

# Outside of Time | Forest Landscapes By David Paul Bayles

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May 28,  
2019



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## Introduction by David Paul Bayles

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In the mid 1970s, I abruptly left the safe, stucco suburbs of Los Angeles to work for a gyppo logger in the Sierra Nevada. For the next four years I was a choker setter, knot bumper, and catskinner, earning money for photography school. It was a profound experience physically and spiritually that inspires me still.

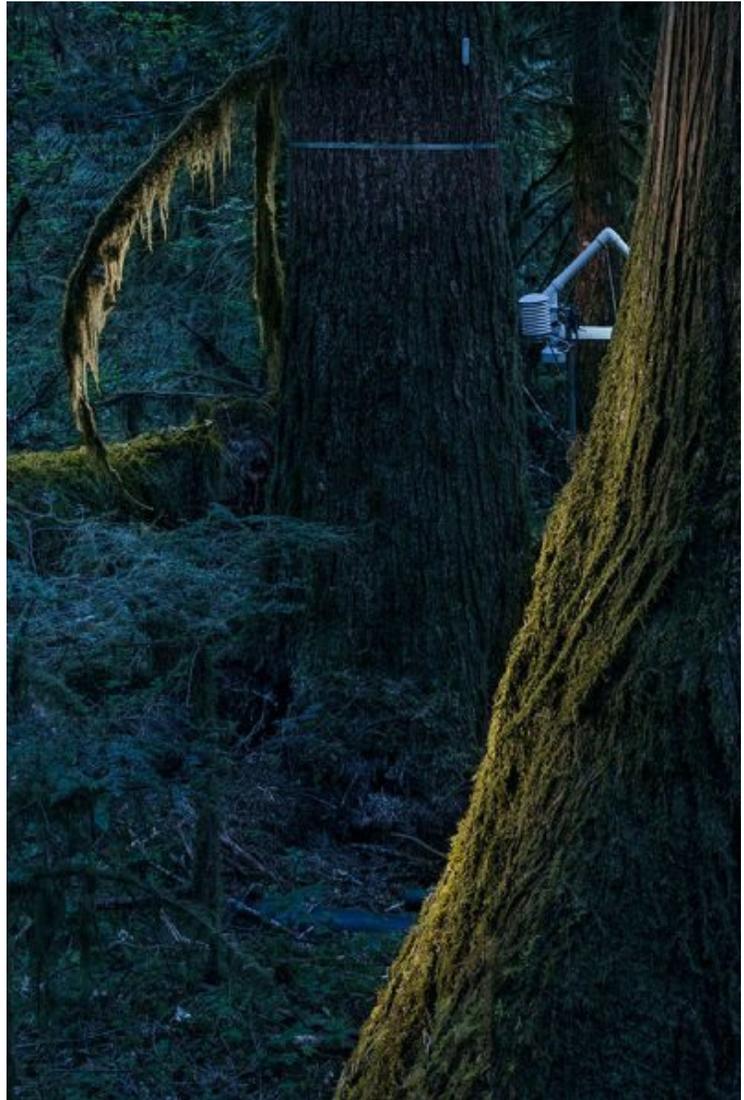
While attending school in Santa Barbara, I read Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, attended lectures and rallies, and began to identify with the environmental movement. My dual perspectives as an environmentalist and former logger continue to find their way into each of my photographic projects.

Until recently, my photographic practice used a straightforward documentary approach to explore landscapes in which the needs of forests and human pursuits often collide, sometimes coexist, and occasionally find harmony. In the last few years I've begun to experiment with digital collage, grid work, and other techniques in order to express my thoughts and feelings.

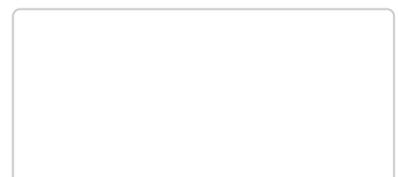
Last year I was awarded an ongoing residency at the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest near Blue River, Oregon. The forest has a history similar to my own evolution. The Andrews began as a 16,000-acre forest dedicated to the study of logging and forestry management with the goal of increasing efficiency, productivity, and yield. Along the way, and not without conflict, the applied science of the logging industry gave way to the basic science of ecology. A few decades after that change, the forest also became a place of inquiry for writers, artists, and musicians.

The Andrews is an ancient forest wired for the future. It is dotted with highly sensitive instruments taking measurements every five minutes. The Discovery Tree, nearly 200 feet tall, has six sets of instruments attached to it at varying intervals. Emanating from its base, like spokes of a wheel, are other instruments, many of them probing deep into the soil. Like the watershed itself, all this data converge to become a powerful data stream flowing down the mountain to Oregon State University via a T1 line.

