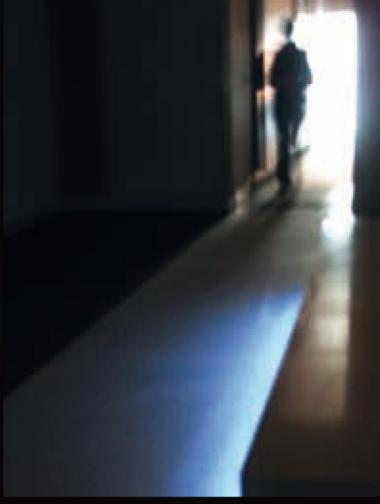


Frames of Mind

“A photograph should tell a story and raise questions.” This is one of the principles by which Ellis Blom and Veerle Koch work on their art pieces. Though two very different photographers, they perfectly complement each other and have found a unique way to cooperate, with striking results.

Visions, Veerle Koch.



Lost Expectations, Veerle Koch

For years Ellis Blom and Veerle Koch had separate careers as photographers. In 2009 they met by pure coincidence and discovered they had been living in the same village for years without being aware of each other's existence. From that day onwards they have been closely cooperating. Collaboration between two artists that are very different can never be easy. This has however been a remarkable working relationship from the very start. Their approach to it is to have no rules, no conditions, no guidelines, but a constantly increasing sense of shared interests, common modes of operating and a collective belief about what real beauty is, in all its details.

Both photographers look back on the past year as a very special process: "All of a sudden we had the opportunity to share ideas and fantasies about the ultimate photograph. We were able to criticise and receive criticism without a sense of discouraging or being discouraged. A type of criticism that only aims to improve one's photographic skills and to help one another – that is very special."

Rare Cooperation

"Cooperating the way that we do is rare among photographers", Ellis and Veerle comment.

"The egos of most of them are too big to allow for the absence of competition and rivalry. Many people ask us how on earth we can make a photograph together. Only one person can actually press the button? The crucial thing however, is not the split-second of opening the shutter. What matters is the process of discussing

*"...photography
that communicates
and confronts..."*

the atmosphere that you want to capture, the location, the surroundings, the time of day, the conditions." Once that has been arranged, they both start the physical aspect of their work and create the founding conditions together according to their shared view of what the result should be, and subsequently one of them presses the button.

Shaping Reality

The two photographers differ strongly character-wise, but find each other in their reasoning and

Masqueration, Blom & Koch.

Exhibiting

Last November saw the opening of their Frames of Mind exhibition at Havezate de Haere in the Netherlands. For this exhibition Ellis and Veerle aimed to confront the sadness, confusion, stillness, love and power that they experienced in their lives. Subsequently, they shaped these experiences into impressively large or probingly small photographic prints. Apart from collective work, signed simply Blom & Koch, the two photographers also exhibited individual work within the context of this same theme. All photographs, both individual and collective work, are set out to force viewers to come to terms with their own feelings, memories and frames of mind.



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Rose's Power, Ellis Blom: "Beauty and Power. No explanation needed."



Visions, Veerle Koch.

Veerle Koch

Veerle attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp. She has worked in the graphics industry and as a ceramist. In recent years she started to concentrate more and more on photographic work, for which her graphic background and feel for detail and colours have proven to be essential assets. Where others walk by, she stands still and captures memories in photographs.

Ellis Blom

For years she worked as a counsellor in Dutch prisons. She is now a professional photographer who specialises in documentary pictures and portraits. After attending the Photography Academy in Apeldoorn, Netherlands, Ellis set her own course: "I am not that much involved with traditional photography or studio-work. My priority is not the technique, but photography that communicates, confronts and arouses emotion". In close cooperation with the subject of her portraits she constantly tries to "unearth hidden, essential beauty".



Lost Expectations, Ellis Blom.

goals. Veerle is a perfectionist and has a great deal of self-criticism. For that reason, she often questions herself and her results. Ellis on the other hand, views her pictures more confidently and wants to share her enthusiasm with others. They stimulate each other because they are both intrigued about the people they meet and the way those individuals shape their lives. What fascinates them in particular are the objects that people let into their lives. On the whole, their passion for photography, the capturing of moments, atmospheres and details, is equally essential to both: "Life slips through one's fingers as sand. A photographer is able to make time come to a halt, so that evanescence changes into permanence. That is a very special feeling. It in fact is not just a case of capturing reality. Photography also enables us to shape reality and make things more beautiful by adding or leaving out."

Life-Altering

Both photographers have had working experiences in many different fields before they decided that the time had come to dedicate themselves exclusively to photography. Ellis explains that every artist knows how hard it is to make such a decision. To give up one's career, to be happy to have to do without financial security, to focus exclusively on art; such choices cannot

be made carelessly. She made a well-reasoned choice to change her career and therefore a significant part of her life: "During all my years as a social worker I felt that I was very close to people, but at the same time I could never be sure about the result of all my efforts. Now, at the end of a day, I know what I have actually created. To hold a print in your hand is to hold something tangible. It is a feeling of euphoria and a sense of uniqueness. I can enjoy that it is what I made, which provides a moment that nobody can ever take away from me."

Veerle sets out equally clear consequences for her daily life: "I think in images. It seems as if I get more and more ideas as time goes on. For instance, I often wake up at night and see the pictures that I have to make – no matter what. Living with pictures in your head isn't always easy, since it means that you have to climb the tortuous path that will lead to the precise picture that you saw with your mind's eye."

Insight

Ellis and Veerle feel that growing older is an advantage for a photographer. They strongly believe that insight into human nature and life experience make one see differently, feel differently and meet others differently than a twenty-year old does. This way, the youthful enthusiasm and energy of young photographers is

compensated for by an acute sense of what is important in life. They add that time plays its part, perhaps because one feels that time is running out. Both photographers are aware of the fact that time proceeds at a relentless pace and that it is up to them to make the best use of the time allotted to them. This realisation is a key factor in the way they work, because it forces them to separate the grain from the husks and they experience that as a godsend.

