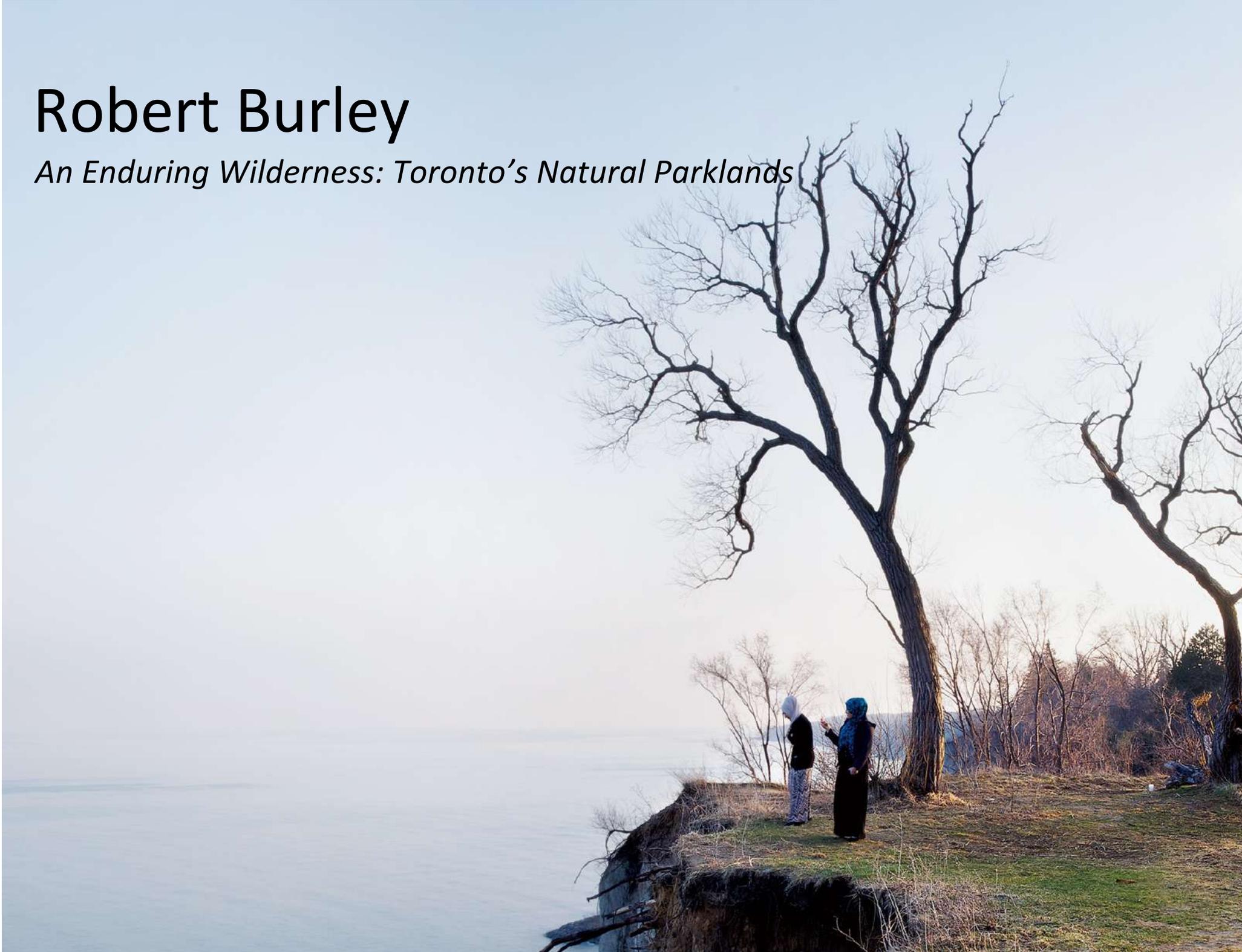


Robert Burley

An Enduring Wilderness: Toronto's Natural Parklands



CONTENTS

List of Works.....3

Forward.....4

Introduction.....5

Photographs: An Enduring Wilderness.....6

Essay by Carla Garnet.....10

Install Images.....15

Public Engagement Programming.....17

- *Enduring Photographs: Robert Burley in conversation with Toronto Photo Laureate Geoffrey James*
- *Toronto's Natural Parklands in the new Millenium: The role of natural parklands in building a great city*
- *Enduring Wilderness/Nature in the City: Exploring the complex relationship between nature and the city*

