

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Daylight

“It is alright to decorate construction, but never construct decoration.”
—Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, architect of Big Ben

FAUXLIAGE

Disguised Cell Phone Towers of the American West
By **Annette LeMay Burke**

Foreword by Ann M. Jastrab
Essay by Annette LeMay Burke



Online Artist Talk and Book Launch:
Annette LeMay Burke
Fauxliage

Center for Photographic Art, San Carlos and 9th, Carmel, CA 93921
Friday, May 7, 1:00-2:00pm PST, for more information, go [here](#).

American photographer Annette LeMay Burke first stumbled upon a cell phone tower masquerading as a tree in the early 2000s. Even living in her native Silicon Valley in Northern California surrounded by technology, she thought the tree looked out of place. This first encounter with a decorated tower sparked her interest. From 2015-2020 she embarked on a series of road trips across the American West to document these strange manmade creations allegedly built to minimize visual pollution by blending in with the environment.

“While I was initially drawn to the towers’ whimsical appearances, the more I photographed them, the more disconcerted I felt that technology was clandestinely modifying our environment,” she writes in her essay in the book. “I began to explore how this manufactured nature had imposed a contrived aesthetic in our neighborhoods ... I dubbed the series *Fauxliage*.”

Fauxliage (Daylight, May, 2021) gathers together sixty-six of Burke’s beautifully rendered photographs of an iconic Western landscape now populated by a quirky mosaic of cell phone towers pretending to be palm trees, evergreens, cacti, flagpoles, clock towers and crosses.

Burke found her subjects by scanning the horizon while driving on the freeway, combing the Internet, and asking the locals to direct her to the strangest tower in town. The majority of the photographs were taken in California, Arizona, and Nevada; with a couple shot in New Mexico, Hawaii, Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah. While Burke never spotted a bird’s nest in a tower, she photographed turkey vultures, falcons, red-winged blackbirds, seagulls, and a peacock amid the counterfeit trees.



Vegas Strip, Henderson, NV Fauxliage / Three Saguaros, Phoenix, AZ

Ann M. Jastrab, executive director of the Center for Photographic Art (CPA) in Carmel, California, who contributes the book's Foreword, met Burke when the *Fauxliage* project was in its early stages of development and immediately fell in love with it. She writes:

"The trees looked part of the landscape: a tall palm overlooking a line of U-Haul trucks, or a eucalyptus just hanging out next to the side of the road. Other times, they were so cleverly hidden, I gasped. The Holy Trinity at the local church is really three cell phone towers? I'm not religious, but this might be a form of blasphemy. Or genius, as the cell phone companies are paying the church good money to plant those there."

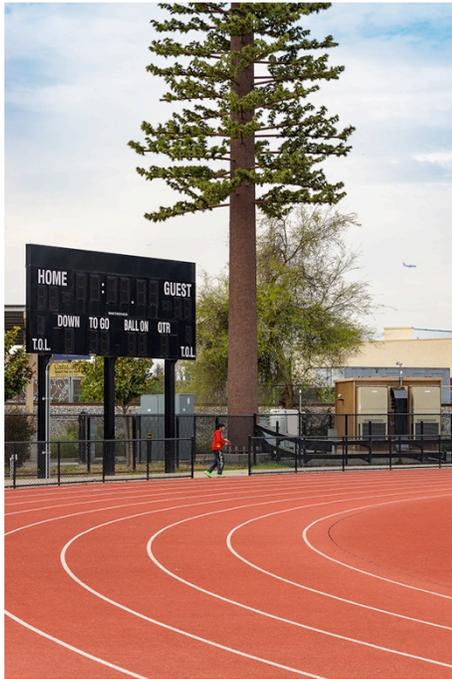


The Middle Cross, Mesa, AZ / Snowfall, Provo, UT

The often-whimsical tower disguises so artfully documented by Burke belie the equipment's covert ability to collect valuable personal data transmitted from our cell phones. This poses the question: how much of our privacy are we willing to sacrifice in exchange for better connectivity? In addition to privacy issues these towers also pose a threat to the environment. Burke writes that "... the leaves drop off the fake trees due to weather and aging. They litter the surrounding area and small pieces can easily enter the ecosystem."



As the fifth generation (5G) of cellular technology continues to roll out, new cell phone towers will be smaller and more inconspicuous—think antennas integrated into the tops of streetlight poles. As a result, the elaborately disguised “fauxliage” towers documented in Burke’s book may start disappearing as they join drive-up photo kiosks, phone booths, newsstands, and drive-in movie theaters as architectural relics of the past.



High School Track, San Lorenzo, CA / Palm in Winter, Calimesa, CA

All photographs in this press release are copyright Annette LeMay Burke

About the Photographer:

Annette LeMay Burke is an award-winning photographic artist and Northern California native who lives in the heart of Silicon Valley. She is a longtime observer of the evolution of the western landscape. She took her first darkroom class while earning a BA in Earth Science from the University of California at Berkeley. Her photographic practice now focuses on how we interact with the natural world, the landscapes constructed by the artifacts of technology, and the more intangible artifacts (memories) that are created throughout our lives. Her work has been exhibited in the US and internationally at institutions such as Academy of Art Museum, Center for Photographic Art, Colorado Photographic Arts Center, Griffin Museum of Photography, Texas Photographic Society, The Center for Fine Art Photography, SE Center for Photography, Photographic Center Northwest, and FotoNostrum Gallery in Barcelona, Spain. In 2017, she was a finalist for Photolucida’s Critical Mass. In 2020 she was a finalist for the UK’s AOP Open Award Series and in 2021 she was a winner of the Imago Lisboa Photo Festival in Lisbon, Portugal.

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