

Unnamed Places, 2012

*Emptiness allows us to absorb and dissipate.
We become the smell of a river, a swollen lake, of fresh dirt.*

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Integrative Project
Section 003

Unnamed Places is an accumulation of memories stemming from locations of solitude. It describes discrete areas that are off the map and easily overlooked. These realms have become my own through years of attachment and are now accessible through the whisper of print and poetry.

The poetry written for the series attempts to recreate a sensory environment. All of these places are natural. James Wright's piece *Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy's Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota* was an inspiration to how the poems are written. The details of surroundings are even more emphasized with unexpected language. "I lean back, as the evening darkens and comes on. A chicken hawk floats over, looking for home. I have wasted my life." The poems of *Unnamed Places* reveal information as a conversational narrative.

The revealing of isolated spaces and memories is counteracted by the concealment of selected information. Information is revealed through the form of a book, by turning pages, and conceals past and future information on previous and past pages. The booklets act as miniature spaces that are precious, sacred, accessible, and portable. They become the means to take these solitary places out beyond their static locations to be shared with others.

Julie Chen's body of artist books strongly relate to the concept of revealing and concealing. *You Are Here* is a great example of exposing new information through each turn. Her book is not the traditional format of a book. It is in essence a map. Each piece of poetry is read on a page and then is flipped open to the following sequence. When all the pages are flipped, the book becomes a map. *A Guide to Higher Learning* is one of her newer pieces owned by the University of Michigan. It works much in the same way that

You are Here does with revealing information through flips. Yet, it is very much open to interpretation through the fragmentation of its poetry. While these pieces rely more on the form for meaning than my pieces, I believe that they correlate with one another by their ability to conceal and reveal information through physical pacing of words.

Concealment is also achieved through layering both language and print. Most of this information is withheld by fragmenting the poetry and illustration. The illustrations of the book are created through woodblock relief printing. One image was done per book, making a total of seven relief blocks. Each block was manipulated to create a different image per page. Despite the fact that the prints come from the same matrix block, they all differ due to the information they conceal. Some are bleed off the page, others had been masked in the process and hide information. After the image had been printed into the page, a monotype process was done in secondary color on top. These gestural marks give understanding and further manipulation to the original print.

Precision is crucial when dealing with empty space and limited words and image. Each move has to be exact. Every piece of information is revealed in just the right moment. The poems are paced slowly. Lines are often surrounded by large areas of empty space, causing the reader to absorb the content of each page. Individual phrases becomes precious to the piece. The prints also are revealed in a certain pace in relation to the written word. The illusion of the expansion and compression of time occurs when reading a moment in this fashion. Time is held out, just as the original experience had been. However, it is compressed into a new form: the book.

Throughout history, the woodblock print has illustrated the words of poets, religious leaders, authors, and folklore. Woodblock printing in books is thought to have

originated as early as the Tang Dynasty in China during the early 1st century AD. Blocks have survived from both China and Egypt from this time, showing that image and text were “mass produced” by a single set of blocks, but not in the mass that we know today. After the Gutenberg press was invented, woodblocks became used in books for solely illustrative purposes.

Blind embossment technique was used in *Unnamed Places* to further elaborate on the notion of the not-quite tangible. The slip-case was letterpressed with the title, imprinting it into the paper. Since the type was not inked, the only way to see the type is to feel it or to look very closely. It is a whisper, just as the poems are. The woodblock prints also leave an embossment when they are pressed into the paper. Many areas have physical texture in places where the unlinked parts of the block had touched the surface. These subtle details parallel on the feeling of memories.

There are three locations downriver that I have focused my series on: The Docks, The River, and The Yard. These are descriptions that I have used to identify my locations when speaking of them, but they are not referred to as these in my final show. The series of poetry based upon the Lake Erie docks have roots in my childhood but now hold the silence of a once active location. Growing up, my father, brother, and I built small fishing boats to take out on to Lake Erie. This series describes the building blocks of my childhood. “We made things... boats and such... trailer halfway in the water... the time Joey locked the keys in the Aerostar...” describes an event in which my little brother made a mistake and I fought with him. “I know Lake Erie...” is a recollection of a memory in which I got to spend time with my father.

The woodblock prints that accompany *The Docks* series are interpretations of lines in the poem. “Swans, usually seen alone found their other halves...”, relates to the print of the nuclear power plant, Fermi II, in the distance. The smoke rising from them alludes to the form of two swans embracing. The block itself is further manipulated during the printing process. In some areas, masks are used to omit the swans from the print all-together. All that remains are the towing stacks, beaming to the viewer with an orange aura. Later, the swans are emphasized, their orange crests adding context as to what the smoke resembles.

