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Natura denaturata

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The exhibition *Genk door schildersogen* (Genk through the eyes of painters) (1850-1950) offers the occasion for Genk to once again be viewed through artists' eyes. This dual view has, above all, become a divided view. The contrast between the two art forms could not be greater. Behind it all is a deeper rift. There is more going on in these contrasting views than merely a recording of the transformed environment of Genk. The transition from heath land to the built environment, as can be identified in the images, is only the superficial manifestation of a more fundamental process. At a deeper level there occurs a break in thinking about the world. In both cases a view of the *Umwelt* (the *physis*) is certainly cast, but this view is the product of an underlying idea about what the world *is* (a *meta-physics*).

The contrast between the two periods, 1850-1950 and 2010, reveals a decisive break in Western thought. Moreover, whoever takes a good look, can already read the first signs of this break in landscape painting between 1850 and 1950, and expose its inevitability. I am therefore not much interested in *Genk* through the eyes of painters. That is just the local manifestation of a more comprehensive event. For me, the true scope of this exhibition is *The World* through the eyes of painters (1850-1950). The paintings are more than pictorial representations to entertain and satisfy the curiosity. The aesthetic pleasure is inexorably linked to the tragedy and the aspirations of an era. These paintings certainly say something about the nature of the surroundings in Genk between 1850 and 1950. They allow us to make a retrospective tour, to visit the past. But they are especially interesting for a different reason. They say something about people's worldview. *How* the world is presented, is determined by the World as a (unconscious) philosophical position. How did people understand the World between 1850 and 1950? How do they understand the World today? In the period between 1850 and 1950 a spiritual landslide occurs that involves more than the earth getting ploughed up by the mining industry. There is a crack in the steadfast relationship: God-man-world. God's retreat begins. The centuries-old balance that relies on God, finally expires. The significance of nature can no longer be the same. This we glean from the artworks of 2010.

In order to clarify the work of these two young artists, Anne Lass and Mårten Lange, in their dialectic with landscape painting, I was obliged to invent the term *natura denaturata* (don't blame me in particular). It seems to me that the conscious fracture can be succinctly summarised as the shift from *natura naturata* to *natura denaturata*.

Natura naturata is an ancient concept that certainly since the 13th century has been an integral part of the conceptual baggage of the West. The concepts *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, especially their unflinching link, form the subject of a long philosophical and theological tradition. [1] They plunge for the first time into the *Liber introductorius* by Michael Scotus (circa 1230). Scotus translates Averroes' commentary on Aristotle into Latin. In so doing, he comes across the passage in Book II of Aristotle's *Physica*, in which the close relationship between 'nature with regard to its origins' (*physis è legomenè oos genesis*) and 'nature as it appears' (*physis*) is discussed. [2] For Scotus, the source that lies at the origin of nature is, of course, God. As a translation for *phyetai*, to originate, he thinks-up a word that does not exist in Latin: *naturare*. Thus he avoids the word creation and can place more emphasis on the inherent productivity of God. The world is not a creation out of nothing; it flows naturally and necessarily from the essence of God. By using the word *naturare*, Scotus strengthens the relationship between divine nature and the natural world. The present and the past participle are then *naturans* and *naturatus*, respectively, 'productive' and 'produced'. Nature is God as the 'naturing' principle, and reality as the 'natured' expression thereof. Nature has two aspects: God as active principle (*naturans*) and a necessary expression of God in all its forms (*naturata*).

In philosophy, the concepts *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* are often associated with Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677), who indeed grants a prominent place to this in his *Ethica*, Part I (*De Deo*, about God) commentary on Proposition 29. [3] The *natura naturans* is here equated with the eternal and infinite essence of God (*aeternam et infinitam essentiam ... hoc est Deus*). The *natura naturans* describes all forms (*modi*) of nature that follow from God. Nature as *natura naturans* is viewed as "things that exist in God and without God are unbearable and inconceivable". [4] It is impossible to think of nature without God. In other words, it is impossible to represent nature without thinking about God. That is the most important thing about the bond between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*.

Paintings that depict nature refer to God. For centuries there has been no doubt as to this pact. The *natura naturata* of landscape painting is a sign of the *natura naturans* that is God. Any imitation of nature is, indirectly and implicitly, a representation of God. The *ordo rerum*, or the

beauty of nature, as suggested in the art of painting, is an *ordo ad Deum*, a beauty that cannot be other than posited by God.

