

## **Anthony Mead - Artist Statement: Fire**

Fire, a simple combination of heat, oxygen, and fuel coming together to form a relationship that ignites into a constant state of change and impacting its surroundings through its transformative properties. As they synthesize, a contextual relationship is negotiated between the fire and fuel, bringing the flames into existence and simultaneously transforming both. A transformative relationship also occurs between fire and humans as fire users, manifested through evolution and societal development as well as a balancing act of control, withdrawal, vulnerability, security, and intimacy.

The installations, created with the techniques of printmaking, painting, and sculpture, incorporate fundamental elements such as charcoal, soot, ash and wood, materials that transform and change identities through physical and material actions. My heavy use of pattern is influenced by the repetitive forms or patterns found throughout human cultures and natural environments in everything from camouflage to spiritual ritual, to cultural adornment. Often my use of pattern is derived from the growth structures of tree canopies under ideal conditions as dictated by the Constructal Law of physics. These are then stenciled directly onto the gallery walls with charcoal, soot, or rust suspended in water, similar to our ancestors creating images on cave walls, the final outcome resulting in repeated images filled with diverging rivulets that grow and decay.

In other work, photographs of campfires are treated similarly to Rorschach inkblots. These images are reflected and rotated to create repeating forms simultaneously referencing psychology and decoration. While my intentions vary, patterns are a constant presence and metaphor of the multitudes of underlying ecological systems that interconnect our universe and our reality. In all of my work, a great interest and intent is placed on materiality and how we understand the world by navigating a relationship between ourselves and materials. The kind of emphasis and importance we place on the burnt beam of a home, the fire-scarred trunk of a tree or the ash of paper that once held someone's wish. By understanding the meaning of materials, whether projected or inherent, we can start to understand interconnected relationships more broadly.

Fire is the genesis for the often-felt separation between what it is to be human and what it is to be natural, oddly different and oddly the same. Our fire, taking the form of light bulbs, heaters, and even engineered materials like glass and steel, has become so isolated into its parts that we no longer see it for what it is, a contextual relationship, dependent on its parts synthesizing together to give it existence and being, the same way that we, as humans, are a series of contextual relationships dependent on the ecological structure we are part of to exist and continue to maintain our being.