

# Artist in the spotlight PHOTOGRAPHER INGO ARNDT IN THE WILD

This is an exclusive interview with Ingo Arndt by SmithDavidson Gallery.



Ingo Arndt *Puma I, Patagonia* (2016).

German-born photographer Ingo Arndt spent already from his early childhood every single minute of his spare time outdoors in nature. Soon, he realized that photography could be a useful tool for environmental protection and Ingo plunged into the adventurous life of a professional photographer. Since then, he has travelled around the globe for extended periods as a freelance wildlife photographer.

“For me, the longer I spend in the wilderness, the more I become one with it. I become more attentive and calmer, and I can fully engage with the animals I am photographing. This is most intense when you sleep outdoors, have no contact with other people (apart from my wife, with whom I almost always travel) and don't have your phone/internet with you. This way, you won't be distracted and can immerse yourself completely in nature.”

“Arndt works and travels extensively with his wife, Silke Arndt. “We can be together around the clock and not get on each other's nerves,” he explained. “You have to trust each other a lot when you work so closely together, but you also have to give each other space.” As the graphic designer, Silke Arndt designs everything they publish themselves, like the illustrated books.



Portrait of Ingo Arndt.

## Travelling around the World

Ingo Arndt's endeavors have taken him to the farthest reaches of the globe, from the lush rainforests of South America to the icy expanses of the Arctic. His insatiable thirst for exploration and discovery is reflected in his work, which often delves into the intimate connections between animals and their habitats, illuminating the delicate balance that sustains life on Earth.



Ingo Arndt *Watershapes VI, Iceland* (2023).

Although every trip is memorable, a particularly incredible moment was looking into the eyes of a male gorilla in the Virunga Mountains in Rwanda. "I had been searching for a gorilla group with trackers for a long time when suddenly a huge silverback gorilla emerged from the dense vegetation, only three meters away," Arndt recalled.

"We were apparently both surprised by each other's presence. The gorilla looked me straight in the eyes for a few seconds. It was a surprised but friendly look. Even though it was only a few seconds, it felt like an eternity. Direct eye contact is usually an expression of aggression, but the silverback looked me in the eyes because he was surprised and had no fear. Mountain gorillas are one of the most charismatic animals on our planet. It was definitely a very powerful moment that stays forever."

Additionally, capturing the life of pumas in Patagonia was particularly meaningful to Arndt, since he was the first photographer to do so with a photo camera. "Until then, few images of the daily life of pumas had been taken. I spent many months with the animals in the wild," he revealed. "Over time, they trusted me, and I was able to get close enough to take photos. Occasionally, the pumas even approached me and lay down to sleep not far away. This is a sign of trust that you rarely see from wild predators."



Ingo Arndt *Puma IV, Patagonia* (2017).

"After all his extraordinary experiences in the nature, Arndt doesn't photograph animals in captivity as a rule: "You can always tell when animals have not been photographed in their natural habitat. This is particularly noticeable in mammals, which are highly intelligent. Their gaze is alienated, and they often appear fearful or disturbed. A dignified image of mammals can only be captured in the wild. When you are out in nature, you almost inevitably document natural behavior that has scientific value from the first moment. Nevertheless, the visual impact is most important to me."



Ingo Arndt on a shoot.



Ingo Arndt *Lesser Flamingos, Kenya (2007)*.

## A Healthy Planet

In recent years, Ingo Arndt has been mainly on assignment for GEO and National Geographic Magazine. He has gained recognition for his work, receiving numerous awards. His photographs have been published in international magazines, such as GEO, National Geographic, Terra Mater, and BBC Wildlife, and have also been exhibited at various museums.

Yet, it's not fame that matters to Arndt. He is driven by a profound desire to raise awareness about pressing environmental issues and inspire action towards conservation. With his photography, Arndt hopes to show the magnificence of nature.

*When people remember pictures, they have triggered something in them. In my case, I hope to inspire people to care about animals. If they like animals, they will also want to protect them – and that is what I want most of all.”*

“I am truly grateful for what I have been able to see and experience. Not many people are lucky enough to see so much beautiful nature in their lifetime. At the moment, I am struggling with the problems facing nature on our planet, which are visible everywhere. Almost everywhere I go, things are getting worse, nature is being destroyed, and biodiversity is being lost. People are waging wars and are more concerned with economic growth than caring for our planet. A healthy planet with intact nature is the basis for a good life; all the money in the world cannot replace that. Perhaps the collapse can still be averted; there are people who are committed to preserving nature, which gives me some hope.”

Today, Ingo Arndt continues to traverse the globe, camera in hand, in search of the next awe-inspiring moment to immortalize through his lens. “There are actually still a few locations I would like to visit and animals I would like to photograph. Snow leopards in the Himalayas, for example. A magnificent animal and a wild landscape, like the pumas I photographed in Patagonia. Let's see what the future brings...”



Ingo Arndt *Muskox I, Norway (2022)*.