

Rocks Trees and I

2022

Michael O'Rourke

Each page is 18" x 18". Full spreads = 36" x 18"

These explanatory notes in cyan are not included in the final book.

A glacier two miles thick —
What have we ever seen two miles thick?
We name it “glacier” and feel we understand,
but what have we ever seen
two miles thick
that could carry a four-ton rock a thousand miles
as easily as a grain of sand stuck to a kneecap,
and deposit it here 20,000 years ago?

This is all too big for me to understand.

My life is tinier than this.

My small job in my small life
is to do my best as best I can
to understand this magnitude,
these magnitudes.

I will study.

Let me start here.





Walls of rock

enclose me,
embrace me,
protect me.

Crush me,
squash me,
bury me,
shield me.

Teach me.



In all this
I try to understand,
try to understand,
better and better,
more and more,
always knowing I cannot understand,
can never fully understand,
that the best I can do is try to understand
better and better
more and more,
forever incompletely.

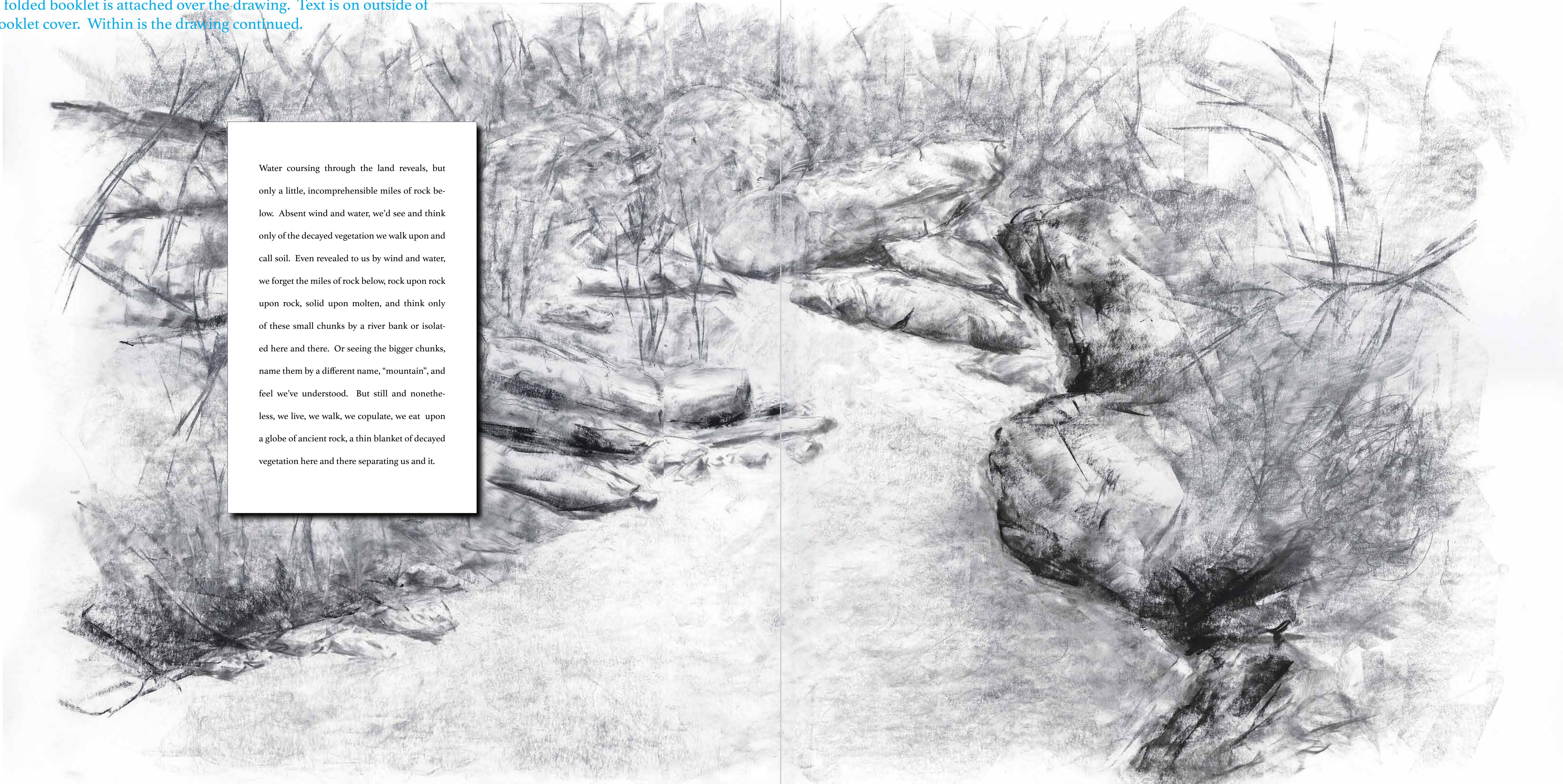
French-door flaps partially cover the fullspread image.



