

Third Floor Gallery

Press Release

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Open: Wed-Sun from 12 to 6pm

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Carolyn Drake: *Paradise Rivers*

17 July to 22 August, 2010

Opening Night Preview: Friday 16th July from 7pm

Cardiff Bay's Third Floor Gallery with support from the School of Arts, Design & Media, Newport University will be displaying from mid July to late August *Paradise Rivers*, the latest photographic essay of Carolyn Drake.

The Amu and Syr Darya are mentioned in early Islamic writings as two of the four Rivers of Paradise. The flow of their waters has sustained human life for forty thousand years, providing pastures for herders, irrigation for farmers, and enabling the development of culture, trade, language and literature. Wars and imperial conquests followed over the centuries. During the twentieth century, the Soviet government transformed the Amu and the Syr Darya into a web of irrigation canals that brought large scale cotton production to the region. Such large quantities of water were diverted that the Aral Sea - once the world's fourth largest inland sea - began to disappear. When Moscow's rule ended in 1991, five new Central Asian nations appeared, burdened with plunging economies, artificial borders, and a growing ecological crisis.

Paradise Rivers follows the rivers from their source in the valleys of the Pamir and Tien Shen mountains, downstream across Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan to their dwindling ends, crossing into the lives of people and layers of history that they intersect along the way. This is a place where the connection between the earth and human life, and between the past and the present, is at once plainly visible and complex. Salty sea has become toxic desert, desert is farmland, and people are left to subsist between the cracks of history.

Carolyn Drake is an American documentary photographer based in Turkey. Her work is regularly published in international magazines such as National Geographic and Time, and her accolades include a World Press Photo Award and five Picture of the Year International Awards. In 2008 she was awarded a Lange Taylor Prize, and currently she is continuing her work in Central Asia on a Guggenheim Fellowship.



