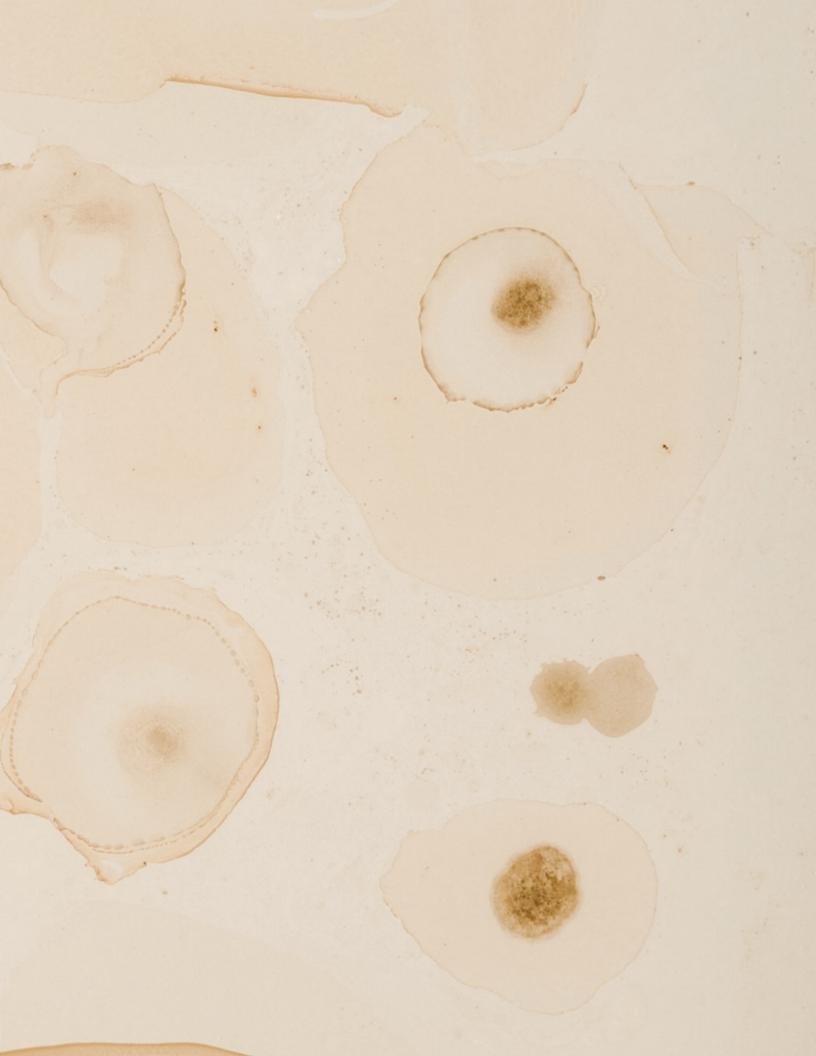


MARBLEIZED OIL FROM THE GULF OF MEXICO

LISA MOREN



Marbleized Oil From the Gulf of Mexico 2014

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Marcus Relacion, Book concept, cover, and book design Antonia Gardner, Managing Editor Aliyah Baruchin and Mary-Ellen O' Neill, Contributing Editors



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Additional thanks goes to Norie Neumark for participating in this project and for her insights through her introduction, and to Aliyah Baruchin and Mary-Ellen O' Neill for their talented editorial contributions, Guenet Abraham and Peggy Re for their design consultation, and Marcus Relacion for his beautiful execution. All photographs are by Lisa Moren unless otherwise noted.