My residency at the Andrews came at a perfect time. I had been making pictures in the industrial tree plantations that surround my home and studio in western Oregon. There are three cycles that a tree plantation undergoes in less than one



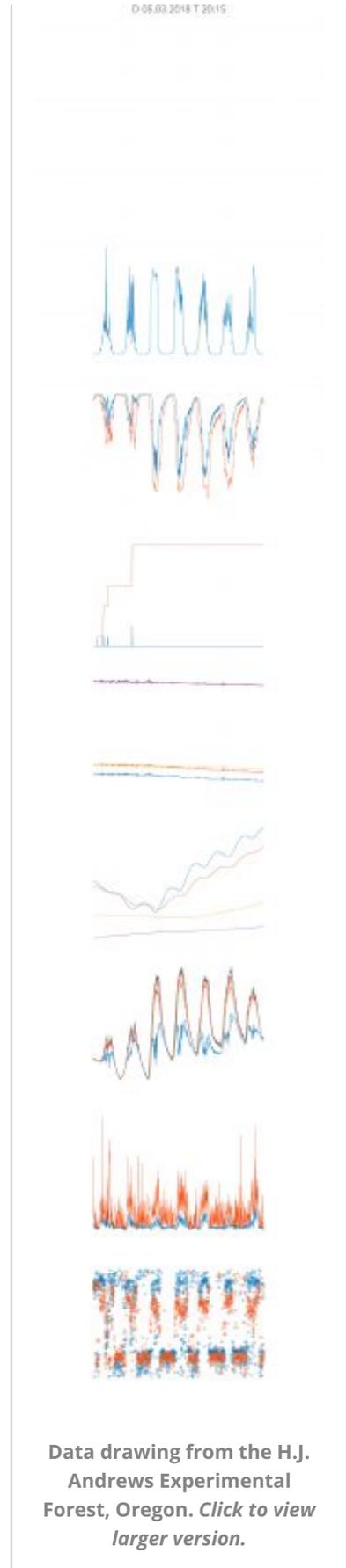
Discovery Tree Meteorological Station, ground level, H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest, Oregon.

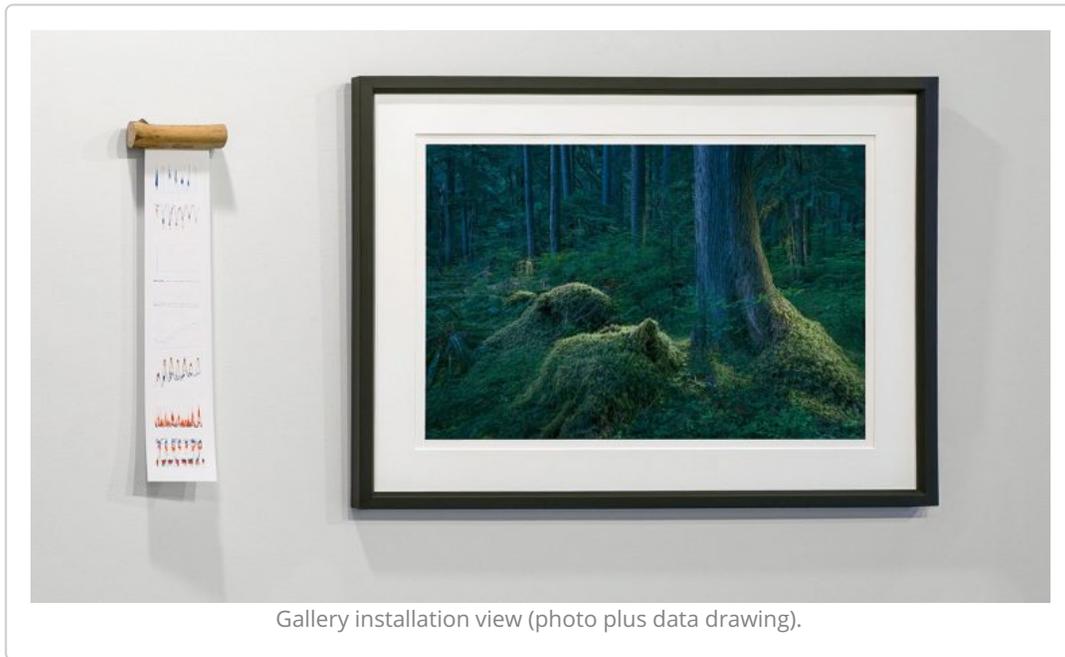


year's time: clearcutting, limb burning, new seedling planting. Then the plantation is left alone for 40 years before the cycle begins anew. These are controlled landscapes where nothing is allowed to grow old. I longed to see what this particular landscape looked like before its transformation from ancient forest to tree farm.

When I entered the magnificent ancient forest that is the centerpiece of the Andrews, I was overwhelmed by the feeling of being at home. Not a physical home but a deeper, more spiritual home. The forest feels at once like a cathedral and a fantasy. I embraced the opportunity to experiment with techniques that would convey these qualities photographically. To do that—to express what I had experienced in the forest—I decided to use a technique that would bend time and skew colors, resulting in images that hover at the edge of reality.

The technique involves controlling the tripod-mounted camera with an iPad via Bluetooth technology, a wireless radio signaling device, to fire a large battery-powered strobe light. The images shown here comprise two to three dozen different exposures, all of them made without ever touching the camera. After a series of ambient light exposures were made, I turned on the strobe light and began a journey through the scene, illuminating elements along the way. In post-production, the multiple exposures were layered, blended, and adjusted, ultimately creating one image from many.





