

# ARTFORUM

## Edward Burtynsky

SUNDARAM TAGORE GALLERY

57-59 Hollywood Road,  
September 21–October 23

Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky's first solo exhibition in Hong Kong offers works made between 1985 and 2008. His longtime preoccupation with the effect that industrial operations have on the earth is apparent: The large-scale photographs show how various industries currently dominate landscapes around the world, from oil fields to highways, electronics factories to car lots. That Burtynsky's practice involves a good deal of research comes through in the level of detail in each photograph. Though the camera hovers, for the most part, at a bird's-eye view, it somehow approaches close enough to make things clear, yet never strays too close—intimacy is not the goal here.

In *Breezewood, Pennsylvania*, 2008, the logos of many major American corporations that provide goods and services are captured in a shot of a Pennsylvania road that runs near the interstate highway. The image encapsulates what drives much of the American economy; still, the photograph feels as easy as looking out the window of a car during a road trip—nothing about it is forced or contrived. By contrast, *Urban Renewal #6, Apartment Complex, JiangjunAo, Hong Kong*, 2004, was shot in this city, and viewing it here is startling—it is rare to have this sort of perspective on the immense scale of the buildings in which we live and work. There is a sense of order imposed by the image, which differs from the chaotic experience of walking through the city's crowded streets.

In Burtynsky's viewfinder, craggy mountains give way to rail lines, highways bisect open spaces, and even mounds of coal take on an unexpected beauty. Through his viewfinder, we see what we might call the new sublime.

— Doretta Lau



**Edward Burtynsky, *Urban Renewal #6, Apartment Complex, JiangjunAo, Hong Kong, 2004*, color photograph, 48 x 60".**