

SAM RICHARDSON

ISLANDS, ICE, AND SAND

Anderson Collection at Stanford University
Wisch Family Gallery

Sam Richardson's objects are precisely crafted moments, frozen in time and yet enduringly universal. Their intimate scale, gracious palettes, and sophisticated surfaces invite contemplation and careful looking. Through his "sectional" or "core" landscapes, or sculpture-scapes, Richardson offered his observations and shared his curiosity for how and where earth, air, and water find balance. His fascination with natural phenomena and his feeling of art as "something to do," transforming ideas into objects, drove his artistic practice and dedication to education as a professor of art at San Jose State University.

No single view of these works provides the complete story. Through repeated looking, we are offered glimpses into the beauty captured by Richardson's interpretations of the natural world and his skill at translating them into painting and sculpture. Mist, a cloud, the night sky, are found suspended above translucent waters embracing islands and icebergs. Windswept sand dunes and snow mounds are punctuated by boundary poles that speak to those who were there and may return. Richardson's works exist in layers, composed of precisely sculpted and sanded materials and delicately applied coats of lacquer to produce illusions of atmosphere and natural light.

Reexamining the work today—amid a backdrop of extreme weather events, migration, drought, polar ice-cap melt, and rising sea levels—we are given an opportunity to reconsider the significance of the land and our impact on the ever-shifting environment. Richardson addressed what he saw as "our universal relationship to the land not to tell a story but to suggest a familiar experience, an illusion that will lead one to ponder rather than know." How generous of Richardson to provide us an imagined space within which we can consider our shared place in and relationship to the natural world.

Sam Richardson: Islands, Ice, and Sand is on view through March 13, 2022.

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