Mongrel Media
Presents

WATERMARK

A film by Jennifer Baichwal & Edward Burtynsky
(90 min., Canada, 2013)
Language: English, Spanish, Hindi, Bengali, Mandarin

Official Selection
2013 TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL – SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Distribution
1028 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6J 1H6
Tel: 416-516-9775  Fax: 416-516-0651
E-mail: info@mongrelmedia.com
www.mongrelmedia.com

Publicity
Bonne Smith
Star PR
Tel: 416-488-4436
Fax: 416-488-8438
E-mail: starpr@sympatico.ca

High res stills may be downloaded from http://www.mongrelmedia.com/press.html
**SYNOPSIS**

*Without water we are nothing, the traveller thought. Even an emperor, denied water, would swiftly turn to dust. Water is the real monarch, and we are all its slaves.*

Salman Rushdie

Every living thing requires water. We humans interact with it in a myriad of ways, numerous times a day. But how often do we consider the complexity of that interaction? And, unless confronted by scarcity, when do we meditate on its ubiquity in creating, sustaining and enriching life?

*Watermark* is a feature documentary film that brings together diverse stories from around the globe about our relationship with water: how we are drawn to it, what we learn from it, how we use it and the consequences of that use. We see massive floating abalone farms off China’s Fujian coast and the construction site of the biggest arch dam in the world – the Xiluodu, six times the size of the Hoover. We visit the barren desert delta where the mighty Colorado River no longer reaches the ocean, and the water-intensive leather tanneries of Dhaka.

We witness how humans are drawn to water, from the U.S. Open of Surfing in Huntington Beach to the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad, where thirty million people gather for a sacred bath in the Ganges at the same time. We speak with scientists who drill ice cores two kilometers deep into the Greenland Ice Sheet, and roam the sublime pristine watersheds of Northern British Columbia.

Shot in stunning 5K ultra high-definition video and full of soaring aerial perspectives, this film shows water as a terraforming element and the scale of its reach, as well as the magnitude of our need and use. This is balanced by forays into the particular: a haunting memory of a stolen river, a mysterious figure roaming ancient rice terraces, the crucial data hidden in a million year old piece of ice, a pilgrim’s private ritual among thousands of others at the water’s edge.

*Watermark* is directed by multiple award-winning filmmaker Jennifer Baichwal and renowned photographer Edward Burtynsky, and is the third part of Burtynsky’s Water project, which includes a book *Burtynsky: Water* and a major photographic exhibition. Filmed and produced by Nicholas de Pencier and three years in the making, it is a logical extension of the trio’s previous collaboration, *Manufactured Landscapes*. In *Watermark*, the viewer is immersed in a world defined by a magnificent force of nature that we all too often take for granted - until it’s gone.
Watermark: Director's notes - Jennifer Baichwal

Water has a unique capacity to express scale and detail simultaneously. It can be a meandering, pastoral brook and the tiny trickle from the edge of an ice sheet, or it can be a monumental force, like Niagara Falls and the Pacific Ocean. And regardless of the diversity of expression it is, fundamentally, the same substance.

This capacity of water to express scale and detail, to be different and the same, became central to an intelligent translation of Edward Burtynsky’s photographic essay into the medium of film. The big picture, often literally aerial in this case, floats away unless it is rooted in the intimacy of the particular. But the detailed vantage cannot begin to convey the breadth of water’s reach, nor the extent to which we transform it to our needs. So it was in the relationship between these two views that the film emerged, and was what allowed us to navigate twenty stories from ten countries and somehow flow them together into a single, experiential stream.

The collaboration fell easily into a marriage of strengths in production. Burtynsky’s primary focus was the wide view and a translation of scale—into both still and motion picture film. We used helicopters, remote-controlled helicopters, poles, lifts and a variety of aircraft to achieve this. My focus was more on finding the details, the narrative threads that give meaning to the wide view or saturate it. Cinematographer Nick de Pencier had to do both: shooting from vertigo-inducing vantage points on the Xiluodu Dam and trying to convey what 30 million people in one place at the same time looks like (at the Maha Kumbh Mela), to balancing a hand held camera on wobbly 10 inch mud berms in Yunnan’s rice paddies or magnifying details of ice crystals from Greenland ice core samples.

