

Land Reform

Born in São Paulo, in 1967, Caio Reisewitz is a photographer who portrays nature as it truly is. And he also portrays the attendance of the sublime in nature, in its most classical denotation since Friedrich and Jules Verne. In Reisewitz's grandiose photos, the indisputable protagonists are mighty thickets and plains, rivers and meadows, in which the human being seems to have hardly interfered, if at all. Nowadays, these nearly Utopian, pristine natural scenes are hard to spot in their attempt to defend themselves from human actions.

Reisewitz's fascinating and touching photographs stimulate our fantasy; they are self-sustaining and undeniably seductive, their beauty is truly bewildering. They are nearly sacred images. As a photographer, Reisewitz practices his mastery of nature, the sublime and its representation, and perfect, unusual images. Like a 21st-century Ansel Adams in color, Caio Reisewitz renders Brazilian landscapes with a vigor that words could never have, and that images sometimes convey.

We are looking at a photographer who could be said to render pictorial interpretations that have landscape for model and an exacerbated romantic tone for theoretical background. In his work, the landscape is a locus for tragedy, melancholy, and the most intimate feelings represented by mythical places impregnated with atmospheric phenomena in face of which the human being is but a diminutive observer.

In nature, the conception of a landscape is the point of confluence of certain events of a given time of day, such as light and other elements that determine a magical instant. Like a hunter, Reisewitz patiently waits for the opportunity to capture this dramatic moment, a sensorial realm that contains elements that photography cannot convey – namely sounds, odors, atmosphere... – yet he earnestly hopes that viewers will hear and smell the sounds and odors he perceived in the given landscape, in that magical moment. Well in the spirit of Richard Long, who travels the world to better understand it, Reisewitz portrays it so he can become impregnated with it.

This photographer trained in the German school is referred to as someone who presents his work in nonpartisan manner so that it is up to the spectator's eye to discover and scrutinize what he/she sees. His work is meant to go unnoticed. Reisewitz views nature through the camera lens, with a feeling of great respect for his subjects. The result is an accurate technicism and absolute temperance, a total monumentality. "Whenever I take a picture with my camera, the motif has been predetermined. Unlike the case with digital and small-format cameras, it takes me from 5 to 15 minutes to set up the camera on the tripod. Perspective, light, and the intended motif are the key elements when I set up the camera," Reisewitz explained. He produces visual documents that are works of art in which the camera is featured as transmitter.

"Radiant, sensual tropical Utopias – secret places" is how Alfons Hug describes Reisewitz's landscapes, many of which, apparently green and pristine, the profane view as having been sought from the heart of the jungle. However, they were captured in the vicinity of his hometown, São Paulo, an impressive megalopolis that grows mercilessly, greedily devouring its surroundings. On the margins of this conurbation, nature has remained untouched, but not for long. In exhibitions of Reisewitz's photographs, a picture of a misty landscape captured at the break of dawn is featured next to an image of a garbage dump on fire. This is the photographer's immediate reality that is nonetheless awesomely portrayable, fragile and vulnerable to the human factor, at any time.

Now Reisewitz presents a new theme: land reform, the photographic elegy of places that humans have devastated just like they have done since they learned agriculture and burnt greenery before cultivating, razing the land in the most primitive ways so they could establish cattle ranches. The burning of forest grounds is a preliminary system to prepare land for mass cultivation, whether it be transgenic soybean plantations in the Amazon, or sugarcane plantations destined for the production of fuel ethanol in different parts of the country. The main importers of both products – soybean and sugarcane – are the United States and China. Since 1999, exports to these countries have increased by nearly 600%. Reisewitz's depictions of these plantations emanate an overwhelming beauty despite the images of degradation resulting from human need. The expanse of Brazilian landscape, the invisible human presence that we perceive in the razed fields and the precarious huts of the

landless squatters who occupy non-productive landed properties help us understand a life of hardships, and a struggle that is seemingly impossible to win, but that in the course of centuries has been questioned: the struggle of humans in face of nature. Reisewitz's dramatic landscapes provide the setting for an even more dramatic human subsistence.

The violence against the earth not only threatens its existence but also generates transformations of a political and social order. The theme of land reform addressed in this exhibition refers to the geophysical and historical use of the earth. The human individual has redesigned landscape with his investigation – something that is not always an impure, malignant, and disparaging thing, though more often than not it is. *Você não está só* (You are not alone) was the title of the exhibition of Caio Reisewitz's photos held in 2005 at Brito Cimini, the gallery that represents him in São Paulo. "To portray the human actions that interfere in the natural environment" is what now the photographer's mission. In other words, to challenge the fabric of the landscape in which we humans are circumscribed.

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