

Arts Scholars Award Outcome
Margaret Via

Last Spring I received funding to work on a project entitled *nest*. I had initially planned to create two bodies of work, one consisting of photographs and the other an Artist's Book that would have included printmaking processes. I wanted both projects to inform and sustain the other. I was curious to see how the two separate mediums of Artist's Book and photograph could work together.

I had originally intended to make photographs in a very constructed way. Instead of finding situations to photograph, I wanted to create my own scenes and photograph them, such as building a constructed nest and photographing it, for example. For both the photographs and Artist's Book I wanted to explore metaphors from Gaston Bachelard's book *The Poetics of Space*. For Bachelard, the nest becomes a negotiation between internal and external space, but maybe most significantly, it is a trope of security. So for this project I intended to explore the notion of place and security, and more specifically home.

During the Summer 2014, I was able to purchase a medium format camera. This allowed me to make higher quality film photographs. I was making photographs in and of my sister's home that I was staying in for the summer. The photographs were interesting, but I did not feel they were strong enough in forming a relationship to the metaphors of nests that I wanted to explore from Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*. During the Fall of 2014 I learned the process of intaglio printmaking. While it was interesting and challenging to explore this process, by the end of the Fall I did not feel comfortable enough with the medium to pursue it for this project. I had overestimated how comfortable I would feel with it by the end of the fall semester.

After the fall semester, I was feeling discouraged about which medium would be most suitable for this project. I had an important meeting with my advisor on the project, printmaking professor Dean Dass. We discussed the limitations of working in a highbrow or lowbrow way. With the Artist's Book for example, there is the assumption that it is higher brow because of the craft and time put into it. In the meeting I decided that I wanted to make a book that was quicker to make and could be distributed to as

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many people as possible. I wanted to reach a larger audience, and create a less precious object. We discussed the possibility of making a zine format.

For the past few months I have been working on making small (pocket-sized) zine print objects. Often diaristic, and made while travelling from place to place, I have still kept in mind my original intentions of thinking about concepts of place. While in Portland, Oregon this spring I made a zine while on the airplane, travelling in subways, and staying in hostels. In this particular zine, I was telling stories about what I was seeing or experiencing, combining fact and fiction. While I was not explicitly exploring the Bachelardian nest, I address a theme of displacement throughout this particular zine. Throughout all of the zines I have made (a total of 8), the ritual I made surrounding my zines was important. I always made them outside of my home or print shop, they became more about the tension between private and public space in this way.

In an effort to meld life with art more, I made most of these zines in public places. This allowed me to work in a way that I do not usually. Instead of literally exploring notions of home, I left home and made work during these brief instances of displacement.

I would not have been able to explore the array of mediums I did if it weren't for the help of this grant. While I had anticipated to spend the grant primarily on the costs of an Artist's Book, the costs of color Xeroxing my zines for distribution added up significantly. The process of switching from medium to medium was a crucial part of the process. I learned a lot about my intentions as an artist. I had wanted to take photographs in a constructed way, but through drawing my zines, I was able to construct my own stories, just like I had originally intended. I also restored confidence in my drawing abilities.

I would like to thank the Miller Arts Scholars Program for allowing me to be so ambitious this year with my artwork. I might not have been as explorative if I had not had the support from this grant. I also want to thank my mentor Dean Dass. He has helped challenge me in many ways and played a large role in the development of this project.



Home, July 2014



Zines Featured (top): *The Intellectual Life of Bees*, *Mtn*, *Untitled*, and *Floss* (2015)