

Trees Heil (b. 1993, NL)

Portfolio

ABOUT

Trees Heil (1993, The Netherlands) works with the intimate and complex relationship between identity, desire, and self-expression from a female perspective. The female and queer body is celebrated as a source of creativity and imagination through photography, short films, and performances.

Her work delves into mental and physical experiences through a magical-realist lens. She embraces both vulnerability and the beauty of the unexpected. Heil mostly collaborates with female and queer models, using an intuitive approach. The models undergo a literal transformation during the creative process. Mutual exchange of ideas plays a central role here, which leads to a profound and meaningful collaboration.

Heil investigates the potential of the body and the power of physical expression. With her works serving as a platform where pleasure, curiosity, and creativity meet, thereby aiming to liberate the body from conventional notions.

Her work has been shown in Het Hem, Zaandam (NL), Museum IJsselstein, IJsselstijn (NL), Frascati Theater, Amsterdam (NL), W139, Amsterdam (NL), Marres, Maastricht (NL), Kunstliefde, Utrecht (NL), Ruis, Nijmegen (NL), Onboards Biennale, Antwerp (BE), Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem (NL), SecondRoom Antwerp (BE), WORM, Rotterdam (NL) Melkweg Expo, Amsterdam (NL) and Yi Contemporary Art Center (CN).

In addition to her autonomous works Heil also works in commission especially within the field of fashion photography. She has shot fashion editorials for magazines including King Kong Magazine (UK), Sensitive Content Magazine (USA), BOOT magazine (ENG), GRIND magazine (JP) and Musée Magazine (NY). Recently she shot her first campaign for the fashion brand Camiel Fortgens.

Solo Exhibition, **Everything For The Image** (2025)
– *A magical-realist view of physicality and intimacy*
Melkweg Expo, Amsterdam (NL)

In the exhibition 'Everything for the Image', Trees Heil explores the intimate and complex relationship between identity, desire, and self-expression from a female perspective. The female and queer body is celebrated as a source of creativity and imagination, showcased through various media: photography, video, and performance.



Part of installation, solo exhibition, Everything For The Image – *A magical-realist view of physicality and intimacy*
Melkweg Expo, Amsterdam (2025) Curated by Fleurie Klootstra.



Part of installation, solo exhibition, *Everything For The Image – A magical-realist view of physicality and intimacy*
Melkweg Expo, Amsterdam (2025) Curated by Fleurie Klootstra.

About the exhibition

Trees Heil's artistic practice explores the intimate and complex relationship between identity, desire, and self-expression from a female and queer perspective. Working across photography, film, and live performance, Heil uses the body as a source of creativity and imagination, emphasizing its role as a starting point for discovery and joy. Her approach is intuitive and collaborative, often engaging female and queer models who undergo literal and metaphorical transformations during the creative process. Heil's work inhabits a space of magical realism, embracing vulnerability and the beauty of the unexpected. The constructed scenarios she creates are poetic explorations of timeless emotions and thought processes, where spaces, people, and behaviors intertwine. The models are often depicted in ambiguous ways - faces turned away or partially obscured - to emphasize symbolism and suggestion over direct representation. "It is more about what the person symbolizes or what suggestive story is being told," Heil explains.

Her exhibition, *Everything for the Image*, balances between attraction and alienation, offering an experience that is both sensual and disruptive. The bodies captured in her work probe the complexities of desire and its boundaries. What may initially appear playful and seductive can reveal an elusive or unsettling undercurrent upon closer inspection. The exhibition challenges viewers to reflect on their perceptions of desire and repulsion, inviting them into a space of introspection, transformation, and self-discovery. It is a celebration of the body in all its facets, an invitation to play and embrace fluidity: "Just as culture, identity, and society are constantly in flux, so are we humans. We are fountains: bodies in constant motion, flowing, puddled, bleed.

