

Miniaturen über das Verschwinden [Miniatures about Disappearance]
Gabriele Rothemann

Sólheimajökull is a glacier tongue in the south of the island state of Iceland in the North Atlantic, an island characterised by fire and ice. The white ice of the glacier contrasts sharply with the black of the lava ash, lending the entire landscape an almost monochrome appearance. Artist Gabriele Rothemann shot her photographs there in autumn 2019. In format terms these black-and-white images are reminiscent of the photographs taken on 19th century polar expeditions, but their focal point here is the floating drift ice. These fragments, detached from the ice mass as a result of global warming, now await their dissolving fate. Indeed, Iceland's glaciers have been particularly hard hit by climate change, with the pace of the ice melt quickening over the past twenty years. In fact, the first Icelandic glacier was officially declared dead in 2019. The terrifying forecast is that, 200 years from now, all of the country's glaciers will have melted.

With *Miniaturen über das Verschwinden* [Miniatures about Disappearance], Gabriele Rothemann has dedicated a subtle work to these glaciers threatened by extinction. The artist has exposed her photographs of these sadly drifting ice floes onto panels of ivory, of the kind featured in miniature painting. For this work Gabriele Rothemann used mammoth ivory, from a species that went extinct thousands of years ago. As the tundra permafrost has melted, fully preserved mammoths have re-emerged, released from the ice. By chance, the artist succeeded in obtaining this extremely rare and oldest of sculptural materials used in art and cultural history from a German miniature painter. Gabriele Rothemann coats the small panels with photo emulsion so the photographs can then be exposed onto them. The precious pieces obtained as a result are presented in a display case illuminated from below, highlighting the lucidity of the material. Through this work, Gabriele Rothemann creates a connection between past and present and implies a potential future – a future in which glaciers will be as extinct as the mammoths that once roamed the earth.

Text: Verena Kaspar-Eisert

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