

Prix Pictet
29 May–22 Aug 2026
Education Guide

storm

MbCP Museum of
Contemporary
Photography

Columbia
COLLEGE CHICAGO



INTRODUCTION



Above: Patrizia Zelano *Acqua Alta a Venezia #24*, 2019

Cover: Camille Seaman *The Lovely Monster Over the Farm 19:15CST Lodgepole NE, 22 June 2012*, 2012

This guide serves as a supplement to the exhibition *Prix Pictet: Storm* and includes information about the works on view, questions for looking and discussion, activities, and suggested readings. You may learn more about educational programs at MoCP [here](#). To schedule a tour of the exhibition or print viewing with your class, please visit our website.

MoCP is supported by Columbia College Chicago, MoCP Advisory Board, Museum Council, individuals, private and corporate foundations, and government grants. The 2025–2026 exhibition season is sponsored in part by the Comer Family Foundation, Efroymson Family Fund, Henry Nias Foundation, the Phillip and Edith Leonian Foundation, the Pritzker Traubert Foundation, Rowan Foundation, United States Artists, and Venable Foundation. MoCP also acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council and a CityArts grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events.



Founded in 2008
by the Pictet
Group, Prix Pictet

is a global award for photography that brings attention to the intersections of photography and environmental sustainability. The prize foregrounds the role of image-making in shaping public understanding of the climate crisis, with each year organized around a theme that reflects urgent conditions. The 2025 edition, *Storm*, considers the intensifying ecological, social, and political forces that define the present moment.

This exhibition presents the work of twelve artists shortlisted for the 2025 prize. Across geographies and approaches, their projects address the impacts of a rapidly changing climate. Some evoke instability and loss, while others attend to resilience, adaptation, and the potential for transformation. Together, they reflect on the conditions of uncertainty that shape contemporary life and the possibilities that emerge in response.

As stated by the organizers:

“The theme challenges photographers to capture the raw energy and profound consequences of these turbulent times. Whether focusing on the devastation of climate disasters, displacement, or the simmering tensions within divided societies, Storm reveals not only disruption but also the generative force within, the possibility of transformation, renewal, and hope that emerges in its wake.”

ARTISTS

TAKASHI ARAI (Japanese, b. 1978)

MARINA CANEVE (Italian, b. 1988)

TOM FECHT (German, b. 1952)

BALAZS GARDI (Hungarian, b. 1975)

ROBERTO HUARCAYA (Peruvian, b. 1959)

ALFREDO JAAR (Chilean, b. 1956)

BELAL KHALED (Palestinian, b. 1992)

HANNAH MODIGH (Swedish, b. 1980)

BAUDOUIIN MOUANDA (Congolese, b. 1981)

CAMILLE SEAMAN (American, b. 1969)

LAETITIA VANÇON (French, b. 1979)

PATRIZIA ZELANO (Italian, b. 1964)

KEY THEME

The Natural World

Many artists in this exhibition convey an awe at the natural world, and at both tranquil scenes and climate disasters as evidence of nature's perfect design.



Tom Fecht *LUCIFER'S VORTEX (Luciferine #2433)*, 2020, Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Laffanour DOWNTOWN, Paris

Questions for Looking and Discussion:

What comes to mind when you think of the word "storm?" Are there any major weather events that have directly made an impact on your life? What feelings arise for you when you think back on your experiences in these moments?

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHT

Marina Caneve

Val di Zoldo: Destruction #02, 2015–2019

Rather than using photography to document an event, Marina Caneve's project, *Are They Rocks or Clouds?*, asks us to consider what has not yet happened. Based on research into the Dolomites mountain region of Italy and the floods and landslides that struck the region in 1966, the project imagines how such events might happen again in the future. Instead of presenting the mountains as majestic, Caneve creates images that feel uncertain and open to interpretation, encouraging us to look more closely and think about how landscapes change over time. Moving between documentary and poetic approaches, the work highlights both the beauty and fragility of the environment, while also reflecting on the limits of photography itself. By focusing on the area she grew up in and the people who live there, Caneve invites us to also consider our relationship to places in the world that are significant to us and how they are shifting.



EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHT

Roberto Huarcaya

Amazograma # 1, 2014

Over the course of more than two years, Roberto Huarcaya made repeated trips to Bahuaja Sonene National Park in southeastern Peru, working within one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet. Initially intending to photograph the landscape, he shifted instead to working photograms, a camera-less technique. First developed in the nineteenth century, this process relies on light-sensitive paper to register the trace or silhouette of forms that interrupt the exposure to light.

In the forest, Huarcaya placed three scrolls of photographic paper, each extending nearly 30 meters, directly onto the ground beneath the fallen palm tree. While working to expose the paper with a small handheld flash, a tropical storm erupted and four flashes of lightning erupted, exposing the paper. The resulting image records the interplay of light, vegetation, and atmospheric conditions, allowing the surrounding ecosystem to inscribe itself. Through this approach, the artist collaborates directly with nature, and the image emerges through the participation of a living landscape.



Questions for Looking and Discussion:

Consider the way the artist presents this piece as a sculpture in the middle of the gallery. What does the shape of the three-dimensional form remind you of? What might the artist be saying in presenting and mounting the photograph in this way?



Installation view of *Prix Pictet: Storm* at the V&A London. Photograph by David Levene.

KEY THEME

Political Upheaval and Social Unrest

Many of the artists in this exhibition highlight the role humans play in climate change. Specifically, the Prix Pictet organizers state that *Storm* refers to: “the unseen and relentless forces shaping our world today. As a theme, it speaks to the growing volatility of our age, encompassing environmental collapse, political upheaval, economic instability, and social unrest, where we seem forever poised on the brink of the next crisis.”

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHT

Balazs Gardi

1.46 pm, January 6, 2021, Washington, D.C., 2021

Created in the aftermath of the 2020 U.S. presidential election, Balazs Gárdi’s work documents the events of January 6, 2021, as a moment when rising political tension erupted into violence at the United States Capitol. Moving through crowds of protestors and police, Gárdi witnessed scenes marked by confusion and aggression, and his images raise questions about the stability of democratic institutions and the spread of political extremism. Drawing on his background in photojournalism and his experiences growing up in Hungary, Gárdi connects the uprising to broader histories of propaganda and authoritarianism. Through this work, he encourages viewers to reflect on how quickly democratic norms can be challenged, and to consider the broader implications of political unrest both in the United States and beyond.



Questions for Looking and Discussion:

- What details stand out to you most in Gardi’s photographs? Why do you think your eye is drawn there first?
- How do you define propaganda? How does it differ from documentary photography?
- What role could photography play—past, present, or future—in propaganda initiatives?
- How can images challenge or support harmful narratives?

Climate Impacts

Many works in the exhibition present the state of the world now, while speaking to the future of climate change if we do not act accordingly.



Camille Seaman *Tracks through the Field, Kansas, USA, May 2008, 2008*

Questions for Looking and Discussion:

- Is there a risk with making environmental catastrophes look beautiful? Why or why not?
- Jaar chose to print these images small, referring to them as a “visual whisper.” How does scale affect the meaning of the images? How might your visual experience change if the images were large in format?

Alfredo Jaar

The End (GSL_a), 2025



Alfredo Jaar's series, *The End*, centers on the Great Salt Lake, an ecosystem that has been dramatically reduced by decades of water diversion. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the lake has lost much of its water and surface area, exposing toxic dust, increasing salinity, and threatening wildlife, local industries, and public health. The lake sustains wetlands and supports millions of migratory birds, yet scientists warn that without significant intervention, it may disappear altogether.

Jaar creates images that balance beauty and loss, drawing attention to both the lake's importance and its fragile condition. Presented in a small, understated format, the photographs function as a quiet meditation on environmental decline, inviting viewers to reflect on the broader consequences of this crisis.

