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For Immediate Release

FOTOFEST 2006 – EXHIBITIONS AND INSTALLATIONS

**The Eleventh International Biennial of
Photography and Photo-related Art**

1986-2006

The Earth – Artists Responding to Violence

March 10 - April 23, 2006

Houston, Texas

HOUSTON, TEXAS (February 14, 2006) – FotoFest is curating and commissioning 20 exhibitions around dual themes: *The Earth* and *Artists Responding to Violence*. *The Earth* continues and expands the FotoFest 2004 exploration of Water, combining conceptual and figurative interpretations of earth through artistic expression, science, and public policy. *Artists Responding to Violence* is a separate but connected theme to *The Earth*. Human-created violence, from war to the household, is omni-present and ubiquitous. It is not only threatening the existence of earth but is transforming the nature of political society. In exploring this theme, FotoFest is not focusing on the depiction of violent acts but rather on how artists interpret these acts of violence, the human capacity for violence, and the presence of violence in many aspects of life.

For more information on exhibit locations and dates please see the FotoFest website, www.fotofest.org/ff2006. Press images can be downloaded at <http://www.fotofest.org/pressimages>
Selected artists as of January 2006:

The Earth

Heidi Bradner (U.S.A., U.K. and Russia) – *The Land of the Second Sun*, documents the Nenets, an indigenous Siberian people whose nomadic journey is the longest in the world – each year they travel 1,400 miles. For most of the 20th century, they remained deep behind the Iron Curtain, shut off from the outside world. Today they face their greatest threat, the development of Russia's largest gas reserves underneath their tundra migration routes. In the 21st century, Siberia will emerge into a new role as energy supplier to the West. This endangers the migration patters of the reindeer and the Nenets' entire way of life.

Maria Martinez Cañas (Cuba and U.S.A.) and **Kim Brown** (U.S.A.) – *Dustograms*. "Dustograms are testament to the potential of two artists who trust and believe in each other's work. Dust is evidence; fragile and ephemeral evidence of life's presence. The English dictionary describes dust as being 'the particles into which something disintegrates.' It is so small and so big at the same time; ceaseless like time - a reminder of the beginning and the end. It comes from everywhere and nowhere and goes everywhere and nowhere." *Dustograms* are unique prints of dust placed directly on photographic paper and exposed to light. The dust is then stitched onto the paper itself and results in a sculptural photographic object.

Dornith Doherty (U.S.A.) – *Rio Grande: Burnt Water/Agua Quemada*, shows the confluence and divergence of cultures of the United States and Mexico. The river traverses recreational forests, agricultural land, Pueblo and Navajo Nations, and densely populated urban areas around the maquiladores of northern Mexico. The series address the relationship between the natural environment and human agency. Doherty takes slide photographs of sites along the Rio Grande and collects objects found on-site. The objects are constructed into a still life and an image is projected onto the objects. The assemblage is then photographed and results in a large scale color print.

John Ganis (U.S.A.) – *Consuming the American Landscape*, shows the effects of humankind's interventions and excesses that have a tremendous environmental impact on the Earth. Colorful landscapes depict an irony between the natural beauty of the environment and the impact of human developments that appear as slights upon the land in which we live.

Eduardo del Valle & Mirta Gomez (Cuba and U.S.A.) – *From the Ground Up*, is a metamorphosis of the vernacular architecture in the Yucatán Peninsula, México. The ancient building types, constructed by hand from organic materials, are beautifully made with a kind of personal attention no longer familiar to us. The images function as a kind of documentation of a disappearing form of architecture. The photographs are not meant to cast judgment but rather to preserve history.

Jules Greenberg (U.S.A.) – *Fallen*, is a series of photographs of bird specimens collected in natural history museums in the United States. Most of the birds were killed in the name of science, their deaths considered a necessary, or at least acceptable, sacrifice for the advancement of human knowledge. Greenberg is interested in these birds for what they reveal about the relationship between violence, death and destruction and “what we call progress” – whether it be scientific understanding or the promise of “freedom” that purportedly justifies the deaths of “fallen soldiers” and others killed in war.

