

A tall, slender communication tower stands in a forest, with snow-capped mountains in the background. The tower is the central focus, extending from the bottom of the frame towards the top. It has a series of horizontal rungs or ladders along its length. At the top, there are several antennas and other electronic equipment. The forest consists of tall, thin trees, some with green needles and some with yellowing leaves, suggesting an autumn or early winter setting. In the background, there are large, rugged mountains with patches of snow. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

ALPINE SIGNALS

THOMAS KNEUBÜHLER



THE ALPS

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ALPINE SIGNALS

TWENTYSIX CELL TOWERS
IN THE ENGADIN

WITH TEXTS BY | MIT TEXTEN VON | AVEC DES TEXTES DE
ROMANA GANZONI & REBECCA DUCLOS

VERLAG FÜR MODERNE KUNST

**ROMANA GANZONI
LOOK, THE GAS PUMPS!**

My short story *Der Kanister* (The Gas Can) is about Bruna, whose car, a Suzuki, suddenly stops in the mountain landscape of the Engadin “out of gas, in a desolate place, on a pass, in the middle of an Alpine cliché.” There is not even a cell tower nearby: “A flurry of snow had set in, no reception, neither phone nor radio; on the other side, in the north, it would work again.”

A situation taken from real life in the Alps. It’s obvious that lack of fuel and no reception can end in disaster, at least in some circumstances. Nature might eventually lend assistance, but an “Alpine cliché”? This conclusion, which comes from my aversion to the rhetoric of the sublime and the bombastic, offers the photographs assembled here a warm welcome.

This is my valley. I do not want to deny or glorify it. This is my river. The mountains. Were there before me, a reality out of stone ever since I can remember. Sometimes like a wall, then a barrier. Me. As if I were a part of them. I did not assist the Creator or facilitate evolution; I contributed nothing to these fold mountains. Of course, it is amazing to look into the valley after a strenuous hike, but it is even more amazing to read Thomas Mann’s *Buddenbrooks*, to be familiar with the poems of Luisa Famos or to follow a complicated recipe, to put a feast on the table. Lending a neighbour an egg. Gaze into beautiful eyes.

Does looking down from the mountain into the valley make me richer? In my case: no. But I managed the hike. That remains. To be able to succeed, not giving up because of a cramp, hunger, thirst, dislike. The gaze downward, the overview, being at the top makes me feel exhilarated, but am I purified because of it? No. Does contemplating nature advance me in a technical, religious, artistic, moral, or intellectual way? No. Is it restorative? Yes. It is restorative. And it

