




EL DORADO COUNTY

THE EXHIBITION

Digital prints and video by Ameera Godwin

JUNE 8 - AUGUST 6, 2023

The background is a vibrant, abstract map. It features a mix of colors including deep blues, greens, yellows, and reds. Faint, stylized outlines of landmasses and water bodies are visible. Some text is scattered across the map, including "Hurt" in the upper left, "Plasse" in the lower right, and "Allen" at the bottom right. A circular marker with the number "31" is also present. The overall aesthetic is artistic and textured, resembling a hand-drawn or painted map.

***"FIRE/LAND* is an artistic exploration of the forest, reflecting on shared history. It's an invitation to grieve and to consider how we might work toward a safer, healthier ecosystem with fire. Using visual media, music, words, and theater - this work is about tapping into the soul of the land."**

-Ameera Godwin

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INTRODUCTION

Marya Osucha, Exhibition Curator

Communities in every corner of El Dorado County have been touched by the effects of devastating wildfires. Between the King Fire (2014), Caldor Fire (2021), and most recently the Mosquito Fire (2022) whole communities have been destroyed, while our collective health and well-being have been irrevocably changed. A rising sense of grief, anxiety, and helplessness sits heavy on our shoulders as we move forward and continue to reside in this beautiful forested county.

At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, an article written by advocacy organization Californians for the Arts described the role of artists in a time of crisis as that of “Second Responders.” In the wake of disasters such as the fires in Sonoma and Paradise, the work of artists has been essential in facilitating community reflection, in acknowledging community grief, and in fostering community resilience. It was this impulse that compelled Ameera Godwin to pursue the *FIRE/LAND* project.

An artist who works primarily in digital video, Godwin conceived of *FIRE/LAND* as a means of understanding how wildfires have become such a massive and growing threat in our region while finding a way to accept, heal, and move forward. To do this, she began to participate in educational forums and build relationships with forest and soil scientists. She learned about the history of wildfire suppression practices and is learning about traditional cultural burns. Threads of emotional response, crisis, and her growing sense of our responsibility to enact change are woven throughout this science-based foundation.

As she continued to learn and create, Godwin found herself writing an opera in response to the filmed images she has found, captured, and recontextualized. *FIRE/LAND* then became a collaborative performance piece, combining choreography, narrative, song, and digital video projection into a culminating one-night event at historic Wakamatsu Farm, in partnership with American River Conservancy. This exhibition distills the performance event to its visual core, capturing the most poignant of Godwin’s digital imagery in high-quality giclée prints.

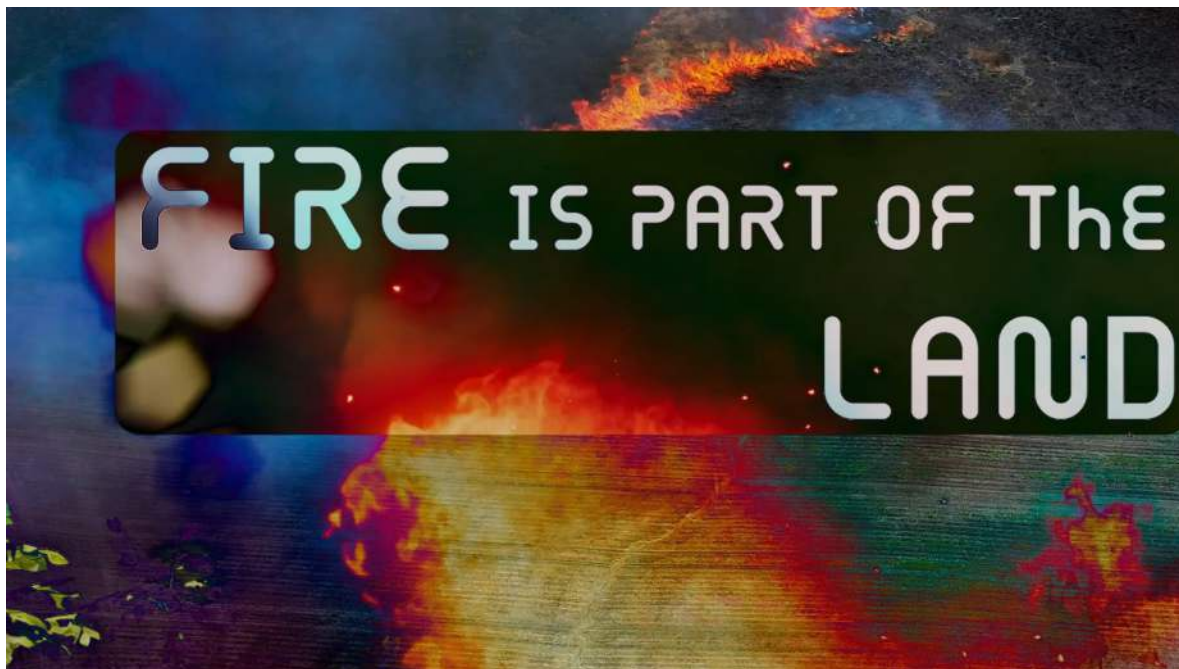
I think of this exhibition as an opportunity to quietly reflect on and explore the ideas and experiences that informed *FIRE/LAND* as a conceptual whole. I hope you’ll take this opportunity to acknowledge what we’ve experienced as a broader community and consider what healing and restorative action can look like.

