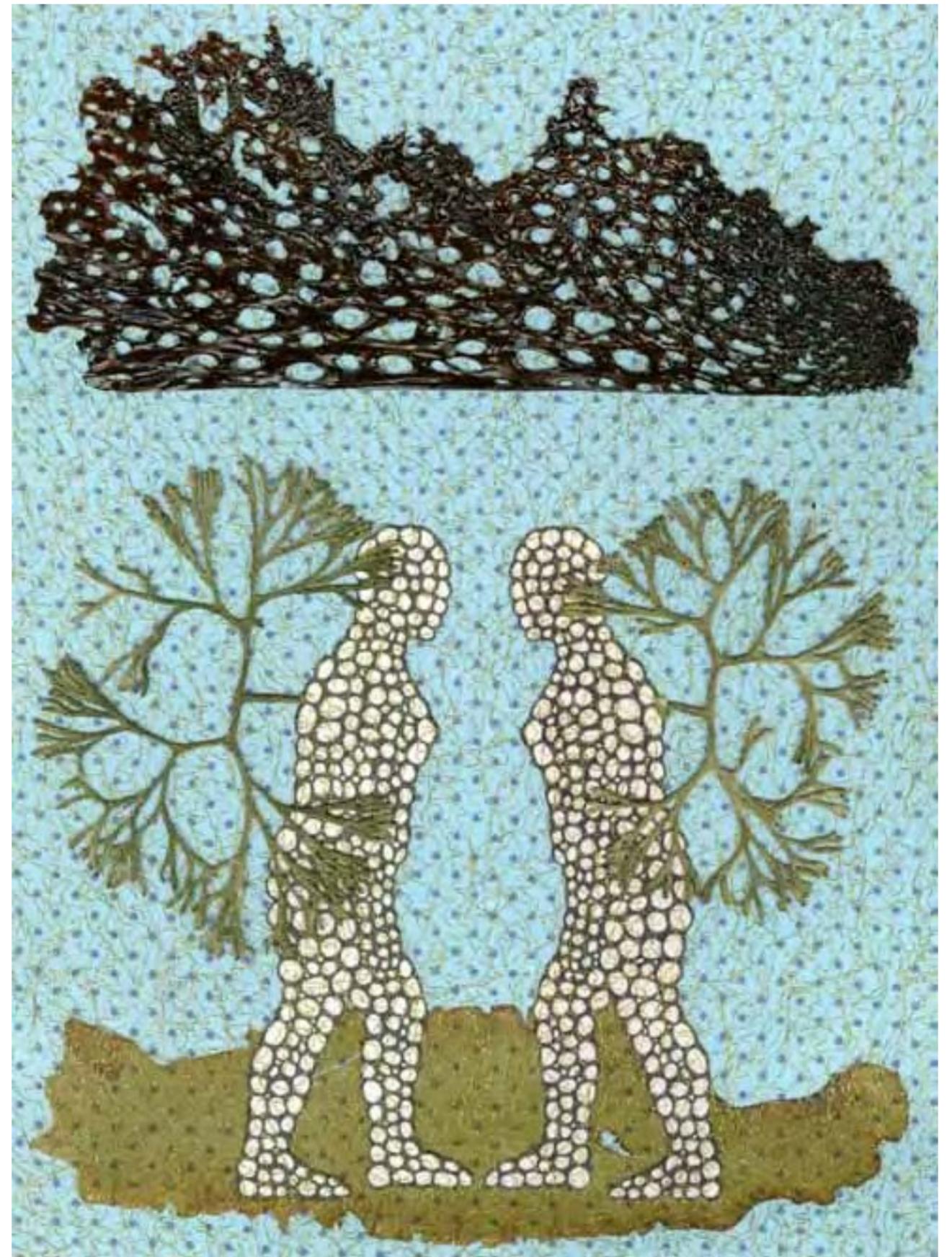




Rising Seas: The Visions of Celeste Roberge

In 1985 at Ingonish Beach on Cape Breton, I picked up a small egg-shaped pink granite stone and brought it back to my studio in Halifax. This small object was the origin of the series of sculptures titled *Geographies*, *Northern Archives*, and *Cairns* that consumed me for the ensuing ten years. I began small, mimicking the size and form of the human head, then shifted to globes representing planet earth, then grew into large boulder-like objects that forcefully contained the mineral extractions of the earth. Finally, the sculptures became gigantic figurative cairns that I imagined walking over the landscape