TWENTYSIX CELL TOWERS



Müstair

Pass d'Umbrail





Multetta

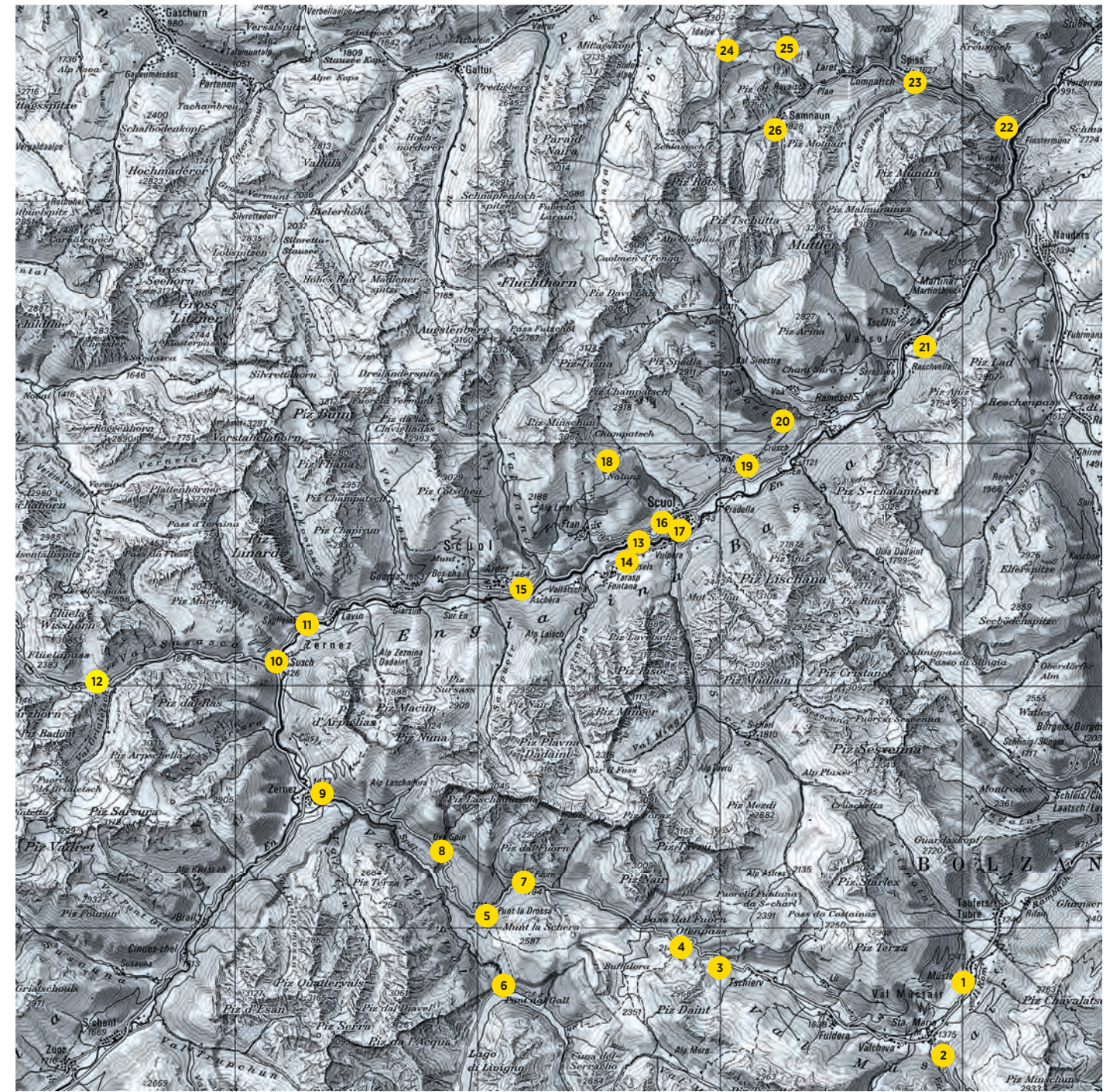
Pass dal Fuorn



Tarasp



- 1 Müstair
- 2 Pass d'Umbrail
- 3 Muletta
- 4 Pass dal Fuorn
- 5 Punt la Drossa
- 6 Punt dal Gall
- 7 Il Fuorn
- 8 Ova Spin
- 9 Zernez
- 10 Susch
- 11 Saglians
- 12 Chant Sura
- 13 Nairs
- 14 Tarasp
- 15 Vallaina
- 16 Scuol
- 17 Gurlaina
- 18 Naluns
- 19 Sent
- 20 Spi da Vinadi
- 21 Farina Cotta
- 22 S-chalun
- 23 Acla da Fans
- 24 Greitspitz
- 25 Alptrider Sattel
- 26 Samnaun



**REBECCA DUCLOS
A DREAM. A BOY. A HORSE. A MIRROR.**

Engadin! Engadin!
The round words in my mouth.
I woke up from my dream with a start.¹

¹ The Engadin is a high valley 100 kilometres long in the Swiss Alps that became the site of Thomas Kneubühler's repeated visits between 2017 and 2019. Published close to linear order here, the line of towers begins near the Italian border of Müstair and ends at a ski resort at Samnaun not far from Austria. A photographer experienced in orienteering, he used a publicly available map to guide him, but ultimately had to employ all manner of transport options (train, bus, car, bike, hiking) in order to reach this series of fairly remote towers. In the artist's own words, the project looks at "the intersection of society and technology, in this case the digitization of our life, which remains so often invisible." "My project," he goes on to say, "also poses questions about the genre of landscape photography. It made me go to places that no one else would choose as a destination—or photograph for that matter. Often they are *non-lieux*, which says more about the mountain region than many of the familiar picturesque views."

