

Biography of 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 over 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 in California.

Burtynsky was born in 1955 of Ukrainian heritage in St. Catharines, Ontario. 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 centre 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; an inspection of the human systems we've imposed onto natural landscapes. Exhibitions include "Water" (2013) at the New Orleans Museum of Art & Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans, Louisiana; "Oil" (2009) at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington D.C.; "China", "Manufactured Landscapes" at the National Gallery of Canada, and "Before the Flood" (2003). Burtynsky's visually compelling works are currently being exhibited in solo and group exhibitions across Canada, the United States, Europe and Asia.

As an active lecturer on photographic art, Burtynsky's speaking engagements have been held at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., George Eastman House in Rochester, NY, The Canadian Center for Architecture in Montreal, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the TED conference, Idea City, and Ryerson University in Toronto. His images appear in numerous periodicals each year including "Canadian Art", "Art in America", "The Smithsonian Magazine", "Harper's Magazine", "Flash Art", "Blind Spot", "Art Forum", "Saturday Night", "National Geographic" and the "New York Times".

Edward Burtynsky's distinctions include the TED Prize, The Outreach award at the Rencontres d'Arles, the Roloff Beny Book award, and the Rogers Best Canadian Film Award. He sits on the board of directors for CONTACT: Toronto's International Photography Festival, and The Ryerson Gallery and Research Center. In 2006 he was awarded the title of Officer of the Order of Canada and currently holds six honorary doctorate degrees.

Acqua Shock exhibition

Acqua Shock exhibition explores the controversial relationship between humankind and water: the most precious liquid, essential resource for life, basic part of our body, planet and living. Between 2009 and 2014 Edward Burtynsky travelled to five continents - from the Gulf of Mexico to the Ganges riverbanks - to capture the life cycle of water. He followed the course of rivers and studied the seas; he has described the different uses of water from worship to farming and he has once again peered beneath the surface of things, as is typical of him. Actually, the photographic work of Edward Burtynsky is the result of a refined ability to investigate and synthesize.

The analysis starts with a precise study of the impact of human progress on the Earth and goes on with the accurate research of exemplary sites. The synthesis is expressed by images which are able to gather the multiplicity and transform it into symbols by means of an aesthetic that satisfies the senses and invites to contemplation. For carrying out the work about water, Burtynsky has used advanced technologies, necessary considering the immensity of the subject. Aerial shots (from helicopters and drones) actually characterize the project and astonish us because of the difficulty to grasp the visual scale and the abstraction of subjects. The result is always amazing, never boring, since one is first fascinated by the awesome depiction of places and only after can go beyond the illusion of endless landscapes, until becomes conscious of the actual subject. Burtynsky uses sublime images to move public opinion: "Since it is by means of culture that one raises his consciousness and builds his history. And through culture one can make man aware of the consequences of his actions". His art is then necessary, for provoking, informing and involving, beyond national boundaries, since the environment is a global topic like nothing else and urgent like our basic needs.

The artist offers amazing images which actually make an impact, since they portray us, the human beings that shape the world according to the logic of greed; however, the Earth is exhausted and utters a cry for help, also by the art of photography. The words of Burtynsky are a clear and simple message: "What one gives to the future are the choices one makes today".

Enrica Viganò