

MELANIE

NON-HUMAN PERSONS

BONAJJO

MISHKA HENNER
(B.1976)

An artist working with photography who focuses on appropriation and surveillance issues. His works have been exhibited internationally in numerous group shows, and are held in the collections of the Tate Gallery and the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Centre Pompidou in Paris amongst others. Mishka is a member of the ABC Artists' Books Cooperative. He lives and works in Manchester, UK.

COLIN PANTALL
(XXXX)

A writer, lecturer and photographer based in Bath, England. His photographic work focusses on his immediate domestic environment. He writes for a range of publications including Photo-Eye, The British Journal of Photography, and his blog, Colin Pantall's Blog. He is also on the editorial and artistic committees of the Photobook Bristol and Gazebook Sicily Festivals. Pantall currently works as a Senior Lecturer on the Documentary Photography Course at the University of South Wales in Cardiff.

November 2015 is something of a milestone in the history of *National Geographic Indonesia*. Not because of some amazing scoop, record sales, or a scandal of some kind. The reason was that in the brief history of *National Geographic Indonesia* (founded in 2005) the magazine had never appeared without a photo or illustration on the cover. In big, elegant letters it stated: *Maaf. Tak ada gambar indah untuk perubahan iklim. Mampukah kita bertahan.* In translation: Sorry. There are no beautiful images of climate change. Can we survive? The local editors had decided to produce this issue on the theme of climate change without a cover photo. Simply because, in their view it was impossible to portray climate change with a beautiful photo.

When it comes to breaking *National Geographic* traditions, visual artist Melanie Bonajo pipped *National Geographic Indonesia* to the post. The first issue of the *MB_Matrix Botanica* series, launched by Melanie Bonajo in September 2015, has the familiar yellow design of a *National Geographic* magazine. Like *National Geographic Indonesia*, Bonajo did not go for a single aesthetically pleasing image in the traditional *National Geographic* manner. Instead, her cover shows a gorilla playing a stringed instrument, a crocodile snatching a burger from a disposable plate and a baby elephant watching a sea lion in an aquarium. While the photos are clearly taken by different photographers and have a certain snapshot quality, *National Geographic's* characteristic yellow border, handy format and glossy paper are all present.

In recent years, Bonajo has collected over 7,000 amateur images of non-human species on Internet. All this while she has been looking intuitively for something that now manifests itself in her publication. "Nature photos used to be divided into categories: lions sleeping was one category, another category was lions eating and then there was the lions reproducing category. That was it. Now the rise of digital photography has made it possible to place photos into far more hybrid categories." Bonajo's categories range from images of Non-Human Persons and Food, Non-Human Persons and Disaster to Non-Human Persons and Escapes and Non-Human Persons and Trash. Using forty series of images and various discussions with animal trauma processing specialist Gay A. Bradshaw, evolutionary biologist Tijs Goldschmidt, zoologist Temple Grandin, visual artist Terike Haapoja and professor and writer Randy Malamud, Melanie Bonajo shows how the easy availability of images and their quick circulation on Internet has changed our view of nature and wildlife. The discussions with these specialists were based on a list of questions that Bonajo drew up while collecting the images. "Isn't it time that all non-human persons in the zoo meet each other?", "Is nature our community or our commodity?", "Does this imply that 'animals' should have human rights?"

The publication developed into an investigative visual document about the disproportional balance of power between people and animals. A rat features in the Non-Human Persons and War section. Tied to a line, the creature searches meekly for mines. Like rats,

