

JOAKIM ESKILDSEN

Persons
Projects

BIO

Joakim Eskildsen is a Danish photographer educated in Finland at Aalto University and one of the most published and recognized photographers to emerge from the Helsinki School. He is most noted for his documentary photography that take a very personal view in depicting communities on the fringes of society. Despite seemingly melancholic undertones, Eskildsen achieves an overwhelming closeness in his work, often by living alongside his subjects for long periods of time. Throughout all his various publications, Eskildsen has demonstrated an innate

sense for capturing an intimacy with his subjects much in the same manner as Diane Arbus. It's not one factor but a combination of many that establishes Eskildsen as one of the most notable documentary photographers of his generation. Whether it be the light or the temperament of any given moment, his ability to focus on the center of what he feels is the essential element in a given picture, lending it a life of its own.

Joakim Eskildsen (*1971 in Copenhagen, Denmark) is an internationally known documentary photographer

with a particular interest in portrait photography within socio-political contexts. His work has been exhibited extensively around the world in both solo and group exhibitions, including the solo exhibitions *American Realities*, Haus des Buches, (Leipzig, 2018), *Nordic Signs* and *The Roma Journeys*, Purdy Hicks Gallery, (London, 2018). All of his main series have been published, including *Nordic Signs* (1995), *The Roma Journeys* (2007, Steidl), *American Realities* (2016, Steidl), *Cornwall* (2018, Mare), *Home Works* (2020), and *Cuban Studies* (2023, Steidl).

THE ROMA JOURNEYS

The Roma Journeys (2000-2007) is the most known series of Joakim Eskildsen that has been awarded several times. For seven years, Eskildsen and his wife, the writer Cia Rinne, visited Roma communities in seven different countries, to learn about their history, culture and living situation. Scattered across the globe, the Roma live in almost every part of the world, each group marked by a distinct language and culture of their own. The Roma Journeys develops a complex narrative that introduces a wide audience to the Romani people who have been facing mar-

ginalization for centuries and are still struggling with social acceptance. Eskildsens photographs, paired with Rinne's essays, unfold very personal storylines from the Roma the couple visited in Hungary, India, Greece, Romania, France, Russia, and Finland. The works oscillate between lyrical-melancholic landscapes and very direct sensory impressions from everyday life in social hotspots. Highly topical and multi-layered, Eskildsen documents the consequences of great political upheavals, some of which still persist in these countries today. Eskildsen's pictures thus

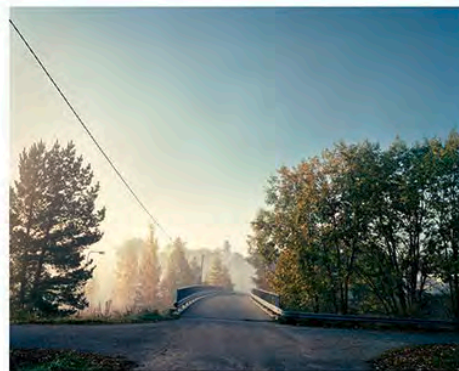
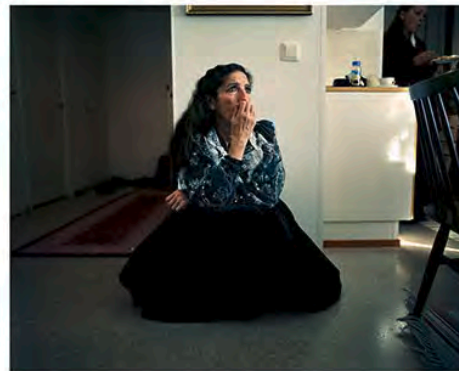
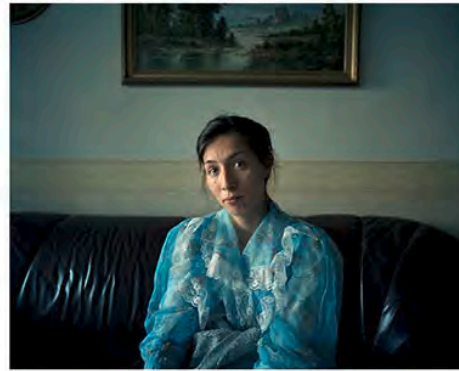
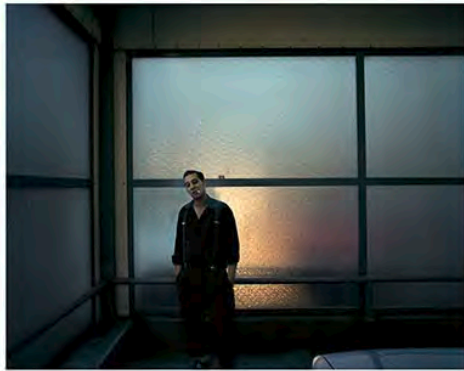
create access to spheres that would likely remain closed to many people. A selection of more than 100 photographs along with the texts and the sound collages have been touring through museums in Europe since 2007, offering the audience a rare insight into the life of the Roma. The Roma Journeys is not only a project of political force but also a very poetic, intimate, and artistic work that sets a new standard in how we interpret a community that has been so culturally isolated by the Western world for centuries.



