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The Sacrifice Zone

Eddo Hartmann

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Eddo Hartmann's new photographic project focuses on one of the first 'sacrifice zones' created by governments in the late modern era for the secret production, testing and maintenance of nuclear and chemical weapons of all kinds. The residents of these locations unknowingly became guinea pigs in the experiment. Today, these areas have become examples of ecocide: the irreversible destruction of nature on a large scale.

A remote area of Kazakhstan was once home to the Soviet Union's main nuclear testing facilities. It became known as 'The Polygon'. On this site more than 450 nuclear tests took place from 1949 to 1989, without regard for their effect on the local population and the environment. The full impact of the radiation only became apparent after the test site closed in the early 1990s.

Today, this corner of the Kazakh steppe is a place of desolation and decay. The landscape is dotted with strange lakes formed by nuclear explosions and the remains of giant concrete structures. It seems uninhabitable, and yet people live there, demonstrating incredible resilience.

Eddo Hartmann (b. 1973) studied photographic design at the Royal Academy of Art (KABK) in The Hague. He mainly focuses on long-running documentary projects and is the author of *Setting the Stage – North Korea*, published by Hannibal Books. He currently also works as a lecturer in photography and visual grammar at KABK in The Hague.

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