Some of the most memorable and famous Chinese woodblock prints by Hokusai, from the 1800’s series of work “Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji” relate to my prints. This famous series included *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, as well as *Red Fuji*. Most of the prints in this series solely depict nature and human interaction with nature and location as the prints in *Unnamed Places* do. However, the scenes are highly beautified, idealistic nature. In my prints I create a juxtaposition of the mundane and ugly into my imagery: such as the mayfly, nuclear power plant, and rubbish floating the water.

The River series has similar connotations both in memory of childhood but also during my adolescent experience. Much of the poem relates to my struggle with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and anxiety issues. The location was a direct means of escape, within walking distance where no one would be able to find me. “I walk anywhere...” describes this sense of wandering. It asks a series of questions that are resolved by “I’m only arriving”. The work is the airy quality of the anxiety whereas “I pour with the rain...” is the more extreme portrayal of the mood. This book reaches a climax when the compulsion to lay “down in the mud on my umbrella...” Many of the

visuals of “I pour with the rain...” show a downward stream of water. The block is fragmented to bleed off the page, printed in a vertical position. This visual language of falling relates directly to the theme of the poem. “Such a sharp drop from the highest point...” speaks of depression and the consequences of letting that state take over. However, the book reaches a resolution with the observation of a content cormorant fishing during the storm. The series for The River end with hopeful imagery.

The Yard series is about the backyard of the home that I grew up in. The theme running in these books deals with my attachments to living things and the silence of The Yard. The Yard is a place that has ties to life and death: the seasons, the death of pets, and the generational rebirth of life in the garden. “I buried the sky...” is a poem that describes the events following the death of my bird, Sky, who passed away after 14 years. The piece is a precious memory paralleling the event and the winter landscape. The second work, “I haven’t seen my sisters...” also eludes to silence, but in a different way. It is a about the camouflaged praying mantis that my family brought with us when we moved into the house I grew up in. The poem speaks of the mantis’ life in the garden and their rebirth over the years I have lived in the house. The two books in this series are a balance between life and death.

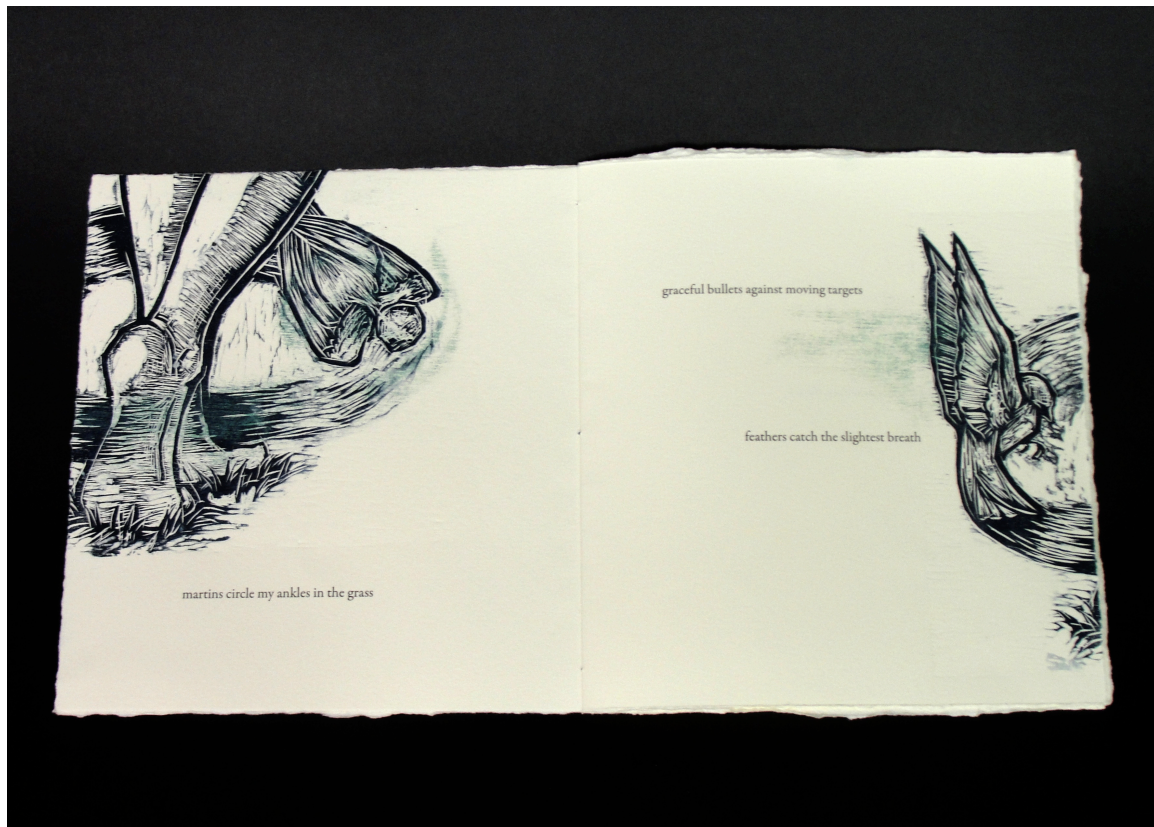
These places are all located in Michigan along the Huron River. Leaving the places unnamed, informally mapped, with memories and moods left for the reader to infer creates a dynamic between what the author feels and how the reader interprets that feeling. The woodblock prints themselves are fragmentations, just as the poetry is fragmented. The whole image is never revealed in a single spread, different segments appear over the course of the book. Each piece of *Unnamed Places* hints tangible

locations, but is just beyond reach in its ghost like existence. The collection of the set acts as puzzle pieces, giving the reader a sensuous experience without revealing too much information.

