

# IN VIVO

*The nature of nature*

**IN VIVO, the 25th Noorderlicht International Photofestival, is about our ambiguous relationship with nature. Museum Belvédère in Heerenveen becomes the setting for photographic art possessing a confrontational beauty, images inspired by our rich tradition of experiencing nature. IN VIVO will be a modern, threedimensional nature scrapbook with a twist, about how our loving way of experiencing nature is directed by hidden social and cultural constructions.**

**Noorderlichts aims to raise awareness in its audience about the fact that our natural environment, from intimate back gardens to remote regions, is radically affected, or even created from scratch, by ourselves. IN VIVO challenges and enables the viewer to look in another, probing manner at the living experiment we call nature.**

**The Noorderlicht International Photofestival 2018 takes place from 23 June to 23 September. Collaborating with partner organisations, an encompassing multidisciplinary project containing photography, other visual arts, and music is created.**

## *Worldwide open call*

We gladly welcome entries for *IN VIVO* until 15 March. Noorderlicht invites photographers, related artists (video and digital media), and curators to propose projects. Proposals should contain:

- A selection of images giving a representative overview of the proposed work. There is not a required number of images. Single-image installations thus are also possible. Minimum resolution is 1500 pixels (long edge). Entries should contain single-image documents; no PDFs containing multiple images.
- A text about the project, accompanied by relevant background information (essays, reviews).
- A project synopsis of approximately 100 words.
- A succinct CV, including contact details and website.

Recipient's address: [pandora@noorderlicht.com](mailto:pandora@noorderlicht.com). Please send large files via a file-transfer service, such as WeTransfer. There is no entrance fee.

Contributors will receive a confirmation of their entry and later on news about the selection. Please send questions you may have preceding your entry to head curator Wim Melis: [wim@noorderlicht.com](mailto:wim@noorderlicht.com).

*IN VIVO* will feature a mix of open call proposals and research by the Noorderlicht curators themselves. Around 40 artists are expected to participate.

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**IN VIVO will be a modern, probing nature scrapbook about how our loving way of experiencing nature is directed by man's hidden influences. It enables the viewer to look in another, probing manner at the living experiment we call nature.**

## **Social construct**

Nature experience is an essential part of our cultural identity. Nature is good for us. It nurtures, soothes, harmonises, and acquaints us with an uncorrupted world away from our everyday sorrows. We are conditioned with an idealised image of what nature is. No one will contradict it, as it is a genuine conception that recurs everywhere in our society and is a prominent part of the public as well as political debate.

Yet beauty can also mislead. The idyll is not as pure as it seems to be. In reality, our 'nature experience' is a social construct. Both the notions of 'nature' and 'experience' are permeated by the very artificiality they aim to oppose.

## **Experience**

We usually experience nature indirectly. We are presented with it as a part of the visual language of seduction, in commercials and entertainment, filtered through the display on countless screens. Our own experiences with nature are captured on photographs and in films; memories that are experienced more often than the original experience, as is the nature of photography. Nature films have been immensely popular for years and years.

The increased amount of spare time and decreased costs of mobility enable us to seek nature experience further away than ever, yet everything is strictly directed. Often tour guides decide which ultimate experience we take home.

## **Nature**

The concept of nature is as ambiguous. There almost is no unspoilt place left on earth, we have left our traces everywhere we could. The Netherlands would not even exist in its current shape if it were not for human intervention. Nature is modelled on our ideal image of it. Simultaneously it is carelessly used both as dumping ground and in service of all kinds of economic interests.

'Nature' is not naturalists' domain as such. It is mainly the field of action of the industries, geneticists, computer programmers, landscape architects, agriculture, and, last but not least, tourism. Terms as 'climate change' and even 'Anthropocene' are used regularly by everyone. What about the consequences of the new, current industrial revolution: robotics, nanotechnology, and DNA engineering? Are they going to enrich or violate our ecosystem?

### **Living experiment**

The world is one big experiment in manufacturability. When talking about nature, do we refer to some sort of ideal underneath all this artificiality, or do we refer to the experiment itself; a sort of 'post nature' in which many truths coexist?

Our romantic conception of nature stems from the industrial era, in which industrialisation and urbanisation alienated us. Consequently, we put nature on a pedestal. Before, nature was just as much a stern partner: cruel and unpredictable. Will the current technological revolution change our construct of nature again?

### **Current relevance**

It is generally accepted that the traces we leave behind on our planet have global repercussions. The realisation that such traces can also be found around the corner on a small scale, receives less attention, but this does not weaken its relevance to the discussion about what nature is.

This certainly applies to our urban society in which the importance of the countryside seems to decrease. *IN VIVO* confronts the visitor with the far ranging scope of the anthropogenic influence. The festival also emphasises the importance of nature to our cultural and personal identity and our survival.

### **IN VIVO**

*IN VIVO* addresses these questions and contributes to the debate about them. The personal experience of nature, with all its above-mentioned ambiguities, is depicted in a surprising way by international artists. From local to global, from back-garden to rainforest ecosystems. From close to home at the time, to present-day travelling all around the world. All this in full, romantic awareness of our nature experience being genuine and valuable, however many construction layers are hidden behind it.

### **Aim**

Photography and art are able to stimulate awareness. *IN VIVO* aims to address the viewer as critical consumer of images. The central question is whether what we love about nature is or is not in fact based on our own cultivated interpretation of it. As it were, the idea of nature is forced open by this festival's artistic and confrontational images.

### Modern nature scrapbook

The festival consists of indoor and outdoor presentations and installation, with images by photographers and related artists worldwide. The works are carefully selected based on the theme and together they form a group that tells an encompassing story. This festival's photographic images will be accompanied by texts that interpret and add background information to the works. Instead of nature itself, the human influence on it will be the main focus of these descriptions.

Thus a new, modern nature scrapbook is created, inspired by the albums with stickers and texts that we collected with our shopping over the years. The most recent example being the sticker scrapbooks of our country's biggest grocer's whereas the tradition started with the Verkade albums dating back to the early 20th century.

### Verkade stickers

The Verkade albums, mostly written by J.P. Thijssen, were hugely popular. They contained single stickers that were given out with Verkade products and belonged in a scrapbook with texts explaining the natural world the images displayed. They can be seen as the start of popularising nature experience and nature conservation as well as of the promotional capitalisation of it. Between 1903 and 1940, 30 different albums were released. The catalogue accompanying *IN VIVO* is inspired by these scrapbooks.

### Partners

*IN VIVO* is organised in intensive collaboration with main partner Museum Belvédère. The museum also presents *Oase Oranjewoud*, containing modern visual art about flora and fauna. The original Verkade scrapbooks are on display in Mansion Oranjewoud, accompanied by the original watercolours they were based on. Both *IN VIVO – The Nature of Nature* and *Oase Oranjewoud* take place in the museum and in installations and pavilions in the surrounding areas.

With additional partner institutions, festival for classical music Oranjewoud Festival and art centre Atelier Majeurs, the boundaries of the still image are pushed even more. This enables a very wide audience to intensely re-experience nature passively as well as actively by means of photography, paintings, installations, music, and accessible illustrations. The museum, the estate with its classical gardens and the museum park become the inspiring setting for a multidisciplinary project.