

Planting the Future

OUR PLANET AND SOCIETIES
AT A CROSSROADS



SZYMON BARYLSKI

CIRIL JAZBEC

KACPER KOWALSKI

IGOR GRUBIĆ

MATJAŽ KRIVIC

LUCA LOCATELLI

PHOTO EXHIBITION |

8-27 OCTOBER 2020

Neimënster - Luxembourg

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ARTISTS

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The human footprint on Earth is undoubtedly a permanent one. The collision between humankind and nature and the clashes between humans themselves, have led to damage that many consider irreversible. As we go seemingly powerless through an unprecedented health and economic crisis, some crucial questions become even more pressing: is it still possible to “cure” our planet and our societies by making our economic and social models more sustainable? Are we – the privileged ones – willing to do the necessary and to pay the price that this effort entails? These are some of the questions raised by Planting the Future, an exhibition that brings together the work of six photographers from Central and Eastern Europe and Italy.

Several of these projects – created in various places around the world – document different aspects of unsustainability of our relations with the environment and the harmful effects of the dominant socio-economic models: humanitarian and ecological disasters caused by exces-

sive urbanization, consumerism, abusive exploitation of the natural resources and exacerbated inequalities. Some projects, on the other hand, illustrate ambitious initiatives that contribute to restoring balance and hope, proving that resilience and innovation can really make a difference and that technology can also be part of the solution.

Planting the Future engages the power of photography to promote a revolution geared towards a more sustainable development and inspire reflection on the paths we could take to change at least our environment. Today, more than ever, humanity is at a crossroads where we all face our individual and collective responsibility. Our common future still seems to be in our hands, but we need to act and “plant” it now.

One of the most striking aspects of social unsustainability are exacerbated inequalities: ten percent of the world population still live in extreme poverty today, struggling to satisfy their most basic needs. With his project *Iquitos - Belen* (2015) **Szymon Barylski** (Poland) takes us to the Belen District, a vast slum in Iquitos, the largest city in the world non accessible by road, which sprawls along the banks of the Itaya river one of the most polluted rivers in the world, a tributary of the Amazon. Documenting the real life of the people he encounters, the artist's goal is to urge the public to take action and be part of positive changes.

In a very different way **Igor Grubić** (Croatia) prompts us to reflect on our impact on the planet and the immense efforts we have to make to bring about the change we need. The staged photograph *366 Liberation Rituals (against trash)*, 2008, refers to an event which marks the beginning of the current international engagement for a more sustainable future, while the project *Do Animals...?* (2017) is another surreal call to our moral responsibility in which the artist presents his own examination of humankind's conflicted feelings towards animals.

Human impact on the environment takes many forms. Overpopulation, water pollution, and defor-

estation are only a few aspects that photographer **Kacper Kowalski** (Poland) captures in his aerial series *Side Effects* (2007-ongoing). The series consists of bird's-eye views of natural landscapes in Poland, in which the jagged scars on the face of the Earth – lignite mines, toxic waste, and pollution – bear witness to human transgression.

The two selected projects by **Matjaž Krivic** (Slovenia) constitute a strong illustration of the tensions and the ambiguities of the fight for a more sustainable environment. On one hand his project *Coming Clean* (2016-ongoing), highlights ‘virtuous’ initiatives of governments or companies aimed at washing away the ‘climate sins’ of yesterday. On the other in *Digging the Future* (2014-2016), he denounces child and slave-like labor in artisanal gold mines in Burkina Faso: workers digging in extremely precarious conditions a metal used also in environment-friendly technologies.

This contrast is also present in the work of **Ciril Jazbec** (Slovenia): his project *Africa's Tech Revolution* (2014-2016) shows how technology can bring life-improving innovations to sub-Saharan communities. Other projects *On thin ice* (2013-2017), *Kiribati is gone* (2011), and *The Ice Stupas – Artificial Glaciers in the Himalayas* (2018-2019) illustrate huge challenges faced by communities whose lives are strongly affected by climate change. In some cases innovation enables adaptation, in many others the fight seems already lost.