Even circa the middle of the 19th century, this constant relationship is still not in doubt. This we read unequivocally in Carl Gustav Carus (1789-1869). To accentuate the active force of nature even more explicitly, he replaces *Landschaftsbild* (landscape image) with *Erdlebenbild* (terrestrial image). In his *Zwölf Briefe über das Erdleben* (Twelve letters on terrestrial life)(1841) he writes: "Thus even the quietest and simplest fragment of *Erdleben* (terrestrial life) is a dignified and beautiful object of art, while its real significance, at least, is embedded in its hidden divine Idea." [5]

In the exhibition catalogue *Genk door schildersogen (1850-1950)* is a duly identical statement by Hilarion Thans in his pamphlet *Heide* (Heath) (c. 1935): "Heath! The world as God created it." [6] This quote deals specifically with the Genk landscape and therefore touches directly on the paintings in the exhibition. A little further along, in his praise of the heath, it reads: "God is tangibly present". These statements are more than poetic outpourings. They have a deep philosophical-theological significance: it is the *natura naturans* that gives sense to the *natura naturata*. Deep, metaphysical bonds interweave God and nature. However, it is also necessary to read the continuation of the text, because there can be found what the author actually has to say about the heath: "The heath dies through the works of humans. IT IS ALREADY DEAD (...) This is its eulogy".[7]

In essence, Thans's text is a lamentation for an irreparable loss. The scope of its declaration extends very far. Unspoken, it is a clocking of the death of God. *He* is already dead.

Here we arrive at the heart of the matter. The words of Carus and Thans, respectively, override about 100 years of *Genk door schildersogen*. They roughly correspond with the beginning and end dates. What actually happens during this period is not so much a change in painting style, which could be summed up as the evolution from academicism to realism onto impressionism and post-impressionism. That is what occurs on the surface. Situated beneath is a much more drastic reversal in the *Weltanschauung* (world view).

The art mandate was traditionally *naturam imitare*, imitate nature or represent it mimicking. It was, so to speak, a divine mandate, considering that the display of harmony in nature contained an underlying recognition and a latent tribute to God. Imitating *natura naturata* means confessing faith in the *natura naturans*. It is this trust that wavers in the period between 1850 and 1950 and it is this breach of trust that we attribute to the slow but certain, precarious evolution in the painting style of landscapes. There is much more going on than just a revolution at a pictorial level. *Naturam imitare* is indeed a confrontation between world and imitation, reality and image, always partaking of a higher order, another reality or 'unreality', the Idea of God. The orderly nature (*natura naturata*) therefore presupposes an organising force (*natura naturans*). *Naturam imitare* has a much deeper meaning than 'imitate'. The rendering of nature calls on a higher order to produce it (*naturare*). The image of nature in painting is thus a sign of the existence and presence of God. As long as there is *natura naturata*, the shape of nature as a definitive given, i.e. produced by a divine intelligence, the task of the painter is to read, repeat, recreate and so imitate divinity. The theories that are unfortunately still occasionally proclaimed today, as if painting at a certain point in its history becomes 'modern' and finally even abstract as a result of its competition with photography, are also totally unfounded. Painting was never intended to produce a representation as such. How could it then allegedly flee a powerful competitor at that level? It couldn't abandon a terrain it never occupied.

Baumgarten is formal in his *Aesthetica* (1750-1758). There is only one law for art creation: *naturam imitare*, imitate nature. More radically, in *Les Beaux-Arts réduits à un même principe* (The Fine Arts reduced to a single principle) (1773), Charles Batteux states: there is only one single, comprehensive law that the artist has to obey and that is the imitation of nature.

