

Signal Fire **Collection CAE2404**

Introduction/Abstract

Signal Fire, and organization founded in 2008 to provide opportunities for artists and creative agitators to engage with America's remaining wild lands. It started operations in the field in 2010 and concentrated on public lands around the Portland area.

Biographical Note: Ryan Pierce

Signal Fire was co-founded by artist Ryan Pierce and his wife, the forest conservation and public lands advocate, Amy Harwood. The not-for-profit group facilitated wilderness residencies and retreats for artists of all disciplines from 2009-19.

Ryan Pierce's paintings, prints, and experimental artist books envision a world recovering from human industry amid the throes of climate chaos. He draws on influences from ecological theory, literature, and folk art to create scenes that portray the resilience of the natural world. He has exhibited internationally, and his work has been recognized by grants from the Joan Mitchell and San Francisco Foundations, and an Individual Artist Fellowship from the Oregon Arts Commission, as well as by reviews in *Art in America*, *Art Papers*, and *The Oregonian*. Pierce has been an artist in residence at the Djerassi and Ucross Foundations, Lademoen Kunstnerverksteder in Norway, and a fellow at the Jordan Schnitzer Printmaking Residency at Sitka Center for Art & Ecology, where he now serves on the Board of Directors. In 2019 his work was showcased in the Portland Art Museum's inaugural triennial of Northwest Art, titled *the map is not the territory...* He is represented by Elizabeth Leach Gallery in Portland. Pierce was also the founding Director of Wide Open Studios, an arts and ecology field program. He currently chairs the low-residency MFA in Visual Studies at Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland.

Scope and Content

Signal Fire was founded to provide opportunities for artists and creative agitators to engage with America's remaining wild lands. It was started in 2008 by activist Amy Harwood and artist Ryan Pierce. Both wanted to find a way to bring their communities closer to foster more collaboration. As avid backpackers, they imagined small groups traveling together into threatened wildlands, discussing and strategizing ways to shift dominant views of land in the American West. This vision was refined, expanded, and productively challenged over the years by other collaborators, participants, and partners. It started operations in the field in 2010 and concentrated on public lands around the Portland area, which included The Columbia River Gorge and Mt. Hood areas. The archives include the extensive readers that participants were furnished at the beginning of each trip, and from which they were encouraged to read and discuss daily. Signal Fire ended all operations in 2024, save for an online archive.

This archive is currently in process.