The title Everything for the Image can be interpreted in several ways. On one hand, as a photographer, I do everything for the image. My life is completely intertwined with it: through photography I meet people, make friends, and travel to different places in order to create. At the same time, all interactions between the models are staged. So even though the intimate moments are what they are, they also stem from a desire to create images. Additionally, 'the image' also refers to the way you see yourself—your persona, or the person you think you are. In my work, I aim to release that 'image' of who you are—or could be—or at least stretch it. The models regularly transform into other beings: frog-like creatures, horses, or fountain-like figures, for example.



Performance, Tableau Vivant 03 (11.30 min) Melkweg Expo, Amsterdam (NL), 2025
Curated by Fleurie Klootstra
Images by Françoise Bolechowski



Performance, Tableau Vivant 03 (11.30 min) Melkweg Expo, Amsterdam (NL), 2025
Curated by Fleurie Klootstra

Played by Hannah Rojer, Alliyah Sy, Stella Oort, Rebecca Lillich Krüger and Isabel Pontoppidan
Soundscape by Rik Möhlmann
Pictures by Françoise Bolechowski

Melkweg Expo programme XXL

As part of the solo exhibition Everything for the Image, a special life drawing session was held in collaboration with Stripclub Life Drawing, an initiative that typically hosts figure drawing events in an Amsterdam strip club. Two stunning strippers posed live, striking dynamic poses in and around the pole, while around 25 participants sketched in an open and relaxed setting. No prior drawing experience was required, making the workshop accessible to all.



Workshop, Stripclub Life Drawing-sessie, Melkweg Expo, Amsterdam, 2025



Tableaux #03 (2024)



Tableau Vivant #05 (2025)

This work was created during my solo exhibition Everything for the Image at Melkweg Expo in Amsterdam. As part of the exhibition, I organized a photoshoot for female and queer models through an open call.

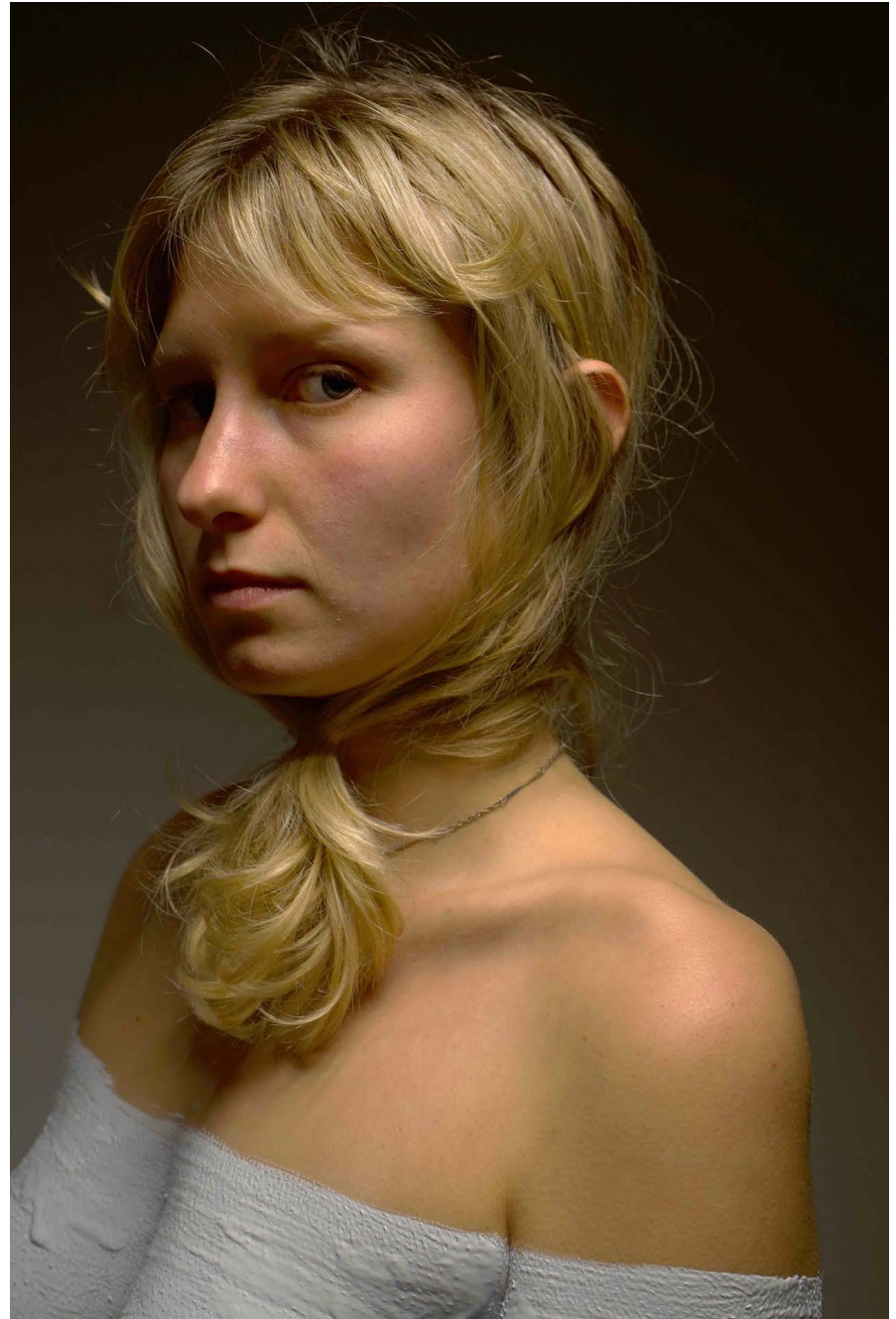
*Production: Ashley Slarrauri, Assistant: Lejla Vala, Intimacy Coordinator: Cynthia Abma, Lighting: Steven de Kok, Styling: Nikki Vekemans
Curated by Fleurie Klootstra.*