A special thanks goes to Monica Donnelly and Jocelyn Kehl for encouraging me to urgently enter these murky waters in the first place. A very special thanks goes to fisherman Patrick Dickinson (Captain Patrick) for his invaluable role mentoring the narrative of this project and hosting me on this journey.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

SYMMES GARDNER

On behalf of the Center for Art, Design and Visual Culture, it gives me great pleasure to introduce Marbleized Oil From the Gulf of Mexico, the inaugural title of the CADVC's new publication series devoted to UMBC faculty research in the areas of art, science, and the environment. Conceived by Lisa Moren, Professor in the Visual Arts Department at UMBC, Marbleized Oil From the Gulf of Mexico traces her journey to the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 to witness firsthand the effects of the historic oil spill generated by British Petroleum. The book also documents the genesis and production of artwork by Professor Moren, who collected quantities of spilled oil and actively utilized it in the creation of multiple series of prints. The unique visual imagery contained within these prints brings to life the organic beauty of this natural material as well as its powerful presence as a fossil fuel in contemporary culture.

Correspondingly, the CADVC's new publication series is a direct outgrowth, in concept and application, of the internationally renowned artist Joseph Beuys and the Joseph Beuys Sculpture Park at UMBC. A core value in Beuys' artwork was permitting the creative process of the artist to play a direct role in how a community envisions its purpose. This publication series is specifically designed to offer UMBC faculty the opportunity to publish research that consciously explores the myriad of innovative connections between art, science, and the environment.

At the University of Maryland Baltimore County, special thanks goes to the Center for Innovation, Creativity and Research in the Arts for their support in the printing of this publication. Dr. Freeman Hrabowski, President of the University of Maryland Baltimore County, Dr. Philip Rous, Provost, and Dr. Scott Casper, Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences also deserve thanks for their continued support of the programming initiatives of the Center for Art, Design and Visual Culture. Appreciation also goes to the Maryland State Arts Council and the Baltimore County Commission on Arts and Sciences for their annual support of the CADVC's exhibition, publication, and educational outreach initiatives.

In producing Marbleized Oil From the Gulf of Mexico, the CADVC wishes to thank Marcus Relacion, a Graphic Design major in the Visual Arts Department, who created a superb book, both in its design and organization of content. Contributing essayist Dr. Norie Neumark, Director of the Centre for Creative Arts and Chair and Professor of Media Screen and Sound Program at La Trobe University deserves special attention for her compelling and pertinent text. Professors Neumark and Moren's essays provide vital platforms for the reader to absorb and understand the long-term cultural implications and effects brought about by our continued dependence on fossil fuel on a global level.

Symmes Gardner Executive Director, CADVC

A MURKY ART OF INQUIRY

DR. NORIE NEUMARK

We cannot make the future, however, without also thinking it. What then is the relation between thinking and making? The way of the craftsman... is to allow knowledge to grow from the crucible of our practical and observational engagement with the beings and things around us.... This is to practice what I would like to call an art of inquiry. To practice this method [of hope] is not to describe the world, or to represent it, but to open our perception to what is going on there so that we, in turn, can respond to it. Tim Ingold, Making p 6 -7

How can we respond to the ever growing, ever multiplying ecological tragedies without sinking into a quagmire of negativity and fear about the present and the future? Lisa Moren performs a brave and important art of inquiry into the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and accomplishes the nearly impossible task of expressing both the despair and the hope. She does not turn away from the devastation, but plunges into its materiality, extracting what she can to make something else out of it. Something else that nourishes our desire for a future — not of denial or even recuperation — but rather one where we might pursue possible ways out of the mire. While art cannot offer us political solutions, it can sustain our sense that there can be another way, and in this Lisa Moren's work is a great gift, evoking the sense of other possibilities that we need in order not to turn a blind eye, in order to respond, to care about our eco-system.

Moren's works on paper thus rip a hole in the web of ecological catastrophes that entangle us. They bear the physical traces of the Gulf of Mexico disaster in a 'beauty' that is not innocent or pure (if beauty ever could be), but closer to a sublime aesthetic experience. If once the awe-full sublime was evoked by the roiling sea and its shipwrecks, it is now the sea wrecked by the forces of global capitalism that makes us feel overpowered, uncertain, vulnerable. The fragility of Moren's works evokes the fragility of the environment - we sense that fragility through the surface of the marbled paper. We sense how we are caught in the contamination of the waters.

