Through Her Eyes: An Exploration of Place & Purpose
“I raise up my voice—not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard...we cannot succeed when half of us are held back.”

—Malala Yousafzai

Welcome to Through Her Eyes: An Exploration of Place & Purpose. Through this book, we hope to provide a platform for the women of F&ES to share their motivations, passions, histories, fears, and triumphs. Though progress has been made, gender equity in the environmental movement is still being realized. These stories and photography ground us in a community of women here at F&ES, and it is our hope that this publication will serve to celebrate diversity, inclusion, equity, and the work that’s being done to understand and coexist within our world.
Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature -- the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.  

— Rachel Carson

Acknowledgements

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A Note From The Editors

We are continually faced with a cascade of truths, approaches, and experts, and throughout, we bring ourselves – in relation to place, people, and environment. We are at once informed by our work and lives before F&ES, while also looking ahead to “what comes next.” Simultaneously, we are challenged to engage in the rush of academic life – the temporality of place and community that is inherent to short-term, full-time programs. As women (however you approach that word), we regularly confront expectations and barriers that attempt to reinforce certain visions of womanhood. Yet we are also surrounded and supported by a thriving community of women who determinedly deconstruct presumptions. We recognize that in creating this book, we are balancing the celebration of womanhood’s ongoing contributions in the struggle for justice with the understanding that our actions are part of a larger, more complex conversation that must be inclusive of all. We must then reconcile the tension between our genuine celebration of momentum with the lived reality that a struggle for justice is still deeply necessary.

This book is the physical representation of radical action; an object to hold, an object to share, and an object to inspire conversation and connectedness. The works here are not meant to represent an end in itself, but to encourage all at F&ES (as a whole, connected community) to defy expectation on all fronts and expand the scope of what is possible. We hope these stories and images encourage self expression via creation and reflection, and help us to examine what it would mean to live in responsible relation to people and place. The author Kathleen Dean Moore asks us to consider: What does it mean to love a place? A person? She writes, “To love a place is to care for it, to keep it healthy, to attend to its needs...To love a person or a place is to take responsibility for its well-being.” In essence, to live these words is to love and work wholly in kinship – truly being in and as community.

With love,
Allyza, Amber & Chandni
The Photographers

Emma Akrawi
Samara Brock
Amber Collett
Maanya Condamoor
Kathy Douglas
Lara Iwanicki
Jules Luthringer
Catherine Martini
Dana Patterson
Olivia Sanchez-Badini
Sarah Sax
Latha Swamy

Thanks to Shi, Yi for photographing the editors
As members of the Stratigraphy Commission deliberate over whether the Anthropocene will be formally accepted as part the geological time scale, it seems the train has been already left the station. Academic journals, newspapers, novels, and films alike declare that we have become a geological force whose trace will be read on this planet for millennia. The distinction between the natural and human world has collapsed. What does it mean to be a woman in the anthropocene? I find resonance with Donna Haraway’s idea that it means to be a cyborg: a hybrid of human, nature, machine, story. A creature made up of reality and of the stories we tell to create reality, and with a responsibility to shape both. The anthropocene story does not need to be one of domination over, or of loss. It can, as feminist scholars like Haraway, Sarah Whatmore, Anna Tsing, and Jane Bennett envision, become an opportunity to create kin, to create a more expansive understanding of what we are and, therefore, what we care for.

The stories we use to understand this world are not inconsequential. As Jan Zwicky observes in the poem above, these stories cut history like a knife. To be a woman in the anthropocene is to confuse boundaries, to resist categorization, to challenge destructive narratives, to grieve but not be overcome with despair, and to create something new.

Stories are merely theories. Theories are dreams.
A dream is a carving knife
and the scar it opens in the world
is history.  – from The Geology of Norway by Jan Zwicky
Quizás llegué aquí buscando hadas e imitando mujeres de la tierra…

Crecí buscando hadas en el jardín, leyendo historias sobre Narnia y maravillándome con sucesos de la Tierra Media cuando ya era adolescente. Entré por primera vez a un bosque, atenta a cualquier elfo que pudiera susurrarme una sabia historia, o a cualquier duende que me pudiera contar un secreto de la tierra. El mar era lejano para mí, las historias de ondinas no se acercaban más allá del papel, el océano inmenso no era un lugar donde me quisiera aventurar.

