HIGHER GROUND

Carl De Keyzer

In this series of pictures, taken in Austria, Switzerland, Germany, France and Spain, Belgian photographer Carl De Keyzer has imagined that Europe has flooded and that people have had to move to higher ground to escape the water that has taken over their cities and towns. It's a fantastical thought-experiment made all the more uncanny by the placid and carefree atmosphere of the photographs. The subjects appear to be on holiday: reading and sunbathing by lakes; taking selfies amid stunning scenery; looking out over magnificent vistas through plate-glass windows. In real life, of course, they probably are on holiday. But in the fictional world that De Keyzer has created, these idyllic scenes are unnerving. Despite the evidence on the ground – the melting ice caps, the unusual storms and droughts, the warming world – our complacency about climate change by and large remains intact. These photographs capture that fatal boredom in the face of this slow-motion catastrophe.
of course, they probably are on holiday. But in the fictional world that De Keyzer has created, these idyllic scenes are unuttering. Despite the evidence on the ground—the melting ice caps, the unusual storms and droughts, the warming world—one complacency about climate change by and large remains intact. These photographs capture that final boredom in the face of this slow-motion catastrophe.
My Vietnamese mother was born in the Year of the Snake. She left her skin behind and never returned to Vietnam. Like many immigrants, we melded our identities, and yet did not...