With an alchemist's hand, Moren confronts the contaminated waters of the Gulf of Mexico to extract the viscous oil that she will bring in unexpected ways to the traditional practice of marbling paper. There's an uncanny quality to these works that catches me each time – oil taken from a place where it doesn't belong and should never have been, to a different place, a place where we can face the fear and horror of the oil spill with life and imagination. Where it can evoke dreams for a different relationship to our eco-system.

This passionate and inspiring work is, of course, most timely. We need to think about these issues now. But it also somehow disturbs time – transposing the time of the oil spill to the now of the gallery. We feel the correspondence of these times, and places, absorbed into the paper.

In this elegant catalogue we are able to follow Moren's process through her thoughtful and poetic personal writing. Her words vividly entangle us in the affective space between the oil spill and the marbled papers. She's caught – immersed – and through her writing, and the images, so are we.

This is an important and compelling work. It reminds us of the necessity of the arts of inquiry, of artist's engaging with ecological issues – helping us to pay attention and to face what it means to be inside this mess. A murky thinking that opens the way to caring.

DEDICATED TO THE FISHERMEN.

GLUPPITY GLUP

the making of Marbleized Paper From the Gulf of Mexico

"Your machinery chugs on day and night without stop making gluppity-glup. Also sloppityslop. And what do you do with this leftover goo? I'll show you, you dirty old Oncler man, you! You're glumping the pond where the Humming-Fish hummed! No more can they hum, for their gills are all gummed. So, I'm sending them off. Oh, their future is dreary. They'll walk on their fins and get woefully weary in search of some water that isn't so smeary."

DR. THEODORE SEUSS, THE LORAX, 1971

SL 192 PP WELL #3 SERIAL #130929 PLAQUEMINES PARISH, LA SECTION 45, T21S-R29E

On June 19th, 2010 I set off in fishing boat with Captain Patrick collecting not fish, but oil samples in Bastian Bay, Louisiana, while the massive BP oil spill was in the midst of devastating the Gulf of Mexico.

The day after I collected those samples I wrote the following essay, and a month later I used the oil to make over 20 hand-made marbleized papers and 50 postcards entitled *"Marbleized Paper from the Gulf of Mexico"*

Like an expectant mother, I feel the nausea in my head. Walking around the streets of New Orleans, images and colors are now more intense than normal. In order to relax, I duck into a Charles Street pub for something to eat, but the various shapes of burnt cheese on my pizza make me flinch without warning and the nausea consumes me. The burnt orange color of my Hefferveisen beer is also creepy. When I walk outside, a pattern of dispersed clouds in the sky reminds me of the oil

spill patterns and I'm again overwhelmed

with a wave of dizziness. The nausea

moves with me, slowly dissipating until

the next abrupt reminder comes of

when Captain Patrick put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Are you alright?", with his handkerchief over his nose and mouth. "That can happen when you lean over the side of the boat and then stand

PHOTO BELOW:

Left: The Avenue Pub on Charles Street, New Orleans, LA, June 19, 2010.

Right: Oil collected in a cup, June 19, 2010.





PHOTOS ABOVE (LEFT TO RIGHT):

A salad with pizza from a pub on Charles Street, New Orleans, LA, June 19, 2010.

A close-up of oil spilled by BP's Deep Water Horizon rig, Bastian Bay, LA June 19, 2010.

Clouds from the airplane returning from New Orleans, LA to Baltimore, MD, June 20, 2010.



up quickly," he said. But we both knew it was more. "It's probably the chemicals, but it could be the dizziness from getting up."

