Jeanine Michna-Bales

Jeanine Michna-Bales is a fine artist working in the medium of photography. Her work explores our fundamentally important relationships — to the land, to other people and to oneself — and how they impact contemporary society. Her work lives at the intersection of curiosity and knowledge, documentary and fine art, past and present, anthropology and sociology, and environmentalism and activism. Her practice is based on in-depth research — taking into account different viewpoints, causes and effects, political climates — and she often incorporates primary source material into her projects.

Michna-Bales’s latest photographic essay on the American Suffrage Movement, Standing Together: Inez Milholland’s Final Campaign for Women’s Suffrage, was featured in the July/August 2020 summer issue of Smithsonian Magazine and the Arts section of The New York Times. It will be released as a comprehensive publication by MW Editions in May 2021.

A comprehensive publication of the Underground Railroad series, Through Darkness to Light, was released in 2017 by Princeton Architectural Press and includes a foreword by Andrew Young. An accompanying traveling exhibition through Mid-America Arts Alliance is currently touring the country through 2027.

Michna-Bales’s work has been featured in exhibitions throughout the United States at institutions including AIRIE Nest Gallery, Everglades National Park, Homestead, FL; Alexandria Black History Museum, Alexandria, VA; Barrett Art Center, Poughkeepsie, NY; Bell County Museum, Belton, TX; Boone County Public Library, Burlington, KY; Canton Museum of Art, Canton, OH; Center for Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe, NM; Colorado Photographic Arts Center, Denver, CO; Conduit Gallery, Dallas, TX; Denison Museum, Granville, OH; Edition One Gallery Book Store + Project Space, Santa Fe, NM; Evanston Art Center and Evanston History Center, Evanston, IL; Fort Smith Regional Art Museum, Fort Smith, AR; Gregg Museum of Art & Design, Raleigh, NC; Griot Museum of Black History, St. Louis, MO; Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art, Charleston, SC; Houston Center for Photography, Houston, TX; Hunter Museum of American Art, Chattanooga, TN; Indiana University, Bloomington, IN; Jefferson School African-American Heritage Center, Charlottesville, VA; Lehigh University Art Gallery, Bethlehem, PA; Longview Museum of Fine Arts, Longview, TX; LSU Museum of Art, Baton Rouge, LA; Meridian Museum of Art, Meridian, MS; Museum of Contemporary Art, Jacksonville, FL; National Museum of Nuclear Science & History, Albuquerque, NM; Nebula Gallery, University of Texas at Dallas, Richardson, TX; New Orleans Photo Alliance Gallery, New Orleans, LA; Newspace Center for Photography, Portland, OR; Ontario Museum of History and Art, Ontario, CA; Panola College, Carthage, TX; Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR; Portsmouth Art and Cultural Center, Portsmouth, NH; Power Plant Gallery, Durham, NC; Open Society Foundations, New York, NY; Spectra Gallery, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM; Texarkana Regional Arts Center, Texarkana, TX; Texas Women’s University, Denton, TX; The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience, Meridian, Mississippi; The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC; Upcountry History Museum at Furman University, Greenville, SC; West Baton Rouge Museum, Port Allen, LA; and Wyandotte County Historical Society & Museum, Bonner Springs, KS.

She has been invited to present artist talks around the country at schools, symposiums, panel discussions and festivals including Albemarle High School, Charlottesville, VA; Alexandria Black History Museum, Alexandria, VA; Capital One Art Program, Colorado Photographic Arts Center, Denver, CO; Dallas Center for Photography, Dallas, TX; Dallas International School, Dallas, TX; Denison Museum, Granville, OH; Elisabet Ney Museum, Austin, TX; Evanston Art Center and Evanston History Center, Evanston, IL; Everglades National Park, Homestead, FL; Jefferson School African-American Heritage Center, Charlottesville, VA; Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art, Charleston, SC; Houston Center for Photography, Houston, TX; Independent School Association of the Southwest 2018 Arts Festival, Dallas, TX; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; New Orleans Photo Alliance Gallery, New Orleans, LA; Open Society Foundations, New York, NY; Review Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM; Sheldon Peck Homestead,
Lombard, IL; St. Anne's-Belfield School, Charlottesville, VA; St. Tammany Parish Public Library, Slidell, LA; Texas A&M Commerce, Commerce, TX; Texas Women's University, Denton, TX; The Cedars Union, Dallas, TX; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Toronto North Star Festival, Toronto, ON; University of North Texas, Denton, TX; Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY; and Virginia Festival of the Book, Charlottesville, VA.

Michna-Bales's work is in many permanent collections including Archive of Documentary Arts, Duke University, Durham, NC; Everglades National Park, Homestead, FL; Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL; Hunter Museum of American Art, Chattanooga, TN; Lehigh University Art Galleries, Bethlehem, PA; Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Louisiana State University, Hill Memorial Library, Baton Rouge, LA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR; Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ; The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; The University of Texas at Dallas, Richardson, TX; and University of North Texas, Denton, TX.


Including other honors, her work was selected for the 2016 Documentarian of The American South Collection Award from the Archive of Documentary Arts at Duke University. She was awarded the top Portfolio Review Prize at PhotoNOLA 2015, resulting in a solo show at the New Orleans Photo Alliance Gallery during PhotoNOLA 2016. Michna-Bales was named to the Critical Mass Top 50 in 2014 and in 2017.

She conceives and presents her projects in a way that spark curiosity about a given subject and encourage discourse among audiences of all backgrounds. Whether exploring the darkened stations along the Underground Railroad in Through Darkness to Light: Photographs Along the Underground Railroad (2002 - 2016), a campaign trail for women's votes in Standing Together: Inez Milholland's Final Campaign for Women's Suffrage (2016 - 2020), long-forgotten nuclear fallout shelters in Fallout: A Look Back at the Height of the Cold War in America, circa 1960 (2013 - present), or the invisible epicenters of environmental turmoil through the project Terra Fractura: A Visual Survey of Manmade Earthquakes (2015 - present), her work seeks out places that are hidden in plain sight.