

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Joshua trees are threatened by the changing climate and may become extinct from places like Joshua Tree National Park in the next 100 years. These trees are an icon of the Mojave Desert and a key figure in desert ecosystems. In her multimedia series of work *"Staying with the Trouble" for Joshua trees*, the Joshua tree becomes a symbol of natureculture that is used to bring attention to the environmental disruptions caused by human activities. Threatened by climate change, development, solar fields, and fire spreading invasive grasses, Harrower studies symbiosis in the Joshua tree system and questions how the mythos of the American West intertwines with Joshua trees.

In *Disrupted Symbiosis*, a series of three multimedia paintings inspired by her research, we are asked to consider the politics of human-mediated species loss. Harrower's scientific investigations on Joshua tree pollinator and fungal populations have demonstrated that climate change impacts Joshua trees through species interactions that may fracture with the changing climate. This work has directly influenced current Joshua tree species protections. She applies this research to create underground painted soilscapes that hold an abundance of information on fungal species, soil types, temperatures, and moisture, which are coded as colors and texture. Illustrated root patterns are taken from Joshua tree roots grown in glass chambers and treated with desert fungi, allowing for a collaboration between the plant, fungi, and artist. The tears in the paper and changing stitching patterns represent Harrower's symbiotic findings and the outcomes of tree-fungal relationships across climate zones. Each painting comes together as a unique experience of the Joshua tree ecosystem from a precise climatic location at her field sites. The painting can be activated by the viewer by downloading the free Artivive phone app. The Joshua tree paintings become animated, sharing a different threat for the Joshua tree ecosystem.



*Pioneer species*. 2022. Salvaged wood, silk, ink, wire, sand, stone, grow light, Joshua trees.

The frames are constructed and sourced from the salvaged wood of degraded Jackrabbit homesteads from the Mojave and gesture towards the larger structure *Pioneer species*. These homesteads are the remnants of the Small Tract Act of 1938, an attempt by the US government to pacify and tame the Mojave Desert and another refrain in the larger movement of manifest destiny. For 10\$/acre, homesteaders could claim a 5-acre piece of land if they constructed a small shack on it. In many cases the ghostly and feral shacks are now being reclaimed by the desert.

Continuing the theme of haunting, in the film *Joshua tree death dance*, Harrower asks us to witness the imagined deaths of three Joshua trees. A soundtrack referencing western movie iconography problematizes how the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism have become entrenched in our conceptualizing of the American West and how the claiming and taming of the land along with the marginalization of its inhabitants is directly linked with the environmental devastation and Joshua tree loss that we are currently facing. The Joshua trees shared across all works reference real trees that Harrower has been working with for over 8 years in her hometown near Joshua Tree, CA.

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*The haunting*. 2021. Ink on habotai silk. 42"x60".



*Climate changing tree systems.* 2021. Acrylic, Joshua tree seed oil, ink, string, reclaimed wood. 18"x24".



*Desert crowding.* 2021. Acrylic, Joshua tree seed oil, ink, string, reclaimed wood. 18"x24".