



HEADLANDS
CENTER FOR THE ARTS

BE PART OF THE POTENTIAL

Headlands Center for the Arts' 2018 Year End Campaign is a call to invest in the potential of visionary artists, ideas, and creative processes.

To help illustrate the potential of the creative process, we sent sheets of cyanotype paper to five Headlands Artists and Alumni: Tavarus Blackmonster, Klea McKenna, Brittany Nelson, Edra Soto, and Barry Underwood. Along with the prints they made from the paper, these artists shared reflections on their approach to the project and thoughts on their time in residence at Headlands.

Follow **#partofthepotential** on Instagram to browse some of the cyanotypes our supporters are making.

TAVARUS BLACKMONSTER

GRADUATE FELLOW 2018-19

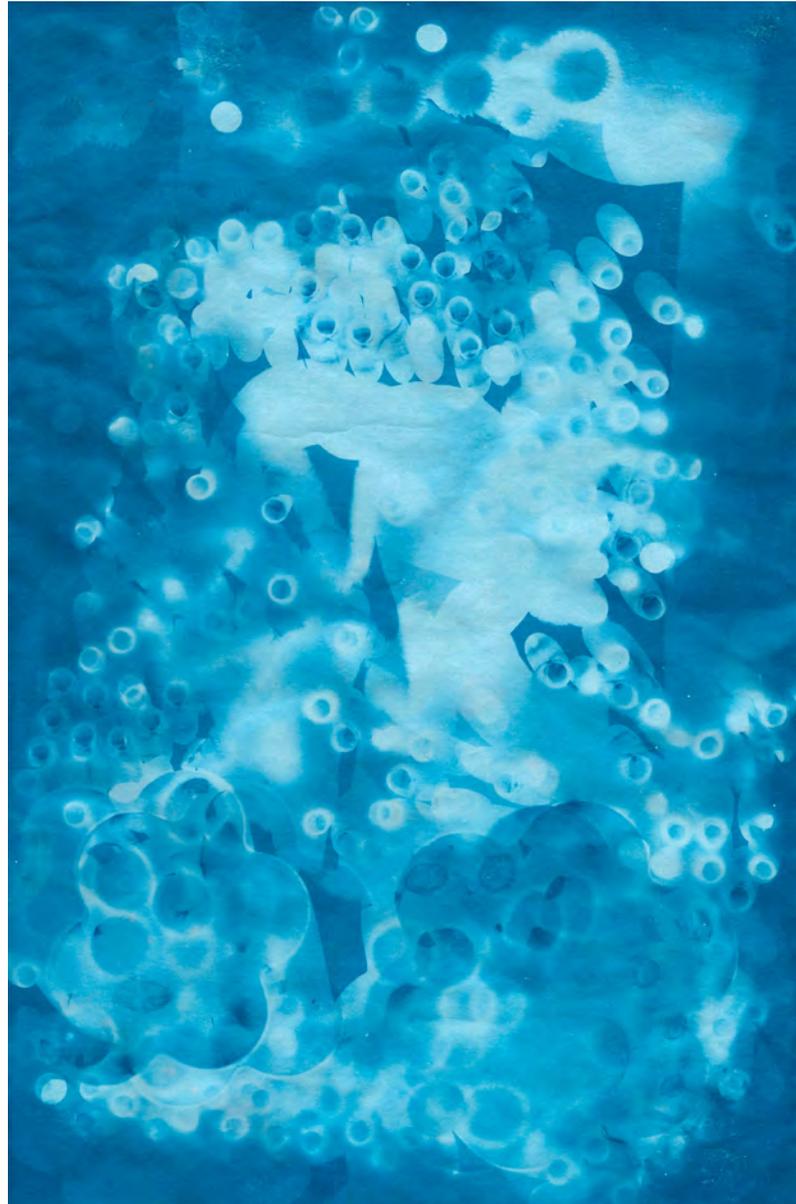
ABOUT THE ARTIST

Tavarus Blackmonster is an American contemporary artist based in California. He has a BA and an MA in Art Studio from California State University Sacramento and an MFA in Art Studio from University of California-Davis. He is a 2018-19 Graduate Fellow at Headlands Center for the Arts.

How did you approach this project?

I tried to have fun. I worked together with my daughter and partner to make the prints, placing items from our house directly on the photo paper. It was fun to watch the paper expose under the direct sun. The only hard part was keeping our dog off of the print.

