above, I have been down in these places and studied the details. Knowing a place from above and recognizing the landmarks is an important act of orienting

oneself in the world and understanding how different places relate to each other, but knowing a place because you have driven or hiked through it allows for a different and deeper understanding.

Driving

When driving, the road and the land around it turn into a liminal space; the landscape is what we encounter while we are trying to get from one place to another. In a car, the landscape often becomes the in-between, not the destination. While the driver has to pay attention to the road, for the passengers, “The world could be traversed with indifference, without even looking out the window.”⁸ Although this statement was made with regard to trains, it easily applies to the passengers of cars. The car is a bubble that separates us from the environment. This bubble limits our engagement with the landscape and our sensory experience of it is limited to sight. We cover



Figure 2: *Sunflowers (The Arboretum with Papa)*, 30” x 22,” photolithograph, 2019.

vast amounts of landscape without really being a part of it. We coast across the surface like the birds seen so stark against the sky, but we do not dive deeper. There is a certain solidarity I feel with the birds that are migrating as I too am traveling.

⁸ Solnit, Rebecca. *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West*. Penguin Books, 2004. p. 72.

Our field of vision is altered by car windows. From the driver's seat, looking through the windshield provides a sweeping view of the land and the road and the sky. Out of the passenger window, the sky is limited, but the road is also minimal; the focus is on the land past the edge of the road. I find the contrast between the sky of the windshield and the sky of the passenger window striking. The driver's side window has more sky, but also more road; there is less of a hierarchy out the driver's window. In the rearview and side-view mirrors, we see the road receding behind us and our fellow travelers. We see in front of us, beside us, and behind us separately and simultaneously. Driving is the only time we perceive the landscape this way.



Figure 3: Sunflowers (*The Arboretum with Papa*), detail.

During my many road trips, things within the landscape reminded me of other places. I would also contemplate the memories held by the places to which I was traveling. These ideas led me to create pieces from the perspective of the car window. Each image is taken directly



Figure 4: *145 to Snowmass*, 25" x 15," photolithograph and screenprint, 2020.

through the window itself and then modified to include the thoughts and memories that are triggered by the passing landscape. Although the car

window pieces did not appear in my thesis exhibition, they were a vital jumping off point for much of the work that was shown.

Walking

Walking removes the bubble provided by a car. As Rebecca Solnit states, “Walking shares with making and working that crucial element of engagement of the body and the mind with the world, of knowing the world through the body and the body through the world.”⁹ While walking, all our senses are engaged. On a walk we can take the time to see what is there; we do not have to limit ourselves to a glimpse. We can study a vista or a single flower for as long or as briefly as we want and are more likely to encounter the creatures that inhabit it. The fine details that are lost to us if we speed through the landscape are so satisfying to experience on a walk.

Walking through a landscape clearly shows us that the landscape is always changing. Plants grow, animals bioturbate the soils, and the light changes from day to day. Different plants and animals appear as the seasons change. Even if we walk the same path every day, we can see something new. The repetition of walking the same path allows the differences from day to day to stand out. Conversely, walking in a new landscape allows us to see the differences between it and our home environment. Walking allows for internal introspection prompted by what we see and invites more careful consideration of our environment.

The integration of all the senses one experiences while walking combined with the ability to change pace to whatever feels best at that moment is unparalleled. As John Muir so succinctly stated, “In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.”¹⁰

⁹ Solnit, Rebecca. *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. Penguin Books, 2001. p. 29.

¹⁰ Muir, John. “Chapter 9 Mormon Lilies.” *Steep Trails*. 1918.



Figure 5: *Ripples*, 85.25" x 85.25," assembled photolithographs and relief prints, 2021.

