



## Michelle Lougee

### *Souvenirs and Castaways*

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Plastic horrifies but beguiles me. Ever-present, disposable, and overused, plastic is at once miraculous, essential, even lifesaving, yet a dire threat to life on earth. *Souvenirs and Castaways* examines the relationships between humans, plastic, and nature in the face of a changing environment.

The works in the *Souvenirs* series are a product of modern foraging, made from carefully curated post-

consumer blister packages encapsulating natural objects such as feathers, lichen, shells and pinecones. Consider the significance of a souvenir: a fetish-like object able to conjure powerful memories. These pieces honor what may soon be a memory—emphasizing the absurdity of our casual approach toward the preservation of nature.

*Onesies* and *Up in Smoke* explore our complex relationship with plastic in relation to climate change. Industrial shrink-wrap has a ghostly, ethereal, ice-like quality, evoking associations between the precariousness of the environment and our collective future. Mesmerizing veils-like layers lend a heightened sense of fragility, drawing parallels to the urgency of the crisis. Ephemeral yet everlasting, the material serves as lamentation, mourning the damage already inflicted on our environment and underscoring the urgent need for change.

Another series presents photographs and objects viewed literally through the lens of plastic bottles, shifting our viewpoint as we glimpse the world through ever-present plastic. Our plastic consumption has a devastating impact on the natural world. Everyday scenes captured through the plastic bottle's distorted lens confront our preconceptions and encourage new perspectives on our relationship with the environment.

*Souvenirs and Castaways* reflects on our current exuberant consumption as we teeter on the edge of disaster and the last chance to prevent the worst of climate change's future harms.