

The Great Indoors
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Hubert, Thomas Jenkins,
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Curator: Niekolaas
Johannes Lekkerkerk

Open
6 September through
19 October 2013
Wednesday - Saturday
2 pm - 6:30 pm

Opening
Friday 6 September
2-8 pm

Artists talks
Jean Hubert
Fran Meana
Clare Noonan
Friday 6 September
4 pm

Open
Wednesday - Saturday
2 pm - 6:30 pm

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THE GREAT INDOORS is the title of a group exhibition that takes as its central subject the increasing disconnection between nature and human activities, as advanced by a number of artworks, positions and approaches taken from a variety of artistic practices. In that, the exhibition seeks to comment on man's growing distance, retreat and deviation from nature – especially considering the ways in which we generally conceive

The Great Indoors — An Analogy of Examples

and organize our lives today – as well as its recovery, particularly in the light of the natural, domesticated and artificial forms of representation and mediation that have come to be attributed to the overall perception of 'nature in general'. In other words still, the increasing social construction of the concept of nature, expressed within a cultivated context, has arguably fostered an elaborate network of what might be termed a surrogate nature, or an Ersatz nature. Moreover, there is a tendency to consider and implement nature as a static resource and a malleable entity. At the same time, however, nature is treated, paradoxically enough, as a self-contained and self-regulating 'domain', capable of providing an unsurpassed backdrop for a quiet break... Or has this lengthy break come to an end, nature no longer functioning as a mere backdrop for human activities?

JOHN BALDESSARI
Teaching a Plant the Alphabet, 1972

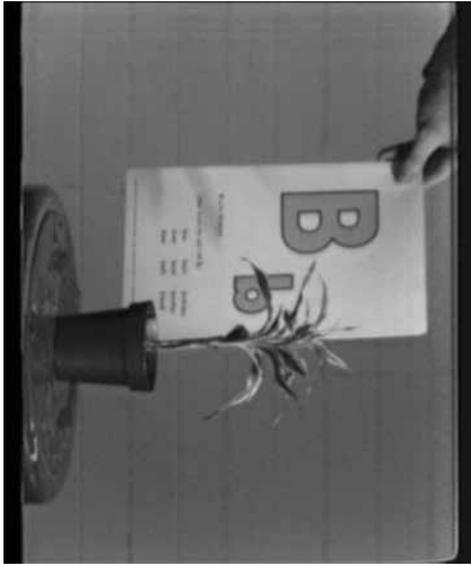


FIG. 2



AN INTERESTING perspective on the previous introduction is provided in *Politics of Nature* (2004) by Bruno Latour: “The idea that ‘nature does not exist’, since it is a matter of social construction’, only reinforces the division between the Cave [Plato] and the Heaven of Ideas [Plato] by superimposing this division onto the one that distinguishes the human sciences from the natural sciences. When one speaks as a historian, a psychologist, an anthropologist, a geographer, a sociologist, or an epistemologist about ‘human representations of nature’, about their changes, about the material, economic, and political conditions that explain them, one is implying, ‘quite obviously’, that nature itself, during this time, has not changed a bit. The more the social construction of nature is calmly asserted, the more what is really happening in nature – the nature that is being abandoned to Science and scientists – is left aside.”



FIG. 1

To GIVE an example: do you remember the worldwide protests of the 25th of May 2013 against the multinational agricultural biotechnology corporation Monsanto? In principle, the crux of the issue leading to this upheaval had to do with Monsanto's plans to further expand its market, from America to Europe and other continents, in light of obtaining the legal rights to allow for the sale of their genetically modified seeds. The protesters stood up against the use of these modified seeds, which would be grown into crops, and ultimately sold as food. Furthermore, a number of thorny issues were addressed, such as, for instance, the pesticides developed by Monsanto which protect only their own products, destroying the surrounding non-modified crops, or the idea that farmers using 'alternative' seeds could be sued by Monsanto if patented seeds were to be found on their lands – subtly ignoring the fact that seeds are carried and spread by the wind. It is interesting to note that the protests mainly took place through social media: a digital form of protest that included the sharing of pro-nature and anti-Monsanto images and articles, whereas the key event through which a stance would truly be made, the actual protests in the proximity of the Monsanto offices, drew relatively few participants and received much less media coverage, both in social and mainstream media. The idea of acting on and applying one's principles, as a collective movement, has largely been replaced by the placing or sharing of a reaction, as a digital and virtual collective.



FIG. 3

BOOK COVER of *The Emancipation of the Corn Plant* by H.P. Howard and L.H. Linz

VINYL ALBUM cover of *Mother Earth's Plantasia* (1976) by Mort Garson



FIG. 4

OR CONSIDER what Michel Serres puts forth in *The Natural Contract* (1995): “Until this very morning nature eluded us: either we limited it to the local experience of the little hayfield, or else we made it an abstract concept, sometimes applied to man. And if we studied it, in the sciences, we cut it up into even smaller plots; one of the crises in our knowledge comes from its inability to function without these divisions and from the need to solve the problems posed by their integration. Here, then, is nature today, new and fresh, being born: global, whole, and historiated before the eyes of global humanity as a whole; theoretical, soon, provided that the disciplines are willing to join in federation; concrete and technological right now, since our means of intervention act on it and it in turn acts on us; a network of multiple bonds where all things, congruent, conspire and consent; a web tied, by a lattice of relations, to the henceforth united social and human fabric.”

IN RESPONSE to the previous examples, the exhibition *The Great Indoors* will engage with the question “If nature is no longer a mere backdrop for human activities, what does this change mean to the arts and social sciences?” As such, the exhibition will put forward a number of transitions: from the idea of nature as a backdrop for human activities to the social conception of the natural – the shift from external to externalized nature – and a further leap from the exterior to the interior: the home and the domesticated, the studio, the gallery space and the artificial: *The Great Indoors*. In so doing, the ultimate landmark might perhaps consist of the idea that nature is not only a support structure, but an assembler, one that links the living and the inert while being both, that serves as a basis to explicate the social and the material, beyond the realm of the formal, and that leads us back to being animals...