

A wide-angle photograph of a winter landscape. The foreground is a vast, snow-covered field with numerous small, rounded mounds of snow. In the middle ground, a long, multi-arched concrete bridge spans across the scene. The bridge has several tall, thin light poles along its length. The background shows a calm body of water under a soft, hazy sky with a warm, golden glow from a low sun, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall color palette is dominated by cool blues and whites, contrasted with the warm tones of the sky.

Charles Thom Seskarö

Seskarö is a photographic project documenting a small island in the Bothnian Bay, which is on the border between Finland and Sweden. Located only an hour from the Arctic Circle, Seskarö holds a very proud and rich history of lumber and fishing work which continues to this day. The approx. 491 residents of the island experience extremely cold, dark and long winters in a unique part of the world that is rarely heard about and seldom mentioned in the mainstream media. This project aims to document the more subtle aspects of life on the 20km² island. As an outsider, it is almost impossible to photograph the island without looking through the prism of what John Urry calls the “tourist gaze”. My overall aim was to capture daily scenarios and key moments that, whilst perceivably normal to its inhabitants, might be considered fascinating and unique by outsiders. The images from this project will come together to form a “portrait” of the island and those who live there using a variety of different subjects and traditional photographic genres.

Fortunately, this shortage of coverage is beginning to change in recent times. The indigenous Sami land, Sápmi, is beginning to receive far more media coverage regarding the effects of climate change there. However, many people still might not know much about this humble corner of Scandinavia. Seskarö aims to shed light on what it's like to live in such a remote place, as it's an area that I hold a personal connection to and one I wish others could experience and learn about. I have decided to produce this project as a set of images with no additional text aside from this brief artistic statement, as I feel this would take away from the heavily visual nature of the series. The project, naturally, includes many images featuring forests, heavy snow and ice which stylistically ties everything together to capture the human element of living on Seskarö, by shadowing its residents and capturing daily occurrences.

Temperatures frequently drop below -25°C during the winters, with staggering amounts of snow and very limited daylight hours, and accustoming myself and my equipment as an outsider to the harsh climate was certainly a big challenge during the production of this project. Despite the winters still being quite bitter, the effects of climate change are felt even on Seskarö, and this is starting to become an everyday worry amongst its residents. Harder snow is beginning to appear more often from more frequent thawing and freezing in the earlier and later winter months, making road conditions untenable, as well as making it far more difficult for the native moose and reindeer populations to find food among a host of other issues. I hope the outlook becomes brighter for the future with the increasing availability of fossil fuel alternatives, renewable energy and sustainable business practices in order to preserve this corner of the world's way of life.

Seskarö was produced over the course of 3 months in the deep Swedish winter, from November to February. I feel photography is the best choice of medium for this series not only because it is the field I hold the most experience in and my preferred method of artistic expression, but also because still-frames force you, the viewer, to look more closely at the frame and study the smaller details and aspects you might miss if the project was expressed through another visual medium. I hope you enjoy studying and appreciating these images as much as I enjoyed producing them. Thank you for viewing this project and giving me the opportunity to express what I have to show you, I am extremely grateful for your support and time.

Tack (Thank you!)
Charles

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles', with a horizontal line underneath the name.



















FOLKETS HUS















About The Artist

I'm Charles, a 22-year-old BA (Hons) Media Production student at Southampton Solent University. Originally from West Sussex, I've held a deep interest in media, specifically in photography, for over 5 years now, developing a love for cameras new and old. This has led to my involvement in the online film photography community, shooting over 250 rolls of film, and a range of projects and self-published photographic zines in locations such as Ukraine and the coasts of North America, and more recently the north of Sweden. With a very eclectic mix of photographic genres and formats, I would describe myself as a laid-back photographer who likes to shoot a bit of everything.

A budding secondary Media teacher, I've secured a place on a PGCE Media Studies course at the University of Sussex for postgraduate study, and I plan to move to Sweden in the long term to persue this career, holding a part-time freelance media business to support my interests.

I hope you enjoy my work! You can find me online at:

 charliethom_  Charles Thom  Charlie Thom Photography