Salvagers, Lovers Leap
2023. Giclée print.

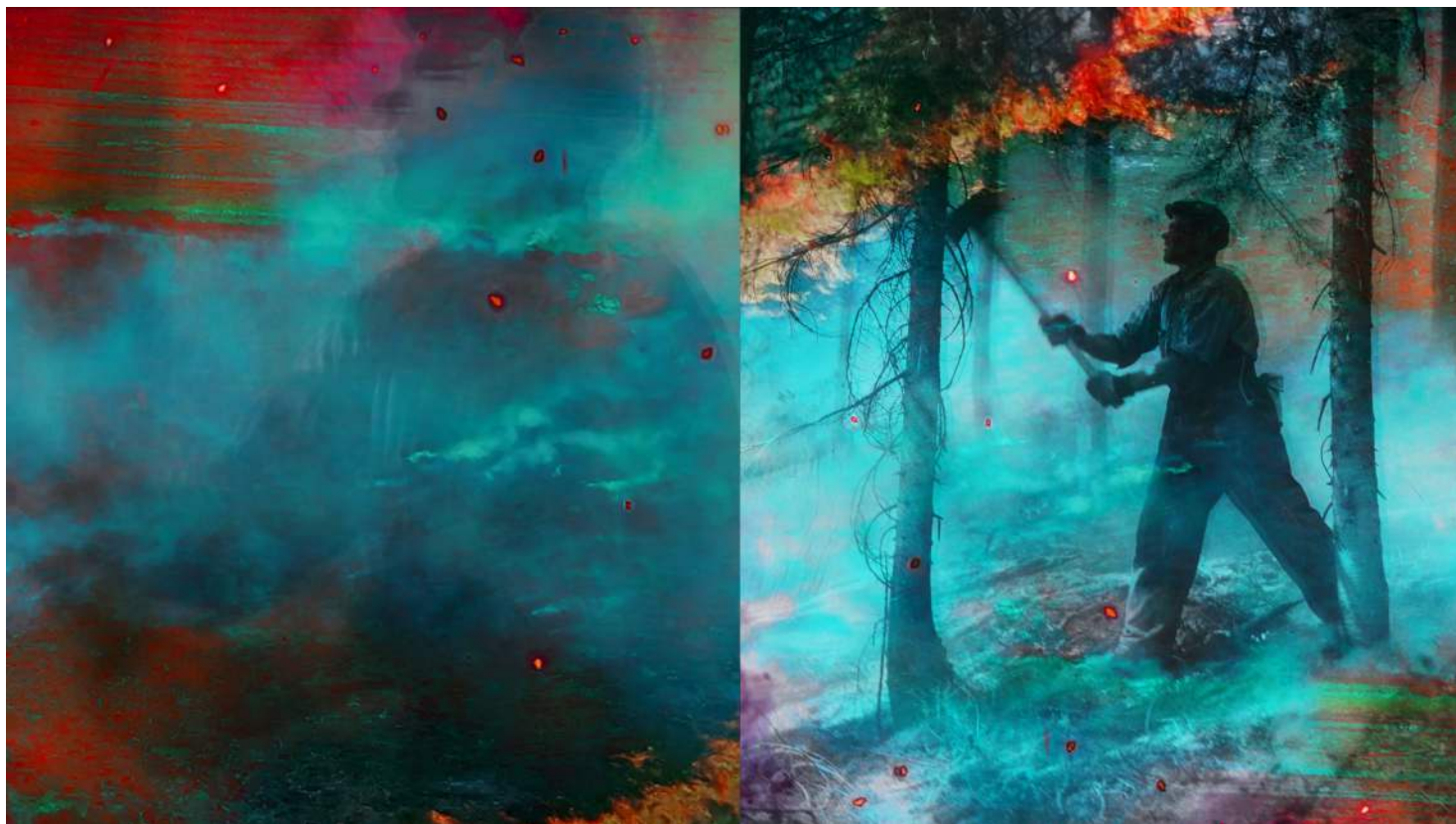
Still from digital video *FIRE/LAND: Salvagers, Burn Scar*.



