

Ruth Wallen
Remember the Trees:
Southern California's Changing Ecology

March 12 - April 3, 2018

Reception: Thursday, March 15, 3:00 – 7:00 pm, Art Gallery D101

Artist walk through in the gallery: 6:00 pm

Light refreshments. FREE parking on reception night ONLY in Lot 10 across from the flagpole.

Gallery is located in D101 next to the LRC. (see map)

<http://www.sdmesa.edu/maps/>

NEW Gallery Hours: MTW 11 am - 4 pm, TH 11 am - 7 pm.

Closed Fridays, Weekends and School Holidays

Since 2010, over 100 million trees have died in California alone--ravaged by beetles, drought, fires and more. Humans and trees are bound in reciprocity. In addition to shade, shelter and food, trees produce oxygen and take up the carbon dioxide that we increasingly spew into the atmosphere. In many cultures, trees are a symbol of life itself. What does it mean that the trees are dying?

This exhibition chronicles the ecological changes in a few locations in southern California from Torrey Pines State Park, Mount Cuchama, Mount Laguna and Pine Creek Wilderness in San Diego County, to Joshua Tree, Walker Pass and Alta Sierra further north. Coastal chaparral, pines, oaks, Tecate cypress, and more are represented in sumptuous photomontages that express the dynamic qualities of these environments. As opposed to the grandiose sublime, these visuals encourage active exploration, offering glimpses, or incomplete views at a variety of scales evocative of the enchanted vibrancy of life.

The visual exploration is grounded science. Text provides insight into the complex intertwined impacts of urbanization, globalization, invasive species, and climate change that are causing the trees' decline. A tree stump with an ipad displays

diagrams of trees rings with historical data and models projecting climate to the year 2100. Tree rings are often labeled with historical events and pressing on selected rings reveals information about a local ecological event that has occurred or might occur in that year.

Visitors will be encouraged to interact with the work. Reminiscent of Jewish mourning rituals, outside the gallery, they may share their grief by writing of their losses on stones. Or they can write their suggestions for actions to effect change on leaves that will be placed on bare tree branches.

[Ruth Wallen](#) is an ecological and community based artist. Initially trained in environmental science (biology and anthropology), she turned to art to address the heart as well as the mind, ask questions outside of disciplinary boundaries and help shape the values that inform community planning and development. She works on a variety of media, on many scales, from intimate artist books and performative lectures to large installations, web sites and public projects. Her work is based on extensive research, careful listening, and paying close attention to the local environment. She combines photographic imagery, text and more to create potent metaphor, compelling narratives and opportunities for dialogue.

Her multilayered installations and performances have been exhibited in solo exhibitions at Franklin Furnace, New Langton Arts, the Exploratorium, CEPA, Sushi Gallery, the Athenaeum and more. She has published critical essays on ecological art, and race and gender in visual culture. Ruth has been represented in numerous national and international group exhibitions ranging from *Virgin Territory*, at the Long Beach Museum of Art, to *Weather Report: Art and Climate Change*, curated by Lucy Lippard for the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art. Public installations include interactive "nature walks" at Carmel Mountain, the San Bernardino Children's Forest, and Tijuana River Estuary. Web projects range from *The Sea as Sculptress* for Exploratorium and *If Frogs Sicken and Die, What Will Happen to the Princes?* hosted by the California Museum of Photography, to her current work on the local impacts of climate change, *Listen to the Trees*, created in collaboration with scientists at Scripps Institute for Oceanography.