

Visual Arts

Snapshot: 'Our Loss' by Joel Sternfeld

This is the latest work in the photographer's ongoing exploration of the climate crisis



'Our Loss' (2019) by Joel Sternfeld © Steidl Publishers

Madeleine Pollard SEPTEMBER 6 2019

On April 14 2018, environmentalist and LGBTQ-rights lawyer David Buckel set himself alight in New York's Prospect Park, his self-immolation a protest against the destructive power of fossil fuels.

Later that day, Queens-born photographer Joel Sternfeld passed through the park with his son. Profoundly affected, Sternfeld returned to the site of Buckel's death over the course of a year to document its gradual regeneration. The result is *Our Loss*, the latest work in his ongoing exploration of the climate crisis.



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The site of Buckel's horrific death appears eerily mundane in Sternfeld's cycle of images; the scorched patch of earth is almost imperceptible against the muted landscape, highlighted only by a flurry of memorial flowers, or a crowd of curious passers-by. Sternfeld documents both the hopefulness of natural renewal, made vivid in the pink hues of a cherry tree, and the ease with which the traces of Buckel's trauma fade away.



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