On opening the outer folds, one sees the entire image.

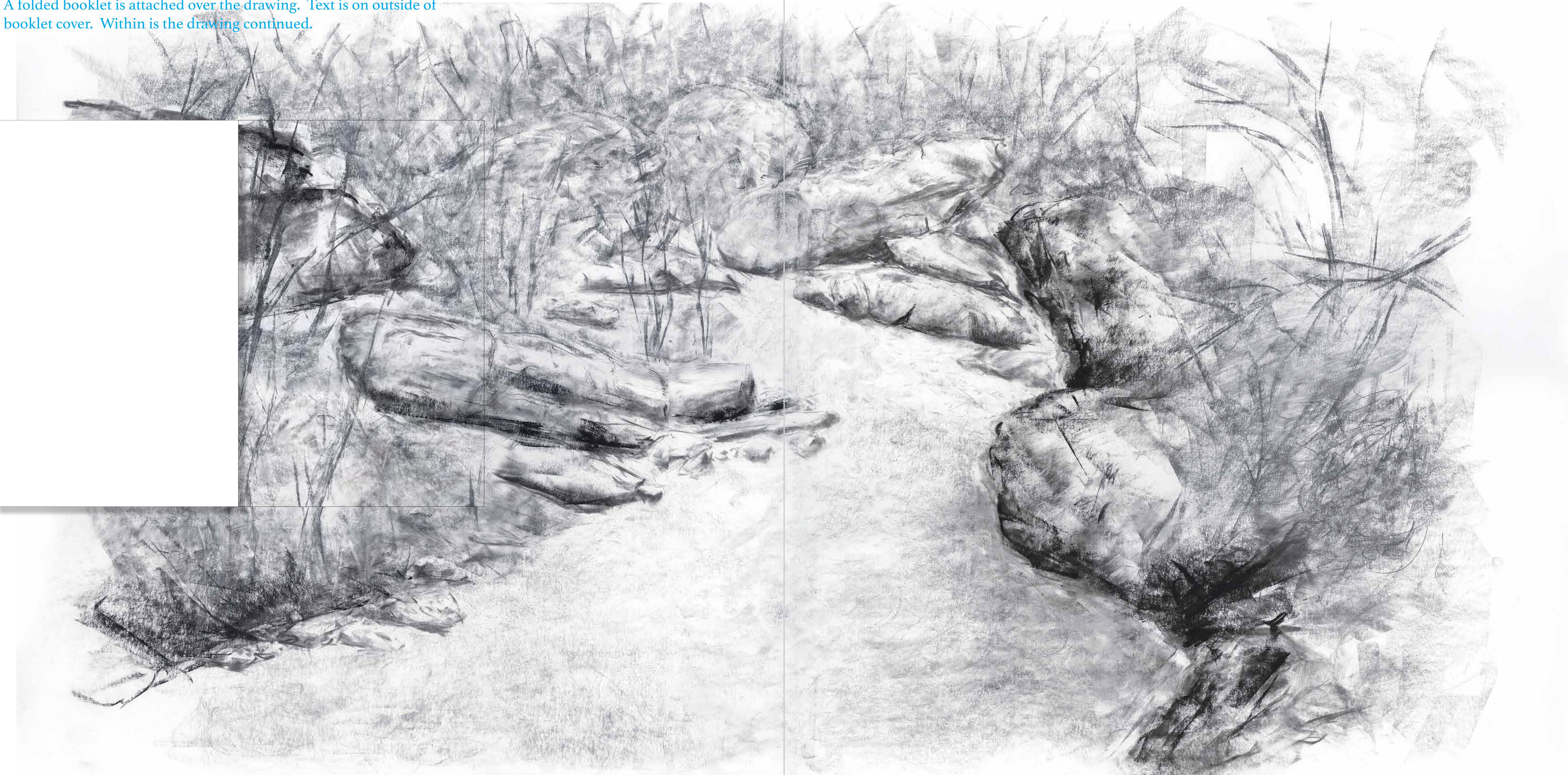


A folded booklet is attached over the drawing. Text is on outside of booklet cover. Within is the drawing continued.



