Earth Tones Journal
Our Environment, Our Lives, Our Inspiration
Earth Tones is a literary journal devoted to the human experience within Utah’s diverse landscapes and environments. Understanding that our surrounding environments have resounding impacts on our emotional and physical health is imperative in today’s world.

As inhabitants of a shared region, our experiences can be vastly different, yet collective; cinched together by boundary lines on a map. Featuring works of art submitted by University of Utah students, this journal is a chance for diverse collaboration, expression, and connection.
Earth Tones Journal Strives to...

....reawaken personal connections to everyday surroundings through diverse forms of artistic expression.

....make environmental issues tangible by illuminating them as personal yet shared.

...connect individuals across disciplines through shared localized experiences in print and in person.

...value diversity and recognize different backgrounds as integral pieces of richness that add to individual experiences within a region.
Shaela Adams grew up running around the Wasatch Mountains where early on she fostered a deep, emotional relationship with Earth. She found her way to the U of U after discovering a profound sense of purpose when she focused those emotions into a form of environmental advocacy and activism. She graduates this spring with honors degrees in Environmental Sustainability, Urban Ecology, and Film & Media Arts. She is grateful for this education which has enabled her to recognize the correlation between mankind’s connection with nature and our capacity for empathy and compassion. In her final semester she’s excited to collaborate on Earth Tones, and hopes it’s a project which will let others experience the intersect between the humanities and sciences in a meaningful and inspiring way.

Aubrilyn Guevara is a senior at the University of Utah who will be graduating this spring with a degree in Environmental and Sustainability with an emphasis in Air, Water, Health and a minor is geography and creative writing. Aubrilyn is a Utah native who has always had an appreciation for the outdoors. Having mountains in her backyard gave her a good understanding of how our planet is treated and how she would like to see it treated. Her goal in life is to create homes and buildings that incorporate nature. Bringing people closer to nature could help people have a better understanding of our planet and want to care for it. Earth Tones is a very exciting project that incorporates arts on any medium.
Hannah Nelson moved to Salt Lake City, Utah from a rural town in Southern Illinois in 2015. She had always felt a strong connection to nature and enjoyed spending time outdoors, which eventually inspired her to join the Environmental and Sustainability Studies program at the University of Utah. It wasn’t until she had spent time in Salt Lake City that she fully realized the impacts her everyday environment had on her life. Life in the valley and the awareness of environmental issues cultivated in the environmental program at the University of Utah really made the need for a project like Earth Tones increasingly apparent to Hannah. She is excited to be a part of such a collaborative effort to reconnect to that which inspires, disquiets, and moves us.

Madison is currently a senior at the University of Utah. She is a double major in Environmental and Sustainability, and Geography with an emphasis in Ecology and Biodiversity. She has lived in Utah her whole life with her family on their cozy hobby farm in Ogden. She is passionate about the wonder that the state has to offer and the environmental issues it faces. Her environment reminds her that movement and change is beautiful and that there is beauty in strength and resilience. She often feels overwhelmed with appreciation and awe at Utah’s array of unique landscapes, and tries to express her connection through mediums from the earth such as pottery and carving wooden spoons with her dad. She feels immensely moved by her environment and can’t wait to hear how you have been as well.
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“Our natural environment is beautiful and worthy of our protection. Its intrinsic value outweighs the money to be made through resource extraction.”

Our Rich Lands

Anonymous
It’s On You

Anonymous

I feel angry
I want to go to my parents and my elders and ask pointedly
This is the world that you left me?
I want to yell at my peers.
Look the fuck around you
We’re gouging out our own eyes
We’re eating our own flesh
Blood soaked and blind
Running from ourselves
And what we’ve done.

But really I know.
This is what I’ve created
All the poisons and confusions that lead people to do harm are in me
I taste them every day, whenever I pay attention to my mind
Fuck my Ignorance. Fuck my Aggression. Fuck my Attachment.
No, that itself is the problem.
Accept my ignorance. Accept my aggression. Accept my attachment.
Turn to the work I can do on myself
Turn to the help I can offer to those I see every day
But never turn away from this pain that sparks my rage
Turn towards those who I hurt
Help others heal themselves
I am no savior.
But I can be a servant.
Antelope Island

Logan Allen

This is a panorama of Frary Peak taken from the top of Buffalo Point. This panorama taken at golden hour is the result of several weeks of planning which amounted to perfect conditions to capture this shot along with several others.
Starry
Siobhan Davis

When I was a little girl stars filled the night sky. I didn’t know all of the constellations so I made up my own. But over the years I could see my beloved constellations fading away. There were so many light sources popping up around the valley. During the winter I would hardly even get to see through the inversion to the twinkling masses above me. My family would go camping in the Uintas. I have never seen so many stars in my life than I have up there. It’s a beautiful thing to sit on the edge of a lake and see not only the stars but their reflection in the water. You almost feel like you’re sitting at the edge of the universe. Above all the filthiness that people bring. Above the pollution, above the lights, and the city noises. There is just the rhythm of nature, echoing in the mountains.
Mitten Buttes Southern Utah
Rachel Schaefer

