

ART NOTES

Closing Time! An Epic, Urgent Environmental Show Is About to Leave Houston — Even as the Floods Make It More Relevant Than Ever

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The final official weekend of FotoFest happens *now*. With many shows closing imminently, make plans ASAP to catch the remaining hours of **FotoFest 2016: the 16th International Biennial of Photography and Mixed Media Art**.

Many have commented that this year's FotoFest, "Changing Circumstances: Looking at the Future of the Planet," is decisively the most prescient in the nonprofit's 30-plus year history. Among the 16 biennials to date — America's most important convergence of photography and photo-related art — past themes have also bowed to environmental concerns: "Water" (2004) and "Earth" (2006). Nonetheless, 2016's convergence somehow seems more epic and urgent, especially as Houston's population recovers from yet another another devastating flood.

At its epicenter is a museum-level retrospective for the iconic Canadian lensman **Edward Burtynsky**, whose images have also graced the cover of *Artnews*. Burtynsky is presented at the newly minted Silos at Sawyer Yards, where the vast industrial space is a good match for the photographer's truly heroic prints (though Sunday, April 24).

Another must-see is Spring Street's trifecta of works by *National Geographic* photographers **David Doubilet**, **David Liittschwager**, and **Joel Sartore**, who focus on the vast species of the planets, including the oceans, in a view that underscores the beauty and peril of extinction of the creatures of the lands and the sea (though April 24).

Also underscoring the nature theme, and among the strongest gallery offerings, are the pioneering duo **Manual** — aka Houston-based **Suzanne Bloom** and **Ed Hill** — shown at **Moody Gallery**, where the duo's New England backyard (where they idyllically summer) provides rich subjects for meditations on flora and fauna (exhibition closed but works available).

Besides these earth-centered topics, FotoFest inclusively allows participating spaces to introduce other topics. Among the most provocative are **Alison Brady**'s haunting, surreal views of feminism at **Capsule Gallery** (through May 14), fashion portraiture by **Natalia Wiernik** presented at **Anya Tish Gallery** (on view in their current 20th anniversary show, through May 28) and **Sarah Gish**'s conceptual series "Ignite Your Life," which recently shuttered at **Flo Paris Bakery**. Rounding out the exhibitions was an intriguing installation melding architecture, nature and sculpture by "It" Core Fellow **Rodrigo Valenzuela** at **David Shelton Gallery** (closed, but works still available from the exhibition).

Finally, kudos to **McClain Gallery** for presenting the unflinching, brave work of **Juan Jose Barboza-Gubo & Andrew Mroczek**, in a look at the Peruvian LGBTQ community, images powerful, lyrical and intensely topical (through May 14).

*Haven't seen FotoFest 2016 yet? Four participating venues —**The Silos at Sawyer Yards, Spring Street Studios, Silver Street Studios** and **Winter Street Studios** — are open **Sunday, April 24, in the Washington Avenue Arts District; Sunday hours, 11 am – 6 pm.***