Last but not least the project *The End of Trash – Circular Economy Solutions* (2012-ongoing) by **Luca Locatelli** (Italy) brings a spark of hope, concentrating on the benefits of innovation and highlighting possible solutions: a new way to design, manufacture and recycle goods, using resources within the limits of our planet's capacity. This is possible only by changing our mind-set and forcing the transition from linear to circular economy.

Isabella Primicerio (curator)

Radek Lipka (coordinator)

Szymon Barylski

PROJECT: IQUITOS - BELEN

Szymon Barylski is a Polish photographer based in Ireland. He works primarily with documentary photography, which he considers a device to explore and better understand the world around us. Barylski began as a street and travel photographer but developed a real affection for documenting the stories of people he encountered along the way. His work is characterised by a long-term engagement with his subjects and their realities; the environment provides a fundamental emotional backdrop for these personal histories to unfold.

He has presented his work at different exhibitions including the third edition of Documentary Photography Days in Istanbul, MIFA Photography, The Centre for Documentary Photography. He has received several prestigious awards, including Magnum Photography Awards, MIFA Moscow International Photo Awards. Barylski's photos have been published among others in The Irish Times, National Geographic, Politico, Time, The Sun, and the Edge of Humanity Magazine.

Iquitos - Belen

Iquitos is the largest city in the Peruvian Amazon, which is not accessible by any land route. One of the attractions of Iquitos is the Belen district, where people can purchase everything at a huge market - from Chinese trinkets to illegally hunted wild animals. Belen is not only the largest bazaar in the Amazon but it is also a vast slum of more than 65,000 inhabitants at the heart of the jungle, which lies on the river Itaya. Every year for six months, it is flooded



with polluted water which claims the many lives. In this 'Peruvian Venice', the inhabitants live in overcrowded makeshift homes on platforms and high stilts protecting them against flooding during the rainy season.

The majority of the population lives in extreme poverty - without access to electricity, sewers or drinking water. Defecation, bathing, washing and cooking in the dirty river is an everyday experience for most people. The low standard of living has led to an increase in unemployment, crime and alcohol addiction. For many, the only source of income is drug trafficking, prostitution or poaching. Respiratory diseases, HIV or malaria, teenage pregnancies, child deaths due to drowning and lack of education are only a few of the gravest social and health plights of this forgotten district.





Igor Grubić

PROJECTS: **DO ANIMALS
AGAINST TRASH**

Igor Grubić is a multimedia artist born and based in Zagreb. His work includes photography, video, and site-specific actions. Since the early '90s, his interventions into public space explore past and current socio-political situations while critically cutting through the fabric of reality. Since 2000 he has also worked as a producer and author of documentaries, TV reportages and socially conscious commercials.

Grubić has participated in numerous major international exhibitions and photo festivals including: the 58th Venice Biennale (2019); The Value of Freedom, Belvedere 21 (Vienna, 2018); the 5th Thessaloniki Biennial (2015); Degrees of Freedom, MAMbo (Bologna, 2015); Zero Tolerance, MOMA PS1 (New York 2014); Gwangju Biennale (2014); East Side Stories, Palais de Tokyo (Paris, 2012); the 4th Fotofestival Mannheim Ludwigshafen, Heidelberg (2011); the 11th Istanbul Biennial (2009); Gender Check, MuMOK (Vienna, 2009); the 50th October Salon (Belgrade, 2009); Manifesta 9 (Genk, 2012); Manifesta 4 (Frankfurt, 2002); Tirana Biennial 2 (2003).

366 Liberation Rituals (against trash)

366 Liberation Rituals is a series that consists of micro political interventions in the public



space performed daily by the artist in 2008-2009. They materialize as a plurality of pointers that destabilize reality and question our outlook on the political historicity of the former Yugoslavia. They evoke youthful, enthusiasm, rebellion, idealism, and nostalgia. Each group of images refers to a short precise action and are accompanied by a label which documents the artist's gesture, as well as the context in which it has been done.