More on page 125 >

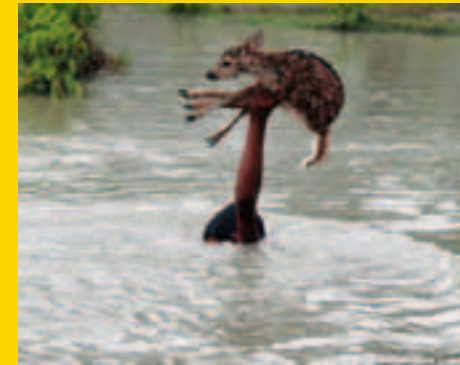
Δ — and PLASTIC BAGS,



Δ — and CAMERAS,



Δ — and DISASTER,



Δ — and ESCAPES,



Δ — and FOOD,



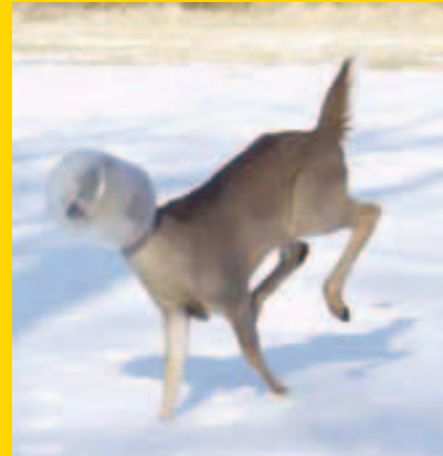
Δ — and GLASS,



Δ — and HEADS,



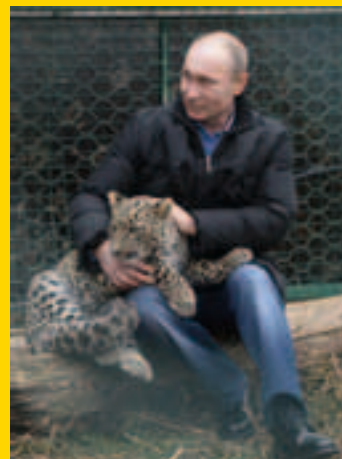
Δ — and BAD LUCK,



Δ — and OBESITY,



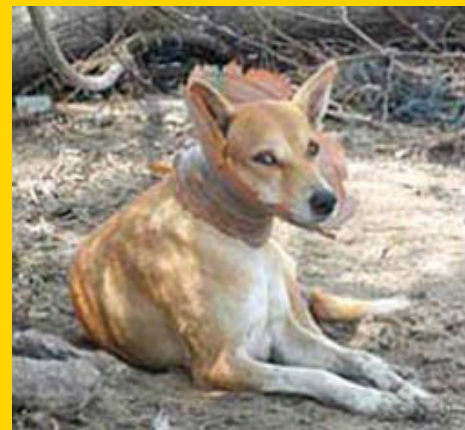
Δ — and POLITICS,



Δ — and TRASH,



Δ — and TRASH,



Δ — and WAR,



Δ — and WATER,



Δ — and WATER,



MB_

Can we send the internet's funny animal pictures into space for aliens to discover the Earth's ecosystem?

How has our shift from science-based nature photography to an increased amateur documentation of simultaneous urban expansion and wildlife disappearance changed our relationship with nature?

Will we in the nearby future end up with mini elephants in our garden, because all wildlife is transformed into cattle?

Who does the Earth belong to?

How much do pictures of kissing dolphins increase romance?

What happens to cute interspecies friendships when those babies grow up?

Is the most loving and morally solid way to experience non-human persons to stay at home and watch them on the internet?

Who doesn't want to be hugged?

Can tigers be friends with anyone?

How has the increasing "online animal representation" compensated for the growing absence of non-human persons in our everyday life?

Should zoos be converted into shelters?

Can a polar bear develop love for a bucket, and can this love be described as a new non-human person emotion?

Has nature become a theater in which non-human persons living within a scenario of stylized wilderness have to stop growing up to remain functional within their roles as actors, which we assigned to them?

Isn't it time that all non-human persons in the zoo met each other?

Is the continuation of a threatened species in the wild only credible by its market value?

Is nature our community or our commodity?

Do new kinds of violence surface due to new kinds of care for non-human persons?

Are our emotions being exploited by vacation packages selling us a desire to be in close proximity with non-human persons?

What do these images tell us about the distribution of wealth as seen through non-human person images?

Do these pictures show that people are turning "animals" into persons?

Does this imply that "animals" should have human rights?

Should putting a non-human animal on display for human enjoyment be a human right?

Did we watch too many Disney movies as a child?

Is using the liminal space between a non-human person and its environment to create humorous or cute imagery a perversion?

How much do mothers and their babies get paid by zoos?

Is anger a right only humans have?

Do we need to send all non-human persons to Kepler-452b with a GoPro camera attached to their heads while we humans stay behind on Earth?

Do we misidentify real emotions and create an illusion of freedom in our observations when we observe non-human persons in a captive environment like a zoo?

Do creatures without speech dissent by not looking into the lens, ever?

Who benefits from the representation of non-human persons online?

Why does the gap between humanitarian ideals and actual social practice remain so enormous?

Aren't non-human persons, just like human persons, molded and remolded by love?