Artist and Curator Biographies.....22

Catalogue Design by Erin Storus

LIST OF WORKS

Front Page: *Scarborough Bluffs Park, 2014*

Page 6: *Beachfront near the Toronto Hunt Forest, 2014*

Page 7: *Fishing beneath the Macdonald-Cartier Freeway, Rouge Park, 2015*

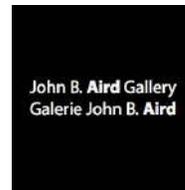
Page 8: *Homeless man beneath the Prince Edward Viaduct, 2013*

Page 9: *Untitled*

FORWARD

The John B. Aird Gallery is delighted to present a primary solo exhibition for the **2017 Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival** by the renowned Canadian photographer **Robert Burley**, entitled: *An Enduring Wilderness: Toronto's Natural Parklands*.

This exhibition features a selection of works from Burley's remarkable photographic series, along with an aerial map, a video and other visualizations of landscape that reflect the artist's interest in the City of Toronto's parklands, waterfronts and ravine systems. The City of Toronto commissioned Burley to create this collection of photographs celebrating Toronto's natural spaces as a way to both examine and promote our twenty-first-century relationship to nature. The exhibition accompanies Burley's new book, *An Enduring Wilderness: Toronto's Natural Parklands*, published by ECW Press, with texts by Toronto writers George Elliott Clarke, Anne Michaels, Michael Mitchell, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, and Alissa York.



INTRODUCTION

Toronto's Natural Parklands in the new Millennium: The role of natural parklands in building a great city, the exhibition and book could not have come about with the hard work and dedication the artist **Robert Burley** and **Jane Weninger** senior planner with Toronto City Planning responsible for natural heritage and environmental policy.

Jane and **Robert** have been working on this project since 2012 when the **City Planning and Parks, Forestry and Recreation Divisions** commissioned the natural parklands photographs. Part of the impetus for this work was Jane's project to designate environmentally significant areas across Toronto in the City's Official Plan. Jane also works extensively on the Green Belt Plan and the establishment of the Rouge National Urban Park.



PHOTOGRAPHS: AN ENDURING WILDERNESS







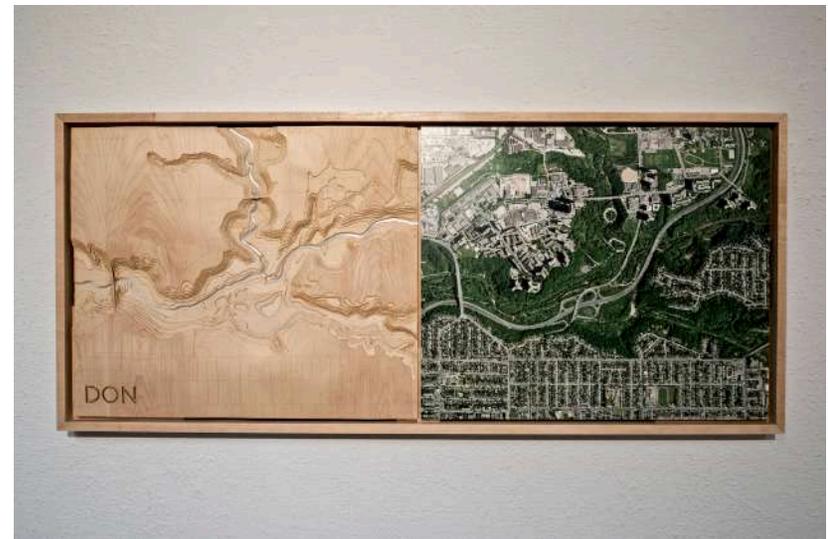


Robert Burley: An Enduring Wilderness

by Carla Garnet

It has been argued that society's relationship to nature was redefined by the Industrial Revolution that took hold in nineteenth-century Europe. As the masses moved from farmland to factory, their lives were no longer shaped by the rhythms of the natural world, yet their desire for the countryside persisted. Crowded and congested cities responded to this need by creating the pastoral experience in

the form of urban parks. This period also led to "the age of the landscape painter," in which urbane artists such as JMW Turner began to combine imagination with observation of the natural world. A century later, the rise of photography would challenge and demystify landscape's role in the cultural imagination.



