

MOUNTAIN AND LAKE



BY PHILLIP PULFREY

For Caro, my light and inspiration...

This book is a printed version of my exhibition 'Mountain and Lake, Light Form and Perception, Interpretation and Expression', held in Montreux Switzerland at the end of 2015 for which I am extremely grateful to J. Blank and T. George for their help and support in mounting the exhibition in their opticians 'Espace Optique' – chosen since the theme is vision. The world is in continual change and development: what do we choose to see, how and when? Our position in time and space and our previous experience influences our perception. As I wrote in my book 'Meditations on a Mountain': *Throughout history mountains have evoked many metaphors: do mountains represent a challenge to be overcome or the presence of the awesome beauty of life?*

INTERPRETATION: FORM IS LIMITATION

"We have acted as though the external world exists in itself and that our knowledge of it amounts to an accurate photographic image. But this way of thinking becomes completely untenable as soon as we realize that all knowledge is translation and reconstruction."

Morin, E. (1998) 'La complexité humaine'

Form requires boundaries, structure and organisation: the mechanisms of perception create these limitations. We create our reality through our perception and our articulation of that expression. Our personal capacities, predilections, experience, education and social context influence our selection of possible perceptions and the construction of our personal, and social, narrative. It is shared language and experience that creates culture, but also limits our perception of reality and:

"In seeking security and stability we wish to fix what is, in fact, an on-going process. Power and domination impose and fix certain perception as the Truth rather than encouraging an open awareness and respect that relates ideas to context and our own perceptions to a larger vision of life in eternity."

From my book 'Meditations on a Mountain'

I photographed the Lac Léman for twenty years and have since been photographing the Dent de Jaman for seven years, with all their moods and seasons.

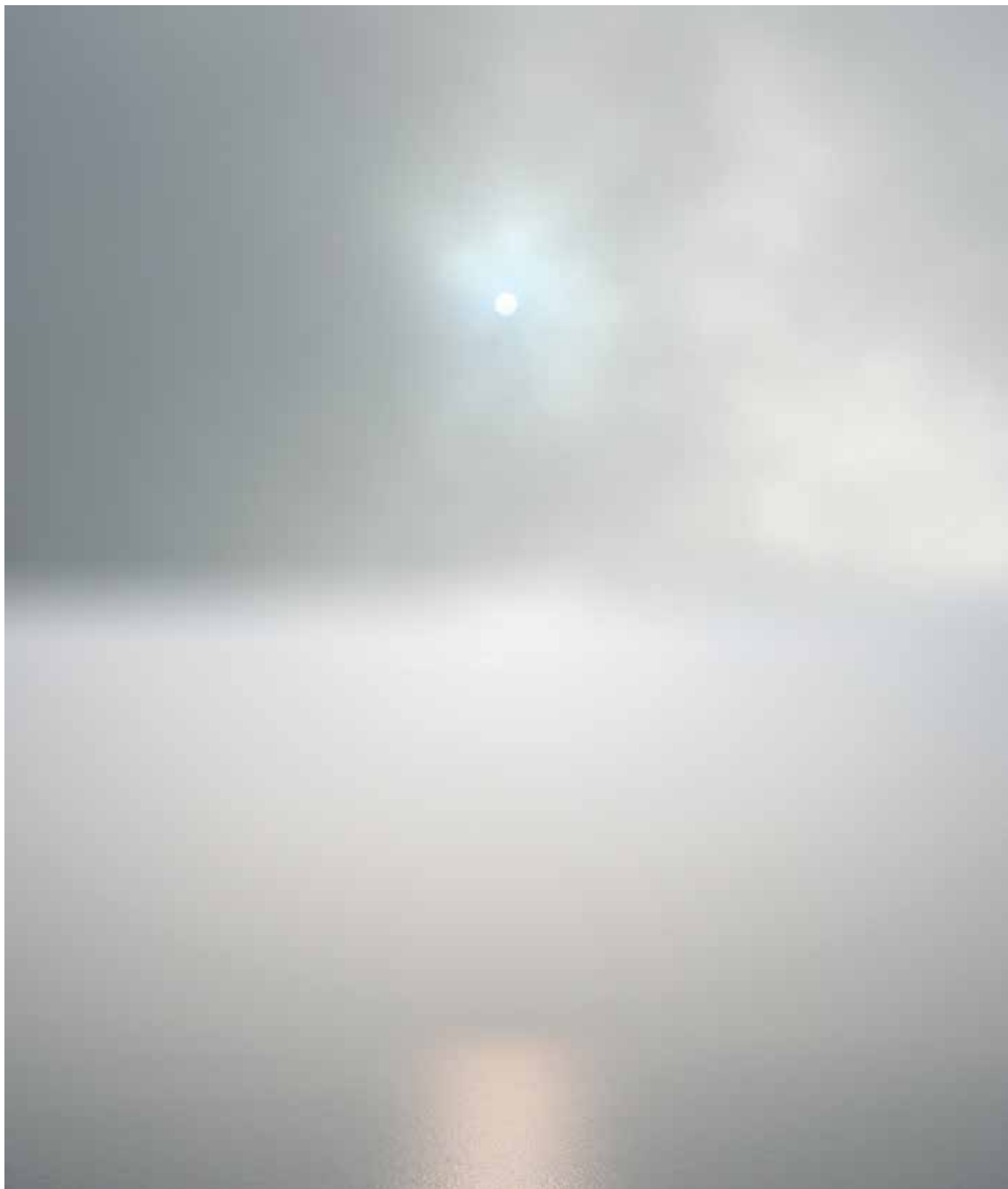
A landscape is constructed from momentary glimpses, grafted on to fragments of memory; pieces of a whole from which we are separated by time and perspective.

