

PRESS RELEASE

There Is Gas under the Tundra

Photographs by **Charles XELOT**

11 March – 18 April 2020

Opening: Tuesday 10 March, 6 – 9 PM



Gregory and the Factory, 2018
Pigment print on Hahnemühle Fine Art paper
©Charles Xelot courtesy galerie Sit Down

Charles Xelot's series, *There Is Gas Under the Tundra*, which has won awards in France and abroad, is exhibited in its entirety for the first time in Paris.

These photographs document the new frontier crossed for the consumer needs of Western society. We have entered the anthropocene, a geological era where all natural phenomena are influenced by man. Man became the devout servant of technology, for which he built temples and totem poles.

There Is Gas Under the Tundra (2016 - 2018)

There is gas under the tundra is a long term project of massive scale. During three polar winters, Charles Xelot explored the Arctic industry of gas production in the Yamal Peninsula, Russia. This photographic series illustrates humanity's appetite for energy and the realities of its gargantuan production. The barren tundra, which was once traversed by herds of reindeer and their herders, the Nenets, is now filled with pipes and flares. Tankers and ice-breakers navigate along the coast, illuminating the night.

We see a bizarre world of ice and metal, a world that sometimes resembles something alien. The endless tundra acts as a theatrical stage for a fantastic play that tells about the modern civilization. Views inside enormous, futuristic factories are juxtaposed with stark images of unforgiving polar landscapes and portraits of the reindeer herders, known as the Nenets. In this environment, even light itself seems to take on a new quality.

From the language of the Nenets, the word 'Yamal' is translated as 'the end of the earth'. Indeed, this work shows what may be the last frontier to explore, the last land to exploit.

In Yamal, all excesses appear more clearly than anywhere else. Here, side by side, all the boundaries coexist together between space and time, between land and ice, between the Neolithic man and his present tribesman. These photos, in the end, put before everyone the main question: Where is the limit to the human civilization?

— **There Is Gaz Under the Tundra** —

Charles Xelot

The Yamal Peninsula in the Russian Arctic is home to one of the world's largest gas deposits. The most ambitious industrial project in the Far North is under construction on the edge of the peninsula. This plant will extract gas from the tundra. This gas will be liquefied and shipped by sea all over the world. However, the Yamal peninsula is also the territory of one of the world's last nomadic populations: the Nenets. In this hostile environment, the human ecosystem is simple: large industries, small villages and reindeer herders. The changes in the region are a metaphor for the global situation. This set of works examines the alterations caused to the environment by mankind's energy needs.

Fire is an ancestral technique. Today it allows us to cook, heat our homes and drive our cars. In order to find fuel, mankind is constantly pushing back the geographical limits of the exploitation of natural resources. Gas is a fuel considered by many as the tool for a smooth transition from the oil era to the renewable energy era. However, the increase in production requires the exploitation of new territories which, for technical reasons, were previously virgin. For example, at the northern end of the Eurasian continent, companies have started to extract gas from frozen ground.

Within a few years, the local populations saw their environment radically changed: a huge factory was built on the tundra. Pastures have been destroyed, the amount of fish in the rivers has decreased and the landscape has transformed. As compensation, the people receive material aid ranging from fuel for snowmobiles to the construction of schools in the villages. Jacques Ellul wrote that every technique has its "price to pay": "In order to preserve our comfort, must we damage the environment of distant populations? Are we, like the Nenets, helpless witnesses to the destruction of nature and the mortgaging of our future?"

In the territories of the developed countries, questions relating to the direction of the development of capitalist civilisation and its relationship to the environment are often abstract. The relocation of industry conceals the reality of the infrastructure necessary to maintain the modern way of life. In Yamal this reality is visible. On the immaculate white tundra, huge machines appear, symbolizing the growing hold of man on his environment. In the remotest places of our planet the environment is being radically changed.

BIOGRAPHY

Charles Xelot was born in 1985 in France. He lives and works between Paris and Moscow. For several years Charles Xelot has been interested in the notion of limits and boundaries. He draws parallels and symmetries between usually distinct fields and questions the world of industry in its relationship with man.

After a scientific training, he began his photographic practice as a self-taught photographer. He became assistant to Ahmet Ertug who introduced him to 8x10 camera shooting, book making and printing. He is indeed passionate about designing art books and has collaborated with several foundations, Neva in Geneva or Timchenko in Moscow. His work is regularly exhibited and published in magazines such as The British Journal of Photography, Greenpeace magazine or Le Figaro magazine. Her curious practice leads her to explore social and environmental changes from the ends of the world, on the margins of documentary and contemporary photography.