Part of installation, solo exhibition, *Everything For The Image – A magical-realist view of physicality and intimacy*
Melkweg Expo, Amsterdam (2025) Curated by Fleurie Klootstra.



Eating the Apple II (2024)



i'm all Ears (2020)

WORKS 1/2

Solo Exhibition Trees Heil 'Everything for the Image'

Melkweg Expo – Marnixstraat 490, Amsterdam



Infinite Braid (2023)
82,0 x 122,0 cm / framed work



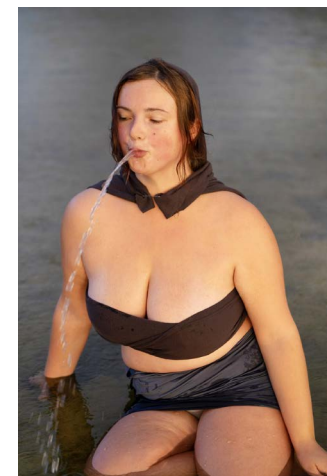
**Prospects for new horizons
(and happy endings) (2024)**
82,0 x 122,0 cm / framed work



I'm all Ears (2020)
36,8 cm x 51,9 cm / framed work



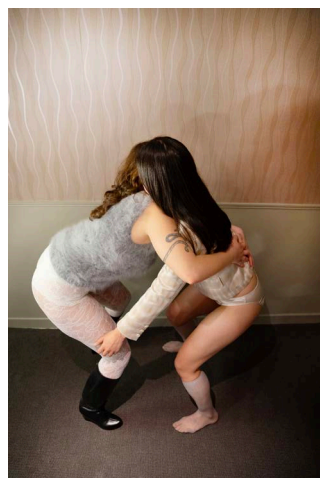
Water Being III (2024)
(XXL poster print)



