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Twentysix Cell Towers (Pass d'Umbrail)

## Twentysix Cell Towers

«Twentysix Cell Towers» is an unusual portrait of the Alps, based on twentysix cell towers in the Engadin, a high valley in the south east part of Switzerland. It challenges the romantic image of the Alps with the non-lieux of the mountain world, and looks at places that are usually not a destination. The project touches on important issues, such as our relationship with nature asking: how much data do we need, even in the remote mountain world?

«Twentysix Cell Towers» is also a node to Ed Ruscha's Twentysix Gasoline Stations. Today, cell towers have gained a similar importance as gas stations in the 1960s - except that nobody sees them.





Twentysix Cell Towers (Samnaun), 2021





Twentysix Cell Towers (Scuol), 2021





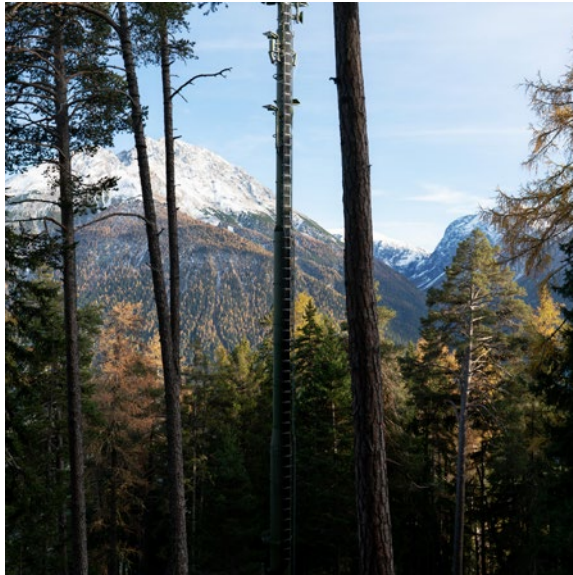
Twentysix Cell Towers (Vallaina), 2021





Twentysix Cell Towers (Naluns), 2021









Funkloch (Plan Mattun), 2021

## Funkloch

A Funkloch is the German term for a place with no cell phone reception. As cell phone coverage has reached even remote regions, these zones are becoming more and more rare. For this project, I went to the Swiss Alps and hiked until my cell phone went silent.

Funkloch pays attention to a landscape which is not instagrammable and has no location tag. Many of the places turned out to be steep side valleys where you can find a sheep farm at best. Places that are often in the shadow, as they are surrounded by high mountains, resulting in rather dark images.





Funkloch (Macun), c-print, 111 x 149 cm, 2021





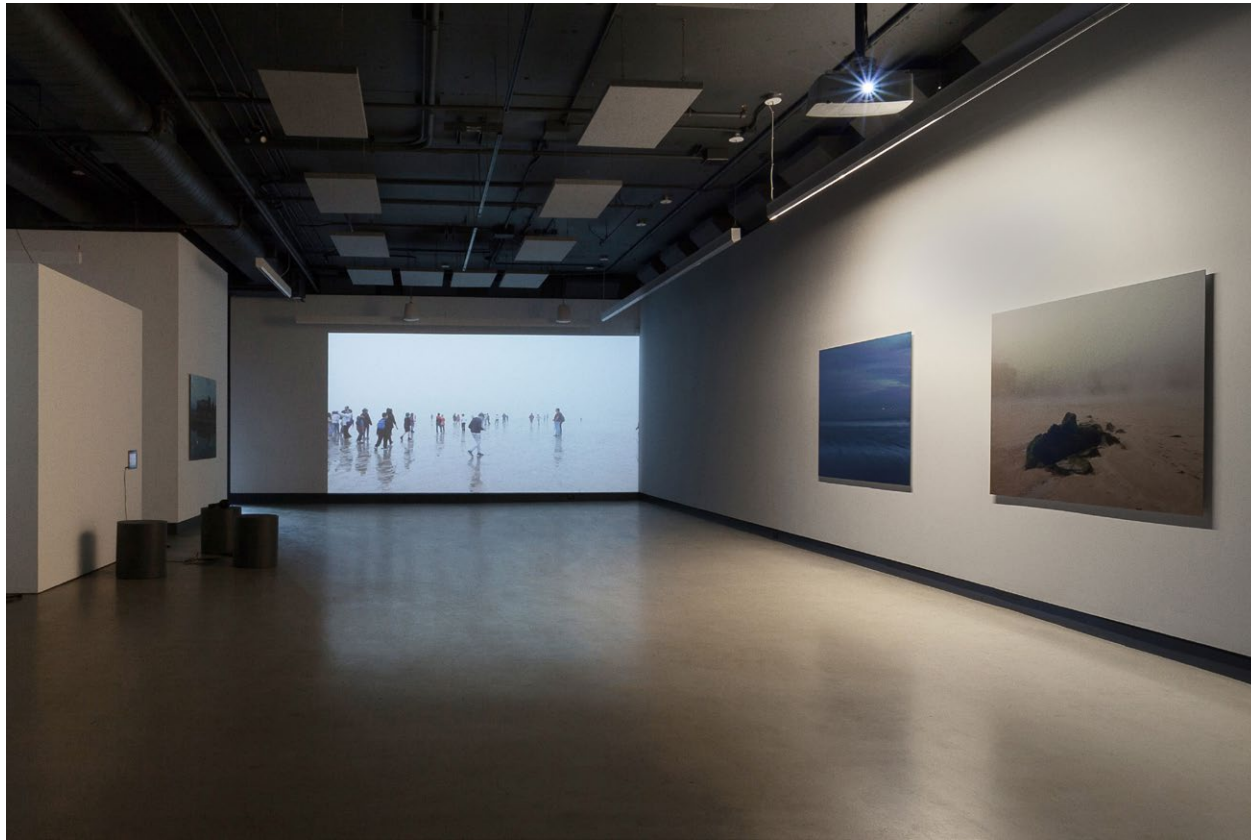
Funkloch (Val Tasna), c-print, 91 x 122 cm, 2021





