



The Art of Oika: Nantucket

Presented at Maria Mitchell Association

June 15 - July 12, 2023

Oika Art is art that carries the intelligence of nature to culture.

Many of us alive today inhabit the arc of a pendulum that swings between material abundance and existential dread. We find our modern condition getting more precarious, and less tenable, with each news cycle.

But a subtle sound is arising from the background cacophony. It is a faint but familiar melody heard only by the most sensitive among us. The more we listen, the more we understand, and the more hopeful we become.

We sense this intelligence as a message from nature, and a relationship that discloses a new but ancient modality for belonging to the Earth. It feels like living in alignment with the creative life force of the universe. We call this feeling Oika. Oika is the ecological intelligence of nature, felt and expressed through humans.

This is an exhibition of four Oika Artists and an ecologist who have been listening and learning from the nature of Nantucket. Each artist brings their own context, experiences and sensitivities. We are inspired by our unique lived-experiences of Oika, but also guided by the deep, ecological principles of Oika as interpreted through the constraints of language.

The blend of scientific insights and artistic expressions in this exhibition are as diverse as the contributors' individual origin stories. But we are all unified by the aim to heal our people (all people), our places (all places) and our home planet (this planet). We offer these tributes in the spirit of right-relationship to all Earthlings; as gestures to Leopold's Land Ethic, which reminds us;

“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.” – Aldo Leopold

– Dr. Rich Blundell, 2023

*love is a place
& through this place of love move (with brightness of peace) all places
yes is a world
& in this world of yes live (skillfully curled) all worlds
-- E. E. Cummings*

Maria Mitchell Gallery
33 Washington Street
Nantucket, MA 02554





The Art of Oika: Nantucket
Gallery Image List

From Gallery entrance, heading left into the sunroom and around:

Coexistence
Acrylic on canvas
30"x40"
Robert Peters



Time Travelers
Acrylic on canvas
20"x16"
Robert Peters



The Grey Lady
Graphite on paper
21"x27" (framed)
Rita Leduc
2023



The Grey Lady (Collage)
Mixed media
11"x14" (framed)
Rita Leduc
2023

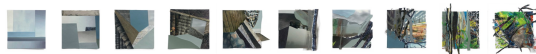




The New World
Acrylic on canvas
24"x24"
Robert Peters



Grey (Eco)Tones
Mixed media
76"x4"
Rita Leduc
2023



Sonic Weave
Native grass and sound
Dimensions variable
Dena Haden + Dakota Clearwater La Croix
2023

