AKINCI

Margit Lukács & Persijn Broersen

I Wan'na Be Like You

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portfolio with photos by Peter Tijhuis

I Wan'na Be Like You

AKINCI is proud to present the solo exhibition *I Wan'na Be Like You* by artist duo Margit Lukács and Persijn Broersen. They exhibit their new film, which shares the same title as the exhibition and has just had its well-received premiere at the Grote Kerk Alkmaar. In the Attachment Space, the duo will show an earlier work, *Bark with a Trace*, 2022.

In the film *I Wan'na Be Like You*, Lukács and Broersen focus on the Western image of the 'jungle'. The wilderness is often seen as a Terra Nullius, supposedly unexplored land that served as an emblem of desire for colonial powers. The artists delve deeper into this wilderness as it was once confiscated and subsequently recreated in the most important Botanical Gardens in Europe, including Paris (Jardin des Plantes), London (Kew Gardens), Brussels (Meise Gardens) and Amsterdam (Hortus Botanicus).

The creation of the film *I Wan'na Be Like You* began four years ago when Lukács and Broersen visited dozens of botanical gardens across Europe and took thousands of photographs there. They then digitally assembled these photographs through a complex process of photogrammetry, 3D moulding and modelling. In this way, Lukács and Broersen created a replica of these greenhouses, made up of the conquered jungle as it is preserved in botanical gardens across Europe. The camera takes the viewer through what at first appears to be untouched nature, a virtual construction of plants, tree trunks, vines, and among them, signs (in the classic style of botanical gardens) that neatly display the names of these 'wild' plants. We are not in nature, we are trapped in an artificial greenhouse where everything is documented, categorised, exported and exploited.

This virtual ruin serves as a backdrop for an avatar of a ghost, an apparition that is neither human nor animal. This otherworldly spirit is animated through motion capture with dancer Laura Moura Costa, performing a choreography by Andreas Hannes, echoing both contemporary dance and the transcendental, weightless language of romantic ballet. The avatar dances to a piece of music composed especially for the film, based on the song *I Wan'na Be Like You* from Disney's *Jungle Book* (1967).

The song is reinterpreted in two ways: as a tribute to the hybrid New Orleans jazz tradition and as an indictment of the underlying racism of Disney's original. Musician David Lukács deconstructed *I Wan'na Be Like You* into a polyphonic melody (a fugue) as a tribute to the classical influences in New Orleans Jazz. Jamal Bijnoe and Orlando Ceder, two members of the choir Black Harmony, interpreted and transformed the original song not only as an indictment of its colonial undertones, but also as a proud representation of the history of their ancestors. In their song *Na Mi* (Sranang for 'I am') they reincarnate the dead and celebrate the living.

The work *Bark with a Trace,* shown in the Attachment Space, is an exploration of the role of photography in constructing our perception of nature in the digital age. At the centre of the work is a piece of bark that Lukács and Broersen brought back from the Białowieża Forest in Poland - a heavily contested area that is the last of the primeval forests that once covered much of Europe. The desiccated piece of bark was removed from its original habitat several years ago and still bears the traces of its history inscribed on its surface; a complex network of ancient fungi, lichens, epidemics and insect infestations.

To read the bark at close range, capturing it in minute detail, Lukács and Broersen used sensitive photographic equipment. They then digitally combined hundreds of different photographs of the bark into a virtual model, which is presented here as new and unknown territory. The film follows the tracks through this almost alien landscape with a virtual camera. What we see is a surface that is larger than the eye can normally perceive, but whose depth remains impenetrable.

The works in the exhibition *I Wan'na Be Like You* are telling of the intense creative process of the artist duo. They are a result of periods of extensive research and technological experimentation which can spread over years. With their works in which reality and virtuality merge, where past and future meet, a new perspective on the image of the wilderness and its meaning in our time is shaped.

Watch the film *I Wan'na Be Like You* **here**.
password: iwbly

I Wan'na Be LIke You, 2024, HD video with sound, digital animation, loop, 12:44 min

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Glass House, 2024, Fine Art Bayta print Hahnemuhle, dibond, framed, 104 x 178 cm

Left: Jungle, 2024, Fine Art Bayta print Hahnemuhle, dibond, framed, 100 x 178 cm
Right: Ouverture, 2024, Fine Art Bayta print Hahnemuhle, dibond, framed, 80 x 143 cm

