



# THE JOURNAL

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READ TIME 7 MINUTES

## THOMAS BIASOTTO: WHEN MAN AND MOUNTAINS MEET

BY RASHUNDA TRAMBLE

Renowned Swiss landscape photographer Thomas Biasotto talks to the Journal about his new book, *GIANTS*, his photography technique and the significance of a very special IWC timepiece in his watch collection.

### TELL US ABOUT YOUR PATH TO BECOMING A PHOTOGRAPHER.

I've been interested in the world of photography since childhood. At the age of 10, I was given a camera for my confirmation - a Leica M6 in actual fact - and a watch - my first IWC, of course. I've been passionate about both - photography and watches - my whole life.

I've been taking photos since then. At the outset, photography was my hobby and my passion. Whenever I had a spare minute, I would go to a city or a mountain somewhere and try to emulate all my photography idols, gradually developing my own style over the course of the years. The distinguishing feature about my portfolio is that I'm passionate about two types of photography that couldn't be more different. The first is street photography, which is very stressful and vibrant, and the second is mountain photography, which is anything but stressful, but which demands a high level of physical fitness.

I originally studied music at Zurich University of the Arts, where I also completed my master's degree in music. After my degree, I moved into the private sector, where I worked for some years until I decided to do only those things in life that make me happy. For me, those were music, photography and teaching. I went back to school and received a bachelor's degree in Primary Education. Of course, while I was studying, I had to earn some money, somehow and that's where photography came in, which is how I ended up as a professional photographer. These days I teach, compose film scores and pursue my photography projects, which is how my fourth illustrated book, *GIANTS*, came about.



Photographer Thomas Biasotto with his Big Pilot Heritage 48 - 2016 (01/10/2017)

### WHAT SPARKED YOUR FOCUS ON MOUNTAINS? TO THE UNTRAINED EYE, IT'S PERHAPS HARD TO DEPICT EMOTION WITH THEM, ESPECIALLY WITH A STILL CAMERA SEEING AS IF THE MOUNTAINS ARE QUITE "STILL" THEMSELVES.

My parents were determined to heavily involve us in outdoor activities. Rather than spending my childhood days in front of the TV or at the playground, we went on hundreds of mountain hikes. You could say that I grew up with the mountains. That also explains my great love and passion for the "giants".



... The Matterhorn / ©Thomas Biasotto

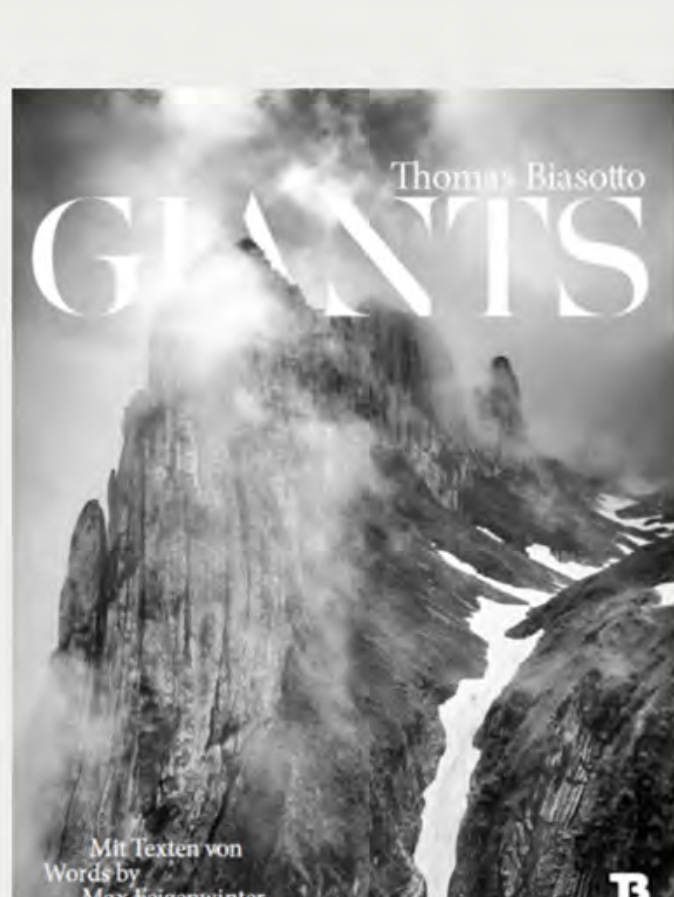
Yes, mountains are "still", but the secret is in choosing the right moment to take the photo, because a mountain will appear different according to the weather conditions. Each different angle changes a mountain's appearance and each season changes a mountain's appearance. I am also fascinated by those places and mountains that have not been climbed very often.