Funkloch (exhibition view), 2021





Landing Sites, exhibition view, Dazibao, 2018

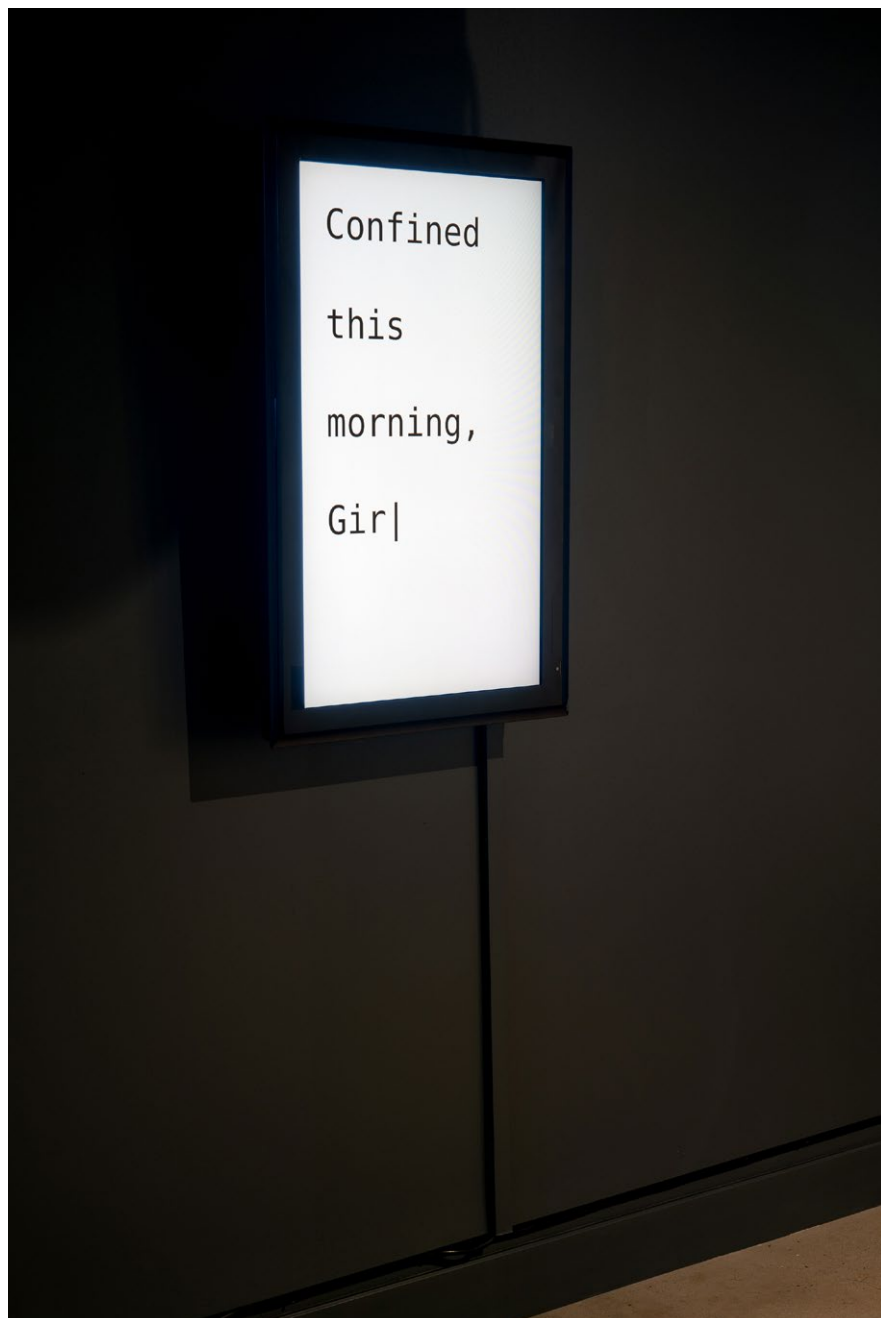
## Landing sites

At the centre of «Landing Sites» is the fibre optic cable FLAG Atlantic-1, put in operation in 2001, which connects the US directly with France. It was the first submarine cable able to transmit high quality video. It enabled the internet as we know in today, with all its streaming applications.

I went to both landing sites of the FLAG cable, one located in the Bretagne in France, and the other one in Long Island, just outside of New York City. My search for signs of the cable turned into an exploration of culture differences, but also how culture, which is transmitted precisely through this fibre optics cable, becomes interrelated.

Another aspect is the change of speed of communication over time. Before the first telegraph cable was laid down in 1858, it took three weeks for a message to cross the Atlantic by boat. When the first telegraph became available, it took still 10 minutes for one single word. In 2001, FLAG Atlantic-1 made it possible to transmit 200 hours of video every second.





The video «Announcement» refers the transmission speed of the first transatlantic telegraph cable from 1858. Back then, it took about 10 minutes to transmit a word, on average 2 minutes per letter.

The text “Confined this morning, Girl, both doing well” is a birth announcement in old fashion English. It is from the Universal Telegraphic Phrase-Book, which lists of the most common telegraphic phrases and the code word which can be used instead for each phrase . It takes 78 Min to see the full message.

An excerpt of this video is available on Vimeo:

<https://vimeo.com/305124975>

Announcement, HD video, silent, 78 min, 2018





## Transmission

HD Video (60fps), 1second, silent, loop, 2018

I compressed 200 hours of videos into one second, which is the equivalent of the transmission speed of FLAG Atlantic-1.

