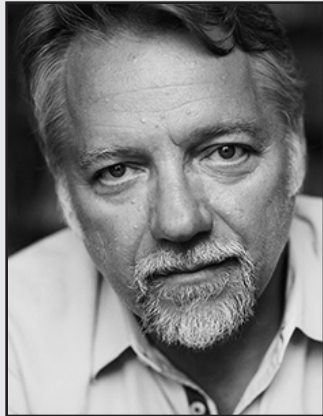


# 2013 MEDALS & AWARDS

## PRESIDENT'S MEDAL

Presented to  
Edward Burtynsky



Edward Burtynsky  
*Photographic Works*

Photo credit Birgit Kleber

### **Citation by George H. Davis**

The President's Medal of the Geological Society of America (GSA), commissioned in 2007, will be conferred only on individuals, groups, or entities whose impact has profoundly enhanced the geoscience profession through: (a) supporting and

contributing to the Society; (b) advancing geosciences, enhancing professional growth, and/or promoting geoscience in service of humankind; (c) or significantly enlarging the range of scientific achievement for the growth of our profession.

When GSA President George Davis (2012-2013) had the opportunity to nominate a distinguished candidate for this honor, he thought immediately of photographer and artist Edward Burtynsky, whose large-format photographs of industrial landscapes are incredible works supporting vastness and detail, elegance and disturbance, focus and limitlessness. Though not a natural scientist, one of Burtynsky's early influences was Ansel Adams. Though not a field geologist, he functions in many ways as a classical geologist, taking photographs with a field camera (large-format!), attuned to capturing just the right oblique 'aerial' vantage.

The body of work celebrated through the President's Medal is "*Manufactured Landscapes*". In accepting the 2005 TED Prize, Burtynsky recounted an epiphany in his realization that geological time permits seeing landscapes in a transformed manner. Indeed, the 'transformed landscape' is baseline for a life's work. In Burtynsky's own words: "*Nature transformed through industry is a predominant theme in my work. ...Recycling yards, mine tailings, quarries and refineries are all places that are outside of our normal*

*experience, yet we partake of their output on a daily basis. These images are meant as metaphors to the dilemma of our modern existence. Our dependence on nature to provide the materials for our consumption and our concern for the health of our planet sets us into an uneasy contradiction. For me, these images function as reflecting pools of our times." It can add to our understanding of who we are and what we are doing."*

Burtynsky's art is inherently geological, and it causes the multifaceted challenges of sustainability to emerge into stark view. Burtynsky has avoided 'transforming' his work into political images or indictments. He does not assign blame. Frankly, he is uncommon in not pitting sides against one another, but instead in emphasizing that *all of us* who make up humankind are transforming landscapes. The implications that all of us are engaged in transforming landscapes are vast in scope and content, just like Burtynsky photographs.

Consistent with a core theme of the intent of the GSA's President's Medal, Burtynsky is being celebrated for working in the service of humankind. Awarding him this medal is particularly appropriate, for he employs a natural-resources medium that can be grasped and appreciated especially deeply by geoscientists.

*No response from Edward Burtynsky*