



Weather Patterns

# W I L D F I R E

Visualizing milestones  
in climate breakdown

DAVID ELLINGSEN

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*2020 September, Hottest Month of September in Recorded History*

Edition of 5  
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
40x50 or 20x25 inches

Seen here most noticeably on the 12th day of the month, smoke from the wildfires in California, Oregon and Washington reached us here in Canada resulting in some of the worst air quality on the planet.

September 2020 was the hottest September in the 141-year record, breaking the record set in 2019. The last seven years have seen the seven hottest months of September in recorded history.

This comes at the end of nine months of devastating wildfires around the globe and followed the most active Atlantic hurricane season since 2005. Late June's record temperatures also helped drive September to see Arctic sea ice plunge to its second lowest extent on record.





Initiated in 2011, *Weather Patterns* is a long-term project recording and marking events in the changing global climate system. This anecdotal archive, functioning as memory, records, encodes, and stores these milestones of climate breakdown.

Each day I make a single photograph using a consistent set of parameters with location, focal length, aperture and framing - resulting in a sizeable archive of images. At a later date, when I become aware of a new record, I draw on this archive to create these large-scale composite works. While some individual days appear as a milestone most of these emblematic compilations combine many days into a single work, enabling the viewer to see wide swaths of historical records at a glance. Most of the final works take weeks, months or years to complete.

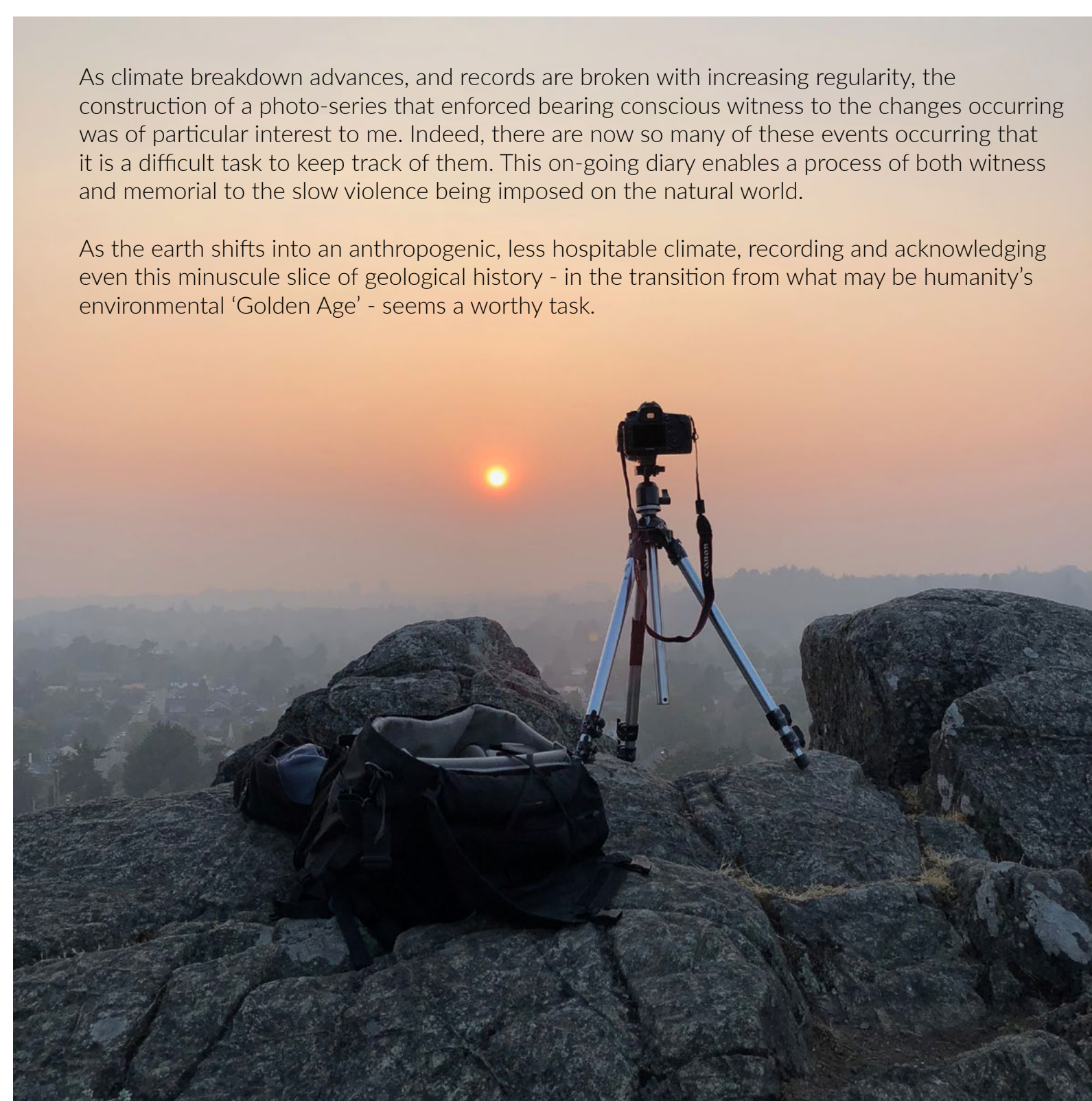
The works you see here grew out of the *Weather Patterns* project, which is bearing unexpected imagery, emerging over time, with the affects of wildfires both local and global being the most noticeable. Victoria, Canada, where I live, has had intense periods of smoke envelope the city since 2017, at times recording the worst air quality on the planet. *Wildfire* focuses in on one of the many cascading events in the acceleration of climate breakdown.

2020 experienced a record-breaking wildfire season stretching through California, Oregon and Washington states. In Vancouver BC (58 miles from Victoria where these photographs were taken) air currents pushed the smoke north from the USA, and September 12 through 14 saw the air quality reach the worst levels of any major city on the globe. The smoke reached across North America and could eventually be seen as far away as Northern Europe - over 8,000 kilometres (5,000 miles) away.