ACTIVITY

Write a Postcard to a Politician or Agency

You can take action on climate change at the state and local levels by contacting the officials who represent you in government, such as your state senators and representatives, your governor, and local leaders like your mayor or city council members. These officials make key decisions about energy, infrastructure, and environmental protections, meaning they play a major role in shaping climate solutions in your community.

Writing to your representatives is a simple yet powerful way to share your concerns, request specific actions, and participate in the decision-making process. Whether you send a letter, email, or postcard, your message shows that climate action matters to the people they serve. People of all ages are encouraged to take part.

First, choose who you'd like to write to:

Mayor Brandon Johnson
121 N. LaSalle Street, 4th Floor, Chicago, IL 60602

Governor J. B. Pritzker
2760 W 111th St, Chicago, IL 60655

Illinois Environmental Council
520 E Capitol Ave, Springfield, IL 62701

Next, [download our postcard template](#) or [upcycle paper to make your own](#).

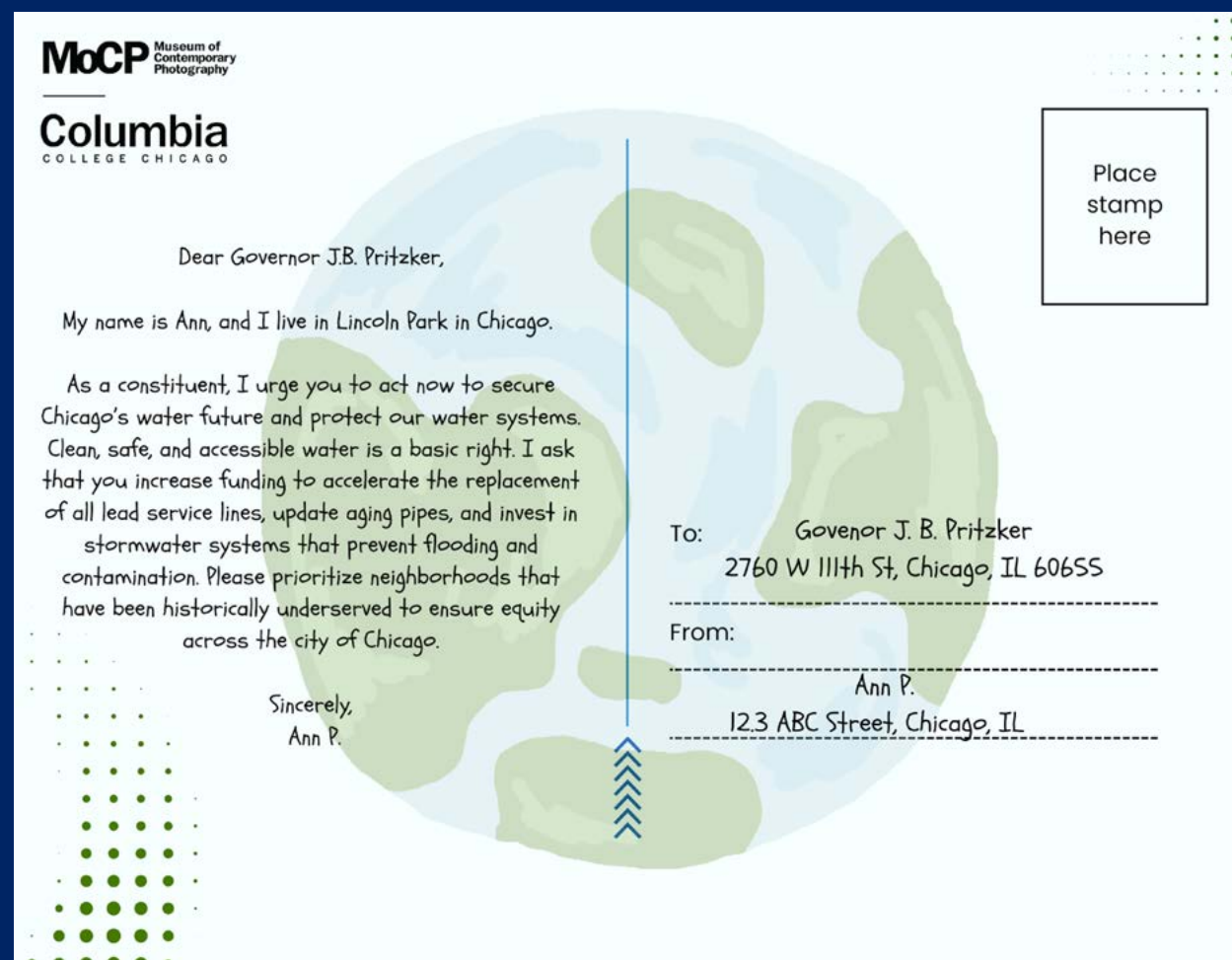
You can use the sample message below as a starting point, but we encourage you to write it out in your own words, adding your perspective, your concerns, or why this issue feels important to you.