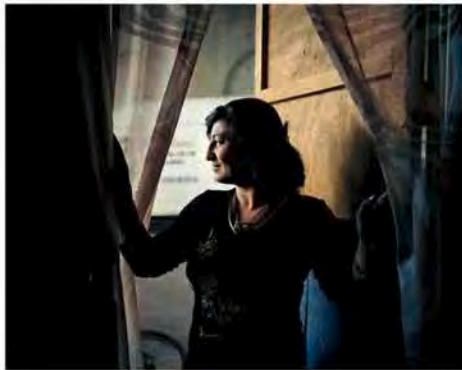
The Roma Journeys, exhibition view at Persons Projects (former Taik Persons), Berlin 2016







The Roma Journeys: Finland



AMERICAN REALITIES

One in every six Americans lived below the official U.S. poverty line when Kira Pollack, Director of Photography at TIME Magazine, commissioned Joakim Eskildsen to capture the growing crisis. During thirty-six days spread over seven months in 2011, Eskildsen, accompanied mainly by reporter Natasha del Toro, traveled through New York, California, Louisiana, South Dakota, and Georgia, visiting places that, according to census data, had the

highest poverty rate.

The outcome is American Realities, a stunning body of work in which Eskildsen has managed to make personal portraits of people living below the poverty line, to many of whom the myth of the American Dream had lost its *raison d'être*. The people Eskildsen has portrayed — those who struggle to make ends meet, who have lost their jobs or homes, and often live in unhealthy conditions — usually remain invisible in a society

where the myth of the American Dream remains strong. Eskildsen created a counter-image to the illusionistic ideas of the dream. Many of Eskildsen's subjects are disenchant-ed with the fact that it is so difficult to get by today — merely the American Reality.

The entire series of photographs culminated in a book by the German publishing house Steidl in 2013.



The American Realities, exhibition view at Persons Projects (former Talk Persons), Berlin 2013



Eric Ramirez, Firebaugh, California, 2011, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 45 x 53 cm



Kelly Mitchell, New Orleans, Louisiana, 2011, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 45 x 53 cm, 89 x 107 cm, edition of 7 + 2 AP



Jasmine and Derrick Amoateng, South Bronx, New York, 2011, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 45 x 53 cm, 89 x 107 cm, edition of 7 + 2 AP



Eli Stockstill, Buras, Louisiana, 2011, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 45 x 53 cm



Mendota, California, 2011, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 45 x 53 cm, 35x45 cm



Mandai Nunez and Santamaria Brissa, Fresno, California, 2011, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 45 x 53 cm, 35x45 cm

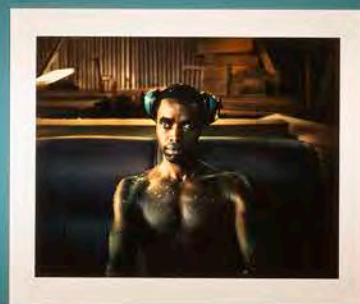
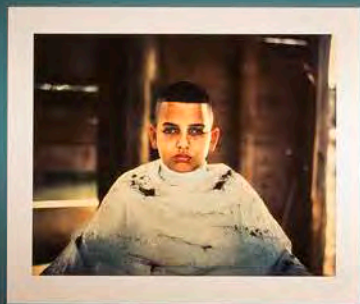
CUBAN STUDIES