I often wonder what a mountain like that has experienced. Mountains are such gigantic wonders of nature. What would they tell us if they could speak?

### HOW DID THE IDEA OF GIANTS COME ABOUT AND WHAT WAS THE PROCESS OF MAKING IT HAPPEN?

The idea of publishing a book about mountains came to me a long time ago. Eventually, I got to the point with my portfolio where I summoned up the courage to bring this gigantic project to fruition. To put this book together, I was on the road nonstop for 3 years and did around 150 mountain tours, covering 2,500 km of footpath and climbing around 300,000 meters in total. All the time I was carrying around 15-20 kg of equipment on my back. Camera equipment, sometimes a tent and food.

The book primarily covers mountains in Switzerland, with particular focus on the Alps area in eastern Switzerland, the Valais in the southern part of the country and neighboring mountain ranges in Chamonix in the Mont Blanc region.



... Cover of GIANTS / ©Thomas Biasotto

### COULD YOU EXPLAIN YOUR PHOTOGRAPHIC PROCESS? HOW DID YOU CAPTURE THESE BEAUTIFUL IMAGES?

I primarily work with medium-format camera systems with 100-megapixel sensors. When it comes to equipment, **Phase One** backs and cameras are my absolute favorites. Phase One cameras give me unlimited capabilities and allow me to capture each and every tiny detail with an outstanding degree of focus and quality that would be almost impossible to achieve otherwise. I usually have a view camera from the Dutch camera manufacturer **Cambo** with me too, which is also compatible with the Phase One digital backs.

For me, a picture is created the moment you release the shutter. I'm meticulously precise about everything during the shoot, so that I can spend more time on mountain heads and less on long Photoshop sessions. But I couldn't do without Photoshop for some types of photos, such as nighttime shots. For instance, there are some photos in the book that have a hyper-realistic quality that I could not have captured with the same degree of quality and detail without Photoshop.



... Stengenel, Valais / ©Thomas Biasotto

Most of the images, especially those in black and white, come straight from the camera, though. No cropping, no distortion, just pure black and white photos. These pictures are also created by using a special Phase One back (achromatic) on the camera that only shoots in black and white (and therefore has no color option).

When taking photographs, I primarily tend to use the shift / panorama technique, taking long exposures using the **ND16** filter system and, of course, using the time blending technique mentioned earlier for nighttime photography. Over several hours, the various lighting conditions merge into a single image to create a work of art.

For me, the image is always a finished image if I can see it as a print on the desk in my studio. The whole process of producing a print is another thing that really fascinates me and that I like to include in. In Appenzel, in one of the most beautiful gulf houses in Switzerland, there is a permanent exhibition of my pictures where typical Appenzeller craft meets photography.

### WHAT WAS THE PROCESS OF PUTTING THE BOOK TOGETHER AND YOUR CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN?

Choosing the photographs for a book is always a huge challenge for the artist. I changed the last picture just three days before the print run. You undergo a huge development before the process is complete. I always discussed the latest pictures with a team of notable curators to get their opinions and their critiques, because it is helpful to receive useful, constructive feedback. Ultimately, though, I always went with my gut feeling.