Fire Is Part of The Land
2023. Giclée print.
Still from digital video
FIRE/LAND: The Seer
and the Seed.



Right Effort
2023. Giclée print.
Still from the digital video
FIRE/LAND: Big Burn.



FIRE/LAND: THE EXHIBITION

Ameera Godwin

This exhibition draws on my creative journey into the local forests in the face of uncontrollable wildfires, climate risks and responsibilities past, present, and future. This exhibition is a companion to *FIRE/LAND: Knowing the Territory*, an art rock opera for the forest and for which I created the concept, script, and video projections.

As a digital video artist, I create, curate, and manipulate images, add context and listen for meaning. I use music as my emotional guide. Formerly a painter, I continue to sketch and integrate found objects into my work. I have been drawn to non-narrative filmmaking for four decades, investigating film or video image as texture, light, color, and symbol. I look to film as a means of interpreting or accompanying music, while integrating other data.

Experimentation is at the core of my work, altering the pace and duration of video sequences; slowing and speeding up the action, I play with time. Changing timescale is a way to poignantly experience the past and future and to confront different notions of temporality, rhythm, and impermanence.

LIFE AFTER ASH AND CHAR

Living in El Dorado County, I've held onto a good deal of fear about wildfire. Then came August 2021. From our lawn, we watched a towering plume of smoke with an angry yellow core rise up just a few miles away. The Caldor wildfire swept across the North and Middle Forks of the Cosumnes, barreled through Grizzly Flats to Silver Fork, Meyers, Tahoe—hour by hour, more acres were blazing. Across a wide swath of the county, families were evacuated, losing homes and whole communities. Lives have been painfully disrupted ever since. That experience propelled me to do this work.

In remembrance of the devastation of the Caldor Fire, and in acknowledgement of the land as the unceded territory of the Miwok and Nisenan people, this work aims to evoke healing and reconciliation around our collective actions that have caused harm over time to the forest and the beings who depend upon it.

THE FOREST HOLDS A HISTORY THAT CAN EXPLAIN OUR CURRENT STATE

FIRE/LAND draws on forest-related events from the early 20th century to explore issues of forest management using song, story, music, and image.

ABOUT THE ARTIST AND THE EXHIBITION

The works included in *FIRE/LAND: The Exhibition*, are selected from Ameera Godwin's visual media for the collaborative project by Myrtle Tree Arts, *FIRE/LAND: Knowing the Territory*.

The selection of prints on view are processed and layered digital video stills depicting an interplay with fire-scarred habitats and fire progression maps, principally of the Caldor and Mosquito Fire in El Dorado County, historical photos, many from the local context, and words that may be written or performed. The images are intended as a meditative reflection on wildfire and forest management, risk, courage, grief, and healing around a shared history and future predictions concerning wildfire frequency, climate crisis and drought.

Ameera Godwin is co-founder and artistic director of Myrtle Tree Arts, Placerville-based arts collaborative, and creator of the performance, *FIRE/LAND: Knowing the Territory*. In 2022, with composer/music director, Paul Godwin, and composers, Miguel Noya and Aron Faria, she developed the site-specific work and created video projections for *Earth Dayta: Media, Music, and Real World Data in Performance with Nature*, performed at Wakamatsu Farm in partnership with the American River Conservancy, featuring *Harbingers*, a video collage that integrated climate and weather data to create a visceral experience of fragility in the natural environment. She is one of five artists to be awarded the 2022 Sacramento Region Community Foundation Gloria Burts Arts Fellowship, to support the creation of the media and music project, *FIRE/LAND*, on the impact of wildfire and climate change in the Sierra Foothills. Last fall, Ameera became a certified Climate Steward of the UC California Naturalist Program.

Originally from New York, Amee Ruth ("Ameera") Evans Godwin earned a B.A. in Media Study, Art, & Performance from the University of Buffalo Center for Media Study, as a student of video pioneers Steina and Woody Vasulka. While working in the NYC commercial film business, she co-founded Mudfog Films and directed video documentaries on land/water use and cultural preservation that garnered awards in film festivals, including EarthWatch, American Film & Video Festival, CINE Golden Eagle, World Women's Congress, Native American Film Festival and others. She earned a Master's Degree in Interactive Telecommunications at NYU Tisch School of the Arts in 1994 and moved to San Francisco to work in digital media. After relocating to the foothills from Montara, CA, where they raised their son and worked in education, Ameera and Paul Godwin ran an artist residency called Talking Tree Ranch in Pleasant Valley until 2021. Ameera continues her work in open education at the global non-profit, ISKME. They now reside with their dog near downtown Placerville.

