
Pato Hebert
In, If Not Always Of

James Madison University

New Image Gallery

February 27 – April 10, 2019

Pato Hebert

In, If Not Always Of

Introduction

Corinne Diop

This catalogue accompanies, *In, If Not Always Of*, an exhibition of Pato Hebert's conceptual photographs in the New Image Gallery at James Madison University (February 27–April 10, 2019). Hebert's series features a being or presence that he calls, "The Oscillator," appearing in various landscapes. The Oscillator reflects its environment, without simply or always being of its context. The Oscillator queries our relationship to place and space, and our limiting ideas that divide humans from nature. The work is also inspired by Buddhist notions of interconnectedness, the illusion of the self and the trappings of the ego.

In conjunction with the exhibition Hebert will make two visits to campus as a JMU Visiting Scholar. He will also present, "What You May Not See: Mobilizing Social Change Through Art and Imagination," a lecture on his recent creative projects as an artist, educator and organizer. Engaging galleries, museums, public space and community settings, Hebert's work addresses a wide range of themes from the concussion crisis in American football to the impact of HIV and discrimination on queer people of color. His conceptual artworks take the form of fine art photographs, mass-produced zines, glass sculptures and text-based interventions. Our relationship to place, space and one another is a recurring theme. He works around the world with communities as they mobilize their imagination and resilience against challenges such as homelessness, violence and migration. In addition to his exhibition and lecture, Hebert will conduct studio visits and workshops with students from a range of departments at JMU.

New Image Gallery

The New Image Gallery features contemporary photography and new media by regional, national and international artists. The gallery has been a vibrant part of the community since the early 1980's when it was initiated by the photography area as a venue to showcase cutting edge photographic work. The gallery directorship rotates among the photography faculty who bring between 4–6 exhibitions along with visiting artists and related events to the campus of James Madison University each academic year. The programming explores the expansive role photography plays in contemporary art, supporting a wide range of conceptual approaches and including digital, traditional, and alternative process photography as well as experimental and emerging media.

Oscillator in Shenandoah Valley National Park, 2015

The Visiting Scholars Program

The goal of JMU's Visiting Scholars Program is to "enhance intellectual exploration and academic excellence" by bringing scholars from a range of disciplines to campus to speak on "challenging and thought-provoking topics." The selection process is highly competitive; while the selected scholars are expected to visit classes in their main discipline and to participate in other activities arranged by the host area, the final slate is made up of prestigious scholars whose presentations are expected to spark a critical engagement beyond the scope of their main discipline.

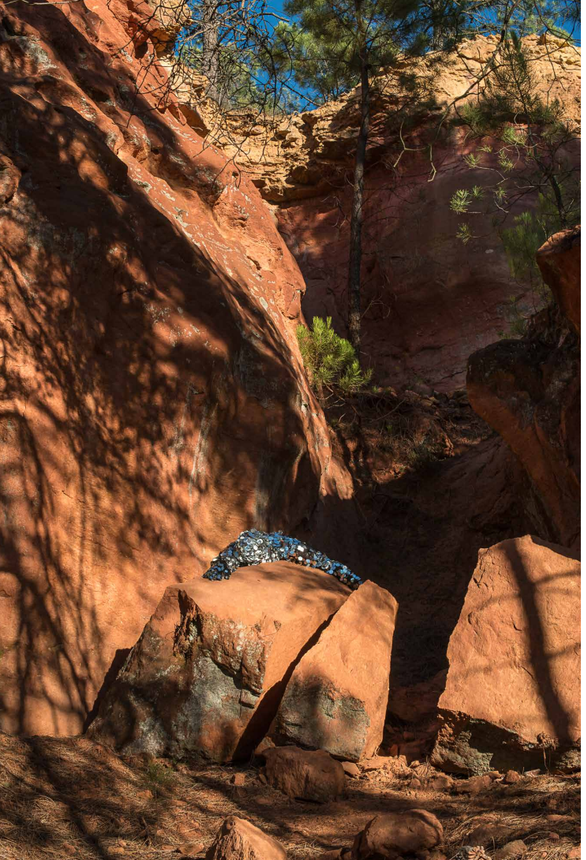
Oscillator in Tualatin Hills Nature Park, 2014

