

A black and white photograph of a sandy, eroded landscape. The foreground is dominated by a wide, sandy path or dune area with visible tire tracks and some sparse, low-lying vegetation. In the background, a dense line of trees, mostly without leaves, stretches across the horizon under a cloudy sky. The overall scene conveys a sense of a natural, perhaps disturbed, environment.

**A PLACE CALLED HOME:
THE EBENEZER KEYES CONSERVATION PROJECT**

**JESSICA ROBEY
NORTH COUNTY LAND TRUST
ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE 2023-2024**

A PLACE CALLED HOME:
THE EBENEZER KEYES CONSERVATION PROJECT

Essay and Artwork by Jessica Robey

With an Introduction by Anna Wilkins

North County Land Trust Artist-in-Residency Program
Jessica Robey, Artist-in-Residence 2023 - 2024

Project Title:
A Place Called Home: The Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project

Exhibition:
Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg, MA, September 4 - 30, 2024

Jessica Robey's *A Place Called Home: The Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project*, is the culmination of a two-year artist residency hosted by the North County Land Trust. Robey's mixed-media and photographic work explores the intersection of the constructed and the natural at Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Area in its transitional state and calls on us to reconsider how we might think of ourselves in relation to nature.

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Artist Statement, Jessica Robey © 2024

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North County Land Trust
325 Lindell Avenue
Leominster, MA
01453
www.northcountylandtrust.org



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**NORTH COUNTY LAND TRUST
ARTIST IN RESIDENCY PROGRAM PRESENTS**

**A PLACE CALLED HOME:
THE EBENEZER KEYES CONSERVATION PROJECT**

Jessica Robey, A-I-R 2023-24

Introduction

North County Land Trust Artist in Residency 2023-24

In 2021, North County Land Trust inaugurated our Artist-in-Residence program in order to expand our opportunities to engage and educate the public about the natural world and its wonders. Art plays an important role in helping us understand and transform our situations. Art is the language of connection. A strong image, a beautiful piece of music, a powerful performance, a compelling narrative—all of these can move us in ways that a simple statement of fact cannot. Art speaks to our emotions, values, and imagination and, in this way, opens us up to new perspectives on our lived experiences. This, in turn, can inspire change and shift our society onto new paths.

If the people in our communities are disconnected from the land, our work at NCLT will continually be challenged and undermined. It is clear, then, if we are serious about our work as a land trust, we would be wise to collaborate with our local artists to help us foster that connection. We believe these collaborations complement and enhance NCLT's priority to broaden our reach and inspire conversations around our conservation work.

Our first artist, Will Close (Concord, MA), focused on the new conservation project on the south slope of Mt. Watatic in Ashburnham and Ashby, MA, which includes NCLT's Longview Conservation Area, bringing awareness to this important site. Jessica Robey (Fitchburg, MA), our second artist, explores the stewardship plan and existing conditions at the Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Area, another recent project. At the culmination of their residencies, each artist exhibited their work at the Fitchburg Art Museum in their Community Gallery. We are grateful to FAM for its support for community projects such as these. We are also grateful to Freedom's Way National Heritage Area, whose grant made the development and publication of this catalog possible.

The Ebenezer Keyes Project

In December 2020, NCLT accepted a donation of 157 acres of land on the west side of Parker Pond in Gardner, MA. This area had been permitted for a 100+ house subdivision in 2004, known as the Cedar Hills development. After some site preparation work, including clearing, sand and gravel mining, constructing stormwater catchment basins, and installing underground utilities, the project was abandoned. The land lay disturbed and fallow until we accepted the donation. This land is not the typical conservation acquisition, but it offers numerous benefits, including:

- Public access to Parker Pond for fishing and canoeing/kayaking
- Paved walking area for bikes, strollers, and those with mobility challenges
- Easily accessed vernal pool for educational programs
- Further protection of the Otter River and our water resources
- Unique sandplain and early successional habitat for wildlife
- Historic features important to the city's history

The property faces a number of challenges, suffering the effects of party spots, homeless encampments, dirt bikes and ATV use, fireworks, target shooting, and graffiti. NCLT works actively with the neighborhood, the City of Gardner, and the State Environmental Police to curb unsafe and prohibited uses of the property.

We have already limited ATV and dirt bike access, held trash clean-ups, cleared out old encampments, and posted informational signs. We've established two welcoming trailheads at the ends of Princeton Street and Keyes Road. Neighbors and other visitors are using the land and trails. We love seeing people of all ages and walks of life enjoying the outdoors, even with the visible scars of development.

While some may look at the site as undesirable, NCLT

believes the prior disturbance of this area, along with its ongoing recreational use, offer unique opportunities to promote healthy and creative ways to utilize the property.

Starting in April 2021, a Conway School of Landscape Design student team began a three-month Master Planning process with us. The report they produced included summarized data from community input collected by a variety of methods. A link to the final report can be found on the NCLT website: at <https://northcountylandtrust.org/reconnecting-people-and-place-the-conway-school-comprehensive-plan-for-ebenezer-keyes-is-released/>.

As part of the project, the habitats were evaluated by Chris Buelow, Senior Restoration Ecologist at the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Chris observed that the disturbed sandy area was naturally emerging as an inland Sandplain Grassland habitat, which is rare in Massachusetts, especially in our region. He identified the presence of prairie warblers at Keyes, whose numbers have been in decline in southern New England, primarily due to loss of habitat. In addition, he saw tiger beetles, who share the habitat requirements of the prairie warbler, and historically have been documented only in Plymouth County. NCLT aims to encourage the emergence of this inland Sandplain Grassland for the prairie warbler, tiger beetle, and other species dependent upon this imperiled habitat. Importantly, the species adapted to this habitat are drought-tolerant. Having a diversity of habitats in our region is key to adapting to an uncertain future of changes in our climate and long-term weather patterns. The more biologically diverse our region is, the more resilient we will be to climate change impacts.

Once adequate funding is acquired, we will regrade the large piles of sand and gravel left on the site in order to facilitate the natural emergence of the Sandplain Grassland habitat. Ultimately, the creation of an inland Sandplain Grassland natural community will achieve our goal of hosting a globally rare ecosystem that supports a wealth of highly specialized and often

endangered biodiversity.

Keyes is an especially attractive site because:

- It lends itself perfectly to supporting this inland Sandplain Grassland community
- It will act as both important refugia and as a vital link to similar restoration sites in the area as a constellation of these projects emerges from Winchendon to Lancaster and south through the Quabbin
- It can act as a demonstration site for municipalities to explore alternative—and much more ecologically sound—approaches to closure plans for retired sand pits
- It provides a terrific educational opportunity for local residents to not only appreciate what they have at Keyes, but what they could have in the immediate surrounding landscape

We hope that Jessica Robey's work, which explores the intersection of the constructed and the natural at Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Area, will help us tell the story of this unique site and NCLT's efforts. We hope as you view the property through her work, it will inspire you to think creatively and consider ideas for how we can build a new future, for the land and ourselves, together.

Anna Wilkins
Director of Conservation and Climate
Executive Director 2017-2024
August 3, 2024

Please visit www.northcountylandtrust.org for more information about the work of NCLT and how to join us. Our critical work is made possible by generous donations from caring individuals and entities.

Maps
The Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Area

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES & ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE*

Most of the neighborhoods in Gardner qualify as environmental justice populations, which tend to have disproportionately less access to nearby recreational open space. The proximity of the site to these communities creates an opportunity to offer recreational amenities that meet their needs.

Of the towns nearest Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Area, Gardner has the highest population with 21,287 people according to the 2020 Census. Most of the region's environmental justice (EJ) populations are located in Gardner, with a small neighborhood identified in Winchendon.

According to the Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' Environmental Justice Policy, EJ populations are "most at risk of being unaware of or unable to participate in environmental decision-making or to gain access to state environmental resources." Research shows that marginalized communities like EJ populations also tend to have disproportionately less access to nearby protected open space (Sims et al.).

Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Area is one of the closest recreational open spaces to EJ communities in Gardner, situated less than two miles from downtown neighborhoods. However, the site is most easily accessed by vehicle, limiting access for lower income households that may not have regular access to a vehicle. Public transportation is limited mainly to the downtown area. Parker Pond, which borders the property's eastern edge, prevents neighbors to the southeast from entering unless they cross a dam and an active railroad running parallel to the base of the pond. Regional trails and expanded public transportation options could increase access to Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Area by EJ communities.