More of her artwork can be viewed at aegodwin.com.



Fire Return Interval
 2023. Giclée print.
 Still from the digital video *FIRE/LAND: The Seer and the Seed*.

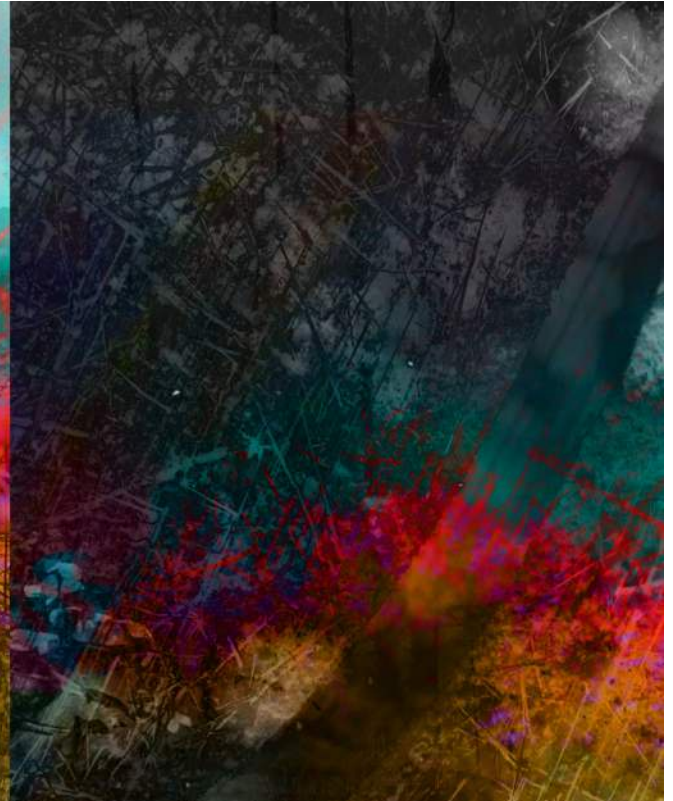
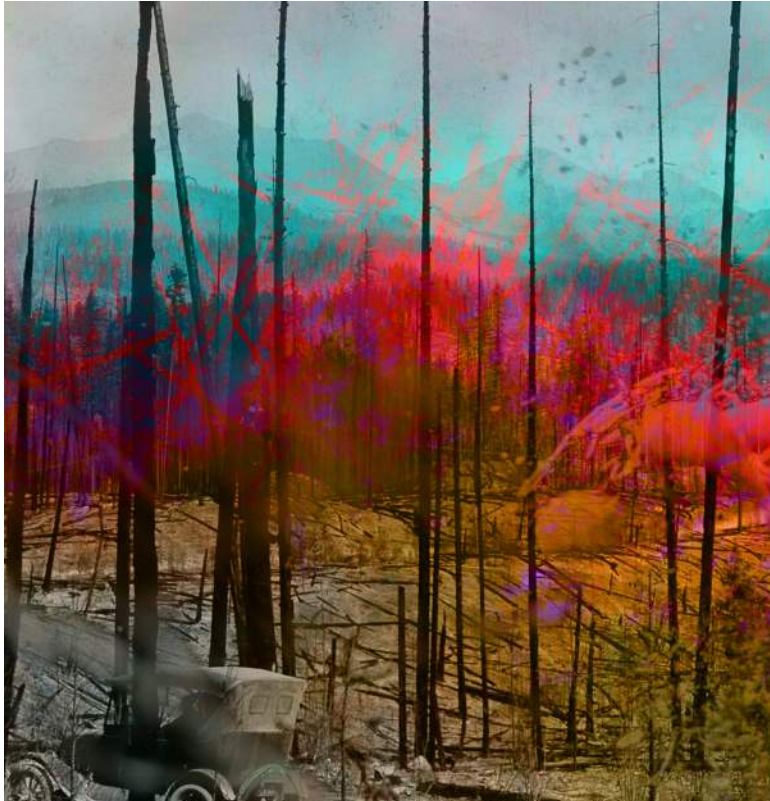
WE INHABIT. WE GET LOST.

BUT, WE MUST REMEMBER:

"The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness."

*-Libretto by Ameera Godwin, adapted from
 John Muir, FIRE/LAND:
 Knowing the Territory, Act I,
 Whichever Way the Wind Blows*

Big Burn Remains
 2023. Giclée print.
 Still from the digital video *FIRE/LAND: Big Burn*.





