

1. Was kann ich wissen?
2. Was soll ich tun?
3. Was darf ich hoffen?
4. Was ist der Mensch?¹

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These are the questions that come to mind when I am faced with a work by Caio Reisewitz. This artist expresses himself through images alone, without accompanying texts. *Altamira* is also a silent tale, one told through strong and incisive images, with no words by the artist, and thus without any auxiliary means of reading or understanding. Each one of us is thus called upon to come to terms with this sequence of images, drawing the narrative from the perceptions one has.

Ever since he killed his first prey, cut down the first tree, first left his footprint on the soil, man has modified the environment. The group is faster and stronger than the individual in conquering space and nature. And over time, with the rearing of cattle, the farming of the land, the regulation of water courses, social organisation and the ensuing subdivision of tasks and skills, the honing of techniques and tools, these modifications have grown ever faster. Having reached the 21st century, the population continues to rise yet further, and the consequent thirst for new spaces and resources to exploit is even more accentuated and impelling.

Altamira is a region of Pará in Brazil, whose flag – within a blue circle symbolising the tropics – reads *Ordem e Progresso*. The tropics are a geographical reality, where the sun reaches its azimuth at 90°, and is an ideal place for the projection of European utopias and dreams, in which virulent global-level phenomena of environmental destruction and overflowing urbanisation occur; thus it is a paradigmatic dimension of paradoxes and contradictions, of both poignant beauty and abomination of all kinds.

What conclusions may be drawn from *Altamira*, this artist's book that constitutes a distilled narration of various photo shoots carried out by Caio Reisewitz? Is it perhaps a further sad example of the economic and commercial phagocytosis of a foreign territory that leaves us to fear for the worst? Or is it reconfirmation of the dominance of mankind, of his victory over 'savage' nature, of the inexorably triumphant march of man in the conquest of the planet? Or else, albeit worried in the short term by the impact on the environment about the exploitation of resources perpetuated by man, do we believe that at any rate, in the mid-to-long term, what has been modified by man today will one day be taken back by nature and the world will return to its 'original' state, perhaps even free of the presence of mankind? What traces will remain of mankind in 2,000 years' time?

I would like to personally invite everyone to consider *Altamira* while bearing in mind the above-mentioned questions.

It is an honour and a great pleasure for our foundation to have supported the publication of *Altamira*: a publishing project by Artphilein Editions in collaboration with the Centre de la photographie Genève.

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*