



Field Guide to a Hybrid Landscape

Photographs by Dana Fritz

Exhibition prospectus



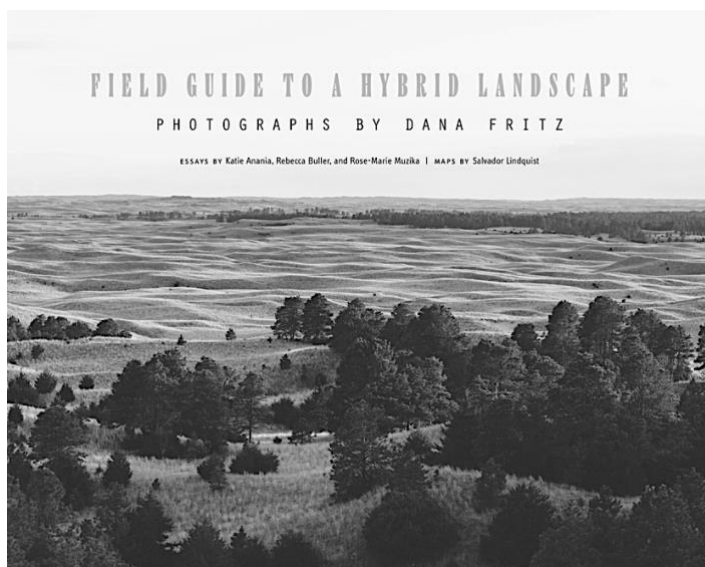
In exhibitions, a book, and related programming, artist Dana Fritz invites viewers to reflect on our climate and environmental crises through the lens of a historic and experimental forest that has implications far beyond its borders.

About the exhibition

Field Guide to a Hybrid Landscape makes visible the forces that shaped what was once the world's largest hand-planted forest. Black and white prints reveal the contrasts of patterns in sand, wind, water, planting, thinning, burning, decomposing, and sowing that contribute to its unique environmental history. A conifer forest was overlaid onto a semi-arid grassland just west of the 100th meridian in an ambitious late 19th century idea to create a timber industry, and to change the local climate. At that time, tree-planting was not considered in terms of carbon sequestration, but to mitigate the wind and evaporation of moisture and to bring order to a disorderly landscape.

While the planners seemed not to appreciate the grassland ecosystem of the Nebraska Sandhills managed through grazing and fire until dispossession, they did recognize the reliable water from the Dismal and Middle Loup Rivers that bound the site. Later it was discovered that under all those grass-stabilized sand dunes was the massive Ogallala Aquifer feeding the rivers through springs. This seemingly unlimited source of water below made it possible to plant a forest on the dry land above where the wave pattern on the riverbeds is mirrored in the larger scale sand dunes. In 1902, the first federal nursery was founded to produce trees for the new forest and for plains homesteads. That same year a forest reserve was officially established in the grasslands where 31 square miles of trees would be planted.

Historical fire suppression and misguided plantings, (some never taking hold, and others that have become invasive,) present ongoing management challenges for foresters. While afforestation is no longer in practice at Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands, the on-site Bessey Nursery now grows replacement seedlings for burned and beetle-damaged National Forests in the Rocky Mountain region as well as the Nebraska Conservation Trees Program. This unique experiment of row-crop trees that were protected from the natural cycle of fire for decades, yet never commercially harvested for timber, provides a rich metaphor for our current environmental predicaments. This hybrid landscape has evolved from a turn of the 20th century effort to reclaim with trees what was called "The Great American Desert" to a focus on 21st century conservation, grassland restoration, and reforestation, all of which work to sequester carbon, maintain natural ecosystem balance, and mitigate large-scale climate change.



The *Field Guide to a Hybrid Landscape* exhibition and [book, published in January 2023 by University of Nebraska Press](#), are the last and most comprehensive visual examination of this experimental forest before two devastating drought-fueled wildfires consumed more than half the living trees in 2022.

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Exhibition information

- 42 framed prints glazed with non-glare museum acrylic
 - 6 16"x40" panoramic overviews
 - 36 16"x20" views and details
- Approximately 100 running feet installed as below
- Optional text about forces shaping the land
- Packed in 4 KuBox cardboard crates
- Available starting in June 2023



Field Guide to a Hybrid Landscape installed at the Great Plains Art Museum, Lincoln, Nebraska
Prints were grouped into forces that shaped the land with introductory text panels.

Far wall: fire; side wall: decomposition and sowing.

