



JOSEPH SCHEER

STATEMENT

Currently I am working on a very large series of the moths from Changbai Mountain in Jilin province. So far the series has well over 300 species. As an artist I am attracted to moths not only because they are amazing and beautiful, but also because of their imagery and symbolism. They are mostly creatures of the night, as opposed to butterflies, which are creatures of the day. They are a family of insects that people typically know little about, either visually or environmentally. Some people are afraid of moths. Some revile them as small, ugly creatures that mess up their food and eat their clothes. And of course, the idea that they are attracted to light, to the flame, is a powerful metaphor. Think of what exists in the human world at night that is not part of the mainstream culture. For me, moths are a symbol of all that. They are beautiful creatures that most but not all, are only seen at night, they are short-lived, and have this intensity, and then they are gone.

I began to call the Moth Print project Imaging Biodiversity. It is about living in the world in a particularly intense way. While not formally trained as a scientist I use the same observational skills that are practiced by researchers, in the scientific process, and this is now an inseparable part of my work. A goal of the work is to bring information about moths, to a broad audience who may not be aware of or come in contact with their beauty and diversity. The moth project has opened up the world for me as well. Over the years I've been doing this, I've learned about how the environment affects what species will show up at any given location: the phase of the moon, the time of month, the temperature, the types of plants around, all of these factors determine which moths we encounter. There is a complexity to their patterns that I have slowly come to appreciate, and I am now much more aware of the fragility of our ecosystem. I believe that we live in a time in which it is highly critical to promote our respect for, and redefine the delicate relationship to, the many living things on our planet.