

TWO COATS OF PAINT

Award-winning NYC blogazine, primarily about painting



UNCATEGORIZED

Ideas and Influences: Brece Honeycutt

March 30, 2017 8:15 am



Brece Honeycutt, bewildered: landlines, 2017, eco-dyed damask textile, eco-dyed thread, 14 1/2 x 27 inches.



Brece Honeycutt, installation view, "Bewilder" @ Norte Maar

Artist and citizen naturalist **Brece Honeycutt** lives in Massachusetts, on a colonial farmhouse in the foothills of the Berkshire mountains. Fascinated with the history of her home and the surrounding land, she reads handwritten antique diaries at the local library, gathers old textiles, and creates natural dyes from the plants she collects on her morning walks. During her walks, she closely observes changes to the landscape, making notes that become the basis for new projects. On the occasion of her solo show at Norte Maar, Honeycutt has compiled the following list of ideas and influences that inform her work.

1. Henry David Thoreau. "It will take half a lifetime to find out where to look for the earliest flower," noted Henry David Thoreau in his journal. [1] For seven years (1851-1858), Thoreau walked **his environs around Concord, MA** and recorded his observations noting when plants sprouted, trees leafed out, and birds returned. An inspiration for us all to become Citizen Naturalists.

WALDEN;
OR,
LIFE IN THE WOODS.

BY HENRY D. THOREAU,
AUTHOR OF "A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS."



I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up. — Page 92.

BOSTON:
TICKNOR AND FIELDS.
M DCCC LIV.

2. **Citizen Naturalist.** Recently I started participating in the **USA National Phenology Network** as a Citizen Naturalist, using **Nature's Notebook app**. Phenology, as defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is "a branch of science dealing with the relations between climate and periodic biological phenomena (as in bird migration or plant flowering)." In fact, Thoreau's findings have become the basis for comparative studies being conducted by the scientist **Dr. Richard B. Primack** that demonstrate climate change and how the warming of the planet is affecting the cycles of our environs. Daily I note the returning ducks and birds, the flowering coltsfoot and the occasional spotting of a bobcat.



Coltsfoot in bloom March 9, 2017

3. **Emily Dickinson**. Like Thoreau, **Emily Dickinson** was a keen observer of plants and a magnificent gardener. I wondered what plants were found in her area of Massachusetts in the 1800s and might we have them here? Dickinson wrote to her friend, Mrs. A. P. Strong, in 1848, “The older I grow, the more I do love spring flowers. Is it so with you? While at home there were several pleasure parties of which I was a member, and in our rambles we found many and many beautiful children of Spring, which I will mention and see if you have found them—the trailing arbutus, adder’s tongue, yellow violets, liver leaf, bloodroot and many other small flowers.” [2]



Columbine in Bloom Bartholomew's Cobble, May 7, 2016

4. **Spring Ephemerals.** Indeed, all but the trailing arbutus are found on the grounds of **Bartholomew's Cobble** (Ashley Falls, MA). In a few weeks, the **Spring Wildflower Festival** will begin at the Cobble and for the second year, I will be leading tours. I am busily reviewing my notecards, guidebooks and poems that I will read to the guests. The most important "tool" is to go and walk the trail, slowly, ever so slowly. Stopping, and really looking around. As Thoreau noted, the earliest flowers are the hardest to find. Spring ephemerals—plants that grow for a short time span due to the intense sunlight and the particular soil found at the Cobble—are fleeting and glorious. This year I want to embark on a project, "To know you is to draw you."

5. **Herbariums. Plants & Place, Deerfield.** What did that particular plant look like when it first sprouted? Gardeners, Citizen Naturalists like Dickinson and Thoreau made Herbariums to both identify and document their native flora and fauna. Each year, I vow to start my own Herbarium and to jump start this year's process, I look forward to the upcoming symposium at **Historic Deerfield—Plants and Place: Native Flora of Western Massachusetts**. We will review various herbaria, including the early collected plant pages of **Stephen West Williams**.



Page of my grandfather's herbarium

6. **Susan Howe.** I had the pleasure of attending a lecture at The Morgan Library with Susan Howe and Marta Werner regarding the current exhibition *I'm Nobody! Who are you? The Life and Poetry of Emily Dickinson*. The exhibition catalog is a treasure trove of essays and images including a conversation between Werner and Howe, "Transcription and Transgression."

