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Gerrit Rietveld Academie

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# Thoughts on Nature

A monument; an excuse; an oasis or an amusement park?

The [00FF00 Grey Roots Workshop](#) poster provoked students from the [Gerrit Rietveld Academie](#) to think about the meaning of nature. The motivations we got from students showed that they were thoughtful about the subject and had engaged in the matter. Here are a couple of the essays the [Lectoraat Art and Public Space](#) received from the participants of the 00FF00 Grey Roots Workshop.

Dorota Sliwonik

Public space, especially the possibility to recreate or redefine a new area, is catching me.

For me personally the space outside is more important than the crowded inner space of cities, where

I want to meet people or I go to be entertained.

A park, a space, wild, untouched is something special. It is more than just avoiding to meet people.

And it's for me not a space, where I expect to be inspired intellectually by artworks. So why? I get into a dialog with nature and it makes me feel alive. But not every open space is like this.

For me it would be a challenge to define a playground for the spirit.

For me it shall not obviously be "man made" like the English gardens.

Or cultivated for recreation with wide roads, that lead me to the next kiosk; artificial amusement parks are good for the economy but not for the soul. My vision is a place for discovery and feeling nature. Not the odd barefoot park areas. Put your shoes off and take a ten minute walk. They are really mostly uninteresting.

What makes a Park interesting? The variation of plants, little paths that lead through the "wild". Mainly formed as if selfgrown, through nature itself. You can not foresee what's coming next behind the bend, but you still are interested to follow the way. But how to do or achieve that?

For me the open space is a place for discovery. Alone or in small groups. Of course families have other needs than people that just like to be confronted with nature like me.

Facing nature would be my main interest.

I always was fascinated by left over places, that sheltered homeless people to survive the wintertime. Little nests, made out of found

materials just for essential needs. What would surprise you more than to see an old sofa in a forest, standing and waiting for you to be used. It's making the outer space a home for your soul to discover. Come back and discover it anew, because of the seasons nature is changing and never stays the same.

Dorota Sliwonik is a student in the Foundation year of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie.

### Spike Raquette

I've lived in villages both in Italy and Sweden surrounded by nature and woods. "Real" nature then not a architectural designed forest. Nature is always intriguing and man has always worked around nature until about a century ago when we've made nature work around us. It's a quite absurd idea to take away what naturally was, or adjust it, to than make it into a more perfect way. Perfect in the human point of view.

I haven't lived in the Netherlands long enough to actually explore anything outside of Amsterdam except for one trip to the seaside which surprised me with it's similarity to some Italian beaches I've been to. Compared to other countries I've lived in where there is more space than people and woods are taken for granted, the Netherlands are the opposite, with both pros and cons. It would be very interesting to work in an environment that isn't a city and isn't what I associate with Holland. You can make a link with learning Dutch: it isn't essential for living in Amsterdam and especially if you study at the Rietveld. Though to get to know your surroundings and being able to use them to your advantage in an artistic way, it's important, and learning the culture certainly helps. From language, to knowing in which shop you buy what, to seeing the places that aren't just around the corner.

My work is text based and I use normally audio or/and installation. I try to make it in a way that everyone can enjoy it, but also think or question it the same way I do. My concepts are about what is very near to me both physically and emotionally, what I experience. Those events are unique, yes, but other people have experienced similar things and can relate to other peoples lives.

Spike Raquette is a second year student VAV at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie.

### Martha Jager

'Is our present nature a monument, an excuse, an oasis or an amusement park?'

It is precisely all of that. I feel nature is made by one's encounters with nature and the perception of those encounters. It's curiously beautiful to me that even those parts of nature that are human made can still make for unexpected situations. Just as cities change the songs of the birds, the woods change the pace of people, thus the artificial might still be natural which is why it still attracts us so.

Even though for different needs we still go *to* nature and visit it as if not a part from our usual surroundings. I often travel to nature to escape city hectics to find exactly that, but in different gradations and in a different setting. In that sense nature might have changed, whereas once the exile for the modern romantic wanderer it has become the extension to the hectics of city life.

Martha Jager is a first year student Fine Arts at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie.

### Fernanda De Andrade

The present nature is an amusement park. People don't use it anymore as a hiding place, toilet or gathering place for food. Nowadays people need nature for different things for example to escape, to get a change of scenery or to relax.

