

AN INUPIAQ COMMUNITY SWALLOWED BY THE SEA

# THE LAST DAYS OF SHISHMAREF



DANA  
LIXENBERG  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
JAN LOUTER  
FILM

[www.thelastdaysofshishmaref.net](http://www.thelastdaysofshishmaref.net)

EXHIBITION / BOOK / WEBSITE / FILM

## PRESS RELEASE

**EDAM, OCTOBER 2008** Inspired by a short newspaper article, documentary filmmaker Jan Louter left Europe in 2007 to visit an island off the west coast of Alaska. The effects of global warming threaten the very existence of the 600 people in the community of Shishmaref, so much so that they have to relocate or be washed away by the sea. As a result, they have become one of the first communities to receive the label of 'climate refugees'.

Louter invited photographer Dana Lixenberg to accompany him to the village of Shishmaref for several weeks in the spring and autumn of 2007. Together, they painted a fascinating portrait of a community trying to maintain some traditional roots, but now forced to take a radical leap into the unknown. The project will be released this coming autumn through various channels: exhibition, book, film, website, and an educational program.

**EXHIBITION** The multimedia installation entitled *The Last Days of Shishmaref* presents Dana Lixenberg photographs alongside a spatial montage of film scenes from Jan Louter's film, shot by cameraman Melle van Essen. Lixenberg's portraits of the inhabitants, the landscape and the interiors of the homes in Shishmaref do not serve merely as illustrations of an alarming tale. They add up to a balanced portrait of this community. The exhibition also displays historical photos and film and video footage of the island and its inhabitants. The current situation will be featured as projected newsfeeds and on the website, which is accessible in the exhibition.

20% of the returns from the ticket sales will be donated to the SOS foundation. *Save Our Shishmaref* is a non-profit association founded by the school children of Shishmaref, who hope to raise funds for relocating the village.

**9 NOVEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup> 2008 - 11 JANUARY 11<sup>TH</sup> 2009 LP II, BUILDING LAS PALMAS, ROTTERDAM Wilhelminakade 326, Rotterdam - [www.lp2.nl](http://www.lp2.nl)**

**PRESS VIEWING with lunch and guided tour on Friday, November 7, 2008 between 12.30 and 2 p.m. Sign up at [info@lp2.nl](mailto:info@lp2.nl)**

**BOOK** Family ties play a central role in the book of photos by Dana Lixenberg. The portraits, details from interiors, village tableaux, land- and seascapes give a nuanced impression of a close community balancing between a past rooted in tradition and an uncertain future.

Lixenberg took her pictures with a large-format camera, a method that requires an intimate collaboration between the photographer and her subject.

**BOOK PRESENTATION SATURDAY NOVEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup> 2008 during the opening of the exhibition / Layout & design: Mevis & Van Deursen / Publishers: Paradox and Episode Publishers Texts: Prospektor | 208 full-color pages | Price: € 35,- ISBN: 9789059731110 (dutch) / 9789059731103 (english)**

**FILM** In the documentary entitled *The Last Days of Shishmaref*, Jan Louter depicts the impending end of the traditional lifestyle on the island of Shishmaref through the lives of three Inupiat families. Despite the alarming situation, this film has not become a political manifesto. *The Last Days of Shishmaref* is a moving film about identity, transience, mortality, and the clash between different eras and cultures.

