

# Flash Art

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DAN TOROP

DEREK ELLER GALLERY



DAN TOROP, *Monkey Mountain Snow Storm*. 2006. C-print, 28 x 35 cm. Courtesy Derek Eller Gallery, New York.

Dan Torop's recent photographs may be the visual equivalent of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*: they are permeated with a visual lyricism and a photographic poetics to the degree that his pristine landscapes uncannily trigger memories of a distant, Arcadian yesteryear. Concomitantly, Torop's pictures are also of the moment and of some primeval future. *Monkey Mountain Snowstorm* (2006) and *View from Monkey Mountain* (2005), for example, are ethereally picturesque but they can also overpower and subsume at the same time. Subtle tension is strategically created by, amongst other means, a demure yet epic subject matter corralled into an intimate scale of 28 x 35 cm. Nonetheless, Timothy O'Sullivan, Anselm Adams as well as some of the post-Becher German photographers can be peripherally detected here, albeit that Torop ciphers these sources into his own unique, artistic vision. Nature's sublime magnitude is further emphasized when Torop peppers his tableaux with signifiers of humanity: a close-up of a car windshield bisecting the picture plane is victim to a snow-engulfed landscape; a row of glistening streetlights appears as a string of pulsating beads when set within an icy, frosty backdrop; and a sleepy, diminutive hamlet becomes an aesthetic motif subservient to the greater, pictorial whole. And just when one thinks that these exquisite works are nothing more than a formalist photography-for-photography's sake, Torop blindsides us with conceptual slight-of-hand and interrogates our presuppositions about his ostensible elision of photography's opacity: two works composed from an amalgam of computer-based imagery culled from the Internet teeter the exhibition into other registers. These simulacra foreground nature's cultural construction while reflexively questioning the seeming transparency of the other works. Although these two compelling anomalies portend another direction Torop's work may take in the future, this welcomed exhibition beautifully highlighted that nature is anything but natural.

**Raul Zamudio**