This is a painting of the East and West “Mittens” in Southern Utah. They are in Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park. I painted this picture for my father who loves photographing Southern Utah. I love this place because it shows nature’s natural beauty and what can be created out of the elements.
In my days as an awkward, rugged young girl growing up alongside the newly-sprawling city of Orem, Utah, I found myself most at home in the remaining patches of Wild among the houses and businesses being erected at an increasing rate. Most special to me was the field next to my house, connecting our sleepy little cul-de-sac to the neighbor’s fruit orchard. Anytime my absence was noticed at home, my mom had only to step outside the door and holler towards the Field (as we called it) and soon I would come tumbling through the door with grass-stained jeans, small twigs in my hair, and scrapes on my muddy hands. My parents fostered my love for the wild and the free, but it was not just an appreciation for nature that I was gaining from my time in that field, I was getting an education as well. One that filled in some of the many gaps in the public education system of the Alpine School District.

In my many days, weeks, months and years spent in that field I learned how Utah land changes with the seasons; wet and bursting with wild grasses and budding tree branches in spring, smelling of dust, sunshine and wildflowers in summer, and bursting to life with leaping grasshoppers as the grasses dry out in fall, preparing for the cold sleep of winter. I had a big book filled with information and glossy photos of butterflies, and another of insects, and I delighted in spotting and identifying as many as I could. I observed the life cycles of monarchs. I saw ravenous black-and-yellow striped caterpillars devouring milkweed leaves so that one day they could build their own little silken fortresses of solitude, cast off their earthly mantles and emerge as vibrant black and orange superheroes, ready to make the long migration down to warmer lands and begin the life cycle anew. I discovered earwigs and bark beetles, creeping, crawling, hiding in the shady spots, boring into the cool dry wood of fallen cherry trees. I made good friends with the bees, who I would rescue from the little pools of water collecting in the ruts carved out by bike tires racing along the narrow pathway through the field. As they would sit and drink by the side of what was to them a small pond, I would reach out a gentle, grubby finger and lightly stroke their fuzzy
golden bodies and gauge how busy their day had been by the swelling of
their pollen baskets.

I also learned about the cruelty and necessity of death, noting the
spindly stick-like mantis snatch up and eat the grasshopper, and watching
helplessly as the robins feasted on the friendly little earthworms I had
carefully rescued from the gutter nearby after the rain. I learned about
architecture, and the masterful art of weaving from the industrious gar-
den spider, delicately constructing both her home and her deadly trap.
In this small bit of Wild, we became explorers, battling our way through
tall grasses with fallen tree limbs as our machetes, or Mountain Lions,
crouched in hiding, defending our den against encroaching hunters. By
threading together some of the long grasses I was suddenly Indiana
Jones, with my makeshift whip, discovering hidden archaeological trea-
sures. I discovered that the spiny, dried-out husks of chestnuts can be
hidden in small “booby traps”, dug with a little girl’s dirty paws and
hopelessly broken fingernails. I found that the long, thorny arms of wild
roses could be tucked into a bit of twine looping two sticks, and when
triggered would fly up as an unpleasant surprise at any approaching hos-
tiles. I learned about teamwork and cooperation, securing and stockpiling
the little platform up in the arms of the long-dead cherry tree that was
our house and fort.

Though this field was owned by my family, and I felt a sense of
protective possessiveness over it, I also learned that this treasure was
meant to be shared and loved, not just by me, but by all who wanted to
lose themselves in the camouflage comfort of the long grasses, unafraid
to rip open jeans and flesh alike while navigating the bony red fingers of
the dead cherry trees. This place of magic-making and discovery provid-
ed habitat and home to hundreds of birds, insects, trees, wildflowers, spi-
ders, and small mammals, but to us it provided a window to worlds both
on smaller and larger scales, a holodeck of imagination, and a wellspring
of stimulation for our thirsty young souls.

It is gone now, and the bounteous orchard next to it, as are almost
all the fields and orchards in the once-small city of Orem, Utah. In its
place are a couple of large, lush homes, surrounded by endlessly-thirsty,
carefully cultivated and meticulously manicured lawns.
Urban sprawl seems to have no end, as our population swells well beyond the belt loop of sustainability on this planet, and as we sprawl, we encroach more and more into the remaining bits of Wild. The Salt Lake Valley was once home to hundreds of species of birds and insects, but also to a variety of lizards, amphibians, small rodents, mule deer, fish, rabbits and even mountain lion, all of which have been forced to retreat farther into the foothills. Next we devour the foothills and they are forced into the mountains. They become stranded in small sections of land, where once they would have roamed and migrated freely. This has resulted in a decline of species. As there are fewer places for plants, animals and insects to thrive, and they have become so isolated and surrounded by our growing concrete jungles that migrating with the seasons, or due to changing climate, has become increasingly difficult. This has also resulted in our own isolation and a sense of separation between us, human animals, and the rest of the natural world.