Barbara Grover (U.S.A.) – *This Land to Me – Some Call it Palestine, Others Israel*. Few other issues fuel global tension and violence as does the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet what do we really understand about it beyond the bloody images of the nightly news? *This Land to Me – Some Call it Palestine, Others Israel* allows viewers to experience a virtual encounter with Israelis and Palestinians who are touched by violence in some way everyday; by giving photos and text equal prominence, the work comes to life. Grover's installation consists of life-size black and white photographic canvases, with excerpts of the interviews displayed alongside the photograph. Rather than talking about violence, the subject was asked to discuss the main issue that is fueling it: people's connection to the land.

Vadim Gushchin (Russia) – *Bread and Wood*, takes a cool, formalist approach with black-and-white photographs of bread and wood that transform them into organic still lifes. Gushchin removes these objects from their conventional environments and from situational context. The object is isolated, center-frame, to draw keen attention to the subject.

Masaki Hirano (Japan) - *Stumps of Silence: Tasmania*. In this work, Hirano photographs stumps and areas of clear cutting in Tasmanian old growth forests. The images are made up of many prints put together in mosaic form. Most of the magnificent temperate old growth forests are getting cut down to export raw materials to Japanese paper companies in the name of the tree-planting program. The local logging monopoly logs old growth forests and replants trees as if it is sustainable and earth-friendly. Surprisingly, this practice is not “illegal”. Even more amazingly, Japanese citizens who use all the paper production, mainly as computer papers, are not aware of the fact that the paper is made up of 90 % wood chips produced in Tasmania. Due to the combination of cross-border corporations' continued attitude of profit before principle and ignorance of on the part of consumers, old growth forests will be converted into plantations in a few years.

Nicholas Hughes (U.K.) – *Edge*. Nicholas Hughes' seascapes and snowscapes are calm and quiet, yet retain a deep underlying contemplative presence. His strong yet delicate photographs serve to show the fragility of our relationship with the natural world. Hughes' work examines the space between the world that people inhabit and that which nature still claims as its own and in this intermediary space seeks to explore the essence of the human spirit and its relationship with nature. However Hughes' contemplation of the distant horizon is by no means a perpetuation of the Romantic, for he sees the notion of the natural

world as forever vast and mysterious quickly evaporating. By focusing on boundaries, plains and surfaces he acknowledges the existence of limits and contemplates the future for both nature and humanity.

Keith Johnson (U.S.A.) – Johnson's photographs portray human intervention with the landscape. In most cases, these interventions appear trivial, but when abstracted by closer observation, simple marks become grand gestures. A plug of grass waiting to find its hole; the line between big and small red stones. Johnson's images are observations about the landscape and the way in which it is put together by humans. He photographs where the landscape has been reclaimed or in transition, trying to make sense of the space between the organic and the human-made, sometimes finding both at the same time.

Harri Kallio (Finland and U.S.A.) – *The DoDo and Mauritius Island, Imaginary Encounters*, is a reconstruction and photographic study of the long extinct (c. 1662-1693) dodo bird. The Dodo was entirely fearless of people, and this, in combination with its flightlessness, made it easy prey. When humans first arrived on Mauritius, they also brought with them other animals that had not existed on the island before, including dogs, pigs, rats and monkeys, which plundered the Dodo nests, while humans destroyed the forests where they made their homes. Based on extensive research, Kallio produced life-size sculptural reconstructions of the bird, as well as a visual photo based study of the actual dodo remains. The project culminated in photographic reconstructions of the dodo bird made with the models in their natural habitat of Mauritius Island.

Eric Klemm (Germany and Canada) – *Metamorphosis*, explores the beauty of decay and the resulting rebirth. A small square of rainforest is the final resting place for the curvaceous and once gleaming automobiles of yesterday, now shells for moss and fern to embrace and occupy. The vehicles are reclaimed by the forest as equal space for growth.