The summer of 2018 also saw unprecedented wildfire events around the globe: fires broke out north of the Arctic Circle, California had both the first and second largest fires in their history (at the time), Greece had the second deadliest wildfires this century, and smoke from fires burning in Siberia crossed to North America affecting both the US and Canada. Here in British Columbia it was the worst fire season to date, surpassing record-setting 2017 with a greater number of fires overall and a larger total area burned. A state of emergency was called on August 15th lasting through September 7th. Wildfire smoke left some areas in the province with the worst air quality in the world and air quality alerts were issued as far away as Prince Edward Island, on Canada's east coast, over 4000km away.

As climate breakdown advances, and records are broken with increasing regularity, the construction of a photo-series that enforced bearing conscious witness to the changes occurring was of particular interest to me. Indeed, there are now so many of these events occurring that it is a difficult task to keep track of them. This on-going diary enables a process of both witness and memorial to the slow violence being imposed on the natural world.

As the earth shifts into an anthropogenic, less hospitable climate, recording and acknowledging even this minuscule slice of geological history - in the transition from what may be humanity's environmental 'Golden Age' - seems a worthy task.

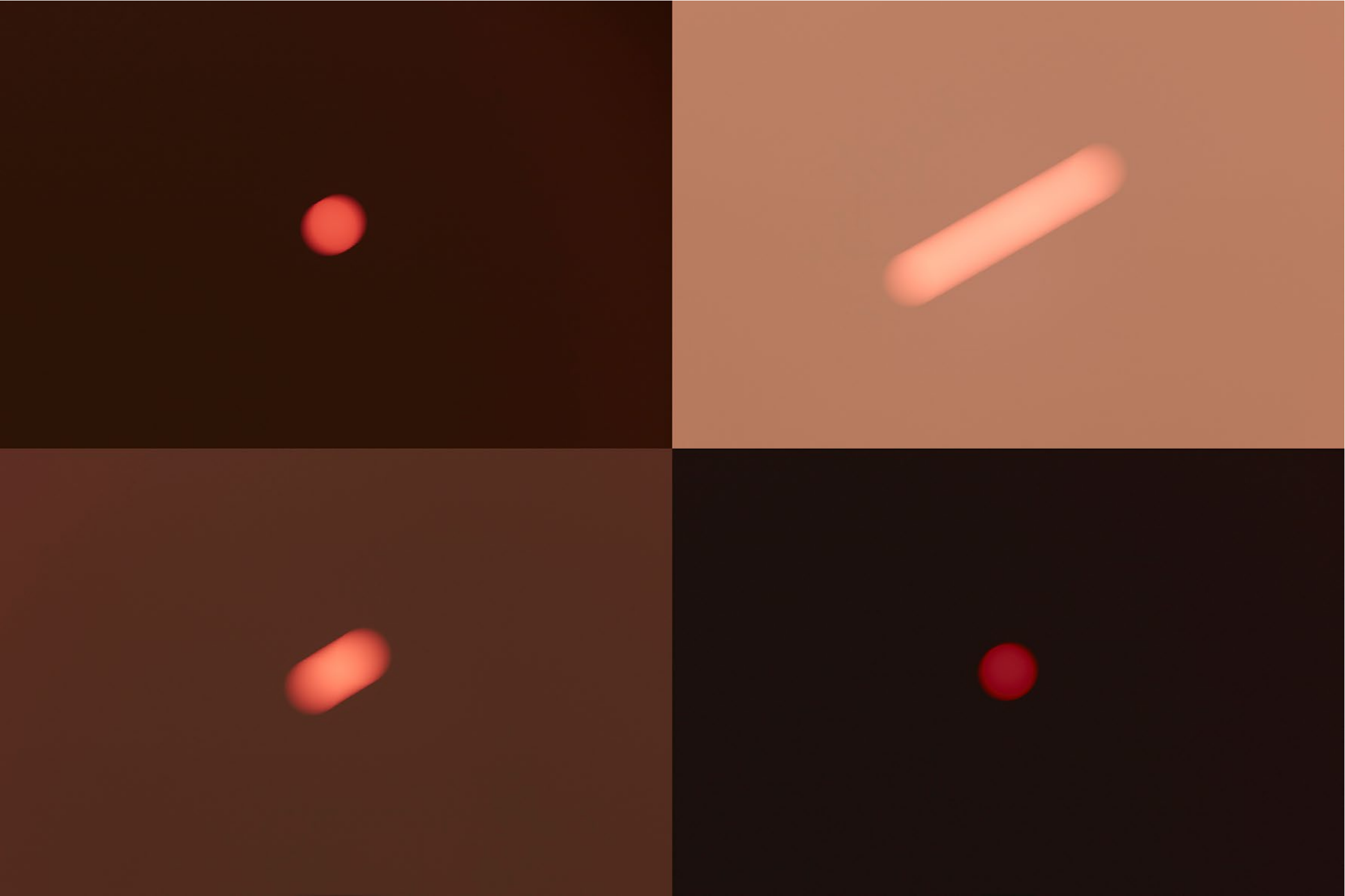


*2020 Wildfires, Four Views of the Sun  
on September 12*

Edition of 5  
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
40x60 or 20x30 inches

This day saw the worst effects of the smoke from the record-setting wildfires in the USA as it drifted into Canada.

These four photographs of the sun peering through the smoke were made from 10:30am on September 12 at exposures of 30, 500, 16 and 142 seconds (clockwise from top left).

