

The Honorary Graduate: Mark Edwards

The Orator: Professor James Longhurst

Mark Edwards is to be awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Arts

Mark was educated at Sibford Quaker School. Undiagnosed dyslexia coupled with a great curiosity made for uneven progress through school and a determination to find his own way in the world.

Fortunately, he discovered the magic of photography and went to Guildford School of Art in 1965. This was an extraordinary time to be a student. A surge of creativity expressed in music, the arts and science swept away the lingering constraints that held society to post-war values. A feeling that you could do anything if you are really determined has stayed with Mark throughout his life.

After leaving art school Mark drove to India - the start of a 30-year journey to over 100 countries living with and photographing people at the sharp end of the environmental debate.

His photographs were extensively published by emerging environmental organizations: Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, International Institute for Environment and Development as well as the United Nations. One of the most widely published photographers in the world, his pictures are collected and exhibited by museums and art galleries in Europe and the US and by private collectors.

In 1985, he established the photo agency Still Pictures. A thousand photographers around the world supplied the agency with images that established Still Pictures as the leading source of photographs illustrating environmental issues and nature.

In 2006, he produced Hard Rain exhibition, a collaboration with Bob Dylan. It shows how global problems are linked by cause and effect and need to be tackled together. Hard Rain is one of the most successful environmental exhibitions ever created, attracting an audience of some 15 million people around the world. WHOLE EARTH? followed in 2010. It offers solutions in the areas of climate, energy, fresh water, oceans and agriculture, but also in areas such as human rights and economic decision making. And it gets personal. It asks students, tutors and universities to respond and say what they are going to do to make society much more sustainable.

Mark has presented his illustrated talk to parliamentarians in Europe, to the National Assembly of Cuba, at the UN, in prisons, to IPCC scientists, activists and climate-change doubters, to companies and corporations, and at leading festivals including Hay-on-Wye; T in the Park and Hove Festival in Norway.

The United Nations added Mark's name to the Global 500 Roll of Honour in 1990, and the Royal Geographic Society awarded him the Cherry Kearton Medal at the Earth Summit in 1992. In 2009 The Royal Photographic Society awarded Mark and Bob Dylan the Terence Donovan Award.

The Honorary Degree is awarded in recognition of Mark Edward's commitment to communicating sustainability challenges through the medium of photography and via the Hard Rain and WHOLE EARTH? exhibitions.