Water Being II (2024)
36,8 cm x 51,9 cm / framed work



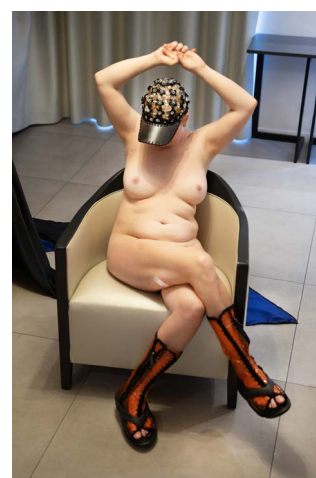
Room 06 (2024)
73,6 cm x 101,7 cm / framed work



**Room 01, The Wrestlers
/ Mountain Pose (2024)**
36,8 cm x 51,9 cm / framed work



Body Spell (2024)
(XXL poster print)



Woman with Plaster (2024)
36,8 cm x 51,9 cm / framed work



The V Portal (2024)
36,8 cm x 51,9 cm / framed work

WORKS 2/2

Solo Exhibition Trees Heil 'Everything for the Image'

Melkweg Expo – Marnixstraat 490, Amsterdam



Mating Frogs (2022)

73,6 cm x 101,7 cm / framed work



Heta, The Pink Witch (2024)

82,0 x 122,0 cm / framed work



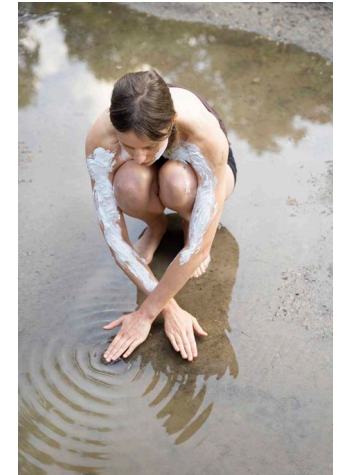
Wildlife Photographer (2023)

73,6 cm x 101,7 cm / framed work



Sister(s) II (2024)

73,6 cm x 101,7 cm / framed work



The Puddle (2024)

82,0 x 122,0 cm / framed work



Untitled, (2024)

82,0 x 122,0 cm / framed wor



Eating The Apple II (2024)

36,8 cm x 51,9 cm / framed work

Short Film, **The Secret Garden** (2025)

In the experimental short film *The Secret Garden*, female landscapes are depicted, stripped of social norms. The transformative, cyclical nature of the female body is expressed in various ways. The images carry a poetic, symbolic, and ritualistic charge, with many loving, intimate embraces and caresses, where skin and eyes make contact. The film focuses on the inner world of women, expressed through slow actions, long camera movements, and an underlying hypnotic soundscape. It is a sensory experience that explores the female gaze, touching on deep desires for connection, sensuality, and sexuality, all with a mystical undertone.

Full HD, 16:23 min.

Watch [here](#) the full film on Youtube



Installation film 'The Secret Garden, 2025', Full HD, 16:23 min.
Solotentoonstelling, Everything For The Image. Melkweg Expo, Amsterdam (2025)
Curated by Fleurie Klootstra.



Poster, short film 'The Secret Garden'



Film still, *The Secret Garden*, (2025) full HD, 16:23 min.



Film still, *The Secret Garden*, (2025) full HD, 16:23 min.



Installation film 'The Secret Garden, 2025', Full HD, 16:23 min.
 Solotontoonstelling, Everything For The Image. Melkweg Expo, Amsterdam (2025)
 Curated by Fleurie Klootstra.
Images by Françoise Bolechowski



Installation film 'The Secret Garden, 2025', Full HD, 16:23 min.
 Solotontoonstelling, Everything For The Image. Melkweg Expo, Amsterdam (2025)
 Curated by Fleurie Klootstra.
Images by Françoise Bolechowski

An Act of Romance (2024 - ongoing)

I feel drawn to themes such as sensuality, sexuality, eroticism, and romance, particularly the boundary between what remains private and what is shared. The idea for this shoot emerged from a desire to create a 'romantic' photoshoot. Together with two friends, the shoot became an intimate outing, a shared journey to our Secret Garden. The photos were taken in a garden shed, a place that evokes the symbolism of a 'Secret Garden.' At the same time, the title refers to a personal or shared fantasy, imagined as the inner garden. Through these works, I aim to challenge the limitations and clichés surrounding female desire and open up space for a richer, freer perspective. My two friends and I considered this shoot an 'Act of Romance'.



