

# TWO KINDS OF LIGHT

## MELANIE MANCHOT

“THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF LIGHT, THE GLOW THAT ILLUMINATES AND THE GLARE THAT OBSCURES”

————— (James Thurber, 1894-1961)

*Light is different in the mountains. Think of the phenomenon of Alpenglow caused by the rising or setting sun reflecting millions of crystals in the mountains' snowfields, making the sky appear illuminated from below. Before science understood how this occurred, Alpenglow was thought to be either an inferno inside the mountains or a sparkling treasure hidden under the snow.*

*In a narrow valley high up in the Alps, I once saw a magical firework display. Rather than watching the display directly it was the reflection in the steep snow of the opposite mountain-face that stunned me into silence.*

*It is the quality of light itself that often becomes the subject – for travellers, writers or artists, attempting to articulate their impressions of time in the mountains. Photography's medium is light. Light and time are at the core of photographic language, and meaning itself resides in how light renders the image, it models not only what we see, but how we read a photograph.*

*The photographs I took of Erich during our first photo session are ok, but just ok – they don't sparkle, the light somehow does not work. Erich has been working on Engelberg's mountain railways for the past 35 years. When I show him his portrait, he too is a bit disgruntled, bemoaning the fact that his hair is not combed properly. We agree to do a re-shoot.*