

# PRESS RELEASE

Roosendaal, December 12th 2015

*Marjan Laaper, Sébastien van Malleghem*  
**SILENT ISLAND**



Videostill: "Landscape"(2014/2015) Marjan Laaper

Navigating between stillness and alienation

**In the landscape of Iceland, extremes meet. The emptiness is crushing, geysers and waterfalls are overwhelming, the volcanic mountains are inhospitable, snow and ice enhance the isolation of the inhabitants and the ubiquitous silence is breath-taking. In the extreme variation of sensations lies the magical attraction of the island, which inspires artists and forces each visitor from outside the island to push the reset button. Both Marjan Laaper and Sébastien van Malleghem stayed in Iceland in 2014. In Albus Lux Contemporary they report on their experiences. Marjan Laaper does this with three video projections she made during an artist in residence period, while Sébastien van Malleghem shows photos of the Icelandic landscapes and people, made during a road trip that took him to inhabited as well as desolate areas.**

Both Marjan Laaper and Sébastien van Mallegem zoom in on the vastness and emptiness of Iceland, where people feel dwarfed by such overwhelming natural surroundings. The two artists' explorations of the landscape yielded different artistic results. In the summer of 2014 Marjan Laaper stayed in the former fishing village of Djúpivogur for two months, drawing inspiration from the desolate landscapes and overwhelming scenery. Her video works focus on animals. Her observations and registrations yielded images in which the phenomenon of 'frozen time' and the experience of infinity are intensified. In the edited video images, the experience of the moment is stretched by slow motion and repetition effects. The contrast between transience and infinity enhances the experience of stillness while at the same time evoking an unusual form of alienation and tension. Brief moments are preserved as if they want to counter or negate the passing of time and the fleetingness of things. The minimal movements of the animals 'acting' in the videos create an intriguing vacuum that encourages contemplation. Actions and interactions have been reduced to a minimum, and still, the expectation that something is about to happen persists.

In Marjan Laaper's video works animals play an important role. Laaper creates the impression that the animals have human traits. Very subtly (almost imperceptibly) she projects human feelings and experiences on the animals she films. This anthropomorphism enhances the sense of recognition. The series of images stimulate the empathy that viewers need to be able to identify with a condition or situation and be absorbed by it completely. The video projection 'Landscape' zooms in on a lying horse whose breathing is almost physically perceptible. The horse, symbol of strength and vitality, seems vulnerable here. Its silhouette matches the outlines of the landscape surrounding it. The video 'Waterfall' shows a golden plover near a waterfall. The smallness and vulnerability of the self-willed bird is subtly contrasted with the impressive natural surroundings. In the video 'Then we met', a small black-tailed godwit and foal stand opposite each other. Laaper focuses on the aspects of encounter and communication here. In the three video projections, which look like moving photographs, stillness is sublimated. While the animals have been placed monumentally into the picture plane, they offer spectators ample room for a personal experience of the situation they find themselves in and the context within which they move.



### Monstrous alliance

Like Marjan Laaper, Sébastien van Malleghem navigates between stillness and alienation. During the road trips he made with buddy Gunnar in the winter and spring of 2014, he recorded his impressions, encounters and experiences in black-and-white photos, some of which he placed on his blog, accompanied by brief comments. On the dashboard of Gunnar's jeep was a skull that was given the name Einar. During the explorations of desolate areas Van Malleghem photographed not only impressive landscapes, but also the people who are tied to it in an intriguing way.

'I got the feeling that we were driving on the planet Mars', Van Malleghem observes. The volcanic landscapes, folded earth layers, desolate roads, leaden grey skies and at times apocalyptic cloudscapes evoke an intense feeling of emptiness and smallness. 'There is so much to be photographed, while so little is happening', Van Malleghem states. This paradoxical sensation is especially true for the desolate landscapes. To the daily lives of the inhabitants, different rules and laws apply. Living often comes down to survival, especially in winter periods when there are only four hours of daylight and the frozen roads are impassable. The inhabitants seem to have formed a mysterious monstrous alliance with their inhospitable surroundings. The elderly bear the marks of a harsh life, while the young seek entertainment to escape the cold regime of their surroundings. Van Malleghem records the basic life in austere black-and-

white photos, using unusual light effects and contrasts that enhance the mystery and romanticism as well as the feelings of loneliness, melancholy and longing. In a penetrating way, he poses the question how people live and survive in the midst of inescapable natural violence. They have no other choice but to surrender and resign to it. They get the most out of the options available, as do Sébastien Malleghem and Marjan Laaper in their artistic translation of their experiences, observations and sensations in photos and video projections.

Exhibition: Marjan Laaper (video projections) and Sébastien van Malleghem (photography), Albus Lux Contemporary, Roosendaal  
12 December 2015 – 16 January 2016.

Information: [www.albuslux.nl](http://www.albuslux.nl)

## Wim van der Beek

*Writer/art critic*

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Information and images are available on request. Attached information and publicity can be used for publication.

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