

Caddo Breathing by Lance Rosenfield Statement

Hours of engine drone come to a halt. I open the car door to a rush of startling silence. Curiosity sharpens my eyes into the soft layers of gray Spanish moss dripping and lifting in the air's breath like souls to a slow country song. I step into the rich air of Caddo Lake, and despite the stillness, a flood of questions emerge, leading me on a quest to create a visual framework for understanding this place.

Digging a little deeper and this question arise: Is man agile enough to remain harmonious with nature, himself, and rectify his mistakes?

Namesake

The sacred lake's namesake, the lithe *kadohadacho* people were known to be friendly and efficient farmers and hunters, who built tall conical dwellings and ceremonial earth mounds. A number of these mounds still exist. As European explorers and settlers moved into the region, so did their diseases, tendency for land disputes, false treaties, exploitation, and anti-Indian sentiment, which eventually drove the Caddo people westward and into the arid plains of Oklahoma. Ironically, the name Texas is derived from the Caddo word *taysha*, meaning friend.

Longhorn Ammunitions Plant

Along the southern shores of Caddo Lake sits an 8,500-acre National Wildlife Refuge, where migratory birds find sanctuary, wildlife thrives, and diverse plant species abound. Cold war remnants crumble in this forest. It's a jolting and eerie sight. The Longhorn Ammunitions Plant was placed there thanks to a young and hungry Congressman names Lyndon B. Johnson at the start of WWII. Bombs and rockets made their way from the plant to Korea, Vietnam, and other Cold War destinations around the world. Fifty years' worth of TNT in the soil and tributaries is being cleaned thanks to an EPA Superfund program. 2015 will mark twenty-five years towards the cleaning effort.

A New Invasion

Crossing the shoreline and into the dark iron-rich shallow water, thick mats of aquatic vegetation soon impede movement to a standstill. It also impedes light, and therefore, life. A distinguished ecosystem and a culture dependent on the lake are at risk.

Giant salvinia is an astonishingly fast-growing aquatic fern that was inadvertently introduced by the aquatic gardening trade. A desire for exotic vegetation in backyard ponds has lead to regional nightmares, threatening a once-before unstoppable ecosystem.

Unlike the EPA cleaning TNT, the federal government is not set up to fight giant salvinia, and the erosion of Texas conservation budget under Rick Perry is leaving locals with few options and plenty of questions.

Hail Mary attempts to curb the rapid growth of giant salvinia are useless. An unlikely savior named Lee Eisenberg, a biologist who farms weevils which destroy and are specific to giant salvinia, works tirelessly in steamy greenhouses with hopes to salvage the precious lake. Will it be enough?

Conclusion

Caddo Lake exemplifies complicated paradoxes of humankind; it is a place of profound peace, confrontation, reverence, and abuse.

With this project, I will dig deeper and create a visual framework to understand the complexities of Caddo Lake, its ecosystem, and the culture around the mystical waters.

Funding

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