Elaine Ling (Canada) – *Monoliths: Guardians of The Earth*, depicts portraits of monoliths standing out in harsh and remote landscapes, each of them bearing the elements that are the result of time, shaping and reshaping their countenances. They stand, silent and immovably strong, as guardians of the Earth. Their message is a promise that the natural Earth, of which they are the expressive outcroppings, will prevail.

Vesselina Nikolaeva (Bulgaria and The Netherlands) – *No Man's Land on the Edge of Europe*. Until 1989 the Bulgarian-Turkish border symbolized the southeastern edge of the Soviet block. It was a border fiercely guarded. Nobody could freely exit or enter the country. The border represents a no man's land on the map. Nikolaeva documents the empty shells of propaganda, frontier posts and broken fences along the border that served as the beginning or end of Europe.

Hyung-Geun Park (Korea and U.K.) – Untitled. The places Park chooses to photograph are "nature", but already have been built by human beings such as parks in London. The sites have been interrupted, controlled, reproduced, and interpreted by man. In the pictures, the condition of nature is in an ordinary state, but various objects reveal mysterious situations that invite the viewer to imagine what has transpired.

Peter Riedlinger (Germany) - *US / THEM II* and **Noel Jabbour** (Palestine and Germany) – *Segregation Wall*, is a major project documenting the changing landscape during the construction of the Abu Dis wall between Israel and Palestine. The images allow the viewer to understand the constraining factors for dialogue, which start with the political and military conflict compounded by decades of psychological barriers. The battle for land, and mobility within this land, are foremost in these images as they allow the viewer to realize the institutional screening and intimidation of the ethnic other, the Palestinian.

Abby Robinson (U.S.A.) – *In Camera*, is a series of photographic studios in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, and Vietnam. Old photo studios create environments where the past and present, east and west, traditional and contemporary collide, while the scenes and props give clues to notions of taste and aspiration. Many of the backdrops deal with representation of the natural world and are, in their fashion, idealized versions of the landscape.

Mark Ruwedel (U.S.A.) – *Ice Age* from the series *Written on the Land*, shows physical traces of human activity on the land, mapped in the context of the Pleistocene lakes that once covered large portions of the arid American West. The most conservative archaeological estimates suggest 10,500 years of

human activity in the Great Basin. As with the natural history of the lakes, the evidence of human history is written on the landscape of the present. Death Valley was the location of Pleistocene Lake Manly. Trails, campsites and other physical traces of hunter-gatherer cultures that lived along Lake Manly's ancient shorelines are still visible on the surface of this desert environment.

Keith Sharp (U.S.A.) – *Nature Boy*. "I started out this series by sketching the various ways I could imagine myself transforming and blending in with nature. At one point, I realized that I wasn't camouflaging myself, but rather transforming into plants or tree creatures. I reflected on historical references of people transforming into or worshiping trees, such as in Greek and Roman mythology. In the end, a photograph remains as the only proof that this performance and photo shoot ever took place."

Doug and Mike Starn (U.S.A.) – *Absorption + Transmission*, is a recent body of work in which images of trees, leaves, neurons, and nocturnal moths come together in a complex installation. The series is comprised of black, silhouetted trees printed on hundreds of small sheets of Gampi paper that are glued together, varnished, and mounted to cover large wood frames. The interconnectedness of trees – branches over branches into branches like dendritic neurons in the brain, the layers are in relation to the complexities of knowledge, understanding, memory and imagination.

Martin Stupich (U.S.A.) – *The Red Desert Project: Seeing Past Empty: Energy Extraction and the End of a Wild Place*. Wyoming's Red Desert is fifteen thousand square mile arid basin in the central Rocky Mountains. Consisting mainly of state and federal lands, it is the largest unfenced expanse in the continental United States; and historically it has been an unpopulated, almost unknown, wilderness. Recently discovered, directly beneath it, is one of the world's largest untapped natural gas reserves. The desert's open-pit coal and uranium operations are being revived in response to world pressures. Surveying, blasting, drilling, and mining accelerate now at a pace that is transforming the region into an industrial landscape.

