

THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

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LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD MISRACH'S HAUNTING,

MONUMENTAL BEACH IMAGES PREMIERE IN CHICAGO

On the Beach Opens at the Art Institute of Chicago 9/15/07

Misrach to Attend Snap Photography Gala and Give Opening Lecture

Richard Misrach, a pioneer of color photography, has long been known for his images of the American desert. But five years ago, he turned his eye—and his camera—to a completely new subject: the beach. These monumental photographs of beaches, the ocean, sunbathers, and swimmers signal a new direction for Misrach that is both playful and deeply



contemplative. While a few of these images have been exhibited over the past few years, never before have so many been seen together. Twenty of Misrach's large-scale, rapturous surf and sand studies will make their museum debuts at the Art Institute of Chicago this fall before embarking on a two-year national tour. ***Richard Misrach: On the Beach*** opens at the Art Institute on **September 15, 2007**, in Photography Galleries 1-4. The show closes November 25, 2007.

Misrach will attend as an honored guest at **Snap**—the benefit gala organized by the Art Institute's Photography Department—on **September 14, 2007**. In addition, the artist will speak on the exhibition opening day, September 15, at noon in Fullerton Hall.

“I’ve come to believe that beauty can be a very powerful conveyor of difficult ideas,” Richard Misrach has said. For more than 30 years, he has been producing stunning photographs of horrific subjects, focusing on man’s often-disastrous effect on the land. His previous work in the series *Desert Cantos* explores the American desert—fires and floods, military-scarred terrain and pits of dead animals—in lush images that accentuate the formidable power and terrible beauty of the landscape.



His new series *On the Beach* works with similarly productive juxtapositions. All of the images originate from a very high viewpoint that does not include any sort of horizon. As a result, humans appear miniscule, and the vast expanses of sand and water offer a radically different perspective to the viewer. The images are very large: new digital technology has made possible dramatically scaled prints, some as large as 6 x 10 feet. As a result, the photographs, with their dizzying viewpoints and lack of narrative suggestion, are strangely disorienting. Depicting people as small, often isolated figures in an immense scene, the photographs remind us of the fragility and relative unimportance of humanity in the face of seemingly infinite nature. To a greater extent than even Misrach’s own desert photographs, these powerful pictures partake of the sublime in the sense that the 18th century philosopher of aesthetics Edmund Burke articulated: they produce astonishment, awe, and perhaps even terror.

All of this is fitting for pictures made after the events of September 11, 2001, for although sunny and colorful, these photographs also evoke a postapocalyptic world; the title *On the Beach* explicitly references Nevil Shute’s Cold War novel about nuclear holocaust. The figures floating in the sea in *Untitled #394-03* seem to plummet through an endless cerulean abyss, arms flailing to their sides; the illusion is encouraged by the disorienting aerial view and absence of other figures or landmarks for reference. In other images, lone figures or clinging couples appear to be the last people on the planet.

Misrach’s particular gift for expressing difficult and troubling ideas—devastation, alienation, decay, isolation—through images of rare beauty is fully on display in this new

series. From its premiere at the Art Institute of Chicago, the exhibition will travel to the Contemporary Museum in Honolulu; the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.; the Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington; and the High Museum of Art in Atlanta.

Richard Misrach: On the Beach is curated by Elizabeth Siegel, Associate Curator of Photography, the Art Institute of Chicago. This exhibition was organized by the Art Institute of Chicago and made possible by David Yurman.

The Art Institute of Chicago Hosts Second Snap Photography Benefit Gala 9/14/07

The Art Institute of Chicago's Photography Department will host one of the most anticipated parties of the year, **Snap**, in celebration of the museum's premiere of *Richard Misrach: On the Beach* on **September 14, 2007**. Last year, the first **Snap** gala founded the Photography Gala Endowment and raised more than \$170,000 for future acquisitions. Individual tickets to the party at the museum from 8:00 to 11:00 p.m. are \$125, and VIP tickets, which include a dinner and auction, are \$500; they can be purchased by calling **(312) 443-7250**. A major portion of the proceeds from Snap will enhance the Photography Gala Endowment. The evening's corporate sponsor is LaSalle Bank; CS Magazine is the in-kind sponsor. For more information, please check out the **Snap** gala Web site: www.artic.edu/snap



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IMAGE CREDITS:

All Snap gala photography courtesy of Cheri Eisenberg.

Richard Misrach (American, born 1949). *Untitled #696-05*, 2005. Digital chromogenic color print; 180.3 x 245.1 cm. Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles and Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.

Richard Misrach (American, born 1949). *Untitled #517-02*, 2002. Digital chromogenic color print; 124.5 x 289.6 cm. Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles and Pace/MacGill Gallery, New York.

MUSEUM HOURS FROM SEPTEMBER 1, 2007:

10:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m. Thursdays (Target Free Hours after 5:00 p.m.)

10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Saturday, Sunday.

Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. Please check www.artic.edu before your visit.

Admission: Adults, \$12.00; children 12 and over, students, and seniors, \$7.00; children under 12 free; members always free. Ford Free Evenings are free to all, except for certain special exhibitions that may require full or extra admission fee. City of Chicago residents with Chicago Public Library cards can borrow a "Check Us Out" card from any library branch for free general admission to the nine members of Museums in the Park, including the Art Institute of Chicago. To reach the Art Institute on the World Wide Web, contact us at: <http://www.artic.edu/aic>
The Art Institute of Chicago is a museum in Chicago's Grant Park, located across from Millennium Park.