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Switzerland & Austria

HERITAGE OF ABOVE MOUNTAIN

MOUNTAIN PHOTOGRAPHY WITH THOMAS CRAUWELS

PLUS

TOP COACHING & TRAINING BEST OF ARCHITECTURE DESIGN, TRAVEL, BUSINESS & MORE

SWITZERLAND'S CIRCULAR ECONOMY 2023

discover

THE MAGAZINE PROMOTING GERMANY, SWITZERLAND & AUSTRIA

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In his images, photographer Thomas Crauwels captures pure Alpine beauty in a timeless, powerful and emotional way. *Discover Germany, Switzerland & Austria* caught up with the photographer to find out more about his photography style, his love for the mountains, and more.

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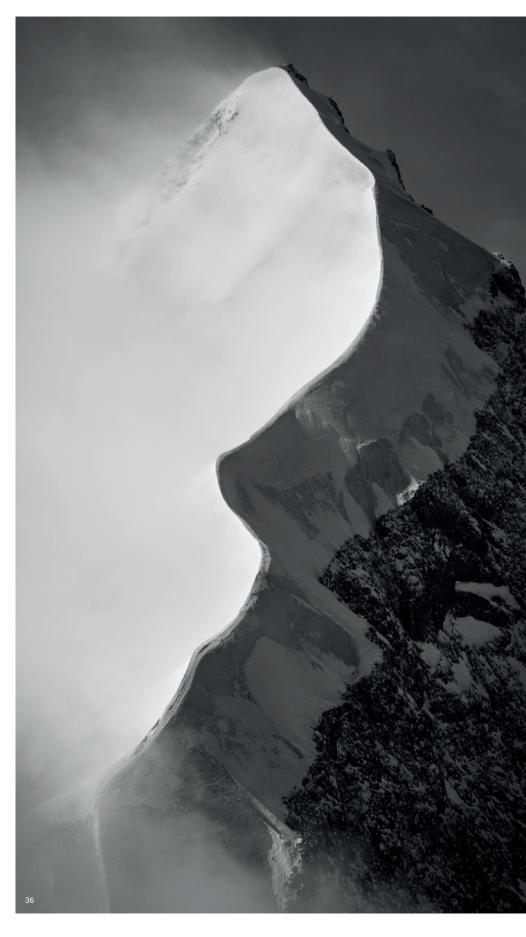
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HERITAGE OF ABOVE

In his images, photographer Thomas Crauwels captures pure Alpine beauty in a timeless, powerful and emotional way. *Discover Germany, Austria & Switzerland* caught up with the photographer to find out more about his photography style, his love for the mountains, and more.

AN INTERVIEW BY NANE STEINHOFF I PHOTOS: THOMAS CRAUWELS

The Matterhorn, Dent Blanche and Dent D'Hérens with the Grand Cornier in front of Dent Blanche.



DISCOVER GERMANY: The mountains seem to be your ultimate happy place. What is the photographic appeal of mountainscapes? Has photography always been your dream profession?

Thomas Crauwels: When I was younger, I never thought of dedicating my life to photography. Although I'd always felt close to nature, I knew very little about the universe of the mountains. I'm originally from Belgium, and it was during a trip to Switzerland that I discovered the beauty of the Alps. I immediately fell in love with these areas. I started photographing the Swiss mountains to share the grandeur of these landscapes with my Belgian friends. I had an awakening some time later, during an excursion to the Cabane des Dix in the Val d'Hérémence. Faced with the grandeur of the Cheilon glacier and the "Through my work, I share the emotions that the mountains give me: their beauty, grandeur and purity."

dizzying faces that surround it, my emotions took hold of me. At that very moment, I realised that I was called to photograph these giants of ice. That's how it all began.

Through my work, I share the emotions that the mountains give me: their beauty, grandeur and purity. These are fleeting moments that cannot be experienced in the world below. I live at the service of these impetuous guardians of the eternal snows. Watching their light, vibrating to the rhythm of their beauty has become second nature. I like to live these moments of contemplation of panoramas both frozen and changing, which feed me with their greatness. In these moments. I taste peace and melt into the landscape. When the clouds are absent, when my gaze goes on forever and I can let my inspiration flow freely. Without any particular goal. Just to live. To let myself be carried.

At other times. I become a truth hunter. I look for the ephemeral moments. The coming storm. The elements colliding. The wind, the air, the rock, creating a chaos that engulfs me in intense and intoxicating sensations. These minutes where I hold my breath so much are of a perfection that exceeds me and carries me in a different space. A space that my eye and its accomplice, my camera, know how to capture. Suddenly, everything calms down. Just after the fin of the world, the revelation of another world arrives. Before my amazed gaze, my senses on the alert, the clouds are torn apart like the curtain rises on a new show. The highest summits are adorned with another light, a new contrast.

