

Existence Doubtful

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Existence Doubtful is a photography book combining a set of images to a literal travelogue.



Night Falling over the Land of the Free

The text in the book describes two journeys, which take the protagonist deep in the South, far from his northern homestead. The first of the journeys takes him onto Antarctica where he boards the Swedish icebreaker as an artist member on an international scientific expedition. For some six weeks he sails across the Southern Ocean to finally end at Punta Arenas in southern Chile. There he decides to continue his wandering on the roads of Tierra del Fuego, at the end of inhabited world.

A year later the protagonist returns to the land of fire, where he sets on a sailing boat trip to the last small islets of the American continent, and finally to wind whipped Cape Horn. He commenced onto this second journey in order to get to witness the barren places which the Yahgan Indians, the southernmost inhabitants of the world, once populated. The Yahgans once lived on those islands and those tormented waters naked, paddling tree bark canoes and gathering food-stuff. They had no structured societies, no religion, hierarchies nor aspirations for progress, and one could imagine, no worries until they were found by the Europeans expanding their cultural dominance. That encounter the Indian culture did not endure. It was the hypothesis of the protagonist that those Indians were the freest people in the creation, and that by their modest share they had helped keeping the world in a natural balance, that was irrevocably shaken by explorations and colonialism. On his sailing trip he hopes to reach a deeper understanding on the Yahgan way of living, and potentially even to experience some of their unchained freedom. Maybe he could even find something mythical, something that in our time of exact knowledge exists only most doubtfully.

Apart from his own journeys, the book deals with historical expeditions, ancient beliefs, phantom islands and truths that have turned into legends, hallucinations, dreams, wonders, Dark matter, the limits of human endurance and sea mammals whose fate was to lubricate and lit the industrial revolution in the North. The book is critical to the ways and practices western civilization was spread repressing a multitude of original cultures and homogenizing the world. The world was tossed off its natural balance for good. The book is dedicated to all the obscure phenomena and events that evade verification.

The title of the book is derived from a cartographic term that has been used for islands that have been reported, but whose existence is still doubted. One of such today uncommon white spot on the ocean charts was sighted on the icebreaker journey.



Pissing against the Prevailing Wind



A Reverential Thought

Excerpt, page 49

“The faint beam from the Cape Horn lighthouse, marking the horizon in the blackness surrounding us, failed to tempt crowds to the decks of the Oden, but the silent night watchman stared hypnotised by that barely perceptible flicker in the night. He understood the sentimental value of guidance by light. I wanted to take a picture of him, but as the deck was better lit on the other side of the ship I asked him to move over. It didn't really matter what he was actually looking at when the picture was taken, even though it was essential to capture a picture of him right at that moment of re-established contact between the ship and the rest of the world. It is important to keep photographic deceptions on a superficial level and to let the meaning of the pictures be based on genuine grounds. For me it is essential that pictures are derived from the presence of the photographer, and that an experience has acted as a trigger and a catalyst for the emergence of an image. Images are usually ripped free of the connotations of their origins, but they do bear traces, faint or still obvious, of the encounter that gave them birth. These authentic traces are what give pictures their right to exist.

High up in the skies a plethora of stars spread out as I had never seen them before. The stars were even more unfamiliar to me here than in the northern hemisphere, but the most striking feature of this view was that the specks of light could be seen all the way down to where the sky met the ocean, forming a complete dome extending unobstructed, and to unfathomable depths, above and around me. There were no restrictions to vision, no clouds and no disturbing light pollution. Stars showed themselves in countless numbers, literally, and I was no longer under the heavens, but enveloped in them. I lent my head backwards, spun around on the helicopter deck, and let the tears of gratitude run down into my ears. Even as a negligible speck, I was a part of something infinite. I took two exposures of the sky, knowing that, due to the conditions, none of this vision would be recorded. But I didn't mind. Cameras fail to record the meaning of a moment like this. I took the two photographs for that very reason; to examine the inadequacy of the medium I was using, to mimic life. Photographs always have to turn into something else, into pictures. Life we experience, pictures we interpret.”