The video is available on Vimeo:

<https://vimeo.com/304971198>



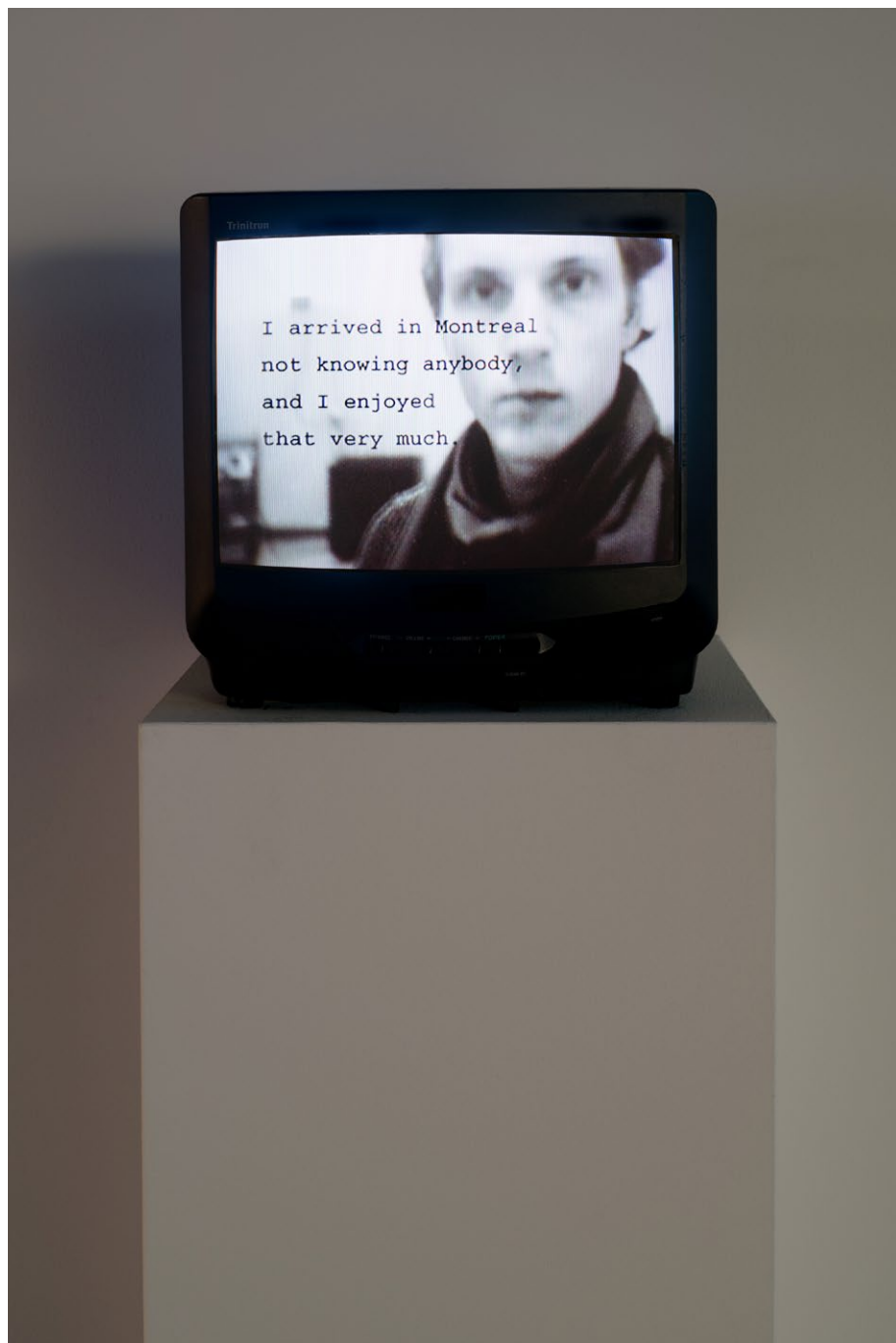


Landing Site (east), c-print, 121x162 cm, 2018





Landing Site (west), c-print, 121x162 cm, 2018



### **Last Generation**

SD Video, BW, silent, 1Min 39 sec

My personal experience with immigration and communication technology.

The video is available on Vimeo:

<https://vimeo.com/305243707>





### **Voices over the Ocean**

HD Video, 1 Min 37s, loop, 2018

Recorded on Long Island near the landing site of FLAG Atlantic-1, we hear snippets from phone conversations interrupted by the sound of the ocean.

The video is available on Vimeo:

<https://vimeo.com/305247796>



Data Center, c-print, 107x137 cm, 2018





## **Ebb and Flow**

HD Video, 5 Min 40s, 2018

Watch on Vimeo (excerpt):  
<https://vimeo.com/288457439>

From the shore in Aupaluk, Nunavik to the landings site of FLAG Atlantic-1 in Palus, France.