The collaboration in the edit room, which took 11 months, was also strong. Roland Schlimme (who also edited Manufactured Landscapes and Act of God) and I waded through 200 hours of original and archival (Greenland) material and then started trying to find the structure and rhythm of the film through a painstaking and somewhat inefficient process of trial and error (inefficiencies mine). This process was punctuated by screenings and more general discussions with Nick and Ed. It is hard to stitch together so many stories without falling into a predictable rhythm or completely losing focus. And the balance of how much information to give while preserving an immersive experience for the viewer is always extremely delicate. I really dislike didactic and mediated content in documentary unless it is mandated by the subject, because the treatment is so predictable that the viewer instantly becomes a passive ingester of material rather than an active partner in the exploration—which of course is the opposite of collaboration. I believe that collaboration also extends to the viewing experience.

As with all of our films, Watermark tries to create a space to think about something in a different way. After three years of almost total immersion, I will never turn on a tap with the same unconscious nonchalance that I did before we embarked on this challenging and deeply rewarding film. I hope the viewer feels the same.
I began to think about water as a subject for my work in 2007, while on a production tour photographing gold mines in Australia—the first continent in this era to begin drying up. Stories about farmers leaving as their land dehydrated were everywhere in the news. While there I met a photojournalist who recounted a story about an incident he had experienced in a bar in Adelaide. He ordered a beer and a glass of water, finished his beer, paid the bill and was about to leave when the bartender stopped him and instructed him to finish his glass of water. Suddenly water took on a new meaning for me. I realized water, unlike oil, is not optional. Without it we perish.

I thought about ways that I could build a body of work around the idea of water. Unlike my Oil and China projects, with Water I had no preconceived notions about what the images in such a project might look like. I trusted that my intuition would lead me to the pictures.

In 2008 my research started in earnest. I wanted to find ways to make compelling photographs about the human systems employed to redirect and control water. I soon realized that views from ground level could not show the enormous scale of activity. I had to get up high, into the air, to see it from a bird’s-eye perspective. Determined by the specifics of each location, I would find a way to depict the most telling viewpoints. The ensuing four years found me at work in nine countries: employing location crews, using man-lifts, small fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters (both remote and piloted) and a specially designed fifty-foot pneumatic mast with camera mount and fibre-optic remote. This pulling away from the earth has allowed me to see our world in ways once unavailable to artists. In addition, the evolution of high-quality digital camera equipment has allowed me to create crisp, finely detailed images from moving aircraft—something that could not be easily accomplished with older, analogue film systems.

As production on the Water project began to roll out I categorized the images into: distress, control, agriculture, aquaculture, waterfront, and finally source. Distress included landscapes such as the Colorado River Delta, that has not seen a drop of water from that river in over forty years, and is now a desert; or Owens Lake, that saw its water diverted to Los Angeles in 1913 and is now a dry toxic lakebed. Agriculture represents - by far - the largest human activity upon the planet. Approximately seventy percent of all fresh water under our control is dedicated to this activity. I went to China and Spain to see the process of farming fish and seafood. The section, Aquaculture provides a glimpse into a quickly growing and increasingly important food source. Waterfront looks at the way we shape land to create manufactured waterfront properties, and speaks to me about the human need and desire to be near water—even if it is artificial. I went to India to witness the largest pilgrimage on the planet with thirty-five million people arriving on the holiest day to bathe in the Ganges and release them of their sins – an ancient spiritual belief in the cleansing power and sacredness of water. Source comes from my journey to those places where a critical stage in the hydrological cycle takes place; in the mountains, containing glaciers and pure fresh snow. I went to northern British Columbia and Iceland to capture these images. They are the first landscapes in over thirty years I have taken that focus specifically on pristine wilderness, instead of the imposition of human systems upon it.

