



They present a kind of empty space: emptied to elicit a moment of stillness and internal dialogue. You have to be able to enjoy this silence in order to communicate with yourself – and eventually with others.

THOMAS STRUTH

Thomas Struth

Paradise 9 (Xi Shuang Banna) Provinz Yunnan, China, 1999

C-print, framed in two parts, edition 2/6

108 1/4 x 136 1/4 inches

Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth,

Museum purchase

Acquired in 2000

Thomas Struth's *Paradise 9 (Xi Shuang Banna) Provinz Yunnan, China* is an image of a lush jungle. The entire space of the photograph is filled with foliage. Though there is a small open space in the center, the forest is so dense and tightly webbed it is difficult to see any horizon or tell how far the photographer was from the nearest clearing or town. Struth has given us a place, but nowhere to go. He describes the viewer's experience of the work, saying, "One can spend a lot of time in front of these pictures and remain helpless in terms of knowing how to deal with them." Struth's aim was to give the viewer not a pictorial place, but an unconscious one. He has said *Paradise 9* could "be understood as a membrane for meditation." In giving us this place, this untouched, and untamed, view of nature, we are left to contemplate ourselves and our place within the world. The brightly colored trees and plants are full of life, and yet the scene is completely empty of any human life. The only human life "in" the picture is now us, the viewer, left alone to contemplate nature, the world, and our place in it.