Example:

Dear [Insert Official's Name],

My name is [Insert Your Name], and I live in [Insert Your Neighborhood] in Chicago. As a constituent, I urge you to act now to secure Chicago's water future and protect our water systems. Clean, safe, and accessible water is a basic right. I ask that you increase funding to accelerate the replacement of all lead service lines, update aging pipes, and invest in stormwater systems that prevent flooding and contamination. Please prioritize neighborhoods that have been historically underserved to ensure equity across the city of Chicago.

Sincerely,
[Insert Your Name]



ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS GUIDE

This guide supports interdisciplinary learning across Visual Arts, English Language Arts, Social Science, and Social-Emotional Learning. Through close looking, critical discussion, writing, and civic engagement, students develop skills in visual literacy, communication, and analysis of contemporary issues.

VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS

Creating (VA:Cr)

VA:Cr1.1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work

VA:Cr2.1: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work

Students engage in creative thinking through reflective and observational activities, including environmental awareness exercises and responses to photographic processes such as photograms.

Responding (VA:Re)

VA:Re7.1: Perceive and analyze artistic work

VA:Re8.1: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work

VA:Re9.1: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work

Students analyze photographic works, interpret meaning, and consider how visual strategies shape understanding of climate change, politics, and social issues.

Connecting (VA:Cn)

VA:Cn10.1: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art

VA:Cn11.1: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context

Students connect artwork to personal experiences, environmental awareness, and broader global issues, including climate crisis and political unrest.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

Reading Informational Text

RI.6–12.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media

Students interpret visual and written materials, synthesizing information from artworks and exhibition texts.

Speaking and Listening

SL.6–12.1: Engage effectively in collaborative discussions

SL.6–12.4: Present information and supporting evidence clearly

Discussion prompts foster dialogue, critical thinking, and verbal articulation of ideas.

SOCIAL SCIENCES STANDARDS

Civics (SS.CV)

SS.CV.2: Explain the roles and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society

SS.CV.3: Analyze the impact of civic engagement
Students participate in civic action by writing to elected officials and considering the role of institutions in climate policy.

Geography (SS.G)

SS.G.2: Analyze the interaction between humans and the environment

Students examine how climate change affects landscapes, ecosystems, and communities globally.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

Self-Awareness & Self-Management: Develop awareness of personal responses to environmental and social issues through reflection activities.

Social Awareness & Relationship Skills: Consider diverse perspectives and global experiences represented by artists.

Responsible Decision-Making: Engage in thoughtful civic action and evaluate personal and collective responsibility in addressing climate change.

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Tom Fecht *POINT OF NO RETURN* (Luciferine #2492), 2021. From the series *Luciferines – entre chien et loup*
(*Luciferines – Between Dog and Wolf*), 2015–ongoing. Image courtesy of the artist and Laffanour | Galerie Downtown, Paris