Prospects for new horizons (and happy endings) (2024)



Prospects for new horizons (and happy endings) (2024)



An act of Romance I & II (2025)

I am interested in exploring ways in which we can relate romantically to ourselves, to life, and to each other, what that can mean in this time, and how it can take shape.

For this series, An Act of Romance (2025), I worked with two friends of mine who are in a romantic relationship. They exchanged clothing and adopted poses in which they alternate between leading and following. I consider this an 'Act of Romance.'

Performance, **Tableau Vivant 02** (24.20 min)
Frascati, Amsterdam (NL), 2024
Played during Come Together Festival 18/19/10 Jan 2024

In this performance, The Tableau Vivant, or the 'living painting' is rediscovered. This form was mainly used for erotic entertainment in the early 20th century. The performance shows a collage of images of sculptural form in which different women's roles are shown. The dynamic and static images alternate. The surreal, poetic and slightly erotic scènes are accompanied by a hypnotic soundscape.

Watch full performance [here](#)



Performance Tableau Vivant #02 (24.20 min), Frascati, Amsterdam (2024).
Played by Kitty Maria van Ekeren, Lizzy Jongedijk and Hannah Rogers
Soundscape by Rik Möhlmann
Image by Reinout Bos



Performance Tableau Vivant #02 (24.20 min), Frascati, Amsterdam (2024).



Performance Tableau Vivant #02 (24.20 min), Frascati, Amsterdam (2024)

Water Beings / The Puddle (2024)

In this project, I collaborated with a group of women and queer people to explore representations of the demonic. The series focuses on oppressed and overlooked female roles and offers a counter-narrative by portraying and celebrating female figures with demonic traits. The figures appear as hybrid beings, half human and half animal, and as fountains that spout water. Rather than rejecting demonic traits, I want to embrace and celebrate them.

The work is rooted in the philosophy of Heraclitus: *Panta Rei* (everything flows). Change is the only constant in culture, identity, and society. From this perspective, the works explore the fluidity and transformation of female and queer representations. The figures symbolize this fluid nature: like fountains, our bodies are constantly flowing; we urinate, bleed, and vomit.

Furthermore, water symbolically refers to cleansing and healing, especially within religious contexts, but in these works, it acquires another meaning. The fluidity of water represents the constantly changing nature of our identities, just as the queer and female figures we present cannot be pinned down to a single definition. Water reflects the way we do not fit into fixed, static roles but are constantly in motion.

