

*Drowning World* Portrait Project  
Takes Over Subway Station for Scotiabank CONTACT

Toronto – April 2014 – PATTISON Onestop is pleased to present *Drowning World* by **Gideon Mendel**, transforming Toronto’s Queen’s Park subway station into a unique exhibition space for Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival. The exhibition also threads throughout the city’s subway system, capturing the attention of more than one million daily commuters on Pattison Onestop screens from May 1 - 31, 2014.

An official public installation of Scotiabank CONTACT, Toronto’s annual photography festival, the 8<sup>th</sup> annual *Contacting Toronto* features London-based, South African photographer **Gideon Mendel**’s portraits of people whose lives have been devastated by floods, an experience that erases political, geographical and cultural divides. The exhibition also includes images of flooded landscapes and personal spaces, as well as excerpts from his *Water* videos, which capture people navigating their lives in the midst of recent floodwaters.

"Public installations of *Drowning World* are very important to me. Reaching such a large audience and exhibiting in a public space where people are not generally expecting an art experience may prove to be more effective in prompting conversation and social awareness about climate change than a traditional exhibition venue," said artist Gideon Mendel.

*Drowning World* is an art project with photojournalistic roots, which Gideon Mendel began in 2007 as a response to climate change. This long-term effort spans 9 countries to date: the UK, India, Haiti, Pakistan, Australia, Thailand, Nigeria, Germany and the Philippines. The project is grounded in the artist’s belief that depicting the individuality of the victims will counter a tendency to view them as faceless statistics.

Exhibition curator Sharon Switzer responds to this year’s Festival theme, *Identity*, with the assertion that Mendel’s images offer an opportunity to ponder human vulnerability and the idea of a shared identity drawn across cultures.

"I am excited to be presenting the first major Canadian exhibition of *Drowning World* in such a well-travelled public space as the Toronto transit system. I hope Mendel’s powerful collection of photographs and videos truly affects commuters and elicits an emotional response to this very serious shared reality," said Sharon Switzer, National Arts Programmer and Curator, PATTISON Onestop.

Mendel’s *Drowning World* surrounds the viewer within the massive underground gallery that Switzer has created using PATTISON print media in the Queen’s Park subway station. Twenty-six large subway posters featuring portraits of flood victims from Mendel’s international project are positioned along the tunnels, and sixteen smaller posters depicting flooded homes and landscapes line the stairwells. The exhibition also exclusively fills the PATTISON Onestop digital screens with the artist’s *Water* videos,

without interruption from news and ads for the entire month. ***Drowning World*** also appears throughout the rest of the subway system with *Water* clips playing all month on the entire network of PATTISON Onestop digital platform screens.

***Contacting Toronto: Drowning World*** is a part of Pattison Onestop's ongoing Art in Transit programme and is one of four projects PATTISON is sponsoring this year at Scotiabank CONTACT.

“We hope the immersive experience offered by PATTISON Onestop's *Contacting Toronto: Drowning World* initiates conversation and that our partnership with CONTACT emphasizes the vital role played by the arts in the social, economic and educational fabric of our community,” said Randy Otto, President, PATTISON Outdoor Advertising. “PATTISON recognizes the importance of private sector investment in culture and is proud to support four unique Scotiabank CONTACT exhibitions this year.”

Gideon Mendel is regarded as a leading contemporary photographer engaged with advocacy and collaborative projects involving a mix of photography and video. Most recently, Mendel's ***Drowning World*** was part of *A Different Kind of Order: The ICP Triennial*, a global survey of contemporary photography and video; featured in ICP's *Picture Windows*, a site-specific, large-scale installation that occupied the museum's 43rd street windows, International Centre of Photography, New York, NY, USA (May - Sept. 2013); as part of the series shown at Somerset House, London, UK (May - June 2012) and *Lost World: Video Art* by Charles Lim and Gideon Mendel will be the inaugural exhibition at the Sackler International Gallery, Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. (May 24 - July 6, 2014). ***Contacting Toronto: Drowning World*** is Mendel's first major Canadian exhibition.

For a selection of ***Drowning World*** images, Gideon Mendel's bio and additional information, visit the exhibition website at [www.contactingtonto.ca](http://www.contactingtonto.ca).

***Contacting Toronto: Drowning World*** is co-produced by PATTISON Onestop and Art for Commuters in partnership with Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival.

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**Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival** – [www.scotiabankcontactphoto.com](http://www.scotiabankcontactphoto.com)  
Photography Festival is an annual event in May, devoted to celebrating, and fostering the art and profession of photography, through a diverse range of programmes. As a leading proponent of photography, the Festival increases exposure and recognition for local, Canadian, and international artists and is committed to advancing knowledge, creativity, and innovation in photography. It stimulates excitement and discussion among a diverse audience that has grown to over 1.8 million. CONTACT is the largest photography event in the world, and a premiere cultural event in Canada.

**PATTISON Onestop** – [www.pattisononestop.com](http://www.pattisononestop.com) – **@onestopmedia**  
PATTISON Onestop, a division of PATTISON Outdoor Advertising, Canada's largest

Out-of-Home advertising company serving 200 markets coast-to-coast, is a world leader in the development and operation of Digital Out-of-Home Media (DOOH) for mass transit, mall, retail, hospitality, residential, office, and outdoor environments. Art in Transit represents PATTISON Onestop's ongoing arts and culture programme.

**Art in Transit – [www.artintransit.ca](http://www.artintransit.ca) – @ArtTransit**

Art in Transit represents PATTISON Onestop's ongoing arts and culture programme, presenting thought-provoking projects that enhance our shared environment and transport commuters, shoppers and city-dwellers, if only momentarily, out of their daily routines.

**Art for Commuters - [www.art4commuters.com](http://www.art4commuters.com) – @art4commuters**

Art for Commuters was founded in 2007 and brings over 100 artworks per year to the Pattison Onestop subway platform screens through 3 annual projects: the Toronto Urban Film Festival, Contacting Toronto, and DRIFT. Art for Commuters offers a wide range of contemporary artistic voices, including photographers, filmmakers, video artists, and animators, the opportunity to showcase their work in the public spaces frequented by urban travelers. Art for Commuters other collective members are Jean-Paul Kelly, Lori Newdick, and Claire Sykes.

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