

Field Notes

Matthew Friday

David McQueen

Michelle Stuart



WAVE HILL
GLYNDOR GALLERY

Field Notes

The acts of exploring, recording and recounting are central to the creative practice of many artists. After documenting their encounters in sketches, photographs or videos, artists return to the studio to use these notations as inspiration for their work. *Field Notes* brings together the work of three artists whose projects, in Glyndor Gallery and on the grounds, offer insights into the way that direct observation can forge profound connections with one's environment.

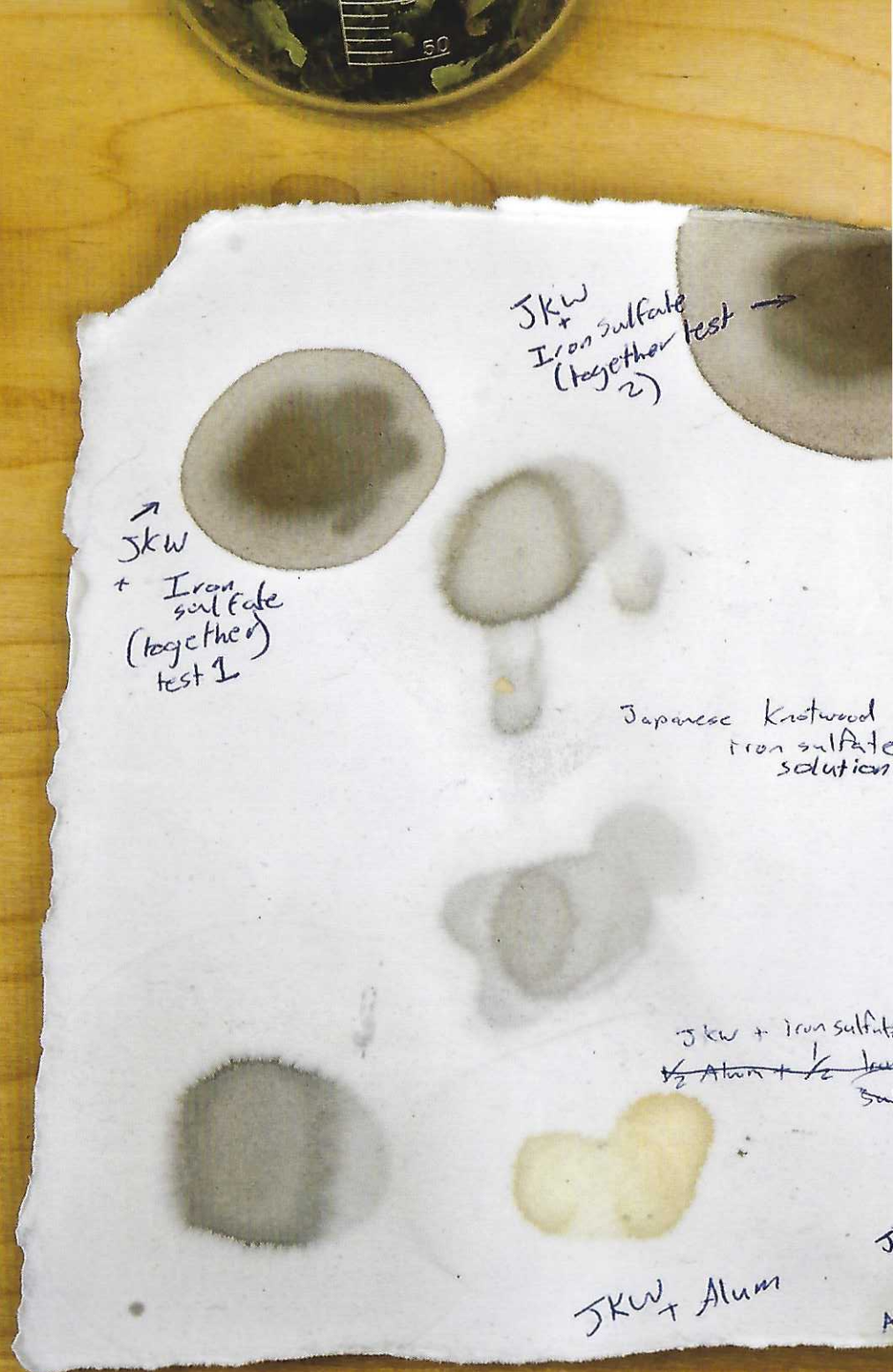
Each artist in the exhibition takes a distinct approach to conveying a sense of exploration. In the north gallery, Matthew Friday presents a portable field station, which he uses to document the changing ecologies of the lower Hudson Valley watershed. The artist will move the station onto the grounds for specially scheduled public programs. Through his sculptural installation and drawings in the center gallery, David McQueen constructs an imagined narrative between Samuel Clemens (aka Mark Twain) and his wife Olivia during their two-year sojourn in Wave Hill House (1901–03). McQueen's fabricated artifacts are displayed in the gallery and located around the grounds for visitors to discover. Throughout Michelle Stuart's remarkable career, travel and observation have fueled her intense interest in natural history and archaeology. Her drawings and photographs in the south gallery draw on her extensive travels in Morocco in the early 1980s; this body of work is being shown here for the first time in the United States.