Cezanne in 1904 still calls nature "the spectacle of God, the Eternal and Almighty Father". [8] Yet this is only a metaphor for him, a 'so-to-speak' for those who adhere to the word 'God'. *Naturam imitare* truly remains the rule in Impressionism and post-Impressionism, but when the divine body withdraws, the artist himself is obliged to become *naturans*. He no longer conforms to the divine source, but is forced to rely on his own power; in other words, to listen to his own whim, his autonomous imaging capabilities, to secure himself space for freedom. He is forced into freedom. The Impressionist painters do not let loose of reality. They still practice *naturam imitare*. However, when we look closely at the small structure within their paintings, their way of painting, we see that the medium of the image is freed from its service of being true to nature. Colour and brushwork are no longer so willing; they are becoming less submissive to the representation. They manifest their independence, their obstinacy. Through such autonomy, the components of the painting part ways, they take leave of their connection with reality. That forces them to seek new

family ties, mutual and unexpected relationships, a yet-to-be-created harmony that is actually absent when it's abandoned by the *natura naturans*. This harmony is therefore more volatile, more vulnerable, more temporary than the harmony in traditional painting. The greater uncertainty, from which we perceive traces in the history of modern painting, attests to the modern man, whose world order no longer rests in the eternal, unchanging stability of the divine.

It is precisely in those 100 years that comprise *Genk door schildersogen (1850-1950)* that God is taken into account. His fate is determined. It is likewise sealed in the art of painting. For example, from Francois Halkett's *In de dennen* (In the pine trees) (1884) to Ludovic Janssen's *Moeras* (Marsh) (1925), much ground has been covered in a short space of time. If a certain nostalgia *exudes* from 'impressionist' landscapes, more-so than from the other paintings in *Genk door schildersogen*, this is not because of the nostalgia for a pristine heath land that's going to be irretrievably lost. The nostalgia comes from the tragic awareness that this is a final demonstration of nature as *Ordo ad Deum*, the *natura naturata* as an expression of the *natura naturans*. The irreversible disappearance of an ancient, reliable bond is recorded in these paintings. Their beauty is constituted by the sadness of this loss. It is an ultimate moment of equilibrium in the full knowledge that it will no longer be maintained. Therefore, the impressionistic landscapes are more those of a new era, not because they revolutionise the painting technique, but because they carry the tragic awareness of their time. It is their wistfulness that makes them more credible as paintings.

What remains of this beautiful, spiritual edifice when God disappears from the God-man-world relationship? The whole structure collapses. *Naturam imitare* makes no sense anymore, because without *natura naturans*, *natura naturata* loses its meaning.

The latest generation of landscape painters in succession has already been overtaken by time and is obsolete. At the very moment they paint, they're already completely past tense. *Naturam imitare* has lost its *raison d'être*.

Here I am obliged to make a small excursus. The datedness of art creation, paradoxically enough, touches only on the creation and not on the reception. We are very capable of feeling and appreciating the music of Bach or the paintings of Velasquez. But that experience would shrivel in relation to someone who today would paint like Velasquez. The tragic example of Antoine Wiertz (1806-1865), who in the 19th century wanted to recreate the paintings of Rubens, provides proof. What remains is merely a curiosity: Wiertz as the most absurd figure of his century. We can still be taken-in by a Ruysdael or Emile Claus landscape, but it would be devoid of all meaning for the same type of landscape painting to continue today. It is basically impossible, in the sense of absurd, to still paint Genk's heath landscapes in the changed world view of the present day.

Artist Geert Goiris was commissioned to act as curator for a contemporary segment, which would form a counterpart to traditional landscape painting. The plan was to ask contemporary artists to take an artistic look at Genk and its surroundings. How do artists see Genk today?

Two remarkable findings can immediately be made. The curator did not invite painters, but two young photographers: Anne Lass (Germany, b.1978) and Mårten Long (Sweden, b.1984). These photographers showed no interest in the Limburg heath to which the painters of a century earlier were so attracted. Attraction on the one hand (1850-1950), disinterest on the other (2010). There is an historic break. The depth of this demarcation line is revelatory. It is not so much about a natural environment that has nearly disappeared. There is a much deeper historical and spiritual process at the root of this chasm.

However, there are many original areas of heath in Genk and its surroundings, or at least some reserves where the landscape is artificially preserved: De Maten, Schemmersberg, Melberg ... And don't forget the Midden-Limburg Park. In practice it would indeed have been possible to take pictures here, but Anne Lass and Mårten Lange paid no heed to this. They turned their back on their surroundings, so-to-speak, just like the former landscape painters ostensibly turned their backs on the first signs of industrialisation. That's an interesting reversal in the attitude of artists.