"I cannot reduce the world to the brutality of certainty. The more I look the more the complexity of surface and shadow shifts and elude me. My understanding; the act of perception bears no relation to the photographic stamp of instantaneous equality. It is pure process, shifting as mood. Endless approximations always precipitating on the brink of chaos. Without time we are nothing more than angels transfixed in perfection from which there is no release."

'Meditations on a Mountain'



The magic of light
Creating Space and Time,
The essence of the Divine
Becoming
Mountains and sea,
Form and fluidity
Perception creating
Specificity
Here, and now



"In particular, it is the function of the beautiful to be, so to speak, an epiphany of the Absolute and formless void which is God. It is an embodiment of the Absolute mediated through the personality of the artist, or perhaps better, his 'spirit' and his contemplative experience."

Thomas Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*









"We take a handful of sand from the endless landscape of awareness around us and call that handful of sand the world."

Robert Persig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*





“Get in touch with things, look at them. Hopefully you will then break out of these rigid patterns we have all developed, out of what our thoughts and our words have imposed on us. Hopefully we will see. What will we see? The thing that we choose to call reality, whatever is beyond words and concepts.”

Anthony de Mello, *Awareness*





“The Buddha taught that beyond this world created by our own senses and limitations, the phenomenal world dissolves into a dynamic process. The true nature of reality lies beyond the realm of language and linear analysis.”