Unity and Desire in Pato Hebert's Photography

Lisa Volpe

In Pato Hebert's series of photographs titled, *In, If Not Always Of*, the costumed figure of the artist inhabits various landscapes. Wearing a head-to-toe suit of reflective paillettes, the figure is captured in environmental performances in a variety of locations around the globe. This intriguing and complex series engages in theories of language, ecology, and psychology. It exposes the division inherent between man and nature, destabilizes this binary, and ultimately mirrors our human desire for unity.

In "Oscillator in Tualatin Hills Nature Park," the reflective figure, which Hebert names "The Oscillator," appears amid the dense growth of trees. Despite its prominent foreground position, the Oscillator is almost unnoticed in the composition. The figure blends into the moss-covered forest, its hunched posture echoing the gently curved branches around it. The light reflected on the paillettes of its suit matches the intensity of the light bouncing off the leaves and ferns native to the Beaverton, Oregon location. In contrast, the Oscillator's appearance



Oscillator in Parc Naturel Régional du Luberon, 2016

in "Oscillator in Parc Naturel Régional du Luberon" is more visibly obvious, yet no less intermingled with the French landscape. The figure lays on the surface of a rock in the center of the composition. Here, the paillettes of the figure's costume reflect the bright blue of the sky and the blinding white of the environmental light. In this way, the bodily form of the Oscillator seems to disappear, creating an area that seems to be neither positive nor negative, flickering between mass and void. This trompe l'oeil is in perfect harmony with the environment, emphasizing the juxtaposition of heavy boulders and sharp, empty expanses. In each of the images in the series, the Oscillator is both present and absent, both separate from and part of the environment.

The titular character of Hebert's photographs provides entrée into an analysis of the work. Visually, the Oscillator is composed of thousands of reflections of its environment. It is both a physical presence and apparitional reflection of its context. Though strongly figurative, the form breaks down. It oscillates. It looks like what it is and what it is not. It also confuses any strict genre classification. Due to the presence of the Oscillator, the series cannot be comfortably confined to either the category of landscape or portraiture. While it is tempting to compare the work to landscape photography such as Robert Smithson's *Yucatan Mirror Displacements* or to figural work such as Vivianne Sassane's *Marte #02* which attempt to break down the solidity of the land or the body respectively, through the use of mirrors, Hebert's Oscillator disrupts these easy associations. The figure encompasses both environment and the body, breaks them both down, and unifies them.

Notably, the figure of the Oscillator speaks directly to the nature of photography. The paillettes of the figure's suit emulate the indexicality of photography, with light acting on the blank surfaces to form an image. Yet, the iconicity of the medium is denied; the Oscillator does not always resemble what it is, but comes to resemble its environment. The icon and the index are at odds. In this way, the Oscillator echoes ontological theories of photography itself. As Roland Barthes notes in his famous text, *Camera Lucida*, "The Photograph [sic] belongs to that class of laminated objects whose two leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both."[1]

[1] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, Second Edition (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1982), 6.

In Barthes's formulation, the image cannot be separated from the photo – paper and emulsion – on which it is printed. The tools of indexicality cannot be separated or peeled away from the image without mutual destruction. The Oscillator performs a similar function. Light and reflections grant it visibility and simultaneously conceal its iconicity. This unified nature – two leaves that cannot be separated – is a leitmotif of the work.

The Oscillator's name further emphasizes this notion of a duality. To oscillate means to fluctuate between differing beliefs, opinions, conditions, etc. It is a word that connotes a duality or division, but also mediates this divide. In Hebert's series, the name begins each of the titles: "Oscillator in Parco Naturale del Marguareis," "Oscillator in Parque Natural Sierra de Huetor," "Oscillator in Nationaal Park Zuid-Kennermerland," etc. The artist emphasizes the name again and again in the titles of his photographs, thus hinting at the importance of the figure's name to his larger concept. In this way, 'Oscillator' recalls the importance of naming and its relationship to duality as first articulated by Walter Benjamin.

