BHUTAN: BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH – PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARY PECK
Lyon Gallery – January 21 – April 1, 2012

The country of Bhutan holds a distinction, and has received increasing attention, for being one of the last nations on earth to retain a native tradition of life and Buddhist faith primarily untouched by modern Western technology and influences. It is this allure that drew Mary Peck~~,~~ to Bhutan, where she travelled to remote parts of this tiny Himalayan kingdom mostly by foot on visits between 1999 and 2005. She was struck by the close link between Bhutanese geography and their culture, as evidenced by her experiences with its people and their closeness to nature. This stable and unbroken tradition was maintained through the 1960's when the first visitors were allowed in Bhutan.~~,~~ The rural communities of Bhutan have endured and while change is now coming to Bhutan there is a great effort to see the tradition and culture continue. Bhutanese philosophy, while primarily Buddhist, also has unique characteristics. The ~~f~~Fourth ~~k~~King of Bhutan emphasized policies of economic self-reliance, preservation of the environment and of culture and tradition. In 1972, while His Majesty was still a teenager, he learned about the modern Western concept of GDP, Gross Domestic Product.~~.~~ He questioned whether this alone can measure happiness and well-being, and created a new concept of his own – that of GNH – Gross National Happiness. GNH is not only a development philosophy but also an enlightened personal ethos. It embraces such things as wisdom, justice and compassion to be the guiding principles for governance of the people, resulting in cultural and spiritual capital rather than material wealth. This policy is still being developed and remains important to his son, the Fifth King.

M ~~5th King.~~

~~M~~ary Peck's ~~65~~ black-and-white photographs capture the unspoiled beauty of the Himalayan landscape and the lives of the people who live within it. Traveling with a special visa she was allowed extended visits in the country and to travel to areas where tourists are not usually permitted. This opportunity allowed her a more direct connection to the people in very rural areas and to experience and to photograph less seen parts of Bhutan. She stayed with rural families and observed their seasonal agricultural activities and the ongoing restoration of their centuries-old temples and monasteries. The settings for these sacred places are awe-inspiring mountain forests, sixty percent of which remain fully intact. This is another major difference between Bhutan and its Himalayan neighbors, such as Nepal and Tibet, which have undergone greater modernization.~~.~~

Mary Peck's work has been photographing landscape in various parts of the world for over 35 years with an ongoing interest in sacred sites, native culture and wilderness. Past publications include *Away Out Over Everything: The Olympic Peninsula and the Elwha River*, and *Chaco Canyon: A Center and Its World.* Her photographic work has been exhibited widely and is in many prestigious collections, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York City and the National Museum of American Art in Washington DC. Previous solo exhibitions of her work have been featured at Albuquerque Museum;

The Museum of Art in Fort Lauderdale, FL; Port Angeles Fine Arts Center, Port Angeles, WA; and Rice University Media Center, Houston, TX

~~EX~~EXHIBITION FACTS

Organizing Institution = Phoenix Art Museum

Exhibition Availability – from ~~early~~ late 2012 ~~through late 2013~~ for 3-4 month venues.

Number of Photos and Scale of Exhibition - ~~6~~Fifty-six~~5~~ 14" x 17" framed black-and-white prints, text for label copy; 200-250 linear feet needed.

Rental Fee – US $8000, plus incoming shipping from previous venue.

Insurance Value – US $175,000 for total exhibition.

Programming – suggested lecturers available upon request. ~~Ms. Peck may also be available to speak about her work in a discussion format, and to student groups.~~

Publication – Phoenix Art Museum and Merlin Press LLC are publishing a 144 -page book, including 55 illustrations of prints in the exhibition, with notes and an essay by Mary Peck; and an essay by Karma Ura, President of the Centre for Bhutan Studies.

For further information, please contact:

Dr. Janet Baker
Curator of Asian Art
Phoenix Art Museum
1625 N. Central Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85004-1685
janet.baker@phxart.org
(602) 307-2049