Baby Maushop
Acrylic on canvas
46"x37"
Robert Peters



Save the Trees
Graphite on paper
52"x30"
Robert Peters





Mother Mountain

grass, bamboo, grapevine,
sheeps' wool
6' x 2' x 2'
Dena Haden
2023



Limbus Sea

grass, bamboo, cedar,
grapevine, sheeps' wool
15" x 22" x 10"
Dena Haden
2023



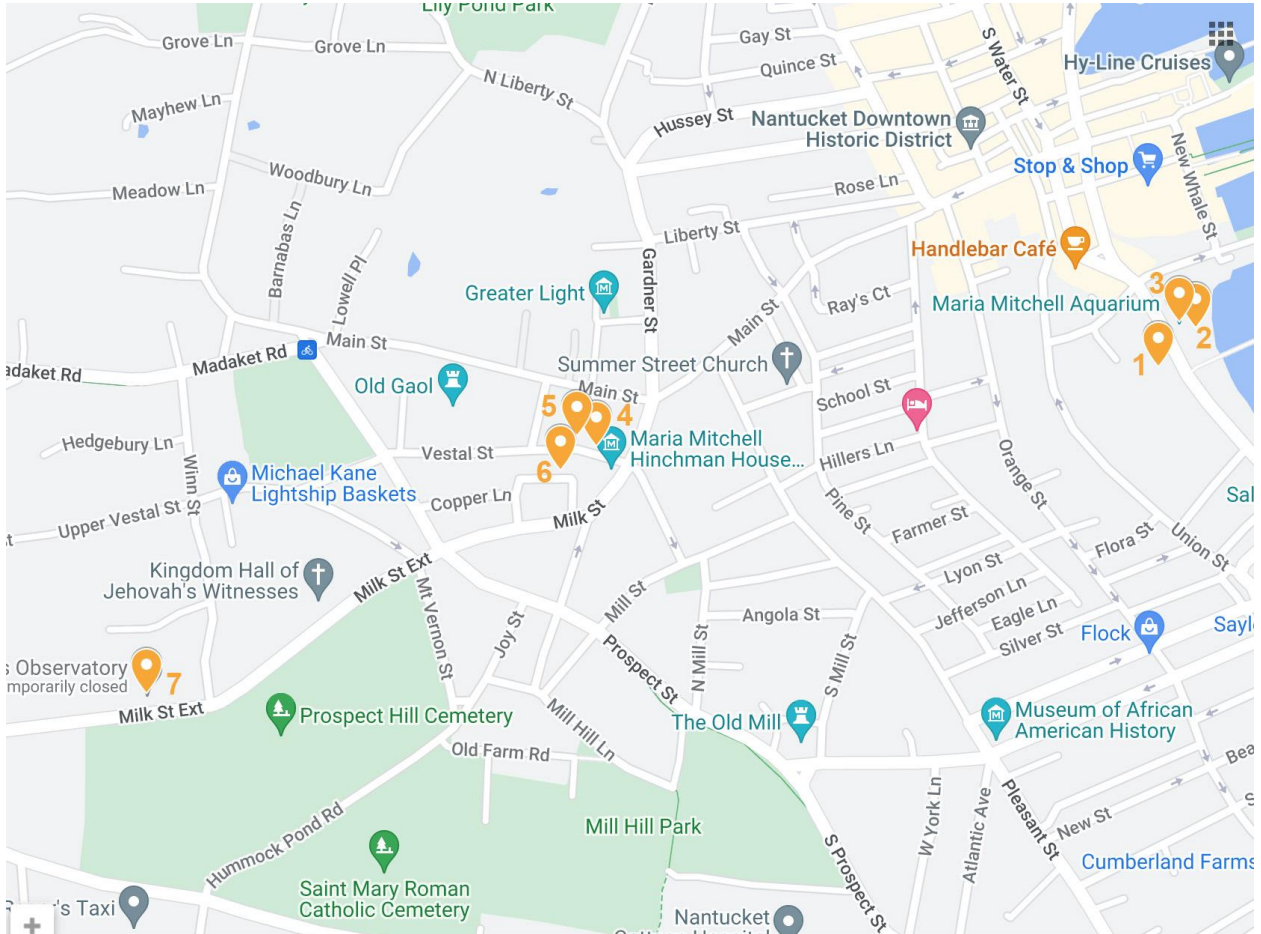
Together

Watercolor on paper
16" x 13"
Dena Haden
2023





The Art of Oika: Nantucket Site-Specific Artworks + Experiences



The Art of Oika: Nantucket

- 1 📍 Gallery + Leduc's "Field Mark (33 Washington)"
- 2 📍 Peters' Stomp Dance
- 3 📍 Leduc's "Field Mark (Aquarium)"
- 4 📍 La Croix's sound walk starts HERE
- 5 📍 Leduc's "Field Mark (Vestal St. Observatory)"
- 6 📍 Haden's "Earth Womb (Nantucket)"
- 7 📍 Leduc's "Field Mark (Loines Observatory)"

To View Map on Phone:

open phone camera



aim at QR code



tap pop-up banner



Maria Mitchell Gallery
33 Washington Street
Nantucket, MA 02554





The Art of Oika: Nantucket
Site-Specific Artworks + Experiences

1. Gallery Exhibition

Location: 33 Washington St.

1. *Field Mark (33 Washington)*

Location: 33 Washington St. (on fence upon entry into driveway)

Mixed media in upcycled acrylic

6.25"x6.25"

Rita Leduc

2023

2. *Stomp Dance for Healing*

Location: Land Bank green across from 33 Washington St.

Approx. 90'x45'

Robert Peters + Mashpee Dancers

2023

3. *Field Mark (Aquarium)*

Location: 28 Washington St.