366 Liberation Rituals (against trash) is a staged photograph which makes reference to Pulitzer Prize winner Joe Rosenthal's photograph of six U.S. Marines planting the American flag atop a battle-blasted hill on the island of Iwo Jima, a fiercely defended Japanese stronghold, during the 2nd World War. Needless to say, the black flag on top of a waste mountain critically stands for our contemporary environmental situation, referring to the U.S. refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol (adopted in 1997) which commits the signatories to reduce greenhouse gas emissions contributing to global warming.

Do animals...?

Do Animals...? is a multimedia project based on the artist's research on former slaughterhouses in northern Italy during his time in the RAVE East Village Artist Residency program.

As a staunch supporter of animal rights, Grubić investigates the psychological effect these factories - "factory of death", as the artist says - have on human consciousness. The work is composed of a series of five posters that feature photographs of now empty former slaughterhouses, overwritten with the artist's questions. Silent and cold, but at the same time distinctly disturbing, the images are visually conceived as the path an animal takes from life to death, from light to darkness. Images and questions together might make some of us reflect also on many other aspects and consequences which our own patterns of consumption entail. The posters have already appeared in the form of anonymous ads in the centres of six northern Italian cities, including Turin, Trieste, and Udine.

The Do Animals...? project is also accompanied by a film shot inside these former slaughterhouses at night, together with interviews with former employees who testify to the miserable conditions of slaughterhouses both for animals and the humans working in them.



Ciril Jazbec

PROJECTS:
ON THIN ICE
KIRIBATI IS GONE
ICE STUPAS
AFRICA'S TECH REVOLUTION

Ciril Jazbec is a documentary photographer born in Slovenia in 1987. He studied Management in Ljubljana and obtained a master's degree in Photojournalism and Documentary Photography from the London College of Communication. Since 2014, he has been a contributing photographer for National Geographic.

Jazbec's main interests are the effects of globalisation and climate change on society. His work is focused on communities that are confronted by today's hot issues.

He won several awards for his work, including the Leica Oskar Barnack Newcomer Award 2013, the Photo Folio Review Les Rencontres d'Arles 2013, the Magnum 30 under 30 2015 and Pictures of the Year International 2018.

His work has been featured in National Geographic, The New York Times, GEO, Der Spiegel, Neu Zürcher Zeitung, Marie Claire Italy, Leica Fotografie International, among others.

Kiribati is gone

Kiribati Is Gone shows the modern life of many developing Pacific countries - nations whose existence is threatened by global warming and rising sea levels.



The artist travelled to Kiribati for a month to witness first-hand the problems and challenges faced by the tiny island country. He focused on photographing the natives and their everyday lives and conducted interviews with decision-makers and activists.

He also visited the Kiribati community in Auckland. As climate change is making Kiribati uninhabitable, New Zealand seems to be the future for the Kiribati people, who are slowly leaving their islands and resettling in the Kiwi country.



On thin ice

On Thin Ice is about the changing lives of the Inuits who live in Greenland, the world's largest island, covered by the world's biggest and fastest melting ice sheet. It is a story about a people with thousands of years of hunting knowledge who are now looking for ways to survive in the collapsing ecosystem.



The entire surface of Greenland is melting, forming thousands of rivers slowly filling up the ocean. The melting permafrost, together with Greenland turning from a self-cooler to a self-heater, could set a fatal rate to the speed of global warming.

Africa's Tech Revolution

From East African leading tech pioneers tackling the continent's most pressing issues and aspiring computer science students to Samburu women who have embraced technology to teach their children about computers, Africa's Tech Revolution shows how Africa's tech generation is bringing life-improving innovations to sub-Saharan communities.