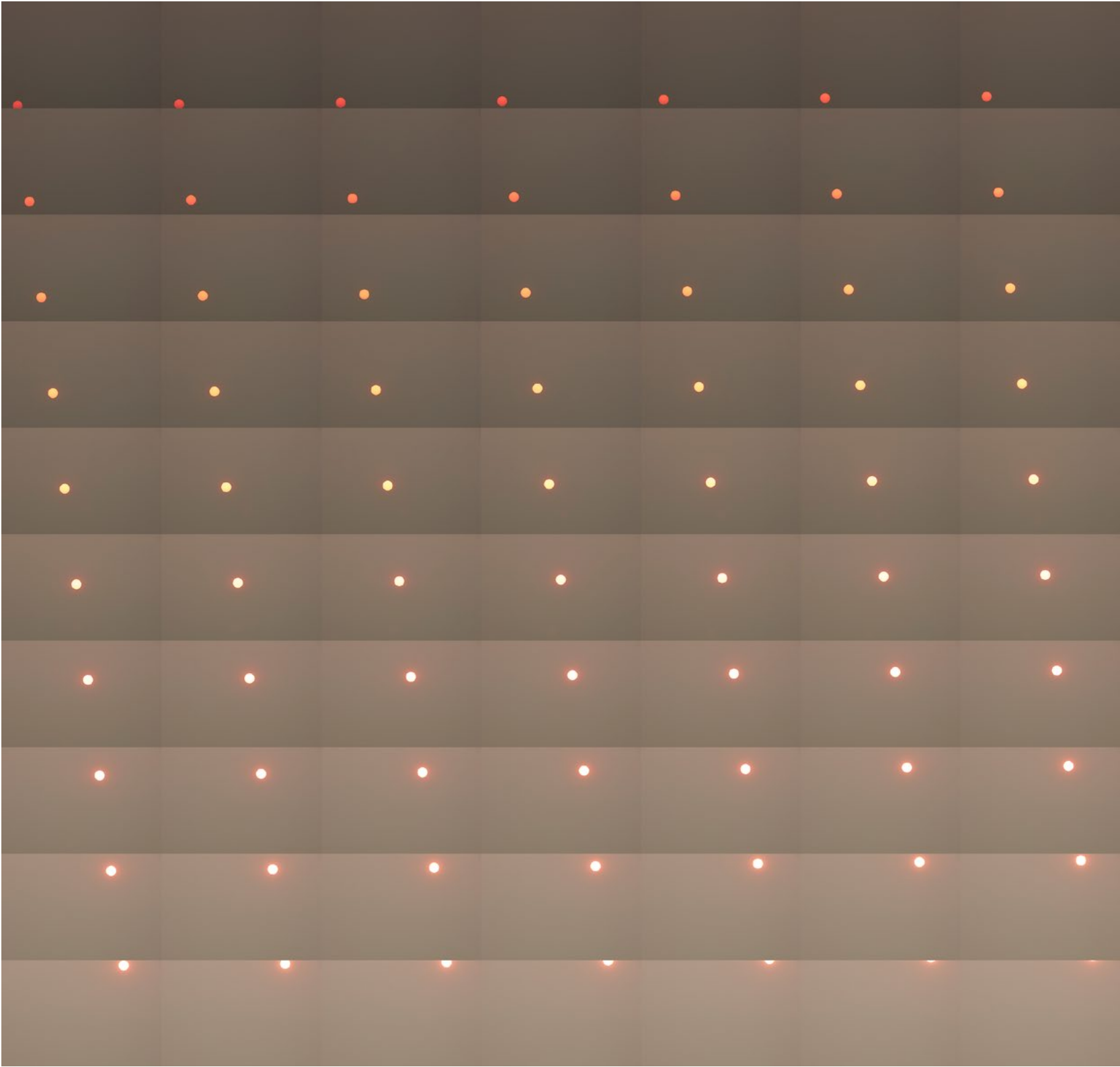


*2018 Wildfires, Ascension No. 1*

Edition of 5  
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
40x42 inches

We had a record breaking wildfire season in British Columbia in 2018.

This compilation captures the ascent of the sun, at 30 second intervals beginning at 06:59:31am Pacific Daylight Time, as it rises through the wildfire smoke on August 20, 2018.

