



STEPHAN VANFLETEREN

NATURE MORTE - STILL LIFE

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Swan, 2016

For the past ten years, Stephan Vanfleteren has been photographing dead animals in his studio in daylight. This intense work constitutes the *Nature Morte - Still Life* series.

Nothing is more difficult than photographing live animals. They're wary and quick, or live hidden in the night, so you can't direct them. A dead animal is patient. Animals are not dead for the photographer's lens. The dead swan was found by a river, the lamb was on its way to the butcher's, the duck and pheasant were shot by a shotgun, the crow died in the grass amid mist and dew, the fox, the wolf and the deer were hit by cars, the porpoise washed ashore after a storm and died in the arms of a surfer, the blue tit and the robin flew into a window.

Nature Morte - Still Life is a natural reference to classical painting, with the bewitching light that penetrates the artist's studio. With this soft light is in the tradition of the old and contemporary masters. His craftsmanship and artistic nature make us both witness and party to the splash of incoming light.

Daylight changes with the seasons, the position of the sun and the clouds. Grey backdrops are as changeable as the evening dresses of mercurial divas. It's beautiful to see how grey frolics between poetic shades of petroleum blue, Lincoln green and Mountbatten pink. With this light, Stephan Vanfleteren observes, studies and sublimates the animal's beauty. The color of the coat, the brilliance of the feather, the reflection of the skin, the roughness of a paw, the aerodynamics of the body, the sharpness of a claw or the texture of the skin fascinate the photographer.

Ibn al-Haytham and Da Vinci not only observed it, they also wrote about it. It is also admired in the Bible, in the creation story, where light is created on the very first day. The 17th century Dutch scientist Huygens was the first to dissect wave motion. Before him, the Dane Ole Roemer even discovered that light had a speed. Light remains a mysterious miracle, beyond the religious or scientific point of view. The fact that sunlight travels for 500 seconds before passing through the studio's large window makes Vanfleteren ecstatic. This tired light, wounded by refraction and distortion on its distant journey, is why Vanfleteren calls it the old light.

Vanfleteren's studio is a kind of no-man's-land, an intimate shelter where the outside world is forgotten. For Vanfleteren, death feeds the vitality of life. If you want to see the light, look at the shadow. *Nature Morte - Still Life* is a Memento Mori, a still life that reminds us of our mortality.



Jackdaw & Crow, 2023

ATELIER

STEPHAN VANFLETEREN

«Light is the beginning of everything. For more than twelve years I've watched this phenomenon enter my studio. It's a miracle I never tire of.»

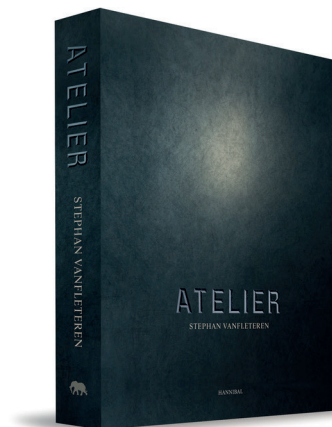
- Stephan Vanfleteren

In recent years, Stephan Vanfleteren has been engaged in intense photographic activity in the daylight studio at his home. This work is brought together in *Atelier*. Grey theater curtains are present throughout as a recurring background. In both his natural light and his artificial light photography, Vanfleteren is on a quest for beauty and meaning. His extensive palette of subjects includes both things and people - well-known figures and anonymous individuals alike. He shows us the face of an old fisherman and inspects both Nick Cave's hand and a bottle washed up on the beach. He adores his growing children and inspired artists. He studies the stiffened corpse of a kingfisher and the body of a flexible dancer, or follows the sunlight as it moves slowly across his theater curtain.

His work alludes to classical painting, with its bewitching 'old' light, oblique light and chiaroscuro. If a subject cannot be photographed in Vanfleteren's home, he raises the grey theater curtains and builds his own studio on location.

Stephan Vanfleteren's *Atelier* project follows in the tradition of old and contemporary masters such as Rembrandt, Géricault, Zurbaran, Claesz., Cézanne, Borremans, Penn and Roversi. It is an ode to the power to observe, to imagine, to sublimate and - ultimately - to fix, in which Vanfleteren stays true to his characteristic style and aesthetic. With his craftsmanship, artistry and vitality, he turns us into witnesses and accessories to a crime with incident light.

With text contributions by Ilya Leonard Pfeiffer and Stephan Vanfleteren.