Werner asks Howe about seeking "small, out-of-the way archives."

Howe responds: "Yes, I also enjoy small local libraries. Usually they have local historical collections where you will find things that historicists have neglected, or you find an old book with the odd spelling from seventeenth century. I don't know. It's the peace found in the landscape of place." [3]

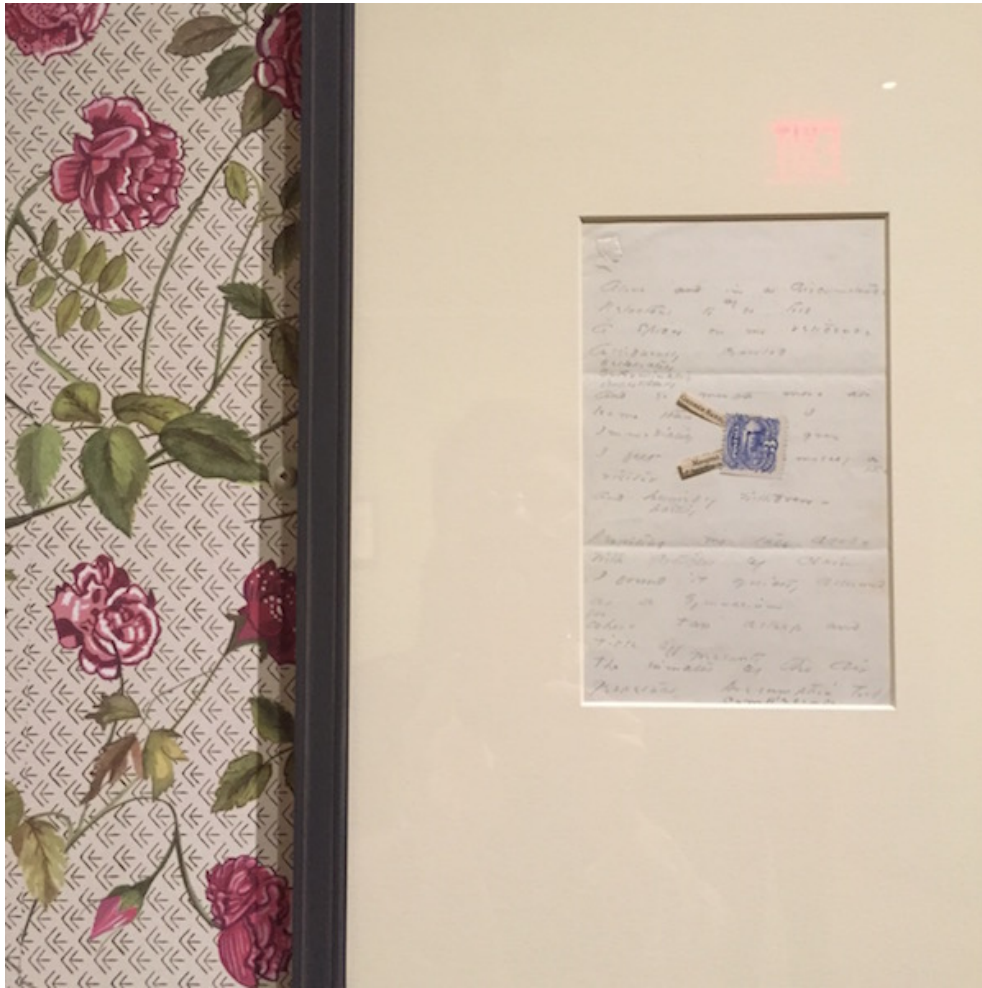


Image from exhibition of reproduced wallpaper wDickinson's bedroom and an 1870 poem collage by Dickinson

7. **Webster's Dictionary.** Howe discussed also that Dickinson used a particular dictionary, Noah Webster's 1844 *An American Dictionary of the English Language*. In a post-lecture conversation, Howe said that not only were Dickinson's words defined by this exact dictionary, but that her gaze across the pages of the dictionary influenced her writings. I procured a facsimile 1828 Webster (also found in the Dickinson home) and have been looking up words found in her poetry, Thoreau's writings and even to see if a spring ephemeral can be found on the pages of this book, evidencing that a plant was very much in residence. What a treat to read Jennifer Schuessler's article "[A Journey into the Merriam-Webster Word Factory](#)" in the March 22 edition of the New York Times.

