

ARTIST STATEMENT, BETWIXT

This work explores the shifting parameters, structure, and physicality of the concept of home. In a globe where both humans and nature are becoming increasingly displaced and interconnected, I create fantasies that are suspended somewhere between the imaginary worlds of isolated human communities and pure nature. I find this fantasy both alluring and fearful, where I yearn to move back in time to an idyllic, unadulterated environment, and at the same time dread being overpowered by it.

As an American living and raising daughters in Mexico, I use the influence of surrealism and magical realism in these semi-autobiographical works. I combine imagery of my daughters and myself with imagery of nature, birds and nests. The juxtaposition of these elements expresses my conflicted yearning for and fear of both wildness and domesticity, my conflicting desires for freedom and control.

I began this series at a time of two conflated events: the loss of the house in which I raised my two daughters, and my trajectory toward empty nest as my children move into and through their teenage years. Birds symbolize the yearning for freedom, and the nest represents the fragility and temporality of home.

Each work contains anywhere from 2 to 20+ images, which I have overlaid, altered, repeated, and blended together on the computer. I select images of both of my daughters and myself, and combine them with landscapes we have travelled, nests I have found near our home, and birds, some of which we have seen, others which my children found dying and which I scanned post-mortem. The photographs I choose to use in each piece are not chronological: I combine photographs taken many years apart.

Each compilation is like a dream to me. I start with one or two photos that hold personal meaning, and then add elements in an organic, unpremeditated way. As I work my imagination opens. I allow myself the freedom of letting each photograph and blend of photographs guide me. Every element that I add reveals another image or texture needed. I search through my personal library, and/or go out and photograph the things I feel the composition needs. As I add new images I take others away. The process moves forward and backwards in a laborious but compelling path, each addition and subtraction of elements leading me onward. I seek a balance between recognition and implausibility in compositions that suspend a sense of reality and invite something new. I add many layers of black and white toned hues to add to the richness and otherworldliness of the imagery. When the composition feels right I modify the elements to make them seamless and believable in the way a dream is believable: irrational but emotionally potent.

-Ri Anderson