

Water colours

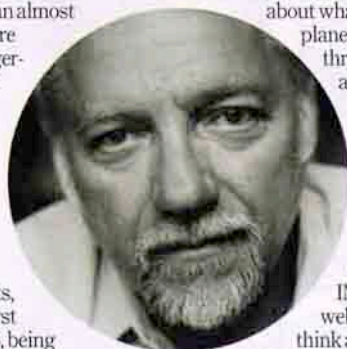
As award-winning Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky makes his solo Singapore debut this month, he shares some of the best shots from his latest series, *Water*, with **Gwen Pew**



Kumbh Mela #1, Haridwar, India, 2010

Edward Burtynsky's photographs are not difficult to identify: the sweeping landscapes as nature is carved up by industry and other traces of mankind, all contorted into an almost abstract canvas, are presented in a larger-than-life format in galleries around the world.

Born in Ontario, Canada, the 58-year-old has earned a slew of honours and awards for his powerful works, having won the first TED Prize in 2005, being named Officer of the Order of Canada in 2006 and receiving the President's Medal from the Geological Society of America last year. He even had a critically-acclaimed documentary film made about him,



titled *Manufactured Landscapes*.

Instead of creating his images just for the sake of it, however, he aims to use them as a visual way to encourage people to start thinking about what we're doing to our planet. When he made three wishes upon accepting the TED Prize – each winner traditionally has to make at least one wish, which the prize money will help them achieve – they were to work on an IMAX film, to build a website to help children think about how to protect the planet, and to create, in his words, 'a massive and productive worldwide conversation about sustainable living'. As a result, Meet the Greens (www.meetthegreens.org) was launched in 2007 with the tagline:

'a site for kids about looking after the planet', and his support for the blog WorldChanging (www.worldchanging.com; of which he's also the chairman) has led to the website flourishing into one of the Top Ten Green Blogs selected by *The Guardian*.

While his previous projects have focused on oil, quarries and mines, his latest series is entitled *Water*, which will be showing in Singapore this month at Sundaram Tagore Gallery. There are 180 works altogether, around 30 of which will be shown here. He began working on the series in 2007, and it has since grown to become his most ambitious collection to date. To capture the shots, he traveled the world, from Iceland to India, and went up to heights of over 7,000 feet with planes or helicopters to achieve his desired perspective.

'While trying to accommodate the growing needs of an expanding, and very thirsty civilisation, we are reshaping the Earth in colossal

ways. In this new and powerful role over the planet, we are also capable of engineering our own demise,' Burtynsky says in his artistic statement for the series. 'We have to learn to think more long-term about the consequences of what we are doing, while we are doing it. My hope is that these pictures will stimulate a process of thinking about something essential to our survival; something we often take for granted – until it's gone.'

In conjunction with the exhibition, *Watermark*, a feature film he co-created with *Manufactured Landscapes* director Jennifer Baichwal during his journey in creating the *Water* series, will also be having its Singapore premiere at Sundaram Tagore Gallery this month.

Edward Burtynsky: Water is at Sundaram Tagore Gallery from **7 Mar-6 Apr**. See www.sundaramtagore.com/events for *Watermark* screening details.



Mount Edziza Provincial Park #1, Northern British Columbia, Canada, 2012



Cerro Prieto Geothermal Power Station, Baja, Mexico, 2012



Step-well #3, Chand Baori, Abhaneri, Rajasthan, India, 2010



Marine Aquaculture #2, Luoyuan Bay, Fujian Province, China, 2012