Helena Norberg-Hodge, Ancient Futures

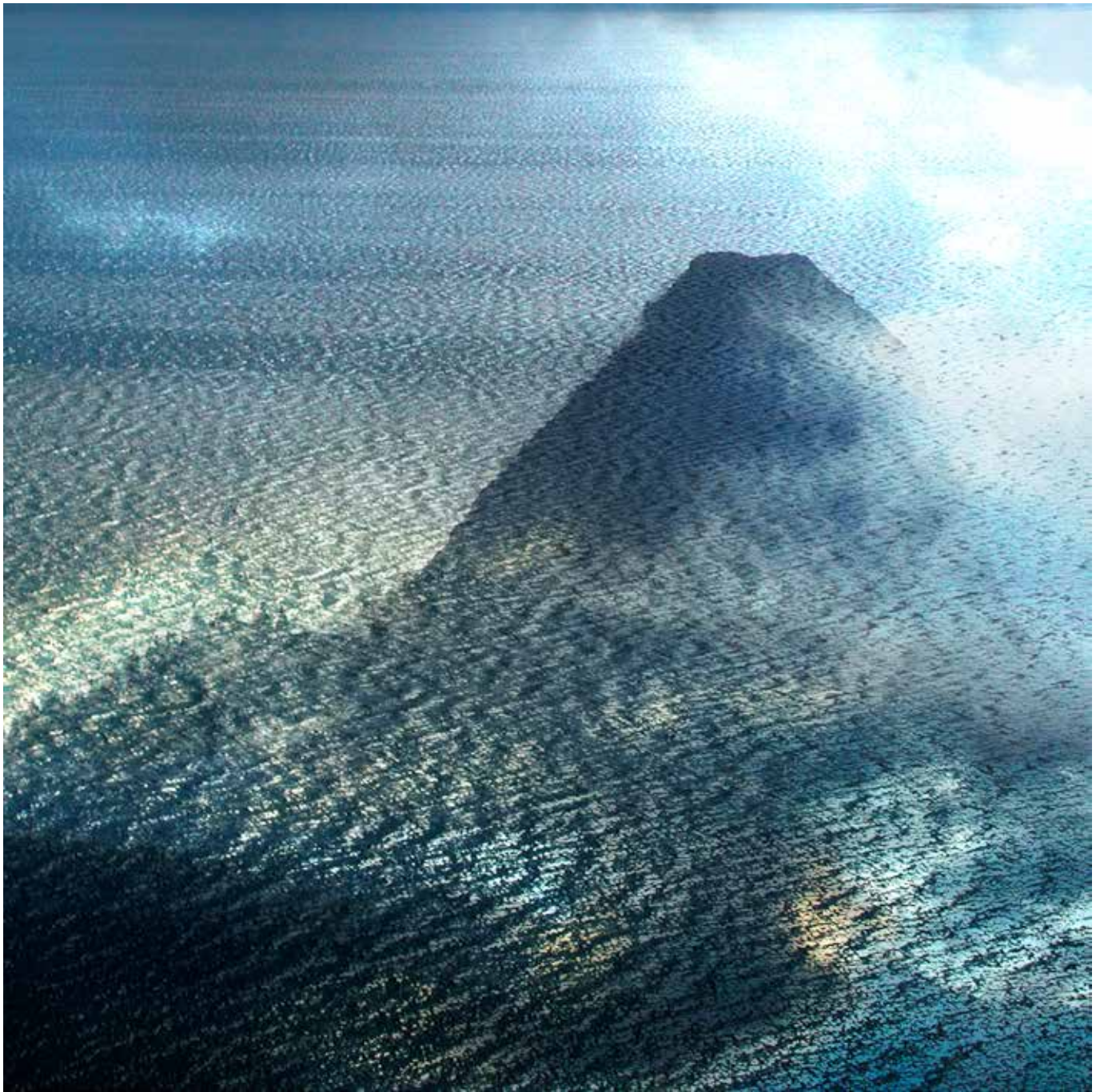






"All knowledge operates through the selection of meaningful data and the rejection of data that are not meaningful. It does so by separating (distinguishing or disjointing) and unifying (associating, identifying), and by organizing into hierarchies (the primary and secondary) and centralizing (around a core of master notions)."

E. Morin, 'Human Complexity' (1998)





"In the end all comes down to the on-going discourse of the infinite with the finite: relation and relativity. Perception with perceived, creating form from the absolute."

My book, 'The Big Picture'