In the essay, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," Benjamin persuasively argues that names are critical linguistic signs.[2] Unlike Swiss linguist and semiotician Ferdinand de Sassure, who emphasized the arbitrary nature between the sign and the signified, Benjamin posits that naming is always preceded by an act of reception. While language is generally understood as a mere tool of communication, Benjamin insists that naming brings something into our personal sphere of existence by making it identifiable. The 'mental life' or 'meaning' of something becomes real only once we can name it. However, Benjamin cautions that just as naming can create, it can also divide. He writes, "Within all linguistic formation a conflict is waged between what is expressed and expressible and what is inexpressible and unexpressed."[3] In short, language creates a frame. The named object is defined by what is inside the frame, in opposition to what exists outside. Benjamin continues his essay by outlining the relationship between man and nature within his theoretical framework. He argues that naming nature has brought about man's alienation from it. By recognizing it as a separate entity, nature is suffering from "muteness."[4] It is too defined, too framed. It is not articulated as a foundation from which all things spring, but rather as something set apart. No longer immediately connected to man, it is recognized as something other. Through language, a principle binary – man/nature – is developed and reified.

Ninety-one years after Benjamin's essay, Timothy Morton similarly discusses the limits of language in understanding nature in *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*.[5] "Nature writing itself has accounted for the way nature gives us the slip," he notes in his ecological study.[6] Morton argues that the ways in which we have conceptualized and represented nature cause a divide. "The idea of nature," he notes, "is getting in the way of properly ecological forms of culture, philosophy, politics, and art."[7] Through his rigorous text, which draws on poetry, music, art, and popular culture, Morton examines how "environment ... is hamstrung by certain formal properties of language."[8] In the text, Morton examines

[2] Walter Benjamin et al., *Selected Writings: 1913–1926* (Harvard University Press, 1996).
[3] Ibid., 66.
[4] Ibid., 72.
[5] Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Harvard University Press, 2007).
[6] Ibid., 1.
[7] Ibid., 2.
[8] Ibid., 3.

the concept of ecomimesis, which attempts to blur the boundaries between the human subject and nature through a variety of techniques.

Indeed, Morton's text was one of the seeds for Hebert's series.[9] *In, If Not Always Of* advanced many ideas with which the artist had previously been engaged. Pato Hebert's oeuvre demonstrates his talents in a variety of artistic media and his thoughtful investigations of issues of space and place, spirituality, geography, collaboration and interconnectedness. His artistic practice is mirrored in his community-based advocacy: leading local HIV prevention programs and organizations dedicated to improving health and human rights for the LGBT community. The twin spirits of unity and collaboration permeate his social and artistic work.

Though various threads of similarity connect *In, If Not Always Of* to Hebert's previous bodies of work, this photographic series advances the artist's investigations of unity by interrogating dissonance. Meditating on the relationship between the figure of the Oscillator and specific physical sites, the artist pursued the idea of ecomemisis articulated by Morton. What would it mean to let go of a given entity of self? What would collaboration between man and nature be? Would it result in a particular type of unity?

[9] Pato Hebert, interview with the author, August 23, 2016.

Following Morton's theory of embracing the truth of nature – that it is not a sublime ideal of landscape but an often darker or gritty reality – Hebert seeks specific environments for the Oscillator. The parks or nature reserves in the images are spaces defined and dictated by man. These environments are framed both through physical borders and through language: inside of these spaces is 'nature'; outside is 'culture.' As Morton and Benjamin both note, our understanding of nature is mediated through the closed frames of language or imagery. The presence of the Oscillator calls this framing or division into question.