Grizzly Flats Mandala No. 3, 2023. Giclée print. Still from the digital video *FIRE/LAND: Burn Scar*.

“We’re living in a time of ashes, walking in sadness with ecological crises,
and specifically with the danger and damage from uncontrolled wildfire.

We thrash for roots among the rootless
And bury them where they belong.

Along the ghostlines
We draw the burn scar”

-Libretto by Ameera Godwin,
FIRE/LAND: Knowing the Territory,
Act II, *Burn Scar*



Emergent Properties
2023. Giclée print.
Still from the digital video
FIRE/LAND: The Seer and the Seed.



Historic Fight, 2023. Giclée print. Still from the digital video *FIRE/LAND: Big Burn*.

FIRE IS PART OF THE LAND.

“As a term, FIRE/LAND refers to interfaces, like the vulnerable zone where we live between “wild” and “urban”. Or like the fragile layer of soil we all depend on, which can be either renewed or destroyed by fire, depending on levels of severity. In my video work specifically, the interface takes the form of layering transparent images to make new digital textures. Then, on our theatrical stage at night, the projected video surface moves on bodies like fluid costuming made of light and color.

Finally, there is the interface of life and death, mortality and legacy. As in fairy tales in which the main character faces a moral challenge, in *FIRE/LAND*, we face the fact that our forests are threatened by many factors, and, while uncontrolled wildfire destroys, controlled fire ultimately can renew. ”

-Ameera Godwin

THERE IS GOOD FIRE.
BENEFICIAL DISTURBANCE.
FIRE RETURN INTERVAL.

“While this work commemorates the courage and dedication of firefighters and foresters, it also asks the community to acknowledge and learn from harms—forced removal of Native Peoples and disruption to their cultural knowledge and connection to land, national fire suppression policies, overstocked forests, rampant industrial development, threats to biodiversity, and climate change.”

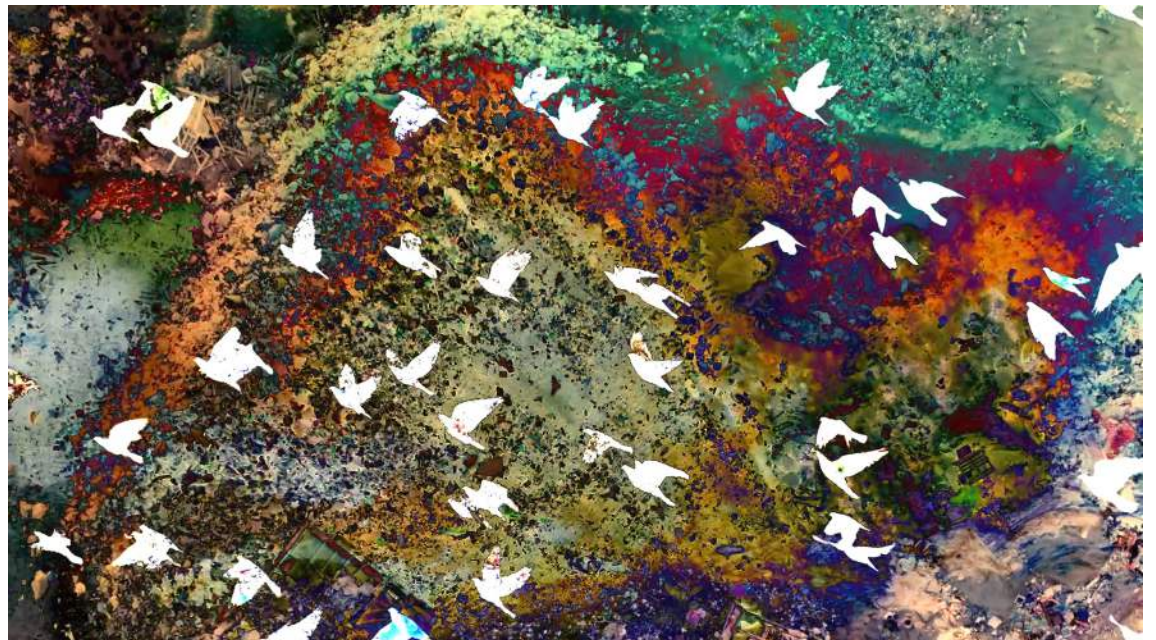
-Ameera Godwin



Beneficial Disturbance, 2023. Giclée print. Still from the digital video *FIRE/LAND: The Seer and the Seed*.