I feel this project encompasses some of the most poetic and abstract work of my career. I was seven years old when I discovered my love of making art, while painting landscapes alongside my father who painted as a hobby. I loved the tubes of oil paint and the smell of the linseed oil and the names of their colours: burnt umber, chromium blue, cadmium red. When I was eleven I got my first camera and a complete darkroom. I immediately fell in love with photography and never looked back. However, I never lost my love for painting and have tipped my hat to it a number of times throughout my work.
While executing the *Water* project, I was pleased to see images emerging that referenced some of my favourite painters, including: Caspar David Friedrich, Jean Dubuffet, David Shapiro, and Richard Diebenkorn. The aerial perspective that I adopted for this project, as well as its subject matter, allowed those influences to seep into my photographs.

Over the past five years I have learned a few things about water. When disrupted from its natural course there are always winners and losers. The moment water cannot find its own way back to the ocean or be absorbed by the ground, we are changing the landscape. When a stream or river is diverted, all life downstream is affected and remains altered until water returns. Insects, plants, frogs, the salamanders and countless other creatures - including people - have paid an enormous price because of our voracious appetite for water—and what we do to the earth while getting at it.
The logistical challenges of this global project were daunting: 20 stories, 10 countries, 200 hours of raw footage, 29 different media formats, 8 languages. By the end, we had used over a dozen different cameras to answer myriad practical and creative considerations. Amazingly, none of them fell in the water. I only fell in a few times myself. Our most ambitious technology was the Epic 5K camera from RED which was so new at the time we started production that we had to use one of the hand-assembled prototypes from California. We were striving to have moving images that could stand up to the incredible detail of Burtynsky’s 60 megapixel stills, and knew that this camera was our best option. It was often difficult to position in our more precarious vantage points, but when we did, the results were dramatic. Our collaboration with FreeFly Cinema was especially fruitful as their engineering for remote controlled helicopters with gyro-stabilized controllable gimbals let us release the camera from the laws of gravity and explore some of our locations from soaring, aerial perspectives.
Biographies

Jennifer Baichwal – Director

Jennifer Baichwal was born in Montréal and grew up in Victoria, British Columbia. She studied philosophy and theology at McGill University and received an M.A. in 1994, supported by a McGill Major Fellowship and an FCAR Master’s Scholarship.

She has been directing and producing documentaries for 20 years. Her first film, Looking You In The Back of the Head, an enquiry into the problem of personal identity, asked thirteen women to try to describe themselves and was first broadcast, to critical acclaim, on TVOntario's From the Heart. It subsequently sold for broadcast across Canada.

Let it Come Down: The Life of Paul Bowles, her first feature documentary, won a 1999 International Emmy for Best Arts Documentary. It premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 1998 and was nominated that year for a Best Feature Documentary Genie Award. It won Best Biography at Hot Docs in 1999 and was picked up for theatrical release by Mongrel Media in Canada, Zeitgeist Films in the U.S., and Uplink in Japan. The film has been sold for broadcast all over the world, and has been selected for a number of international film and television festivals, including Jerusalem, Buenos Aires, FIPA, Banff (where it received a Rockie nomination), Istanbul and Edinburgh.

The Holier It Gets documents a trek Baichwal took with her brother and two sisters to the source of the Ganges river with her father’s ashes. The film won Best Independent Canadian Film and Best Cultural Documentary at Hot Docs 2000, Geminis for Best Editing and Best Writing and was nominated for the Donald Brittain Award and the Chalmers Documentarian Award. It was commissioned by TVOntario and features music by Ravi Shankar and John McLaughlin.

The True Meaning of Pictures is a feature length film on the work of Appalachian photographer Shelby Lee Adams. It was commissioned by TVOntario, Bravo!, SBS Australia and Discovery Germany. The film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2002 and was invited to the Sundance International Film Festival in January 2003. It won a Gemini award for Best Arts Documentary in 2003 and has played at numerous international festivals. The film was released on dvd by Docurama/New Video in October 2003.

Baichwal, along with Nick de Pencier, was commissioned in 2003-4 to make 40 short films on artists who have been supported over the past four decades by the Ontario Arts Council. These include writer Michael Ondaatje, artist Michael Snow, pianist Eve Egoyan and playwright Judith Thompson, and are in periodic rotation on TVOntario. The collection received a 2006 Gemini nomination for Best Direction in a Performing Arts Program or Series.

