

23 Nov. 2015
Press release

***Drowning World* by Gideon Mendel:
A powerful representation of climate change in 20 photos in the heart of Paris.**

From 23 to 29 November 2015, on the eve of the opening of COP21, 20 JCDecaux billboard flags on poles show 20 striking pictures from *Drowning World* in the heart of Paris. They come from 10 'flood response' trips made since 2007, including three this year. This true "outdoor exhibition" is a premiere in Paris for JCDecaux, the world leader in outdoor advertising. The project is supported by the Allianz Group, one of the world leaders in insurance, engaged on climate risks. The Pictet Prize 2015, whose theme is *Disorder*, has shortlisted Gideon Mendel for *Drowning World*: the exhibition takes place at Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris until 13 December 2015 (end of COP21).

"Drowning World is my attempt to explore the effects of climate change in an intimate way, taking us beyond faceless statistics and into the individual experiences of its victims. I began work on Drowning World in 2007 when I photographed two floods that occurred within weeks of each other, one in the UK and the other in India. I was deeply struck by the contrasting impacts of these floods, and the shared vulnerability that seemed to unite their victims.

Since then I have endeavoured to visit flood zones around the world, travelling Haiti, Pakistan, Australia, Thailand, Nigeria, Germany, The Philippines, Bangladesh, Brazil, the USA and returning again to India and the UK recently in search of these commonalities and differences.

The flood is an ancient metaphor, found within the myths and legends of many cultures. It represents an overwhelming, destructive force that renders humanity powerless in its wake and leaves us seeking refuge. As global warming drives an increasing number of extreme flooding events each year, this message continues to resonate."

Gideon Mendel was born in 1959 in South Africa. He now lives in London.

After studies of psychology and African History at the University of Cape Town, he started photography in the 1980s during the final years of apartheid. This is his "struggle photography" which then brought his work to the world's attention. Mendel won the Eugene Smith Award for Humanistic Photography, six World Press Photo Awards and the Amnesty International Media Award for photojournalism.

Drowning World Paris is a core project of the initiative *Artists4ParisClimate2015*, which not only aims to mobilize public opinion around climate change, through interventions in public space by major international artists, but also act for climate: on 9 December, a charity auction will be conducted at Christie's Paris. Each artwork will support a different UN selected NGO project to combat desertification and climate change. www.artists4parisclimate2015.com/

Jacques Richier, CEO of Allianz France *"Last October, we had to face a major weather event in south-eastern France. This is the intimate look beyond insurance statistics, which make the photographs of Gideon Mendel so intense. Events of this nature will be repeated. We must learn from it. We need an ambitious climate action. "*



Allianz, one of the leading insurance companies worldwide, offers a complete range covering all insurance needs, assistance and financial services for individuals, professionals, companies and communities. Allianz is present in over 70 countries serving 85 million customers. General insurer, heritage and social protection specialist, Allianz France relies on the expertise and dynamism of its 10,500 employees in France. Nearly 7,000 commercial intermediaries, agents, consultants, brokers, partners are present to provide quality advice to 5 million customers who rely on Allianz France.

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Jean-Charles Decaux, JCDecaux General Co-Director *"For over 50 years, JCDecaux's mission is to experience art in the city and make it accessible to the greatest number. We are delighted to stage in Paris the "Drowning World" exhibition and contribute to public awareness of the consequences of global warming."*

JCDecaux, No. 1 worldwide in outdoor advertising, is today present in over 70 countries and 3 700 cities of more than 10 000 inhabitants. It all started in 1964 by a simple idea: installing free street furniture in cities in exchange for exclusive commercial exploitation of prime locations. For over 50 years, JCDecaux's products are considered as the benchmark for quality, aesthetics and functionality. Thanks to the expertise of its employees, the quality of the Group's services, including cleaning and maintenance, is recognized worldwide by the cities, airport authorities and transport, as well as advertisers. www.jcdecaux.com

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Chinta and Samundri Davi
Salempur Village near Muzaffarpur, Bihar, India
August 2007



Jeff and Tracey Waters
Staines-upon-Thames, Surrey, The UK
February 2014

Photographs of the 2 sides of billboard flags JCDecaux
Quai du Louvre / Pont du Carrousel, Paris
23 au 29/11/15