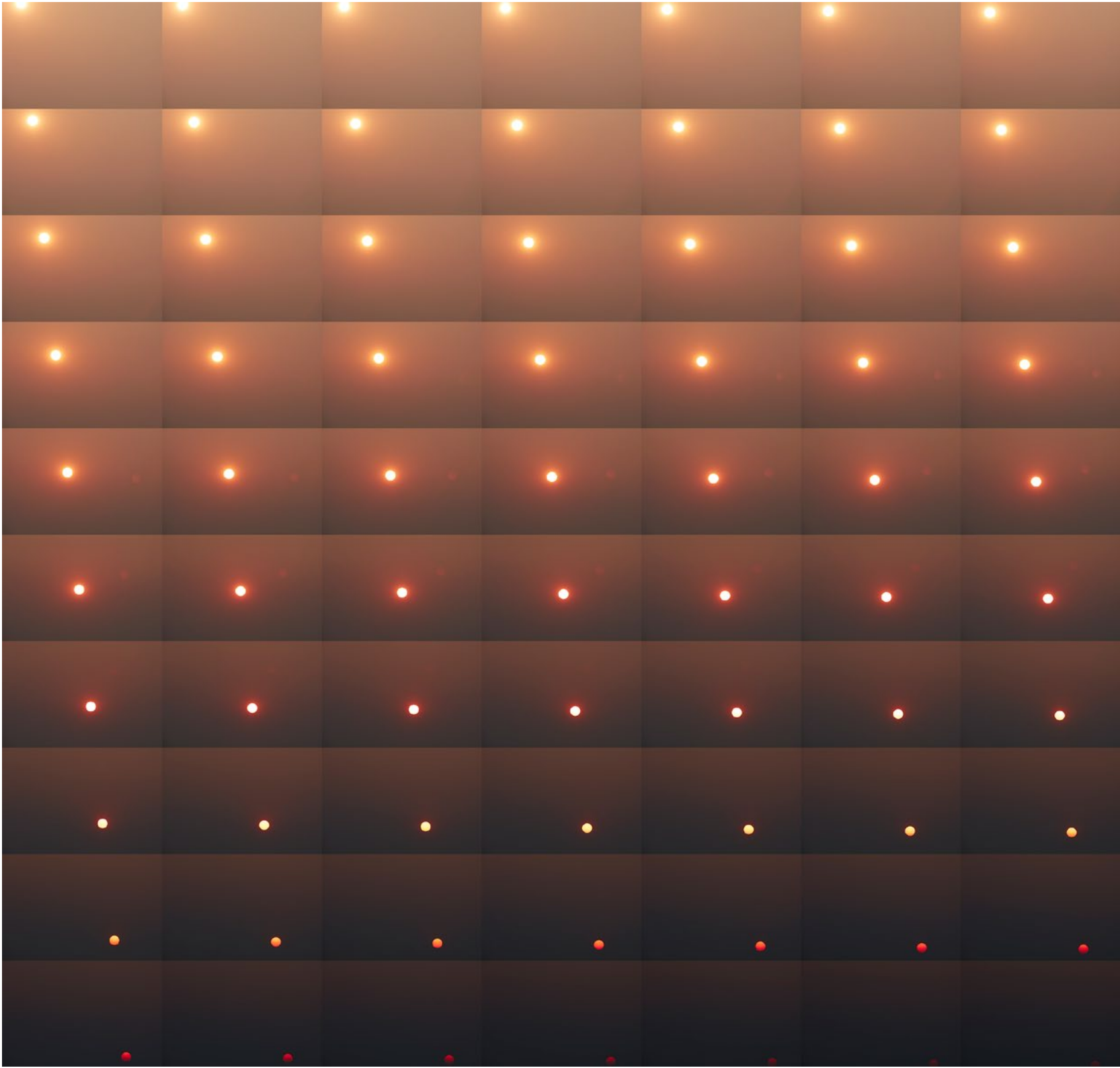




*2018 Wildfires, Descent to Dark No. 1*

Edition of 5  
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
40x50 or 20x25 inches

Also on August 20, 2018, these 70 exposures  
illustrate the descent of the sun, at 30 second  
intervals beginning at 07:21:48 pm Pacific Daylight  
Time, as it shines through the heavy wildfire smoke.

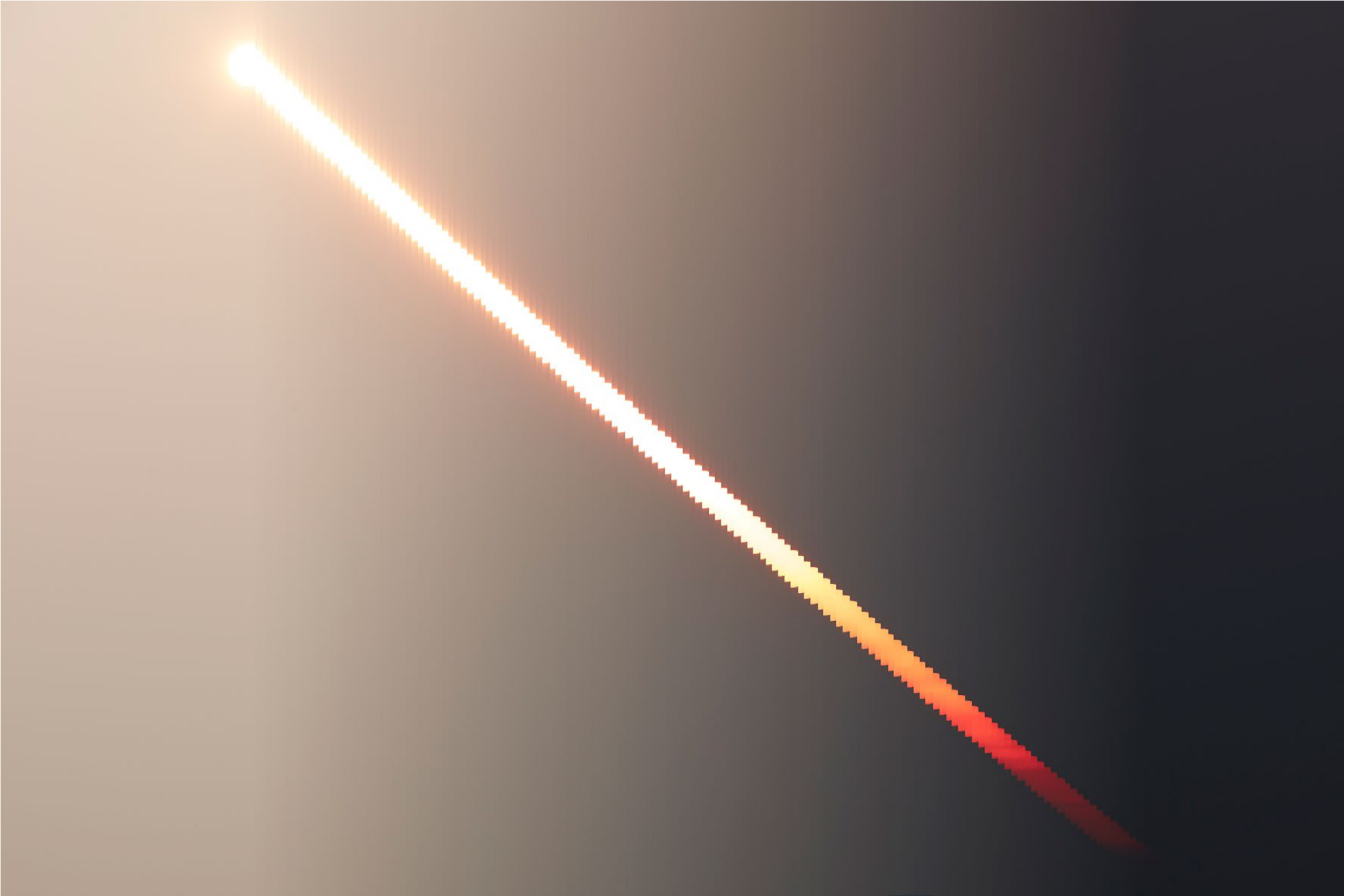




*2018 Wildfires, Descent to Dark No. 2*

Edition of 5  
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
40x60 or 20x30 inches

Small vertical strips from 142 photographs, exposed every 30 seconds and ending at 8:05:24 pm, make up this photo-montage illustrating the setting of the sun through smoke-filled skies on August 13, 2018.



*2017 The Second Hottest Year on Record, the  
Hottest Year on Record without El Niño event, and  
41st Consecutive Year with a Global Temperature  
Above the 20th Century Average*

Edition of 5  
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
54x76.5 inches

Emerging in this work is the yellow/grey evidence of  
the record-breaking forest fires here in the Pacific  
Northwest.

The years 2017, 2016 and 2015 make up the 3  
hottest years on record for the planet. 2016 and  
2015 were El Nino years and to have 2017, in  
which El Nino was absent, join the others in the  
top 3 illustrates the ominous direction of climate  
breakdown.