8. **Mending. Sewing. Georgia O'Keeffe. Alabama Chanin.** The current exhibition *Georgia O'Keeffe: Living Modern* at the Brooklyn Museum charts her life through drawings, paintings, photographs and clothing. Her friend Anita Pollitzer noted that O'Keeffe was "extremely industrious, her hands are seldom idle. She loves to sew—not fancy things, but Chinese silk blouses and loose clothes that become her." One wall label noted her to be a "conscientious mender" of clothes.

Inspired by [Alabama Chanin](#) a few years ago, I found the determination to make some of my own clothes. Stitch by stitch.



Note the mending on this blouse made by Georgia O'Keeffe

9. Clean Air. Clean Water. Rachel Carson. Where will we be without clean air and clean water? After watching PBS's documentary *American Experience: Rachel Carson*, I sought the pages of *Silent Spring*, first published in 1962. Carson's intensely factual, yet lyrically written, scientific book exposed the devastation occurring from the use of synthetic chemicals on all living beings.

Carson states:

"If the Bill of Rights contains no guarantee that a citizen shall be secure against lethal poisons distributed either by private individuals or by public officials, it is surely only because our forefathers, despite their considerable wisdom and foresight, could conceive of no such problem.

"I contend, furthermore, that we have allowed these chemicals to be used with little or no advance investigation of their effect on soil, water, wildlife, and man himself. Future generations are unlikely to condone our lack of prudent concern for the integrity of the natural world that supports all life." [4]

10. Wendell Berry. Now. Wendell Berry asks us to remain in the present with our actions in regards to climate change and land abuse. He posits that if we are only thinking of what can be accomplished in the future, we are missing the

opportunity for what we can do right now. He invites us to “save energy now for the future” by beginning with small acts today. Berry states,

“...so few as just one of us can save energy right now by self-control, careful thought, and remembering the lost virtue of frugality. Spending less, burning less, traveling less may be relief. A cooler, slower life may make us happier, more present to ourselves, and to others who need us to be present.” [5]



Brece Honeycutt, installation view of cheese grater monoprints, 2017, Norte Maar.

“**Bewilder: New Work by Brece Honeycutt**,” Norte Maar, Cypress Hills, Brooklyn, NY. Through April 23, 2017.

Footnotes:

[1] Henry David Thoreau, *Thoreau’s Wildflowers*, edited by Geoff Wisner, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), pg. 16.

[2] Emily Dickinson, *The Letters of Emily Dickinson, 1845-1886*, Google Docs, page 38.

[3] Susan Howe and Marta Werner, “Transcription and Transgression,” *The Networked Recluse: The Connected World of Emily Dickinson*, (Amherst: Amherst College Press, 2017), pg. 135.

[4] Rachel Carson *Silent Spring*, (Greenwich: Fawcett Books, 1962), pg. 22.

[5] Wendell Berry, *Our Only World Ten Essays*, (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2015), pgs. 174, 175.

Related posts:

Update: Peter Soriano’s observations

Gregory Amenoff: Inside and Out

Eric Aho shadows his father at the New Britain Museum

Tags: [Brece Honeycutt](#), [Ideas and Influences](#)

10 Comments



Josie merxk

March 31, 2017 at 8:30 am

I find this artist's work very inspiring and will be passing on to naturalists at work in the field.

As a recycling artist I feel sympathetic to the mending saving composting of all things made for our use the first time around, and deserving of rediscovery.

Bibliography :beautiful.

Josie Merck



Frances Hynes

March 31, 2017 at 8:49 am

I hope to see the show by Brece Honeycutt and I share these ideas. I do gardening in a small yard in Queens. I mourn over development and for all the displaced plants and creatures. My small space I feel is a little oasis in the city for small snakes and toads and plants that just grow up with little intervention from myself.



Mary Zeran

March 31, 2017 at 1:30 pm

What an interesting post. I loved reading about Brece Honeycutt's work, but especially how her life and art making meld into one another. Thank you!!!



Florence Suerig

April 1, 2017 at 6:34 pm

This artist's influences are inspiring.