Landscape Quilts

When I remember my own hikes and experiences walking through various landscapes, I remember specific details. I have more memories of specific things along walks and hikes than of grand vistas. I wanted to create pieces that focused on the way my memories of places intermingle with each other in my head. When I visit a place, I do not just see what is in front of me; the thoughts and memories of other people and places are sparked by what I am currently

seeing. In that way, places that are physically far apart become intermingled in the minds of those that visit them. Barry Lopez had similar thoughts while traveling through a tundra:

“These small habitats, like the larger landscapes, merge imperceptibly with each other. Another remembered landscape makes this one seem familiar... But no country, finally, is just like another. The generalities are abstractions. And the lines on our topographic maps reveal not only the scale at which we are discerning, but our tolerance for discrepancies in nature.”¹¹

To represent these ideas, I decided to create pieces made up of details and textures from many of the places that are important to me. I used images from the places represented in the relief prints. Hiking through places and later reflecting on those places brings me comfort, so I decided to use quilt structures to imply the comfort received from a blanket. When picking images to use as “quilt squares” I focused on images that had a dominant color or a texture that could read as fabric. I also modified many of the images to abstract them and create more of a pattern than a traditional landscape or nature photograph. When determining layouts, I decided to intermingle images from different places because that felt truer to the way memories live in my head. The landscape quilts are meant to bring comfort. I tried to balance the overall effect of each piece with the details the viewer notices when looking closer. Just as there is interest in looking at the vast panorama of a landscape, the landscape quilts ask to be taken in as a whole, while also rewarding the viewer for taking a closer look. Each square is connected to the others with the map-based relief prints. In these pieces, I am playing with ideas of memory, comfort, and the

¹¹ Lopez, Barry Holstun. *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in Northern Landscape*. Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, 2006. p. 259.

interconnectedness of different places. The large pieces are made up of many smaller pieces to mirror how so many different entities make up a landscape. The use of radial symmetry creates a sense of movement in the pieces and gives the viewer an overall pattern to latch on to. Radial symmetry is found frequently in nature and creates balance

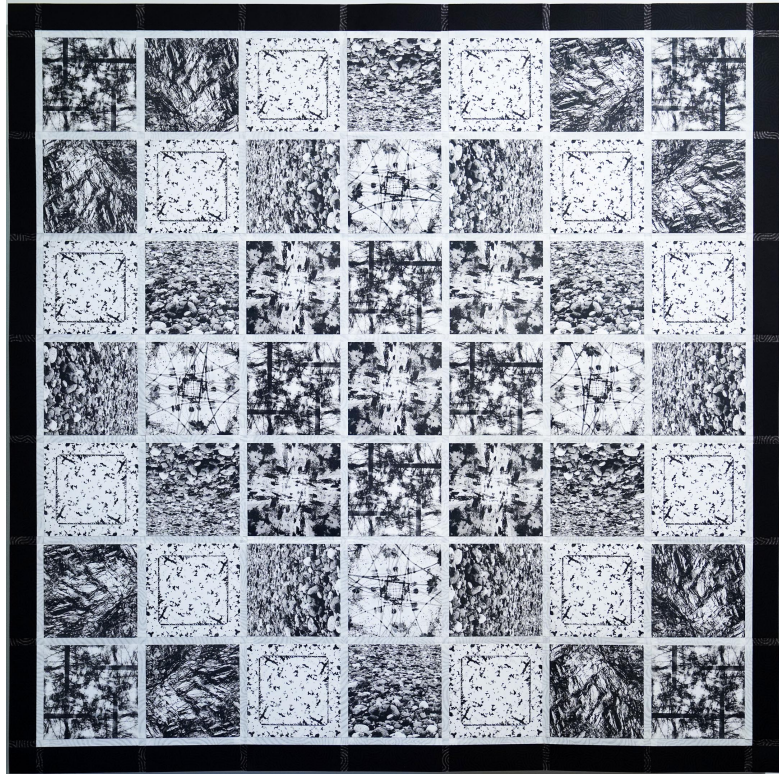


Figure 6: *Blurred Memories*, 57” x 57,” assembled photolithographs and relief prints, 2021.

that allows the works to feel complete. This symmetry also allows the disparate imagery of the “quilt squares” to become united; to make something grander than the parts that make up the whole. The sense of movement created by the symmetry reminds me of staring at the bottom of the pool while swimming. I get great solace from swimming and feel that the water envelops me just as a quilt would. Although the landscape quilts look nothing like the bottom of the pool, the effect is still present.