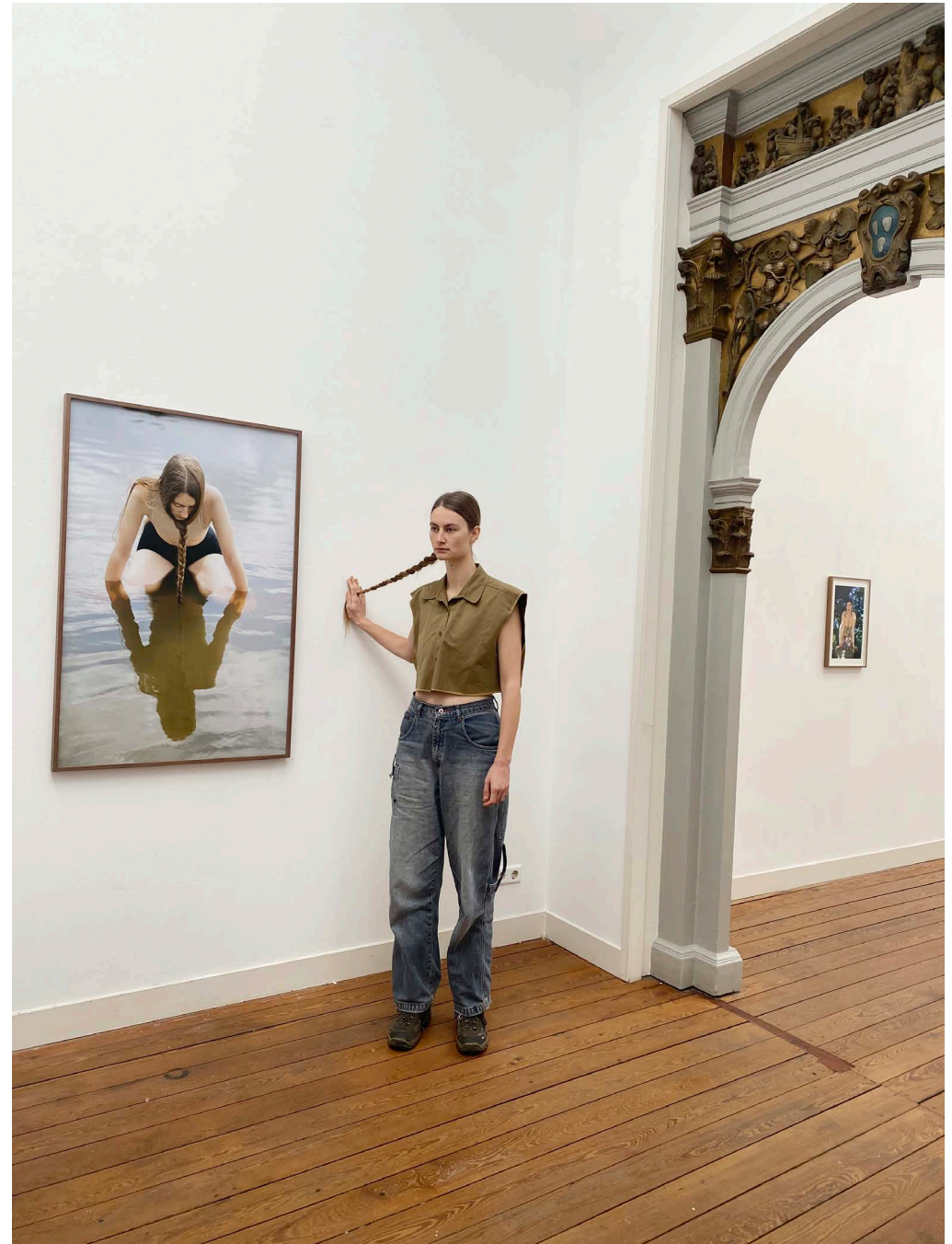


Infinite Braid (2023)

