

Heather Davis

Artist Statement

For my studio practice, I investigate social concerns through mixed-media and video installation. I focus on the phenomenon of melting identity into a surrounding experience – to find the place of transparency and centeredness that exists beyond a culturally defined and constrained self.

Recording light through video then releasing it again is, for me, like reliving the captured memory of an experience. I record phenomena of the natural world, and then project the videos into, onto and through objects, composing a meditative atmosphere that translates into a contemplative experience.

Fieldwork delightfully pulls me out of the routine of daily life, so that I am professionally compelled to embark on mini-adventures, collecting what I find in video. Usually, I explore an area first for its restorative elixir. Then, like an environmental biologist, I venture out into the field with my Cannon 60D in tow to find samples to bring back into the lab to study. When my camera and I are in place and the record button has been pressed, I still myself and observe the mechanism of the camera collect the experience. As I become engrossed in this perfect moment, an excitement builds that soon this beauty will be shared with the rest of the world.

Although I am not an anarchist or an ascetic, I feel an imbalance in traditional Western culture that favors the use of our surroundings for material resources over spiritual experiences. There is a long history of finding enlightenment and transcendence in the earth's wonders, a history that spans from ancient religious prophets seeking wisdom and truth in the wilderness, to the romantics escaping polluted cities during the industrial revolution, to contemporary cultural and political efforts to embrace and preserve nature as a spiritual resource. While food satiates hunger and water satiates thirst – two needs of the body that are felt with immediacy – restoration through immersion in nature is being shown through recent study to satiate anxiety, a quieter need that is less often met.

The work that I make acts as a conduit that leads me from the heart of culture, humanity, and environmental control to the wonders of environmental abandon. My work carries the intent of emphasizing value on the wild and the uncultivated in order to inspire reverence for wildness, and to preserve the absence of human control in areas of the natural world. I revere transcendental experiences and the places in which they occur, and I challenge and bring attention to how little value is assigned to them both. I hope to reveal this connection between the planet and humanity to others by presenting them with a sensory-rich experience, to strengthen the connection as it is weakened by the daily grind, and to remind viewers of its relevance.