Interiors

I had been thinking about many of the aforementioned ideas since before the pandemic, but the pandemic pulled them into focus and further developed them. The inability to travel to places both new and old brought out stronger feelings of longing and sadness for the places I

have been and would still like to go to. The uncertainty for the future and the fear created by changing pandemic protocols increased my desire to explore natural places. While I was able to explore my immediate surroundings more thoroughly than I previously had, my primary landscape for several months was my apartment. Since we were discouraged from even working in the studio, my apartment became not only my home and place to relax, but also my art studio, classroom, church, gym, social scene, and basically everything that had previously had separate spaces. Instead of traveling to other locations for things, our worlds shrunk to the size of our homes. I did not venture out to go other places, but to see what winding path I could take to get back to my front door.

During the pandemic, our homes have become—even more than they already were—a refuge from the outside world. Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* says, “if I were asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace.”¹² Our houses give us space to continue on; to be able to say, “I will be an inhabitant of the world, in spite of the world.”¹³ Bachelard’s words feel even more poignant during this time. The house gives us a safe haven from which to observe. The outside world infiltrates through our technological devices, but there still remains a disconnect. A house is a place that grants us control, or at least the illusion of control.

Throughout the last year, we all became far more familiar with the objects that fill our spaces. Just as hiking through one landscape can remind me of another, the objects in my home remind me of other people and places. It felt important to make pieces that reflected this shift to interior spaces. Although I am grateful for my apartment, it could feel limiting. These pieces reflect the melancholy of being stuck inside; it is one thing to choose to spend one’s time inside,

¹² Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Penguin Books, 2014. p. 28.

¹³ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Penguin Books, 2014. p. 67.

but quite another to feel obligated and forced inside, even knowing it is for the best. I have felt vulnerable during this time and showing interiors of my personal living space feels even more vulnerable, but it seemed necessary.

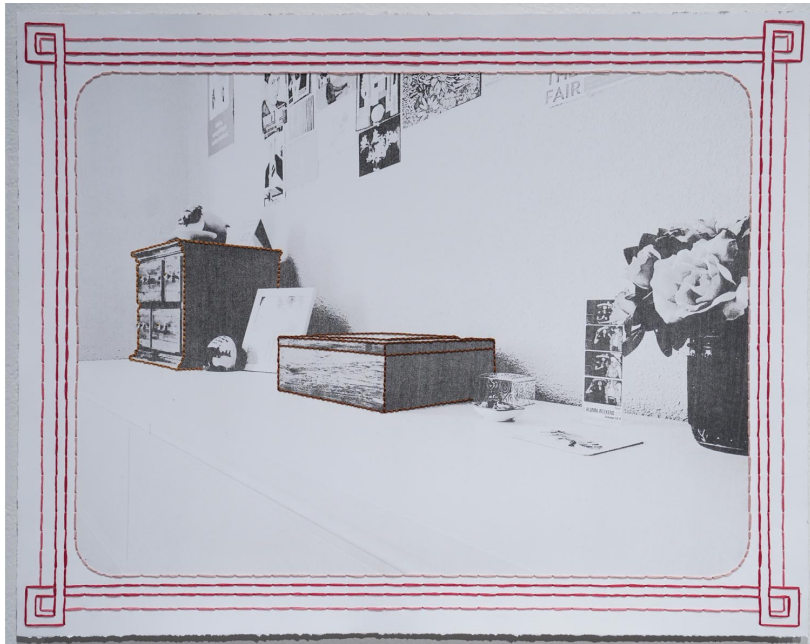


Figure 7: *Made with Care*, 21" x 16.5," 3-color photolithograph, hand embroidered 2021.

Rendering the interiors in black and white emphasizes that as an interior space becomes more and more familiar, we can become blind to it. Unlike the outside world, the interior does not hold new surprises each day; the interior of a house is only changed by those that inhabit

it. The interior spaces represented also include objects that remind me of other people. My family likes to make things for each other, so my apartment is full of handmade objects. These objects remind me of the family members who made the objects. Unlike many other aspects of my apartment, I did not become blind to these objects over time and they made me feel less alone during such an isolating period. Embroidering around the objects makes them stand out in the images just as they do to me in my apartment. These objects hold more weight because of how connected they are to other people, so they deserved to be emphasized in these interiors. Although the objects and interiors are specific to me, the images are universal enough for the viewer to project their own story upon the work. The rounded corners and embroidered borders

reference old photographs and the decorative borders that often accompanied them. Formatting the prints in this way added to the sense of nostalgia and remembering that the pieces induce.

