

***Orion* Partners with the 18th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival**



by ORION STAFF

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The [Wild & Scenic Film Festival](#) is proud to partner with *Orion* to promote the 18th annual flagship festival taking place January 16-20, 2020 in Nevada City and Grass Valley, California. This partnership highlights the organizations' shared goals of increasing the environmental groundswell and inspiring awareness and change by sharing stories and ideas of sustainability, conservation, social justice and community.

The Wild & Scenic Film Festival recently unveiled its full lineup of over 140 environmental and activist films, including sixteen world premieres. The five-day festival features activist workshops, music, art exhibits, youth programs as well as opportunities to meet filmmakers and special guests. [Tickets are now available.](#)

This year's festival theme, "(re)Generation," gestures toward renewal and possibilities for restoring earth and human communities while creating a positive future for the next generation. The official 2020 artwork was created by naturalist and author [Obi Kaufmann](#) with this idea in mind. A poet, painter, and naturalist, Kaufmann blends science and art to illuminate a multifaceted array of the natural world, forming a uniquely elemental narrative based on the shaping forces of earth, air, fire, and water.

Obi took a moment from his book tour to talk with Wild & Scenic Film Festival Director Jorie Emory about his work and creative process:

Jorie Emory: Tell us about yourself. Who is Obi Kaufmann?

Obi Kaufmann: I am a painter who has spent his life scrambling through California's backcountry, looking for the story that binds all life together here in this most beautiful of all places—California. I am thrilled at the success of my first book *The California Field Atlas* as well as follow-up work, *The State of Water, Understanding California's Most Precious Resource*. These days, my professional and creative career is now solely about communicating the beauty and intrinsic value I find across California's living systems. I have a lot of fun reaching out to the community by weekly essays and daily Instagram posts.

JE: Walk us through the artwork you created for the 2020 Wild & Scenic Film Festival.

OK: In the painting I created for the festival, I wanted to celebrate the forest biodiversity of the northern Sierra Nevada. The mountain depicted is the south face of the Sierra Buttes, near the headwaters of the North Fork of the Yuba River—kitkitdizze flowers flank the habitat of the Lahontan trout and halo the black bear—golden eagles, blue tailed skinks, the endangered red-legged frog, and the yellow-rumped warbler complete this portrait of biodiversity thriving in this beautiful watershed.



JE: Your artwork and writing is so often place-based. Can you tell us about your approach to painting and writing about places that are special to you?

OK: California's portfolio of diversity astounds me at every turn and offers me enough inspiration for a hundred books to come. I could paint a hundred maps, a hundred landscapes, a hundred renderings of plants and animals within and about California's natural world, every day for the rest of my life, and still not have enough time to tell all the story that I wanted to tell.

JE: You and Wild & Scenic Film Festival have somewhat of a shared mission to use art to educate and embolden people towards sustainability and environmental advocacy. How did you discover the intersection of art and activism, and why is it crucial in this moment?"

OK: My activism is the careful tracking of my own journey towards a better understanding of the more-than-human world of ecology and natural history. I know that if I can turn the key inside myself, I can turn the whole world. This process of understanding, a consilience of all knowledge between truth and meaning, or science and art, is our unfolding destiny and the best shot we've got. As we discuss what conservation looks like across our natural legacy in the 22nd century—and we should be talking about that today—we are beginning to realize that we have the opportunity to leave 21st century California in better shape than we left it at the end of the 20th century. This new paradigm is a function of increased knowledge and supported by the communal telling of a better story of how we may tend to the many responsibilities we have to the world's ecology, and how they relate to the democratic rights we all enjoy on a daily basis.

JE: Our Festival's tagline is "Where activism gets inspired." What inspires you?

OK: I spent my youth removing myself from the human world, disappearing into the mountains to seek solace there from chaos I felt in the city. This function of my own baggage has, over the decades, been tempered by an emergent paradigm: despite the fits of politics and media, there is a new dawn happening right now. I see it in the eyes of the hundreds of people I meet every month on book tour. The old ways of extraction of replenishment and development over restoration are being tackled in the creative minds of the young who can see past societal folly with drive and inspiration I can hardly keep up with. O

MORE RESOURCES:

- Lean more about the [festival and film trailers](#).
- Tickets to the Wild & Scenic Film Festival are [now available](#).

