

Phoenix Art Museum

News Release

MEDIA CONTACT:

Margaree Bigler, Communications Manager
602.257.2105 | margaree.bigler@phxart.org

Phoenix Art Museum presents global portrait of water in new photography exhibition

Edward Burtynsky: WATER explores the intersection of humanity and nature

PHOENIX (June 9, 2016) – Beginning July 1, Phoenix Art Museum will present *Edward Burtynsky: WATER*, an epic and ambitious photographic survey of the increasingly fragmented lifecycle of water around the world. Blending fine art photography with a message of social consciousness, *WATER* features 40 large-scale color prints of Burtynsky’s (Canada, b. 1955) aerial images that trace the various roles that water plays in modern life—as a source of healthy ecosystems and energy, as a key element in cultural and religious rituals, and as a rapidly depleting resource. Sometimes elegant, sometimes haunting, the exhibition forms a compelling global portrait of water that functions as an open-ended question about sustainability and humanity’s relationship with the natural world. It will be on view through September 18 in the Museum’s Steele Gallery.

“Exhibitions like *WATER* are not only awe-inspiring in terms of scale and subject but are also ways to begin important conversations,” said Amada Cruz, the Museum’s Sybil Harrington Director. “At a time when we find ourselves examining the viability and sustainability of our ways of life, we are excited to present art that connects our audiences to matters that not only concern our community, but others around the world.”

WATER is a global exhibition. Over a five year period, Burtynsky travelled across the globe, from the Gulf of Mexico to the shores of the Ganges, weaving together a monumental composition of water and the systems that humans have put in place in order to harness it, shape it, and control it. Photographs of maze-like stepwells in India, massive dam construction and aquaculture in China, manufactured waterfront housing projects, and irrigation systems in the American West are presented alongside parched landscapes, dried river regions, and ominously-colored salt and shrimp farms.

“I wish my artwork could persuade millions of people to join a global conversation about sustainability,” says Burtynsky. Focused on the intersection between nature and human industry and the ways in which human activity has transformed the natural world, this exhibition is sure to deepen that increasingly vital conversation.

Edward Burtynsky: WATER was organized by the New Orleans Museum of Art. Its Phoenix premiere was made possible through the generous support of Contemporary Forum and INFOCUS, support organizations of Phoenix Art Museum.

About Edward Burtynsky

Edward Burtynsky is known as one of Canada's most respected photographers. His remarkable photographic depictions of global industrial landscapes are included in the collections of more than sixty major museums around the world, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He received his BAA in Photography/Media Studies from Ryerson University in 1982, and in 1985 founded Toronto Image Works, a darkroom rental facility, custom photo laboratory, digital imaging and new media computer-training center catering to all levels of Toronto's art community. Early exposure to the sites and images of the General Motors plant in his hometown helped to formulate the development of his photographic work. His imagery explores the collective impact we as a species are having on the surface of the planet, serving as an inspection of the human systems we've imposed onto natural landscapes.

About Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum has provided access to visual arts and educational programs in Arizona for more than 50 years and is the largest art museum in the Southwestern United States. In addition to an annual calendar of special exhibitions, Phoenix Art Museum's permanent collection galleries are drawn from more than 18,000 objects of modern and contemporary art, fashion design, and photography, as well as American, Asian, Latin American, and European art. Each month, the Museum hosts a wide variety of public programs, including lectures, performances, tours, workshops, and film screenings designed for audiences of all ages to enjoy.

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