De niña aprendí que las mujeres Mapuche además de criar a los niños y tejer en telares, eran las encargadas cultivar la tierra. ¿Sería un trabajo duro para ellas? Pero también vi a mi mamá y a mi abuela cuidar las plantas; me enseñaron a sanarlas, a amarlas, a cultivar. Y entonces decidí, que yo también podría labrar.

Luego conocí de las tragedias de la Tierra y corrí a preguntar a mi papá -Si los bosques desaparecen, ¿dónde vivirán los elfos? y si el mar se acidifica y las aguas se calientan ¿qué será de las ondinas? -Esas son preguntas que yo no quiero tener que escuchar.

Perhaps I came here looking for fairies and imitating women of the earth…

I grew up looking for fairies in the garden, reading stories about Narnia, and marveling at the events of Middle Earth. When I first visited the forest, I looked for an elf that could whisper a wise story, and waited for a gnome that could tell me a secret of the land. The sea was mysterious for me, stories of nymphs did not emerge from the paper; the immense ocean was not a place I wanted to explore.

As a child, I learned how Mapuche women, in addition to raising children and weaving looms, were the farmers of land. Would it be a hard job for them? But I saw my mother and grandmother doing the same; I was taught to heal, to love, to cultivate plants. So, I decided, I could also till the land.

Later on, after hearing about the tragedies of the Earth, I asked my dad, “If the forest disappears, what will happen to the elves? And if the sea becomes acid and the waters warmer, where the nymphs will live?” Those are questions that I don’t want to have to hear.
Climbing gnarly mango trees to find a quiet perch on the top amidst its dark green leaves and bird-made holes, running barefoot around banyan trees and playing hide and seek in its seemingly infinite trunks, unfreezing my shoes from my feet having spent too long outdoors in the Himalayas while on vacation, watching in awe as a cyclone temporarily engulfed the beach I lived close to while rain, ocean spray, and sand flew into my eyes and mouth, and speeding along on the back of a scooter at night with the wind in my face and inhaling the olfactory explosion of a giant city - these are some of my earliest childhood memories of growing up in India, of me in my environment.

Our environments are a composite mosaic, an intricate fabric shaped by innumerable influences, both living and non-living.

I am most hopeful about the power of empathy – between human and non-human species, and between people of all kinds.
Biased and Time-delayed Beautiful

Transitory being –
I nearly fully believe
Myself permanent.
But would I not take better
Care of “Life, the Universe
And Everything”? (Thanks, Douglas Adams!)
Am I permanent for
“All the time in the world?”
*****
May all beings be loved
May all beings be well?
May all beings have happiness
May all beings be free
May all beings be peaceful
And at ease

Buddhist Loving-kindness Meditation.
My prayer/hope/intention for all.
*****
Environment…
The environment we experience
Lives within: biased, time-delayed.
My journey:
Remove blinder after blinder,
See the Earth and me
As close to real as I can,
Know you as close
To as-you-are…
*****

Life, dinosaurs, biology, ecology, natural
history, trees, F&ES, teaching, learning,
preaching, LGBTQI, Barbara, books,
savoring, music, movies, theater, water, cats,
humor, Divinity, diversity, algae, matter
& energy… Margulis, Darwin… Dillard,
Carson… Eiseley, Leopold, Gould…
Mystics… everything!
*****
Being in the moment
I create space in time in me,
to hear, see, know, and value you – let you
know:
I did and do hear you!
*****
… environment lives within…
Biased, time-delayed…
*****
When knowing all is dynamic
I grasp
Ecosystems change, life evolves…
Connectedness…
Power of tiny change…
My transitoriness, growth, transformation,
Impact,
And Fleetingness…
Fleeting mysterious time…
As I look back over my life and work, several things are clear. My life’s story is rooted in my personal experiences in nature. I lived on a farm in eastern Oklahoma until going to college. This gave me a chance to be outdoors a lot. I explored the woods, watched animals, roamed weekly over several miles, mostly by myself. Nature became a personal friend. It remains my emotional touchstone. That is why I live in Wyoming today – when I’m not at Yale. I live across the street from the National Elk Refuge and in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem; both are full of wildlife, but facing threats. The wonders of nature keep me going as do the good works of people.
Words that I live by—family, pride, respect, strength, support, assurance, compassion, dedication, integrity, honesty, determination, and success. These words are valued by and exhibited in the many families that have shaped me—the family that gave me life and raised me, the family that I created with the love of my life, the family that I work with, and the family that I support through my work. I’m rewarded tangibly by their spoken words of affirmation and written words in thank-you cards and jotted-down notes. I’m rewarded intangibly by their smiles and successes. I share in the joys and accomplishments of my various family members, as they share in mine.