Within these spaces, the Oscillator destabilizes. As Benjamin would argue, by bestowing a formal name on the figure, the artist forces the viewer to recognize the Oscillator as a subject, to acknowledge its 'mental life.' Yet, here is the twist. 'Oscillator' connotes fluctuation. It does not fully

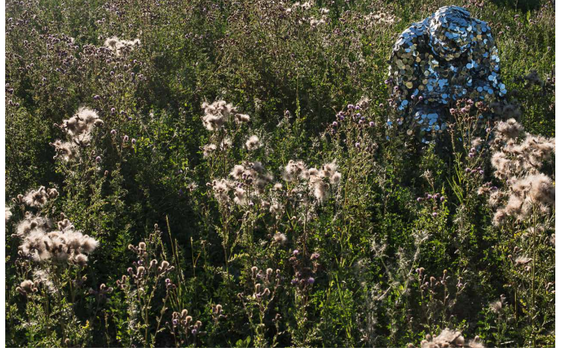
separate, as Benjamin would theorize, instead it oscillates. Visually, the figure is both what it is and what it is not. It is part of the environment and not. It belongs and is alien. It is man and nature. The Oscillator is evident amid the cottony plants in "Oscillator in Parc Naturel Régional des Grands Causses" but is nearly indistinguishable from the trees in "Oscillator in Nationaal Park Zuid-Kennermerland." It does not 'emerge from' the landscape, just as the environment does not 'consume' the figure. Just as a photograph cannot be separated from an image, the Oscillator is part of its environment. In its name, in the titles of the photographs, and in the images themselves, the dichotomy man/nature is destabilized.

In testing Morton's concept of ecomemisis through the creation of the Oscillator, Hebert's photographic series also advances that theory by making visible its links to psychoanalysis. When aligned with French theorist Jacques Lacan's 'mirror stage,' it is clear that Hebert's artistic destabilization of the divide between the self and nature and his use of reflective paillettes introduces human desire into the work. Through this lens, *In, If Not Always Of* is not only an attempt to examine the rift between man and nature but also to mediate it.

Oscillator in Nationaal Park Zuid-Kennermerland, 2016

The emerging notion of a self – separate from the environment – was articulated by Jacques Lacan in his theory called the 'mirror stage.'[10] According to Lacan, infants have no conception of where their physical body ends; children only know that different body parts produce different sensations. In the quintessential Lacanian moment, the infant sees itself in a mirror and begins to understand its bodily boundaries. In its original German, Lacan uses the words Umwelt (environment) and Innenwelt (inner world) to emphasize the division between the physical world and the self. In the mirror stage, the self only comes into being through an association with an image that is 'other' than the self. Simply stated, it understands itself by understanding what it is not. The umwelt and innenwelt become dialectical. It is notable that in Lacan's original language, he specifies the 'other' as environment. Lacan further developed his theory of the mirror stage by establishing two different modes of looking: the eye and the gaze. The eye represents the rational, conscious way of looking. The gaze, however, is the term Lacan uses for the strange sense that the world is looking back at us. It is not

[10] Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I," in *Écrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977), 1–7.



literal, but rather "imagined … in the field of the other."[11] He notes, "It is a disturbance in the visual field, an unconscious reminder that our position is only partial and that there is always something beyond our control."[12] For Lacan, we always feel a sense of lack and our desire is always to recover what is missing. The gaze is a visual symptom of this feeling.

Within a Lacanian framework, the aim of art is to regain the unity that was lost in the mirror. Certainly, the images in *In, If Not Always Of* align with this notion. By covering his destabilizing figure in paillettes, Hebert emphasizes the

[11] Jacques Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (London: Penguin, 1979), 84.
[12] Ibid., 189.

Above: **Oscillator in Parc Naturel Régional des Grands Causses**, 2016

gaze and attempts to reverse the mirror stage. When we look at the Oscillator, it is 'the other' looking back. The gaze of the environment is reflected in the suit, reminding the viewer of the divide between man and nature. Through those same reflections, the figure grows indistinct, visibly melding with the environment; thus, the umwelt and innenwelt merge. Psychoanalytic theory suggests that this primary desire for unity and completeness with nature is revealed in Hebert's work.