«Off-Grid», installation view, Patrick Mikhail Gallery, 2017

## Off-Grid

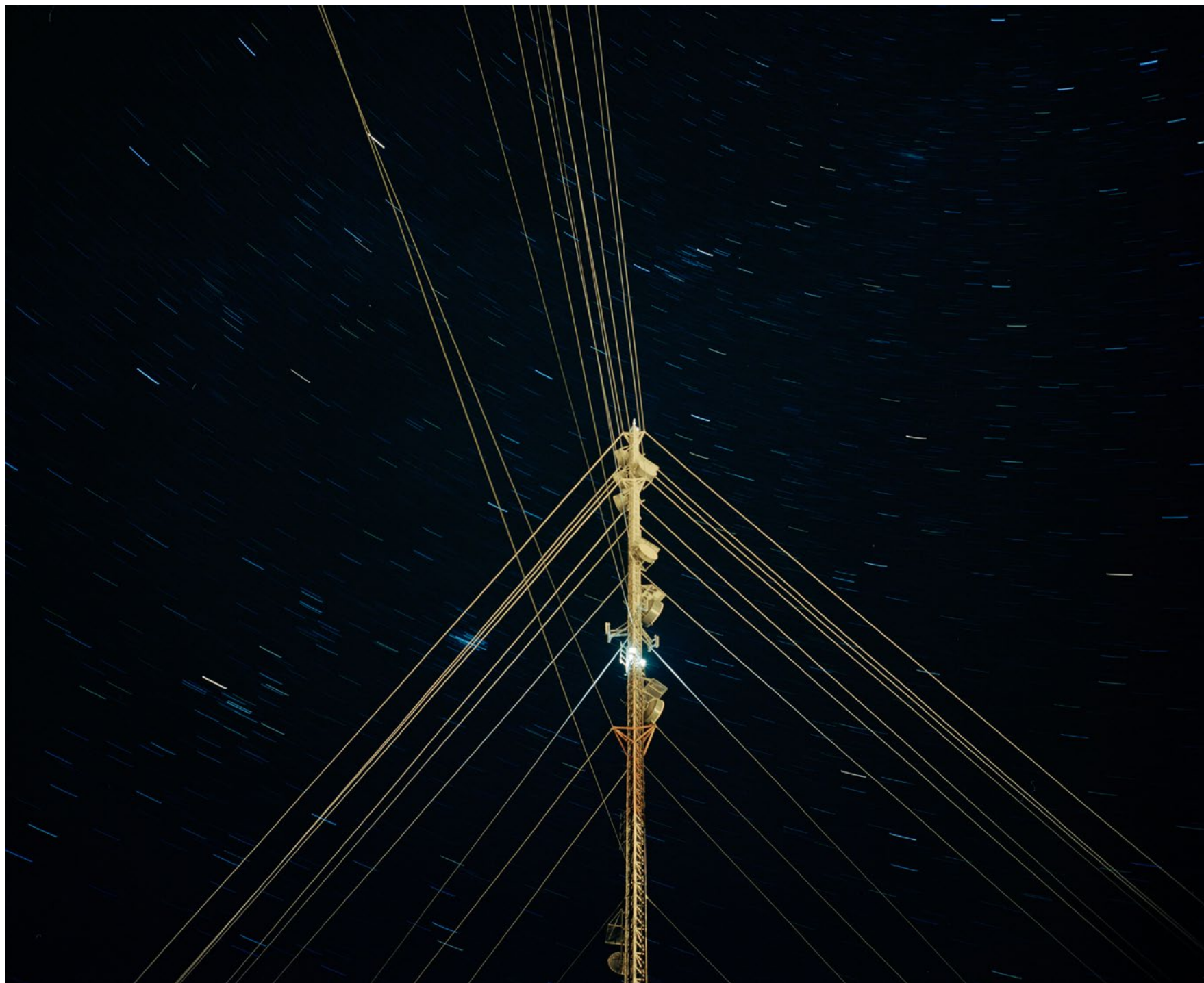
C-prints, 2012 - 2017

«Off-Grid» looks at the network infrastructure in Nunavik, the Quebec Arctic. No roads go there, telecommunication requires satellites, and in every Inuit village electricity is produced with diesel generators on site. As a consequence, every settlement has a small industrial zone which ensures a community's survival under northern conditions. The appearance of industrial sites in this landscape creates a rupture, symptomatic for these communities which have been colonized and forced to move away from their nomadic life.





Hello World, 38 x 50 cm, 2012



Tour d'étoiles, 76 x 90 cm, 2012





Northern Lights, 88 x 120 cm, 2017



Beach Front, 88 x 120 cm, 2017





Tanks, 88 x 120 cm, 2017



Intersection, 88 x 123 cm, 2017





«Land Claim», installation view, Centre Pasquart, Bienne, 2014

## Land Claim

C-prints, HD video, 2014

*«Mines do not reveal themselves, and they present nothing to see. They are recalcitrant subjects; unlike a bridge or a building, they offer no proper face, and no vantage from which to apprehend their totality. Mining is, in short, radically unphotogenic.» (Kenneth Hayes)*

Mining takes place in the dark, far away from the public eye. It is tied to a specific location, often in very remote places. Yet, the business is global, dictated by the market around the world.

«Land Claim» looks at mining in the Canadian arctic and brings together mining sites in the north with the economic centers in the south.



## **Forward Looking Statements**

HD Video, 3 Min 55s, 2014

A conference call by investors of a planned iron mine provides the soundtrack for a ride over the land the company wants to exploit. The land in question is traditional hunting ground for the Inuit community of Aupaluk, located in Canada's far North. The village has already been relocated in the 1980's, and is now again under threat.

The term "forward looking statements" is used in the world of investors to describe future events which are subject to certain risks and uncertainties.

Watch on Vimeo (excerpt):  
<https://vimeo.com/103588997>





Under Siege #1 (drill hole), c-print, 114x152 cm, 2014





Under Siege #2 (camp), c-print, 77x103 cm, 2014





Under Siege #3 (chopper), c-print, 77x103 cm, 2014





Under Siege #4 (traces), c-print, 77x103 cm, 2014





Under Siege #5 (shots), c-print, 77x103 cm, 2014



### **Relocation (FPIC\*)**

HD Video, 41s, loop, 2014

The headquarter of the mining company Xstrata (now Glencore), located in Zug, Switzerland, a known tax heaven. We hear the CEO talking about relocating aboriginal communities, and the procedure involved. But is there such a thing as “free consent” when a small community faces a global corporation?

