

## **Salvage**

**Heather Wetzel**

This series of ferrotypes titled *Salvage* is made using the tops and bottoms of recycled cans. The lids are collected from a variety of sources, shaped, cleaned, and japanned by alternating a layer of japanning solution and baking the lids until a sufficient density of rich brown is achieved. Then, the lids are coated with collodion, sensitized, and exposed under the enlarger, developed, fixed, dried, and finally varnished. By using a circular format of varying diameters, these photogenic drawings become little worlds. The plant material used to create the imagery indicates growth, biodiversity, and potential regeneration.



*Salvage* is constantly growing. As I continue to explore ideas of biodiversity, mono-crop culture, and genetically modified crops, and the science and controversy surrounding the topic, *Salvage* adapts. It now includes a "field" 30 repeating digitally captured images, reproduced on 3" square photo litho plates in large quantities, depicting corn fields in various stages of growth representing genetically modified crops. This field is arranged in an orderly grid, with some "blowing" out of the field and into the circular ferrotype, or natural, environment. Where these two shapes, symbolizing the intersection of natural plant life and mono-crop culture, the imagery on the unique round ferrotypes will become almost nonexistent, a faded shadow of what once was, symbolizing GMOs and monoculture's propensity for crowding out indigenous flora and fauna.



The size of the installation varies depending on the venue and is installed using nails and magnets so the ferrotypes float about an inch from the wall, giving a variety of subtle depth and dimension. The photo litho plates are installed directly upon the wall, creating a flatter field of pattern. Currently, there are just over three hundred of the unique circular ferrotypes completed ranging in size from 1" to 5 1/2" in diameter, with many more to come. There are four hundred photo litho plates. In contrast to the concise grid the square plates create, the formation of the circular plates is more organic and free flowing, with some areas being denser than others. Bigger, faster, cheaper isn't

always better and certainly isn't always good for us.

*Salvage* now includes small constructed landscapes, using the smooth can walls of many of the cans collected for this body of work. These landscapes utilize the same botanical materials used in the making of the circular plates, and continue to manipulate the chemicals in the wet plate collodion process. Taking a moment to step back and look at the landscape from a different perspective offers a renewed appreciation of the beauty of our planet and the need to be better stewards of the environment. This body of work began in 2011 and is ongoing.

### **Artist Statement**

*Time moves so fast. It seems there is less and less time for the slower things in life. Time to sit and reflect, time to remember, and time to notice the little things. Analog ways are being replaced by faster technology. Photographic prints and books are being replaced by intangible, transient digital files made of zeros and ones - no texture, no smell, no weight. I prefer to work at a slower pace, with materials and process playing important roles in my making. My work is grounded in contemplation of life in the 21st Century, examining current social concerns, using a variety of materials and methods.*

*The quest for the best form for my ideas to inhabit finds me working in a variety of media, such as historic photographic processes, book structure and content, print, hand paper making, metal, and wood. I am equally concerned with the object and alternative methods of display, and with how my chosen materials support concept and content. I work predominantly with analogue processes, but am also interested in how these methods complement digital technologies, and work to seamlessly integrate digital processes as concepts dictate. My interest in these processes and materials all contribute to my concern in multi-media constructions and art as object.*

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