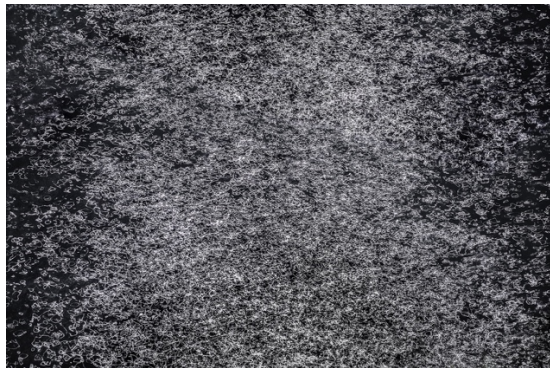


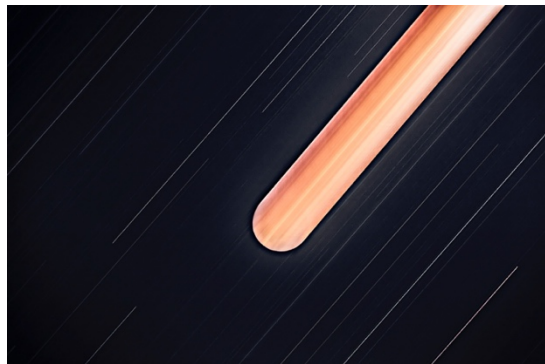
## An Artist Reflected: William Pierson at Piante

After a four-year exhibition hiatus, William Pierson's show of new photographic work presents an artist at the height of his creative powers. His show, *Diary of an Artist*, at Eureka's Piante gallery, displays the results of his ongoing contemplative cataloging of moment, emotion, and environment. Pierson's new photographs retain the themes and energy his work has demonstrated for years. The new pictures are immediately recognizable as William Pierson photographs (silhouetted trees, atmospheric skies, meditative horizons, seascapes, and time-lapsed celestial views abound) but there are some subtle changes, too.

One notable difference in *Diary of an Artist* involves Pierson's relationship with abstraction. Over the last decade, Pierson's shows have included a number of photographs that could arguably function as abstractions. However, in the past there was usually enough visual information to allow the viewer to know what natural form Pierson had photographed. This is no longer the case. *Diary of an Artist* includes several fully realized, unapologetic abstractions. With pieces like *Homage to Mark Tobey* and *Lunar Eclipse in Passing*, Pierson seems to be announcing his new relationship with the abstract. While his titles still often reveal the subject matter from which these abstractions were realized, the information is wholly unnecessary to experience the image's impact. Another piece, *Horizon Line Binding Two Elements*, reads like a kind of cheerful Rothko. In a sense, this title describes Pierson's process and aesthetic: the binding of the natural world and the artist's metaphysical sense of self.



*Homage to Mark Tobey*



*Lunar Eclipse in Passing*



*Horizon Line Binding Two Elements*

Another difference in Pierson's new exhibition is the way pieces are titled and displayed. In addition to titles, each piece includes a date, location, time of initial exposure, and number. The photographs are displayed chronologically. While the passage of time has always been an important element in Pierson's work, (the movement of stars across the night sky, seasonal changes, the subtle, second by second variation of light and shadow) now there's a new temporal connection between subject and artist. Viewing the work in the context of a visual diary, the regular recording of visual information over time, we experience the artist moving *through* time while simultaneously documenting moments *in* time. Pierson captures moments when his internal, emotional experience of the instant becomes manifest in the external, natural world.

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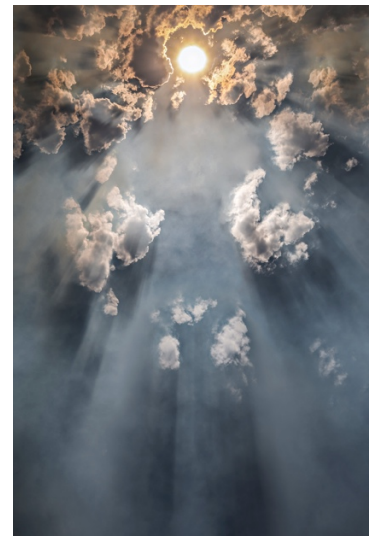
*Crow Manifestation*



*The Edge of the South Pacific*



*Alignment*



*Shadows from the Center*

Pierson has said that he has always been drawn to symmetry, and his compositions have historically demonstrated an innate sense of balance. In this new body of work, Pierson's desire for symmetry is again on display but not without an interesting contradiction. In some of his most symmetrical pieces he has gone to great lengths to interrupt the sense of balance. Using time-lapse techniques, Pierson turns celestial bodies into unbroken swaths of light that move

diagonally, usually from left to right, across the top portion of the photograph. The addition of these asymmetrical moments amid the expected symmetry are surprising and bring to the pictures an added element of tension that wouldn't otherwise exist. Often these moments are the sole appearances of intense light or color, a sharp contrast with Pierson's typically subdued palette, drawing additional attention to the balance-tipping swaths.

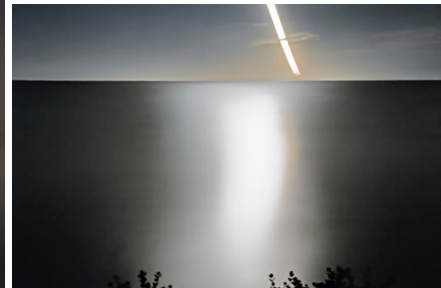
Three pieces in particular exemplify this interruption: *From the Heavens*, *Completion*, and *Horizon Line at Midnight*. In these photographs, reflecting light breaks dark water into three distinct and balanced zones. In the foreground of two, the flora is compositionally balanced near the bottom of the image. But at the top of each picture, nature's balance is interrupted by some celestial unknown: the familiarity and balance of the natural world upstaged, interrupted by the metaphysical. Here again we can see the melding of Pierson's two principle creative inspirations: the metaphysical and the natural.



*From the Heavens*



*Completion*



*Horizon Line at Midnight*

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*My favorite way of working photographically is when I don't know what the outcome is going to be. The best ones are gifts.*

--William Pierson

Pierson has often said that he doesn't search out subjects for his photographs but rather captures them when they present themselves. This belies the diligence and awareness necessary to work in this manner. The diary format (the artist moving through place and time) heightens the fact that Pierson is constantly putting himself in position, making himself available, to record the moments that trigger him to create. While an atmospheric sunset might move an artist to want to paint a picture or a poet to pen a poem, Pierson chronicles the inspiration itself and his emotional/aesthetic connection to it. It is a subtle but significant difference: an artist being moved by a sunset and deciding to work with that subject matter or an artist being moved by a sunset and finding a way to capture *that* sunset in *that* moment. The instants that move Pierson to action are moments of recognition: seeing something of himself mirrored in the landscape. It is in these moments of communion between his internal, emotional landscape and his external environment that a William Pierson photograph is created.