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Water: Experience, Recognition, Conversance

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Water: Experience, Recognition, Conversance

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Masters of Fine Art

in Independent Film and Digital Imaging

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Abstract

*“The edge of the sea is a strange and beautiful place. All through the long history of Earth it has been an area of unrest where waves have broken heavily against the land, where the tides have pressed forward over the continents, receded and then returned. For no two successive days is the shoreline precisely the same. Not only do the tides advance and retreat in their eternal rhythms, but the level of the sea itself is never at rest. It rises or falls as the glaciers melt or grow, as the floor of the deep ocean basins shifts under its increasing load of sediments, or as the earth's crust along the continental margins warps up or down in adjustment to strain and tension. Today a little more land may belong to the sea, tomorrow a little less. Always the edge of the sea remains an elusive and indefinable boundary.” - Rachel Carson, *The Edge of the Sea**

The exhibition of the photographic work entitled, Water: Experience, Recognition, Conversance, is the culmination of the artist's life-long interest in the natural environment. The title also infers a chronological description of how interest in the subject evolved as well as how this document and the exhibition has been constructed and curated.

The human experience in the natural environment is largely one of discovery and exploration. From our earliest activities as children, and throughout life we encounter

the natural world on many levels so that, inevitably, the concept of nature becomes internalized. It is virtually impossible for human beings to be unimpressed in some regard by the natural environment. As life complicates itself, often, these experiences can often be forgotten.

In the 1950-1970's the publications of scientist Rachel Carson initiated an environmental consciousness and movement that caused a global response, scientifically, economically, governmentally and artistically. This movement has set precedents but not necessarily made progress, given the grave ecological concerns present today. The images presented in this exhibition are intended speak to those concerns.

As we age, our ever-evolving experience in the world of nature brings an automatic recognition of the environment, its importance or just a reawakening to its existence. We become used to our spaces and our place and our interactions. Yet the effect of this recognition can become silent, fleeting and often intermittent.

After the publication of Carson's book, *Silent Spring* in 1962, and with the growth of the environmental movement, the earth artists of the 1960's offered a new artistic consideration of the landscape. Artists including Robert Smithson, Andy Goldsworthy and Richard Long created works within and about the environment. Although not the first artists to consider nature, these were more contemporary voices than the Hudson River Valley sublime painters of the mid 1800's or the landscape photographers of the early

20th century. The work of the earth artists seemed to provide a unique visual response to the new environmental zeitgeist blossoming worldwide.

While visual artists of many disciplines adopted the natural environment as subject matter, filmmakers responded to the cause as well. Over the years, private institutions, government agencies and independent filmmakers have produced numerous films and documentaries with an environmental sensibility. The art of film has accepted the environment on many levels, so much so, that the concept of “place as character” has nearly developed a genre of its own.

In his *Qasti Trilogy*, filmmaker Godfrey Reggio, expresses “*the transitioning of nature into a technological milieu*” raising the viewers level of consciousness and an alert to problems in the fore, while the work of Terrence Malick especially resonates with the imagery presented and its conceptual direction and the recognition factor of an experience with nature and its majesty.

Malick often explores the theme of a person’s struggle with their place in nature as he features nature in the foreground of his scripts. Malick’s films cause the viewer to really see and experience his captured environments.

By definition, conversance is the state of being conversant. It is the acquisition of personal knowledge or information about someone or something. It is an acquaintance or familiarity with a subject. Conversance is defined as information acquired through study, experience or instruction.

Filmmaker Jennifer Baichwal, along with photographer Edward Burtynsky, explores the human experience, interactions and effects within the environment in

their collaborative work. They provide the viewer with powerful visual information and a unique acquaintance and narrative with their subjects. Baichwal states she wants the viewer *“to come to their own conclusions”* (youtube.com)

The challenge of the exhibition presented is to provide a level of experiential conversance for each viewer and have them come to a conclusion of their own. All of the artists and authors discussed have proven to be an inspiration for the artist in the creation of the images presented. The aim of this work is to bring the viewer once again through some of the steps of knowing the natural environment in one space, during a single interaction, within the gallery walls.