Herman van den Boom (Belgium) – *Arcadia Redesigned - Imaginative Landscapes/Landscapes of the Imagination*, is a series of images that shows the ways in which homeowners transform the landscape surrounding their dwellings. "While looking at these front yards and gardens it occurred to me that the fragments I was photographing could be felt and experienced as a modern day Arcadia. The owners themselves undoubtedly derive great pleasure from their creations, but if you put all these pieces of 'Arcadia' together in your imagination on a global scale, you encounter an enormously cultivated and surreal landscape."

David Williams (Scotland) – *one taste: (n)everchanging*, depicts trees and garden spaces within ancient Buddhist temples. The resulting series of photographs delivers a meditation that evokes the esoteric *koans* of Buddhist teaching. Eight triptychs are of a cedar tree throughout one specific day from a fixed camera position. Conceptually, the work is multi-layered and interconnects issues of time, nature and culture.

Angilee Wilkerson (U.S.A.) - *History Series I*. In this body of work, Wilkerson references the memory shared with her Oklahoma ancestors. This memory is created through handed down narratives passing through what was once "Indian Territory" and from the multiple accounts of prophetic dreams and visions told to the artist by her mother, grandmother and grandfather. In *History Series I* Wilkerson's family story makes itself present through the layering of natural elements native to the North Texas and Southern Oklahoma landscape with old family photographs.

Barbara Yoshida (U.S.A.) – *Night Vision: Rocks and Stones by Moonlight*, is a series of images from over ten different countries, from Sweden to Corsica, featuring various standing stones. Also called *menhirs*, they are megalithic, with the earliest ones having been erected around 3,650 to 2,500 years B.C. Although some of them have burial sites beneath them, very little is known about who constructed them and why. The images are photographed under moonlight, with the stones against the night sky, emphasizing their shapes as well as the relationship between the focal object and its surroundings.

Artists Responding to Violence

AES+F (Russia) – *Action Half Life* and *Last Riot* deals with questions of heroism in an age when heroism is depicted in movies, television and video games; a virtual world passively accepted by its participants. Large scale digital collages are created featuring children selected from model agencies, engaged in fictional battles in the desert. Their expressions are blasé, nonchalantly trekking through dunes with shining bazookas while fighter jets scream through the blue skies. The images are reminiscent of the war video game (and increasingly the actual war) in which a child (or adult) can play the role of hero, blasting one's enemy from the comfort of one's home.

Sergey Bratkov (Ukraine) – *Soldiers and Army Girls*. Bratkov's work arrives out of a consciousness of his own time gauged against the political, social and economic contingencies of the recent past. Bratkov seeks out young subjects who find themselves listless within a space inscribed by the temporal gap between Ukraine's Soviet period and its subsequent reincarnation as an evolving market economy and political anomaly. In its context the portrait is of special value in its stereotypical form. Whether it shows party secretaries, workers, peasants, space travelers, scholars or soldiers, they are all typified as heroes.

Maria Martinez Cañas (Cuba and U.S.A.) – *Lies*. Cañas states, "I had gone through a terrible personal experience in my life that made me confront head-on how easy lies can be told and believed. How easy it is to bring devastation to people's lives by telling lies that other people believe in. The popular notion is that photography does not lie and that what we see in an image is 'truth'." The images in *Lies* appear as snapshots from a crime scene, blurred to a point where one cannot distinguish details or boundaries of objects.

Juan Manuel Echavarría (Colombia) – A former writer, Echavarría presents several bodies of work dealing with the fifty years of civil war in Colombia through metaphorical imagery. Through video and still photography, he presents work that is beautiful on the surface and entices one to look beyond this sheen into the violence that the work represents. Each series is drawn from the history of Colombian cultural life and utilizes "the beauty of civilizations to draw the viewer into the evil that has crept in to the soul of Columbia."

Joakim Eneroth (Sweden) – *Reactive*, is a series of black and white and color photographs that portray the origin of violence as being the reactive mind. Eneroth states that "there is no violence without the violent intention. The conditions for violence are present...in everyday life." The images are strung together as words in a poem, each reflecting a different aspect of internal or external violence functioning as a visual essay on the root of violent acts.

