



MUSEUM of NORTHERN ARIZONA
Celebrating the Colorado Plateau

Contact:

Kristan Hutchison

Director of Marketing

(928) 774-5211 x273

Cell: 360-265-8357

khutchison@musnaz.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Great Unknown: Artists at Glen Canyon and Lake Powell

The Museum of Northern Arizona welcomes a new exhibit this May

[Flagstaff] The Museum of Northern Arizona (MNA) presents *The Great Unknown: Artists at Glen Canyon and Lake Powell* opening May 7, 2022 and running through November 2022. The exhibition explores different perspectives of the canyon, the dam, and the lake while bringing to light the impacts of human interaction with the natural world.

Featuring work from prominent photographers like Byron Wolfe and Mark Klett, Peter Goin, Greg Mac Gregor, Tad Nichols, Eliot Porter, Martin Stupich, and Todd Webb, the exhibit presents their individual reactions to the beauty of Glen Canyon and the building of the dam as well as their shared experiences.

The exhibit title comes from John Wesley Powell, who led the first US- government expedition down the Colorado River in 1869, calling it “the great unknown”. Powell’s expedition was a step in the development of the West, a process that led eventually to damming the Colorado River at Glen Canyon. Eliot Porter's book *The Place No One Knew: Glen Canyon on the Colorado* was published to protest the building of the Glen Canyon dam and is a touchstone in the exhibition. Featured in the exhibition are stunning photographs of beautiful Navajo Sandstone formations, photographs of the dam and the resulting lake, and much more.

In the mid 1950s and early 1960s, while the dam was being planned and constructed, many artists took river trips through Glen Canyon and fell in love with its beauty. Photographer and filmmaker Tad Nichols originally went on a river trip to film advertisements for a boat company. He returned to Glen Canyon several times with actress and singer Katie Lee, who then spent the rest of her life singing, writing, and speaking out for the river.

---more---

On their trips, Nichols took photos of the group and their favorite places throughout Glen Canyon including photos of the unique Navajo Sandstone formations found throughout the canyon. Landscape photographer Todd Webb also took many trips through Glen Canyon with his good friend Georgia O'Keefe, who became the subject of many of his photographs.

Glen Canyon Dam was built and completed in 1966, flooding and submerging much of Glen Canyon under a reservoir known as Lake Powell. In the early 1990s, the Glen Canyon Dam was the subject of many of Martin Stupich's photographs. His photos show the dam as the architectural and engineering achievement that it was but also as a part of the landscape.

Between 2012 and 2016, Byron Wolfe and Mark Klett used Eliot Porter's book as a guide. While on the lake, they looked for evidence of the places Porter photographed. On one trip, they even measured the distance from their boat to the bottom of the lake. Their photographs heavily critique the legacy of the dam and speculate about the future of the Glen Canyon Dam.

As water levels at Lake Powell drop due to decades of drought, Peter Goin's photographs show the effects of the receding waters. Photographs of Navajo Sandstone stained with a "bathtub ring" and boats left stranded on land are visual markers of the human impact on the environment at Glen Canyon and Lake Powell.

As Lake Powell becomes the topic of national news stories once more, due to the megadroughts and concerns for water in the West, these images of the Glen Canyon are both aesthetically compelling and ecologically relevant.

The Great Unknown: Artists at Glen Canyon and Lake Powell was originally on view at the New Mexico Museum of Art from March 2019 through September 2019, curated by Katherine Ware. This exhibition presents works selected by MNA Curator of Art Alan Petersen from that original, larger exhibition.

#

High-resolution images are available upon request.

Interviews with MNA Fine Arts curator Alan Petersen available upon request.

About the Museum of Northern Arizona: Founded in 1928, the mission of the Museum of Northern Arizona is to inspire a sense of love and responsibility for the beauty and diversity of the Colorado Plateau through collecting, studying, interpreting, and preserving the region's natural and cultural heritage. MNA works in collaboration with native peoples of the Southwest to protect and foster the cultures, traditions, and beliefs of the Colorado Plateau by encouraging artistic expression and supporting, empowering, and educating visitors about the region's art and cultures. The Museum, located at 3101 N. Ft. Valley Rd. in Flagstaff, is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.