Seasons pass, the world around us changes in the blink of an eye, and daily life occurs so close to where I live. Nothing can replace that connection with the natural environment. The need for solitude is something felt by almost everyone at one point or another. I want to bring the beauty of the mundane natural environment forward through these pieces, to let readers pause and immerse themselves in spaces that are virtually unknown.



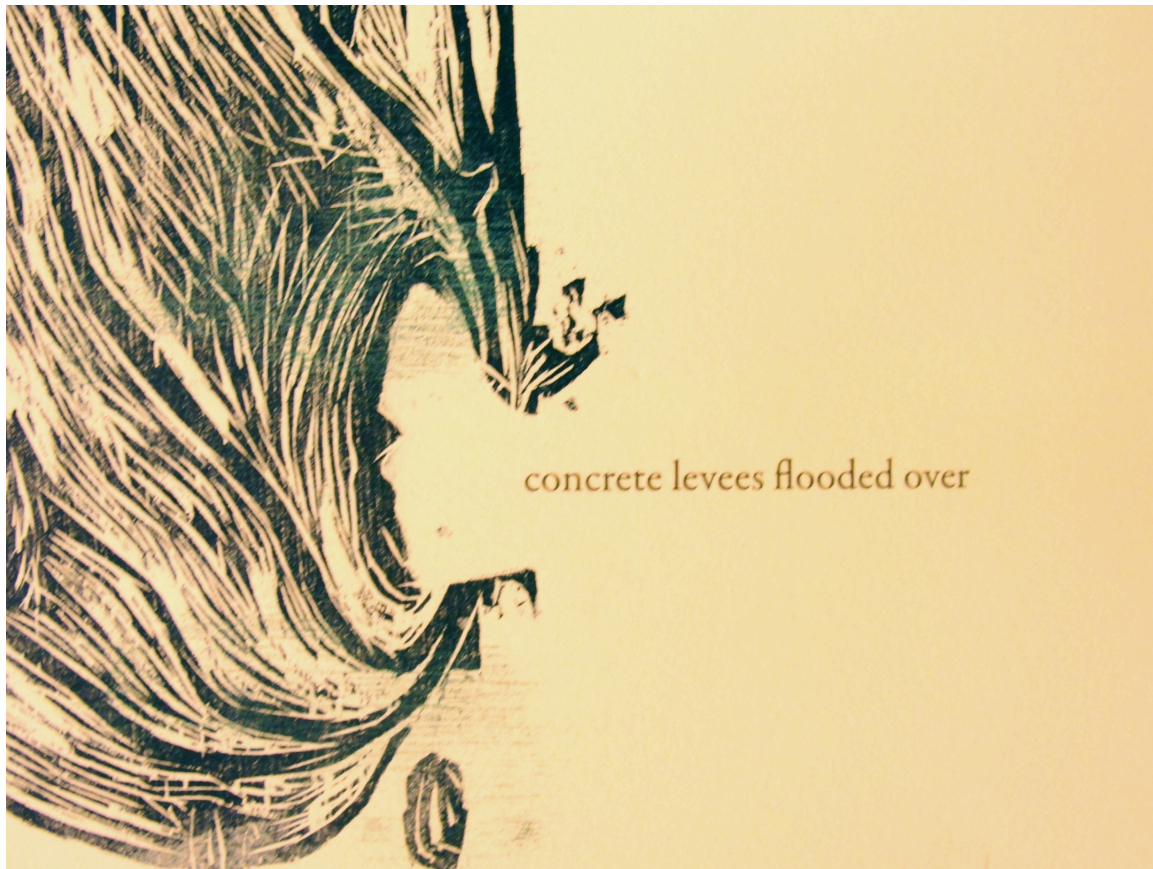
"Swans Found Their Other Halves" Lauren Korany 2012



Fragmentation of a single block, "*I walk anywhere*"
Lauren Korany, 2012



Same block matrix used in two different ways on spread, "*I was not one who jumped*"
Lauren Korany, 2012



Example of mask usage to manipulate print, "*I pour with the rain*"
Lauren Korany, 2012



Hokusai, *Red Fuji* 1831



Julie Chen, *You Are Here* 1992

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