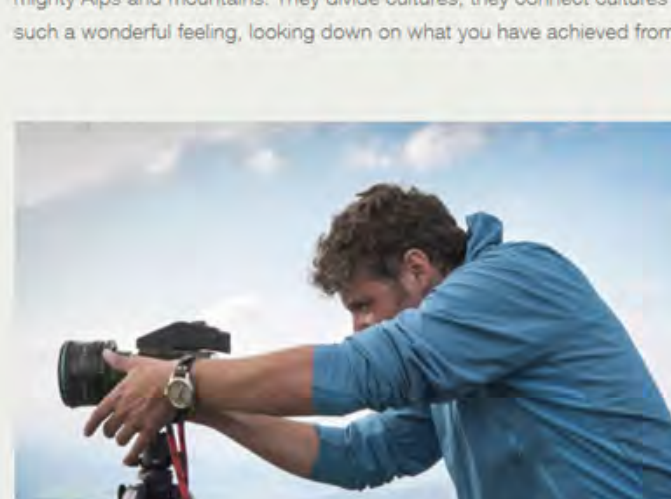
This is now the fourth book I've financed through crowdfunding. My relatively small community of backers and I think this type of financing is really ingenious. As an artist, it means that I don't have to do the rounds of all the backers, instead, it allows me to sell tangible products, in advance, at an attractive price for the buyer, which means that I can then finance my own project. Having already financed several books this way, the scope of my sales operations also widened and I did workshops and shoots, not to mention advance sales of the books and prints from the book, all of which enabled me to cover a large proportion of the production costs.



... Oeschinensee, Bern / ©Thomas Biasotto

### WHAT IS THE KEY MESSAGE YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE ABOUT GIANTS AND WHAT IDEA WOULD YOU LIKE SOMEONE TO TAKE AWAY FROM THIS BOOK?

Nature is one of the most important gifts given to humanity and it is this beauty that I wish to convey in this book and in future books. We have such mighty Alps and mountains. They divide cultures, they connect cultures and, if you have the time and the courage to climb one, you will experience such a wonderful feeling, looking down on what you have achieved from the summit.