Our cities and our growing population are here to stay, but we still have opportunities to coexist with and support native plants, insects and animals. Our yards and our parks offer places ripe for rewilding! Instead of planting lawns, a sort of emerald signifier of wealth and prosperity, we can plant coneflowers, varieties of thyme, brightly-colored bee-balm, milkweed, sweetly-fragrant wild roses, native sages and sunflowers. These plants are water-wise and provide the needed resources for bees, butterflies, birds, bats, rodents, and insects to thrive, even in cities. These open spaces can foster native plants and wildlife and act as a living classroom for both children and adults to learn about native species, about the delicate ecosystems that work together to sustain a way of life, and to gain an appreciation for the sanctuary that these little wild oases can be for humans and other native species alike.

I look forward to a time when I can wander local parks with my grandchildren and introduce them to my old friends, the bees and the squirrels, thriving in a healthy and diverse native ecology. I hope that one day I will have my own granddaughter who will learn about life and death from the delicate garden spider, and about growth and change from voracious stripy Monarch caterpillars, munching their way among the native Milkweed plants I have nurtured in my yard. I hope that she, too,
can learn to track the seasons by the smell of the wild summer roses in bloom, or the sight of grasshoppers feasting among long, dry grasses growing along the fenceline in fall. I see great value in preserving these little bits of Wild as much needed oases in our expanding developments, fostering life and fostering discovery for generations to come.

The Overlook
*Katie Christensen*

A mallard duck looks out over his pond. How can we know what beauty animals see, or how they might be moved by their surroundings, or how they might mourn at their degredation?
The Reach
*Katie Christensen*

An urban squirrel reaches for the last of November’s berries. If the time is taken to observe your surroundings, inspiration from nature can be found even in urban areas.
The winter inversion traps our air pollution in the Salt Lake Valley. It shows the smog consequences that are otherwise invisible when allowed to join the rest of the atmosphere.
Flash flood on 400 S

Christopher Garcia

Bustling life flows down the predetermined asphalt ravine during rush hour, lined by cliffs made of steel and glass.
Sometimes, even in this place far from home, the air rolls in unassuming-
ly, smelling of childhood, smelling like the summers I remember. It is the
scent of moist grass after sunset, when the humidity still hangs heavy,
unable to escape into the cloud-littered night sky. I took it for granted
back then; being enveloped by the endless stars, almost caressing me as
fireflies brought their beauty down from the heavens. The scent departs
just as quickly as it had come, leaving me surrounded by dry air between
concrete walls. The heat has begun unpacking its bags, the second season
in this climate arriving in full force; no spring to lead me into all that
summer brings. Hints of childhood, of how it felt to be at home, are
fleeting here. The smells and sights of the city quickly stifle those brief
moments when something feels familiar in this foreign place.

In the distance I can see a border of mountains, their rocky slopes rare-
ly supporting any vegetation that grows higher than my knees. It isn’t
much like home, where the forest was my backyard, and verdant is the
suit of summer. As I squint to see past the sun, I can’t help but remem-
ber those nights as a child when my bare feet stalked through moonlight
grasses, and I feigned that I was alone. Under the leaves of oak trees, I
felt fearless romping through the shadows. There was a feeling, a certain-
ty that my guardians were nearby. Inevitably I would retreat indoors to
the warmth and sounds of family.

Now, despite the backdrop of the Wasatch range, the buildings and
streets, the same shops on every corner, are my landscape. I see more
homeless people than trees, smell more exhaust than honeysuckle, and
though there is so much noise surrounding me, I am often struck by an
immense silence. Even the wind snaking its way through the valley seems
barely a whisper. I can feel myself reaching out into these moments,
where the glare of the sun is so piercing I can almost hear it scream
against the silence of this city. I am searching for that past certainty, the
security brought by the hum of cicadas and the rush of wind through
leaves, listening intently for the soothing tune of nature. Then a car will
rush by, or a siren will sound in the distance, and the only thing I find in
the eerie silence are my own thoughts at a standstill. Without moisture
to draw them away with the summer’s breezes they remain to remind me
that this isn’t home. Sometimes I fear that this is to be my rite of passage,
that I have to accept the uncertainty of this silence, and discard the mag-
ic of fireflies as the frivolous comfort of a child. I am left wondering if
I can find a way to grow in this forest of concrete when my roots are still
nestled in the fecund soils of my childhood home.
Inverted

Hannah Nelson

Walking through campus I am barraged by the bitter grey of January. Concrete buildings careen into mists, preventing any view of the sky, while sidewalks spread into platforms, creating a flat expanse of unforgiving ground. The surrounding harshly angled structures produce the feeling of being restricted within a deftly crafted cage. I can’t see beyond these obstructions to a brighter, warmer, more colorful future. It is as if time stops in this maze of bureaucracy and so-called progress, unrelenting to admit anything of what was before their reign. The only departure from ashen that I can notice, is the sepulchral sepia of an inverted atmosphere, the consequences of our actions, like a biblical punishment, come to take our breath.