The concept of the exhibition is to remind or provide a vehicle toward remembrance to those ephemeral instances that we as a species have all experienced. It is intended to incite a response or perhaps inspire an action or a reaction or just a renewed appreciation of one component of life, water, that we cannot live without.

Influences

Artistic influences to each individual can be numerous and often times disparate. While theoretical, historical and critical courses can inform an aesthetic, in this instance a combination of academic study and real-life experiences helped to build the artist's sensibility.

Working artists are a prime source of inspiration and can provide a direction or act as a measure of justification for the work one produces. The work in this exhibition has been highly influenced.

Landscape in the history of art has been depicted since ancient times, from the earliest cave paintings, through Greek and Roman garden-scapes to the Renaissance when a real interest developed in the natural world. The genre of landscape art developed and transformed along with communication advancements, technological progress and the world changed. While the painters of the 19th and 20th centuries embraced the pictorialist and a sublime point of view, photographers embraced the subject and began to consider several different landscape concepts. The beauty and majesty of the landscape was depicted along with a response to the increase of industrialization and a new ecological consciousness. (getty.edu)

Earth Artists

With the burgeoning environmental movement, The Earth Artists of the 1960's provided a new consideration of the landscape. Artists including Robert Smithson, Richard Long and Andy Goldsworthy created works within, and about the environment, although not only or necessarily for its glorification. The work of the earth artists provided a visual response to a growing environmental consciousness and the natural world provided a new medium for them to explore.

One of these most influential artists of the 20th century, Robert Smithson, (1938 - 1973) expressed his complex ideas in media including drawings, projects, films, writings and this new media of environment. His focus was on the theme of entropy or the lack of order involving decay and renewal with his Non-sites or Earthworks.

(robertsmithson.com)

In *Entropy and the New Monuments*, Smithson wrote "...the urban sprawl, and the infinite number of housing developments of the postwar boom have contributed to the architecture of entropy" and that "entropy is a condition that is moving toward a gradual equilibrium." (robertsmithson.com)

Smithson was concerned about the earth's closed systems, i.e. water, oil, etc., that he claimed were being so altered that they would reach a point of equilibrium and therefore become irreparable. Smithson was also anxious to get away from the confines of the artist's studio and the art gallery, explaining, (*Spiral Jetty*)



"By excluding technological processes from the making of art, we begin to discover other processes of a more fundamental order. The stratum of the Earth is a jumbled museum. Embedded in the sediment is a text that contains limits and boundaries which evade the rational order, and social structures which confine art."— Robert Smithson

Although all of his works reflected these concerns, his site-specific work *Spiral Jetty*, is considered one of the most influential pieces of the genre and speaks directly to the concept of entropy, among other things, with its disappearance and reappearance dependent on the fluctuation of the water level of the Great Salt Lake. Considered by some to be a landmark of 20th century art, *Spiral Jetty* seemed to set the stage for continued environmental art possibilities. (umfa.utah.edu)

Concurrently, Richard Long, (b. 1945) also brought the environment to the art world by documenting his epic "walks" through remote areas of Britain, Canada, Mongolia and Bolivia. Interested in the concepts of time, mapping and distance, Long was guided by a respect for nature and the formal structure of basic shapes.

(richardlong.org) *"You could say that my work is a balance between the patterns of nature and the formalism of human, abstract*

ideas like lines and circles. It is where my human characteristics meet the natural forces and patterns of the world, and that is really the kind of subject of my work."

— Richard Long (*Walking and Marking*)



Additionally, British sculptor Andy Goldsworthy (b.1956) began producing site-specific sculpture and land art situated in natural and urban settings.

