

Alaska

Foreword

Alaska. It makes me think of ice. I've never been to Alaska, so maybe I'm way out: but the image I have of Alaska is icy, glacial. The word 'Alaska' even sounds like skating on frozen water. It fits as the name for this new photography publication.

Photographs have been talked about as ice before, as stilled frozen moments compared to say the flickering fiery motion of cinema (although the two metaphorical elements are now far more closely combined in their malleable digital forms)¹. Like ice, photographs are also sometimes regarded as transparent, as 'windows on the world' perhaps, or vessels to carry messages or ideas. Indeed this latter interpretation of photography's power has often dominated the contemporary critical analysis of the medium, while the former idea of veracity has been rounded upon. But ice is visible too. Indeed ice can be beautiful. The formal beauty of photographs is something that seems to have been missed in much critical photographic analysis for decades. Yet the last ten years or so have seen the appearance of a great deal of art photography that, while loaded with meaning, has clearly been made with aesthetics very much in mind.

This publication provides a place for such new work to appear. The photographs within these pages are displayed as their makers wish. The images are not as illustrating, or being explained by (except perhaps for this general Foreword). As far as I will go is to suggest themes across the pictures: of nature and culture, empty spaces and chance encounters, life celebrated and loss mourned. The pleasure in looking at these images, printed here to an exhibition quality, will make you return to them again and again. Alaska combines the permanence of a book with the timeliness of a periodical. It occupies a state in between, like ice is to water or steam.

Stephen Bull
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For example Peter Wollen 'Fire and Ice' (1984) in Berger, J.X. and Richon, O. ed. *Other Than Itself* (Manchester: Cornerhouse)