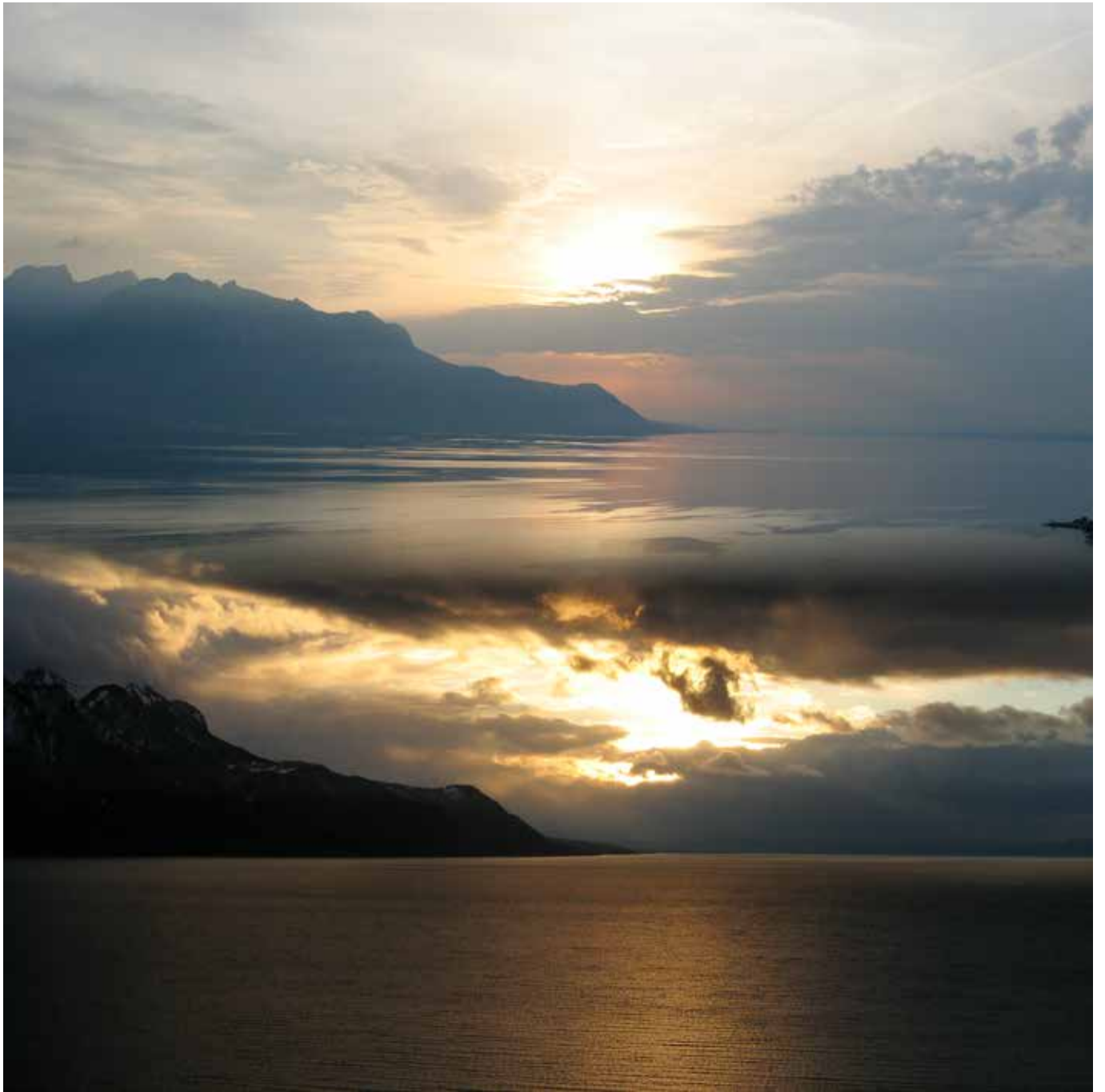




PRESENCE

To come into the moment,
To grasp the ungraspable:
Presence of passage,
Here and Now.
Desire of Being
Becoming
This narrative,
Caught in glimpses:
Recorded instances
Of smiling faces
In their moment,
Leaving these traces.
Fragments of being
Woven into meaning
Through this connection,
The on-going perception
Of space and time:
Eternity
Within Now.





