



ROSPHOTO State Museum and Exhibition Centre  
Ministry for Culture of the Russian Federation

**Mathias Kessler**  
**I'll Survive**

15.06 – 20.07.2011

**Vernissage: 14 June 2011 at 18.00**  
Front Building Exhibition Hall, 2 floor

In 2004, after a string of natural disasters and as a result of the ongoing media focus on global warming, I undertook to develop a second “look” at nature in order to better show how we perceive and encounter it today. After conducting research on the Western perception and historical representation of nature, I developed different bodies of work that examine and update Western landscape traditions, in order to better reveal how the depiction of landscape is also the matter of its production, and show how historical changes in these representations relate to contemporary images of the landscape.

To produce these bodies of work, I traveled to the very hot spots and man-made disaster zones that were most often featured in media stories about global warming. I took part in the new cultural practice of disaster tourism, where individuals see for themselves the unexpected scale of the recent destruction and desolation of ecological systems. I was able to understand how the earth responds to dysfunctional human communities that have lost their way.

While this new project, I'll Survive, continues my research into our relationship with nature, it will also take a closer look at how we as individuals survive in society, and how our society as a whole survives within nature. I relate to the ways that other life forms, meaning the genera of the animal and plant kingdoms, survive in nature by using successful strategies and adaptations the ways that societies also function and survive within a system of life forms, in order to show how nature itself will survive us.

In my expeditions, I often asked the question, “what if something goes wrong?” of myself and my hired team. I learned that both cave exploration in the hinterlands of Venezuela, and travel by ship in the Arctic winter to photograph icebergs, can be deadly.

In an age where the use GPS and satellite communication enables real time communication and tracking of events over vast distances, it is hard to imagine the reality of a large-scale 18th and 19th century expeditions, where boats carrying large numbers of people could simply vanish from the earth with no survivors. The sublime horror and fear of nature is no longer physically present, and news of natural disasters seem only a distant flickering on the news channels. Today those disasters are disconnected from our day to day reality of survival, we encounter them in popular culture, which are exploited by animated video game designers and action movie producers, who provide us with distant but frightening scenarios of a coming apocalypse, packaged along with pop songs to advertise them. Exploiting our unconscious drive to be eradicated, this brainstem paranoia has enabled a profitable market for an abundance of songs, films and video games.

In our ever-shrinking world, we will soon run out of places where pollution has not damaged the environment, where the water is still drinkable. It seems we are in a

race against our own survival, and our technology is caught in an ever-spiraling pressure to advance to fix the problems it has created prior. The truth is that nature does not need us, as we are led to believe; instead, we need nature to survive in this biosphere. In the end, nature will always find new strategies for survival and adaptation to any situation we might create.

The idea of I'll Survive exhibition is to produce a new photographic series which showcases my serving as documentary photographer for a scientific expedition in Venezuela, or as to research the connection of places rendered unlivable by pollution and how they are represented by media culture and how I used that role to expand my artistic practice, further my investigation of landscape art, and apply new conceptual strategies to our models of representation—the digested, regurgitated media images of how nature is being colonized, reproduced, viewed, and advertised.

Mathias Kessler

**ROSPHOTO will host a meeting with Mathias Kessler after the exhibition vernissage, on 14 June at 19.00.**

ROSPHOTO State Museum and Exhibition Centre  
35 Bol. Morskaya 191186, St.Petersburg  
Tel.: (812) 314-12-14, fax.: +7 (812) 314-61-84