Water coursing through the land reveals, but only a little, incomprehensible miles of rock below. Absent wind and water, we'd see and think only of the decayed vegetation we walk upon and call soil. Even revealed to us by wind and water, we forget the miles of rock below, rock upon rock upon rock, solid upon molten, and think only of these small chunks by a river bank or isolated here and there. Or seeing the bigger chunks, name them by a different name, "mountain", and feel we've understood. But still and nonetheless, we live, we walk, we copulate, we eat upon a globe of ancient rock, a thin blanket of decayed vegetation here and there separating us and it.

A folded booklet is attached over the drawing. Text is on outside of booklet cover. Within is the drawing continued.





A foldout of a mountain scene. Poetry is visible on left side of spread when foldout is closed. When open, the poetry is hidden but the panoramic photo is fully visible.

We tumble along,
childhood to death,
Our lives as short to these mountains'
as a mosquito's to ours.



A foldout of a mountain scene. Poetry is visible on left side of spread when foldout is closed. When open, the poetry is hidden but the panoramic photo is fully visible.







A leaf, a cluster of pine needles.

Deep black cracks in a grey rock face.

The sweep of a mountain covered with trees.

Twisting branches and tangled roots

of an aged tree

persisting,
persisting.



My predecessors, colleagues, masters,
Cezanne, Sansetsu,
DaVinci, Moore, Guo Xi,
Okamura,
we study together,

our wonder and awe

cascading

through generations
and
cultures

like twisting branches
of an ancient

juniper tree.



A French-door structure. Drawings are on the outside of the doors.
When doors open, a photograph of twisted roots becomes visible.



A French-door structure. Drawings are visible on the outside of the doors. When doors open, a photograph of twisted roots is visible.



I cannot understand this beauty. Nor this. Do the rocks find me as beautiful? The trees the rocks? I cannot understand, wh



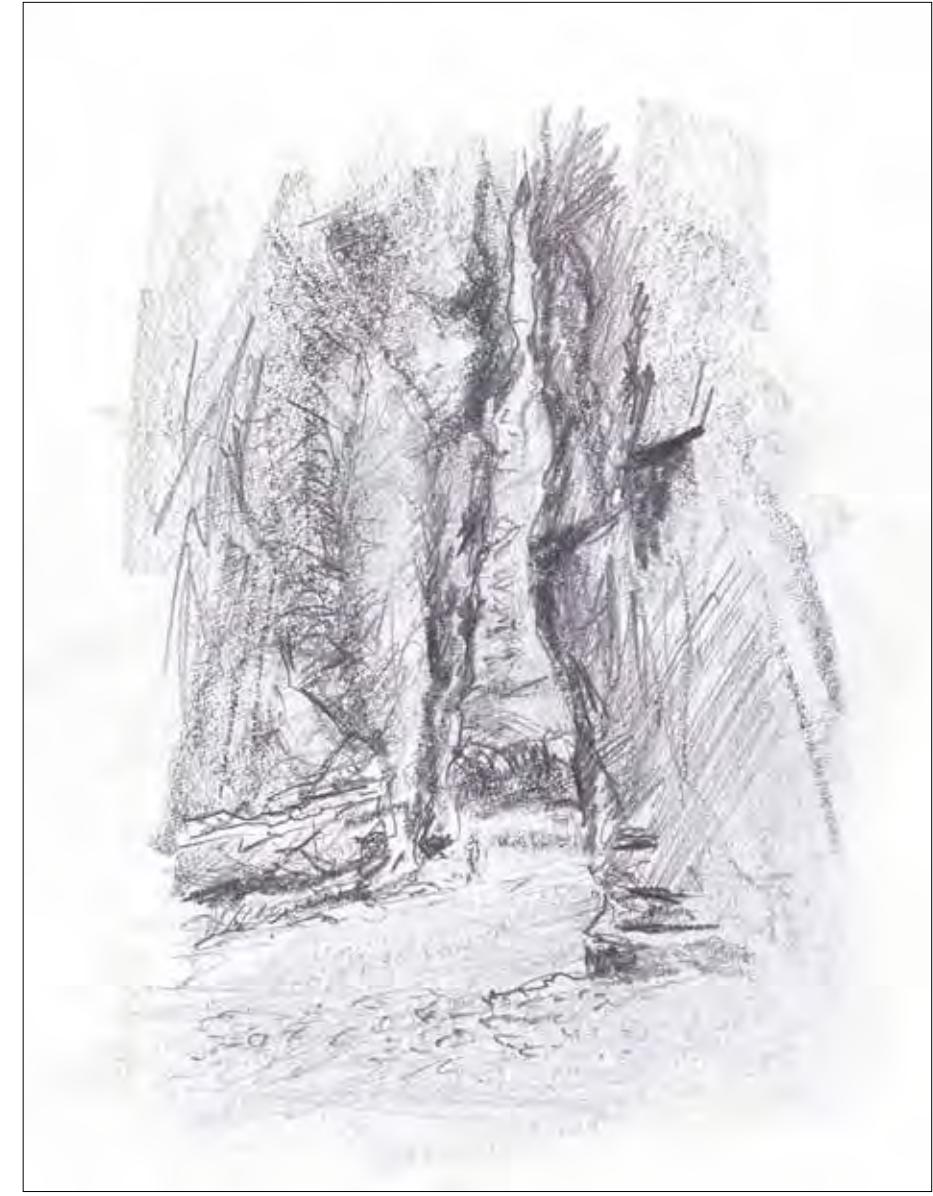


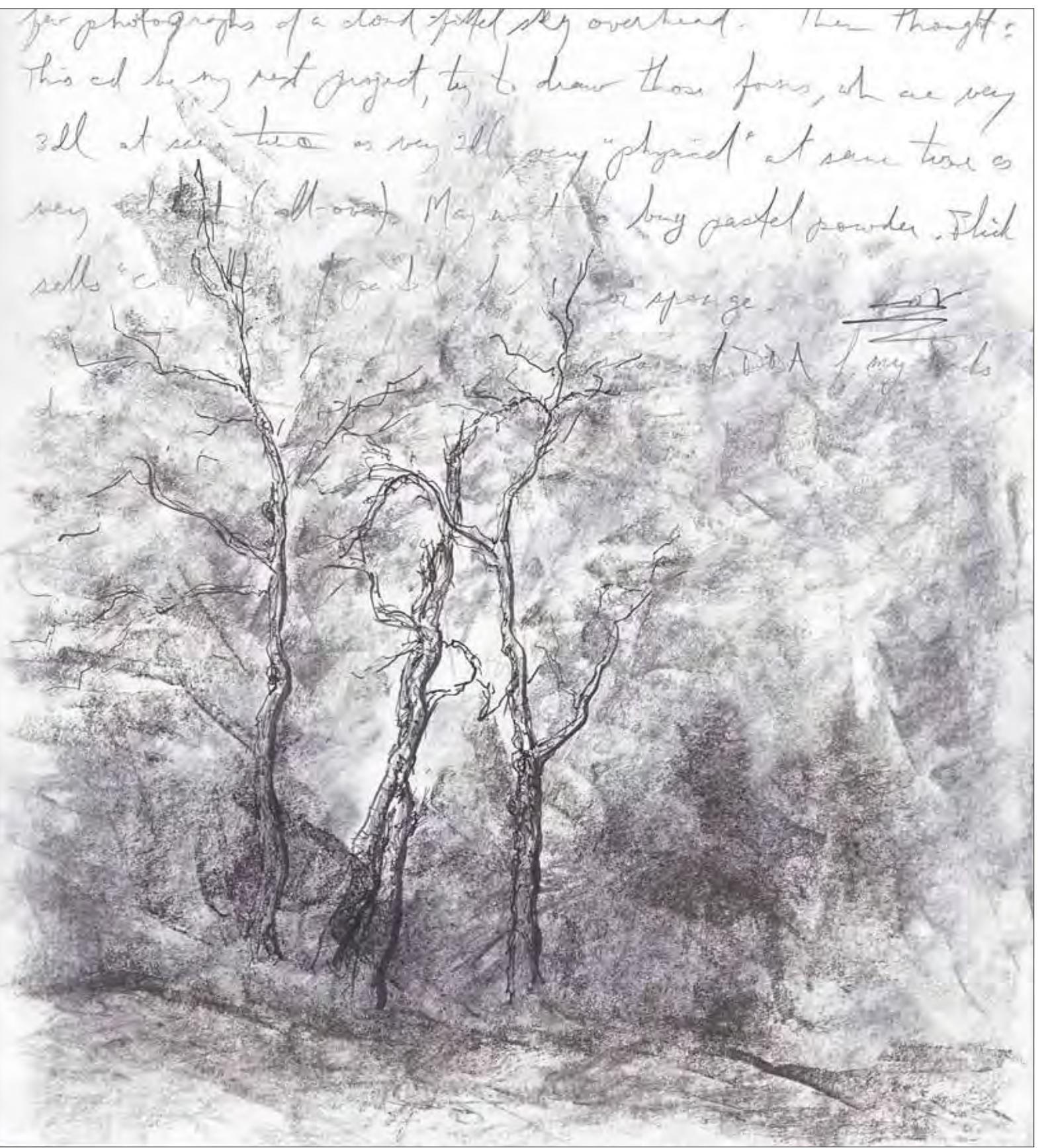