Building relationships with EJ communities throughout this project and in the future could help determine how uses of the space could best reflect the wants and needs of the nearby community's values around open space and recreation. For example, those with less disposable income may not purchase recreational equipment like kayaks or canoes and may not have regular access to a car to transport it to Parker Pond. A site with a wide variety of recreational opportunities accessible to all income levels, abilities, and cultures will serve a broad and economically diverse population.

***NOTE:** Maps and descriptions reprinted from *Reconnecting People and Place—A Comprehensive Plan for the Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Area*, Gardner, Massachusetts, prepared by Claire Baglien & W. Kyle Finnell, Graduate Program in Sustainable Landscape Planning + Design, Spring 2022



WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY?

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts designates a neighborhood as an EJ population depending on which of the following criteria it meets:

- 1 Annual median household income is 65% or less of the statewide annual median household income, which is currently \$85,843.
- 2 >40% of the population identifies as part of a minority group.
- 3 >25% or more of the population identifies as a part of a minority group **and** the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150% of the statewide annual median household income.

LEGEND

-  Neighborhoods that only meet criteria number one
-  Neighborhoods that only meet criteria number two
-  Neighborhoods that meet criteria number three
-  Publicly accessible & protected recreational space
-  Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Area

EXISTING AND NEW TRAILS FEATURE POINTS OF INTEREST, PLACES TO REST

Building off the foundation of the existing trail system, the paved road remains for those looking for an easy walk or roll. New or rerouted trails connect people to points of interest, including scenic vistas and the Ebenezer Keyes historical homestead, and avoid steep, erosion-prone spots. Trails also meander past vernal pools, swamps, and bogs and a new loop makes it easier to access Parker Pond. Picnic tables are placed at points of interest throughout the site.

MANAGING FOR AN INLAND SANDPLAIN GRASSLAND & EARLY SUCCESSIONAL FOREST

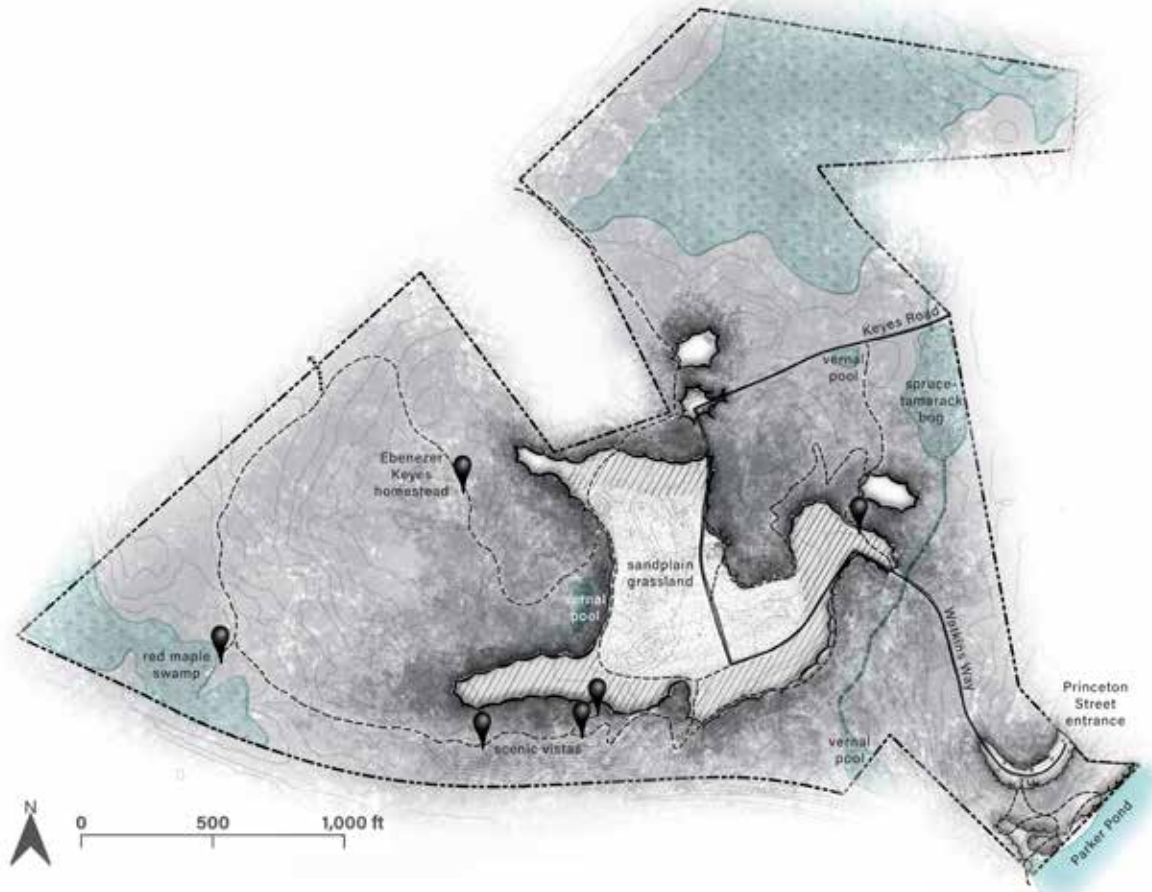
A notable feature of the site is a sandplain grassland emerging from the most disturbed center portion of the site. The grassland provides regionally uncommon habitat and sustains a diversity of wildlife. Through a phased management approach, the grassland expands year after year. Invasive species are weeded out and perennial grasses like little bluestem become dominant instead of young trees and shrubs. Replacing drastic edges where bare sand suddenly erupted into forest, young trees and shrubs are encouraged along the sandplain grassland edges. This subtle transition provides habitat and cover for wildlife.

TWO DESIGN ALTERNATIVES FOR A NEW GATHERING SPACE

The first alternative sites a timber frame pavilion and natural play area on the eastern edge of the sandplain grassland. A new parking area with two accessible spaces allows visitors to park closer to the pavilion and trailheads. Meeting ADA accessibility requirements, the pavilion and short walk to it feature up close views of the wildlife and plants making their home within the emerging sandplain grassland. In the second alternative, a timber frame pavilion is sited near the Princeton Street entrance overlooking Parker Pond. Two new accessible parking spaces sit next to a boat rinse station for canoers and kayakers.

WATERFRONT ACCESS TO PARKER POND

A spot for launching canoes, kayaks, or paddleboards awaits visitors at the bottom of a new universally accessible trail. The trail loop guides people from the parking area toward the pavilion, fishing spots, and the carry-in watercraft launch.



Ebenezer Keys Conservation Area

LEGEND



Scenic vista or point of interest



Paved trail



Gravel trail



Young successional forest



10' contours

Jessica Robey – A Place Called Home:
The Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project

A Place Called Home: The Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project

Artist Statement

Keyes is a weird place. Uncanny. At first viewing, it seems like an abandoned battlefield from a war between humans and nature. There's a sense of desolation and loss among the sandy dunes, formed when the topsoil and vegetation were stripped to make way for a housing development. This subdivision was abandoned, left somewhere between incompleteness and decay. There are the remnants of human infrastructure, a cracking road slowly being taken back by the land, construction debris mixed with half-burned trash, and impromptu fire pits left by partiers and homeless camps. The open plain, stripped and waiting for its unbuilt houses, is dotted by an occasional sapling, apparently placed to mark a future home site. The barren ground is scarred and crisscrossed by the tracks of dirt bikes, and studded by broken glass and beer cans. The road and larger boulders have become a canvas for graffiti.

The 15-acre stripped area is in the center of the 157-acre property, creating a jarring contrast to the woods, vernal pools and small patches of wetlands that encircle it. Comparing the two, one can get a sense of what was lost. The open area partially prepared for human habitation is unsheltered, hot and dry in the summer, and harsh and windy in the winter. It is bleak at all times; Eden transformed into a desert. A ruined land, one might think. A shameful place of mourning for habitats carelessly destroyed by human expansion, and then left to rot unused. A place to contemplate the irony of developers investing so much to create a place so foreign to a human sense of home. A place deliberately sited in a natural setting, yet so out of harmony with the nature that surrounds it. In this way, it provides a fascinating dissection of the process of carving out human dwellings from nature. The destruction behind

the creation is clearly revealed, and along with it the artifice of the carefully groomed suburban landscape that typically replaces an erased ecosystem.

