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

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

*BY NEAL V. HITCH | Special to the Desert News/Imperial Valley*

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

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 BLM News, and posted 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.

**Science of photography**

The word photography comes from the Greek words "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 focuses beams of light, redirecting them to form an image. That image is captured onto film, which is focused in the camera body. Over time glass, paper, film and flexible plastic have all been used as film. 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.

**The lens of a designer**

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

“Fascinated with the intersection of art, nature 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’s landscape paintings of early California — only I don’t use oil on canvas; I use film or digital film.”

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.”

Field’s images provide many of the backgrounds for his work and photography often in- tersects with experiment with natural landscapes with human-made elements. This makes the work interesting and often presents juxtaposition between the natural and the unnatural.

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