“Movement, change, light, growth and decay are the lifeblood of nature, the energies that I try to tap.” – Andy Goldsworthy

Goldsworthy maintains that the energy and space around a material are as important as the energy and the space within and states:

“The weather—rain, sun, snow, hail, calm—is that external space made visible. When I touch a rock, I am touching and working the space around it.”

– Andy Goldsworthy (ucblueash.edu)

Contemporary Artists and Photographers

While art throughout history is the truest fodder for building an aesthetic, contemporary artists may have the most immediate effect on one's current work.

American designer and artist Maya Lin (b. 1959) is known for her work in sculpture and landscape art. Although Lin is well known as the designer of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., her 2012 memorial project, *What is Missing?* focuses on bringing an awareness to the current crisis surrounding biodiversity and habitat loss. With landscape as the source of inspiration for her work, Lin uses technological methods to visualize and depict the natural world by employing sonar resonance scans, aerial and satellite mapping devices and translates the gleaned information into her works. She explains that her *“works address how we relate and*

respond to the environment, and present new ways of looking at the world around

us.” (mayalin.com) Maya Lin’s work offers a sophisticated view of the importance of the simplicity of natural things.

American photographer Richard Misrach (b. 1949) known for large-scale photographs depicting human intervention within the landscape, uses the convention of series imagery to tell stories about floods, fires, urban sprawl, manufacturing and other man-made factors imposed on the natural environment. In production for over 14 years his still project, *Desert Cantos*, could be considered a documentary on the deserts of our American west. Misrach explains that the photographs are broken down into thematic visual essays with varying numbers in each series that should be considered together as the whole statement. Although Misrach claims he is apolitical and does not compromise his aesthetic for a cause, he does hope to progress as he put it – “from the descriptive and the informative to a metaphorical resolution,” and he states:

“In the past when I traveled, I used to look for the light, the beautiful forms. Now I cannot escape the fact that every facet of the landscape is suffused with political implications.” - Richard Misrach

It was Misrach’s concept of the thematic visual essay that was informative to the work in this exhibition as depicted by the series or sets of images that document light, movement, composition, time and color of the single subject, water. It is only with consideration of the entire exhibit that one can surmise the entire story and appreciate the artist’s intention.

Japanese photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto (b. 1948), speaks of his work as an “*expression of time exposed*” in that his photographs act as time stamps for individual events. Using a large format camera with long exposures he is as well known for the quality of his technical ability as he is for his conceptual outcomes.

Sugimoto maintains, that he is influenced by the Dadaist and Surrealist movements allowing his work to focus on “*the transience of life and the conflict between life and death.*”

Although his work is widely varied and encompasses a variety of subjects, the *Seascapes* series seem to describe an atmospheric coupling of life and after-life. The simplistic yet powerful images are evocative of that fluctuating boundary that occurs in life and art, between complete control and pure chance.

“Water and air. So very commonplace are these substances, they hardly attract attention—and yet they vouchsafe our very existence. The beginnings of life are shrouded in myth: Let there be water and air. Living phenomena spontaneously generated from water and air in the presence of light, though that could just as easily suggest random coincidence as a Deity.”

– Hiroshi Sugimoto
(*Aegean Sea*)



Photographer and environmentalist Sebastião Salgado (b.1944) is a Brazilian social documentarian who came to photography later in life, after working as an economist for many years. By assigning himself long-term projects, Salgado travels the world capturing a series of image sets describing landscapes, nature, and humanity that result in highly regarded publications. The impressive imagery of his work in *Genesis*, (2004 -201), a very large format publication, consisted of photographs of humans living within their traditional environments and with their long established customs. It was conceived in an effort to provide a direction for, in his words, "*humanity's rediscovery of itself in nature.*" He stated, "*In GENESIS, my camera allowed nature to speak to me. And it was my privilege to listen.*" – Sebastião Salgado (blog.ted.com)

