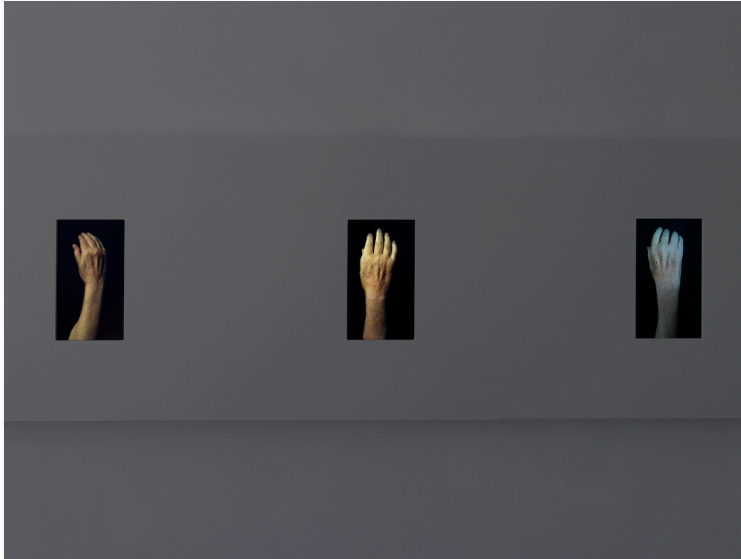


# What remains when someone disappears

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Death is not part of life. Usually it is said differently, but that is really a dead end. In the exhibition "Eat, Love, Die" by Roos van Geffen (Nijmegen, 1975) in the Museum Tot Zover at the De Nieuwe Ooster cemetery in Amsterdam, she deals with this unheard of cliché. You can only find someone in life, even when it is over. Death has nothing to offer. In death, life is over. As an artist, Roos van Geffen often uses the medium of photography that protects moments in life from the oblivion of death. With Roos van Geffen death is the reason to taste life. Death tastes like nothing. Life is a fresh cherry in your mouth.

A three-part work about the cherry, after which the entire retrospective "Eat, Love, Die" is named, consists of a black and white photo of eight cherries, a video recording of a red mouth she eats, and a series of framed cherry stems. The stem is formed into an eight with the tongue. With the cherry stem always lying 8, she has formed the lemniscate sign, the symbol for the concept of infinity. It is a mathematical sign and thus contradicts itself, because infinity cannot be calculated. "Eat, Love, Die" is therefore an experimental, sensuous counterpart to death.



The stem is formed into an eight with the tongue. Death may not be part of life, but it is waiting around the corner with its scythe. All the more reason to face in life who is dear to you and what you want from life and how you shape it. The artistry then contributes to preserving what is lost with death in life. "What will remain if someone disappears," Roos van Geffen wonders

in a series of photos of objects that form the traces of her father who is no longer there: the piece of soap that has been used, or the comb with hair, the abandoned bed linen. In that series of photos she makes that personal feeling almost abstract and at the same time there is a photo of how a shirt collar falls a bit clumsy over a blue sweater that actually conveys a sense of concern. "Eat, Love, Die" is a private statement by Roos van Geffen about her deceased father in particular. In series of diverse works she shows how unrecognizable death is. When life has disappeared from existence, we observe with wonder what is no longer there. A loss is invisible. It is no longer there. What is left you have credit. With what is left, Roos van Geffen creates an image from which someone has disappeared and in which only she herself appears as the maker of the work.