Personally, I've not yet had the pleasure of visiting the Alps, so I'm projecting myself into Thomas' world. Quite simply, what do I see? Each tower has a stark (some might say vulgar) solidity as an object in a landscape. I see vast tracts of land that are quintessentially "Swiss" in their ruggedness and quintessentially "Swiss" in their embrace of global entrepreneurship. What I don't see, of course—and what Thomas' images reference but can never capture—is the evanescent communications data streaming through the aether as an intangible Alpine wind. *This* is what I have been dreaming about since first seeing these photographs.

REBECCA DUCLOS

Rebecca Duclos' serpentine career has toggled between academe and the cultural sphere with "off book" forays into archaeology, sheep herding, and cheffing. Late life degrees, global itinerancy, independent and institutional appointments, and some recent art school deanships have characterized her path. With a PhD in Art History and Visual Studies from the University of Manchester and an MA in Museum Studies from the University of Toronto, her undergraduate degrees are in Classical Studies and Near Eastern Archaeology. She is a certified death doula. Rescued greyhounds are a constant. She is writing a play.

Die verschlungenen Pfade von Rebecca Duclos' Laufbahn schlagen Serpentinien zwischen der universitären und der kulturellen Sphäre. Streifzüge jenseits von Buchpublikationen haben sie in die Archäologie, die Schafhüterei und zur Kochkunst geführt. Akademische Abschlüsse spät im Leben, Globetrottereie, freiberufliche Tätigkeiten und Anstellungen bei großen Institutionen haben diesen Weg bestimmt, zuletzt als Dekanin mehrerer Kunsthochschulen. Sie promovierte in Kunstgeschichte und Visueller Kultur an der University of Manchester, erlangte einen Master in Museologie an der University of Toronto und machte Bachelorabschlüsse in Altphilologie und Vorderasiatischer Archäologie. Sie ist eine zertifizierte Sterbebegleiterin. Adoptierte Windhunde sind eine Konstante ihres Lebens. Derzeit schreibt sie an einem Theaterstück.

ROMANA GANZONI

Romana Ganzoni crawled out of a blue handbag in Celerina, Engadin, Switzerland, in 2013, multilingual, with a text in her hand. Since then, she has been writing short stories, novels, poems, essays, and op-eds. Not even her pug Lulu can stop her. Her most recent publications are *Tod in Genua* (novel, Rotpunktverlag, 2019), *Die Torte* (young adult fiction, da bux, 2020), *Vent per mia vela* (poetry, Uniun dals Grischs, 2020), and *Magdalenas Sünde* (novel, Telegramme, 2021). Ganzoni has received several awards, including the Bündner Literaturpreis 2020. The short story *Der Kanister* (The Gas Can) mentioned in the text was nominated for the Ingeborg-Bachmann-Preis in 2014.

Romana Ganzoni ist 2013 in Celerina/Engadin, Schweiz, mehrsprachig aus einer blauen Handtasche gekrochen, mit einem Text in der Hand, seither schreibt sie Erzählungen, Romane, Gedichte, Essays und Kolumnen, nicht einmal ihr Mops Lulu kann sie stoppen. Zuletzt erschienen *Tod in Genua* (Roman, Rotpunktverlag, 2019), *Die Torte* (Jugendbuch, da bux, 2020), *Vent per mia vela* (poesias, Uniun dals Grischs, 2020) sowie *Magdalenas Sünde* (Roman, Telegramme, 2021). Ganzoni wurde mehrfach ausgezeichnet, unter anderem mit dem Bündner Literaturpreis 2020. Die im Text erwähnte Erzählung *Der Kanister* war 2014 für den Ingeborg-Bachmann-Preis nominiert.