One of the prints is very domestic. It has lots of household items and toys that spread out in the composition. My work is influenced by my family, and this print is no different. The other print is very abstract, which to me works with the medium. The subject in this case is loose, but my intention was more a visual experience.



Cyanotype print by Tavarus Blackmonster.



*Tavarus Blackmonster's studio at Headlands in 2018.
Photo by Kelsey Floyd.*

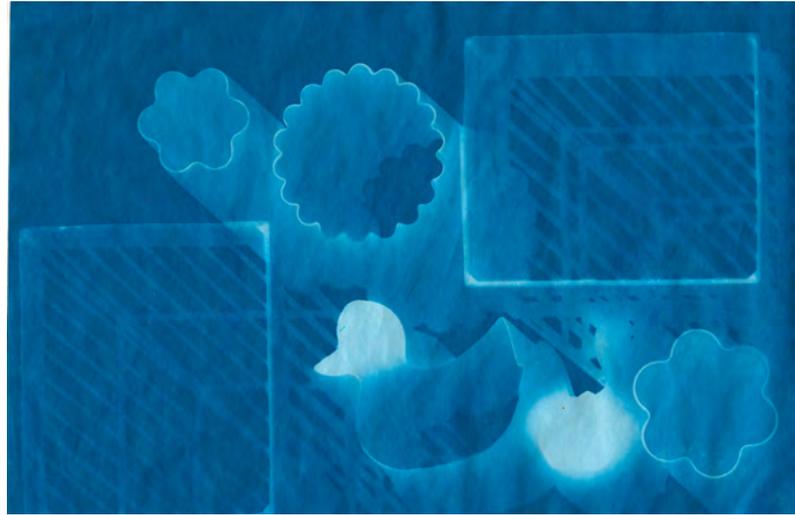
What would you do differently if you had more time and resources?

I would definitely make this a mixed media project. It would be great to use the print as a substrate and paint or add more media on top of that. If the project had a greater scale there could be an opportunity for more visual information.

What was the most important resource you received during your time at Headlands?

Having a studio is an invaluable opportunity. I have liked the networking opportunities, Open Houses, and dinners. I've found them a great way to further the discourse of my work, that is, speaking to others about it and becoming better at communicating my intentions.

This residency came at a great time, right after graduating the MFA program at UC Davis. It provided a studio and access to other artists and opportunities to continue my practice. The projects I have been working on will be part of a solo exhibition early next year.



Cyanotype print by Tavarus Blackmonster.

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KLEA MCKENNA

AFFILIATE ARTIST 2015-16

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Klea McKenna is a visual artist based in San Francisco, California. She has an MFA from California College of the Arts and a BA from University of California-Santa Cruz. She is represented by Von Lintel Gallery in Los Angeles, Euqinom Projects in San Francisco and Gitterman Gallery in New York. In addition to her own art practice, she was cofounder and photographer at IN THE MAKE an online arts journal. Klea was an Affiliate Artist at Headlands from 2015–2016.

How did you approach this project?

Whenever I work with a specific medium (or even subject) I ask myself, how I can transform this thing? How can I take this very familiar or perhaps mundane technique and make it do something unexpected? So that we can see it—at least for a moment—with new eyes. Cyanotypes have such a wonderful botanical history and I have worked with that tradition quite a bit, but for this I tried something very uncharacteristic of the medium.

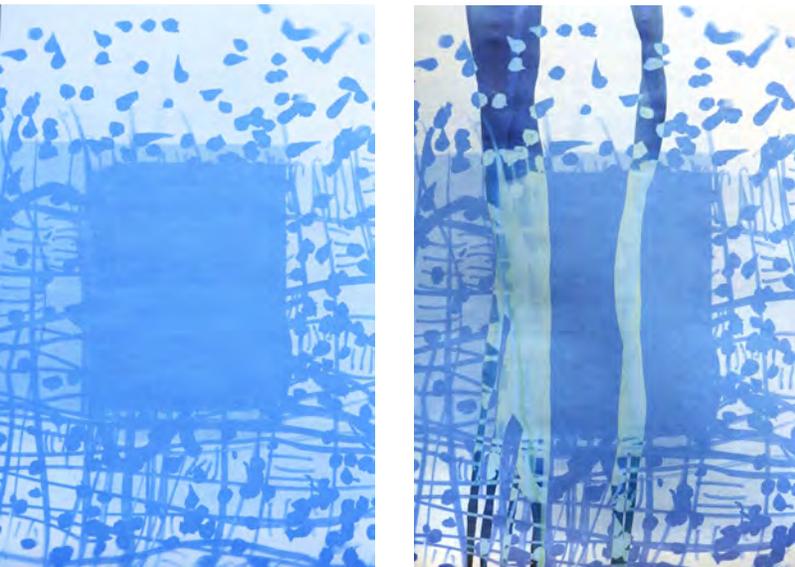
My four year-old daughter and I make very chaotic collaborative drawings, so I asked her to make two drawings on Mylar with a Sharpie and then we used those as “negatives” to make the cyanotypes. We tried layering them in a few different ways. I then developed the print gradually and selectively, by pouring water over it rather than submerging it. I photographed it along the way as it changed.