\*Free, prior and informed consent

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/103535173>



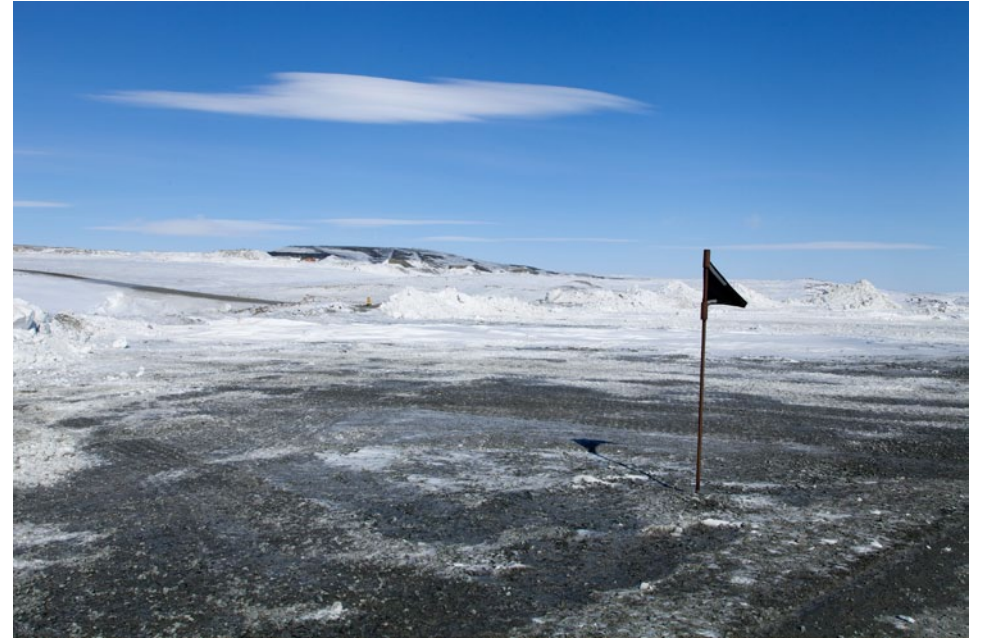
### **Underground**

HD video, 90s, silent, loop, 2014

Inside a spiral tunnel of a nickel mine, at Raglan in Nuanvik, Canada.

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/103481662>



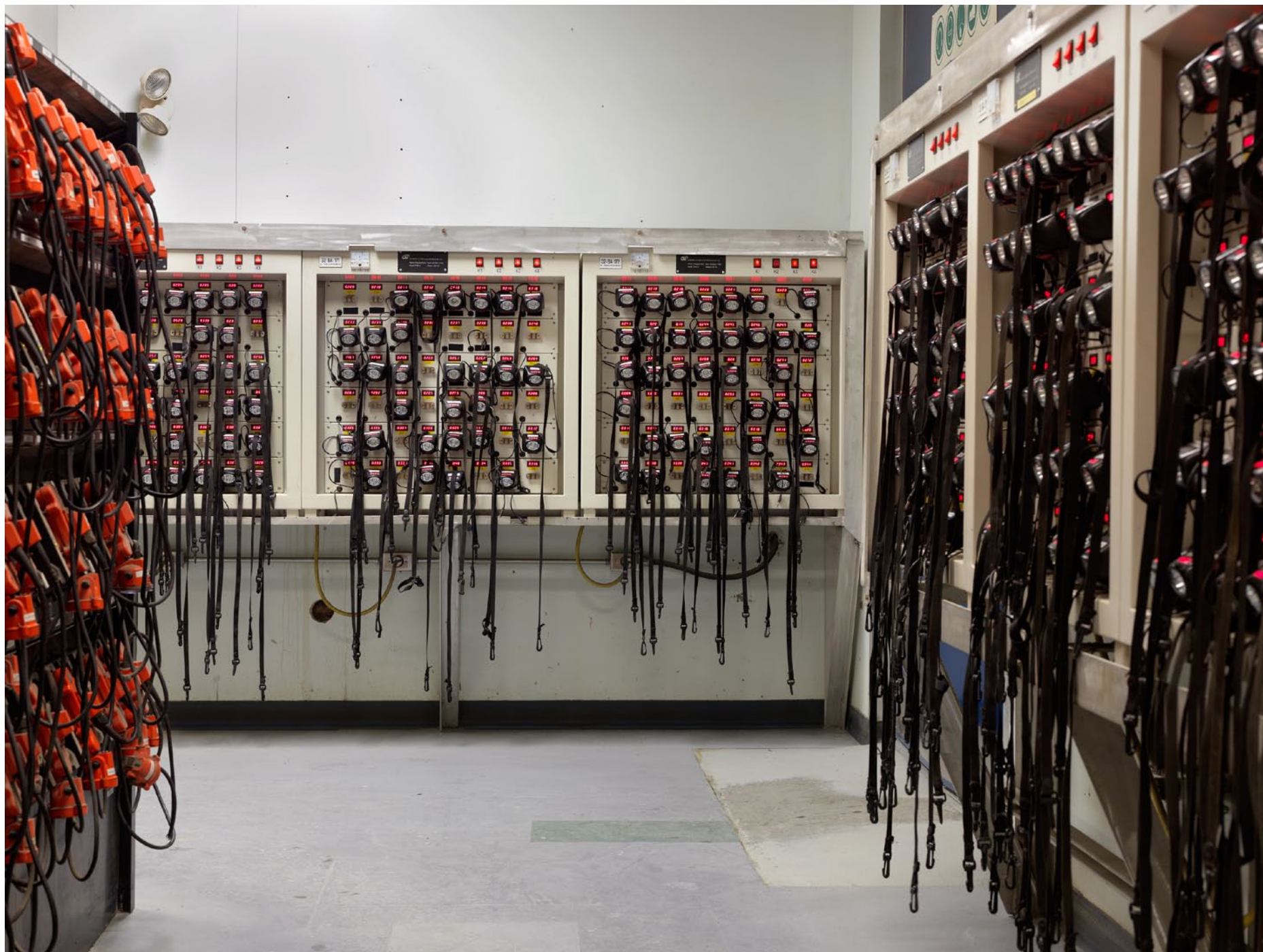


Poles, c-prints (diptych), 127x84 cm each, 2014



Light Man, dimensions variable, 2014





Miners, c-print, 152x113 cm, 2014





Traders, c-print, 114x152 cm, 2014





«Days in Night», installation view, Ausstellungsraum Klingental, Basel, 2013

## Days in Night

C-prints, HD video, 2013 - 14

It is hard to navigate in the dark, especially in an unknown territory. Over time, the eyes adjust to the darkness, and the new environment starts to emerge.

«Days in Night» is the result of a residency at CFS Alert, a military and research station in the high arctic. From October to early March there is polar night, with no direct sunlight. Not even a compass works up there: magnetic north is south of the station.