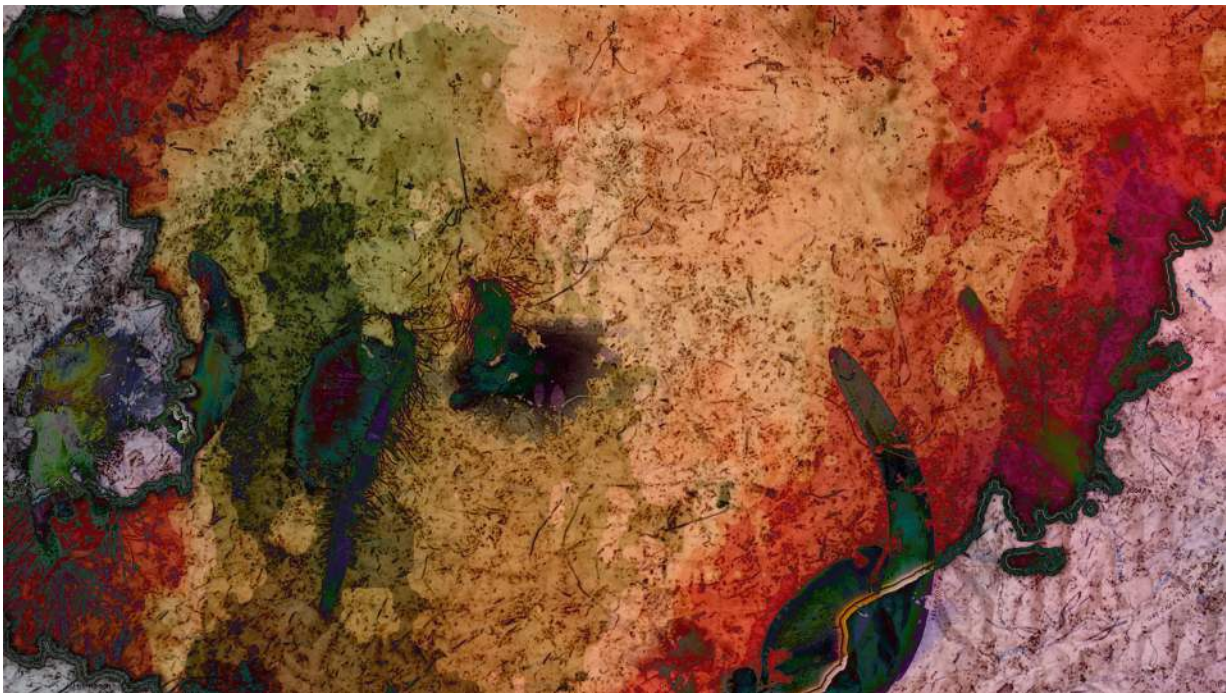
Uncontrolled
2023. Giclée print.
Still from the digital video
FIRE/LAND: Big Burn.



Predicted Loss
2023. Giclée print.
Still from the digital video
*FIRE/LAND: The Seer
and the Seed.*



Fair Sky, Mormon Emigrant Trail, 2023. Giclée print. Still from the digital video FIRE/LAND: Burn Scar.

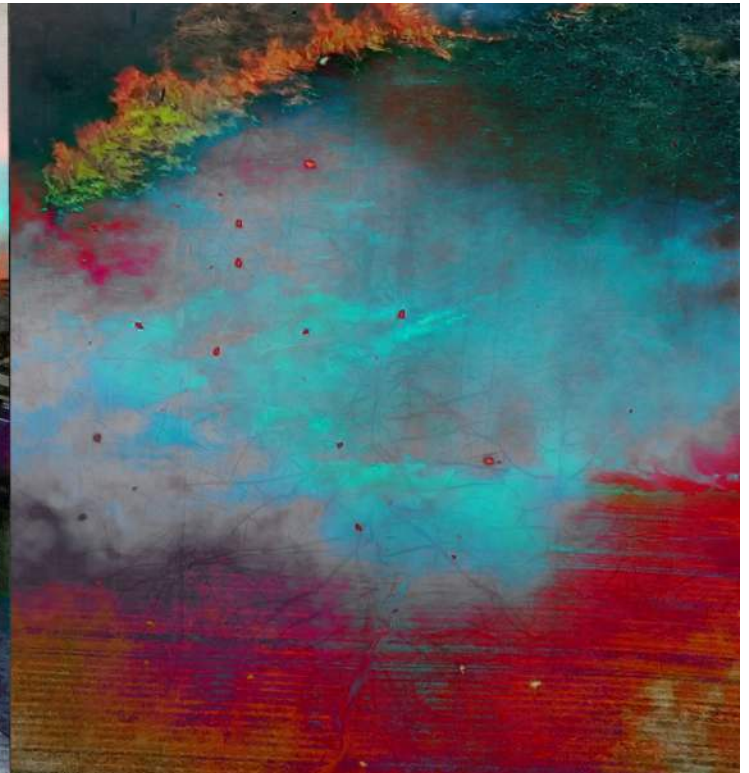


Rate of Recovery, 2023. Giclée print. Still from the digital video FIRE/LAND: The Seer and the Seed.

