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6ABC LOVES THE ARTS: PHILLY ART MUSEUM ENTERS THE WILD

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The Philadelphia Museum of Art is taking a walk on the wild side with the first major exhibition dedicated to world-renowned wildlife photographer Michael Nichols.

The award-winning photographer's work has taken him to some of the world's most remote areas.

In this exhibition, titled Wild, he gives viewers an up close look at creatures in their natural habitats, with the hopes of expanding conservation efforts.

Nicknamed Nick, Nichols began his career as a photographer for National Geographic and his work spans nearly 40 years.

"Early in my career, I was called 'Nick Danger: The Indiana Jones of photography' because I was doing so many, what we would perceive as dangerous expeditions-climbing, caving, rafting," says Nichols.

Curator Peter Barberie says the appeal of Nichols' pictures is simple, "he's documenting real animals in real places."

In one image, he captured primate expert Jane Goodall with Gregoire, the chimpanzee, held in solitary confinement in an African zoo for 45 years.

"He'd gone blind and hairless," says Nichols. "So Jane and I go into the cage with this animal that's never been touched and it was an incredible moment."

Some of his images came easy like his shot of a silverback lowland gorilla in Congo.

"I made that picture five minutes after I got there and never made one better," says Nichols.

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But others, like his 1996 photo of a tiger in India literally jumping into the lens, took much more patience.

"That camera was there for three months. We got one picture in three months and he's jumping into the lens; it's a miracle."

The show is a combination of Nichols' photographs and depictions of nature from the museum's permanent collection and, Barberie says, the exhibition is designed to motivate viewers to action.

"I hope that everybody who leaves this show will be galvanized to really contribute to making the wild world exist and thrive."

"We cannot look at the planet like we have another one to go to later." adds Nichols. "We've got to take care of this one."