After *American Realities* and *Cornwall*, *Cuban Studies* completes Joakim Eskildsen's photographic trilogy on dysfunctional political systems. Accompanied by Cuban journalist Abel Gonzalez, the project is the result of Eskildsen's journeys between 2013 and 2016 when he travelled throughout the country during a period of major socio-political transition. Depicting the living situation of Cubans population after extensive economic reforms, the photographer found himself in a situation in which he had to entirely rely on his photographic instincts: "Traveling with writer Abel González, whose ability to tell stories

taken from a huge source of knowledge, was a never-ending force. I soon found myself being a student and so Cuba put a magical spell on me from the very first trip. The more I learned about Cuba, the more difficult it became to understand. It was like learning to see the world from a fundamentally different angle, so different from what I knew. I decided to keep an open mind and take the position of a listener, to follow my instincts rather than anything else." Eskildsen's Cuba series not only adds to his list of political works, exposing the economic hardships in our global society. It is above all a

new approach on how Cuba is being perceived by others. Through Eskildsen's documentary like access that does not evoke neither pity or nor exaggerated sympathy, but more of a comprehensive compassion, gives Cuban People a new voice. Photographs unlike *Fisherman* (2013) or *Charcoal Studies* (2013) are representations of working, or rather living standards and realities that are very much part of Cubans everyday life – realities that have long been ignored through the predominating American perception of the country.

Cuba



Joakim Eskildsen, exhibition view at Black Diamond Copenhagen, 2016



Ear Muffs, 2013, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 109 x 130 cm, 50 x 58 cm, edition of 21 + 2 AP



Haircut, 2013, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 109 x 130 cm, 50 x 58 cm, edition of 21 + 2 AP



Fisherman, 2013, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 45 x 53 cm



Charcoal Studies, 2013, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 45 x 53 cm



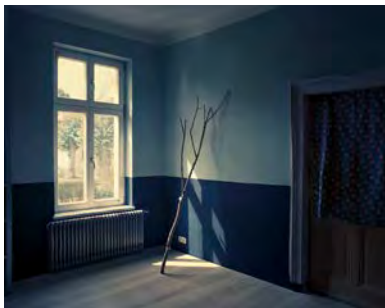
Malecon, 2013, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 109 x 130 cm

HOME WORKS

This series stands in direct contrast to his previous projects unlike Cornwall, Cuban Studies or American Realities. Instead of travelling to foreign countries, Eskildsen pointed his camera towards his own home and surroundings. With this series, that has been ongoing since 2005, the photographer documents his family's journey in their pursuit to find a home of their own, taking them to six different homes in Finland, Denmark, and Germany. Eskildsen's photographs seem to capture this concept of finding one's place through his children's eyes. The photographic collage of portraits, landscapes and still lives provide an intimate look into the nature of innocence that is filled with the wonderment of curiosity, exploration, and the lightness of being part of a new beginning. Eskildsen reflects on the catalyst for his series Home Works: "I started photographing when I was 14 years old, now I am 41. During the first years, I photographed around the house, in the fields, and in the forest. My interest started turning back to the beginnings, and to the things that had so much inspired me at first. I felt it was a relief to photograph in the immediate surroundings, rediscovering what had made me so interested in photography – an artistic homecoming as it were."



Home Works, exhibition view at Scandinavia House, New York, 2013





Fridge, 2009, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 65 x 54 cm



Furesoe, 2010, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 65 x 54 cm, 109 x 130 cm, 6500€



The Tooth, Potsdam, 2012, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 65 x 54 cm, 109 x 130 cm, Ed. 7 + 2 AP, Price: 6500€



After the Snow Storm, 2008, Pigment print on archival paper, , 65 x 54 cm, 109 x 130 cm, 6500€ + VAT



Willow Tree, Potsdam, 2012, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 65 x 54 cm

NORDIC SIGNS

Nordic Signs is first long term project and marks the beginning of Joakim Eskildsen collaboration with the Swedish poet Cia Rinne, who later became his wife. The series is a photographic work on Northern Europe, a hymn to nature and the people who live in it. It is a poetic reflection on the inherent qualities of lands ruled by the elements. The photographs were made in Norway, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands between 1989–1994 in attempt to put forward nature's strength and the relationship it builds with those who inhabit it. Eskildsen's masterful and dynamic use of lighting lends itself to a Renaissance-like quality, adding to it a mystic and ethereal atmosphere; these contemplative images are filled with mysterious codes. Eskildsen states "I think that I managed to capture here the meaning of the Nordic Signs, something that is at the same time wild yet liveable, and profoundly shaped by the climate, the wind, and destiny."