The clash of civilization and nature seems excruciatingly clear at Keyes. However, it is not clear which side has won. Exploring the area, one sees evidence everywhere of nature's resilience as it reclaims what was abandoned. The unsettling quality (in both senses of the word) of Keyes also drives home our psychological need to connect with nature as a living system, not just as a few ornamental shrubs in a manicured lawn. The moral of the story seems clear; industrial civilization destroys the very thing we most desire—a place called home.

This was the argument made as early as the mid-nineteenth century by a number of well-known intellectuals—Thoreau and Emerson come to mind immediately—and lesser-known naturalists such as Wilson Flagg (1805-1884), who discussed the changes in New England's ecosystem caused by European settlers and their attitude towards natural resources. When I discovered one of Flagg's books in a dusty corner of a junk shop, I was amazed at his astute analysis of the changing climate, soil conditions, and cycles of drought and flooding brought on by the settlers' farming methods. He discusses the land in ecological terms, as a living system of mutually dependent parts, and points out that the pursuit of short-term profit overlooks the long-term damage that future generations will have to contend with. He notes the potential tension between those who live on the land and depend on making use of its natural resources, and those who view the land with wonder and reverence from a privileged distance. Only his flowery language, and his portrayal of Indians as noble savages, separate his arguments from many contemporary environmental writers.¹

It is instructive to juxtapose Flagg's writings with those of William Cronon, whose book *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (1983) broke new ground in environmental

history. Flagg was writing at a time when it was assumed that the indigenous peoples of North America had lived as lightly on the land as animals, in a primitive Eden untouched by history. He echoes other writers at the time romanticizing the purity of this wilderness state before White settlers, and tracks the beginning of environmental change to this historical meeting of European culture and New World nature.

Cronon, in contrast, points out that humans have lived in collaboration with and exploitation of the natural world since we first evolved. There is very little "pure" wilderness, untouched by human labor. In New England, for example, indigenous tribes regularly did controlled burns and worked the land for agriculture. He thus refutes the Western narrative of the Fall from Eden and the break between nature and culture. In *Changes in the Land*, he argues, "The choice is not between two landscapes, one with and one without a human influence; it is between two human ways of living, two ways of belonging to an ecosystem."² He goes on to explain, "All human groups change their environment to some extent—one might even argue that this, in combination with language, is the crucial trait distinguishing people from other animals—and the best measure of a culture's ecological stability may well be how successfully its environmental changes maintain its ability to reproduce itself."³

Looking at Keyes as a failed housing development site, one could be inclined to see it as a microcosm of our global failure to change the environment in a sustainable manner, a literal and metaphorical model of how not to create a home within an ecosystem. But as Cronon argues in his essay "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" (1996), it would be irresponsible and shortsighted to stop there:

Idealizing a distant wilderness too often means not idealizing the natural environment in which we actually live, the landscape

that for better or worse we call home...The wilderness dualism tends to cast any use as ab-use, and thereby denies us a middle ground in which responsible use and non-use might attain some kind of balanced, sustainable relationship. My own belief is that only by exploring this middle ground will we learn ways of imagining a better world for all of us...The middle ground is where we actually live. It is where we—all of us, in our different places and ways—make our homes...If the core problem of wilderness is that it distances us too much from the very things it teaches us to value, then the question we must ask is what it can tell us about home, the place where we actually live.⁴

The Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Area is a site where these multiple arguments about our place within nature come into focus, collide and tussle. My role in this project, as the North County Land Trust Artist-in-Residence from February 2023 to September, 2024, has not been strictly to document the site in its transition, but rather to explore the transition in thinking that Cronon articulates about such hybrid sites. This is a transition I experienced myself, as I explored and photographed the area in different seasons and in a variety of weather conditions. Growing up, my attitudes towards the natural world were strongly shaped by the environmental movement, the Sierra Club, Ansel Adams and John Muir. That (combined with my misanthropic tendencies) led me to revere the (supposedly) pure wilderness in opposition to human culture, and I was initially resistant to Cronon's views. In my photographic work, I sought out the uncanny Otherness of nature, those aspects of the land that surprised and unsettled me the more I delved into them. I chose the shots that made me feel alienated rather than comforted. I found the feeling of unease was often most intense where culture and nature rubbed up against each other in unexpected and disharmonious ways. This is no doubt why Anna

Wilkins (NCLT Director of Conservation and Climate/ Executive Director 2017-2024) pointed me in the direction of the strange landscape of Keyes.

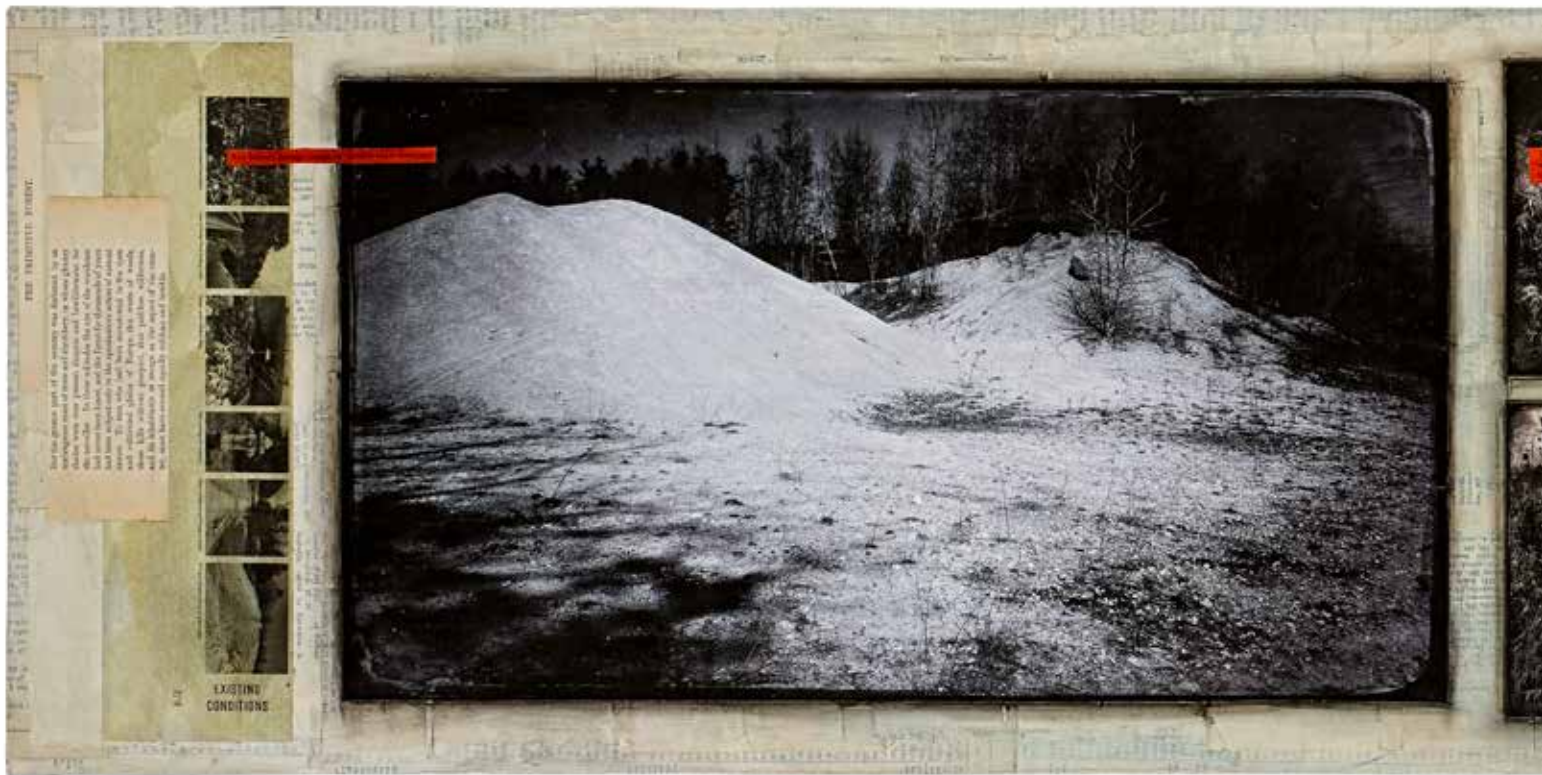
Learning about the trust's plans for the site, and reading Flagg and Cronon's arguments about the New England landscape, pushed me to reconsider how we might think of ourselves in relation to nature. The plans that NCLT has developed for this place seek to shift the narrative from the story of a fall from grace, to one of renewal, resilience, and sustainability. The trust envisions a mixed-use area that will serve as a recreation site for an underserved community, and a restored and managed Sandplain Grassland habitat crucial to maintaining biodiversity in New England. These types of managed interactions that benefit both the human and nonhuman community are key to creating a more sustainable and ethical future for our planet. A site such as Keyes now strikes me as a place of opportunity rather than just regret. The sense of loss and melancholy are still present in my heart and in my work, but there is now also hope for redemption.