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STEPHAN VANFLETEREN

Born in 1969 in Courtrai, Belgium
Lives and works in Belgium

Stephan Vanfleteren is one of Belgium's most renowned photographers. Among the general public, he is mainly celebrated for his penetrating black and white portraits of famous and anonymous people. However, his oeuvre is much more diverse than that. Starting his career as a press photographer, Vanfleteren made captivating photo reports about the events that dominated the news. Later on, he began to elaborate a variation of themes in extended photo reportages, going from storefront façades to a journey along the mythical Atlantic Wall. For his most recent work, Vanfleteren withdrew into his studio to focus on his own version of classic themes such as nude portraits and still life photography. In the latter, entitled *Nature Morte*, he portrayed in color dead animals that he found near his home. Where most of his images are very time phased, this series marks an evolution in Vanfleteren's work towards a more timeless approach and subject matter. Whether it concerns his journalistic, documentary or artistic photographic projects. Vanfleteren always remains true to his characteristic style and esthetic. A pallet of black and whites, the use of sharp contrasts and well-defined details is the trademark that he developed throughout the years. Also, his recent color work shows his impressibility, combined with his craftsmanship, his involvement with the subject which can be landscape, still life, portrait or nude. His expansive personal stories and reflections of encounters are mesmerizing excursions of a photographer who feels as much a witness as an accomplice. A melancholic soul hides in the sensitive photographer.

Stephan Vanfleteren received in August 2021 a Doctor Honoris Causa from the VUB - Brussels University.

SOLO SHOW (SELECTION)

- 2023 ATELIER, Antwerp Argentin, Antwerp, Belgium
- 2022 Koppelkoppen, ZLDR Luchtfabriek, Heusden-Zolder, Belgium (01.11.2022 - 28.01.2023)
Catching light, Freezing time, Sotheby's Brussels, Brussels, Belgium
- 2020 SURF TRIBE, Navigo Scheepsvaartmuseum ODK, Oostduinkerke, Belgium (09.2020 - 04.2021)
Angels of the Sea, Scheepsvaartmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands (09.2020 - 04.2021)
Corona Walks, FOMU, Antwerp, Belgium
- 2019 Present, FOMU, Antwerp, Belgium (14.12.2019 - 13.09.2020)
Onuitgesproken, Museum Dr. Guislain, Gent, Belgium
Surf Tribe, Liberté! L'esprit des lumières, Bordeaux, France
Surf Tribe, Kahmann Gallery, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2018 Surf Tribe, Kunsthal, Rotterdam, Netherlands
Surf Tribe, Scharpoord, Knokke-Heist, Belgium
- 2017 The People of Mercy, Lauranda, Antwerp, Belgium
Iceskaters - Icons, Thialf, Heerenveen, Netherlands
- 2016 Angels of the Sea, Navigo, National Fishermuseum, Oostduinkerke, Belgium
- 2015 Charleroi, Il est clair que le gris est noir, Musée de la photographie de Charleroi, Charleroi, Belgium
- 2014 Atlantic Wall, Atlantic Wall Museum, Raversyde, Belgium
MMXIV, Botanique, Brussels, Belgium
Belgium, Gallery Von Kories, Hamburg, Belgium
- 2013 Façades & Vitrites, Aller-Retour, Budafabriek, Kortrijk, Belgium
Flandrien, Flanders Centre, Osaka, Japon
- 2012 En avant marche, Huis van Alijn, Gent, Belgium
Belgium, Imagesingulière, Sète, France
- 2011 Belgium, Gallery Von Kories, Hamburg, Belgium
Portret 1989-2009, C-Mine, Gent, Belgium
Flandrien, Flanders Centre, Osaka, Japan
- 2010 Flakkelan, Fries Museum, Leeuwarden, Netherlands
Portret 1989-2009, Centre Céramique, Maastricht, Netherlands
Flandrien, Fotomuseum Rotterdam, Netherlands
- 2009 Belgium, Botanique, Brussels, Belgium
Portret 1989-2009, Wintercircus Mahy, Gent, Belgium
- 2008 Belgium, FOMU, Antwerp, Belgium
- 2007 Flandrien, Host Gallery, London, UK

GROUP SHOW (SELECTION)