In 2017 the oceans were recorded at their hottest  
levels ever. The 5 hottest years on record are 2013,  
2014, 2015, 2016 and now 2017.





*2020 Wildfires, Trajectory Interrupted*

Edition of 5  
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
40x60 or 20x30 inches

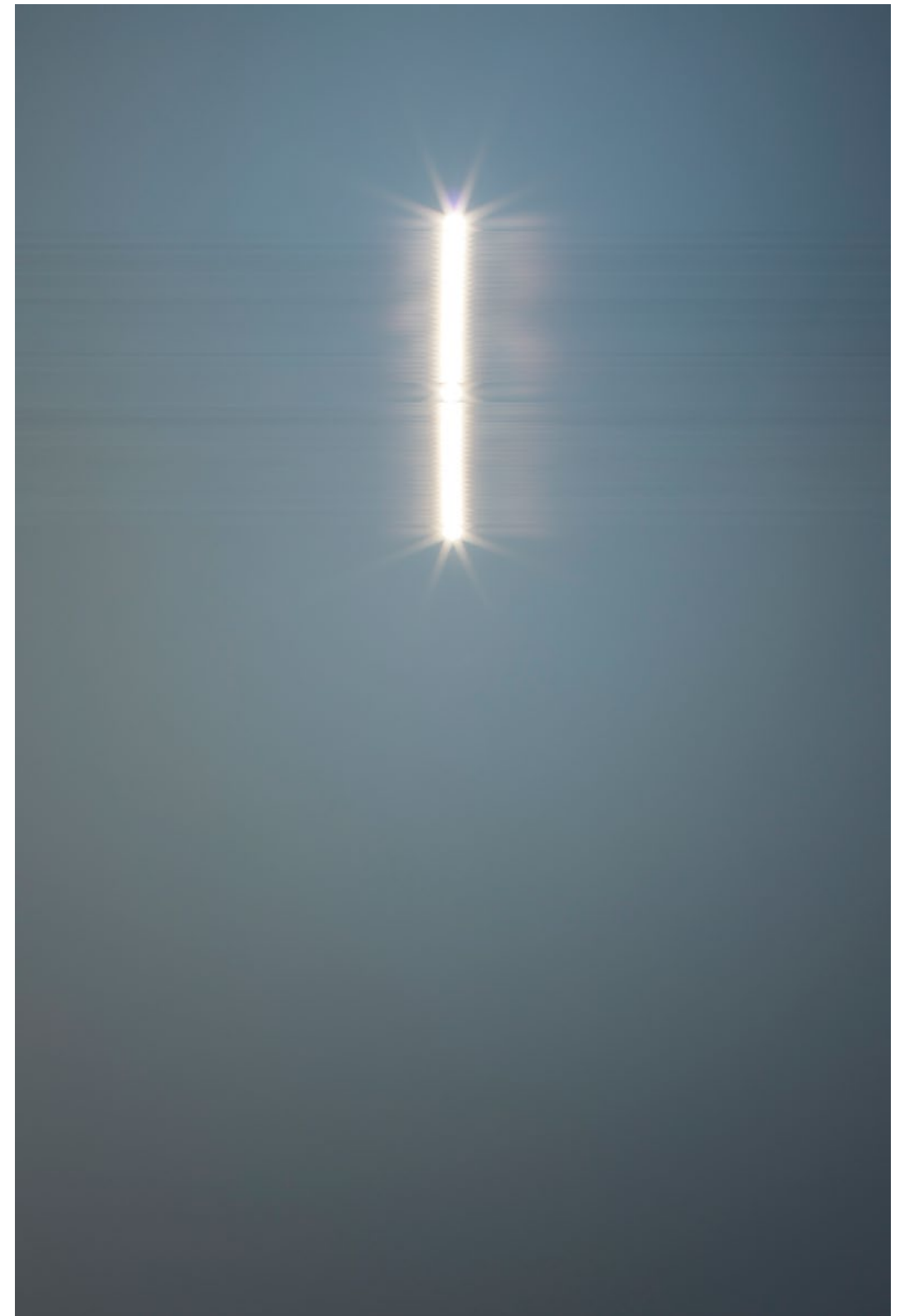
The harvest moon of October 1, 2020 as it rises through the smokey haze. A 1507 second exposure, beginning at 8:48 pm, with camera rotation at 783 seconds.



*2018 Wildfires, 2018 Wildfires, Clearing Skies at  
High Noon*

Edition of 5  
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
60x40 or 30x20 inches

Photographed every 60 seconds with the camera  
pointing almost vertically from 11:28 am to 12:27  
pm on August 14, 2018. Sections of those 60  
exposures compile to show an hour of the trajectory  
of the sun, at its clearest possible angle, during the  
days of smoke.