My work for this project is primarily photographic, combined with acrylic paint and pastels, and collaged with pages from antique bibles, celestial navigation charts, vintage prefab home catalogs, and the planning report for Keyes. I include excerpts from Flagg and Cronon's writings as signposts tracking how our understanding of the local environment has changed over the centuries, and how this history shapes our experience of the land. My own feelings about Keyes are ambivalent and complex, changing with every encounter. My artwork is the arena in which I negotiate my relationship to places like Keyes, and my aim is to share my evolving views on how we live in the natural world. Will our human nature ever allow us to feel truly at home in our natural habitat? I have no answer to this, but I believe it is crucial for our survival to dedicate ourselves to grappling with the question.

Jessica Robey
August 9, 2024

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1. Wilson Flagg, *Studies in the Field and Forest* (Little Brown and Company, Boston, 1857); *A Year Among the Trees: or, The Woods and By-Ways of New England* (Educational Publishing Company, Boston, 1881); *A Year with the Birds: or, The Birds and Seasons of New England* (Educational Publishing Company, Boston, 1881).
 2. William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (Hill and Wang, New York, 2003): 12.
 3. Ibid: 13
 4. William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, Ed. William Cronon (W. W. Norton & Company, New York/London, 1996): 85-87.

A Place Called Home:
The Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project



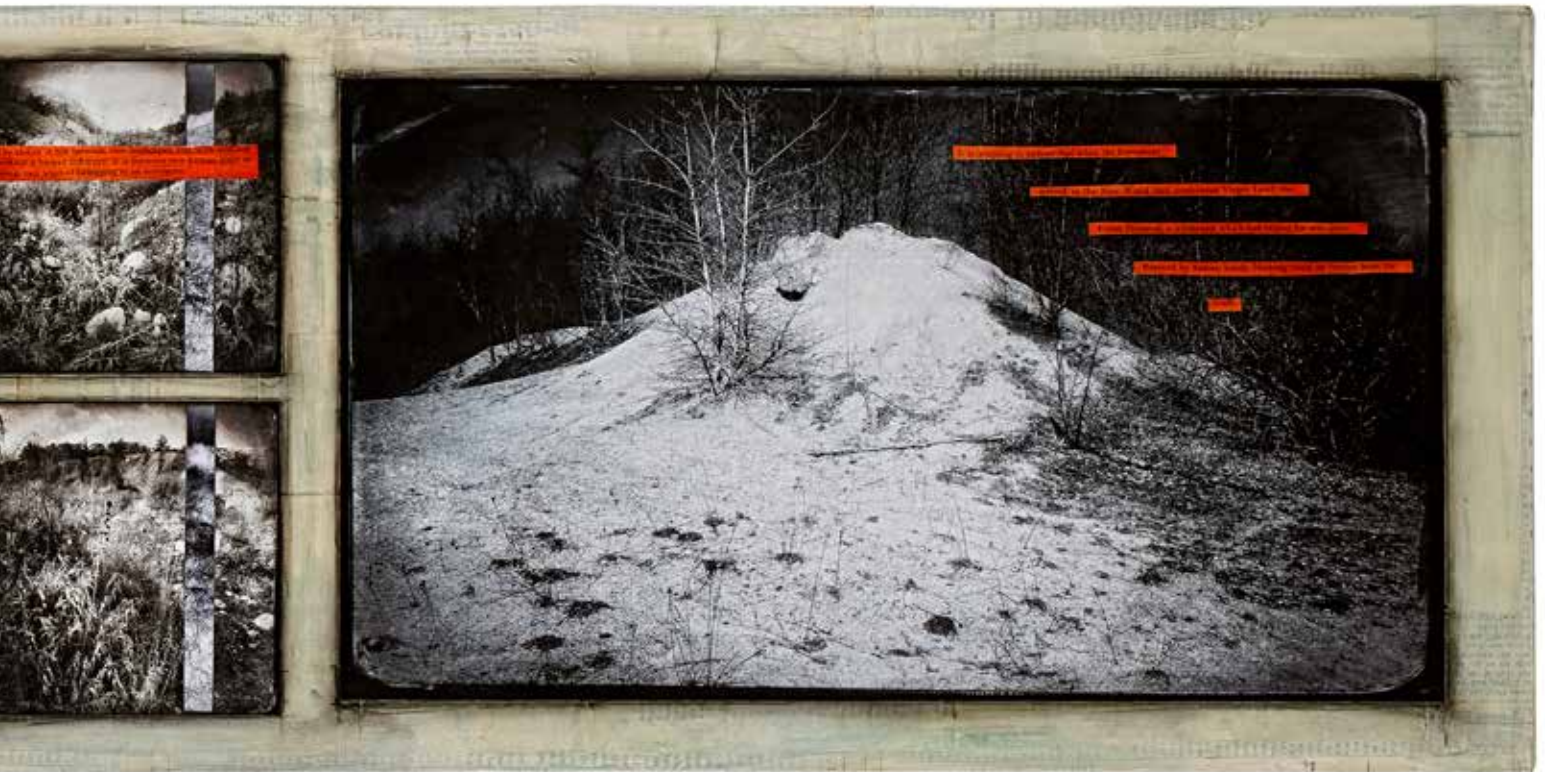
Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #1, 2022-24

Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
 12 x 48 inches (30.48 x 121.92 cm)

Excerpts from Wilson Flagg, *A Year Among the Trees: or, The Woods and By-Ways of New England* (Boston: Educational Publishing Co, 1890)

THE PRIMITIVE FOREST

But the greater part of the country was darkened by an umbrageous mass of trees and shrubbery, in whose gloomy shades were ever present dangers and bewilderment for the traveler. In these solitudes the axe of the woodman had never been heard, and the forest for thousands of years had been subject only to the spontaneous action of natural causes. To men who had been accustomed to the open and cultivated plains of Europe, this waste of woods, those hills without prospect, that pathless wilderness, and its inhabitants as savage as the aspect of the country, must have seemed equally sublime and terrible.