As a member of the present, how do I relate to nature?

I see myself as a nature person. A nature person is someone who explores, investigates, talks about, and is surrounded by nature. For me nature is one of the great inspirations. The one thing I like most is its uniqueness. For example every tree from the same species looks different, but still is the same. Every part of nature is unique. Forms repeat each other, but not like bricks in a wall.

Fernanda De Andrade is second year student in the DOGtime department of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie.

### Elize Rietberg

When I'm in a plain above the Netherlands, I am time and again astonished by how everything has a structure, an appointed place. A box in which life may exist within the boundaries. This structure is very clearly and terribly present. The way in which our country is divided up and how our city and nature has an appointed place, has a big influence on how we communicate with each other in daily life and what conclusions we relate to this. We want clarity, to the point. But they are loose pieces, fragments. Disciplines are separated, professions are separated, our thinking and feelings are separated. But that is not more of this time. If there must be a future for this earth and the Netherlands, it is beginning by being conscious that everything is connected with each other. It is a continuous interaction between our way of thinking and our arrangement of the landscape. These are connected to each other like no other. The typical 'hokjesdenken' we see straight away in our arrangements.

This deep rooted urge to control and get a grip on our surroundings is predominant, but also limited that we sometimes forget that there are a lot of different ways to approach and experience nature. It is important to travel to other parts of the world to discover a completely different approach. People in the jungle of South America have certainly opened my eyes, for them nature is the essence and origin of life. You have to be very grateful to nature par excellence for all the valuable treasures it has given.

What interests me is how we relate to nature. We could ask a lot of questions about our origins that we can learn a lot from. This humble mentality people in the Netherlands shall have to discover anew if they want to move forward in this time. Because if we keep waltzing over our nature we ignore ourselves. Although we want to, we can't live forever, and that is a good thing. Being conscious of our mortality, the circle of life, is something we see directly in the nature surrounding us, but we often choose not to see it. What is new life without dying?

The beautiful thing is that although people attempt to create a distance between the origin, nature, this longing always stays. Who isn't sitting in the Vondelpark during a sunny day? Or towel next to towel on the beach of Scheveningen? What can be found there that we can't find in a car on the highway? How can we be conscious of where we come from and where we are going to? What can we learn from nature without directly profiting from it? How can we let the city and nature cross over into each other without sharp boundaries?

Elize Rietberg is a first year student TXT at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie.

### Margarita Tristi

Nature as a monument

An excuse

An oasis

Or an amusement park?

Nature has always been the strongest point of reference we had.  
In any form and with any means we try to imitate her ways, alter her, reproduce her, conquer her.  
But we are always influenced by her in every way.  
Our environment defines our actions, creativity, perception, system of values.  
Today we are mostly surrounded by urban scenery, which molds our aesthetic.  
Then what is nature's role?  
Whatever is left of her, whatever we've made out of her.

These are questions that appear even in the most primary forms of artistic creation.  
A change of scenery, though, is able to alter our perception of form, perspective, scale, context.

Margarita Tristi is a student in the Foundation year of the DOGtime department of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie.

### Hrafnhildur Helgadóttir

What is Nature? Is by far the question I ask myself the most.  
I was born and raised in Iceland, a country famous for wild nature both as a cruel reality and as a sales product.  
And as with so many other things, leaving Iceland made me think about what Nature really is, being frustrated by living in a country like Netherlands where there seem to be no Nature at all.

This is a definition I like when I try to answer: What is Nature?  
(Nature with a capital N)

“Those parts of the visible world which were not created by men and can be perceived through the senses”.

What this gives me is just a fragile ground form to start thinking, but Nature is a concept I can understand differently everyday and it will also be different from everyone else. Defining Nature has so much to do with geology. Nature is different and I have very limited experience. Nature is a social construct.  
With our words it is defined and recreated.

I was for some time looking for Nature in Amsterdam. I also had a definition of Nature that is based on a feeling of being in Nature. The Amsterdam Bos was a place I visited. It had all the qualities of a forest and I was surprised to learn that if I followed my definition of Nature then the Amsterdam Bos is not Nature. It is man made!

So this stirs up some contradictions within me.

