

Emily Kuzar

Professor Thelma Bauer

COMD 1112

## Edward Burtynsky

Edward Burtynsky, a Canadian artist, is known largely in the photography world for his sustained investigation of the human effects on the world. Burtynsky's works have been featured in collections in over sixty museums worldwide. Starting his interest in photography at age 11 after his father gave him his own camera, he started by photographing machinery at the factory his father worked at. This led to him eventually studying photography at Ryerson University, and founding Toronto Image Works, a darkroom rental facility, custom photo laboratory, digital imaging, and new media computer-training center. Burtynsky's major projects throughout his career include *Quarries*, *Oil*, *Water*, and *Anthropocene*. He's dedicated over 40 years into witnessing the impact of humans on the planet.

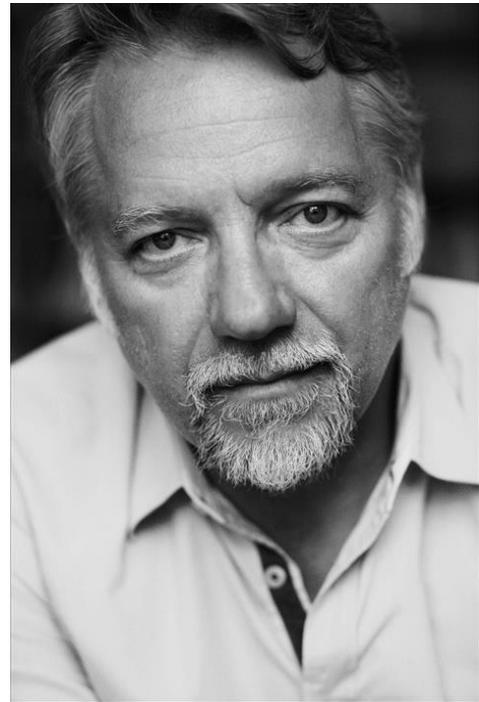


Figure 1 Edward Burtynsky ©Birgit Kleber

Throughout his career, he took time to depict the sprawling footprints that industrialization has put onto the world and its resources. Showing incursions of the landscape on an industrial scale by using large scale aerial photographs to properly show the amount of altering humans have done. In figure 2, we're shown one of the many quarries he explored while in Vermont, which was believed to have the deepest quarries in the world. When it came to these



Figure 2 Rock of Ages #15, Active Section, E.L. Smith Quarry, Barre, Vermont, USA, 1992 Edward Burtynsky

quarries, Burtynsky talks about how the concept of landscapes as architecture has become an act of imagination. Describing the look of these areas as open-pit mines, funneling down, like inverted pyramids.

Undoubtedly, one of his biggest accomplishments was the film trilogy

he created with filmmakers Jennifer Baichwal and Nicholas de Pencier. Focusing on the Film *Manufactured Landscapes* (2006), which won 4 awards and 7 nominations, which continues to observe the world through the changes in landscapes due to industrial work and manufacturing.

He visits different sights like slag heaps, e-waste dumps, factories, and an area where ships are taken apart for recycling. One of the focuses of the film was in China, shown in figure 3. This

photo is highlighting the

scale and amount of

people needed for the

production of goods to

be sent all around the

world. The film itself

during this scene shows

millions of workers

assembling into groups



Figure 3 Manufacturing #18, Cankun Factory, Zhangzhou, Fujian Province, 2005 Edward Burtynsky

while being told what they had done wrong the previous day, showing a disattachment from the real world and being apart of this weird dystopian bubble.

Burtynsky, aswell as doing photography, is known for doing some TED talks and other forms of screenings. One of his most known talks is ‘My wish: Manufactured landscapes and green education’ in 2005. This talk had led him to winning the TED Prize during that year aswell. In this talk he discusses that his images are meant as metaphors to the tragedy and beauty of our existence, and shows the dilemma of how the world is suffering due to human successes. He wanted people to see his photos and think that these sights and beautiful, but they’re also scary and something we shouldn’t enjoy looking at. He’s showing us through his works that us as humans want power, and

this power comes with consequence to the most important thing for our existence, the earth itself. In figure 4, he shows one of the many sights he’s been talking about, a tragic yet beautiful sight. He uses photos like this to try and persuade millions of people to join the global conversation on sustainability.



*Figure 4 Shipbreaking #11, Chittagong, Bangladesh, 2000, Edward Burtynsky*

In conclusion, Edward Burtynsky has spent the entirety of his career working towards the cause of improving our planet by showing us the horrors that we, as people, have created. His photography on things ranging from destroyed landscapes, industrialized areas, and oil spill sights show us the tragedies right before our eyes that a lot of people might not be able to see for themselves. He uses his art to convey the message that he wants and in return he has been awarded and regarded greatly by the photography world.

## Work Cited

“Edward Burtynsky.” *Flowers Gallery*, <https://www.flowersgallery.com/artists/145-edward-burtynsky/>.

“Edward Burtynsky - Overview.” *Nicholas Metivier Gallery*, <https://metiviergallery.com/artists/28-edward-burtynsky/overview/>.

“Photographs: Quarries.” *Edward Burtynsky*, <https://www.edwardburtynsky.com/projects/photographs/quarries>.

“Photographs: China.” *Edward Burtynsky*, <https://www.edwardburtynsky.com/projects/photographs/china>.

“Photographs: Shipbreaking.” *Edward Burtynsky*, <https://www.edwardburtynsky.com/projects/photographs/shipbreaking>.

“Biography.” *Edward Burtynsky*, <https://www.edwardburtynsky.com/about/biography>.

“Birgit Kleber Photography.” *Birgit Kleber*, <https://www.birgit-kleber.de/en/gallery/home>.

“Featured Actions.” *Art Works for Change*, <https://www.artworksforchange.org/portfolio/edward-burtynsky/>.

Muhlenfeld, Leah. “Tuesday Ted Talk: ‘My Wish: Manufactured Landscapes and Green Education’ by Edward Burtynsky.” *Powell Law Group - Personal Injury and Workers' Compensation Attorney In Richmond, VA*, Powell Law Group - Personal Injury and Workers' Compensation Attorney In Richmond, VA, 30 Oct. 2018, <https://www.powelllawgroup.net/en/news-articles-personal-injury/2018/tuesday-ted-my-wish-manufactured-landscapes-and-green-education-by-edward-burtynsky>.

“The Evidence of Man.” *Granta*, 26 May 2020, <https://granta.com/the-evidence-of-man/>.

“Edward Burtynsky.” *Artnet.com*, <http://www.artnet.com/artists/edward-burtynsky/biography#:~:text=Burtynsky%20studied%20photography%20at%20Ryerson,sweeping%20views%20in%20fine%20detail>.