Roos van Geffen, *Media Vita* (2019), Tot Zover \*

The artistry then contributes to preserving what is lost with death in life. In the installation "Media Vita" she has arranged 76 photo books by or about meaningful photographers from her father's collection on tables. All books are open and each show a single photo that forms a lifeline in associative images. Walking along the photos, whispers are heard here and there through audio equipment from the pages, quotes from the makers brought together by her in a dialogue of the history of photography. A photo of a pregnant Annie Leibovitz taken by Susan Sontag reads from the book the phrase 'Photography is making an inventory of mortality', a quote from Sontag who described the making of photos as an author of 'On Photography' as a form of chronic voyeurism. She also came to the conclusion that someone who records existence does not intervene. In doing so, she puts her finger on the moral dilemma of not only the photographer, but of the artist as such. To what extent are you concerned with what you demonstrate with your work? Photographer Irving Penn echoes from his photo book saying, "For me personally, photography is a way to come to terms with my mortality," and Eliot Porter sighs, "I don't think it is necessary to express your feelings about photography. to bring. (...) They just talk, they don't say anything. "Diane Arbus says," What remains after what is not removed is what you are. "



In doing so, she puts her finger on the moral dilemma of not only the photographer, but of the artist as such. These texts, along with a number of other quotations, constitute a "statement of the rights of the photographer", in fact, as a clarification for their field of expertise of the "universal statement of human rights." Roos van Geffen sees in photography, as collected by her father, how she relates to the finite nature of life. Her father is the protagonist in this cartoon, but we don't get to know him, but her. Roos van Geffen: "For me it was a search for meaning in that large collection of photo books based on my own question: 'How am I supposed to live?', When my father asked me 'How am I supposed to die?' . I see the work as a self-portrait, but also as a walk through the history of photography, which always makes connections with my own memories and universal memories of a life. It meanders through all those photo books. I see the quotes I give as an exploration of mortality, or how you should live, or how you relate to life and work as an artist, but that is much richer than I can put it in words, there I need images. "

The work "The final month" can be seen in the same space as "Media" Vita. It consists of ten films of her father on his death bed, filmed by Roos van Geffen on her phone when she came to visit. The hand still reaching for life touches death. Roos van Geffen sees in photography, as collected by her father, how she relates to the finite nature of life.



*Roos van Geffen, Smile ( 2012), Tot Zover*

These two works are watched by the soundless film "Smile" in which three faces against a black background with a neutral look start to smile gently, which leads to a great conversation with distorted faces. Later in the exhibition the film "Yes" can be seen, part of the series "Five Faces", which also includes "Smile". In "Yes" five faces nod "Yes". It is striking that the film "No" from the same series is missing, as if Roos van Geffen clearly wants to say yes to life and not no to death. With "Media Vita" she indicates that she is at an age that on average marks half of her entire life. "Media Vita" are the first words of a Gregorian chant: "Media vita in morte sumus" (In the middle of our lives we are surrounded by death). At that age you have gained so much experience in life that you know that your certainties are relative. It is a feeling that she also shows in the photo series "Unfocused Days". In diffuse portraits of women she

depicts feelings that are penetrating and inescapable. It's like seeing someone through a frosted glass pane and immediately knowing something is going on. With the death of her father, Roos van Geffen ponders not only the finiteness of his life, but also her own, while also facing her fear of seeing her own child die, as she did in a photo from the series. ' Drifting in Time 'imagines. It photographed a young girl floating as Ophelia in the water, her image already affected by algae, silt, aquatic animals and duckweed.

"Eat, Love, Die" can be seen until 1 September 2020 in Museum Tot Zover.



*Roos van Geffen, Traces (2018-2019) Tot Zover*

\*Photocredits Media Vita

1. **Untitled no. 225. Cindy Sherman, 1990.** Uit: Arthur Danto. *Cindy Sherman: History Portraits*. Parijs, München: Schirmer/Mosel, 1991, ongepagineerd.

2. . **Nude. Peter Hujar, ongedateerd.** Uit: Klaus Kertess. *Peter Hujar: animals and nudes*. Santa Fe: Twin Palm Publishers, 2002, ongepagineerd.

3. **Kostbarkeiten. Werner Bischof, 1948.** Uit: Marco Bischof et al. *Werner Bischof Bilder*. Zürich: Helmhaus, 2006, p. 76.

4. **Artemio Colon Gym, Harlem, 1980. Martine Barrat, 1980.** Uit: Martine Barrat, Martin Scorsese. 'Do or die... we do, we don't die.' New York: Penguin Books, 1993, ongepagineerd.