**Camera: Melle van Essen / Editing: Riekje Ziengs**

The film premièred during the Netherlands Film Festival. The worldwide première was held in Shishmaref itself. NOVA, a Dutch late-evening news programme, accompanied the crew to the Alaskan première; view their report on the event at [http://www.novativ.nl/index.cfm?ln=nl&fuseaction=videoaudio.details&reportage\\_id=6335](http://www.novativ.nl/index.cfm?ln=nl&fuseaction=videoaudio.details&reportage_id=6335) (Dutch spoken)

**CURRENTLY SHOWING IN 6 CINEMAS: De Uitkijk and Het Ketelhuis (Amsterdam); Lantaren-Venster (Rotterdam); 't Hoogt (Utrecht); LUX (Nijmegen); Chassee (Breda) . For complete listings: [www.cinemien.nl](http://www.cinemien.nl)**

**WEBSITE** The website contains historical and contemporary images and background information on the island, the inhabitants and the climate. The website is an important part of the project: it links the past, present and future of the island and its inhabitants. The young people of the community make their own contribution through video letters. In addition, the news section is updated on an ongoing basis. Supplemented by the material supplied by Dana Lixenberg and Jan Louter, the site is a multimedia archive that allows us to explore the dilemmas facing the people of Shishmaref.

[www.thelastdaysofshishmaref.net](http://www.thelastdaysofshishmaref.net)

**EDUCATION** This autumn, an educational programme focusing on the problems facing Shishmaref will be starting at two different locations: Kunstgebouw Zuid Holland and the Netherlands Fotomuseum compiled the programmes, in cooperation with the SKVR Beeldfabriek.

**INFORMATION: [www.thelastdaysofshishmaref.net](http://www.thelastdaysofshishmaref.net), heading 'education'**

**ABOUT DANA LIXENBERG** Dana Lixenberg (Amsterdam, 1964) lives and works in New York and Amsterdam. She studied photography at the London College of Printing and at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. Her previous photographic projects include *Jeffersonville, Indiana* (1997-2005) and *Imperial Courts* (1993-2009). She has held solo exhibitions in the KunstHAL in Rotterdam and in Museum De Hallen in Haarlem, among other venues. Two books of her work have already been published: *united states* (Artimo, 2005) and *Jeffersonville, Indiana* (Artimo, 2001). Her work has been published internationally in *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *Newsweek*, *Vibe* (USA), *The Telegraph Magazine* (GB) and *Vrij Nederland* (NL).

**ABOUT JAN LOUTER** Jan Louter (1954) is the creator and director of many independent documentaries which are visually and conceptually both imaginative and challenging. He portrayed many writers and artists (o.a. John Fante,), but is equally interested in social issues which transcend local importance. Louter creates his imagery and soundscapes in order to translate important themes and undercurrents into an evocative story, which offers the viewer a new experience of the subject matter. His films remain accessible at the same time.

Jan Louter has realised more than twenty documentaries. All of them were broadcasted. Most of them were screened at national and international filmfestivals around the world. *A sad flower in the sand*, about the American writer John Fante, was awarded on the AFI filmfestival (American Institute for film) in Los Angeles.

**PRODUCTION AND SUPPORT**

The project *The Last Days of Shishmaref* is a production by Miroir Film, LliNK and Paradox in partnership with LP II, the Netherlands Fotomuseum and Cinemien. With thanks to Kunstgebouw and the SKVR Beeldfabriek.

This project is supported financially by the Mondriaan Foundation VSB Foundation, Egbert Kunst Fund / Prince Bernhard Cultural Foundation, the Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture, SNS REAAL Fund, Nederlands Fotomuseum, LP II, Rotterdam Climate Initiative, Rotterdam Department of Arts and Culture, Rotterdam Development Corporation, COBo Fund, Netherlands Film Fund, Dutch Cultural Broadcasting Promotion Fund, LliNK, Rotterdam Film Fund Van Ommeren-De Voogt Foundation, Valkieser Capital Images.

**CONTACT:** PARADOX - Lotte ten Voorde - [lv@paradox.nl](mailto:lv@paradox.nl) - T +31 (0)299 315 083 / LP II: Michael Vogel - [vogel@lp2.nl](mailto:vogel@lp2.nl)  
T. +31(0)10 2030 444 / MIROIR FILM: Renske Meertens - [info@miroir-film.com](mailto:info@miroir-film.com) - T +31 (0)10 4651 778