The monochrome of this landscape threatens to consume me. I am convinced that if I call this home I will become grey and rigid myself. By wandering through this maze I begin to take on the values and logic of those that finance it over the intuition I know to be equally important. There is power to be found in an open visible sky above and unadulterated earth below. The absence of these features work as a tourniquet, cutting off direct avenues to sustenance. Without communion with sources of life, light, and nutrients, the maze becomes the mother, the nurturer, and I find I have forsaken a more intimate connection with the land outside of this stark world.

A dry wind blows across my face, its movement the only sign of life left on campus after the onset of winter. I can hear nothing but its sinuous journey between hard walls, its presence extenuating the lack of movement around me. In the silent still I am disoriented and overcome with an urgency to escape this tomb. I imagine this is the silence before death when all life but our own has been chased from this planet. I only know one route leading out of this maze, so I take it, floating away into memories of my midwestern hometown.

Even encrusted in ice the fields and forests were alive, geese squawked overhead, their arrows cutting across a piercingly blue winter sky. From the front porch I could witness a symphony as squirrels scampered along phone lines and back into the trees. Their journey heard from the ground as a series of scratches and crunching snow pack. All around a rhythm was established, a variety of birds providing their own unique twist on
the day’s music. If I walked along the road from what was once my home, the fields would be burnt umber with the hibernation that comes with the season. I could find horses stopped for lunch, bringing their large snouts down to the earth before exuberantly stretching their legs. Not all creatures are ushered to rest by the hum of falling snow.

There is so much hope in the bristling cold of Southern Illinois. While much is dormant, visions of fecundity remain active in every gust of wind and bird’s warble. I was just another small being in the midst of an open field, a part of the fabric around me instead of a creature enforcing a blatant contrast. Without the sound of wind through branches and the carrying on of something other than human life I forget that I belong. The high walls on campus seem to create a fortress excluding the natural world, and while they surround me, I worry there is nothing of this beauty left.

Smog Day Afternoon

**Ben Ackerman**

Everyone on the Wasatch Front can relate to the juxtaposition of our natural scenic beauty against the encroachment of humankind, like inversion smog and urban sprawl.
Protesters march to the State Capital after Donald Trump is announced to be the next president.
I took my three children to Albion Basin in the summer last year and saw them experience the awe of mountains and natural landscapes close up and in person. When I think about the landscape my children will experience, I am reminded that part of my role is to be an example of responsible caretaker so that when they are adults they have a deeply instilled love and responsibility to take care of the world we have given them.
Birds Eye View
Lauren Joy Swidnicki

Birds Eye View is a collage using different clippings from local Utah magazines (Slug, Devour Utah and CATALYST.) The different layers represent Utah’s environment and culture. One a picture of immigration canyon, one mountain being people in a ski lift line, one representing Utah desert and red rock, one representing our smog and pollution, etc.
Swallow the Sun

*Madison Lopez*

Raindrops
take the sky down
to earth, piece
by piece. Trees

uproot from
gravity and float up to
dip their leaves in
the sky. Each drop

of rain
piles on itself to
form mirrors, called
oceans. Branches

tear away
from soil, soar up
to blue sap and
become stars. Blurred

clouds and pastel
leaked flowers form
a bowl of color upside down
on a pruned finger. Prairie

grass, earth’s
eyelashes, drift on the
wind, alongside the sun
swallowed by the moon.
Where Two Worlds Meet

*Lucy Holland*

As I look beyond the crowded skyline
The faint beige hues disappear
The foggy brown meets stark white clouds
And a blue sky, oh so clear.

The line that forms contrasts the two
In an indescribably way
Light blue mixes with dull nudes
To set a colored stage.

The site is mesmerizing, singular and pure
No other town can boast of such a vibrant hue
Littered streets and faded concrete speak as if to say
That our own tones won’t stick to us
They fill the sky with gray.
Desolate Abundance

Dallen Garner

The desert is often thought of as a dry desolate uninhabitable place of little desire. This painting of Monument Valley expresses the life and abundance to be had in the beauty of the desert.
Pectol’s Pyramid

Christopher Garcia
The picturesque monolith dominates the surrounding landscape, in turn acting as a point of reference for several hikes throughout Capitol Reef National Park.