Remembering/Forgetting

The pandemic offered more time to reflect and wade through memories; if you cannot visit places, you can think about and remember the experiences of previous visits. With the gradient prints I am thinking about how one remembers and starts to forget. The pieces are also



Figure 8: *Stopping on the Trail*, 22" x 28," 22-color photolithograph, hand embroidered 2021.

about our inability to fully capture places in our memory. When visiting a place, “Whatever evaluation we finally make of a stretch of land, no matter how profound or accurate, we will find it inadequate.”¹⁴ Even in a well-known landscape, “The land retains an identity of its own, still deeper and more subtle than we can know.”¹⁵ The color drains out of the pieces as though the memory is fading. It takes the viewer time to register what is

¹⁴ Lopez, Barry Holstun. *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in Northern Landscape*. Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, 2006. p. 228.

¹⁵ Lopez, Barry Holstun. *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in Northern Landscape*. Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, 2006. p. 228.

being seen because of the orientation of the landscapes with a vertical horizon line. This mimics how it takes time to recall a memory long past. There is a sense of longing for these places and a sense of nostalgia. The use of rounded corners and decorative borders again references the formatting of old photographs. The embroidery acts as the threads leading to and enmeshing the memory. Bitmapping the images and then printing them via photolithography creates a more textured, dimensional graininess that makes the pieces feel like old photographs. Although the reference photos were processed in Photoshop to convert them into CMYK layers, they were not altered in it. The only alterations were those of color and were made through the photolithographic printing process.

In *The Beginning of Forgetting* (Figure 9), a subtle red line two-thirds of the way up the piece gives the viewer the sense that this memory is beginning to fade. The grass in the lower right is the only part of the image that is not a reflection and grounds the viewer in a piece that is



Figure 9: *The Beginning of Forgetting*, 34.5" x 26," 7-color photolithograph, hand embroidered, 2021.

disorienting. The reflections in these pieces create additional confusion and disorientation for the viewer, increasing the time it takes to understand what is being seen, just as a memory takes time to form. As Bachelard

says, “Dreams, thoughts and memories weave a single fabric” and these pieces are the dreams of the places in the memories so often thought of.¹⁶ When I remember these places, I remember feelings: the sense of peace, and wonder, and also a bit of fear of the power of the wilderness. I remember the hikes—especially those repeated again and again—in a fair amount of detail. I remember these things and want to relive them, but cannot because, “Memory—what a strange thing it is—does not record concrete duration... We are unable to relive duration that has been destroyed. We can only think of it, in the line of an abstract time that is deprived of all thickness.”¹⁷ The lack of duration in memories is probably for the best, as during stressful times, one may be tempted to take full refuge in the memories of better times.

Stones and Rocks

I started making what I consider worry stones out of fabric I had printed with relief blocks as a way to keep my hands busy and relieve stress while being barred from the printmaking studio and the pool due to stay-at-home orders. I worked intuitively, thinking mostly about the tactility of the objects and the textures the different stitches would have. I embroidered along the printed lines, my needle following the path like my feet would have on a trail. The shapes are not necessarily stone-like and calling them worry stones



Figure 10: *Gold Stone*, 3.25" x 4.5" x 1.5," relief print, embroidery, 2020.

¹⁶ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Penguin Books, 2014. p. 193.

¹⁷ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Penguin Books, 2014. p. 31.

somewhat belies these objects' appearance, however they are meant to be used as a worry stone; to be objects of comfort. I have long been interested in cairns: the stacked rocks that mark the trails in areas of sparse vegetation. The cairns I have encountered led me safely along the trail; making the fabric worry stones helped guide me through the uncertainty of the beginning of the



Figure 11: *The Biggest Worry*, 10" x 12" x 11," relief print, hand embroidered, 2020.

pandemic. The fabric and embroidery also allude to domestic "landscape" I found myself stuck in. *The Biggest Worry* (Figure 11) is a "worry stone" large enough to be embraced rather than manipulated by hands and illustrates how much strain we have all been subjected to.