Mixed media in upcycled acrylic

6.25"x6.25"

Rita Leduc

2023

4. *Head, Hand and Heart: A Geo-Locative Sound Walk*

Location: 1 Vestal Street

Audio inc. narrative stories, local soundscapes, and audio from Dr. Rich Blundell and Robert Peters

Walk begins at Maria's birthplace and moves through town, to the Stomp Grounds, ocean, and culminates at the Maria Mitchell Gallery.

Dakota Clearwater La Croix aka Curious Lightning

2023

5. *Field Mark (Vestal St. Observatory)*

Location: 3 Vestal St. (on fence)

Mixed media in upcycled acrylic

6.25"x6.25"

Rita Leduc



2023

6. *Earth Womb (Nantucket)*

Location: 4 Vestal St. (hanging from tree into pond)

grass, grapevine, cedar, alpaca fiber, found animal bones, rocks
variable size

Dena Haden

2023

7. *Field Mark (Loines Observatory)*

Location: 59 Milk St. (on deck stair railing)

Mixed media in upcycled acrylic

6.25"x6.25"

Rita Leduc

2023



The Art of Oika: Nantucket

About the Participants

Dena Haden

About the Artwork

Inside Gallery: Through the intentional act of collecting, growing and building organic materials, Haden creates moments in time to honor nature. Her exploration on Nantucket is represented within her works through remembrance, collecting and gathering, and processing weaving techniques passed down from generations that were used in functional craftsmanship specifically on Nantucket, MA. She has created two vessels that intersect Nantucket Basket Weaving with traditional fishing net construction. These pieces were built in a very slow meditative process allowing the works to unfold and embody the native plant materials in which the vessels are created from; telling the story of place, while embodying an open vessel to hold space, light, and moments of healing and what that expression might look like in a physical form. One vessel remains stretched and open, while the other is more dense and woven tightly, allowing the play between the two works in space to interact in a visual and emotional correspondence.

Outside Artwork: Nantucket is dense with history and embedded with natural habitats for exploring. Haden's outdoor installations explore the opportunity of "place" as presented to her with possibility. *Earth Womb (Nantucket)* is one of four large scale vessels in a series that embodies life and the land, weaving parts of the actual materials found on site to create a vessel that hangs and gently weaves back into the ground. These vessels activate the concept of 'Genius Loci,' evoking the spirit of a place that led this piece to come into form; to reconceive and gestate that which is before us and give back to mother earth with gratitude for that which she has given to us; in a constant state of renewal and appreciation.

Biography

Dena Haden is an installation and fiber artist from New Bedford, MA. She received her BFA from UMass Dartmouth and her MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia. She has an extensive exhibition record with numerous solo and group exhibitions in Boston, Philadelphia, and around the Northeast of the United States. Haden has also exhibited internationally in Europe; Italy, Turkey and Japan. She was recently enrolled in a residency at the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Tennessee, Baroque Blue Residency in Nardo, Italy and is currently working in collaboration with Oika and the Maria Mitchell Association on Nantucket, MA as well as the Primo Piano Projects in Lecce, Italy. In addition to her own art practice, Haden is the founder and Director of the Co-Creative Center, a collaborative workspace for artists and is the co-founder for SuperflatNB, a Mural Arts organization in New Bedford, Massachusetts.



The Art of Oika: Nantucket

About the Participants

Dakota Clearwater La Croix

About the Artwork

Inside Gallery: Together, La Croix and Haden expand their traditional practices to explore and deepen their relationships to Nantucket's natural wisdom. Their collaboration weaves a tapestry of place-based stories, materials and media transporting and reimagining the Windswept Cranberry Bog visited during their residency on the island. The installation invites the visitor to feel and rediscover the spirit of place through visual, somatic and auditory senses. Sparking inquiry beyond a point of view, it enters into a space of being and remembrance that they are a part of, rather than apart from, the natural world.

