

The breathtakingly touching photography of
Jacob Aue Sobol

In conversation with Colin Pantall

Danish photographer Jacob Aue Sobol talks to Gomma Magazine about his acclaimed book 'Sabine', his World Press photo winning series 'Guatemala' and 'Tokyo', his latest work from Japan.

JACOB: When I was a child, my father gave me a book called 'The Diary of a Hunter'. It showed Greenland and the changes that were taking place there. I finally visited Greenland when I was a student. I wanted to show the culture clash between the traditional and the modern. I went to Tiniteqilaq, a settlement with 150 people. I had two rules while I was out there - no pictures of icebergs or empty beer bottles.

After five weeks, I got home, developed my film and realised I had only photographed the clichés of Greenland, so I went again and stayed with a priest called Hans. I went hunting with him and on one trip, I saw a seal - the rule is that if you see an animal first, you kill it. Hans gave me the gun and I shot the seal. It was the first animal I had ever killed and it changed my relationship with Greenland forever.

Then I fell in love with Sabine and started living with her and her family. Now, instead of coming home with exposed film, I wanted to come home with fish or fur. I started using my compact camera to record my emotions with Sabine. I was fascinated by the spontaneous way she expressed her joy, her fear, her sorrow and I tried to capture that in my photographs.

I stayed for six months then we came to Denmark to earn money. It was the first time Sabine had seen streets and trees and she got very homesick. For two and a half years we lived between Denmark and Greenland. On the last trip we broke up and I came back to Denmark.

Images taken from the new series Tokyo, Sabine and Guatemala.
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