That nature -- Genk as nature zone -- was largely repressed by an artificially constructed environment, is a sober conclusion, though Genk is also touting the oxymoron 'green city'. Whoever sees the landscapes in these paintings or reads the descriptions by Néel Doff, will be searching in vain for the past in present day Genk. However, what forms a much more deep-seated given at the basis of the division between both periods of art, is that the idea of nature, which still forms the foundation of the paintings by Van Dooren, Maclot, and company, is expunged from the worldview. The concept of *natura naturata* has been irrevocably removed. Although there are still heath landscapes that have been preserved, it would be outdated to imitate them, because in the changed worldview it is devoid of all sense. The world will never be the same, not because the landscape has changed, but because our idea of the world has undergone a total reversal.

These young artists are well aware of the *clash of ideas*. That's clear right down to the topics they choose and how they wish to describe them. *Natura naturata* is a lapsed idea. Their interest is not 'the world as God created it', but a world that God deserted and that was transferred to the people. No *ordo ad Deum*, but a 'disordered' nature, *natura denaturata*, which was abandoned to human intervention. People are not gods. Their images prove that.

Anne Lass and Mårten Lange address the *natura denaturata*. Without God, the traditional idea of nature inevitably lapses into art. *Naturam imitare* no longer makes sense in this context. This photography thus confronts us with an intriguing paradox: the 'imitative' medium of choice that often finds it so difficult to extract itself from its documenting tendency, is the instrument that serves to refute the principle of *naturam imitare* and definitively make a relic of it.

The one exhibition sheds light on the other and vice versa.

The rejection of the *ordo ad Deum* and related *natura naturata* in the photos of the young artists clarifies the transformations that landscape painting undergoes from the first to the second and onto the third generation in *Genk door schildersogen*. The demise of landscape painting is not so much a result of physical factors like construction and industrialisation, but is primarily the product of an inner necessity, namely, a radical break in human consciousness. There is much more going on than simply an evolution in painting technique from academicism to impressionism.

But, conversely, the landscape exhibition contributes to a better understanding of contemporary works of art. The latter are a culmination of a dormant process taking place between 1850 and 1950. They are the inescapable conclusion of the gradual demise of the *idea of natura naturata*, which is very different than the expropriation of the landscape under the impulse of the industrialisation process.

The concept *natura denaturata* aims to summarise this complex history in one word by referring to *naturata*. *De-naturata* simply means that nature can no longer be considered *naturata*. The world has become independent; it has separated from its aspect of *naturata* as a participle of *naturare*. *Naturata* obtained its meaning only through its relationship with *naturans*, the divine authority that's widely found and recognised in nature. *De-naturata* is another way to say 'un-divine', without acknowledging the existence of God, a-theistic. It is the conclusion of a history that has been accomplished in the West in several hundreds of years and to which the years 1850-1950 in painting precisely testify. The work of these young photographers helps us to read that process in the landscape paintings.

We rely on the autonomous world. The photos of Anne Lass and Mårten Lange reflect a very distinct fragment of reality, but while doing so they reflect a *Weltanschauung* (world view). Behind their images of the world is a hidden World.

Photography doesn't have the intentionality that is inevitably inherent in painting, or at least it can do almost nothing else but distance itself from it. Therefore it is an appropriate medium in the presence of the *natura denaturata* -- this justifies Geert Goiris's decision of opting for photographers. Photography contains the directness, the causal relationship from reproduction to displayed content. The picture can say: this is it, this is reality, at this moment and in this place. It can ideally be no other way. That was Roger Scruton's analysis in his philosophy of photography. [9] The ideal subject of landscape painting (God, or the *natura naturans*) is unreal, uncertain in its existence. Scruton notes that photography has a *causal* relationship to its subject, while painting is essentially characterised by an *intentional* relationship. Its loss is its gift, but also its handicap. Photography is focused on private space and time; moreover, it almost never loses this bond. How can it allow reality to be more at the same time, to, despite everything, still extract poetry from it, transforming it into 'something else' that entitles it to ennoble itself to art? Why is photography such a terribly difficult medium (as opposed to the average opinion that it's easy!)? As an artist you run a great risk by opting for it.

So *natura denaturata* can also just be another word for 'culture' as opposed to 'nature': where nature should give way to people. We mainly know nature today by its vulnerability, no longer by its divinity, i.e. that which makes it seem human. These photos have an eye for a world of people, not people themselves, but for the world they have created and the terrain they have stolen from nature.