Did you ever feel like some thing that could be possessed or owned?

Are human persons the rightful owners of all living things?

Looking from a non-human person's perspective, do these photographs show us that our scientific model of objectification is replaced by subjective attachment?

Does having immediate access to pictures of non-human persons on the internet decrease our awareness that humans are the only persons who possess self-awareness, culture, and land?

What do these images tell us about postmodernism and how do they fit into the context of pre-modernism, or would they need a completely revised category?

Can our profit-based culture change fast enough to save our ecosystem?

Did the archaic human person cuddle with giraffes in a moment of pure excitement?

At what convenience do we "love animals"?

Are non-human persons existing like expatriates in their own land, on their way to extinction?

Is this the end?

Are non-human "animals" persons?

Why do we need non-human persons?

When does a lion stop being a lion?

Page 108 > Alsatian dogs also play a role in the front line. The crocodile in the Non-Human Persons and Food category, the one with the burger, forces its way over a picnic blanket into the demarcated territory of people. This used to be the crocodile's terrain. "Naturally, people like animals, but only as long as they do not break the rules which people have devised to keep them in check. Bears should stay in the woods where they belong. As soon as they venture into the garden, that's when the problems start. Space for wildlife is constantly shrinking. Indeed, how many truly wild animals are there, if they all live on reservations? These reservations need to be financially viable and are often located in politically unstable regions. As soon as they discover oil the multinationals arrive and the rebels are bought off."

The way people deal with nature and the alternative models that have emerged in response to our capitalist barter system is one of the central themes of Melanie Bonajo's fascinating oeuvre. Having graduated in photography at Amsterdam's Rietveld Academie in 2004, Bonajo developed her expertise as an artist with photography, performance, video and music at Amsterdam's Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten. To this she brings humour, absurdity, relativity, empathy and intuition. Like her film trilogy *Night Soil* - a series of documentary-style experimental films about lifestyles opposed to capitalism's basic values of linear progress - the first edition of the *MB_Matrix Botanica* series is something of a daily dose of bittersweet medication against capitalism. This projects is a tantalizing taster, raising questions about and exploring issues of ecological and humanitarian significance against a capitalist background.

MB_Matrix Botanica. Non-Human Persons is designed by Experimental Jetset and published by Capricious.

THE POLITICIZED LANDSCAPE

BY MIRJAM KOOIMAN

MELANIE BONAJO
(B. 1978, NL)

An artist whose work examines the paradoxes inherent to ideas of comfort. Her work has been exhibited and performed in international art institutions, such as EYE Film Museum, Amsterdam; Kunsthall Stavanger, Norway; De Appel Arts Centre, Amsterdam; Foam, Amsterdam; Centre for Contemporary Art, Warsaw; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; the Moscow Biennale; National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul. Her most recent work, the film *Night Soil / Economy of Love* has been produced and screened by Schunck, Heerlen (2015), and was shown at AKINCI, Amsterdam (2015) and EYE Film Museum, Amsterdam (2016). She lives and works between Amsterdam and New York.

KIM KNOPPERS
(B. 1976, NL)

Kim has been a curator at Foam Museum since 2011. She studied art history at the University of Amsterdam. She was previously curator at De Beyerd Center of Contemporary Art and has also worked as a freelance curator. She has curated group exhibitions including *Remind* (2003), *Exotics* (2008) *Snow is White* (2010, together with Joris Jansen) and *Re-Search* (2012), and solo exhibitions by WassinkLundgren, Onorato & Krebs, Jan Hoek, Lorenzo Vitturi, Jan Rosseel, JH Engström, Geert Goiris and Broomb-erg & Chanarin amongst others. She lives and works in Amsterdam.

What makes a landscape political? When we make one another aware of a landscape we tend to say “Look at the view.” Professor of English and Art History at the University of Chicago, W.J.T. Mitchell, mentions in his preface to the second edition of the book *Landscape and Power* (2002) that the expression suggests that the invitation to look at landscape does not point the viewer to look at anything specific, but rather to appreciate a vista or a scene that may be dominated by some specific feature but is not reducible to it. Thus a landscape can be read or viewed in many ways, resulting in a certain ‘indeterminacy of affect’, as Mitchell calls it. Looking at how we view a place is ultimately about who is looking. Consequently, any political meaning assigned to a landscape is always in the eye of the beholder.