I didn't believe so at the time, but while I was leaning over the boat I may have blacked out for a moment, or at least I have no memory of choosing to stop scooping up the orange 'glup' 50 miles from the Deep Water Horizon

PHOTO OPPOSITE:

The artist collecting oil, photographed by Captain Patrick Dickinson, June 19, 2010.

rig. I simply said, trying to overcome the nausea, "I'm ok, just taking it easy so that I'll last the rest of the day." Later Captain Patrick said he felt it too, and then he explained to me how to contact the Coast Guard in case anything happened to him. With a deep sense of responsibility, knowledge and professionalism, he maintained a confident composure for my sake. It was for this moment that I traveled 1,000 miles. I had been making my own watercolor pigment out of the Chesapeake Bay waterways back in Baltimore and then making paintings



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A Contraction of the second se



out of their random ingredients. Now I used my entire Maryland State Arts Council grant in order to be in the brackish Gulf waters of Bastian Bay, Louisiana, trying to repeat the project here. The more congealed masses I collected from the water, the more artwork I could make from it. Patrick had just picked up a pancake-sized one, the largest we'd seen all day and probably the same amount that I had collected in total, when a peculiar kind of nausea overwhelmed rational objectives, as if we were in an invisible cloud of carbon smoke, and our raw instincts overwhelmed by any other thoughts than to leave the spot we had worked so hard to find. Patrick turned us starboard 180 degrees, and we soon composed ourselves. "Look at the horizon" he said.

"It can sometimes help." Earlier that day at the shore, Patrick moved his fishing poles out of the boat while his friend said "you won't be needing those out there", Patrick chuckled that "we're going out to actually look for oil, if you can believe that." His friend pointed to the sky and said to me, "See that helicopter? They're looking for oil over the mouth of the Mississippi. Because the water and fish gush down with a ton of force, nothing can go up it, it all comes down, it's the last place that we're still allowed to fish around here. But," he continued, "if that helicopter finds one drop of oil, that'll be shut down too, and we'll be done."

PHOTO LEFT:

Lisa Moren with her oil 'catch'. Photo by Captain Patrick Dickinson, June 19, 2010.

PHOTOS BELOW:

An oil slick; "good ripples"; Bastian Bay, LA, June 19, 2010.



When we headed out, Patrick had an amazing eye for the waters. Driving the boat at 30 mph, he could see particle-sized changes in the texture of the waters surface. At first, we found specks when we rode past dozens of

PHOTO BELOW:

Bastian Bay, LA, June 19, 2010.

oyster colonies providing 30% of all oysters enjoyed in America. Then, in Bay Pomme d'or we found the largest piece of oil so far, about the size of a pea. Patrick eagerly slowed down to point out his successful find, and then abruptly murmured an understandable "Shit!" Patrick apologized for blurting his disgust over face-to-face contact with a pea-sized oil particle that was

polluting his life. Later we entered an oil slick. It was a solid area. several acres in diameter and different in texture and light than the rest of the Bay. The angular caps of the good dark, cool-colored water were now a softer, warm ripple that looked like something between the plasticity of a Pixar animation and the solarizing effects of an early 1960s Nam June Paik video, when digital effects were brand new and unnatural color contrasts were big. If you bent down to eye level with the water, the contrast allowed you to see the hollow oval shapes of the shimmering oil sheen. The slick was strange, horrifying and almost mesmerizing in its subtle character. To be surrounded by it was a sad and calm experience, not the visceral experience



56 It's alive! Imagine something so small alive in all this.



that was to come. Soon we moved from this soft, warm rippled water into smaller, white capped ripples — as distinct a transition as moving between the former East and West Berlin, including color, light, sound and the symbol of it all.

A few minutes later Patrick cupped his hand in the water and gleefully pulled out an infant bait shrimp. He watched it

PHOTO ABOVE:

Partially oiled Pelican, Bastian Bay, LA, June 19, 2010.

like his pet as it danced in the pool of water in his hand, announcing, "It's alive! Imagine something so small alive in all this." Then he released it with a sigh.

"Not for long."