This leads to a surprising finding. Actually, the landscapes in *Genk door schildersogen* could be painted anywhere, while the photos of Anne Lass and Mårten Lange can only be made there, *in that specific place*. They are bound to the particular, while the paintings *in essence* are not. The very reverse *seems* to be the case. It would therefore be a missed opportunity to only approach the landscape paintings as 'touristic', based on curiosity as to how the heath was at the time, a bus journey to the past, as it were. Both photographers protect us from this misconception. They do not dramatise the situation like Hilarion Thans or Néel Doff did. The world offers more than enough

stories to be surprised by. You should no longer view it through divine spectacles. While they irrevocably record the end of *natura naturata*, they shed a different light on the world. That is clear. For the generation of artists to which Anne Lass and Mårten Lange belong, this occurrence is no longer tragic.

Natura denaturata means: nature is degraded, it has lost its glory, its aura of divinity that as *natura naturata* it contained. How can one still create artwork ('with eternal value') when it is no longer possible to represent the world *sub specie aeternitatis*? How to maintain a view on the increasing banality of a manmade world? How to still create poetry by way of photographing? Poetry, as active alienation from the world, must be sought elsewhere. It must necessarily be drawn from the 'few', the residual trace, the *natura denaturata*. Schelling could still describe beauty as "the infinite represented as finite". Today, culture is a border, no longer a port to infinity. We are reliant on a beauty that accepts the finite and represents it as finite, but above all respects its finitude.

The definition that the poet Bernlef gives of poetry can get us started. [11] Bernlef sees poetry as information, but information of a different order than the encyclopedic, scientific or journalistic. Information possesses, in essence, a characteristic that makes the unknown known. Poetic information, however, he defines as "translating the known into the unknown". We can say that the photographs of Anne Lass and Mårten Lange 'denature' the familiar, and in this sense the 'natural' image of our everyday environment; that is, they pull it out of its naturalness and casualness. They cause a break in the common perception of the world. This mutation makes them, so-to-speak, unfit for consumption. The shock of the poetic is not consumable.

Increasingly it is about the possibility of creating distance in regard to ordinary life. The landscape paintings do that by occupying a position in front of the world *sub specie aeternitatis*, with the view or the glance of eternity. The photos of Anne Lass and Mårten Lange strive for detachment, but they do it *sub specie momenti*, the spectacle is that of the instantaneous. They isolate a moment, highlight its context and upheave the trusted.

The landscape paintings are more than a viewing angle. They introduce a cosmic eye. From their specific position, they contemplate the cosmos; that is to say, penetrate the comprehensive, invisible *natura naturans*. If it is no longer possible to see the world as a cosmos, a whole, one cannot but endorse the particular.

The images of Anne Lass and Mårten Lange integrally focus on what is peculiar, what stands alone. Each of the images strives to remain separate and independent and to avoid the big picture. Each of them is a schism. They are torn from a macrocosm whose credibility is lost. This sustained, unruly microscopy, however, always reveals a world that is full of poetry. Poetry is brought close to us. In fact it is everywhere, but our sensitivity and our imaginations are not trained to notice it. In the paintings, the selected fragment has the meaning of a *pars pro toto*: the part summons the All. The photos are a *pars pro pars*: each part speaks for itself. One by one the photos tell something about a world that has become infinitely divisible. This key is already evident in the framing. The field of vision is limited, robbed of a horizon. In the photos of Anne Lass, we sometimes look straight at a wall. Or if she sometimes takes a photo of nature, she looks no further than the first plane that's closed off by a hill and a hedge. Mårten Lange notably photographs the ground, like a hiker who focuses his attention on what is happening at his feet. Free of a horizon, these pictures home-in on immanence, in contrast to the paintings, which due to their horizon line capture a transcending or vertical standpoint.

In using the photographic medium, which ideally *establishes, fixes*, the big challenge for them exists in showing reality as it *escapes* us. But how is it possible to achieve this alienation? How can a world so well known emerge as unknown and therefore become 'the unknown'? The photographs extract two different directions simultaneously. They maintain recognition and they undermine it. They show the familiar world and demonstrate how little we are familiar with it. Nothing is ordinary in the ordinary. The 'documentation' of reality becomes a means to that reality in order to look behind-the-scenes. The photos make small cracks in the curtain of fog, doing their best to conceal that, behind the screen of rationality, the theatre of preposterousness takes the upper hand. They unveil the hypocrisy.

