

Whispers of Nature

ARTIST: JOSEPH MICHAEL
CURATOR: CAMILA HAIDBAUER



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Contemporary photography has evolved into an influential and versatile art medium from its inception in the 19th century to the present day. Initially conceived as a tool for visual and scientific documentation, photographers like Fox Talbot and Louis Daguerre explored the technical possibilities of this new medium, capturing landscapes, portraits, and everyday scenes of their era. After World War II, documentary photography and photojournalism gained critical importance, especially in the context of the Cold War and the social movements of the 1960s and 70s, when altered images became a dominant tool for protest and communication-driven change. Photography's ability to document reality, influence public opinion, and offer an authentic view of world events transformed its role in art and society.

The technological revolution of the digital era in the 1980s and 1990s not only democratized access to photography but also allowed artists to experiment with new methods of manipulation and editing, thus opening up a range of creative possibilities. Through these digital tools, photographers began to explore more conceptual themes, transcending the traditional boundaries of documentary photography to suggest philosophical, abstract, and introspective approaches.

It is in this context that we find the work of Joseph Michael (New Zealand, 1985), a visual artist and photographer whose work challenges the boundaries between art and nature. Through long-exposure photography, Michael reflects on the relationship between humans and their natural surroundings. His work not only captures the beauty of landscapes and urban environments but also represents the interdependence and fragility of global ecosystems, emphasizing human responsibility for their preservation.



(Series The Hour of Change, New Zealand, 2017. Using a technique that combines photography with digital collage).

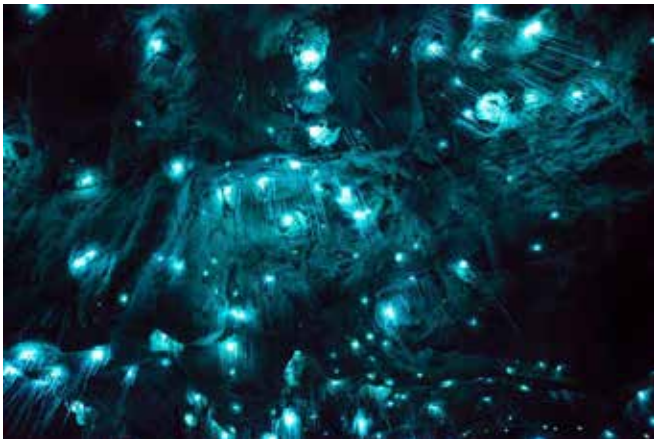
One of the highlights of Joseph Michael's career was his project "Voices for the Future," presented in 2019 at the UN Climate Action Summit. This monumental installation not only illuminated the UN General Assembly and Secretariat buildings with images of a collapsing iceberg but also amplified the voices of young climate activists, reminding us of the urgency to take action against the environmental crisis. The combination of powerful artistic visuals with a clear and compelling message placed Michael at the heart of the global conversation on sustainability, climate action, and committed art.

(<https://www.joemichael.co.nz/#/united-nations>)



(Series Iceberg, Antarctica, 2015. Michael used a night-time lighting technique with long exposure to capture the details and textures of Antarctic icebergs, illuminating ice formations with LED lights, which allowed him to highlight the complexity and beauty of their surfaces at night. This technique creates a dramatic and sculptural effect, emphasizing the unique tones and textures of the ice, which in the photographs appears almost otherworldly).

Joseph Michael's ability to combine technology and art with a socially relevant message is one of the distinctive traits of his work. In an era when the human impact on the environment is increasingly evident, his work acts as a bridge between contemporary art and ecological awareness, provoking an emotional and critical response in the viewer. Michael does not simply document visible reality; he constructs narratives that connect the visual with the conceptual, allowing the public to reflect on the interaction between nature and humanity.



(Series Luminosity, New Zealand, North Island, 2015. Long-exposure photography. More of this work can be seen in Colossal, Wired, The Verge, and Juxtapoz).

The exhibition "Whispers of nature" brings together a selection of Joseph Michael's works, showcasing his innovative approach to photography and its role in communicating environmental issues. Through his photographs, audiences can explore themes such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and the intrinsic relationship between humanity and nature. The exhibition aims to create a space for reflection and dialogue on the urgency of the environmental crisis and the power of art to inspire action and change.





(Universal Series, New Zealand, North Island, 2016. Michael uses a macro photography technique to capture high-resolution surface details. In this case, he explores the texture, color, and detail of natural formations, focusing on surfaces within caves or natural elements in his surroundings).

His current project, "Amazon - Raised Up Sky," is an augmented reality installation that delves further into this connection, using advanced technology to transport the viewer to the heart of the Amazon rainforest. This innovative fusion of art and science places the observer in an immersive environment where they can visually interact with trees, feel their presence, and understand the importance of endangered ecosystems. Furthermore, dialogues with scientists and Indigenous leaders enrich the experience, providing a deeper interpretation of the cultural and biological role of forests in the planet's sustainability. (<https://www.joemichael.co.nz/#/amazon>)



Amazon - Raised Up Sky Project

Presenting Joseph Michael's work in Argentina not only highlights his relevance in the field of international contemporary art but also establishes a cultural bridge between two distinct geographic and social contexts. This exchange of ideas and experiences will enrich understanding of the global challenges we face.



(Landscape Series, New Zealand. Combination of long-exposure photography and time-lapse)

Camila Haidbauer
CURATOR