Salgado has worked since the 1990's on a reforestation effort in his homeland within the Atlantic Forest of Brazil, and has presented the progress in a TED talk utilizing his own photography to express the dramatic success of the project. Additionally, he has established the Instituto Terra on his own property and dedicated it to environmental education, reforestation and conservation. It is Sebastião Salgado's passion, foresight and expertise that speak to the power of the visual image to affect the world. (ted.com)

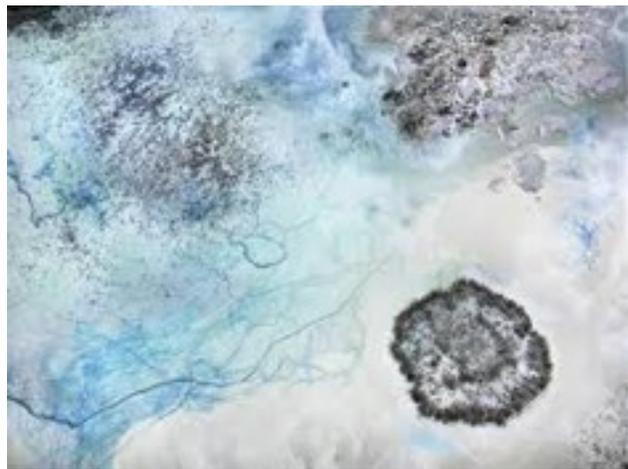
Edward Burtynsky has worked as an environmental archivist, reporter and documentarian all over the world and has tackled a variety of provocative subjects. His still, exquisite photographic images can be beautifully disarming when the realization of the subject is recognized. While viewing an enormous print of a mountain of brilliantly colored objects that initially evokes an abstract expressionist painting the viewer can be

overcome with the final comprehension of the subject, technological waste. From oil, to mass manufacturing, to farming, pollution, habitation and finally to water, Burtynsky offers a unique view of our present world condition.

The watershed for the imagery presented in this exhibition was the screening of the acclaimed film *Watermark*, produced by Edward Burtynsky and Jennifer Baichwal.

The film is another kind of poetic rendition to an undeniably necessary resource.

“While trying to accommodate the growing needs of an expanding, and very thirsty civilization, we are reshaping the Earth in colossal ways. In this new and powerful role over the planet, we are also capable of engineering our own demise. We have to learn to think more long-term about the consequences of what we are doing, while we are doing it. My hope is that these pictures will stimulate a process of thinking about something essential to our survival; something we often take for granted—until it’s gone. I wanted to understand water: what it is, and what it leaves behind when we’re gone. I wanted to understand our use and misuse of it. I wanted to trace the evidence of global thirst and threatened sources. Water is part of a pattern I’ve watched unfold throughout my career. I document landscapes (Phosphor Tailings Pond #2)



that, whether you think of them as beautiful or monstrous, or as some strange combination of the two, are clearly not vistas of an inexhaustible, sustainable world." – Edward Burtynsky (*Walrus, October 2013*)

Filmmakers:

While still imagists have been a tremendous influence to the work presented in the exhibition, film has also had an important impact on the development of the works' aesthetic.

Film has explored the environment throughout history. From one of the earliest moving pictures of the sea, with Birt Acres presentation to the Royal Photographic Society in 1896 of his film, *Rough Sea at Dover*, (earlycinema.com) to the panoramic battle scenes in D.W. Griffiths' 1915 film, *The Birth of a Nation*, on to the poetic cinematic tone documentaries of the 1920's.

Of the six principal modes of documentary filmmaking the poetic mode is most closely related to the work exhibited. Considered an avant-garde or experimental genre, a poetic film focuses on visual associations in its imagery with regard to color, form and lighting.

Organization, timing and transitions are useful tools in the poetic documentary while traditional film entities like characters, linear organization, narrative and material objects are absent. These films are often fragmentary and impressionistic, and do not use continuity editing. (collaborativedocumentary.com)

Still produced today, the viewer of a poetic documentary experiences a subjective approach to a concept through an abstract representation of reality.