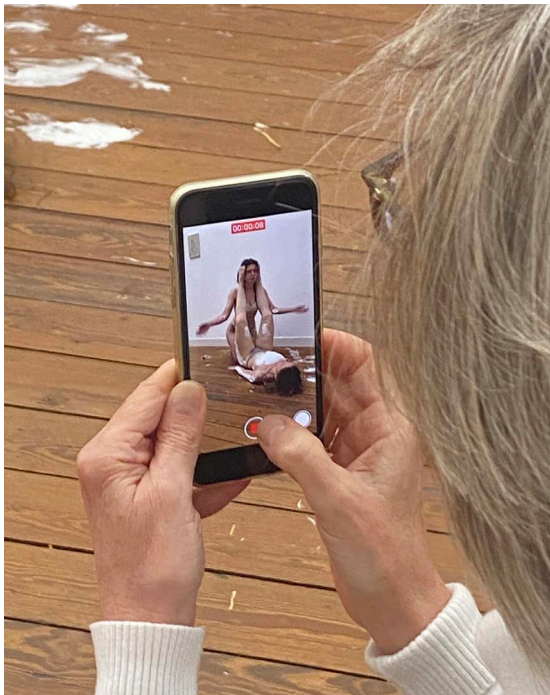
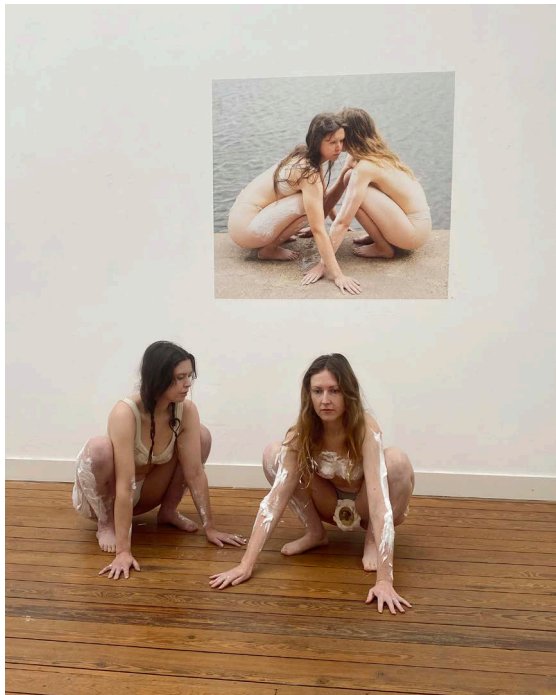
Performance, **Tableau Vivant 01** (21.20 min)
Hazy Horizons, Kunstliefde, Utrecht (NL), 2023
Played during 'U?' Festival 2023

In this performance, the tableau vivant, or the 'living painting' is rediscovered. This form was mainly used for erotic entertainment in the early 20th century. The performance shows a collage of images of sculptural form in which different women's roles are shown. The dynamic and static images alternate. The surreal, poetic and slightly erotic scènes are accompanied by a hypnotic soundscape.

Played by San van Elk, Kitty Maria van Ekeren and Marieke van Ekeren
Soundscape by Rik Möhlmann



Performance, Tableau Vivant 01 (12.35 min)
Group exhibition, Hazy Horizons, Kunstliefde, Utrecht (NL), 2023



Performance, Tableau Vivant 01 (12.35 min)
Group exhibition, Hazy Horizons, Kunstliefde, Utrecht (NL), 2023



The Puddle I (2023)



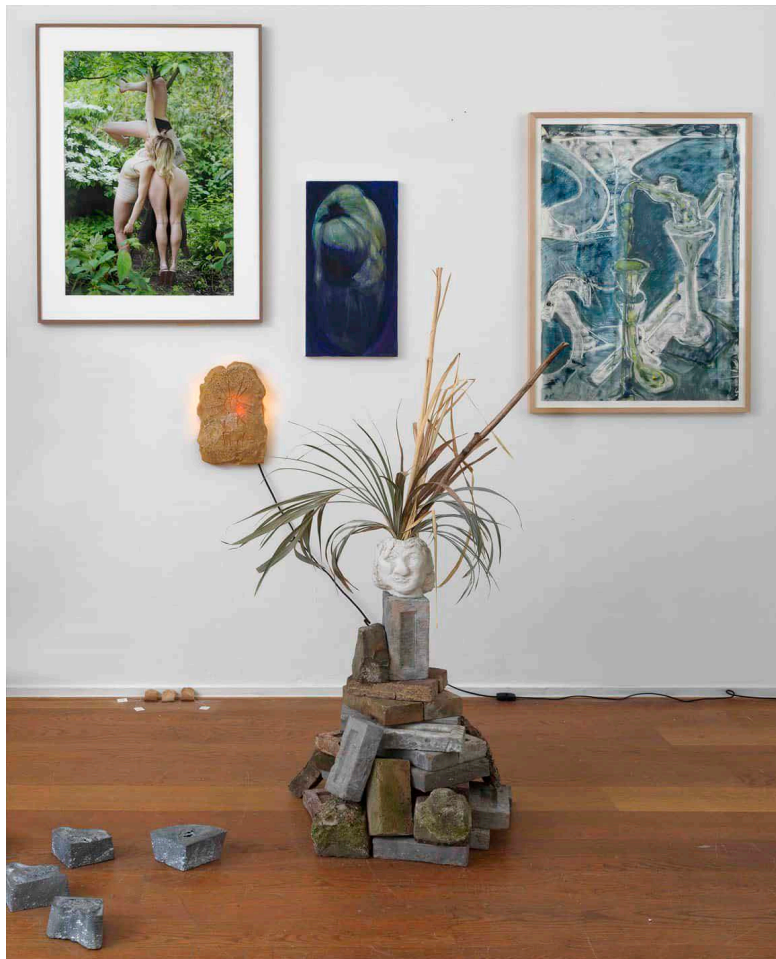
The Puddle II (2023)