REMEMBERING

2020 September, Hottest Month of September in Recorded History  
2020 August, Second Hottest Month of August in Recorded History  
2020 July, Second Hottest Month of July in Recorded History  
2020 June, Third Hottest Month of June in Recorded History (Tie With June, 2015)  
2020 May, Hottest Month of May in Recorded History (Tie With May, 2016)  
2020 April, Second Hottest Month of April in Recorded History  
2020 March, Second Hottest Month of March in Recorded History  
2020 February, Second Hottest Month of February in Recorded History  
2020 February 9, Antarctic Registers Temperature Above 20C for the First Time in Recorded History  
2020 February 6, Antarctica (Esperanza Base), Hottest Temperature in Recorded History  
2020 January, Hottest in Recorded History  
2019-2010 Hottest Decade in Recorded History  
2019 Second Hottest Year in Recorded History  
2019 Hottest Global Ocean Temperature in Recorded History  
2019 December, Second Hottest in Recorded History  
2019 December, Second Hottest Global Ocean Temperature in Recorded History  
2019 November, Second Hottest in Recorded History  
2019 October, Hottest in Recorded History (tie with 2015 October)  
2019 September, Hottest in Recorded History (tie with 2015 September)  
2019 August, Second Hottest in Recorded History (tie with 2017 and 2015)  
2019 August, Hottest Global Ocean Temperature in Recorded History  
2019 July, Hottest on Record and Hottest Month Overall in Recorded History  
2019 July, Hottest Global Ocean Temperature in Recorded History  
2019 July 25, United Kingdom Germany Belgium Luxembourg Netherlands, Hottest Day in Recorded History  
2019 June, Hottest in Recorded History  
2019 June, Hottest Global Ocean Temperature in Recorded History (tie with 2016)  
2019 May, Second Hottest Global Ocean Temperature in Recorded History  
2019 April, Second Hottest in Recorded History  
2019 March, Second Hottest in Recorded History  
2019 February, Fifth Hottest in Recorded History  
2019 January, Third Hottest in Recorded History (tie with 2007)  
2018 Fourth Hottest Year in Recorded History  
2018 December, Second Hottest in Recorded History  
2018 November, Second Hottest Global Ocean Temperature in Recorded History  
2018 October, Second Hottest in Recorded History  
2018 September, Fourth Hottest in Recorded History (tie with 2017)  
2018 August, Fifth Hottest in Recorded History  
2018 July, Fourth Hottest in Recorded History  
2018 July, Death Valley USA, Hottest Average Monthly Temperature in Recorded History  
2018 June, Fifth Hottest in Recorded History  
2018 May, Fourth Hottest in Recorded History  
2018 April, Third Hottest in Recorded History  
2018 March, Fifth Hottest in Recorded History  
2018 February, Seventh Hottest Global Ocean Temperature in Recorded History  
2018 January, Fifth Hottest in Recorded History  
2017 Third Hottest Year in Recorded History  
2017 December, Third Hottest in Recorded History (tie with 2016)

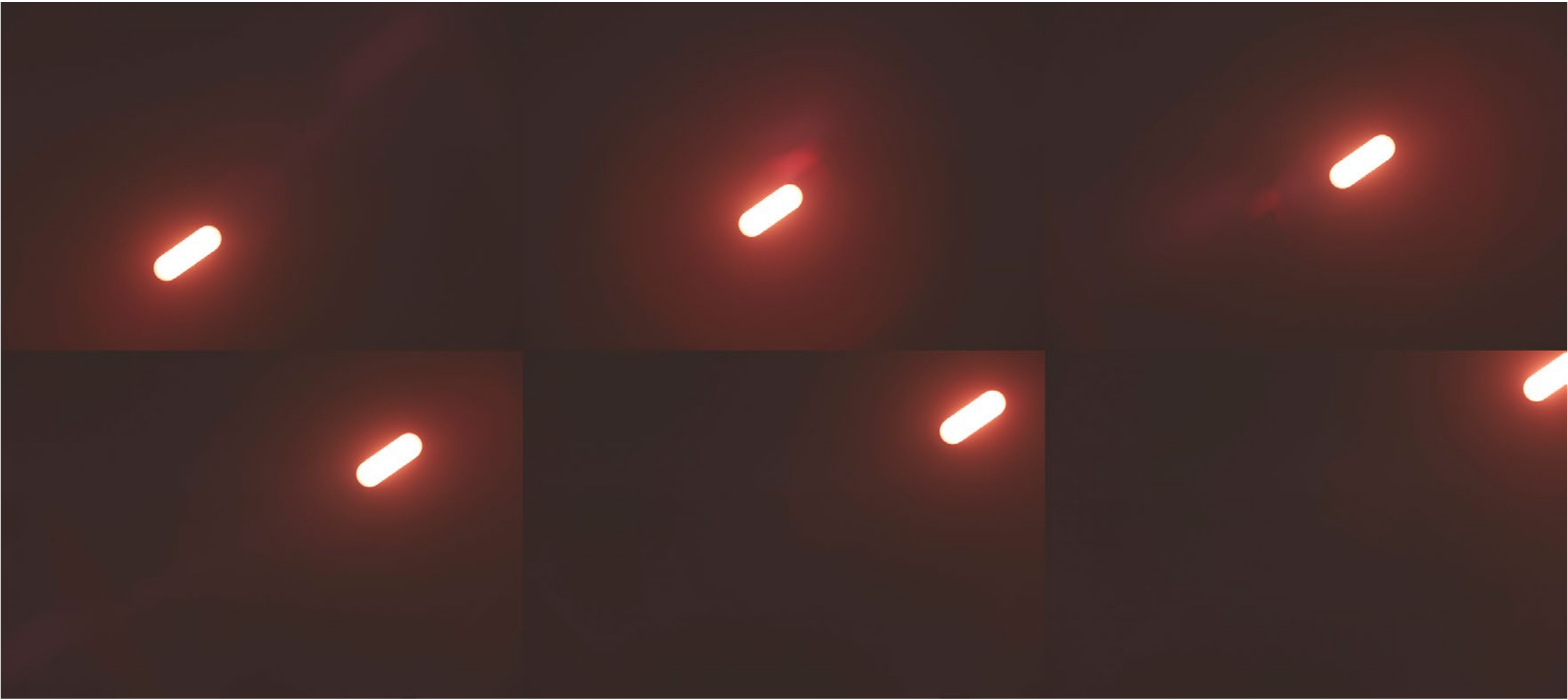
2017 October, Fourth Hottest in Recorded History (tie with 2003)  
2017 September, Fourth Hottest in Recorded History  
2017 August, Third Hottest in Recorded History  
2017 July, Second Hottest in Recorded History  
2017 June, Third Hottest in Recorded History  
2017 May, Seventh Hottest in Recorded History  
2017 April, Second Hottest in Recorded History  
2017 March, Second Hottest in Recorded History  
2017 February, Second Hottest in Recorded History  
2017 January, Second Hottest Global Ocean Temperature in Recorded History  
2017 January, Third Hottest in Recorded History  
2016 Hottest Year in Recorded History and 40th Consecutive Year to Surpass the 20th Century Average Temperature  
2016 December, Third Hottest in Recorded History  
2016 November, Fifth Hottest in Recorded History  
2016 November, Second Hottest Global Ocean Temperature in Recorded History  
2016 October, Third Hottest in Recorded History (tie with 2003)  
2016 September, Second Hottest in Recorded History  
2016 August, Hottest in Recorded and 16th Consecutive Month of Record High Temperature  
2016 July, Hottest in Recorded History  
2016 June, Hottest in Recorded History  
2016 May, Hottest in Recorded History  
2016 April, Hottest in Recorded History  
2016 February, Hottest in Recorded History  
2016 Hottest January and Hottest Global Ocean Temperature in Recorded History  
2015 Hottest Year in Recorded History and the largest margin by which an annual temperature record has been broken.  
2015 December, Hottest in Recorded History  
2015 November, Hottest in Recorded History  
2015 October, Hottest in Recorded History  
2015 October, Second Hottest Global Ocean Temperature in Recorded History (tie with 2015)  
2015 September, Hottest in Recorded History  
2015 August, Hottest in Recorded History  
2015 July, Hottest in Recorded History  
2015 June, Hottest in Recorded History  
2015 May, Hottest in Recorded History  
2015 April, Fourth Hottest in Recorded History  
2015 March 24, Esperanza Base Antarctica, Hottest Temperature in Recorded History  
2015 March, Hottest in Recorded History  
2015 February, Second Hottest in Recorded History  
2015 January, Second Hottest in Recorded History  
2014 Hottest Year in Recorded History  
2014 December, Hottest in Recorded History  
2014 November, Seventh Hottest in Recorded History  
2014 October, Hottest in Recorded History  
2014 September, Hottest in Recorded History  
2014 August, Hottest in Recorded History  
2014 July, Fourth Hottest in Recorded History  
2014 June, Hottest in Recorded History  
2014 May, Hottest in Recorded History  
2014 April, Hottest in Recorded History (tie with 2010)  
2014 March, Fourth Hottest in Recorded History  
2014 February, Twenty-First Hottest in Recorded History