Opposite: *Desmarestia aculeata*, cyanotype, 22" x 30"

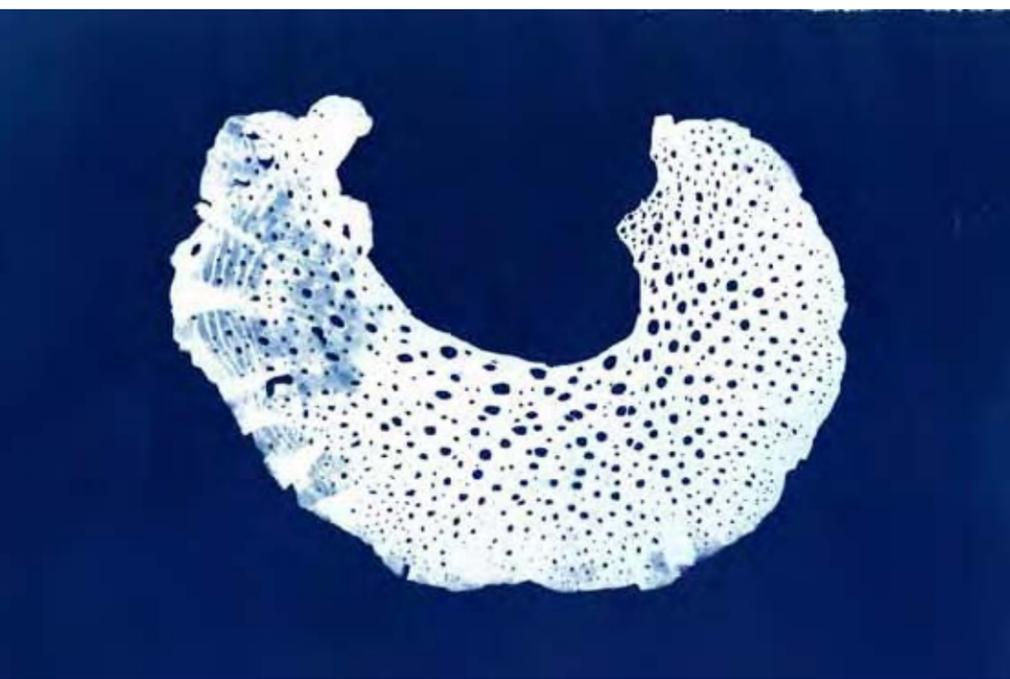
Above: *Meeting While Walking Under the Sea*, textiles, gouache, seaweeds, ink, 15.5" x 11.25"



Left: *Palmaria palmata*, cyanotype, 15" x 22"

Below, left: *Agarum clathratum*, cyanotype, 11" x 17"

Below: *Chordaria* #2, *Chordaria flagelliformis* on herbarium paper, 11.5" x 8.25"



Far left: Kelp Drying on My Clothesline, photograph, size variable

Left: *Agarum clathratum* specimen, photograph, size variable

Opposite, top: X-Kelp#2, *Saccharina latissima* on herbarium paper, 16.75" x 11.5"

Opposite, below: Rockweed at Baie Ste. Marie, Nova Scotia, photograph, size variable



of the North Atlantic, beings filled with glacial cobbles retracing their steps over millennia. For ten years, I bounced back and forth between the earth and the human body, then back and forth again and again. Uncertainty.

