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Gerhard Lang

# Cloud Walk 11 on Furka Pass

As the philosopher Bernhard Waldenfels once remarked in a conversation, cloud walks “preserve the clouds’ environmental character up to the point of being enclouded and immersed in the atmosphere”. To allow the clouds to keep their environmental character admittedly harbours the consequence that at the outset it is impossible to say whether the walk will visibly lead into a cloud. In this respect cloud walks are in their essence on a par with a cloud. In its presence a cloud already intrinsically manifests its absence. So one should be prepared for the possibility that on arrival at one’s destination the previously still present cloud could also be absent and thus reveal its other side. A walk therefore does not become a cloud walk simply because there are clouds about, but because it is about the clouds.

On the afternoon of 31 August 2017, up on the Furka Pass in the high alpine region of Switzerland, vast, low-lying clouds drew past. Through heavy, incessant rain the route led down from Hotel Furkablick into a cloud. To my surprise, much further down I encountered a herd of curious heifers. I had already begun hearing their bells higher up, but inside the cloud it took me a long time to make out exactly where the cows were standing. All of a sudden they emerged. One cow stuck close to me until I made my way back, alternately tugging out grass and inquisitively nosing my rucksack. Had she been detailed by her peers to keep an eye on me, to make sure that everything was right and proper? After all, I had ventured into their territory. Having sucked a small part of the cloud with my mouth into the separation funnel (fig. 10) I had brought with me I started to head back. Before reaching Hotel Furkablick I walked back out of the cloud.

Furka Pass was discovered for art in the early 1980s by James Lee Byars. His performance “A Drop of Black Perfume” signalled the start of an artistic exploration of this high alpine location in the 1980s and 1990s that was initiated by the gallerist Marc Hostettler and the Alfred Richterlich Foundation. The approach they took was predominantly characterised by a series of minimal actions. In this there are parallels to the Cloud Walks. They too are minimal in their approach. It is above all in small gestures that landscape can be aesthetically experienced.


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Ob den
Galenbödmen

Galenstafel

2700

2500

2400

2300

2400

Fliegerdenkmal: In tief hängenden Wolken kollidierten am 27. August 1962 während eines Manövers drei Militärflugzeuge mit dem Gelände. Die drei Piloten verloren dabei ihr Leben.

Hotel
Furkablick

Furkastock

In den ehemaligen Truppenunterkünften des Militärs befindet sich heute die Alpine Forschungsstation des Botanischen Instituts der Universität Basel (ALPFOR).

Station und
Seilbahn des
Militärs

Haltestelle
der Dampfbahn
Furka-Bergstrecke
(DFB)

2600

WALLIS

UR

Furkastrasse

Furkareuss

Am Blauberg

# Furkapass

2429

2400

2300

Ob den Rifen



14

Plates: **1:** Inside the cloud **2:** In the early afternoon of 31 August 2017 the cloud drifted up the valley during pouring rain **3:** Immediately after departure. On the western side of Hotel Furkablick **4:** The route led downwards, towards the approaching cloud **5:** The walk soon led into the cloud **6/7:** Inside the cloud **8:** A cow suddenly drew close from one side and didn't leave until my departure **9:** This shot was taken while part of the cloud was being sucked into the separation funnel **10:** 2000 ml of cloud were kept inside the sealed separation funnel which was later sealed a second time using an older procedure and given a seal stamp. Along with the photographs and the topographic charts the separation funnel is preserved inside a velvet-lined wooden box **11:** On the way back **12:** After leaving the cloud **13:** The view down into the valley **Map** showing the route of the walk and the cloud moving up the valley **14:** Hotel Furkablick after my return. Its restaurant was converted in the 1990s based on plans by Rem Koolhaas. The striped shutters were designed by Daniel Buren.

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