Within an hour I had witnessed Patrick's emotional range toward the pea-sized pollution to the same sized shrimp-life. While Patrick may have been experiencing something similar to myself physically that day, his cool demeanor didn't show the burden he must bare from the moment we found thousands of dispersed orange blops polka-dotting an oval shape like a flock of birds or a school of fish that it had indeed replaced. What this second generation fisherman looked forward to most in the world was to one day bring his 4 year old son fishing in these waters in the same way his dad









PHOTOS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Oil collections and observations from Bastian Bay, LA, June 19, 2010. had taken him. This dispersed oil was nothing like the solarized slick. This oil was clearly inundated with chemicals. Most distinct from the non-chemical oil was the orange color and the dispersed pattern. The odor and the texture of a branching web, like the estuary landscape as seen from an airplane, were all secondary characteristics to the color and pattern. It was not clear how dangerous what we were inhaling was, until after only a few minutes when we both nearly collapsed. We couldn't see it directly, nor was the odor strong enough to warn us of the effect it was about to have on our minds and bodies. What one news commentator described as an overwhelming urge "to get out of here" was an apt description.

It's about 24 hours since the moment when I first inhaled the mysterious oiled dispersants and I haven't had a proper meal since. Small encounters with food or patterns that remind me of the dispersed oil bring back the nausea. All odors, and even colors, have intensified, and if it's not some kind of post-traumatic stress, I doubt it's because I got up too fast.

Patrick explained to me that the







currents naturally form parallel circular patterns that bring these dispersed oil pieces together and keep them together. Unfortunately these are the same opposing currents that bring the smallest critters on the food chain together, from plankton to bait shrimp and briar shrimp. Therefore the food and oil will naturally congregate, and the basis of the ecosystem will immediately die. Patrick offered his knowledge

PHOTOS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

A close-up of the boat after our excursion; Captain Patrick with his fishing boats; supplies and oil retrieved from Bastian Bay, LA, June 19, 2010.

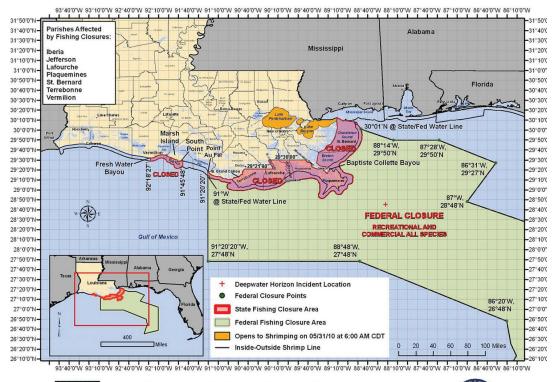
and passion for details of both the ecosystem and the technologies of the oil and gas rigs alike. It was clear he grew up impressed with the harmonious balance in which the two worlds had coexisted. His pride was diminished with each blob of oil, rather than fish, that we were catching. We passed another boat where one of his buddies was trying to get an oil covered brown pelican to fly off a rock into the water where it would be easier to catch it for cleaning. The stubborn pelican didn't want to be caught, and finally, like most of the oil stained pelicans that we saw, this bird was still able to slowly fly away with just a little more effort. The bird was gone and on his own. In the same area it was refreshing to see so many porpoises that made healthy arches in and out of these seemingly less toxic waves. Patrick thought that these creatures would be okay; they were smart and will figure out how to stay away from the polluted oils.





MAP BELOW:

State and Federal fishing closure areas, 6pm, CDT, May 26, 2010. Source: LDWF, NOAA, ESRI, US Census, LDOTD and LOSCO. State of Louisianna, Wildlife and Fisheries.



State and Federal Fishing Closure Areas 6pm CDT May 26, 2010

SOURCES: LDWF, NOAA, ESRI, US Census, LDOTD and LOSCO. Map Projection: GCS WGS 84. Map Date: 05/26/10. LDWF Map Leastion: Mc OilSpill 052510 LDWF, fishingclosure/052510_05pimCDT.mxid



