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Take a journey through an ‘apocalyptic, never-ending winter’ in ‘Bright Black World’



Todd Hido is one of the most acclaimed photographers working today. His work is characterized by a dreamy, moody aesthetic that is also highly cinematic. Hido is probably best known for his books featuring the American suburbs: “House Hunting,” “Outskirts” and “Roaming.”

Hido’s newest book, “Bright Black World” (Nazraeli Press), continues with the aesthetic described above, but this time he takes us on a dark, mysterious trip through the Northern European landscape and even as far as the North Sea of Japan. The book is his first significant attempt at doing work outside the United States.

According to a statement by Nazraeli Press, Hido’s foray into environments outside the United States was inspired by Nordic mythology, with particular emphasis on the idea of “Fimbulwinter,” which translates to “endless winter.” The statement goes on to describe the work in the book, saying that “many of Hido’s new images allude to and provide form for this notion of an apocalyptic, never-ending winter.” Indeed, thumbing through the pages of “Bright Black World” does feel like taking a journey through a never-ending desolate, although lyrical, winter. In the foreword to the book, Alexander Nemerov’s poetic description of what the book contains sets readers up for the journey.

The end sends advanced warning. Molten suns and empty roads, barren hillsides like swelling oceans, windows like blocks of ice — we learn the signs. But to warn us, the end must let another speak for it. This is the artist, who throws his colors into the inferno, stoking the fire. Without him, the end would not know itself — could not reckon its score of starveling trees and shrunken shores . . . Back on the leveled ground of this book, the reader examines the pictures in private devotion, running her fingers on empty fields. If only imps and other charlatans of the margins were responsible for this withdrawal of all sense. But they too have left the scene, the fornicating troubadours and friars with their casks of ale, the pimply summoners and proud cocks who pass the time. Only the artist remains, a superintendent of the state, a night watchman fumbling for his keys, unwilling to leave.