In the twentieth century, North American cities grew at surprising rates and soon began to sprawl and dominate their surroundings. The seminal 1975 exhibition *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape*, curated by William Jenkins, pointed toward an alternative approach to making landscape photography—an objective style that nonetheless addressed the notion of the “man-made environment”—and suggested that society’s relationship to the natural world had become dysfunctional.

Like the *New Topographics* photographers, Robert Burley’s practice concedes human action on the landscape by focusing on constructed urban environments. Sharing his predecessors’ survey-like sensibility, he brings an equally liminal awareness to his slow, tripod-dependent operation of observation, allowing viewers access to not only place, but also *time*. Burley has photographed the ravine systems, waterfronts, and parks of North American metropolises since the mid-eighties. His dispassionate scenes feature urban

watersheds knitted with expressways, railway lines, industrial compounds, utility towers, and pipelines. At the same time, Burley's phenomenological images often offer glimpses into some of the remaining natural habitats found within and along the river valley systems and lakefronts.



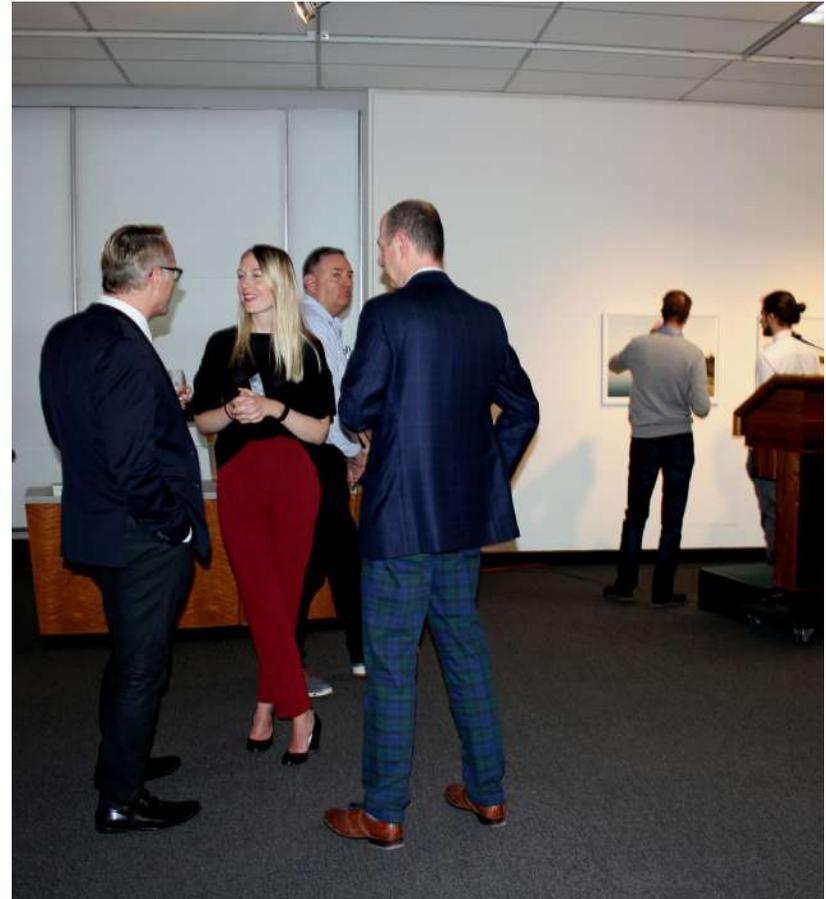
It is therefore fitting that the City of Toronto commissioned Burley to create a collection of photographs celebrating Toronto's natural spaces as a way to both examine and promote our twenty-first-century relationship to nature. Through this visual archive, the city acquires evidence of the considerable natural areas within its urban parkland system as part of a strategy for maintaining and communicating their ecological and civic function. Though commissioned for their documentary value, the images that comprise this exhibition, and