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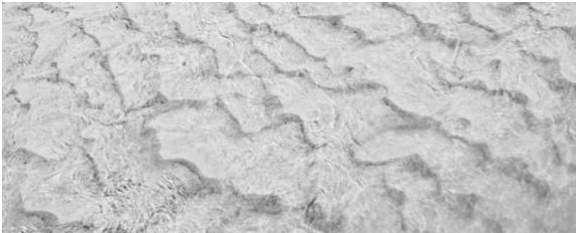
Available prints



Fire Tower View



Forest Edge



Dismal Riverbed



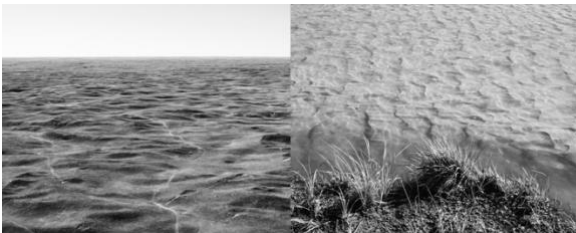
Blowout and Middle Loup River



Ponderosa Pine and Sandhills



Grassland Forest Ecotone



Sandhills near Thedford | Dismal Riverbank



Buried Fence | Waves and Grass Shadows



Sand Dune Encroaching | Tenuously Stabilizing Vegetation



Row Crop Pines | Firebreak



Pine Row | Pine Shadows



Eastern Redcedar Thicket | Leaning Trees

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Thinning Boundary | Burn Pile



Eastern Redcedar Stumps | Culled Eastern Redcedars



Fuel | Fuel Detail



Signal Hill Prescribed Burn | Smoldering Yucca



Grassland Prescribed Burn | Forest Prescribed Burn



Low-intensity Burn | Moderate-intensity Burn



Fallen Tree | Forest Floor after Fuel Removal



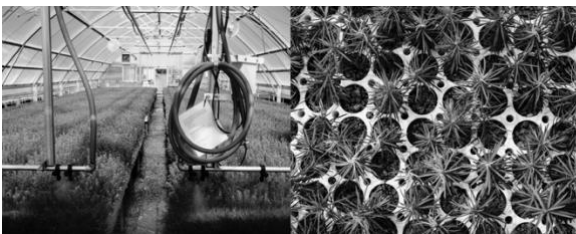
Decaying Pines | Open Trunk



Decaying Pine among Eastern Redcedars | Pine Sapling



Greenhouses and Forest | Spruce Seedlings



Greenhouse Irrigation Hose | Seedling Containers



Greenhouse Irrigation | Bessey Nursery and Hand-Planted Forest

About the Artist

Dana Fritz uses photography to investigate the ways we shape and represent the natural world in cultivated and constructed landscapes. She holds a BFA from Kansas City Art Institute and an MFA from Arizona State University. Fritz is currently Hixson-Lied Professor of Art in the School of Art, Art History & Design at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Her honors include an Arizona Commission on the Arts Fellowship, a Rotary Foundation Group Study Exchange to Japan, and a Society for Photographic Education Imagemaker Award. Fritz's work has been exhibited in over 140 venues including the Phoenix Art Museum, Florida State University Museum of Fine Arts, the Griffin Museum of Photography, and the Great Plains Art Museum, and Sheldon Museum of Art in the U.S. International venues include Museum Belvédère in The Netherlands, Château de Villandry in France, Xi'an Jiaotong University Art Museum in China, and Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Place M, and Nihonbashi Institute of Contemporary Arts in Japan.

Her prints are held in collections including the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; Bryn Mawr College Special Collections, Pennsylvania; Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Arizona; the Center for Art + Environment at the Nevada Museum of Art; and Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. Fritz's artist books are held in collections including Yale University's Beinecke Library; the Museum of Fine Arts Houston's Hirsch Library; Rare and Distinctive Collections at Colorado University Boulder; and Wellesley College's Clapp Library.

Fritz has been awarded artist residencies at locations known for their significant cultural histories and gardens or unique landscapes: Villa Montalvo in California; Château de Rochefort-en-Terre in France; Biosphere 2 in Arizona; PLAYA in Oregon; Brush Creek Foundation for the Arts in Wyoming; Huron Mountain Wildlife Foundation in Michigan; and Homestead National Historical Park in Nebraska. She has been invited to deliver formal lectures, casual gallery talks, and to serve on conference panels in the United States and abroad.

Her work has been published in numerous exhibition catalogs including *IN VIVO: the nature of nature*, *Encounters: Photography from the Sheldon Museum of Art*, *Grasslands/Separating Species*, and *Reclamation: Artist Books about the Environment*, and was featured in print magazines *Harper's*, *Orion*, *Border Crossings*, *Studio*, and *Photography Quarterly*. University of New Mexico Press published her monograph, *Terraria Gigantica: The World under Glass*, in 2017. University of Nebraska Press published *Field Guide to a Hybrid Landscape* in 2023.

Exhibition programming possibilities include:

- Formal artist lecture
- Casual gallery walk-through
- Focused discussion about how reflecting on environmental history can help us shape a better environmental future
- Panel discussion with local experts about climate change, conservation, wildfire, biodiversity, or other related topics