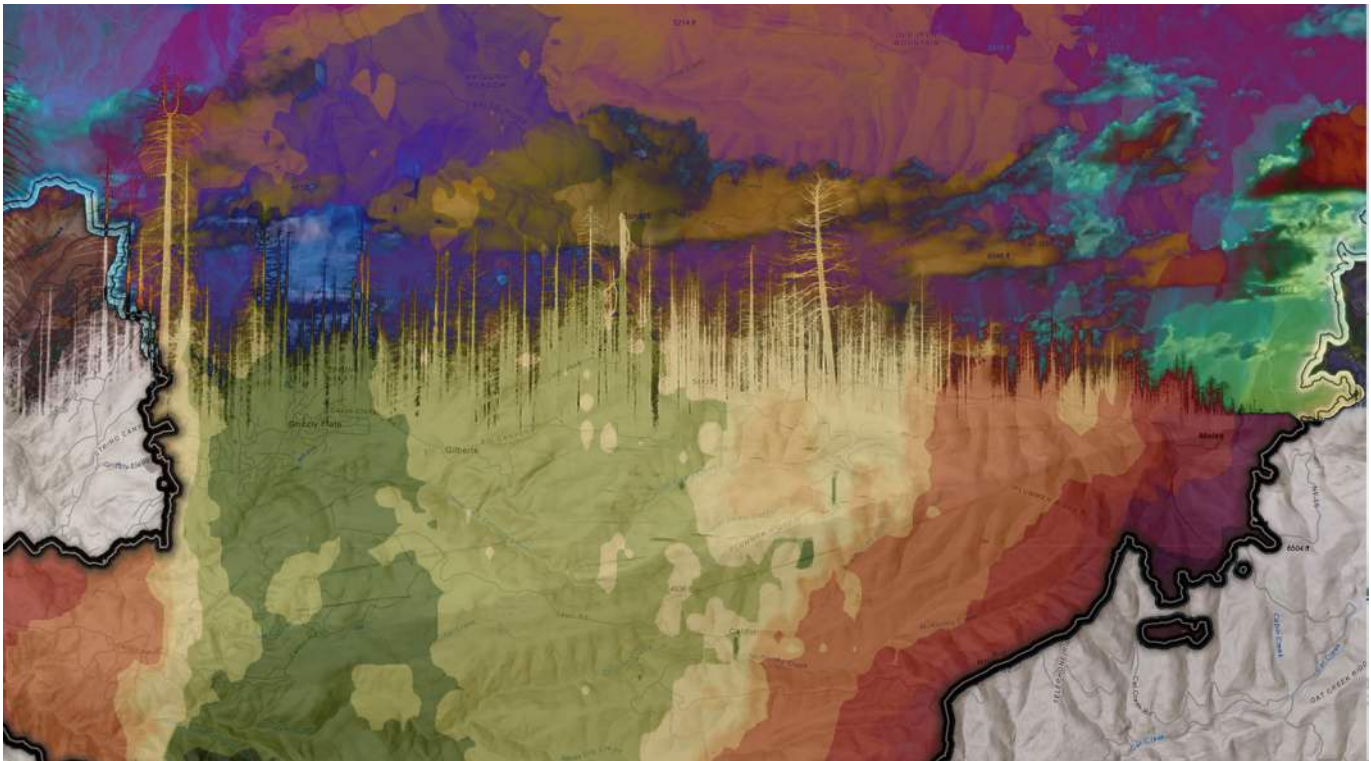


Rampant Not Regular
2023. Giclée print.
Still from the digital video
FIRE/LAND: The Seer
and the Seed.