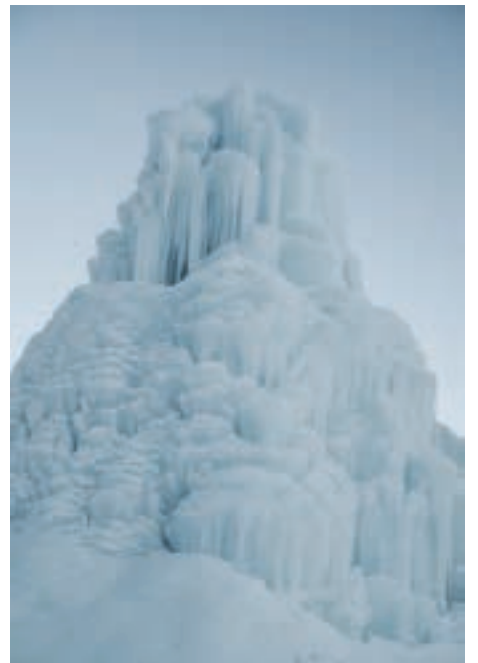


The Ice Stupas – Artificial Glaciers in the Himalayas

In the last few decades the Himalayan glaciers have been receding and water scarcity has been direr than ever. This has led the inhabitants of the mountainous Ladakh region of India to become climate refugees forced to abandon their valleys.

Sonam Wangchuk, a Ladakhi engineer and innovator, brought hope to the community. In 2015, he prototyped ice stupas, artificial glaciers that store winter meltwater and slowly release it in spring. In the years that followed numerous villages in the Ladakhi region started to build ice stupas. Jazbec has been following Wangchuk and his team's efforts almost from the start.





Matjaz Krivic

PROJECTS: **DIGGING THE FUTURE
COMING CLEAN**



Matjaz Krivic is a Slovenian freelance documentary photographer who captures social and environmental stories of people and places around the world. With his stories of planet Earth, he expands the space of inspiration, as well as our empathy and tolerance towards the known and unknown social and cultural space.

His best-known works include long-term projects such as Tribe, Earth Temples, Urbanistan, Digging the Future, Lithium Road, PlanB and Coming Clean, an ongoing project showing pioneers in the fight against climate change.

He has won several prestigious awards including the World Press Photo award for Digging the Future in 2016 and LensCulture's Visual Storytelling award for Lithium Road. Krivic's work has been extensively exhibited around the world in various galleries, museums, festivals and fairs and it has been widely published in major magazines such as Spiegel, Stern, Le Figaro, Le Monde, Geo, Newsweek, CNN, Wired, Terra Mater, Forbes, Marie Claire, FishEye, Quest and Nat Geo.

Coming Clean

How countries and companies are washing away the climate sins of yesterday to create a sustainable future

Coming Clean is an ongoing project showcasing a collection of best global community-based cases of fighting and challenging the climate crisis. It is a joint project of award-winning photographer Matjaz Krivic and award-winning journalist Boštjan Videmšek that started in 2016.

The project documents trailblazers of sustainable energy and how they are transforming their own societies. Among others, they have already covered:

- the oil-rich nation of Norway and the national attempts for electric transportation and carbon capture;
- Climeworks, a small Swiss company which takes the lead in the climate business, capturing carbon dioxide from the air;
- the island of Tilos (Greece) – the first Mediterranean island to become energy self-sufficient and carbon negative;
- Scotland's Orkney Islands, where more clean energy is produced than can be used by the locals and where marine energy solutions are developed; and
- Iceland, where the world's first 'negative emissions' power plant has been launched – turning carbon dioxide into rock.

Finally, they set out to follow track the impact of the game-changing mineral, Lithium, from investment and prospecting in the US, through mining in Bolivia, and to the production of batteries and cars in China. They show how this rare mineral is changing our societies and how it might contribute to saving our planet.

We believe that those captivating stories in which individuals and whole countries are trying to turn the tide and make a difference for our common future provide clear evidence that there is still hope, inspiring others to follow suit. By bringing together the most prominent figures of the energy industry, Krivic and Videmšek raise awareness among the general public about how the transition from fossil to renewable energy is actually happening, with all its wonderful possibilities, but also how it is affecting global geo-politics and how clean energy also comes with a price of its own and what risks it carries.

Digging the Future

Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world, yet ranks fourth in Africa in terms of gold production. In this country, gold is extracted in small-scale mines where children work alongside their parents from dawn to dusk. They only get paid for the amount of gold they find. Sometimes

it can take up to two weeks to find just as much gold as is used in one smartphone.

