

***Culture of Fire* - a collaborative art and community engagement project**



Fire Sprite by Shannon O'Hare (Obtainium Works) *Fire Sprite* concept by Heriberto Torres (MIT Academy)

Ritual burning is a common practice across time and cultures. Fire has the power to bring people together and to transform landscapes and lives. It regenerates even as it consumes. Indigenous cultures understand this, and it is a central element of community co-creation festivals like Burning Man. Contemporary society, however, is largely disconnected from ecological processes and has been negatively influenced by the perception (and reality) of “catastrophic” wildfire.

Culture of Fire is a community-oriented project that raises awareness about the critical role of fire in California’s forests and grasslands. It is a model for re-imagining our collective relationship with fire.

The idea is simple and anyone can participate. It starts with creating an object from a locally collected natural material (wood or clay). This is placed by our team inside a section of forest that will be burned using prescribed fire. Before the burn, the objects will be publicly displayed in a gallery or as an installation in the forest. The burn will then become a ritual to be witnessed live or in a video presentation. Finally, the objects will be recovered from the fire and displayed again. They may be destroyed, radically changed in form, or remain largely intact. The variable outcomes offer a lesson in the important role of low intensity fire in our forests.

“Culture of Fire” is a [Future Forests](#) project being developed by a partnership among the USDA Forest Service, University of California-Sagehen Creek Field Station, the Visions of the Wild Festival and Obtainium Works. We are working with students the MIT Academy, a public charter school in Vallejo, CA. Other schools, artists, cultural institutions, nonprofits, agencies and foundations are invited to join us. We believe that this concept can be done anywhere that we use fire as a management tool and can be scaled up as we increase public participation.

For more information contact: info@visionsofthewild.org