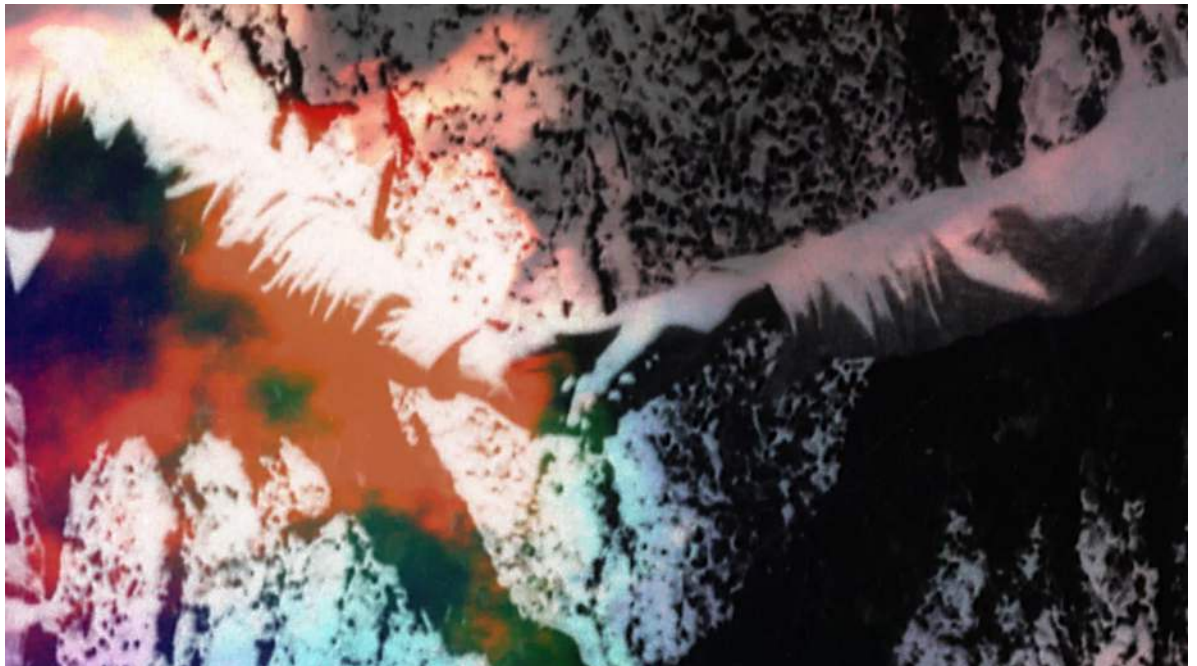
Right View
2023. Giclée print.
Still from the digital video
FIRE/LAND:
Discontented Tree.



WE INHABIT, WE GET LOST, BUT WE MUST REMEMBER.



Caldor Burn Undulation, 2023. Giclée print. Still from the digital video *FIRE/LAND, Whichever Way the Wind Blows*.



We Must Remember
2023. Giclée print.
Still from the digital
video *FIRE/LAND:*
Discontented Tree.

VIDEOS BY AMEERA GODWIN

FIRE/LAND Overture: Whichever Way the Wind Blows (2023)
Music: “Hills, Dreams, Secrets” composed by Miguel Noya, recorded by Dogon

Discontented Tree (2023)
Music: “Discontented Tree” composed by Paul Godwin; Lyrics by Ameera Godwin, adapted from John Muir

Big Burn (2023)
Music: “Big Burn” composed by Aron Faria

Burn Scar (2023)
Music: “Salvagers” composed by Paul Godwin & Miguel Noya; Lyrics by Ameera Godwin
Music: “Talking Tree, A Chair” composed by Miguel Noya

The Seer and the Seed (2023)
Music: “Moral Dilemma/We All Play a Part” composed by Paul Godwin; Aria lyrics by Paul Godwin and Ameera Godwin, Song Lyrics by Ameera Godwin

VIDEO CREDITS	EXHIBITION CONTRIBUTORS	PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS
Concept/Writing, Video Photography/Editing: Ameera Godwin	Myrtle Tree Arts: Direction and Production	American River Conservancy
Music Direction: Paul Godwin	Verlander Design: Brand/Graphic Design and Exhibition Concept Design	Arts and Culture El Dorado
Original Music Composition: Miguel Noya, Paul Godwin, Aron Faria	NFWoodShop: Fabrication and Installation	The Latrobe Fund
Drone Photography: Rob Kurk	Volution Gallery: Fine Art Printing and Mounting	Sacramento Region Community Foundation
Archive/Public Domain Images: El Dorado County Historical Museum, US Forest Service, CAL FIRE, El Dorado County, Wikimedia Commons, Internet Archive	Monte Kawahara: Firefighter Apparel	Pure Life/Sacred Roots
	DogonSound: Music Recording	El Dorado Community Foundation
	Arts and Culture El Dorado: Partner/Installation/Design Support	



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AMEERA GODWIN AND MYRTLE TREE ARTS EXPRESS DEEP THANKS TO:

American River Conservancy
Arts and Culture El Dorado
The Latrobe Fund
Sacramento Region Community
Foundation
El Dorado County Office of Wildfire
Preparedness and Resilience
El Dorado and Georgetown Resource
Conservation Districts
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Placer Prescribed Burn Association
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