- 2021 Art Antwerp, Gallery Fifty One, Antwerp, Belgium
Paris-Photo, Gallery Fifty One, Grand Palais Éphémère, Paris, France
Ijslandvisser, Venetian Gallery, Ostend, Belgium
Capturing Life - Viviane Maier >< Stephan Vanfleteren, Gallery Fifty One, Antwerp, Belgium
- 2020 Iconobelge II, Handelsbeurs, Antwerp, Belgium
Art Brussels, Gallery Fifty One, Brussels, Belgium
- 2019 Het Glore - Amenra, Menen Cultuurhuis De Steiger, Belgium
Nude Now, Museum Hilversum, Netherlands
Nature Morte, Museum Tot Zover, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Pop Up Amelisweerd, MOA Bunnik, Netherlands
Cannes Portraits, Naarden Fotofestival, Netherlands
Haute Photography - Surf Tribe, Rotterdam, Netherlands
- 2018 Cannes Portraits, Visa pour l'image - Archipel, Perpignan, France
Walls/Streets, A-Galerie, Brussels, Belgium
Aan Zee, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, Netherlands
Iconobelge, AntwerpPhoto, Belgium
Hollandse Koope, Amsterdam Museum, Netherlands
Promesses d'un visage, Koninklijk museum voor Schone kunsten van België, Brussels, Belgium
Façades & Vitrines, Haute Photographie, Rotterdam, Netherlands
- 2017 Wolkers Geportretteerd, Marktsteeg 10, Leiden, Netherlands
Fisherman on horse - Marius, Navigo, National Fishermuseum, Oostduinkerke, Belgium
Vive Labeur, Chinese Portraits, Chapel, Poperinghe, Belgium
Flandrien, Mythos Tour de France, NRW - Forum, Düsseldorf, Germany
Atlantic Wall, Fotografiska, Stockholm, Sweden
The angels of the sea, Haute Photographie, Rotterdam, Netherlands
- 2016 Portraits, La Photographie Galerie, Brussels, Belgium
Portraits, A-Galerie, Bruxelles, Belgique
Façades & Vitrines, Francfort - Griesheim, Germany
Verfraaiing-Het Verbeelde Westen, Ambassade de Belgique, La Haye, Netherlands
Stil Leven, MOA Bunnik, Netherlands
Faces, Ambassade des Pays-Bas, Paris, France
- 2015 Unseen, Unseen, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Facing Japan, Museum Dr. Guislain, Gent, Belgium
The Pistol's Waltz, Fifty One Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium
Faces Now, BOZAR, Brussels, Belgium
Faces Now, Fotomuseum Rotterdam, Belgium
Faces Now, Fotomuseum Thessaloniki, Greece
- 2014 Modern Times, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2013 Neighbors, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands

- 2011 In de Marge, Museum Dr. Guislain, Gent, Belgium
- 2003 Belgium Nomads, Fifty One Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium
Elvis & Presley, Fifty One Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium
- 2001 Elvis & Presley, Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool, UK
Elvis & Presley, Verona, Italy
- 2000 Neighbors, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands

AWARDS

- 1996 World Press Photo Award
- 1997 World Press Photo Award
- 1998 European Fuji Awards
- 2000 World Press Photo Award
- 2001 World Press Photo Award
- 2001 European Fuji Award
- 2007 Nikon Press Photo Award
- 2009 Louis Paul Boon award – Belgique
- 2010 Lead Awards: 'Portätfotografie des Jahres', Germany
- 2011 Henri Nannen Price, Germany – Tomi Ungerer
- 2012 Vijfjaarlijkse Cultuurprijs voor de Provincie West-Vlaanderen
National Portrait price of the Netherlands – Rem Koolhaas, Dutch architect
- 2013 World Press Photo Award-Staged Portraits, 1th prize stories, People of Mercy
- 2019 Henri Nannen Price, Germany – Angels of the Sea – Mare Publication.

BOOKS

- 1999 Elvis&Presley, with photographer Robert Huber - Cruse Verlag
- 2000 Buren, with Mark Power & Eva Leitolf - Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
- 2003 Tales from a Globalizing World
- 2005 Flandrien - Cannibal Publishing
- 2007 Belgicum - Hannibal Books
- 2009 Portret 1989-2009 - Lannoo
- 2012 En avant, marche! - Hannibal Books
- 2013 Façades & Vitrites (Limited edition 666 ex.) - Hannibal Books
- 2014 MMXIV - Cannibal Publishing
- 2014 Atlantic Wall - Hannibal Books
- 2015 Charleroi, il est clair que le gris est noir - Hannibal Books
- 2018 SURF TRIBE - Hannibal Books
- 2019 PRESENT - Hannibal Books
- 2019 Onuitgesproken - Hannibal Books
- 2020 Dagboek van een fotograaf, Coronawandelingen - De Bezige Bij
- 2021 Collegium Vocale Gent – Hannibal Books
- 2023 ATELIER – Hannibal Books