Maybe we should think about this ground question: Is the Amsterdam Bos Nature or not?

And what makes it Nature and what makes it something else, and what else could it be?

And by trying to figure this out the Amsterdam Bos also becomes a metaphor for so many other things in this confusing world where humans have had such a great impact.

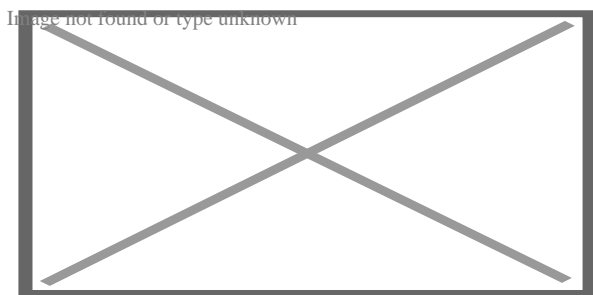
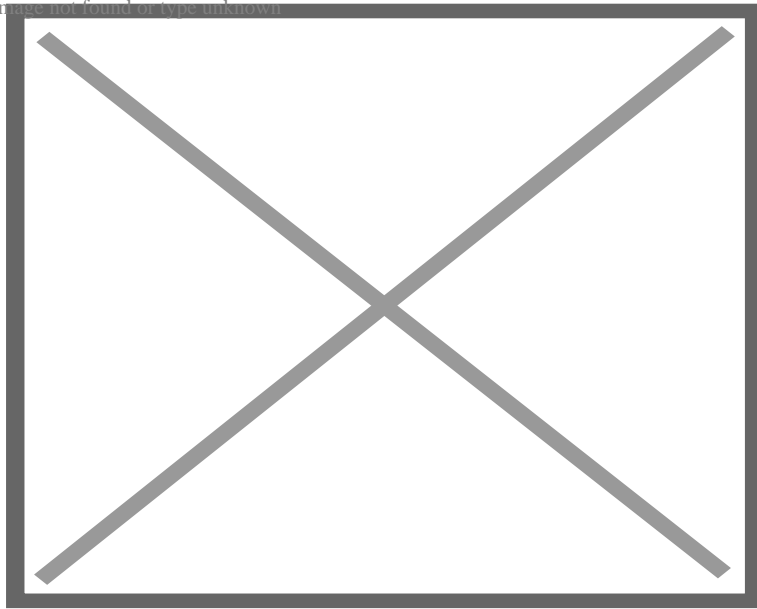


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Hrafnhildur Helgadóttir is a third year student Fine Arts at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie.

#### Mark Vennegoor

Nature is of everyone. But who decides? How it comes into existence is a natural process that tells us a lot about people and culture.

The Netherlands is known for its polder model. Something we can see in nature. However, everybody decides for himself how he consumes nature.

For me an interesting question is how I create “my” nature? What I expect of “my” nature? How I want to relate to nature?

Where do I realize my nature and how do I incorporate nature in my work and who I am?

For me nature is a consumption product, material and medium. Whether it be the Amazone or the Amsterdamse Bos.

The question is: “How do I (re)form “our” nature?”

Mark Vennegoor is a second year student in the DOGtime department of Gerrit Rietveld Academie.

#### Tanya Spaan

When I was twelve-years-old I saw the Amsterdamse Bos for the first time, and I thought it was a strange place. It is not a forest to me, but a bizar park. Two years ago I saw a book about the Amsterdamse Bos in the Rietveld library, and I was instantly intrigued. When I saw the Grey Roots announcement, I wanted to participate. Land Art, is that an interest of mine? I love being outdoors. What is this forest/park to me and how does this relate to making art? I would like to explore all these questions.

Tanya Spaan is a first year student Photography at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie.

The 00FF00 Grey Roots Workshop will take place from 16 April until 27 April 2012 in the [Amsterdamse Bos](#). In the fall of 2012 there will be an exhibition and publication of the works of the participant of the workshop. The workshop is a collaboration of the [Lectoraat Art and Public Space](#) with the [Amsterdamse Bos](#) and the [Gerrit Rietveld Academie](#).

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1. [00FF00 Grey Roots Workshop](#)
2. [Bentwoud, a different horizon](#)
3. [Awareness of Form](#)