## **Days in Night**

HD Video, 3 Min 48s, 2013

Watch on Vimeo (excerpt):  
<https://vimeo.com/62498416>





Polar Night, c-print, 88x118 cm, 2013



Water Line, c-print, 88x118 cm, 2013





Antennas, c-print, 88x118 cm, 2014



Terrain #1, c-print, 88x118 cm, 2014





Terrain #2, c-print, 88x118 cm, 2014



Horizon (West), c-print, 48 x 72 cm, 2014





Horizon (East), c-print, 48 x 72 cm, 2014



## Under Currents

Duratrans in lightbox, c-prints, HD video,  
Land claim agreement, webcam on ipod, 2011

«Under Currents» looks at the hydroelectric installations in Canada's far North, and their impact on the people and the land. There are two intersecting axes: first the rivers that flow from east to west, interrupted by hydroelectric power stations; then there is the stream of electricity, flowing from north to south. One transmission line goes more than 2000 Km south, to a converter station outside Boston.

These installations are also where the native Cree population and the state-owned energy company Hydro Quebec intersect. If Canada's North is traditionally a nomad's land, ironically, in the course of its development, it is the workers from the south that become nomadic: they are flown in for their work shifts and housed in temporary work camps, whereas the native population, displaced by the installation's progress, is settled in subdivisions.





Power Station, duratrans in lightbox, 81x107 cm, 2011





Converter Station North, c-print mounted on aluminum, 91x230cm, 2011





Converter Station South, c-print mounted on aluminum, 91x230cm, 2011





Substation, c-print mounted on aluminum, 122x152 cm, 2011





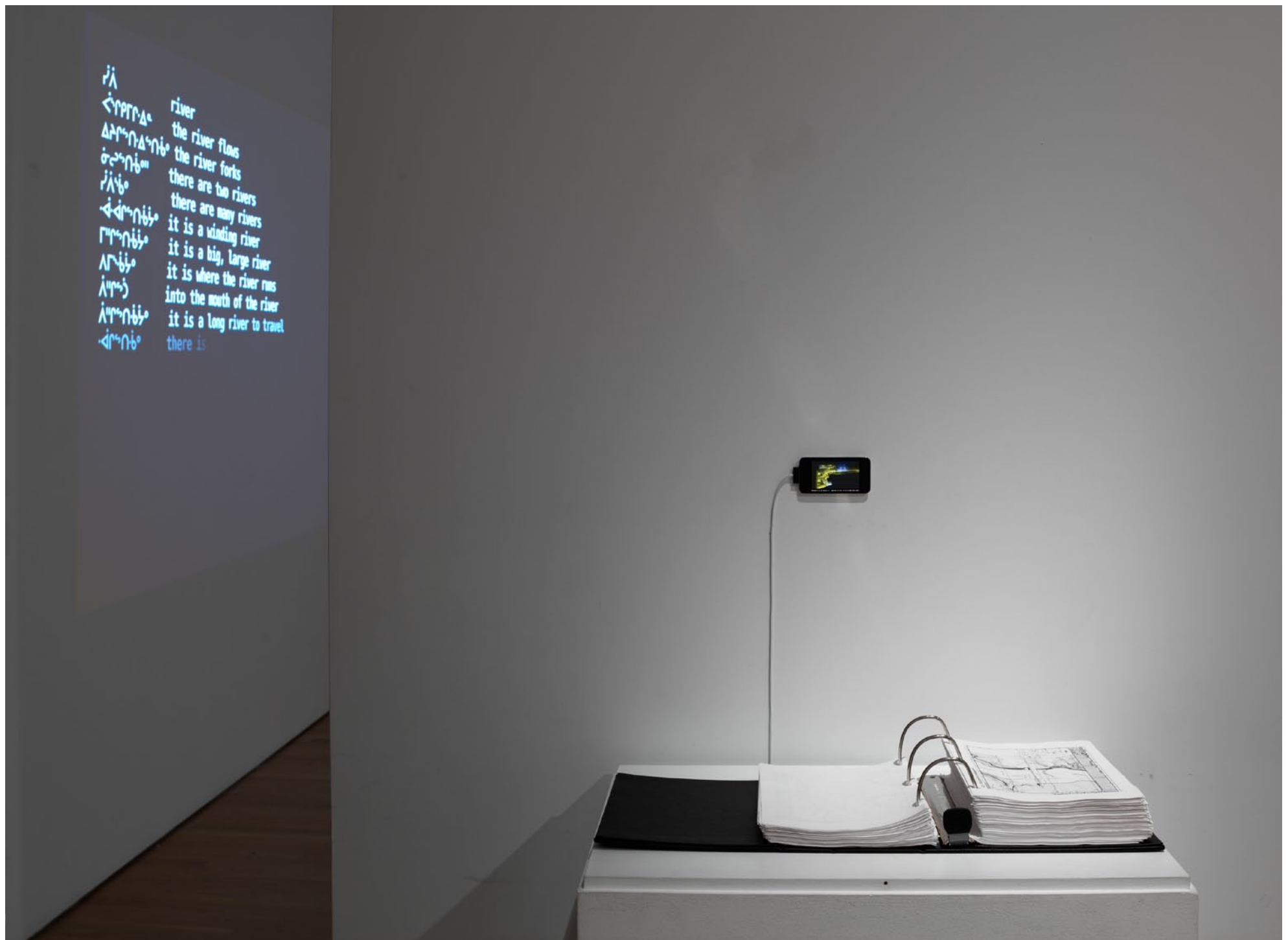
**Currents**, HD video, 6:30 min, loop

The video is available on Vimeo:  
<http://www.vimeo.com/35092757>



Currents, HD video, 6:30 min, loop, installation view, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 2011





Land claim agreement, webcam on ipod, installation view, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 2011





