Dana Hargrove

Artist Statement, *Enclosure*

The word enclosure has many open-ended meanings, yet the general concept points to a lack of open ends, to the closing up of space. Historically, enclosure has been applied to land. The 'Enclosure of the Commons' allowed wealthy landowners to partition common resources traditionally managed by local communities. The privatization of communal land persists globally and perpetuates a pattern of disenfranchisement affecting all but a privileged few. Colonial takeovers, land grabs, forced migrations, and habitat loss all occur as access to nature and the 'common treasury' becomes narrowed and less equitable.

While lamenting my own lack of access to nature in Central Florida—a stark contrast to my upbringing rambling freely around the countryside of Scotland (one of only fifteen countries with some form of a Right to Roam Act)—I am reminded that in the United States, property rights are protected and typically take precedence over rights of way. Freedom to access and enjoy nature is often limited to public spaces such as parks and preserves, many of which are under threat of being rezoned.

My work develops while thinking about the in-between, mediated spaces—fertile grounds where I like to explore and farm my ideas. Managed rural boundaries are often planned as a 'green belt,' an area of bucolic countryside that exists as both a buffer and a portal between the built world and the untamed wilderness that may no longer even exist. My *Treeline* series in particular acts as a forest/city hybrid, intersecting along the green belt and commenting on pressing issues such as deforestation and possible revitalization, as colors shift and grow from concrete and plastic urban hues toward lush greens and canopy light. By contrasting the relationship between a region's nature and topography—such as tracing trees from the imperiled Split Oak Forest in Florida alongside human-induced vertical facades—I point to the ecological decline and environmental disruption that occur as our natural landscapes are developed into civilized urban forms.

Within the *Nature Journal: Rights of Way* series, I take a meandering approach, holding a nostalgic belief that the freedom to roam should extend to all creatures. *Rights of Way* documents recent hikes in Iceland, Scotland, and Florida and is enriched with text derived from research into environmental liberalism, enclosure, and the more recent concept of the 'rights of nature.' One example includes a quote from the philosopher John Locke, referencing his 'State of Nature' stipulation that land can be appropriated as long as there remains "enough and as good" resources accessible to all. This Lockean proviso has been historically misused to justify and promote the colonization and privatization of land into the hands of a few.

While researching the historical ramifications of land enclosure, I was cognizant of my place within the larger genre of landscape painting. *Sketch of a Tree* places my freeform, nature/culture watercolors alongside en-plein-air sketches of trees copied from the celebrated masters, such as Caspar David Friedrich, J.M.W. Turner, and Thomas Cole, who were prominent during the Romantic Period, influencing concepts of the ideal landscape (even trickling down to why we maintain manicured lawns today). I used technology to recreate the vital and immediate sketches of the masters, while mirroring the removed distance from nature I experience on a day-to-day basis. Technological advancements have also sped up the destruction of woodlands, post-industrial revolution. A pencil sketch of a spruce tree by

Friedrich has been re-represented through the process of scanning, vectorizing, and using a computer connected to a drawing machine equipped with a gold pen. Recreating this sketch, following the tradition known in art history as an 'after,' pays homage to the concept of 'Liber Studiorum,' a tradition where artists and landscape designers shared ideal imagery and allowed for the reinterpretation and creation of their own representations of picturesque and beautiful landscapes. Gold features prominently in several of my artworks, drawing a connection to the rectangle frames that enshrine master artists' works in museums.

The master artists within the established canon provided a prescribed notion of wilderness: a sublime link to god, a space to be conquered, and a landscape worthy of preservation. Ultimately, and even though enclosure has reshaped and limited our access to the natural world, I am encouraged by the thought that nature has the ability to regenerate and heal itself, and that its best hope relies on our ability to bring light to the issues of sustainability and accessibility for the benefit of all.

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