Little kids are a catalyst for spontaneity and looseness in art-making and I love their sense of pattern, so it seemed an obvious path to combine her marks with my technique and experiment a bit. Integrating her in these kinds of activities is also just practical.



Klea McKenna's daughter watches the cyanotype expose.

“[My residency was] my re-entry to my art practice after becoming a mom—which was a hard transition for me. The solitude of that landscape and its psychological distance from San Francisco was so valuable to me during that time. I did a lot of thinking, experimenting, and diving deep into my internal well of ideas. It was a period of figuring out what this new version of myself had to say, creatively.”



Cyanotype print by Klea McKenna at three different points in the process.

What would you do differently if you had more time and resources?

I would coat my own cyanotype emulsion on the paper rather than using pre-coated paper. A lot of nuance and depth can be created just in how you paint on the emulsion. And of course I love to make things really big.

What was the most important resource you received during your time at Headlands?

I was an Affiliate Artist there for one year just after my daughter was born. That time was my re-entry to my art practice after becoming a mom—which was a hard transition for me. The solitude of that landscape and its psychological distance from San Francisco was so valuable to me during that time. I did a lot of thinking, experimenting, and diving deep into my internal well of ideas. It was a period of figuring out what this new version of myself had to say, creatively.

During my time at Headlands I took my photographic work in a very physical, sculptural direction and developed a technique for making what I call “photographic rubbings”. The built (and crumbling) environment of the Headlands was my

first subject for that method—my own testing ground—and it has since evolved and grown into several bodies of work. My time there was a challenging period, but it led to creative breakthroughs.

BRITTANY NELSON

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE 2017

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Brittany Nelson works with 19th century photographic chemistry techniques to address themes of feminist science fiction and queer abstraction. She received an MFA in photography from Cranbrook Academy of Art and a BA from Montana State University. Brittany was a 2017 Artist in Residence at the Headlands Center for the Arts.

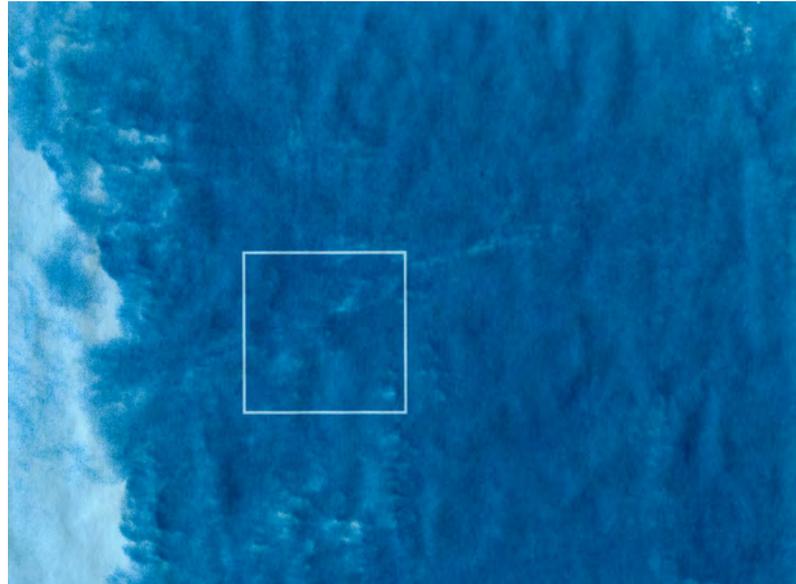
How did you approach this project?