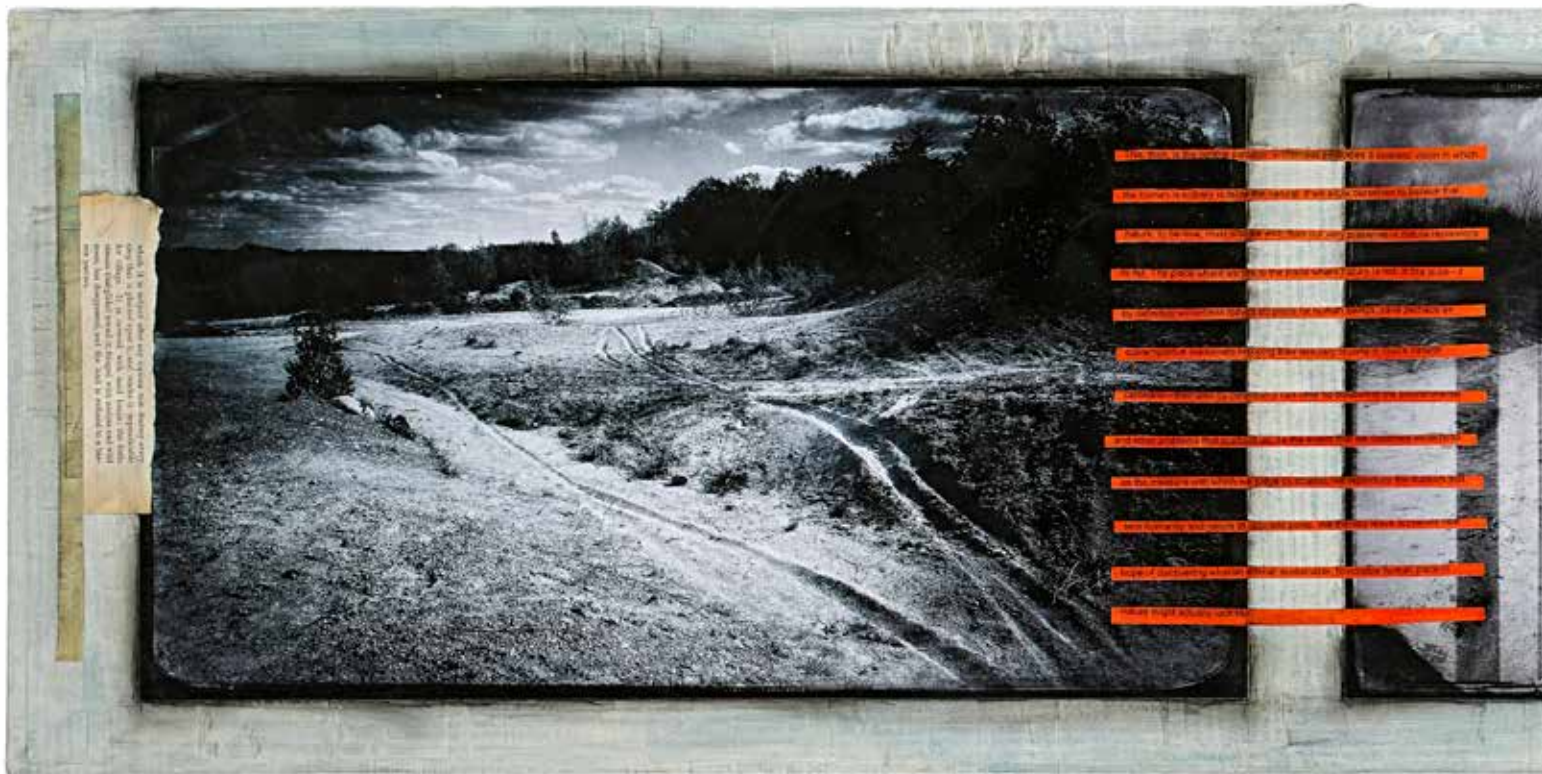


Excerpts from William Cronon, from *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997)

Are human beings inside or outside their system?

The choice is not between two landscapes, one with and one without a human influence, it is between two human ways of living, two ways of belonging to an ecosystem.

It is tempting to believe that when the Europeans arrived in the New World they confronted Virgin Land, the Forest Primeval, a wilderness which had existed for eons uninfluenced by human hands. Nothing could be further from the truth.



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #2, 2022-24

Inkjet print/mixed media on panel

12 x 48 inches (30.48 x 121.92 cm)

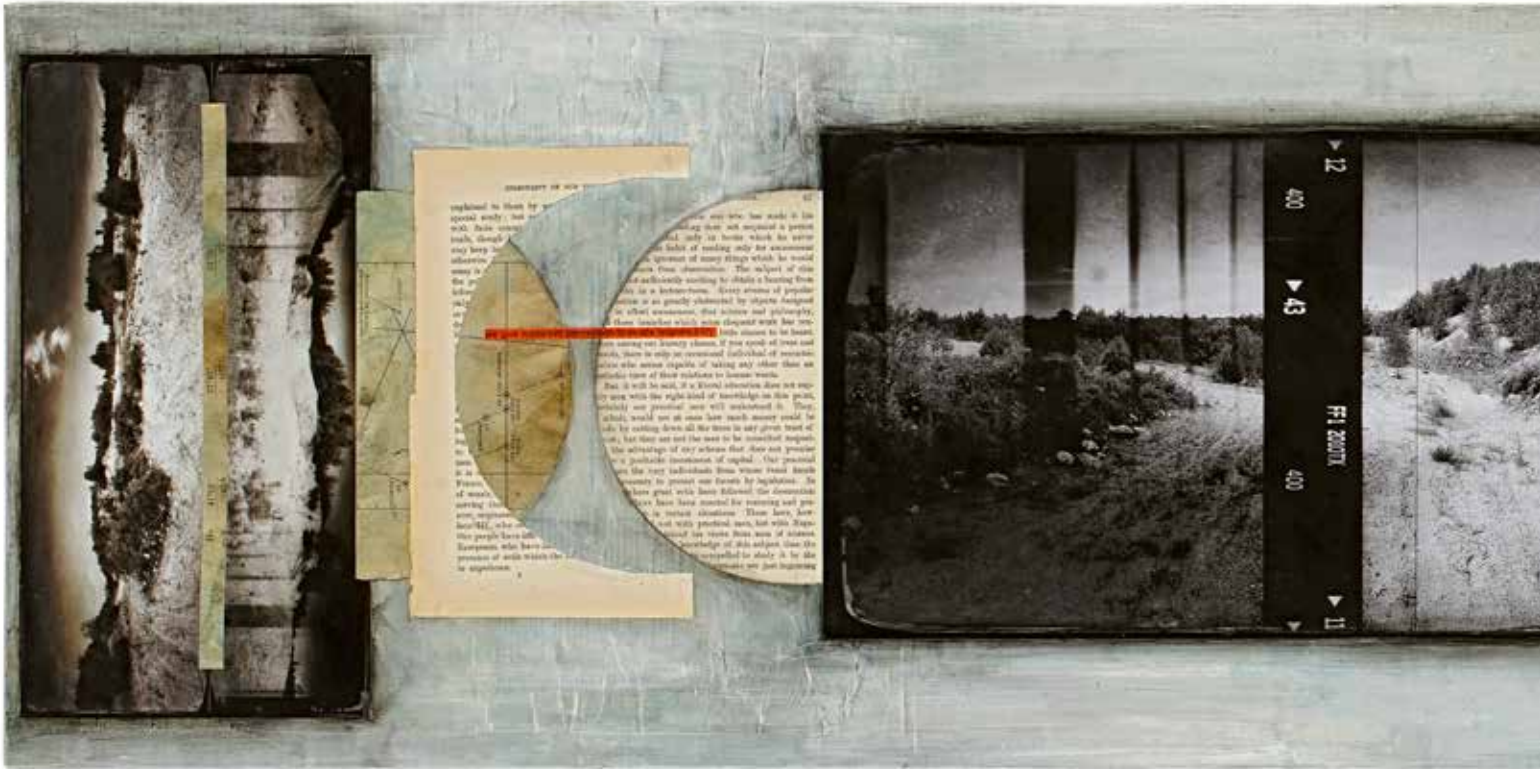
Excerpts from Wilson Flagg, *A Year Among the Trees: or, The Woods and By-Ways of New England* (Boston: Educational Publishing Co, 1890)

...which it is subject after any copious rain destroy every crop that is planted upon it, and render it impractical for tillage. It is covered with sand heaps; the little stream that glided round it, fringed with azaleas and wild roses, has disappeared, and the land is reduced to a barren pasture.



Excerpts from William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York/London: W.W. Norton & Co, 1996)

This, then, is the central paradox: wilderness embodies a dualistic vision in which the human is entirely outside the natural. If we allow ourselves to believe that nature, to be true, must also be wild, then our very presence in nature represents its fall. The place where we are is the place where nature is not. If this is so—if by definition wilderness leaves no place for human beings, save perhaps as contemplative sojourners enjoying their leisurely reverie in God's natural cathedral—then also by definition it can offer no solution to the environmental and other problems that confront us. To the extent that we celebrate wilderness as the measure with which we judge civilization, we reproduce the dualism that sets humanity and nature at opposite poles. We thereby leave ourselves little hope of discovering what an ethical, sustainable, honorable human place in nature might actually look like.



