

NEW RELEASE

## Anton Kusters 1078 Blue Skies / 4432 Days

Texts by Jane E. Klinger (USHMM), Fred Ritchin (ICP),  
Joan M. Walker (NGA)

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**Consisting of 1078 Polaroid photos of abstract blue skies above Nazi concentration camps, the work is an unsettling way of looking directly at an unspeakable trauma that is also a fading collective memory.**

Over a six-year period, Anton Kusters researched and photographed a blue sky at the last known location of every former Nazi Germany SS concentration camp and killing center across Europe. These camps existed for 4432 days, from 1933 to 1945, in a highly organized system of imprisonment, forced labor, and murder. More than half of these 1078 sites have no visual remains today. Every photograph is manually blind-stamped with the number of victims beneath that sky, as well as its GPS coordinates. The artist's upwards viewpoint reflects upon the difficulty of representing trauma and commemoration, and is a confrontation of how we see, and how we choose to remember.

From the essay by **Fred Ritchin**, Dean Emeritus of the International Center of Photography, New York:

*Anton Kusters' 1078 Polaroid photographs emphasize color, particularly the color blue. To make them, he "traveled 177,828 km, 95% alone, to every corner of the former Third Reich" over five-and-a-half years. He researched the existence of the 1078 former official Nazi Germany SS concentration camps, including 110 early camps first established by local authorities as well as the six mass extermination camps that were built later, based upon information gathered in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum seven-part Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos 1933–1945. He employed a geo-positioning device to locate the sites and weather apps to find out when the skies over them would be blue. In an age of billions upon billions of uploaded images, he limited himself to making only three peel-apart Polaroid images of each largely cloudless sky, the camera always set at the same exposure to uniformly record the reflected light.*

*Kusters is aware that, unlike digital files, one day these film-and-paper images will fade away. He is happy about that and aware that photographing the past can be paradoxical. (...)*

*Every viewer knows that one day these photographs will disappear, but the blue skies they depict will not fade into the past; they will persevere no matter what occurs below. Intuitively then, Kusters has created photography of the eternal present that hangs over an incomprehensible and highly contested past.*

*And in the meantime, as Charles Simic put it, "The world seems to be divided today between those horrified to see history repeat itself and those who eagerly await its horrors."*

*Looking up, the blue skies peer down at us.*

For *The Blue Skies Project* Belgian artist **Anton Kusters** (b. 1974) was nominated for the Prix Pictet 2019, and was a finalist for the 2020 Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize. *The Blue Skies Project* is curated by **Monica Allende**, and the exhibition installation is accompanied by a 13 year long tracking audio/visual piece by sound artist and composer **Ruben Samama**.  
[antonkusters.com](http://antonkusters.com) / [@theblueskiesproject](https://www.instagram.com/theblueskiesproject)

### Selected Exhibitions

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington D.C., USA  
2019 – 2021

Fitzrovia Chapel, London, UK, 2019

The Photographers' Gallery, London, UK, 2020

Landskrona, Sweden 2020

C-Mine, Genk, Belgium, 13.03.21 – 30.05.21

Rencontres d'Arles 2021, Arles, France, 04.07. – 29.08.2021

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## Press images



01\_Breitenau | 0000470 | 51.202349, 9.476400 (EX) from The Blue Skies Project. FP-100C peel-apart instant film © Anton Kusters, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn



02\_Auschwitz II - Birkenau | 1471595 (est.) | 50.034568, 19.181185 (EX) from The Blue Skies Project. FP-100C peel-apart instant film © Anton Kusters, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn



03\_Taucha | 0001261 | 51.377620, 12.477593 (EX) from The Blue Skies Project. FP-100C peel-apart instant film © Anton Kusters, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn



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05\_Kirchham bei Pocking | 0000496 | 48.363448, 13.282170 (EX) from The Blue Skies Project. FP-100C peel-apart instant film © Anton Kusters, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn



06\_'s Gravenhage | unknown | 52.085097, 4.326982 (CO) from The Blue Skies Project. FP-100C peel-apart instant film © Anton Kusters, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn



07\_Dippoldsau | 0000152 | 47.864733, 14.610172 (EX) from The Blue Skies Project. FP-100C peel-apart instant film © Anton Kusters, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn



08\_Kiel | 0000051 | 54.323381, 10.123386 (CO) from The Blue Skies Project. FP-100C peel-apart instant film © Anton Kusters, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn



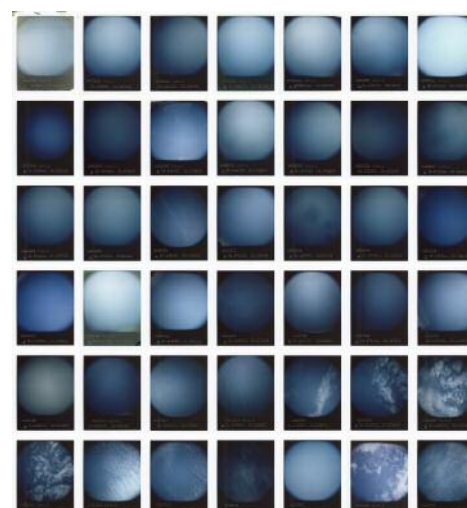
09\_Fallersleben | 0000600 (est.) | 52.430393, 10.763114 (EX) from The Blue Skies Project. FP-100C peel-apart instant film © Anton Kusters, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn



10\_Danzig (Schulemann) | 0000025 | 54.349522, 18.641100 (AP) from The Blue Skies Project. FP-100C peel-apart instant film © Anton Kusters, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn



11\_Alderney (Kanalinsel) (SS-BB I) | 0000700 (est.) | 49.704799, -2.218568 (EX) from The Blue Skies Project. FP-100C peel-apart instant film © Anton Kusters, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn



12\_A grid of 42 of blue skies instant film images shot at every last known location of the Auschwitz concentration camp and sub camp system. Part of The Blue Skies Project © Anton Kusters, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn