

Mary V. Marsh

During the COVID-19 pandemic, my husband, Tony and I went on day trips to photograph sites of human intervention in the landscape. Continuing my research on systems and history of communication, I began photographing cell tower trees using my father's Rolleiflex camera. Cell towers disguised as trees exemplify our need for the convenience of internet service everywhere, and satisfy our desire for the infrastructure to be invisible. Camouflaged to blend in, the fake trees are silent witnesses to our movements and interactions. Through our denial we allow the collection and sale of our personal data, to be used to advertise and manipulate our attention. During Shelter-In-Place I began to think about being here, present in a location, yet connecting virtually with colleagues and friends. Being in touch with others through social media has kept us connected and has been even more important during this time. This has also been a time of learning and accepting truths about White privilege and race in America. It is a heavy lift to examine closely the hierarchy and social structures we have been taught to not see, yet uplifting to have these issues in the forefront of a national conversation. In the Here/Hear series of prints I invite the viewer to look up to see one part of the digital infrastructure that we may not notice. Analog photographs transformed into intaglio prints, honor the trees as icons of our times. Incorporating letterpress polymer text messages adds a humorous note, and suggests how our movements and attention are transformed into digital currency.