Burley's new book, also reveal intangible aspects of the temporal. He places timeless elements alongside those that are in flux, interrogating temporality by juxtaposing the permanence of municipal infrastructure, the seasonal shifting of landscapes, and the ephemeral quality of people's day-to-day movements. These images are not simply records; they also *bear witness* to the current state of Toronto's shoreline, rivers, creeks, and valley forest, imparting knowledge about our urban geography, water supply, biodiversity,

and public space. Subsequently, these images become instruments to safeguard and protect that which they describe. In the end, Burley's work suggests that the relationship between city and nature is being redefined again in the twenty-first century as more sympathetic and enlightened, as urban dwellers increasingly invest in nourishing and encouraging all forms of the natural landscape found inside their city limits.

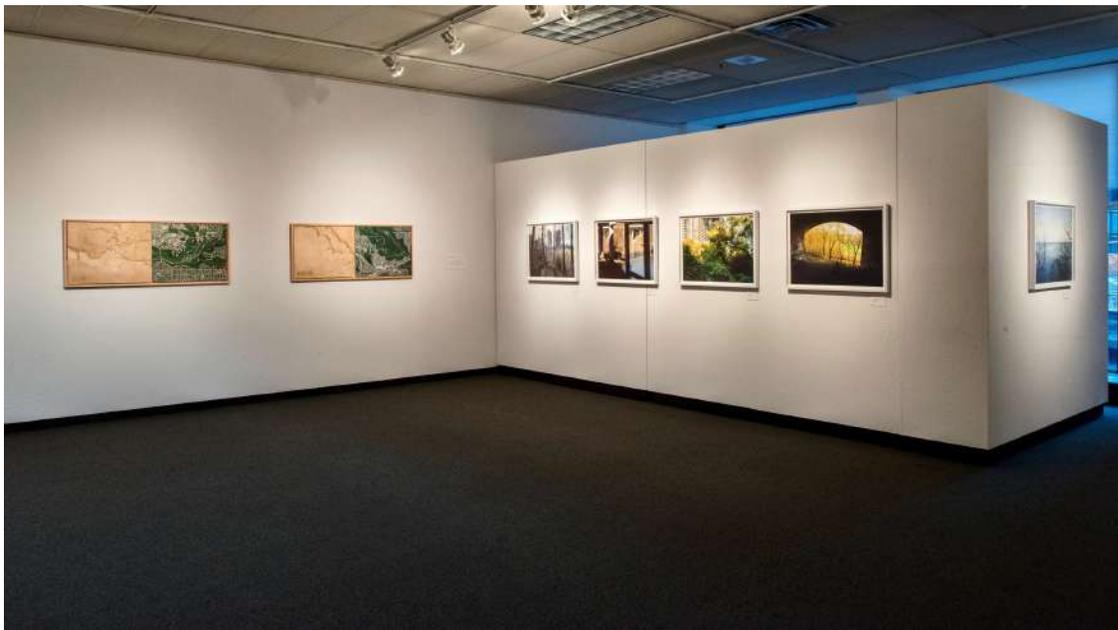
The book, *An Enduring Wilderness: Toronto's Natural Parklands*, is published by ECW Press, with texts by Toronto writers George Elliott Clarke, Anne Michaels, Michael Mitchell, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, and Alissa York.

CG/2017



INSTALL IMAGES





PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMMING

May 9th, 2017

Enduring Photographs: Robert Burley in conversation with Toronto Photo Laureate Geoffrey James

GEOFFREY JAMES (b. 1942, Wales, United Kingdom) Geoffrey James was born in Wales in 1942, read Modern History at Wadham College, Oxford (BA and MA), and emigrated to Canada in 1966. A self-taught photographer, he is the author or subject of more than a dozen books and monographs and is represented in major collections internationally. He has had solo shows at the Palazzo Braschi, Rome, the Americas Society, New York and the National Gallery of Canada. He has participated in group shows at Documenta IX, Kassel, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Frankfurter Kunstverein and San Francisco MOMA.