I began by first considering the history of the cyanotype, which was invented by the astronomer Sir John Herschel as a way to copy his notes, and by considering the chemical reaction that takes place. Iron III reduces to Iron II in a reaction caused by the sunlight, creating Prussian blue dye.

The image used was released by NASA weeks ago, which details where Opportunity is located on the surface of Mars. I made a digitally-printed negative of this image pulled from the internet, and contact printed it on the cyanotype paper.

I began my research of the Mars Rover, Opportunity, at my residency at Headlands in October 2017, so it seemed appropriate to include her here. Currently, she is not operational and she lost contact with NASA in June when a major dust storm hit Mars. She has still not woken up, and the race against the clock involves her solar panels being able to charge once the dust has cleared, before her battery reserves allowing her to do so run out.

Opportunity landed on Mars in 2004 with her twin rover, Spirit. They were dropped on opposite sides of the planet never to meet up. Her lifespan was calculated at 90 sols (Martian days, about 40 minutes longer than an Earth day). Opportunity has been roving the planet alone for 14 years, in unprecedented and unplanned missions since then. I grew up gay in Montana, so Opportunity has become a bit of a lesbian icon for me. With this print, I wanted to consider the basic chemical reaction involving light that is in play with the paper and the subject matter—but also this bizarre image where NASA can locate her physically, but cannot establish communication.



Cyanotype print by Brittany Nelson.

“The time to think and reset is the most valuable thing I have ever been given. That there is no pressure on production at Headlands really demonstrates that this residency is truly committed to supporting artists and deeply understands the real resources we need to operate at a high level.”

What would you do differently if you had more time and resources?

If given more time, I would spend it in the research phase of this project, and think about how it connects to the rest of my work, how I could expand upon it more in depth, what kind of conversation the imagery has with the history of the cyanotype, and how to expand upon it. I then would develop a way to increase the scale exponentially. Perhaps building a giant contact frame that would allow me to make very large prints to see how the image functions at different scales.

What was the most important resource you received during your time at Headlands?

TIME. I think everyone would say this. But you have to buy time. Only the most privileged can just take it. The stipend combined with the airfare to allow you to get [to Headlands] is essential to buying the time away from your life.

The time to think and reset is the most valuable thing I have ever been given. That there is no pressure on production at Headlands really demonstrates that this residency is truly committed to supporting artists and deeply understands the real resources we need to operate at a high level. This break was hugely life changing and beneficial to my life and career. I was able to actually slow down and do real research that wasn't hurried. I was able to rethink how I was working back at my studio at home and retool my efforts, and I have been immensely more productive in the year since then.

I can't tell you how more productive I am after being able to have the space and time to take care of myself and think about my next steps. The work I created at Headlands premiered at a two-person exhibition in Chelsea, at Crush Curatorial titled "Science Fictions." Subsequent research on the Mars Rover I conducted while I was at Headlands just premiered at an exhibition at the Harnett Museum of Art in Richmond, Virginia, as a collaborative with another resident I met at Headlands, Danishta Rivero. The show is titled "Warm Worlds and Otherwise" and features a live performance and sound piece by Rivero. We began discussing this collaboration during our residency last year and have been working on it ever since.



