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Review of Håkan Strand's photography book "Silent Moments" in *KULTUR-RADIO*, Berlin, Germany.

If you want to get into the mood for the months associated with rain and darkness, fog, snow and ice, and see how these seasons can be appealing, a photo book by the Swedish photographer Håkan Strand is perfect. His collection of images was taken without exception in autumn and winter.

Håkan Strand "slows down" both himself and the objects of his artistic motifs, reducing his photographic view of the world to the essentials. He reveals what is simple, refined and beautiful: clear lines, smooth forms, the mysterious beauty of a bare tree bending in the wind, a ship emerging from the fog, a road disappearing into dark nothingness.

The photos of Håkan Strand are a repose from the hustle and bustle of a big city, a deliberate contrast to a loud, bright climate, where people pull out their cell phone, pose, click, and post the snapshots to the world.

Instead, Håkan Strand unveils the natural, nothing is staged or posed. He takes his time, observes quietly and persistently. Only one of the 54 pictures in the photo book shows a human being. A man, only dimly recognizable, walking across a bridge through thick fog.

Moments of Silence

The working method of the artist and the presentation of his pictures is similar to the work of the old masters. It differs from (almost)

everything in contemporary photography. For example, Håkan Strand uses only black and white film, composing images out of light and shadow. The images look like frozen moments of silence.

In an inexplicable way, the photos look elegant, casual and timeless, but at the same time melancholic and earthy. The photos forego everything digital, they are always made with an analog camera, under the most difficult lighting conditions. Strand usually works at dusk, in bad weather, the sky is always gray and cloudy, damp fog prevents visibility or white snowy surfaces dazzle the eye, rain is reflected on the asphalt.

The photos focus on just one motif, a tree, a bridge, a house, a ship, a rock. Everything that surrounds this motif consists primarily of light and shadow. The photos are printed on thick, soft paper, 20 by 20 inches, the cover of the book is made of elegant gray canvas, no title on it, no name, just a photo. Or more precisely, one of three photos that the artist offers to the buyer.

On the cover of my book, you can see a solitary tree against cold and firmness on a dazzling white snow surface, in the background the dark gray sea and the light gray sky: a picture of the sublimity of nature, of loneliness and endlessness.

On one of the other two available cover pictures, you can see four stones that disappear in a sea of water and fog and were perhaps once part of a jetty or bridge. And now appear like archaic remains from another time.

The third possible cover photo shows a dark path, a group of stones that leads into a gray sea, like a ruler, and then makes a sharp turn out of the picture to the right. The water is completely calm, no waves, no breath of life. It is as if time stands still and nature holds its breath.

Håkan Strand has taken photos in many places, in Sweden and Finland, Belgium, Austria, England, the USA. Especially fascinating are the photos from Iceland: a bizarre rock that sticks out of the sea and looks like a giant, water-slinging animal. Or the image of a

gigantic waterfall: The flow, which descend from a dark gray stone and edges into the abyss, appears like a single, bright, velvety ray of light.

Perfect symbiosis

The pictures in the book tell enigmatic stories and when you look at them, they develop a musical sound that you think you hear: When looking at the photos, I was magically transported to my old jazz records, especially the jazz classic "Kind of Blue". Miles Davis whispers elegantly with the trumpet, John Coltrane casually sighs on the tenor saxophone. Bass, drums and piano weave improvised patterns that float into another world, in which art touches the essence of things and the secrets of life.

Cool jazz and cool pictures - for me the perfect symbiosis of music and photography.

Frank Dietschreit, cultural radio, Berlin
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