With a distinguished history as a garden oasis and magnificent landscape, Wave Hill has inspired many to engage with the site in meaningful ways. Visitors are encouraged to wander the grounds, participate in programs and make discoveries of their own. Our Wave Hill colleagues have put together an exciting array of fall programs that offer the public opportunities to sketch, observe and create in the garden.

We are grateful to the artists for envisioning these projects for Wave Hill: to Matthew Friday and his students from the State University of New York at New Paltz; to David McQueen and Kim Foster Gallery; to Michelle Stuart, her assistant Jose Silva and Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects.

—JENNIFER MCGREGOR, GABRIEL DE GUZMAN, DANNI SHEN

MATTHEW FRIDAY
Space as Substance: Beyond the Scenic Hudson, 2015
Pigment tests





Matthew Friday

Born 1972, Middletown, CT
Lives in Kingston, NY

Space as Substance: Beyond the Scenic Hudson, 2013–present
Mobile archive, Stirling engine, Fresnel lens, rocket stove, site samples,
wood-framed painting mounted on Sintra, archival inkjet prints and
locally sourced pigments on paper, photographs, specimens
Dimensions variable
All works courtesy of the artist

Through his expansive fieldwork, Matthew Friday poses a question: How can art uncover a different way to relate to ecology, as a thoroughly active partner that demands its own ethics and aesthetics? His search for an answer is mapped through the elements assembled in Glyndor Gallery, featuring the mobile and modular research station that he created as a provisional laboratory and camping platform. Here, it becomes a library and exhibition installation. The station contains a variety of cartographic and scientific instruments for the naturalist/artist, as well as a rocket stove, Fresnel lens, mortar and pestle, water-analysis station, test tubes and books related to watersheds, the Hudson River and political ecology. Friday's own analysis of the river can be seen in the diagrammatic paintings that overlay his research and philosophy about the river with information about its health today. To create these paintings, Friday harvests a wide range of plants that play a critical role in the river's ecosystem, dries them and makes dyes using a sustainably engineered mill that he devised. Using these dyes, Friday has created a series of diagrams that explore species migration, geological and meteorological transformation of the Hudson Valley and ongoing and potential responses to these issues. The large painting is made with remediated toxic mud from General Electric's dredging sites, combined with coal collected from power plants in the Hudson Valley.

Matthew Friday engages with a wide range of media, situations and institutions, focusing on organized labor, community agriculture and watershed remediation. He has exhibited in a number of venues, including Exit Art, New York, NY; the University of Buffalo Art Department Gallery; the Cambridge Art Association, Cambridge, MA; 1708 Gallery, Richmond, VA; the University of Rochester Art Gallery; the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts; the Center for Contemporary Arts, St. Louis, MO; and Spaces, Cleveland, OH. Friday studied at the Slade School of Art, the University of New Mexico and the Whitney Independent Study Program. He has an MFA from Indiana State University. A committed educator, he is the graduate coordinator and associate professor of critical studies for the Art Department at the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz.

Jennifer McGregor:

In this project, you pose the following question: How can art uncover a different way to relate to ecology, as a thoroughly active partner that demands its own form of ethics and aesthetics? Can you elaborate on this?

Matthew Friday:

To me, as someone with feet in both activist and art camps, this question is of particular importance. The connection between ethics and aesthetics is at least as old as Plato; modernism segregated these two discourses in such a way that conversations about their relationship are particularly impoverished. Activism, which is often presumed to be one of the spheres where the question of ethics appears, tends to privilege a form of speaking that strives for transparency, clarity and public address; if there are aesthetics to be considered, they are subordinated to these goals. Conversely, we often take aesthetics to exist solely within the narrow realm of art, where it can be accommodated as entertainment, commodity or critique. For me the question of how matter shows up, in all its mucky glory, became central to thinking about how we model new ways of being in the world. One example of this is the algae dye that was harvested from beds of water chestnut, a recent and rapid colonizer that, with the algae, kills most aquatic life. Creating a production method for this dye required understanding how this process could be beneficial for the watershed. In developing paints and papers from local sources, we become accountable to the plants and animals that are also dependent upon them; our health and their health become inexorably linked. For me, ethics unfolds from this increased cycle of situated co-dependence.