Clear in composition and straight-forward in approach, Pato Hebert's photographs from the series *In, If Not Always Of* are deeply thoughtful and intellectually stimulating. Though engaged in the tricky terrain of language, ecology, and psychology, the photographs effortlessly articulate the primary conceit of the series: man's separation from nature and our endless quest to bridge that divide.

Oscillator in Ecola State Park, 2014

Oscillator in Scott State Park, 2015

Oscillator in Los Osos Oaks State Natural Reserve, 2015

Oscillator in Brandywine Creek State Park, 2015

Oscillator in Dead Horse Point State Park, 2015

Oscillator in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 2015

Oscillator in Rancocas State Park, 2015

Not Just Any Kind of Nature: A Conversation with Pato Hebert

Leticia Gutierrez

The following is a condensed edit from a series of extended conversations that Leticia Gutierrez conducted with Pato Hebert from July, 2015 through January 2016. Leticia joined Pato while traveling to create images for the series, *In, If Not Always Of*. This edit of their conversations covers key themes central to the work such as place, reflection, colonialism, movement and dislocation of meaning.

Leticia: How did the idea of The Oscillator start?
Pato: I was reading the ecological theorist Timothy Morton about how in Western culture, there is a false split between human and nature, sometimes called culture and nature. Morton said no matter how hard an artist or naturalist or an ecologist or a conservationist tries to describe nature in all kinds of great detail, it still reinforces an idea that humans are not of nature. It's important to mind that vibration, that distinction. I was thinking about this mindset in relationship to certain church practices; it is central to the ideologies that enabled colonialism to unleash such devastation; it's embodied in racism and sexism, and it becomes a problem for ecological politics, for green politics, because what you get is either consume or conserve. I wanted to think of a way to play with those ideas and a being that could sit between, that could oscillate, that could somehow locate itself in this vibration and this problematic that Morton and others are talking about and that we're all living. And in turn, I think it allowed me to try to get at these questions of otherness.

L: Could you talk about the formal qualities and material of The Oscillator?
P: Initially, I thought it would be made of mirrors, and I think some of that is the disco ball in me [laughs]. Mirrors are the most obvious form of reflection, and mirrors create a more one-to-one relationship with the thing reflected.

But through experimentation with my research assistant, Aleta Lee, we realized that paillettes would create this kind of fish-scale layering, and so they looked more like scales or skin than a disco ball. They could also evoke a little bit of armor. The paillette was also really practical. It was light, it was inexpensive, and it fit the narrative and thematic approach I wanted about something that could be as much skin as it could be regalia. And it may be that to even talk in the language of skin and regalia is already too human. If this has the potential to be some kind of a creature, something that is and isn't 'natural,' then to use these existing languages and concepts may be a little flattening. But at a spiritual level, for this presence to vibrate in a way that is speaking to other realms or other understandings, it may need to begin with things that we think we know – disco ball, mirror, armor, fish – even if it's too strange to ever quite land there.

L: Why choose a material that reflects? Why was it important to you?
P: Playing with light is integral to photography, of course. But I've also begun to do some research on shine and reflection, especially in pre-contact cosmologies in Panamá and cultures in the Americas more broadly, the roles that reflection, iridescence and precious metals played in honoring the cosmos. Prior to electricity light came primarily from fire or the sun, the moon, lightning, maybe lava. So for most of our history, light has had this incredibly visceral, primordial, and sacred presence. It was necessary for warmth and the growth and preparation of food. Radiance and reflection were ways to honor that, and display power. The paillettes we use are compelling because they do reflect, but not as cleanly or clearly as a mirror does. We found our way to this material that's neither a dull reflection nor clear, sharp or distinct the way a good mirror would produce. It's in the middle.

Depending on where the angle of the light's coming from, and its intensity, sometimes The Oscillator will pick up and reflect multiple things. So, you might have some blue sky in the "shoulder" area but some green grass on the right of the "leg" and then mostly silver in the rest of the creature. This gets back to ideas of ecomimesis, where this creature is no longer so distinct from the space, and yet that may not be beyond a kind of reflection or mimicry. It may not ever quite be the tree, but it's also not so distinct from the tree. It's a shapeshifter, with an oscillating presence that takes on different forms.

