

JULIE LANGSAM:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world...*

— Excerpt from William Butler Yeats "*The Second Coming*"



Before my stepmom **Joan Kuehl** died in November, we discussed this poem, a favorite of hers. She was a filmmaker and we often talked about philosophy, psychology, fiction, films and of course politics. She understood me in a way that no one else did; her loss is heavy on my heart.

The pandemic has slowed everything down, things have gotten quieter, deeper, more meaningful. I try not to take anything for granted.

I am a painter, now making a film.

Scene: New Jersey, 2020.
The **Lenape** lived here.

I focus my attention on the vista, the sense of an immense, infinite space that is so.....

American.

We are conquerors, occupiers, and extractors.
The land is ours. We can do whatever we want to it.
The land is ours.

While driving I think about the vastness of the United States. The sheer square footage of it. I think about the physicality of mapping. I see structures everywhere representing systems of labor, systems of oppression. Every day I become part of the movement of people, goods and bodies.

I think about **Robert Smithson**. I think about his **Monuments to Passaic**. I think about chapters. I think about states. I think about New Jersey. I think: I'll make a short movie called "Garden State". I can do it during the pandemic. I will be outside.

I drive all around New Jersey: Middlesex, Somerset, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Sussex, Warren, Monmouth, Mercer, Burlington, Atlantic, and Ocean Counties. Each place offers a primer on **Edmund Burke's** philosophy of the sublime. As I aim my camera in the direction of the sun setting on gas tanks, I am very aware that it is only because of the horror that I can feel the beauty.

And that is where we are.

