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PRESS RELEASE

**Somewhere between defiance and innocence:  
New portrait photos by Hellen van Meene**



**Hellen van Meene**  
***Tout va disparaître***

With an essay by Jörg M. Colberg  
88 pages, 40 color plates  
Format: 29 x 29 cm, hardcover  
German/English  
ISBN 978-3-8296-0417-3  
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“Tout va disparaître” (Everything will vanish) is the title of the new photo book by Hellen van Meene. As one of the most respected female photographers in the Netherlands and important representative of contemporary international photography, van Meene (born in 1972 in Alkmaar) has just produced her third work for Schirmer/Mosel publishers. At the center of her photographic works are portraits of young people. For over ten years she has been repeatedly creating and re-creating new images so as to lend that precarious state of growing up a “face”, a location. In carefully orchestrated poses and usually photographed in color in subdued lighting, van Meene’s young models might appear in their accustomed environment but they are treading the shaky ground of puberty, that physical and emotional state of suspense between melancholy and euphoria, self-abnegation and reinvention.

“Tout va disparaître” features for the first time Hellen van Meene’s latest portrait studies, which were produced in the United States, Russia and the Netherlands. The young boys and girls stand in bare rooms next to old-fashioned furniture, in front of shabby corrugated-iron huts, sit on unmade beds or pose awkwardly on car hoods. Their clothes range from jeans and a polo shirt through a nightdress or underwear to a party dress; their gaze fluctuates between defiance and insecurity, skepticism and attentive observation.

Totally new for Hellen van Meene are the panorama images she shows for the first time together with atmospherically charged interior shots. Thanks to the panorama format, which is somewhat unusual for portrait photography, the physical setting of the youngsters becomes more instrumental in shaping the fundamentally ambivalent mood of the photographic arrangements. The photographs are composed down to the very last detail, and landscape and space play a crucial role for each respective protagonist.

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Using great sensitivity, van Meene guides her models in a certain, desired direction in order to achieve her artistic vision. It is a vision that employs artistic instruments – light, color and the texture of clothing and surfaces in the manner of the Dutch painting and light tradition of Vermeer – to try to capture the confusing state of transition in the phase of becoming an adult.

The forty high-quality printed color plates in the large format book testify to a successful realization of this artistic idea. Jörg M. Colberg, astrophysicist and author of numerous articles on scientifically-oriented and artistic photography, wrote the introductory essay for the book and explains the international success of Hellen van Meene's photos as follows: "There are about *us*, and what makes us human, about our dreams and aspirations." The complex compositions, perfect in their technical realization, represent timeless masterpieces of portrait photography.

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