I decided that some actual stones should be introduced into my work and also wanted to physically represent the comfort I feel while being in the landscape. In my head I imagined pulling the land up over

me and nestling down inside it. A quilt seemed the best physical representation of this mental image. The patterns on *Rocky Shoreline (Lake Superior)* (Figure 12) were made using rubbings of rocks from the shore of Lake Superior. Standing on that shore in July was the first place I had truly felt happy and at peace in months. The various rock patterns on the fabric and colors of the fabric are meant to mimic the rocks that make up sections of the shore. Unlike in the landscape quilts, there is no overall pattern or symmetry in this fabric quilt. The back of the quilt is printed with a pattern that references ripples in water and represents Lake Superior itself. Water, and

swimming in the water, brings me at least as much, if not more comfort than being in a landscape. This quilt embodies both of those things. All the comfort and solace I and others find while inhabiting natural landscapes would not be possible if not for the shift in the way wilderness itself was viewed.



Figure 12: *Rocky Shoreline (Lake Superior)*, 60" x 84," screenprint, 2020.

The Frontier

The idea of the American frontier started with the establishment of English colonies at the beginning of the 1600s. Manifest Destiny, which is the belief that the United States was meant to settle the land from the Atlantic to Pacific, arose after the United States gained independence from England at the end of the 1700s and led to the continual expansion of settlers westward. During the settling of the frontier, “easterners and European immigrants, in moving to the wild unsettled lands...shed the trappings of civilization, rediscovered their primitive racial energies...reinfused themselves with a vigor, an independence, and a creativity...” that defined the “national character.”¹⁸ The frontier mentality was profoundly American and reframed the wilderness not as *useless*, but as a thing to be tamed and taken control of. As the lands filled with settlers, the frontier— “the quintessential location for experiencing what it meant to be an American”¹⁹—shrank and people became nostalgic for earlier times.

The end of the frontier was the harbinger for the idea of wilderness preservation. Since “the wild land had been so crucial in the making of the nation, then surely one must save its last remnants as monuments to the American past—and as an insurance policy to protect its future.”²⁰ National parks idealized the wilderness and further divorced humans from the idea that we are a part of nature. In establishing park boundaries, “the wilderness lost its savage image and became safe: a place more of reverie than of revulsion and fear.”²¹ Around the turn of the twentieth century, wilderness trips became popular with elite Americans who lived so separately from the wilderness and wanted an opportunity to play frontiersmen. However, “The myth of the

¹⁸ Cronon, William, ed., “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995, pp. 69-90.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

wilderness as “virgin” uninhabited land” proliferated by the parks is blasphemous when considering “the perspective of the Indians who had once called that land home.”²² Wilderness in America has not been “virgin” for thousands of years and our idea that wilderness is untouched is paradoxical, as is our idea that we are completely separate from nature. Humans are dependent on nature for our food and resources; we are a part of nature.

Visiting national and state parks to explore the great outdoors is still popular today. My own work is so much about being invested in nature and taking the time to enjoy and appreciate it. Without these shifts in perspective leading to the views towards wilderness that we now have, my work would not be what it is. Without the importance my parents placed on showing my sister and I the beautiful places of this country, I would not have many of the memories that I look back upon so fondly. I would not find the comfort I do when out in nature or continue to seek out experiences that increase my understanding of the natural world.

Conclusion

My work deals with memory through the lens of natural landscapes and the longing to be back in those places that bring such comfort. My work is tied inextricably to my memories of places I have traveled. We as humans are tied to the places we have inhabited, whether we were there for a week or many years. The use of various methods of printmaking and textile-based techniques allows me to create the work I feel compelled to make as a result of the ties I have to various places. Throughout this text, I have explored the ways different methods of traveling through a landscape influence our perceptions of it, the ways interior landscapes can shift our focus to memories, the comfort gained from those memories, and the way historical shifts in the

²² Ibid.

views of wilderness have brought us to the understanding of the world that we have today. Just as there are many facets that make up a place, there are many facets that contribute to the work I have created.