Outside Artwork: Head, Hand and Heart: A Geo-Locative Sound Walk is a playful, time-traveling audio walk that invites us to rediscover our true nature and a fresh re-remembering as we re-connect Head, Hand and Heart. With the help of a hybrid robot named AWMI-M3-4170, local soundscapes, and insights from Dr. Rich Blundell and Robert Peters, the experience tells the stories of Nantucket's enchantments. The walk begins at Maria's birthplace (1 Vestal St.) and moves through town, to the Stomp Grounds, ocean, and culminates at the Maria Mitchell Gallery.

Biography

Dakota Clearwater La Croix's meraki-filled cinematic audio and video creations are sparked by a radical curiosity to rediscover story exploration and story-telling as an invitation beyond traditional narratives. His multi-media practice learns from the spirit of nature and leans into the alchemy of imagination and technologies guided by ancient wisdom and modern insights that evoke poetic potential and wonder in our relationships with space as it transmutes into place. Inspired by the perspective of experience, expressions include walking for nearly a year in North America, creating audio stories while living in a disaster zone, and cultivating various storytelling collaborations and experiments in various mediums that explore the intimate and meaningful relationships to nature and one another.

La Croix's creative and consulting projects have come into being with and been recognized by foundations and nonprofits and have appeared at major film festivals as well as in national and local television, radio, and print media such as Voice for National Mob Museum, Mystic Seaport Whaling Museum and Discovery Channel's Investigation Discovery, Outside Magazine, Twisp Works Foundation, Edinburgh Film Festival and NYC's IFP Marketplace. La Croix is a graduate of Emerson College.



The Art of Oika: Nantucket

About the Participants

Rita Leduc

About the Artwork

Inside Gallery: Leduc's visual inquiry on Nantucket explores the changes in character of the color grey as it traverses from the Grey Lady's port and downtown area to the forests and moors. It is an investigation into what can be unearthed in an ecosystem's "grey areas," interrogating the very existence of boundaries until they break character and dissolve.

When acquainting herself with a place, it is important to Leduc that she utilize a variety of processes; each material and method provides an alternative means of understanding. By diversifying her engagement with an environment, she can absorb and participate from a myriad of perspectives. The effect of this is not dissimilar to the conflation of vantage points in her *Field Marks* (outside installations) or the amplification of continuity offered by the "grey" artworks (inside gallery): the multiplicity of approaches makes *her* more porous, "smoothing out" her own boundary between self and world.

Outside Artwork: Leduc created four *Field Marks* located at 33 Washington St., the Maria Mitchell Aquarium, Vestal St. Observatory, and Loines Observatory. To do so, she first collected "visual data" at each location by applying fabric, paint, vinyl, marker, and other provisional materials onto a clear acrylic sheet secured on-site. She did this from two, 180-degree perspectives at each location. In the studio, Leduc then merged the two data sets from each location, effectively "smoothing out" each vantage point into one. The resulting collages are sandwiched between upcycled acrylic and installed at their origin sites, converging the two perspectives and inviting reflection on continuity, duality, and change.

Biography

Rita Leduc is an interdisciplinary artist living in New York's Hudson Valley. Her overarching practice is led by spirited explorations into ecosystems: environmental, human, and organizational. In addition to her collaboration with Oika / MMA, current engagements include Artist-in-Residence at Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest (also with Oika), Creator/Director of GROUNDWORK, member of The Place Collective, and participant in Arts@FSMLs. Leduc has shown her work globally; current/upcoming exhibitions include Stand4 Gallery (Brooklyn, NY) and The Museum of the White Mountains (Plymouth, NH). Her work has been supported, published, presented, and workshopped widely; recent examples include *Unpsychology* magazine's "An Anthology of Warm Data," and Art.Earth's conference, "Sentient Performativities: Thinking Alongside the Human." Leduc received her MFA from Mason Gross School of the Arts (Rutgers), Post-Baccalaureate Certificate from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and BA from the University of Pennsylvania. She teaches at Rutgers University and Ramapo College.



The Art of Oika: Nantucket

About the Participants

Robert Peters

About the Artwork

Inside Gallery: Peters' visual art and poetry draws heavily on two traditions: his Wampanoag heritage and his African American lineage. Peters' contributions to this exhibition are colorful renderings of his experiences and memories.