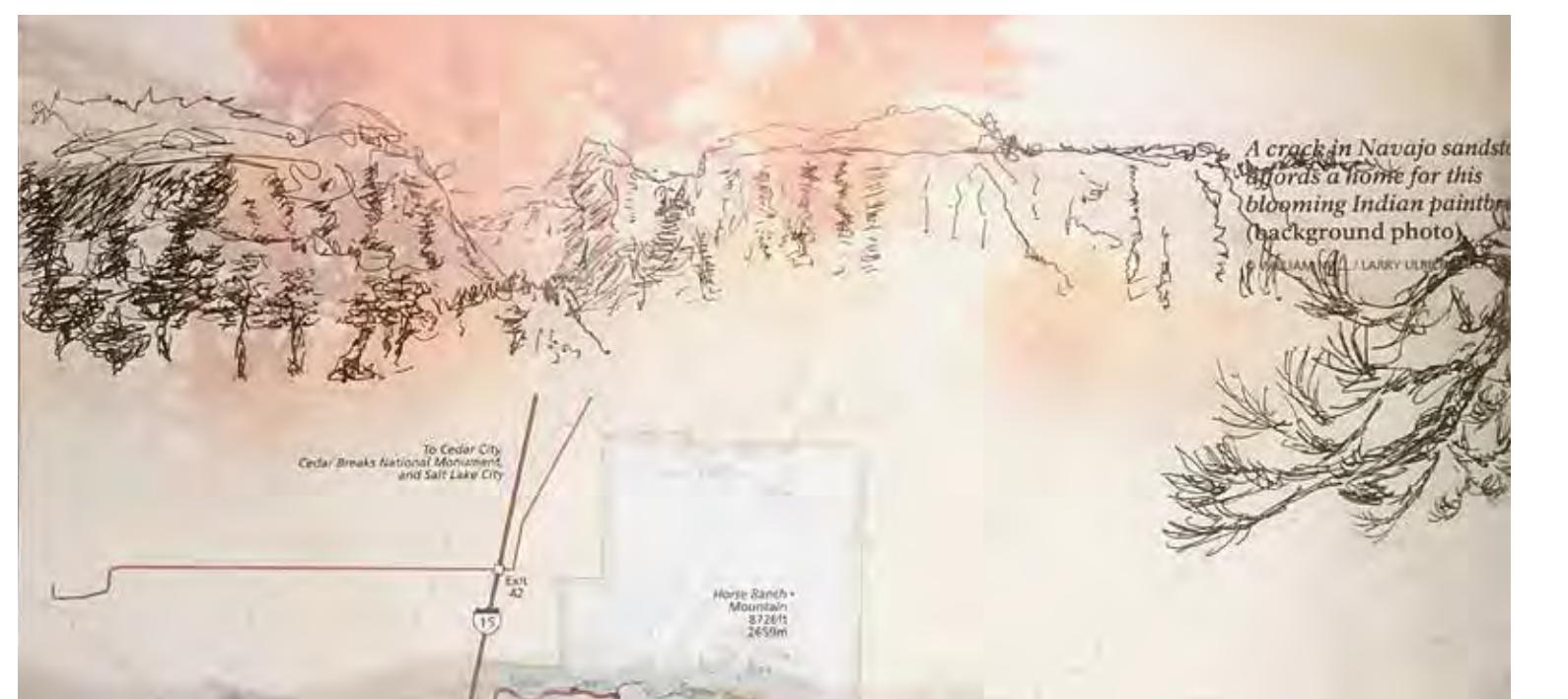