For example, both ugliness and beauty -- just to mention two extremes -- but also irony and innocence, can distort the banality of the world and jeopardise security. They behave as intruders in the demarcated territory of the business-like. The unexpected installs itself in a world we believed had no secrets for us.

The photographs bring together the impossible: both the desire for objective observation and the subversion of it. Their strength lies in maintaining this contradiction. The images are clear *and* confusing. It is through the simultaneous motion of clarification and confusion that they become exciting. We see the world we have always been accustomed to seeing and yet are brought to

realise that we have still never seen the world. Dissonances bring flaws in the peerless mirror that we usually hold.

Complainingly, Hilarion Thans speaks of a deep bitterness over the loss of the world of silence and endlessness that the heath once was. "Her silence? Aeroplanes overhead, lorries passing through, cars driving along. (...) Her boundless spaces? (...) Her endlessness cadastre-registered and grid-mapped, parceled-out and gardened-off. Black-topped chimneys peep over the shoulders of the hills. Iron pylons and concrete poles span their cables and wires above the tree tops, running in straight lines over hill and dale". [12]

Anne Lass and Mårten Lange turn this nostalgia on its head. The *natura denaturata* forms for them an opportunity. The poetic possibilities all these damages offer, they gratefully use in their images. Grids, poles, cables, housing estates, earthworks, structures, machinery, construction of all types, waste ... provide the substance for their world of the incongruous, the unconventional, the playful. Although this is not the exalted world of the *natura naturata*, the 'microscopy' stages *another* world. The photos, in their way, each fulfill the brief of 'poetic information': a modest look at *the Other* subject. They uncover the other side of the matter and reveal the orderliness. The incomprehensible and elusive existence come to the surface.

Their respective poetic language is different. They each have their own vocabulary, in which occasionally similar elements arise -- but that applies to all poets. Their syntax, especially, is unique, their way of arranging the image. Mårten Lange's focus has a limited range, often towards the ground, preferring the magic of the night, typically isolating a single element, fitting it precisely within the grid of the image, creating an almost classical stateliness and dignity. The confusion tends to clarity. Anne Lass's view is broader and full of light, sometimes more panoramic, at least more frontal, more complex, fuller, more plural, chaotic. Clarity tends to confusion. That is their own way to record all the strangeness in the world, but their basic tendency is consistent. They are investigators of the unusual, unwanted, illogical, contradictory. Where is wonder still to be found in a world that through culture has become demarcated and occupied? Proud, human interventions are transformed into signs of helplessness through their photographic vision, without their having to stage anything. Poetry is there for the taking. Not necessarily in higher spheres.

Mårten Lange even seems to say, as a manner of speaking: you can gather it up off the ground. The hiker looks at what he finds at his feet. The great simplicity of his images is striking. The attention literally goes to the particular. A bikerack that separates itself from its function and emerges as an abstract sculpture, an old-fashioned typewriter that was left behind, a stray cardboard box, a stepladder against a blank wall, metal panelling in an impossible place, a winding cable that forms a masterful ornament, all sorts of strange piles... Poetry is like weeds that take root in the most unexpected and inadequate places. It waits until someone finds it -- or ignores it. The camera works like a radar that is poetry-sensitive and detects traces of the unknown, something that does not belong in a world that pretends to be perfectly arranged but threatens to become boring and devoid of poetry.

Anne Lass moves at the intersection between the natural and urban environment, where people overtake nature. The nature-culture encounter is not always prudent. This intersection is sometimes strange, sometimes wonderful, sometimes hilarious, sometimes absurd, sometimes poignant. Fences that fence-in nothing, a wall that is as capricious as a place overgrown with weeds, nature that is occasionally more straightforward than the culture that perverts everything (bearing witness to 'the timber so crooked, from which man is made'), a broken-up bridge that finds itself alongside the road, irrational and helpless, constructions that seem to have escaped all structural planning... The landscape is an open-air museum in which the beauty of the bizarre or the bizarre of the beauty comes into its own.