David Farrell (Ireland) – *Innocent Landscapes*. In the thirty years of Northern Ireland's conflict and atrocity a small group of people stood apart: they were the 'missing', the 'disappeared' – absent yet somehow still present. Even their exact number was uncertain though it was thought that there were at least fifteen people whose whereabouts had remained shrouded in misinformation and doubt since the 1970's and early 1980's. All but one were Catholic and assumed to have been 'disappeared' by the IRA in the process of internal 'policing' of the movement and the wider Catholic community. Farrell travels to the burial sites and photographs the land where the bodies have been excavated. Maps of the sites accompany the images.

Yves Gellié (France) - *Distinct Perceptions*. Working on assignments for famous magazines, Yves Gellié photographed people who have lived under an embargo since the first Gulf war and a country plunged into a disastrous economic and social situation. Throughout the different trips, he travelled to almost every part of the Iraqi territory, and from 1999, pushed further to Syria and Iran, two countries who've played a direct part in the recent history of Iraq. To cover the embargo in pictures, he isolates a detail of a worker's dress on a shipyard in southern Iraq or the shoes of a surgeon at the entrance to an operating room of a hospital. The photographer's idea is not to prove or denounce, but to show. In his images, he doesn't show acts of violence but rather the signs of human violence, the marks it leaves on objects, landscape or architectures.

Muriel Hasbun (El Salvador and U.S.A) – *Trace*. Faced with the outbreak of war, persecution, and/or religious intolerance, Hasbun's family members either were caught (and murdered), hid from danger, and/or fled their countries of origin. Daughter of a Palestinian/Salvadorian Christian and a Polish/French Jew now living in the United States, Hasbun rescues the otherwise silent voices of her family through images of old family photographs appearing as ghosts intertwined with other images.

Claudio Hils (Germany) – *Red Land Blue Land*. This body of work is taken from the troop training grounds in Senne, North Rhein-Westphalia, Germany. During maneuvers Red Land stands for enemy, Blue Land for friendly territory. The artist approaches the terrain with what appear to be standard pictures of landscapes already suggestive of a specific intention. In what follows, the reader will observe a series of mysterious pictures of a seemingly surreal ghost town which, until recently, has provided the setting of numerous rehearsals for military emergencies. Traces of military activity are to be found everywhere: Targets in the shape of human beings, puppets which, in the most peculiar of ways, appear to invigorate the scene and yet which, in fact, emphasize the emptiness and lifeless atmosphere of the terrain. Yet, the distance which Hils' documentary pictures take to their subject allows the observer to form his or her own associations.

Alfredo Jaar (Chile and U.S.A.) – *The Sound of Silence*. FotoFest International is commissioning a new video installation created by internationally known visual artist Alfredo Jaar for the FOTOFEST2006 Biennial and the theme Artists Responding to Violence. The installation, *The Sound of Silence*, is a work that Alfredo Jaar has wanted to do for several years. It is a penetrating and haunting work that confronts the question of the role of public media vis a vis social tragedy and human suffering. *The Sound of Silence*, installed by FotoFest at DiverseWorks, is a centerpiece of the FOTOFEST2006 Biennial.

Nathalie Latham (Australia and France) – *#65*; documents Latham's travels to Ozyorsk, Russia, the home of the Soviet Union's first plutonium production complex, Mayak. Created in 1948 and known as N°65, the city was not marked on any map, Soviet or otherwise. The children and grandchildren of the Mayak workers continue to reside in the city and scientists study the effects of radiation over several generations. In December 2003, Latham accompanied three scientists from Columbia University, N.Y.C., to visit the closed city of Ozyorsk, Russia.

Lisdebertus aka Luis Delgado (U.S.A. and Mexico) – *Unfathomable Humanity*. As we enter the 21st century, it becomes evident that "inhumanity" is still a major force even as we deem it "unfathomable". As these photographic panels posit, we commit daily acts of "inhumanity" in the name of an ideal and from deep within our human institutions. Each piece is a montage of old drawings, photographs, and video stills and represents well-known violent occurrences, past and present.