As Krivic has seen with his own eyes, the work is fraught with risk: mines collapse frequently, and the air is filled with dangerous chemicals like mercury, used in gold extraction. The photographer witnesses real life down there, as the 16-year-old Yakuba emerges from a 50-meter-deep hole after another gruelling 14-hour workday underneath the panorama of western Burkina Faso. Krivic learned that one year before, his uncle and two of his friends died when a nearby mine collapsed.

The International Labour Organization considers mining one of the worst forms of child labour due to the immediate risks and long-term health problems it poses, given the exposure to dust, toxic chemicals and heavy metals – on top of back-breaking manual labour. Men, women and children dig with their bare hands and, as Krivic himself says, while there are always ropes for the buckets of ore, there are not always ropes available for little boys who scabble up and down the pits. Sadly, there are also kids who believe that mining is still better than working in the field back home where ‘you farm the land, but don’t earn anything’. The 13-year-old Nuru is one of these kids.





Kacper Kowalski

PROJECT: | **SIDE EFFECTS**

Kacper Kowalski is an aerial photographer born and based in Poland. He has a degree in Architecture from the Technical University of Gdańsk, Poland. After having worked in architecture for four years, he devoted himself entirely to flying and photography. As both a pilot and a photographer, he presents landscapes and cityscapes of his native Poland that are normally unavailable to our eyes.

He uses a gyrocopter or a paraglider with an open-air cockpit. He likes being exposed to low temperatures and various scents and he enjoys feeling the vibrations of the engine and the wind on his face. His favorite altitude is 150 meters, which he calls a 'human distance', as it allows him to see everything on an 'architectural' scale.

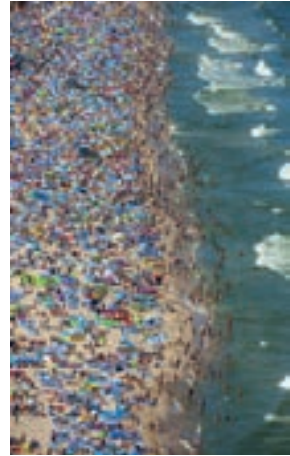
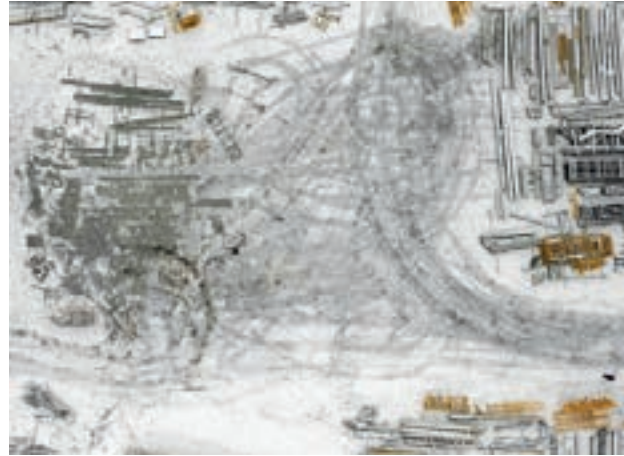
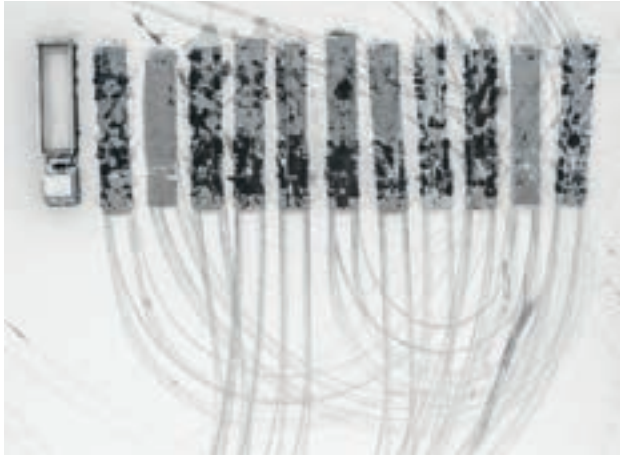
Kowalski has received numerous awards, including the World Press Photo (2009, 2014, 2015), the Picture of the Year International POYi (2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019), National Geographic, Sony World Photography, and many others. He is represented by Panos Pictures. His first photography book *Side Effects* was published in early 2014 by Leica Gallery Warsaw; his second photobook *OVER* was self-published in 2017.



