

# humble arts foundation

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## rachel sussman

### artist statement

My work is landscape based, rooted in an exploration of man's complex relationship with nature, and through this, himself. I'm drawn to man-made patterns that use nature as medium or muse, and conversely, to natural patterns returning the man-made to a more natural state. I employ formal devices such as restricted color palettes, flattened/filled picture planes and considered use of line & shape to further the interaction between aesthetics, content and form. What results in the work is my own unique visual system, imbued with cultural context from my extensive travels. The work isn't about a particular place, but rather, all places. An element of serendipity is revealed through travel.

The *Oldest Living Things in the World* project is a natural extension of my ongoing work. While very simple in its conception, the photographs, scientific data and visual display of quantitative information will combine to create a compelling body of work. An interdisciplinary approach has the potential to shed light on the intersection of science with philosophy/belief via an artistic framework. Themes of longevity, sustainability, the natural sublime and mortality are inherent to the subject matter. Themes ranging from gender to the existential can surface simultaneously when learning that an 80,000-year-old colony of Aspen trees exists as a self-sustaining male, and, in principal, could be immortal. The project provides dialogue that resonates beyond the sum of its parts.

### biography

Rachel Sussman was born in 1975, grew up in Baltimore, MD and has enjoyed stints in Santa Fe, NM and Nicoya, Costa Rica. She received her BFA in photography from the School of Visual Arts in New York in 1998. She is currently working on *The Oldest Living Things in the World*, a project that has her doing research alongside biologists and traveling to sites all over the world to photograph 2000-year-old living things. A book and corresponding exhibition of the work are forthcoming.

Sussman has been awarded artist residencies at the MacDowell Colony, the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, and the Vermont Studio Center. She was recently elected to the Macdowell Colony Fellows Executive Committee in addition to being named the Evelyn Stefansson Nef Fellow in 2005. She received an Artist's Fellowship Award for her residency at VSC, and was presented with an *ID* magazine award (Bronze: design) in 1999, as well as the Arkin-Medo Excellence in Photography award in 1998. Sussman will serve as a Thomas P. Johnson Distinguished Visiting Artist at Rollins College this fall.

Over the past 10 years Sussman has exhibited in the US, Europe, and online. She has shown in NYC in such venues as New Century Artists, Pierogi 2000, Jen Bekman Gallery, Christie's, Artists Space, Cue Art Foundation, Galapagos Art Space, Momenta, White Columns, and in non-traditional venues like the RIDER Project mobile art gallery. Her work was also shown recently at the LA Design Center, Vox Populi in Philadelphia, Photography 2005 at the Renaissance Society in Chicago, Stenersenmuseet in Norway, D21 Kunstraum and Pierogi, Liepzig, and in a solo exhibition at Galerie Engler und Piper, Berlin.

Sussman has also worked as an interactive producer for 10 years and has managed large teams and interdisciplinary projects ranging from NBC.com's *Homicide* and *Saturday Night Live* sites to educational software projects employing speech recognition technologies. She also performed trapeze as part of the duo *The Amazing Siblings* in venues throughout New York, though her acrobatic career was cut short when she was sidelined by a rotator cuff injury.

Sussman lives and works in Williamsburg, Brooklyn when she is not traveling.