Bethany Laranda Wood: The West at Hand

Bethany Laranda Wood uses techniques from her training in jewelry design, metal working, and book arts to translate places and found objects into drawings. She uses these sketches to create small metal boxes, brooches, sculptures, and prints inspired by the landscapes she visits. The mark making of drawing—which for her is an intimate and embodied relationship between person and place—is thereby translated into equally intimate experiences for viewers holding or wearing her works.

Some of Wood’s early works are based on her travels with the Land Arts Program of the American West at Texas Tech University in 2011. While on the road she made field drawings of major land interventions, such as Utah’s Bingham Copper Pit and Robert Smithson’s Land Art sculpture Spiral Jetty in the Great Salt Lake. She also kept note of the group's nomadic encampments, and from her experiences and drawings created small metal-and-paper pop-up “books,” wearable art, and miniature sculptures.

Wood’s miniatures fall within the long tradition of miniature art, a genre that was especially popular in painting during the Middle Ages in both Western and Persian cultures. What makes her works unique, however, is the way that she transforms some of the largest land alterations in the American West into intricate objects for contemplation in the palm of the hand.

The materials in this exhibition include works loaned by the artist and are from the Special Collections and Archive Collections of the Center for Art + Environment.