

Ellie Irons

Artist Statement

I have been making art since I was young, but for some time, I truly thought I would be a scientist. When I was twenty-one, I spent six weeks studying biodiversity in a remote part of Costa Rica. I was fascinated by my field work, but began to understand that rather than making a scientific report full of charts and graphs, what I really wanted was to express my passion for science and nature through art. Since that time, I have been turning this realization into a coherent approach to art making. In combining a naturalist's attention to detail and an artist's license to translate and recontextualize those details, I find fertile ground for artistic expression.

Now I am a New York-based artist making paintings, drawings and sculptures that explore the continuum between humanity and nature. I actively engage my immediate environment in an attempt to relocate the viewing public and re-imagine the surrounding landscape. Whether my subject is a suburban wasteland or the wildest of forests, I seek out structures that tie my environment to larger ecological patterns, and highlight those connections for viewers to explore in dynamic and unexpected ways.

Currently, I am exploring the ecological concept of the watershed. Research and travel in the Hudson River watershed as well as two distant deltas, the Sacramento-San Joaquin and the Danube, have fueled my creative process. The watershed is an intriguing structure because it challenges our tendency to think of roads, state lines and city limits as the boundaries that delimit our lives. A watershed is an alternate demarcation, based on a natural system that we participate in but do not control. It is characterized by an intricate system of tributaries feeding into one another, growing, for example, from the smallest trickle high in the Adirondacks to the massive flow of the Hudson just outside the MFA Building. This repetition of form from the micro to macro levels creates a delicate but resilient system that is always evolving in response to a host of inputs, from weather and geology to dredging and damn construction. Using sculptures, drawings, and installations I am tracing a network that extends from the wilds of the Adirondacks to the engineered rivers and canals of the city. Through dialogue with geologists, geographers and ecologists, I am melding the views of scientists with my own artistic inclinations, seeking to serve as a poetic translator between the two disciplines and the viewing public.

My current thesis installation addresses my ongoing fascination with the myriad connections among living systems and those fleeting moments of insight that reveal them. Through my work, I seek to experience and interpret these systems, creating objects and installations that allow others to reconsider their own place in our shared habitat.