AND ON...

*2020 Wildfires, Sun Ascending Through Smoke in  
Four Minute Exposures*

Edition of 5  
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
40x90 or 20x45 inches

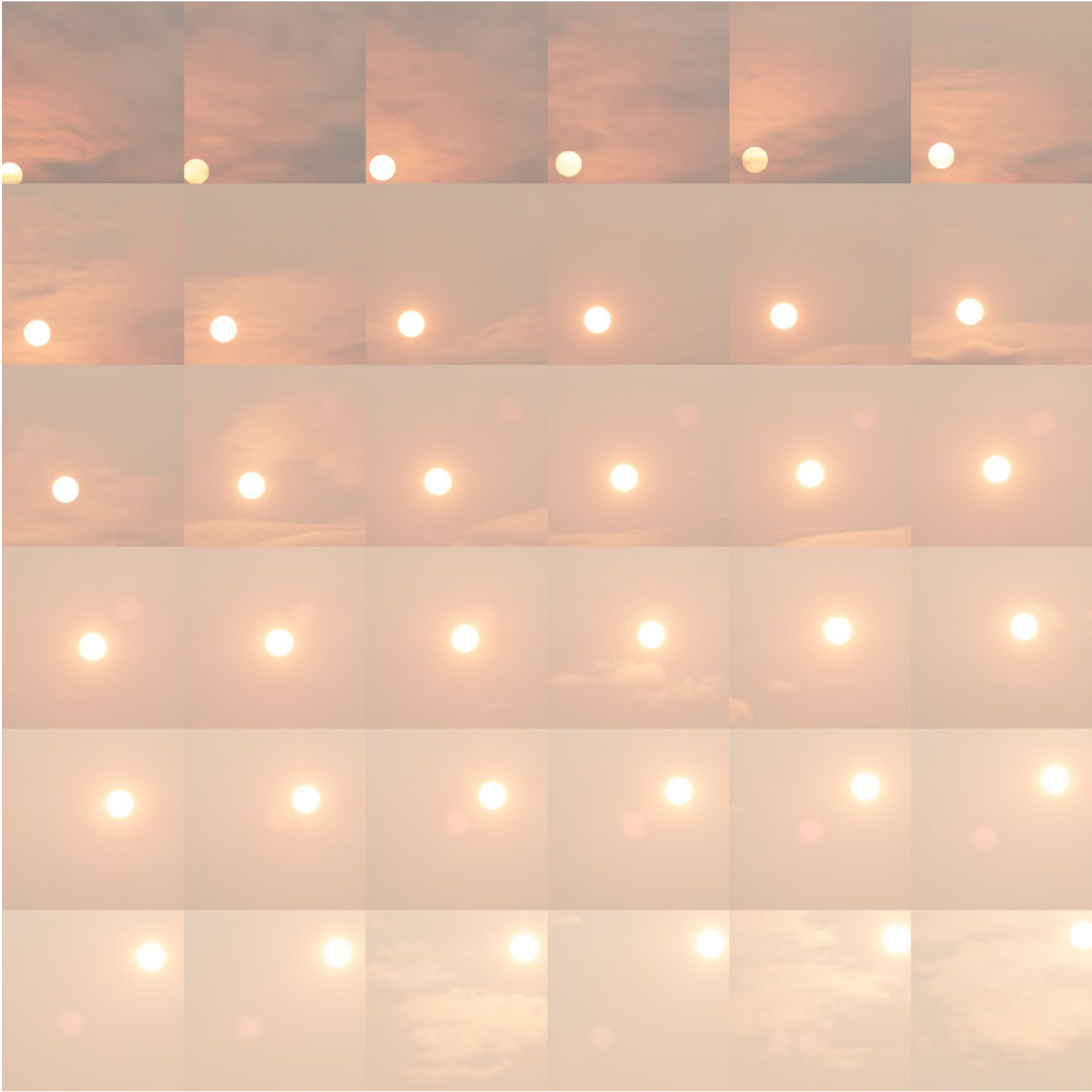
Made on September 30 beginning at 9:18am PDT,  
these 4 minute exposures with 2 minutes intervals  
track the morning sun through the smoke-filled  
sky over the Strait of Juan de Fuca between British  
Columbia and Washington State.