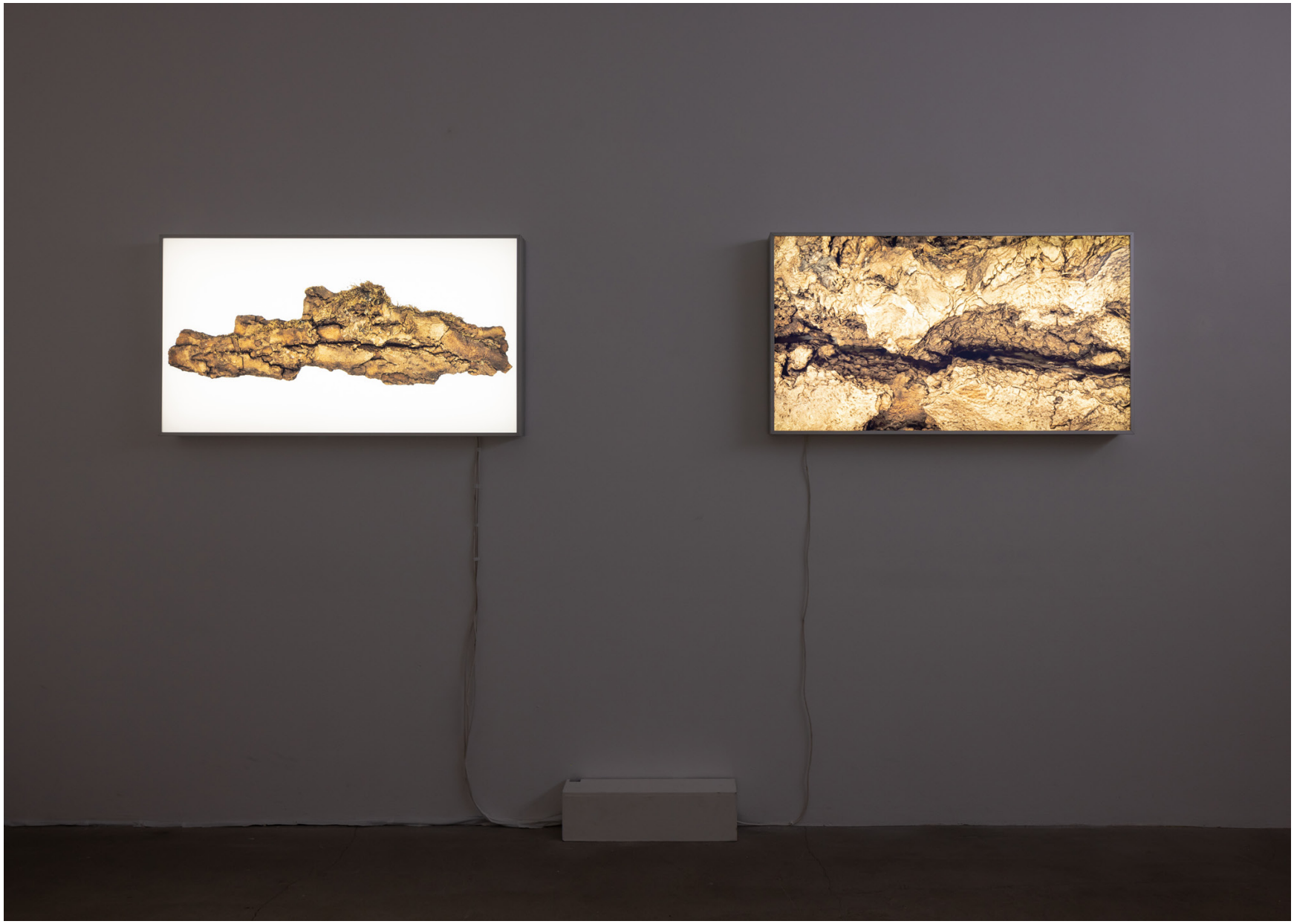
Ouverture, 2024, Fine Art Bayta print Hahnemuhle, dibond, framed, 80 x 143 cm

Above: Mirage, 2024, Fine Art Bayta print Hahnemuhle, dibond, framed, 100 x 165 cm
Below: Oldest Tree, 2024, concrete, 30 x 36 x 36 cm

Oldest Tree, 2024, concrete, 30 x 36 x 36 cm

Bark with a Trace, 2022, HD video with sound, digital animation, 7:18 min

Left: Lightbox_Bark with a trace, zoom, 2022, Lambda duratrans, perspex, aluminium, led, dimm., 62 x 108 cm
Right: Bark with a Trace, 2022, HD video with sound, digital animation, 7:18 min



Left: Lightbox_Bark with a trace, overview, 2022, Lambda duratrans, perspex, aluminium, led, dimm., 62 x 108 cm
Right: Lightbox_Bark with a trace, zoom, 2022, Lambda duratrans, perspex, aluminium, led, dimm., 62 x 108 cm

Bark with a Trace, 2022, HD video with sound, digital animation, 7:18 min

Biography

Margit Lukács and Persijn Broersen are an artist duo based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. They are graduates of Graphic Design from the Rietveld Academy Amsterdam, followed by a MFA at Sandberg Institute Amsterdam. Furthermore they were artists in residence at the Rijksakademie voor Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam (NL). Their work, consisting of video films, layered projections, digital animations and spatial installations, has been exhibited in renowned institutions and organisations worldwide, a.o. Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (NL), MacKenzie Art Gallery (CA), arc en rêve (FR), Stedelijk Museum Breda (NL), Centraal Museum Utrecht (NL), HKW Berlin/ Louvre Paris for Rencontres Internationales, FOAM (NL), MUHKA (BE), Centre Pompidou (FR), Cultural Capital City of Europe Esch (LU), HEK, Basel (CH), Kröller Müller (NL), A Space, Toronto (CA) WROBiennale, Wroclaw (PL), the Biennale of Sydney (AU), Rencontres Arles (FR), Wuzhen Biennial (CN). They will represent the Netherlands at the Gwangju Biennale 2024.

The film *I Wan'na Be Like You* was made in collaboration with:
Music and lyrics: Orlando Ceder and Jamal Bijnoe (Music Company Black Harmony)
Music: David Lukács
Additional music and sound design: Berend Dubbe
Choreography and dance: Andreas Hannes & Laura Moura Costa
With the kind support of Mondriaan Fonds and Amsterdams Fonds voor de Kunst

Read the article about *I Wan'na Be Like You* by NRC **here** (in Dutch)
Read the article about *I Wan'na Be Like You* by Parool **here** (in Dutch)