

Meredith Foster Project Evaluation

PROJECT OUTCOME/PROCESS

The project *Elements/Evidence* evolved to include two separate but congruent bodies of work which explore the chemical components that comprise the human body, the landscape, and the significance these elements play in a larger capacity. As the work was researched it became clear that two distinct but conceptually analogous bodies of work should emerge. Including research, sourcing materials, planning, and execution both series combined were completed between summer 2012 and spring 2013. During this time different phases of project development were undertaken depending on time availability and season. Summer months were spent documenting surrounding landscapes of Champaign Urbana and collection of samples to be scrutinized. By Fall a series of this documentation was printed becoming a springboard for future work while winter was devoted primarily to the research of the periodic table and its role.

The first series, comprised of 7 digital drawings and a book, remains authentic to the initial project proposal through the research of the chemical makeup of living organisms, site, and the alteration of such through industry, urbanism, and agriculture. These drawings were organized according to categories which describe the chemical composition of subjects such as *The Human Body*, *Water*, *Air*, *Soil*, and *Urban/Industrial Output* through a synthesis of image and text centered on the iconographic periodic table and its diagrammatic powers of conveying information.

The second body of work which developed congruently emerged from the initial research done on the chemical concentrations found in both the soil and water of Illinois. As expected the state and the Mid-West at large is a repository for the chemicals leached from agricultural fertilizers and pesticides and as such is one of the geographic regions with highest concentrations of sodium chloride (or salt) in the United States-so it seems that sodium is one of a few primary elements found in commercial fertilizers and pesticides thus the high concentrations found in the soils and water of the Midwest. As I read on I came to find that salt mining itself was the first industry of Illinois. As such its contemporary role in the Illinois landscape is based on a combination of its presence in agricultural products and its use in the maintenance of icy winter roads. In both contexts, it is a major source runoff contamination and has had deleterious effects on the native plant habitats due to its high concentrations in the soil.

The series consists of drawings representing an aerial view of the figure/ground relationships found between the infrastructure, agriculture, and green areas of Central Illinois. Made with a solution of pigmented salt, the salt itself references the multiple roles salt has played in shaping the Midwestern landscape.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The process of producing the project *Elements/Evidence* provided an opportunity to research the chemical composition of environments before and after the disposal of commercial and household chemicals, deepening my understanding of the ecological and social implications of high chemical concentrations present throughout local and global environments. The series of digital drawings and accompanying book were made public through an installation hosted in conjunction with Urbana Land Arts project *Inter-Urban* (also was funded by Urbana's Art Grants) during the 2013 Boneyard Arts Festival as part of the exhibition *Minding the Margin*. Installed within two rooms of a rental home, the exhibition was curated to the theme of the often overlooked and concealed within the local landscape. Approximately 20 visitors attended with numerous passerby throughout the festival day. A sobering project, it has been however fascinating and continues to evolve with its latest iteration scheduled to be included as part of an exhibition in South Bend, IN during summer 2013.

USE OF FUNDS/IMPACT OF GRANTS FUNDS ON ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

The financial support provided by the Urbana Arts Grants program was used to fund both the research and material costs of the project including water testing, printing, studio supplies, transportation and the cost of exhibition installation and promotion. The programming of the Urbana Arts Grants made the progress of the *Elements/Evidence* project possible in three ways: First, it provided essential fiscal support used to fund both research and materials. Second, the availability of such a program and its application process provided the initial impetus for developing the conceptual framework and logistical timeline for the undertaking of such a project. Third, as a project without a clear ending; its development continues to evolve when new areas of focus emerge.

NUMBER OF HOURS SPENT

Planning/ Administration: 8

Research: 40-50

Promotion: 2

Production: 120

Final Presentation/Exhibition Installation: 5