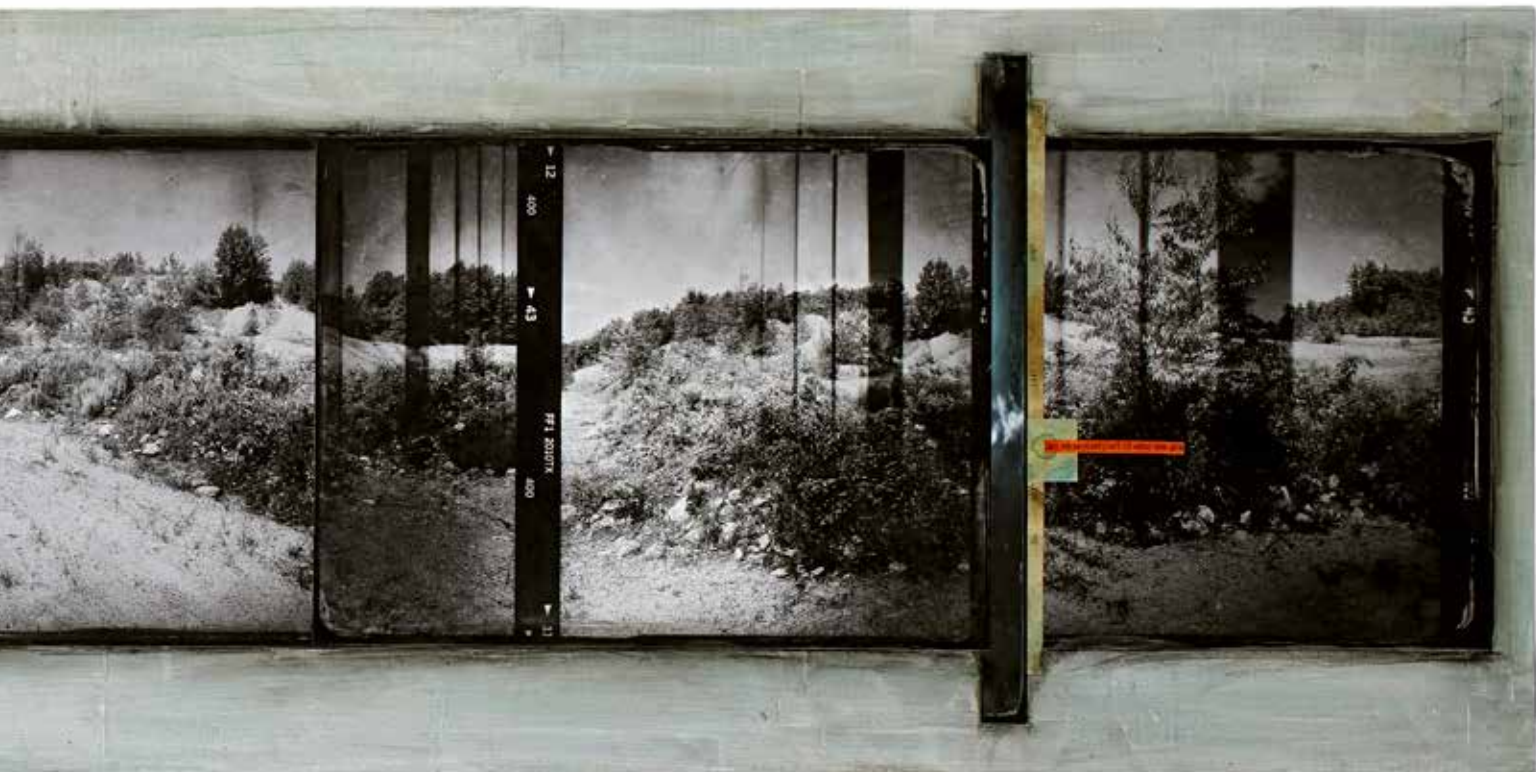
Ebenzer Keyes Conservation Project #3, 2022-24

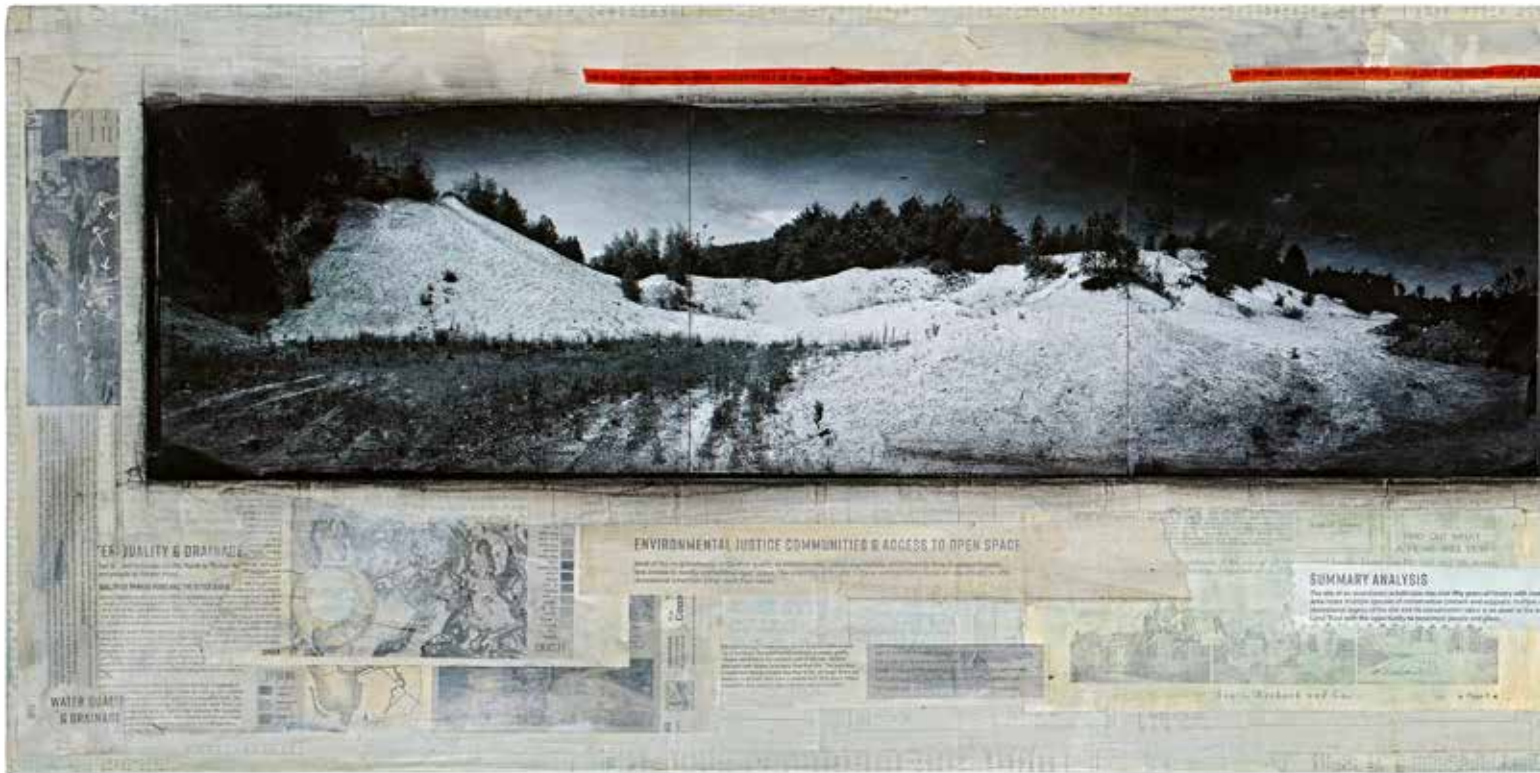
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
12 x 48 inches (30.48 x 121.92 cm)

Excerpts from William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York/London: W.W. Norton & Co, 1996)

...we give ourselves permission to evade responsibility...

...an essential part of who we are...





Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #4, 2022-24

Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
12 x 48 inches (30.48 x 121.92 cm)

Excerpts from William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York/London: W.W. Norton & Co, 1996)

...we live in an urban industrial civilization but at the same time pretend to ourselves that our real home is in the wilderness...We inhabit civilization while holding some part of ourselves—what we imagine to be the most precious part—aloof from its entanglements...By imagining that our true home is in the wilderness, we forgive ourselves the homes we actually inhabit.



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #5, 2022-24

Inkjet print/mixed media on panel

12 x 41 inches (30.48 x 104.14 cm)

Excerpts from William Cronon, from *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997)

Land in New England became for the colonists a form of capital, a thing consumed for the express purpose of creating augmented wealth. It was the land-capital equation that created the two central ecological contradictions of the colonial econ-...

But there was a second ecological contradiction in the colonial economy as well. Quite simply, the colonists' economic relations of production were ecologically self-destructive. They assumed the limitless availability of more land to exploit, and in the long...



