

Bernice Ficek-Swenson
2018 Artist Statement

Starting in 1995 I created photographic tableaux using fire, water and stone to explore the alchemic forces of nature, as well as elements of landscape. These fundamental materials suggest processes of transformation in deep geologic time and imply an inherent spiritual sensibility. Several related suites of copper plate photogravure etchings and large digital installations have been completed that reference this theme.

Fire is the primary material and metaphor in *Pyre* and *Prayer Flag II*. Fire represents the duality of life, simultaneously conveying a sense of rejuvenating forces and of disintegration. Change is inherent in fire, with the process of degeneration begins the cycle of renewal.

Water has a special place in human consciousness. It is associated with cleansing and renewal and is viewed as a venerated spiritual source, mingling aspects of ritual with day-to-day use. The melting of ice and the cascading, dripping pools in the *Promise of Water* prints and the dynamic relationship of water versus fire in the *Aqua Vitae* series allude to aspects of climate change.

The *Stone Voices* installation and artist book, as well as *Here Now There Then* suite of photogravures, were inspired by “pilgrimage” trips to view the Neolithic standing stones at Carnac, France and the Orkney Islands in Scotland. The stones in these prints represent specific geographic locations or they suggest a historic significance.