In addition to reflection, there is also form, gesture, siting and scale. In some of the images, the scale of The Oscillator or the visibility of it is quite minimal. It's either really small or it's hidden amidst things. It's almost invisible. In other moments, it's really foregrounded. And so hopefully over the series, there will be times when it's absurd to imagine that The Oscillator is a part of its environment. It's going to look like it's an alien from somewhere else. But then there's other times where you can't really find it, the landscape is so predominant or The Oscillator has become either so reflective or so invisible, perhaps even so connected that it's indistinguishable. Is it hidden, synonymous, other? Most of the work vibrates somewhere in between.

L: How does this relate to "the otherness" you mentioned?
P: I think that the reflection both reinforces the difference and destabilizes it. What's happening is that it is both other and not in terms of its relationship to place. It is in if not always of its environment. And I think if there were no reflectiveness, it could not have as much potential to oscillate around these questions of various states — differing from, becoming or even being of its context.

Oscillator in Terrapin Beach Park, 2015

One way to think about otherness with this project is to consider why is this being in this landscape? It could be very much of its place, and either questioning the viewer's presence as the other, or camouflaging itself in order to survive the intrusion of the viewer as other in relationship to the landscape. And yet seen differently, it might be mistaken for a mutant conquistador. But the most extreme other in human terms might be the alien, right? It is from outer space or another realm. It is from such an other place that it seems like it cannot be of this place – the park – or of Earth itself. In some instances The Oscillator might seem more like the movie character The Predator. So in certain images it may almost seem as if The Oscillator has to have come from somewhere else.

This is not unlike what xenophobia does to migrants — calling people aliens, a dehumanizing process. Or colonialism, which had to construct notions of settlers' "rights" to claim land that wasn't theirs, in part by deeming Indigenous people as less than human, or as savages to either be enslaved, dispossessed and displaced, assimilated or killed. Some beings get to be humans, some don't. And as Marisol de la Cadena's work reminds us, contemporary states in Latin America and elsewhere continue to operate on a nature/culture divide in relationship to something like mining, whereas Indigenous political organizing in the Andes has successfully pushed for not limiting legal recognition of beings with rights to the idea of the human. If we think about forests and rivers as alive and with rights, and settler states as invasive species, what does that do to shift our ethics about what should be possible in a place?

In much of early science fiction, the aliens and the monsters become proxies for the other — an invader, a threat, a deformity against civilization. In the older work the protagonists are almost always white, with people of color absented or other. *Godzilla* and *Star Trek* signal some shifts amidst the period of post-war and counter-colonial struggles. But the movie and television genre of the Western was also flourishing, with intensely settler notions of who belongs and who is a threat. Compare these popular forms to Indigenous understandings of historic and ongoing encounters with colonial invaders, or contemporary legal battles with the state. Or diasporic people's resilient strategies for surviving forced displacement and enslavement, or later migrations for survival.

These subtextual narratives may not seem primary in the work, but the Oscillator is trying to call into question its own presence as a way to interrogate our relationship to, and conceptions of, existence and place. The title of the series signals this: *In, If Not Always Of*.

I also think there's some otherness in the ways in which the being or presence is queer, what in contemporary theory might be called the inhuman. That's not to say that it's simply queer in its sexual orientation because it might not even have a sexuality. But it's queer in the sense that it's non-normative and resists a narrow definition of human, it's not easily gendered and it may open up other possibilities. How might we conceive of sexuality and the body in ways that aren't just human?

