

Testimonies of the Anthropocene by Edward Burtynsky

James Miyamoto

Edward Burtynsky is a renowned Canadian photographer, known worldwide and attentive to the impacts of human activities on nature and human lives. His work is both impressive and moving, oscillating between the destructive forces that plague the planet and the artistic beauty captured through his lens. With over forty years of work, his photography reveals a deep sensitivity to life.

On his website (<https://www.edwardburtynsky.com>), there are several passages that highlight the current moment and his concerns for the future, such as:

Now it is becoming clear that humankind, with its population explosion, industry, and technology, has in a very short period of time also become an agent of immense global change. Arguably, we are on the cusp of becoming (if we are not already) the perpetrators of a sixth major extinction event. Our planetary system is affected by a magnitude of force as powerful as any naturally occurring global catastrophe, but one caused solely by the activity of a single species: us.

I have come to think of my preoccupation with the Anthropocene — the indelible marks left by humankind on the geological face of our planet — as a conceptual extension of my first and most fundamental interests as a photographer. I have always been concerned to show how we affect the Earth in a big way. To this end, I seek out and photograph large-scale systems that leave lasting marks.

Thésis journal encourages its readers to explore this important and admirable collection in depth. We also extend our gratitude to Mr. Edward Burtynsky and Mrs. Alanna Joanne Smith for their generosity in allowing this magnificent work to be widely shared—not only among students and professors, but also among others interested in architecture, urbanism, and the planet's ecological issues.

Photos: © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto



Photo 1
Borneo, Malaysia, 2016
Edward Burtynsky



Photo 2
Lagos, Nigeria, 2016
Edward Burtynsky



Photo 3
Nairobi, Kenya, 2016
Edward Burtynsky



Photo 4
Lagos, Nigeria, 2016
Edward Burtynsky