

## Warning: Snow

My final series consists of minimalistic detail shots and are inspired by photographers like Mette Tronvoll, Heidi Morstand and Tiina Itkonen. These photographers have all worked in winter landscapes and their images are of a minimalistic documentary style. This project has turned out to be about how people interact with winter in Alaska and Norway, but also about me and my relationship to this season. This is my story of winter.

I have travelled to Alaska, and home to Norway to document people going about their normal winter routines. Prior to this I practiced photographing in England to find out what kinds of photographs I wanted to do. And researched portrait photographs done in a straight forward style, taken from eye level in natural light, by photographers like Erika Larsen, Tom Koene, Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, Zwelethy Mthethwa and Esko Männikkö. Their photos look candid even though the subjects are looking straight into the lens. I ended up with using mostly still life shots, but I found the research very helpful because it gave me somewhere to start out, helped me with my approach and resolved some technical issues.



From the series 'Sami People', Erika Larsen

Photography has been a way of seeing cultures far away since the first photographers travelled to distant countries and came back with photographs of exotic people and places acting as substitutes or inspiration for travelling. Photographers like J.P. Sebah and Felix Bonfils tourist spots in countries like Egypt, Syria and Israel and their photographs have a strong historical value today (Princeton University). By doing something similar I am interested in telling stories about snow that I think is lost to most people who have never experienced a proper winter, and might have a romanticised image of this season. At the same time I am comparing a place that is well known to me with a place I had never visited before. It is with this mix of familiarity and estrangement I have conducted this project.

Derrida wrote about how the white space in paintings often lacks a specified intention, how it turns the work inward on itself and constantly manifests the place "*where nothing*

*will have taken place except the place”* (Calcutt, p. 14, 1997). This is the case for the white walls in Martina Mullaney’s series ‘Turn In’, where two thirds of the images consists of bare wall. The snow and ice in my series does have some of this effect, as it acts as a background and object at the same time depending on what the viewer chooses to focus on. It might reveal something about temperature and weather conditions or about the actions that has taken place in it, but it also simply contrasts the ice pick (in ‘Dragonfly Creek, Denali National Park, Alaska, USA’) and the dead fish (in ‘Bealjasjavri, Kautokeino, Norway’). These objects, on the other hand, get an almost sculptural feel to them, and I am curious as to whether the viewers will see a photograph of ‘two dead fish’ or a photograph of ‘two dead fish in the snow’.



From the series ‘Turn In’, Martina Mullaney

Unresolved questions in an images shapes a communication between the viewer and the image and creates a *“deeper level of viewing that allows us to think and feel more connected to the story”* (duChemin, P. 94, 2009). The minimalist style of my work, with only traces of people, are meant to evoke the viewers imagination and curiosity, and make them wonder what kind of people that are ‘missing’ from the scene.

The book is dedicated to Connie, the girl I visited in Alaska, in appreciation of all the time we have spent together outside the last thirteen years. Alain deBotton has written about William Wordsworths view on nature, how spending time in nature changes peoples perspectives. Competition, envy and anxiety yield for calm and virtue and we are more likely to *“locate the good in ourselves”* (p. 151, 2003). The experience and the beauty surrounding us is in focus and the stress of the ‘urban life’ is forgotten for a while. It was the people I spent time with outside in Alaska that left the best impressions with me. I guess that after a day of skiing or ice climbing you let your guard down and thereby making it easier to get to know you.