

MARS – A photographic exploration

Mars, a photographic exploration is a project presented by Xavier Barral with the scientific consultation of Alfred S. McEwen (NASA) and Francis Rocard (CNES).

Valles Marineris, Olympus, Arcadia Planitia, Elysium Mons, Planum Boreum, Icaria Fossae and *Noachis Terra* are some of the Martian regions that NASA's observation probe has flown over at an average distance of 300 km.

The probe, equipped with the HiRISE camera, was sent into orbit in 2005 to study the planet's surface. From among the tens of thousands of images recorded with a resolution of unprecedented quality, Xavier Barral has extracted a series of nearly 200 photographs with a consistent point of view. Each photograph covering a 6 kilometres wide strip.

This selection of photographs offers a completely new vision of Mars, one that has never been seen before, revealing the geological and mineralogical contours of this legendary planet. An unsuspected landscape mainly shaped by the wind for more than three billion years. These images fuel our imagination. “*At the end of this voyage, I have gathered here the most endemic landscapes*” says Barral, “*a stroller-in-place*” traveling along thousands of miles, “*They send us back to Earth, to the genesis of geological forms, and at the same time, they upend our reference points: dunes that are made of black sand, ice that sublimates.*”

An exhibition of this work has been presented for the first time at the *Rencontres d'Arles* in 2013, and then at *Kyotographie* in Japan in 2014. Both of the exhibitions presented large size gelatin silver prints as well as a projection or a video installation. A video of the project has been screened at the *Nuit des images* in Lausanne in 2014. A selection of these photographs have also been shown in the exhibition *Vues d'en haut* at the Centre Pompidou-Metz in 2013 and at the *Quinzaine photographique nantaise* in 2017.

An accompanying book *Mars, a photographic exploration*, published in 2013, brings together a large corpus of these photographs, enriched with texts by astrophysicist Francis Rocard of CNES (France's National Centre for Space Studies), professor of planetary science, and the director of HiRISE, Alfred S. McEwen, as well as detailed captions by planetologist and geophysician Nicolas Mangold, providing keys for interpretation and placing these enigmatic images back in their context.

Project in partnership with NASA, Jet Propulsion Laboratory and The University of Arizona.