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IRON COUNTRY: Photographs of People and Landscapes of the Iron Range

WHAT: IRON COUNTRY

WHEN: Opening Reception: Thursday, June 9, 2016 from 6:00 - 8:00 PM
Exhibition dates: June 9 – September 4, 2016

WHERE: Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota Duluth

Duluth, MN – The Tweed Museum of Art (TMA) at the University of Minnesota Duluth invites you to discover Iron Country, an exhibition about the people and the ever-changing environment of the Iron Range as seen through the lenses of photographer Vance Gellert.

Vance Gellert, a St. Paul native and pharmacologist, has been photographing people and landscapes since the 1970s, including a popular series on fatherhood called CarlVision, a set of portraits of Minnesota artists, a study of South American native healers, and more recently BRIDGE, on the collapse of 35W, which showed at the Mill City Museum in 2012.

Gellert’s interest in the Iron Range started with a project in 2003 in Grand Rapids. In 2011, he returned to “research, interview and photograph this evolving environment.” The photographs taken from Coleraine, Eveleth, Hibbing, Virginia, and other places range from studies of technology, landscapes, and structures, to the personalities and culture which emerged from this region. His study encompasses the intersection of the Ojibwa people who named their region “Mesabi” (meaning “sleeping giant”), the massive mining industry, and the immigrant peoples from 43 nations who came to live and work here since the first shipment of ore left the Lake Vermilion area in 1884.

From the photo of a new housing development perched over a flooded abandoned mine, to the big machines in use, to the plush City Council Chambers in Hibbing, Gellert shows the new landscapes reclaimed by nature as well as the next generation of mine engineers and their new technologies. Athletes, musicians, journalists and union leaders are remembered as well. This exhibit documents what Gellert considers to be “arguably the most important story of Minnesota.” The exhibition is on view at the Tweed Museum of Art from June 9 through September 4, 2016.

About the artist: www.vancegellert.com

About the Museum: www.d.umn.edu/tma
SELECTED IMAGES

Housing Development on Rouchleau Mine, Virginia, 2012

Kavela Finnish Cultural Center, Virginia, 2013
SELECTED IMAGES

Settling Pond, PolyMet Mining, Hoyt Lake, 2012

Zocca Vidovic’ with Hams, Bovey, 2012
SELECTED IMAGES

City Council Chambers, City Hall, Hibbing, 2012
Biography: Vance Gellert

Vance Gellert bought his first camera as he was finishing his graduate studies in pharmacology at the University of Minnesota. He soon realized that the camera was going to give him a more effective voice to address his concerns in medicine. Several years after completing his MFA at Virginia Commonwealth University, he cofounded pARTs Photographic Arts, a nonprofit gallery for photography where he was director and curator for 13 years.

He left the organization in 2003 to pursue his photographic dream of documenting rituals and ceremonies surrounding medical plant use by traditional and shamanic healers in Bolivia and Peru. That culminated in a major exhibition (Smoke and Mirrors) at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. This work continues through his investigations into ceremony and ritual in Western biomedicine. His interest in mindfulness in the healing process has also brought him to teaching yoga.

Other projects include REAL: Artists and Landscapes, about self-taught artists; BRIDGE, a moving project on the survivors and first responders of the 35W Bridge collapse, and the Palmer's Bar Sideshow, on the patrons and musicians of what Esquire magazine labeled the best dive bar in America. His first and favorite body of work is CarlVision, an 11-year project he did with son exploring the emotional rollercoaster, mostly fun, of the father-son relationship. He still curates photography at several venues.

Many of these projects were presented, published, and are in collections nationally and internationally. His work has been supported by numerous grants and fellowships, including National Endowment for the Arts, Minnesota State Arts Board, McKnight Fellowships, Jerome Foundation, Minnesota Legacy Funds, and the Thomas and Edith Peilen Charitable gift fund. His work can be seen at www.vancegellert.com.

Image courtesy of Yoga Sanctuary