

## Art in Nature

Online exhibit captures our unique relationship to the environment

BY CHERYL DELLECESE

Photographer and multimedia artist Gabrielle Russomagno '85 was looking forward to fall 2020. Originally, her plan was to begin an artist-in-residence post at Smith and create installations that addressed issues of climate change at the MacLeish Field Station in Whately, Massachusetts. Her work is part of the Arts Afield program established by the Center for the Environment, Ecological Design, and Sustainability (CEEDS). Then the pandemic struck, making it impossible for Russomagno to launch her project and work with students.

Not wanting to miss an opportunity to raise awareness about art and the environment, she quickly thought of an alternative: Invite the Smith community to produce art that reflects the natural world and how it relates to their lives from wherever they find themselves.

Called *Elsewhere*, the project consists of a comprehensive website that features photos, art, music, writing and videos from Smith alums, students, faculty and staff. "It is a celebration of our larger community and the creative ways that we connect to the natural world to get us through these difficult times," says Joanne Benkley AC '02, assistant director of CEEDS.

Benkley likens each submission to a "portal that invites you into another place." Russomagno was struck by the intimacy of each piece. "Some pictures feel like portraits, where stones in the water have the same kind of personality as someone sitting on a bench or at a café," she says.

Russomagno hopes that *Elsewhere* brings wider attention to CEEDS and the Arts Afield initiative, which encourages work in the arts and humanities that incorporates themes of nature and sustainability. "CEEDS and Arts Afield at MacLeish offer art and nature in the same place, providing exponential possibilities for moments of wonder," she says.

Laure Biron '06 snapped this photo in Newtown, Pennsylvania.



ABOVE: Joshua Tree National Park by Alana Miller '10. RIGHT: Image by Risa Bernstein Sodi '79.