Paula Luttringer (Argentina and France) – *The Wailing of the Walls*, combines photography and text to give expression to those who were kidnapped and tortured in clandestine detention facilities in Argentina. Luttringer interviewed 75 women who shared their experiences with her. Luttringer uses excerpts from their stories to accompany large black and white images of the remains of the now abandoned jails. Having had this experience herself, the works speak from the heart of the artist and the women she interviewed. The text forms a powerful expression of the violence endured behind the concrete walls of secret prisons.

Wolfgang Müller (Germany) – *Karat*; After years of change and decline, St. Petersburg celebrated its 300th anniversary by renovating its historical center to display its stunning churches, museums and palaces. But the image Müller presents is in stark contrast to the poverty found not far away in the backyards of the Nevskij Prospect (the main shopping street) and behind the huge advertising boards that conceal empty lots. Here, littered with syringes, is the entrance to a different world. Wolfgang Müller's photographs tell the stories of children who live above the city's streets on the roofs and in attics of abandoned buildings. Here they can sleep, take drugs, and make money from prostitution without being apprehended. Many have escaped from apathetic parents or decaying orphanages, but the desolation of their situation is tempered with the warmth of the small family units they have formed.

Liza Nguyen (France) – *Surface*, shows different samples of earth which were taken from battle sites or places affected by wars in Vietnam. Most places in the series are known for their battles; Khe Sanh, Huế, and Dien Bien Phu. The samples appear as handfuls of sand or dirt isolated on a white background. The

viewer stays on the surface of the battle “where men turned to dust.” *Postcards* examines traces of war. The images are displayed like leaflets sold in touristy places. Instead of showing stereotypical landscapes, the cards depict war-museums, old weapons, ruins, bunkers, tunnels, war-monuments and cemeteries.

Elizabeth Mellott-Carreon (U.S.A.) – *Diary of an Enlistment* and *One Day*. *Diary of an Enlistment* speaks about the frustrations, loneliness, devotion and mystery that are embedded in Mellot-Carreon’s marriage to a combat soldier during the Iraq/Afghanistan War. The installation contains thirteen clay boxes that represent one month time segments of her relationship. Each box contains items that range from hand made books, dried flowers, and photographs that represent “the surreal experience of heightened tensions, emotions, and numbness of this period.” *One Day*, addresses the issue of the statistical number of women who are reported raped every day in the United States. The project contains 720 (the number of women raped in one day) individually cast paper female figures that are embedded with a variety of unique objects. The figures are on the floor and suspended from the ceiling with images of women’s silhouettes projected onto the entire installation. As the viewer enters the installation, they become part of it by interrupting the shadows.

Discoveries of the Meeting Place

The one non-themed FotoFest exhibition is the sixth Discoveries of the Meeting Place exhibit. It highlights the work of ten outstanding artists selected by curator/reviewers from artists whose portfolios they reviewed at FotoFest’s 2004 International Meeting Place. The Meeting Place is FotoFest’s acclaimed portfolio review program for artists. It is the largest program of its kind in the world.

The 2004 Discoveries exhibit will feature **Lili Almog** (U.S.A., selected by Juan Alberto Gaviria), **Dave Anderson** (U.S.A., selected by Yossi Milo), **Luis Delgado** (U.S.A., selected by Fernando Castro), **Esteban Pastorino Diaz** (Argentina, selected by Burt & Missy Finger), **Justin Guariglia** (Singapore, selected by Alan E. Rapp), **Fredrik Marsh** (U.S.A., selected by John Bennette), **Martina Mullaney** (U.K., selected by Charlotte Cotton), **Morten Nilson** (Denmark, selected by Xavier Cannone & Marc Vausort), **Frank Rodick** (Canada, selected by Katherine Ware), and **Brad Temkin** (U.S.A, selected by Evgeny Berezner & Irina Tchmyreva).

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