Similarly, in 2008, while walking with two friends at Hirtle's Beach on the South Shore of Nova Scotia, I picked up a dark brown blade of seaweed that I did not recognize as any I had seen before in either Nova Scotia or Maine. That specimen of marine macroalgae named *Agarum clathratum*, and more commonly known as sea lace, sea colander, devil's apron, or shot gun kelp, set me off on another decade-long investigation into the properties of seaweed both as subject and as material for sculptures, drawings, prints and photographs. My identification with seaweed is more visceral and more immersive than with stone. I am no longer walking across the hard geological landscape of the earth; rather, I am drifting in the ocean and in my memories, entering into a dialogue with the seaweed and all of my artworks that came before.

Seaweed is the first elemental material that I can actually wrestle with and manipulate by hand. No machines, no wrenches, no welders, no torches, no grinders are necessary.





Top and detail: Sealace Boat, cast bronze, 4.5" x 15" x 4.75"

Below and detail: Sealace Boat, Agarum clathratum, copper leaf, 3.75" x 14.25" x 5.5"



Top: Marina, side view, Agarum clathratum, perforated steel, overall: 60" x 108" x 5.5"

Above: Seaweed Boat, archival pigment print, 9.5" x 14"

When wet, seaweed is soft and pliable; when dry, brittle and shriveled. There are also the fascinating transitional states between wet and dry. Often translucent, just a few cells thick, seaweed is like a chiffon fabric, a moiré, a curly lace edging showing off its hyperbolic geometry, or, formless like jello. My investigations of seaweed could be considered a primitive form of material science. I have lots of questions.

Some seaweeds reproduce like humans do: with sperm and egg. They do it in the vast and unpredictable oceanic currents. Some grow slowly, so slow that each year of growth can be measured by a single flotation bladder on a string of *Ascophyllum nodosum*. Others grow very fast, from a miniscule seed in November to a twenty-foot long blade in April, as with *Saccharina latissima*.



I have collected seaweeds in the Canadian Maritimes, Scotland, Iceland, Svalbard and Maine. I have made cyanotypes of thirty seaweeds from the Maritimes. I have dried and glued many seaweeds into collages. I have drawn seaweeds from observation. I have cast seaweeds into boat forms in order to return them to the sea, from whence they came. I have photographed my sculptures made from seaweeds in the locations where I have found them. I have attempted to conflate seaweed forms with the forms of my own body and forms of earlier sculptures. I have made clothing out of seaweed. I cook with seaweeds.

In short, I have become possessed by seaweed. I dream it and it dreams me. In the photograph, *Algae Dreams*, made in collaboration with Joy Drury Cox, the title refers to the paradox that the algae is dreaming me and I am dreaming of the algae, simultaneously. We are in flux in an immersive oceanic experience.



Above: *Walking Cairn* (foreground), *Rising Cairn* (behind), welded and galvanized steel, 4000 pounds of granite cobbles, 108" x 36" x 30" and 58" x 54" x 43" respectively.

Opposite, top: *Body/Sea Beach Test* at Fortune's Rocks Beach, photograph, size variable.

Opposite, below: *Cairn in Surf*, photograph, size variable.



Above: *Wet Suit*, detail front, seaweed, wax, neoprene, 53" x 15" x 6"

Right: *Wet Suit*, back, seaweed, wax, neoprene, 53" x 15" x 6"

Opposite, top: *Seaweed Will Be Lapping at Your Doorstep*, seaweed, wax, 19.5" x 12.5" x 5" each

Opposite, below: *Algae Dreams* (in collaboration with Joy Drury Cox), archival pigment print, 20" x 28"



The seas are rising, waters are warming, beaches are shifting, marine organisms are on the move. In response, I am making a new series of sculptures titled *Rising Seas(onal) Collection*, survival gear for the era that is upon us. So far, the collection includes: *Wet Suit*; *Seaweed will be lapping at your doorstep (boots)*; *Swimsuit*; and *Seaweed Slip*. These fabrications are all made from my own gear and clothing, things that I have worn for years, in the case of *Wet Suit* for 33 years. Seaweed is a shape-shifter, a resilient adapter. Let's hope.

-Celeste Roberge
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