Geoffrey James is a Guggenheim Fellow and recipient of the Gershon Iskowitz Prize and the Governor-General's Prize in Media and Visual Arts. He lives in Toronto, where he has been named the city's first Photo Laureate.



May 13th, 2017

Toronto's Natural Parklands in the new Millenium: The role of natural parklands in building a great city

PANELISTS

Michael McClelland is a registered architect and one of the founding principals of ERA Architects, a multidisciplinary firm specializing in heritage and cultural projects. Michael is also currently one of the board of directors for the Friends of Allan Gardens and he serves on the Stewardship Committee of the Cultural Landscape Foundation. He is the editor of a number of books, including *Concrete Toronto – a guidebook to concrete architecture from the fifties to the seventies* and *The Ward – the life and loss of Toronto's first immigrant neighbourhood*.

Jake Tobin Garrett is a writer and park advocate in Toronto. He works as Manager of Policy and Planning for Park People, a charity that builds strong communities by animating and improving parks. He is the author of the several reports including *Making Connections*, which highlights creative strategies for parks in intensifying cities, and *Sparking Change*, which explores the social impacts of parks in underserved neighbourhoods. **Tobin Garrett** is the lead on planning, policy, and engagement work in urban parks, including public life studies, workshops, and governance strategies for clients such as the City of Toronto He is the project lead on the Green Line, an initiative to transform a hydro corridor into a linear park and trail.

Since graduating from the University of Toronto's master of landscape architecture program in 2011 with a specialization in knowledge media design, **Denise Pinto** has

piloted an impressive multi-disciplinary career, incorporating civic engagement into a diverse range of fields. These days, **Pinto** is taking the work she does locally – which includes advocating for safe, accessible and stimulating pedestrian environments and encouraging people to explore their city on foot – to a global level. As global director of *Jane's Walk*, an annual international festival of citizen-led walking tours, she has been convening conversations within communities in cities around the world.

Wayne Reeves is chief curator for **City of Toronto Museums & Heritage Services**. He manages the city's artifact, fine art, and archaeological collections and helps shape major exhibitions at Toronto's ten community museums. He is also a historical geographer who has written and lectured extensively about the long-term interplay between nature and

culture in Toronto, including the establishment and evolution of the city's public green spaces.

He contributed essays to *Special Places: The Changing Ecosystems of the Toronto Region* and *GreenTOpia: Towards a Sustainable Toronto* and was co-editor of *HTO: Toronto's Water from Lake Iroquois to Lost Rivers to Low-flow Toilets*.



May 20th, 2017

Enduring Wilderness/Nature in the City: Exploring the complex relationship between nature and the city

PANELISTS

Jason Ramsay-Brown is the author of Toronto's Ravines and Urban Forests (Lorimer, 2015). He serves on the board of directors of the Toronto Field Naturalists (TFN), and represented the TFN on the City of Toronto's Ravine Strategy Advisory Group, 2015-2017. He is a volunteer on the Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve Stewardship Team, Beechwood Wetland Stewardship Team, and is a member of the Ontario chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration.

Todd Irvine is an arborist with Bruce Tree Experts where he specializes in the care and preservation of mature trees. He also co-

teaches a masters-level ecology course at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Landscape Architecture, and leads training workshops for landscape professionals. He is a co-founder and contributing editor of the award-winning urban affairs magazine *Spacing*. His writing on trees and ecology has appeared in the Toronto Star, Globe and Mail and Canadian Geographic and he has been a frequent guest expert on media programmes such as CBC Radio's Metro Morning.

Joyce Chau is the Executive Director of EcoSpark, an environmental charity in Ontario. EcoSpark connects students and community groups to their local environment through environmental education, citizen science and civic engagement. Joyce has been working in the environmental not-for-profit sector for the past 12 years. She is actively engaged in numerous environmental committees including

the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance, Biodiversity Education and Awareness Network, the Southern Ontario Stream Monitoring and Research Team, and the Small Change Fund.

