Max Pettinelli

MONT 108N

Tom Zetterstrom’s Photography and its Impact on My Thinking

The photography that Tom Zetterstrom displayed made me think more than I anticipated. Going into the exhibit, I believed that I was going to be bored out of my mind by so many pictures of trees. However, some of the pictures really made me think.

The most powerful set of pictures for me were the pictures of the solitary American elm in the four different seasons. With nothing else in view, the elm tree was holding on and almost thriving. As humans, we can learn strength from trees. No matter the outlook, trees survive and make the best of the situation.

Another picture that interested me was of the fallen Pacific redwood trees. Whenever a redwood is mentioned, I think about the massive trees in California that are larger than any other trees. Yet, the picture of these dead redwoods is shocking. It shows the fragility of nature, and how even the greatest living things can perish.

This idea of fragility has become more important to us as humans recently. As humans expand the land they feel they own, the environment is being hurt tremendously. Humans have an obligation to protect the environment, since we need a healthy environment so that we can survive. Trees are a large portion of this equation, since we need them to survive to provide the oxygen that we need to survive. When I see a picture of dying trees, it scares me to think about what the future might look like.

Another aspect I noticed was how some trees look like they are alpha-trees. One example of this was the coast oak. This tree has massive limbs that extend seemingly forever, taking over the land surrounding the oak. This tree made me think about how in nature there is an element of the strong versus the weak, even among trees, not so different from humans.