

Land of Extremes

QUESTIONS? Contact Copy Editor Esteban Ortiz at 760-337-3431 or eortiz@ivpressonline.com

The Imperial Valley Desert Museum will celebrate **PHOTOLAB**

with an exhibit entitled Michael Field: Designer, Hiker, Photographer



“Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge.” PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL FIELD

BY NEAL V. HITCH | Special to this Newspaper/ Imperial Valley

This October, the Desert Museum joins institutions such as the San Diego Museum of Art, The Museum of Photographic Art and the La Jolla Athanaeum in PHOTOLAB, a massive celebration of photography with events, exhibits and workshops taking place across San Diego County.



“San Diego Landscapes.” PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL FIELD

The lens of a designer

Michael Field, lead exhibit designer at the San Diego Natural History Museum, is an avid hiker and photographer. His photographs have been published in books, used in BBC News reels, and provide the backdrops for the IV Desert Museum’s new permanent exhibit: The Land of Extremes. From October to January, a temporary exhibit of his photographs entitled Michael Field: Designer, Hiker, Photographer will be hosted at the IVDM.

Michael Field moved to San Diego from Canada in 1964 with his family. One of their first weekend trips was a hike up Palm Canyon and he has been in love with the desert ever since. Field studied photography at San Diego State University and now combines his two passions of taking pictures and hiking. As part of PHOTOLAB exhibit at the Desert Museum, Field completed an interview about his work.

Michael Field: Designer, Hiker, Photographer

Field’s style of photography often includes experimenting with natural landscapes with human-made elements. This makes the work interesting and often presents juxtaposition

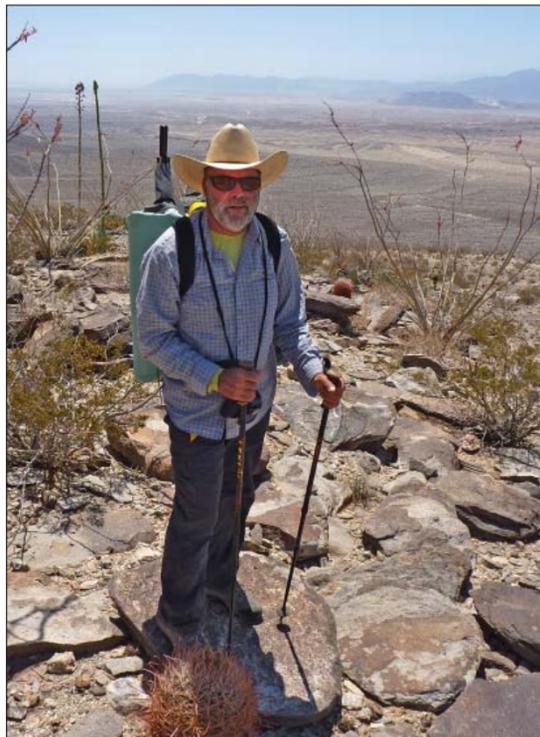
between the natural and the unnatural.

“I’m fascinated with the intersection of art, natural sciences, and history,” Field says. “That’s the sweet spot when you can make connections to the past, present and future. I want my photos to look like Albert Bierstadt landscape paintings of early California — only I



“Blue Heron and Chair at Salton Sea.” PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL FIELD

Michael Field: Designer, Hiker, Photographer will run from today through Jan. 31. The opening reception, which is free and open to the public, will be held at the museum from 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Oct. 24. For a complete list of exhibitions and events, go to www.photolabsandiego.org To read the complete interview with Michael Field, including how to outsmart your camera and the similarities of designing an exhibit and photography, go to our blog at www.ivdesertmuseum.blogspot.com



Michael Field: designer, hiker, photographer. PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL FIELD

might have a dead tree or rotten chair as the center of interest, telling the story of a failed development.”

Field says it’s not about the equipment, it’s about the photographer. “One of the myths about photography is that you have to have a super fancy camera and a shoulder bag full of gear to take great pictures,” he states. “That’s not true — the world’s greatest camera is actually whatever camera you have with you — for most people it’s also their phone.”

His advice to other

photographers?

“Get closer to your subject,” he says. “Dramatic lighting is also critical ... capturing dramatic lighting in a photo also means you need to outsmart your camera.”

While Field plans his explorations, studying the areas he intends to hike, he also plans specific images. He reminds fellow photographers to never underestimate being in the right place at the right time.

“I keep both eyes open when I’m looking at the viewfinder. The best shot is frequently behind you.”



“Uplift ancient lakebed sediments.” PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL FIELD

Science of photography

The word photography comes from the Greek photo (light) and graph (to draw). From the first photograph in 1827 to today’s digital images, the technology of the camera has remained relatively unchanged. Cameras are made with three basic components: a lens, film and the camera body.

The lens is a piece of curved glass or plastic that bounces beams of light, redirecting them to form an image. That image is captured onto film, which is housed in the camera body. Over time glass, paper, linen and flexible plastic have all been used as film-coated with a variety of special chemicals to make them light sensitive.

To take a photograph, the photographer briefly opens the shutter making a hole that lets light briefly through the lens. Light causes reactions to take place on the film and stores the desired image. When the film gets developed you have a usable picture.

Digital cameras work the same way, with one exception: there is no film in a digital camera. Instead, there is a grid, or array, of sensors that record the incoming light patterns into pixels. Pixels are stored in the camera as numbers. A digital photograph is just a long line of binary numbers recording color and brightness.

In both cases, just as the definition implies, a photograph is like drawing a picture with light.



Field’s images provide many of the backgrounds for the IVDM’s new permanent exhibit. PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL FIELD