Side Effects

Side Effects is an ongoing aerial series which Kowalski started in 2007 and which is shot entirely in Poland. With this body of works, the artist frames the landscape in terms of human impact and formal patterns within nature. He considers his work as a mission to reveal the unknown, unseen world to the people: a mission to record a bird's-eye-view portrait of our civilization. It is a sort of visual storytelling which conveys a broad spectrum of human activity and which functions as a starting point for discussions and reflections about the costs of our lifestyles – what is necessary and what is optional in the relationship between humans and nature.

But *Side Effects* also has another dimension: it reveals how toxic releases and industrial waste can paradoxically awaken or appeal to our sense of beauty: what from a distance seems



an attractive abstract pattern is in fact polluted land or water, waste, or an industrial landscape. The project is a record of the physical imprint of human activities on land, juxtaposing the aesthetically pleasing with the thought-provoking.

The project comprises many smaller subprojects and series (Seasons, Toxic Beauty, Flood from Above, Sun and Fun, Depth of Winter, Toys for Boys and others).





Luca Locatelli

PROJECT: **THE END OF TRASH**

Luca Locatelli is an Italian environmental photographer and filmmaker who focuses on the relations between people, science and technology and the environment. To further contextualise his research, Locatelli produces his stories in collaboration with journalists, environmentalists and scientists.

Deeply rooted in documentary and journalistic methods, his work revolves around the 'making' of the future. Since 2013, his main focus has been to discover and document the most promising ways to live on Earth when confronting today's critical environmental issues. The aim of his work is to contribute to an open discussion about our future on the planet.

He uses photography and multimedia to tell people's stories, and his photographic work has been published in National Geographic, The New York Times, TIME, The New Yorker, Bloomberg Businessweek, Geo Germany and other magazines. Locatelli's works have been exhibited and screened in various venues including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Somerset House, Les Rencontres d'Arles, Visa pour l'Image, Noorderlicht International Photography Festival, Getxophoto International Image Festival and Cortona On The Move.

The End of Trash – Circular Economy Solutions

The world population is booming and at the same time draining Earth's natural resources at an alarming rate. Raw materials are obtained and transformed into products that are sold and then discarded as waste. Take-make-waste: this is the creed of linear economy. And this has to change.

The project The End of Trash – Circular Economy Solutions brings together farmers', manufacturers' and governments' remarkable initiatives which make use of and promote the so-called circular economy, ushering a transition to a better future. It is a new way to design, make and use materials, products and resources on a global scale.

Linear economy is a system inherited from the first industrial revolution that gave us access to an immense variety of products and to a level of comfort unimaginable in pre-industrial times. The way products are produced, used and disposed of nowadays ignores the devastating effects on the environment. Mass production is only profit-oriented, and it ignores the collateral environmental damage it inevitably brings.

By changing our mindset and considering waste as another type of resource, we can avoid creating

trash in the first place. Shifting to a circular economy system must involve everyone and everything: businesses, governments and individuals; our cities, our products and our jobs. We need to use our knowledge to find solutions inspired by the natural life cycles because, in nature, there is no waste - everything is either food or fuel for something else.







Central and Eastern European Film Festival

Luxembourg, 8-27 October 2020

ARTISTS PARTICIPATING IN THE EXHIBITION:

Szymon **Barylski**

→ www.szymonbarylski.com

Igor **Grubić**

→ www.igorgrubic.org

Ciril **Jazbec**

→ www.ciriljazbec.com

Matjaž **Krivic**

→ www.krivic.com

Kacper **Kowalski**

→ www.kacperkowalski.pl

Luca **Locatelli**

→ www.lucalocatelli.com

THE TEAM:

Isabella Primicerio (curator) / Radek Lipka (coordination) / Jiří Vlášek (graphic design)

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