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Edward Burtynsky with Jennifer Baichwal and Nick de Pencier

Anthropocene

Main description

Anthropocene is the newest book by Edward Burtynsky to document human destruction of the earth on a geological scale. In photos as beautiful as they are disconcerting, Burtynsky explores issues such as extinction (large-scale burning of elephant tusks to disrupt illegal trade and the black market, the plight of the last white rhino), technofossils (Nigerian landfill sites entirely of plastic, massive concrete tetrapods to protect Chinese coastline from erosion), and terraforming (mines and industrial agriculture). Containing specially commissioned poems by Margaret Atwood published here for the first time, a statement by Burtynsky and a range of essays, *Anthropocene* presents compelling artistic and scientific responses to these urgent topics.

The book is one part of the larger “Anthropocene” project, a multi-disciplinary body of work with film-makers Jennifer Baichwal and Nick de Pencier which includes a major traveling exhibition, documentary film and interactive website. Its starting point is the research of the Anthropocene Working Group, an international body of scientists advocating to change the name of our present geological epoch, Holocene, to Anthropocene—the period where human activity dominates climate and environmental change. Including images of the video components and augmented reality experiences from the exhibition, the book, like the overall project, combines traditional and new lens-based media in an innovative and dynamic expression of humanity’s profound and lasting changes on the planet.

Biography

Edward Burtynsky’s imagery explores the human systems imposed upon our planet. His remarkable photographic depictions of large-scale industrial landscapes are included in the collections of over 60 major museums 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. 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 the Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival and the Ryerson Gallery and Research Center, and is co-founder of the Scotiabank Photography Award. In 2006, Burtynsky was awarded the title of Officer of the Order of Canada and in 2016 he received the Governor General’s Award in Visual and Media Arts. Burtynsky currently holds seven honorary doctoral degrees. His books with Steidl are *China* (2005), *Quarries* (2007), *Oil* (2009), *Water* (2013) and *Salt Pans* (2016).

Jennifer Baichwal has directed and produced documentaries for over 20 years. Her distinctions include Al Gore’s Reel Current Award and Best Canadian Feature Film at the Toronto International Film Festival 2006 for *Manufactured Landscapes*, about the work of Edward Burtynsky in China; and the 2014 Toronto Film Critic’s Association prize for Best Canadian Film and Canadian Media Awards prize for Best Documentary for *Watermark*. *Anthropocene* is her tenth feature documentary.

Nicholas de Pencier is a documentary director, producer and director of photography. His credits include *Let It Come Down: The Life of Paul Bowles* (International Emmy), *The Holier It Gets*, (Best Canadian Doc, Hot Docs), *The True Meaning of Pictures* (Gemini, Best Arts), *Hockey Nomad* (Gemini, Best Sports) and *Manufactured Landscapes*, (TIFF Best Canadian Feature; Genie, Best Doc). De Pencier was also director, producer and director of photography of *Watermark* and *Black Code*. He photographed and co-directed with Baichwal *Long Time Running* about the Tragically Hip's historic Man Machine Poem tour.

Bibliography

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