



BUILDING CONNECTIONS

GIAN CARLA TAVELLI HONORS STUDIO ART

MAILE NEEL PLANT SCIENCE AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE & ENTOMOLOGY, JOWITA WYSZOMIRSKA DEPARTMENT OF ART

PURPOSE: The Amazon rainforest supports some of the most diverse and productive ecosystems on the planet. The region also suffers from alarming rates of deforestation as illegal logging and mining, cattle ranching and drug trafficking take their toll on this area. Indigenous peoples living in this fragile ecosystem struggle to earn incomes, typically living well below the poverty line. Generating income while sustaining the rainforest is a challenge facing many indigenous groups in the area.

To raise awareness of the many sustainable uses of plants that live within the Madidi National Park (Bolivia), located in the western part of the Amazon Basin, I produced a contemporary mixed media installation triptych applying rainforest plants to dye textiles in collaboration with Tacana and Quechua community members.



Photo Credit: Maile Neel



Photo Credit: Maile Neel



Photo Credit: Maile Neel



Photo Credit: Maile Neel



Photo Credit: Maile Neel

PROCESS: I followed an experimental process to 1) test plant species I collected from the rainforest for their ability to produce dye; and 2) test the ability of leaves, flowers, fruits, and bark to make eco prints on fabrics. I then incorporated the naturally dyed and eco printed textiles into an art installation to convey the importance of conserving the rich of biodiversity of the Amazon Rainforest. This installation was presented in an exhibition at University of Maryland in December 2023.

RESULT: The installation I produced represents the intersection of art and science and a collaboration with indigenous residents of the rainforest. I used a scientific process to produce a robust artwork product based on ethnobotanical and cultural resources that engenders discussion about natural dyes and how they are a renewable and eco-friendly resource in fragile ecosystems.

The collaborative process of collecting plant material and dye led to discussions of the potential for natural dyes to become a source of income for the indigenous communities that call the Madidi National Park their home.



Acknowledgments:

This project was made possible through funding from Maryland Summer Scholars Program and logistical support from The Madidi Jungle Ecolodge.

Guide: Rigoberto Pariamo Apana

Art Installation: Foon Sham, Department of Art