Peggy Honeycutt

April 3, 2017 at 11:35 pm

Yes, yes very interesting and so is Brece interesting! She does so many interesting things, in her wonderful art studio, at the farm where she and her husband live and grow many of their foods. Brece works with nature in so many creative ways, she definitely is to be admired.



Brece

April 13, 2017 at 7:50 am

Thanks, Josie. Indeed, one never knows what will pop up along one's path—be it plant material or an object—all part of the discovery.



Brece

April 13, 2017 at 7:51 am

Frances, your green space sounds divine. I know that the flora and fauna appreciate what you do. If you don't get a chance to see the exhibition, there is a catalog on the Norte Maar website. Cheers.



Brece

April 13, 2017 at 7:53 am

Mary, thanks for reading the post. I very much appreciated the opportunity to write about place, objects and especially books. Cheers.

Brece



April 13, 2017 at 7:54 am

Florence, Where would we be without books? & landscape for that matter. Thanks for reading the post. Best.



Brece

April 13, 2017 at 7:56 am

Thanks, Aunt Peggy. You have been an inspiration for me. I recall walking into your studio as a child, for that experience opened up a new world to me. Women could be artists. And, then your gardens—divine worlds unto themselves. Thank you.

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The advertisement features a blue header with the school's name and a photograph of an artist painting a large, colorful abstract work in a studio. A person is also seen in the foreground, possibly a student or another artist.




Anki King: Waiting

Katharine Dufault:
To Be In The Same World

JUNE 22 to JULY 17

THE PAINTING CENTER

The exhibition banner shows two artworks side-by-side. The left one is a dark, moody painting of two figures, and the right one is a landscape with trees and a moon.



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The graphic has a black background with the text in white and red.

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Popular



Cézanne's pursuit If there's one word that sums up Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), the subject of this massive MoMA exhibition, it's "struggle."



Two Coats Selected Gallery Guide: June 2021 A painting-centric guide to art exhibitions in New York City, featuring Wendy White at Denny Dimin, Josh Abelow's take on abstraction at Magenta Plains, and Alyssa Fanning at Platform Project ...



Sue Havens: Encoding history Sue Havens' history – her searching and sometimes painful life experiences and her adventurousness in the studio – are distinctly encoded, like a unique double helix of molecular structure, in ...

Carl D'Alvia's wry subversion Carl



D'Alvia's show at Hesse Flatow, "Sometimes Sculpture Deserves a Break," is a playful, irony-laden take on the hyper-masculine minimalist sculpture canon.



Invitation to Pause "Pause" is a restful, thoughtful summer group show featuring Bill Albertini, Stephen Bron, Eric Brown, Sharon Butler, Peter Krashes, Sylvia Plimack Mangold, Michelle Vaughan, and Andrew Witkin.



Art and TV: Professor T, an extraordinary burst of mind Koen de Bouw as Professor Jasper Teerlinck on Professor T Contributed by Laurie Fendrich / Boy did the otherwise on-the-mark Guardian

television critic Lucy Mangan get it wrong.
In her 2017 ...



**Closed-Eye Hallucinations
with Jennifer Coates** Paul

Whiting talked with Jennifer Coates about her experience while stricken with Covid, her strategy for continuing to work while stuck in bed, and how she developed a series of ...



**History: Artist-run galleries
in NYC in the 1950s and 1960s**

At artist-run galleries, the conversation centers on art rather than commerce. Alternative spaces provide a place for unknown and under-recognized artists to mount exhibitions, for curators to organize their first thematic shows, and for established artists ...



**Scott Daniel Ellison: "Every ar
some way self-taught"** Scott

Daniel Ellison's images of flora and fauna are suffused with personhood--trees wave bony limbs, bats have human faces, and animals wear jewelry. Working at a small scale and focusing ...



**Studio visit: Susanna Heller's
endless strength** Paintings in

Susanna Heller's

Williamsburg studio

Contributed by Medrie MacPhee / Before Susanna Heller's paintings were wrapped and shipped to Toronto for her upcoming solo show at Olga Korper, I brought Sharon Butler ...

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Source: Hyperallergic Art | Published on 06-28-21 | By Elisa Wouk Almino

Review: In 'Tevye in New York!' at the Wallis, 'Fiddler' fiddles once again

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**The Morgan Library & Museum Presents
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