Manufactured Landscapes, a documentary about the work of artist Edward Burtynsky, was a co-production among Mercury Films, Foundry Films and the National Film Board. It premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2006 and won Best Canadian Feature Film, was in competition at Sundance the following January, and has since received a number of other awards, notably a Genie for Best Documentary, Al Gore’s Reel Current Award and the 2006 Toronto Film Critics’ Award for Best Canadian Feature and Best Documentary 2006. It played theatrically in over 15 territories worldwide, after a prolonged and successful run in Canada.
Act of God, a documentary on the metaphysical effects of being struck by lightning and another collaboration between Mercury and Foundry, opened the Hot Docs Film Festival in April 2009 and was released in Canada afterwards by Mongrel Media. It has since played at a number of international festivals, and was released by Zeitgeist Films in the U.S. and Against Gravity in Poland. The film features Paul Auster, Dannion Brinkley and Fred Frith. It was commissioned by The Documentary Channel in Canada, Arte in France and Channel 4 in the U.K.

In 2011 Baichwal completed Payback, a documentary adaptation of Margaret Atwood’s *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth*, with the National Film Board of Canada and Ravida Din (Director General, English Language Program). The film premiered in World Documentary Competition at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2012 and was released in Canada (Mongrel Media) in March 2012 and the U.S. in April 2012.

*Watermark* is a feature documentary film about human interaction with water around the world and marks Baichwal and de Pencier’s second collaboration with Edward Burtynsky. The documentary is co-directed by Burtynsky, produced and filmed by de Pencier. It will be released in Canada by Mongrel Media in the fall of 2013.

**Edward Burtynsky – Director/Executive Producer**

Edward Burtynsky is known as one of Canada's most respected photographers. His remarkable photographic depictions of global industrial landscapes are included in the collections of over fifty major museums around the world, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in California.

Born in 1955 of Ukrainian heritage in St. Catharines, Ontario, Burtynsky is a graduate of Ryerson University (Bachelor of Applied Arts in Photography) and studied Graphic Art at Niagara College in Welland. He links his early exposure to the sites and images of the General Motors plant in his hometown to the development of his photographic work. His imagery explores the intricate link between industry and nature, combining the raw elements of mining, quarrying, manufacturing, shipping, oil production and recycling into eloquent, highly expressive visions that find beauty and humanity in the most unlikely of places. In 1985, Burtynsky also founded Toronto Image Works, a darkroom rental facility, custom photo laboratory, digital imaging and new media computer-training centre catering to all levels of Toronto's art community. Mr. Burtynsky also sits on the board of directors for: Contact, Toronto’s international photography festival, and Ryerson Image Centre.


An active lecturer on photographic art, Mr. Burtynsky's speaking engagements include the National

Mr. Burtynsky’s distinctions include the TED Prize, The Outreach award at the Rencontres d’Arles, The Flying Elephant Fellowship, Applied Arts Magazine book award(s), and the Roloff Beny Book award. In 2006 he was awarded the title of Officer of the Order of Canada and holds four honorary doctorate degrees, with a fifth to be awarded in 2013.

Edward Burtynsky is represented by: Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto; Paul Kuhn Gallery, Calgary; Art 45, Montreal; Howard Greenberg and Bryce Wolkowitz, New York; Sundaram Tagore Gallery, Hong Kong; Flowers Gallery, London; Galerie Stefan Röpke in Köln, and Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco. His prints are housed in over fifty public collections worldwide.

