

KYW News Radio

1Thing: Artist with a conscience

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By Rasa Kaye

PHILADELPHIA (KYW Newsradio) — Philadelphia artist-activist [Diane Burko](#) works at the intersection of art and the environment. She calls herself an artist with a conscience, and while she's not trying to reinvent landscape painting, she is hoping to make you appreciate the glories of nature she portrays in a new, urgent light.

"I feel a responsibility to the landscape, to our environment, so that I'm trying to imbue what I make to have more than just a beauty angle, more than just attracting you to look at these big large paintings about color or whatever," Burko explained after a lecture recently at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. "I want you to get some information, so that I'm integrating information into these images."

That information comes from research and meetings with scientists as well as her own expeditions to extreme climates. "I read, I go to conferences, I'm always following what's going on in terms of geology and research, but it's also a practice based on bearing witness. It's not enough to just learn intellectually, I need to learn experientially," she said.

Burko's resulting paintings, [photography](#), and video are [multi-layered images](#) meant to further the conversation about climate change. Her work's been shown all over our region and the world, and her current multi-media exhibition at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C., is called "[Endangered: From Glaciers to Reefs](#)."

"I don't think you can exist in the 21st century without having a conscience about the context that you're living in, about the world that we have created, and about the world that we can still have if we change the trajectory," she said.