

The Unwanted Self:

Contemporary Photography from the Low Countries

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The Unwanted Self, a collection of contemporary Dutch and Belgian photography, presents itself against the backdrop of a global and homogenised visual culture and asserts a need for a national cultural identity. The work of the thirty-three featured photographers in this publication is diverse and appealing, from well know individuals such as Hans van der Meer to relatively unknown practitioners. It is a carefully selected body of work, and that the curators omitted the very famous individuals, such as Carl de Keyser, is to their credit.

There are no fewer than six essays and the lengthy transcript of a discourse via e-mail within this publication, each attempting to identify or define the particular characteristics of Belgian and Dutch photography, with the ongoing assumption that making such distinctions is both possible, and necessary. Only in Inge Henneman's lively and amusing essay are some of the photographic works included in this collection embellished upon or contextualised.

Why works originating from these two very different countries are presented jointly is not really clear; in fact, it seems detrimental to the purpose of describing an *individual* national identity. While I certainly enjoyed a lot of this work, what does photography from the Low Countries look like? Not all that different from the photography of many other countries.