

PRESS RELEASE

CUSTOT
GALLERY

DUBAI

NICK BRANDT
THE DAY MAY BREAK

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Custot Gallery Dubai is pleased to present *Nick Brandt: The Day May Break*, an exhibition of new works photographed in Zimbabwe and Kenya in late 2020. It is the first part of a global series portraying people and animals that have been impacted by environmental degradation and destruction.

The people in the photos have all been badly affected by climate change - some displaced by cyclones that destroyed their homes, others such as farmers displaced and impoverished by years-long severe droughts.

The photographs were taken at five sanctuaries/ conservancies. The animals are almost all long-term rescues, victims of everything from the poaching of their parents, to habitat destruction and poisoning.

These animals can never be released back into the wild. As a result, they are habituated, and so it was safe for human strangers to be close to them, and photographed in the same frame at the same time.

The fog is the unifying visual. We increasingly find ourselves in a kind of limbo, a once-recognizable world now fading from view. Created by fog machines on location, this often renders the animals almost a dream, or a memory of what the people once experienced in their lives. It is also an echo of the suffocating smoke from the wildfires, driven by climate change, devastating so much of the planet.

However, in spite of their loss, these people and animals are the survivors. And therein lies possibility and hope.

"Nick Brandt is an artist and witness who seizes bleak and desperate fates, and by some mystery and alchemy, transmutes these into a gesture of poignant and painful beauty.

It has been an eon, and then some, since I experienced contemporary photographs of people of African roots created by a person of Euro-American origin, that were this tender, human and gorgeous."

— Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, from the Foreword to *The Day May Break*, Author of *Dust* and *The Dragonfly Sea*.

"The environmental threat to life on this planet - both human and animal - is realized by Nick Brandt in *The Day May Break* to devastating effect in these powerful yet tender portraits. Art of this calibre is in a unique position to challenge and engage audiences in environmental conversation."

- Mary Robinson, *Former President of Ireland and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Climate Change, Chair of The Elders*.

"A landmark body of work by one of photography's great environmental champions. Showing how deeply our fates are intertwined, Brandt portrays people and animals together, causing us to reflect on the real-life consequences of climate change. Channeling his outrage into quiet determination, the result is a portrait of us all, at a critical moment in the Anthropocene."

— Phillip Prodger, *Curator, Author, Photography historian, former Head of Photographs at the National Portrait Gallery, London*.

Born in England, Nick Brandt studied film and painting at St. Martin's School of Art in London. He turned to photography in 2001 with his trilogy *On This Earth, A Shadow Falls, Across the Ravaged Land* – to be followed up by *Inherit the Dust* and *This Empty World*. Nick Brandt co-founded Big Life Foundation with one of the most respected conservationists in East Africa, Richard Bonham.

Image: Halima, Abdul, and Frida, Kenya, 2020