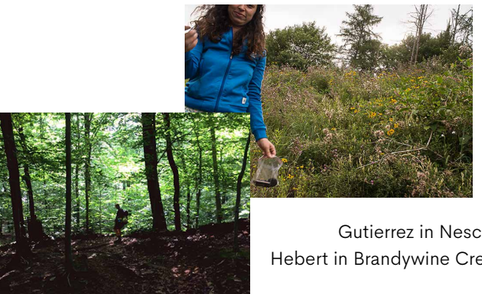
L: Is The Oscillator a figure? And if so, why is it in parks?
P: The Oscillator often harkens to the figure, and sometimes even to the human, but it is more concerned with sentience and being beyond the human. Sometimes its form is very figurative, but sometimes it looks more like a rock or a tree. It needs to be in spaces that seem to conjure the non-human, seem to be about the non-human, and it itself is not human. The spaces we're working with have all been designated as parks or nature reserves, often through and after the violent displacement of Indigenous peoples and traditional guardians of the land and water. If the series engaged just any kind of nature, you wouldn't get to the question of the way we have chosen to designate some spots as parks or "nature." There is a role that the state plays in that, and a role that conservation plays in that, and yet the way that the blurring between nature/not-nature occurs is not always so evident. In some of the images, at first blush The Oscillator can initially look so distinct from its context, its nature, and yet, in other images, it gets so chameleon that it moves beyond camouflage. It's not only in, it is of.

In terms of depiction and perception, this also raises all kinds of questions of figure/ground relations. If The Oscillator toggles in this figure/ground relationship, if it can be of nature, then maybe we can be too. Maybe we are not so separate from what has been called nature. The work is not simply an argument against parks, or for figures, nor is it an argument to say that humans are just like trees and grass. It's none of those quite so simply. It's meant to oscillate in, and around, and through, and with these tensions, these issues. Because if we look at this being

and say, "We could be that thing," it raises all the figurative, object and non-human questions we've been talking about. And if in turn we look at The Oscillator and say, "It's part of its environment," then maybe we are too. Rocks as relatives. We might have to conceive of ourselves as more than human and rethink the whole concept of nature in order to work through the catastrophes that humans have created. We might have to heed what Robin Wall Kimmerer calls the teachings of plants.

L: What about the movement of The Oscillator? You travel to different places to take the photographs. Does that play a role in the series?
P: The different locations inform the titles for each image. So, the series is titled, *In, If Not Always Of*, but each individual image is named in relationship to the particular park that is the setting for the performance and image. And the naming of these places usually embodies state and settler conventions, the imposition of those names and worldviews onto places that may have been known and conceived in very different ways prior to the creation of the 'park' or 'nature reserve,' and still are by Indigenous people. Obviously, this might be different in California or Australia than it is in Costa Rica or France. Each of these have particular histories, even as now they all have national and often state or regional parks. So these references to specific namings of place and therefore the movement across space and place are present within the titles.

L: What does the movement mean to you?
P: In more practical and methodological terms, in order for The Oscillator to presence itself in these parks, the artist has to move in and through space. And The Oscillator gives me as an artist a means to experience these spaces in a way that I wouldn't otherwise. At one level, I'm glad these places exist, though I'm uneasy with their construction as parks. I don't think they're sufficient for the bigger problem ecologically nor in helping us work through colonial violence and dispossession. But I'm thrilled that these amazing topographies exist, and I'm grateful that I get to engage with them. Thinking about what it means to call, or conceive of, or claim, or protect a place as a park gives us an opportunity to reimagine our understanding of place and the very politics of what we call nature, the other, and in turn our relations, belonging, being. The Oscillator may at times feel illegible, maybe even abstract, but it can also set in motion feelings and ideas. Does it exist in or of multiple places at once? Or is it a singular thing that travels? That implies mobility. Does it teleport like in *Star Trek*?



Gutierrez in Nescopek State Park, photo by P. Hebert, 2015
Hebert in Brandywine Creek State Park, photo by L. Gutierrez, 2015

L: Exactly. How did it get here?
P: Right. And I think that the series is really a way to ask a question about place. Who belongs where, and what belongs in that place? If place is for more than conquest or extraction, it might of course be for stewardship, co-existence, symbiosis, and certainly for purposes well beyond the human. Place means we have to wrestle with difference and interconnectedness, or what Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh calls interbeing.

