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# High Altitude

## Photography in the Mountains

### Nathalie Herschdorfer

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| **ISBN** | 9788874395880 |
| **Publisher** | 5 Continents Editions |
| **Binding** | Paperback / softback |
| **Territory** | World excluding Italy and France |
| **Size** | 248 mm x 311 mm |
| **Pages** | 111 Pages |
| **Illustrations** | 65 color |
| **Price** | £24.95 |

- What remains of the myths linked to mountains?
- How do perceptions of them shift as their populations disappear, and references are increasingly centred on an urban existence?
- Features works of contemporary photographers who record mountains in their various and multiple states

As elsewhere in the world, mountains have been instrumental in defining identities in Switzerland. The theme has not ceased to fascinate artists and mountain landscapes have attracted photographers since the earliest days of the new art, when masterful work was produced during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Today mountain chains are seen differently, recognised as having an unsettling fragility in the face of their occupation by human beings. What remains of the myths linked to mountains? Are mountains still a source of inspiration for today's artists? How do perceptions of them shift as their populations disappear, and references are increasingly centred on an urban existence? *High Altitude* provides some of the answers to these questions. This book has been conceived as a companion to the Swiss photography festival, Alt. +1000, held in Rossinière, a well-known village in the foothills of the Alps. High Altitude features works of contemporary photographers who record mountains in their various and multiple states: spectacular, sublime, domesticated, constructed (even artificial!) and frightening. Young artists from around the world, many of whom live far from a mountainous environment, celebrate and challenge deeply-rooted myths, and each in his own way tries to interpret this elusive landscape. The famous landscape photographer Olaf Otto Becker (Germany 1959), renowned for his views of Greenland, has been invited to make a portrait of a natural park situated close to the festival. He was chosen for the breathtaking beauty of his work, a beauty that nonetheless reminds us that nature is being radically modified by climate change. Unspoiled nature versus mountains altered by man is the theme interpreted by talented artists, whose visions are far removed from those of tourist postcards. Text in English and French.

**Nathalie Herschdorfer**, curator and art historian, specializes in photography. Director of the festival Alt. +1000, curator at the *Foundation for the Exhibition of Photography* (Minneapolis, Paris, Lausanne), she was previously a curator at the Musee de l'Elysee, Switzerland, where she organised many international exhibitions.

Published 1st Jan 2019