Spectacular sights, sounds, and senses that comfort my soul so often emanate from the environment—ocean waters sliding past the hull of our sailboat while the sun reflects on the water in diamond-like sparkles, wind blowing the leaf-laden trees as I hike in the woods, sunsets, waterfalls, the crispness in the air after a fresh fallen snow, the stunning beauty of a majestic mountain landscape, the pitter-patter of little feet, and sand pushing through my toes as the sea breeze blows my hair while strolling on a white sandy beach.

I live my life in a beautiful world.
I believe that when we see ourselves in other species, when we see ourselves in other people, when we recognize our self in the other, then that mindset will lead us to harmony, peace, and sustainability. When we start to realize that we are a part of our environment, not separate or above it, then we can take responsibility for our actions, and start to do better for each other and for all life.

In the US, we act frequently through our consumer choices. Every time we buy something, we vote for the world we want to live in. It’s a small amount of power, but it can make a difference. When you buy used clothes over new or local vegetables that are free of packaging, you are voting for a harmonious world. That kind of conscious consumerism is a way we can demonstrate integrity to our environmental values.

Women, help each other out. Please, just do it. Sexism is real, and so deeply entrenched in our society that we may unwittingly participate in discrimination against other women. So help your sisters out.
We find ourselves at a moment in history when we must rethink our understanding of nature and of being. The assumptions we draw from these definitions give us the conventional world we experience, and by all accounts this world is not serving us.

For those who look, we see that our finite Earth is spinning recklessly towards climate change. This, while our exponentially growing, technologically consumed, and conflict prone human population remains bounded by views that explicitly or vaguely oppose a world where peace and justice are rule.

I am one who looks. And if nothing else, this is my commitment to our Earth and all her life. I commit to keeping watch and sharing with others this sight of the future, the present, and the past. I commit to leading by example to establish a culture that thinks in context, values coexistence over conflict, and treats all people, all land, and all life with respect.

Will this—an understanding of nature and of being that is founded in respect—be enough to ensure our future?

*It is bedrock. And without it, we have no honest footing on which to face tomorrow.*
At this stage in my life I am not much of an outdoor person, but in my childhood exploring the fields and forests near my home was the best experience a child could have. We would hike way up into the woods behind the cemetery (always a scary but exciting place to go), pick blueberries, harass the cows in the pasture, and climb trees to pick black walnuts – all without parental knowledge or supervision. Those were different times! Such freedom to be in nature with few restrictions.

Many years ago I attended an exhibit on trees at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford – one of my favorite museums. I was so moved by the photos, drawings, and paintings in the show that I purchased and framed the exhibit poster, which has hung in all my homes ever since. This started my acquisition of tree-related artwork that now cover the walls in my house. They all bring me great joy and peace.

Working at F&ES has been a perfect complement to my long-standing love and respect for trees, and it feels great to be a part of this noble effort to protect and preserve the environment.
This is a reminder for those of us who are often perceived as underdogs. Those of us whose potential and passions are overlooked simply for being a woman, a person of color, or of a different nationality.

Today and always, I choose to believe that…

“Much of what we consider valuable in our world arises out of these kinds of lopsided conflicts, because the act of facing overwhelming odds produces greatness and beauty.