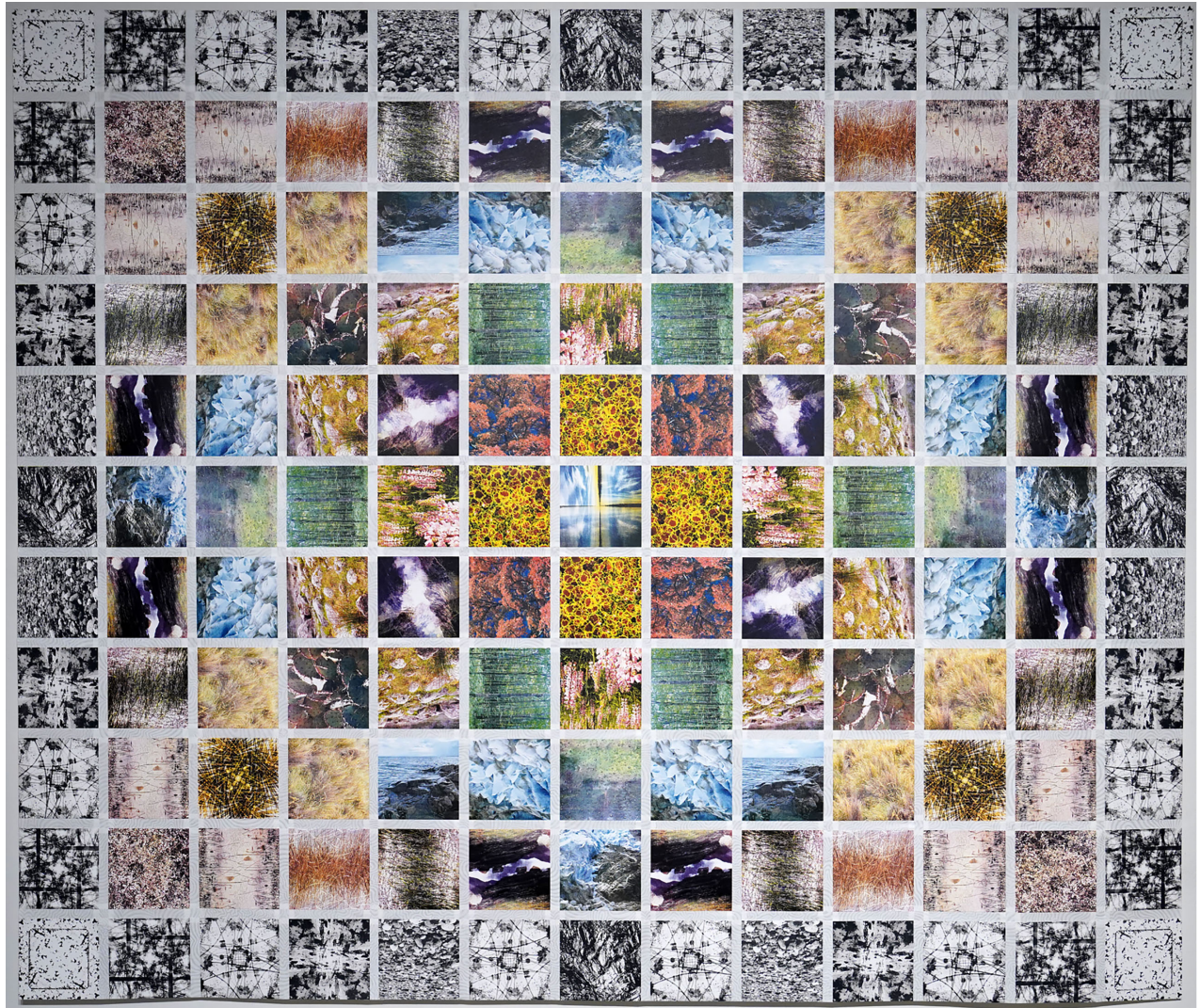


Figure 13: *Interconnected*, 100" x 85," assembled photolithographs and relief prints, 2021.

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