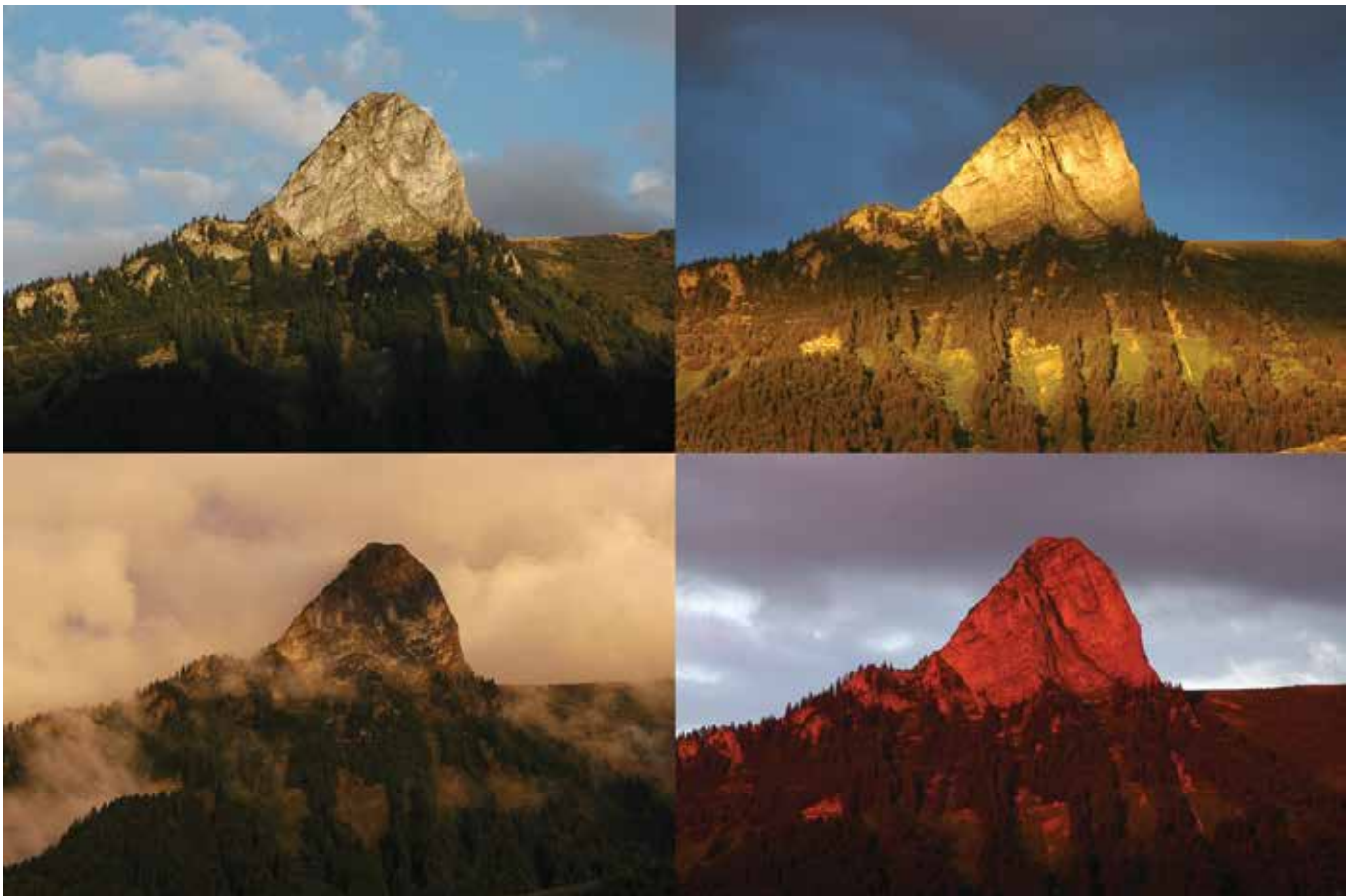


“ One does not see or sense, or perceive in isolation – perception is always linked to behaviour and movement, to reaching out and exploring the world. It is insufficient to see; one must look as well.”

Oliver Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars*

ECHOES OF INFINITY

The mountains speak
In echoes of infinity
Framed by birdsong;
The sound of wind and water,
Orchestrated by moment.
The voice of each
Specific to time and place,
Reverberation of texture and orientation
Echoed in the sculpted form of rock;
The ever-varied resonance of space
Which trace hour and season,
Centuries beyond human reason,
To the very essence of being.







"I saw that reality might not be a fixture – crudely, inescapably there – but a continuing, spontaneous enterprise of the imagination. It might be shaped, remade, revalued again and again through each act of perception, each inventive gesture of relationship."

Lindsay Clarke, *The Chymical Wedding*





“We all know more than we allow ourselves to know because of a certain cowardice in face of the inexpressible, and fear of accepting its effect on us as guide to the nature of reality. Yet those who can persuade themselves to be guided thus in their pursuit of the totality of truth find themselves rewarded not so much by a surrender of any significant part of the essential mystery, as by its transformation into something accessible as living wonder.”

Laurens Van der Post, *Venture to the Interior* (1952)









AWARENESS

Techniques of prayer and meditation develop the ability to stay in the moment and to be aware of sensation rather than judging it. To be open, rather than imposing our ideas. Awareness or Mindfulness, as expressed in Buddhist teaching, helps us to view experience in relation to our reaction to it, thus allowing us a distance that avoids judgement:

"Let your awareness drop deep within you like a stone, sinking below the level of what words or acts can express... Breathe in deep and quiet... Open your consciousness to the deep web of relationship that underlies and interweaves all experience, all knowing."

J. Macy, *'Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age'* (1983)



EXPRESSION AND TECHNOLOGY

The camera pastry-cuts a rectangle from the seamlessness of reality and analyses it into a grid of numbers. The unique moment of choice engraved in the memory of silver salts is replaced by the dynamic potential of the pixel; a tool for the considered hesitancy of a Cezanne: *"is this what I saw, and at what moment?"*

We record a pattern of numbers; open to translation through process: screen, printer, paper; each offering its own particular interpretation. The computer allows me to juxtapose moments in time and space to capture a complete sense of my experience. I mix photography with drawing, blurring the boundaries between the two so that it is not possible to see which is which.

How does our visual vocabulary affect what, and how, we see? Is the computer changing our perception of reality as photography did at the beginning of the last century? These are a few of the questions my work poses.