We consistently get these kinds of conflict wrong. We misread them. We misinterpret them.

Giants are not what we think they are. The same qualities that appear to give them strength are often the sources of great weakness.

And the fact that being an underdog can change people in ways that we often fail to appreciate: it can open doors and create opportunities and educate and enlighten and make possible what might otherwise have seemed unthinkable.”

–Malcolm Gladwell
Look inside and she finds peace.
Look back and she is reminded of who she is and where she will be.
Her peace is sustained by love and the greater being,
A being that nourishes the Earth and her children
She is of the Earth, she realizes
She is her mother, and her mother’s mother
Her being is connected to all beings.
She is of the trees, the water and even the sun.
Her journey is one among billions.
She falls,
Looks inside,
She is lifted.
Her spirit is again connected to all others.
The spirit in the trees, the water and even the sun.
She continues to carry on her duties
And she meditates on,
May all beings be happy, may all beings be happy.
Alyse Putnam
Photographed by Jules Luthringer

My heart lives here.
My body stretches from corner to corner of its space; becoming one with
the warmth of the wood. This place is quiet and chaotic. It can become
what anyone chooses it to be.

Within these very walls I have learned of beauty. I have learned of
strength and emotional freedom. This is where I open the doors to hap-
piness as I participate in the elegant cultivation of creativity and love.

This place is my home.
Melanie Quigley  
Photographed by Dana Patterson

Chainsaw

The Pacific Northwest damp idled  
I pulled the choke and the kick of the chainsaw  
Startled the She inside of me who had felt  
Uninvited  
To get in the dirt, drive a Bobcat, a pickup, a machete through brush  
Swing an axe above her head

A rain-sodden field of boots and raingear  
Steady figures bending, pulling

The chainsaw whirred spitting oil  
Pulling through wood  
She  
The woman I was supposed to be  
Unraveled with the tug of the chain
Maclovia Quintana  
Photographed by Catherine Martini

Flying into Albuquerque,
Headlights on I-40 like beads
Leading to the crescent moon,
Red at the horizon;
The persistent sound of rain on the roof—
Meditations inherent in the landscape.

A wintertime prayer
Watching snow
melt on my brown skin,
collect on the juniper branches above
making them soft as unshorn sheep.

In the spring,
My skin cracks like cottonwood bark
The sight of mountains the only balm.

I have no early recollection of a thing called “nature,”
That is,
Nature as something distinct from everyday life
To grow up in the high desert
Is to tell time not by a clock
But by the cast of light
The color of sky,
To tell seasons by the colors at sunset,
To measure my joy
By the blushing hope of apricot blossoms.
Lindsey Ratcliff

Photographed by Lara Iwanicki

Court of the Matriarchs

These rocks were raised, etched and placed by women before us.
Cut and smoothed by canyon ladies.

Her cliffs tower above where I stand. Below she grounds me, lifting and supporting. Ancient seas flow in her solid walls overlaid by preserved moments of shifting winds.

Sun falls westward below her mesas. Orange spirals illuminate. Moon pulls herself up to the east. I rise in the middle, balanced by emerging lunar shadows.

The divided river below constantly carves, unveiling impermanence of landscapes and these things about myself.

From the court of matriarchs, with all the layers inside me, I step forward strong and unbounded.
Islands can seem like tiny strongholds in a gulping, grasping ocean, but I prefer to think they smudge some line we fix between sea and land. Less about remoteness and isolation, but about connections and magnification. Islands are fascinating because of the convergence of things we place in opposition, sea and land, vulnerability and strength, local and global, unique and universal. And they speak to something larger—how we interact within a system, how we treat people at the margins, and how we navigate an asymmetrical world.

I am encouraged by all the ways people consider how they want and choose to relate to these asymmetries. I know I am fortunate to be made to stretch my brain to distress, to be urged by others to reflect on what I overlook. And I know I should strive to think beyond myself, traverse doubt, evade complacency, and resist simple self-assurance. To detect your own in a diversity of motivations and to locate yourself in relation to the world is almost certainly a permanent exercise, and one I should be glad to have the chance to do.
I feel a sense of peace walking in the streets of Eldoret. When I’m there, I’m home. I’m me. I am accepted and I belong. When we were younger, we frequently visited my grandmother and these were my most precious early memories of connecting with nature. In the evenings, we went with her to milk the cows and the cold evening breeze from the Nandi Hills engulfed us. These hills – the majestic Nandi hills - have served as a fortress for my people for thousands of years and had been a safe retreat in times of war and famine.

