

SUBLIMITY AND EXPLOITATION

HAN SUNGPIL ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANKIND AND NATURE

How much does the human species alter its habitat? That is photographer Han Sungpil's central theme. His volume of photographs, *Intervention*, reveals a surprising perspective that moves beyond the visual language of ordinary environmental documentation. Monumental landscape photographs shift focus onto the exploitation of ecological resources. In 2016 Sungpil won first prize from the Ilwoo Foundation in Seoul for his work. Now, Hatje Cantz is publishing his first monograph.

Berlin, May 30, 2017 — The world is sublime and beautiful, yet humans are constantly endangering it. Whether it's a nuclear power plant in a picturesque French landscape or mining in the seemingly untouched Arctic, Han Sungpil (*1972 in Seoul) has visited natural landscapes that bear the marks of human exploitation. At first glance his photographs look artfully idyllic, yet upon closer inspection one notices the considerable damage that humans have left behind after their worldwide raiding parties. "The most impressive of Sungpil's works make us aware of how much post-industrial life has changed our environment. They recall what has been forgotten, while telling the important history of how human development impacts nature," says Celina Lunsford, the artistic director at the Fotografie Forum Frankfurt and author of the accompanying text in the new Sungpil monograph.

Intervention is the first compilation of Sungpil's conceptual work. The book contains ninety large-format photographs, divided into three chapters. For the first section, "Fauna Fuel," Sungpil sought out abandoned whaling stations on the Atlantic, Antarctic, and Arctic Oceans. The factory ruins depicted in these photos provide evidence of whale oil extraction and show the rubbish, junk, and garbage left behind. In "Fossil Fuel," the second section, Sungpil documents large coal mining areas in the Arctic Ocean. In the last chapter, "Fission Fuel," intensely colorful landscapes serve as stages for nuclear power plants puffing away along the Seine and Loire Rivers in France. In contrast to the sky, the wind-driven clouds of steam seem practically poetic—although never in harmony with nature.

Sungpil studied photography at the Chung Ang University in Korea and has a master's degree from the Curating Contemporary Design program at London's Kingston University and the Design Museum London. His oeuvre encompasses photographs, films, and installations. His work involves examinations of philosophical themes and human behavior toward nature and the environment, or the relationship between fiction and reality. Travel and the exploration of various cultures are always essential elements of his work. "I believe art is something that an artist produces from out of his experience, so it's very valuable for me to have the opportunity to have a variety of experiences. I enjoy the way I work," explains Sungpil.



HAN SUNGPIL INTERVENTION

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Especially in the digital age, Hatje Cantz regards itself an element linking museums, artists, galleries, collectors, and art lovers. Conveying knowledge - in terms of both content and visuals - as well as an enthusiasm for art is always at the heart of our engagement.

In keeping with our ambition to make it possible to experience art beyond the medium of the book, Hatje Cantz has launched the EDITION GERD HATJE as we continue to expand our portfolio of strictly limited, signed editions featuring works on paper, photographic works of art, and art objects.

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