Group exhibition, Jan Koos Feylbrief's Lifemirror, Seelab, The Hague (2024). Curated by G.C. Heemskerk.
Part of the installation The Puddle I (2023) and The Puddle II (2023), 82 × 122 cm, printed on wallpaper and framed in a handmade plaster frame

Pole Dance Portraits (2021-2024)

Pole dancing has become both a popular sport and a powerful form of self-expression, especially for women exploring their identity, sensuality, and strength. Fascinated by this, I began reaching out to women who practice pole dancing, often through the #PD (Pole Dance) hashtag on social media. In initial conversations, I learn about their personal connections to the practice, which then inspire the themes for our photoshoots. The portraits are taken in various public spaces around Amsterdam, where poles, whether in metro stations or on traffic signs, serve as a familiar backdrop for the art of pole dancing. The women take up space with their own unique presence and transform the spaces through movement.



Group exhibition, Limburg Biennale, Marres Maastricht, Maastricht (2024)
Curated by Wessel Verrijt.
Onderdeel installatie, 'Wildlife Photographer, 2023', 73,6 x 101,7 cm



Wildlife Photographer (2023)



Group exhibition, Pride without Borders, Clifford Chance, Amsterdam (NL), 2024
Curated by Young Collectors Circle
Photo by Saffron Pape



Chi #PD (2023)

Horseday (2021 - 2023)

In the *Horseday* project, Heil plays with the fluidity of identity by showing how human bodies transform into horses. This gives every-day objects and clothing a different meaning. People and horses are inherently connected in language; we wear ponytails and can be dark horses. Within her work, Heil questions the absurdity of daily interaction between man and animal and creates a new perspective of what we can ride. In the pictures, models can be seen riding chairs, each other and fantasy creatures. In this way, with, among others, her friends, ex-boyfriend, neighbours and students Heil creates a world of horses. The work evokes new behaviours, calls for intimacy, and shows how fantasy steps into reality.



Sister Horse (2021)



A Horse with No Name (2021)



Holiday Horse (2022)



Horsepower Elixir (2023)

This life elixir played with the idea that drinking could turn you into a horse. The elixir was distributed during the 'Horseday' exhibition at SECONDRoom Antwerp.

Brewed by Liedeke Härschnitz
Designed by Marijn van der Leeuw

The Horseday Performance 01 (08.40 min)

Springboard Art Fair, Utrecht, Werkspoorkathedraal (NL), 2023

Curated by Arash Fakhim

The Horseday Performance is an extension of the photographic project called 'Horse-day'. Within this work, the fluidity of the human being is embodied, and themes such as identity and intimacy are explored. Power dynamics between humans and animals are also subverted in an absurdist manner. The images gradually flow into one another. During the performance, you sometimes see only hands moving or someone's breathing for several minutes. The performance can affect the viewer like a visual meditation.

Performed by Lotte Verkaik, Fiorens de Lange, and San van Elk
Soundscape by Maarten Brijker



Performance, Horseday 01 (08.40 min)
Springboard Art Fair, Utrecht, Werkspoorkathedraal (NL), 2023



Performance, Horseday 01 (08.40 min)
Springboard Art Fair, Utrecht, Werkspoorkathedraal (NL), 2023