

Artist Statement for *On Trees*

A photograph captures a slice of time. It could be thought of as an act of conservation, preserving a moment, an impression of how things were at a specific point in time. Traditional film is still my photographic medium of choice as I appreciate the idea that light from the photographed scene leaves its physical imprint on the film, a lasting memento from the moment of exposure.

As a photographic artist, my palette is the world around me. My surroundings become both the inspiration and the artwork itself. I choose to focus on the environment, be it natural or manmade. Not in a search for ideal landscapes, but rather to create images that reflect human experience and speak to our relationship with our surroundings.

These photographs of a charred forest, still standing five years after the Okanagan Mountain Park Fire, are part of my ongoing photographic study on trees. I am fascinated by the human qualities that can be found in the tree, especially when winter or wildfire reduces it to the basic form of trunk and branches. Standing amidst the blackened forest I cannot help but feel a profound sense of loss. Yet despite the devastation there are ever-increasing signs of new life, in some cases, life only made possible through the flames. Through these images of loss and renewal, my hope is that the viewer encounters the many parallels to the human condition.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL RATHJEN
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