All the World’s a Stage

Five iconic photographers will exhibit their most memorable works at the Ayala Museum this month.

ICE CASTLES
Sebastião Salgado
Iceberg between Paulet Island and the South Shetland Islands in the Weddell Sea, Antarctic Peninsula, 2005
“Keep taking photographs probably for the same reason I keep breathing, eating, and sleeping,” says Steve McCurry. “This is just what I do.”

Judging from the images on view in the Ayala Museum group exhibition _The World We Live In: Through the Lens of Contemporary Photography_ (17 February–27 March 2016), he isn’t the only one. Each of the exhibiting artists share a similar obsession with the medium. Devoting their lives to documenting the world around us, they have captured myriad geographies and cultures with arresting results.

The museum exhibition, hosted in partnership with Sundaram Tagore Gallery and Teresa Herrera of Collective 88, features images from the distant travels of the five photographers as part of Art Fair Philippines. The selected works weave a rich visual narrative of pertinent issues in contemporary culture.

Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado has built his name with sublime black-and-white photographs of vanishing cultures, wild animals and migrant populations in flux, particularly the celebrated _Serra Pelada_ and _Genesis_ series. In contrast, Edward Burtynsky is known for his disturbingly beautiful photographs of ravaged landscapes. The remaining two photographers, Annie Leibovitz and Robert Polidori, turn away from the natural world and hone in on human behaviour and how we interact with our surroundings.

The common thread linking the images in the show is a deep sense of empathy. As McCurry says, “We are all fascinated with each other and how we live in different ways. If we see how other people live, we see our similarities and our shared humanity.”

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culture clash

(From top) group portrait of Kamayura shamans by Sebastião Salgado; Alvares residence by Robert Polidori; (opposite) a painting in Versailles by Robert Polidori; Colorado river by Edward Burtynsky

master pieces
(From top) Robert Polidori, aMI.04.001, Attique du Midi, Aile du Midi-Attique, Château de Versailles, France, 2005; Sebastião Salgado, Southern Right Whale, Valdés Peninsula, Argentina, 2004

imitation of life
(From top) Sebastião Salgado, Group portrait of Kamayura Shamans, Upper Xingu, Mato Grosso, Brazil, 2000; Steve McCurry, Reflection of the Taj Mahal, Agra, Uttar Pradesh, India, 1999