American still photographer Ralph Steiner, also a documentary filmmaker, created a film in 1929 entitled *H2O* that has helped to inform the concept of this exhibition. Considered a poetic description of water it was unique for its time and has been added to the National Film Registry. The silent black and white film has been described as a cinematic tone poem that depicts water in its many forms. The 12 minute film ([youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)) exhibits the drips, flow, drops, patterns, power and texture of water with its undulations and abstracted linear surface light writings. It is water poetry.

A more current filmmaker, Godfrey Reggio's *Qatsi Trilogy* is an extraordinary example in the visual essay style, that depicts the impact of the modern world on our environment and has informed this exhibition.

First in the trilogy, the film *Koyaanisqatsi*, (Hopi Indian, meaning "life out of balance") was created between 1975 and 1982, and describes a visual conflict between the two worlds. Using quick timed images and film with a provocative Phillip Glass score, Reggio attempts to convince the viewer of an impending technological doom should society remain on the current track.

As the other two films speak to the demise of ancient cultures and the animal kingdom, when the *Qatsi Trilogy* is experienced as a whole, it is a unique example of the power of sound and image to convey an evocative message. When asked about his work, Reggio explains that "*we do not live with nature any longer but that we live above it or off of it*". He has stated that an artificial environment has replaced the original and that

nature has become the resource to keep this artificiality alive. Godfrey Reggio also states that he believes art has no intrinsic value and that the power of art is that it is free to a personal interpretation. He explains that the role of his films is to raise questions in his audience that only the viewer can answer. Reggio accepts that the value and meaning of his work may come "*exclusively from the beholder.*" (koyaanisqatsi.org)

Interestingly, Reggio's first film *Koyaanisqatsi* (1983), originally produced at 82 minutes, was sped up and republished by filmmaker, Sandeep Gadila in 2012 with a 5-minute timeframe. This newer version of the film is a true testament to Godfrey Reggio's greatest fears and apocalyptic predictions.

Thirty years after producing *Koyaanisqatsi*, Reggio asserted we are no closer to a life in balance. "*We are on a treadmill,*" he says, "*we're all pursuing our technological happiness without realizing that the price we pay for it is the plummeting of our humanity and the planet we live on.*" (koyaanisqatsi.org)

The work of American film director, screenwriter, and producer, Terrence Malick resonates with the images and film presented in the project. Malick has directed only six feature films in a career spanning over four decades. His films include, *Badlands* (1973), *Days of Heaven* (1978), *The Thin Red Line* (1998), *The New World*, and *The Tree of Life*, (2011) Palme d'Or winner and *To the Wonder* (2012). Although not as prolific as some, Malick is regarded as one of the greatest living filmmakers. (wikipedia.com) He appears to employ a stream of consciousness style of imagery and utilizes unconventional angles, cropping and transitions within his films to focus on the concept rather than a narrative.

In his films, Malick explores the theme of man's struggle with his place in nature he often exhibits nature in the foreground of his scripts. While filming the light of magic moment landscapes, Malick often uses the convention of memory with flashback and internal reflection. His films depict the contrasts between the majesty of nature and the shortcomings of man. Although he tackles monumental themes, the stills from many frames become evocative images that often remain with the viewer. They cause the viewer to really see and to experience his captured environments.

After viewing the film *Tree of Life* for the second time, film critic, Jonathan Lack, amends his first lukewarm review and describes Malick's film as: "*It is filmmaking at its purest, gorgeous images driven by sound, not meant to narrate, but to evoke.*" (jonathanlack.com) Additionally, writer Chris Wisniewski in his review of the Malick films, *Days of Heaven* and *The New World* stated:

"Those rambling philosophical voiceovers; the placid images of nature, offering quiet contrast to the evil deeds of men; the stunning cinematography, often achieved with natural light; the striking use of music – here is a filmmaker with a clear sensibility and aesthetic who makes narrative films that are neither literary nor theatrical, in the sense of foregrounding dialogue, event, or character, but are instead principally cinematic, movies that suggest narrative, emotion, and idea through image and sound."

