

# matt bohli

## AMONG GIANTS

March 2<sup>nd</sup> - April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022

Opening on March 1st from 5pm to 8pm



Matt Bohli, *THE SUMMIT*, 2021, color photography, 60 x 40 cm

Xippas Gallery in Geneva is pleased to present *Among Giants*, the first exhibition in Switzerland of Matt Bohli. On this occasion, the artist will unveil a series of images captured in Iceland. His photographs, neither retouched nor cropped, transcribe as closely as possible the intrinsic force of the wilderness he has confronted.

A trip near the Great Smoky Mountains between North Carolina and Tennessee (USA) gave birth to his first photographic series. A few months later, in 2017, he traveled to Iceland for the first time. Last year, the photographer, eager for nature, road trips and hikes, returns to the Snæfellsnes Peninsula in western Iceland. There, he captures the shadow and the light that follow one another on the landscapes he crosses. Leaving behind film, the digital camera he uses this time allows him to capture with more acuity the contrasts of this powerful nature. The artist presents here the images from this last trip.

### Magic Mountains

« In the adventure novel *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864), Jules Verne writes: “What is curious about this land of Iceland is not above, but below”. The photographs of Matt Bohli demonstrate the opposite. The exhibition *Among Giants* presents twenty-five photographs showing the majestic volcanic landscapes of Iceland. Since the early 1960s, this land of mist characterized by the omnipresence of an extraordinary nature has been a subject for many artists, and especially for Dieter Roth, a true mentor of the Icelandic art scene. However, in the famous sculptural series *Island* (1968-1970), the island of Roth distances itself from an image of pure beauty to become a heap of waste and rotting food.

Matt Bohli's Iceland has nothing to do with the degraded representation of the member of Fluxus, it is even quite the opposite. The mountains of *Among Giants*, whether misty, sunny or snow-covered, devoid of any human trace, in an impeccably mastered framing, celebrate the spectacle of an almost overwhelming powerful nature, not without recalling the notion of «sublime» as the German romantics described it, – Friedrich von Schiller states in *On the Sublime* (1798) that “on the mountains dwells freedom”. Matt Bohli's own photographic protocol comes to confirm Schiller's words.

The mobility of the artist's gaze on these landscapes, like a cinematographic tracking shot, testifies to a way of nomadism reminiscent of the practice of walking artists, Richard Long or Hamish Fulton, who since the mid-1960s have made traveling in the natural landscape the heart of their work. Matt Bohli walks, wanders, strolls and roams on these Icelandic mountains in search of the ideal image which, unretouched, will translate the very concept of sublime, in a perspective of reconciliation of man and nature, heir to the Rousseauist fantasies of the *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (1782).

While the landscape genre in contemporary photography is fundamentally a social documentary style questioning the mutations of the territory, the photographs of Matt Bohli in their exaltation of beauty appear as singular in testifying to a duality: both unprecedented in the view of a current trend of neutralization of the aesthetic dimension in favor of a documentary observation, and traditional, because they are part of a classic and pictorialist approach to landscape photography ».

Marjolaine Lévy

Matt Bohli, American photographer and musician, was born in 1986 in Baltimore, Maryland (USA). After college in Boston he moved to Nashville, Tennessee where he pursued a career as a rock and then country music drummer. Since 2017 the artist has been developing a photographic work resulting from his numerous travels. He now lives and works in Paris.

#### **XIPPAS GENEVE**

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Mardi - Vendredi : 10h-13h et 14h-18h30

Samedi : 12h-17h

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