

HIGH MOUNTAINS AS METAPHOR

by Hans-Michael Koetzle | PHOTO International May 2021

Landscape, it is sometimes said, is an unphotographic subject. It is immobile, always available, does not change - in other words, it is the natural antithesis of the "decisive moment," which sees itself as a courageous cut through space and time and repeatedly sets out to bring history to the point. Of course, landscape is also in motion, mutates beyond the seasons, and if it is denied history, then it is against the background of our crouched perspective: What is a human life in the face of the history of the earth! The latest publication by Hamburg-based photographer Michael Lange shows just how exciting landscape photography can be: nature does not have to be an event. It is always a metaphor.

Michael Lange photographed in the French Alps between 2013 and 2018, and one motif was created in the Dolomites. But geography does not play a role. Lange was not guided by his navigation system, but by the overwhelming power of untouched landscapes, whose energy he translates into tableaux of highly subtle color. Everything anecdotal has been cut out in favor of a breathtaking atmosphere. At most a narrow brook, perhaps a flock of birds (but only exceptionally) create something like a "punctum". Otherwise, everything is "study" in the sense of Roland Barthes, is - quite threatening - "all-over", gladly immersed in haze, in fog, rain, snow: a great meditation on landscape. Not coincidentally, Japanese verses are interspersed on a black background, which in their delicacy provoke something like a visual pause. Exquisitely printed, generously laid out, thread-stitched as a matter of course, and with a deep black endpaper as an introduction, the book shows what photographed landscape can stimulate: lasting goose bumps.