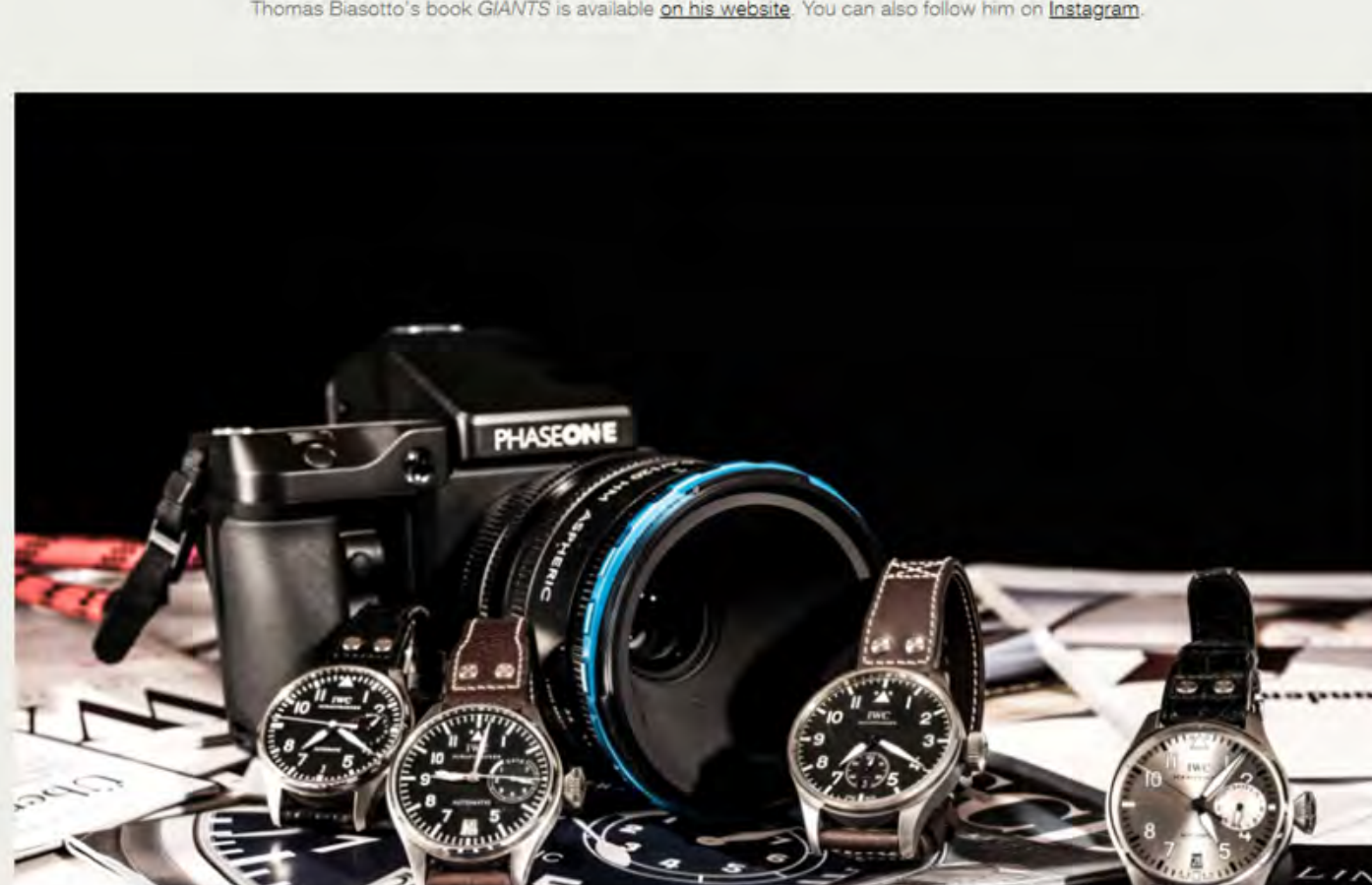


... Biasotto on location with his Big Pilot's Watch edition "Father and Son" - 2020 (05/02/21) / ©Thomas Biasotto

### WE SEE YOU WEARING YOUR IWC BIG PILOT'S WATCH "FATHER AND SON" EDITION IN YOUR BEHIND-THE-SCENES VIDEO. WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND YOU WEARING THIS PARTICULAR WATCH WHILE YOU WORK?

I've been a huge fan of IWC since I was a small boy. Indeed, the Big Pilot "Father and Son" I wear in the film is of great significance for me. It's the watch my wife gave me when we got engaged. What I really love about IWC are the Pilot's Watches, particularly the Big Pilots. The small collection I've built up over recent years mainly consists of Big Pilots, including the limited-edition Pilot Heritage 48, which is also my absolute favorite. Its simplicity, its design and its size give it a real wow factor. Much like the *GIANTS* in the book: simple, large, timeless.

Thomas Biasotto's book *GIANTS* is available [on his website](#). You can also follow him on [Instagram](#).



THOMAS BIASOTTO'S IWC PILOT'S WATCH COLLECTION / © THOMAS BIASOTTO

### BROWSE OUR TIMEPIECES



PILOT'S WATCH TIMEZONE SPITFIRE EDITION - THE LONGEST FLIGHT



PILOT'S WATCH CHRONOGRAPH SPITFIRE



PILOT'S WATCH CHRONOGRAPH TOP GUN

### SHARE

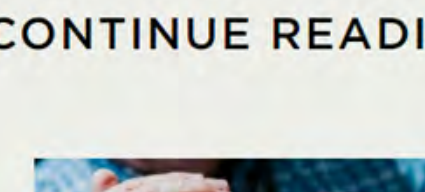


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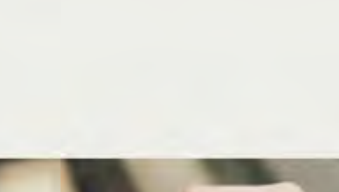
#### THE SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE MK IX: 360-DEGREE COCKPIT TOUR

Silver Spitfire pilot Matt Jones invites you inside a Spitfire for a 360-degree cockpit tour. Watch the video here.



#### A HIGH-FLYING CAREER: AN IWC COLLECTOR SHARES HIS PATH TO THE COCKPIT

IWC collector Antonio Gomes shares stones about his career as a pilot and which timepieces are his favorites. Read his story below.



#### WATCH COLLECTING: A FAMILY AFFAIR

The Journal travels to Singapore to meet IWC watch collector Michael Hilton and his son Max. Learn more about their love of collecting IWC watches here.

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