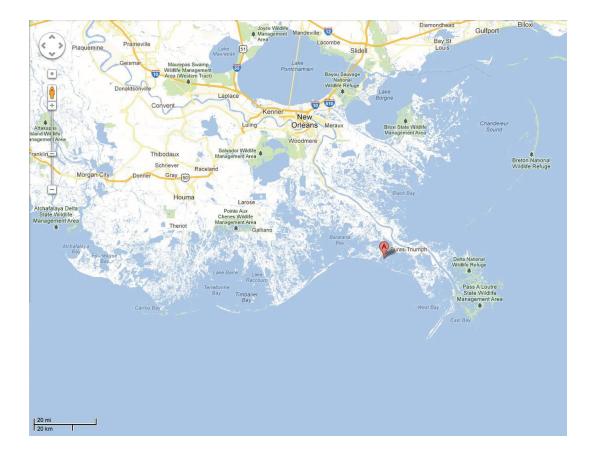


PHOTO RIGHT:

The fishing boat cast-off from Buras-Triumph and toured Pomme d'Or on it's way to Bastian Bay, LA, June 19, 2010.

MAP BELOW:

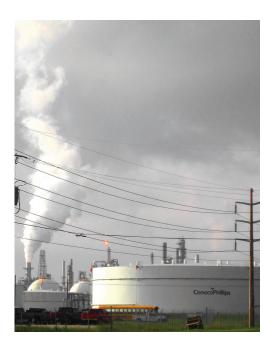
Image from Google Maps, May 2010.



On the drive down to the coast from New Orleans, I was struck by how visible the oil industry was from folks who pumped a small family rig to Conoco Chemical's fire-breathing silos and a dozen tanks, and everything in between. While clearly this was a region with distinct character from anywhere in the world that I knew. I nevertheless saw a bit of the Australian sublime here. I saw a community-centered region with a connection to the eco-system that so-called cultured urbanites dream of in their community gardens and other micro-pastoral moments. Like the working class Australians, these Louisiana folks had no disdain for what made them modern. but rather embraced Utilities, silos resting among it. beautiful bushy marshes exposed the harmonious design of life, like the Parisian Pompidou Museum celebrates civility of systematic interiors - societal or technological - in harmony with their natural community.

Of course like oil and water, this disaster is separating pastoral nature from the advances of culture. The strips of beaches that created the bay marshes and waters had through invasive drilling as well as natural causes, eroded over time. It was these gaps in the beaches that allowed the oil to come into the bays; these were the places where oil had to be stopped at all costs. The fisherman were thrilled that sandbags were coming; they hadn't seen any other truly useful methods being deployed to protect their bays and marshes. 50 days after the rig exploded and the oil had already entered the bay, we thankfully watched state funded military helicopters dropping sandbags in these gaps.

Lisa Moren, 2010



LEFT:

While documenting a variety of oil rigs on my return to New Orleans, a Plaquemines Parish Officer pulled over and confiscated my video camera for 20 minutes. He cited a national "red alert" day while inquiring about my motives for documenting the Conoco Phillips Chemical Plant. This image was shot earlier that day while driving to the Gulf coast using my cell phone.

Belle Chase, LA, June 19, 2010.