Nothing is

Joakim Eskildsen, exhibition view at Black Diamond Copenhagen, 2016



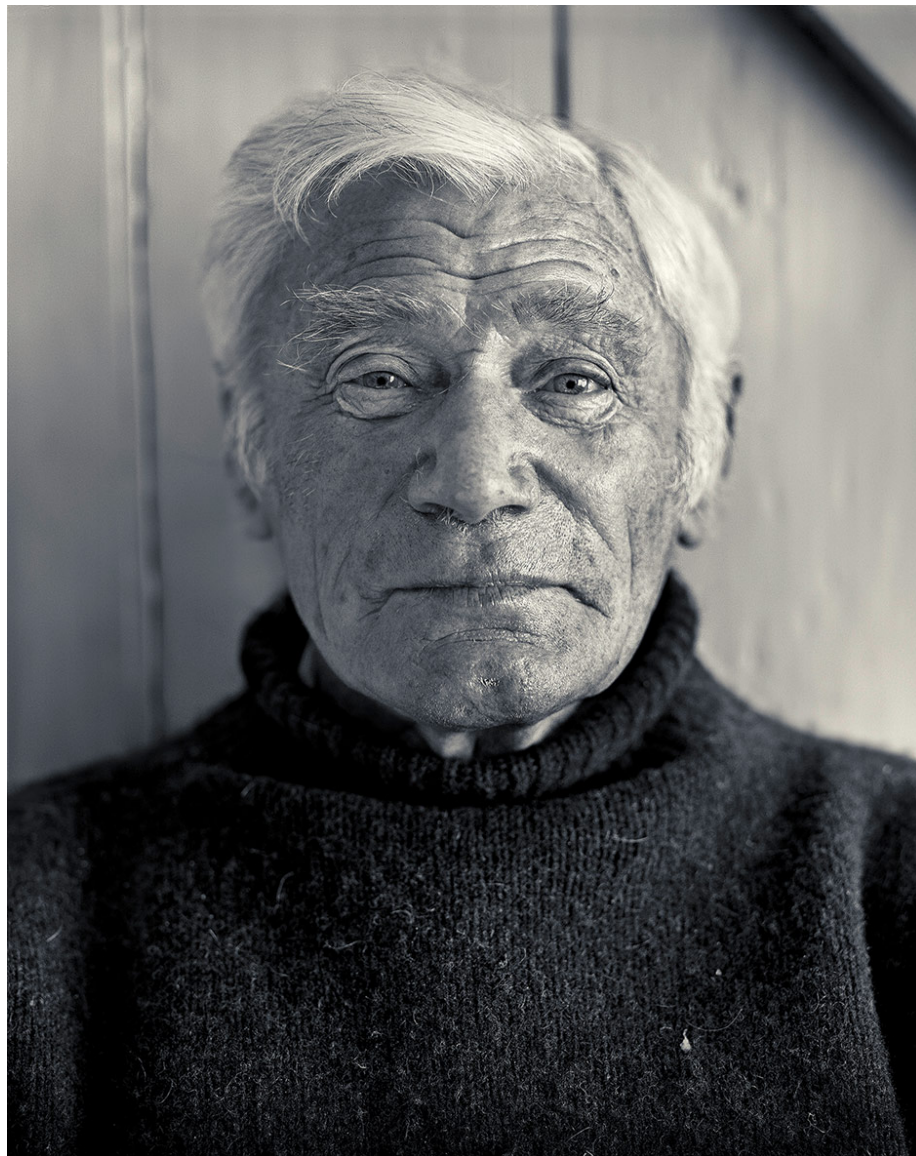
Fireworks, 1991, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 54 x 65,5 cm



Ice II, 1992, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 131 x 108 cm



Mountain III, 1992, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 102 x 144 cm



The Fisherman, 1993, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 65,5 x 54 cm



The Puffins, 1993, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 102 x 144 cm



The Sky, 1993, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 117 x 200 cm



The Spider, 1992, Pigment print on archival paper, framed, 54 x 65 cm

Persons Projects

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