Excerpt from *Genesis*, Chapter 1

24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind: and it was so. 25 And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the ground after its kind: and God saw that it was good. 26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28 And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. 29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food: 30 and to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, *I have given* every green herb for food: and it was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.



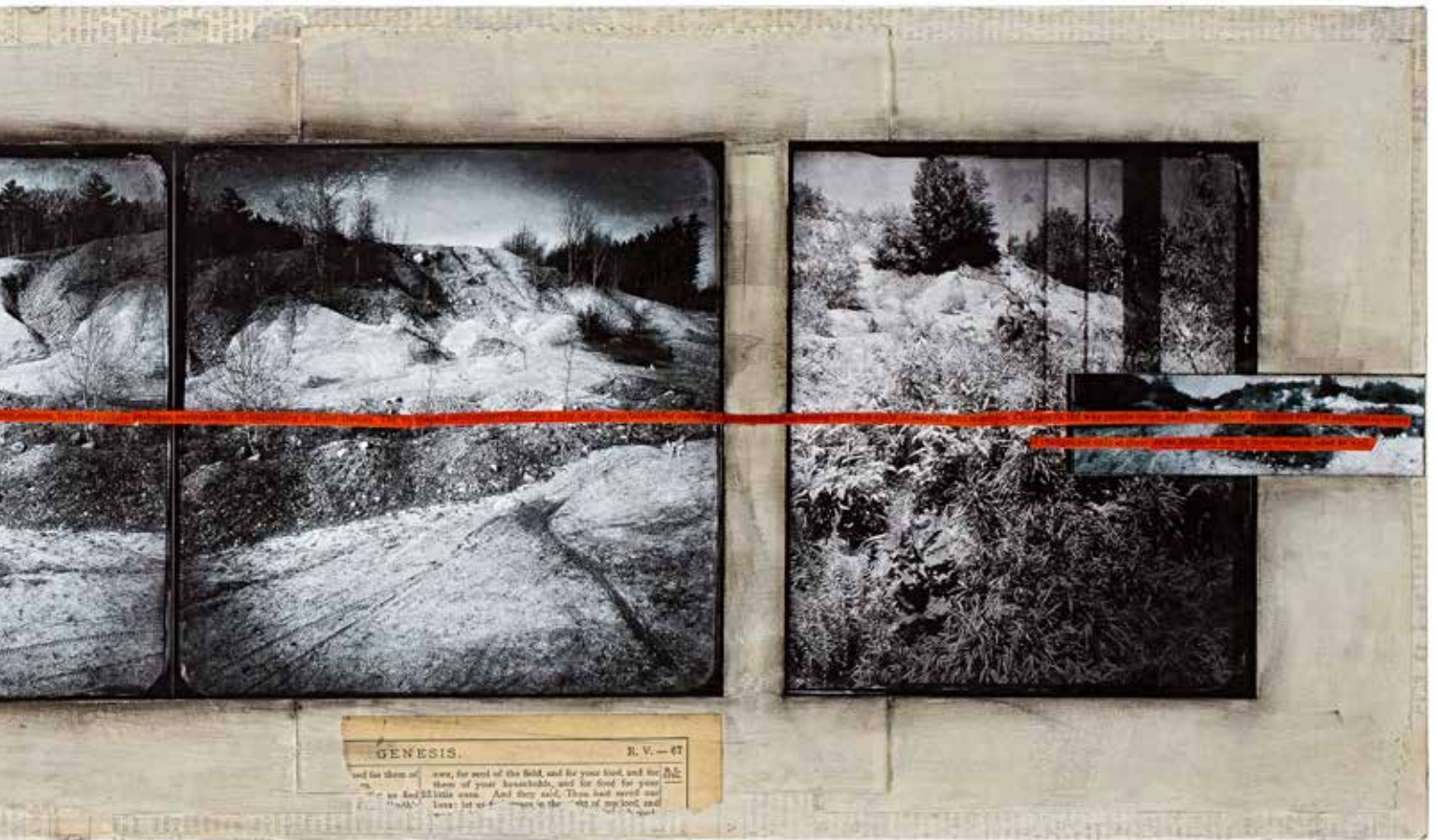
Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #6, 2022-24

Inkjet print/mixed media on panel

12 x 41 inches (30.48 x 104.14 cm)

Excerpts from William Cronon, from *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997)

An ecological history begins by assuming a dynamic and changing relationship between environment and culture, one as apt to produce contradictions as continuities. Moreover, it assumes that the interactions of the two are dialectical. Environment may initially shape the range of choices available to a group of people at any given moment, but then culture reshapes the environment in responding to those choices. The reshaped environment presents a new set of possibilities for cultural reproduction, thus setting up a new cycle of mutual determination. Changes in the way people create and re-create their livelihood must be analyzed in terms of changes not only in their social relations but in their ecological ones as well.



Excerpt from *Genesis*, chapter 47

...own, as seed for the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones. And they said, Thou hast saved our lives; let us...in the sight of my lord, and...



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #7, 2022-24

Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
12 x 24 inches (30.48 x 60.96 cm)

Excerpts from William Cronon, from *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997)



Here again was the paradox of want in a land of plenty.

Colonists who starved did so because they learned too late how ill-informed they had been about the New World's perpetual abundance.

Although the myth died hard, those who survived it were reasonably quick to reverse their expectations.



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #8, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
10 x 10 inches (25.4 x 25.4 cm)



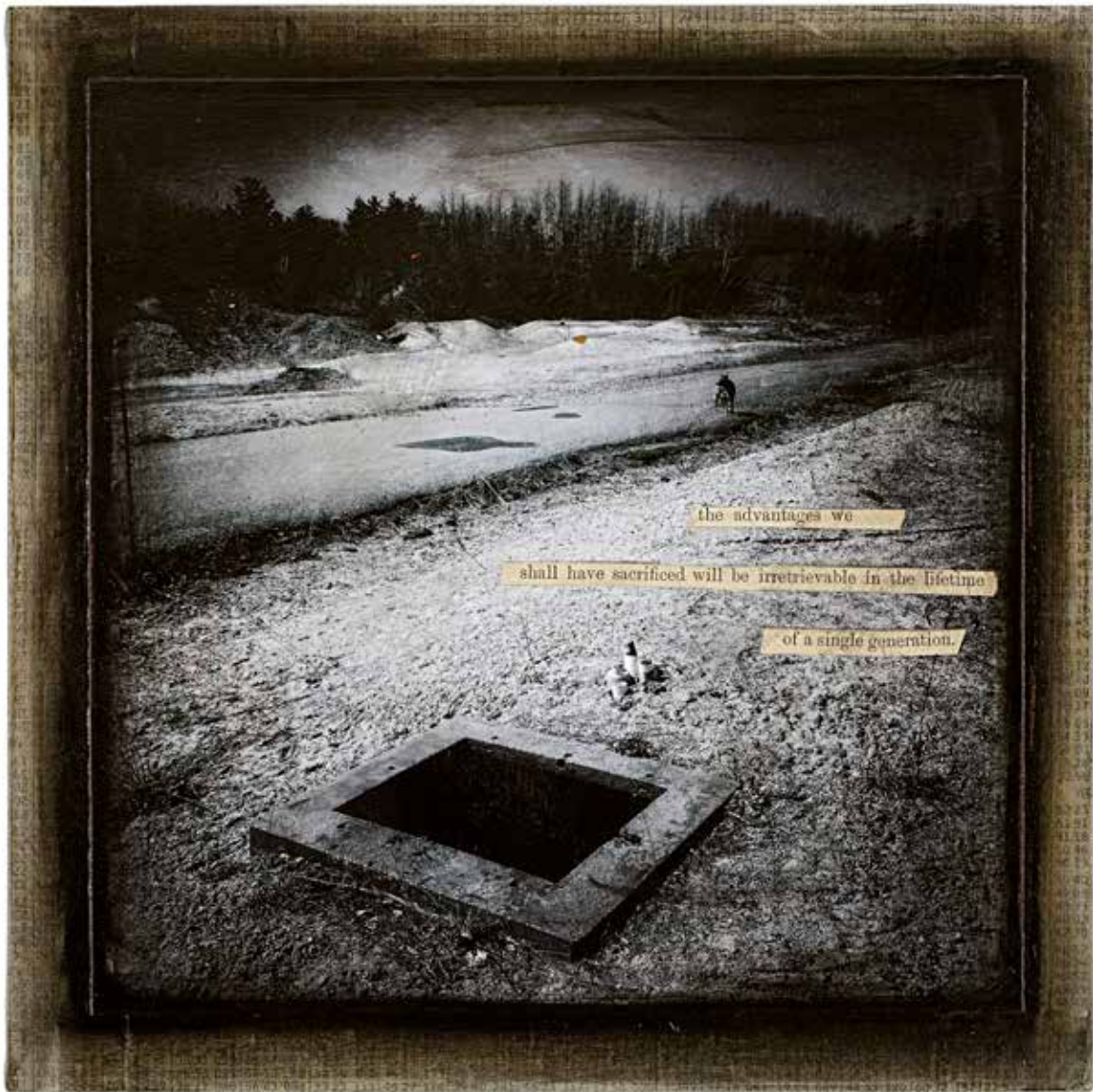
Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #9, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
10 x 10 inches (25.4 x 25.4 cm)



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #10, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
10 x 10 inches (25.4 x 25.4 cm)



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #11, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
10 x 10 inches (25.4 x 25.4 cm)



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #12, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm)



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #13, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm)



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #14, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm)



mutilated to a considerable extent without losing its normal characters of beauty.

Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #15, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm)



pointed out to me how the whole character of the wood was changed by the simple act of falling the primitive trees. The ground was not so wet as formerly; the standing waters did not occupy so wide a space; the forest contained more openings, the barren elevations not having been supplied with a new growth of trees. In

Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #16, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm)



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #17, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm)



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #18, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm)



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #19, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm)



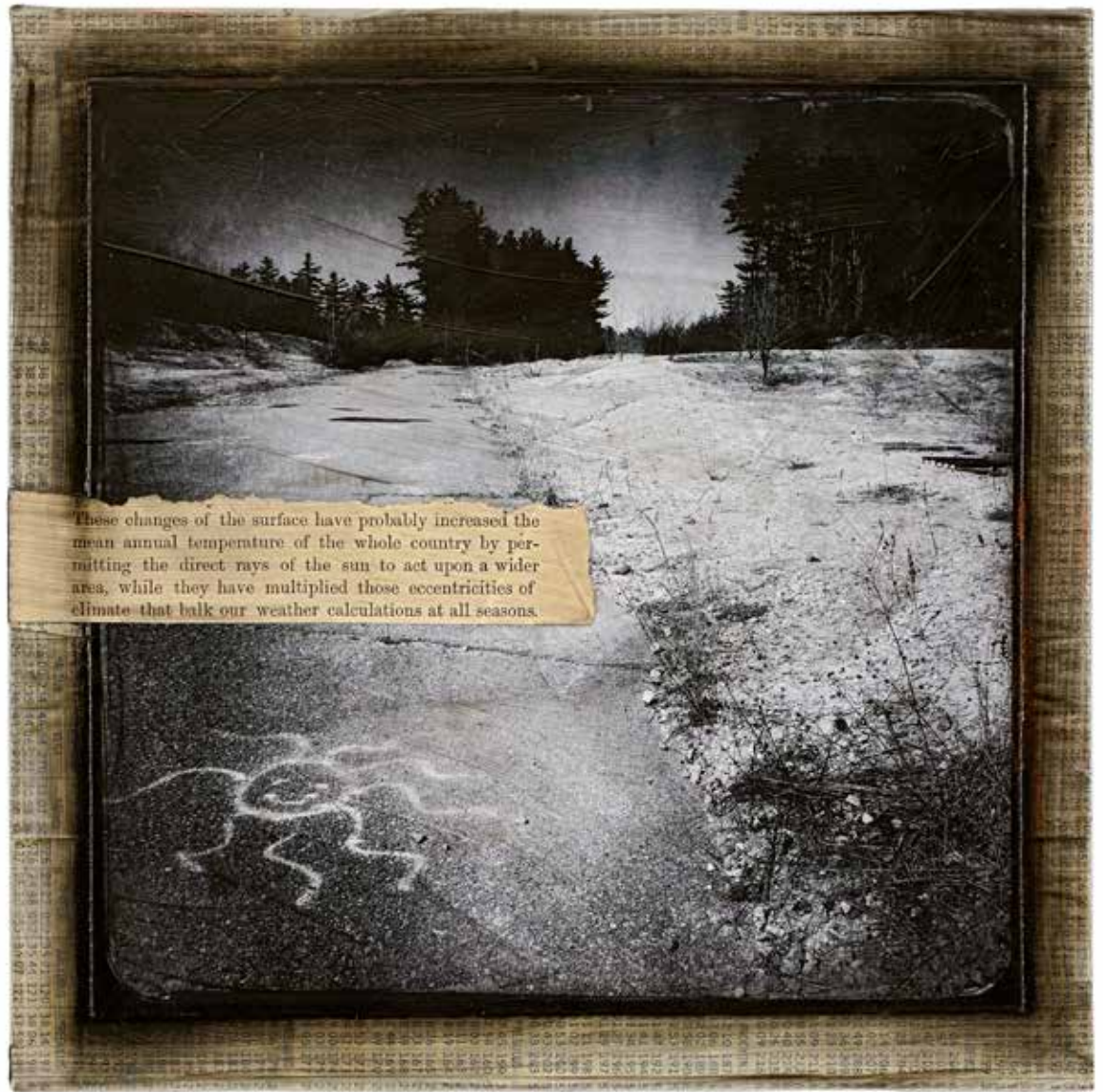
Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #20, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm)



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #21, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm)



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #22, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm)



These changes of the surface have probably increased the mean annual temperature of the whole country by permitting the direct rays of the sun to act upon a wider area, while they have multiplied those eccentricities of climate that balk our weather calculations at all seasons.

Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #23, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm)



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #24, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm)



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #25, 2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
8 x 8 inches (20.32 x 20.32 cm)



*Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #31
Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #33*

*Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #30
Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #28*

2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
6 x 6 inches (15.24 x 15.24 cm)



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #32
Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #34

Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #29
Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #40

2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
6 x 6 inches (15.24 x 15.24 cm)



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #38
Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #26

Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #27
Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #41

2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
6 x 6 inches (15.24 x 15.24 cm)



Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #39
Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #35

Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #36
Ebenezer Keyes Conservation Project #37

2022-24
Inkjet print/mixed media on panel
6 x 6 inches (15.24 x 15.24 cm)

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Jessica Robey received her BFA (Dean's List) in photography from the Academy of Art University, San Francisco CA, in 1989. She curated and assisted with exhibitions at SF Camerawork and wrote book reviews for SF Camerawork Quarterly before her acceptance into the art history graduate program of University of California at Santa Barbara. At UCSB, Robey earned her MA in 1997 with her thesis *Sebastião Salgado and the Aesthetics of Tragedy*, and her PhD in 2006 with her dissertation *From the City Witnessed to the Community Dreamed: The Civitates Orbis Terrarum and the Circle of Abraham Ortelius and Joris Hoefnagel*. Her dissertation research in Belgium and the Netherlands was supported by a Fulbright Grant for 2001-2002. While her thesis and dissertation focused on very different historical periods, the late 20th century and the 16th century respectively, both focused on the art of documenting and articulating humanity's place within the world. The question of individual agency and the ethical role of the witness to history explored in these projects continues to drive her work and research.

Robey served as a Teaching Associate and Adjunct Instructor at UCSB, Westmont College (Santa Barbara CA), and Brooks Institute of Photography (Santa Barbara and Ventura CA), before joining the faculty at Fitchburg State University (Fitchburg MA) in 2007. She is currently a tenured Associate Professor in the Humanities Department, teaching a broad range of topics in art history, from the prehistoric to the contemporary, as well as a nature journaling course. She has presented her research at numerous conferences and other venues, including the keynote speech at the NCLT Annual Gathering in October, 2022. She earned a Master in Arts Education at FSU in 2022. In 2023, she

won an Academic Innovation Fund grant to create a Sustainability Studies program at FSU, which launches its new minor in fall 2024.

Robey returned to her studio practice after attaining tenure at FSU, exploring a wide range of media, including metalwork, encaustic, fiber, book-making, painting, video, collage, and found-object assemblage sculpture. She has exhibited her video work, sculpture, books, photographs and collages in various group shows, and held her first solo show at Creative Connections Gallery, in Ashburnham MA, in 2022. Photography remains central to her artistic practice as she explores the place of human history in relation to the natural world.



North County Land Trust