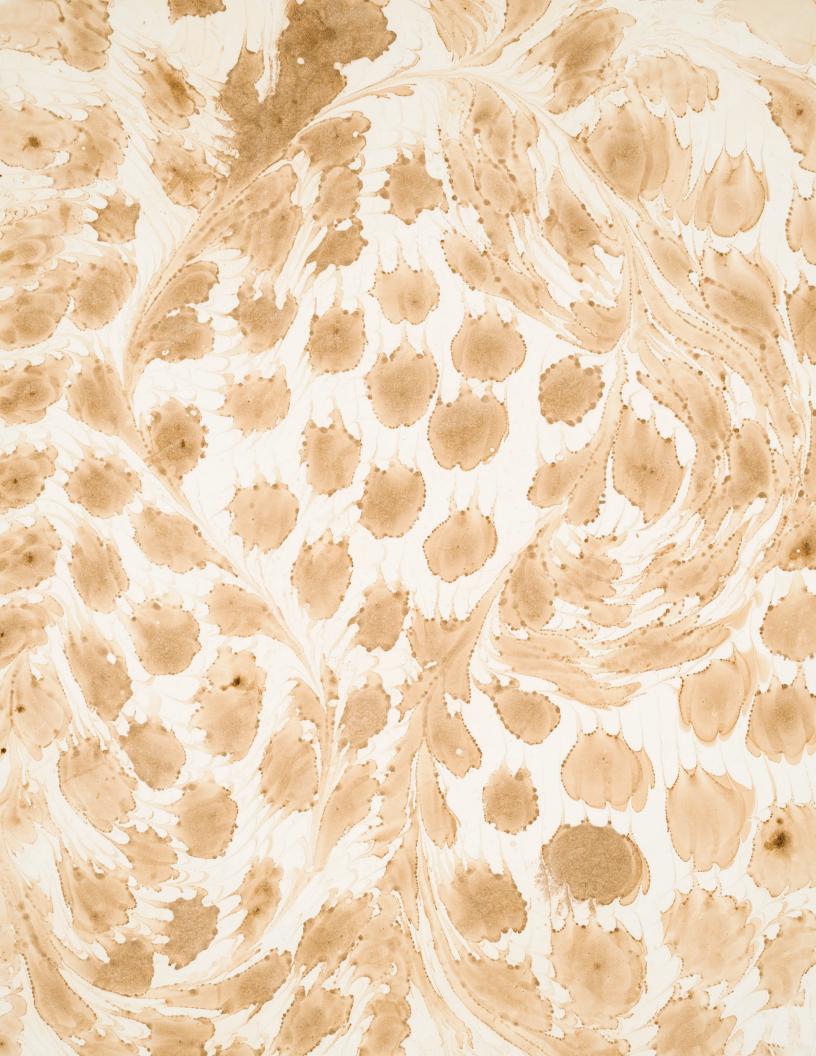
"SO... Catch!" calls the Onceler. He lets something fall. "Its a Truffula Seed. It's the last one of all! You're in charge of the last of the Truffula Seeds. And Truffula Trees are what everyone needs. Plant a new Truffula. Treat it with care. Give it clean water. And feed it fresh air. Grow a forest. Protect it from axes that hack. Then the Lorax and all of his friends may come back."

DR. THEODORE SEUSS, THE LORAX, 1971

II



III



V



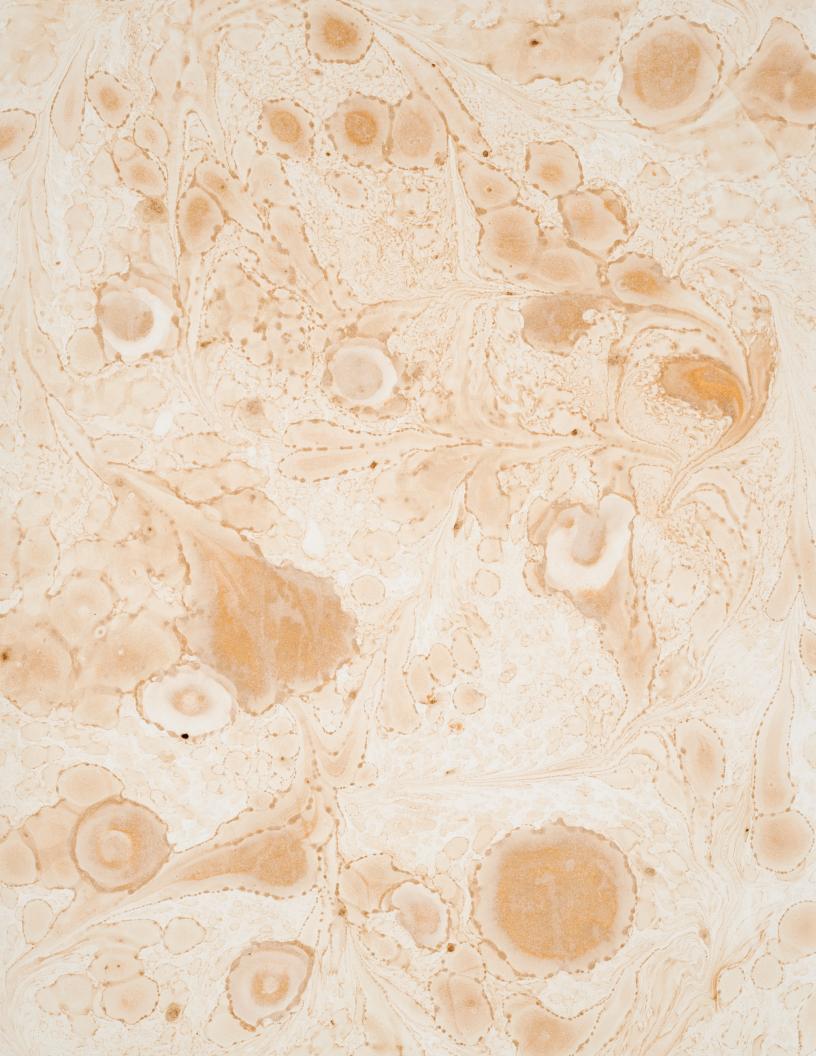
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VII