L: Is The Oscillator trying to dislocate meaning? Is The Oscillator questioning our sense of what we're looking at?
P: The work is trying to have a vibration where something is opened up, and maybe as you're saying, that's meaning. We can call it a dislocation. I'm not opposed to that. I'm more interested in it being open and somewhat elusive as a way for us to work, imagine and play. It doesn't want to be pigeonholed. The Oscillator's funny and absurd. And it oscillates. So, when you say dislocate, maybe you've precisely zoomed in on it. If a park is a location, and the oscillator a kind of "dis" – in that location, but not always of it – then maybe dislocation has spatialized its very meaning. Right? But it's really not just about being pushed from one space to another space in dislocation. If you're connecting it back to meaning, that also gets dislocated. And I like that. It's in motion. Oscillation is about movement, which means it's about time and space. The Oscillator reckons with this in relationship to our most basic concepts of being, as well as the politics of place.

Above: **Oscillator in Petrified Forest National Park**, 2015

The Artist

Pato Hebert is an artist, teacher and organizer. His work explores the aesthetics, ethics and poetics of interconnectedness. He is particularly interested in space, spirituality, pedagogy and progressive praxis. His projects have been presented at Beton7 in Athens, PH21 Gallery in Budapest, the Centro de Arte Contemporáneo in Quito, the Songzhuang International Photo Biennale, IHLIA LGBT Heritage in Amsterdam and the Kunsthal Charlottenborg in Copenhagen.

In 2015 he was an artist-in-residence with the Neighborhood Time Exchange project in West Philadelphia. In 2016 he was a BAU Institute/Camargo Foundation Residency Fellow in Cassis, France. Hebert's work has been supported by grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Creative Work Fund, the Durfee Foundation, the National Education Association and a Mid-Career Fellowship for Visual Artists from the California Community Foundation.

In 2008 he received the Excellence in Photographic Teaching Award from Center in Santa Fe. He teaches as an Associate Arts Professor in the Department of Art & Public Policy at Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. He has also worked in HIV prevention initiatives with queer communities of color since 1994. He continues these grassroots efforts at the local and transnational levels, working with social movements and community organizations to strengthen innovative approaches to HIV mobilization, programs, advocacy and justice.

Contributors

Corinne Diop is a visual artist with a practice based in digital and lens-less photography. She teaches from introductory to graduate level as a Professor in the School of Art, Design, and Art History at James Madison University where she is also Associate Director. Her work was recently exhibited at Site: Brooklyn, Huntington Museum of Art, and artspace gallery in Richmond, VA and in a solo exhibition at Gallery at Laughing Dog, an artists' collective in downtown Harrisonburg. She frequently exhibits with Metal Shed CoLab, an evolving collaborative of faculty, graduates, and undergraduates who work with photo-based processes, cofounded with colleagues Dymphna de Wild and Rebecca Silberman. Diop served as New Image Gallery Director from 1989-2006 and resumed the role in 2016.

Leticia Gutierrez is an arts producer, curator, writer and arts educator. Originally from Mexico City, Leticia graduated from Tisch School of the Arts, New York University with an MA in Arts Politics in 2014; and Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City with a BA in Art History in 2008. Coordinating exhibitions, organizing public programs and producing in situ work with artists are part of her interests in developing multidisciplinary and hybrid projects that explore forms of cultural activism. She has worked for and collaborated with different institutions that include Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes, Casa del Lago Universidad Autonoma de Mexico, Museo Rufino Tamayo, Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil and Laboratorio de Arte Alameda; all in Mexico City. She currently works as an Associate Educator at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Lisa Volpe is the Associate Curator, Photography at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Before arriving in Houston, she was the Curator of the Wichita Art Museum where she oversaw all areas of the museum's collection. Additionally, she held various curatorial roles at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art (SBMA), and fellowships at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Cleveland Museum of Art.

In, If Not Always Of
Pato Hebert

With contributions from:
Corinne Diop, Leticia Gutierrez and Lisa Volpe

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