*2018 Wildfires, Sunrise Through Smoke*

Edition of 5  
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
40x40 or 20x20 inches

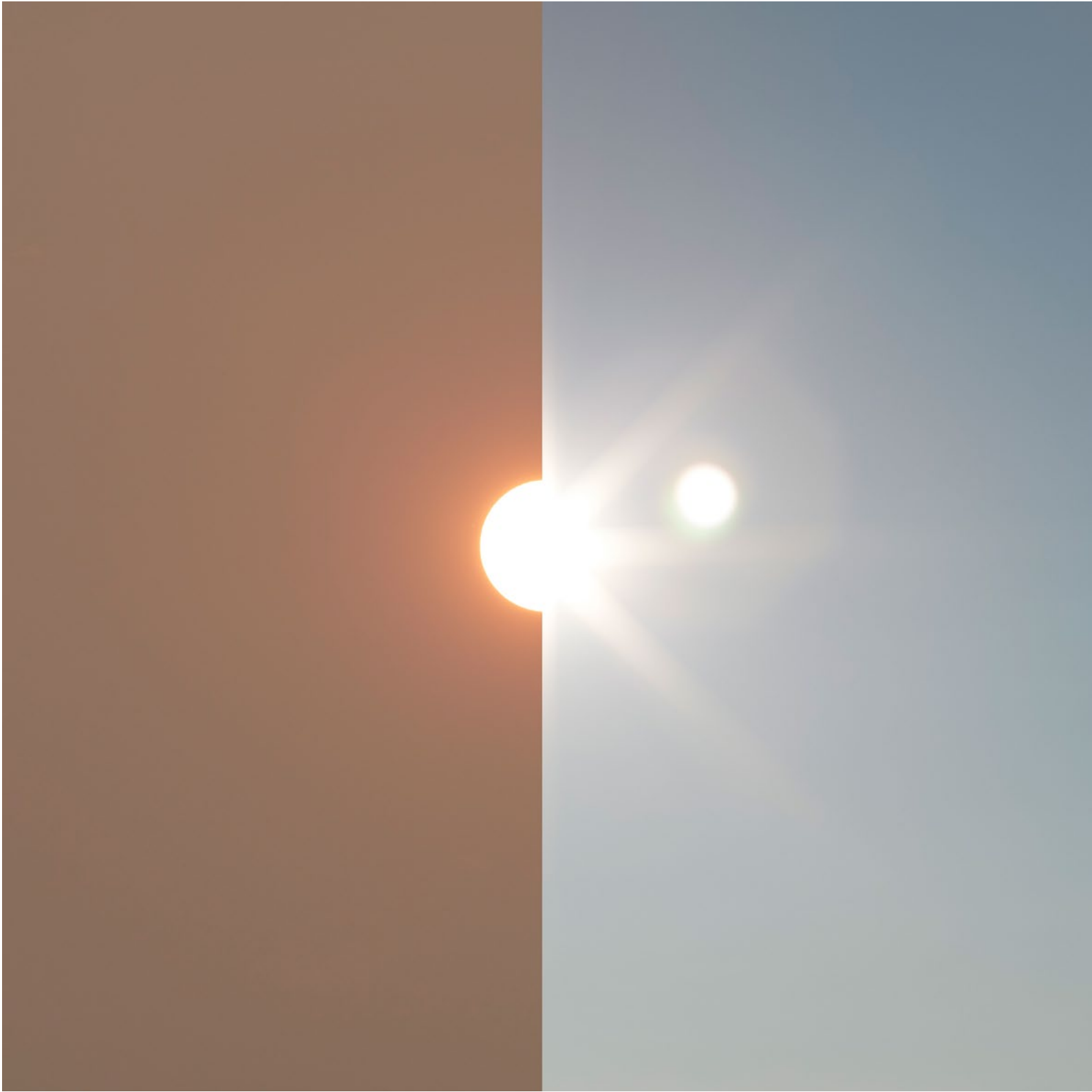
This compilation shows the rise of the morning sun  
through the smoke from 07:03:23am PDT at 30  
second intervals.



*2018 Wildfires, 24 Hours*

Edition of 5  
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
40x40 or 20x20 inches

This image combines 2 photographs taken on consecutive days, August 22 and 23, as the smoke began clearing.







I am a photo-based artist creating images that speak to the relationship between humans and the natural world. I focus on themes of climate, deforestation, and biodiversity loss while drawing upon connection to place. I maintain a varied practice of which intersections form the foundation – intersections of observer and participant, documentary photography and contemporary art, archivist and surrealist.

My photographs are exhibited internationally including recent exhibitions at the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, Mexico's Foto Museo Casa Coyoacán, and the Campbell River Museum in British Columbia. They are part of the permanent collections of the Chinese Museum of Photography, South Korea's Datz Museum of Art and Canada's Beaty Biodiversity Museum, have been shortlisted for Photolucida's Critical Mass Book Award, appeared with National Geographic, and awarded First Place at the Prix de la Photographie Paris and the International Photography Awards.

I live and make my work in Canada's Pacific Northwest, moving between my home in Victoria and the island of Cortes, where I was raised, 150 miles to the north.

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## RECENT NEWS

Weather Patterns illustrates climate change article in The Correspondent  
[LINK](#)

Weather Patterns awaits exhibition opening at the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art  
[LINK](#)





*2018 The Fourth Hottest Year on Record*

Edition of 5  
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
40x56.5 or 20x28.25 inches

This compilation shows all the days photographed in 2018. For a second year running, the yellow/grey cast of record-breaking forest fires here in the Pacific Northwest are evident during the late summer months (10th row).



*2018 Wildfires, Ascension No. 2*

Edition of 5  
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
40x60 or 20x30 inches

A small slice of each of 130 consecutive exposures, made from 7:18:37am at 10 second intervals on August 13, were compiled to illustrate the ascension of the sun during this record-breaking wildfire season.





*2018, August Wildfires*

Edition of 5  
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
40x50 or 20x25 inches

In this compilation, notice the yellow-grey smoke  
begin to creep in near the beginning of the month.  
In almost all of the days following there is some  
evidence of smoke (and these photographs are  
made in Victoria, BC, one of the areas furthest from  
the fires).





*2020 Wildfires, Fifteen Views of the Sun on  
September 17 from 4:11:01 to 4:11:37pm*

Edition of 5  
Pigment ink on cotton rag  
40x100 or 20x50 inches

Using the 15 intersecting points of the viewfinder  
grid display to arrange each exposure, these  
photographs capture 36 seconds of day 5 with  
smoke-filled skies.