Time in the desert is deeply felt.
It does not loom rather sinks beneath the clay fills in the lines of our skin stained red with earth growing deeper faster until they coalesce with the wrinkles of the sand.

Subjective to Nature Pt 1

Shaela Adams
Time in the mountains is deeply felt. It does not pass quiet rather rises and bends fills your spirit with something old burrows in your soul rooting deeper faster until you remember it in your bones.

Subjective to Nature Pt 2 
Shaela Adams

Big Cottonwood in Early Autumn
Jaxon Roller

Taken in the evening as the sun sets behind clouds from a storm that day. I love that there is already snow when the leaves are just barely beginning to change. The road, while not natural, is designed with respect to the landscape and it allows us to access the region. I want these places and experiences to be preserved for others.
Without me . . . .

Without me you would die, your eyes would burst and your lips would dry.

Without me there’d be no drink, no coffee or tea or cup from the sink.

Without me you couldn’t be clean, just like our oceans with their oily sheen.

Without me life wouldn’t be here, no bacteria, no plankton, no atmosphere.

Without me there’d be no trees, no breathe, no cough, no laugh or sneeze.

Without me you’d have no cars, no plains, no trains or boulevards.

Without me there’d be no cries, no rivers or lakes to industrialize.

Without me you’d have no hydration, similar to those in undeveloped nations.

You’re taking too much of me, you’re spreading me thin.

Allow me to replenish naturally and start this cycle again.

Imagine a world without me then perhaps you could attempt to let me be.
Frozen

Colton West
Mesa Arch

Nate Devries

This photograph was taken at Mesa Arch at the beginning of February in Canyonlands National Park. One of my favorite places, when the sun comes up and hits the bottom of the arch everything lights up and it’s incredible.
Floods in the Spring

Madison Opal Skinner

you pass through me, floods in the spring,
your energy has shaped me,
parts carried away, pieces that I loved.

you pass through me,
laughter and joy from the way I hold you
the warmth I contain seeps into you.
I carry you to places you’ve never seen
show you the places you can create life.

you pass through me,
engulfing what I have to offer
capturing whatever is free
you pass through me,
but do you understand what I am losing
this turbulence is taking over me

you passed through me, floods in the spring,
your energy has shaped me,
new paths were carved and traces left
but you were not the only dream

you passed through me,
and others will too.
but after you’ve come and you’ve gone
took what you could,
took harbor in my arms.
I’ll still be here, worn away
too many times to forget your song

you passed through me
but I am more resilient than you know.
On Pueblo Lands and Mormon Rhetoric

Russ Fugal

Growing up in the “Mormon diaspora” — migrants from Great Basin Mormon settlements who relocated throughout the US for educational or employment opportunities — the romanticized stories of Mormon pioneers, and particularly the 1847 arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, are very familiar to me. My family, once a year when I was a child, would make a Walkaraian journey from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to visit paternal and maternal grandparents just north of Nuche’s Timpanogó (Provo–Orem). Mormon settlement of Utah had a remote, almost mythological feel as a personal origin story. To my younger self, settlement was ancestral, religious, historical, and, in backdrop to my cultural education on Pueblo lands, absent any mention of indigenous people.

The stories of indigeneity in Santa Fe are stories of resistance, persistence, presence, and people. Evidence of colonialism is everywhere, alongside historical and modern evidence of indigenous culture. Indigeneity existed and was evident in my environment, outside the ‘Lamanite’ theology of Mormonism evinced within chapel and home. In my mind, the two ideas of ‘Lamanites’ and Indigenous Peoples existed separately, cloistered off in separate spheres. Within the Mormon sphere, indigeneity was ready for redemption and remote, “in the mission field” of Latin America; in other words, not in Utah. On Pueblo lands, indigeneity and colonialism contested place everywhere — from the Pueblo Revival style architecture of my home to the Palace of the Governors built atop the Oghá P’o’oge Pueblo, from the frequent trips up US-84 (as far north as Abiquiu) to the ruins down the P’osoge (Rio Grande), from the Cicuye/Pecos Pueblo southeast to the Ancestral Pueblo below the Pajarito Plateau northwest, from performing Agnus Dei in the elementary school of Tesuque Pueblo to the Dixon Orchard apples we bought on contested Cochoti Pueblo land. The stories I learned — Utah is White, not Indigenous Lands in the way Santa Fe is — I don’t think were just my mistaken and impressionable youth; evidencing this rhetoric of remoteness is a Feb. 9, 1967 sermon, where Apostle and future Church President, Spencer Kimball, said, “My fellow Indian students, it’s a joy to be with you… The Indian is a Lamanite. There are South American, Central American, Mexican, Polynesian, and other Lamanites…”