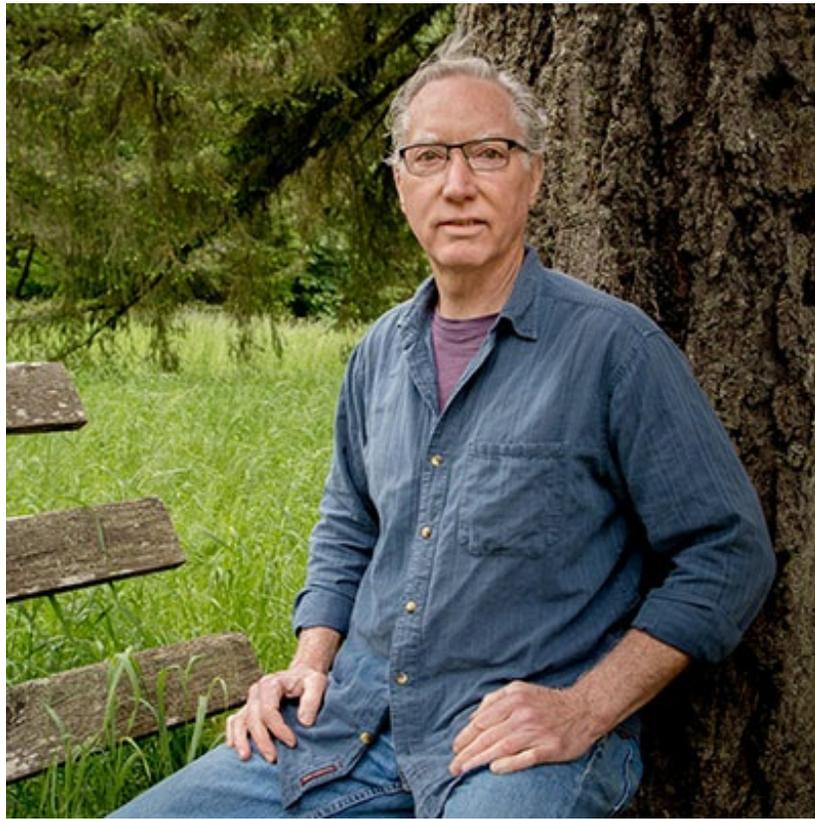
Gallery installation view (photo plus data drawing).

At the same time, the forest was making its own drawings from the data being collected by the scientific instruments—on solar radiation, relative humidity, precipitation, soil water content, air and soil temperature, wind speed and direction. I've seen graphs all my life, but I was deeply moved by the colorful lines and dots in these particular data drawings, seeming to reveal the forest's secrets in a mysterious code. After sharing my excitement with several scientists, they offered to create drawings from the information that had been gathered at the time each of my photographs was made. These drawings, hung from pieces of tree limbs, have been exhibited alongside my photographs in what I call an old growth dialogue. An example of one such pairing is included here in this introduction.

For the gallery below I've elected to show only the photographs for an immersive experience in the magic realism of the forest, as I perceive it. After all, though the images are time-stamped (their titles are composed of the dates and times they were made), the forest when you are in it seems to exist outside of time, indeed beyond human measurement of any kind, at least to a non-scientist like me. My residency at the Andrews is a dream come true. I get to absorb as much science as I want, but I'm also free to steep in the magic and wonder of not knowing at all.

## About the Artist

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**David Paul Bayles.**  
Photo by Lea Bayles.

David Paul Bayles lives and photographs in the Coast Range of western Oregon, where highly efficient industrialized working forests supplanted the massive old growth forests many decades ago.

His photographs have been published in numerous magazines including *Orion*, *Nature*, *Audubon*, *Outside*, and *The Los Angeles Times Magazine*. Public collections include The Portland Art Museum, Santa Barbara Art Museum, The Harry Ransom Center, and the Wildling Museum of Art & Nature. His book *Urban Forest: Images of Trees in the Human Landscape* was chosen by *The Christian Science Monitor* as one of their seven favorite books of 2003. The David Paul Bayles Photographic Archive was created in 2016 at the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley to archive his life's work.

**Find more of David's work at [www.davidpaulbayles.com](http://www.davidpaulbayles.com).**

ARTerrain Gallery by David Paul Bayles  
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*Image titles refer to the date and time the images were made.*

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[D03.29.2018 T16:50](#)

[D03.29.2018 T17:05](#)

[D03.30.2018 T15:10](#)

[D03.31.2018 T07:00](#)

[D03.31.2018 T07:15](#)

[D05.03.2018 T20:15](#)

[D05.04.2018 T18:55](#)

[D05.04.2018 T19:15](#)

[D05.04.2018 T19:50](#)

[D05.19.2018 T19:55](#)

[D05.19.2018 T20:35](#)

[D10.04.2018 T09:55](#)

[D10.04.2018 T17:55](#)

[D02.13.2019 T08:50](#)



Header image, "D05.04.2018 T:19:15," by David Paul Bayles.