Nomadic Settlement #1, 75x102 cm





Nomadic Settlement #4, 75x102 cm



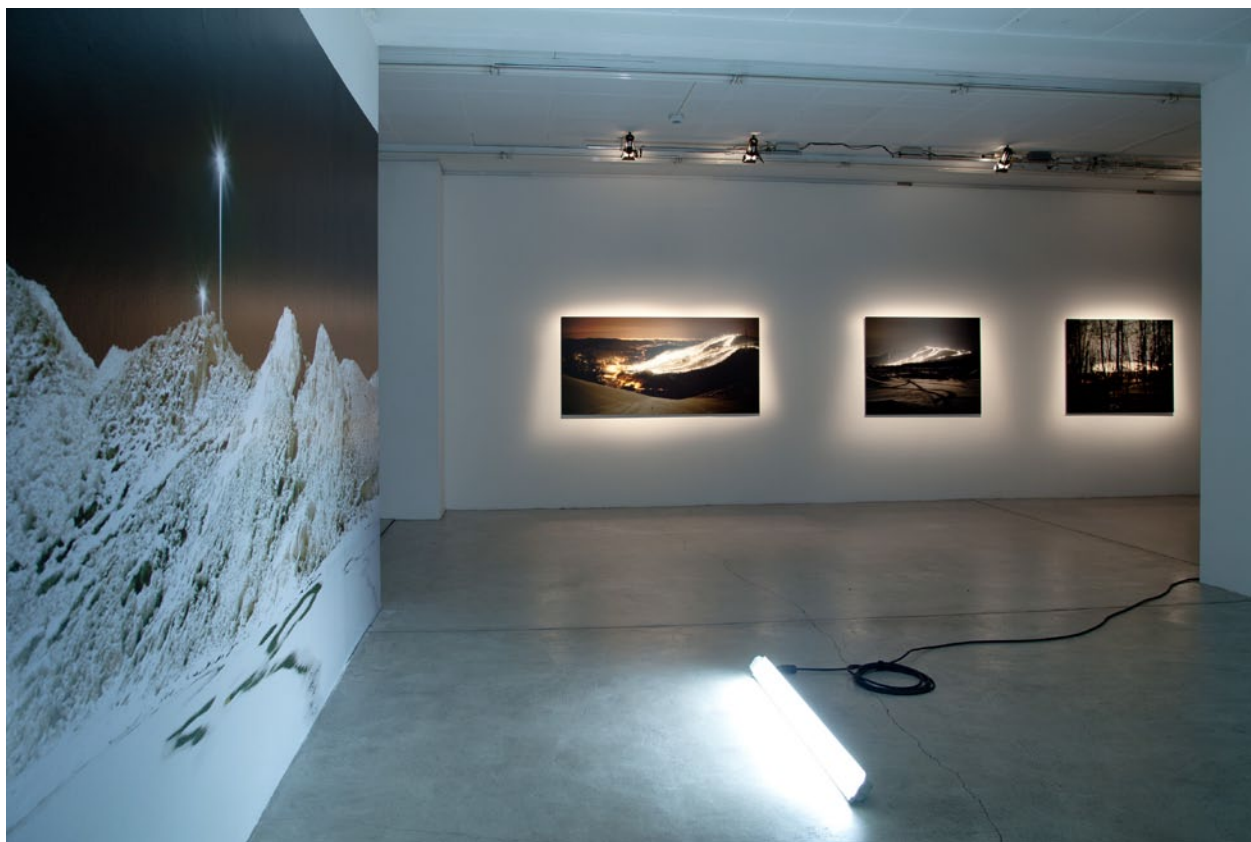


Nomadic Settlement #5, 75x102 cm





Nomadic Settlement #6, 75x102 cm

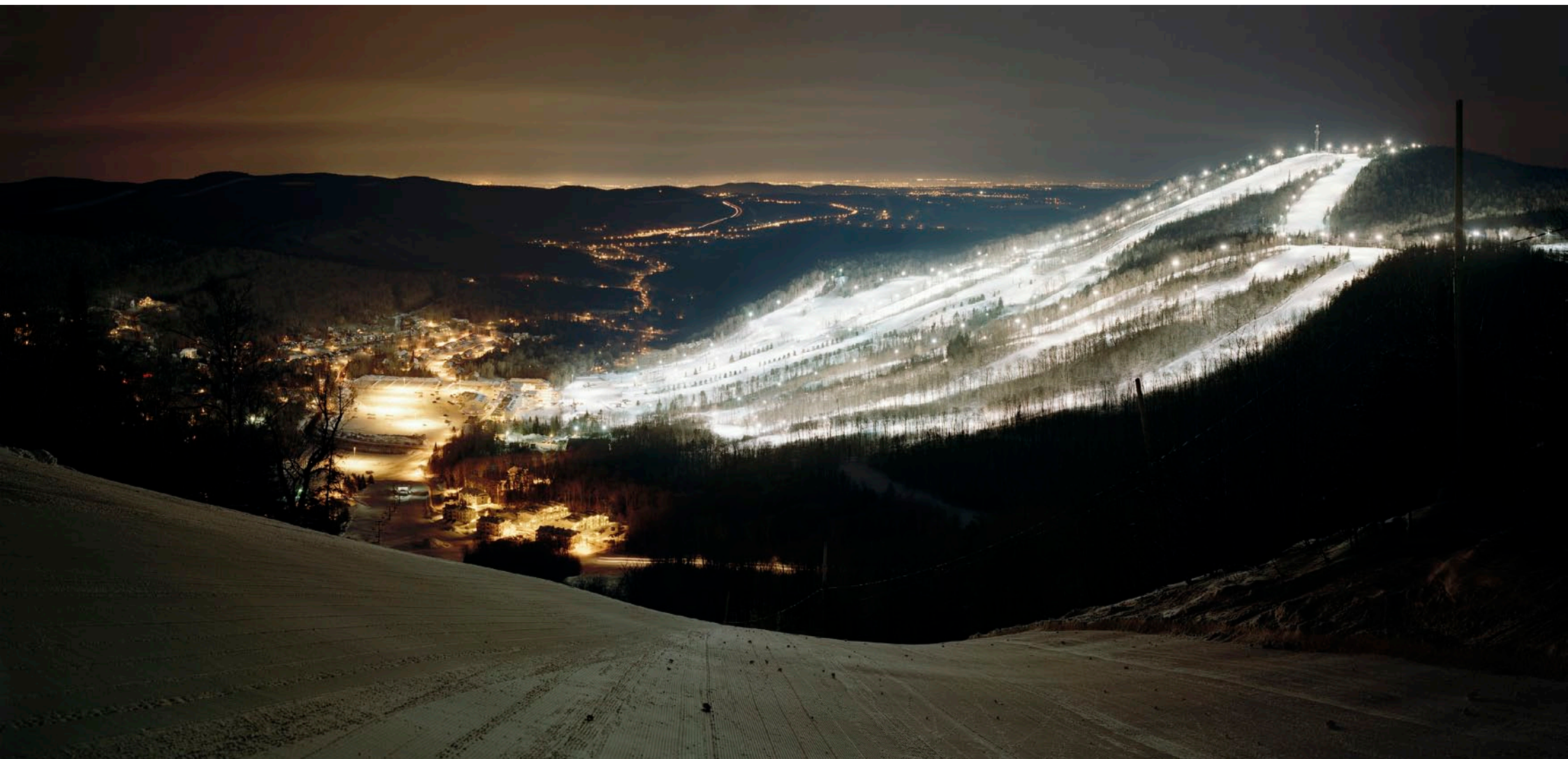


## Electric Mountains

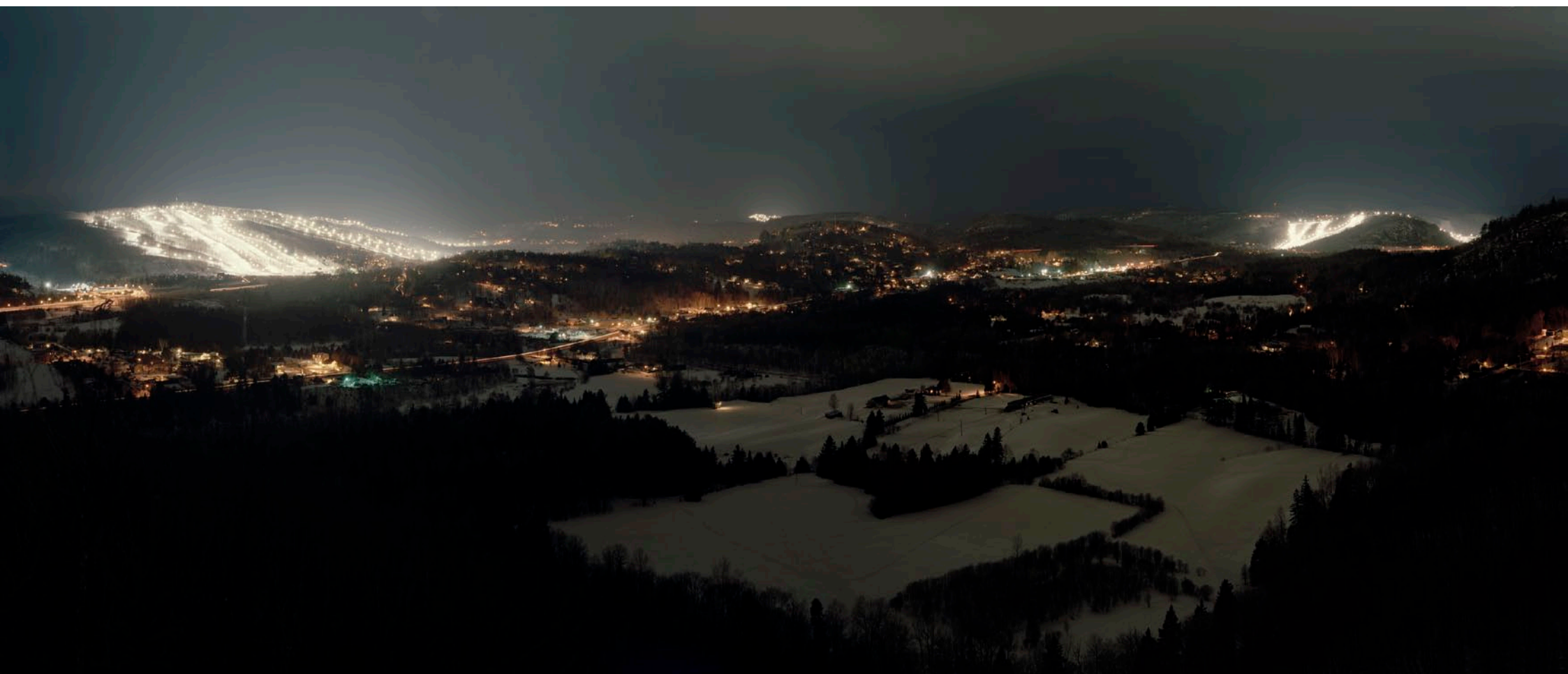
C-prints, wall mural, HD video, 2009

*Kneubühler's Electric Mountain series commanded attention by capturing the eerie nighttime illuminations of Quebec ski resorts in photos that were both ironically picturesque and seriously documentary. Like something out of Close Encounters of the Third Kind, his photos show a strange, abandoned recreational universe where the lit slopes seem like sign code directed to the stars. Kneubühler's nocturnes of cold, white artificial illumination tell the tale of a unique kind of landscape that waits for dark to come into its own—both land art for the sports-minded and a meta-image of photography's indebtedness to light. (Richard Rhodes)*





Electric #1, c-print, 96x200 cm, 2009



Electric #2, c-print, 96x200 cm, 2009





Electric #3, c-print, 100x127 cm, 2009



Electric #4, c-print, 100x127 cm, 2009





Electric #5, c-print, 100x127 cm, 2009



Electric #6, c-print, 100x127 cm, 2009





Electric #9, c-print, 100x127 cm, 2009



Mt. Hortons, dimensions variable, 2009





**Switch, 2009**

HD Video, 2 Min 50s, 2009

Sound: Steve Bates

500'000 watts electrify the mountain. Somebody turns the switch. A sound mimicking an electrified field fills the air.

Switch captures the moment when Mount Bromont's artificial lighting network, is switched off, plunging the mountain and town below into an immediate darkness. The contrast between the artificiality of the illuminated mountain is contrasted with the natural darkness of the night. This rupture between light/dark, artificial/natural is startling in its suddenness and lack of ceremony.

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/35934068>



Electric Mountains, installation view, ProjexMtl Galerie, Montreal, 2009