

Tropic Ice_Dialog between Places Affected by Climate Change

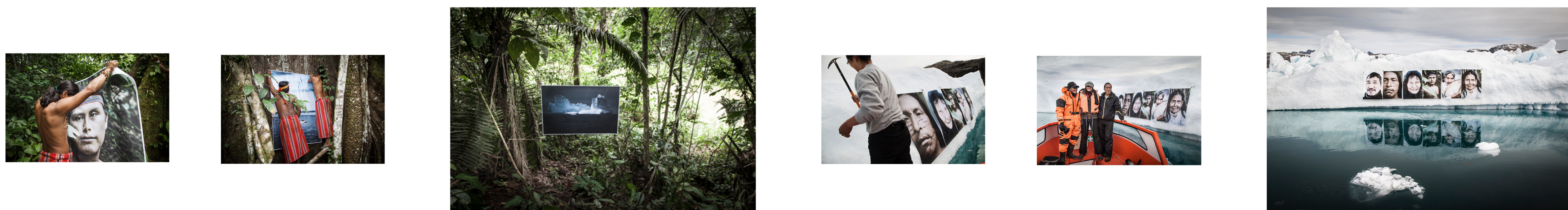
Man-made climate change not only poses a massive threat to nature, ecosystems and biodiversity, but above all to people themselves. This is the essential theme of my photo art project "Tropic Ice_Dialogue between Places Affected by Climate Change", which I started in 2010 and worked on for over 10 years.

In order to give people a face and to show that everything is connected to everything else, I went to climate-relevant places on all five inhabited continents and visited indigenous peoples who live in the tension between tradition and modernity and whose habitat is threatened by external influences.

However, I do not want to show catastrophes, but rather the people themselves. The people who are representative of their continents and climates in my work are the Inuit of East Greenland, the Achuar and Shuar in the Amazon rainforest of Ecuador, Mongolian nomads in the Gobi desert, the Maasai of Tanzania and the Micronesian people of the island nation of Kiribati in the fragile world of the South Pacific.

In the first few years, I travelled exclusively to Greenland and Amazonia. Through several stays, the idea of an exhibition installation formed on site. With large-format textile banners, I set out to bring the images of the Inuit, the Achuar and Shuar in the Amazon rainforest and in the ice of the Arctic into a new context. These two installations allowed me to create symbolic images that illustrate the climate crisis in a new and powerful way, connecting the people depicted and building a bridge between the two regions.

For my installations, I deliberately chose a material made of light textile that is exposed to the climatic conditions in nature. Wind and rain have left their marks on the works. The aspect of the images slowly being destroyed by the influences of nature is meant to symbolise in a haunting way our vulnerability as part of all life.



America_Amazon Rainforest in Ecuador:

I visited the Achuar in Sharametsa on the Rio Pastaza, near the Peruvian border. There are about 18,500 Achuar living in Ecuador and Peru. They used to be warlike hunters and originally lived in individual family clans in the forest. Today they live in small village communities.

The habitats of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon are threatened by land reclamation for cattle grazing and monocultures such as soy, deforestation and oil production. This not only destroys their habitat, but also has a strong impact on the global climate.

Threat: The forest is losing its ability to regenerate. In the ten years between 2010 and 2019, the Amazon rainforest emitted more CO2 than it absorbed: 2.7 billion tonnes. (IPCC)

Europe_East Greenland:

I visited the Inuit in Tinetiqilaaq and Sermiligaaq, two small villages with 100-200 inhabitants. East Greenland remained undiscovered until the late 19th century due to the pack ice that hermetically sealed it off in winter. It is very sparsely populated, with only 3,500 people living there, about 1800 of them in Tasiliaq, the capital of East Greenland.

Threat: Due to the thawing of the ice sheet and sea ice, sea level is expected to rise by one metre by the end of 2100. The flow rate of the Gulf Stream due to increasing water warming is changing. Both have strong impacts on coastal regions of all countries, worldwide.

Asia_Gobi Desert in Mongolia:

Mongolia is almost 4.5 the size of Germany, but only 3 million people live there, 1.5 million of them in the capital Ulan Bator. I visited nomads in the Gobi Desert.

Threat: The deserts, which already cover about one third of the earth's surface, are spreading fast: 50,000 to 70,000 square kilometres of soil are lost to them every year. That is an agricultural area about the size of Switzerland every year. (IPCC)

Africa_Tanzania:

In Africa, I visited the Maasai people, in their village of Tinga Tinga at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain. They live a largely maintained, semi-nomadic lifestyle in coexistence with wildlife.

Threats: Droughts followed by heavy rains leading to leaching of topsoil, which leads to further droughts. According to estimates by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Africa is the continent most threatened by climate change. This is mainly due to the impact of climate change on African agriculture, which accounts for about 70% of the African population. (IPCC)

Oceania_Kiribati:

In the island atoll state of Kiribati, I visited the Micronesian people, who call themselves I-Kiribati, in the village of Tabonibava on the main island of Tarawa. The state of Kiribati lies on the equator at the International Date Line 4000 km southeast of Hawaii and is made up of 33 coral islands, 21 of which are inhabited. A strong 110,000 people live there.

Threat: Tarawa's highest point is only 3 metres above sea level. According to the IPCC, global sea levels have risen by about 3.3 cm per decade in recent years. The rise in sea water is causing the fresh-water bubbles under the atolls to become saline and the palm trees to die.

Coral bleaching: Already, historically unknown amounts of tropical coral reefs are dying - so far mostly temporarily. This so-called "coral bleaching" is closely related to water temperature. The IPCC's 1.5-degree report predicts the almost complete loss of tropical coral reefs at just 2 °C warming. According to NOAA, the US Oceanographic Administration, more than half a billion people worldwide depend on coral reefs for their food supply, income or coastal protection. (Scientists4future)

Installation of the 5 Continents:

In September 2019, I brought together the peoples of the five continents in a circular installation on the apron of the open-cast lignite mine at Hambach Forest, in Germany. The juxtaposition and connection of people in large-scale images makes us realise that we are all connected, even in the most remote regions of the world. The climate crisis affects far more than just the global South, but has long since reached the global North. The consequences of our actions are not without impact, in any place.

In addition to the connection of all five indigenous peoples and the slow, symbolically vicarious destruction of the textile material, the circle installation also contains a third level.

Through the circle arrangement, I want to emphasise the animistic view of the five peoples, who see all life as animate and no one superior to the other.

In contrast to this is the view of Christianity and the Enlightenment, which regard man as the crown of creation and nature and all creatures as subject to him.

Barbara Dombrowski was born in Stuttgart. She studied visual communication in Dortmund until the early 1990s. Afterwards, she spent four years in Paris, initiated by an art scholarship from the German-French Youth Office. Since her return to Germany, she has lived in Hamburg. She works mainly on free projects that arise in collaborations and teaches documentary photography in Hamburg. She has acted as a juror and curator several times and gives lectures on her work "Tropic Ice" and the importance of artistic engagement with the climate crisis. In addition to cooperating with the Christian Albrecht University of Kiel in several projects, she was able to realise a book project entitled "Everyday Worlds of Climate Change" with the Cluster of Excellence of the University of Hamburg. She has received various prizes and awards for her work and presents it in numerous national and international exhibitions. In 2017, she became an official partner of the UN for the "COP23" in Bonn with the work "Tropic Ice". In 2020, in the course of the European Weeks Passau, she was able to complement her exhibition "Tropic Ice" with a live performance of Beethoven's "6th Symphony, Pastoral" and a world premiere with the Beethoven Philharmonic Orchestra. She has been an appointed member of the DGPH (German Society for Photography) since 2022.

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