My journey to this body of work has been driven by searching, looking for my place within the Texas landscape, and framed by a question: where do I fit within this landscape, as an immigrant with a different history and culture? Each individual work is very far from being answer, but they are, I realize, a manifestation of my thoughts and interrogations, and, inevitably for me, reflections on my environment. I found Louise Bourgeois’ ideas of sublimation to be relevant to my own process; she described her process of art creation as being one that filters and processes memory, and leads eventually to their purging.

I adopted concrete as a material initially because it is omnipresent in my current environment, as well as being intrigued by artists who used concrete, such as Bourgeois and also Rachel Whiteread in her work “House”, a to-scale concrete cast of the interior of a house. I draw my own creative force from walks in nature, and in North Texas, even areas described as ‘nature reserves’ have concrete paths. Living in suburbia, I also became fascinated by the more liminal areas in which development intersect with green areas, either wild or nurtured.

Concrete is also a material with masculine, workman associations, that relates to architecture and the construction of our public spaces and this exploration of materials is part of the discourse within the post-minimalist, feminist, and arte povera art movements, all of which have influenced my work. My first works in this series painted with concrete on burlap, held within embroidery hoops, contrasting the masculine with the traditionally feminine. I placed these forms within wooden constructions that were references to architecture, and specifically the notion of ‘home’.

As I developed the work, I took the formerly external wooden forms that encased my concrete forms, and instead distilled it into the work itself, creating tondo-like ‘portals’ on the wall that draw on these recognizable shapes such as embroidery hoops, windows and doors. They also suggest memorialization and loss, like the old Victorian portraits within oval frames.

In researching the works of Agnes Martin, I discovered that she regarded her line paintings as landscapes, reduced to their essential energy. Partly because of the process, and partly owing to my own aesthetics drawn from my interest in minimalism, I approach the creation of these works through considering the composition of line and value – line through the folds of the plastic cast, and value through selections of types of concrete and additives. Stretched tightly between the edges of the form, they have a visual tension that fascinates me.
The more three-dimensional forms take the heavy concrete and float it lightly on the wall like an inhale of breath, the visible puncture marks that I make provide a clue that this concrete is in fact fragile, vulnerable to damage.

The influence of my personal interest in geology and archeology has become increasingly apparent in my work. Exploring the landscapes of Texas has lead me to discover that this area is replete with fossils and artefacts, of which I have amassed a considerable collection.

Fossils are forms that have over time had their own minerals leeched out, and replaced with, essentially, stone, over a timeline of hundreds of thousands of years. Their forms, however, remain pristine and the process is exact: a shark’s tooth when fossilized with still display all the surface textures and sharp edges of the original.

The idea of fossilization led me to the notion that perhaps the artworks I am creating are objects from our own time that became fossilized – but with concrete. Recently, the term ‘anthropocene’ has been used to describe the idea that human activity has so affected the earth, we are considered a new era in geological forces, and perhaps concrete is our signature mineral, rather than limestone or naturally occurring fossilization material. Certainly, I see interesting parallels between my studio process for making the works and these geological forces that create fossils.

Perhaps they will one day be dug up, and wondered over like the artefacts and fossils we discover today, telling the future people something about the nature of our lives in the 21st century. My most recent work in this series, “Flood”, has a marked and altered surface as if it had been submerged and then recovered. I created this one in response to the 2017 floods in Houston, TX.

In my process, I create the forms that I am to cast from plastic bags that I drag from the creeks around my neighborhood, which for me introduced my ideas of critiquing our abuse of nature, and considerations of the kind of a footprint we are leaving for future generations. The plastic is shaped, and attached to a custom wooden support that I router from single pieces of plywood to an exact shape. This mold is then hung from a custom supporting table, and into it I pour my pigments, charcoal powder, cement and other additives.

Inventing this process took me many months, and to be truthful, it has had a significant effect upon the aesthetics of the pieces, as much as my pre-conceived ideas of what I wanted them to look like. In fact, I am excited by the possibilities of an emerging movement of landscape art, influenced by artists such as the art-engineering of Olafur Eliasson, that incorporates new ideas, processes and materials. Many of the works were engendered by discoveries made in the previous work: a particular texture or color, or an interesting juxtaposition.

Finally, over the years of developing this work, I have struggled at times to reconcile the many roles I have in the world, such as mother of two, wife, studio
artist, author, concerned citizen, student, and teacher with my studio practice. I cannot leave these identities and experiences at the door of my studio, and thereby produce art that is somehow pure, an essential abstraction, separate from my world. I have come to realize that there is no need for to try to construct artificial boundaries. My artwork will ineluctably draw from and reflect my life and experiences and be changed by it.