

# Laudation German Photobook Prize 19|20

The German Photobook Prize is a competition in which the best photo books from the German-Speaking countries are selected by a team of jury. Always looking for something “special” and “extraordinary”, the jury honored the achievement of the authors, the photographers, the editors and the producers of the submitted photo books. In their laudations, the members of the jury team provided insight into the reasons for their decisions and at the same time offered inspiring “Reading and Viewing Advice” for the general public to appreciate the awarded books.



German Photobook Prize 19|20 Category:  
Conceptual and Artistic Photo Book



Award in Gold

**Periphery - Archaeology of Light**

Photographer: Erieta Attali

Text: Alessio Assonitis, Erieta Attali, Jean  
Attali et.al

Design: Koma Amok



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When I started to take photography in the 70s, I thought architectural photography was very boring. Until one day I saw the spectacular night photographs of the Case Study House No. 22, built in 1960, high above sparkling Los Angeles. The photographs by Julius Shulman show one of those timeless elegant, minimalist glass cases by the Californian architect Pierre Koenig, who only became world famous through Shulman's photographs. What was new about Shulman was that, since the 1960s, he had radically related architecture to its landscape surroundings, creating a new narrative.

During the judging of the German Photo Book Prize 19|20 I unexpectedly came across a new milestone in architectural photography. I am talking about Erieta Attali, who presented the breathtaking book *Periphery | An Archaeology of Light*. It is the second book that the artist, who grew up in Istanbul and Athens, has published with Hatje Cantz since 2015.

The names of all those places and universities where Erieta Attali, born in Tel Aviv in 1966, has taught: Columbia University, New York; Faculty of Architecture, Technical University of Munich (TUM); Catholic University of Chile; Royal Danish Academy of Arts, Copenhagen; Architectural Association, London; RMIT, Melbourne; University of Tokyo; Technion, Haifa, Israel; University of Sydney.

The book can be better explained by pointing out how Erieta Attali started. Namely in 1993 as a specialist in the photography of archaeologically explored wall paintings, i.e. frescoes in ancient funerary monuments, in excavation sites in northern Greece and in the Aegean Sea. Here she has practised exploring spatial and temporal transitions from urban structures to natural surfaces and capturing the circadian rhythm of a city or place and the different behaviour of light and material. She identifies and investigates the behaviour of architectural textures, geometries and degrees of transparency.

Today Attali is internationally known for her research on the relationship between architecture and landscape. It analyses how the placement and the surrounding terrain of a building are part of a two-way dialogue. "A central principle of my photography is" Erieta Attali said in an interview earlier "to always contextualize architecture, since the communication/interpretation value of a purely visual/geometric composition is minimal, can even approach zero". It is therefore logical that the present book is broadened with analytical and literary texts.



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Attali photographs architecture at the edges of the world. In her photographs she is increasingly concerned with exploring how extreme desert terrain provokes monolithic architecture and allows it to communicate with its surroundings. Attali's sites can be found at the periphery of our world: in the Atacama Desert, in the extreme landscape formations of Chile, in remote regions of Japan, in the icy deserts of Norway, on the deserted coasts of Peru.

The book title *Periphery* plays with the motif of the edges of ancient maps, which were also the borders of the world known at that time. Today, these boundaries exist only in our imagination and memory: images of tropical forests, dry deserts, high sea cliffs and inhospitable landscapes at the outposts of civilized existence.

The book plays with the rhythm of photographic travel books. The individual sections each describe an architectural episode, with each chapter becoming a suggestive dialogue between landscape and building, between light and dark, between black and white and color photographs. Even more: an inner dialogue develops between photographic image and the soul landscape of the viewer. Thus, self-contained imaginations emerge, whose further journey is extended by texts from archaeology, architecture and art history, by maps and explanations by the artist.

Let me illustrate the working technique of Erieta Attalia with the photographs of the bunker-like Chalet C7 in Portillo, Chile, by Max Néez and Nicolas del Rio: The chalet, which is 2,990 metres above sea level, is "enveloped" by Lake Inca and the Tres Hermanos mountains of the Andes. Attali shows how the architecture enters into a dialogue with its surroundings. The extreme landscape with its metaphors for height, snow and water is in exchange with the formal structures of the architecture.

Apart from the insufficient openability, there is nothing to criticize about this book. The high-contrast print and the sublime colour processing of the analogue photographs provided by Attali in the 4 by 5 inch format, the wonderful surface of the 150 gram Kiara paper, the generous choice of the 28.5 by 35 cm format, the creative layout, the open-worked cardboard cover that invites you to pick up the book and open it. Everything about this book is excellent. And since "*Peripherie*" combines everything we love about photo books, the jury of the German Photo Book Award was disempowered.

The 1st prize in the category: Conceptual-artistic photo illustrated books had to be awarded to this clever and outstandingly designed book by Erieta Attali.

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