In worship, inside the only Mormon chapel in Santa Fe, on Pueblo lands, with a mostly White congregation with roots in Utah, I would sing the songs of settlement:
Firm as the mountains around us, Stalwart and brave we stand
On the rock our fathers planted For us in this goodly land—
And we hear the desert singing: Carry on, carry on, carry on!
Hills and vales and mountains ringing: Carry on, carry on, carry on!
This personification of land is abundant in Mormon settler mythology. This is foregrounded on the This is The Place monument. When I first visit, the monument is snow covered, so I can’t read most of the plaques. I can read the Hosanna stone:
Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!
To God and the Lamb! Amen! Amen! Amen!
And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.
The land yearned for the Mormon settlers; this is a narrative I am very familiar with but had never seen so plainly. “The wilderness… shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice.” This is Manifest Destiny. That the monument was constructed of local granite from the “mountain of the LORD’s house,” the same granite as the temple and conference center downtown, is not lost on me; if the native peoples didn’t welcome the pioneers, at least the land did.
This is The Place, as a public and historical monument, has an air of being academic and non-religious. The bronze statues adorning the perimeter of the monument commemorate non-Mormons and their contributions to “opening the west.” On my return visit, the snow has begun to melt, and I read the plaques of these token gentiles. I think again of hymns I know well:
They, the builders of the nation, Blazing trails along the way;
Stepping-stones for generations Were their deeds of ev’ry day.
Building new and firm foundations, Pushing on the wild frontier, Forging onward, ever onward, Blessed, honored Pioneer!

The images of the oxcart and children evoke melodies from even earlier years:
Here comes the oxcart, oh, how slow!
It’s pulled by an ox, of course, you know.
The wooden wheels creak as they roll along.
Creak, creak, creak, creak is their song.

Pioneer children sang as they walked and walked and walked and walked.
They washed at streams and worked and played.
Sundays they camped and read and prayed.
Week after week, they sang as they walked and walked and walked and …

When pioneers moved to the West,
With courage strong they met the test.
They pushed their handcarts all day long, And as they pushed they sang this song:
For some must push and some must pull, As we go marching up the hill;
So merrily on our way we go Until we reach the Valley-o.

For a while, I am convinced of a false notion, forgetting that at its heart, the monument is Mormon rhetoric — the three men of the Mormon presidency are exalted several dozen feet above my head and Isaiah’s prophecy attributed to this land and the Hosanna Shout are emblazoned in all caps, carved in temple granite — it’s not simply about arrival and settlement, it is worship and assertion of prophecy fulfilled:

On the rock our fathers planted For us in this goodly land—
The rock of honor and virtue, Of faith in the living God.
They raised his banner triumphant— Over the desert sod.

Absent any mention of indigenous peoples in my settler Mormonism heritage, I grew up with constructs of two separate worlds: monocultural White (Mormon) Utah and pluricultural Brown (pueblo, neomexicanos, genízaros, and/or mestizos, etc.) Santa Fe. This is what struck me the most in my visit to This is The Place monument — how white-washed the heritage story is. This is not normal on Pueblo lands, where lands and places stand witness to coloniality, contesting monuments to Oñate with art, actions, words, and voices of Pueblo peoples.

I don’t know if stories of indigenous encounters were purposefully left out of the canonical narratives of Mormonism because indigenous deaths by genocide were so damning, or if they were just seen as too peripheral to be relevant. When I returned, I had hoped to learn something from the Washakie plaque. All I learn is how good a friend he was to the Whites. There are mentions on the uncovered plaques of all the White men who came before the Mormons, who’s knowledge of the lands was invaluable to the settlers. I saw no mention of how indigenous knowledge helped the settlers — or, undoubtedly, the White men who came before — navigate and survive these inhospitable lands. Washakie is not privileged with any contribution other than not driving us away. Not that we believed it was in their power:

We’ll find the place which God for us prepared, Far away in the West,
Where none shall come to hurt or make afraid; There the Saints will be blessed.
And should we die before our journey’s through, Happy day! All is well!
We then are free from toil and sorrow, too; With the just we shall dwell!
But if our lives are spared again To see the Saints their rest obtain,
Oh, how we’ll make this chorus swell — All is well! All is well!