When ‘school’ came to Kenya in the 1940’s and 1950’s, my grandmother took my mother to school. She knew little about what happened in school, but she knew that there was something of value there, and that when someone ‘went’ they came back different. She wanted something more for her children, in the best way she knew how. This, for me, is a constant motivation to do better, to always count my blessings to work harder and to always aspire for more.

Retrogressive cultural practices, lack of financial empowerment and energy poverty are issues women continue to grapple with in my home country. But the future is bright – more women are getting educated and as we say in Africa, when you educate a woman, you educate a village.
Karen Seto
Photographed by Olivia Sanchez Badini

Two Cinquains

deserts
breathtaking, flawless
meditating, trekking, exploring
puts me at peace
Badwater

community
support, trust
belonging, sharing, caring
like an extended family
FES
Becca Shively
Photographed by Amber Collett

The South Fork Eel

In the city, I close my eyes and picture it.
I am three thousand miles west,
in the place each of us loves exactly the same way.

I imagine I am sprawled on a sandbar, head back and immersed
in a canyon filled with the music of sighing trees
of river gliding over rocks
of insects chirping in dry grass.

I let hot river rocks burn my bare legs
and cold green water lick my heels, toes pointed to the sky.

I close my eyes and fill my lungs with the best smell,
like pepperwood, and bitter weeds, and blackberries
and new oxygen exhaled from the oldest trees.

I extend my arms and lay them flat, willing myself to sink,
forge to the crust
and live forever with
river
trees
wind
and sun.
Sabrina Szeto
Photographed by Olivia Sanchez Badini

A silvicultural prescription for incoming students (I mean, seedlings).

Values.
What are you managing for? What do you hope to achieve? Who do you want to be? Humans are complex. Take time to think about your values, and be prepared, for they may change.

Site.
You can’t plant whatever you like anywhere and expect it to grow. We all have limitations and strengths. Recognize them. Learn what you can do with them. Limitations might be biophysical - which means, take care of yourself. Leaders in sustainability need to live sustainably too. Go to sleep. Hang out with friends. Cook food.

Management.
Be active, engage, question, enjoy. Most of all, follow your heart. (See Values.) The two years you have are a blank slate you can be creative with. Try something new. This is a safe space to make mistakes. It is a greenhouse.

Regeneration.
Reach out to someone and encourage them. Express gratitude to those around you. Challenge others to persevere. Be a source of positivity in the face of ArcMap crashing. Share. There is much beauty in a Sage Lab sunset.

Harvest.
It’s not all about merchantable value. It’s about becoming a better tree. (See Values.)
The people in the west of Ireland describe a connection to the land so vivid and tangible it is as if the earth is singing. One day, while traveling north along the Irish coast, I stopped in a fishing village. By happenstance I met a young girl wearing wellies and overalls. Before I knew it her family was inviting me to explore their home—the Burren, a vast limestone region with hills like giant cow patties. Together we hiked to a holy well beneath a wishing tree. There Jenny taught me to take a “nature memory photograph”: I closed my eyes, followed her lead, and at the tap of my shoulder opened and closed my eyes, like a camera aperture, to glimpse a delicate pink flower growing between the rocks. This magical experience stayed with me, and through FES I organized a summer internship in Ireland. I returned to the Burren to learn about place-based education and local grazing traditions that are harmonious with the area’s rich floral biodiversity. I believe that our relationships to the land not only build stewardship but community. This connection—call it stewardship, call it singing—is exactly what I aspire to celebrate and foster.
I stood behind a man and a woman on an escalator.
He said, “try and lower your pitch when you speak”
she looks down.
“I cant this is my voice.”

