

Edward Burtynsky - Clip 8

Frackville, Pennsylvania

In 1981, I'd... I went on a trip and then I was driving all through the east coast of the United States, all the way down into Virginia and up through Pennsylvania. And at one point, I... and I was doing mostly the pristine landscape, trying to explore and build on that image that I took of the grasses on that one Easter weekend in '81, up around the Great Bruce Peninsula.

And I was doing some things, and I was kind of excited about it, but at a certain point I found, on the way back, that I'd gotten lost, and I had to cut across an area that I wasn't familiar with, and it was... it happened to be a very large coal mining area in Pennsylvania.

And I end in this town called Frackville and on the outskirts of this town there were these coal slag hills. And I stopped the car and got out and kind of stood on this one high point and looked around as far as I could see and there was nothing that was natural. It was all converted into this coal mining area. And these new birches were punching through these coal slag hills. And there was this very surreal quality to that space. And I took some photographs of it, and didn't think much of them, and they kind of sat as contacts for about a year.

And then I decided to print some up, and that's when a light went on saying "I think this is my next thing to go out and photograph mines".