You employ a collaborative approach to your work. Can you talk about the parts of this project that engage others, such as your students?

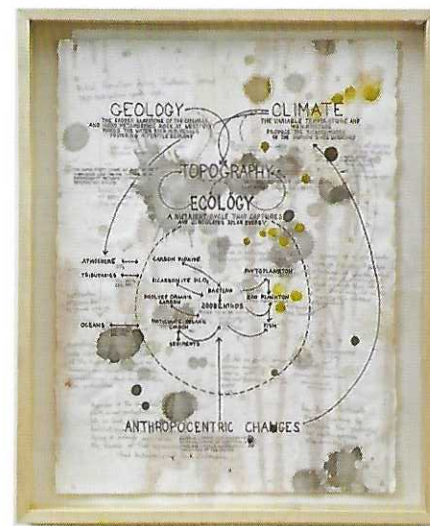
In a very real sense, the world itself is collaborative; all of our actions are determined by various forces, institutions and beings. My interest in engaging the watershed derives from a desire to think and act in a collaborative fashion with both humans and non-humans. For me there is a pressing need to develop processes that engage these collective entities and to redistribute agency. The dyes, pigments and paper developed in this exhibition were the result of a partnership with the students at SUNY New Paltz. Over the past several years, working with environmental advocacy groups such as Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Riverkeeper and the Department of Environmental Conservation, I've developed a series of public projects to cultivate environmental literacy and foster ecologically resilient systems, and much of the research behind that work informs this project. Wave Hill's unique transdisciplinary pedagogical mission really challenged me to think about how to get people to participate. By including pamphlets that ask people to think about and experiment with their relationship to water, the exhibition incorporates numerous tactile and interactive components where people can contribute directly to the exhibition.





With regard to the concept of Field Notes, your project references both the sources of information that you draw on (as seen in the library and the photographs) and the methods (the pigment-processing mill and other instruments). Can you talk about how you distill the notes into new ideas?

There is something magical about maps and diagrams; unlike images, they don't present an object but a set of relations. They seem to offer the promise of radical reconfiguration, as if, in their implementation, they could assemble the world anew. Speaking about maps and diagrams, the philosopher Gilles Deleuze made an interesting claim: they don't simply represent things but rather iteratively build upon existing connections to activate new potentials. This got me interested in how this process might be used in relation to ecological systems. The pigment-processing mill, and the plants and energy systems that power it, were the result of diagrams that mapped the ways one could assemble unique associations between art and ecology and between people and watersheds. This interplay between map and apparatus is crucial; the entire installation could be understood as a diagram that, with participation, coproduces new subjects, ecologies and politics.



Space as Substance: Beyond the Scenic Hudson is part of your ongoing exploration of the Hudson River watershed. How has this particular installation advanced your goals and propelled your inquiry?

Faced with the massive impact of global warming, deregulated power plants, crumbling infrastructure and toxic pollution, we have a pressing need to redefine our relationship to the Hudson River watershed, and much good work has already been done in this regard. Our current political/economic structure—capitalism—presents the world as a set of resources to be used while it externalizes the impacts, such as pollution, so that corporations do not have to pay for its true costs. My painting *Pure Color of the Hudson (after Rodchenko)* is a trace of these forces. Made with polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) mud obtained from a General Electric dredging site and processed waste coal from power plants in the Hudson Valley, it is both a map and an index of the radical impact capitalism has had on the watershed. As I developed this piece, I came to believe that, just as we need ways to visualize this dynamic, we require a way of working that directly challenges the relationship between how we produce and how we think about nature as a resource. This installation embodies this search for new alliances, ways of producing materials and modes of sensing the world.

LEFT
Pure Color of the Hudson (after Rodchenko), 2015
 Remediated polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)
 mud obtained from General Electric dredging
 site, processed waste coal from power plants in
 the Hudson Valley on Sintra
 72" x 48"

TOP
*The System of the Hudson River: Circulations,
 Networks and Catastrophes*, 2015
 Locally sourced plant dyes and ink on
 Arches 88 silkscreen paper
 33" x 22"