

MURMURATION

Variation III

Christa Bowden

Growing up in the American south, I have always felt a deep connection to home, place, and nature, and the way that these things intertwine like overgrown muscadine vines becoming part of an aged tree. I spent most of my time outdoors as a child, and have always felt the most at peace in nature. When I was a baby, my parents realized that when I cried, they only had to take me outside and I would stop crying. The connection of place and family are inextricably bound together in my work. When I am walking in the woods seeking my subjects, I can't help but think of my grandmother collecting native plant seeds and specimens for her garden, or my mother identifying which plants are edible and which must not be touched. It is these things that I have in mind as I gather my subjects like a collector. Often, I take these specimens from their existing place to isolate and photograph them with my flatbed scanner. By this method, I am able to visually evaluate these subjects and how they serve as metaphors and connecting my past to present, place to people.

Dymph de Wild

One day, at age eight, I was walking home from school and suddenly noticed I was being followed by an enormous crow. Unexpectedly the bird flew in closer, dove down and veered just over my head, almost touching my hair. When I arrived at the house, the crow was waiting for me on the roof of the garage. As soon as I opened the kitchen door, it spread its wings and aggressively tried to fly inside with me. A loud, hoarse scream escaped from the crow's throat that sounded like an old laughing witch. Then it flew off, fearless. Silence. I reached into the pocket of my coat and felt for my gelukspop-petje (small good luck doll). I had survived the attack.

Over the years, my interactions with crows have continued. When I was visiting the Netherlands in the summer of 2018, I came upon a field with hundreds of scarecrows intended to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the town of Oisterwijk. There was great thematic variety: Some were primitive, some more sophisticated, some looked human, and some were clownish, yet all together they seemed ominous and rather threatening. Since then, I have found myself building my own varieties of decoy creatures that not only protect me from crows but they can embody social and political commentary.



Rosemary Jesionowski

My work has long been about human relationships to place. How do these relationships define and sometimes change us? In the fall of 2018, I set out alone to travel across the United States on a three-month photographic road trip. I would capture the landscape on film and make albumen silver prints (a photographic process popular in the mid-late 19th century) along the way. I envisioned myself following the proverbial path of photographers like Timothy O'Sullivan with his darkroom on wheels and Eadweard Muybridge with his mammoth plate camera documenting Yosemite. I created a modern equivalent of O'Sullivan's portable darkroom- a custom built cabinet to fit perfectly in the hatchback of my Subaru, with compartments for chemistry, paper, and equipment. I outfitted myself with a monorail view camera and several lenses.

My route took me through sacred places that are personally and/or culturally significant. I drove from Rochester, NY, through the Badlands of South Dakota to my birthplace at the base of Mount St Helens. I meandered down the Pacific coast, dipped in to Yosemite and then headed inland over the Rockies to my childhood playground in Colorado. I sped through Texas to land in Louisiana, a place I called home for a bit. I photographed all of it.

As I drove, I spent a lot of time thinking about my place in the history of photography. While the medium has been much more accessible than say, painting, to women throughout its short history, this particular arena of photography has always been (and is still) vastly dominated by men. Perhaps this is because wandering out into the land takes a certain sense of adventure that girls so frequently are not encouraged to explore as children, or maybe it's the physical demands of carrying a camera (though I do know of several women who are working in the landscape with significantly larger cameras than the one I use). What does it mean to be a woman conquering the landscape? I certainly don't feel as though I have conquered it, more so, I feel reclaimed by the land and the places that are significant. I have a romantic relationship to place and landscape. Mount St Helens is my mother, Pikes Peak is my father, and the Gulf Coast is my lover.

This romance with the landscape is largely why I chose to print this body of work as albumen silver prints. They have an inherent romanticism to them. My images as albumen prints are tangible and yet fantastic. They represent some sort of reality, but it is certainly a skewed reality. The images are of both place and time, yet... they are timeless. One of the most beautiful aspects of an albumen print is its luminosity. This glowing quality comes from the fact that the image itself is suspended in egg white above the surface of the paper. Light passes through the albumen layer and bounces off of the paper, giving the image subtle backlighting. This is not lost on me as I am in the field, under my darkcloth, watching the light, thinking... about place, about time, about history.



"Once upon a time, when women were birds, there was the simple understanding that to sing at dawn and to sing at dusk was to heal the world through joy. The birds still remember what we have forgotten, that the world is meant to be celebrated." - Terry Tempest Williams, "When Women Were Birds"

COVER IMAGE: Christa Bowden, "Nest II," 2009

FIRST FOLD: Dymph de Wild, "Longing for Silence," detail, 2020

INTERIOR: Rosemary Jesionowski, "Colorado," 2020

Variation I (Nava Levenson, Martha Saunders, Rebecca Silberman)
Reception: January 29, 5:00 - 7:30 PM
January 22 - February 7, 2020

Variation II (Corinne Diop, Julia Merkel, Kristin Skees)
Reception: February 12, 5:00 - 7:30 PM
February 12 - February 28, 2020

Variation III (Christa Bowden, Dymph de Wild, Rosemary Jesionowski)
Reception: March 18, 5:00 - 7:30 PM
March 4 - April 24, 2020

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These exhibitions are supported in part by the College of Visual and Performing Arts and a grant from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