Documentary filmmaker Jennifer Baichwal has not only immortalized the photographs of artist Edward Burtynsky, she has expressed the beauty, power and crisis of the natural world through extraordinary visual imagery and with a very non-didactic

approach. In collaboration with Burtynsky, the films *Manufactured Landscapes* and *Watermark* offer a contemporary view of the global use and abuse of our environment and our limited resources. The works of these two artists have been highly influential to this project with regard to the image execution and exhibition. Baichwal purports that *“film leads emotionally not just intellectually”* and that her aim is not to alienate but to offer philosophical or existential moments toward understanding. (youtube.com)

Baichwal has been quoted as saying she presents her work for an overall experience that may challenge the viewer *“to come to his or her own conclusions”* perhaps even a recognition or possibly conversance. Her acclaimed film *Watermark* has been especially significant in guiding the direction of this project with its focus on water. Baichwal explains her film:

“As with all of our films, Watermark tries to create a space to think about something in a different way. After three years of almost total immersion, I will never turn on a tap with the same unconscious nonchalance that I did before we embarked on this challenging and deeply rewarding film. I hope the viewer feels the same.”

– Jennifer Baichwal (vice.com)

The film has enjoyed broad appeal with noteworthy reviews and comments as described: *“An immersive experience, with stunning visual language, that will transform the way we think about water, and our relationship to it”*.

– Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (edwardburtynsky.com)

Culmination of Influences

While capturing of the natural environment has been a life-long endeavor, the distillation of the imagery has resulted in a focus on the natural resource of water. In retrospect, from the earliest serious image acquisition to the present work, water and water imagery has been an aesthetic constant.

Each of the artists compiled in this review have offered an important component to the current direction of the imagery presented. Filmmakers Godfrey Reggio and Jennifer Baichwal provided a view of the possibilities of making a statement through film. With little or no dialogue in their works these artists exemplified the power of observational persuasion. Edward Burtynsky and Richard Misrach have informed the concept of the imagery. The *Desert Cantos* series work of Misrach and the unified management of his own means of image capture aided in narrowing the field of concentration for this exhibition.

Burtynsky's chosen scale and concentrated efforts toward all of his photographic subjects offered a unique examination of what might otherwise be considered merely ordinary or mundane.

The land artists from the 1960's set the tone for the development of this personal aesthetic and Baichwal, Lin and especially Salgado encompass in their works an artist as activist attitude that has been inspirational to the creation of the exhibition and the works featured.

Focus: Environment

Scientist Rachel Carson help set the stage for the launch of the environmental movement with the publication of her book, *Silent Spring* in 1962 exposing the hazards of the pesticide DDT. Having worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Carson, a marine biologist and nature enthusiast was a renowned and accomplished authority whose views held a lot of weight in the scientific community. Her previous works, *Under the Sea Wind*, *The Sea Around Us* (which stayed on the New York Times bestseller list for 86 weeks), and *The Edge of The Sea* spoke to the inter-connectedness of nature and all living things.

In her book *Silent Spring*, Carson made a radical proposal that posed the new technology against natural environmental processes by outlining the threats of contamination of the food chain, cancer, genetic damage and the deaths of entire species. It is because of her scholarship, speeches and publications that the need for awareness and regulation became evident and from these efforts the environmental movement was born. (nrdc.org)

"Man's attitude toward nature is today critically important simply because we have now acquired a fateful power to alter and destroy nature. But man is a part of nature, and his war against nature is inevitably a war against himself? [We are] challenged as mankind has never been challenged before to prove our maturity and our mastery, not of nature, but of ourselves."

- Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*.

Recent research has proven that the concerns of Rachel Carson have not been addressed in fact they have dramatically increased. However, there are voices speaking to the current environmental issues. In the 2012, film *Mission Blue*, renowned marine scientist Sylvia Earle chronicles her life-long experiences with the waters of the Gulf of Mexico to aquatic environments around the world.

Along with numerous worldwide societies, conservancies, institutions, governments, causes etc. whose focus is on water, The Blue Ocean Film Festival whose motto is *Inspiration, Education, Empowerment through Entertainment*, dedicates itself to the awareness and sustainability of this endangered natural resource, annually through film and symposiums. (blueoceanfilmfestival.org)

Focus: Water

As the focus of this exhibition is water, it is important to consider its universal significance to many of the practices and traditions in most belief systems. It is considered a cleansing substance both externally and spiritually, a true purification medium and a necessary building block of all life. While water can be the essence of creation, it's power can also be a great destructive force, as evidenced by recent devastating weather events in the Gulf Coast, the Indian Ocean and around the world.

As the waters of a Christian Baptism are used to cleanse the stain of original sin, all water, especially the seven sacred rivers, is critical in the Hindu religion. Islam requires a purification process utilizing water before any religious duties can be carried out. Water has been used to tell the stories of these belief systems as well, from the parting of the Red Sea in Exodus, to the Great Flood in Genesis, while Native Americans believe that all elements of nature are interconnected and that water is a spirit shared by all living creatures.

The therapeutic power of water is incorporated into many traditional and holistic practices. A warm bath can have the power to not only cleanse but also to heal aches, mend spirits and relieve emotional trauma. Water therapy has been used for centuries and continues today to be of great therapeutic interest and practice.

Possibly the most important human aspect of water is the physical need for its ingestion. The human body requires a gallon of water per day to maintain a healthy existence. Water is an irreplaceable component of life.

After much consideration of all the possible environmental imagery the research and image generation for this exhibition has found its focus in the most essential ingredient of life. It is the clear, odorless, colorless, tasteless liquid that covers nearly three quarters of our earth, giving it the name Blue Planet, water. As seen in the imagery, the abundance of water seems almost incomprehensible yet this can be very misleading considering the following:

- Only three percent of the Earth's water is fresh and less than one third of that water exists in a useable form or place available for human consumption.
- The available, usable water is a finite resource.
- Water works for and with us, it builds, erodes and powers our world.
- It is constantly in motion through evaporation, transpiration, and precipitation.
- It alters our weather, climate, environment and atmosphere.
- The human body is made up of 60-75% water and requires approximately a gallon per day.
- More than one billion people do not have access to healthy fresh drinking water and according to some experts, the oceans are dying. (Mission Blue. Perf. Sylvia Earle. N.d.)

With consideration to the current issues of worldwide climate change, ocean acidification, ground water depletion and contamination, the hidden costs of water, the Clean Water Act, the water delivery infrastructure, endocrine disrupters, waste and

mismanagement, let alone pollution in general and population growth, the implication is clear, that there is an impending urgency for the awareness and a deeper understanding of our most valuable commodity. Life cannot exist without water. (amnh.org)

Those working in many of the fields of scientific research and environment, concerning water conservation and climate change realize that their concerns can be a tough sell given the perceived vastness and beauty of this ubiquitous resource. Yet, looks can be deceiving. From the dead zones in the Gulf of Mexico, to seasonal dramatic weather conditions, to the hot spots and human suffering worldwide, the problems are becoming undeniable. It is with a sense of that urgency that this exhibition's images have come to fore.

Exhibition

The Master of Fine Arts of Independent Film and Digital Imaging exhibition held in the Governors State University Visual Arts Gallery is a one-person show comprised of photographic imagery and film. While the aim of the curator/artist is to provide an atmosphere that will not only exhibit the work to its strongest potential it also endeavors to provide the viewer with a unique conceptual experience.