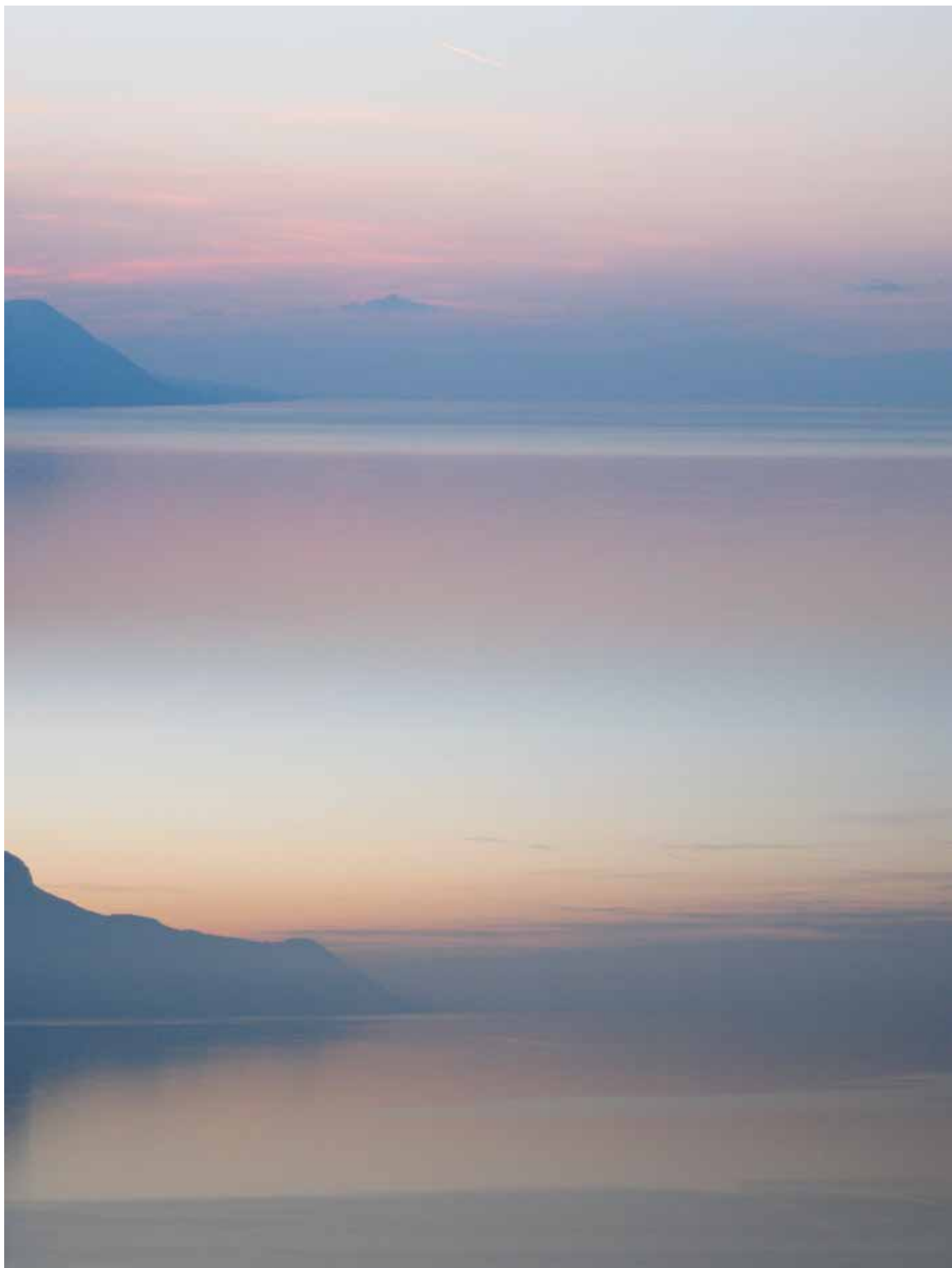
What is 'Real'?

What is Time?

"And thus I meditate on the nature of human reality: on similarity and difference, on constancy and change. All perception arises from a relation between perceived and perceiver: from time and context. We are born at a certain place at a certain time into a context of social experience and values that give rise to a shared narrative that is the basis of our reality."

'Meditations on a Mountain'

We may perhaps slip through a breath of time, glimpse the divine, by entering deeper into this mystery of the moment; heightening our awareness, grasping change and changelessness across the nuance of nature, time, vision and memory.



The lake seen from the mountain...







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