DISCOVER GERMANY: What's the aim behind your artworks? Do you see them as conservation pieces, exploration images or fine art objects?

Thomas Crauwels: 'Heritage of Above' is my mission statement. I want to soar, to contemplate, to share the grandeur and emotions of these inaccessible places. My photographs take our eyes on a journey to a pure world halfway between sky and earth. The second aspect of my mainspring is to preserve the heritage and memory of the Alps. In a context of climate change, the mountains are undergoing rapid transformation. I see myself as the guardian of these glaciers, victims of global warming.

DISCOVER GERMANY: How do you bring out the most out of these dramatic landscapes? What settings do you use? Thomas Crauwels: I work in a very traditional way: I find myself in the right place at the right time. My photographs often depict the mountain before, during or after the storm. When man dares not venture onto one of these peaks because of bad weather conditions, I'm there, with my camera. At that precise moment, the mountain offers me a spectacle. These ephemeral moments are brief: they last between a few seconds and one hour. Very quickly, the sun reappears and its rays damage the whiteness of the snow freshly laid on the rock.

My daily life is punctuated by the study of weather forecasts. Detecting the approach of the forces of nature. A subtle alliance between intuition and the rational study of the elements. I am at one with nature, who is the chief creative artist... and I the humble craftsman.

DISCOVER GERMANY: How would you describe your photography style?

Thomas Crauwels: Iconic, unique, traditional. I like to create large, powerful works of art depicting a pure mountain. My photos are minimally retouched on the computer. My pictures are the fruit of perseverance, because the moments I capture in the mountains only occur two or three times a year. My photography is essentially in black and white. I consider colour to be superfluous in the mountains. The higher you go in the world above, the fainter the colours become.

DISCOVER GERMANY: What do you love most about mountains and the Alps? Why did you fall in love with these sceneries?

Thomas Crauwels: The inaccessible beauty and purity of the peaks. I love contemplating

"I want to soar, to contemplate, to share the grandeur and emotions of these inaccessible places."





"I consider colour to be superfluous in the mountains."

these mountains and waiting... Waiting for the weather to break so that I can capture the full essence of these giants of ice and rock. At that moment, I become one with the mountain and feel deeply connected to its soul. It's my way of meditating. At the opposite end of the spectrum from these moments of disconnection, I'm getting more and more drawn to climbing summits. When we climb the peaks, we surpass ourselves and discover a little more about ourselves.

DISCOVER GERMANY: Social media – friend or foe?

Thomas Crauwels: As in every situation, there's good and there's bad. It's the same with social networks. I see social networks as an opportunity, because they help me gain visibility. I have to admit that I particularly enjoy showing my work in large format, but social networks allow me to get a good overview of my work. The other thing I like about social networking is the closeness to my community. Exchanges with my followers are always moments I enjoy.

DISCOVER GERMANY: Your favourite moment in the mountains to date?

Thomas Crauwels: Climbing the Matterhorn, probably? I'd been watching this magnificent pyramid-shaped peak for years. When I climbed this mountain, the emotion was particularly intense. But in reality, there's not a single moment that stands out in my memory. Whenever I reach the top of any mountain, it's an elevation for me. Also, when I climb and take a difficult step, I always discover myself a little more. Concerning photography, I love those moments of ecstasy when I capture this pure mountain, with no trace of man's passage. They're so powerful, yet so rare.

DISCOVER GERMANY: And your most difficult moment up in the Alps? Were there ever any dangerous situations you found yourself in?

Thomas Crauwels: Just as in life down here, the most difficult moments are the best ones later on. They help us to evolve and move forward. I've had some tough times in the mountains, but I've never had an accident. Mountains are inherently dangerous. But I choose to contemplate its beauty rather than perceive its danger.

DISCOVER GERMANY: What would you advise young photographers seeking to find a footing in the photography industry today?

Thomas Crauwels: Be passionate, believe in your abilities and never give up. The key to success, as in every profession, is hard work and the sacrifice of time.

DISCOVER GERMANY: What else is planned for this year and the beginning of 2024?

Thomas Crauwels: Lots of climbing, as long as the mountains can welcome us. I also hope that in 2024, conditions will be favourable for photography. In parallel, my artworks will be displayed regularly at exhibitions.

DISCOVER GERMANY: What do you wish for the future? Any dreams or hopes?

Thomas Crauwels: Firstly, I want to continue to capture the beauty of the Alpine world. Secondly, I want to preserve the memory of the Alps and Alpine fine art by setting up a foundation. This is my long-term goal.

Find out more about Thomas Crauwels photography here: <u>www.thomascrauwels.ch</u>



The Matterhorn, an immaculate and smoking pyramid, is adorned with its most beautiful white robe.

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