The world that has ended-up in human hands, the 'gridded world' of Hilarion Thans, the *natura denaturata*, bends to rational and utilitarian principles. Through the misunderstanding of the unknowableness and unpredictability of nature, it is released from its otherness. It is placed under guardianship. The volatile becomes a derivative of the steadfast -- *natura derivata*.

Contrarily, the photographic gaze brought by Anne Lass and by Mårten Lange has the ability to return the *natura denaturata* to an original game-character. The contrast between utility and game is settled in favour of the latter. Essentially both nature and art are situated there. On the value-scale of human activity there has always been a profound relationship between art and game. Art is an expression of the 'playing human'. But the game is also a natural phenomenon that has determined the running of the world from the very beginning; the formation of matter as well as the organisation of matter into living structures -- and therefore also ourself. [13]

It can be said that on a detour through photography the *natura denaturata* is restored in its capacity as a game and along the way realises a form of *renaturata*. Culture that again becomes nature. Civilization that returns to its roots. *Natura denaturata, cultura renaturata*.

1. See below H.SIEBECK, 'Über die Entstehung der Termini *natura naturans* und *natura naturata*', in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 3, 3, 1890, pp.370-378; Olga WEIJERS, 'Contribution à l'histoire des termes "natura naturans" et "natura naturata" jusqu'à Spinoza', in *Vivarium: An International Journal for the Philosophy and Intellectual Life of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, 16, 1978, pp.70-80.
2. In Book II, 1 (193b, 12-17) from *Physica* by Aristotle. I use the classic publication with French translation: ARISTOTLE, *Physique (I-IV)*, (translated by Henri CARTERON), Paris, 'Les Belles Lettres', 1926. The stated passage can be found on p.26.
3. I use the Latin version with the Dutch translation: Benedictus DE SPINOZA, *Ethica*, (translated by Henri KNOP), Amsterdam, Bert Bakker, 2004. This passage can be found on p.104-105. On the use of the concepts *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* by Spinoza, see: Piet STEENBAKKERS, 'Een vijandige overname: Spinoza over *natura naturans* en *natura naturata*', in Gunther COPPENS (editor), *Spinoza en de scholastiek*, Leuven – Leusden, Acco, 2003, pp.35-52.
4. '(...) *considerantur, ut res, quae in Deo sunt, et quae sine Deo nec esse, nec concipui possunt*'. Benedictus DE SPINOZA, *Op. cit.*, p.104.
5. '(...) *so ist doch jede, auch die stillste und einfachtste Seite des Erdlebens, wenn nur ihr eigentlicher Sinn, die in ihr verborgene göttliche Idee richtig erfasst ist, ein würdiger und schönster Gegenstand der Kunst.*' Recorded in Carl Gustav CARUS, *Natur und Seele*, Jena, Eugen Diederichs, 1939, p.40.
6. Kristof REULENS, 'Genck in de negentiende eeuw: een schets', in Jos GEERAERTS e.a. (ed.), *Genk door schildersogen: Landschapsschilders in de Limburgse Kempen 1850-1950*, Leuven, Davidsfonds, 2010, p.27.
7. Hilarion THANS, *Heide*, Mechelen, Sint-Franciscus printers, s.d. Quotes respectively, pp.5, 6, 23 and 24. A similar sentiment is expressed by Néel Doff, when she writes about Genk: '*Un avion... Oui, tu es beau, mais je te voudrais ailleurs qu'au-dessus de cette paix qui n'a que faire de ton bruit d'usine*'. Néel DOFF, *Quitter tout cela!*, Paris – Nemours, 'Entre nous', 1937, p.11.
8. '(...) *de la nature ou, si vous aimez mieux, du spectacle que le Pater Omnipotens Aeterne Deus étale devant nos yeux.*' In a letter to Emile Bernard from 1904. Recorded in John REWALD (ed.), *Paul Cézanne: Correspondance*, Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1978, p.300.
9. Roger SCRUTON, 'Photography and Representation', in *Critical Inquiry*, 7,3, 1981, pp.577-603.
10. ID., p.588.
11. J. BERNLEF, *Wie a zegt*, Amsterdam, Querido, 1970, p.9.
12. Hilarion THANS, *Op. cit.*, p.23.
13. Manfred EIGEN & Ruthild WINKLER, *Das Spiel: Naturgesetze steuern den Zufall*, München, R.Piper & Co, 1975, p.11.