I enter the Visitor’s Center, looking for indigenous people, and I only see merchandise of infantile natives and children’s stories about the noble savage. Arriving downstairs, I am suddenly hit with the full force of Mormon rhetoric played out. Walking into a room with floor-to-ceiling wall murals of God’s green earth, grand panning-camera scenes of creation accompany a video presentation of origin story education; I instantly feel the power of Mormon temple rhetoric bolstering the stories being told here. The narrator of the Mormon origin story tells me that “by early 1838 religious persecution drove [the Mormons] from the state and forced them to seek a new home. They went west and established themselves on new land.” Continually moving westward, “Brigham Young and his people turned their faces west, far to the west. They knew that somewhere beyond the Rocky Mountains was a place for them — a place where they could go, find freedom, build their cities, and no one could drive them out.” As I hesitantly take a seat, realizing that it is more than likely manufactured by a company that supplies seats to the construction of Mormon temples, all pretense melts away. This is our rhetoric; this is Mormon mythmaking. “Prior to the arrival of the Mormons, this quiet wilderness was the land of the Native Americans — the Shoshone to the north, and the Utes and Navajo to the south. They had lived for millennia in these mountains as nomadic hunters and gatherers.” The precedent of millennia is washed away by the arrival of the Mormons, because how could it be otherwise. The land rejoices. As if filming the Garden of Eden, beautiful sweeping shots of traditional hunting grounds in the Wasatch Mountains, absent any Indigenous Peoples, accompany the flowery rhetoric of the narrator; “As the Mormons entered what they called the Great Basin, they saw it ringed with high mountains — like pyramids towering towards heaven, some of which were beautifully snowcapped. The Great Salt Lake shimmered a dark silvery blue in the distance. The canyons along the west slope of the Wasatch mountains teemed with wildlife and crystal-clear streams.” This is The Prophesied Land. On-screen I see reenactments of settlement, but not displacement, accompanied with photographs and artwork. “Those first years in the valley were a struggle for survival. Whether it was famine and drought, or crickets decimating their
crops, or conflict with some native peoples, those first settlers paid a heavy price to build their mountain home.” The film cuts to images of crops, seagulls, and homesteads, but no images of conflict. I watch the video twice. And that’s it. That’s the extent of any recognition of Native Peoples. This was the land of (qualified: nomadic) people for millennia until the Mormons arrived. How was the transition so rapid and painless? Perhaps the seagulls gobbled them up. At least it is more mention of the Native Peoples than I’ve ever heard in my Utah heritage narratives outside of Utah.

Oh, how we’ve made this chorus swell — All is well! All is well!

The land which White settlers throughout Utah occupy is contested. The waters, springs, and oases of the eastern Great Basin — ancestral lands in the valleys of the Markagunt, Pahvant, Wasatch, and Bear River Mountains — are just a fraction of the lands supporting families and sustaining the communities of myriad Nuche–Neme (Numic) peoples. I had not connected the dots, being educated about Spanish colonialism on Pueblo lands, that due to Spanish slave trade many genizaros and mestizos had deeper claim to Utah heritage than I had — colonial powers have disrupted life for the Nuche–Neme for over 400 years. Despite a history of violence and impoverishment, it was not until Mormon settlement that dispossession of lands was carried forward with devastating effect. This violence is not unique to Mormon settlement — it is property of all U.S. occupied lands — but the past is obscure, and it’s more comfortable for White men like me to forget these histories. All is not well and histories convey responsibility.

As you consider debates over public lands, as your children sing the Utah state song (“Utah, This is The Place” www.utahstatesong.com) in public Elementary schools, or as you make your way throughout the Great Basin and Colorado Plateau, pumping black carbon particulates into the valley air and filling your tanks with Sage Grouse endangering petroleum, enjoying the diminished beauty of Numic lands, if any Mormon Rhetoric reflects upon your thoughts, may it be: If there still should be offenses, Woe to them by whom they come!

Measure given, large or grudged, Just the same you must receive.

Little motes are but a bubble When I think upon the beam.
This photo was captured on a camping trip in the middle of October of 2018. The camping group and I were lucky enough to spot buffalo everywhere that day but were never able to get close enough to snap the perfect photo until we spotted this buffalo getting ready to cross a stream.
Colors of Utah Pt 1
*Cassandra Palor*

Powell Interpretations Pt 1
*Aubrilyn Guevara*
Powell Interpretations Pt 2
Aubrilyn Guevara

Colors of Utah Pt 2
Cassandra Palor
there is a stirring in my heart
a sweet thrum that asks i sit to listen
and pay a visit

i line the walls of my stomach with calendulas
filling me with the warmth of the sun
and absolve from resentment

“you cannot apologize for your truth.
in this place, i forgive you.”

i have forgotten many things that i once knew by heart
the last four digits of my grandparents phone number
the green glint of summertime cicadas
twirling in tinsel

“where did i go”

i have to remember my body is capable of healing
that these surfacing realities are just misunderstood children

they need just to be held
and told,

“you are safe here”

there have been many times were i have not felt safe here
times that left me as empty jars
the hollow in tree stumps

it is hard to love in a world that does not understand softness
it is hard to love in a world that rarely welcomes the tender
it is hard to love in a world that exploits the earth

how this planet is treated, i’m seeing, is a reflection of my own hollowness
a collective hollowness
i wish to help and understand her
to wrap her up and say “you are safe here”

but oftentimes,
it is not safe here

the people who inhabit this place hold little to nothing sacred
pissing in plastic, bleeding on stolen land

i’m still in search of somewhere cradled by human hands
meanwhile, i’m healing the places that have held her in ways she had never hoped for
i am pressing my ear to her ground
letting her know that i hear her

that i’m here to listen

and among all this,
i feel myself rotting alongside her
we have both tolerated a lot

a lot

but we still manage to grow from these gashes to forgive those who have held us in
ways we had not hoped for
to teach others how to see
to hold

and contine on, changing with the seasons
shedding our skins to welcome relief

...

