

THE REFUGEE GLACIER

LAURENCE
PIAGET-DUBUIS

SMART SUSTAINABLE
MOUNTAIN
ART


Foundation for sustainable development
in mountain regions


Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

**MUSÉE HISTORIQUE
DU CHABLAIS**
VOUVRY, SWITZERLAND

WHERE STUNNING VISIONS COLLIDE:

A LANDSCAPE OUT OF THIS WORLD, devastated by a cataclysm, **A REFUGEE CAMP** dotted with torn-out white tents sheltering illusive survivors, **AGRICULTURAL COVERS** reshaped into articulated ghosts by the swaying wind, **A GIGANTIC WORK OF ART** wrapped in sheets sewn together by Christo, or better yet, **LAYERS OF DEATH** shrouded in pale blankets.



TODAY TOURIST, TOMORROW CLIMATE REFUGEE?

From tourism for recreational purposes to forced migration due to global warming, the methods of migration of people are radically opposed.

For some, a set of consumer goods and services linked to their comfort of movement is developed, and for others, borders are erected and provisional camps are opened to manage precariousness.

However, beyond the borders that exist between the status of tourist and refugee, a common vector emerges: the environment, refuge and the living space of mankind.

The Rhone glacier, one of the highlights of Valais tourism in Switzerland, gives a troubling vision where the two aspects — innumerable tourists on pilgrimage to the source of living water (250 000 people a year cross the Furka Pass) and refugees adrift on the waves across the seas of the globe — seem to telescope visually in a picture that mixes a landscape, that conjures up an atmosphere that oscillates between opacity and transparency, and beauty and ugliness...

To protect the eternal ice from melting, the glacier is dressed in strange tarpaulins sewn together, which give it an air of refugee camp and where barriers are erected to privatise its paid access.

If the degradation of the climate currently announced transformed everyone up until the end of the century into potential refugees!

Would the surface of the earth be large enough for us all to live on? Where should we go? North, East, South or West?

MANKIND, REFUGEE ON EARTH

The fragility of the glacier accentuated by its shroud becomes a metaphor for the ephemeral status of the tenancy of man on earth, his only habitat. It challenges us on the degradation of the climate in progress, on our connection with our environment and what links us to others. A Butterfly effect (knock on effect) and interconnectivity, everything is one.

DO SOMETHING NOW!

What will happen in the second half of the twenty-first century will depend on what we are doing today.

The extent and nature of climate change will depend on the emissions we produce today.

Act today to reduce tomorrow's forced climate migrations.

THE CLIMATE IS CHANGING, AND YOU?

THE BATTLE TO SAVE THE ICE

“Every summer since 1870, the operators of the ice cave located beside the Hotel Belvédère at the Furka Pass (VS) dig a tunnel into the Rhone glacier. With its blue walls, the gallery has already attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors. The team protects the ice by means of a reflective tarpaulin which slows the melting a little, although the glacier continues to shrink and become thinner. Measurements show that it is losing between six and eight metres of thickness every year. In five or six years' time, the glacier tongue will no longer be sufficiently resistant to sustain a tunnel.”

Text taken from the magazine “Environnement” 04/2014 — What climate for tomorrow? Federal Office for the environment.

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Rhone Glacier,
Switzerland.

