



The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

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Dual photography exhibits to celebrate nature in Texas and around the world

Nature Conservancy, Blue Star to present companion exhibits Sept. 2-Oct. 9 as part of Fotoseptiembre

San Antonio, Texas —August 4, 2005—The Nature Conservancy of Texas and Blue Star Contemporary Art Center will present two companion exhibits in September that document the response of acclaimed international and South Texas photographers to some of the most wild and beautiful places on Earth.

“In Response to Place: Photographs from The Nature Conservancy’s Last Great Places” and “The Last Great Places of Texas: Photographs from The Nature Conservancy’s Texas Preserves,” opening September 2 at Blue Star, are intended to illustrate the importance of conserving our natural world through the works of world-renowned artists including Annie Leibovitz, Hope Sandrow and William Wegman, as well as 14 celebrated South Texas photographers. The exhibits are part of Fotoseptiembre and run through October 9.

“The Nature Conservancy works to protect natural habitat for wildlife and people in Texas and around the world, a goal that is both aesthetically and pragmatically valuable,” said Carter Smith, Texas State Director for The Nature Conservancy. “These two exhibits perfectly convey the intrinsic value of wild and natural places in the great variety of ways the artists articulate their response to nature.”

“These two exhibitions represent the first collaboration between Blue Star and the Nature Conservancy,” said Bill FitzGibbons, Executive Director of Blue Star Contemporary Art Center. “Our mission is to exhibit contemporary art for San Antonio and to support San Antonio artists. Since nature has always been a great source of inspiration for artists, these two exhibitions are an appropriate and unprecedented project for us to co-sponsor. It is my hope that this is the beginning of a long relationship with The Nature Conservancy of Texas!”

Curated by renowned essayist and former New York Times art critic Andy Grundberg, “In Response to Place” features the work of internationally recognized photographers William Christenberry, Lynn Davis, Terry Evans, Lee Friedlander, Karen Halverson, Annie Leibovitz, Sally Mann, Mary Ellen Mark, Richard Misrach, Hope Sandrow, Fazal Sheikh and William Wegman. Each artist visited an area protected by The Nature Conservancy for its ecological value and recorded his or her response to that place on film.

The companion exhibit, “The Last Great Places of Texas,” curated by FitzGibbons, comprises works by distinguished South Texas photographers Ron Binks, Dan Borris, Melanie Rush Davis,

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Penny De Los Santos, Margarita Caraballo-Hough, Rick Hunter, George O. Jackson, Jr., Jim Keller, Larry Leissner, Vincent Mariano, Neil Maurer, Bob Maxham, Michael Nye and Trish Simonite, and explores the rich and complex splendor of the Lone Star State's remaining wild places. Using the same concept as "In Response to Place," the Conservancy invited the Texas artists to visit the organization's nature preserves and conservation projects throughout Texas to document their personal and creative interpretations.

The diversity of artists represented through "In Response to Place" ranges from landscape photography to portraiture and photojournalism. For example, Hope Sandrow spent time in Indonesia at Komodo National Park in the Lesser Sunda Islands – home to the ferocious Komodo dragon – where the Conservancy is assisting the government and park officials to conserve the habitat while developing sustainable economic resources for local people. Sandrow's luminous, multi-image panoramas of the marine environment reveal the pristine beauty of one of the world's most diverse coral reefs.

Sandrow will present an artist's symposium open to the public at 7 p.m. September 8 at the Blue Star Contemporary Art Center. Her work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Houston Museum of Fine Arts; and the Minnesota Museum of American Art.

Portrait photographer Annie Leibovitz visited the Conservancy's Sam's Point Dwarf Pine Ridge Preserve in upstate New York for "In Response to Place," and William Wegman cavorted with his famous Weimaraner dogs at the Cobscook Bay conservation project in Maine.

The works represented in "The Last Great Places of Texas" also run a wide gamut of styles and locations. From the rich coastal ecology of Mad Island Marsh Preserve on Matagorda Bay to the stark, desolate splendor of the Davis Mountains in Far West Texas, these "last great places" are vividly rendered by some of Texas' finest photographers.

Pristine plants, native wildlife and even common household objects are all used to draw viewers into the artists' imaginations. Neil Maurer presents an austere composition of a drinking glass filled with smooth, river stones partially submerged in a lazy section of Barton Creek at Barton Creek Habitat Preserve in Austin. In Bob Maxham's startling photograph at the Eckert James River Bat Cave Preserve, the first of millions of bats take flight from their cave for their nocturnal hunt.

Texas photographers will participate in a Texas artists' symposium for the public at 7 p.m. September 22 at Blue Star.

Opening reception for the exhibits will take place at 5:30 p.m. Sept. 2 at Blue Star Contemporary Art Center, 116 Blue Star. Afterward, gallery hours are from noon to 6 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday.

The Nature Conservancy is an international, nonprofit organization that preserves plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. To date, the Conservancy and its nearly 1 million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 15 million acres in the United States and have helped protect more than 102 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. In the Lone Star State, The Nature Conservancy of Texas owns 34 nature preserves and conservation projects and manages another 61 projects through voluntary land-preservation agreements with landowners. The Nature Conservancy of Texas protects 250,000 acres of wild lands and, with partners, has conserved close to a million acres for wildlife habitat across the state. Visit The Nature Conservancy of Texas on the Web at nature.org/texas.

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