Daniel Iron – Executive Producer

After graduating from Osgoode Hall Law School in 1987, Daniel Iron was legal counsel at Telefilm Canada for five years. He then joined and eventually became a partner at Rhombus Media where he produced several acclaimed feature films: Long Day's Journey Into Night, directed by David Wellington; the award-winning Last Night, directed by Don McKellar; McKellar’s Childstar; as well as co-producing the Oscar-winning The Red Violin from Francois Girard. Iron also executive produced Guy Maddin’s Saddest Music in the World, Jennifer Baichwal’s acclaimed documentary Let It Come Down: The Life of Paul Bowles, and Peter Wellington’s Luck. At Rhombus, Iron was also producer on numerous television productions including: The Four Seasons and Don Giovanni Unmasked, two performing arts films; the Gemini-nominated series Foreign Objects, written and directed by Ken Finkleman; Stormy Weather: The Music of Harold Arlen, a performance/documentary directed by Larry Weinstein; Elizabeth Rex, a television film based on Timothy Findley’s play; the acclaimed Slings and Arrows, a six part comedic television series; and Beethoven’s Hair, a documentary directed by Larry Weinstein.

In January 2004, Daniel left Rhombus to create his own production company, Foundry Films Inc. In 2005, Foundry produced Northern Town, a CBC series set and shot in the Yukon, It’s Me Gerald, a six half-hour series for Showcase and Last Exit, a TV movie with CTV directed by John Fawcett. In 2006, Iron produced the highly acclaimed Manufactured Landscapes, a theatrical documentary on acclaimed photographer, Edward Burtynsky, which was directed by Jennifer Baichwal and won a slew of awards: Best Canadian Film at the 2006 Toronto International Film Festival; the Toronto Film Critics Association Award for Best Documentary of 2006; as well a Genie for Best Documentary. Foundry partnered with Jennifer Baichwal on her next documentary, Act of God, which was the opening night film for Hot Docs 2009.

Daniel has also produced Sarah Polley’s debut feature, Away From Her, starring Julie Christie and Olympia Dukakis, which was released in the US by Lionsgate in May 2007 and garnered six Gemini Awards and two Academy Award Nominations. In 2008, Daniel produced Cairo Time, written and directed by Ruba Nadda and starring Patricia Clarkson and Alexander Siddig, which won Best Canadian
Feature Film at TIFF 2009. In 2009, he produced *The Bang Bang Club*, starring Ryan Phillippe, Taylor Kitsch and Malin Akerman, a South-African/Canadian co-production written and directed by Steven Silver, and in 2010 he executive produced TIFF 2011’s Best Canadian First Feature Film Award Winner, *Edwin Boyd*. Daniel’s most recent productions, which both premiered at TIFF 2012, are *Picture Day* (executive producer), written and directed by Kate Melville starring Tatiana Maslany, and *Inescapable* (producer), a thriller written and directed by Ruba Nadda starring Alexander Siddig, Marisa Tomei, and Joshua Jackson. He is currently developing numerous other television and film productions.

**Nicholas de Pencier – Producer/Cinematographer**

Nicholas de Pencier is a director, producer, and director of photography working in documentary, performing arts, and dramatic film. He is President of Mercury Films Inc., the Toronto based production company he shares with his partner, Jennifer Baichwal.

De Pencier was a producer resident in the Canadian Film Centre’s 1997 Producers’ Lab, and produced Jim Allodi’s feature film *The Uncles*, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2000, was distributed in Canada by Odeon Films, and named one of year’s top ten Canadian films by the Toronto International Film Festival Group. He also produced the documentary *Manufactured Landscapes*, which won the Chum City Award for best Canadian feature at TIFF 2006, the Genie Award for best Documentary, and was distributed in 20 countries.

As a cinematographer, de Pencier regularly shoots factual TV series and documentaries for the CBC, PBS, Discovery, National Geographic and History. In 2011 he was nominated for a best photography Gemini for *Raccoons*. A detailed Director of Photography CV can be found at www.mercuryfilms.ca. In 2010 he shot the documentary adaptation of *Payback*, Margaret Atwood’s Massey Lecture on debt, which was selected for Sundance, 2012 and released theatrically in Canada and the U.S. De Pencier was admitted as a full member to the Canadian Society of Cinematographers in 2012.