Many of the images represent straight photography and have been conceived as a series that are displayed in a chronological ordered system. Other images are digital composites that aim to evoke the dynamics of the subject. Although the intention is for individual appreciation of each image in a series, they should be understood and considered within the whole of the entire exhibition.

The photographic images are displayed frameless in a free hanging system which is intended to promote slight movement of the works suggesting the perpetual motion of the subject with other larger, more stable imagery meant to immerse the viewer.

While the composite and manipulated images may provide a more quixotic instance of the natural world they are included as a possible expansion of the concept and are intended to add an evocative element to the overall experience for the viewer.

One area of the gallery space has been allotted for the film which will be played on a continuous loop throughout the duration of the exhibition. The film is comprised of some of the still images exhibited as well as a moving picture documentation of the water environment. The film included in the exhibition is intended to provide a description of the concept through timing, ambient recorded sound and a combination of moving and

still images. It will reiterate some of the still imagery while offering additional information supporting the concept.

The show is curated in a chronological fashion moving from a distant, aerial view and progressing with a directed path to the more common experiential images, moving then to a more intimate description of this natural resource. The gallery lighting, intentionally low, with spotlights on the still images initiate the experience while the film is screened in a darkened area amenable to viewing deeper in the gallery space. The sound track of water: waves, drips, splashes, surf, rain, is present in the background to the film and present throughout the gallery to enhance the overall concept and experience. Additionally, quotations from environmental authors Rachel Carson and Sylvia Earle as well as artists, Andy Goldsworthy, Richard Misrach, and Robert Smithson augment the environmental soundtrack.



Anthroposcenes-part-8

Conclusion

“I’ve come to believe that beauty can be a very powerful conveyor of difficult ideas. It engages people when they might otherwise look away. To me, the work I do is a means of interpreting unsettling truths, of bearing witness and sounding an alarm. The beauty of formal representation both carries an affirmation of life and subversively brings us face to face with news from our besieged world.” - Richard Misrach

The concept for this exhibition is to provide a visual description of how we as people use, see and need our natural environment. As the title implies it is meant to be, an experience that incites an individual recognition and hopefully leads to some level of conversance. The work exhibited has been collected from the local and distant environment. The process is one of an ongoing image collection that has spanned several years. Gleaned from variety of times and places, the exhibition aims to evoke a significant atmospheric condition both of the universal and the direct environment.

Although the intent of the exhibition was to provide a visual and sensory experience for the viewer, it may provide a prompt or an appreciation, recognition or even a movement toward conversance of the subject. If after the viewer’s experience of the exhibition only one question is posed, “Why water?” the effort will be considered a success and a personal accomplishment.

Image List



Dark Water



Outlier



Full Water



Slipstream



Transpiration 1, 2, 3



King Tide



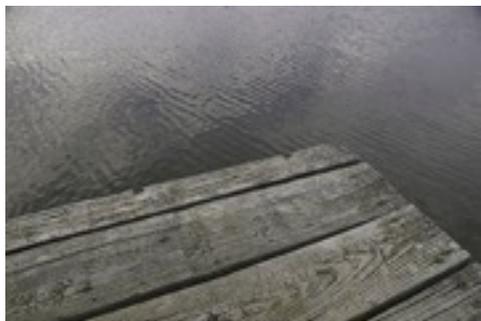
Spring Tide



Neap Tide



Underset



Dock



Catspaw

Water: Experience, Recognition, Conversance



Aerial 1, 2, 3



Wind Drag



Wave Fronts

Water: Experience, Recognition, Conversance



Floes



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Maine Wash

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Water: Experience, Recognition, Conversance

Tools

Hardware:

Mac Book Pro

Nikon D 200, DSLR

Canon Vixia HF G20, camcorder

Software:

Adobe Suite CC:

Photoshop

Audition

iMovie

Premier Pro