Outside Artwork: In association with Dr. Rich Blundell of Oika, Peters is bringing Wampanoag tribe-members to Nantucket to perform a ceremonial stomp dance and invites public participation in the healing process. *Stomp Day Nantucket* is environmental art and the stomp tradition combined wherein participants stomp a path into the grass. It is a healing dance dedicated to stomping out the culture of addiction, racism, depression, disease and ailments associated with environmental decline. Participants will be smudged and instructed on the dance prior to entering.

The stomp dance event will take place across the street from the gallery during the run of the exhibition. Peters' design (the impression of the path left by the dancers) will remain as part of the exhibition and be maintained for as long as the community wishes by its continued use.

Biography

Robert Peters is a Mashpee Wampanoag artist, writer, fire keeper and keeper of indigenous oral traditions. He believes that in the telling of our stories through art, words and actions we take back a measure of power that people have given away. Peters has used his art, ideas and writings to help combat addiction among indigenous people. He introduced the use of the traditional stomp dance to be performed at powwows in dedication to the families impacted by addiction. He published his first book "Da Goodie Monsta" in 2009, began writing and designing illustrations in 2011, and is currently working on a series of acrylic paintings called "13 Moons."

Peters' family moved to the Wampanoag home land of Mashpee when he was ten. There his father, Russell, entered a life-long battle to regain land and sovereignty for the Mashpee Wampanoag People. As a child, Peters witnessed the 1976 Wampanoag Indian land claim, trial and the tribe's quest for Federal Recognition.

During 24 years of service with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Peters observed the culture of Boston's subway system working as a motorman, union steward and at times, a civil rights activist on the MBTA's Orange Line. Now retired, Peters focuses on writing, painting, and working with youth.



The Art of Oika: Nantucket

About the Participants

Dr. Rich Blundell

About Oika

Oika is the intelligence of nature that can be felt and expressed by humans. It is also a growing community of creative humans committed to feeling and expressing it.

We are in a wicked mess. Any sober analysis of our situation reveals systemic dysfunction across personal, social and planetary scales. Oika sees these patterns as originating from a false separation of humans from nature. The same thinking that disconnects us from nature also disconnects us from each other.

The cumulative impact of this fiction has brought us to our shared moment of crisis and uncertainty. The only certainty now is that we are all in this together.

But we live in a cosmos that also lives in us. This universal truth becomes personal through intimacy with nature. Not just the grand nature of galaxies, oceans and rainforests, but also the small nature accessible in backyards, bodies and open minds. Oika believes this kind of intimacy with nature also presents a way to realize a better future.

We are witnessing a revolution where science is revealing a long-forgotten meta-pattern. It is a pattern familiar to animals, children, mothers and indigenous perspectives. This is not about any particular science, but how all the sciences are validating a consilient story that is everyone's story. Oika presents this story and within it, the principles upon which to build a new reality.

To restore reciprocal flourishing, we must rediscover this story as our story and the intelligence embedded within us. Through science, art and the creation of culture we align our creativity with nature to discover, decipher, heal, and feel the nature to which we belong. There is a new beauty waiting to be discovered.

The future is beautiful. Or there isn't one.

Biography

Dr. Rich Blundell is an ecologist and philosopher working at the convergence of art, science, nature and culture. As the Principle Investigator of Oika (www.oika.com), his research examines how transformation happens across the scales of person, place and planet. As a communicator, Blundell tells a scientific story of the universe that includes art and human creativity as natural phenomena. His goal is to make the continuity of nature palpable. Blundell has received numerous grants and awards including, an ongoing TIDES innovators award, The National Science Foundation grant for Science Out There, the Michael Brinkman Award, The Deep Time Values video award for *An Earth Story*, The Macquarie University Innovation in Scholarship award for The Cosmosis1 Explorer app, an Oculus Creators Award for *In the Light of the Forest* VR, and nomination for the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival Best New Media for *Saving Grey's Zebra*. Blundell's creative video work has appeared on PBS, National Geographic and numerous social media platforms.

Oika

Maria Mitchell Gallery
33 Washington Street
Nantucket, MA 02554