AWARDS

- 2019 Winner "Bourse du talent" award, Landscape category, Paris, France
Winner ZOOM award, Salon de la Photo, Paris, France
Runner-up at the "Prix Régnier pour la création", FotoFest Paris, France
- 2018 Prix Albert-Kahn finalist
AFAR photography award
Best emerging photographer by Lensculture
Discovery award, Encontros da Imagem
Winner editorial photography, TIFA
- 2017 Winner editorial photography, MIFA
Winner Environment editorial category, IPA
Shortlisted at Meitar award for Excellence in photography, Tel Aviv
- 2014 Award in "Beaux-Livres" category "La Nuit du livre", Paris

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 *There Is Gaz Under the Tundra*, galerie Sit Down, Paris, France
JART gallery, Moscow, Russia
- 2019 *Sabetta*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art (MMOMA), Moscow, Russia
There Is Gaz Under the Tundra UNSEEN (galerie Sit Down), Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2016 *The Holy Abodes of the Russian Soul*, Winzavod Art Center, Moscow
Tykkylumi, Atelier 55 gallery, Mégève, France
- 2015 *Tykkylumi*, la Cité radieuse Le Corbusier, Marseille, France
- 2014 *Etats de mer*, 6 j'avais su, Marseille, France
- 2013 *Oil Terminal*, Galerie Cimaise, Geneva, Switzerland
Russian Forest, Galerie Cimaise, Geneva, Switzerland
- 2011 *Forest*, Galerie Le Village, Geneva, Switzerland

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 *Les usages du monde*, gare Saint-Sauveur, Lille
- 2019 "Les Photautumnales" festival, Beauvais, France
Ligne de rupture, "Bourse du talent" award exhibition, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF), Paris, France
ZOOM, salon de la photo, Paris, France
PPP, Phnom Penh Photo festival, Cambodia
DIPE photo festival, Dali, China
- 2018 Arte Laguna, Venezia, Italy
Projection at MOPLA, Los Angeles, USA
Projection at Voix Off festival, Arles, France
Encontros da Imagem, Braga, Portugal
- 2017 *Arctic*, Atelier 55 gallery, Megève, France
Monastery, Tverska Boulevard, Moscow, Russia
IS:RAEL Photo festival, Tel Aviv, Israël
- 2013 Photographical installation, Orangerie de Vandoeuvres, Switzerland
- 2012 Museum of the Borusan collection, Istanbul, Turkey
- 2010 *Gallargues-le-Montueux*, Galerie Cimaïse, Genève, Switzerland

BOOKS AND CATALOGUES

- 2019 *Sabetta*,
- 2017 *Resurrection*, Les éditions du Cerf, Paris, France
- 2016 *Forêts*, Editeur Jean-Fabien G. Phinera
- 2015 *Valaam Monastery*
- 2014 *The Holy Abodes of the Russian Soul*, Fondation Neva et Le Cherche-midi
- 2010 *Terminal*

SELECTED ARTICLES AND REVIEWS

- Snoeck Magazine, Belgium, January 2020
- Newsweek China, October 2019
- ICON magazine, Italy, September 2019
- Domus Magazine, March 2019
- National Geographic web, March 2019
- Wired America and Japan, web, March 2019
- Greenpeace Magazine, February 2019
- British Journal of photography, January 2019
- FotoMAGAZIN XXL, September 2018
- Catalogue Arte Laguna Venezia 2018
- "Russian Monasteries", text by J.-C. Buisson, Le figaro Magazine, France, November 2014

PRESS MATERIALS UPON REQUEST



Nenets Family, 2016
Pigment print on Hahnemühle Fine Art paper
©Charles Xelot courtesy galerie Sit Down

galerie

**SIT
DOWN**

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Flare, Sabetta, 2017

Pigment print on Hahnemühle Fine Art paper

©Charles Xelot courtesy galerie Sit Down



Citerne d'un tanker brise-glace destinée au transport de gaz naturel liquéfié, 2016
Pigment print on Hahnemühle Fine Art paper
©Charles Xelot courtesy galerie Sit Down

galerie

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Valves, 2016
Pigment print on Hahnemühle Fine Art paper
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Galerie SIT DOWN

Established in Le Marais area in Paris, close to the Picasso Museum, SIT DOWN gallery was founded by Françoise Bornstein in 2005 and is a member of the French "Comité Professionnel des Galeries d'Art".

Since 2013, the gallery has been entirely devoted to photography, and its programming consists primarily of documentary and fine-art photography. The gallery aims to showcase young emerging photographers and support renowned international photographers such as Tom Wood, Yan Morvan, and Sacha Van Dorssen.

In addition to organizing personal exhibitions, Françoise Bornstein invites curators to participate in exhibition projects during special events or art fairs.

Through artist representation, SIT DOWN gallery has established itself as a major figure in documentary photography and opens its doors to the creativity of young photographers who bring new vision to this medium.

Françoise Bornstein is also a nominee for the Niépce prize and an expert at the Photo Folio Review of The Rencontres d'Arles.

REPRESENTED PHOTOGRAPHERS

Aurore Bagarry
Gilles Coulon
Olivier Culmann
Catherine Henriette
Jean-Gabriel Lopez
Marie Maurel de Maillé
Sandra Mehl
Robert McCabe
Yan Morvan
Salvatore Puglia
Alisa Resnik
Florian Ruiz
Silvi Simon
Chantal Stoman
Sacha van Dorssen
Laure Vasconi
Tom Wood
Charles Xelot

INFORMATION

There Is Gaz Under the Tundra

Photographs by **Charles Xelot**

March 11 – April 18 2020

Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, 2-7 pm and by appointment

galerie Sit Down

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Visuels presse sur demande

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