Philip Cote is Shawnee, Lakota, Potawatomi and Ojibway from Moose Deer Point First Nation. A published short storywriter and muralist; Cote is a graduate of The Ontario College of Art and Design. He has been at the forefront of a group of artists who are exploring new ways to imbue sculpture, painting and other installation art with traditional spiritual perspectives. The great, great, great-grandson of Tecumseh, Cote has been exploring, researching and making art about the importance of the Shawnee leader's life and spirit.



BIOGRAPHIES

Since the mid-1980s, photographer **Robert Burley** has used the camera as a recording device to make fleeting traces of the material world permanent. Burley's works have been exhibited around the globe, and can be found in museum collections including the National Gallery of Canada, Musée de l'Élysée, George Eastman Museum, FoMu, Musée des beaux arts de Montréal and Musée Niepce. Over his career, Burley has undertaken numerous urban landscape projects including explorations of Toronto's Don Valley, Chicago's O'Hare Airfield and, as part of the larger commission *Viewing Olmstead*, New York City's Central Park. His publications include *Viewing Olmsted: Photographs by Robert Burley, Lee Friedlander and Geoffrey James* (1996) and *The Disappearance of Darkness: Photography at the End of the Analog Era* (2012). Burley currently

lives in Toronto and teaches at The School of Image Arts, Ryerson University.



Carla Garnet is the John B. Aird Gallery Director/Curator and JOUEZ curator for the annual BIG On Bloor Festival of Arts and Culture in Toronto. Garnet is on the Trinity Square Video Board of Directors where she is active on both the program and fundraising committees. She has worked as in-house curator at the Art Gallery

of Peterborough (2010-2013), as guest curator at Gallery Stratford (2009-2010), as an independent curator (1997-2010) and as the founder and director of Garnet Press Gallery (1984-97). While at the Art Gallery of Peterborough, in addition to her curatorial work, she developed and managed the gallery's education program. Garnet holds an Associate Diploma from the Ontario College of Art and Design and a Masters Degree in Art History from York University.

About John B. Aird Gallery

The John B. Aird Gallery opened in 1985. It was named in honour of the 23rd Lieutenant Governor of Ontario to recognize his support of the visual arts in Canada. Governed by a Board of Directors, the Gallery's mandate is to create awareness and promote the enjoyment of works of art by professional contemporary artists. In order to fulfill its mandate, the Gallery strives to encourage excellence in visual art; present a

variety of media, disciplines, and styles; and to provide opportunities for study and education in conjunction with exhibitions.





PRIMARY EXHIBITION



John B. Aird Gallery
Galerie John B. Aird



Robert Burley, Beachfront near the Toronto Hunt Forest, 2014.

Robert Burley

An Enduring Wilderness

Toronto's Natural Parklands

Curated by Carla Garnet

May 3 - 26, 2017 | 2 mai à 26, 2017

Open to the public | Monday - Friday | 10 - 6 pm | Saturdays 12 - 5 pm

VIP reception | Thursday, May 4, 5-7 pm | Public opening | 7-9 pm
(By Invite Only)

Panel Discussions

Tuesday • May 9 • 5 - 6 pm

Enduring Photographs:

Robert Burley in conversation with Toronto's Photo Laureate Geoffrey James

Saturday • May 13 • 1 - 3 pm

Toronto's Natural Parklands in the new Millennium:

The role of natural parklands in building a great city

Saturday • May 20 • 1 - 3 pm

Enduring Wilderness/ Nature in the City:

Exploring the complex relationship between nature and the city



airdgallery.org

Macdonald Block, 900 Bay Street (at Wellesley), Toronto, ON, Canada M7A 1C2 | Gallery Hours: Monday to Friday, 10 am - 6 pm
Edifice Macdonald, 900 rue Bay (angle Wellesley), Toronto, ON, Canada M7A 1C2 | Heures d'ouverture: du lundi au vendredi, de 10h à 18h

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