THOMAS KNEUBÜHLER

Thomas Kneubühler was born in Solothurn, Switzerland, where he spent the first years of his life on a convent farm. He was active in Basel's cultural scene (Neues Kino, VIA AudioVideoKunst) before moving to Montreal, Canada, where he graduated from Concordia University's MFA Program in 2003. Since then, Kneubühler has pursued a research-based art practice including fieldwork in remote locations and on sites where access is restricted. Addressing questions of power, the exploitation of natural resources, or the effects of new technology on society, his work has been presented internationally, most notably at the Québec Triennial at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Centre Culturel Canadien in Paris, Kunstmuseum Bern, and at Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal. His video work has been screened at a wide range of festivals, among others at the Solothurn Film Festival, Les Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin, Videonale.15 in Bonn, and the Montreal International Documentary Festival RIDM. He received the Swiss Art Award in 2012, and was a research fellow at the Centre for Advanced Studies (CAS) in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 2018.

Alpine Signals started to take shape during a residency at the Fundaziun Nairs, Scuol, in 2017. It follows his previous project *Landing Sites*, where a transatlantic Internet cable served as a starting point to reflect on the change in communication speed over time. Thomas Kneubühler lives and works in Montreal, sometimes in Basel, and visits the Engadin on a regular basis. He knows the Alps from hiking with his father from an early age, and from cycling over many mountain passes.

Thomas Kneubühler wurde in Solothurn geboren und verbrachte die ersten Lebensjahre auf einem Klosterbauernhof. Er war lange in der Basler Kulturszene aktiv (Neues Kino, VIA AudioVideoKunst), bevor er im Jahr 2003 in Montreal, Kanada, sein Studium an der Concordia University mit einem MFA abschloss. Seitdem arbeitet er mit Fotografie und Video an künstlerischen Langzeitprojekten, die umfangreiche Recherchen an manchmal schwer zugänglichen Orten beinhalten. Seine Arbeiten, die sich mit Fragen zu Macht, Landbesitz oder den Auswirkungen neuer Technologien auf die Gesellschaft befassen, waren sowohl in Europa wie auch in Nordamerika zu sehen, unter anderem im Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Centre culturel canadien in Paris, Kunstmuseum Bern und auf der Québec City Biennial. Seine Videoarbeiten wurden auf zahlreichen Festivals aufgeführt, unter anderem den Solothurner Filmtagen, den Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin, der Videonale.15 in Bonn und dem Montrealer Dokumentarfilmfestival RIDM. 2012 wurde er mit dem Swiss Art Award ausgezeichnet, und 2018 war er Stipendiat am Centre for Advanced Study (CAS) in Sofia, Bulgarien.

Alpine Signals nahm im Jahr 2017 während eines Atelier-Aufenthalts in der Fundaziun Nairs, Scuol, erste Gestalt an. Es knüpft an sein vorheriges Projekt *Landing Sites* an, eine Arbeit über die Beschleunigung der globalen Kommunikation, bei der ein transatlantisches Internetkabel im Zentrum steht. Thomas Kneubühler lebt und arbeitet in Montreal, manchmal in Basel, und besucht regelmäßig das Engadin. Die Alpen lernte er in jungen Jahren durch Bergwanderungen mit seinem Vater kennen, und auf Radtouren über viele Alpenpässe.

IMPRINT

Alpine Signals
Twentysix Cell Towers in the Engadin

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On photographs of the Engadin there are mountains, if there has to be a town, then please a sleepy village, but no high-voltage power line, no snow groomer, or remnants of a strangely furnished landscape in the off-season. Every cell tower is like a little off-season, a hybrid situation, annoying but necessary; without them there would be no summer, no winter. No money. This non-time, this non-season is like the non-place that constitutes the station and the cell tower.

Romana Ganzoni

