

Marcel van der Vlugt

In search of beauty...

Van der Vlugt uses photography as the preferred medium in his quest for beauty. This pursuit of beauty is an all encompassing one: no angle or perspective escapes him. It can be found in his fashion photography but more so in his autonomous work.

Series that embody this 'search' are for example Van der Vlugt's surrealistic portraits in the series 'I like...', the series 'Before and After' where references to the skin-deep, cliché advertisements for beauty centers are portrayed, and even more so in the imaginary, almost science-fiction like world in the series 'A New Day'.

Van der Vlugt's career started at the age of five, when his father, a professional photographer himself, handed him a camera. Since then he has been shooting image after image: a passion that will never leave him.

His work is not for the meek. The images are boldly sensual, leaning towards dangerously subversive. To enable images as photographed by Van der Vlugt though, there should be a relationship of complete trust. In the end it is always the subject that has the upper hand: the one who makes the picture what it is.

Much of Van der Vlugt's work speaks of constraints: be it in town lines in the landscapes series 'Greetings from Beauty', wrapped in bandages in the series 'A New Day', or the notion of time in the series 'Buds'. He seeks to reach those boundaries - finding all the freedom within that 'framework'.

To be able to carefully mold the image to what he has in mind Van der Vlugt prefers to shoot one image in a few minutes, making him rather shutter shy unlike other photographers.

The beauty depicted in Van der Vlugt's work is never perfect, soothing, nor of a conventional kind. It might shock or give discomfort to the viewer. His work is a running commentary on the ever changing world. It speaks of hidden appetites and desires, but ultimately of decay: the loss of beauty through time. His photographic odyssey leads at long last to a relative context. Individual series with one common denominator - everything touches everything.

'Beauty, NP, RSA #139' from the series 'Greetings from Beauty' holds the truth of Van der Vlugt's work: Beauty is close by, but not yet truly reached. His work 'reads' as a stream of consciousness novel. His quest for beauty is strangely similar to the 'search of lost time', of his namesake Marcel in Proust's 'À la Recherche du Temps Perdu'. Just like him, Van der Vlugt is trying to capture something essential to him: beauty. Never fully able to grasp it, always exploring, and by doing so, keeping his audience captivated in the process.