*Brittany Nelson in her studio at Headlands in 2017.
Photos by Andria Lo.*

EDRA SOTO

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE 2017

ABOUT THE ARTIST

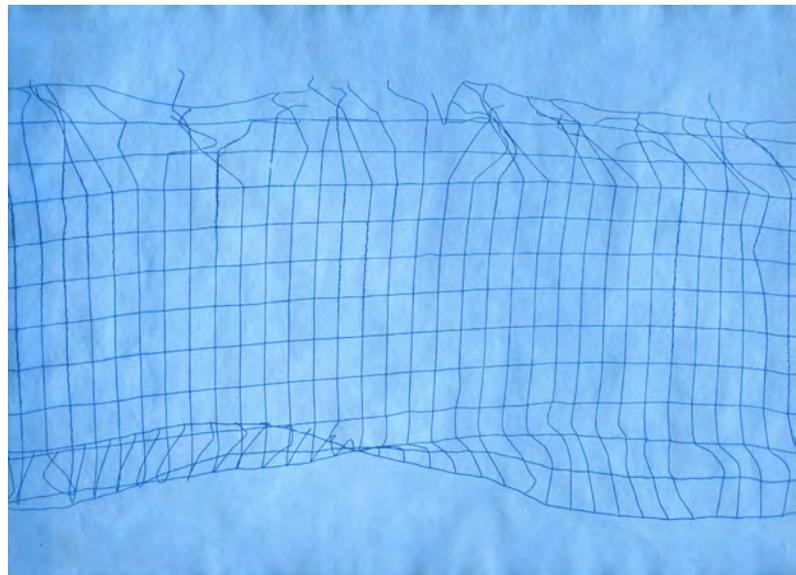
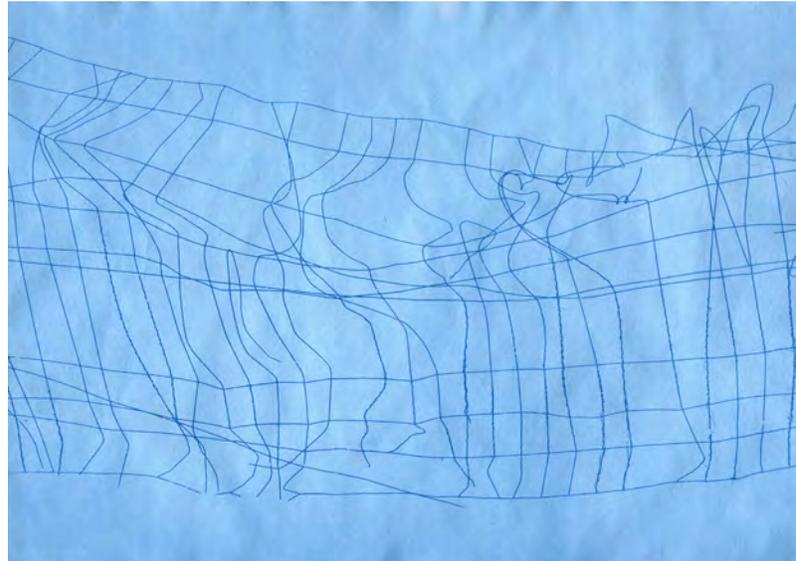
Edra Soto (b. Puerto Rico) is a Chicago-based interdisciplinary artist, educator, curator, and codirector of the outdoor project space THE FRANKLIN. She has an MFA from School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a BA from Escuela de Artes Plásticas de Puerto Rico. She is a lecturer for the Contemporary Practices Department at School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Edra was an Artist in Residence at Headlands in 2017.

How did you approach this project?

This is my first attempt to make a cyanotype print. I very much followed the instructions to make them. To make my images I produced a negative print of my photographs. I took these photos last year during a snowy winter in Chicago. The images captured a wire fence that has been affected structurally by time and weather. During the winter, these fences become very graphic and present, like a delicate line drawing.

I have been exploring vernacular language for some time, and to me, these fences are a part of this category. These particular images try to capture the fragility and inability of something that is trying to remain still to protect. It also delineates and provides boundaries between the public and private space, but in a precarious way.

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Cyanotype prints by Edra Soto.