VIII



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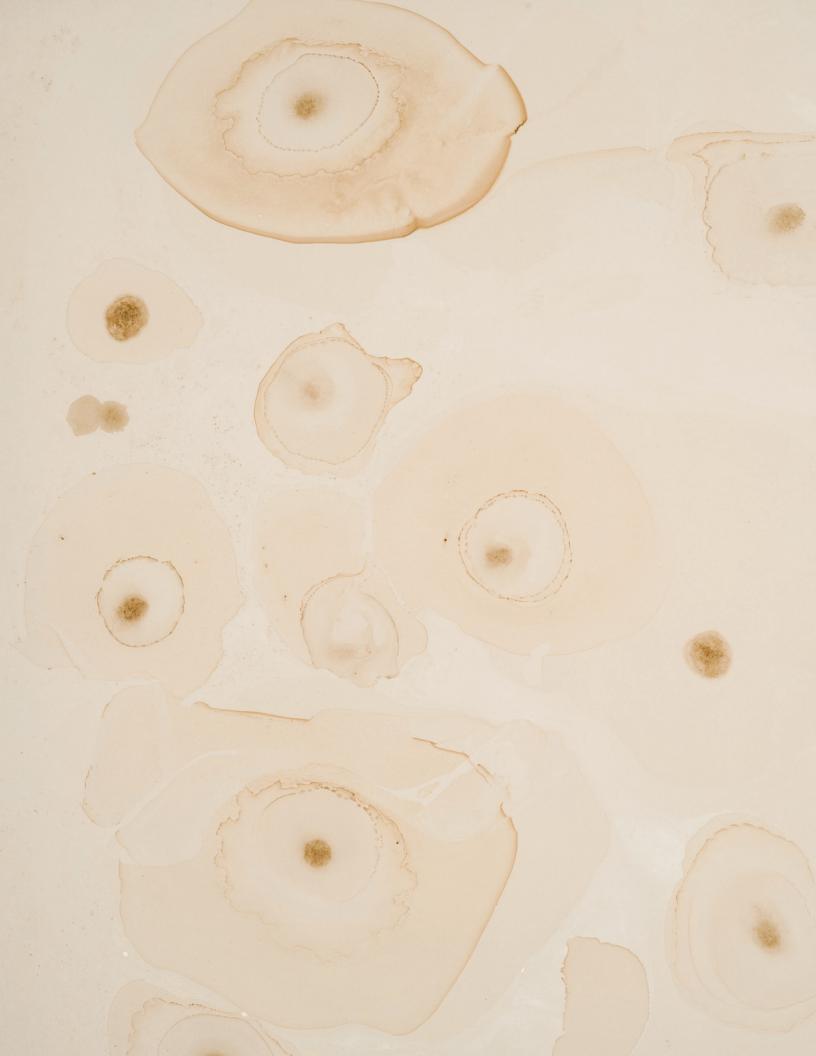


XI

22x30" oil on rag paper (detail) 2010



XII



XIII



XV



XVI



XX



XXII