As both producer and director of photography his credits include the feature documentary *Let It Come Down: The Life of Paul Bowles* which was nominated for a Genie, a Rockie, and won the International Emmy Award for Best Arts Documentary. *The Holier It Gets*, a documentary filmed in Canada and India, won Best Cultural and Best Independent Canadian Documentary at Hot Docs, 2000, and won Geminis for best writing, editing, and direction in a documentary series, as well as a nomination for The Donald Brittain award for best documentary and a Chalmers Award nomination. In 2002 he produced and shot the documentary: *The True Meaning of Pictures* about the work and world of Kentucky photographer Shelby Lee Adams, which premiered at TIFF and then Played at Sundance. It was nominated for two Gemini Awards and won for best Arts Doc. This was followed in 2003 by *Hockey Nomad* based on Dave Bidini’s best-selling book *Tropic of Hockey* about hockey in unlikely places around the globe which was nominated for a Banff Rockie Award, as well as three Geminis, winning for the Best Sports Documentary. He was also producer and director of photography on *Act of God*- a feature documentary about the metaphysics of being struck by lightning, which was selected as the opening night film for Hot Docs International Film Festival as well as being in competition at the Karlovy-Vary International Film Festival in 2009. In 2011-13 he is producing and photographing a feature documentary on the global use water in collaboration with Edward Burtynsky and Jennifer Baichwal which will be released in the fall of 2013.
As a director, aside from his work in factual series, de Pencier’s credits include the feature documentary *Four Wings and a Prayer*, about the migration of the Monarch butterfly which won the Grand Prix Pariscience, the Banff Rockie Award for best Wildlife and Natural History Program, the Jules Verne Nature Award, and was nominated for Geminis for best Science Documentary, Best Cinematography and Best Direction in addition to an Emmy nomination for the PBS NOVA version (called *The Incredible Journey of the Butterfly*). In 2004 de Pencier was nominated for a Gemini for Best Direction for his performance film *Streetcar*, while the film's lead, Peter Chin, won for Best Performance. The film was also nominated for a Banff Rockie Award. He also co-directed, produced and photographed for TVOntario a series of 40 short profiles on artists who have received Ontario Arts Council grants over the past 40 years.

In December 2011 de Pencier collaborated with Dr. Mike Evans and Illustrator Liisa Sorsa to direct and produce the short animated health video *23 ½ Hours* which instantly went viral and has been viewed by more than five million people in many languages worldwide. Evans and de Pencier have produced more than a dozen subsequent health videos and their company Reframe Health Films is an emerging player in the field.

**Roland Schlimme – Editor**

Roland Schlimme continues to work in editing and post production, collaborating with leading independent filmmakers in Toronto.
Watermark Fact Sheet

10 countries:
USA
Canada
Mexico
China
India
Denmark
Greenland
Germany
Bangladesh
Iceland

20 stories/threads:
Xiolangdi dam
Colorado River Delta
Imperial Valley
Ogallala Aquifer
Dhaka tannery
Stikine Headwaters
Abalone farms
Las Vegas
Xiluodo Dam
Step Wells
Owens Lake
Rice Paddies
Kumbh Mela
US Open of Surfing
Discovery Bay
Greenland
Steidl
Denver
Xiluodu Dam reservoir fill
Iceland

Raw Material, Production, 2010-2013: 199 hours
64hrs China
45hrs Cal/Arz/Tex Mex
16hrs Ice (Copenhagen & Denver without Archive)
15hrs British Columbia
14hrs India
13hrs Las Vegas
06hrs Dhaka
04hrs Göttingen
04hrs Ontario
18hrs Burtynsky Studio
**Raw Material, Archive:** approx. 75 hours

**Editing:**
180:1 footage ratio
11 months offline

**Final Cut:** 90mins, 20 formats

- 27mins 31%  RED (4 formats - 5K, 4K, 2K and 2K widescreen)
- 25mins 29%  C300
- 12mins 13.5%  HDCam & HDCamSR & NANO
- 11mins 12.5%  XDCam (5 formats - 1080p, 1080i, 720p, 25pfs & 23.98fps variations)
- 4mins 4.5%  5D & 7D
- 1min 1%  FS100
- 1min 1%  GoPro (2 formats)
- 5mins 6%  Other (Stills, Timelapse stills, Archive, etc.)