



John Ganis

Photographer, educator, author and environmental advocate.

by MINDY CHARSKI

You must have something to say with your art. That's what John Ganis likes to tell his students at the College for Creative Studies (CCS) in Detroit, where he's been teaching since 1980. It's a mandate he attributes to the late photographer Paul Strand, and one he follows himself.

In his own work, Ganis sheds light on the effects of climate change on rising sea levels. His new book, *America's Endangered Coasts: Photographs from Texas to Maine*, is scheduled to publish this November and will feature 170 photographs of low-lying areas that have been hit by



hurricanes or could be affected by rising sea levels and storms in the future.

"[The book addresses] things such as the widespread overdevelopment of barrier islands and other fragile coastal environments being unsustainable due to rising sea levels," Ganis explains in a recent interview with *PDNedu*.

He began taking the images in 2009, but it wasn't until shooting the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy in 2013 that he realized the work could be content for a book—one he hopes will serve as a time capsule of sorts.

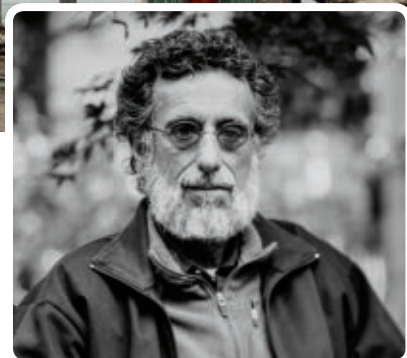
"I think it will help to raise awareness, but at the same time will still be a historic document because some of those same areas are going to be destroyed in the future," Ganis says. It's why he included the elevation and GPS coordinates of each photo location.

Photographing the land has long been a passion for the educator. He got hooked on the idea during a series of road trips in the 1980s, but it wasn't traditional landscape photography that excited him.

"My interest is in how the land is being altered by humans," Ganis says. "It's not as romanticized [as work that glorifies nature], but my work still has a very strong emotional content to it because I feel a strong empathy with what I photograph."

This semester he plans to share with students some of the lessons he's picked up about publishing a fine-art photo book, which he's now done twice.

His first book, *Consuming the American Landscape*, was published in 2003 by Dewi Lewis Publishing in Great Britain and Edition Braus in



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PHOTOS © JOHN GANIS

Germany. That book focused on overdevelopment and how Americans exploit the land for purposes like housing or logging.

George F. Thompson Publishing is behind his newest project, but as is now common for fine-art photo books with small runs, Ganis needs to help cover expenses like printing and designing by paying what's known as a "subvention fee." He's doing that with support from the arts nonprofit Fractured Atlas and through crowdfunding.

"Anybody who has a good idea for a project can get fiscal sponsorship if their work is worthy," he says, adding that photographers can alternatively detour the traditional publishing route by using self-publishing services like Blurb.

It's the kind of encouragement one would expect from someone who says that helping students discover their own creativity is part of why he loves teaching so much. **EDU**

THIS PAGE: Fun Town Amusement Pier, destroyed by Hurricane Sandy. Seaside Park, New Jersey, 2013. Elevation 16 feet, N 39.94122 W 74.07093 (above)

Beach houses after Hurricane Sandy. 959 East Avenue, Mantoloking, New Jersey, March 2013. Elevation 9 feet, N 40.05418 W 74.04623 (left)