so i sink my heart into her soil
and pray for her to hear its song

in response, i hear

“together,
we are safe here”
CONTRIBUTORS

Aspen Meek; Poet from Utah, Aspen writes to connect herself and others to the Earth.

Ben Ackerman; Ben is an environmental geoscience senior with a background in mass communication. He enjoys finding creative outlets through all forms of audio, visual, and written media.

Carrie Marsh; After parenting for twelve years and making personally sustainable choices, Carrie became more aware of the world that we are leaving for future generations and felt compelled to make a difference in an environment larger than her own home. She is a junior majoring in environmental and sustainability along with urban ecology and hopes to build better, healthier, and more equitable communities for her children.

Cassandra Palor; Currently, a junior at the University of Utah Cassandra Palor is pursuing a minor in photography. Palor has been taking pictures since high school and loves highlighting things from her normal daily life.

Christopher Garcia; 2nd semester transfer to the U. Always looking for an excuse to go out and take pictures.

Colton West; Full time student at the University of Utah, with a deep passion for nature and photography. Social Media: @westernpines

Daniel Pohorelsky; Daniel is an Environmental and Sustainability Studies major at the University of Utah. He is a 35 year old U.S. Air Force veteran.

Dallen Garner; There is so much to tell, there is so little to tell.

Erika Kusakabe; Erika is an Environmental and Sustainability Studies senior at the University of Utah. She grew up in the Salt Lake Valley with asthma and feels a personal concern for low air quality.

Jaxon Roller; Jaxon is a graduating senior at the University of Utah. He has always been amazed with Utah’s landscapes and environments, and wants to recreate those feelings of awe with landscape design and architecture.

Katie Christensen; Katie is an amateur nature photographer and wildlife enthusiast. She believes conservation can be influenced by art and making art is influenced by a passion for wildlife conservation.

Kelsey Palmer Andersen; Kelsey Andersen is a professional photographer who uses her camera to capture images that tell a story.

Lauren Joy Swidnicki; An Anthropology and Environmental studies major, Lauren who feels most at home in Utah’s great mountains. Lauren believes that the outdoors are for everyone and everyone can play a role in protecting them.
Lilly Argaiz; Originally from San Antonio, Texas, Lilly is a freshman at the University of Utah and is currently a Pre-Medical Lab Science major.

Lisa Donaldson; Lisa is a student at the University of Utah, studying Writing and Rhetoric, as well as Environment and Sustainability.

Logan Allen; Logan is a landscape photographer from Boise, Idaho and a freshman at the University of Utah studying Computer Engineering. Being from Idaho, he really enjoys being outdoors and began landscape photography as a way to further appreciate our natural surroundings.

Lucy Holland; As an Honors student and Environmental Sustainabilities Studies undergraduate at the University of Utah, Lucy has found her home in the valley that is Salt Lake City. Although mostly enthralled in academics, dabbling in poetry and painting is a welcome outlet for the multifaceted singer/songwriter in Utah.

Madison Lopez; A student at the University of Utah majoring in photography, Madison has lived in Salt Lake her whole life. She likes to focus on organic aesthetics and how nature relates to itself, and how people relate to nature either as forms of nature, or a disruption of nature.

Nate Devries; Nate is a freshman at the University of Utah studying Environmental science. He grew up here in Utah and has always enjoyed the outdoors. He enjoys photography, biking, hiking, camping, and exploring. He cares about our planet and personally thinks that being in nature is the best way to relieve stress and feel peace.

Rachel Schaefer; Rachel loves Southern Utah as it shows nature’s natural beauty and what can be created out of the elements.

Riley Nevis; Riley feels the beauty of the nutrient cycle is seen within the arid southwestern landscapes which stretch across Utah’s backyard.

Russ Fugal; Russ Fugal is a senior in the U’s Writing and Rhetoric Studies program. He is a father of 3 and lives in Draper. His prose and poetry tend to foreground indigenous and environmental issues, with his publication debut in Salt Lake Community College Spring 2018 Folio poem, witaèmi.

Siobhan Davis; Siobhan has lived in Utah her whole life, so the outdoors and the solar system specifically have always been a huge part of her life. She is a freshman at the University of Utah, currently undecided as to what major she will be studying, but has a large interest in Environmental Studies.