

ENGAGEMENT – The Hanging Stag

My sister's boyfriend found the hanging deer in Goblinwoode on my mother's birthday, June 03, 2022. It was eaten from the neck down, skeleton hanging freely like a plumb line, with back hooves scratching the dust. Its antlers were wedged between two trunks of a fallen tree. We could only guess it had gotten itself stuck, and then either starved itself or broken its own neck trying to escape. The head was hardly decomposed, indicating a recent death followed by a prolonged feast of foxes and ravens.

For the next several months, engagement with the stag became a centerpiece of my practice and its focus. I shot photos and footage almost every day, trying new lenses, angles, and contexts of weather and lighting. During the filming, macro-photography began to capture interesting interactions. It appeared that the insects weren't just feasting, they were courting, copulating, and laying their eggs. Birds and other more predatory insects such as wasps occasionally gathered nearby to hunt the bugs. It was a rich example of spontaneous assemblage and converging desires, here at the sites of death. I started to call the emerging work Carrion Ecologies.

After a few weeks we took the stag to Skullwillow and hung him horizontally along a branch. There he stayed until his flesh fell off completely.