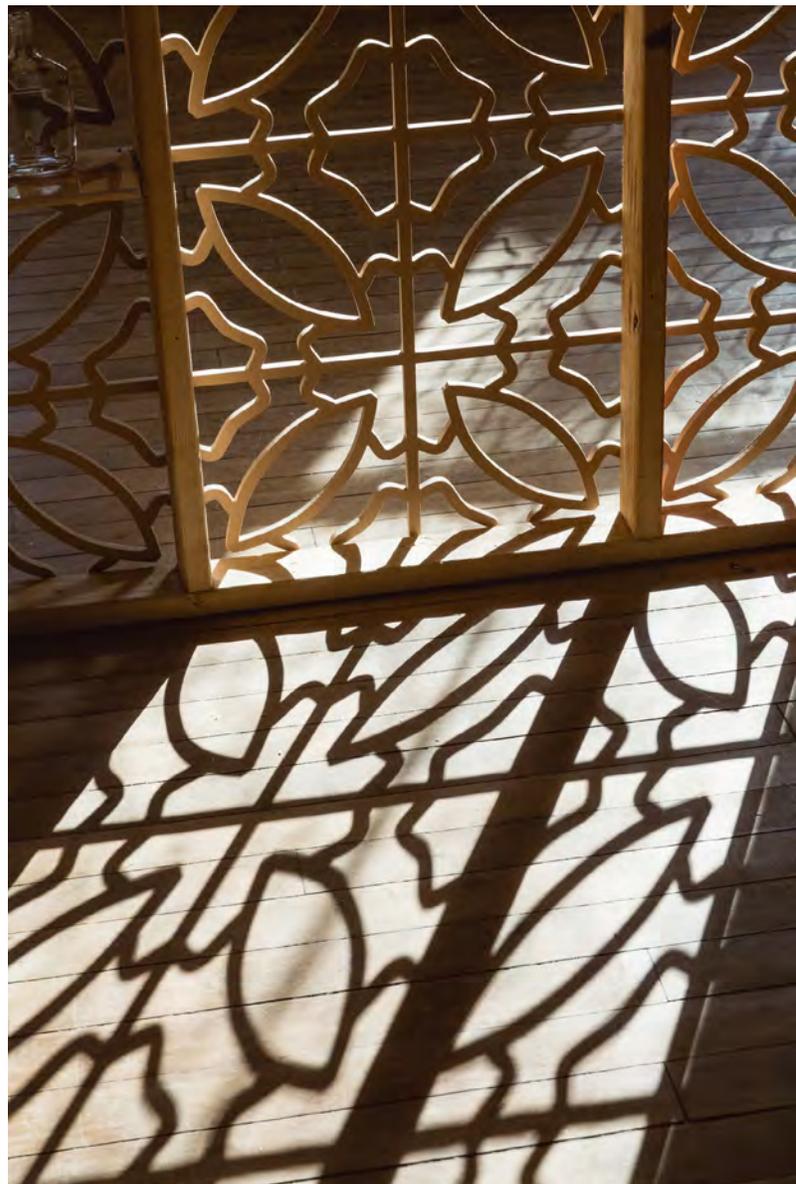
The prints are seasonal visions that capture the fragility of fences of welded wire mesh. Their decomposition by the passage of time caused [the fences] to lose their composure and the ability to exercise their expected function to protect an unlicensed lot.

What was the most important resource you received during your time at Headlands?

Headlands provided space, time, and resources for me to materialize a new iteration of my project Open 24 Hours, that I continue to explore. Bringing this project to Headlands gave me an opportunity to build a new take and explore a new perspective with a new audience.

Headlands expanded my national visibility. I'm currently working on a new iteration of Open 24 Hours for Luis De Jesus Los Angeles. This new project has some characteristics of the Headlands iteration as well.

Headlands is a remarkable place bound to inspire anyone who steps in.



Edra Soto's Project Space exhibition, Open 24 Hours, at Headlands in 2017. Photos by Andria Lo.

BARRY UNDERWOOD

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE 2009

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Barry Underwood lives in Cleveland, Ohio and is an Associate Professor in the Photo + Video Department at the Cleveland Institute of Art. He has an MFA in photography from Cranbrook Academy of Art and a BA in theatre and photography from Indiana University Northwest. Barry was an Artist in Residence at Headlands in 2009.

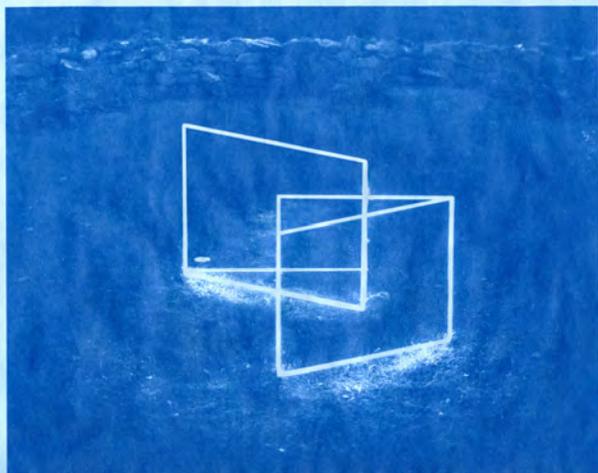
How did you approach this project?

Using my own work, I used this opportunity to try a different printing process to explore, and play, to see if new ideas arise. I selected new images, made this past summer, that were/had a strong graphic. [With more resources, I would use] multiple sheets to produce a larger piece.

What was the most important resource you received during your time at Headlands?

Use of the grounds, time, and the huge studio to have as a staging ground. Meeting Kimberly Johansson at the Open House. My practice and exposure really took off. Headlands was a precious and important time in my life and career.

Cyanotype prints by Barry Underwood.



“Headlands was a precious and important time in my life and career.”