Studies & Sketches

Many sketches, photographs, and repeat drawings as I worked to understand not only the physical appearance of these scenes and things, but, for me, their philosophical significance.





List of Artworks

Artworks are listed below from front of book to back. Sketches are listed from top left clockwise per page. All artwork is original and unless otherwise noted created in 2021 or 2022. This book was printed on Moab Entrada paper and fabricated by hand by the artist in Massachusetts.

Full-page images

Berkshires Rock. Charcoal on paper, 24" x 19"
Rock Formation, Grand Canyon. Charcoal on paper, 24" x 19"
Narrows Passage, Zion. Charcoal and pencil on paper, 24" x 19"

Zion Panorama. iPhone SE
Granby River Rocks. Charcoal on paper, 24" x 38"
Granby Rocks. Colored charcoals on paper, 24" x 19"
Adirondacks Peaks, C- louds. iPhone SE
Grand Canyon Panorama. iPhone SE
Central Park Tree. Charcoal on paper, 24" x 38"

Ashville Roots. iPhone SE
Bonsai Juniper, Brooklyn Botanical Gardens. iPhone SE
French Door foldout;
exterior: *Two Sketches*, pencils and ink.
interior: *Berkshire Roots*, iPhone SE

Colebrook River Rocks. Sony Alpha photos, composited
Colebrook River Rocks. Sony Alpha photos, composited
Sandisfield Rocks. Colored charcoals on paper, 24" x 19"

Zion Narrows, Big Rocks, 1. Charcoal, ink on paper, 8" x 12"
Zion Narrows, Big Rocks, 2. Charcoal, chalks, pencil on paper, 11" x 19"
Zion Narrows, Big Rocks, 3. Charcoal, pencil on paper, 19" x 24"

Diptych: Decatur Woods|Berkshires Rock, iPhone SE

Sketches

Central Park Bent Tree. Ink and charcoal on paper. 8.5" x 5.5"
Becket Tree. Pencil on paper, 2014
Tree Study. Ink and charcoal on paper. 6" x 9"
Twilight, Bay Ridge. Ink and charcoal on paper. 11" x 8.5"
Central Park Burl. Pencil on paper, 1983. 5" x 6"
House Under Trees, Decatur. Charcoal on paper. 5" x 7"
Twisted Birch. Charcoal on paper. 5" x 9"
Narrows Narrow, Study #1. Charcoal on paper. 7" x 8"
Narrows Narrow, Study #3. Charcoal and pencil on paper. 8.5" x 10"
Narrows Narrow, Study #2. Pencil on paper. 7" x 8"

Women Under Tree, Central Park. Ink and charcoal on paper. 5" x 8"
Four Trees. Ink and charcoal on paper. 10" x 8"
Zion Panorama. Ink on brochure. 11" x 4"
Grand Canyon Rocks. Pencil and charcoal on paper. 16" x 15"
Big Cypress, Golden Gate Park. Ink and charcoal on paper. 8" x 12"
Half Dome. Charcoal, ink on paper. 6" x 12"
Lakeside Trees. Pencil on paper. 8.5" x 5"
Adirondack Mountains. Charcoal on paper. 9" x 20"
Two Trees, Two Rocks. Charcoal on paper. 8" x 12"

Disk. Pencil on paper, digital drawing, 2015, 2022. 4" x 4"



Each copy of the book is signed and dated here.