A man catcalls me on the street,
“hey there baby, nice ass”
my boyfriends think that's the cross I bear
As a woman.

Do you speak to the trees with that mouth?
They should cage you with their roots
Till your bones are crushed
Dust to soil
Soil to roots

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They should cage you with their roots
Till your bones are crushed
Dust to soil
Soil to roots

And I wonder,
Why do I need to bend to the world,
when it doesn't even lean over for me

Do we expect the redwood to tumble to the ground
To converse with the hands and mouths that cut it?

It belongs in the canopy
Conversing with clouds
Not cut and shaped to build the table
You put your feet on.

Devoid of life because it
Tried to fit in a world
Not made for it.

But they forget.
I am a woman.
And I will grow.

My niece is 12. She is witty
And loves making things with her hands
But thinks she is weak.
Because she is a girl.
Saying yes to being in this lovely little book felt so scary that I almost didn’t do it. Which is why I figured I should probably do it! As a woman in a sometimes controversial or unpopular field, speaking up for what I believe in has not come easily. The desire to remain soft and likable can overwhelm, so I, like a lot of women, fall back on working quietly in the dark. So here, I’ve dared myself to say the thing in which I believe most, the thing that sets my soul alight and the cause for which I want to work LOUDLY forever. I’m abandoning the fear that others will think it’s too small or unimportant, too aggressive, too dorky, too anything, and putting it in writing forever: When you’re ready to have a pet, please adopt from a shelter!!!
You are your own forever:
a flowing pulsing staple like the beat-beat-beating of a Mobius-strip drum
[or of a heart]
like the pump-pump-pumping of your lung’s living rhythms. [xylem in,
phloem out]
Inert chemicals exchange and suddenly: you’re a single singing soul, unre-
peat[ed/able].
Ecstatic you, alongside moss, oaks, geese, and hedgerows:
   Chloroplasts dance the sun rays
   Bedrocks croon magnetically
   Planets fling out their inertia
You [all] flitter, flutter, soar. You’re every impetus for motion.
You, ma’am, rev the revolution and rage with resolution:
beat-beat-beating wings fan the fires, Flyer.
You resonate deep, like thunder, booming [bang-boom-beat]
after your lighting strikes waiting-patient skies, the starred-black-bright.
If your aim pin-points any moon’s light, shooting [bang-boom-beat],
you’ll make it there. There, there, darling.
Right now, you are everything you need to be.
   a golden ratio on a casual seashell
   a beech bud breaking ultraviolet
   susurrating starlings
   an old mountain; a quiet trail.
Dear Dean Crane and Assistant Dean Kuhne,

This email is regarding the lineup for the FES Wednesday Seminar[s]. I greatly enjoyed last year’s series and was looking forward to the speakers list this year. Receiving the email this week, however, I was surprised and concerned to see that there did not seem to be [was not] a diverse list of speakers represented. Specifically, there did not appear to be any [were barely any] female speakers [(not to mention international and people of color)], which make up a significant portion [majority] of our student body.

Since the Wednesday Seminars are well attended and a great opportunity [meant] to showcase the latest environmental issues in academia, I do hope [know] we can work together to get a more diverse set of speakers for next semester that is more representative of our student body and the environmental arena. Do let me know if [how] I can assist in this endeavor.

Best Regards,

Alisa Zomer
I - like the earth - am not static. I am evolving, in process, growing. I see reflections of my past in everything I do; I connect with people from different parts of myself. Yet I am not who I once was when I began this journey. My identity is shifting. Always.

My spirit has been broken wide open at the top of a glacier-fed, wildflower-cloaked mountain; I’ve soaked in hot springs on the edge of ocean cliffs as I watched whales migrate with their young. I’ve contemplated, “What more can I do for the world? How can my life be of meaning and service for others?”

I have cried earth.

I feel a great urgency. To address what I can of wicked problems; to not let a moment go by where I am not thinking, working, and accessing the available resources to better the possibility of a future.

I am learning to let go of who I identified myself as, and my expectations of who I would be today, and here at Yale, and who I will be after Yale, because as before so will be after: life unfolds despite ones best laid plans.
Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies

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